

GANDHI THEORY AND PRACTICE

*Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance*



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY TRANSACTION SERIES No: 3

# GANDHI THEORY AND PRACTICE

## *Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance*

*Proceedings of a Seminar*

*Edited by*  
S.C. BISWAS

*With a New Introduction by*  
TRIDIP SUHRUD



GOLDEN JUBILEE SERIES

Indian Institute of Advanced Study  
Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

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# Foreword



During the first decade or so following the founding of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in 1965, several path-breaking seminars were organized around issues that were then of urgent concern to researchers and society alike. Leading academics participated in the deliberations and the interesting volumes that emerged were published by the Institute as the 'Transaction Series'. Each of these publications represented an important benchmark in the subject they sought to explore. However, questions of fundamental importance are not only complex: they are also perennial in nature. Even the most outstanding contributions can perhaps provide only partial answers. In their relative incompleteness, nevertheless, are contained possibilities of future trajectories for exploration. Half answers, therefore, often become the basis of a renewed and revitalized effort and thereby of a better understanding.

Given the significant nature of these seminars and the continuing relevance of their themes, my predecessor, Professor Peter Ronald deSouza, was justifiably of the view that their proceedings needed to be republished with a new introduction written by an eminent scholar in the relevant specialization. His personal initiative has been crucial for the republication of these 'Transaction Series'. The typing of the volumes was a time-consuming task as was the painstaking process of proof-reading. I would like to acknowledge with thanks the support provided by the scholars who undertook the task of

writing the new introductions to these volumes. We are grateful to Professor Binita Desai who helped us with the design not only of these books but also of our other design requirements.

The Golden Jubilee celebrations of 2015 are, indeed, a fit occasion for the Institute to release the Transactions volumes as a new series. These volumes are not simply markers of the lasting impact of the research carried out at the Institute. They are points of both reference and departure even today for those who seek meaningful answers to questions that have for long drawn the attention of thinkers.

CHETAN SINGH  
*Director*

## Foreword



This heavy tome is a reprint of the proceedings of a seminar held at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study at Shimla in 1968 and published in 1969. It deals essentially with Mahatma Gandhi's ideas in relation to economy, politics, ethics and society. The wide scope of the book and the excellence of individual contributions bestow upon it a quality of lasting relevance. That, in fact, is the reason why it has been reprinted.

The reader will find ample reward in this serious study of the perhaps the greatest man of our times.

J.S. GREWAL  
Director



## Preface



The present volume of the Transactions of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, contains the papers presented at and the proceedings of our eleventh Seminar, the one on Gandhi: Theory and Practice, held at the Institute beginning October 13 through to October 26, 1968. The work of editing the papers and proceedings was undertaken by my esteemed colleague Dr S. G. Biswas to whom our grateful thanks are due. He also undertook to write an introduction to the Volume. We appreciate very much the trouble he has taken in this regard.

It has taken well-nigh about a year to see the Volume edited, printed and published, which, we believe, is not a very long time considering the amount of work involved in the processes. We feel happy that we have been able to publish the volume during the birth-centenary year of Mahatma Gandhi.

NIHARRANJAN RAY  
General Editor



## New Introduction



I

It is with hesitation that I write this introduction. I am also aware of the privilege of being associated with these volumes. The source of anxiety and hesitation lies in both the distance and the proximity that are inherent in such acts. The distance is manifold. It is at one level generational, biographical; while at another it is that of our times. That year was 1969, the year in which the people and the nation celebrated the centenary of Gandhi's birth. It was possible then for a Mulk Raj Anand to speak of the deeply felt and entrenched presence—both intimate and personal—of the Mahatma in our lives. It was possible for Mohan Singh Uberoi Dewana to remind us that every possible traditional Sanskrit adjective had been applied to him: a *brahmacarin*, a *tapasavin*, a *mumukshu*, a *jivan mukta*, a *vairagyavan*, an *ahimsaka*, a *vratin* or *vratacari*, a *bhakta*, a *samkritanacarya*, a *sannyasin*, a *parivrajka*, a *sanatana dharmavalambin*, a *Mahatma*, a *yuga purusa*, an *avatara*. It was possible for Nirmal Kumar Bose to speak of Gandhi not in the past sense but as a living presence from whom one could learn ways of being non-violent, dialogic and deeply democratic. For those who came together for a fortnight to reflect upon the meaning of Gandhi and his relevance, Gandhi was not a deeply fractured, divisive and divided presence. His absence was spoken of not as

longing, memory or history but as a challenge, a constant reminder of what could be. He was the measure. He was for them a constant referent on the most basic ideas of politics, of society, of economy, of civilization and of life itself. It is this ability and availability of Gandhi – the person, his institutions, ideas and associates – to be the measure of things that made him a deeply entrenched presence; personal, societal and political. It is due to this proximity that they spoke of Gandhi critically. The presence of Nirmal Kumar Bose, I imagine, would have acted as a constant reminder for the need to retain autonomous judgment. His presence would also have made available ways of being critical while retaining deep affection and reverence for the man because, it was Nirmal Kumar Bose – a representative of modern academe- who embodied the age-old idea that it is in the act of submission that one acquires the capacity, the *adhikar* to have fundamental disagreement. His presence would have reminded the group of others like him, albeit from the Ashram tradition: Hermann Kallenbach, Kishorelal Mashruwala, Swami Anand and even perhaps Harilal Gandhi. All of them had shown that it was possible and necessary to have fundamental disagreements with the Mahatma and yet not lose sight of the significance of the man and his experiments.

And there was among them D G Tendulkar, saying little as he had said all in his majestic life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi: *Mahatma*. He embodied the journey of a whole generation of Indians from a devotee, to a critic and then an impartial admirer.<sup>1</sup> He would have spoken of how during their last meeting on January 22, 1948 he and Gandhi discussed the smallest details: “the format of the biography, type, illustrations, standardization of spelling, quotation-marks and even hyphens.”<sup>2</sup> We do not know- as he says little during this fortnight – if he had emerged from the dream world that Gandhi and his life were for him. And yet, he along with R R Diwakar, would have been constant reminders of the other two great chroniclers of the Mahatma; Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal. Mahadev Desai, more than anyone else, showed us what was it to bear witness to the Truth of *that* man.

As I write this little over four decades after the distance could not have been greater. This distance is about the nature of Gandhi’s presence and absence, as also our modes of re-memorizing him. It is still possible for some of us to speak of the moving presence of Bapu Kutni as Rajni Bakshi did. It is possible for us to seek solace and comfort in Hriday Kunj as blood flows in the river Sabarmati where



he bathed for so many years. It is given to us to search for our personal Gandhi. But the nature of distance is defined by the signs of our times. In 1969 Gandhi was at his worst as a commemorative stamp, a first -day cover. Today, he is a floating sign appropriated to sell Apple Computers, a gymnasium in New York, Monte Balnc fountain pens and even political parties. His sparse, meager artifacts are sold and bought in the international auctions and we have the hubris to argue that even he sold his autograph for five rupees to collect funds for his activities! The Sanskrit adjectives that Mohan Singh Uberoi Dewana invoked have all but lapsed from our vocabulary. His *brahmacharya* is a matter for salacious gossip. His spirituality a justification for communal politics; his fasts have been reduced to a mockery. He is the cause of all that ails us; partition, appeasement of minorities, reservations for dalits and the tribals and yet he is also the cause of persistence of caste oppression, he is a *Manu vadi*. His deep and abiding concern for the poor and the disposed has been called a charade. And yet, we do remember him. Not only at the time when the Indian State decides to observe his birth and death anniversaries or when we decided to imitate his act by walking to Dandi. He is remembered when his Gujarat turns against itself in an orgy of macabre violence. We ask what has happened to Gandhi's Gujarat. We remember him as walls come up between two communities and ask what he would have done, how he would have re-established dialogue and trust. We invoke him through our social movements: Chipko, Narmada. Despite our invocation, in spite of our turning to him in moments of our crises, there is a fundamental lack.

## II

This lack is not that of the frayed symbolism of our invocations. It is not also due to the ruptures in the national conscience regarding the significance of his experiments. This lack is caused by the marginal presence that his economic ideas have come to occupy in our times. If there was anyone in that gathering in 1969 who saw this clearly, it was Professor Raj Krishna. He said that in the year of his birth centenary the Gandhi faithful—and there were still a large number of them—argued that if the country had failed to follow the Gandhian model of economy of permanence, the reason for it was not the intrinsic failure of the model but the leadership was not intelligent or willful enough to steer the country on that path. Gandhi's economic ideas – which go beyond Khadi, Swadeshi and trusteeship – belong to the realm of normative economics which

proposes ideal economic order. Raj Krishna argued that Gandhi economic ideas were primarily governed by non-economic values. He was not concerned with essentially economic values such as high rate of growth, full employment, economic efficiency, stability and equality. Gandhi placed a demand on us, almost as an imperative, that we should adjust our economic behaviour in accordance with non-economic values and to the extent we are capable of this, the ideal would become real. Gandhi's economics proposes seven ideas: limitation of wants, limitation on large - scale technology with emphasis on small- scale technology and handicrafts, limits on large scale production, limited state ownership with widespread village ownership and trusteeship, self-governing, self-sufficient villages, equality of wages and universal physical labour. Raj Krishna argued that history of economic behaviour shows that in normal times mass of people show a scant regard for normative economic values. He said; "Most people are not interested in believing in any general normative economic model at all. And few who do, take care not to allow their beliefs to interfere with their normal economic acquisitiveness. That is why in recent history no ideal model whatever, Communist, Cooperative or Gandhian, has materialized anywhere on a large scale. The perennial power of ordinary human acquisitiveness and the attractions and compulsions of modern technology, have combined to endow the economic process with an autonomous dynamic which is largely independent of ideal models, and has a high degree of universality."<sup>3</sup> He argued that everywhere there was an irresistible urge for consumption goods which can only be met with large scale industrialized production, and notwithstanding the institutional arrangements of ownership the technology for producing these goods was essentially the same. He said that Gandhi's economic model had to be understood and evaluated not by its appeal or otherwise to our ethical sensibility but against the evidence of contemporary historical trends. He predicted that "Idealism of the Gandhian or any other variety has no future in so far as it takes the form of institutional economic utopianism."<sup>4</sup> As we march forward towards greater and greater consumption of all goods Raj Krishna's analysis becomes ever more relevant.

But, we need to ask a few questions: Does any normative economic thought have any future? Does it survive even as a residue? These questions have acquired a salience which they perhaps lacked then. This is in large measure due to our urgent search for what Joseph Cornelius Kumarappa called the "Economy of Permanence"

and what we call “Sustainable Development.” As we mark the tenth anniversary of the Earth Charter our search for normative behaviour has become evermore urgent. But even within this discourse the primary emphasis has so far been on finding technological solutions to a technological problem. In our search the ethical dimension has not been primary as sustainability is seen as an economic value and not a normative one. But as more and more communities rise in protest- often violent- the question of community ownership and rights over natural resources have come to predominate the debates on ecology, industrialization and survival of both tangible and intangible heritage that communities embody. In this search the ethical dimension has re-emerged and search for an ethical economics has re-acquired legitimacy. In this search Gandhi’s ideas about the limitation of wants, decentralized local production using locally available resources and skills; his concern for the well-being of the human person and emphasis on the uplift and dignity of the weak, the meek, the exploited and the underprivileged will find a locus. Thus, Gandhian proposal for economic organization may not have a future, the search for ethical, sustainable economics that recognizes the rights of the earth, of other living beings, of communities disadvantaged by modernity will find resonance as future might belong to normative considerations in the economic realm.

### III

The reflections of 1969 have one remarkable absence. This absence is the discussion on the textual Gandhi. None of the Mahatma’s seven major books<sup>5</sup> are brought under serious discussion, not even the *Hind Swaraj* and the *Autobiography*. This absence is not difficult to understand. *Hind Swaraj* was for long a neglected and misunderstood text. Gandhi was keen to bring the *Hind Swaraj* to the attention of two of his contemporaries whom he held in deep reverence: Leo Tolstoy and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. He sought Tolstoy’s attention as a ‘humble follower’ and Tolstoy gave emphatic endorsement of the universal significance of the Transvaal struggle. Gandhi regarded Gokhale as his political guru. Gokhale was the only prominent Indian leader who had personal acquaintance with the Satyagraha in South Africa. And yet, not surprisingly, Gokhale like many others was confounded by the text. According to Mahadev Desai, “When Gokhale saw the translation, on his visit to South Africa in 1912, he thought the book so crude and hastily conceived that he prophesied

that Gandhi would himself destroy the book after spending a year in India.”<sup>6</sup>

The only serious discussion on *Hind Swaraj* during the Mahatma’s own life time was the *Aryan Path*<sup>7</sup> issue of the *Hind Swaraj*. Sophia Wadia, the editor of this theosophical journal sent the revised edition of *Hind Swaraj* to several leading writers and thinkers of Europe with the intent to open a serious discussion on the text. Curiously, among the persons invited to send comments there was not a single Indian or a person conversant with any Indian languages. This remarkable absence has also remained uncommented.

The Mahatma’s sense of the significance of *Hind Swaraj* remained constant unto the end of his life. But, as the independence approached the salience of *Hind Swaraj* receded from the public imagination. In fact, Pandit Nehru in that famous exchange with Gandhi in 1945 impatiently dismissed the latter’s attempt at engaging him in a serious and public discussion on the basic arguments of *Hind Swaraj*. Pandit Nehru had only a dim recollection of this seminal text, which he dismissed as “romantic mythology of backwardness.”<sup>8</sup> As Suresh Sharma points out, the only significant intellectual comment on *Hind Swaraj* from that period came from Ram Manohar Lohiya in his essay “Economics After Marx.” It is only after the romance with modernity waned with the emergence of ecology and environment that *Hind Swaraj* has acquired salience as a key text. The imposition of National Emergency and suspension of ‘Parliamentary Swaraj’ also brought attention to Gandhi’s critics.

The *Autobiography* also received scant scholarly attention, especially the act of translation. It was Bhikhu Parekh’s critical essay, ‘Gandhi and His Translators’<sup>9</sup> that brought the question of the translation of Gandhi’s writings into sharp focus, especially Mahadev Desai’s translation of the *Autobiography*. Parekh drew attention to the need to re-translate Gandhi’s writings, especially the *Autobiography*.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, these 1969 reflections do not dwell deep into the questions of the textual fidelity and the questions of their translations. In fact, they were acutely aware of this. In his “An Approach to the Study of Gandhi”<sup>11</sup> T K Mahadevan brings this into sharp focus. He is scathing in his observation: “In a very large sense, the rather rapid decline in the academic acceptance of Gandhi, especially in India, is due to an error in interpretation. This error arises, in my view, primarily from the unscholarly dependence of Indian intellectuals on Gandhi anthologies – a species of popular books which retail the

epigrammatic utterances of Gandhi without recourse to historical methods. Books and articles have been, and are being written on Gandhi without any attempt to consult the source from which the anthologies have ostensibly been compiled...so that what we have is something like an oral tradition on Gandhi. Most of our present knowledge on Gandhi is based almost entirely on this 'oral tradition.'"<sup>12</sup> He hoped that the multi-volume publication project of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* would allow us to take complete material into account. Mahadevn, writing in 1969 had anticipated that the CWMG would have roughly sixty volumes. By the time it was completed in 1992 under the truly remarkable editorial care of K Swaminathan and C N Patel there were 100 volumes running into over 43,000 pages. It is the most significant intellectual achievement of post-independence scholarship. In this sense one must share Mahadevan's belief that "systematic study of Gandhi is only just beginning."<sup>13</sup>

The scholars working on Gandhi in 1969 also did not have the advantage of the complete Gandhi archives which came up later at the Sabarmati Ashram Preservation and Memorial Trust, with that remarkable scholar - curator C B Dalal. Thus, there were structural impediments which did not allow certain kind of systematic, textual scholarship on Gandhi.

#### IV

These reflections also avoid one major fallacy in the study of Gandhi. This widely shared belief that Gandhi had propounded a separate and distinct body of doctrine in the social, political, religious, spiritual and economic fields. This leads to a fragmentary view of Gandhi. These reflections span the entire rubric of Gandhi's concerns, political, social and economic. And yet they share one of our present tendencies in approaching Gandhi. The scholarship on Gandhi has to a large extent neglected two very significant aspects of his life and thought. These are: the nature of his spiritual experiments and an understanding of his institutions. The father of the nation's need and desire to see God face to face, his need and ability to hear the inner voice and submit to it, the relationship between his fasts and his prayers still await a more nuanced study and exposition. We have studied his religious thought but not his spiritual self-practices which occupied his being. This lacuna has to a large extent not allowed us to comprehend the spiritual basis of his politics. We can begin to appreciate the nature of these experiments only when

we bring into the structure of attention Gandhi's institutions: the Ashrams, the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, the All India Spinners Association, the All India Spinner Association and his work at Uruli Kanchan. Similarly, Gandhi's years in South Africa remain shrouded, except for the account that he gave in *Satyagraha In South Africa*. We are yet to have a fuller understanding of his closest associates; Hermann Kallenbach, Maganlal Gandhi, Mahadev Desai, Mirabehn, Kishorelal Mashruwala, J C Kumarappa still await scholarly attention. It is only when we begin to look at the Gandhi of the Ashrams, the Bapu of his associates, the spiritual seeker, the devotee of Ramanama that the spiritual longing and quest of the man would reveal itself.

## V

I am grateful to the Indian Institute of Advanced Study and especially its director Professor Peter Ronald deSouza for this privilege. This has allowed me to deepen my affinity to the grand and polyphonic tradition of engaging with the life and thought of Gandhi.

2015

TRIDIP SUHRUD

## NOTES

1. See Tendulkar, D G; *Mahatma : Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1951, (revised edition) 1960).
2. *Ibid.*, p. xv.
3. Raj Krishna, "Some Reflections on Gandhian Economics", p. 234.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
5. The seven books under consideration are: *Hind Swaraj*, *Satyagraha In South Africa*, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, *From Yeravda Mandir*, *Ashram Observances in Action*, *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*, and *Key To Health*. We shall also consider his translation of the *Bhagvad Gita* as *Anasakti Yoga* in the essay. The term 'book' has to be understood in a broad sense in the context of Gandhi's writings. *From Yeravda Mandir* are a set of letters. Large parts of *Satyagraha in South Africa* were dictated to a fellow prisoner and serialized in his journal *Navajivan*. His autobiography also appeared first in a serialized form both in Gujarati and its English translation.
6. See, fn. 2, to Gandhi's message to the *Aryan Path*, CWMG, vol. 67, pp. 169-70. For a detailed discussion on the nature of silence surrounding the *Hind Swaraj*, see, 'Editor's Introduction'; *M K Gandhi's Hind Swaraj: a critical edition*; annotated, translated and edited by Suresh Sharma and Tridip Suhrud (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010).
7. Vol. 9, no. 9, September 1938.
8. For Gandhi's letter to Nehru see, CWMG, vol. 81, pp. 319-21. For Pandit

Nehru's response see, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, First Series, vol. 14, (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund), pp. 554-57.

9. Bhikhu Parekh, 'Gandhi and his Translators', *Gandhi Marg*, June 1986, pp.163-172
10. For the reconstruction of the history of the English text of Gandhi's autobiography and the nature of changes between the first edition and the second revised edition see; Tridip Suhrud; *An Autobiography Or the Story of My Experiments with Truth: A Table of Concordance* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010).
11. See, pp. 45-61.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 46.





# Introduction



That Gandhi had been a world phenomenon the vastness and complexity of whose bewildering impact on the people of the different parts of the globe has not been fully and properly assessed to this day, might, possibly, be regarded by some as a controversial fact. But the fact that the appearance of this phenomenon has resulted, during all these years, in the creation of a certain totality of intriguing situations in our country and elsewhere demanding closer and clearer understanding will, perhaps, be readily granted. The papers presented in this volume attempt to approximate to such an understanding if only by trying to throw some more light on some of the shadowy and semi-lighted regions of the field, or else by bringing to bear a new set of analyses on the constituent facts of the situation. In both cases, there seems to have been a conscious effort to make the different aspects of the phenomenon more meaningful and relevant in the context of our own life and time, and, possibly, for the future also.

And yet each of the papers while purporting to throw some significant light on the multi-dimensional personality that was Gandhi, has, in an entirely unsuspected way, succeeded in giving some kind of an expression to the personality of each of their respective authors in the embarrassing sense of revealing what *he* is more than

what Gandhi is. Queer as it might appear, it is this fact that will perhaps explain as to how, for instance, one writer employs all his analytical apparatus acutely to bring to our notice what he considers to be the inherent contradictions with which Gandhian thought is riddled, while the employment of the same apparatus would enable another to see the inherent coherence in Gandhi's thinking, overriding the many apparent contradictions, when considered in that larger ethico-religious perspective of what we call the actual human living.

But in a study such as the present one is, with its internationally wide and diverse range of authorship, such diversity of assessment is obvious in the very nature of the case, out of the richness of which the reader will, perhaps, be better equipped to make his own final assessment, than if he had been presented with some kind of a regimented conglomeration of assessments intended for a certain end in view. Thus, although the papers vary freely in their analysis and interpretation of the different facts and facets of the Gandhian phenomenon, in this very freedom itself may be said to lie one of the chief merits of a work of this kind. Furthermore, in presenting a cumulative diversity of viewpoints which the present volume so richly embodies, it has perhaps been able to recreate, partly at least, the incessant dialectic of contemporary thinking on the subject throwing up new ideas and fresh insights.

Some of the views expressed here on certain specific issues might really appear to be poles apart, having been solidly entrenched in certain political ideologies which, themselves, are not merely rigorously rigid but are also deeply diverse. It is a far cry indeed from the dogmatic to the skeptical in every kind of doctrinairism, in whatever form may it be presented, or howsoever may it be spelt out. And yet, no wonder that out of this whole intervening range itself will, perhaps, steadily emerge, through the subtle logic of operational dialectics, that healthy rational conviction which is the prize and consummation of all reflective thinking.

The stamp of such a conviction is unmistakably noticeable in both of the illuminating contributions of Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose whose writings are invariably grounded upon his long firsthand experience of Gandhi, having had the opportunities of living with him, of observing him from very close quarter and of engaging himself in searching rational dialogues with him on many an important issue. In his Introductory Address, 'Professor Niharranjan Ray, on the other hand, gives, in brief, a dispassionate and masterly survey

of the mansidedness of the Gandhian impact and of the whole diversity of problems to which it gives rise, in the course of which he focuses our attention to the main areas of the problem and holds out, in clear terms, the aims and objectives of the seminar of which this volume purports to be the proceedings. Professor Ray ends up with a passionate plea for the intellectuals who had assembled, to exert themselves seriously to try to understand the whole magnitude and meaning of the challenge which Gandhi presented to India and the world and, if possible, to provide some kind of a guidance to ourselves and to our people on the face of this great challenge of our times—a challenge which we tend to believe is veritably directed to the conscience of humanity itself, for, in whatever ways we are going to act, whether in war or in peace, Gandhi's whole life and character is always there to stand in judgement upon us.

Under General Lectures, Mr T. K. Mahadevan's paper is a powerful presentation of what he considers to be the true significance and legacy of Gandhi. Of the papers on Social Cohesion and Social Change those that are marked by clarity of presentation and analytical skill include, among others, the contributions of Dr (Mrs) Margaret Chatterjee, Mr Ganesh D. Gadre, and Mr A. B. Shah.

With a view academically to assess the intrinsic merits and deficiencies of the economic phase of Gandhi's social idealism, Professor Raj Krishna's paper attempts to put the Gandhian model to a specialist's searching critical analysis. In this essentially intellectual exercise Professor Raj Krishna has sought to confront the model under examination with the prevailing trends in the real world, and particularly in India, in order to determine the extent of its problem of Professor Raj Krishna's, and from a standpoint which is largely identical to his, Dr S. N. Mishra, however, arrives, in the course of his reconstructive study, at conclusions which are quite dissimilar to Professor Raj Krishna's. Among the contributions covering Gandhi's Political Ideas and Movements a few dwell quite ably upon the different aspects of some of the significant concepts of Gandhian thinking in this field, like Power, Freedom, *Swaraj*, *Ram Rajya*, *Satyagraha*, Civilian Defence, Political Socialization, Nationalism, etc. These include the writings of Dr Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya, Dr K. J. Mahale, Dr V. V. Ramana Murti, Professor K. Satchidananda Murty, Mr Mohit Sen, Professor Gene Sharp, Professor V. M. Sirsikar and Mr Devdutt. The papers which attempt to assess from diverse angles the different ideas of Gandhi in this area and his role as a political leader and modernizer are those of

Professor George E. G. Catlin, Mr P. Govinda Pillai, and Dr (Mrs) Urmila Phadnis.

Of the contributions classed under Gandhi's Legacy and Contemporary Relevance those that tend to be purely analytic include that of Professor K. J. Shah and Dr S. C. Biswas. While the relevance of Gandhi and some of the Gandhian methods of approach have been strikingly brought out in the most lucid and forceful exposition of Mr B. R. Nanda and, in restricted contexts, in the papers of Mr R. R. Diwakar, Mr Ganesh D. Gadre, Mr H. S. Takulia and Professor Prem Nath, among others.

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A departed leader is one who usually continues to live in the minds of his people through some of his great deeds and achievements. And yet such a memory is bound to fade out with time, since no achievement, howsoever great, can hold on to its original importance, which inevitably dies out in the changing context of developing situations. But does not the Gandhian Character far surpass the life's achievements of this man? And if Gandhi shall still be living with us, or shall continue to live, it is only for the fact that, most essentially, he represents a certain ageless moral quest of the universal man. Thus, out of the conflicting diversity of contemporary assessments of Gandhi—ranging from, to illustrate its extremities in one direction alone, reducing him, on the one hand, to a mere ideological reflex of the melancholy Hindu, to regarding him, on the other, as the most liberal humanist whom no system of religion can adequately hold—the unique quality of Gandhian character which clearly stands out is his capacity to suffer infinite pains in response to a restless moral urge that is man's. But it is hardly enough from the Gandhian standard if the change that he is able to bring about is confined to the individual sphere alone. It has been Gandhi's relentless moral demand that such transformation must, in the end, reflect itself in institutional form in social life, which alone will be the proof and the measure of the change actually brought about in the life of the individual. From these sides, Gandhi is still a very significant living force with many of us And in the new age of ours, in which new problems are cropping up in every sphere in their endless multitude clamouring for radical and creative answers, one, in this country, is often forced to look back upon the essentially integral and human approach that was typically Gandhian. Looked at from this context, it has been a most profitable and entertaining experience, indeed, going through

all the papers presented in the Seminar and the various Reports of the interesting, and often lively, discussions that followed them. But the one fact that is unmistakably revealed through this experience is that in his inimitably unoffensive yet strong polyphonic voice—a confident voice which knows nothing of the bitterness of human malice or wrath—Gandhi had been speaking all the while, variously, perhaps, according to our own lights and comprehension, *to each one of us*, and, in fact, on almost each one of our contemporary problems. Yes, he *is* still speaking, if only we would care to listen to him!

S.C. BISWAS



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PART ONE

INAUGURATION

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NIHARRANJAN RAY

## Introductory Address



THE centennial of the birth of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, whom a grateful nation learnt to call Mahatmaji, the high-souled great, in deep love and regard, fell on October 2 last. India and the world have already started organizing and holding throughout the year countless number of celebrations which are sure to take diverse forms, shapes and characters, seminars like the one that is being inaugurated here today, symposia and conference, etc., not being excluded. These celebrations will be the homage of India and the world to the great leader of men that Gandhi was, and still is, to millions of this country and of the world.

Rituals of some kind or another will also perhaps form an essential part of many of these celebrations. An academic body like ours, the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, while considering it to be one of their obligations, to take their share in these nationwide, worldwide celebrations, cannot and does not certainly observe it as a ritual, but considers it to be a duty and privilege to participate in these celebrations as a most important item of their academic work for the year. This item is going to take the shape and form of a fortnight-long seminar which is proposed to be our humble but most serious and sincere homage to Gandhi whom we hold as one of the great pathfinders of humanity.

Bapu's life is an epic by itself. It is not therefore possible to

cover his entire life and the huge corpus of his activities and their total effects, his vision and conception of Indian society and of humanity of the future in course of one seminar. We have therefore been obliged to select a few main items only, on which we propose to concentrate and which we propose to discuss in some depth. Even the few ones we have chosen are wide and significant enough, I believe, to keep us engaged and involved for one fortnight. To this engagement and involvement I have the pleasure and privilege to invite you. We are grateful that you have responded to our call, and we are looking forward to a sustained confrontation of minds that would contribute not only to the delightful experience of sharpening of intellect, and generation of new ideas and visions but also give us a better and more incisive insight into the total social situation in which we find ourselves.

Looking at the traditional Indian society facing the challenges of his times, challenges generated by the confrontation of an alien and aggressive political authority and a relentless colonial economy on the one hand, and an old, weak, poor, disunited and stratified social order on the other, and involving himself in the tensions and turmoils our society has been experiencing, he felt compelled to ponder, long and deep, over the total situation, going to their very roots and ramifications through time. As he did so, he developed, slowly but surely, a worldview of humanity and human affairs, and his thinking about human society in general and Indian society in particular, was naturally conditioned, shaped and formed by that worldview. Being essentially a man of action, he eventually came to commit himself to the great task of transformation of Indian society to which he belonged and which he was emotionally and intellectually committed to, in accordance with the social vision and conception he had developed over the years, a vision and conception conditioned as much by his personal social background, his education and upbringing as by the influences drawn upon from outside, and experience—actual, imaginative and intellectual—that he has been going through.

One who thus builds up a worldview of his own and seeks to articulate that view and vision in the context of his time and space, is often obliged to coin or find out new terms that he considers more likely to explain his concepts better than is possible through the use of older and commoner terms. The new terms are also supposed to be more helpful in imparting to the respective concepts the distinctiveness and significance that are claimed for them.

Early in his life and career, Gandhi coined a new term for articulating his vision of Indian society and the way he wanted to transform it in accordance with his vision and imagination. This overall term was *sarvodaya*, literally the “Welfare of All”, a term that called forth a series of other terms all along the line of an effort towards a total reconstruction and transformation of Indian society in the context of the contemporary world situation. *Sarvodaya*, *swaraj*, *ahimsa*, *satyagraha*, *gramodyoga sampattidana*, *samya-yoga*, *Harijan*, civil resistance, *asahayoga* or non-cooperation, and similar other terms that he came to use, are all of a piece. Quite a few of them were older and commoner terms, without doubt, but he imparted new meanings, new connotations into them and sharpened their edges so as to make themselves usable as weapons of effective action. Thus, *satyam* and *ahimsa*, for instance, two terms as old as the Sanskrit language, he used in equation respectively with God, the quintessence of human existence, and with Love, both in a positive sense. But the overall and all-comprehensive term for all the other terms and concepts, was *sarvodaya* which was posed directly and contra-distinguishably against the current utilitarian concept of the greatest good for the greatest number. *Sarvodaya* has indeed been the very basic idea of the Gandhian way of life, even from the days when he wrote his *Hind Swaraj*, long before he made his appearance on the Indian public scene as the great leader of the Indian people towards the end of the First World War. *Sarvodaya* is a total view of life and human society, comprising individual and collective life as much as in social, economic and political affairs as in moral, religious and spiritual. *Sarvodaya* then summarizes in one word the concept of Indian society of his vision, in its totality.

With Gandhi *sarvodaya* could not be conceived without its moral-spiritual base, spiritual not in any metaphysical sense. Since *sarvodaya* stood for the welfare of all, one who subscribed to its ideology was expected to pledge himself to all kinds of sacrifice, even unto death, should that be necessary so that others may live. *Sarvodaya* therefore pre-supposed acceptance of a moral code based on the essential purity of means for achieving an end, allegiance to one’s duties rather than insistence on one’s rights, absolute adherence to truth and *ahimsa*, supremacy of renunciation and sacrifice, cultivation of absolute fearlessness, and finally and most importantly, recognition and practice of bread-labour which meant that one must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, which, Gandhi considered, was the divine law. Each one of these items, among others, was with

him a moral obligation of man, irrespective of time and space, but he posed them all in the context of the total social situation in India of his times.

It is on the basis of these moral values that he sought to evolve a social, economic and political order for the poor and hitherto despised and neglected teeming millions of India, who were his first and foremost consideration and to whom he felt morally obligated. He firmly believed the humblest, poorest and lowliest Indian as 'being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land'. This is the most important point to bear in mind in any consideration of his thoughts and ideas, arguments and activities. He was all the time working towards the effective articulation of a total social order in which the lowest and lowliest of the land will have the biggest say, and their needs and requirements, hopes and aspirations will have the fullest way.

There is also a second point to bear in mind in this connection. Analysts, academic and non-academic, have more often than not, tried, for understandable reasons no doubt, to classify Gandhi's ideas and activities under separate heads like social order, economic order, political order, and so on and so forth. This method of analysis, to my mind, is unfair to him. One should not forget that he was all the time thinking and acting in terms of a total social order of his vision in which the moral, social, economic, political, creative and intellectual orders were all but parts of one integrated whole. One may not therefore try to analyse and interpret the economic order of his vision by taking it away and apart from his social and political, as a matter of that from his moral order, for instance. We cannot, again for instance, hope to have the *panchayat raj* of his vision without the kind of socialization of land that he had prescribed and without the kind of State structure that he had envisaged. Similarly, to extend patronage and subsidies to encourage cottage industries and handicrafts in a competitive economy dominated by large-scale industries operated on the basis of monopolistic capitalistic interests, is simply to ignore the economic role of cottage industries, and handicrafts in the overall economic order of Gandhi's vision.

There is yet a third point which one may bear in mind in this connection. Bapu's vision of the total social order of India was but a part of his wider vision of a total world social order. Contemporary world social order that lay spread out before his eyes, rested on the basis of exploitation of men by men, and was hence, he considered, an evil, and he wanted to replace it by a new one. South Africa

he chose as his first laboratory where he could test his plans and methods and policies and programmes. Encouraged by some amount of success he came back to his own country and people, to find a larger laboratory in India which provided him with an age-old, highly developed but traditional culture with countless millions of people groaning under the heels of an alien authoritarian rule and a relentless colonial economy. If his experiments towards the new social order of his vision could be successful here, he could, he seems to have thought, set an example that would work for the establishment of the world social order of his vision, since he knew but too well that the Indian social order he was thinking of, could be fully operative and effective in a corresponding world-order alone, a world-order that would be committed to non-violence, to a non-competitive and hence to a human society that would not seek sharpening of conflicts and exploitation, and to a moral order that would be based on the absolute acceptance of the purity of means for achieving of even the noblest of ends. One more point to bear in mind.

The bedrock of the Gandhian social, economic and political order was truth and *ahimsa*, the latter translated negatively into English as non-violence, which, according to Gandhi, was, besides being a personal virtue, a moral code of social discipline for national and international behaviour. Truth and non-violence indeed interpenetrate his thinking and action in all spheres of human life and affairs—personal, social, economic, political and cultural.

Elimination of all kinds of violence, as far as possible, from human society and absolute commitment to truth, were indeed his main world social objective. In any consideration of Gandhian thought and activities therefore, one may not miss this important fact.

To return to the Indian scene, I will first take the social order of Gandhi's vision. The traditional Indian social order was based on the twin principles or systems of *varna* and *asrama*, and he upheld the social validity of this order even for our own times, since he thought this order had avoided all unworthy and heartless competition, restricted man's material ambition and defined in a socially healthy manner, man's ambition in life. But he, contrary to traditional sanction admitted inter-marriage, and the right of the individual to choose his or her own life-mate, and pleaded for equal rights of the sexes but with the recognition of the division of the spheres of work of men and women. He pronounced himself against

enforced widowhood though he recognized the grace and dignity of voluntary widowhood. Gandhi valued individual freedom, but not unrestricted individualism since he believed that willing submission to social restraints for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, enriched both the individual and the society. Untouchability he regarded as a blot on Hinduism, described it as a plague and a curse, and waged a non-violent battle against it all his life, as a result of which more than forty millions of people have today found their place within the Hindu fold and a recognized share in the body-politic of India. He also brought thousands of our tribals who for centuries were never taken note of even, into the arena of our vision, and worked incessantly towards finding for them a place in our social economy and cultural and political life. By his making us conscious of the despised castes and the tribals and making us recognize them, he extended the physical boundaries of our social life, and enriched our social content, a thing which was never attended to and attempted before in so national a scale, at any rate.

Gandhi appeared on the Indian socio-political scene at a time when an aggressive, sometimes even militant Hindu nationalism on the one hand, and an equally aggressive Muslim communalism on the other, had been raging for several decades, rending the Indian socio-political life into two. With unerring instinct he felt convinced that if he was to bring about a concretization of the socio-political order of his vision, he must bring all the religious communities together into the same arena of work and struggle, whatever the cost. Communal unity was indeed, one of the main planks of the socio-political order of his conception, and what he did in this direction throughout his life is well-known to all. But one must not forget that he did not want communal unity of a purely political nature achieved mainly through compromises arrived at in the manner and spirit of business deals; he wanted a unity based on the union of hearts.

His deep faith in the unity of universal life and human brotherhood, engendered in him a deep regard for all living beings, including birds and animals, which in its turn made him plead for the protection of cows, not on any economic grounds, be it noted, but on idealistic and ‘finer or spiritual’ reasons.

As in his social order so in the economic as well, the basis was non-violence so that there should be no coercion at any stage.

Social wealth consisted in men and women, he contended, and not in gold and silver, and that human element was the prime

factor in economic efficiency. To ensure that efficiency, society must engage itself in such occupations alone as would involve the least possible violence, ensure equality of income, a just wage for workers, and strive incessantly towards economic equality among various grades of people by fixing a decent minimum living wage and a ceiling for income, the difference between the two to be a reasonable and equitable one in such a manner as to have a direction towards ultimate obliteration of the difference. Indeed, he considered economic equality the 'master-key' to non-violent independence. Believing firmly that no body had any moral right to capital, he upheld that if capital was power, so was work or labour, and the two were inter-dependent; he therefore pleaded for right relationship between capital and labour without recognizing the supremacy of one over the other. In his view there was no antagonism between the two, and that there should not be any; hence he did not believe that the path of progress lay through class-conflicts which he wanted to avoid altogether, but through willing and meaningful cooperation between the classes and the masses.

Land, in his opinion, belonged to God, which 'in modern language meant that it all belonged to the State, that is, the people', neither to the peasant nor to the landlord exclusively. This view led him to plead for cooperative farming based on the principle of common ownership of land and of farming tools and implements etc. by the tillers and the landlords. Inevitably, therefore, he was led to evolve a theory of trusteeship which, he thought, had the sanction of religion and philosophy behind it. Gandhi's State-regulated trusteeship did not recognize any right of private ownership of property, and aimed at providing a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. He went to the extent of pleading for socialization of land and confiscation of property by legislation and without compensation even; if necessary, 'in order to raise the down-trodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes, and then, subsequently and scientifically, by the British rulers'.

In the Gandhian economic order, the character of production was to be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed. This social necessity, Gandhi argued, was to provide meaningful work and gainful employment to the countless millions of the Indian people so that they might engage themselves in producing the primary and secondary necessities of life, namely, food and clothing, housing, health and sanitation, education

and other requirements that would render unto everybody the dignity of human existence. He was therefore against large-scale industrialization which he considered as a curse indeed, for mankind, since it engendered, he argued, heartless competition, unnecessary hatreds and jealousies, encouraged violence and corruption on a large scale, and was the one powerful engine of oppression and exploitation of men by men. But he was not opposed to the use of machines and technology though only to the extent that these did not replace or eliminate necessary human labour. He was certainly against indiscriminate multiplication of machines; but let us note that when questioned about small, manually manipulated machines even, calling for large-scale industries for the making of such small machines, he was socialist enough to retort that all such industries must come under a system of nationalization.

In Gandhi's scheme of things 'the *kisan* or the peasant, whether as a landless labourer or a labouring proprietor', came first in any consideration of social change. He recognized the absolute necessity of closest co-operation amongst them and the need for special organization in unions or associations for them. Closely allied to the *kisan* was industrial labour centralized and concentrated in the cities, whom he wanted to be organized into unions of their own. His considered view was that 'labour united and morally and intellectually trained' was any day superior to capital; but at the same time he did not want the labour unions to become 'a pawn in the hands of the politician on the political chessboard'<sup>1</sup> he wanted them to dominate the chessboard instead.

And finally a few words in regard to the political order of his vision. By *swaraj* if he meant anything, he did mean the democracy of the masses and for the masses, and since the vast masses of India lived in the villages, the pivot of *sarvodaya* democratic state of his vision was the villages of India conceived in an ever-widening oceanic circle. The centre of this circle was to be the individual who should always be prepared 'to perish for the village', and the village in its turn 'ready to perish for the circle of villages', till at last the whole became one life organized in the shape and form of a State consisting of widening circles and decentralized not only in form but also in its functions and activities. Modern states, he noticed, were all pyramidal in form and structure, with their apes supported and sustained by the bottom. This he wanted to discard altogether. *Sarvodaya* democracy had to be worked out decidedly from below by the people of every village and not by a few people



sitting at the top of the apex. A pyramidal State was an evil since it destroyed individuality and represented violence in an organized and concentrated form. Frankly he envisaged a machinery of government that would govern the least, and by his own admission, he believed in a democratic State of 'enlightened anarchy'. Such a State had to be strictly secular, one without any affiliation to or special support or protection for any particular religion, but enabling everyone to profess and practise any religion without let or hindrance so long as the citizen obeyed the common law of the land. He also recognized the right of the minority to act differently from the majority whose decisions, he considered, had only a narrow application, that is, insofar as the common law of the land was concerned.

Gandhi was somewhat suspicious of political power and 'looked upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear', since, he thought, it destroyed individuality. Ideally speaking, there should be no political power, and hence no State or *vice versa*, but since this ideal could not be fully realized in life, he was prepared to make some concession in this regard. What he disapproved of was an organization based on force which a State was, in his view. Self-government meant to him a continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it was a foreign government or a national one. By *swaraj* he meant the government of India 'by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population—he was indeed the first to speak of franchise of all adults, above the age of twenty-one or even eighteen, and preferably below fifty—male or female, native born or domiciled, who had contributed *by manual labour* to the service of the State and who had taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters'.

Since the State symbolized force, power and authority, and since there was always the likelihood of the State abusing that power and authority, Gandhi evolved certain tools and techniques for the resistance of all such abuses, as a matter of fact for that of all kinds of evil in total social life, as well as for resolving such abuses and evils by means that were non-violent, non-violence being, in his view, 'an active force', having 'no room whatsoever for cowardice or even weakness'. The most important of these tools and techniques was *satyagraha* which postulated the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's person' without coercion or cowardice, anger or malice, intolerance or compulsion, a suffering even unto death, should that be necessary, by fasting. In a line with *satyagraha* was evolved the tools and techniques of passive resistance, non-

cooperation, civil disobedience, non-payment of taxes and rents, etc., organization of the *kisans* and industrial labour, confiscation by legislation, even without compensation if necessary, peace brigades and similar others. Resolution of conflicts included the methods of negotiation and compromise, but not at the sacrifice of essentials.

Could the State of his conception maintain its police force and its army? Ideally speaking, his answer would have been an unequivocal ‘no’; but he realized that even in a non-violent State, a police force might be necessary, which, he admitted, was ‘a sign of his imperfect *ahimsa*’, but the police force of his vision was to have the role of non-violent reformers working in close cooperation with the people. But his consideration in respect of the maintenance of an army, even to the offer of armed resistance to an invading army, that is, for defensive purposes only, was different. His positive reaction was that in such an eventuality, the people should offer absolute passive resistance and non-violent non-cooperation to the point of even complete annihilation. But he was prepared to recognize that the people of India and the world were not yet ready to accept such a proposition.

The Mahatma knew well enough that unless and until India attained political independence he should not be able to concretize his visions and conceptions in terms of social, economic and political realities. He therefore devoted himself all but exclusively to two main tasks: achievement of political independence and building up of the nation from within through wide and intensive programme of fundamental constructive work, one being integrally related with the other. While on one hand he was trying to organize resistance against alien rule and exploitation by following the methods and applying the tools and techniques that I have already referred to, in another he was trying to organize village reconstruction, to find a place for Khadi and spinning in the village economy, to organize the *kisans* on the one hand and the industrial labour on the other, to lead the movement against untouchability, to focus our attention towards the tribals, to foster communal unity and amity and to build up a new system of basic education, along with a few other things.

To what success or failure he could and did meet these two tasks and to what extent he could galvanize the nation to lend him the strength and support, is well-known to all, and I need not waste your time by trying to assess them.

But I hope I should not be saying anything contrary to facts if I observe that while we did achieve our independence from alien rule

and exploitation, we did so not on the fulfilment of the essential pre-conditions of independence as laid down by Gandhi. Gandhian methods, tools and techniques certainly did play a part, may be, even a good part; perhaps by and large we remained non-violent; but on the whole it remains debatable if independence did not come to us more as a result of a very complex concatenation of world situations and circumstances than anything else. That we did not fulfil one of the main pre-conditions of independence, namely, communal unity and amity, was clear at once and showed itself not only in the tragic partitioning of the land but also in the large-scale communal killing that followed. That since independence we have been depending more and more on foreign aid which Gandhi was consistently very much against, has been more and more manifest. That our democratic State is not the *sarvodaya* State of his conception; that we have not accepted even the theoretical implications of the economic order of his vision, nothing to speak of its adoption; that we have not done nor are we doing what Bapu asked us to in respect of the despised and the downtrodden or of the minorities; that bread-labour is not what the dominant minority of rulers, administrators, professionals and intellectuals live by; that we have not nationalized our land; that our *panchayat raj* is not that of his vision; that his ideas on capital and property or of trusteeship have not found favour with us; that we have not fixed a minimum wage and a maximum permissible income; and that we have not done nor do we intend doing anything to establish the social, economic and political order of his vision, that communalism in some form or other vitiates our socio-political life; that all individual and social initiatives have passed on from voluntary organizations to the State and government represented by a few sitting at the apex of a huge pyramid—these have all been made more than manifest during the last twenty years after independence followed by the death of Gandhi in an assassin's hands. Gandhian way of life has now been obliged to confine itself in a handful of workers in half a dozen of voluntary organizations.

Nevertheless, we love to call Gandhi the father of the nation, remember him with endless love, admiration and regard. Is it self-delusion or is there anything that we really want to emulate and translate into concrete shape and form?

In a very real factual sense Gandhi has indeed been the father of the nation since it was he who by as much the magic of his personal life as by his activities engaging large areas of the life of the people, brought them all together and directed them towards the two

main objectives that he had placed before our people; the building of the nation from within by inculcating into them the spirit of self-reliance, fearlessness and dedication, and the achievement of freedom from alien rule and exploitation. In less than thirty years time he transformed a people—not its educated middle class alone—from a conglomeration of individuals—inert, fearful, weak, without hope, without faith—into a nation committed to and involved in a struggle for all round social change. How did he perform what may justly be called a modern social, national miracle? What was the magic behind it?

Simply by a total abnegation of his own self and by his concern for the lowliest and the lost. If there was ever a person operating in the realm of ordinary, day to day human affairs, who was completely selfless, it, was Gandhi. Everything else in his life flowed from this basic quality of his character. Howsoever rational, scientific and intellectual we may profess ourselves to be, we Indians seem to have a perception of the essential greatness in a person when we find in one the ripeness of life, a ripeness that comes from absolute selflessness, from dedication to the cause of the destitute and the dispossessed, and from deep wisdom. The Mahatma had all these three, and it is to this essential greatness in life that we offer our homage when we hold him in love and regard. Our admiration for him comes from the fact that he has given to us and the world new perspectives and dimensions to our social, economic and political thinking and action. While we and the world may not find our way to accept and adopt his ideas, methods and programmes, we nevertheless cannot but feel attracted by the pull these have on our hearts and minds.

Ever since Gandhi started his mission in India, his ideas, his policies and programmes were being subjected to criticism on more grounds than many, by people both academic and non-academic. As early as 1919 at the Bengal Provincial Conference at Barisal, Bipinchandra Pal roared in parliamentary English, that what Gandhi was offering and promising to the nation was ‘magic’ and not logic. So also did quite a number of our veteran and knowledgeable leaders, though in a less vibrant voice. But in 1921, at the very height of the non-cooperation movement, Gandhi’s greatest friend and admirer, Rabindranath Tagore raised his voice against the basic principles that lay behind the policy of non-cooperation and the anti-intellectual attitude and approach of the movement and the ancillary cult of the *charkha*. The report of the tentative plan and programme and the mind behind it, of the National Planning Committee setup by the

Congress itself, were also critical of the social and economic order of Gandhi's vision. It was therefore very clear that even when he was alive, critical voices were being heard from many quarters including that of the nascent communists like M. N. Roy, for instance, which was understandable. Since then these voices have been gaining in volume and variety.

It has been pointed out that his total vision and conception of Indian society was much too idealistic and Utopian and had hardly any relation to the hard realities of contemporary life in India and the world. The moral approach of *ahimsa* or non-violence and *satyagraha*, was philosophically untenable; his methods and techniques of passive resistance, of non-cooperation and of fasting, for instance, were themselves coercive, if not negative in meaning and ethically wrong altogether, and that his whole attitude towards life and living in general was negative, austere, unaesthetic and anti-intellectual. All these are ethical and philosophical questions that call for much closer examination than just casual remarks of criticism. In all these respects Gandhi threw certain challenges before the world of contemporary ways of thinking, and we must take them up in the same spirit as he presented them before us.

In respect of the social order of his vision it has been argued that his acceptance of the principles of *varnasrama dharma* and the interpretation he gave to it in support of his acceptance, is, if not revivalist and reactionary in tendency, at least not tenable when examined in the light of the history of the *varnasrama* system in ancient and medieval India. In respect of his ideas on and activities in the field of communal unity and amity, it has been pointed out that while he was very sincere in his faith and was motivated by the best of intentions, he did not probe deep enough to try to understand the social and cultural reasons of communal disharmony and bitterness, namely religious and communal nationalism on the one hand and religious obscurantism on the other, of both the Hindus and Muslims, and try to attack these at their very roots. Nor did he look closely enough into the economic reasons either. On the contrary, his emphasis on *brahmacarya* and abstinence, on non-killing of cows, on prohibition, on renunciation and on restraint on one's food and drink, his idealization and glorification of voluntary widowhood, his insistence on vegetarianism as a moral way of life, and his almost monkish negation of all creature comforts and joys and pleasures of life, including aesthetic delights, for instance, seem to have encouraged amongst large sections of the educated middle

class certain obsolescent medieval values, revivalist and obscurantist ideas and a general conservative attitude of resistance to modern ideas, methods and techniques and to modern ways of life. This criticism draws support from Gandhi's scant regard for certain aspects of modern science and civilization.

In respect of the economic order of the Mahatma's vision, it has been said that while his main objective of achieving an economic order that would do away with accumulation of wealth and property for personal gain and strive towards an egalitarian economy, the means and method 'of trusteeship that he had recommended for the purpose was most inadequate and unworkable, and that his over-emphasis on the avoidance of class conflicts and the over-encouragement of class-collaboration blunted the edges of his weapons for fighting the existing capitalistic order which he sincerely abhorred. His attitude towards machines, and industrialization, it has been said, was also irrational and medieval, if not reactionary. It has also been pointed out that his idea of a more or less self-sufficient village economy was unrealistic in the sense that no such local self-sufficiency was possible any more in a world of monetary and globally interpenetrating economy, nor was there ever one in any point of history anywhere. And finally, it has been said that Gandhi's economic order was based on the assumption of minimal standards of life and living of men, which ran counter to human nature itself.

In respect of the political order of his vision it has been argued that Gandhi's concept of power and of the State as the symbol of that power and authority was built on wrong premises, both historically and theoretically, and his ideas of self-government, anarchical in the main. Naturally, he could not, therefore, take a very rational and objective view of the functions of a modern State and government. What instead he recommended, fell therefore, far short of the requirements of a modern State and government that together have been showing increasing tendency towards becoming all but co-terminous with society itself, with its fingers touching almost every aspect of life.

These and certain other similar questions have been raised in respect or the Gandhian way of life and Gandhi's total conception of Indian society. Some of these questions are fundamental and call for careful scrutiny and examination in the light of world thought and experience as well as in that of what he said and did. It is my feeling that this has not been done as seriously and as closely as it should have been. Gandhi deserves it, I am sure. We have perhaps

taken some note of what he said, but not as much of what he actually did, and try to correlate the two. His activities are all on full record, but they call for intellectual analysis which unfortunately has not been done. For instance, he organized and led in well-nigh thirty years of his active life in India, more than forty movements, big or small, local or nation-wide. An analytical study of these movements from the point of view of their motivations, their organization, their tactics and strategies, their pulls and pressures, the extent of popular participation in them and the extent of their successes and failures. Nor, to give another instance, have we made a close analytical study of why his sincere and unceasing efforts towards achieving communal unity and amity did not only not succeed but ended in disaster. Why did he make the Khilafat movement, frankly one of pan-Islamic affiliation that had already been given up by most Islamic countries of western Asia and which was antithetic to the cause of Indian nationalism, a part of the Indian national movement? Why did the two Ali brothers, Muhammad and Shaukat Ali, part company with him? Why could he not reach an understanding with Muhammad Ali Jinnah? Muslim intransigence does not by itself explain the situation, I am afraid. Or, to give a third instance, we have not yet asked ourselves why Gandhi ignored the growing urbanism of Indian life and concentrated all his energies and attention in the villages, and how this emphasis conditioned his vision of the Indian socio-economic and socio-political order.

It is common knowledge that the pre-dawn of Independence was a bitter, tragic span of time for Gandhi, and it was a most unwilling consent that he extended to its terms and conditions. What followed was still more bitter and tragic, and one cannot help feeling that the Congress that took over power and authority of government, started its career as rulers, with a bad conscience which seems to have given it a split personality. They had inherited all but in fact, a machinery of government and a socio-political and economic order that they knew was altogether distasteful to Gandhi, but which they could not alter overnight nor were they prepared to. It was therefore with them a matter of slow transformation of the order, if at all, without a sudden and violent break with what they had inherited. The social revolution that he had envisaged thus remained still-born.

Thus the Congress government of India fell between the two horns of a difficult dilemma. On one side there was the emotional and spiritual pull of the charismatic personality of Gandhi, the enlivening vision of his social order and his programme of social reconstruction

from the bottom; on the other side there was the equally strong pull of the pressing demands of the realities of modern life, of the maintenance of the inherited order without large-scale disturbance and yet attempting to bring about certain social changes through legislation and state-initiated projects, and of the pressures of world politics and world economy. An oscillation between the two was the inevitable result. Pledged to the achievement of a socialistic pattern of society and committed to achieve that pattern as peacefully and as democratically as possible and as quickly, through social and economic planning, they tried to follow models and experiences of other countries, all but exclusively western, and at the same inform their endeavours with certain ideas and programmes of Gandhian socialism, if one may use such a phrase. This kind of divided mind makes itself clearly manifest in many a sector of our social, economic and political life. Between these two minds the people and their government are being twisted and tossed for the last two decades.

Meanwhile vested interests and forces of reaction of all sorts have been taking fullest advantage of the situation and finding time and opportunity to entrench themselves, strongly and effectively. They know very well that with the shadow of Gandhi hovering over the heads of the Government of India it would not use coercive or violent means to resist them or undertake drastic legislations without their consent. The name of Gandhi is always there to cover up any sins of omission or commission, either on the part of the ruling authorities or in that of its opposition.

This seminar has been convened with a view to arrive at a clearer understanding of this total situation, and to clarify our ideas, and if possible, also to present some guidance to ourselves and to our people. Gandhi presented to India and the world a serious challenge, to my mind, and we must try seriously to understand what he and his life and activities meant, for our own times and for the future of humanity. This seminar proposes very humbly to make such an attempt. We are looking up to our distinguished participants to help us do so.

Thank you once more, and once more, a hearty welcome.



NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

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## Inaugural Address



In the introductory address, Professor Niharranjan Ray has presented to us a comprehensive account of Gandhi's contribution to Indian political and social thought during the last fifty years. My task has, therefore, become easy; and I shall confine myself briefly with the manner in which Bapu put his ideas into actual execution. I shall try to do so by recounting a few incidents observed by me in course of my brief, but very fruitful, experience during one of the most critical periods of modern Indian history. These will mostly relate to the period when Gandhi was involved in trying to find a solution of the communal problem in our country during the years 1946 and 1947. But I shall begin with a small incident which goes back to the year 1934.

My first interview with the Mahatma in Wardha took place in that year. The questions discussed related to his theory of trusteeship, the ways of organizing the peasantry for combat, and so on. On the first afternoon it was not possible for Gandhi to cover all the questions. After the initial discussion, it was time for him to go out on his everyday walk, and I was privileged to join him and his party in it.

Gandhi walked briskly; and among others we were accompanied by that celebrated leader of the Pathans, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. When the mile of walk across the rough, stony ground was over,

all of us turned back; and what interested me was that everybody collected as many small or large pieces of rock as he could carry in his *chaddar*. I also did the same, and when we returned to the house where Gandhi stayed, through the backyard, we deposited the stones in a heap which had already grown there, perhaps after weeks or months of such constitutional walks. Khan Saheb told me later on that these were meant for building a small road which was to connect the house with the pucca road which lay a few hundred yards away.

To my mind, this was not economical. If a road needed to be built, and materials had to be collected, it could be done much more expeditiously by raising subscriptions, or by a more concentrated effort than by collecting materials, bit by bit, over weeks and months. When this question was put to the Mahatma on my behalf by Khan Saheb the reply or explanation came that he was, firstly, not merely interested in his daily morning and afternoon walk for the sake of health, but he also wanted to add to it some *useful* work. Secondly, if the road needed to be built, what Bapu desired much more was that everyone who needed it should also *be involved* in its making. It was not enough to have the road built anyhow; he wanted to use this also a *means of education*. Perhaps, in Gandhi's mind, the epic story of how the squirrels brought in their grains of sand when a bridge had to be built across the ocean when Rama planned to invade Lanka of Ravana must also have occurred. And so he wanted every citizen of India to be similarly involved in the making of a road, or whatever it was, no matter how small his contribution was going to be.

This was my first direct experience of how Gandhi worked, and how also he wanted us to work; and this also helped me to understand many things in his plan of work as I tried to study them later on in life.

The second incident which I shall relate before you is connected with his days in Noakhali at the end of 1946. He had gone there, as he said, not to bring consolation to those who had suffered grievously from riots, but to give them courage so that they could build up their lives anew.

In order to bring peace on the land, and also in order to build up new organizations which would supplement the work of the Government, peace committees were being set up in those days by the Government itself. Representatives of both the communities, Hindu and Moslem, were to sit and work together in these committees. The task set before them was that they should try to bring back the

refugee Hindus to the villages, help in their rehabilitation, and also assist the police in discovering the culprits so that they might be punished.

It was in this connexion that a deputation of Hindu leaders came to consult Gandhi. At this point, please allow me to quote rather extensively from a book of mine entitled *My Days with Gandhi* (1953, pp. 60-62). I shall do so with some hesitation, but one needs to be extremely careful and accurate when writing about Bapu.

A batch of Hindu political workers of the district had come to discuss certain demands which had to be satisfied before the peace committees could, in their opinion, function effectively. Gandhi listened carefully... and then said, 'Your proposal that these demands should be satisfied before the peace committees can be formed, virtually means a summary rejection of the peace offer. This will only succeed in embittering feelings still further. The Government offer should be accepted on grounds of expediency. I do not however plead for peace at any price, certainly not at the price of honour. Let us act on the square, and let us put them in the wrong. It was exactly in this way that Indians were able to gain the silent sympathy of a large number of Europeans in South Africa. If, after a fair trial, the committees are found unworkable, you can come out with your honour in tact. That sense of honour will give you a courage which no man can beat.'

'The demands were now examined one by one. In place of the demand that certain Muslim officers should be replaced by Hindu officers, Gandhi remarked that it was unreasonable and a *communal* demand. "While putting forward such a proposal, you should ask yourself if the Muslims of Bihar can reasonably make a similar demand. In my opinion, the present demand is absurd and I would personally never countenance it. You can, of course, substitute in its place, impartial officers in place of biased ones, that would be fair".

'Someone pointed out....that the Ministry in Bihar had employed Muslim armed solidiers to quell the disturbances, the suggestion being that this was for the appeasement of the Muslims. Gandhi was clearly of opinion that such a thing, if true, was surely a sign of weakness.

'The last point raised was in connection with the Hindu members of the peace committees. One member present pleaded for postponement, as most of the leading Hindus had left the district and only poor weavers, blacksmiths and farmers remained behind. If these were to be on the committees, they would be no match for the

more intelligent and educated Mussulman representatives. Gandhi said with some warmth that if many had fled, leaving neighbours to their own fate, they did not deserve to be called leaders. The seats would have to be occupied by barbers, washermen and the like, who were as much interested in the preservation of their life and property as the rich. It was not unlikely that they might submit to the influence of Muslim members. But the risk had to be run if true democracy was to be evolved. “In all preliminary steps in democracy, we have to run tremendous risks”.’

It was in this manner therefore that Gandhi worked to build up the structure of democratic organizations from among the commonest and the lowliest of Indians.

The third incident which I shall try to narrate relates to Calcutta where Gandhi was present at the time when power was being transferred by the British Government to Indian hands in August 1947. While Gandhi set up his camp in a house belonging to a Moslem lady, in a district which was predominantly Hindu, he argued with a number of Hindu young men who eventually decided to bring back home the other Moslems who had evacuated the place during the riots. The Hindus had also given word that no harm would come to them if they returned.

But unfortunately on August 13, 1947, there was a turn for the worse in the city of Calcutta. Riots broke out once more in other parts of the city, and the frightened Moslems came to Gandhi’s camp and wanted him to make an arrangement so that they might be carried away to some place of safety. When this was actually being done, and an open truck in which the refugees were accommodated moved away from where Gandhi stood in the middle of the road, two bombs were hurled on the truck and two men died. Bapu walked up to the place; arrangements were made for the transport of the survivors, and the dead bodies were duly removed. At this point, I walked up to a crowd of Hindu young men who stood a few hundred yards away, and asked them why they had thus broken their plight word to the Mahatma.

They were indeed sorry, and said that two of their company had not been convinced by Gandhi’s arguments, and it was they who had thrown the bombs from an empty house and then run away. But there were still some Moslems left in the *bustee*, and they would, firstly, not allow them to be evacuated any further, and secondly, would protect them by means of such arms as they possessed. Their prayer to Gandhi was that, if the police arrested them tonight for the possession of unlicensed arms, he must set them free.

It was a strange prayer; but when I went to Bapu and reported to him what the young men had said, without one moment's hesitation, he asked me to go and tell them that "he was with them. If the Chief Minister could not protect the minority with the Government forces, and the young men decided to do so, they deserved his support".

Later on, I asked Gandhi why he had supported violence in this manner. His answer was that he could not prescribe the non-violent way to others without demonstrating that it was a more effective remedy. He had decided to fast in order to bring back sanity to the citizens of Calcutta; in the meanwhile, he supported the young men in their moral act of protecting the weak. Gandhi then went on a fast in Calcutta on the first of September 1947, and in the statement which was issued, he said, 'what my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch all the warring elements in the Punjab if it does in Calcutta....If the people of Calcutta wish me to proceed to the Punjab and help the people there, they have to enable me to break the fast as early as possible.'

Three days passed by; the conscience of the citizens of Calcutta seemed to have been stricken, and eventually the leaders among the citizens came to him and gave him word that they would do everything, and even risk their lives if violence broke out again. It was only after this that Gandhi broke his fast, and peace was once more restored to the city. As he used to say, good is always slow in action while evil is militant. All that he had done was to touch the heart of those whom he loved, and who also loved him, and make them act, each in his own little sphere, to quell the violence that was raising its head.

My intention, Ladies and Gentlemen, has been to present to you the actual manner in which Gandhi worked during his lifetime. We have seen how he paid the utmost attention to details; how his constant endeavour was to build up democracy even from the grass-roots, one in which the lowliest would be able to participate. I have also tried to present how he organized his non-violence, how he tried to keep violence in check by offering a better and more moral way of action. We have seen how he *understood* violence, knew its limitations, and when necessary staked his own life in keeping resistance and action within the bounds of non-violence.

If we recall today all the heritage which Gandhi has left to us, by a life devoted to ceaseless action and by a death which set a martyr's seal upon that life, we shall indeed be blessed.



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PART TWO

PAPERS

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SECTION A

General



NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

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## Non-violence and Defence



The most crucial question with regard to non-violence is the question of defence. Can a nation defend its possession against external aggression or even internal disruption by means of non-violence? Gandhi had his own views regarding this question, and I shall try to present them in as brief a manner as possible. The first point to remember is that Gandhi was not a “nationalist” in the usual sense of the term. He thought that the whole human family had a right to the wealth created anywhere in the earth by Nature. And if a human community developed that wealth by means of its own labours, even then the wealth had to be shared by it with the rest of the human family. They could act only as its “trustees”. That is why, in 1925, he said in course of a speech:

‘I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from free country, so that the resources of my country might be utilized for the benefit of mankind.... a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love, therefore, of nationalism, or my idea of nationalism, is that my country may be free so that the human races may live.’ He said again in 1931: “There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours across State-made frontiers. God never made those frontiers”. This, as everyone will realize, is an ideal which is very far from the usual ideal of nationalism.

It was Gandhi’s belief moreover that every kind of possession could not be defended by means of non-violence. Anything gained by violence could

be protected by violence alone. So, if a community wanted to protect its possessions by means of non-violence, it had to qualify itself by getting rid of all that had been acquired by means of violence, things which he described as 'ill-gotten gains'. And capitalism came under this category. So that a nation or a community had to divest itself voluntarily of such gains before it could hope to deal effectively with an aggressor who came to snatch away from its non-violent possessions.

Once Gandhi said that just as war of the ordinary kind needed adequate preparation of many kinds, so also adequate preparation was needed for defending a country under the scheme of non-violence. And this consisted of setting its own economic and social house in order. The non-violent aspirant had to start with transforming the social relations within his own community by means of constructive work and *satyāgraha* if his intention was to establish *swarāj*, or real freedom of those who toiled in the fields or the workshops.

This, then, was the aim towards which a community had to strive to the best of its ability, and with the available resources at its command. Supposing, however, this aim is conceded, what form would the non-violent combat actually take, in case there was aggression from without or a threat of disruption from within?

War has been defined by one authority, at least, as a means of imposing the will of one community upon another by means of punishment. In contrast, one can define *satyāgraha* as an instrument of heroic and intelligent self-suffering as the *satyāgrahī* tries to resist what he considers to be unmoral and evil. His aim is to evoke respect for his courage in the heart of one who opposes him, and whose interest it is to perpetuate the system which is considered evil by the *satyāgrahī*. Once his heart is touched, not through fear but through respect evoked by the *satyāgraha* campaign, the door is opened for a dialogue between the opposing camps. The aim is eventually to come to a settlement, and build up a new institution based on justice through the co-operation of those who had so long been engaged in combat.

Gandhi held that, during the period of preparation, the *satyāgrahī* should also make it widely known how he was trying at home to build up a just society. He did not also look upon the wealth of his nation-state as an exclusive possession, but something which had to be shared with other communities. Such educative propaganda, if we call it by that name, would give him a prestige and reputation both at home and abroad which would be of great value when the time came for the application of non-violence against armed aggression.

If such a reputation has been successfully built up, even to a small but appreciable extent, then let us suppose, the act of aggression from outside begins. The first act of defence would, according to Gandhi, lie in the confrontation of the invading army by a band of *satyāgrahīs* who would try to talk to the people on the other side, even allow themselves to be killed, but who would not lift even their little finger in order to hurt the so-called antagonist. The antagonist had to be won over by patience; he should be made to feel that *his* life was not ever in danger. Only, the *satyāgrahīs* were determined to put up with any punishment for the defence of a way of life which they considered to be just or moral.

It was often argued against Gandhi that, in modern warfare, such a self-sacrifice on the part of the *satyāgrahīs* would not even be noticed. Bombs might be hurled from the air; tanks might sweep over the *satyāgrahīs*; and their slaughter would be useless. Gandhi held however that, after all, the armed forces would have to take possession of the land of the *satyāgrahīs*, even if it were to bend them down to slavery. And then would come the second step. The population must organize non-violent non-cooperation with the occupation-forces. There must be no scorched-earth policy; but the population must bravely confront the aggressor, talk to them, tell them that they were prepared to share whatever they had if the soldiers were prepared to share in building up a new kind of life based on justice and equality which they had so long been trying to. But the *satyāgrahīs* would never submit to their dictates, or work as their slaves.

It was Gandhi's hope that the sacrifice of the first line of *satyāgrahīs* of those who had lain down their lives while not resisting, would give a kind of courage to the survivors behind them, so that they would be able to continue their non-violent non-cooperation.

In time, the imagination of the occupational forces would be touched. They would begin to wonder at the quiet courage and determination of those who never threatened their lives, yet would not surrender, but carry on another way of life in which *all* men are treated as brothers.

The question was asked of Gandhi if he thought that such a form of non-violent resistance was at all humanly possible. He said it was. But he admitted that it required a quality of courage which was of a very high order. But his belief was that, unless humanity was prepared to accept an extremely audacious measure of this kind,

men will be involved for ever in a race for armaments which would lead them to greater and greater moral degeneration.

Someone asked him, again, if it was possible for a *satyāgrahī* to make an appeal to the heart of a man like Bachchaisakao or Hitler. Gandhi replied, that through bitter experience, he would admit that the heart of such a person might not after all be touched. But commanders of war do not act alone. They act through ordinary soldiers, who, as men, are no better and no worse than any of us. The *satyāgrahī's* action will have an appeal for them. And the moment the latter begin to think, the spell of their commander's indoctrination would be broken, and the latter would become isolated.

And this kind of isolation of the focal points of violence would be the maximum that he would dare to hope for under the present circumstances.

It was in this manner that Gandhi planned to organize the defence of our non-violent possessions by means of *satyāgraha*.

A. K. DAS GUPTA

## Gandhi on Social Conflict



AT LEAST one biographer of Gandhi has compared him with Marx. 'The only non-official figure', says Louis Fischer, 'comparable to Gandhi in his effect on man's mind is Karl Marx'.<sup>1</sup> The comparison is appropriate. But it is doubtful if it could be sustained in terms of Louis Fischer's assessment. It would indeed be wrong in any substantial sense to say that as yet Gandhi has had an 'effect on man's mind' at all comparable with Marx's influence. About half the human society today is run along Marxian lines. Elsewhere, too, the conviction is growing that a socialist form of society, such as Marx envisaged, where capital-labour dichotomy is irrelevant, is not only conceivable but is also practicable. 'Gandhi's teachings, on the other hand, although known fairly widely in a rather vague way, cannot be said to have produced any significant stir in man's mind, so as to form the basis of action. There was no doubt a good deal of action along Gandhian lines in India during the twenties and thirties in the context of the freedom struggle. Yet, unless one loses historical proportion altogether, one has to recognize that it is not Gandhian programme as such to which one should attribute Indian independence; along side of it there was the terrorist movement, culminating in Bose's I.N.A. and the naval mutiny. Nor could one say that the basic social and economic framework of post-independence

India has much to do with Gandhi's teachings. The Five Year Plans—whatever their achievements might have been—are not Gandhain plans. In certain remote quarters outside India, Gandhi's name has been invoked sometimes in the struggle of the weak against the strong. But these activities are sporadic and have not yet assumed much significance.

Yet I believe there are certain aspects of Gandhi's social theory which come very close to Marx's teaching. A comparison between Gandhi and Marx is appropriate, I believe, because both Marx and Gandhi accept the existence of social conflict as a fact and both bring a scientific attitude to bear on their programme for resolving it.

To ascribe 'scientific attitude' to Gandhi may seem paradoxical to many. For, to all appearances, Gandhi was a intellectual, who would depend for light on intuition, or 'inner voice', as he would put it himself. Yet essentially Gandhi was a scientist. For does he not describe his whole life as an 'experiment with truth'?<sup>2</sup> If intuition served him in his hour of difficulty, it is intuition inspired by observation, experience and testing. And these are the essentials of scientific enquiry.

Gandhi saw conflict in society, and he pointed out three areas in which the conflict is particularly conspicuous—(i) conflict between labour and capital in industry; (ii) conflict between tenant and landlord in agriculture; and—this is where he goes a step beyond Marx—(iii) conflict between the village and the city.<sup>3</sup> It is the interest of the landlord to appropriate as much of the produce of land as he can, leaving the actual tiller in poverty. It is the interest of the capitalist to appropriate as much share of the product of factories as possible, leaving more or less a subsistence wage to the labourers. And it is the interest of the urban society to offer as unfavourable terms as possible in its trade with the rural people. Industrialization proceeds, as Gandhi recognizes, on the basis of the exploitation of labour on the one hand and agriculture on the other. It is low wage coupled with low terms of trade for food and raw materials which provides the basis of modern industrialization, of which the capitalists are the beneficiaries.

If Gandhi is against machinery, as it is employed in a modern economy, it is because machines are the instruments through which capitalist exploitation takes place. He is not against the use of machinery as such. If the owner uses a machine himself and does not have to employ hired labour, then the machine ceases to be an instrument of exploitation. Gandhi gives his blessings to the use of



such machines: 'I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation', he said. And he makes an exception particularly to Singer Sewing machine, adding that it is one of the few useful things ever invented.<sup>4</sup>

Now, how are these social conflicts to be resolved? There are two strands in Gandhi's teachings which must be distinguished. One is his conception of Trusteeship and the other is Passive Resistance. It is true that Gandhi does not always isolate one from the other, that he often takes passive resistance on the part of the exploited as a way to the building up of the spirit of trusteeship. There are indeed passages in Gandhi's writings which suggest that the image of a good society that he has is one in which there would be not only no exploitation but also no sense of conflict, where those who used to be exploiters will be converted into a new faith and would look upon their property as a kind of trust. However, for clarity of understanding, it is very necessary that one should distinguish this *ideal* of Gandhi from the *theory* of non-cooperation and passive resistance. The distinguishing feature of the latter is that it is built on an awareness of the fact of conflict. It is a realistic, hence scientific, assessment of the nature of social relationship. And it is here that a comparison between Gandhi and Marx is valid. Unfortunately, in post-independence India, those who have adopted the Gandhian creed—the Sarvodaya group of thinkers, for example, are bringing the Trusteeship aspect of Gandhi's teaching to the fore. Gandhi is thus presented to the world as an idealist and a visionary. For, who would take seriously a system which assumes that man in general could be persuaded to surrender self-interest? Success of a social policy depends, as Alfred Marshall once put it, on 'the extent to which the strongest, and not merely the highest, forces of human nature can be brought under operation'.<sup>5</sup> It is the stronger force of human nature—the will of the deprived to fight exploitation—which Marx throws up in his programme of action to resolve class conflict. Passive resistance of Gandhi has also its basis in the same kind of philosophy.

Recommending non-cooperation and civil-disobedience as the 'right and infallible means' of resolving social conflict, Gandhi says: 'the rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor in society. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread among the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves....'

Gandhi's programme of *charkha* is essentially a symbol of self-

sufficiency, an instrument through which it is possible for the weaker group to fight exploitation from a position of strength. The cultivators are asked not to pay rent if the landlords do not behave properly. The rural people in general are asked to stop trading with the urban industrialists unless the latter improve the terms of trade. The same injunction is given to factory worker in his dealings with the capitalist, and above all to the country as a whole in its dealings with the British Raj. Non-cooperation and passive resistance are thus offered as a weapon to fight exploitation, with the philosophy of self-sufficiency as a base for making the campaign effective.

In all this there is a clear affinity of Gandhi's teaching with Marx's. Both start with an awareness of the existence of social conflict. Both use the same material, namely the exploited, for resisting exploitation. In both, further, the urge is revolutionary. The difference between the two—and this of course is fundamental—lies in the image of the ultimate society that they have in view.

In Marx's scheme, large scale production remains. But, unlike under capitalism, capital (which includes land) is not in private hands; it belongs to society. It is inherent, Marx argues, in the progress of capitalist system, that there is an emergence of a proletariat. The transformation of the social structure from capitalism to socialism is worked out through this proletariat class rising in revolt and ultimately expropriating the expropriator. Gandhi, on the other hand, envisages a social structure in which private property persists, in so far as the property held by a person is not more than he can himself use. In agriculture this happens if the cultivators themselves are the owners of land, so that the existing tenant-landlord relationship is obliterated. In industry it can be realized through an expansion of cottage industry where the implements are such as can be used by those who own them. The process through which such transformation takes place is also differently viewed by Marx and Gandhi. While Marx envisages a war between workers and capitalists, Gandhi's process is non-violent. Passive resistance to be pursued by the worker is a kind of struggle in very much the Marxian sense; only it is not to have any violent manifestation of the sort that Marx would envisage.<sup>8</sup>

There is one difficulty, however. What would happen to the production of implements as such? Does the Gandhian system eschew factory operation altogether? Would not capital goods for the production of capital goods, however simple the latter may be,

require, often at any rate, a kind of technology which will involve large scale operation and the use of hired labour ?

The answer that Gandhi gives to this question will perhaps be startling to many a Gandhian. Gandhi wants such industries to be *nationalized*. Asked, in the context of his approval of the use of Singer Sewing machine, what he would say about the factory for making these machines, Gandhi had no hesitation to remark: 'Yes, but I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized, or State controlled'.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever one might say about the efficacy of passive resistance as a weapon for a campaign against exploitation vis-a-vis war, and whatever one might say about the economic possibilities of the kind of society that Gandhi would have—and here one must consider the case in the light of the situation in India where labour is abundant—Gandhi does offer a consistent philosophy and—what is more important—a realistic one, based on the operation of the 'strongest forces' of human nature and not merely the 'highest forces'. It is unfortunate that it is not this, but the unrealistic Trusteeship aspect of Gandhi's teaching that is in circulation in India today.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, London, 1951, p. 397.
2. Gandhi's choice of the title for his autobiography is surely not an accident.
3. 'The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen—city-dwellers. They produce food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it'. N. K. Bose, *Selection from Gandhi*. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1950, p. 79. Marx, it should be remembered, was preoccupied solely with the implications of the capital-labour conflict and left the agriculturist more or less alone. In the *Communist Manifesto*, rural life is, in fact, ridiculed.
4. 'Singer', Gandhi tells us, 'saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine in order to save her from unnecessary labour'. There is thus 'a romance, about the device', he adds. See N. K. Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
5. Alfred Marshall, *Industry and Trade*, London, 1919, p. 664.
6. N. K. Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
7. It is here that the theory of passive resistance has to be sharply distinguished from the theory of trusteeship. In the latter Gandhi proposes to use the exploiting party, not the exploited, as the vehicle of resolving class conflict.
8. There is reservation even here. Gandhi did not rule out violence altogether.

On being asked by Louis Fischer what would be the position of the peasantry in a free India, Gandhi said that the peasants would 'seize land', that no compensation would be paid to landlords, for compensation would be financially impossible, that there might be violence in the process, but that the landlords might 'cooperate by fleeing'. See, Louis Fischer, *A Week With Gandhi*, New York, 1942, Dull, Sloan and Pearce, pp. 56, 91.

9. N. K. Bose, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

K. P. KARUNAKARAN

## Some Perspectives on Gandhi



THE literature on Gandhi is already very large. Still one feels that as far as the studies on Gandhi's ideas and work are concerned there are some virgin fields. Some detailed and definitive studies can usefully be undertaken after the centenary year when many more documents on Gandhi and the Gandhian era will be made available in a systematic manner to the general public. But it was not always the lack of information that was responsible for the dearth of scientific studies in this field. One main reason was the extremely controversial nature of Gandhi's life and the passions he aroused in different sections of the people. It was not an accident that only recently a statue of Gandhi was unveiled in London and only recently some excellent studies on Gandhi were published in the West. It was also not surprising that Gandhi was not given the nobel prize for peace or that he was not given an interview by the Pope in the nineteen thirties. During those days the establishments in the West had so much to loose by recognizing Gandhi as a very great man. This was equally true of the Communist Establishment in the Soviet Union also. During recent years the description of Gandhi and his work in Soviet encyclopedia was revised very often and perhaps the latest is more realistic than the earlier references. In India, on the other hand, there was such a glorified cult of Gandhi that it was almost impossible to organize objective studies on Gandhi. The

recent books and a large number of scholarly articles which are pouring in from the West now suggest that the dominating elements in the Western academic circles have disentangled themselves from the earlier sterile and conformist attitudes they have accepted on Gandhi.

In India, a healthy departure in this field is taking place only slowly. Apart from the fact that the cult of Gandhi is still very strong in the country, the gap which exists between the so-called social scientists and social and political realities in this country is another factor which had hindered objective and scientific studies on Gandhi. The 'Gandhians' have not made the tasks of the social scientists easier. Commenting on this matter Jaya Prakash Narayan observes: '...Those among the social scientists who have had some interest in Gandhi's message and its continuing relevance had no encouragement or opportunity to attempt the task of interpretation.... Whether they were in the universities, research institutions or elsewhere, they had their programme of work cut out for them by the prevailing interests and climate of thought. These institutions, it need hardly be pointed out, have not been particularly concerned with Gandhi... Few among them (trained social scientists) are interested in Gandhi, or for that matter have the necessary social awareness... Terribly few, even among the competent ones, have the intellectual courage and adventure to blaze out a new path. The difficulty however, has not all been on the side of the intellectuals. On the part of us, Gandhians, there has been no little difficulty. On the one hand, there has been inadequate appreciation of the need and value of modern social science and its methodology for attaining the ends of the Gandhian movement; and on the other, we have had our own brand of intellectual and moral arrogance which not seldom borders obscurantism and intolerant dogmatism. Our attitude to the intellectual has also been governed by such extraneous factors as scale of salaries, mill-made clothing, cigarettes and such like.... Little is it realized that the trained social scientist is expected to bring with him not Gandhian learning and attitude of mind but a scientific mind, a fund of valuable knowledge, the skills of his profession (of analysis, measurement, interpretation, presentation) and certain vocabulary used and understood by the modern elite all over the world'.

To begin with we must note that like all creative leaders Gandhi was an extremely complex personality. Among the political leaders

of the twentieth century only Mao Tse-tung and Lenin can be compared to Gandhi in the range of their influence over their people. The followers of these two leaders can very well maintain that their political achievements were much greater than the achievement of Gandhi. But unlike them he had made valuable contributions in many other fields. That is why Gandhi is often referred to as a prophet and saint. At the beginning of Gandhi's career, Leo Tolstoy of Russia noted that Gandhi was an exceptional leader with a universal message. Within a decade after Gandhi's death, Martin Luther King of the United States was proclaiming the indebtedness of American Negroes to Gandhi in their struggle for racial equality. More than one Christian missionary, who came to India to preach and to convert stated that they found a living Christ in Gandhi. Many thinkers of European continent like Romain Rolland and Rene Fillop-Miller predicted in the nineteen-twenties that Gandhi was a prophet of this generation—a view which was repeated by the historian Arnold Toynbee after Gandhi's death.

Inside the Indian sub-continent Gandhi was a controversial figure. Many Indian leaders who were held in high esteem by a section of the people before 1920 expressed the fear that Gandhi's emergence as the supreme leader would inaugurate a period of anarchy in this country. On the other hand he was accused of being a reactionary and the champion of vested interests by some communists inside the country and outside in the nineteen-thirties. M. A. Jinnah, the leader of the Indian Muslim League and the first Governor-General of Pakistan, felt that Gandhi was a great leader of the Hindu community—a view he expressed even while paying a compliment to Gandhi after his death. To the militant Hindus he was the friend of Muslims and the Pakistan and that was why one of them murdered him. To many champions of 'modernization' Gandhi was an obscurantist and to the traditionalists Gandhi was a revolutionary who under-mined their positions.

It is not possible to touch upon all these aspects in one paper. Even if that is done, many other aspects of Gandhi and his views which related to nature cure, village industries and the role of religion in society will be left out. Here an attempt is made only to draw the attention of the participants of the seminar to some of the new perspectives on Gandhi opened up by some of the recent studies and to suggest some other lines on which studies can profitably be undertaken.

## REASON AND WORLD AND LIFE AFFIRMATION

Although Gandhi often spoke of man's supreme need for a faith in God and religion, there were many rationalist and materialist elements in Gandhi's thought and practice and these are often overlooked by students and commentators. These are not necessarily mutually contradictory although this is often wrongly assumed to be so. Gandhi's definition of God was unique. Very often he said that God was truth: sometimes he said that truth was God. He had little use for hereditary priests and the established institutions like the temples from which the untouchables were excluded. He did not show high regard for the Pandits, i.e. to those who had a scholastic attitude or for those devotees of God who left 'the rosary only for eating, drinking and the like'. His following statements were revolutionary in the context they are made:

'To a people famishing and idle the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages'. '...to serve India is to serve its poor. God we cannot see with our eyes; it would do if we serve those we can see. The object of our public life is to serve the visible God, that is the poor'. Many other utterances of Gandhi taking a similar view can easily be quoted. But much more than his sayings, the record of his work was the standing testimony to his being that 'Life for me was real'. Until his death he was engaged in continuous worldly activities. Even his prayer meetings were generally used to propagate his views on social, economic and political issues.

He never accepted the authority of any religious text or any particular interpretation of any text. He never wanted to leave a sect or dogma after him. Reason and the spirit of enquiry were cardinal features of his thought. His life itself was a series of experiments.

But at the same time he made concessions to heredity and the tradition of the people in some respects. In many studies on such subjects as the Social Background of European reformation, Martin Luther, the religious renaissance and German humanism, the origins of European capitalism and Protestant Ethics, many scholars had examined the interrelation between religious reformation and social and political awakening and economic growth, some of them had to draw a line between the area on which reason held supreme in the thought of Luther, Bernard and Thomas Aquinas and the area given to faith by them. No such comprehensive study is made in regard to



Gandhi although a few maxims are stated by some scholars here and there.

Some of these maxims are sound. But they must be substantiated and much work should be done to stress the elements of reason and world and life-affirmation in Gandhi's thought and practice.

#### A REBEL AND A REVOLUTIONARY

Gandhi was a great rebel and revolutionary. Some extremely competent studies have focussed attention on this aspect. Two recent books are: *Gandhi: A Study in Revolution* by Geoffrey Ashe and *The Revolutionary Personality: Lenin, Trotsky, Gandhi* by E. Victor Wolfenstein. Even before 1930 Rene Fulop-Miller has focussed attention on this aspect of Gandhi's personality in the book, written originally in the German, under the title *Lenin and Gandhi*.

In regard to the statement of objectives Gandhi was uncompromising. This was true both in regard to political and social questions. One of the recent books entitled *Non-Violence and Aggression* by H. J. N. Horsburgh, published in the United Kingdom, gives emphasis to those aspects of Gandhian philosophy which offer resistance to aggression. Quite a few scholarly articles also have dealt with Gandhi as a fighter. An article which appeared in the *World Politics* in October 1963 was entitled, 'The New Courage: An Essay on Gandhi's Psychology'.

There was something thorough in Gandhi's capture of the organization which he wanted to lead. And there was something ruthless in Gandhi's replies to his critics and in his occasional dealings with political opponents. Though non-violent in form and incapable of doing any bodily harm to any one, Gandhi never flinched from the consequences of any step he took in furtherance of his political and social aims.

On fundamentals he rarely compromised. His last act of martyrdom was in line with his basic approach. The Hindu metaphysical thought always accepted that there was truth in all religions and advocated religious tolerance. But day-to-day social behaviour of the vast number of Hindus was far from being based on any belief in tolerance. Gandhi's final and uncompromising fight was against this. But there were many other social and political questions on which he was equally uncompromising. His opposition to the practice of untouchability was another instance.

Like that of other great revolutionaries Gandhi's thought could

never be divorced from his practice. To him, to believe in anything was to act on the basis of that belief and he always aroused enthusiasm among a large number of followers who accepted his lead.

This aspect of Gandhi is not entirely missed and in the recent period continuous attention is paid to it in scholarly writings although it has not fully cleared away the misunderstanding and confusion created by the linking up of Gandhi's non-violence with his so-called gentleness and his so-called womanliness—a linking up which was extensively undertaken by those who never properly comprehended Gandhi.

Here, again, for a scientific study, it is not Gandhi's utterances to the effect that if there was a choice between cowardice and violence he would choose violence and that non-violence was not the weapon of the weak but of the strong that should pave the way, but a critical examination of his life and work and of those who had followed him. Many people hold the misconception that bravery and violence cannot be separated. Gandhi's life was a standing repudiation of this view. Much work can still be done on this aspect of his life.

#### REALISM AND POLITICAL SENSE

Another aspect of Gandhi and his work on which sufficient attention is not so far given by scholars was his realism and political sense. Even during his life Richard Gregg had written a book *The Power of Non-Violence* where he had referred to non-violent methods as 'moral jiu-jitsu'. In that book and in other writings the author had maintained that the practical aspects and effectiveness of non-violent resistance could not be over-estimated. Gregg brought the testimony of physiologists, psychologists, and philosophers to point out the 'inevitable' success of Gandhi and his methods.

Simone Panther Brick's book, *Gandhi Against Machiavellism*, originally written in the French and translated into English in 1966, fulfils a similar function. This extremely competent study is guided by the following political formula: 'Effectiveness is the function of organized force and action supported by numbers. And indeed if effectiveness is renounced, political action is renounced. If force or action is renounced, *satyāgraha* is renounced. If organization or numbers are renounced, it loses its vigour. Failure is due to the deficiency of one of the terms of the formula instead of its keeping pace with the progress of the others; success to the full and harmonious development of all the terms.' The author has critically examined some of the *satyāgraha* campaigns and their fate in the light

of this formula. Although the author has a personal faith in non-violence, the book is an objective study of Gandhi as a politician—a new kind of a Machiavelli.

Considerable work has still to be done in this field. The attention Gandhi gave to public relations, propaganda, the preparations he made before the beginning of each political campaign, his decision to suspend some campaigns, his tactical withdrawals, the negotiations he conducted and the pacts he concluded with his political opponents and other matters of this kind have to be scrutinously examined. The distinction he made between non-violence as a policy and as a creed and the use he made of this distinction are also to be studied. Gandhi also made a distinction between a temporary truce and a permanent peace. The Gandhi-Irwin pact was a temporary truce which he wanted to make use of for the preparation of the final struggle for freedom.

There should be thorough and critical studies on the strategy and tactics of non-violent resistance. *The Strategy of Civilian Defence—Non-Violent Resistance to Aggression*, edited by Adam Roberts published in London in 1967 is a significant book in this field. Gene Sharp, who is a keen student on Gandhi, has contributed a paper to this book on ‘The Technique of Non-Violent Action’.

#### THE PROPHET WITH A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

Gandhi as a prophet is by no means a virgin field for students, although many books written by his admirers on this subject are on a sentimental level. Some general books like *The Strategy of Civilian Defence* mentioned earlier and *The Pacifist Conscience*, edited by Peter Mayer, throws light on Gandhi’s role although they mention him and his writings only in some of the chapters. In this connection, Aldous Huxley’s short reference to Gandhi in his book *Ends and Means* is also noteworthy. By linking Gandhi to other classic writers and thinkers on the subject they help the understanding of Gandhi from global and historical angles. John V. Bondurant’s study on *Conquest of Violence*, Gene Sharp’s *Gandhi Wields the Weapon of Moral Power* and H. J. N. Horsburgh’s book *Non-Violence and Aggression* are specifically on Gandhi. They are also competent studies. Two significant books from Indian authors are: *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* by Gopinath Dhawan and *Studies in Gandhism* by Nirmal Kumar Bose. Both have approached their subject from a scholarly angle. Two other significant books are: *Gandhi’s Challenge to Christianity* by S. K. George and *War Without Violence* by Krishnalal

J. Sridharani. The first, written by an Indian Christian, shows his search for a ‘great conception of God and life in which the spiritual leadership of Gandhi can be justly and comprehensively set by those who profess and call themselves Christians’. Sridharani’s book notes the difference between Western pacifism as enunciated by Gandhi and explains the latter in scientific terms.

There are innumerable other books on this theme, but not written on a scientific level. Some of them are: (1) *My Gandhi* by John Haynes Holmes (1954), (2) *Gandhi—The Holy Man* by Rene Fulop-Miller (Translated from German to English in 1931), (3) *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* by E. Stanley Jones (1948), (4) *Mahatma Gandhi* by Rommain Rolland (Translated into English in 1924); (5) *To Live in Mankind—A Quest for Gandhi* by Reginald Reynolds (1951) and (6) *Lead, Kindly Light* by Vincent Shean (1949). Many contributors to the following book had developed on this theme: *Mahatma Gandhi, Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work*, edited by S. Radhakrishnan (Second Edition 1949). This list can easily be lengthened.

Two recent biographies of Gandhi written by Louis Fischer and B. R. Nanda are important because they give a connected account of various phases of Gandhi’s life. Nirmal Kumar Bose’s book, *My Days with Gandhi*, Pyarelal’s books on the early and later phases of Gandhi and Tendulkar’s biographical volumes are other valuable sources of information. The Collected Works of Gandhi, now being published by the Government of India, are other important additions in this field.

Although the number of books written in this field is very large there is good scope for further studies. It is important to note that Gandhi himself saw no contradiction between his role as an Indian political leader and his role as a teacher of mankind. (Of course, he did not use such expression as the teacher of mankind to describe himself.) On the other hand, he thought that one role supplemented the other. While replying to a friendly critic who maintained that Gandhi’s grouping unities conflicted with ‘the larger mission of uniting the world’, he said that he was more cosmopolitan than his critic. He added: ‘unless I group unities I shall never be able to unite the whole world’. In the same statement he said earlier: ‘What was the larger “symbois” that Buddha and Christ preached? Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the enemy’s camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple of Jerusalem and drew curses from heaven upon the hypocrites and pharisees. Both were for intensely direct

action.’ While declining to accept the invitation of many Americans to visit their country and spread his message there, Gandhi said: ‘If I go to America or Europe, I must go in my strength, not in my weakness, which I feel today—the weakness, I mean of my country. For, the whole scheme for the liberation of India is based upon the development of internal strength. It is a plan for self-purification.... And if the movement that I seek to represent has vitality in it and has divine blessing upon it, it will permeate whole world without my physical presence in its different parts.’

The impact Gandhi made on American Negroes and particularly their leader Martin Luther King, is the evidence of the wisdom of what Gandhi said on that occasion.

Now one also hears about Gandhi’s influence on some of those who led ‘non-violent non-cooperation movement’ in Czechoslovakia recently against the foreign armies who occupied that country.

Although Gandhi did not visit foreign countries to spread his message, he expressed his views on various international questions and on some important internal questions of other countries. They include the struggles of the Negroes and the Jews for the ending of discrimination against them, the problems of the Arab refugees, the struggles for freedom of Czechoslovakia, Poland and China. He also wrote open letters to Hitler, to ‘every Briton’ and to every Japanese during the war giving his views on the armed conflicts and their resolution. An analytical study of these is still called for, although the book *Gandhi on World Affairs* by Paul F. Power has referred to them in some detail.

#### ENRICHING AND DEVIATING FROM GANDHISM

Gandhi’s ideas and his methods of social and political action are enriched by many others who have followed him, The most striking case is that of Martin Luther King, the Black American leader. In his paper on ‘The technique of Non-Violent Action’ included in the book on *The Strategy of Civilian Defense* by Gene Sharp, he refers to important non-violent struggles which emerged independently of Gandhi, under exceedingly difficult circumstances in Nazi-occupied and Communist countries. On the whole, he refers to 84 cases on non-violent actions and makes comparisons and contrasts. This is attempted in a very short paper. A more detailed study will throw better light on many dark corners of this field and expose the weakness of the arguments of those who contend that non-violent campaigns can be undertaken only by people like the Indians with

their unique traditions and only against a government like that of the British with their inherent liberal and democratic orientation. Vinoba Bhave is to some extent a projection of Gandhi in today's India. There is no systematic study on Vinoba Bhave and no critical examination of the successes and failures of his campaigns. A fairly good book on Bhave is the one written by Lanza Sel Vasto, an Italian known in India as Shantidas, entitled *Gandhi to Vinoba*, originally written in French, and published in English in 1956.

The success of the studies with these new perspectives will depend to a large extent upon the objective and intellectual levels on which they are undertaken.

It also presupposes the willingness on the part of those who undertake studies to be critical of Gandhi when the occasion demands it. Gandhi should be treated as a human being with faults as well as greatness. He had made Himalayan blunders and some of those he had not admitted because he was not aware of them. His attacks on modern civilization, machines and medicines cannot be fully defended now, even if they can be explained as useful slogans in the period when they were made. His support to the Khilafat is another one of his acts which cannot be defended. There are many non-essential elements in Gandhi's thought and practice which have become fads now. To take an instance, many of Gandhi's followers had virtually given up prohibition as a state policy and gone ahead with industrialization of the country on a large scale. But as fads they remain in their utterances. In India there is no 'de-Gandhisization' in the realms of thought. The Indian Government's policies in regard to birth control and popularization of modern medicines are other striking examples where it has taken place in the realm of action. Here again the deviation from Gandhi is called for in the realm of thought as well as in practice. Gandhi's view on trusteeship and on structural reforms in regard to economic institutions should also be critically examined. Gandhi was fully justified in giving priority to employment before the introduction of machines in many fields of economic activity. A new look at the problem is called for under the changed circumstances of today.

There are some fields where the present leaders of India have taken the clock back from Gandhi in practice, but not in theory. A most striking case is the slogan of 'Self-reliance' as far as economic plans are concerned. Decentralization of political power is another. A third relates to the narrowing of the gulf between the rulers and

the ruled and the fourth the reorganization of educational system for that and other purposes.

These are some of the questions which come to the mind of a student who is working on 'Some Perspective on Gandhi'. The purpose of this paper was only to raise some of these questions and not to answer them. It is hoped that some of them will be answered during the course of the seminar.

T. K. MAHADEVAN

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## An Approach to the Study of Gandhi



IN A very large sense, the rather rapid decline in the academic acceptance of Gandhi, especially in India, is due to an error in interpretation. This error arises, in my view, primarily from the unscholarly dependence of Indian intellectuals on Gandhi anthologies—a species of popular books which retail the epigrammatic utterances of Gandhi without recourse to historical methods. Books and articles have been, and are being written on Gandhi without any attempt to consult the sources from which the anthologies have ostensibly been compiled. The situation is made infinitely worse when one anthology draws on another anthology, often shortening and distorting the original text still further, so that what we have is something like an oral tradition on Gandhi. Most of our present knowledge of Gandhi is based almost entirely on this ‘oral tradition’, screened from the unsuspecting reader’s eyes by means of the scholarly subterfuge of footnotes which make a pretence of having consulted the original texts.

Gandhi was not a man who embodied his ideas in a systematic treatise. Apart from his two well-known narrative-didactic works—the autobiography and *Satyāgraha in South Africa*—the only other considerable work which attempts to set forth his ideas in anything approaching a systematic manner is *Hind Swarāj*. All the rest of his truly voluminous writings are to be found scattered in his journalistic



articles, his letters and memoranda, and such of his speeches as have been recorded faithfully or of which the texts are available—now being painstakingly brought together in the roughly sixty-volume publication project, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. In the nature of things, therefore, no understanding of Gandhi would be complete unless it took all this material into account. On the face of it, this would seem an impossible academic task, more so as the *Collected Works* is far from complete yet. And in a sense it would even be true to say that the systematic study of Gandhi is only just beginning. Nevertheless, since a good deal of Gandhi's journalistic writings has always been accessible—to those who cared to take the pains—the rather widespread tendency among Indian scholars to take to the anthological short cut is, of course, wholly inexcusable. For apart from the unhistorical jumble that the anthologies mostly dish out, by isolating Gandhi's utterances from their contextual settings, they introduce an element of distortion which has done irreparable damage to the understanding of Gandhi.

Gandhi often confessed that he grew 'from truth to truth'; in other words, his earlier utterances need to be understood in the light of his later ones, not vice versa. Not having had the time or training for the systematic development of his thought, Gandhi's ideas are in the main of an existential kind: they grew as he grew up. The anthologies do little to help understand this development or to trace the progressive nuances of his thinking. Indeed, the popular notion that Gandhian thought is holistic, rather than heuristic, is one of the tragic gifts of the (I hope) passing anthological era in the study of Gandhi.

A second major fallacy in the study of Gandhi is the belief shared by pundit and peasant alike, that he had propounded a separate and distinct body of doctrine in the social, political and economic fields. It is thus that we reduce him to the level of a social reformer. It is thus that we fragment his teachings and miss the wood for the trees. We may talk of a social, political or economic philosophy of Gandhi and produce a surfeit of quotations, especially from the Gandhi anthologies to prove our case. But I dare say it would be more apposite to speak of the philosophy of Gandhi—in the more generalized sense—and to show how his social, political and economic ideas are derived from, and are accidental to, the core of his teaching.

The core of the Gandhian teaching consists of one concept—and no other. It is truth. The whole structure of Gandhian thinking can

be picturized in terms of an ancient Indian symbol—the *ūrdhvamūlam avāksākhaṁ vr̥ṣam* first mentioned in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* and recurring in at least three *Upaniṣads*, the *Kaṭha*, *Śvetāśvatara* and *Maitrī*. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* elaborates it as the eternal *aśvattha*, an idea which the *Bhagavadgītā* later took over and popularized. The root at the top is truth and the branches that proliferate below are the social, political and economic ideas that Gandhi put out in such profusion during his nearly fifty years of public life. Gandhi’s mind roamed far and wide, but the meanest of his ideas can be traced back to the fount of truth. The development of Gandhian ideas is achieved deductively. He begins with truth and everything else follows as a matter of course.

Chief among the ideas that Gandhi derives deductively from truth is non-violence—a much abused word. For impenetrable reasons, ever since the passing of Gandhi and often during his lifetime as well, the concept of non-violence has come to play a much more important part in the interpretation of his teaching than the concept of truth. This in my view is nothing short of tragic and it is this misemphasis which has led to the present erosion of Gandhi in the world marketplace of ideas. To add insult to injury, having distorted the seminal quality of Gandhi’s emphasis on truth, we then go on to question the rationality of his thinking and to dismiss him as irrelevant and Utopian. We vivisect his ideas, dividing them into conventional categories, and pronounce their irrelevance to our time and, indeed, to the human condition in general.

Bereft of truth, untethered to truth, the Gandhian teaching is indeed a jumble of unrelated ideas, falling apart like a necklace of pearls of which the thread has snapped. The *sūtra* of truth is the thing. It is truth that holds the Gandhian teaching together and gives meaning and significance to the meanest of his ideas. And yet, for a quarter of a century and more, the interpreters of Gandhi—God save us from their kind—have carefully spirited away truth from his teaching and put in its place a thing called ‘non-violence’. When Gandhi spoke of non-violence, he spoke of it in tandem with truth and not as a separate entity. In fact, Gandhi spoke of truth-and-non-violence, a two-legged concept. Our tragedy lies in trying to stand it on one leg and inviting the kind of disaster that betook Humpty Dumpty.

At the cultist level, the recession of Gandhi owes much to our inability to identify and isolate the ephemerae in his teaching, to sift the grain from the chaff. Probably the ‘inability’ was deliberate and

arose from the misguided notion that the masses would understand only a Gandhi wrapped in tinfoil. But the result has been truly disastrous, and as the inexorable march of time has exposed the ephemerality of much of the marginal Gandhi, along with it has gone a progressive depreciation of the essential Gandhi as well. In our attempt to popularize Gandhi and to make him comprehensible to the masses, all that we have done is to undermine the inner coherence and soundness of his central teaching of truth.

Partly the inability to distinguish between the timeless and the time-bound aspects of the Gandhian teaching arises from a common misconception about what constitutes the *samagra-darśana* of Gandhi. Taking Gandhi whole has its true and false aspects. We do not have to accept every fad and foible of the man in order to buttress up our adherence to his total philosophy. Indeed, the totality of the Gandhian philosophy rests not on the details but on a certain sureness and infallibility of approach. This infallibility comes from the primacy of truth in the Gandhian scheme of things.

The peripheral details may change as often as they please, provided that the core remains untouched—the core of truth.

But what is truth? Or rather, what is the Gandhian idea of truth? At first sight, this may sound like a question of despair. But it is the submission of this brief essay that the Gandhian truth is essentially the existential truth of everyday life. It is the truth of a given situation, fully within the confines of space and time. It is the truth which, in its given context, is indubitable and self-evident and, therefore, absolute. The relativity of such truth, about which we make so much play, comes from a contextual change. Within a given context, the existential truth of Gandhi is always absolute, admitting of no kind of compromise or adjustment. The perception, communication and asseveration of such truth constitute the peculiar dynamics of Gandhian social action—what has been neatly, though not adequately, summed up in the word *satyāgraha*. The fact that most of us after Gandhi look upon *satyāgraha* as a technique, a way of getting things done, rather than as what it really is, namely, the simple and unadorned practice of truth, shows how far we are from an understanding of his teaching. By the same token do we talk of the power of non-violence, as though there is such a power bereft of truth. The only power that Gandhi wielded, or cared to wield, and which was the source of all his charisma, was the power of truth. Shorn of truth, non-violence is a thing of shreds and patches.

In the Gandhian teaching, truth is not only self-evident in a

given situation, but it is also self-sufficient; whereas non-violence is both derivative and accidental. Quoting Gandhi is always a tricky business, since most often the quotations are picked up at random from anthologies; but having made so many assertions in the name of Gandhi, I feel I am bound to put before the reader a sampling of his texts<sup>1</sup> all my own. In doing so, I shall try and avoid the beaten track of the anthologies.

‘A satyāgrahi will adhere to truth to the last. We may even lose the good opinion of others. We may let everything go. But we must not allow truth to forsake us. This and this alone is fearlessness.’ (From a miscellaneous writing, May 16, 1908.)

‘How can anyone command the power of truth unless he dedicates himself to truth?’ (From the preface to *Hind Swarāj*, November 22, 1909.)

‘When the rats began to die in Rajkot, I advised all to leave the house or the town. Those were my ideas then. I now feel that it was a mistake on my part. Many of my ideas have undergone a similar change. Every time the objective was the same—the search for truth.’ (From a letter to Naraindas Gandhi, February 8, 1911.)

‘Satyāgraha is not a difficult term to understand. It only means adherence to truth. Whatever else the ethical life may mean, it cannot be ethical if it is not based on truth.’ (From an article, October 28, 1911)

‘He is a satyāgrahi who has resolved to practise nothing but truth, and such a one will know the right way every time.’ (Fragment of a letter, June 9, 1914.)

‘Instead of telling you what I expect of each one of you individually, let me tell you what I expect from you all. It is that you should observe to perfection our first and last vow, the vow of truth.’ (Reply to birthday greetings in the Āśrama, October 1, 1918.)

‘There can be no room for untruth in my writings, because it is my unshakable belief that there is no religion other than truth and because I am capable of rejecting aught obtained at the cost of truth.’ (Letter to F. G. Pratt, April 16, 1919.)

‘Truth is the same thing as mokṣa. Anyone who does not display āgraha for mokṣa is no man; he is only a brute.’ (Letter to Mahadev Desai, 15 September 1919.)

‘All have wished me long life. My desire is to close this life searching for truth, acting truth and thinking truth—and that alone.’ (Letter of thanks on receiving birthday greetings, September 28, 1919.)

‘The highest honesty must be introduced in the political life of the country if we are to make our mark as a nation. This presupposes at the present moment a very firm and definite acceptance of the creed of truth at any cost.’ (Letter to V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, March 18, 1920.)

‘I believe that it is possible to introduce uncompromising truth and honesty in the political life of the country. Whilst I would not expect the League to follow me in my civil disobedience methods, I would strain every nerve to make truth and non-violence accepted in all our national activities.’ (From a communication to members of the All-India Home Rule League, April 28, 1920.)

‘I have no party save that of truth. I want to live for nothing but truth. Whether you remain in the non-cooperation ranks, or whether you do not, I cannot desert you, even as I cannot desert Malaviyaji, no matter where I find him for the time being. For I consider you to be a man of truth. You have left in me the impression that you are too cultured to do anything wrong, knowing it to be such.’ (From a letter to M. R. Jayakar, January 15, 1922.)

‘As I proceed in my quest for truth, it grows upon me that truth comprehends everything. I often feel that *ahimsā* is in truth, not vice versa. Out of truth emerges love and tenderness.’ (From a letter to Jamnalal Bajaj, March 16, 1922.)

‘My correspondent accuses me of the crime of using the ambiguous middle in that I have confused truth and non-violence with the Hindu creed. The crime is deliberate. It is the good fortune or the misfortune of Hinduism that it has no official creed. In order, therefore, to protect myself against any misunderstanding, I have said that truth and non-violence is my creed. If I were asked to define the Hindu creed, I should simply say: search after truth through non-violent means. A man may not believe even in God and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless after truth.’ (From an article, April 24, 1924.)

‘The *ṛsis* of old who lived in the forests cut and fetched wood, tended cattle, and even fought. But their pursuit in life was pre-eminently the search after truth.’ (From an article, July 17, 1920.)

‘It is one’s duty to say only that which, after a painstaking inquiry, one has come to regard as the truth, even if the world considers it to be an error. In no other way can one become fearless. I cannot consider anything dearer to me than mokṣa. Yet even that mokṣa I would renounce if it were to conflict with truth and non-violence.’ (From a letter to G. D. Birla, August 21, 1924.)

‘The fundamental principles of Hinduism are absolute belief in truth and non-violence. Therefore use truth as your anvil, non-violence as your hammer; and anything that does not stand with *ahimsā* reject as non-Hindu.’ (From a speech in Madras, March 22, 1925.)

At this point I should like to call a halt to the Gandhi texts and to consider a question that must have arisen in the mind of the reader: How far is this Gandhian absorption in truth a reflection of the Indian Hindu tradition? I am posing this question particularly to explode the popular myth that Gandhi belongs in the tradition of Mahāvira, Buddha and Jesus—that is to say, in the non-Hindu, Jaina-Buddhist tradition of *ahimsā*, *karuṇā* and love. Like Saṃkara being called a Buddhist quisling (*pracchanna-bauddha*) by the Hindu jingoists of his time, Gandhi was often pilloried for being an ‘enemy of Hinduism’; and the conspiracy that led to his assassination derived much of its fire-power from this arch misconception. Indeed, most of those who claim to follow Gandhi and to interpret his teaching, look for the sources of his inspiration in Tolstoyan Christianity and make much play of his comparative early unfamiliarity with the Hindu inheritance. Within limits, all this is true; but while the Western Christian tradition provided Gandhi with the initial stimulus, it cannot be denied that throughout the rest of his life he drew his daily sustenance from Hindu roots. I would, therefore, venture to say that the forerunners of Gandhi are the great epic heroes of Hindu India—Hariścandra, Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira.

One of Gandhi’s most formative periods, from the point of view of his intellectual development, was the two-year sentence of imprisonment that he served in Yeravada jail in 1922-24. In an interview soon after this, in February 1924, he said: ‘I have plunged into politics simply in search of truth.... I want to show how to epitomize the *Mahābhārata*’.

For the best part of his prison term, this man of fifty-three almost like a schoolboy set himself a reading task that would be the envy of men half his age. Having been caught most of his years in the vortex of action, which left him little time or inclination for reading and the pursuit of knowledge, it was as though he was trying desperately to make up for the loss. He read long and widely—and sometimes without choice or discrimination. The list of what he read, as we find it recorded in his Jail Diary, is truly formidable. Some of the books he merely skipped through and put aside; others he read because they were to be had in the jail library.

But there was one book on the study of which he spent many

months. This was the *Mahābhārata*. His Jail Diary reveals that he read this great Samskrta epic in a Gujarati translation, spending in all as many as 163 days on the reading. It is significant that nearly a third of this time he devoted to a study of the *Śānti-parva*, the celebrated post-war book of the epic in which the dying Bhīṣma discourses at great length on the laws and duties of life.

Like that other great, though smaller, Indian epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki, the *Mahābhārata* of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa was written essentially for the vindication of truth or *dharma*. Gandhi confesses that he began its study hesitantly and with some scepticism. But the dominant refrain of the epic, man's quest for truth, soon gripped him. Tireless as he himself was in the search for truth, Gandhi lost little time in realizing the incisive quality of Vyasa's work and the daring with which it probed the secrets of *dharma*. Here within the confines of a single work, examined, elaborated and vindicated with great intellectual rigour, were all the nuances of the truth-seeker's dilemmas. No wonder Gandhi spoke of his desire to 'epitomize the *Mahābhārata*'.

During his reading of the epic, Gandhi once jotted down in his Diary two parallel columns of indicators which seemed to him to bring out the contrast between truth and untruth. He might have done this in an idle hour, but we can be sure that these strange indicators, some of them naive and childish, were a pointer to the unremitting intensity of his groping towards truth.

Part of the columns runs as follows:

<i>Truth is</i>	<i>Untruth is</i>
light	darkness
life	death
goodness	evil
existence	non-existence
love	hatred

At one point he wrote down, 'Truth is a right angle', but was not sure what untruth was!

Was Gandhi, I wonder, trying to expand the thirteen-fold expression of truth given in the *Mahābhārata*?

*satyaṁ ca samatā caiva damaścaiva na saṁsayah  
amātsaryam kṣamā caiva hrīṣ titikṣānasūyaṭā  
tyāgo dhyānam athāryatvam dhṛtiśca satatam sthirā  
ahiṁsā caiva rājendra satyākāras trayodaśā<sup>2</sup>*

Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira: ‘O monarch, truth expresses itself in thirteen indubitable forms—as impartiality, restraint, magnanimity, forgiveness, modesty, patience, tolerance, detachment, introspection, dignity, resoluteness, constancy and harmlessness’.

A remarkable combination of virtues—and yet only the bare minimum. Notice the quality that stands at the apex: harmlessness, the non-violence of Gandhi. Truth is non-violence. A truthful position never needs to be defended or vindicated by violent means. Indeed, the need for violence which so often taints our lives would seem to indicate that somewhere in us there is an unnoticed flaw, that the truth in our lives is not whole and complete. In other words, when we concede the need for residual violence, all that we are saying is that absolute, unflawed truth is not of this world, not that violence is an irreducible entity. Conversely, when we deny the universality of non-violence, we can hardly be accused of denigrating it. The *Mahābhārata* equation that truth is non-violence or that non-violence is an expression of truth—*ahimsā satyākāraḥ*—is absolute and unchangeable. Where truth is complete there non-violence is complete; where truth is partial there violence and non-violence go hand in hand.

What might Gandhi have learnt from the *Mahābhārata* that he did not know already from his desultory earlier studies or from the often crucial nature of his own experiences or from his habit of introspection? This is not an easy question to answer. The greatness of the *Mahābhārata* lies in its absence of dogmatism, and it is very likely that its chief influence on Gandhi’s mind was to smooth out the hard edges in his thinking.

Bhīṣma punctuates his long discourse to Yudhiṣṭhira with a timely reminder:

*naitac chuddhāgamād eva tava dharmānusāsānam  
prajñā-samavatāro ’yam kavibhiḥ sambhṛtam madhu<sup>3</sup>*

‘All this that I have taught you is not to be understood as coming solely from the scriptures. Rather is it the quintessence of the wisdom and experience of a long line of seers and sages.’

Why do we stand behind Gandhi, cowering in his shadow, when he wanted us to stand on his shoulders and look ahead? Why have we reduced ourselves to mindless automatons mumbling his words or quarrelling over the dry sands of exegesis? Like that wisest of men, Bhīṣma, Gandhi was a gushing mountain stream of experiment and innovation. He cared little for the old Indian fallacy of *śruti-pramāṇa*



(scriptural authority) which has been such a brake on our intellectual development. No text however ancient or sacred it was, but he would bend it to the dictates of his reason and moral sense.

For after all truth is not a static quantity. The search for truth is an ongoing process. It did not end with the Veda or the Upaniṣad or the *Bhagavadgītā*, nor indeed with Gautama or Jesus or Gandhi. It is like a Joycean sentence, going endlessly on, unpunctuated. We may draw from the past, as Gandhi did, but we dare not stop and look back. If we tarry too long, if we hesitate, we shall be left behind, a mere weed on the river bank, to fester and be forgotten.

Truth! How easy on the tongue! And how glibly some of us use it! And yet, what is truth? Said Bhīṣma to Yudhiṣṭhira: *satyānr̥te viniścitya tato bhavati dharma-vit.*<sup>4</sup> Unless you can distinguish truth from untruth, you cannot surely understand *dharmā*. But then what is *dharmā*? A golden word, containing within its simple confines all the wisdom and experience of centuries of Indian civilization. A simple concept and at the same time one that is not easy to understand or to explain—*dharmāḥ suduravacaḥ duṣkaraḥ*—a word with a load of meaning too involved and encrusted to be taken apart on the run.

But unless we understand *dharmā* we shall know nothing of Gandhi! True, it is not a word he often used; perhaps he hardly ever used it in the fundamental manner in which it is used in Indian ethics. May be he deliberately eschewed its use for fear that the secondary and tertiary meanings of *dharmā*, some of them patently unsavoury, would tend to cloud his simple message.

And yet, whether Gandhi did or did not speak of *dharmā*, there is no running away from the fact that the whole of his teaching is shot through with the implications of that golden word. Instead of using a word that may be misunderstood, he expanded it into the famous Gandhian tandem—truth and non-violence. For as he undoubtedly argued to himself, even *dharmā* might be disputed, but who would dispute truth?

In risking this innovation, Gandhi was nevertheless not entirely on virgin ground. For though Indian tradition begins by lamenting the indefinability of *dharmā*, it soon comes up with a very acceptable and inclusive definition of that word:

*prabhāvārthaya bhūtānam dharmā-pravacanām kṛtam*<sup>5</sup>

‘It is to serve the ends of human advancement that the concept of *dharmā* has been enunciated.’

In other words, *dharmā* is not the *status quo*. Nor is it a set of

ground rules to help men pursue an untroubled vegetable existence free from strife and striving. *Dharma* is rather a free, fluid and flexible *modus operandi* by which the human race can grow without outgrowing itself. In a specific sense, *dharma* is the means; and as with all means, it is subservient to the larger ends of human destiny. But in a more inclusive sense, *dharma* is the end as well. For without it the human race may well grind to a halt or destroy itself. *Dharma* is thus the great key to human survival.

But survival has not the same meaning for termites and men. The human race cannot survive unless it has the freedom to grow. Growth (*prabhāva*) is important for us. If we cease to grow, we shall wilt and wither away. We are just not built for survival at any cost!

In the context of man's present predicament, I would define *dharma* as that which helps us to progress without perishing—to grow and yet survive. This is the crux of our problem—as well as Gandhi's—how not to set up barbed-wire fences on man's expanding frontiers of knowledge, power and consciousness and yet to hold him back from hurtling over the brink. It is a delicate balancing trick. In a manner of speaking, it is even somewhat like the perilous American game of 'Chicken!'—except that the *dharma*-accelerator has an in-built braking device which cuts off power at the critical split second.

Gandhi called this braking device 'non-violence'. So does Vyāsa in the *Mahābhārata*:

*yat syād ahimsā-samyuktam sa dharma iti niścayah<sup>6</sup>*

'Whatever precludes injury to others, that indeed is *dharma*.'

Sounds dull and prosaic. Sticks and stones don't injure one another. Quick to notice the flaw, Vyāsa elaborates the definition by adding:

*yat syād dhāraṇa-samyuktam sa dharma iti niścayah<sup>7</sup>*

'Whatever helps to uphold, nourish and preserve the race, that indeed is *dharma*.'

He adds an etymological footnote to this by saying: *dhāraṇād dharma ityāhuḥ* (*dharma* is so called because it upholds). The survival factor *dhāraṇā* also means restraint—the self-conscious braking device in man.

But restraint is not abnegation. It does not mean you don't put your foot on the accelerator: you do. Life would hardly be

worth living if we denied ourselves everything for fear of death and extinction. This is precisely the point Vyāsa selects to drive home at the conclusion of his great epic:

*ūrdhva-bāhur viraumyeṣa na ca kaścic chr̥ṇoti me  
dharmād arthaśca kāmaśca sa kimarthaṁ na sevyate*<sup>8</sup>

One of the great moments in all literature. ‘With uplifted hands I call out: alas, no one listens to me. By practising *dharma* one can gain all the wealth and happiness in the world. And yet who cares for *dharma*?’ Indeed we all want the short cut, or what we think is the short cut. But the shortest cut of all is the straight path of *dharma*. It only seems long and tedious—but that is because it studiously avoids the brink. The apparent slowness of *dharma* is due to that in-built breaking device which cuts off acceleration at the point of explosion. Without it, all our quick victories would be Dunkirks.

How then shall we characterize *dharma*? By its expansive dynamism— what Gandhi called truth—or by its self-inhibiting survival device—what Gandhi called non-violence? It is a difficult choice. We want the achievements of science, but we also want time, and an extra innings, in which to savour those achievements. No one has recounted this dilemma more vividly than Gandhi: ‘When I look for *ahimsā*, truth says, Find it through me. When I look for truth, *ahimsā* says, Find it through me.’<sup>9</sup>

Here I think is the core of the Gandhi image—of a man endlessly, tirelessly in search of truth. Nandlal Bose, in that famous linocut, immortalized the walking Gandhi, the eternal pilgrim with the staff in hand and the forward gait, moving endlessly on, never looking back. But Gandhi was more than a pilgrim: he was an indefatigable searcher for truth. Though movement was necessary for him, it wasn’t enough merely to move onwards in one set direction. For Gandhi, the *mumukṣu*, unlike Gandhi they *yātrika*, was never sure which way his road lay. If he knew, his search for truth would not be a search for truth at all. I am reminded of the poet’s predicament:

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.<sup>10</sup>

With some pardonable exaggeration, I would say that the Indian mind’s search for truth, which we find so intensely portrayed in Gandhi, began several millennia ago in the *Rg Veda*:

*navi jānāmi yadivedamasmi niṅ yaḥ saṁnaddho manasā carāmi*<sup>11</sup>

‘What thing I truly am, I know not clearly, Mysterious, fettered in my mind, I wander.’

It is a search which has a beginning but no end. Gandhi continued the search; others have to take over from where he left it. The *R̥g Vedic* poets called it *ṛta* and sometimes *satya*:

*ṛtam ca satyam cābhiddhāt tapaso ‘dhyajāyata*<sup>12</sup>

‘Both *ṛta* and *satya* originated from intense *tapas*.’

I have thought it wiser to leave these loaded terms as they are, untranslated, remembering that even an ancient text like the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* could no more than work out an imaginative, but speculative, etymology for *satya* (*sat + tyat*).

At an earlier point in the same *Maṇḍala*, the poets venture the idea that ‘it is truth which bears this earth aloft’—*satyenottabhītā bhūmih*<sup>12</sup>—which is indeed saying a great deal. In the Seventh *Maṇḍala*, they make a clear distinction between truth and falsehood, bringing the idea down from its cosmological heights to the human and ethical level:

*suviññānaṁ cikitūṣe janāya saccāsacca vacosī pasydhāte  
tayoṛ yat satyam yatarad ṛjīyas tad it somo* ‘*vati hantyaśat*<sup>14</sup>

‘Truth and falsehood run a race against each other. Of them, Soma protects what is true and straightforward, and strikes down what is false.’

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the idea receives a further extension to cover the psychological aspects of the human condition:

*satyam brahmetypāsita; atha khalu kratumayo ‘yam puruṣaḥ*<sup>15</sup>

‘Meditate on truth as brahman. After all what is man but will?’

However, it is in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of *Vālmīki* that the conception of truth receives its maximum definition. The poet achieves his object by means of several deft brush-strokes, all of them exceedingly beautiful, but I shall content myself with a few samples :

*trīṅ yeva vyasanānyatra kāmajāni bhavantyuta  
mithyā-vākyam paramakam....*<sup>16</sup>  
*mithyā-vākyam na te bhūtam na bhavisyati rāghava*<sup>17</sup>

Says Sitā to Rāma: ‘There are but three evils that arise from human passion. Of these, uttering a falsehood is the first. This primal evil has never overtaken you, Rāghava, nor will it ever.’

This opinion of a wife—not an easy certificate at the best of times—finds its justification in that celebrated passage where Rāma confides to his brother Bharata:

*laksmiś candrād apeyād vā himavān vā himam tyajet  
atīyāt sāgaro velām na pratijñām abam pituh<sup>18</sup>*

‘It is conceivable that beauty may forsake the moon, or snow may vanish from the Himālaya, or that the ocean may overleap the land. But it is inconceivable that I should ever break the word I gave to my father.’

Later on, Rāma explains to Jābāli the political meaning of truthful behaviour :

*satyam evānṛśamsam ca rājavṛttam sanātanam  
tasmāt satyātmakam rājyam satye lokah pratiṣṭhitah<sup>19</sup>*

‘The principle of sovereignty, which includes the quality of pity, has through eternity been truth. Therefore it is that sovereignty is truth itself. And thus too is the world founded on truth’.

Towards the close of the epic, Vālmīki shows how the ingrained sycophantism in human nature makes it difficult for most men to practise truthful behaviour. In a parting broadside to his brother Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa says:

*sulabhāḥ puruṣā rājan satatam priyavādinaḥ  
apriyasya ca pathyasya vaktā śrotā ca durlabhah<sup>20</sup>*

‘Men who always speak agreeably are easy to find, your majesty. Rare indeed is the man who will speak the unpleasant truth; and rare too the man who will give ear to it’.

Almost as though taking a cue from Vālmīki, Vyāsa in his *Mahābhārata* carries the analysis of truth to dizzy heights. For example, at one point Bhīṣma says to his interlocutor, Yudhiṣṭhira:

*nāsti satyāt paro dharmo nānṛtāt pātakam param  
sthitir hi satyam dharmasya tasmāt satyam na lopayet<sup>21</sup>*

‘There is no greater good than truth, and no greater evil than falsehood. Indeed truth is the very foundation of *dharmā*. Therefore, it is that one is enjoined not to transgress truth.’

But then Bhīṣma complicates the issue by introducing certain bewildering niceties which have the superficial effect of justifying chicanery:

*satyasya vacanam sādhu na satyād vidyate param  
yad bhūloke sudurjñātam tat te vakṣyāmi bhārata*

*bhavesatyaṁ na vaktavyaṁ vaktavyaṁ anṛtaṁ bhavesatyaṁ  
yatrānṛtaṁ bhavesatyaṁ satyaṁ vāpyanṛtaṁ bhavesatyaṁ  
tādṛśe muhyate bālo yatra satyam anīṣṭhitam  
satyanṛte viniścītya tato bhavati dharma-vit<sup>22</sup>*

‘It is good to speak the truth. There is nothing greater than being truthful. However, I shall tell you something, O Bhārata, which is not popularly understood. Where a lie masquerades as truth, there it is better not to speak the truth. On the other hand, where truth sounds false it is even better to speak a lie. Truthfulness dissociated from *dharma* leads to delusion. He alone understands *dharma* who can discriminate between genuine truth and genuine falsehood.’

After this piece of sophistication, Vyāsa introduces through Nārada a very necessary clarification :

*satyasya vacanaṁ śreyah satya-jñānaṁ tu duṣkaram  
yad bhūta-bitam atyantam etat satyaṁ bravīmyaham<sup>23</sup>*

‘It is indeed noble to speak the truth, but one is never sure what the truth is. I tell you, that alone is truth which is wholly beneficial to others.’

This is where Gandhi’s non-violence comes in. The whole conception is elaborated with great profundity in the famous encounter between Tulādhāra the merchant (anticipating Gandhi’s Raychandbhai) and Jājali:

*adroheṇaiva bhūtānāṁ alpa-drohena vā punah  
yā vṛtīḥ sa paro dharmas tena jīvāmi jājale<sup>24</sup>*

‘The highest *dharma* is to live in such a way that no harm—or very little harm—is done to others. I live that kind of life, Jājali.’

Tulādhāra then explains what constitutes the hallmark of this way of life:

*yadā cāyam na vibhethi yadā cāsmān na vibhyati<sup>25</sup>*

‘It is the kind of life in which one neither fears others nor is feared by them in turn.’

Almost in the next breath, he clinches the argument with a *tour de force*:

*na bhūto na bhaviṣyāś ca na ca dharmo ‘sti kaścana yo  
‘bhayaḥ sarva-bhūtānāṁ sa prapnotyabhayaṁ padam<sup>26</sup>*

‘Why talk of the past and the future, or even of *dharma* and *adharma*? The simple truth is that a person who lives a life bereft of harm to others achieves fearlessness himself.’

Tulādhāra then rounds off this remarkable dialogue with a final Gandhian plea :

*dānaṃ bhūtābhyaśyāhuḥ sarva-dānebhya uttamam  
bravīmi te satyam idaṃ śraddhasva ca jajāle*<sup>27</sup>

‘Take this truth from me, O Jājali. There is no greater gift than the assurance of harmlessness to others.’

Elsewhere in the epic, Bhīṣma makes it even clearer in the course of his long discourse to Yudhiṣṭhira:

*jīvitum yaḥ svayam cecchet katharī so ‘nyam praghātayet  
yad yad ātmana iccheta tat parasayāpi cintayet*<sup>28</sup>

‘How can anyone who wishes to live himself, want to destroy others? Whatever we want ourselves, we should cherish for others as well.’

Vyāsa expresses the same truth in a more downright and dogmatic fashion in the *Anuśāsana-parvā*:

*na tat parasya samiddhyāt pratikūlam yad ātmanaḥ  
eṣa samikṣepato dharmah....*<sup>29</sup>

‘Dharma in a nutshell: not to inflict on others what is disagreeable to oneself.’

Popularly known as a hallmark of the Christian ethic—‘Behave towards others as you would have them behave towards you’—this idea is, in fact, deeply etched into Indian Hindu thought and is as old as the *Smṛtis*. For example, the *Dakṣa Smṛti* says:

*yathaiivātmā paras tadvad draṣṭavyaḥ sukham icchatā  
sukha-duḥkhāni tulyāni yathātmani tathā pare*<sup>30</sup>

‘If you wish to be happy, look upon others as you would look upon yourself. Joy and sorrow affect all in the same way.’

The *Devala Smṛti* is even more explicit :

*śrūyatām dharma-sarvasvaṃ srutvā caivāvadhāryatām  
ātmanaḥ pratikūlāni pareṣām na samācaret*<sup>31</sup>

‘The quintessence of *dharma*: don’t do to others what you yourself find disagreeable.’

Reduced to an aphorism—*ātmaivat sarva-bhūtāni*—first suggested in the *Āpastamba Smṛti*, the idea gained an enlarged definition in one of the later *Upaniṣads*, the *Annapūrṇa*:

*ātmaivat sarva-bhūtāni para-dravyāṇi loṣṭhavat  
svabhāvād eva na bhayād yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati*<sup>32</sup>

‘He indeed is truly perceptive who, by nature rather than by compulsion, looks upon others as upon himself and covets not their wealth.’

I have gone at this length into the record of ancient Indian tradition to show beyond any manner of doubt that the Gandhian teaching belongs strictly within this mainstream and any superficial resemblance it may have to Western Christian tradition can only be accidental. To say that the Hindu forebears of Gandhi were concerned more with the spiritual upliftment of man rather than with his political and social advancement is only partly true. The *Mahābhārata*, at any rate, insists again and again that the reserves of power in truth or *dharma* are immense and that this power is serviceable in the material realm as well. In fact, this is the larger import of the well-known *Upaniṣadic* dictum: *satyam eva jayate nānṛtam*—truth alone wins in the end, not falsehood. The entire Indian epic tradition is devoted to this one theme and no other. A life permeated, interpenetrated with truth gains this world as well as the ‘other’.

*śīlena hi trayo lokāḥ śākyā jetuṃ na saṃśayaḥ  
na hi kiṃcid asādhyam vai loke śīlavatām bhavet*<sup>43</sup>

This is, of all people, Dhṛtarāṣṭra advising Duryodhana: ‘One can conquer the whole world by the power of virtue. Nothing is impossible for a virtuous person’. Had Duryodhana heeded this advice, the *Mahābhārata* story might well have been different! When Gandhi spoke of wanting to spiritualize politics he was merely rehearsing an ancient Indian dream which found its apotheosis in the concept of *Rāmarājya*—outlined by Vālmiki and elaborated, each in his own way, by Tulsidas and Gandhi.

In an India which has begun to profess secularism of a home-brewed variety, my insistence on the inescapable Hindu roots of Gandhian thought may sound somewhat discordant. But I am convinced that it is a necessary corrective that we should begin to relate his teaching to these roots and thus restore some of the lost balance and perspective. For Gandhi cannot be understood in terms of Marx or Hobbes as well as he can be understood in terms of the *Mahābhārata* or Hariscandra. If I may put this in the form of an equation:

Gandhi – God = 0

Unless we take into account Gandhi’s open and avowed absorption in God—which to him was the same thing as truth—all



our attempts to understand and interpret him will lead to nothing. One of our fashionable preoccupations nowadays is to make Gandhi 'relevant' to the present-day world and we go to endless pains to show the validity of each one of the dozen or so political, economic and social ideas that he adumbrated in his *Hind Swarāj*—a tract that he wrote almost at the beginning of the previous century and which he continued to champion to the end of his days. But while Gandhi produced something like an integrated and coherent, even holistic, worldview, what we in our misplaced enthusiasm do with his teaching is another matter. We cut him up and fragment him, in the process forgetting the thread that binds his ideas together, and far from succeeding in 'relevanting' him, we merely show up Gandhi in the worst possible light.

A rational and objective study of Gandhi—what I have argued has yet to begin—must take at least two factors into account. First, like all great men Gandhi had his fair share of what I would call 'great failings'. One of the most disastrous of these was his procrustean tendency to force reality into a preconceived mould and to reach conclusions that were *prima facie* questionable. Given the premisses with which he started, these conclusions were doubtless unimpeachable, but then no human premisses are ever absolute. This leads us to the second factor—the irrevocable finiteness of all human concepts, and instruments. There can be no finality even about Gandhi.

To summarize: the palpable failure in the study of Gandhi so far may be ascribed to the following reasons, among others. First, the dependence of scholars on Gandhi anthologies and the general inaccessibility of Gandhi's original writings in their entirety. Secondly, the nature of the Gandhian corpus, which though voluminous in extent, consists almost entirely of journalistic writings spread over a long period of years, from which to abstract anything like a doctrinal core is a task in itself. Thirdly, the fallacious scholarly assumption which continues to see in Gandhi a political, social and economic thinker and to derive from his teaching political, social and economic 'systems'. Fourthly, the misconception that the core of the Gandhian teaching relates to non-violence and not to truth and a consequent misemphasis and distortion of what it was that Gandhi was trying to tell us, both by precept and example. Fifthly, the ignorant misplacing of Gandhi amidst a Western Christian tradition rather than where he truly and fundamentally belongs—within the mainstream of India's ethical and philosophical tradition.

Although the Gandhian teaching is essentially universal in character, we in India at any rate cannot—and dare not—forget that

Gandhi lived and died in the service of our motherland. Our primary duty, whether as followers of Gandhi or as students of his thought, is thus to serve India—not the India of a romantic past or the India of Gandhi’s time but the India of today. In doing so, we shall fail in our duty if we twisted the palpable and objective requirements of our country to suit some received dogma—whether Gandhian (or Marxist or American) or any other. We are living in a fast moving world in which ideas are being constantly eroded, replenished and replaced. To live up to the truth of this very fluid human situation, to prevent an ossification of our thought, and to help in the correct perception, communication and upholding of the truth in us—this is the core of the Gandhian teaching which is valid for all time and is never in need of the specious scholarly desire for ‘relevanting’.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. These quotations are from the relevant volumes of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*.
2. *Mahābhārata* (critical edition), 12.156.8, 9.
3. *Ibid.*, 12.140.3.
4. *Ibid.*, 12.110.6b.
5. *Ibid.*, 12.110.10a.
6. *Ibid.*, 12.110.10b.
7. *Ibid.*, 12.110.11b.
8. *Ibid.*, 18.5.49.
9. *Young India*, 4 June 1925, p. 191.
10. From Robert Frost’s ‘The Road not Taken’.
11. *R̥g Veda*, 1.164.37a.
12. *Ibid.*, 10.190.1a.
13. *Ibid.*, 10.85.1a.
14. *Ibid.*, 7.104.12.
15. *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 10.6.3.1.
16. *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Arāṇya-kāṇḍa*.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa*.
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, *Yuddha-kāṇḍa*.
21. *Māhabhārata*, 12.156.24.
22. *Ibid.*, 12.110.4-6.
23. *Ibid.*, 12.276.19
24. *Ibid.*, 12.254.6.
25. *Ibid.*, 12.254.16.
26. *Ibid.*, 12.254.18.
27. *Ibid.*, 12.254.33.
28. *Ibid.*, 12.251.21.

29. *Op. cit.*, 113.8.
30. *Op. cit.*, 3.22.
31. Quoted in P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. I.
32. *Op. cit.*, 1.38.
33. *Mahābhārata*, 12.124.15.



SECTION B

Gandhi on  
Social Cohesion and Social Change



S. MAQBUL AHMAD

## Gandhi and Islam



IN ORDER to understand fully and appreciate the religious philosophy and practice of Gandhi, and to get a correct idea of his understanding and appreciation of world religions, one has to keep in view the social and political conditions of his time; one has to discard, at least for a time, all religious and communal prejudices which surround life in India, and to try and begin thinking with a clean mind and clean heart. I believe that unless a person, however great a philosopher or academician he may be, exerts to step into the shoes of Gandhi, it would not be possible for him even to appreciate the value of his thought superficially, let alone to go deep into it.

The Mahatma's religion was the religion of peace, universal brother-hood and non-violence. Those who have had the rare privilege of seeing him in action in the pursuit of these ideals would recall his supreme sacrifices and his untiring efforts to create peace of mind in the tormented souls, to prevent nations from wars and to prevent the world at large from the curse of violence and massacres. His entire life was devoted to peace and against violence and hatred and for love of man for man. Ultimately, he sacrificed his life for the principles he stood for and suffered martyrdom, like Jesus Christ, to atone the sins of humanity. Once attending one of his prayer meetings in Bombay, I was impressed by the time he spent in first pacifying the people and asking them to remain silent by

putting his fingers on his lips, for his gatherings were not the usual gatherings of modern politicians where, if the people displayed the least rowdyism, lathis and bullets will come down upon them like monsoon showers, but the gatherings of harijan men and women, old, young, children, babies crying in the laps of their mothers and were full of all imaginable noise that human beings could make. He would control them in a few minutes and then begin with his address. I was present in the massive gathering on the eve of August 9 in Gowalia Tank Maidan, Bombay when the ‘Quit India’ Movement was launched. The Maidan was full of the teeming millions of India and Gandhi made the most inspiring speech that I had ever heard. Next morning, when we went to listen to the leaders, they had all been arrested the night before and we were among the first in India to face tear gas and the bullets. The movement was launched. Thus, whenever and wherever I saw Bapu, or heard him, I was inspired by his ideas and moved to action.

Gandhi’s was an effort, therefore, to bring into harmony and solidarity all the elements of the country and to harness them for the supreme task of freedom. He struggled for communal harmony, for peace and brotherhood. But his ideas were not merely the ideas of a politician motivated in a particular direction or for a purpose which have temporary value only. He believed in what he preached and his beliefs were the outcome of the work of a lifetime and based on the study of different religions, their philosophies and the lives of the prophets. Gandhi believed that all the principal religions of the world, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism were basically true. ‘The principal faiths of the world constitute a revelation of Truth; but as they have all been outlined by imperfect man, they have been affected by imperfections and alloyed with untruth.... One can only pray that the defects in the various faiths may be overcome, and that they may advance, side by side, towards perfection’. (A.R.T., p. 4).

‘For me, all the principal religions are equal in the sense that they are all true. They are supplying a felt want in the spiritual progress of humanity.’ (*ibid.*).

Elaborating the *element of truth* in the religions, Gandhi makes his position clear by saying, ‘I believe that all the great religions of the world are true, more or less. I say “more or less” because I believe that everything that the human hand touches, by reason of the very fact that human beings are imperfect, becomes imperfect. Perfection is the exclusive attribute of God and it is indescribable, untranslatable.



I do believe that it is possible for every human being to become perfect even as God is perfect. It is necessary for us all to aspire after perfection, but when that blessed state is attained, it becomes *indescribable, indefinable*. And I, therefore, admit, in all humility, that even the *Vedas*, the *Qur'an* and the *Bible* are the imperfect word of God; and imperfect beings that we are, swayed to and fro by a multitude of passions, it is impossible for us even to understand this word of God in its fulness.'

'I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that all are God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the stand-point of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.' (*A.R.T.*, pp. 4-5).

Gandhi emphasized the fact that all religions should be regarded as *equal*. 'All religions are equal, for all have the same root and the same laws of growth' (p. 6). He believed that the religions are always growing and hence the functions of God should not be limited, for he may reveal himself in a thousand ways and a thousand times (p. 6). He declared that unless he accepted the position that all religions were equal and have as much regard for other religions as he had for his own, he would not be able to live in the boiling water around him. He said, 'Any make-believe combination of spiritual forces is doomed to failure if this fundamental position is not accepted. I read and get all my inspiration from the *Gītā*. But I also read the *Bible* and the *Qur'an* to enrich my own religion. I incorporate all that is good in other religions' (p. 7). Further elaborating the concept of *equal regard for other's* religions, the Mahatma points out, 'I believe in *Sarvadharmasamanatva*—having equal regard for all faiths and creeds. ...' My equal regard compels me to understand their viewpoint, to appreciate the light in which they look upon their religion. It means that we should emphasize points of agreement and not make much of the points of difference' (p. 7). 'For me, the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore, they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect' (p. 8). Explaining the *aims of the comparative study of different religions* and the purpose of it he points out, 'I do not aim at any fusion. Each religion has its own contribution to make to human evolution. I regard the great faiths of the world as so many branches

of a tree, each distinct from the other though having the same source’.

‘If all religions are one at source, we have to synthesize them. Today, they are looked upon as separate and that is why we kill each other. When we are tired of religion, we become atheists and then, apart from the little self, nothing, not even God, exists. But when we acquire true understanding, the little self perishes and God becomes all in all.’

Explaining the *unity and diversity in religion*, Gandhi explains in clear terms as follows: ‘We are all children of the same Father—whom the Hindu and the Mussalman and the Christian know by different names.... True religion is a universal belief in the one and only God.’ But, in spite of this unity, there is diversity. ‘Just as tree has a million leaves, similarly though God is one, there are as many religions as there are men and women though they are rooted in one God.... Religion is purely a personal matter. There are in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind has a different conception of God from that of the other.’

‘*Belief in one God* is the corner-stone of all religions. But I do not foresee a time when there would be only one religion on earth in practice. In theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same and identical conception of God. Therefore, there will perhaps, always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions. But I can clearly see the time coming when people belonging to different faiths will have the same regard for other faiths that they have for their own. I think we have to find unity in diversity. We are all children of the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal.’

‘In nature, there is a fundamental unity running through all the diversity we see about us. Religions are no exception to the natural law. They are given to mankind so as to accelerate the process of realization of fundamental unity.’ (pp. 9-10)

‘It is impossible to compare religions, but they are all equal. All men are born free and equal, but one is much stronger or weaker than another physically and mentally. Therefore, superficially, there is no equality between the two. But there is an essential equality. In our nakedness, God is not going to think of me as Gandhi and you as Keithan. And what are we in this mighty universe? We are less than atoms, and as between atoms there is no use asking which is smaller and which is higher. Inherently, we are equal. The differences of race and skin and of mind and body and of climate and nation are transitory. In the same way, essentially all religions are equal. If

you read the *Qur'an*, you must read it with the eye of the Muslim; if you read the *Bible*, you must read it with the eye of the Christian; if you read the *Gita*, you must read it with the eye of a Hindu. Where is the use of scanning details and then holding up a religion to ridicule?... The tree of Religion is the same, there is not that physical equality between the branches. They are all growing, and the person who belongs to the growing branches must not gloat over it and say: "Mine is the superior one". None is superior and none is inferior to the other' (pp. 11-12).

To Gandhi, *toleration* meant the equality of all religions. Jesus Christ may be looked upon as belonging to Christians only, but he does not really belong to any community, inasmuch as the lessons that Jesus Christ gave belong to the whole world.

*Truth is the same* in all religions; through refraction it appears for the time being variegated even as light does through a prism. This Truth resolves itself into its component parts: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. For, Truth will appear to most sincere and conscientious Hindus, Mussalmans, and Christians as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, respectively, *as they believe them*.

The golden rule of conduct, therefore, is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and that we shall always see *Truth* in fragment and from different angles of vision (pp. 12-13).

These are, in brief, some of the important views of Gandhi on religion in general. He evolved his own ideas on religions and endeavoured to discover the basic truth about religion through study, meditation and practice. There was a *method in his study* too. 'There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions, and that is that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions .... This study of other religions, besides one's own, will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of that Universal and Absolute Truth which lies beyond the 'dust of creeds and faiths' (p. 22). Gandhi asked people to read other religions and he believed that best interpreters of the scriptures are not the learned men but the sages and the saints.

Let us now examine how Gandhi viewed Islam and what concepts and teachings of Islam he incorporated in his system of thought. Again, how does his religious thought compare with the basic concepts of Islam and the Islamic beliefs?

Gandhi not only studied the *Qur'an* thoroughly but he also gave his own interpretations for which he was criticized by some

Muslims on the ground that a non-Muslim had no right to do so. ‘Have I changed or have the times so changed that it has become a crime for a non-Muslim like me to read and even dare to put his own interpretation upon the *Qur’an*?’ he asked, but said in the same breath, ‘Many pious Muslims have remarked that I am a better Muslim than most Muslims in that I act in the spirit of the *Qur’an* and know more of the life of the Prophet than most Muslims’ (p. 221). There is little doubt that the scholar who criticized Gandhi was in the wrong. It was done from a very narrow point of view. The *Qur’an* is an open book for the whole humanity to understand and follow. If it was not so, the very purpose of Islam would be lost. The important point is, however, the purpose and the motive of interpretation. If it is done with the preconceived notion of denouncing Islam, it would be wrong and again, if the object is to establish the superiority of Islam over the rest of the religions, this would also be wrong. The right method would be to study it and then to interpret it objectively and critically like a sound scholar. Gandhi, however, differs in this respect. He thought that an interpretation given by a learned man should not be accepted. It was the saint or sage who could alone interpret religion in the true sense. However, he thought that the interpretation given by a devotee of the religion should be acceptable in any case. I would, however, differentiate between a dogmatic and fanatic devotee from one who has truly imbibed the spirit of the religion, and it is the former type who would snatch the right from the Mahatma to interpret Islam in his own way. He is likely to give a distorted picture of the religion. He combined the qualities of a critical scholar and a sage and hence his interpretations would be in the true spirit of the religion, even though he would like to interpret it in his own way and desire that some basic ideas of Islam should conform to his own views. Again, Bapu appreciated the *Qur’an* by applying reason. And this is in conformity with the very teachings of Islam. The *Qur’an* time and again refers to reason and to the reasonable people and Islam is meant to be understood so. Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet has often emphasized the use of reason in the understanding and practice of the religion. Gandhi applied reason not only in the case of Islam but also in the case of all other religions, including Hinduism. He declared, ‘In my writing about Islam, I take the same care of its prestige that I do of Hinduism. I apply the same method of interpretation to it that I apply to Hinduism. I no more defend on the mere ground of authority of a single text in the Hindu scriptures than I can defend one from the

*Qur'an*. Every thing has to submit to the test of reason.' Again, 'I claim to understand enough of the *Qur'an* and the history of Islam to know that a multitude of interpreters have interpreted the *Qur'an* to suit their preconceived notions.... But I would like to say that even the teachings themselves of the *Qur'an* cannot be exempted from criticism. After all we have no other guide but our reason to tell us what may be regarded as revealed and what may not be' (pp. 222-23). In the middle ages, when the wars of the crusades were rampant, Islam was maligned and the Prophet was presented as a vagabond by the Christian Zealots. In modern times, the Christian missionaries did their job by presenting a distorted picture of Islam to the world, for they wished to oust Islam from the areas where they were most active. Scholarly treatment and analysis of Islam is, however, a comparatively recent trend in the West. We have fine examples of scholars like Sir Hamilton Gibb, Dr. Joseph Schacht, Montgomery Watt and others who have strived to present Islam in an objective and critical way. This trend is apparent among the modern scholars of the East also and among their best representatives are Muhammad Ali, Dr. Fazlur Rahman, A. A. A. Fyzee and others who have presented Islam and the Shariat in a critical way. Let us hope this trend develops and continues. As against this, there is the dogmatic way of interpreting Islam, but some of the scholars like Shibli Nu'mani and Sulayman Nadvi have given a true picture of early Islam and it was these authors whose works Gandhi studied.

Besides studying the *Qur'an*, Gandhi studied the life of the Prophet and his companions and was highly impressed by their actions and deeds. 'There are incidents in it', he says, 'which I do not understand, there are some I cannot explain. But I did not approach the study as a critic or a scoffer. I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind. And I found enough in the volumes to account for it. I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and forbears, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and his own mission. These and not the sword, carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle.'

'And I do not regard', continues Gandhi, 'any human being absolutely perfect, be he a Prophet or an *Avatar*, it is unnecessary for me to be able to explain to the censor's satisfaction every detail

of the Prophet's life. It is enough for me to know that he was a man among millions who tried to walk in the fear of God, died a poor man, wanted no grand mausoleum for his mortal remains, and who did not forget even on his deathbed the least of his creditors. The teaching of the Prophet is no more responsible for the degrading intolerance or questionable proselytizing methods that one sees around himself, than Hinduism is responsible for the degradation and intolerance of present day Hindus' (pp. 214-15). About the lives of the companions of the Prophet he says, 'How their lives were transformed, as if by magic, what devotion they showed to the Prophet, how utterly unmindful they became of worldly wealth, how they used power itself for showing the utter simplicity of their lives, how they were untouched by the lust for gold, how reckless they were of their own lives in a cause they held sacred, is all told with a wealth of detail that carries conviction with it. When one notes their lives and then the lives of the present-day representatives of Islam in India, one is inclined to shed a tear of bitter grief' (p. 213). How correct it is even today!

The word Islam does not mean 'peace', as Gandhi pointed out (p. 218). The actual word for 'peace' being *salam*. However, the sense of peace is implied in the word Islam. The word means 'submission', obedience, etc., which implies submission to the will of God which was revealed to the Prophet. 'Nay, whoever submits himself entirely to Allāh and he is the doer of good (to others), he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve' (2: 112). Islam was not revealed to the Arabs alone. It was a message of submission to the will of God sent to the different peoples at different periods from Adam downwards. It was the religion of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. But each people for whose guidance the religion was revealed disobeyed and became oppressive. Hence, it became necessary to reveal it to others. Finally, it was revealed to Muhammad, and in a perfect form Muhammad was the last of the Prophets. '...This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion...' (5: 3). The ultimate purpose of this religion was to establish the 'kingdom of Allāh on earth'. But this covenant was not fulfilled by any people before Muhammad. Hence, it was revealed to him and through him to the Arabs. 'Or do they envy the people for that which Allāh has given them of His grace? But indeed we have given to Abraham's children the Book and the Wisdom, and we have given them a grand Kingdom' (4: 54). The Prophet was also given

news that the Kingdom of God will come. There are many verses in the *Qur'an* about the Kingdom of God. 'Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Kingdom, and He is Possessor of power over all things' (67: 1). 'The kingdom on that day is Allāh's. He will judge between them. So those who believe and do good will be in Gardens of bliss' (22: 56). The concept of the Kingdom of Allāh in Islam, to my mind, is collateral with other concepts like Garden, Heaven, Bliss, the Day of Judgement, etc. Thus, the *Qur'an* exhorts the Muslims to achieve this state of happiness by submitting to the will of God. Hence, there are certain values which Islam emphasized and required that Muslims should cherish. Among them, the most important are: establishment of peace through non-violence and tolerance, brotherhood of the community and of the human race, justice, and social and economic equality. Islam emphasized certain human qualities, so that the Muslims may practice them and become better men and women and build up noble character which is necessary for a happy and peaceful society and for salvation. The *Qur'an* repeatedly exhorted the Muslims to practice truth, sincerity, purity, unselfishness, humility, patience, perseverance, thankfulness, self-control, courage, forgiveness, acts of charity and benevolence, kindly treatment of neighbours, the needy, orphans and the poor and downtrodden. By the practice of these and the acts of worship like offering prayers, performing the pilgrimage, fasting, paying of the *zakat*, a Muslim is bound to reach the state of eternal happiness and bliss. To my mind, it is the values that are emphasized by Islam more than the acts of worship. And it is the former category that forms the spirit of Islam. It is this spirit of Islam and its teachings that Gandhi praised and appreciated and to which he refers time and again. It is not the details of the *Qur'an* which regulate a Muslim's day to day life that he was concerned with. He was concerned with the principal teachings and its spirit. And he was right for it is these that form the core of the religion. No interpreter, however a great sage he may be, can interpret the basic principles differently from another interpreter. But the details could be and have been interpreted by the Muslim theologians, jurists and others differently at different periods of Islamic history and that is why there are so many factions and schisms in Islam today. These details were meant to regulate the life of the Muslims at a given period of history and they can be and must be re-interpreted today again so as to suit the life of a modern Muslim. Again, the fact that *Qur'an* did not lay down the commandments in specific terms or in a self-explanatory way itself shows that Islam was not

much bothered about them. But the spirit of Islam and its eternal values shall remain eternal, just as those of Christianity, Hinduism or any other religion shall remain ever true. This applies not only to religious philosophies but to all social and political philosophies also which the human mind has enunciated so far, and which aim at the amelioration of the human lot and establishment of a happy and prosperous human society on earth. The means may differ but the aims are the same. The fault does not lie with such religions or philosophies but with its followers and with the politicians. If the feudal societies of the Middle Ages had the objective of human prosperity, and happiness, I would praise them. But it was not so. If modern capitalist societies were not based on human exploitation and the accumulation of the means of production and of wealth by few, I would welcome their continuance. But it is not so. Islam, I treat as primitive communism, wherein class differences were sought to be demolished by the Prophet—differences not only of economic classes, but also social, political and religious differences. In Islam, no single Muslim is superior to another Muslim religiously, socially or politically. There is no religious distinction, there is no Pope, there is no Acharya in Islam.

#### TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

Gandhi considered Truth and non-violence as the master-key to all religions. He says, ‘I certainly regard Islam as one of the inspired religions, and, therefore, the Holy *Qur’an* as an inspired book and Muhammed as one of the prophets. But even so I regard Hinduism, Christianity, Zoroastrian-ism as inspired religions. The names of many of them have been already forgotten, for the simple reason that those religions and those Prophets related to the particular ages for which and peoples for whom they flourished. Some principal religions are still extant. After a study of those religions, to the extent it was possible for me, I have come to the conclusion that, if it is proper and necessary to discover an underlying unity among all religions, a master-key is that of truth and non-violence. When I unlock the chest of a religion with this master-key, I do not find it difficult to discover its likeness with other religions.

When you look at these religions as so many leaves of a tree they seem so different, but at the trunk they are one. Unless and until we realize this fundamental unity, wars in the name of religion will not cease. These are confined to Hindus and Mussalmans alone. The pages of world history are soiled with the bloody accounts of



these religious wars. Religion can be defended only on the purity of its adherents and their good deeds, never by their quarrels with those of other faiths' (pp. 219-220). Commenting on Islam, Gandhi says, 'My reading of the *Qur'an* has convinced me that *the basis of Islam is not violence*. But here again thirteen hundred years are but a speck in the cycle of time. I am convinced that both these great faiths (Christianity and Islam) will live only to the extent that their followers imbibe the central teaching of non-violence. But it is not a thing to be grasped through mere intellect, it must sink into our hearts.

'Some Muslim friends tell me that Muslims will never subscribe to unadulterated non-violence. With them, they say, violence is as lawful and necessary as non-violence. The use of either depends upon circumstances. It does not need *Qur'anic* authority to justify the lawfulness of both. That is the well-known path the world has traversed through the ages. There is no such thing as unadulterated violence in the world. But I have heard it from many Muslim friends that the *Qur'an* teaches the use of non-violence. It regards forbearance as superior to vengeance. The very Islam means peace, which is non-violence' (pp. 217-18). About the use of violence in Islamic history, Gandhi says, 'The sword is no emblem of Islam. But Islam was born in an environment where the sword was and still remains the supreme law. The message of Jesus has proved ineffective because the environment was unready to receive it. So with the message of the Prophet. The sword is yet too much in evidence among Mussalmans. It must be sheathed, if Islam is to be what it means—peace' (p. 216).

The Mahatma, therefore, maintained that the original message of Islam was peace and non-violence, but the sword was very much in evidence when Islam was born and hence, it was used. If we examine the teachings of the *Qur'an*, we will find that in spirit, Islam was against the use of sword and violence. Those who shed blood and make mischief are denounced by the *Qur'an*. The inherent nature of man to shed blood and the hope that we will one day improve and become peaceful, is implied in the verse: 'And when thy Lord said to the angels, I am going to place a ruler in the earth, they said: Wilt thou place in it such as make mischief and shed bloods. And we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness. He said: Surely I know what you not' (2: 30). Again, 'And when it is said to them, Make not mischief in the land, they say: We are but peacemakers' (2: 11). 'Who break the covenant of Allāh after its confirmation and cut as under what Allāh has ordered to be joined, and make mischief in the land.

These it is that are the losers' (2: 27). There is a well-known verse which runs thus: 'There is no compulsion in religion—the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error' (2: 256). There are a number of verses which admonish the followers of Islam to be tolerant of other religions and the objective was to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and wars. 'Say: O disbelievers, I serve not that which you serve, Nor do you serve Him Whom I serve, Nor shall I serve that which you serve, Nor do you serve Him Whom I serve. For you is your recompense and for me my recompense' (109: 1-6). 'And abuse not those whom they call upon besides Allāh, lest, exceeding the limits, they abuse Allāh through ignorance. Thus to every people have We made their deeds fairseeming; then to their Lord is their return so He will inform them of what they did' (6: 109). The *Qur'an* allowed war to be waged for the first time when, after a long period of oppression suffered by the Muslims, they were forced to take to sword as measure of defence. This took place after the migration of the Prophet to Medina after 13 years of suffering and tribulations in Mecca. The permission was given in the following form: 'Permission (to fight) is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed. And surely Allāh is able to assist them' (22: 39). It continues: 'Those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allāh. And if Allāh did not repel some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allāh's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down. And surely Allāh will help him who helps Him. Surely Allāh is Strong, Mighty' (22: 40). Wars in self-defence and protection were thus allowed for the first time. And offensive wars and aggressions were not allowed. This is evident from a set of other verses: 'And fight in the way of Allāh against those who fight against you but be not aggressive. Surely Allāh loves not the aggressors' (2: 190). *Persecution is also prohibited*. 'And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from where they drove you out, and persecution is worse than slaughter. And fight not with them at the Sacred Mosque until they fight with you in it; so if they fight you (in it), slay them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.' (2: 191). 'But if they desist, then surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful'. (2: 192). 'And fight them until there is no persecution, and religion is only for Allāh. But if they desist, then there should be no hostility except against the oppressors' (2: 193). 'The sacred month for the sacred month, and retaliation (is allowed) in sacred things. Whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict injury on him according to the injury he has inflicted on

you and keep your duty to Allāh, and know that Allāh is with those who keep their duty.’ (2: 194). It would become clear from these verses that Islam was basically against wars of aggression, any kind of oppression and persecution of the enemies. Wars were allowed against the aggressors until Islam was established and protected but with a number of restrictions and provisos. Never was full and open license given to the Muslims during the life time of the Prophet to go out and conquer. The Prophet never thought or planned any such wars during his life time.

The verses of the *Qur’an* cited above were meant for a certain period of Islamic history. Gandhi was right in pointing out that the spirit of Islam was against any wars but it were the circumstances of the time that forced Muslims to raise the sword. The subsequent wars waged by Muslim rulers were political wars and waged by individual monarchs and not wars for Islam. In the name of Islam, however, wars were waged and empires built by ambitious people.

#### UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

Islam has offered the concept of brotherhood within the community as well as the concept of brotherhood of humanity. ‘The believers are brethren so make peace between your brethren, and keep your duty to Allāh that mercy may be had on you’ (49: 10). Then, ‘O mankind, surely we have created you from a male and female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allāh is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allāh is Knowing, Aware’ (49: 13). The idea of confining the feeling of brotherhood within the community (*umma*) was based on the feeling that those who accepted Islam were the guided ones and those who refused to accept Islam created a new fraternity in which the distinction of blood relationship (*asabiya*) which was prevalent among the tribes of Arabia, was abolished. The distinction of religious worship was also done away with for the Muslims worshipped only one God. Thus, it was an improvement on the previous state. But the spirit of brotherhood is so intense that distinctions of caste, creed and colour and even of nationality were abolished once for all. The concept of nationality is a modern one. From this early concept there developed the concept of the Islamic world or *dar al-Islam* where the authority of Islam prevailed, and ruled. But this concept was a later development enunciated by Muslim political scientists and jurists. It can be compared to the modern concepts of the Communist world and the non-Communist world. However, the Islamic political concept

lasted until the fall of the *Khilafat* and the *sultanat* in Turkey. Today, efforts are made to revive the political idea of a Muslim community of the world, but there is little hope of it for there is no single political and spiritual authority like the one Christianity has in the form of Pope, to which the Muslims the world over may look for spiritual guidance. The feeling of brotherhood among the Muslims is there, no doubt, but there is no political sanction behind it. It is this feeling to which Gandhi referred to when he said, ‘The spirit of brotherhood is manifested in no other religion so much as is Islam. It is no doubt confined to Muslims. But Islam has been a downright leveller as no other religion has been. It would be much better if the followers of Islam say the whole world is a brotherhood.’ The distinctive contribution of Islam to India’s national culture is unadulterated belief in the truth of the Brotherhood of Man for those who are nominally in the fold. In Hinduism, the spirit of brotherhood has become too much philosophized. Similarly, though philosophical Hinduism has no other god but God, it cannot be denied that practical Hinduism is not so emphatically uncompromising as Islam’ (p. 224). The spirit of brotherhood of man is present in Islam and it is bound to grow, for the germs are there. If there is any feeling of community brotherhood it is because of the desire for identity and specially in countries where they are in a minority.

Islam’s emphasis on good actions, humility and an intense sense of justice must have also appealed to Gundlji, but I will not discuss them here. There are a number of verses in the *Qur’an* which inculcate these qualities among the Muslims.

Finally, it must be emphasized once again that Gandhi’s primary object of studying Islam was to present to the people of India a true picture of Islam so that communal harmony may be achieved. His main objectives were social and political. In his zeal he went a step further and tried to project Islam through his own understanding and thought. At times he could not present a true picture of the Islamic beliefs. For instance, he could not understand why people differentiated between monotheism and pantheism. From the Islamic point of view, God was the Greater (*Khaliq*) and all that existed was his creation (*makhlūq*). The personality of God, therefore, in its essence and qualities, could not be mixed up in any way with the things he created. It would be *shirk* to do so. This concept is quite different from the pantheistic concept where all that exists is a *part of God*. In Semitic religious philosophy God

*cannot* be a part of that exists or the creator. The Muslim believe in one God, but it is not *Brahman*, or the Universal Spirit, or the First Principle. The Islamic concept of God is totally devoid of causality. It is for this reason that a Muslim is unable to believe that God can exist in a stone or some other object. God is very close, in fact closest to human beings that anything could be, but he cannot be part of Man. The sufis, however, conceived of God differently from the orthodox Islamic concept. They believed in the unity of existense (*wahdat al-wujud*), and the unity of appearance (*wahdat al-shuhud*) or in other words, everything that exists is one and is the reflection of God which is the reality or the unity of existence. These basic and fundamental Islamic concepts were not fully appreciated by Gandhi. He says, 'There is not one man in Hinduism who believes not in one God but in many. There is one God who is everywhere. Angels of God, manifestations of God, are infinite, God manifests himself in endless ways. No Hindu believes in many Gods. But he will be told that his religion is pantheism and not monotheism. To me, the two are convertible terms. No Muslim believes that God is in the Seventh Heaven and nowhere else. I personally have not been able to make a distinction between monotheism and pantheism' (p. 226). What Gandhi conceived monotheism and pantheism to be is understandable, but his concept is not the concept of a Muslim, and there lies the difference. The two terms are not convertible in the Islamic religious thought.

MARGARET CHATTERJEE

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# Gandhi's Conception of Collective Action



## COLLECTIVE ACTION AS A CONCEPT IN THE WEST

THE distinction between individual and collective action is one of the most important threads that runs through the history of ethical and political thinking. On the whole, it would be true to say, however, that the *analysis* of collective action is a comparatively recent phenomenon. It was not very difficult to pull apart the various factors which enter into individual action, factors like motive, intention, consequences and the like, once the artificial assumption was made that the individual can, in his moment of acting, to some extent separate himself from society and make his impress either upon it or upon nature or upon both. It is not surprising that such a view should find expression in the cult of the hero, where the individual challenged both men and gods. Collective action in this period of history (I am thinking of ancient times) takes the form of obedience to the fiat of a king (such action as is found in building a monument) or a violent revolt against a tyrant (the career of Spartacus). Increasing complexity of life brought with it varieties of group organization for social, economic, political and religious ends, involving varying weightage of factors like beliefs and interests. The period from the Renaissance to the present day

presents a paradoxical situation in the sense that, on the one hand, there is an apparent concentration of collective life in the shape of the growth of nationhood and, on the other hand, an intensification of the spirit of individuality seen as much in the advent of artists like Leonardo and explorers like Columbus as in the growth of the Protestant conscience and the expansion of entrepreneurship. We find, furthermore that, although it was the West that fostered one of the most powerful concepts of collective life, the concept of nationhood, there is an extraordinary lack of thinking on the part of philosophers and others on the question of the nature of collective action as such. But this should not surprise us if we reflect that epistemology itself, in the period from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century, was analyzed in terms of the isolated ego and his world and that many of the scientific discoveries of the time were the work, not as today, of the team, but of the single man of genius.

It would, of course, not be correct to say that the West had offered no theoretical discussion of these matters. There are in particular three views which may be briefly referred to here. The first is that associated with the so-called Philosophical Radicals of the first half of the nineteenth century. The background of Utilitarian thinking with its stress on the maximization of happiness is extremely individualistic. But it was natural that in a decade which produced the First Reform Bill (i.e. the 1830s) thinking should have been in terms of the good of the majority. Difficult as it was to make the transition from individualism to altruism the social legislators who were inspired by Bentham believed that it could be done. This was all very well if a society had men like a Shaftesbury or a Howard in it but hardly workable if society were not so fortunate. That a technique of joint action is difficult to found on the basis of competing interests is writ large in the history of nineteenth century Britain. The same wishful thinkers that imagined that a just society could be brought about by the 'perfect' competition of economic forces imagined that egoistically inspired individuals would be able to act in terms of the 'common good'. Were it not for the efforts of individual reformers, within and without Parliament, it is doubtful if the nineteenth century would have seen the amount of social legislation that it did. The faith of the Benthamites in the unit of collective action which Parliament, in fact, was, was borne out in the successive decades of that century. So also was the maxim that democracy first makes men into individuals and then into groups. That the groups would represent sectional interests is something that could be expected

in a society where wealth was and still is unjustly distributed. T. H. Green's attempt to formulate a concept of the 'common good' follows from the Benthamite premises, fertilized by the 'organic' thinking of the Continent.

The second and third models of collective action produced in the West, in recent times, are too well known to need much elaboration. They are the Marxist concept of class action and the later development of this giving a special role to the party. It is to be noted that the 'class' idea continues the analysis of group action based on interests (in this case economic interests) and thus has affiliations with the democratic Benthamite view. Similarly, the developed form of communist theory which gives the party a special role has resemblances to the old 'elite' conception of leadership. The big difference between the Benthamite and the communist views in the context of our subject is the association of the first with constitutionality and the latter with revolution and militancy. Both, however, are concerned with economic and political power. It may not be out of place here to say that it is not surprising that some contemporary existentialists should be trying to cross-fertilize their theories with Marxism. There was no movement on the continent parallel to utilitarianism in U. K. in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century continental discovery of the individual is a belated theoretical formulation of values discovered at the time of the French Revolution. The British had already arrived at individualism *via* a different route, *via*, the Protestant conscience, and so had no need for an existentialist movement in this century. The continental thinker, however, still struggles to reconcile his individualism with the need for joint action, a need which is patent if society is to be transformed. He does this at an inauspicious time when the working class is becoming bourgeois at a fast rate and when the only ones who are likely to listen are the students who are not usually working class in origin at all. The British experience of collective action today is seen in philanthropic and recreational spheres while on the Continent we have the phenomenon of the failure of the clarion appeal to 'class' because of the fact that, scandalous though it be, there is nothing that the working class want more than to become the middle class.

#### SATYĀGRAHA AS A METHOD OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

I must apologise for this lengthy introduction in a seminar on Gandhi. My purpose was, however, to suggest that there was perhaps



no time in history when there was such a bankruptcy of thinking on the concept of collective action as there is in this century in the West. No one was better aware of the fact of conflict in society than Gandhi was, beginning from his days in South Africa. But he was able to evolve a method not only for the short-time resolution of particular conflicts but to envisage and build up a form of society in which conflict would be minimized. His whole approach, therefore, was realistic and practical. I shall try to focus attention on certain unique features of the *satyāgraha* concept with a view to showing that they scarcely have a parallel in the social thinking of the West and that Gandhi evolved a technique which, although it matured in the context of resistance to a foreign government, was actually applied by him and those who adopted his method to a variety of situations where people were engaged in fighting injustice.

First of all it is necessary to note, in contrast to the Marxist idea of collective action, that the group of people who offer non-violent resistance need not belong to the same *class*. In saying this, however, it is necessary to bear in mind that many *satyāgraha* movements were aimed against the exploitation of a particular group and so the core situations in which the method was applied in such cases were certainly economic in nature although the method was far from the method of class struggle. The Champaran, Ahmedabad and Mulshi Peta movements are of this kind. One example of *satyāgraha* where success can be partly (if not mainly) attributed to the upper class character of its participants is the Midnapore Union Board boycott of 1921 carried out by the upper peasantry who were, on that very account, intrinsically strong. Gandhi always believed that it was those who bore the brunt of a particular injustice who should learn to mobilize their non-violent strength in remedying their condition. This was behind the line he took in disallowing Sikh kitchens in the Vykom Satyagraha his comments on Christian efforts to eradicate untouchability, and his rejection of the dole system. We may also cite Bapu's special appeal to women as a group to come out strongly against the consumption of alcohol and drugs by their menfolk, since it was the women who would suffer the most if these bad practices continued. Often common opposition to a particular form of injustice served to cut across caste and religious barriers and foster a unity among people who would otherwise not be aware of any such unity. Thus the Khera struggle commonly concerned all who were affected by the over-assessment of land revenue and the Bardoli Satyagraha helped to foster Hindu-Muslim cooperation.

The most outstanding examples of *satyāgraha* as collective action on non-class lines are naturally to be found in connection with the National movement, that is to say, where the leverage of action was political instead of being economic or social, especially in the agitation against the Rowlatt Act and the Salt Tax (an economic element is, of course, present in the latter).

Collective action conducted on Gandhian lines comes not as a sporadic reaction to a situation but as the result of long preparation. The discipline of the man trained in non-violence is in fact greater than that of the party worker, because until he is disciplined in himself, he will not be able to serve as an example to others. Inadequate preparation was considered to be the main reason for the limited success of the Khera struggle (the attaining only of postponement, rather than of remission of land revenue). Successful preparation, on the other hand, was notable in the Anti-Indenture struggle of 1917 and the various movements of 1930-1. Part and parcel of preparation was the training in constructive work to which Gandhi attached such importance. The idea behind this was that in resisting injustice there must not only be an *ideal* of what to put in its place but some experience of what the new society will be like. In this respect, and in a most practical way, Bapu's ideology was far more fully worked out than that of theorists for whom the ideal society is reserved for the future. A brilliant example of the correlation of resistance and construction is found in the boycott of foreign cloth and the khadi programme. The link-up between the two could be intelligible to all. The constructive programme was always need-based rather than interest-based and, therefore, inherently flexible.

An important implication of Gandhi's conception of collective action is his belief that ideas pass over into actions. He wrote in 1934 "...Non-violence in action cannot be sustained unless it goes hand in hand with Non-violence in thought". Thinking, in turn, becomes rootless unless it is constantly tested in the crucible of action. He would perhaps have attributed our present gap between profession of ideas and action to the absence of practical constructive work on however humble a scale, work for which no amount of planning on paper is any substitute. The habit of putting ideas into practice meant that this was no mere theoretical matter but a practical task of seeing what could be in a particular situation with the human resources available. In each case, the human resources set the arena for possible courses of action. Even where the people concerned are the downtrodden, the most completely dispossessed, something

could be done. Furthermore, there is the additional factor of the general persuasive power of those who suffer, something in which Gandhi had immense faith.

Paradoxically, one could say that there could be no more fervent believer in the principle that our business is to change reality than Gandhi himself. But there is a world of difference between the self-assertive and aggressive view of collective action, the kind which inflicts suffering on the enemy and the kind which refuses to think in terms of a 'enemy' at all, which uses the voluntary endurance of suffering as a most potent weapon. Two other contrasts may also be mentioned here. The voluntary endurance of suffering by the group is to be contrasted with asceticism on the part of an individual. *Satyāgraha* is also to be contrasted with mob action where the individual sinks below his usual standard of activity; for the *satyāgrahī* rises above his usual standard of activity. How this is possible is connected with Gandhi's new conception of power. In distinction from certain perfectionist models of collective action (where successful group action presupposes the perfecting of each individual participant first), he believed that it was possible, indeed imperative, that we found a new order of society with men as they are now. He believed that there was a greatness in the humblest of men which comes to full flowering in the course of the *satyāgraha* struggle. This brings in a concept of power distinct from either economic or political or military power. According to this concept, there is a strength in the group which is released not when they seek personal advancement or pursue narrow sectarian interests but when in a collective manner they utilize their non-violent strength. Sacrifice<sup>1</sup> itself has a conquering power. Men *are* capable of being motivated by factors other than selfish ones. From this it is clear that *satyāgraha* as a tool of action has a strong moral content and that this is why Gandhi always gave the warning that it could not for this reason ever be used in an unjust cause. The causes in which it should be used, however, were various indeed, to fight oppression, to resolve conflicts and to change ingrained outlooks. One could also say that *satyāgraha* had a definite educative function. The open-ended nature of each struggle in which the people gradually become aware of their rights and their strength is comparable to the growth of the child who first crawls, then stands, walks and finally runs. In which direction movement will thereafter be, cannot always be predicted, hence the need for guidance and control. That Gandhi thought in terms of growth can be seen from what he called the law

of progression which applies to every *satyāgraha* struggle. He wrote, ‘As a *satyāgraha* struggle progresses onward, many other elements help to swell its current and there is a constant growth in the results to which it leads’. This is contrasted with setting a demand so high that it has constantly to be cut down (as if we demanded of the child that it should run before it could walk). That a myriad such struggles were able to become part of a national movement shows how collective action in various places and often on a very humble scale can grow into a mass movement.

The manner in which this happened brings out another central feature of the *satyāgraha* idea, that the actions of men have a persuasive power which goes beyond the power of words. There are no short-cuts for finding out what a Gandhian solution to any particular contemporary problem would have been, no ideological document to which easy reference can be made. The key remains in the history of the various *satyāgraha* struggles themselves, their character as exemplars both then and since. But the notion of ‘example’ needs a word of elucidation. The influence of an example must not be confused with imitation, the essence of which is that similar situation call forth similar reactions. It is also to be contrasted with a rule-ethic where what is to be done in a particular case is derived from a general principle. To learn from an example does not necessarily involve doing what the exemplar did (It may, of course, involve doing just that as in the case of the Contai *satyāgraha* and the numerous agitations against the iniquitous Salt Tax). A good example stimulates intelligent invention in new situations. The extent to which others not immediately concerned were drawn into non-violent struggles by the example of those who were concerned varies, if we examine the various movements themselves. The Champaran struggle attracted other *satyāgrahis* from distant Bombay Presidency. The Bardoli Satyagraha became an example for resisting arbitrary levies elsewhere. By contrast, the Mulshi Peta *satyāgraha* did not succeed in attracting support from outside Maharashtra.<sup>2</sup> The efficacy of the precise impact of each struggle is closely related to the definition of each situation. Each situation has its own special features which crystallize sometimes in such a way that a knotty problem pulls clear.

In the case of Vykom, for example, the question was not economic or political but social. All turned on the conversion of the Brahmins. In the Patuakhali<sup>3</sup> Satyagraha the issue was ultimately found to be one of civil rights and not, as at first appeared to be the case, one

of communal affairs. Further, many cases could be cited, especially in East Bengal, where an apparently communal issue was found to be in fact and at bottom something very different, usually a matter of exploiter versus exploited where the religion of the protagonists was essentially irrelevant. The *satyāgrahī*, therefore, in learning from the history of previous struggles needs to use his earlier experience intelligently. The lesson of an earlier example often was in the nature of a warning not to generalize too quickly about what the core problem was.

#### COLLECTIVE ACTION IN INDIA TODAY

Only a few aspects of our contemporary situation can be selectively referred to here. Methods used in resisting a foreign government may not all be appropriate in an independent country. Activizing the indifferent is not comparable to the enterprise of canalizing the angry and the desperate. The intellectuals of today are involved in the status quo unlike (in the majority of cases) during the independence movement. We are too paralysed by our belief in legislation (depending, in turn, on the *jadu* of the five-yearly ballot) to undertake resistance to injustice of which plenty remains. We are too involved in the existing power structure to desire to undermine it altogether and we are too preoccupied with our own small interests to think out viable ways of altering the loci of power.<sup>4</sup> We think of five years hence, whereas Gandhi always thought of the present and its needs.

The Mahatma never wanted his words or deeds to be regarded as infallible cues for solving the problems of the future. How could this be so since no one was more alive than he was to the changing complexity of each situation as it arose? But it would be foolishness on our part if we ignored the massive heritage both by way of precept and practice which he has left us on this subject of collective action. At a time when we have slipped into one dominant pattern of action, that of demand followed by concession, he offers a very different method indeed. At a time when we are clearer about what we are against than what we are for, Gandhi has positive alternatives to suggest. There is every urgency for remembering that the fight against injustice is always to be matched by constructive work based on the needs of the people concerned and their own ability to evolve means of satisfying those needs. In this connection I would like to suggest that the following matters could attract our special attention:—

- (1) What precisely is the connotation of *constructive work*, especially in urban areas, since Gandhi has himself left more guidance as to its connotation at the village level? What distinguishes such work from welfare work in general and what relation should it bear to Government-sponsored welfare schemes ?
- (2) How can we develop *tools of insistence*?—for when a Government is our own, the problem is more one of insistence than resistance. Sporadic meetings and high-level resolutions are no substitute for the evolving of such tools. It is because of the absence of them that we have the sad phenomenon of the fizzling out of good projects. This is some thing which each generation needs to work out for itself. But it is also a matter which concerns the handing over of leadership from one generation to another.
- (3) No form of collective action is possible without *leadership*. The history of the various *satyāgraha* movements provides a storehouse of material on the Gandhian conception of diffused leadership. It presents a challenging alternative to every other conception of leadership.<sup>5</sup> What, in other concepts of collective action, appears as the problem of energizing the rank and file, takes a completely different shape on the Gandhian view because of Bapu's starting point at the base of the collective pyramid rather than at its apex (it may even be questioned whether the pyramid image is at all an appropriate one). How group actions, so organized, developed into a mass movement is something which should be of equal concern to the historian, the psychologist and the political theorist.
- (4) A national movement has a momentum of its own, each tributary swelling the mainstream. The building of a free and secular society apparently does not offer equivalent inspiration. The crisis is really one of morals. In this connection it is important that *small projects* successfully implemented, whether it be in the field of land lord/tenant relations, irrigation or sanitation, receive adequate publicity. Gandhi would have regarded face-to-face encounters as being far more potent than mass media but the latter can certainly be utilized to give publicity to those encounters which have borne fruit and these can serve as new examples just as the various *satyāgraha* struggles served as examples in the pre-Independence years.
- (5) Another interesting point which emerges from the history of the various *satyāgraha* movements is the extent to which Gandhi succeeded in breaking down certain *stereotypes* in people's minds.

It was found that a Brahmin, a planter, a capitalist, even a police official, was after all a human being who was not impervious to change, once one could break through the protective shell behind which he sheltered. Gandhi showed that this shell was as much an outcome of the attitude of the rest of society as of that of the man himself. The whole process of negotiation, as Bapu practised it, depended on his own ability to break through the stereotype and his encouragement of others to do the same.

A whole new set of stereotypes has been added to the legacy of previous decades, the trade unionist, the student, the bureaucrat, the scheduled caste man and so on. To reach the man behind the stereotype seems to me to be one of the prerequisites of any progressive social change.

- (6) A new and potent way in which the Gandhian method could be applied is what I call the method of *social disobedience* (instead of civil disobedience), for many of our ills are social rather than political or economic. The refusal of young people to allow their parents to indulge in 'conspicuous expenditure' at the time of marriages or the refusal to agree to marriages arranged on caste lines would count as acts of 'social disobedience'. This is a way in which the young, especially, could help to transform society.

Our collective action could be meaningfully directed along paths such as these, so as to nurture the inner resources of courage, initiative and self-respect in each individual so that the lessons of Gandhi's life and teaching bear new fruit in the challenging situations of today.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ninian Smart in his recent book *The Yogi and the Devotee* has made an interesting comment on the idea of the strength of gentleness in the Indian tradition, and *via* a different line of thinking Hannah Arendt makes a plea for the spirit of sacrifice in her book *The Human Condition*.
2. The Mawlas evidently felt let down in this respect, for apart from Gandhi's letter in *Young India* of April 24, 1921 they felt they did not have adequate support from satyāgrahīs in the rest of India.
3. Interesting facts come to light in S. J. Piyush Kanti Ghose's report to the Hindu Relief Committee which was published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in 1926. Evidence of earlier communal harmony in this Muslim majority area is found in the fact that the land for the mosque had been donated by the Hindus, and that cow-slaughter on the occasion of Bakr-Id had previously not been practised in view of the public feeling. It also provides

a clear record of provocation on both sides and at the same time shows that there was a desire on both sides for a settlement to be reached.

4. The examples of alleged *satyāgraha* that one reads about these days return to the old *dharna* tradition in that the methods used are purely coercive. The presupposition of moral strength and training in constructive work is in such cases absent. It is therefore incorrect to attribute such outbursts today to the legacy of Gandhi's days. They are in fact witness to a complete abandonment of the principles for which he stood.
5. Gandhi was very alive to the fact that along with decentralized leadership there can be a real possibility of rifts developing, something which did happen, for example, in the case of the Burdwan Satyāgraha against the water tax.



MARGARET CHATTERJEE

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## A Harijan Woman's Viewpoint\*



I LIVE in a *bustee* (a *jbuggi* actually) with my husband and five children. Sheila is 12 years old. After her, there are three other girls and then there is Pappu who has not had his first birthday yet. There are people of all castes living in our *jbuggi*. We have tap water and there are common latrines. We are all poor and the place is very dirty. The other day a neighbour's husband died. They were not Harijans. They were poorer than us. We all collected what we could in the *bustee* and gave it to her. She had nothing for the funeral, no money to buy food for her children.

Certainly things have changed. I would say 'Times have changed'. For one thing, twenty years ago we would not have sat down talking like this. I still cover my head in the presence of men and seniors but you should have seen how low down we used to wear our veils then. But things are very expensive. I have lived both in the country and the town. We have a plot of land in the Punjab. At least in the village

\* I am indebted to Ragbiri Devi, Rajpur Bustee, Gur ki Mandi, Delhi, for her help in preparing this account. A connected narrative has been made out of the replies she gave in the course of an interview whose main purpose was to find out what Harijan women thought about education. It seemed to me that she put her finger on many of the factors that would require 'measuring' in an assessment of social change and that she succeeded in doing this in a very direct and practical manner.

there is always something to eat. Here in the town, in some seasons vegetables are too expensive for us to buy them.

Some of the men in our family have studied up to matric standard. My *jeth* is a clerk and his son works in the ‘kachery’. None of the girls of my generation were ever sent to school. I was 6 years old when I was married.

Sheila attended school for 5 years. In Class V she won the first prize which was Rs 30. When Pappu was born I had to keep her at home to look after him. No, there was no one else to look after him. In our community all the women go out to work. Also we have to go out a second time in the afternoon or early evening to sweep once more. There was a five-year gap between Pappu and the fourth daughter and those were the years when Sheila went to school. I go home from 1 o’clock to 3 o’clock. During that time Sheila goes to a sewing class. It is privately run. We have to pay Rs 6 a month for the lessons. No certificate is given at the end. People from different castes attend. Some are Sheila’s age and then there are wives who go too. They all want to sew in their own homes. I don’t think any are earning their living in this way. Even this class Sheila cannot attend very regularly. Sometimes she is needed at home. We have bought a sewing machine for her. It will be part of her dowry. We shall arrange her marriage in about a year or two’s time.

I don’t know of any girl in our community who has stayed at school as long as Sheila has. The non-Harijan girls in our *bustee* also do not stay any longer than that. Of course, they marry a little later than our girls. These days they marry at 16 or 17. Up to that time they are kept in the house and do household tasks. Marriages other than arranged ones are unknown to us all. If we kept Sheila in school after the age of 13 and did not see to her marriage we would be criticized by my in-laws and our community in general. In any case even if she did her matric she would still have to be married and would have become ‘too old’ by then. I was married at 6 and she will be married at 13 or 14. She will be able to teach her children to read and write, she can keep accounts, and she can sew. She will not have to do sweeping work until later on and if her in-laws wish it.

I hope Pappu will be able to study up to matric level. We shall encourage him. But these days children do not listen to their parents. The boys in our *bustee* all go to school as far as I know. But many play truant and get into bad company. At any rate we shall not withdraw him from school when the time comes. It will depend on how much he wants to study.

I wanted to go to my mother's house for Dussehra. It would take at least 7 days and I was not given leave. Of course, it would have meant expense. There is the bus fare and I would have taken presents of clothes for them all. They sent me a lot of things when Pappu was born. Perhaps I can go in the winter. If anyone comes from the village I sometimes send one of the girls there. But this is not the same as going oneself.

As you know other people look down on us. But in our *bustee* we are all in the same condition, no matter what our caste may be. We are lucky in that we can get free medicines from the dispensary where my husband works. Even the girls who go to college have to marry in the end. They cannot find jobs. We can always find jobs. We can do other jobs than sweeping if given the training and the chance. In my experience, however, I do not know of any girls of our community who have become teachers, nurses or 'female aids' in hospitals. Even if they did, they would not earn much more than we do.

Times have changed a lot. The price of *gur* makes it difficult to have a cup of tea. I cannot foresee a time when our women will have more education and become 'leaders'. I have told you why.

K. DAMODARAN

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## Ends and Means



*'I feel that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means'.*

—Mahatma Gandhi

*'An end which necessitates unholy means is not a holy end'.*

—Karl Marx

*'A worthy end should have worthy means leading up to it... the means that are not good often defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties'.*

—Jawaharlal Nehru

ONE of the moral principles frequently discussed in our country concerns the relation between ends and means. In periods of rapid socio-economic changes when everybody thinks of quick results in an atmosphere of unpredictability and insecurity, this problem assumes added significance.

Kauṭilya, Machiavelli, Hitler and Stalin are known to have held the view that the end justified the means. Humanitarian thinkers and philosophers like the Buddha, Karl Marx, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, on the other hand, insist that good ends cannot be attained by evil means.

But what is good and what is evil? What do we mean by ends and what are the means?

An end is something we want to secure and the means represents the way in which we endeavour to attain it. There is, however, no rigid dichotomy between the two. Sometimes the end is changed into the means to another end. Let us take an example. We need food and in order to secure it we cultivate paddy in the field. Here food is the end and cultivation of paddy the means. But why do we need food? You may say it is necessary for our very subsistence. In that case food becomes the means and subsistence the end. Again, why do we want to subsist? What is the purpose of life? You may say that you want to look after your wife and children and make them happy. Or you may say that you want to serve the suffering people, to fight for the freedom of the country or to struggle for the establishment of a just social order. Your subsistence then ceases to be an end and becomes the means to a higher aim. Again, if political freedom is the end, it is also a means to achieve economic freedom. Similarly, socialism is both an end and a means. It is a means for the further development of human potentialities.

Thus ends and means are convertible terms. They are interconnected. The means is the end in the making, the 'the end in embryo'. It is determined and conditioned by the end. When you choose the end you choose simultaneously the means also. The means is chosen because it is appropriate and suitable to the end in view. It is suitable because it leads to the desired goal. You can't employ any means to secure a specific end. It must be effective and capable of securing the end. Otherwise it ceases to be the means. If you want to go to Calcutta to see your ailing mother you don't purchase a plane ticket for London. If you are in need of food you do not approach a carpenter or a goldsmith. You can't get a bottle of brandy by collecting pebbles on the seashore.

Means in themselves are neither good nor bad. They are good or bad when they are judged by reference to some end or other, that is, to the consequences which follow from their adoption. They have meaning when they are related to something else, i.e., when they are used as means to an end. Thus, there is an organic unity between the end and the means.

The validity of the means cannot be judged in the abstract, but only in terms of the concrete circumstances of a given situation and in relation to the different possibilities or alternatives existing in those circumstances.

It is possible that there are different ways to reach the same goal. You can reach Calcutta by plane, by train, by car, by bullock cart

or even by walking. How to choose the best and the most effective means? If you have plenty of money and if you want to reach your destination in the shortest possible time you may go by plane. But suppose your doctor has forbidden you from travelling by air? In that case you may prefer to travel by train. If, however, your mother is so seriously ill that you wish to be with her as early as possible, you may even risk your own life and go by plane. You can choose only one of the two alternatives; either you risk your life to have a last look at your dying mother; or you save your own life and lose the final opportunity to see your loving mother. Which is better?

Take another example. You need food for your existence. The ways to secure it, however, are limited. You may beg, borrow or steal. You may purchase it in the market or produce it yourself. Suppose you have only two alternatives: to steal or to starve. You value your life and starvation may lead you even to death. Would you commit theft? But theft may result in the starvation of the owner of the stolen food. Whose starvation is worse and whose life is more precious? Is theft of food to satisfy your needs good and morally justifiable?

Again, is it right to earn a little more money by selling adulterated food articles or by indulging in hoarding and black marketing?

Is it morally right to steal a little money in order to purchase medicine for my ailing child?

What should be my approach to a strike of the doctors and nurses for a justifiable living wage, but which results in the death of a patient in the hospital?

What should be my approach to war and peace? Are there just wars and unjust wars? If so, what is just and what is unjust? What should I do (i) if a capitalist country attacks another capitalist country? (ii) if a socialist country attacks a capitalist country? (iii) if a socialist country invades another socialist country? To take a concrete example, what should I do (i) when the United States of America interferes with armed might in the internal affairs of Vietnam? (ii) when the Soviet Union interferes with armed might in the internal affairs of the Czechoslovak people and infringe their freedom and sovereignty? Should I adopt different standards to judge the morality of invasions? If so, why?

Should I raise my voice against the persecution of writers in another country for holding certain views which he considers right? Should my approach to the suppression of the freedom of expression in a socialist country be different from that in a capitalist country?

These are only some of the moral conflicts that face us in our

everyday life and these are related to the basic problem of what is good and what is bad, of what is right and what is wrong.

Some people try to resolve such conflicts by interpreting good and bad in terms of the satisfaction of human needs. Satisfaction of elementary human needs like food, clothing, shelter and other comforts is certainly the first premise of all existence. But moral principles are determined not merely in terms of socially expressed human needs or, for that matter, in terms of the interests of a class or a caste or a nation. They are also related to the means employed to secure those needs, for the end cannot be separated from the means.

The key to the understanding of man and his moral behaviour is, therefore, not his biological needs for food and shelter and other material comforts. The instinct of self-preservation is inherent not only in man but in all living beings. What distinguishes man from other living beings is human nature, his awareness of himself as a human being and his capacity to distinguish between good and bad. Man is a moral animal.

But how could one define good and bad? What is the criterion on which moral principles can be judged? Is there any universal standard by which good and bad can be measured?

Philosophers like David Hume and Herbert Spencer believed in the relativity of morals. They were of the view that the different conceptions of morality in the diverse cultural patterns of the world were all equally valid and that it was impossible to judge them by any universal standard. The recognition of moral diversity in different societies led them to the position of ethical relativism. Relativism in ethics rejects universal, general, objective validity for moral principles.

Certain Communist writers who consider themselves as followers of Marx define the basic criterion of morality as conformity to the laws of development of society. According to them what is historically necessary is progressive and what is progressive is good and morally justifiable. They argue that since socialism is a progressive system as well as a historical necessity, the moral stature of man is measured by the extent of his participation in the struggle for socialism. If values clash with the requirements of historical necessity so much worse for the values; for there are no absolute and universally applicable moral norms. Values are determined by relating them to social progress.

It is true that socialism is historically more progressive than capitalism and, in as much as it abolishes exploitation of man by man, it represents certain values of a moral nature. The attitude

to socialism thus becomes a moral criterion for man's actions. But the moral nature of man's attitudes and actions are not determined solely by the progressive nature of a social system. What is historically progressive is not identical with what is morally right, for only human activities, not historical and social processes, are subjected to moral judgement.

There were periods when slavery and serfdom and even capitalism were historically necessary and generally accepted. In ancient India, the *varṇāśrama* system based on the exploitation of *sūdras* and artisans was historically more progressive than the primitive pastoral system of the early Aryans. It helped the development of the economy, culture, art and literature and paved the way for social advancement. Even the caste system played a useful role at a certain stage of social development. But neither historical necessity nor social progress could justify the exploitation of man by man as a moral duty. That is why even in those days great humanitarian thinkers and social reformers condemned it as evil and raised their voice against untouchability, oppression and other forms of human degradation.

Marx pointed out that the British colonization of India played a historically progressive role in as much as it helped to undermine the outmoded social relations based on oriental despotism, caste divisions and slavery which 'surrendered man to enslavement by external conditions instead of making him the ruler of these conditions'. But the means adopted by the colonizers were considered by Marx as repulsive and immoral, because they were inspired by base motivations. His human feelings recoiled 'at the sight of the destruction and decomposition of tens of thousands of industries, patriarchal and peaceable social organizations, at the sight of their members deprived at the same time of their old system of civilization and of the inherited means of support'.

Take another example. Industrialization and collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union were accomplished in the early thirties through heinous crimes against the people. Development of industries and agriculture certainly contributed to the welfare of the people. But that did not transform the sins of Stalinism into virtues. What was historically progressive was at the same time morally repulsive.

Some Marxist writers have expressed the view that whatever serves the interests of the working class to carry out its historical mission of abolishing the capitalist system and establishing socialism, is



moral and, conversely, whatever serves the interests of the capitalist class is immoral.

If, from the standpoint of the worker, whatever serves the interests of the working class is moral, one may say with equal justification that from the standpoint of the capitalist, whatever serves the interests of the bourgeoisie is moral. If everybody defines morals from the standpoint of his own selfish, personal or class interests then society would not have anything better than the morality of the jungle.

Yet there are writers who assert that in societies divided into classes there exist no universal moral values, but only class moralities which serve the interests of one class or the other. A Soviet philosopher, V. Afanasyev, for example, writes: 'In a society divided into antagonistic classes there exist the morality of the exploited, the morality of the ruling class prevailing. Under slavery, the morality of the slave owners dominated; in feudal society, the morality of the feudal lords, and in bourgeois society, the morality of the capitalists. Opposite to them stood the moral standards and principles of the slaves, peasants and proletarians.... In society at present, two moralities are pitted against each other, communist and bourgeois. Bourgeois morality plays a reactionary role in society's development. Its main social aims are to preserve private property and exploitation, the keystone of capitalism. These aims, in effect, are also served by religious morality' (V. Afanasyev, *Marxist Philosophy*, Moscow, 1968, p. 336).

Afanasyev's schematic division does not recognize any permanent or universal element in morality which transcends class differences and which has developed in the course of centuries of social development. He does not understand that at every turning point of history, progressive philosophers and social reformers belonging to the middle and upper classes contributed much to the store-house of universal human values.

In fact, moral values had existed long before the emergence of classes or castes. Ideas of good and bad and of right and wrong existed even among the most primitive food-gathering tribes. Of course, they did not spring from heaven or from some unknown supernatural authority as theologians would assert. The foundations of man's moral and ethical behaviour lie not in abstract ideas of a transcendental life, but in real earthly life itself. They were created by man himself. They emerged out of human needs and acquired

meaning in terms of the specific social environment. They have been accumulated and enriched by man himself in the course of his age-old struggles for freedom and to the extent of his mastery over nature and society, which in its turn, fosters, shapes and conditions his subjective feelings and inclinations, his needs, his ideas and his values. Human needs are the source of man's practice. Man's essence is his praxis, his creative activity, his physical, emotional and spiritual efforts to satisfy his needs and to become what he potentially is, that is, to become fully human. The all-round development of man through unrestricted, free, creative activity is a universal human value.

But man must be viewed in his concreteness, not only as an individual, but also as a member of a social group, of a family, of a clan or a class; in other words, as a historical and social phenomenon. He lives and labours, satisfies his needs, fulfills himself and develops his human potentialities not in self-evolution or in a vacuum, but within the framework of a social and historical relationship. Social life involves various kinds of associations and cooperations based on kinship and consanguinity, division of labour and economic and social relations among the various sections of the people. It also involves a complexity of psychological and emotional factors like totem and taboo, religion, language, family and culture. The individual is tied to the social order by various kinds of customs and laws, social and political organizations, religions, beliefs and ethical codes.

Collective life and social relations transform man's animal instincts into human behaviour which reflects in his relations to other men. The very process of social life makes new needs necessary which could never have existed in the animal herd. Man needs not only the most elementary things like food, shelter and sex, but also emotional and spiritual needs; cooperation, assistance, sympathy, love and companionship, art and culture, and the freedom to develop his specifically human qualities and potentialities which are quite distinct from animal instincts. It is out of these humanized needs and the ways of satisfying them that moral values emerge.

Living in society, man has to take into account how his behaviour, his attitudes and activities affect other people, whether they meet with social approval or disapproval. Social approval often becomes a stimulant to his activities and disapproval fosters feelings of shame and repentance. Honour, self-respect, duty and mutual help become powerful motives of human behaviour. They are expressed

in concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, justice and injustice. Society needs harmony, cohesion, stability. Whatever contributes to these necessities is considered to be good and whatever hinders them is regarded as wrong and immoral.

Moral values not only help the stability of society and the cooperation among its members in the pursuit of human needs; they also ennoble man, humanize him and thus become a spiritualizing force.

With the development of society and the advent of new epochs in history, some of the old values become obsolete and are discarded, while others are modified and reinterpreted and rejuvenated to suit the new needs of society. As society develops through contradictions and conflicts of different interests, it is only natural that each class seeks to interpret the traditional values in its own favour. Conservative classes cling to old ossified values in the name of *sanatana dharma* and invoke tradition to safeguard their narrow material privileges. Progressive forces, on the other hand, use the traditional values in their own interests and in favour of progress. Thus, there is no denying the fact that in class-stratified societies ethical values are approached differently by different sections of the people. Under capitalism, for example, the right to own property, the right to rent, interest and profit, the freedom to hire labour and earn wealth are considered as sacred values by the spokesmen of the capitalist class. The working class, on the contrary, resolutely oppose them by advancing their own values and by fighting for their own rights and for an end of the capitalist system. Marx thought that only the elimination of all class contradictions and social conflicts would, for the first time in history, make possible the unrestricted enjoyment of universal human values, long cherished by mankind.

This, however, does not mean that people belonging to the richer classes are incapable of becoming good and that anybody who is born in the working class automatically grows into a good human being. From the Buddha, Gandhi and Tagore to Marx and Engels, many great humanitarian philosophers belonged to the upper classes but they stood by the downtrodden and against the narrow interests of the classes in which they were born. How will Afanasyev explain the phenomenon that in the U.S.A. a wide section of students and intellectuals coming from the upper strata of society oppose their own government's policies in Vietnam? Are the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity to be condemned because they were first advanced by bourgeois philosophers? Have honesty, integrity

and truthfulness and other values which have been existing from the times of the *Rg Veda* and the *Mahābhārata* no significance for a worker living in a capitalist society? Are they mere class-moralities which disguise the real interests of the capitalist class?

Some writers have expressed the view that ideas and ideologies, ethics and morality, depend entirely on the economic base and that, given certain economic conditions, intellectual, cultural and moral changes will follow automatically. Others think that once man's ideas are changed, social and economic changes will follow. Both fail to understand the real relationship between human consciousness and social change.

Of course, moral and spiritual life must fit in with material conditions. But changes in external circumstances will not automatically solve man's inner conflicts and turmoils, conquest of the physical world is no substitute for self-control and moral development. It is a fact, it is the social environment that determines the conditions in which the individual develops his personality. In other words, human activities are socially conditioned. But they are not predetermined by social and economic factors. Social and economic factors are only the conditions and not the decisive factors in history. The decisive factor in human activities is man himself. Man is free to react and respond to his environment within historical and social limitations, he is free to think and act as he likes. He has the freedom to choose between good and bad, between justice and injustice, between selfishness and selflessness. Man develops his individuality through his own personal efforts, his own talents and skills, his will power and his power of dedication. Only such qualities can shape and develop human personality.

Social development is thus a total all-embracing process involving not only technological innovations and economic development but also intellectual, moral and spiritual development. The latter is not a mere consequence but a part and often a precondition. Thus, it will be seen that unless one pays sufficient attention to the spiritual elements in human nature, the development of external conditions may even become an obstacle.

Development of human personality does not consist in shunning creative activities and taking refuge in mystic contemplation of the inner self, but in ceaseless struggles to remove the causes of dehumanization and to cleanse life of all evils, oppression and violence and to create conditions for the unfettered development of true individuality. This is the process of self-creation and self-

realization. Self-realization demands an uncompromising struggle to transform social conditions which force humanity to sink to the depths of depravity and degradation. It is closely linked with the needs and aspirations of humanity for a better, nobler and happier life on earth, free from exploitation, oppression and violence.

In the earliest stages of his life, man was not aware of himself as a human being. He lived in unity with nature, as a mere part of nature. Human history begins with man's self-awareness. It is a process in which man develops his consciousness, his specifically human qualities, his powers of love, compassion, reason, understanding and mutual assistance, and above all, his conception of human freedom. Freedom is not an escape from nature and social reality. It is achieved not by detachment but through practical struggles against nature and reality. It is by struggling against nature and transforming reality that man transforms himself.

But these activities and efforts are obstructed by various political, economic and social factors, by the domination of one class by another. Man's human essence is impoverished and enslaved by exploitation, bureaucratism, egoism, monotonous and mechanical work, along with craving for money and power. Freedom from such retarding and enslaving factors is therefore the highest human value.

Man by his own activities, experience and knowledge tries to transgress the boundaries imposed by nature and the institutional structure of society and to transcend himself. His abilities become greater and greater through a continuous process of self-realization. History is the never-ending efforts of man for the realization of freedom and salvation, his ceaseless pursuit for completion and fulfilment.

Thus man has not only immediate ends but also ultimate ends. The ultimate end is the development of human personality, the freedom, fulfilment and self-realization of man. Man is the end and everything else only the means. Things and institutions are not ends in themselves, but only the means to serve man. This, according to humanitarian philosophers and thinkers, is the basic principle of universal value judgements. *Na manushat shreshtataram hi kinchit*. Nothing is nobler than man.

The *upaniṣadic* philosophers sought the ultimate aim and meaning of man's existence in self-realization or *atmasākshātkara* through realization of one's identity with the absolute of what they called *brāhmaṇa*. To Gandhi it was Truth. To Marx it was self-realization in the realm of freedom.

The *upaniṣadic* conception of *brāhmaṇa* expressed man's aspiration for the unification and harmony of the infinite, limitless human community. But this great dream of human unity and harmony was not realized in practice. The day-to-day life and activities of the people were based on the *varnāśrama* division of society. The unity and harmony of human community did not include the *sudras* and the various barbarian tribes. They were destined to toil and suffer outside the totality. In philosophical speculation, distinctions between man and man were abolished, but in empirical practical life distinctions and divisions prevailed. This was because the end was distorted and restricted by the rise of private property and class differentiations. The more society developed the sharper became social contradictions and conflicts which undermined the generic unity of the human being. Man began to be considered as mere means and things, organizations and institutions as ends. This distorted outlook reached its climax under capitalism. Commodities, money and profit became ends to which man was subordinated. Under capitalism man is not an end. The end is production, profit, money and power, man is only the means.

Many philosophers and religious leaders who could not find the appropriate means to change these conditions projected their souls inward and tried to change their inner nature without relating themselves to external nature and to society. For others, like Gandhi and Marx, believed that the development of man's personality was inseparable from human activities to change social conditions.

According to Marx, the ultimate aim was the creation among men of 'an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'. This aim could not be realized without 'the overthrow of all those conditions in which man is a degraded, servile, neglected, contemptible being'. Hence, to him, the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist order of society was the precondition and the means for the realization of human freedom.

To Gandhi, Truth was the end. 'To find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one's identity...that is to become perfect'. (Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 98). Truth to him was not ordinary empirical truth, but absolute Truth. 'As long as I have not realized this Absolute', he writes, 'so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, shield and my buckler'. (*Autobiography*).

In other words, relative truths were conceived as means to Absolute Truth. From this understanding he began his pursuit of experiments with relative truths and the testing of their validity in practice.

Experiments involved imperfections, ineffectiveness, limitations, errors and even Himalayan blunders under certain conditions. But they also meant improvements and corrections to make them more and more effective and as perfect as possible. After all, the means have to be suitable and effective to achieve the end. Otherwise it is no means.

Experiments with truth translated into the realm of ethics became Non-violence and love and the technique of *satyāgraha* to attain them. He says:

‘Ahimsā is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsā is our supreme duty’. (From Yeravada Mandir, *Ashram Observances*, p. 8). But what is *ahimsā*?

‘*Ahimsā* is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of *ahimsā*. But it is its least expression. The principle of *ahimsā* is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody’.

But it meant something more than all this. Gandhi identified *ahimsā* with love of man. ‘Love as the active state of ahimsa’, Gandhi himself wrote, ‘requires you to resist the wrong doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically’. (*Young India*, January 19, 1921).

*Satyāgraha* was the technique of social action which could not be practiced in isolation from social and political phenomena, but only in the midst of the suffering people with a view to satisfying human needs and aspirations. ‘The quest for truth cannot be practiced in a cave’, he said. Honesty, integrity, *aparigraha* and even the various items of the constructive programme were all linked with this means to his cherished end: *Satyāgraha* to fight evil and change the system based on evil, for non-violence ‘does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant’. (*Young India*, August 11, 1920).

Moral principles cannot, however, be considered in the abstract. They can be discussed only in the context of the concrete historical, social and human situation. For instance, truth and non-violence are in themselves noble values, the practice of which helps man to improve his quality of life. But under certain exceptional circumstances, it

may become necessary to violate them. Lying is certainly bad. But a situation may arise when one tells a robber a lie in order to mislead him. Inflicting pain on a human being is immoral. But you don't blame a doctor who injects a needle into your body or resorts to a surgical operation and inflicts pain on you so that you may recover from your illness. Inflicting pain in this case is a necessary act, not because it is good but because it is necessary to avoid more pain. Even killing a person may become necessary under certain conditions. Of course, taking another man's life is inhuman and immoral. Yet killing in self-defence is justified. But under no circumstances can the evil be glorified as a virtue. One breaks the general moral rule and resorts to evil under exceptional circumstances in order to avoid a greater evil. Even Gandhi justified violence when it was the only alternative to cowardice which, according to him, was worse than violence. A cowardly retreat from danger degraded human personality far more than the act of killing. He wrote:

'I do believe that, when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force, which he could and wanted to use, and defend me. I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence'. (*Young India*, August 11, 1920).

British rule in India appeared to Gandhi 'to be a perfect personification of violence' (Tendulkar Vol. III, p. 14) and he believed that non-violence as a means was 'infinitely superior to violence'. But he had no hesitation to add:

'I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour'. (*Young India*, August 11, 1920).

Marx, too, wanted to destroy the capitalist system by peaceful means, because he believed that force and violence dehumanized human nature. But he did not hesitate to hail the heroic armed uprising of the Paris Commune in spite of its weaknesses and blunders. Almost all social and political revolutions in history like the American War of Independence, the Great French Revolution and the Great October Revolution in Russia contained elements of violence. Take the case of the French Revolution which overthrew an oppressive social structure and transformed the very



pattern of existence for humanity. The violence employed by Jacobin dictatorship was an inseparable part of the Revolution. Similarly, the Russian Revolution which aimed to substitute socialism for capitalist exploitation involved violence and bloodshed. Yet these revolutions are not condemned as mere outbursts of abstract violence, because they undoubtedly paved way for human progress. Their total effect was not only to transform existing social institutions based on violence, but also to provide better and more humane ideals and values. Violence employed by the revolutionary forces was a comparatively small consequence of this total effect and was necessitated mainly by the armed counter-revolution of the vested interests.

Does this mean that the violence employed by revolutionaries is morally good and that employed by counter-revolutionaries and oppressors is bad? I do not think so, because violence does not become good under any circumstances. Taking the life of a human being is always bad; for life is sacred in itself. Killing dehumanizes the killer. Yet under special circumstances it is justified not because it is good, but because it is unavoidable. Social transformations and revolutions would have been nobler and better if they did not involve the regrettable and deplorable negative consequences of violence and bloodshed. It may also be noted that means chosen sometimes lead to mixed results. Along with the good end it may produce other results which may be bad and undesirable. The task, therefore, is to avoid if possible all negative consequences of the means adopted or at least to reduce them to the minimum necessary and to make them as temporary as possible.

Some people think that a good end can be attained either by good means or by bad means. But this is impossible because the quality of the end is mechanical materialism instead of the humanism of Karl Marx. Obviously, it had nothing to do with Marx's socialism based on humanism, democracy and freedom and brotherhood of man. Opulence can never be a substitute for human freedom.

What is to be noted is that the means adopted by Stalin were perfectly appropriate to the end he visualized. Stalinism not only perverted the means, it also distorted the end. In other words, it was the distortion of the end that led to the perversion of the means.

Despite the legacy of Stalinism and the persistence of many of its facets, recently a beginning has been made in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to overcome the harmful consequences of Stalinist bureaucracy by a regeneration and revitalization of society on the basis of Marxist principles. For, these negative phenomena,

as E. V. Ilenkov of the Institute of Philosophy, Moscow, explained in a recent paper, ‘in no way offer an argument against the ideas of Marx’, but, on the contrary, they were the results of the ‘bigoted and sometimes perfidious’ conditions in which these ideas were sought to be realized.

To Marx, man was always an end in himself and never a means to an end, be it the State, the class, the nation or even God. To him the freedom and dignity of the human person was the greatest and noblest of all moral values. But he was aware that the personality of man and his spiritual qualities could not be developed without developing man as a social being, without creating and ensuring the material and social conditions for his all-round development. Conditions had to be created in society so that man could be fully aware of his own real capabilities and aptitudes. Man was capable of not only beautiful dreams, but also of glorious deeds. Once his creative energies were freed from exploitation, oppression and alienation of all kinds, he would be able to set gigantic forces into motion and create wonders on earth based on love, brotherhood and human unity. That is why Marx set himself the task of changing the existing capitalist social order based on violence, hatred, class war and narrowness of mind and establish human brotherhood based on socialism and communism. Socialism and communism were not ends in themselves but only means to the development of man, the conditions in which man ceases to be ‘a crippled monstrosity and becomes a fully developed human being’.

In this respect, that is, in the great ideal of restoring to man his full human dignity and opportunities for the full flowering of his human personality, there is perhaps no contradiction between Marx and Gandhi.

There are very few people in India who accept Gandhi’s preachings and principles in their entirety. Even great personalities like Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore disagreed with him on many important issues. An objective analysis could reveal many elements in his theories and teachings which were impractical, outmoded, unscientific, obscurantist and even conservative or reactionary. But none can ignore his greatest contribution; his emphasis on moral approach to political problems as well as those of every day life. Gandhi demonstrated the practicability of an ethical and spiritual life in social and political spheres. The teachings of ancient philosophers on ethics of self-perfection became meaningful in the pursuit of social and political goals. Personal virtues were

transformed into social and political weapons to challenge outmoded systems and to raise the human individual to a higher level. He tried to improve his technique of *satyāgraha* by experimenting and testing it in the spheres of social and political action.

Unfortunately for us and the world, his experiments with truth were abruptly and tragically ended by the bullet of a fanatic assassin on that fateful day in January 1948.

It is difficult to speculate how he would have reacted to the current events if he were with us today. Perhaps he would have changed some of his older ideas in the pursuit of his experiments in truth. He would have improved his means and made it a more effective weapon to change the existing social order based on exploitation and oppression of man by man, greed for money and power, corruption, insensitiveness of human sufferings, lack of compassion for fellow beings, because all these evils were certainly alien to Gandhi's concept of truth.

Great men who fearlessly search for truth and fight for the emancipation of man are often ignored and persecuted when they are alive. But after their death they are defied and turned into infallible prophets while their ideas are defiled and distorted. This happened in the cases of both Marx and Gandhi.

But the search for truth continues. The struggle for the emancipation of man continues. With unprecedented technological and scientific development and the richness of the inherited human values, it has now become possible to realize the age-old dreams of man for a better and fuller life, to end oppression and exploitation of man by man by establishing on earth a classless and casteless social order based on the unity of the human race, on love, truth, justice, brotherhood and cooperation.

But such a state of affairs can be built only by men and women who have faith in universal human values and who try to enrich their content to suit the new conditions. Self-seekers, opportunists, sychophants, liars, men without character, honesty and integrity are incapable of building a good society. As Gandhi stressed again and again, 'our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means'.

DEV DUTT

## Sarvodaya, Our Times and Gandhi



*SARVODAYA*<sup>1</sup> partakes of the nature of a total ideology.<sup>2</sup> It has its own world-view, view of history, philosophy of social relations, technology and values. It rests on the belief in the spiritual nature of man, the essential unity of life, the existence of a 'benevolent law operating behind universal process'<sup>3</sup> and the imperativeness of making a determined effort to re-arrange the private and public life of man in accordance with this law. It is held that as truth and non-violence are the regulative principles of life, the human community should be fashioned in the image of Truth and non-violence.

It repudiates modern civilization.<sup>4</sup> In spite of the fact that the believers of *sarvodaya* are aware of the weaknesses of Indian civilization, by implications, they seem to nurse a belief that it alone is based on truth and non-violence and that it has a tendency<sup>5</sup> to elevate moral beings. Their conviction in this postulate is strengthened by the results of the critical evaluation of the modern civilization as reflected in the writings of the Western critics and by certain depressing aspects of the Indian development since 1947.

*Sarvodaya* is expressive of a deep concern about the future of man. The adherents of the doctrine seem to wonder whether the logical conclusion of the acceptance of modernism will not lead man to a point where he will forget his longing for freedom, for dignity, for integrity, for love, and will, they seem to worry, become a soulless

automation, lose his human qualities and will not be even aware of it.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, they see the individual today as a modern Prometheus bound with the chains of excessive institutionalization, over organization, gigantism and industrialism.

They are also convinced that modern politics tend to become too complex, too massive, and too technical to be comprehended, manipulated and controlled by an average citizen who has not yet achieved such a degree of refinement, sophistication and richness as to be able to cope up with a bewildering 'range of social relationships and present situation'. In short, they think that there is a maladjustment between technical progress and restricted sympathies of social groups<sup>7</sup> which ought to be mended.

It appears that the various aspects of *sarvodaya* programmes, as we know them today, are as much a product of the process of stretching Gandhi's seminal ideas to their logical conclusion as are the 'negative Utopias' of Huxley, Orwell and Zamyatin are the result of these writers having imaginatively conceived the ultimate limits of the injurious potentialities of the value system of modern civilization. In contrast to the nightmarish world of robots, they seem to have conjured up another Utopia in which the elemental human values will stand reinstated and where the rule of love will prevail.

They hope to realize the ideal by trying to change the present corrupted states of awareness of the individual citizen by making him aware of his basic nature and by reducing the social institutions to such a size as could be managed by an average citizen conveniently, intelligently and independently.

The realization of *sarvodaya* ideals will involve a massive experimentation in all fields of human endeavour, specially in those of education, research, organizational techniques, managerial skills and the art of governance. It would also be necessary to re-orientate every currently used idiom of communication—art, religion, culture—and bring it in tune with the ideology.

It would be necessary to find out whether these techniques have the requisite sophistication, versatility and refinement for ready use. How far they are dated, culture-bound and their success depends upon the personality of the user. The entire gamut of Gandhi's activities from 1894-1947 in connection with conflict-resolution and constructive work will have to be reviewed. For the present, it seems to offer few guidelines and what is left of it are a few memories of a country-wide movement of *padyatris* and of some other exotic ideas.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, for the reorganization of Indian polity new experiments require severely controlled conditions—almost hermetically sealed—which do not obtain at least in India for it has opted for an open social system and where people and institutions are fully exposed to the influence of all cultures. Further, even if these conditions were available, the very process of control and experimentation is tantamount to a negation of *sarvodaya*, which as an eclectic doctrine does not admit of ‘willing’ a new society into existence, it is opposed to coercion.

*Sarvodaya* rests on the assumption that human beings can be so educated as to be able to live in the constant awareness of their spiritual nature. It has also been taken for granted that it is possible to neutralize and nullify completely the momentum of history, the proclivities of human nature and modern technology. A very low premium is placed on those malignant forces which are also a part of social processes.

*Sarvodaya* also suffers from cult-thinking. There is the cult of localism. It romanticizes and over emphasizes the guilelessness of local bodies, particularly, of the variety of panchayats—as if, these communities are Gardens of Eden, untouched by power and its corruptive influence.

There is the cult of the consensus. *Sarvodaya* underestimates the value of conflict of ideas and it is not conceded that there is a creative force in competition of ideas. Consequently, it takes an unusually dim view of the prospects of success of parliamentary democracy.

The audacious vision of a society based on an inflated estimates of the potentialities of ordinary human being to be consistently good also involves a revolt against the powerful influences of the civilization of the West which have gone too deep to be rooted out in the immediate future.

For instance, consider the proposition of an economy of limited wants and of conservation of resources. The minds of men are today aflame with renaissance of desire, which has created new opinions and demands and these, in turn, have led us to opt for a productive system which will satisfy them. The elite groups as well as the masses have learnt to pin their faith, perhaps, irrevocably, in the secular religion of industrialization.

Atomization or fragmentation of society and alienation and robotism in respect of individuality are the maladies of the societies at an advanced state of development. In less developed areas people are afflicted with a different variety of de-humanization that which

is promoted by poverty. The *sarvodaya* emphasis in the variety of dehumanization in affluent societies is rather incomprehensible to them. For them, what matters is the dehumanization which they experience rather than that with which their children might be confronted with.

Of course, some Westerners may be in sympathy with their point. But it is doubtful if this will be understood by the public at large so effectively as to force the ruling classes to reconsider their policies radically. In fact, affluence seems to have coarsened their sensibilities. A well-fed and satiated populace crying for the moon seems to have lost its concern for freedom and peace and human values. Thus, the climate of opinion does not seem to be conducive to the acceptance of *sarvodaya*; their will to change stands atrophied.

Similarly, the notion of a 'powerless' society has little prospects of being considered seriously. Life in modern world stands politicized. The role of state as an agency for social change has been unquestioningly accepted. In these circumstances a plea for de-politicization is not likely to attract notice. For it is clear that for a 'powerless' community, much less to survive as a national unit, and it is not possible for it to function freely and independently.

In a sense *sarvodayites* are institutionalists. But in another, they are not: there is considerable evidence of hesitation on their part to change social relations and create institution to consolidate and to perpetuate the gains accruing, at a particular point of time, from change of heart, 'There is reliance on subjective factors', and the importance of objective factors discounted.

In a society which suffers from the presence of built-in inequalities and backlog of arrested growth, the ideal of *sarvodaya* is likely to promote, in the first instance, the interest of those who control the levers of power. It may even perpetuate inequalities and find itself on the right side of the forces which are in favour of the established order and *status quo* and are against the unprivileged.

This did happen in India after 1947. Some of Gandhi's followers yoked his teachings in the service of the party and the leadership in power. They, to the great detriment to progress and social change, worked assiduously to canonize him, and to use his name and his ideas to legitimize their claims to power.

Thus the nature of *sarvodaya* ideals, their inadequacies, and the spirit of our times placed a severe limit on their relevance today. Moreover, in the light of the historical experience that a strictly fundamentalist approach is of very doubtful utility in the task of

ordering human and social affairs, like Marxism, for that matter like any ideology *sarvodaya* cannot be and should not be adopted as a philosophy of reconstruction and social change. It is in this special sense *sarvodaya* is irrelevant.

But if *sarvodaya*, the church of Gandhism, is irrelevant today, it does not follow that the gospel of Gandhi is also irrelevant. He cannot be dismissed as a glorious redunary and a grand irrelevancy of history. If no effort is made to canonize or to codify his ideas into a formal system, if he is not intellectualized beyond a particular point (because Gandhi was too close to life—almost coterminous with it), if it is recognized that there is considerable evolution in his ideas, if it is understood that no single concept, be it non-violence or be it truth or God can be considered as adequate to define him fully, if it is agreed that the essence of Gandhi's teachings lies not in what he wrote but in what he did, and if a systematic attempt is made to discover the common denominators of ideas as reflected in practice, and if we do not approach his heritage with a view either to replicating it or enriching it or revising it, it should not be difficult to disengage the redundant from the relevant. It may be possible to find in Gandhi's heritage certain 'pure quantities' of thoughts and ideas and approaches which are relevant today.

This is not only essential in itself but it is also necessary for India today. The available modes of thought, all patents, prescriptions, offered so far to deal with our problems seem to be failing us. Almost all significant techniques and styles of action seem to have exhausted their potentialities and are proving inadequate. We are groping. We are from a suffering loss of identity. There is no alternative frame of ideas in view. In this void, the forces of religion and revivalism are working furtively to stage a comeback. Those who control the levers of power and patronage are exploiting this situation. Moreover, the Indian social situation itself is rather moribund—national issues such as federal relations, language, education, prohibition, planning and foreign policy, which should have been settled long ago are being re-opened time and again and allowed to remain in that stage. The leadership, absorbed in the politics of management, either procrastinates or waits, like Micawber, for something good to turn up from somewhere.

It is clear that India needs fresh sources of renewal, it needs infusion of new ideas and it needs an audacious sense of destiny. It is not improbable that a critical re-appraisal of Gandhi may lead us to discovering these sources of strength, for though his programme of action and mode of working as such may not be found useful



today, some of his seminal ideas, such as *swadeshi*, *sambhav*, and *swarāj*, are very much in tune with our times and can serve as very effective correctives to the excesses of modernism and industrialism and cosmopolitan—particularly at a time when dangerous weapons of destruction and violence have been forged.

For instance, take Gandhi's personality. Gandhi was completely and totally committed to the task of bringing about fundamental social changes in favour of the unprivileged humanity so that it could live in relative comfort, freedom and dignity due to it. He was out to transform the basis of modern living. By implication, he seems to have pitted himself against the powerful forces of history, psychology and technology and to the task of initiating a new movement in the heart of contemporary civilization.

But this total commitment did not render Gandhi a stray-eyed idealist. He was ruthlessly practical too, no captive of his own values. He seems to have been under no illusion about the quality of the people he had to work with—perhaps, he very well knew that they were men of common clay, who forced either by circumstances or by a fluke of destiny were to become the instruments of national destiny. He, therefore, was ever willing to try the second-best alternative to deal with a given situation. Here lies the secret of his inventiveness, catholicity and flexibility. He had the knack of using his disadvantages to his own advantage. He could be supremely detached from his values and be able to respond to a challenging situation with dignity and courage.

Gandhi could operate at two planes simultaneously: his idealism, besides being a source of strength to him as an individual; it rendered the reality less vulgar, less degrading and less mean; on the contrary, the reality rendered his idealism practical, plausible and sober.

Thus, his philosophy was the philosophy of life-affirmation. He was willing to do what is possible, accept what is feasible, work out what is practical at a particular time, and treat the immediate gain as a step to the realization of the ultimate ends, which he never forgot.

Further keeping in view these developments in the realm of ideas, in the light of the experience of the working of socialist and liberal instructions in India and elsewhere, realizing the sinister character of the long term trends of the present technologically oriented civilization, and believing that it is possible for human beings to change unitedly the course of history, the feasibility of adopting the following ideas derived from Gandhi's thought could be considered as a basis of fresh thinking and social action:

Consistent with the principle of justice and equity for all other

sections of society, all social effort today should be directed towards the all-round development of the lowest of the lowliest (i.e., landless labourers, small peasants, petty craftsmen, untouchables and tribals, etc.) in terms of freedom, equality, independence and relative comfort. This objective can be realized in a social order so framed as to allow for a wide measure of an almost complete involvement and sustained participation of the individual in the political, social and economic and cultural processes.

While retaining the vital, but limited role of the state, the broad pattern of this new order would be in conformity with the principles of decentralization of the political and economic institutions, the latter perhaps on voluntary cooperative lines.

Consistent with the spirit of our times, India should strive to build its cultural life on the basis of the value of constraint and indigenous sources.

The task of promoting national unity is not simply a task that can be handled by political prescription because it is a task which in reality involves a reversal of the historical trends operating for over nearly a thousand years and of which the most important elements are: (i) involvement of religion with politics and law; (ii) disregard on *the* part of the *people* for *the* sentiments *of the other*; (iii) built-in economic inequalities in general and *regional* inequalities in particular; (iv) an absence of a truly comprehensive all-India *nationalism* which can only develop as a result deeper and intimate inter-religious, inter-caste, inter-state contacts, like marriage, etc., by growth of such regional institutions in the field of education, health and culture, abolition of state domicile rules, etc.

India should follow a really independent foreign policy by so arranging the domestic policies that it is self sufficient and self-reliant in respect of food, shelter, clothing, education, security and culture. It is not possible to be politically independent without social, economic and cultural independence.

Since the process of the elaboration of the details of this new order of ideas will involve considerable amount of discussion, clarification and experimentation, the intellectuals may undertake fundamental and operational research in the use of non-violent techniques in resolving inter-group conflicts (caste-out caste, Hindu-Muslim) and for collective social action, with regard to communal harmony, a close study of Gandhi's non-violent movements on the basis of available data.

It would also be worthwhile taking such steps as will mitigate the evils of the prevailing order. To begin with we could campaign for the leadership to work for the abolition of inheritance, for strict and honest and vigorous implementation of land reform laws; to consider the possibilities of evolving a new type of constructive programme to promote national culture; to avoid social waste and, corruption, etc.; and to mobilize forces for new experimentation in the fields of education, customs and conventions; and to promote widespread political education of the people with a view to making them more self-conscious, and to preparing them for collective action as and when required.

In conclusion it can be stated that *sarvodaya*—the church of Gandhism—is irrelevant today. But the life of Gandhi as a man of action and of social commitment indeed has considerable relevance. Some of the elements of the approach of Gandhi to social questions—both national and international—are equally valid; for instance, India can learn from Gandhi the importance of looking within and of learning to stand in her boots; India can learn from Gandhi about the need to create new foci of power based on the efforts of the people in the field of economic, political and social relations in order to check the growing power of bureaucracy to reinvigorate our collective life; Gandhi's constructive programme could be adopted to evolve new fields of creating mass pressure against social evils; and India can learn from Gandhi how to strengthen the will of the people to bring about basic social changes; of affluence rendered easy by technology.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Gandhi's ideas and programmes differ from *Sarvodaya* in the same way as the gospel is distinct from the church.
2. It is indeed not as an ideology in a formal sense. Nonetheless, if various elements of this thought are pieced together, it does appear to be.
3. N. K. Bose, *Culture and Society in India*, Bombay, 1967, p. 417.
4. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swarāj*, Ahmedabad, 1938, p. 34.
5. *Ibid.*, 63.
6. Erich, Eramm, 'Afterword' in Orwell's *1984*, New York, 1961, p. 260.
7. N. K. Bose, *Culture and Society in India*, Bombay, 1967, p. 404.
8. For example, *Kanchan mukta* (society 'money-less economy'); *lokniti* (people's power 0); Bhoodan and the related movements; Panchayati raj; *Khadi*; Prohibition; *ram-dhun* and hymn singing and *brahmacārya* and *Varnāśrama dharma*; in some cases the followers of *Sarvodaya* have evolved even a typical hair style.

BHAGWANT RAO DUBEY

## Gandhi's Views on Status of Woman in India



FOR Gandhi, *Swarāj* was a wide and a comprehensive term; it was not merely a political fact, but a social reality also. Therefore, not only did he struggle to free the country from the foreign yoke, but also to free her from social maladies. As an important aspect of his programme for the social reconstruction of the Indian society, he wanted to bring about a reform in the status and general condition of women in society.

Historically viewed, the status of women in India was fairly satisfactory during the Vedic Age when there was absolute equality between the sexes in the field of religion; girls were imparted high education and were married about 18 years of age; love marriages were in vogue; and widow remarriages were allowed. In the last two thousand years, however, the general condition of women has been deteriorating.<sup>1</sup> As a result of the social reforms, beginning from the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the position of women slightly improved. In the twentieth century it was Gandhi who did commendable work to improve the lot of the Indian women. In the present paper, we are going to generally discuss Gandhi's views about religion and his ideals of womanhood.

## GANDHI—A RELIGIOUS MAN

Gandhi was essentially a religious man. His existence without religion was unthinkable. He said:

'I could not live for a single second without religion.... My politics and all other activities of mine are derived from my religion'.<sup>1</sup>

Though the main source of his religious values was Hindu *dharmā*, this is not to be taken to suggest that he was a blind follower of Hindu *dharmā*. He rejected the religious doctrines that did not appeal to his reason or were in conflict with his conscience.<sup>3</sup>

## GANDHI'S IDEALS OF WOMANHOOD

Concerned as he was with the regeneration of Indian women, Gandhi expressed his views about the Indian women several times. He was of the opinion that the status of women is defined in culture contexts. While talking about the Indian women, Gandhi had the ideals of womanhood from ancient India in mind. Replying to a question he said: 'My ideal of a wife is Sita'.<sup>4</sup> He held Damayanti, Draupadi and Savitri also in high esteem. In his Presidential Address at the Bombay Bhangi Samaj held on February 20, 1918, expressing his views about the regeneration of women, Gandhi emphasized the need for producing Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi who could help us forget the blemishes on women which are represented in *Shāstras*. If such women were produced, the women will occupy the respectful place they held in the past.<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi was not opposed to the good things in the Western way of life or to the status of women in the Western society. However, he was opposed to the irrational craze that had seized a certain section of Indian society for imitating the West even when it did not suit our genius. He advised the Indian women in clear unmistakable terms:

'They may not ape the manner of the West, which may be suited to its environment. They must apply methods to the Indian genius and Indian environment. Their's must be the strong, controlling, purifying, steadying hand, conserving what is best in our culture, and unhesitatingly rejecting what is base and degrading. This is the work of Sitas, Draupadis, Savitris and Damayantis, not of amazons and prudes.'<sup>6</sup>

## EQUALITY BETWEEN THE SEXES

Gandhi was a votary of non-violence, the first condition of which was

justice all around and in every department of life.<sup>7</sup> The principle of non-violence also demands complete abstention from exploitation in any form.<sup>8</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that Gandhi denounced men for the neglect and ill use of women.<sup>9</sup> According to Gandhi, legislation is the handwork of man who has been unfair to woman in performing the self-appointed task.<sup>10</sup> For him, liberation of India was as necessary as the liberation of women.

In his address on February 20, 1918, Gandhi dealt at length with the problem of regeneration of women. During the course of his speech Gandhi stated that:

‘Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest detail of the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his’.<sup>11</sup>

That is to say women are not inferior to men. In fact they are supreme in their fields. The acceptance of the different fields of activities for men and women presupposes that they are fundamentally different from each other. This point he further states in most unambiguous terms that ‘man and woman are equal in status, but are not identical. They are a peerless pair complementary to one another’.<sup>12</sup>

Since the men and women were not identical, for Gandhi, there was no equality of occupations.<sup>13</sup> Nature demanded the vocations of men and women to be different from each other. For instance, it was not necessary for men to acquire the qualities necessary for performing the duty of motherhood. According to Gandhi: ‘The art of bringing up the children was her special and sole prerogative’.<sup>14</sup> There was a definite division of labour between man and woman; the former is the breadwinner while the latter, the caretaker and the distributor of bread.

It is true that Gandhi was nostalgic about the great Indian traditions. But he would reject anything that would not appeal to his reason. Therefore, in the new order of his imagination the women in India were the part-time workers, their primary function being the discharge of domestic responsibilities.<sup>15</sup> Yet, Gandhi did not like that the household chores should take away entire time of women. He called it domestic slavery and wanted to free the womankind from this incubus.<sup>16</sup>

Men and women, though equal in status, are quite different from each other by nature. No surprise, therefore, that while

agreeing to the need of universal education, Gandhi recommended separate methods of education for the boys and the girls.<sup>17</sup> He held the view that it was not possible to develop the personality of men and women to their maximum unless the scheme of education was framed keeping in view the cardinal truth that the activities of men and women were different; while the men are to be prepared for the outward activities, the women have to be trained for the home-life.<sup>18</sup> He said:

'I believe in the proper education of women. But I do not believe that woman will make her contribution<sup>19</sup> to the world by mimicking or running a race with men'.

Since man and woman were equal, said Gandhi, 'woman must cease to consider herself the object of man's lust'.<sup>20</sup> If Sita, the woman of his ideal, never bothered to please Rama by her physical charms, and if the woman was to be an equal partner with man, woman should neither adorn to please her husband, and much less to attract others,<sup>21</sup> nor consider herself subordinate or inferior to man.<sup>22</sup> He once said: 'If I were born a woman, I would rise in rebellion against any pretension on the part of man that woman is born to be his plaything'.<sup>23</sup> Gandhi wanted that man and woman should enjoy absolute equality in public life and woman should suffer no legal disabilities. He said: 'women must have votes and an equal legal status'.<sup>24</sup>

#### WOMAN SUPERIOR TO MAN

Gandhi considered women not only equal to men, but in many ways superior to them. The students of Gandhian ethics know that Gandhi accorded a high value to the qualities of suffering and sacrifice. To him bravery lay in dying, and not in killing,<sup>25</sup> as many wrongly believed. He defined bravery in highest sense of suffering; and real sacrifice as dying for a noble cause. And for the courage of self-sacrifice, woman is superior to man as the man is to woman for the courage of brute.<sup>26</sup> By the limitations imposed by nature on them, woman cannot participate in a violent war in a big way. But in a non-violent war, against injustice anywhere, men and women could be co-sharers. In a way, in a non-violent war women could make a greater contribution than men because non-violence calls for suffering, and who could suffer more purely and nobly than women! To call women a 'weaker sex is a libel',<sup>27</sup> Gandhi declared. It is a gross injustice to women. If by strength is meant brute strength,

then indeed woman is less brute than man.<sup>28</sup> But if by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably superior to man.<sup>29</sup> Non-violence means infinite love, which means infinite capacity for suffering. And who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure?<sup>30</sup> Woman has been endowed with tremendous strength of sacrifice and suffering. Gandhi wrote: ‘Woman is sacrifice personified. When she does a thing in the right spirit, she moves mountain.’<sup>31</sup>

## MARRIAGE

Gandhi generally believed in the form and purpose of marriage as envisaged in the Hindu religion. He said:

‘I have no theory of marriage that is inconsistent with a belief in transmigration, rebirth or *mukti*’.<sup>32</sup>

The aims of the Hindu marriage are said to be three: *dharma*, *praja* (progeny) and *rati* (pleasure). Of these, *rati* is given the least significance and the Hindu thinkers never advised marriage solely for *rati* or sexual pleasure.<sup>33</sup> Gandhi also assigned first place to spirituality and last to love.<sup>34</sup> In the Vedic Age, marriage was universal since it was believed that without a son one could not get *mokṣa* (salvation). But Gandhi said, ‘it was an excellent thing for girls to remain unmarried for the sake of service’.<sup>35</sup> However, he knew that only one in a million was worthy of remaining unmarried. He considered marriage a natural thing, but declared that marriage is a *vyabhichar*—concupiscence—which was performed for the satisfaction of sexual appetite. He wanted all those to remain unmarried who did not want a child.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, he called upon the girls to remain spinsters if they failed to get a suitable match.<sup>37</sup> Gandhi made no distinction between a son and a daughter—either of them should be welcomed alike.<sup>38</sup>

Gandhi’s ideals of husband and wife were Rama and Sita.<sup>39</sup> He was sad at his heart that in India there were husbands who regarded their wives as their property like cattle or household furniture.

Gandhi considered family a God-ordained institution and held the marriage-tie in high esteem. ‘I hold that’, he said, ‘husband and wife merge in each other. They are one in two or two in one’.<sup>40</sup> To a married couple he blessed thus:

‘You are being united in marriage as friends and equals. If the husband is called *Swamin*, the wife is *Swamini*—each master of the other, each helpmate of the other, each cooperating with the other in the performance of life’s tasks and duties’.<sup>41</sup>



Gandhi defined the status of wife vis-à-vis husband thus: 'The wife is not the slave of the husband but his comrade, otherwise known as better half, his colleague and friend. She is a co-sharer with him of equal rights and of equal duties. Their obligations towards each other and towards the world must, therefore, be the same and reciprocal'.<sup>42</sup>

Though opposed to the custom of *sati* or immolation, Gandhi placed a high value on marital fidelity. However, he wanted husband also to be loyal to his wife. He said:

'If the wife has to prove her loyalty and undivided devotion to her husband, so has the husband to prove his allegiance and devotion to his wife. You cannot have one set of weights and measures for the one and different one for the other'.<sup>43</sup>

Gandhi was opposed to compulsions in the choice of companions for life. He advised the people to take consent of the girls in this regard and allowed the girls to resist such a marriage against their will in every legitimate manner.<sup>44</sup>

#### AGE AT MARRIAGE

The age at which the girls are ordinarily married gives a clue of the position of the women in society. An early age of marriage would suggest that the girls play no or little role in espousal; that the girls can be given in marriage for pecuniary considerations by the elders; that the bride price can be in vogue; that the connubial relations do not extend beyond the caste; that the female education is neglected; that the females are subjected to the hazards of early and frequent pregnancies, etc. Gandhi was strongly opposed to the child and early marriages. Expressing his views about Sarda Act, then under the process of formulation, he wrote:

'I am strongly in favour of raising the age of the consent not merely to 14, but even to 16'. He further stated: 'I have witnessed the ruin of the health of many a child mother, and when to the horrors of an early marriage is added enforced early widowhood, human tragedy becomes complete. Any sensible legislation in the direction of raising the age of consent will certainly have my approval'.<sup>45</sup>

To Gandhi, the custom of child marriage was a moral as well as a physical evil. It was also 'a recession from God as well as from *Swarāj*'.<sup>46</sup> He wanted that 'ordinarily a girl under 18 years should never be given in marriage'.<sup>47</sup> He was in fact in favour of fixing 20 as the minimum age for marriage of the girls. Advising the young men not to marry any girl who was below 16, he wrote:

‘If I could do so, I would lay down 20 as the minimum. Twenty years is early enough even in India. It is we who are responsible for the precocity of girls, not the Indian climate, because I know girls of the age of 20 who are pure and undefiled and able to stand the storm that may rage round’.<sup>48</sup>

## WIDOW REMARRIAGE

Gandhi had three sets of values for widowhood: (i) for the child widows, (ii) about voluntary adult widowhood, and (iii) regarding enforced adult widowhood.

Gandhi was deeply concerned about the state and condition of child-widows. He treated an unmarried girl and a child widow at par. But he was more sympathetic towards the latter, who were customarily denied the right to remarry and also suffered from several other social and legal disabilities, than the former who could live a respectable life even if they decided to remain unmarried. As stated earlier, Gandhi permitted a few girls to remain unmarried who had a strong will and passion for service. However, he wanted all of the child-widows to remarry because they suffered from a number of social disabilities. He said: ‘If there be even one child widow, the wrong demands redress’.<sup>49</sup> To do justice to the child widows, Gandhi advised the parents to see that the girl widows are duly and well-married— not remarried.<sup>50</sup> To Gandhi, the use of term ‘widow’ for the girls was a violent abuse of a name which had a sacred association.<sup>51</sup>

About the adult widows, Gandhi felt that the decision to remarry should rest with the widows. Yet Gandhi ‘never advocated widow remarriage on a wholesale scale’.<sup>52</sup> He held voluntary widowhood in high esteem. He said: ‘I do believe that a real Hindu widow is a treasure’.<sup>53</sup> According to Gandhi the word ‘widow’ in Hinduism has a sacred odour.<sup>54</sup> He declared, ‘I am a worshipper of a true widow’.<sup>55</sup> He was not against widowhood, but against the wrongs done to the widows. ‘My crusade’, he said, ‘is not against real widowhood. It is against its atrocious caricature’.<sup>56</sup> Thus, while ‘voluntary widowhood is a priceless boon in Hinduism’, said Gandhi, ‘enforced widowhood is a curse’.<sup>57</sup>

## PURDAH

According to Gandhi, *pardah* was one of the social evils of the society that impeded the march towards *Swarāj*. *Purdah* not only denied the freedom to the women, but also the free gifts of God-like light and fresh air. He considered it an institution of recent origin.<sup>58</sup> Removal of *pardah* was also necessary for a healthy competition with other

nations which was impossible 'if we allow the better half of ourselves to become paralysed'.<sup>59</sup>

According to Gandhi, 'chastity is not a hothouse growth. It cannot be super-imposed'. He called upon the men to trust their womenfolk in the same way the latter are compelled to trust the former. Therefore, he called the people to 'tear down *purdah* with one mighty effort'.<sup>60</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, it will be amply evident that Gandhi was a supreme blend of tradition and modernity, in regard to his views on the status of women. And there is no denying the fact that it was mostly because of Gandhi's relentless efforts that the woman—the backward woman of India—took active part in the public life both in the pre-and post-independence era. It is on record that in the *satyāgraha* movements of Gandhi, women came out in large number to take part. And picketing of liquor shops by the women, particularly of Bihar, was indeed a revolutionary step. In brief, the political awakening in the Indian women in recent years may largely be attributed to the movements that Gandhi initiated and the general improvement in the status of women in our country owe a great deal to the infinite interest that Gandhi, from the very beginning, took to their cause.

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GANESH D. GADRE

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## Trusteeship



### THE STORY OF FOUR WISE MEN

WE MAY begin by recalling the Panchatantra story of the four wise men. One of them was worldly wise and the other three were otherwise. They had set out to make some money and were passing through a forest, which might well have been somewhere near Simla. In that forest they found a few scattered bones of a tiger. The first wise man whispered a *mantra* and arranged the bones into a skeleton. The second wise man, with his *mantric* powers, put flesh and skin on the skeleton. The third wise man then uttered another *mantra* and infused vital breath into the body. The animal, as soon as it regained life, swallowed up the three wise men. The worldly wise man saved himself by climbing the top of a tree before the beginning of these 'Experiments with Truth'.

The *mantra* of trusteeship can infuse life into the skeleton of Gandhism which, if revived, will swallow us along with our comfortable armchairs. But I am sure, all of us belong to the tradition of the three wise men who would, in the pursuit of truth, prefer self-sacrifice to self-preservation. In this adventure, the intellectuals in India may hope for respectable company. The Tatas have been experimenting with trusteeship according to their own lights.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Shri G. D. Birla accepted in principle the responsibilities

of trusteeship and said at a merchants' conference at Sholapur in 1929: 'Let us live and be prepared, if it comes to that, to sacrifice ourselves for the common good.'<sup>2</sup>

#### GANDHI MORE RADICAL THAN MAO

Gandhism, not being carnivorous, may not devour our bodies; but it will decidedly deprive us of all our unfair privileges. At the dawn of independence, Gandhi said, '...if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*,<sup>3</sup> doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work'.<sup>4</sup>

It would be no exaggeration to say that Mahatma Gandhi was a more radical revolutionary than Chairman Mao. Gandhism seeks to combine Lincoln's love of liberty with Lenin's urge for equality, without resorting to the barrel of a gun. Hence, we have to pursue an effective non-violent strategy for establishing in India a fraternity that will embrace both liberty and equality. If we succeed, India can save the world from nuclear disaster and help humanity in the discovery of higher and nobler truths, which is the real purpose of human existence.

#### ETHICS AND ECONOMICS

Gandhi had a way of prescribing sugar-coated quinine for the maladies of society. He would administer the bitterest of truths under a thick coating of *ahimsā*. But some of his followers have developed a way of lapping up the sugar and spitting out the quinine. They deal in the same manner with the theory of trusteeship. They give endless lipservice to the spiritual and moral wrappings, but on reaching the hard core, they walk away without suggesting any method for transforming the existing social order and bringing it in line with the principle of trusteeship. They forget that mere talk is no substitute for action. Individual ethics is not capable of solving economic and political problems. A mere call to the conscience of businessmen will not control their power to act irresponsibly. 'Power which is open to abuse must be controlled by power—not by conscience'.<sup>5</sup> Any student of Gandhi, if he has the patience to piece together his utterances on trusteeship, can find clear and powerful sanctions for its implementation. Gandhi's theory of trusteeship can transform the docile *Daridranārāyana*<sup>6</sup> into a vigorous *Narasimbhā*<sup>7</sup> that will tear to shreds all subtle systems of exploitation of man by man.

## CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF TRUSTEESHIP

Gandhi arrived at his theory of trusteeship through the study of the *Gītā* and Snell's *Principles of Equity*. All forms of property and human accomplishments are either gifts of nature or products of social living. As such, they belong not to the individual but to society, and therefore, should be used for the good of all. Every person should look upon his mental or physical talents or material wealth as a trust for society and use them for its benefit. This constructive trusteeship is not optional; it is obligatory. Nor is trusteeship a permanent tenure for holding property. It is a transitory status, leading to cooperativization of large-scale property. The transference from private ownership to trust ownership does not give rise to any claims for compensation. Trust ownership is not inheritable, it terminates after the death or removal of the original trustee. Trustees have no right to profits. They can get remuneration for managing the affairs of the trust with the consent of workers and the sanction of the State. This remuneration should bear a reasonable proportion to and ought not to be much higher than the wages of the workers. Workers become partners in the management of trust property. The managers are responsible and accountable to workers as well as to society. The labour-power, skills and talents of the workers are also to be used, not for personal aggrandizement, but for the benefit of the society as a whole. The theory of trusteeship does not contemplate the liquidation or pauperization of the capitalists. It gives them a genuine opportunity to use their experience and talents for the common good. Administrative or legislative action by a *panchāyat rāj*<sup>8</sup> representing the consensus of the society is permissible in the implementation of trusteeship. The ultimate sanction behind the theory of trusteeship is non-violent non-cooperation with those who cling to their exclusive ownership.

## GANDHIAN ECONOMIC ORDER

Gandhi had become keenly aware of the Western dilemma between capitalism and communism. If modern means of production remain in private hands, they lead to a concentration of wealth and power, the rich become richer and the poor poorer. On the other hand, if these means of production pass primarily into the hands of the State, the demon of dictatorship raises its head. The Mahatma, therefore, visualized a decentralized and broadly autonomous economic order, with the smaller units in private hands and the larger ones owned and managed by co-operative communities.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF TRUSTEESHIP

Proudhon, the French philosopher, said: ‘all property is theft’. Gandhi, on the other hand, said: ‘all property is trust’. Both of them, however, meant the same thing. When he asked any group or class to behave like trustees, he implied that they were behaving like thieves. They were thus served notice to surrender their properties or powers and share them with those whom they had been exploiting or dominating. Gandhi used to give a long rope to the trustees to mend their ways; but if they showed no signs of repentance he unleashed the weapons of non-cooperation and *satyāgraha* to change their hearts. ‘If the owning class does not accept trusteeship voluntarily’, said Gandhi, ‘its conversion must come under the pressure of public opinion’.<sup>9</sup> His methods of conversion, according to Jawaharlal Nehru, were ‘not far removed from courteous and considerate compulsion’.<sup>10</sup>

### THE BRITISH TRUSTEES

This is exemplified by Gandhi’s dealings with British trustees. In the beginning he expected the British rulers to behave like trustees for the Indian people. When he was completely disillusioned about British intentions after the Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala massacre, he led wave after wave of non-cooperation against the British rule until Lord Mountbatten stepped down from Viceroyalty to Governor-Generalship, until the master was ‘persuaded’ to become a servant.

### PRINCES AS TRUSTEES

The same thing happened with Indian Princes. Gandhi requested them to behave like trustees at a stormy meeting at Benaras in 1916. When the princes appeared unwilling to surrender their properties and power even after the withdrawal of British paramountcy, Gandhi advised Sardar Patel to employ the pressure of public opinion and ‘persuade’ the princes to accede to and integrate with the Indian Union. Many of them were given an opportunity to serve their people as *Rajapramukhs*.<sup>11</sup> All of them were given privy-purses to tide over the hardships of change in their status. It would be interesting to note here that Gandhi grudged Sardar Patel’s generosity in determining the size of the privy purses.<sup>12</sup>

### BHOODAN-GRĀMDAN

Acharya Vinoba Bhave is striving to implement the concept of trusteeship in the agriculture sector of Indian economy. His *Bhoodan-*



*Grāmdan* movement proclaims that all land belongs to the village community and he seeks to persuade all land-holders to accept this principle. But the major concentrations of wealth and power are centred in the cities. The *Bhoodan-Grāmdan* movement has not spelled out how its principles are to operate in trade and industry. People have already started saying that the *Bhoodan* workers are capable of pestering only the poor villagers but have nothing to say to their really powerful brethren in the cities, who are corrupting the character of the entire nation with their sordid selfishness. Every ambitious lad in the village is now attracted by the glitter in the cities which are crowded by luxurious businessmen and comfortable bureaucrats, technocrats, lawyers, doctors, journalists, film actors, educationists and others. The richer landlords in the villages welcome moral and political preachers from the cities; but the poorer sections of the peasantry listen cynically to sermons on simplified and diluted *grāmdan*.

#### GANDHI CONFRONTS THE CAPITALISTS

Gandhi had, however, anticipated the mood of the people at the dawn of independence itself. He, therefore, approved a formula of trusteeship for the urban sector. It said:

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare. It does not exclude legislative regulation of ownership and use of wealth.
3. Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society.
4. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum income should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so, that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.
5. Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of

production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.<sup>13</sup>

Gandhi sent this formula to the Indian capitalists through Shri G.D. Birla for acceptance. Shri Birla had accepted the principle of trusteeship as far back as 1929. But when the Mahatma came to brass-tacks, the formula was kept in cold-storage. No further communication from Shri Birla followed.<sup>15</sup> Bapu was assassinated before he could pursue the matter further.

#### THE MULTI-PRONGED DRIVE

It is now more than twenty years since Gandhi served notice on Indian capitalists, through Shri Birla, to quit their privileges. They have shown no signs of a change of heart. On the other hand, they are entrenching themselves into positions of vantage with the help of foreign capital for a more intensive exploitation of the Indian people. It is, therefore, high time that those who claim to follow Gandhi should think of ‘persuading’ these recalcitrant trustees to fulfil their obligation.

Bapu combined in himself the leadership of *Rajaniti*<sup>15</sup> and *Lokaniti*.<sup>16</sup> But Jawaharlal and Vinoba divided this inheritance and divorced *Rajaniti* from *Lokaniti*. This made both of them feeble and relatively ineffective.

The strategy for the implementation of trusteeship in the urban sector of the economy will have to be a multi-pronged drive. The advance in these different directions can commence simultaneously. Progress in one direction will accelerate the pace in the other directions. But ultimate success will come only when the various prongs synchronize and close in simultaneously.

#### JAYAPRAKASH GROPEs FOR CONSENSUS

A Panchayāt Rāj, that is, a State representing the consensus or common will of the society is an important step towards introduction of social ownership without bloodshed and class war. Shri Jayaprakash Narayan has already initiated moves for a national consensus. He has started a dialogue among representatives of all major political parties in India to explore possibilities of their working together for an agreed minimum programme which has an immediate relevance. He has not, however, thought of making trusteeship the hub of all inter-party discussions. A programme of trusteeship can alone bring together ardent workers from all

political parties to a common platform. Those who are anxious to conserve the traditional values of our ancient culture can be made to see that an honest implementation of the theory of trusteeship will strengthen the roots and core of our culture and ensure its hold on the mind of the masses. Those who are eager to introduce socialism or communism in India can also be made to see that an honest implementation of theory of trusteeship can fulfil their most cherished norms of economic justice. And those who have today monopolized political power in the name of Mahatma Gandhi can be reminded of their debt to him and persuaded to share their power with other political parties for the implementation of trusteeship. A drive among political parties for the formation of a Panchayāt Rāj should constitute an important step towards the implementation of trusteeship. ‘When Panchayāt Rāj is established’, said Gandhi, ‘public opinion will do what violence can never do...If the people non-cooperate with the evil of Zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In Panchayāt Rāj, only the Panchayāt will be obeyed and the Panchayāt can only work through the law of their making’.<sup>17</sup>

#### LOHIA ATTEMPTED LEGISLATION

The enactment of a permissive or enabling statute on trusteeship would constitute another important step towards its implementation. ‘When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it’, said Gandhi, ‘the people themselves, beginning with Grām Panchayāts, will begin to introduce such statutes’.<sup>18</sup> The late Dr Ram Manohar Lohia had given notice of an Indian Trusteeship Bill to the Lok Sabha. It provides for the voluntary conversion into trust corporations of concerns owning industries, plantations, banks, trade, transport, etc., worth Rs. 10,00,000. If the shareholders of any such concern offered to become trustees and accepted the workers as their partners, the Government would constitute a panchayāt of trustees to manage the affairs of that concern. The shareholders and the workers would elect 5 trustees each and the central and state governments and the local municipal committee would together nominate 5 trustees to represent the interests of consumers and the community. The existing managing agent of the concern would become the managing trustee of the new trust corporation. The bill made detailed provisions for efficient management of trust corporations in the light of Gandhi’s views on trusteeship. The Bill also provided that the net profits of the trust corporations, after due provision being made for depreciation

and provident funds, should be credited to the Ministry of Finance for being allocated to the different States according to the recommendations of the Finance Commission.

The President of India withheld sanction to the introduction of this bill in Lok Sabha on the ground that the aforesaid provision made it a Money Bill. Dr Lohia had appealed to the President for reconsideration; but death snatched him away before he could pursue the matter. Gandhi had hoped that statutory trusteeship would be India's gift to the world.<sup>19</sup> Dr Lohia tried to realize Gandhi's dream. It is now for other members of Parliament to make statutory provisions for enabling conscientious trustees to fulfil their moral responsibility.

#### SHANKARRAO DEO HINTS AT EDUCATION AND AGITATION

The most important step towards the implementation of trusteeship is a mass drive for educating the people in the responsibilities of trusteeship and for organizing workers behind the demand for cooperativization of large concerns. Shri Shankarrao Deo, the veteran Sarvodaya leader, has initiated some work on these lines. In a paper circulated recently, he had suggested that 'the tea plantation industry in India provides an ideal target for intensive experiments in the implementation of trusteeship'.<sup>20</sup> The British owners of tea plantations have earned annual dividends of over 100 per cent for over 100 years. The report of the Plantation Inquiry Commission, 1956, reveals how British capital has retained its economic stranglehold on India by entering into partnership with Indian capitalists. It is the sacred duty of Gandhi's India to convert this vestige of the old British Commonwealth into a real commonwealth. The different trade union organizations should be called upon to agitate, not for higher wages, but for the ownership of the concerns where they work. If the owners fail to become trustees, workers should resort to non-violent *satyāgraha*, making it impossible for the owners to continue their exploitation. Gandhi had advised the owners that 'they should willingly regard workers as the real owners of the concerns which they fancy they have created.... they should at once offer the strikers full control of the concern which is as much the strikers' as theirs'.<sup>21</sup>

#### ENTIRELY NON-VIOLENT AND DEMOCRATIC STRATEGY

When enlightened and organized workers from a particular industry or concern are prepared to undertake responsibilities of partnership and when they resort to non-violent non-cooperation with their

employers who refuse to become trustees, the Government is entitled, under the existing statutes, to take over the management of such deadlocked concerns in the public interests. And if the Government which takes this administrative measure is representative of all parties, the subsequent transition from private ownership to trust ownership will be consistent with all canons of non-violence laid down by Gandhi.

#### FUTILE AND FRUSTRATING EXERCISES

The theory of trusteeship is thus a vital *mantra* which can infuse life into the skeleton of Gandhism. The many-sided constructive activities launched by Gandhi are the limbs of Gandhism; but trusteeship is its very life-breath. Abolition of castes, decentralization of industries, removal of *purdah*, emancipation of women, basic education, linguistic, regional or communal harmony, national integration, peace, *bhoodan* and *grāmdan* are all very valuable movements; but they will prove futile and frustrating if they are not integrated with the programme of implementing trusteeship in the urban sector of the economy.

#### TRUST WITH DESTINY

Explaining that the Karachi Resolution of 1931 implied a maximum monthly income of Rs. 500 for all public servants, lawyers or merchants, Gandhi remarked, 'you should not think that this proposal is meant to remain on paper. This will be enforced when *swarāj* is attained. I am old and even if I die, Jawaharlal is certain to enforce it'.<sup>22</sup>

On the midnight of August 14-15, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru said, 'Long years ago we made a trust with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge'. Even after 21 years of freedom, the pledge remains substantially unfulfilled, because we have been caught up in a rat race for money, because we tend to be worldly wise and because we are inclined to climb the top of a tree in fear of the *Narasimha*.

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MOHIBBUL HASAN

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## Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian Muslims



No MUSLIM leader, not even Maulana Mohammad Ali or Mr Jinnah, ever received the adulation of the Indian Muslims, as Mahatma Gandhi did during the Khilafat and Non-cooperation days from 1919 to 1922. He was the idol of the Muslim masses; he was looked upon as a saint, and miraculous powers were ascribed to him; and there was hardly a prominent Muslim, with the exception of Mr Jinnah, who did not accept his leadership. But from the late twenties his popularity began to wane. This was due to the failure of the unity talks, for which he was partly held responsible, and some of the statements which he made on the communal disturbances that followed the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement. However, he still commanded sufficient influence to be able to rally considerable numbers of Muslims round him when he gave a call for the Satyāgraha in 1931. But with the growing dominance of the Muslim League from 1937-38 onwards, his influence began to decline rapidly. The League started a virulent propaganda against him, raised the slogan of 'Islam in danger' and made him not only responsible for all acts of omission and commission of the Congress but even for the reactionary stand of the Hindu Mahasabha. The result was that, in the years before Partition, his prestige and popularity among the Muslims stood at its lowest ebb. Gandhi realized

this and said so on August 8, 1942, at the AICC meeting: ‘During Khilafat the Muslims accepted me as their true friend. I have now come to be regarded as so evil and detestable’.<sup>1</sup> However, his efforts to save the lives of Muslims in the course of communal riots during and after Partition and the supreme sacrifice which he made with his life in the cause of communal harmony, rehabilitated him in their hearts. But Gandhi could never win back the affection that was given to him during the Non-cooperation days.

Upto 1918, Gandhi had no significant place in Indian politics; nor did he have any power base, although he was trying to find one in Gujarat. In order, therefore, to establish himself as a political leader he tried to use different issues that would serve his purpose. In 1917, he conducted an enquiry into the condition of the indigo growers in the Champaran district in northwest Bihar who were ruthlessly exploited by the planters. Then the next year he advised the peasants of Kaira district in Bombay presidency to start *satyāgraha* and refuse to pay taxes to the government. The same year he organized the textile workers in Ahmedabad and secured for them a rise in wages. He then, on April 6, 1919, began *satyāgraha* as a protest against the Rowlatt Bills (March 1919). But since this led to violence in different parts of the country, he announced its suspension on July 21.

These isolated campaigns, which Gandhi organized, were in the nature of a probe to enable him to test his strength and find out the effectiveness of his techniques. They gained him some prominence, yet he was still dwarfed by more famous men like Tilak, C. R. Das and Jinnah. It was however, the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movement which not only pushed him to the front rank of Indian politicians, but made him the supreme leader of the Indian people.

The *Entente* had won the war against the Central European powers, and Turkey, being allied to the latter, was to be deprived of Thrace, of the Arab provinces and even of her homeland. Owing to the existence of Four Secret Treaties to which Britain, France, Russia and Italy were the signatories, the Ottoman Empire was to be divided among them. This created great restlessness among Indian Muslims, for the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire would mean the virtual liquidation of the Khilafat, which was a symbol of Muslim unity. Without sufficient territory and a large army the Khilafat would not be in a position to act as defender of the faith. Gandhi with the great uncanny insight that he possessed, realized the depths of Muslim feelings over the issue and he decided to champion their cause. He saw that here was an opportunity not only to win the goodwill and confidence of the Muslims and to



become their leader, but also to use them as a counterpoise against those Hindus who were not yet prepared to accept his leadership and programme. There was a further reason why he took up this cause. Being 'a worshipper of the cow' and regarding her with the same veneration as his mother,<sup>2</sup> he believed that 'the Hindus' participation in the Khilafat is the greatest and the best movement for cow-protection. I have, therefore, called Khilafat our Kamadhenu'.<sup>3</sup> Gandhi also championed the cause of the Khilafat because he hoped that thereby Hindu-Muslim unity would be strengthened and lead to the freedom of India. To quote his own words, he saw in the situation 'an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Musulmans, as would not arise in a hundred years'.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi's interest in Muslim politics began in 1916. He attended the Muslim League session of the same year and addressed one of its meetings. Earlier in the year he wrote to Mohammad Ali: 'It was during the Congress Session that I was able to get your address. I wanted to write to you to say how my heart went out to you in your troubles. Pray let me know if I can be of any service to you.'<sup>5</sup> Later, he became very friendly with Maulana Abdul Bari, who commanded considerable influence among Indian Muslims, and when in 1921 he visited Lucknow, he stayed with him.<sup>6</sup> He tried to secure the release of the Ali Brothers by writing to and meeting the Viceroy in regard to this and the Khilafat question. He drafted a letter which he wanted the Ali Brothers to address him in order to facilitate their release.<sup>7</sup>

From January 1919 onwards meetings in different places in India began to be held, stressing the maintenance of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, consistent with the dignity, prestige and power of the Caliph. In many of these meetings Gandhi personally took part and even presided over some. The meeting which took place at Delhi on November 22 passed a resolution thanking Bapu and other Hindus for their interest in the Khilafat agitation, and resolved on Gandhi's advice that, in the event of the Khilafat question not being satisfactorily solved, 'the Musalmans of India shall progressively withhold all cooperation from the British Government'. March 19, 1920, was fixed as a day of National mourning—a day of fasting, prayer and *hartal*; and on that day Gandhi made an announcement that he would lead a movement of non-cooperation if the terms of peace with Turkey did not meet the sentiments of Indian Muslims. Accordingly, when the peace terms imposed on Turkey were made public in May 1920, the All India Khilafat Committee adopted Gandhi's non-cooperation programme. On the June 2, at Bapu's suggestion, a conference of all parties was held at Allahabad, which decided upon the policy of non-cooperation,

and appointed a committee consisting of Gandhi, the Ali Brothers, Maulana Azad, Dr Kitchlew, Hasrat Mohani, and Haji Ahmad Siddiq Khatri to draw up a programme. On August 1, the Khilafat Committee organized a *hartal* and entrusted Gandhi with the leadership of the Non-cooperation Movement. The Mahatma launched the movement by returning his medals to the government.

It is interesting to note that Gandhi did not wait for the decision of the Congress before starting the movement. In justification of this he stated: ‘In my humble opinion it is no Congressman’s duty to consult the Congress before taking an action in a matter in which he has no doubts... For me to suspend Non-cooperation would be to prove untrue to the Musalman brethren.... They cannot await Congress decision.... The Khilafat is a matter of conscience with them. And in matters of conscience the law of majority has no place.’<sup>8</sup> But the real reason why Gandhi did not wait for the Congress’ decision appears to be that Muslims were getting impatient, and he feared that if the movement was delayed it would take a violent course and thus pass out of his control and leadership.

At the same time Gandhi realized that if the Khilafat agitation was to be successful, it must be linked with national issues, like the Punjab wrongs, and have the support of the Congress. In March 1920, the report of the Congress (Punjab) Enquiry Committee was published. The details disclosed in the report were received with indignant horror in the country. The delay in publishing the Hunter Report roused widespread suspicion. This was confirmed when on May 3, 1920, the Majority and Minority Reports of the Hunter Committee were published. Owing to these developments the All India Congress Committee met at Benaras, and decided upon holding a special session at Calcutta to consider the programme and policy of Non-cooperation which had been decided upon already on August 1 by the Khilafat Committee.

The special session was held on September, 1920. In the Subjects Committee all Muslim members, with the exception of Jinnah, voted with Gandhi, while many non-Muslims like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and the Maharashtrians supported C. R. Das, who led the opposition. It was due to Muslim support that Gandhi’s programme was approved by 148 against 135 votes. In the open session also there was sufficient opposition to Gandhi, but the solid, determined support of Muslims—they were also joined by many non-Muslims who felt angry over the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs and the illusory nature of the reforms—enabled him to carry his programme through the Congress by 1826 votes for and 804 votes against.<sup>9</sup> That Babu’s victory at Calcutta

was due mainly to the Muslim support is evident from the remarks of Mr Joseph Baptista, a prominent Congressman, that 'the Muslims have made the Congress the tail of the Khilafat lion.... Mr Gandhi by his stubbornness under the Sword of Damocles wielded by the Khilafat Committee, has made asses of all of us.'<sup>10</sup> Lajpat Rai, the president of the Calcutta session said: 'Non-cooperation programme has to a certain extent been precipitated by the central Khilafat Committee'.<sup>11</sup>

At the Nagpur Congress (December 1920) also there was great opposition to Gandhi. But he was able to win over C. R. Das. Bipin Chandra Pal pleaded with Das, but the latter stood firm. Lajpat Rai also tried to wean away Das from his present stand and reminded him of the discussion they had only a week ago at Benaras and Pandit Malaviya had lent his weight towards moderation. But this proved ineffective. The Lala, too, therefore changed his attitude because, in the words of Mohammad Ali, he 'realized that he could have no political existence outside Gandhi's Non-cooperation'.<sup>12</sup> Babu won over a majority of the non-Muslims, who firmly resolved to adhere to the Calcutta resolution which was reaffirmed, revised and recast in form acceptable to all parties in the Congress. But all the Muslims, with the exception of Jinnah, voted for Gandhi's resolution. It would not be too much to say that but for this solid, determined Muslim support both at Calcutta and Nagpur, Gandhi would not have secured his victory.

Gandhi's impact on the Muslim mind during this period was incalculable. His simplicity of life and sincerity of purpose stirred the imagination of the Muslims and won their devotion. There is no doubt that the Khilafat agitation would have been launched even without his cooperation. But it was he who gave it form and organization and directed it into non-violent channels. But for him, Muslim leaders would have resorted to violence with results that would have been disastrous. At the same time it must be said to their credit that they willingly accepted Gandhi's technique. On May 21, 1925, Maulana Abdul Bari issued a statement to the press that all the '*ulamā*' at Firangi Mahal (Lucknow) were in favour of non-violence.<sup>18</sup> Later, on hearing that the Mahatma had been arrested, he issued a statement calling upon Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to remain peaceful and have faith in his leadership.<sup>14</sup> Writing to Gandhi in 1919, Abdul Bari observed: 'Thanks are due to your kind special attention for the success of the Day of Prayer and Hindu-Muslim unity. Your personality and behaviour are deeply affecting Mussalmans in general and religious sections in particular. A group of '*ulama*' have written to me specially to pay their homage to you'.<sup>16</sup> Abdul Bari was taunted by some Muslims for his admiration of

Gandhi and called him ‘son of Gandhi’, but this did not change his attitude. Maulana Mohammad Ali was also full of admiration for, and placed his entire confidence in, Gandhi and wrote to Shaukat Ali from Paris where he had gone as a member of the Khilafat Delegation: ‘I only wish that I had Musheer here, and if possible Fazlul Haq, though of course the best man to have is Gandhi himself’.<sup>16</sup> Mohammad Ali was also accused, like Abdul Bari, of being a Hinduphile and Gandhiphile. But his reply was: ‘I cannot find in any community—Jewish, Christian or any other—a man who has as noble a character as Mahatma Gandhi. My *pir* and *murshid* is Abdul Bari whom I greatly respect. Yet I can say that I have not found any one superior to Mahatma Gandhi’.<sup>17</sup>

Gandhi has been criticized for uniting and awakening Muslims,<sup>18</sup> for making much of the Khilafat wrongs<sup>19</sup> and laying too much stress on the religious and spiritual side of the, Non-cooperation movement.<sup>20</sup> All this, it has been argued, led to revivalism and Hindu-Muslim conflicts. In regard to the awakening of the Muslims, Gandhi justified himself by saying: ‘The awakening of the masses was a necessary part of the training. It is a tremendous gain. I would do nothing to put the people to sleep again’.<sup>21</sup> Now it must be remembered that the Muslim masses would have been roused in any case because of the Khilafat agitation. What Gandhi did was to speed up the process and give it direction. His object was to make the Muslims anti-British and lead them to nationalism by stirring their religious consciousness. In this he was greatly successful. The Non-cooperation movement threw up a number of Muslim leaders like Mohammad Ali, Dr Ansari, Azad, Kitchlew, Sherwani, Kidwai, Asaf Ali and the Khan’ brothers, not to speak of many eminent educationists, who have rendered great service to the country. They came to nationalism by way of the Khilafat and remained nationalists and secular. Some political leaders who later formed themselves into an Ahrar party, also emerged into importance during this period. Although they assumed a religious label, they did not give up nationalism and always supported the Congress. The *‘ulama* of the Deoband school had always been anti-British and they remained loyal to the Congress till the end and opposed Partition, The others, along with many political leaders, began to drift away from the Congress from the late twenties. But this was due to other factors, to be discussed later, and had no connection with their ‘awakening’ in the Khilafat days.

The introduction of religious element in politics was no innovation of Gandhi. Indian nationalism, from its very inception, was closely associated with Hindu revivalism and emotionalism. Many

Hindu leaders like Rajnarain Bose, Aurobindo Ghosh, Tilak, Swami Shardhanand and Malaviya laid stress on the religious and spiritual side of Indian nationalism. Even C. R. Das talked of the 'spiritual significance of Dominion status'.<sup>22</sup> Thus Gandhi broke no new ground when he said that 'politics cannot be divorced from religion'.<sup>23</sup>

Taking into consideration the objective conditions existing in India, there was nothing wrong in exploiting religion for political ends and rousing the people from their slumber. This has been done in the past in India and elsewhere and is being done even today by states who are secular and even anti-religious. The mistake which Bapu made was first, that he made a fetish of religion and regarded it not merely as a means but also as an end in itself. Many of his beliefs and practices were rooted in revivalism and some of the words like *Rāma Rājya* and *Purṇa Swarāj*, to which he tried to give currency, aroused suspicion in the minds of Muslims. His second error was that he called off the movement after the Chauri-Chaura incident. This not only demoralized the leaders but also created great frustration among the masses. The bottled up energy of the people which had been unleashed during the Non-cooperation days, now found an outlet in communal clashes.

However, we should not overstress this point. It is true that if the movement had continued, it was likely that Hindus and Muslims would have remained united a little longer, but the movement could not have gone on indefinitely and on its termination there would have been a recrudescence of riots. At the same time it is impossible to agree with Lala Lajpat Rai that Hindu-Muslim conflicts were the result of the Non-cooperation movement,<sup>24</sup> because they were already there before Gandhi, and were due to economic, political and historical reasons. He was, in fact, successful in preserving communal peace for about three years by forging Hindu-Muslim unity. That he failed to make this unity permanent was because he could not diagnose the disease and apply a remedy that would strike at the root of the troubles. The facade of Hindu-Muslim unity which he built up was really shaky, because it was not built on solid foundations. The Mahatma himself was conscious of this, and while opposing Hasrat Mohani's resolution defining *swarāj* as complete independence at the Ahmedabad Congress in December 1921 he observed: 'Let us understand our limitations. Let Hindus and Musalmans have absolute, indissoluble unity. Who is here who can say today with confidence; Yes, Hindu-Muslim unity has become an indissoluble factor of Indian nationalism.'<sup>25</sup>

From 1924 onwards, Gandhi began to lose the confidence of

the Muslims. Already, after the Moplah rising of August 1921, misunderstandings had risen between him and the Muslims. The Muslim press, in general, tried to play down the atrocities committed by the Moplahs on the non-Muslims. Gandhi, while agreeing that official reports had greatly exaggerated the aggressive conduct of the Moplahs and were obviously calculated to affect the relations between Hindus and Muslims, could not but admit that excesses had been perpetrated. Maulana Mohammad Ali agreed with this view, though he maintained, on the basis of Dr Syed Mahmud's evidence, that there had been no conversions. However, Gandhi's real difference was with Hasrat Mohani who justified the conduct of the Moplahs by applying to their rebellion the rules of war, according to which those who helped the enemies became enemies themselves. And since the Hindus acted as informers, they deserved punishment. The Moplahs would have fought the Muslims, too, if they had behaved treacherously.<sup>26</sup>

Luckily, the Moplah affair blew over without leaving much bitterness. This was partly because it was forgotten in the excitement of the Khilafat issue and partly because Muslim leaders broadly agreed with Gandhi's analysis.

After two years of peace, communal conflicts again flared up. The first riot took place at Multan during the Moharrum festival in 1922. In the next two years there were a series of communal disturbances all over India. These greatly worried Gandhi. But the Kohat riot of September 1924 was the last straw. He was greatly affected by this tragic happening and went on a twenty-one day fast in Maulana Mohammad Ali's house in Delhi, where he was staying at the time (later, he was removed to a house outside the city). Mohammad Ali was not present when Gandhi commenced his fast. When he returned in the evening and was given the news, he wept and then got angry. He was always very respectful to Gandhi, but on this occasion he lost his temper and told the latter that he should have consulted him before starting the fast, because if he died the whole Hindu community would hold him responsible for it. Mohammad Ali pleaded with Gandhi to break the fast. His mother from her sick bed also sent a message to the same effect. But Gandhi remained adamant.<sup>27</sup>

It was over the Kohat riots that for the first time differences between Gandhi and the Muslim leaders, particularly the Ali Brothers, were revealed to the public. Tension had already existed in Kohat for some time. In September 1924, Jiwan Das, Secretary of the Sanathan Dharma Sabha, published a poem by Krishan Lal in a pamphlet entitled *Krishan Sandesh* at Rawalpindi on the occasion of Janam Ashtami and imported

it into Kohat. This created great excitement among the Muslims and led to rioting. The Muslim version was that Hindus fired the first shot on an unarmed crowd, killing a Muslim boy and wounding another. This inflamed the Muslims and they indulged in looting and arson. The Hindu version, on the other hand, was that it was the Muslims who fired the first shot and the Hindus had to retaliate in self-defence. Looting and burning by the Muslims, it was stated, was preplanned. According to Gandhi, it was not of much significance as to who first shot. Even if it was accepted, he argued, that the Hindus were the first to start firing, surely this did not justify the damaging of temples and a gurudwara, the breaking of idols and the murder of two Hindus merely because of their refusal to accept Islam.<sup>28</sup> Maulana Shaukat Ali's view was quite opposed to Gandhi's. To the Mahatma's contention that it was immaterial as to who fired the first shot, for looting and arson would have been indulged in any case, Shaukat Ali's reply was that no harm would have come if the Hindus had not provoked the Muslims by firing the first shot. He also held the view that there were no forced conversions and that accounts of Kohat riots in the press had been greatly exaggerated.<sup>29</sup> Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, too, criticized Hindu papers which printed exaggerated reports of the riots, thus creating a dangerous situation and raising difficulties in the way of the local Anjuman which was trying to restore normalcy.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, some of the statements which Gandhi made were greatly resented by Muslims and created misunderstandings. Writing in *Young India* on April 2, 1925, he observed: 'The Musulmans take less interest (in the internal political life and advancement of the country)... because they do not yet regard India as their home of which they must feel proud'.<sup>31</sup> Then in connection with the communal disturbances, he wrote that 'the Musulman as a rule is a bully, and the Hindu as a rule is a coward',<sup>32</sup> thus giving the impression that Muslims alone were responsible for communal troubles. Again, he made the following observation in *Young India* of June 19, 1924: 'The Musulman being generally in a minority has as a class developed into a bully.... The thirteen hundred years of imperialist expansion have made the Musulmans fighters as a body. They are therefore bullies and aggressive. Bullying is the natural excrescence of an aggressive spirit. The Hindu has an age old civilization. He is essentially non-violent.... If Hinduism was ever imperialistic in the modern sense of the term, it has outlived its imperialism.... Predominance of the non-violent spirit has restricted the use of arms to a small minority.... The Hindus as a body are, therefore, not equipped for fighting ... they have become docile to

the point of cowardice. This vice is, therefore, a natural excrescence of gentleness'.<sup>33</sup> Gandhi appealed to Muslims to forbear because, being bullies, they could fight and fight well and could protect themselves from the attacks of Hindus.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, he advised the Hindus to fight back because 'quarrels must break out so long as the Hindus continue to be seized with fear. Bullies are always to be found when there are cowards. The Hindus must understand that no one can afford them protection if they go on hugging fear.'<sup>35</sup> This is strange advice, coming as it does from the champion of non-violence.

These remarks came in for a great deal of criticism. Gandhi's evaluation of Hindu character was neither supported by contemporary events nor was it historically true. Pandit Malaviya's view was that Hindus were not weak, and that in all conflicts with Muslims, when they were equally matched, they were never vanquished.<sup>36</sup> Maulana Mohammad Ali, however, stated that 'the average Musulman more than an average Hindu and a larger percentage of Musulmans than Hindus do rely on their physical strength and courage to support their claims in any quarrels and that Muslims, particularly the Pathans, bully banya passengers in trains to secure accommodation'. But he did not agree with Gandhi's classification, for according to him, 'many of those whom Gandhi calls cowards are first rate bullies and vice versa. Many a coward among Hindus does a good deal of bullying and many a bully among Musulmans turns on his heels the moment he finds himself pitted against one superior in strength'.<sup>37</sup>

Muslims, in general, believed that it was the Hindus who provoked communal troubles everywhere. Maulana Abdul Bari, for example, was convinced of Gandhi's sincerity and goodness of heart and was certain that he never deliberately injured Muslims interests, but he believed that sometimes Bapu was partial towards Hindus while assessing the blame for communal troubles.<sup>38</sup> He told the Mahatma in regard to the Bombay riots that the Muslims were not to blame, though their courage on the occasion appeared to incriminate them. This happened in the case of all communal riots.<sup>39</sup> Maulana Mohammad Ali also, while presiding over the Khilafat conference in August 1927, complained that for the last five years it was the Hindus who were responsible for breaking communal peace.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the riots during these years took place over cow-slaughter. Gandhi, as we have seen, was very anxious that cow-slaughter should stop, though he was against banning it by legislation. He believed that in order to maintain communal harmony, Muslims should have full freedom to slaughter cows.<sup>41</sup> In 1919, some Hindu Congressmen



were prepared to take up the Khilafat issue only on condition that Muslims gave up cow-slaughter. But Gandhi was against any such bargain,<sup>42</sup> though in the heart of his hearts he hoped that, owing to the unconditional support which Hindus would give the Muslims in the hour of their greatest need, the latter would renounce eating beef.<sup>43</sup> That is why he stated that 'the best and the only way to save the cow is to save the Khilafat'.<sup>44</sup> And he was not wrong in his assessment, for Muslims did in large numbers give up cow-slaughter. The Muslims of Phulwari Sharif in Bihar, under the influence of Maulana Sulaiman, announced that in future they would not slaughter cows.<sup>45</sup> Maulana Abdul Bari went even to the extent of saying that 'we ourselves have determined not to sacrifice cows in future. We have fairly influenced the feelings of others'.<sup>46</sup> The Muslim League at its Amritsar session of December 1919 passed a cow-protection resolution. The Ali Brothers gave up eating beef, and during the Id-uz-Zuha festival, Seth Chhotani saved hundreds of cows.<sup>47</sup>

On account of these voluntary renunciations and the preoccupation with the Non-cooperation movement, there were very few conflicts over cow-slaughter. But from 1922 onwards, clashes again started. The Muslims refused to give up beef-eating because of economic reasons, and besides, they maintained that if they yielded to the Hindu demand in regard to this matter, there would be no end to further demands. 'The Hindu majority would become more and more aggressive and would insist that Muslims should live on sufferance in *aryāvarta*',<sup>48</sup> Gandhi was, of course, opposed to compulsion, but this was negated by the sanctity which he attached to the cow. 'Cow protection is the dearest possession of the Hindu heart',<sup>49</sup> he observed. He even went to the extent of saying: 'No one who does not believe in cow-protection can possibly be a Hindu',<sup>50</sup> and that 'Hinduism will live so long as there are Hindus to protect the cow.... Hindus will not be judged by their *tilaks*, nor by the correct chanting of *mantras*, nor by their pilgrimages ... but by the ability to protect the cow'.<sup>51</sup> No wonder these statements inspired a section of Hindus with a fanatical zeal to prevent cow-slaughter, even by violent methods.

*Shuddhi* and *sangathan* and their counterparts, *tabligh* and *tanzim*, were greatly responsible in embittering Hindu-Muslim relations. Gandhi favoured *sangathan* provided it aimed at self-discipline and physical training. Owing to his faith in the goodness of human nature, he does not seem to have realized that the movement was aggressive and militant and that its object of giving self-discipline and physical training was merely a means to communal ends. As regards *shuddhi* and *Tanzim*,

while on the one hand he opposed them, because conversion was useless when people denied God by their actions and because the real *shuddhi* movement ‘should consist in each one trying to arrive at perfection in his or her Faith’;<sup>52</sup> on the other he stated that ‘*shuddhi* and *tabligh* must not be disturbed, but either must be conducted honestly and by men of proved character. It should avoid attack on other religions. There should be no secret propaganda, and no offer of material rewards’.<sup>53</sup>

There was nothing basically wrong with the *shuddhi* movement. Christians and Muslims had been carrying on proselytization for centuries and no one had a right to object if Hindus also desired to start missionary activity. What, however, was objectionable was that the *shuddhi* movement—and the same can be said of the *tabligh*—was aggressive and launched at a time when feelings in the country were running high. On May 29, 1924, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* that ‘if the Malkanas wanted to return to the Hindu fold, they had a perfect right to do so’.<sup>54</sup> This statement was bitterly criticized by Muslims because it was made just when serious efforts were being made to prevent the reconversion of not only the Malkanas but of a large number of other Muslims in the Agra area where the *shuddhi* leaders were very active.

Reactionaries, both Hindu and Muslim, exploited the *sangathan* and *shuddhi*, *tanzim* and *tabligh* movements and the communal disturbances to spread the poison of hatred in the country. But men like Ansari, Azad, and Sherwani remained unaffected by the malicious propaganda carried on in the press. Even Mohammad Ali’s loyalty to Gandhi remained unshaken. Writing in the *Comrade* of January 9, 1925, he observed: ‘Our concern is to help Jinnah to formulate a correct programme for the League and to bring him into line with Mahatma Gandhi, who alone deserves to lead India, Muslim as well as Hindu, the Congress is, and must remain, the only political organization, and the Mahatma alone can be expected to guide it and through it the Nation to victory.... Let the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha both perish; let the Congress and the Nation survive.’<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, in spite of these professions of loyalty, Mohammad Ali’s differences with Gandhi had been growing over problems to which reference has been made above. To these problems was added the issue of separate and joint electorates. Mohammad Ali, like Jinnah at this time, did not personally favour separate electorates, but conceded that owing to the communal atmosphere prevailing in the country it would do no harm if they were to continue a little longer.<sup>66</sup> Mohammad Ali, during this period, was the most dynamic and influential personality among Indian Muslims and had a large following. He was a staunch

Muslim and had the good of his community at heart, but this did not affect his nationalism. He summed up his political philosophy by stating that ‘a Muslim Indian need not be a bad Muslim in order to be a good Indian, but that an Indian Muslim could, and should, fight for the freedom of Kashi as well as for the freedom of Kaba’.<sup>57</sup>

Mohammad Ali was opposed to communalists, both Hindu and Muslim, and commenting on the Delhi communal riot of July 1924, he wrote to Gandhi: ‘And pray Mahatma-ji, forgive a pang of sorrow, the cry of a well-nigh broken heart, the credit of it all goes, in the first instance, to the misguided spirit of the *sangathan* movement, and the superfluous boastings of the *shuddhi* leaders, to which we must add the activity of the fanatical section of the *tabligh* leaders. I feel sick, positively sick of it all.’<sup>58</sup> Mohammad Ali was disappointed because Gandhi not only did not criticize Lala Lajpat Rai and Pandit Malaviya, though both of them were communal and opposed to the ideals of the Congress, but associated with them, attempted to justify their conduct and was even susceptible to their influence. Pandit Malaviya, Mohammad Ali believed—and Pandit Motilal Nehru agreed with him, ‘was out to defeat Gandhism and to become the leader of the Hindus only since he could not be a leader of both the Hindus and the Muslims’.<sup>59</sup>

Gandhi’s role in the Hindi-Urdu controversy made him very unpopular among the Muslims. In the basic constitution of the Congress it was laid down that the language of the country should be Hindustani written in both the Nagri and Urdu scripts.<sup>60</sup> Gandhi had subscribed to this decision—in fact he had himself drafted the resolution—and as late as 1925 he stated: ‘I have accepted Hindustani as a common medium because it is understood by over twenty crores of people of India’.<sup>61</sup> But later a change came over him and he began to identify Hindustani with Hindi and to propagate the use of the Devanagri script to the exclusion of the Urdu script. On July 14, 1927, he stated that, so long as the Hindu-Muslim tension lasted, there would be two scripts, but eventually there would be only one universal script for the whole country.<sup>62</sup> He further observed: ‘Before the acceptance of Devanagri script becomes a universal fact in India, Hindu India has got to be converted to the idea of one script for all the languages derived from Sanskrit and Devanagri stock. . . . It would help to solidify Hindu India and bring different provinces in closer touch’.<sup>63</sup> Again in 1935, presiding over the Indore session of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, with which he had been associated since 1918, he stated that Hindi or Hindustani should be the lingua franca of India and that the Devanagri script was to be used for all the Indian languages. He did not regard Urdu as a separate language but included

it in Hindi.<sup>64</sup> Next year at the Nagpur session of the Bhartiya Sahitya Parishad, which he also presided, he repeated the same idea, adding that Urdu was the religious language of the Muslims. These statements led to protests from both Hindu and Muslim intellectuals. Taking their stand on an early decision of the Congress and on the statements which Gandhi himself had made on a number of occasions, they pointed out that the national language of India was to be called Hindustani and not Hindi and that it was to be written both in the Nagri and Urdu scripts. They resented Bapu's remark that Urdu was the religious language of the Indian Muslims and attempted to prove that it was the language of both Hindus and Muslims.<sup>88</sup>

As the result of these protests, Gandhi modified his view and reverted to the former position that the national language of India should be Hindustani to be written in the Devanagri and Urdu scripts. However, the suspicion of the Muslims could not be dispelled. In fact, it was further confirmed by the pronouncements of certain Congress leaders and the policies of Congress Ministries that in reality Hindustani meant Hindi to the exclusion of Urdu. Gandhi himself added to the misunderstandings by saying that he agreed to the use of two scripts 'only as a temporary measure—ultimately one script should be acceptable to all'.<sup>66</sup> The Devanagri script, he pointed out, would prevail because it was more scientific, phonetically sounder and more adaptable than either the Urdu or Roman script.<sup>67</sup>

The sheet anchor of Gandhi's policy, until the early twenties, was Hindu-Muslim unity, and he repeatedly stressed its importance for the attainment of *swarāj*. Although the Moplah and Kohat riots came to him as a great shock they failed to shake his faith in Hindu-Muslim unity. He devoted virtually the whole of *Young India* of May 1924 to the communal question and pointed out that 'there is no question more important and pressing than this. In my opinion it blocks all progress'. In November of the same year, Mahatma Gandhi initiated discussions for the settlement of the Hindu-Muslim problem. This led to an All Parties Conference at Delhi on January 23, 1925, under his presidency. At his suggestion a sub-committee was appointed to study the communal problem. The first meeting of the committee took place in February, but since no agreement could be arrived at, it adjourned *sine die*.<sup>68</sup> This failure, together with the constant riots over music before mosques and cow-slaughter, and bitter wranglings over separate and joint electorates and reservation of seats filled him with great disappointment and despair. As early as January 1927 he told a meeting at Comilla in Bengal (now in East Pakistan) that 'Hindu-

Muslim problem had passed out of human hands into God's hands'.<sup>69</sup> Again writing in May 1927, to Jinnah he observed: 'I wish I could do something but I am utterly helpless. My faith in unity is as bright as ever; only I see no daylight out of the impenetrable darkness and in such darkness, I cry put to God for light'.<sup>70</sup> Two years later, at Abbotabad, he admitted his own imperfection as an instrument for bringing about communal peace, and in despair said: 'I have learnt more and more to resign myself utterly to His grace'.<sup>71</sup>

In spite of these statements Gandhi continued to lay stress on the importance of communal harmony; though it seems that from about 1925 onwards, he began to give untouchability and the spinning wheel, which Pandit Motilal called 'hobbies',<sup>72</sup> precedence over the Hindu-Muslim problem.<sup>73</sup> In consequence, he took little part in the negotiations for the settlement of communal dispute in the late twenties. In 1926 he held himself aloof from the debate on the political resolution at Kanpur, deciding to remain at his Wardha Ashram for one year.<sup>74</sup> On March 20, 1927, thirty Muslim leaders met at Delhi and formulated certain demands. In May the All India Congress Committee endorsed them and they were ratified with certain modifications, as suggested by Gandhi, by the Madras session of the Congress in December. If he had exerted his influence and the Congress had shown firmness, the Hindu Mahasabha would have accepted them, because, as Jayakar pointed out, a large number of men who were at the head of the Mahasabha were also members of the All India Congress Committee and held prominent positions in the Congress.<sup>75</sup> Pandit Malaviya had already approved of the proposals; the others would have followed him with a little persuasion and firmness.<sup>76</sup>

Gandhi also took no part in the Nehru Committee meetings, nor was he present at the All Parties Conference at Lucknow (1928) yet he welcomed the report as 'the most brilliant victory achieved at Lucknow'.<sup>77</sup> But Shuaib Qureishi, a member of the Nehru Committee, dissented from it and Dr. Ansari was not happy about its recommendation. It was rejected by the Jama'iat-ul-Ulama, by Jinnah and his Leaguers and by Sir Mohammad Shafi. Maulana Mohammad Ali, presiding over the Khilafat Conference at Calcutta in December 1928, observed: 'Today Mahatma Gandhi and Sir Ali Imam would be sitting under one flag and over them would fly the flag of the Union Jack. The Nehru Report in its preamble has admitted the bondage of servitude and Pandit Motilal's resolution was the worst of all'.<sup>78</sup>

What is the explanation of Gandhi's indifference towards efforts to bring about a communal settlement? In a letter to Dr Ansari, he explained

that his approach to the Hindu-Muslim problem had hitherto been wrong and observed: ‘Give and take is possible only when there is some trust between the respective communities and their representatives. If the Congress can command such trust the matter can proceed—not before.... But meanwhile, the third party—the evil British power has got to be sterilized.’<sup>79</sup> Gandhi had come to the conclusion that communal settlement would be brought about only after India became free and not before. He no longer believed that unity could be achieved through conferences; it could be established only ‘through fighting for common causes’,<sup>80</sup> and as Pandit Motilal emphasized, ‘in the course of the fight for freedom’.<sup>81</sup> But Dr Ansari was opposed to Gandhi’s approach and wrote to him: ‘Hindu-Muslim unity is not only one of the basic items in our programme, but according to my firm belief and conviction, the *one and only* basic thing’.<sup>82</sup> He further stated that conferences were necessary for settling the communal problem, and that ‘we have not tried enough to solve the Hindu-Muslim question. I have felt that you and Motilal Nehru are not so eager, anxious and striving for Hindu-Muslim unity as is necessary considering the importance of the problem’.<sup>83</sup> Ansari felt that after the failure of the Simla Conference, it was no longer possible to have any agreement between extreme communal groups, but that workable agreement could be brought about between Nationalist Muslims and Nationalist Hindus, as had happened at the Madras Congress of 1927. ‘I have not the slightest doubt’, he wrote to Gandhi, ‘that if we had stuck to it we would have gradually overcome the opposition of the Hindu Mahasabha and Hindu-Muslim unity would have been accomplished by now. But we wanted to be more just and fair and in our effort to do justice and bring greater harmony in the shape of the Nehru Constitution, I am afraid we lost at Lucknow and Calcutta what we had gained at Madras.’<sup>84</sup> This failure weakened the position of the Nationalist Muslims and strengthened that of the League. It gave the reactionaries and the Leaguers a stick to beat the Nationalist Muslims with.

Dr Ansari’s differences with Mahatma Gandhi were boldly reflected in his attitude towards the Civil Disobedience Movement. Bapu firmly believed that ‘India will have freedom whether the communal question is solved or not’.<sup>86</sup> But Ansari was opposed to this view and wanted first the settlement of the communal problem before starting any movement for independence which, he held, would fail. It would appeal only to a small group loyal to Gandhi, while a large number of Hindus and a majority of Indians would remain indifferent towards it.<sup>86</sup> Gandhi, however, refused to change his opinion and wrote to

Ansari: 'if you cannot participate in the struggle, give it your blessings'.<sup>87</sup> Ansari felt so disappointed with Gandhi's attitude that he resigned from the membership of the Delhi Congress Provincial Committee and the membership of Provincial Executive, and refused the General Secretaryship and membership of the Congress Working Committee. That in spite of this he joined the Civil Disobedience Movement was partly due to the persuasion of Maulana Azad<sup>88</sup> and partly because he felt that, as a disciplined soldier, he should not refuse the marching order of his officer.

The Nationalist Muslims like Sherwani, Khaliquzzaman and Shuaib Qureishi, too, did not agree with Gandhi's approach. Sherwani wrote to Ansari: 'I agree with every word you have said in your letter to the Mahatma. But his letter to you in reply is most disappointing; it shows utter indifference to the feelings of those who stood by him just like soldiers.'<sup>89</sup> Similarly, Khaliquzzaman observed: 'Uptill now we thought that Hindu-Muslim unity was the pillar over which the superstructure of the constitution of free India was to be laid, but from Mahatmaji's letter one can infer that while recognizing the utility of such a unity, he does not consider it *sine qua non* for a fight for independence'.<sup>90</sup>

The Mahatma's view that the Hindu-Muslim problem would be solved once India became free greatly influenced his attitude in his talks with Muslim leaders in the forties and even later. This is not to suggest, as many Leaguers wrongly did, that Gandhi was communal. He was too great a man to think in terms of group or sectarian interests. The difficulty with him was that he could not understand the psychology of Indian Muslims. Maulana Mohammad Ali tried to explain to him the Muslim side of Hindu-Muslim tension, but failed because of Pandit Malaviya's influence.<sup>91</sup> Even the efforts of Ansari and Shuaib Qureishi were not successful. An idealist that Bapu was, he could not understand why Muslims were so anxious for safeguards. On October 21, 1939, he wrote that the minority should not fear 'the so-called majority which is merely a paper majority and which, in any event, is ineffective because it is weak in the military sense'.<sup>92</sup> He again observed: 'There are no such things as real minorities in India whose rights can be endangered by India becoming independent. With the exception of the Depressed classes, there is no minority which is not able to take care of itself.'<sup>93</sup> Gandhi even went to the extent of saying that 'there are no majority or minority in India, there can be only political parties'.<sup>94</sup> He held the view that 'the moment the alien wedge is removed, the divided communities are bound to unite'.<sup>96</sup> He even thought that, if the British Government declared that it was going to withdraw from India whether the Indians

agreed or not, the Hindu-Muslim question would be solved. Gandhi was, of course, conscious of the growing separation between the two communities and was pained by the riots, but he was certain that with independence all problems would be solved.<sup>96</sup> Like the Wars of the Roses in England, in India, too, ‘order must come out of present chaos’.<sup>97</sup> ‘Unity will not precede but will succeed freedom’.<sup>98</sup> How unprophetic these statements were!

The Muslims looked at the problem differently. Owing to the communalism that was rampant in the country, they were not prepared to trust the majority. They believed that there *were* a minority and a majority and not merely political parties. So they were anxious for a communal settlement before joining in the struggle for independence. This was a wrong attitude, but unfortunately they had developed a kind of persecution mania and their dread of the majority was almost pathological. At the same time it is impossible to deny that there was an element of genuineness in their anxiety for their future. Even Maulana Azad, who was extremely critical of the defeatist mentality of the Muslims, had to admit on the eve of the arrival of the Cabinet Mission: ‘One thing nobody could deny. As a community, the Muslims were extremely anxious about their future. It is true that they were in a clear majority in certain provinces. At the provincial level they had therefore no fears in these areas. They were however minority in India as a whole and were troubled by the fear that their position and status in independent India would not be secured’.<sup>99</sup> If only Gandhi had subscribed to this view, the history of this sub-continent would, perhaps, have been very different.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Tendulkar, *Mahatma Gandhi*, vi, p. 193. (Cited hereafter as Tendulkar)
2. *The Way to Communal Harmony: Gandhi*, p. 90, (ed.) U. A. Rao. (Cited hereafter as *The Way to Communal Harmony*).
3. *Ibid.*
4. Tendulkar, ii, p. 59.
5. Mohammad Ali Papers (Jamia Millia), M. Ali to Gandhi, January 9, 1916.
6. Abdul Majid, *Mohammad Ali—Zati Diary ke Chand Auraq*, Hyderabad, 1943, p. 29.
7. Mohammad Ali Papers, Shaikat Ali to Gandhi, May 3, 1919. The letter ran as follows: ‘I wished to say for myself and for my brother that you are at liberty to state publicly that both of us believe in the British connection and consider ourselves perfectly loyal citizens of the Empire. The so-called reservation made by us in the undertaking required by the government meant that we should resist by every means at our disposal encroachment upon the holy places of Islam and upon the question of the Khilafat’.



8. Tendulkar, ii, pp. 3-4.
9. *The Bombay Chronicle*, September 11, 1920.
10. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1920.
11. See his Presidential Address.
12. *The Comrade*, January 22, 1926, p. 20.
13. Abdul Bari Papers.
14. *Ibid.* He also wrote to Sir Mohammed Shaft on Jamad-us-Sani 1, 1342/ April 28, 1924, that if the government released Mahatma Gandhi he would maintain non-violence and promote Hindu-Muslim co-operation.
15. *Ibid.* (undated)
16. Mohammad Ali Papers, Mohammad Ali to Shaukat Ali, May 15, 1920.
17. Mohammad Ali Papers, M. Ali to Shraddhananda, March 26, 1924.
18. Tendulkar, ii, p. 174.
19. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi*, London, 1959, p. 225.
20. Nehru, *An Autobiography*, London, 1936, p. 72.
21. Tendulkar, ii, p. 175.
22. H. N. Mukerjee, *India Struggles for Freedom*, p. 44.
23. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, xiii, p. 135..
24. *Lala Lajpat Rai (Writings and Speeches)*, (ed.) V. C. Joshi, p. 182.
25. *Young India*, January 19, 1922.
26. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, xxii, p. 200.
27. Abdul Majid, *Mohammad Ali—Zati Diary Ke Chand Aaraq* (Urdu), p. 44-5.
28. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, xxvi, p. 338-42.
29. *The Comrade*, April 10, 1925; also January 19, 1925, p. 15. Mohammad Ali agreed with Shaukat Ali's views. See also the *Complete Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, xxvi, f. n. p. 341, for Shaukat Ali's views on conversions in Kohat.
30. Mohammad Ali Papers, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan to M. Ali, September 27, 1924.
31. *The Way to Communal Peace*, p. 113.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 262-63.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 312.
36. *The Comrade*, May 22, 1925, p. 312.
37. *Ibid.*
38. It is interesting to note that the Hindus like Lala Lajpat Rai accused Gandhi of partiality towards Muslims. See *Lala Lajpat Rai (Writings and Speeches)*, p. 171; also *The Comrade*, August 7, 1925, p. 57.
39. Mohammad Ali Papers, A. Bari to M. Ali, Muharram 29, 1342/September 11, 1923.
40. Tufail Ahmed, *Musulmanon ka Raushan Mustaqbil*, p. 49.
41. *The Way to Communal Harmony*, p. 90.
42. *Young India*, December 10, 1919.
43. Gandhi's statement at the AICC meeting. See Tendulkar, vi, p. 193.
44. *The Way to Communal Harmony*, p. 90.
45. Abdul Bari Papers (English), A. Bari to Gandhi, 1919.

46. *Ibid.* But in a *fatwa* (undated) he states that he did not say that Muslims should permanently give up cow-slaughter. It was during the Non-cooperation movement that he had given up cow-slaughter during Id-uz-Zuha and advised the Muslims to do the same. (A. Bari Papers)
47. *The Way to Communal Harmony*, p. 90.
48. This was the answer given by Muslims to Maulana Mohammad Ali during the riot in Delhi in 1925 over the route for the sacrificial cows. (See *The Comrade*, July 17, 1925).
49. *The Way to Communal Harmony*, p. 93.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
55. *The Comrade*, January 9, 1925. He again wrote on October 16: 'I also strongly hold certain views with regard to the way India can win freedom, which for the most part I agree with Mahatma Gandhi, whom I am proud to regard as my chief.' (*Ibid.*, October 16, 1925).
56. *The Comrade*, June 22, 1926.
57. *Ibid.* On January 22, 1926, he again wrote: 'To be a good Musalman is not to be a bad Indian.... To be a Mussalman first is to be a nationalist and Indian first' (*Ibid.*, p. 25).
58. Mohammad Ali Papers, M. Ali to Gandhi, July 21, 1924.
59. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, No. 31. See also *The Rangoon Daily News*, March 10, 1927, for a criticism of Pandit Malaviya: also for the assessment of Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, see Nehru, *An Autobiography*, London, 1936, p. 157-59. Writing to Jawaharlal, Motilal observed: 'The Malaviya-Lala gang, aided by Birla's money are trying to capture Congress. They will probably succeed'. (*A Bunch of Old Letters*, No. 46).
60. *The Jamia*, October, 1936, vol. 27, No. 4, p. 903, Jawaharlal to Dr Syed Mahmud. Jawaharlal repeated the same thing in his *An Autobiography*, p. 454.
61. Tendulkar, ii, p. 273.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 357.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, iv, p. 27; also *The Jamia*, May, 1936, Vol. 26, No. 5.
65. *Ibid.*; also Vol. 27, No. 6.
66. Tendulkar, iv, pp. 176, 357.
67. Tendulkar, ii, p. 174.
68. *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 235-36.
69. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 259.
70. Cited in S. K. Majumdar, *Jinnah and Gandhi*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 139.
71. Tendulkar, v, p. 187.
72. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, No. 46.
73. Incidentally, it is interesting to note that Hindu-Muslim question invariably occupied the second position in his programme.

74. Tendulkar, ii, 293.
75. *The Hindustan Times*, May 17, 1927. See also Ansari's view in his letter to Gandhi dated February 13, 1930. (Ansari Papers).
76. *Ibid.*
77. Tendulkar, ii, p. 435.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 442.
79. Ansari Papers, Gandhi to Ansari, February 16, 1930.
80. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1930.
81. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, No. 70.
82. *Ibid.*, Ansari to Gandhi, February 13, 1930.
83. *Ibid.*, March 5, 1930.
84. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1930.
85. *The Way to Communal Harmony*, p. 136.
86. Ansari Papers, Ansari to Gandhi, February 13 and March 5, 1930.
87. *Ibid.*, Gandhi to Ansari, March 3, 1930.
88. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, (ed.) H. Kabir, p. 11.
89. Ansari Papers, Sherwani to Ansari, March 3, 1930.
90. *Ibid.*, Khaliqzaman to Ansari, March 3, 1930.
91. *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Mohammad Ali to Jawaharlal, June 15, 1924, No. 31.
92. *The Way to Communal Harmony*, p. 122.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 139.
97. *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 15.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
99. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 139.

D. N. PATHAK

## Gandhi: Tradition and Change A Study in Modernization



A LEADER as charismatic, religious, saintly and in some respects other-worldly, like Gandhi, could hardly be associated with modernity or modernization. Many of Gandhi's ideas failed to impress his contemporaries and their appeal seems to have declined. His insistence on spinning wheel as a solvent of India's economic ills did gather some momentum. But to a large extent it was more a symbol than an item of peoples' choice or programme. Gandhi, in fact, was regarded as a bit of a crank by quite a few of his own contemporaries. His favourite theme of village self-sufficiency, glorification of village life, his general opposition to industrialization, his distrust of the machine and his idea of trusteeship failed to evoke enthusiasm even among his followers.

And yet, Gandhi's ideas and work have been of more fundamental importance in the making of India than any other leader of recent past. In spite of several antideluvian ideas and traditional outlook that he displayed, Gandhi was one of the greatest contributors to India's modernization.

Modernization as a conscious and deliberate pursuit has acquired currency in the post-war world. If development is the governing idea for the majority of Asian and African nations, modernization is

their goal and objective. Though comparable to Westernization, the two are not the same. Indeed, modernization could theoretically be conceived of as an endless, never-ending process. Western societies have been modernizing at a rapid pace and catching up with them may involve some repetition of the process by covering the same ground and to that extent the two may appear identical. But the process need not go through the same stages or take the same time and it is here that modernization of the under-developed society may be differentiated from westernization.

Modernization indicates swift widespread change and transformation of societies and the broad lines of the process are industrialization, urbanization, literacy and mass communication. Broad trends indicative of modernity could be spelt out as follows: (1) peoples' commitments and associations change from the local to the universal; (2) individual as a unit of society begins to play a more important role as against group; (3) association depending upon accident of birth is replaced by association of choice; (4) in place of fatalistic beliefs, there comes a sense of mastery over environment; (5) individual and group identities are not ascribed but chosen and achieved; (6) individual's work is less influenced by his family, residence and community; (7) rational and scientific attitudes replace emotions and non-rational approaches; (8) there is a change in social life in that authority is not necessarily associated with seniority or sex, and youth and women acquire a new place and identity; and (9) Government, far from being a manifestation of power, come to be regarded as instrument of society with more popular participation, element of consent and accountability. A modern society is differentiated, pluralistic, and is broadly participatory and democratic.<sup>1</sup>

Students of modernization have constructed models of societal behaviour under broad heads of tradition and modernity, the one being opposed to the other. A traditional society depends more on ascription than achievement, particularistic and diffuse in its orientation, more affective than rational and less differentiated and mobile in its structure and movement. It is predominantly agricultural and rural: a vast number of its people are illiterate and less susceptible to change.

But the dichotomy between tradition and modernity has limited validity and applicability. Tradition and modernity are to be viewed as a continuum rather than two extreme and exclusive poles. A traditional society may have aspects of modernity and even the most

modern society may have traits of traditionally.

Models of tradition and modernity are certainly helpful in our attempt to identify the predominant character of society. They greatly facilitate perception, analysis and comparison. But no traditional society remains unchanged and even the most modern societies continue to live with many traditional elements. There is, in fact, an intricate mosaic of co-existence of tradition and modernity and societies display a variety of combinations. At any rate, while societies can be identified as predominantly modern or traditional, elements of modernity and tradition co-mingle in almost all societies.

Among the Asian countries, Japan has successfully adopted Western technology and can be said to have successfully modernized itself. In its political and economic life Japan today is comparable to any prosperous Western nation. With its phenomenal rate of growth, Japan has taken her place among the more developed nations of the world. But along with the numerous artefacts of modern technological civilization, Japan has retained in the social life many of its traditional practices and ways of life. Japan's family and home life remain largely unchanged. Indeed, some of Japan's traditions have helped ease the process of modernization. Japan's military traditions, the unique place of honour and worship enjoyed by the Emperor, strong attachment to families, general spirit of subordination and discipline have played a part in effecting transition from a traditional to a modern society.

The process of modernization may take various paths. Some traditions persist, some undergo change and some of them, indeed, may help in the very process of modernization. Modernization as a social process is a continuum that carries forward the past traditions and brings about a new pattern, a fresh combination. Since there never is a complete divorce between tradition and modernity, transition to modernity has often been effected through the use of traditional idiom, symbol and behaviour. Tradition may thus become an instrument through which an appeal for modernization may be made. Tradition may, therefore, serve the purpose of acting as a hand-maid for a new birth. Which tradition, to what extent and when, would permit of change, is perhaps the most intricate and baffling question of human history. Possibilities of change and transformation of societies remain hidden as latent potentialities till they are evoked and tapped by some one. In short, the movement of modernization is often the modernization of tradition.

While continuity and survival of reformulated tradition into modernity may be conceded, the process of modernization need not be taken as merely a cyclical and repetitive development of old time tradition. Modernization involves structural change and an element of innovation almost always accompanies it. Innovation, and an inclination and effort to sustain it, may be the very foundation of modernization. While continuity may not be broken, there occurs a shift when modernization takes place. As innovation proceeds, flexible response of society help sustain its growth and produce congenial atmosphere for further leaps in the direction. Under the spell of Gandhi's leadership, India's traditions were re-furnished, mobilized and galvanized to serve new goals and objectives. Gandhi's capacity for innovation was stupendous. He was, in fact, a great builder. He built institutions—womens' institutions, labour unions, institutions like Satyāgraha Ashram; political movements like Indian National Congress, Harijan Sangh, Hindi Bhasha Pracharini Sabha, Khadi Gramodyoga Sangh, and all this along with his ubiquitous contacts with India's millions. Through these institutions Gandhi built up the Indian nation. He also nurtured Indian national leadership. He was also the architect of the broad patterns of political behaviour. He laid down norms, standards and the style of India's political life.

It was the singular genius of Gandhi that he perceived India's traditions with an instinct of a leader who knew what to do with them and how to do it. He was a strange mixture of the old and the new. Some of the richest and highest traditions of Indian civilization were embodied in him. For the vast multitudes of India, he was another *avatār* and his *darsān* was sought with avid interest. His prayer meetings, his revival of songs of worship, were indicative of his deep roots in India's traditions of *bhakti*, asceticism and self-sacrifice. In his personal life, he was a saint who abjured worldly pleasures and lived a life of self-denial and devotion. The symbols he popularized, the techniques he adopted, contained rich elements of past traditions. The future Indian polity was to be a *Rām Rājya*, the downtrodden untouchables became *Harijans* and the fight against the British was *satyāgraha*. His non-violent, non-cooperation, though defiant of laws, was full of humility and he called it *savinay bhang*. Gandhi's weapon of non-cooperation had its roots in Indian traditions. Inflicting pain upon oneself for self-realization was a hoary tradition in India. It was also well adopted for usage by an unarmed nation. Likewise, it was a potent instrument for reviving

courage, fearlessness and honour, serving as a tonic for the Indian people by making them aware of the tremendous energies that lay untapped within themselves. It also served the purpose of integration through participation. The old symbolism was serving the new goal of political liberation.

Gandhi entitled his autobiography as *Experiments with Truth*. The idea of experimentation was in itself modern. All through his life Gandhi experimented with himself. He experimented with food, apparel, medicine, personal hygiene, social customs, language, public sanitation, not to mention his married life. His ceaseless endeavour to strike new paths, make fresh efforts evoked in the minds of people a symbolism of successful change and transformation. Gandhi's private life became a public topic for discussion as well as a model for imitation. Gandhi had conquered his self and he was a liberated soul. He had transcended earthly attachments, including the laws imposed by the alien empire. Perhaps the greatest value of his autobiography lay in its exemplification of the process of self-development and integration of his personality. The way Gandhi struggled within himself for the attainment of perfection was a story that helped in the revival of national self-respect. Given will and motivation, one could reach heights of greatness—this was the message of Gandhi's personal life. Conquering one's own self was the first step before one could challenge the foreign yoke; and the way Gandhi lived and developed, the conscious and deliberate attempt to live and utilize every moment of his life, served to show the drama of self-realization that was open to all without let or hindrance. The most subtle and pervasive influence of the British Raj lay in spreading the psychology of self-defeatism among the Indian people. The root of Indian slavery, according to Gandhi, was in the psychology of fear; and his personal life served to eradicate it and revive the ego and self-esteem of the Indian people.

Nothing would escape Gandhi's all-embracing perspective. Nothing was too small or too big to serve the great cause of nation-building and integration. Gandhi propounded healthy, progressive and modern ideas about several aspects of Indian life. His views on Hindu-Muslim question, India's national language, cow-slaughter, child marriage, widow remarriage, education, to name only a few, showed not only his tremendous capacity but also a rare gift for instilling new ideas and outlook on various facets of Indian life.

Before Gandhi's entry into Indian politics, the freedom struggle had proceeded into two broad channels: (1) the terrorist methods;



and (2) the constitutional approach through appeal to the good sense of the British. Both the approaches had dismally failed and the country was in need of new leadership and fresh approach. Here was a call for innovation, for channeling the hopes, aspirations and energies of the people into new but acceptable ways. India had reached a blind alley and was groping in the dark. Gandhi's new technique of non-violent non-cooperation suddenly illumined the minds of the people. Here was a technique that grew out of India's traditions. It was perfectly applicable to a disarmed nation and it was based upon Gandhi's understanding of, and insight into the British political culture.

Like J. S. Mill, Gandhi clearly understood that a liberal Government, in his case free India, cannot be sustained without a liberal society. Gandhi never used the term modernization. But his programmes, movements and approach gave eloquent proof of his perception of the need for modernity in India. Modernization was needed from three points of view. Firstly, it was the emergent need in as much as India had considerably lagged behind during the years of dependence and the lag had to be bridged. Secondly, the idea of nationalism, in itself new and modern, needed modernism as its precondition. India had to be a modern society before it could successfully fight against the foreign rule. This needed mobilization and activation of a vast number of people. India had to reform itself socially and religiously before it could think of demanding freedom. Lastly, as Gandhi realized, a modernized society alone could stand the stress and strain of independent nationhood, the goal of the Indian national movement. Modernization was necessary for self-sustaining, integrative growth of India's nationalism.

Into the status-conscious, hierarchically organized society of India, Gandhi's reformist zeal brought new ideas of equalization. He was opposed to the practice of untouchability and was deeply aware of the evils that grew out of the traditional caste system. 'Caste', said Gandhi, 'has injured Hinduism because of its implications of superior and inferior status and of pollution by contact, which are contrary to the law of love'.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps Gandhi's Western education and stay abroad had given him an opportunity to view Indian society in an objective way. He could easily distinguish between the substance from the shadow, the form as against the essentials, the vital as against the ephemeral, the relevant against the irrelevant. Like many before him, he went to the root of the Hindu religion and scriptures. Having had the

opportunity of living with Western people, he was impatient about the cant and hypocrisy that prevailed in Indian society. The reforms of Indian society that he advocated were needed for the very survival of Indian society, apart from it being instrumental in winning the struggle for independence. Though pragmatic to the core, he seemed to be in a hurry to put Indian society on a modern base. Gandhi brought a Western touch but he had the insight and understanding to make them relevant in the Indian context and conditions. Caste was to be modified, untouchability was to be removed, dignity of labour was to be instilled, not because Western countries were doing so but because they were the emergent needs of India.

Gandhi appears to be a strange mixture of tradition and change. Perhaps it is one of the reasons of his wide appeal, national stature and general acceptability, Gandhi symbolized India in transition, the India that found herself and the India that welcomed modernism. Some of the deepest and most significant founts of tradition were tapped to support and legitimize the newest needs of national awakening and exertion. Here was a man who never allowed even a shadow of an astrologer near him, a perfect specimen of *Bhagavadgītā's karmāyogi*, a Kauṭilya in action.<sup>8</sup> Traditional in his exterior, Gandhi breathed modernism in every sector of national life. There was, for instance, the time factor. India was to be modernized within a time span that Gandhi laid down as it were. Every minute counted, every gesture mattered, every move significant, in the overall plan that had to be fulfilled. Gandhi perceived his role in the context of the total situation that prevailed in India. Otherwise traditional in appearance, Gandhi dangled on his waist a watch, the symbol and emblem of modernity. Time was the essence and the given tasks were to be performed in a given time. Punctual to the minute, Gandhi had a fetish for cleanliness and order. People close to him have remarked that he was never seen unshaven; his nails were always cut; he did not use soap but his standards of cleanliness were very high.

Through personal example of self-discipline and self-development, embodying in his self the predispositions and cultural configurations of India's traditions, Gandhi successfully carried out a thrust of modernity into the otherwise dull and stagnant society. With his arrival, India's politics gained primacy, involving a large number of people. With Gandhi, politics became participative, national and largely secular. He imbued India's millions with a purpose that was at once national and total. Narrow, sectarian outlook was challenged and new commitments came to the fore.

Peoples' hearts vibrated to the new symbolism of national identity. India's traditions coalesced in Gandhi, got transformed and released to serve the modern goals of nation building and national liberation. Old clusters of values and commitments stood exposed to the wind of change that now swept all over India. There was a new air of emancipation, a feeling of liberation and a clearer, definite perception of the goal to be achieved. Country's resources were mobilized, and harnessed for national development and integration. A new national leadership emerged, a mass-based, programme-oriented party built and efforts channelized into constructive activities of durable and national significance.

Gandhi acquired wide and convincing legitimacy for himself, reinforced national identity, achieved a rare degree of political penetration among the vast masses of India and brought forth an unusual degree of popular participation through empathy and mobility. All this was richly indicative of a fast pace of modernization.

Gandhi's most impressive achievement consisted in successfully bridging the gap between his saintly personality and the call of politics. His individual achievements and self-development were to be utilized for the goal of India's political regeneration. It is this linkage between his self and politically relevant goal of national liberation that puts him in a position that is unique by itself. Politics, that too politics of national struggle, was an activity demanding mass communication, mass mobilization, and involved, by its very nature, modernization on a big scale. Politics thus assumed a leading role in Gandhi's programme. It was through political activity that he reached India's millions. It was through politics, again, that Gandhi laid the foundation of India's democracy. His politics was free, open, fearless, and tolerant of opposition and criticism. India was at school and Gandhi was the teacher.

While Gandhi charted out India's march to modernization, his approach, attitude and style left a deep impact on India. Through his life-work and example he laid down a framework of standards and expectations that was to govern India's future development. His attitude to politics, for instance, was governed by ethical principles. His fight against the British was essentially a moral fight and he had a lasting concern for the purity of means, even when he aimed at morally sound ends. Though deeply immersed in politics, he had an aversion for power, the very essence of politics. Question may be raised whether his attitude to power sprang from Indian tradition or if it was his own personal value judgement. Could the ambivalent

attitude to power, often encountered in India, be traced to this past legacy that Gandhi has left? The question has a relevance for modernization in that politics has been the chosen instrument of modernization in almost all underdeveloped societies including India.

Gandhi urged modernization, but he always stood for reduction of human wants, and the two attitudes cannot be easily reconciled. Modernization means expansion, movement, physical as well as psychological, and proliferation of human wants is often an incentive to further dose of modernization. Gandhi's puritanical attitude sprang partly from India's traditions, partly as a strategy of instilling discipline and partly as an instrument for national development. The question still remains: whether the attitude was, or was not, conducive to modernization. Gandhi's spirited support of village self-sufficiency, general opposition to urbanization, and artificial birth control and dislike of the machine, though belonging to different spheres of life, fall in a pattern that spring from traditionally orthodox and puritanical background. If one way to test modernity is to examine the survival rate of an idea, then surely many of them have either failed to have a large following or blissfully ignored in the onward march of the nation. In short, their relevance has declined, if not disappeared.

Gandhi, nevertheless, stands as a supreme representative, head and shoulders above so many of his past predecessors and contemporaries, summing up, climaxing, and heading, the group of modernizing elite that had risen with India's Western contacts. He was like a colossus, a watershed, separating the past from the present of his times. Gandhi saw a different India when he started his public career and the India that he left, when he passed away, was immeasurably transformed, almost in every sphere of human life and endeavour. This, indeed, was the measure of his role and relevance.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*, University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 3, f. n.
2. *Ashram Observances in Action*, p. 115.
3. The comparison is being used in a narrow sense. Apparently, Kautilya did not rely on astrological forecasts and believed in human efforts, for example.

HOSSAINUR RAHMAN

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## Gandhi: The Messiah and the Politician



OCCASIONALLY critics have noted in passing the character of Gandhi as a political thinker and politician. None of the Gandhi or political scholars has made a systematic study of the great Indian political personality. Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose has, however, made significant contribution to Gandhi phenomenon by writing books, namely, *Studies in Gandhism*,<sup>1</sup> *My Days with Gandhi*, and *Selections from Gandhi*. It is the purpose of this short paper to explore some criticisms regarding characteristics of Gandhi in relation to Indian politics between 1920 and 1947.

It seems convenient to initiate this paper with an examination of criticism concerning him. It is said by some that Gandhi was never a brilliant leader in the Western sense of the term—nor brilliant in revolutions and warfare due to his lack of methodology. Take his entire work, for example. Not at all impressive as a political agitator in its volume, range, its forcefulness and so on. His oratory is said to be non-electrifying. He had no sense of staging and timing. Perhaps he was not born to leadership in the same way as some of his contemporaries. He had to work his way into political expertise.

In his case, nevertheless want of each of these talents could be a matter of strength and his weakness because in later days some of

the rare gifts which earned him an unassailable position in Indian political scene. His small gifts served him greatly. The vast range of Indian interests made him eclectic, his charismatic relation with the masses was at times matched by an inability to get along with the Congress organization. Some contemporaries found him cold and aloof. They dismissed him as a pietist. When turned against antagonists his political brilliance was often charged with grace.

Surprisingly very few have as yet undertaken a portrait of him from the point of view of depth psychology.<sup>2</sup> Such a portrait would have to deal as systematically as possible with the psychosomatic symptoms of his behaviour. Gandhi was subject to violent political swings, the low periods accompanied by mental depression; and at crucial moments in his political career, poorly defined political exigencies mysteriously incapacitated him.

Still without a psychosomatic portrait, it is easy to sketch out his character. It is far more difficult to summarize and evaluate his political role. And any such undertaking is obviously subjective for the evaluation of his actions and his ideas depend on the writer's own broad attitude towards Gandhism, the independence movement and the subsequent development of free India.

Admittedly, a theoretician or seer lives far from the madding crowd. He has to learn the art of sacrifice in the sense that he must not too much associate himself with the present. He should live for the future, for the present would not understand him. In the case of Gandhi it was not to be. Karl Marx had to prepare his thesis with the future in view. And, then a political theorist needs a propagandist who will really bring down the thesis to the lowest level of the society. Lenin, one of the greatest pamphleteers that the world has ever produced did this through some of his brilliantly written booklets.<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi, from the beginning of his ascendancy in Indian politics demanded too much from the people and politicians of India, while in return he promised them nothing but self-sacrifice in the course of *swarāj*. Take Gandhi's *Hind Swarāj* or *Indian Home Rule* (1908), for example. In trying to define the ideal *swarāj* he writes (chap. xiv): 'It is *swarāj* where we learn to rule ourselves. Such *swarāj* has to be experienced by each one for himself'.

It is clear from the above passage that Gandhi wants a condition when, all labouring people will feel that they are their own masters; such a state alone is worthy of being called *swarāj*. During the Non-cooperation Movement, Gandhi objected to the use of violence, for he felt that even if India succeeded in bringing British rule to an end,

the condition of the masses would remain unaltered. But if freedom came through non-violence, power would automatically come to the masses instead of the classes. He wrote: 'If it is steel that is to decide the issue, it must be not Sikh or Gurkha steel, it must be an all-India steel. If it is brute force that is to rule, then the millions of India must learn the art of war or must for ever remain prostrate at the feet of him who wields the sword, whether he is *paradeshi* or *swadeshi* ... non-cooperation is an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power. This can only be by enabling them to realize that they need not fear brute force.'<sup>4</sup>

Emphasizing the fact that *swarāj* was to be won both by and for the masses, he declared: 'The Congress must cease to be a debating society of talented lawyers who do not leave their practice but it must consist of producers and manufacturers, and those who would understand them, nurse them and voice their feelings. Practising lawyers can help by becoming silent workers and donors. I sympathize with them for their desire to be in the limelight. But I would urge them to recognize their limitations'.<sup>5</sup>

Not that he stopped short at this point. He went further:

'The Congress must progressively represent the masses. They are as yet untouched by politics. They have no political consciousness of the type our politicians desire. Their politics are confined to bread and salt. I dare not say butter, for millions do not know the taste of ghee or even oil. Their politics are confined to communal adjustments. It is right however to say that we the politicians do represent the masses in opposition to the government. But if one begins to use them before they are ready, we shall cease to represent them. We must first come in living touch with them by working for them and in their midst.'<sup>6</sup>

Moving along the same line, Gandhi had tried to convert the Congress into a voluntary labourer's association by suggesting those who spun and paid their subscription in yarn, could alone be its members. But the proposal was summarily turned down by the Congress. Commenting on this Gandhi had written: 'Had it been workmen who had been the most influential people and not capitalists or educated men and a property or an education test had been proposed, the powerful workmen would have ridiculed the suggestion and might have called it immoral.'<sup>7</sup>

Such innumerable incidents may be enumerated here to show that Gandhi was an alien in the Congress from the beginning. He too realized it with the march of time. As a politician he should

not have expected such sacrifice from the upper and middle reaches of Indian society. At the same time he could not leave the Congress organization to the leaders of the day. Here Gandhi was only concerned with the question of India's freedom. He struck a note of dichotomy in his political thesis. He had a greater message to give to the world than the independence of India even. That is non-violent resistance through *satyāgraha*; non-violent resistance as the key to the problem of liberty in the modern, all-powerful state. But Gandhi was equally anxious for the independence of India. His lonesome stand during the 1942's August *inqlab* for unconditional independence of India is a case in point. Here he was in a flux. To him both is of supreme importance.

He prepared the whole country for the countrywide plunge through non-cooperation in 1920. A special session of the Congress in Calcutta adopted the resolution for non-cooperation and later the annual session in Nagpur (in December) confirmed it. The method of struggle was a perfectly peaceful one, non-violent as it was called, and its basis was a refusal to help the government in its administration and exploitation of India. To begin with there were to be a number of boycotts—of titles given by the foreign government, of official functions and the like, of law-courts by both lawyers and litigants, of official 'schools and colleges, and of the new councils, under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Later the boycotts were to extend to the civil and military services and the payment of taxes. On the constructive side, stress was laid on hand spinning and khaddar, and on arbitration courts to take place of the law courts. Two other most important planks were Hindu-Muslim unity and the removal of untouchability among the Hindus. The Congress also changed its constitution and became a body capable of action, and at the same time it laid itself out for a mass membership.

Now, this programme was a totally different thing from what the Congress had so far been doing. Gandhi knew quite well what *satyāgraha* meant for the Indian people. It meant immediate and heavy sacrifices for some people, like the lawyers who were called upon to give up their practice, and the students, who were asked to boycott the government colleges. It was difficult to judge it, as there were no standards of comparison. The old and experienced Congress leaders hesitated and were filled with doubt. And there was no doubting the temper of the average Congressmen, or the man in the street, or the masses. Gandhi carried them off their feet, almost hypnotized them, and with loud shouts of 'Mahatma ki jai',



they showed their approval of the new gospel of non-violent non-cooperation. The Muslims became enthusiastic about it for the first time. The Khilafat Committee, under the leadership of the Ali Brothers, had adopted the programme even before the Congress did so. Soon the mass enthusiasm and the early success of the movement brought most of the Congress leaders into it.

The subsequent history convinced Gandhi more and more that he should dissociate himself from the Congress. And that is what he did in the year of 1934—after the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress. The main reason being that from now on, his supreme and uneasy reaction to the malaise of Indian politics. Indian poverty was to offer ungrudging help to people who were in dire need. He vehemently protested against Congress's veering round back to selective social help as opposed to universal social rights. From now on, he was out for offering social security to everyone as a right shared with fellow citizens. No stigma, he declared, should be attached to it, and he further said each may claim help without loss of self-respect. He urged: to ensure this feeling of community the upper and middle classes must join hands with him. The challenge of poverty, Gandhi held, will not be met by singlehanded application of politics but only by a sensible and sensitive combination. He advocated an infrastructure of universality, to protect self-respect and safeguard social standards with a saving dash of selectivity, which should however, be directed to the needs of the individual but of easily identifiable groups and important territorial areas. His motto was: equality, adequacy and social efficiency.

Now, this is asking too much of a political organization. Let us hold an hypothetical consideration. The Prophet of Dialectical Materialism and classless society and the protagonist of historical inevitability, Karl Marx, was doing the job of Lenin in 1917. It is anybody's guess that Marx cannot be both an enunciator and destroyer of his own Thesis! Gandhi wanted to do both, but with little assistance. It is perhaps Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose taking extracts from Gandhi's writings was one of the first to elucidate Gandhi's political thinking. But this was only as late as 1940. Professor Bose too, wanted too much when he wrote in first edition of *Studies in Gandhism* in 1940; 'And that loyalty to non-violent non-cooperation has come not from any lurking cowardice within us, but from a particular intellectual judgement'. In all<sup>8</sup> his analysis on Gandhism he seems to have depended on intellect rather than on emotions. Here Lenin is perhaps correct in saying that most men

live in society not by will but by habit. And he declared later that the Communist party would take charge of the whole life of the people in Soviet Russia. In other words, Gandhi missed the point that a country dependent on a foreign power would naturally base its constitution on foreign models, rather than on indigenous lines. Take M. N. Roy, for example. His prophetic pamphlets<sup>9</sup> are nothing but gross imitation of Lenin's booklets mentioned earlier.

Finally, the great mistake of Gandhi is the mingling of truth with politics. No political leader has ever succeeded in emancipating a subject nation through fair means exclusively. Gandhi presented a riddle here. None perhaps knew the way out. Truth and non-violence appeared to him to be the same thing and he firmly stood for these ideals all along. Here Lenin placed in the past 1917 era may be accepted with an open mind. To the present writer there is no doubt that Gandhi made a mistake by calling off non-cooperation and the later civil disobedience movement. Had he accepted the hazardous path leading to outbreak of violence at those periods of history, the last dying spasm of communalism, racialism and all such attendant evils would have ended and hence the appearance of Jinnah would have been nipped in the bud. And we have reason to believe that had it not been for Lenin's disruptive tactics, the whole history of social democracy in Russia would have developed along very different lines. Let us imagine that the vacillation and indecision of the mensheviks after February 1917 could have played into the hands of those dark forces of counter-revolution which the historian finds much more difficult to discern than did Kerensky and the socialists at the time.

There will probably never be any final assessment of this strange and troubled humanist politician, whose personal impact on events, both in his own country and in the world outside, may well have been greater than that of any other individual in this century. Gandhi's status must be measured in terms of his determination, his strength of will, his certainty of purpose and his qualities of leadership. What gradually made him the most controversial figure of the twentieth century India was his gift of rousing moral indignation both in himself and in the masses. The great dominant theme in the final characterization of Gandhi was that conscience and the moral law must govern political decisions.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Reader may be benefited if he, besides reading the latest edition, refers to the earlier edition published by D. M. Library, 1940.

1. In this regard too Professor N.K. Bose's *My Days with Gandhi*, is a significant study.
2. (i) *What's to be Done?*, 1902. (ii) *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, 1905. (iii) *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1917.
4. *Young India*, 1.12.1920.
5. *Young India*, 11.8.1921, quoted from *Selection from Gandhi*, p. 105.
6. *Young India*, 11.9.1924.
7. *Young India*, 27.11.1924.
8. See Professor N.K. Bose's 'The case for an intellectual Movement to support Gandhism', *Modern Review*, 1939, pp. 207-9.
9. (i) *What do we want?* 1922. (ii) *One year of Non-cooperation*, 1923. (iii) *The Aftermath of Non-cooperation*. (iv) *Our Task in India*.

KSHITIS RAY

# Tagore and Gandhi vis-a-vis Rural Reconstruction

## A Study in Contrast and Convergence



GANDHI'S education in practical politics started about the same time as Tagore's—in the early part of the nineties. Their schools were different: Shelidah, tucked away on the banks of the Padma in Bengal was a far cry from Natal in South Africa. The human situation they had to face was also different. While Tagore was easily acceptable as the grand seigneur in his family estates, Gandhi became a victim of apartheid almost on landing in the dark continent. It was initially the personal indignity he had to suffer which steeled his resolve to champion the cause of the Indians in South Africa. Tagore's interest for the welfare of his ryots stemmed out of the natural concern of the *pater familias* for the flock committed to his care. Gandhi had to grow in structure through rigorous self-discipline to be able to forge his particular weapon of defence against assault upon Indian prestige, and, by the large, his weapon had to be a political one. But, Tagore stirred at first emotionally by the spectacle of the utter and childlike helplessness and dependence of the ryots, went on to analyse the root cause thereof. On the basis of his own study and experience of the situation he concluded that India's problem in the main was

human and societal rather than political. According to Tagore, as between the State as a political concept and the Society as a group of people drawn together by a community of interests, the latter was certainly more important to India as a fact of historical tradition. No matter where political power was concentrated, the people were used to consider themselves as members of a body *sociatique* rather than of a body *politic*. Whether Tagore over-simplified the problem and turned a blind eye on the realities of the colonial regime in his interpretation of India's tradition or history, is a debatable point. But the fact remains that quite early in his 'public' career, Tagore emphasized the village as the primary unit and the sheet-anchor for any effort at constructive nationalism to succeed in India. The point that Tagore wished to make was that whosoever wielded political power in India and whatever the complexion of his skin, unless the people could whole-heartedly participate in bringing about their own welfare through co-operative self-help, the subjugation of the unprivileged many would continue under the privileged few. He interpreted independence or *swarāj* not so much in its limited political connotation as in its broader aspect of the corporate will of the people functioning uninhibitedly to order their own lives to their better good—individually and collectively.

Not content only with defining his thesis in his essays and addresses, he also gave a most practicable blue-print of a rural reconstruction programme, some of the items of which were based on trials and experiments he had already carried out in his own estates. As further proof of his ardent interest in rural reconstruction, he sent his teenage eldest son, Rathindranath to far away United States of America to study Agriculture at Urbana, Illinois—along with two others equally near and dear to him.

When the school at Santiniketan claimed more and more of his time and attention, Tagore put his son in charge of management of the estates, on his return from the States. Rathindranath recalls in his reminiscences how a large part of his estate management consisted of implementing his father's plans of rural reconstruction. Not content with what was at best only a remote control, Tagore planned to link up his educational work with rural reconstruction work, and with that end in view acquired lands and buildings in the vicinity of Santiniketan as early as 1912. But Sriniketan, as the locale of the Institute of Rural Reconstruction came to be known later, had to start its career a decade after when a man became available in the

person of Leonard Elmhirst to organize the centre, as also money from his wife, Dorothy.

All this happened at a time when Congress-led political movement in India reached a new crescendo under the inspiration of Gandhi, and non-cooperation became the order of the day. This was also the time when the Great Sentinel and the Mahatma fell out on a number of issues. The very first of the series of controversies was also the most crucial in that it etched the disparities of the two personalities in bold contrast. When Gandhi launched his Non-cooperation Movement in 1920, Tagore was abroad enlisting support and cooperation of the cultural leaders of Europe for Visva-Bharti which was to grow and develop into an inter-cultural centre. His first reaction to news from home-front was typical. ‘Let us establish’ he pleaded in a letter to Andrews, ‘perfect co-operation of life and mind amongst ourselves.... and then will come, in its natural course, non-cooperation’. Confronted with Andrew’s rejoinder that ‘the movement’ was daily gathering momentum, Tagore wrote back, ‘Such an emotional outbreak should have been taken advantage of in starting independent organizations all over India for serving our country. Let Mahatma Gandhi be our true Leader in this, let him send his call for positive service, ask for homage in sacrifice, which has its end in love and creation.’

Fourteen long years had to pass before Tagore’s hope to see Gandhi as a ‘true leader’ of his conception, came to be fulfilled. In 1934 Gandhi retired from the Congress to devote himself entirely to what is known as Constructive Work programme. A letter that Tagore wrote about this time, bearing on the subject, is worth quoting:

‘Whichever be the nature of our weakness—psychological, social or traditional—we must accept responsibility for the betterment of our own country ourselves. The weak becomes the weaker for dependence on others. Besides, the wheel of our historical destiny does not certainly vouchsafe that the British rule of India will remain a permanent feature.

‘We must learn how we may regulate what future holds in store for us even if we have to go through many a lapse and mistake, trial and tribulation, revolution and sudden change. I took my first steps towards that kind of discipline—of course within my own limited means and abilities, long ago.

‘Unlike what it is in the West, our people, by and large, have never been truly urban. In India as in China, our civilization and

way of life have always been village based. The British, with their predilection towards urbanization, have cut asunder that umbilical cord with which our existence is bound to our mother earth of rural areas. That is why our disintegration has started at the grassroots. One can hardly describe the amount of poverty, sorrow, ignorance and utter helplessness which blight the bases of our existence. In my humble way, I have initiated efforts for revival on that plane. In that work of mine, I have neither received any encouragement from my own people nor any aid from the powers that be. Yet, I have clung to it and not given it up. If you asked me how to build up defences to protect our motherland, my reply would be—through rural reconstruction. Mahatmaji, at long last, has started stepping out in that direction. He is a person of colossal stature and he may well cover a lot of ground in his gigantic strides. But, I feel, and I have said so repeatedly, that he has let go many an opportunity and lost much valuable ground and time. He has now retired from the Congress. Even if he may not admit in so many words, his action implies that the Congress is not in a position to deliver the goods in so far as national reconstruction is concerned. Where the spirit of co-operation is inadequate, a gathering of men of varied temperaments is bound to end up in head-on collisions. The signs are already ominous. Quarrels and rivalry within the camp itself do not produce results of lasting good. It is true that with my limited resources I have not been able to achieve much. But, please do remember, right from the days of the Pabna Conference, I have consistently upheld and propagated this doctrine. And, in the long run, reformation of our educational system and revival of our rural life, have been the two main planks of my practical work. Whether I have achieved some success or not, time alone can judge. But, even to have willed is not without value or significance’.

Whether Tagore’s grievance that Gandhi took to the field of rural reconstruction rather late in the day, and, if he (Gandhi) had started betimes, we would have been better able to shoulder the responsibilities of a self-governing democratic state such as we envisage India to become, is debatable point which only close students of our contemporary history can disentangle. It remains a fact, however, and Gandhi himself bore witness to it, that during his closing years their two paths tended to converge towards each other, more and more. At a conference at Santiniketan on his last ‘pilgrimage’ there, in December 1945, Gandhi is reported to have said, ‘I have found no real conflict between us. I started with a

disposition to detect a conflict between Gurudev and myself but ended with the glorious discovery that there was none.’

It is also on record that on the fateful day he died at the hands of an assassin, Gandhi had drafted a scheme for the future shape that the Congress might take. In this, his last will and testament, Gandhi proposed voluntary disbandment of the Congress so that Congressmen who continued to believe in his ideal could constitute themselves as volunteers dedicated to the service of the hungry and helpless millions in the villages, leaving the scramble for office and power to professional politicians.

This was probably Gandhi’s last and final attempt at correcting the error he had made in fixing priorities. He realized more clearly than many that the British response to the Quit India demand, which had been dramatized in the calendar marked by Mountbatten, was only indicative of the unseemly haste of the British to be rid of ‘the mud and filth’ which they had stirred up in India, and to which Tagore had pointed a prophetic finger in his *Crisis in Civilisation*. Nor was Gandhi impervious to the British design in beating a hasty retreat. His resistance to the idea of partition, his readiness for prolonging the period of struggle, and finally his plan to replace the Congress by a voluntary organization of servants of the people—were all calculated to gain time to prepare the mind of the masses of India to *earn* neither birthright through blood and sweat rather than have it served up in a platter. But his war-weary lieutenants failed him and repudiated him, and, notwithstanding the successive Five Year Plans and a separate ministry set up for development, our recession socially, economically, politically and morally, has become complete after our twenty years or so of independence.

Now, the question finally is: whether we should persist with our lopsided priorities, drifting from nowhere to nowhere, or, should we, taking courage in both our hands, tread the Tagore way of educational reform and rural reconstruction on countrywide basis—and thereby fulfil also the terms of Gandhi’s last will and testament? If not for anything else, sheer instinct of self-preservation should guide us to the paths of self-help, self-sufficiency and self-respect. Or else, we shall continue to be baulked by the anomaly of holding our freedom as a fruit which we cannot eat.



A. B. SHAH

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## Gandhi, Communalism and National Unity



HINDU-Muslim unity and the abolition of untouchability were two of the most important elements of Gandhi's programme for the freedom and national regeneration of India. Indeed, in a sense they were among the preconditions of *swarāj* as he visualized it, and therefore he often described their attainment as even more important than the withdrawal of British power from India. He succeeded in considerable measure in his fight against untouchability; though much remains to be done. No Hindu, except the lunatic fringe represented by the Shankaracharya of Puri, would have a moment's hesitation in supporting government as well as voluntary measures designed to bring about the complete liquidation of untouchability. However, Hindu-Muslim unity evaded Gandhi throughout his active political life in India, except for a brief period during the Khilafat agitation. (And the inspiration behind this short-lived unity was not that of secular, territorial nationalism but that of an extra-territorial loyalty based on religion.) Not only that; in spite of Gandhi's ceaseless effort, the country had to accept partition as the price of freedom. And soon after independence, Gandhi had to die at the hands of a Hindu, though he alone among the leaders of the Indian National Congress was unreconciled to partition.

Why did this happen? How was it that Gandhi, who always asked the Hindus to be patient and generous to the Muslims, and asked the British to hand over power to Jinnah and quit, came to be increasingly isolated not only from the Muslims but even from his own followers in his quest for unity? And how is it that twenty-one years after partition, the Hindu-Muslim problem is still with us, in the sense that we are still groping even for a valid theoretical solution of it?

A satisfactory discussion of these questions would require an examination of Gandhi's philosophy of life, his theory of social change and, most important of all, the nature of the Islamic tradition and the type of mind that it moulds. All this cannot be undertaken in a single, brief background paper and must wait for a later date. Here I shall only deal with them to the extent that is necessary for indicating the lines on which further discussion may usefully proceed.

Gandhi was essentially a philosophical anarchist in his view of man and did not subscribe to the idea of original sin. On the contrary, he believed that man was 'essentially' good, for every human being had a spark of the divine in him and no one was beyond redemption even though the struggle for self-realization was bound to be long and arduous. He, therefore, approached the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity as well-meaning, persuasive, non-sectarian, nationalist. He worked on the assumption, based on his experience in South Africa, that if only Hindus and Muslims could be brought together in joint constructive endeavour, they would see that unity was in their common interest and learn to live together in peace and harmony. He tried to project the universal human values preached by all major religions, including Hinduism and Islam, and hoped that in the course of time the forces of unity would triumph over those of separatism, for true religion could only join, not keep separate, men of different faiths. If Hindus and Muslims in India looked upon themselves as essentially separate groups the fault, according to Gandhi, lay not in the beliefs and practices enjoined by their scriptures but in a defective understanding of their 'real' message.

This is a noble view of man and religion. But it overlooks the union of good and evil that man as a product of evolution is, just as it overlooks the historically determined character of specific human cultures and institutions. Consequently, Gandhi missed the socio-political and cultural roots of the religious conflict in

India, and attributed its origin to the wily British, who certainly were interested in keeping the Muslims away from the 'seditious' and 'Hindu' nationalist movement. Gandhi was satisfied that if only there were enough goodwill on the part of a sufficient number of Hindus and Muslims, sooner or later they would realize the suicidal implications of religious conflict and work together for the attainment of freedom from foreign rule. This approach, which I would call the Rama-Rahim approach, because it postulated the peaceful co-existence of Hindus and Muslims without any fundamental modification in their attitude to religion, was bound to fail. It did not take into account the hold that religion, with its custom, tradition and dogma, has on the minds of men in a pre-modern society. Also, it presupposed that the logic of individual or small-group behaviour could be applied to the behaviour of huge, faceless masses of men whose only common bond is blind loyalty to a tribal collectivity in the name of God and religion.

The Gandhian approach was saintly in the main. However, it was also akin to the Marxist, in the sense that it assigned a secondary role to the cultural factor. Gandhi believed that the urge for political freedom would enable the Muslims to take an enlightened view of their religion. The Marxists, including socialists like Achyut Patwardhan and Asoka Mehta, went further and sought to interpret Hindu-Muslim relations in terms of economic interests and the machinations of the British. Gandhi as well as the Marxists assumed that the Muslim masses, as distinguished from their upper-class leadership, had at heart the same political and economic interests as their Hindu counterparts. They, therefore, concluded that as the struggle against political and economic injustice gathered momentum, the basis of Hindu-Muslim conflict would gradually be undermined. And once freedom was established and justice was on the march, the two communities would, it was hoped, begin to live in friendship and peace. In this perspective no critical examination of religion as a socio-cultural institution, let alone a frontal attack on some of the values and attitudes it sanctified, was considered necessary either by the Gandhians or by the Marxists.

That Gandhi should not have seen the need for such criticism is easy to understand. What is surprising is the attitude of those who swore by Marx. For the left originally arose as standard-bearer of enlightenment and was as much a protest against religious obscurantism as against exploitation in the secular field. It is true that Indian Marxists were unsparing in their criticism of Hindu

obscurantism, which was relatively easy in view of the rather amorphous nature of Hinduism and the tradition of critical self-inquiry started by the reformers of the nineteenth century. However, there was no such tradition in Muslim society nor was there a large enough class of liberal, forward-looking Muslims which, like its Hindu counterpart in the preceding century, could initiate such a tradition. Consequently, Islam escaped the humanizing process through which Christianity in the West and, to a certain extent, Hinduism in India had to pass. Inspired by considerations that were primarily political, the Marxists no less than the Gandhians missed the true nature of the role that the doctrine and tradition of Islam played in the evolution of Muslim politics in India. Gandhi made Khilafat a national cause in order to win the confidence of Indian Muslims. The Marxists were not particularly impressed by Gandhi's support of the Khilafat agitation. But they, too, dared not criticize Muslim communalism except in political terms, whereas what was required was a thorough-going critique of the philosophy and sociology of Islam of the type that Marx considered 'the beginning of all criticism'. Even M. N. Roy, who alone among Indian Marxists subjected Hinduism to such an analysis, failed in respect of Islam.

It is not the purpose of this paper to carry out a detailed examination of Islam and its history. I shall, therefore, content myself with only such observations as are relevant to the problem of Hindu-Muslim relations in the context of our effort to develop a modern, liberal and secular society in India.

Like any other religion, Islam offers a vision of life and a theory of man and universe that incorporates this vision. In the history of every religion a stage arrives when the spiritual vision fades into the background except for a socially ineffective minority, while the theory achieves an absolute status unrelated to the historical situation in which it was first formulated. When this happens, religion proves a fetter on human freedom and creativity, superstition triumphs over science, and ethics itself is perverted into a specious justification of social inequities. Medieval Christianity and Hinduism from classical times to the early years of the nineteenth century provide ample evidence for this view. The Renaissance humanized Christianity, and Hinduism too underwent a partial but significant change of the same type in the nineteenth century. However, Islam still awaits its renaissance, and till it takes place Muslim society cannot be modernized nor can Muslims be integrated into a modern secular society, regardless of whether it is liberal or authoritarian.

The problem of Hindu-Muslim unity thus appears as an aspect of the larger problem of the modernization of Indian society. For, given the composition, past history and present context of this society, it would be unrealistic to imagine that the Hindu and the Muslim can live together as equal citizens unless each were willing to dissociate his political from his religious or cultural identity. For historical and other reasons, the Hindu is at an advantage in this respect. But precisely because of that, he has to accept the onus of promoting the modernization of Muslim society. So far, he has defaulted on this responsibility, apparently out of expediency but mainly because his own understanding of the task of modernization has been superficial and imitative. Consequently, well-meaning Hindus in public life have generally been soft-headed secularists in relation to Muslim society. Over the years their attitude has seriously damaged not only the cause of democratic secular integration but also the interests of Muslims themselves. It has created a vested interest in obscurantism, and encourages among educated Muslims a tendency to self-pity of the Mock Turtle kind instead of facilitating the emergence of a secular and forward-looking Muslim leadership. Worse still, in reaction to the persistent refusal, in the name of religion, of the spokesmen of Muslim society to adapt their attitudes and institutions to the demands of the modern conscience and the requirements of the modern age, a growing number of well-meaning Hindus are rallying round the banner of Hindu revivalism. Indeed, if the present trend continues unchecked, in a few years from now most Hindus and Muslims will be confronting each other from platforms like those of the R.S.S. and the Jamat-e-Islami. One need not worry about *their* fate—indeed, I would say to them: ‘a plague on both your houses’! But an overwhelming majority of the people of this country, be they Hindu or Muslim, are entitled to a more decent society and its chances would suffer a great setback. It is, therefore, necessary that those who speak in the name of secularism and democracy refuse to have any truck with obscurantist groups claiming to represent the interests of Muslims even if it means the loss of Muslim vote for some years to come. There are enough secular-minded Muslims, mostly of the younger generation, who would like to establish rapport with their Hindu counterparts. They feel alienated from the bulk of their community, and also from the Hindus because of the latter’s narcissistic attitude and short-sighted opportunism. Let secular Hindus seek them out and give them a sense of belonging, not as Hindus or Muslims but as fellow-

citizens engaged in building an open society in India. This may not be Gandhi's way, but I believe it is a Gandhian way of solving the communal problem and promoting national unity.

T. K. N. UNNITHAN

## Gandhi and Social Change



SOCIAL differentiation and stratification are the fundamental processes of national societies. These processes cause the existence of a multiplicity of groups (familial, racial, political, economic, religious, occupational, etc.) and values and norms of conduct which govern the individuals but which differ from group to group. These differences in the values and norms of groups are basically responsible for the different types of conflicts that exist in society. It is the existence of these conflicts that often manifest themselves as hindrances to social cohesion and change. Societal changes, i.e., changes in the structure and functions of societal elements, are warranted by cultural changes, and cultural changes do not take place without some new factors, immanent or external, that affect a particular socio-cultural milieu. In a society where conflict is a norm, social change can, however, be ushered in by synthesizing the conflicting cultural values and norms, thus paving the way for a new social order. It is in this respect that we shall try to examine the positive contributions that the Gandhian thought stream can generate.

The Gandhian thought system, though not presented here in a systematic manner, constitutes the starting point of the various propositions that are enunciated. In the words of Sorokin (*Reconstruction of Humanity*, p. 93), 'If we wish to eliminate wars and

establish a creative altruistic order, we must modify simultaneously our culture, our social institutions, and the personality of our citizenry in an altruistic direction'. Gandhian ideas and contributions constitute one of the most outstanding efforts in the recent history of the world to transform, systematically, a social order in this manner. Those who are familiar with the Gandhian thought system would agree that there was hardly any aspect of societal life which was not his concern. Whether it was in regard to cleanliness in daily routine or it was high level politics concerning the independence of the country, Gandhi had given them careful thought and he had concrete suggestions to offer.

Many have considered Gandhi not as a thinker but primarily as a man of action. Undoubtedly Gandhi was a great man of action; but his actions resulted from his own thoughts and convictions or their unique applications to particular situations. This popular image of Gandhi as 'a man of action', is, however, based not on any assumption that there was no Gandhian thought system to provide intellectual stimulation to the elite groups for bringing about social revolution and change. It was rather due to Gandhi's inclination to constantly experiment with his own ideas in order to demonstrate their potency in bringing about social transformation and thus to get convinced before asking others to follow them. It may thus be concluded that Gandhi was primarily a thinker, and then only a man of action; yet he was not an 'ivory tower thinker' but one whose thinking was very much related to reality and the existing society.

Gandhian thought is an all-pervading universal system with some ideas representing the essential core and others forming merely the peripheral values. Most probably, only the core is significant enough to be of consequence to any society. Yet, strangely enough, the core contributions are often forgotten and the peripheral values are followed. History is full of illustrations of disciples of social and religious reformers endeavouring to enshrine the peripheral preachings rather than the core values which the reformers cherished above all and wanted humanity to accept. This introduces cleavages between their actual preachings and applications. And as time passes the cleavage between the values which they preach and the actual practice of the same in society becomes larger and larger. Some of the preachings of Gandhi may not be relevant in a contemporary society. It is, therefore, necessary to clearly distinguish between the core and peripheral contributions of Gandhian thought and to apply the significant core to existing societies. Otherwise, the result



may be that Gandhian ideas will meet the same fate as those of other great reformers. Keeping in mind the logic of Gandhi's thinking, we should be able to relate Gandhian principles to a democratic society. Unless we consider Gandhian contributions in their proper perspective, all attempts to utilize them for social progress are bound to fail. It is in this respect that we may examine the relevance of Gandhi today.

As indicated earlier, if one has to alter a social order, it is necessary to try to change the important segments of the society, namely the cultural system, the social system and the personality system. Without approaching these simultaneously, it will not be possible to alter the socio-cultural order in a creative fashion. Gandhi wanted not only freedom for all but also a transformation of the entire social order in this country. Political independence was only one of the Gandhian objectives. Gandhian thought thus essentially concerns itself with the functioning of a society and its reformation and relates to:

1. Acceptance of *ahimsā* as an end and a means, in all individual and social actions;
2. Acceptance of egalitarian values in social, economic and political institutions in spite of contrary religio-cultural sanctions, simultaneously repudiating all bases of inequalities;
3. Belief in God along with the toleration of different religious faiths;
4. Continuous reformation of the individual in terms of the moral values of non-violence; and
5. Fearless and selfless action in pursuit of truth and non-violence with a capacity to identify one's own well being and happiness with that of the entire society.

All pronouncements of Gandhi can be related to one or the other of these. Let us analyze how these represent an attempt on the part of Gandhi to alter the cultural, personality and social systems.

Indian society as a political entity consists of different homogenous and heterogenous cultural elements with predominating Hindu religious values and norms. Without entering into an argument regarding the intrinsic qualities of a social order based on a caste system, as it exists today, it is evident that caste generates inequalities of all sorts. As a matter of fact, Hindu society is legitimately regarded as one of the best examples of a hierarchical

stratification of a social order intended to perpetuate inequalities. Gandhi realized the injustice perpetuated on account of the practice of caste and hence took up the question of Harijans. He offered fasts unto death for their better treatment. He preferred to live with them wherever he went inspite of the palatial mansions put at his disposal. His was a dedicated life for the upliftment of these poor social outcastes, who were disowned and discarded by the caste Hindus. Whether it was Kashmir or Kerala, Assam or Bombay, Gandhi was on the spot fighting for their cause. Gandhi's Vaikom *satyāgraha* was an eye-opener to the high-caste Hindus all over the country and was responsible for arousing social consciousness in regard to the oppression and different forms of exploitation of the lower castes, who all were branded as 'untouchables'. Gandhi was not a mere Hindu social reformer and he was not satisfied by merely questioning the practices of the Hindus. By his own living he demonstrated the extent of injustices in the social practices and pointed out positive ways of living. It was this dedication to the cause of Harijans that prompted the Constituent Assembly to pay homage to Gandhi and enshrine in the Constitution a provision to abolish untouchability. To Gandhi the practice of untouchability, i.e., keeping a section of humanity as not worth interacting with just because of their birth in some type of families, was violence. Oppression of any form is according to him, violent and liberation of the oppressed group is non-violent provided such liberation is undertaken by noble means.

Gandhi was interested not only in social institutions like untouchability but also in economic institutions. Gandhi's concepts of *apārigraha*, *daridranāraayan*, 'trusteeship', *swadeshi*, 'decentralization', 'dignity of labour', and above all his ideas of a 'spinning wheel economy' are worth considering. Gandhi preferred a simple economy with everyone working and earning his daily bread by the sweat of his own brow. If capitalistic large-scale production was inevitable, he would allow it provided the accumulation of wealth was done by non-violent means, for the sake of the poor. So in both the institutions of caste and property Gandhi tried to introduce greater egalitarian values. The socially downtrodden castes were also materially poor. In terms of caste or in terms of class the Harijans were at the lowest rung of society. The plea for their upward mobility, therefore, meant radical alteration of the existing social structure.

In regard to alteration of political institutions also Gandhian contributions are outstanding. His insistence on *satyāgraha* and 'non-violent resistance' in political actions and on peaceful resolution of

conflicts, his struggle for *swarāj* and his preference for democracy, adult franchise, decentralization of power, etc., have, indeed, made their impact on Indian society. He 'fought' for the independence of this country, not out of enmity towards Britain but because the political oppression of India by Britain was not good even for Britain. His *satyāgraha* movement for political freedom of this country was expected to bring good both to India and Britain simultaneously. Gandhi had expressed often that if by political independence of India Britain were to suffer Gandhi would not be happy about it. But by removing the reins of oppression the oppressor and the oppressed would be better off in the Gandhian system.

So also in the case of the institution of religion. People accused Gandhi for adhering to the Hindu concept of Rāmrajya and other Hindu religion-loaded ideas, but he was not a Hindu of the ordinary kind. He had toleration of all faiths. His entire life is a triumphant illustration of this cardinal principle of equality of religious faiths which he tried to infuse as a value among the followers of various religions. It might be, as he himself had admitted, that due to his Hindu background and training, he internalized a greater dose of Hindu social values. But if we accept the logic of religious equality, whatever religion one adheres to it does not really matter. All religions lead to the same goal. Therefore, in this sense it did not matter whether he chose Hinduism or Christianity, Buddhism or Islam as his religion. In the Gandhian system a true Hindu was also a true Christian and a true Muslim and vice versa. But tolerance of different religious faiths became a scarce value in contemporary society torn by strifes and conflicts of many varieties arising out of narrow religious affiliations. The dedicated work of Gandhi for communal harmony and religious tolerance was an outstanding contribution towards building up social solidarity. Thus, both in the cultural and social systems, Gandhi has tried to effect changes.

As it has already been pointed out above, affecting changes in any one of these sectors alone is not going to result in a transformation of society and, therefore, his emphasis on individual reformation becomes extremely significant. If the individuals did not internalize the new values enunciated by Gandhi, then, perhaps a radical transformation in the social order would never have been realistic. The Gandhian insistence on individual reformation is to be interpreted in this context. Character formation is one of the most important tenets of Gandhism. In a society where caste norms control the individual from cradle to grave, it will become impossible

to introduce egalitarian values without taking care of the individual right from the very early stages of his life. Personality development starts at zero age. If in the first few years of life the child internalizes certain age-old values, cherished by his family, and then, if we want him to incorporate certain particular values contrary to what have been already internalized it will not only be a difficult task but also may create problems of maladjustment. The de-socialization function of modern education in a backward society manifests the same difficulties. Gandhi's insistence on character formation and the scheme of basic education are best illustrations of his anxiety to take care of the child right from the beginning. Even more important than formal education is the informal educative environment of the home. The home revolves round the woman. In India the women were an oppressed lot and without raising their status, no worthwhile social change could be effected. Emancipation of women from the social ties to which they were bound since generations has been another important Gandhian contribution in this connection. It is the women who are the repositories of a society's culture and also the agents of transmission of that culture to the children. Therefore, if the old values of inequalities are to be altered, there is no solution till the woman, who is oppressed in the house in the name of religion and caste, is liberated and educated. And hence Gandhi's lifelong and dedicated 'battle' for the upliftment of the status of women in the country. Alongwith this, his insistence on the individual reformation by strict adherence to *brahmacārya*, non-stealing, telling the truth, observing non-violence, etc., were meant to reinforce the transformation of character. The individual personality was to be moulded in such a way as to become conducive for accepting the egalitarian values which he propounded. Thus, Gandhi tried to approach the social order from different angles at the same time. He wanted to transform the cultural, social and personality systems simultaneously to usher in a social order of a more acceptable nature, so that an India of Gandhi's dreams would have come to exist.

A question may be asked as to what is the relevance of Gandhi in the modern world which is characterized predominantly by an increasing use of science and technology in man's day to day life with consequential cultural and social changes. New technology results in new norms and values and different ways of living. In a world which is committed to the increasing use of technology there will be hardly any area that can be isolated from technological influences. By its own logic, the development of technology implies

development in communication possibilities thus breaking down cultural barriers. It should be increasingly difficult to create artificial cultural barriers. The natural consequence of this would be greater chances of cultural diffusion; the propensity will be for all societies of the world to accept in varying degrees more and more the use of technology. India is no exception to this. It is in this context that we have to answer as to whether Gandhian ideas and contributions are relevant to bring about social progress.

It may be recalled that Gandhi was opposed to big machines, unchecked industrialization and urbanization. It is well known that in this industry-based civilization there are certain economies of scale, which necessitate the use of big machines. If we are to increasingly accept technology the natural corollary of it would be a greater use of big machines and large factories. The result will be more industrialization and urbanization. In this situation, it may sound strange to say that Gandhian contributions are significant. But Gandhi is not only relevant in the context of increasing industrialization and urbanization of today's society, he is becoming more and more relevant even for tomorrow. Industrialization has not reduced inequalities. Democratic political systems of various types have not completely eliminated serfdom. Political and social oppressions continue to be norms of human society. So long as social differentiation continues to be an accepted form of human society, there will be necessity for infusing egalitarian values. Acceptance of technology does not reduce differentiation; on the contrary, it increases it. Increasing use of technology and urbanization have resulted only in greater heterogeneity, greater inequalities and greater unaltruistically oriented behaviours. Therefore, the need for following Gandhian propositions will be increasingly felt.

Our difficulty is due to the rigidity that we attribute to Gandhian propositions. Gandhian propositions are revisable propositions to some extent. In a dynamic society if the Gandhian propositions are not revisable they may not hold true. Gandhi knew it and himself revised some and hence was even accused of inconsistency by Gandhian illiterates. Of course, the fundamental principle of *ahimsā* (truth and non-violence) were eternal and unchangeable and in that sense absolute. Ipso facto, relative values arising from their application to existing societies which themselves do not remain stationary are changeable, revisable, if they are to remain true. Gandhian propositions, therefore, may be revised if we think in terms of applying them to any contemporary situation.

Social scientists may undertake the task of investigating various aspects of Gandhian contributions in the context of different social situations. Irrespective of the possibility of being branded as ‘neo-Gandhism’, or ‘revisionism’ the only correct approach, using the Gandhian logic itself, is to adjust Gandhian ideas to contemporary society. What Gandhism needs is growth; unless we understand the essentials of its dynamics Gandhian principles would stand rejected inspite of the many ‘Gandhi Bhaktas’. The need of today is to promote Gandhism and to promote Gandhism is to make his teachings relevant to present day society. To make them relevant today, we need research and experimentation and a capacity and willingness to accept and promote the findings of such researches and experimentation in an objective manner, without deviating from the fundamental social goal of *Sarvodaya*, through non-violence and peace.

SECTION C

Gandhi's Economic Ideas and  
their Implementation





VIVEK RANJAN BHATTACHARYA

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# Economic Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi



## INTRODUCTION

IN RECENT times Gandhi was the only politician, nay social thinker, who was able to present a complete economic theory. Unlike Marx's his economic thought is all-embracing. It is based on a practical philosophy of his own, and covers all the problems that plague our social life. Stalwarts in the field of politics were mostly engrossed in current problems. But like all original thinkers, since Bapu was gifted with a larger vision, his economic theory spells out a solution to problems both immediate and ultimate.

All economic theories are meant for man. His well-being is the ultimate goal of them all. Now, if he fails to imbibe good virtues of life, who will preserve the mantle of the society? For, surely, the total well-being of man can never be wrought by bringing about a change in the material conditions of his life alone. It is essentially in this context that the entire economic philosophy of Gandhi has to be studied—a philosophy which is set in an altogether new pattern of thinking for the fuller and near-perfect development of man and his society.

The Mahatma, who was a true Vaishṇava, has drawn immensely on our cultural and spiritual heritage to plan his theory. Since

universal love has always played an important role in our religion, it forms the basis of Gandhian economic philosophy, and as such, Gandhian economics could never wriggle out of this imprint of deep spiritual influence.

Besides the teaching of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and the Vaishṇava philosophers, another significant work that left its mark in Bapu's mind was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. Gandhi himself records in his autobiography<sup>1</sup> that he derived the following ideas from Ruskin's work in the year 1904:

- (1) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all;
- (2) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work;
- (3) That a life of labour, i.e. that life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Another great mind that influenced Gandhi was Tolstoy. It is almost universally known that he subscribed to Tolstoy's 'theory of bread-labour', according to which no man was free from the obligation of body-labour for the production of the elementary necessities of life. This was a law which should apply to intellectual workers as well. They too were not to be exempted from its operation.<sup>2</sup>

#### EMPHASIS ON ETHICS

Gandhi's economic philosophy gains added significance when we take note of the fact that he laid tremendous emphasis on the ethical aspect of the problem. 'I must confess', said he, 'that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics'.<sup>3</sup> Whereas Alfred Marshall accepts economics as the science which studies welfare of man in the ordinary business of life, Gandhi stresses more emphatically that 'Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful. Thus, the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral.'<sup>4</sup> This strong plea for ethical values is the first brick upon which the edifice of the entire Gandhian economics stands. Gandhi went further to apply his political weapon of non-violence in the international arena of Economics. 'The extension of the law of non-violence in the domain of economics means nothing less

than the introduction of moral values as a factor to be considered in regulating international commerce.<sup>5</sup>

This emphasis on the ethical aspect distinguishes Gandhian economic philosophy from that of Marshall, Marx or Keynes. Whereas Marx emphasizes on class struggle, Gandhi stresses class coordination. Marx talks of bloody revolution as perhaps the only *modus operandi* of solving the problem of economic inequality. Gandhi writes categorically that ‘the economics that disregard moral and sentimental considerations are like waxworks that being life-like still lack the life of the living flesh. At every crucial moment these new fangled economic laws have broken down in practice. And nations or individuals who accept them as guiding maxims must perish’.<sup>6</sup> For ‘that economics is untrue which ignores or disgraces moral values.’<sup>7</sup>

And yet, it should be clearly noted that Gandhi did not ignore the aspect of material advancement in anyway. He said, ‘By economic progress, I take it we mean material advancement without limit, and by real progress we mean moral progress which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us. The subject may therefore be stated thus: Does not moral progress increase in the same proportion as material progress? I know that this is a wider proposition than the one before us. But I venture to think that we always mean the large one even when we lay down the smaller.’<sup>8</sup>

To Gandhi, providing a mere economic minimum to the members of society was *not* the *summum bonum* of existence. A society must follow a norm of life where mere material well-being is not the only motivating force. There must be proper values in an ideal community. This is why most emphatically and unequivocally Gandhi wrote ‘true economics stands for social justice and moral values’.<sup>9</sup> But in this compromise and comparison, too, Gandhi does not discount the real significance of economics. He brings a happy and harmonious blending of the two:

‘True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name, must at the same time be good economics. An economics that inculcates Mammon worship and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life.’<sup>10</sup>

Further, Gandhi does not ignore the divinity of man which is epitomized in the great maxim that ‘*a jiva* is always *shiva*’: a man

is, by and large, divine. And, in this respect, it is very difficult to distinguish between man and man. It is from this deep feeling of spirituality and divinity of man that later on Gandhi derived his ethico-economic theory of trusteeship and inheritance. He wrote, 'Everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God's people'.<sup>11</sup> That is why Gandhi always talked of equality of distribution of national wealth. His idea of society was based on a theory of thorough equality. Everybody must have equal opportunity in life. This was the basis of his theory of trusteeship too:

'My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, as have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc., therefore in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees.'

Thus, nobody in society should own or enjoy more than his necessity.

This forms the very basis of the Gandhian theory of distribution. As Gandhi himself explains:

'The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural wants and no more. For example, if one man has weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring his ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed.'<sup>12</sup>

But as a practical economist Gandhi knew also the difficulties of implementing this theory. He realized the tremendous difficulties a society was to face to have equal distribution of national wealth. So he amended his economic goal. He wrote, 'My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it is not to be realized. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution'.<sup>13</sup>

For this sincere approach to equality Gandhi may perhaps rightly be regarded as a true socialist. And he was certainly a socialist when

he categorically said that he believed in the universal ownership of the instruments of production. 'I know socialists and communists who will not hurt a fly but who believe in the universal ownership of the instruments of production. I rank myself as one among them'. And further:

'According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realized only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others.'<sup>14</sup>

Yet the Gandhian socialism has its own unmistakable spiritual stamp where a man's freedom of thought ranks immensely superior in the valuation scale than his bread alone.

'My socialism means "even unto this last". I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing not even your body.'<sup>15</sup>

Again, 'My socialism in its modified form means that the State does not own everything. It does in Russia. There you certainly do not own your body even. You may be arrested at any time, though you may have committed no crime. They may send you wherever they like.'<sup>16</sup>

The modified socialism of Gandhi, based essentially upon the unique institutions of trusteeship and *Panchāyat Rāj* and by providing a viable alternative to industrialization through the development of village industries and agriculture is intended to bring about the *Rāmrajya* of his dream. It will afford, if not a car to all as in the U.S., at least a square meal a day to the masses without snatching the personal liberty of an individual.

It is true that in the predominant technocracy of the present-day world the whole Gandhian conception of economic progress will sound utterly incongruous, and may, at best, perhaps be taken as nothing more than a saint's idealistic sermon in the wilderness. But when we look at it sincerely, we feel that, the time has perhaps

come, after twenty years of trial and error process, to look back and reconsider our pattern of progress. At such a juncture of our national existence, we shall do well to remember the Gandhian exhortation of the supreme importance of the purity of our approach. For, ‘this socialism is pure as crystal. It therefore requires crystal-like means to achieve it.... One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth’.<sup>17</sup>

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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11. N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 313.
12. *The Harijan*, August 25, 1940.
13. *Young India*. March 17, 1927.
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GYAN CHAND

## The Substance of Gandhian Economic Approach



THE Gandhian economic point of view has been and is being presented with passionate high mindedness and has inspired many noble souls. It was and is an integral part of Gandhi's whole philosophy of life; and it can be fully understood and duly appreciated only if this basic fact is borne in mind. This view in economic terms involves:—

- (a) Primacy of man in production, distribution and exchange, i.e., man—his well-being, growth and unfoldment—has to be the prime object of economy in all its aspects and the end, the means and the measure of productive efforts and its results. This, of course, means that it has to put premium on qualities which maximize production without undermining or impairing the essential meaning of life—making compassionate living the essence of social relations and the growth of personality.
- (b) This principle applies with special force to the use of machinery in production. Machinery for man and not man for machinery has to be the cardinal principle of mechanized production. It has been very clearly stated by

Mahatma Gandhi and his successors that it is right and proper to use machines—even the most advanced type of machines run by power including atomic energy—provided it does not cause greater redundancy of labour for which alternative and satisfactory employment cannot be found and otherwise is not harmful for physical and mental health of the producer.

- (c) From this point of view, however, industrialization which involves mass production, centralization of initiative, policy decision and power and concentration of authority in the economy as a whole is undesirable and has to be limited to the irreducible minimum. Industrialization in this sense, even in a society in which the means of production have been socialized, involves concentration of economic and political power and has to be avoided.
- (d) Decentralization of production, if the validity of the point is admitted, becomes the natural corollary of this principle and has to be promoted and realized to the utmost. This involves the development of integrated agro-industrial economy consisting of small communities in which with agriculture as the pivotal activity, small industries are developed around it on a planned basis with the areas of operations carved out on an inter-related basis to suit each specific line of production. Production for use and not for profits has to be the guiding principle of the decentralized agro-industrial economy which means planning in terms of real needs and resources and on the basis of maximum utilization of the available labour force. This is the meaning of self-sufficiency in production and it does not mean cessation of specialization and trade. Each small community has to produce what it needs or acquire it through exchange. This however, means rationalization of trade and avoidance of unnecessary movement of goods.
- (e) Small communities of producers means economic and social democracy, reduction of inequalities within a very limited range and decentralized initiative. Decentralized agro-industrial economy necessarily involves end of exploitation, reduction of acquisitiveness in economic life to the minimum and making well-being of the community its prime-mover.
- (f) These changes cannot be brought about without radical changes in the social structure and its motivation, norms and



patterns of behaviour. As violence has absolutely no place in the Gandhian point of view, social transformation of the existing extremely unjust economy necessarily involves mass awakening, widely diffused social awareness and the use of the peoples' power for fundamental social transformation. This awakening and awareness have to be based upon a real social vision of a society based upon justice, equality and freedom, society established without creating any social animosities or antipathies.

The main tenets of the Gandhian economic point of view, which are well-known, have been re-stated very briefly in order to give the context in which various experiments in social transformation made in the last twenty years have to be assessed and evaluated. In the nine enclosed annexures of this short paper, the evaluation of the results of these experiments, which have involved large outlay of public money, has been attempted and the conclusion of this evaluation is that, generally speaking, these experiments have failed from the point of view of efficiency, utilization of idle man-power and increase of production and social change. This applies to all experiments sponsored and financed by the Government. But this is also largely true of the magnificent endeavour of Vinoba and his devoted associates who have worked with great dedication and social earnestness. In quantitative terms the Gramdan movement has achieved very impressive results, but in spite of all nobility of thought, spirit and action that has gone into this great endeavour its impact on the mainsprings of the economy, its working and its output in economic and social terms have been disappointing. Vinoba and his dedicated associates, in the midst of the gloom created by the general frustration produced by chaotic planning of last 18 years, could have been the bearers of new hope, new faith and new sense of social adventure. This, generally speaking, unfortunately has not happened. This band of high spirited workers has not been daunted by these results. They are buoyed up by the number of Grāmdāns, Blockdāns and Zilladāns and even prospective *dāns* of the entire states. The economy, as a whole, however, even in *grāmdan* areas has not received the impact of this buoyancy and though there are some exceptions, the masses are still steeped in inertia, almost stupour, are being exploited and suffering grievously from growing economic and social inequalities and have not developed any capacity for resistance to the inequities with which the economy has been and

is afflicted. There is no *lok-niti* or *lok-shakti*— peoples' government or peoples' power, the two desiderata on which so much stress is being laid by the Gramdan movement.

The explanation for the miscarriage of this high-minded social purpose has to be given in terms of the basic concepts, their formulation, implementation and entire social context in which they are necessarily embedded. This explanation cannot obviously be offered in this short and highly condensed paper. All that can be done is to indicate briefly and very broadly the limitations of these concepts and their applications. Their most important limitation is that their revolutionary intent has not been co-related with the operation of the major social forces which have been generated and developed in the country in the pre- and post-independence period and created an economic apparatus which is essentially counter-revolutionary. These forces pre-modern, modern and anti-modern in their genesis, interaction and the complex in which they are operating are in effect regressive. In spite of land reforms, which have admittedly failed to realize this avowed purpose, the agricultural economy remains largely parasitical, distribution of the proprietary right is extremely uneven, the landless labourers and their near adjuncts—the small peasants, both of whom have been subjected even to greater exploitation and are in no position to defend themselves against the encroachments of village oligarchy, mercantile and money lending communities and local bureaucracies with whom they are closely allied. This rural triumvirate is in stages affiliated to and working in close alliance with the trading, the financial, the industrial, the upper bureaucratic and increasingly with the foreign entrenched interests, is more and more under the pressure of and controlled by the high-ups of the regressive and repressive economic apparatus. This whole network with its subtle and almost invisible means of communications and control has grown even more in post than pre-independence period and has increased the distortions of our entire economic and political system. This means not only greater concentration of economic and political power but its purposive use to retard social change and reduce the effectiveness of forces working against the status-quo—the present pattern of power. In India all ages are bound together in its economy—from pre-historic to ultra-modern in respect of technique, social values and alignments. But taking the economy as a whole it is becoming more and more parasitical from social standpoint and the decreasing minority is living on the labour of increasing multitudes and appropriating the

growing proportion of its total national output and social power. The social forces, which are to be reckoned with and brought under control, are generated by this setup. The minority at the top has to be divested of its power for ill and 'conversion', 'change of heart', etc., which means, of course, social education, can be effective not only by a process of de-concentration through voluntary agencies but by applying organized might of the people to promote this process and stop it from going into reverse. Failure of all the experiments referred to above is primarily due to the failure to appreciate the consequences of the growing strength of the status-quo forces, which is greatly increased by the increasing penetration of foreign vested interests. This means that paramount need of building up counter-vailing forces to the status-quo forces is not realized. The growing disintegration and degeneration in the country is largely due to this fact and ineffectiveness of the inspired efforts of the devoted worker of the Gandhian movement is a part of this process. The whole social context in which these efforts are to be put forth is being lost sight of and they are not, therefore, co-related to it.

The question of violence versus non-violence is to be understood in relation to this point. This is not an abstract metaphysical issue. Violence in preference to non-violence when the latter can be effective in bringing about the desired result is a course of madness. Those, who are in power, are likely to be the first to use violence to maintain their privileges and position. They have to know that if they do so, they will not be able to get away with it, i.e., they will have to reckon with the peoples' power—the organized strength of the masses, who will resist the use of violence by the powerful minority, in an intelligent and disciplined manner. Building up of the peoples' power—the organized strength of the masses—is a stupendous task and it has not been accomplished in India because the organized political parties, even those who are committed to radical social transformation, have failed totally to accomplish it. The advocates of non-violence—particularly the Vinobaists—have spoken fervently of the peoples' power but have done nothing or, next to nothing, to create this power and put it into action. Satyāgraha—non-violent resistance—has to mean creation of this power based upon new social consciousness and concerted efforts to use it in a disciplined manner. Increasing exploitation of the masses has been made possible because power of non-violent resistance as a measure of purposive defiance of the use of economic and political power by the entrenched interests has not been organized. Organization of

this power is a democratic process par excellence; and if this power can be generated and used effectively, injustice and exploitation can be ended without violence. This is, to repeat, a stupendous task and organization of the poor—the landless labourers and small peasants in the villages and industrial and office workers, small traders and casual labourers in towns—require a much higher order of effective political action than what has been attained so far. Effective peoples' power has to be an essential attribute of disciplined non-violence. For practical purposes this fact has not been understood or acted upon. All political parties have failed badly in this respect but the votaries of non-violence even much more so. They are not even aware that organized strength of the masses is the essence of non-violent resistance, the necessity of which is a cardinal doctrine of their creed.

The issue of decentralization has also not been clearly understood nor its implications made the basis of action. Autonomous—semi-independent—village republics, even if they actually existed—were the products of the times when communications hardly existed, trade was practically confined to luxuries and was only a fringe characteristic of the economy. Money economy, relatively speaking, was only of marginal significance, and mobility of labour, capital and entrepreneurial ability was practically unknown. In India production for subsistence is widely prevalent even now but is of diminishing importance and has to be consciously eliminated progressively. In other words what is called commodity production has to be the rule and trade-exchange on an ever-widening scale, i.e., in local areas, sub-regions, regions, state, country and the world—has to be consciously promoted and made the basis of economic policy, more so in a planned socialist economy. The principle of self-sufficiency and its attribute decentralization has to be understood and applied in this context. Decentralization is necessary and beneficial; but it has to be understood and applied in a world of increasing integration. In other words decentralization and integration have to go together and combined in theory and practice. This point has, largely speaking, been disregarded in practice and its far-reaching implications have not been even vaguely understood. This in effect means, organized, planned trade or distribution of goods and a price structure specifically designed to ensure not only stability and justice of income and prices but also a system of price relations to secure equity and flexibility in relative terms. This is the implication of decentralization and self-sufficiency in the context of today. This point has been completely missed in the theories and

plans of Gandhian decentralists and the failure of their plans is also partly due to the lack of understanding in theory and practice of this very vital point.

The question of technique has also to be understood in terms of the conditions of today and the need for developing and applying a system of cost accounting in real, i.e., social terms. The essential point that technique of production has to serve the social interests—interests of the community—and not to be the arbiters of the future, i.e., determine the purpose and structure of economy and its development is not only basic but indisputable. Technique is a social phenomenon and has to be used for social well-being and not its detriment. This is the real meaning of ‘machine for man and not man for machine’. This technique is, however, to be conceived not in terms of money costs and money gains but real costs and real benefits. This point has been very well understood and stated ever since Mahatma Gandhi raised the question of technique. Its meaning has, however, not been understood by the believers in mass production irrespective of its social consequences. Its practical implication has been clearly stated in the latter day discussion of this subject and the need for research in the small-unit technology owing to the super-abundance of man-power in India has been duly recognized. But it has not led to research in technology adapted on a selective basis to the specific social conditions existing in the country on an adequate scale, and still there is a lot of unclear thinking on this subject. This applies specially to the advocates of small and village industries. Failure of the schemes of rural industrialization is due to lack of a programme of applied technical research in this field and its integration with the programme of utilization of manpower and the strategy of rural development. A programme of all-round research in small-unit technology has to be undertaken and carried out with full understanding of its relation with the programme of industrialization as a whole, including the programme of development and operation of the largescale organized industries both in public and private sectors. Industrialization of the country in relation to technique of production, scale of operation, utilization of available man-power on local, sub-regional and regional basis, has to be conceived, planned and implemented in an integrated manner and the contradictions, which have been allowed to develop owing to the lack of sincerity of purpose and functional and operational co-ordination, have to be removed and the social context of the entire programme has to be given the highest pre-eminence that it should

have in this as in every other programme. The Sarvodayist view that in all industries in which mass production, the most advanced technique and wide scale of operation, are essential and unavoidable should be nationalized and made an instrument of public policy and serve the interests of the community, is a profoundly sound view and has to be acted upon. The disregard of this view, which Mahatma Gandhi himself affirmed in an unambiguous manner, is the prime cause of the cross purposes in the industrialization programme of the country. This fact accounts for built-in self-defeating features of industrial policy and programme.

The decentralized programme of economic development cannot be carried out in islets of unrelated endeavour. This means not only ineffective disjointed efforts but dissipation of energy, resources and social earnestness. The whole programme of development and social transformation has to be imbued with a unity of purpose and carried out in a coherent and consistent manner with the utmost vigour. Lack of this all-important animating spirit and operative social imperative is primarily responsible for the programme having led to existing frustrating state of things.

BIMANBEHARI MAJUMDAR

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## Gandhi's ideas on Agriculture and Food Shortage



THE problem of shortage of food is intimately connected with the question of population. Soon after the holding of the first session of the Indian National Congress, Lord Dufferin wrote in a lengthy Minute that Indians should ponder deeply over the problem of over-population instead of frittering away their energy in political agitation. The attitude of the government implied that if India suffered from poverty, it was due to their thoughtless increase in population. To such arguments Mahatma Gandhi replied in the *Young India* on 2 April, 1925—‘It is contended that birth control is necessary for the nation because of over-population, I dispute the proposition. It has never been proved. In my opinion, by a proper land-system, better agriculture and a supplementary industry, this country is capable of supporting twice as many people as there are today.’ This proposition deserves serious consideration.

Agriculture was considered as an ideal occupation by Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>1</sup> The study of Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* in 1904 produced such an impression on his mind that he began to take active interest in the cultivation of land by setting up the Phoenix Settlement near Durban in Natal. This was followed by the foundation of the Tolstoy Farm in 1910. He could, therefore, speak with some measure of

authority on agriculture. He was, however, so much engrossed with the political struggle, that he could find little time to write on agriculture before 1935. He published a series of articles on manure pits and compost manure in *The Harijan* between March and August, 1935. This shows his vital interest in increasing the productivity of soil. He was never tired of reminding the people that Indians earn their livelihood by agriculture.

In February, 1946, he was pained to find millions of people of Bengal, Assam, Madras and other parts of India suffering from distress on account of shortage of food. But as soon as the Government report expressed fear of shortage of food, the market price of foodgrains doubled. Gandhi was constrained to comment: 'The mercantile community should be competent to curb such greed. Let them not add to the distress caused by Government mistakes or incompetence'.<sup>2</sup> He attributed the severity of food shortage not so much to the failure of crops, as to the controls imposed by government. He observed: 'I have seen during my life time covering two generations several God-sent famines, but have no recollection of an occasion when rationing was even thought of'.<sup>3</sup> He considered the food control as one of the vicious legacies of the Second World War. The import from Burma stopped but on the other hand foodstuff had to be exported for war purposes. These factors led to rationing. But he pointed out that when the war had come to an end and the monsoons had been favourable there was no real scarcity of food. He, therefore, wrote: 'There are enough cereals, pulses and oil seeds in the villages of India. The artificial control of prices, the growers do not, can not understand. They, therefore, refuse willingly to part with their stock at a price much lower than they command in the open market. This naked fact needs no demonstration. It does not require statistics or desk-work civilians buried in their red tape files to produce elaborate reports and essays to prove that there is scarcity. It is to be hoped that no one will frighten us by trotting out before us the bogey of over-population'.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary to examine how far this sarcastic remark is applicable to the food problem of today.

The population of India increased between 1941 and 1951 by 7,81,22,217 and between 1941 and 1961 by 12,05,33,522. It has been estimated that in five years between 1961 and 1966 the increase has been to the order of 5,55,30,018, that is more than the total population of the United Kingdom. Some economists who were closely associated with the Planning Commission stated that the



rate of increase in the production of foodstuff had been much greater than that of population. One such estimate was that while population increased by 2.5 per cent,<sup>5</sup> and food production increased by 3.5 per cent. In 1964 the Government of India stated that whereas in 1951 the quantity of food available per head of population was 13.5 ounces, it increased to 15.4 ounces in 1963. It is difficult to find out the degree of reliability of statistical figures.<sup>6</sup> A highly placed statistician has pointed out that according to the National Sample Survey of 1952, the total production of food crops was 39 million tonnes, while the estimate of production of foodgrains derived from its consumption estimate came to 69 million tonnes.<sup>7</sup> Again, the National Sample Survey came to the conclusion that during 1958-59 India's production of foodgrains approached 100 million tonnes.<sup>8</sup> Such figures are simply bewildering. If the production of foodgrains showed such increase, why has it been necessary to depend on imported rice and wheat to an increasing amount every year. Between 1947 and 1964 the value of such imports was Rs. 2634 crores, in 1965 it was Rs. 290 crores and in 1966 Rs. 524 crores, giving a total of Rs. 3448 crores during the first two decades of Indian independence. In spite of the reported increase in the production of food and larger quantity of import of cereals, the severe drought of 1965-1966 compelled the Government to introduce rationing in Calcutta industrial area, Madras, Coimbatore and Delhi in 1965 and in Greater Bombay, Poona, Hyderabad-Secunderabad, Visakhapatam, Kanpur, Sholapur, Nagpur, Asansol, Durgapur and Siliguri in 1966. The total population covered under statutory rationing at the end of January, 1967 was about 3 crores. These people got a distinct advantage over the rest of the inhabitants of the country because they could get some portion of the food requirements at a much lower rate than what others had to pay. But the quantity of food allowed per head was hardly sufficient for those who have to do hard manual work. A competent body of experts made a survey of diets taken by poorer class of Indians and came to the conclusion that instead of 14 ounces their per capita intake of cereal food was 18 to 20 ounces. But in Calcutta 500 grammes of rice and 1000 grammes of wheat constitute the ration of an adult person per week. This is only about a half of what is needed for nourishment. In Madras the daily rice ration is only 7 ounces, and in Kerala 160 grammes of rice and 120 grammes of wheat are given to an adult per day.

Mahatma Gandhi was perfectly justified in opposing the continuance of rationing soon after the achievement of

independence. On November 16, 1947 he wrote: ‘Controls give rise to fraud, suppression of truth, intensification of the black market and to artificial scarcity’. He quoted the authority of a physician who wrote to him that the food control had made it impossible for those who depended upon rationed food to take the rotten stuff and to suffer from various ailments.<sup>9</sup> In the next issue of *The Harijan* he wrote, ‘By reducing rations from 1½ lb. to ¾ lb. the Government has further created a bigger vicious circle. The more the ration is reduced, the more the secret hoarding by the agriculturist. He knows that the lesser is the ration the greater is the demand of the black market and the more his earning. He will hoard secretly and the correct figures of foodgrain production will not come to the Government. The lower production figures will cause a stir in the Government Department and they will contemplate a further reduction in the ration.’<sup>10</sup> Gandhi did not adduce any statistical evidence in support of his conclusion, but circumstances prevailing in India within twenty years of his death show that he was gifted with prophetic vision. In 1952 the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee wrote: ‘There is a tendency to lower the figures of production in order to reduce the burden of procurement. For the State as a whole there is advantage in the form of reduced exports or enlarged import quotas if overall production figures are reported to be lower than the actuals.’<sup>11</sup> This state of things continues even now. The *Eastern Economist* analyzed the figures of production of cereals in the Andhra Pradesh, Madras, Mysore and Kerala in 1964-1965 and found that whereas the production of foodgrains was reported to have been slightly decreased in Madras, there was an enormous fall in the three other southern states. It expressed surprise at the reported drop of 26 per cent in these four states as compared to a fall of 14 per cent in the whole of India. In conclusion it stated that there were reasons to believe that ‘notwithstanding the severe drought the decline in output has been greatly exaggerated’.<sup>12</sup> Whenever a cry of severe drought or flood is raised in any state, there is a reasonable hope of getting a substantial grant in the name of a loan from the authorities of the Centre of a Welfare State. The amount thus received is distributed as loan to those who are likely to influence voters in favour of the party in power. Whenever there is a drive for the realization of the loan the Press and platform under the influence of the beneficiaries of the loan raise a howl of protest on the ground that the failure of crops has made such a step most inopportune. The case of Bihar in the month of September 1968 aptly illustrates

this position. There was good rainfall in the months of June and July and an excellent Kharif crop was expected. The Government under the President's rule made a determined bid to collect the loan. As there was a cessation of rain in August and in early September some of the administrators in charge of districts stated, probably under the pressure of wily politicians that there would be a failure of paddy crop in Bihar. As soon as this was published in the provincial press prices began to rise and a demand was made for lowering the tempo of collection of dues on account of repayment of loan. But kindly Nature foiled their game. There was excellent rainfall in the last three weeks of September.

When the control and rationing were removed towards the end of 1947 Gandhi wrote that though he was rightly accused of knowing nothing about orthodox economics and the fluctuation of prices, yet the decontrol which he demanded had brought about a fall in prices. He cited certain specific instances. 'The price of *shakkar* had fallen from Rs. 34 to Rs. 24 per maund. One rupee now brought one and a half seers of pulses instead of 14 *chataks*. The price of gram has fallen from Rs. 24 to Rs. 18 per maund. The black market price of wheat had been Rs. 34 per maund. It has come down to Rs. 24.'<sup>13</sup> A well-known businessman wrote to him in the first week of January, 1948, that the price of wheat had fallen to Rs. 18 to Rs. 20, of Basmati rice to Rs. 25 and of other grains to Rs. 15 to 17 as a result of decontrol.<sup>14</sup> These prices appear to us today as far removed from reality as those prevailing during the Governorship of Shaista Khan. Nowadays if and when the price level of foodstuff shows the least symptom of decline, the authorities in the Union and the States become highly alarmed lest the growers of food-crops should suffer and switch over to the production of money crops. Mahatma Gandhi however, thought otherwise. Being asked whether the policy of the interim Government to keep down the price of foodgrains would not adversely affect production, he wrote: 'I want to reduce the prices of foodgrains still further. I claim to be a peasant myself and I know that only a fraction of the price paid by the consumer actually reaches the grower of food.... The trouble with the cultivator is not low prices but the middleman.'<sup>16</sup> Had the Government been able to keep down the price of foodgrains, at the reasonably moderate level of the last month of Gandhi's life, it would not have been faced with so many strikes in the ranks of its own employees, not to speak of the private industries.

The incentive of high price has not been adequate to make India

self-sufficient in food. Our ministers have to go on begging missions to the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., and even to the petty States of Europe and America. Mahatma Gandhi was deadly opposed to importation of foodgrains from abroad. The reasons adduced by him for such opposition were equally weighty. First, ‘relying on outside help will make us still more dependent’.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, begging for food from outside is demoralizing.<sup>17</sup> Thirdly, arrival of food in the ports would not solve the problem unless it was made available where it was needed most urgently.<sup>18</sup> The transport problem has not been solved satisfactorily even now as is shown by the sending of wheat in open wagons in the rainy season recently.<sup>19</sup>

With a view to tackling the problem of food for the increasing millions of India, Mahatma Gandhi suggested (a) utilization of underground water,<sup>20</sup> (b) getting wells dug through the help of the army,<sup>21</sup> (c) stopping the practice of polishing rice, which is responsible for 10 per cent loss,<sup>22</sup> (d) cultivation of soya beans on an extensive scale,<sup>23</sup> (e) reclamation of waste land and (f) avoiding the centralization of foodstuff.<sup>24</sup> The other two steps suggested by him shows that he was not an obstinate doctrinaire even in the matter of non-violence. He advised the non-vegetarians to take more fish.<sup>25</sup> He, of course, could not foresee the five hundred per cent increase in the price of fish within two decades of his martyrdom. The other advice is more startling. In June 1946, he supported the following contention of one of the contributors to *The Harijan*: ‘Taking of life is very repugnant to me. But when the choice lies between human life and other, I think that the former should have preference. There is a large damage of crops by deer, rabbit, bear, pig and pigeon. I am a vegetarian. But non-vegetarians tell me that these have food value and can be used for food. By a proper organization, though difficult, but not impossible, it should be possible to organize shooting of these animals so as to provide regular supply in certain areas, particularly in large cities. Incidentally, destruction on a large scale of these would be reflected in reduced destruction of food crops.’<sup>26</sup> One mischievous species, namely, monkeys is omitted in the list, not because, their ancestors are said to have helped Ramachandra to gain victory over the demons and to establish Rāmarājya but because they have no food value.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. From Yeravada Mandir, p. 50.
2. *The Harijan*, February 17, 1946.

3. *Ibid.*, November 16, 1947.
4. *Ibid.*
5. A. K. Dasgupta's speech reported in the *Indian Nation*, November 27, 1965.
6. Gyanchand, *Socialist Transformation of Indian Economy*, 1965, pp. 143-44, citing Table XI of *the Food Statistics*, February, 1964.
7. 'Feeding India's Growing Millions' by P. V. Sukhatme, Director, Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, F. A. O., p. 15.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
9. *The Harijan*, November 16, 1947.
10. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1947.
11. Report of the Grow More Food Enquiry Committee, June 1952, p. 100.
12. *The Eastern Economist*, March 4, 1966, p. 366.
13. *The Harijan*, December 28, 1947.
14. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1948.
15. *Ibid.*, October 6, 1946.
16. *Ibid.*, February 24, 1946.
17. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1947.
18. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1946.
19. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1946.
20. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1946.
21. *Ibid.*, February 24, 1946.
22. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1935.
23. *Ibid.*, November 9, 1935.
24. *Ibid.*, October 19, 1947,
25. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1946.
26. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1946.

S. N. MISHRA

# A Model of Gandhian Economy Technology, Industry and Growth



## THE PROBLEM OF METHOD

IN THIS paper an effort is made to reconstruct a Gandhian economic model amenable to modern economic understanding and then to study the interrelationship obtaining between technology, industry and growth, if the latter at all is possible in such a model. The task is by no means easy. Indeed the path to such a reconstruction is strewn with a large number of difficulties. These difficulties in a great measure arise from what may seem an unbridgeable gap between the modern economic understanding—a superstructure, as it were, raised upon the *strictly hedonist behaviour* of the Western *city man* or a city man anywhere—on the one hand and the *Gandhian scope of the economic process* on the other. The central theme of the latter is the economic behaviour of the *village man*, not only as one finds it but also as it ought to be.<sup>1</sup> In short, the human material of study in the two approaches essentially differ. The approaches too differ from one another. In the first case the economic process is assumed to be *distinct* to the exclusion of all other aspects of human society.<sup>2</sup> In the Gandhian approach no such distinction is made.<sup>3</sup> Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. This point,<sup>4</sup> however, is presently beside our main theme. The modern economic

understanding relies exclusively on formal logic and empiricism whereas in the Gandhian system these tools of analysis go only up to a point and beyond that 'intuition', individual experience, Socratic analytical method of analogy, and even the dialectical rule<sup>5</sup> of 'is and is not' all have a role to play. For this reason and for the reason of difference in the human material of study those who are trained and brought up in the analytical milieu of Western economic theory, including Indian economists, when faced with the Gandhian economic system find it simply baffling. In fairness to Gandhian eclectic method of analysis, it must be said, however, that there is no escape from this method in so far as economics is considered an organic instead of a mechanical science. Just as in biological sciences in economics too an integrated theoretical structure based upon formal logic alone seems impossible, at least as things stand today. Apart from these fundamental difficulties arising out of the difference in the concept of basic study material and difference in the analytical method, there are difficulties which crop up from the uniqueness of the person and his times. These difficulties can be best seen by realizing that in quintessence Gandhi was an idealist thinker bent upon solving the practical problems posed by the real social life of his days. This asymmetry, between the idealist and the real, runs like a thread through all his economic ideas. It not only makes the understanding of Gandhi's economic system difficult but, on the other hand, quite often drives him to war with himself. It makes him appear contradictory.<sup>6</sup> There is nothing enigmatic about there being in a system of thought an ideal economic state<sup>7</sup> along side a real one but the separation of one from the other is necessary for understanding. In Gandhi's economic ideas this separation is absent. True to his approach, as discussed earlier, he made no effort at such a separation. Yet his ideas cannot be put in a modern perspective without making such an effort. In the light of this separation, as we shall see later, many apparent contradictions simply disappear from his economic system. Moreover one is then in a position to judge his system more cautiously and one is also saved from dismissing it as a mere contradictory idealist hotch-potch. With these remarks on possible difficulties encountered in studying the Gandhian economic system we proceed to a formal presentation of the latter in the following section.

#### A MODEL OF IDEAL GANDHIAN ECONOMY

The blue-print of this economy is distilled from the self-contained

and self-sufficient Indian village community of the ancient past and then projected into the future with no time bound for its realization. In the process Gandhi endows the blue-print with a highly moral content. Economic agents in this society are not maximizing satisfaction in isolation from one another by seeking the largest bundle of goods. Instead, each one has realized and incorporated in his conduct the truism extracted by the sages after due deliberation, namely that happiness was largely a mental condition.<sup>8</sup> It did not depend upon the size of the bundle of the goods one possessed. Instead there was a definite advantage from the point of view of happiness in reducing the bundle of every one to the irreducible minimum of his primary needs. Since everyone in the society realizes this, there is no difficulty in implementing this law of distribution of primaries. Society produces only such goods and services which are directly or indirectly related to the satisfaction of primary needs of its members. Any surplus produced in the process is accredited to the society for the common good of all.<sup>9</sup> Primary needs are derived from the necessary minimum material conditions of living and largely relate to food, clothing and shelter. All callings and occupations in the society subserve these wants. There is a social division of labour between agriculture and cottage industry. Within the agricultural subdivision, each family is assigned as much land as it could work from its own labour. Land, however is a communal property. The implements and tools of a cottage industry belong to the family traditionally engaged in it. Since owners are also the labourers, individual private property does not form a basis for exploitation. Moreover since every individual assiduously observes non-violence, exploitation as an economic manifestation of violence is ruled out. Every family follows its hereditary occupation and within a family everyone does his 'bread-labour' in the sense that 'every one had to labour with his body for his food and clothing'.<sup>10</sup> In this way the division between 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour in the classical economists' sense does not exist. The free labour at the disposal of the individual over and above what goes into his bread-labour and family calling is used in contemplation or worship of the God. Since there is no problem of new wants and, therefore, of new commodities, the number of economic activities are largely fixed and immutable. Since production is according to community's requirement and occurs at the point of consumption, there is no problem of either exchange, transport<sup>11</sup> or market. As a consequence thereof, there are no cities or towns but only self-sufficient villages.



Any intercourse between villages is not at the level of commodity exchange but exchange of atemporal ideas through the medium of missionaries, who wander on foot from village to village. Each family in a village just reproduces itself in the sense that family size does not increase from year to year as every member in the reproductive age-group strictly observes natural contraception. The technology of the system is rudimentary and its level is well restricted by the moral principle that 'we should do only what we could with our hands and feet.'<sup>12</sup> At the cost of some violence<sup>13</sup> animals have been tamed and drafted for power. But there are no sources of power other than living men and animals. Machinery<sup>14</sup> simply does not exist.

Such an economy, as it were of Gandhian saints, if it could be attained can be shown to be viable and to be permanently in a steady state under certain conditions. It suffers indeed from no internal contradiction. There are no conflicting classes because surplus does not appear as individual property and distribution is regulated strictly by the rule of *to each according to his primary needs, and from each according to his bread-labour*. As a matter of fact the distribution rule is not enforced but observed by every one as a Kantian self-imperative of duty. This internally harmonious and externally closed economy can continue to live indefinitely provided the following conditions are met: (1) It produces enough surplus for (a) meeting the input requirements of its next round of production, and (b) replenishment of its worn out implements and tools howsoever rudimentary and also for warding off the effects of possible successive natural calamities like draught and floods; (2) its population does not in due course become infertile due to endogamy; and (3) finally it is not run over and dissolved by any violent aggressive community. The continued existence of the ideal Gandhian economy under the above conditions does not mean that it is a growing economy. Any way, 'growth' understood as expansion of the material basis of the society either in absolute or in per capita terms is, in fact, ruled out by the axiomatic foundation of the ideal Gandhian system.

#### A MODEL OF REAL GANDHIAN ECONOMY

Gandhi had no illusions about the realization of his ideal system.<sup>15</sup> Yet a clear picture of the latter was needed to provide a guide-post for the organization of the real Gandhian economy. Operationally I venture to suggest that by relaxing the stringency of the rules of organization of the ideal model in every direction, one arrives at a model of real Gandhian economy in its essentials. Thus, the

instinctive law of cumulative want generation is not put down on the real state by the iron hand of minimum material conditions necessary for living, while it is still left under moral reproachment, production continues to be located in villages<sup>16</sup> and in the first place geared to the local requirement, surplus product becomes an object of commerce; small towns<sup>17</sup> as ‘clearing houses for surplus village products’ appear; transport becomes inevitable; such machinery as serves the primary wants of man finds a place in the economy;<sup>18</sup> heavy machinery too ‘for works of public utility’<sup>19</sup> which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its ‘inevitable place’. Apart from mechanical power, electric power<sup>20</sup> is carried to villages for running their cottage industry. Large-scale industry co-exists with cottage industry but it is confined to such basic goods of public utility which cannot be produced in the villages<sup>21</sup> and it is located in the cities.<sup>22</sup> Villages, however, remain the most important centres of social production, producing almost all the necessaries of life. Cities depend on villages for the letter<sup>23</sup> and supply in exchange tools, implements, machines and power, etc., for the village handicraft industries. In short, in the real Gandhian model while villages produce all the consumer goods, cities produce investment goods, machines needed to produce machines required for village industries. Thus the rule of localization of production and distribution is normally followed with some relaxation in the industrial organization of the Gandhian economy.

The form of ownership of the means of production is determined by the technological requirement of the quantum of labour necessary for producing a good. Gandhi says, ‘I would have state ownership,<sup>24</sup> where a large number of people have to work together’. The pattern of property ownership in the villages substantially remains the same as in the ideal economy. Only when a village industry necessitates the supersession of the general rule of individual property, namely, that those who work on a set of tools and implements with their own labour own it, it becomes necessary to put it under communal ownership. It would appear that all industries located in cities being invariably large, as these are basic and key industries, are under public ownership.<sup>25</sup> Land, above all, remains under public ownership,<sup>26</sup> as in the ideal state.

The distribution of consumption goods strictly follows the rule adopted in the ideal model with the exception perhaps that number of goods though still within the limits of necessaries, has moved beyond the primary wants of food, clothing and shelter ‘...

each man (be in the city or in the village) shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more?<sup>27</sup> This law applies without exception.<sup>28</sup> Justification of income differentials, however small, on grounds of efficiency or gradation of different kinds of work is completely banished from the Gandhian economy, because such a justification, whether in a capitalist or socialist economy, has its source in the 'animal spirit' of man and not in his moral social consciousness of 'good neighbour-lieness'.<sup>29</sup> This apart since no work in the Gandhian economy is superior to the other just as no organ of human body is superior to any other, any differential on work basis does not exist. Every one, independent of his social function, is enjoined to do his 'bread-labour', just as in the ideal model. In the social division of labour, mental labour does not exist by a class in itself. Mental labour is not alienated from physical labour, thereby going a long way in curbing the abuses arising out of managerial functions and intellectualism.

Surplus, no matter where it occurs, is accredited to the community or the state and only surplus becomes a commodity in the Marxian sense and may be not all of it but only that part of it which is needed in the cities from the villages and back. Since most of the production is localized in villages and geared to local needs, there is little exchange.<sup>30</sup> Whatever exchange there is it is undertaken by public or cooperative agencies and the exchange rates, i.e., prices of commodities are not determined in the market through the process of bidding but through mutual adjustment<sup>31</sup> with no consideration for profit.<sup>32</sup> The rest of the surplus<sup>33</sup> is partly used for public good like, health, sanitation, medical facility, education and partly in capital accumulation.

This, in short, is the picture of a real Gandhian economy in its bare essentials. It has all the conditions of a fast 'growth'. It's inhabitants live virtually the life of ascetics. Increasing consumption does not appear as an upper bar to growth. The economy produces surplus and engages in capital accumulation. What more is needed for a fast growth to take place? One major handicap to fast growth, however, arises from the fact that Gandhian economy deliberately does not reap the benefits of the large-scale production,<sup>34</sup> at least in most consumption goods industries which are localized and scattered in small units in the villages. This very fact, however, keeps production and consumption unseparated, problems of exchange and distribution over space limited and, finally, the abuses of concentration in check. It thus happens that Gandhi, if

we are allowed to call him so, is a distribution economist. Growth in his system, although desired, is secondary and, moreover, human ‘progress’ as he understands<sup>35</sup> it, does not go parallel to ‘growth’. Unlimited material growth, he believes, conflicts with the moral wealth of man and society. To this we turn in the following section.

#### PROGRESS: THE TWO DIVERGENT GANDHIAN PATHS

We saw in Section 2 how Gandhi’s ideal state was a highly equitable economy of ascetics. It had achieved high level of ‘moral wealth’<sup>38</sup> at the low level of ‘economic wealth’ just necessary for the satisfaction of primary wants of its members for food, clothing and shelter. And thereafter it did not accumulate ‘economic wealth’ knowing that it will begin to conflict with the ‘moral wealth’. Thus if we take the liberty of conceiving ‘moral wealth’ and ‘material wealth’ as two *distinct* coordinates of ‘progress’, then the Gandhian ideal state lies somewhere high on the line IP and the ideal path of human progress lies along the broken arrows. Gandhi believed that the observed progress function<sup>37</sup> is of the type of the curve OPF. Beyond the level of primary wants, material wealth begins to conflict with moral wealth and the relationship between the two becomes inverse as shown by the segment P’F of the progress function. Up to the primary wants level, material wealth being minimum necessary for living, must go hand in hand with moral wealth.

The real Gandhian economy, since it has moved beyond the primary wants level, lies to the right of IP at any point of time. Let it be initially at  $G_1$ . So long as  $G_1$  is to the right of P’F, it is possible for the economy to increase moral and material wealth simultaneously and reach the function at  $G_2$ . At  $G_2$ , however, it faces an impasse. If it accumulates material wealth, it must go down along the progress function. To avoid this contingency, two alternative courses, however, are open to the economy. First, if its members overnight decide to become Gandhian saints, it may begin to de-accumulate its material wealth gradually and move to P’ and thereafter along the ideal state path. Second, if while prizing moral wealth it is still desirous of more material wealth, it may move along the path of solid arrows.<sup>38</sup> Moral wealth in the process may be forthcoming from stricter observance of the rules of income distribution and ‘bread-labour’ and also of the equality of all types of work. If the observance of these rules may involve a slowing down<sup>39</sup> of ‘growth’ along the material coordinate, the real Gandhian economy will not be bothered. As it moves along

this path, the ideal state path will go on receding from it, yet the moral progress will remain unthwarted.

#### GANDHIAN INSTRUMENTS OF POLICY

For transforming any given economy into the real Gandhian economy, as pictured in section 3, Gandhi placed equal value on his prescribed set of instruments. The set consists of (1) non-violence, (2) non-cooperation and (3) trusteeship. Non-violence in fact is the limiting instrument of all other instruments. The sequence of working of the instruments in the context of a capitalist economy would be like this: Capitalists must voluntarily become public trustees of their property and come down to the level of workers in their consumption; if not, then the workers will resort to non-cooperation within the limit to non-violence. This process admittedly would be lengthy but even then if it fails, violent revolution becomes inevitable.<sup>40</sup> After all the instruments of production have been brought under public ownership whether through the medium of trusteeship or violent revolution, it would be a long way before the economy is completely restructured along Gandhian lines. The inherited economy will still be suffering from the antithesis holding between the city and the village and the alienation of production from consumption as manifest in large scale production of almost all industrial goods concentrated in the cities,<sup>41</sup> and the population concentrated in the villages. The restructuring will have to begin both in the spheres of production and income distribution. In production sphere no additional investment in *large-scale* consumption goods industries, unless technologically and socially necessary, will be undertaken. Industries of this kind already in existence, will be left to die out in due course. Additional investment will be undertaken in establishing and expanding *small-scale* industries in the villages producing such goods. Key and basic industries will continue to be located and developed in the cities, and will invariably be under public ownership. In the field of income distribution the policy of supplying necessities to everyone according to need will be progressively followed. 'Bread-labours' will have to be made compulsory for everyone. This, in short, is the strategy of Gandhian economic development.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

Members of the seminar might have noted, perhaps with surprise, that spinning wheel and Khadi which covered largest number of

pages in Gandhi's economic writings are not at all mentioned in our discussion. This is because in the light of the formal economic framework in which we have tried to place Gandhi's ideas, these are too specific subjects to be discussed, although these are covered by the framework. Gandhi himself devoted so much to these because of their serious political implications for the national freedom movement and the problem of employing the idle village labour. A second point which may be discomfoting to some people is that while sketching the Gandhian model, we have freed his economic ideas from his religious overtones. This, however, is necessary if we wish to see Gandhi in the perspective of modern economic understanding and is perhaps still more necessary for making him relevant today to India's economic ills.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This is not to say that the modern economic understanding, better called Western economic theory, does not have normative problems within its scope. But given its strictly hedonist axiom, solutions to such problems always arise exclusively in terms of *more or less of things*. In the Gandhian scheme on the contrary, every solution consists of two sets, a set of *things* and a set of *actions*. If the two sets are incongruous, the solution is rejected.
2. See on this a very illuminating contribution of Professor Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen in his, *Analytical Economics*, Cambridge, Mass. 1966, pp. 101-03, Harvard University Press.
3. In reply to the great poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who reproached Gandhi for mixing up economic and other issues, Gandhi stated his position in most clear terms thus: 'I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics'. *Young India*, October 31, 1921.
4. To focus only on advantages, one of the chief advantages of the first approach is that every thing economic is brought under the perview of *quantitative measure* and that of the second is that it preserves the organic structure of the social organization.
5. *Young India*, June 26, 1926.
6. Note for example his views on locomotion and speedy transport, machinery, mill and factory system, foreign trade and so on. At times he is opposed to these in toto and at others he favours these with some modification. The personal dichotomy clearly comes to surface in the following view of his: 'Railways are there. I do not avoid them. I hate motorcars but I make use of these willingly. All the same compromise comes in every step but one must realize it is compromise and keep the final goal constantly in front of mind's eye'. *The Harijan*, June 22, 1935.
7. In the Western economic theory, the concept of ideal economic state is not lacking. For example the ideas of 'golden age' and 'Bliss' do nothing less than denote ideal economic states.

8. *Hind Swarāj*, p. 31.
9. *The Harijan*, September 3, 1934.
10. *The Harijan*, September 7, 1947.
11. Thus Gandhi is perfectly right in disclaiming long distance transport for his ideal state. Critics who dismissed it as a crazy idea could not have realized the logical implications of the ideal Gandhian economy.
12. *Hind Swarāj*, p. 31, in Mathur and Mathur, *Economic Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 471, Chaitanya Publishing House, Allahabad. In the same place Gandhi approvingly says, 'we (i.e., Indians) have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago'.
13. As there is no economic activity which is completely free of violence, since all activity involves some measure of violence, all we have to do is to minimize the violence involved in it'. *The Harijan*, September 1, 1940.
14. Gandhi says, 'Ideally, however, I would rule out all machinery even as I would reject this very body, which is not helpful to salvation'. *Young India*, November 20, 1924.
15. He says, 'The ideal will cease to be one if it becomes possible to realize it. The pleasure lies in making the effort not in its fulfilment'. *The Harijan*, October 13, 1934. Asked how can we get back to ideal condition of things, Gandhi using his characteristic method of simile, replied, 'Not easily. It is an express moving at a terrific speed that we are in. We can't all of a sudden jump out of it. We can't go back to the ideal state all at a jump. We can look forward to reaching it some day'. *Young India*, June 26, 1926. We might complete his simile by saying that since the express was moving in the forward direction only, per force, by non-reversible law of evolution, going back was impossible. As late as 1946 in a mood of despair he said, 'Today there is such an onslaught on India of Western machinery that for India to withstand it successfully would be nothing short of a miracle. I must confess that to-day everything seems to point to the contrary'. *The Harijan*, November 17, 1946.
16. In *The Harijan*, November 2, 1934, Gandhi extensively argued for 'production by masses' in place of modern 'mass production'. He provided the rationale in essence as follows: 'Where production and consumption both became localized, the temptation to speed up production indefinitely and at any price disappears'.
17. *The Harijan*, January 28, 1939.
18. *Young India*, November 20, 1924.
19. *The Harijan*, June 22, 1935. With additional proviso that all such machinery would be under public ownership and would be used for the benefit of the people. In concrete terms, '...Take printing presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can one make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them'. His guiding principle is perhaps well stated thus: 'I am aiming not at eradication of all machinery but limitation'. *Young India*, November 13, 1924.
20. Gandhi observes, 'If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villages plying their implements and tools with the help

- of electricity. But then the village communities or state would own power houses just as they have their grazing pastures'. *The Harijan*, June 22, 1935.
21. On this consideration a cloth mill has no place in the Gandhian model because cloth can be produced with the skills and resources of the village, while key industries producing basic goods like steel, machine-making machines, precision instruments all have a place.
  22. Gandhi maintained, 'I do visualize electricity, ship-building, iron-works, machine-making and the like existing side-by-side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the state of future it will subserve the villages and their crafts'. *The Harijan*, January 27, 1940.
  23. *The Harijan*, March 1, 1935.
  24. *The Harijan*, September 1, 1946. Largeness by itself may be a subject of endless debate as regards its concrete level. Nevertheless the qualitative principle is there. One can perhaps arrive at its concrete level where the ceiling on individual ownership hits it.
  25. The ruling Congress party in its effort at planning the Indian economy has departed from the Gandhian precepts on property ownership. It has been largely moving on bourgeois lines.
  26. *The Harijan*, March 9, 1947.
  27. *The Harijan*, August 25, 1940.
  28. *Ibid.* Referring to those wealthy who join the Gandhian economy as trustees in the first instance Gandhi says, 'They may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours'.
  29. It is interesting to note that Mao Tse-Tung's recent broadside on 'Economism' is essentially based upon a similar understanding although it is free from Gandhian ethical overtones. The Soviet Union and other East European Socialist countries have reverted to the justification of even very high income differential on grounds of efficiency.
  30. *The Harijan*, November 2, 1934.
  31. Price determination indeed would be difficult if there is no rule provided for it. The *necessaries* of labour which is the same on average between the city and the village, provides a good rule, with a margin provided for transport cost, for the determination of prices. To illustrate, suppose 5 men in the city over the year produce one tractor, which is needed in a given village. Then the village in question will receive the tractor by supplying in exchange the necessaries for these five for one year at the average standard quantum of necessaries assigned to each man according to the distribution rule.
  32. This observation is based upon Gandhi's statement specially in relation to Khadi economics. See *The Harijan*, September 21, 1934. We construe that in the Gandhian economy economics of other industries is not different from Khadi economics.
  33. Notice its desirability and inevitability in the Gandhian system in his, *Conservative Programme*, 1941 edition, p. 18.



34. Refer to Gandhi's view on mass production and production by masses in *The Harijan*, November 2, 1934.
35. See Mathur and Mathur, *op. at.*, pp. 522-23.
36. Moral wealth may be conveniently conceived as cumulative adoption by the community members of a certain set of moral rules in their action, such as non-violence, good-neighbourliness, 'bread-labour' etc.
37. He gives instances from the history of Rome, Egypt, India and cites his own experience of South Africa. See Mathur and Mathur, *op. cit.*, p. 521, quoted from *Speeches And Writings, etc.*, '... in so far as we have made modern materialistic craze our goal, so far we are going down hill in the path of progress'. Mathur and Mathur, *op. cit.*, p. 523.
38. This path may seem to be violating the real law of progress. In the absence of the first alternative, no other course is open to the economy except of overcoming the law. Even on Gandhi's showing this law is after all historical, neither universal nor immutable. In one casual remark Gandhi himself seems to be approving this path. 'I want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of few but in the hands of all'. *Young India*, November 13, 1924.
39. Slowing down as of necessity has not been established.
40. 'A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good'. *Conservative Programme*, 1941 edition, p. 18.
41. Gandhi is the first thinker who placed the antithesis between the city and the village at the centre of social analysis and change. In unmistakable terms he wrote, 'the fact is that we have to make a choice between the India of the villages.... and India of the cities.... Today the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they (villages) are crumbling to ruin. My Khadi mentality tells me cities must subserve villages when that domination goes'. *The Harijan*, January 20, 1940. Later Mao Tse-Tung was to make this antithesis as the corner-stone of his own thought and of Communist movement in China. Of late he has universalized it as the major antithesis between different societies of the World. In the new look, the developed societies of the West are the cities of the World and poor Eastern societies the villages of the World. The antithesis is to be resolved by villages overpowering the cities. This antithesis does not play a role in Marx's thought, although he noted it once: 'The foundation of every division of labour, well developed and brought about by the exchange of commodities, is the separation between town and country. It may be said that the whole economical history of society is summed up in this antithesis'. *Capital*, Moscow, 1954, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Vol. I, p. 352.

S. NAQVI

## Economic Thinking of Gandhi\* The Concept of Trusteeship



A CAREFUL study of Mahatma Gandhi's writings, speeches and letters, leads one to the conclusion that he never formulated any theory of economics.

Gandhi was essentially a politician, passionately and single-mindedly engaged in the task of organizing and uniting the vast and varied nationalities, religions, communities, linguistic groups, castes and sub-castes and economic interests, in this ancient land of ours, for realizing the universally cherished objective of national freedom. As a national leader, however, he could not help noticing the terrible poverty and privations which was the lot of the overwhelming majority of the Indian peasants, artisans and workers, in the midst of the dazzling display of wealth by the millowners, merchants and the Princes and landlords.

Mahatmai saw right before his eyes the growing conflicts between the peasants and the landlords, the workers and the millowners and the states people and the Indian Princes.

\* This is a part of larger work on Mahatma Gandhi's Economic Ideas—Their Genesis, Development and Social Impact—on which the present writer is currently engaged.

As a humanist, he felt hurt at the sufferings of the Indian masses. His deep sense of justice and fairplay revolted.

As a national leader, he felt alarmed at the threat to national unity, against British Imperialism, that this growing class-conflict represented, just as he felt deep anguish and an acute sense of disturbance at the widening gulf between the religious communities, more specially the Hindus and the Muslims. It must be remembered here that Gandhi, as distinguished from his predecessors in the national movement and even large numbers of his contemporary fellow leaders, held the view that for the freedom struggle to succeed, it was indispensable for every section of the Indian people, more particularly, though by no means exclusively, the vast mass of peasants, artisans and workers etc., to be actively drawn into the struggle with a fine sense of personal and group or class involvement.

For a person in the position which Mahatma Gandhi occupied, it was incumbent, that he takes the most pressing economic problems and issues into account and offers his own answers to questions as and when they arose, just as he did in the non-economic, political, cultural, linguistic, educational and other spheres.

And in the midst of his extraordinarily busy life, bustling with intense political activity, besides the maintenance of his Ashram and the care of its ever new problems, personal and organizational, and a thousand other institutions and individuals, under his direct or indirect guidance and superintendence, Bapu was being constantly confronted by economic questions, seeking answers from or solutions by him.

Thus, it became unavoidable for Mahatma Gandhi, to deal with the multitudinous economic problems, both which affected the interests of the nation as a whole and those, which pertained to sectional or class interests, and were the basis of conflicts between the different classes and interests.

Inevitably, arising as they did, in an *ad hoc* manner (that is, coming to the attention of Gandhi, in such a fashion) he, perforce, had to deal with them, in an *ad hoc* way.

It was only later, when some of these problems were faced by him repeatedly and more and more frequently that the Mahatma's response to them gradually began to take the form of some kind of a system.

This became particularly necessary, since Mahatma Gandhi sought to reconcile these mutually conflicting interests, in order to

maintain or build a cohesive force of all these interests, to present a united front, against British Imperialism.

Of course, Mahatma Gandhi's reactions and solutions were influenced powerfully, by the legacy of ideas, prejudices and superstitions that he had acquired from his social background and the close associates who surrounded him and apparently gave him loyal financial and moral support to his many activities, some of which seemed to militate against the interests of their own classes and groups. Besides, Gandhi's overpowering passion to seek a solution of these conflicts in a peaceful and non-violent way, by means of converting the oppressor, to the need for being just and fair to the oppressed, assuming that the demands of the oppressed were really just and that they were prepared to unite behind these demands and undergo suffering on themselves, until the process of conversion was completed.

And it was in this context that the concept of 'Trusteeship' was developed, as an alternative to class war and violent or legal expropriation of the means of production.

Here, we shall confine ourselves to an examination of the genesis of this concept and to analyze its content and its impact on the relations between the various conflicting classes and interests, specially the landlords and the peasants and the mill owners and the workers. There is no doubt, that other and more learned participants in this Seminar would throw valuable light on other aspects of Mahatma Gandhi's economic ideas, in their contributions.

The first time, when Mahatma Gandhi used the term 'Trusteeship', was while speaking on the occasion of the opening of the Benaras Hindu University on February 6, 1916.

Gandhi, in the course of his speech<sup>1</sup> said:

'... I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen: There is no salvation for India unless, you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it *in trust* for your countrymen in India....'

The same year, addressing the Economic Society of the Muir Central College, Allahabad, on December 22, the Mahatma indirectly reiterated the same view when he said:

'... If I were not afraid of treading on dangerous ground, I would even come nearer home and show you that possession of riches has been a hindrance to real growth....'

The next occasion for the application of the concept arose

during the workers strike in Ahmedabad Cotton Mills early in 1918. In a leaflet addressed to the workers, Shankerlal Banker, presumably with the approval of Mahatma Gandhi, exhorted the former to regard their employers as their 'parents' and to appeal to them for any concession the workers may require. The leaflet laid down the rule—agreed upon between the employers and Gandhi, as the workers' representative, that in case of any dispute in future, the workers shall not resort to a strike and shall try to settle it with their employers, failing which the dispute shall be referred to a board of arbitrators, whose findings would be binding on the workers as well as the employers.

It is interesting to note that during the preceding struggle of the Champaran peasants against the English Indigo Planters, as also in the subsequent *kisān* struggle for remission of rent in Kheda, fought against the Bombay Presidency Government, while the struggles were conducted in the Gandhian peaceful and non-violent manner and Gandhi was always prepared to come to an honourable settlement even by agreeing to scale down the peasants' demands the concept of Trusteeship, parent-child relationship or working within the framework of a joint family, etc., were not even once brought into play.

Here again, we see Mahatma Gandhi's anxiety to build cordial relations of a family type, between the conflicting elements in Indian society, while treating the English vested interests and the alien Government as a distinctly non-Indian category, outside the pale of the Indian joint family.

The twenties and thirties saw a mounting wave of working class strikes and *kisān* struggle all over India.

We find Gandhi reacting to these struggle sharply.

For instance, in 1921 Mahatma Gandhi condemned in clear terms social boycott and no-rent campaigns launched by the rack-rented peasants of U.P. and called the movement 'an instrument of violence'.

Bapu categorically declared that

'...Whilst we will not hesitate to advise the *kisāns* when the moment comes, to suspend payment of taxes to the Government, it is not contemplated that any stage of non-cooperation we would seek to deprive zamindars of their rent'.<sup>2</sup>

Mahatmaji held that

'The *kisān* movement must be confined to the improvement of the states of the *kisāns* and the betterment of the relations between the zamindars and them'.

He was of the opinion that

‘The *kisāns* must be advised scrupulously by the terms of their agreement with the zamindars, whether such is written or inferred from custom. Where a custom or even a written contract is bad, they may not try to uproot it by violence or without previous reference to the zamindars. In every case there should be a friendly discussion with the zamindars and an attempt made to arrive at a settlement.’<sup>3</sup>

The same year, referring to a big strike in Bombay, Gandhi expressed concern at the rise of militant trade union leaders who, he feared would ‘use labour as a pawn in more ways than one’.

While reiterating his opposition to strike action by the workers, and advocating reference of all disputes to arbitration, Bapu ended up by exhorting the readers that

‘Since if you are interested in ameliorating the condition of labour, if you want to befriend the workmen and serve him, you will see from the above that there is only one royal road before you, viz., to elevate the workmen by creating between the two parties family relationship...’<sup>4</sup>

It is noteworthy that when the Assam Tea Garden workers went on strike against reduction of their wages by the Tea Planters, overwhelming majority of whom were English, Mahatma Gandhi while disclaiming any fore-knowledge of the strike, as charged by the Planters, justified the strike on the ground that ‘it is purely a labour trouble. It is admitted that the employers have reduced the wages... the trouble is purely economic and the coolies have a substantial grievance. It is evident that the reformed Government has failed to cope with it’.<sup>5</sup> Here again, any reference to the family relationship or trusteeship is missing.

Four years later, Mahatma Gandhi became even more specific and said: ‘I have always said that my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony, capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers but their moral welfare also, capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them’.<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi’s confidence in the path he had chalked out was soon afterwards expressed thus:

‘We may not dispossess the zamindars and talukdars of their thousands of *bighas*. And among whom shall we distribute them? We need not dispossess them. They only need a change of the heart. When that is done, and when they learn to melt at their tenants’ woes, they will hold their lands in trust for them, will give them a major part of the produce, keeping only sufficient for themselves.’<sup>7</sup>

In 1931, Mahatma in reply to a correspondent maintained that: 'By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as trustee for those on whom he defends for the making, the retention and increase in his capital.'<sup>8</sup>

We now notice a shift in Gandhi's tone. The *kisān* struggles, specially in U.P., were to become more and more intense and sanguine, more particularly to the violent resistance of the zamindars and talukdars, backed up by the armed force of the British Police and even Army, to the elementary demand for (a) reduction in rent and (b) fixity of tenure.

In a message to the zamindars, Bapu warns them of the danger facing this order. He said:

'I would like the zamindars to recognize the correctness of the kisan's position and make a correspondent change in their own outlook. The present crisis will be somehow tided over. But it would be wrong to go to sleep after it is over.

'The zamindars would do well to take the time by the forelock. Let them cease to be mere rent collectors. They should become trustees and trusted friends of their tenants. They should limit their privy purse. Let them forego the questionable perquisites they take from the tenants in the shape of forced gifts.... They should give them fixity of tenure, take a lively interest in their welfare ... and ... make them feel that they, the zamindars, are their true friends, taking only a fixed commission for their manifold services. In short, they must justify their position.'<sup>9</sup> This new shift begins to grow gradually, as Gandhi found that 'voluntariness', on which his Trusteeship concept was based, was not in operation. Hence, we find that, as against his earlier belief in the indispensability of the landlords and capitalists for the smooth and orderly running of the system of production, Gandhi had by 1936, come round to a different view. In reply to the correspondent Basil Mothems, Gandhi said: 'I do not want to destroy the zamindar, but neither do I feel that the zamindar is inevitable.'<sup>10</sup>

In another two years, Mahatma Gandhi had further moved away from 'voluntariness'. Replying to the Socialist communication he declared:

'The difference between your view and mine is based on the question whether the zamindari system is to be mended or ended. I say it should be mended, and if it cannot be mended, it should end itself.'<sup>11</sup>

We observe a radical departure in Mahatma Gandhi's views by 1947.

In answer to a question about the future of landownership he now formulated the principle that

‘In the non-violent order of the future, the land would belong to the state, for has it not been said ‘Sabhi bhoomi Gopalki’, under such dispensation there would be no waste of talents and labour.’<sup>12</sup>

Thus starting from the original opinion that landlords are indispensable and should not be dispossessed of their landed property, Mahatma Gandhi ended up by advocating nationalization of land. Reference may be made here to Bapu’s famous dialogue with Professor Nirmal Bose in 1934, when Gandhi declared his stout opposition to nationalization of means of production.<sup>13</sup> The last substantive statement made by Gandhi regarding the zamindari system was in May 1947, when he appealed to the zamindars of Bihar in the following words:

‘To the landlords he said that if what was said against them was true, he would warn them that their days were numbered. They could no longer continue as lords and masters. They had a bright future if they became trustees of the poor *kisāns*. He had in mind not trustees in name but in reality such trustees would take nothing for themselves that their labour and care did not entitle them to. Then they would find that no law would be able to touch them. The *kisans* would be their friends.’<sup>14</sup>

Here Gandhi feels obliged to refer to the possibility of legislation intervening in order to ameliorate the condition of the peasants and affect the interests of the landlords: He warns them that if they did not voluntarily change in their attitude towards the peasants, they will have to face legal restrictions.

What a far cry between this threat of legislative action from the assertion, sixteen years ago that

‘Our capacity for *swarāj* depends upon our capacity for solving, without reference to, or intervention of, the Government, all the varied and complex problems that must arise in the affairs of one of the biggest and most ancient nations like India.’<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting to observe that by 1942, all that Gandhi could claim in the way of converting the capitalists to trusteeship was to be able to say that ‘Of those you have named only Jamnalal-ji came near, but only near it’.<sup>16</sup>

In 1946, Mahatma Gandhi moved further towards state intervention when he declared:

‘As for the present owners of wealth they would have to make their choice between class war and voluntary converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sake, but for the



sake of the nation and therefore without exploitation. *The state would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the services rendered and its value to society.* Their children would interest the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it.<sup>17</sup>

During this period, Gandhi's writings refer more and more frequently to the intervention by the state in regulating the conduct of the landlords and the capitalists and the incomes they should be allowed to retain, on the condition that they are fit to be allowed to become and retain trustees of the system of production and the means of production. Voluntariness thus receded more and more into the background.

What may well be regarded as an appropriate epitaph to the more than thirty years' efforts of Mahatma Gandhi to convert the capitalists and landlords to the concept of trusteeship, one may cite the following admission by Bapu in reply to the question:

'You say that a Raja, a zamindar of a capitalist should be trustee for the poor. Do you think that any such exists today? Or do you expect them to be transformed?

'I think that some very few exist even today, even though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present Rajas and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When Panchāyat Rāj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the Rajas can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-cooperate with the evil of zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In Panchāyat Rāj only the Panchāyat will be obliged and the Panchayat can only work through the law of their making'.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, gone is the optimistic hope that the vested interest could voluntarily transform themselves into trustees and the assertion that intervention of the state was tantamount to violence. All that now remains is that if the desired change does not come about voluntarily, state will intervene and end the system of exploitation.

In its final stage, Mahatma Gandhi's theory of trusteeship came to acquire a shape almost completely different from the original, rather naive concept.

Perhaps the most systematic presentation of the theory of trusteeship is the one by one of his closest associates, Shri Pearelal, in a paper presented to the Seminar on Gandhian Outlook and Techniques, held in New Delhi in 1953. According to Pearelalji,

Mahatma Gandhi ‘summed up his trusteeship idea in the following formula:

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one, it gives no quarter to capitalism but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except in as much as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of ownership and use of wealth.
4. Thus under state-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold on disregard of the interest of society.
5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.
6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not personal whim or greed.

Acharya Kripalani, another of the closest associates of Mahatma Gandhi for over thirty years has this to say about the fate of the concept of trusteeship.

‘Gandhi was rather disillusioned in the end and held that his capitalist friends could never become the trustees of the people.... The capitalists went to him for their own purposes mostly... but Gandhi could not turn the heart of even one capitalist. They remained what they were...’<sup>20</sup>

The frustration of Mahatma Gandhi’s efforts was inevitable. The roots of failure lay in his failure to understand the mechanism and dynamics of the capitalist system and the parasitical and reactionary nature of the zamindari system, which by siphoning off the surplus produce of the peasants, inhibited economic growth.

What Gandhi could not see was the fact that a humanitarian capitalist was a contradiction in terms. Survival of the capitalist depended upon his maximizing his profits, reducing the cost of

production by ever growing concentration and centralization of capital, ever increasing the rate of exploitation of the workers, surplus value and re-investing his savings to further expand his scale of production, to be able to face competition from fellow capitalists within the country and abroad. Any capitalist who did not join this race would be reduced to the fate of Sinclair Lewis' Babbit and go out of business, which would be taken over by his fellow capitalists, ending up in his own utter ruin and bankruptcy.

Gandhi's concept of being able to retain the capitalists, but ending the capitalist system, by means of a gradual transformation of the capitalist, one by one, was utterly Utopian. Either the system would be ended by socializing the means of production, and replacing it by management by workers' production councils, including the managerial and engineering personnel and not excluding the employment of such of the erstwhile capitalists who possess technical skill and could contribute to the efficient running of the productive system, or it would continue to grow into a system of big monopolies, castles and trusts, reducing the manual and skilled workers and technicians to the state of mere cogs in the wheel of the system.

This was the cause of even the Ahmedabad mill owners and capitalists like the Birlas, who were closest to Gandhi, not agreeing to implement the concept of trusteeship and, to the utter disappointment of Bapu, becoming bigger and bigger capitalists, extending their sway to almost every aspect of the national economy and even the press of the country, seeking to control and form public opinion according to their own desires and interests.

So far as the land problem is concerned, the zamindari system was entirely parasitical, the zamindars having absolutely no useful role in the process of agricultural production. They drained off the entire or almost the entire produce of the land, through rack-renting the peasants. The result was that

1. The peasants had next to nothing left for re-investment on land in order to improve the productivity of agriculture.
2. The peasants, in most cases, did not have enough left with themselves even for their own bare current household consumption, forcing them to get into the clutches of the usurious moneylenders and become their virtual slaves.
3. A good part of the output of the peasants left with them was taken away by the moneylender traders, in payment of

interest charges, going into boards and enabling the traders to regulate the supply and prices for the consumers.

4. This restricted the national market and in its turn inhibited the development of industrial production, causing crises of production, wage cuts and under employment and unemployment.

This integrated character of the semi-feudal and semi-capitalist system that was operating in India and its impersonal nature was not seen or grasped by Gandhi. The result was that he pleaded for individual landlords and capitalists to be humanitarian, charitable, noble and patriotic, with those appeals falling on deaf ears of the system, while no individual or a small group of individuals could reform, in face of the objective laws of social and economic development. They, of course, took full advantage of Bapu's appeal to the peasants and workers to regard the landlords and capitalists as their trustees and parents, etc., and not to resort to militant actions against them, even for their admittedly legitimate demands.

The impact of Gandhi's policies on the trade union and *kisān* movements was increasing splits, brought about by his own followers, through their insistence on eschewing strikes and no-rent campaigns.

Thus, the middle alternative between capitalism-cum-landlordism and socialism, which the Mahatma sought to create, turned out to be of an illusory nature.

It is significant that Gandhi's own colleagues and followers have repudiated all his teachings, one by one, as and when it suited the interests of the owning classes. The latest example is that of the refusal of the union government to agree to its own employees' demand of need-based wage being put to arbitration, one of the cardinal pillars of Gandhi's method of getting disputes solved.

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VASANT PALSHIKAR

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## Gandhi's Economic Ideas and their Present Relevance



GANDHI did not believe in the autonomy of economic laws. True economics, according to him, 'never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name must at the same time be also good economics'.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi's advocacy of a rural civilization was consistent with his unified outlook, where ethics was interchangeable with economics.

Gandhi significantly called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. A careful reading brings out clearly that Gandhi was, since his childhood, in search of a way to God. This search became more urgent and insistent in South Africa, during the early years of this century. Early in his life he became fiercely wedded to truth, and was convinced that only a truthful life could lead one to God. It was through this search after a truthful life that he came to his economic ideas.

What leads one away from God or Truth? The answer that emerges out of his *Autobiography* is that, ultimately, this business of living with a body itself leads one to desire, to violence and away from God. So it became imperative for him that wants should be reduced to the minimum, that only *necessary* needs should be satisfied. That way one would be nearest to God and free from untruth.

The impact of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* on him is well known. Gandhi writes, 'I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin'.<sup>2</sup> What was it that he found in that book?

'The teaching of *Unto This Last* I understood to be: (1) that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. (2) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work. (3) That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me... I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce those principles to practice'.<sup>3</sup> This is the quintessence of Gandhi's economic thinking.

The second influence that shaped Gandhi's economic thinking was his observation of the English industrial scene in the last decade of the nineteenth century while a student in London. This finds expression in his early book *Hind Swarāj*. The book is, according to Gandhi, a faithful record of conversations he had with political workers. There is a whole chapter on 'Civilization', meaning modern civilization of the West. Three of the key passages in the book read as follows:

'Formerly, men worked in the open air only as much as they liked. Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at the risk of their lives, at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires. Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy'.<sup>4</sup>

'This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in it appear to be half-mad. They lack real physical strength or courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication'.<sup>5</sup>

'It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre.... They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages'.<sup>6</sup>

We may note in passing here that this was possibly the worst phase of industrialism, where exploitation was unchecked and knew no bounds, and greed was rampant. Mammon worship was equated with God-worship quite seriously and honestly. We may also bear in mind that, although material conditions of workers improved

continuously during the twentieth century, and the worst forms of exploitation came to be prohibited, till after the Second World War conditions of workers, both inside and outside of factories, kept them in an oppressed and impoverished state, and they were at the mercy of the monied people for their livelihood. Even today, although conditions of work, pay and opportunities have materially altered for the better, the basic divisions of owners-workers, rulers-ruled, masses-leaders remain much the same and Gandhi's strictures on the Western civilization continue to have relevance.

The third factor that shaped Gandhi's economic ideas was the principle of *swarāj*. According to Gandhi, *swarāj* meant self-rule based upon self-restraint. It depended entirely on 'our internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds'.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the stress on economic self-sufficiency in the matter of vital needs, which alone could give the people (and the villages) the strength to stand up against the whole world, when the need arose.

These three influences together gave shape and content to his idea of an ideal socio-economic order. We may briefly know the characteristic features of such an economic order in his own words:

'Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world.... This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured, in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants, and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

'This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all knowing living force which inheres every other force known to the world but which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act.

'In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral parts.

'In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place



in a cultural human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place'.<sup>8</sup>

The very scantiness of Gandhi's Utopia is its characteristic merit. In the very same article he compares it with Euclid's point, and suggests that, like it, 'though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an unperishable value'. It is important to always remember that Gandhi was not an utopia-builder but a man of action practising the art of the possible. He was not interested in filling in details in his picture of the ideal society. He was concerned with the first step that men today could take in that direction.

Even here, Gandhi rarely thought of mankind in the abstract. He always worked with particular men in a certain time. It is largely in the specific Indian context that he worked out a few concrete programmes, and which he then related to his larger concept of an ideal socio-economic order. So, while considering how he further elaborated his idea and filled in some details' in his 'model', we ought ever to remember the limitations of the specific context within which he worked, and separate specific remedy from the universal principle.

We may also not forget that Gandhi's writings are really articles and speeches that he wrote and delivered in the course of his practical work with people of different persuasions. Naturally, a large part of his 'economic' writings after he came to India were done to persuade people to undertake specific measures like khadi and village industries work, village service, etc. Inevitably, exposition of his ideas suffers from being put into the strait-jacket of the specific Indian conditions. And Indian conditions then, and even now, are a strait-jacket. For instance, his total neglect of urban problems is partially a result of the terrible drag that Indian villages are on all efforts to change. So also the question of the use of machinery. There were, and are, so many millions of idle, poor hands in India that giving gainful employment to them meant putting away the thought of machinery for a long time, and that is what Gandhi advocated.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we must go to the underlying principles to know the mind of Gandhi.

Gandhi reached India in 1915. His first close acquaintance with the Indian villages was in Champaran, although he had already read all that was there to read of Indian poverty. He immediately set about remedying the situation. He started schools, opened clinics, taught village people basic rules of sanitation. It was in a village in Champaran that the fact of poverty was brought to him

in a most poignant and dramatic manner. On his visit to the village of Bhitiharva Gandhi came upon women who were very dirtily dressed. Gandhi enquired why they did not wash their clothes. ‘Tell Mahatmaji to get me another *sari*, and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day’,<sup>10</sup> was the reply. It must have stung his heart deeply.

We need to recall here a most telling fact. Gandhi was a very much minor star in the galaxy of Indian leaders in 1915. But it was to him that people with an economic grievance came. His early campaigns in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad were fought in the cause of the poor. Gandhi came to know India and its problems most intimately in this way.

Gandhi’s case was very simply put. He drew attention to the fact that India lived in its villages and that only through their salvation India would regain her glory. The problem of problems was, how were the hungry millions to be fed? Not through charity, Gandhi said. ‘They cannot be given it (food). They must earn it. And they can earn it only by the sweat of their brow’.<sup>11</sup> This meant providing them with work.

What work could be found for these people, which they could do in their villages, unskilled and ignorant that they were? The talk of industrialization, big machinery, factories did not impress him for two reasons. That he considered industrialization of the Western variety to be evil was one of them. He also rejected it because that way work could not be provided to all and in the villages. Hence he advocated ‘industrializing’ of all the lakhs of villages. He championed the cause of spinning as ‘the only ready means of driving away penury and making famine of work and wealth impossible’.<sup>12</sup>

Both because Indian conditions warranted it and he considered a simple life of labour to be the only really moral one, village was Gandhi’s unit of social organization. In the village the means of production of the elementary necessities of life were to be ‘freely available to all as God’s air and water’ and were not to be ‘a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others’.<sup>13</sup> The village was to be self-sufficient in the matter of its vital requirements as a unit. But self-sufficiency was not to be interpreted as absence of commerce and exchange with other villages.<sup>14</sup> Provided villages manufactured mainly for their use, ‘there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others’.<sup>15</sup> Central to Gandhi’s economic thinking was his firm

conviction that a non-violent, i.e., free from exploitation, economy cannot be built on centralized 'factory civilization'. The incessant search for material comforts leads inevitably to factory civilization and thence to exploitation of, and violence to, other human beings, he said. Hence he wanted that production and consumption should be localized, so that 'temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears'.<sup>16</sup>

Although his personal position was that he would be happy to see all big machines and factories and utilities like railways and aeroplanes to disappear, Gandhi was realistic enough to accept that the people were not prepared for it. So in practice he made allowance for machines and factories that subserved the interests of all. When he was asked how it fitted in with his decentralized economic structure, he replied,

'I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized, or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive.....This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery... The individual is the one supreme consideration'.<sup>17</sup>

That each man should do bodily labour to satisfy his most essential needs,<sup>18</sup> and that no one had the right to take more than what he needed,<sup>19</sup> are two more basic principles of the Gandhian economic order. This establishes complete equality amongst all types of labour and men.

The inclusion of the above two principles completes the basic structure of the Gandhian economic order. The details can all be filled in, and answers to any unforeseen questions can be gleaned from it.

It cannot be emphasized too much that Gandhi's economic ideas have an integral relationship to his ideal of a godly life. Throughout his writings he again and again makes it clear that, what does not promote spiritual growth is harmful, and can be usefully done away with, however comfort-promoting the thing may have proven otherwise.

This is important to bear in mind, because it is no argument against Gandhi to say that a particular arrangement of things adds to the leisure or the pleasures of life. Does it enhance the spirituality of all men, would be his question. He would not be convinced of its goodness otherwise.

Gandhi can be legitimately criticized from three viewpoints. It can be said that, however right his ideas may be theoretically, the world is not going to listen to him, or that it is too late to alter the course it has set itself upon. Then again it can be said, and rightly, that Gandhi has left many gaps in his thought, and there are also some inconsistencies he has left behind, and a lot of detailing would have to be done before his idea can be meaningfully applied in the present times. Lastly, Gandhi can be said to have been wrong in his fundamental principles: either that his very ideal of a godly life is wrong, harmful or irrelevant, or that a godly life did not require the constraints that he wanted to put on this-worldly life.

The first kind of criticism would really be a confession of the world's folly, rather than a criticism of Gandhi. In the remainder of this essay Gandhi's ideas would be reviewed from the other two points of view.

The inadequacies of Gandhi's economic structure are essentially threefold. Gandhian order lacks the two time dimensions of the past and the future; it is static and timeless, and so unreal. Secondly, Gandhi does not show recognition of an ancient historical fact that even on the level of a settled agricultural *adivāsi* civilization the unit of self-sufficiency is larger not only than the village but even the entire tribal group; the commercial links with the outside world are not marginal but integral to its survival. Even to achieve self-sufficiency in elementary needs a village, and even a group of villages, may have to be dependent on rather far away areas. Thirdly, urban culture is almost as ancient as agriculture-based civilization. Emergence of cities could be said to be functional to a settled, agricultural civilization extending over a large territory. Gandhi failed to realize this connection. All the three inadequacies arise out of his lack of understanding of or his blindness to history and historical process. From certain of his passages it can be said that he was deliberately anti-historical: he wished things to be static in the material sphere. He gives the impression that he believed it necessary for spiritual growth. His statement that the ancient Indians could have developed machinery but chose not to, quoted earlier, can be understood only in this light. He read back into Indian history what he wished should happen.

Three features distinguish the modern situation. Firstly, the technological situation has become dynamic to a degree never reached before. The rapid growth of scientific knowledge is a complementary fact. More raw materials can be used to produce

more number and kinds of goods. The interpretation of 'minimum wants' would have to be substantially broadened and liberalized, although the expression has not today become meaningless as some suggest. Secondly, the modern society is much more differentiated as the number of occupations at which man works has increased manifold. There is more mobility. Gandhi's fundamental concept of body-labour (or bread-labour) needs to be radically reinterpreted, to allow people to contribute bread-labour through occupations other than those related to the satisfaction of elementary physical needs of hunger, clothing and shelter. Thirdly, modern society is developing in a direction of growth in the number of intellectual, technological, scientific and artistic disciplines. These disciplines require for their existence and growth a 'global' as opposed to 'rural' setting. Urban culture is vital to the very survival of mankind, as also for its spiritual development. Therefore, cities also need to be integral as social units in any civilization.

Accommodation to these new factors in the situation, as also to the need of world-wide network of commerce, communications and production would substantially radically alter the ideal picture of the Gandhian economic order. But it need not necessarily mean abandonment of Gandhian economic principles, as will become clear later.

The more fundamental criticism of Gandhi is that his conception of a spiritual life was too narrow, and his understanding of the connection between material well-being and spiritual pursuit was wrong on two important counts.

Gandhi narrates the incident of his father's death at length in his *Autobiography* (pp. 21-23). Gandhi was devoted to his father, and nursed him with passion. But, as ill-luck would have it, Gandhi was in bed with his wife when his father breathed his last. It came as a whiplash to him, a God-sent punishment for his lustfulness. Gandhi writes, 'It is a blot I have never been able to efface or forget, and I have always thought that.... (I) was found unparadonably wanting because my mind was at the same moment in the grip of lust... .It took me long to get free from the shackles of lust, and I had to pass through many ordeals before I could overcome it.'<sup>20</sup>

Gandhi's narrowly ascetic conception of a spiritual life sprang out of the traumatic shock narrated above. It explains much in his personal life and philosophy, as also economic ideas. Romain Rolland has perceptively said, '... herein lies his narrowness; not in his heart, which is as large as that of Christ but in his spirit of intellectual

asceticism and renunciation. (And this too is of a Christ!) Gandhi is an universalist of the middle ages.<sup>21</sup> Yes, but with one significant difference. Gandhi did not believe in the wilful mortification of the flesh; he took great care of the body and kept it fit as a fiddle. He was not a body-hater. However, the important thing is, not only indulgence, but even simple pleasures became in his eyes hindrances in the path of godly life. Witness his efforts to dissuade Mrs. Polak from having even simple picture frames on the walls in their home at Phoenix Ashram.

Gandhi brought his narrow ascetic outlook fully on his economic ideas. This transference of a very personal equation into a social one was wrong for two reasons. Firstly, there is no essential connection between an ascetic mode of material life and a godly life; also, all available historical evidence shows that people living at a static low subsistence level that Gandhi would have deemed ideal, the tribals all over the world, do not show spiritual development. Neither do these cultures uphold values dear to Gandhi, like equality, non-violence, non-exploitation, etc. If at all, although these people are happy and innocent in a childlike fashion, they are spiritual pigmies: their God is poles apart from Gandhi's. Secondly, in insisting that the whole civilization go ascetic, Gandhi was denying a whole human dimension the aesthetic dimension. That Gandhi could deny himself the aesthetic dimension without spiritual impoverishment was an exception; the rule is contrary, and is amply proved by the signal failure of all the *āśrama* in producing a godly life amongst most of its inmates.

Acceptance of this criticism would mean a substantial alteration in Gandhian economic structure. But, in my view, it need not mean a denial of Gandhian economic order provided three principles are adhered to. We should be steered along the path of non-material development. (Godly path for Gandhi meant in the social sphere a path of truth, non-violence, equality and brotherhood.) We need to build up an economic order which is decentralized and free of exploitation. We must insist that each one does bodily labour to earn his living, all other pursuits of the individual—intellectual, aesthetic, scientific, religious, etc., being voluntary and non-pecuniary in nature.

It is not beyond the genius and the technological capacity of human kind to create such an economic order. Nor would it be incompatible with the highest technology and an urban culture.

Are these three principles relevant and important today? Their

relevance and importance is revealed if one tries to search for the root cause of inequality, exploitation and violence in social life, and if one is wedded to remove it. It is then that the truth of Gandhi's criticism of cities and machinery comes home to us. Gandhi was wrong in almost wishing away cities and urban culture, but that cities and the urban people have been the exploiters in history is nonetheless true. This relationship can be put right, i.e., freed from exploitation, only when bodily labour is put on a par with other kinds of labour, and each one is made to labour for his living. Gandhi's stand against machinery was too fundamentalistic and destructively harsh, and hence, wrong, but it nevertheless remains true that most of the technological development so far in history has been motivated by greed or a desire to dominate. Hence Gandhi may have an important insight when he says that much of it in its present form, and in its present industrial organization, would have to be rejected. It could be argued with truth that violence is basic to human nature, and Gandhi was not unaware of it. All the more reason, he would say, and rightly, that a non-violent socio-economic structure be built up. Gandhi argued that you cannot create a non-violent society where economic production is concentrated, where there is competition and greed, and where there is a political concentration of power. Once again, it can be rightly contented that decentralization by itself does not mean automatic elimination of violence, greed and competition. Our village life today is full of all these vices and was so even in ancient days. But it still remains the fact that, concentration beyond a certain point can be achieved only at the expense of someone else, is usually motivated by greed and power, and is always prone to violence, both offensive and defensive, as it is itself built on violence.

Gandhi's insistence on minimizing wants has been attacked on two grounds: firstly, that it is too narrowly ascetic. Secondly, that it goes against human nature. Economists particularly have attacked him on the latter ground. We have argued earlier that it is not necessary to go fully with Gandhi in reducing wants to follow a godly path. But it also remains true that anyone who wants to pursue serious interests in life, apart even from spiritual ends, finds it essential to regulate his wants severely: he chooses to forego many of his wishes. It is also patently wrong to say that human wants are insatiable. Anthropological studies of tribal cultures show that there is no inherent insatiability where wants are concerned. This is also proved today by the fact that huge monies are spent today to

persuade people to buy what they, in all likelihood, would not buy otherwise. At best, then, it can be said that human desire is malleable and can be manipulated to make it insatiable. The converse would also be true then: Wants could be reduced without loss. Gandhi is, therefore, not impractical, and is certainly right in saying that we ought to subordinate our material life to higher ideals.

In conclusion, these insights of Gandhi expressed in the above principles, therefore, remain important to all those who want to face the problems of violence, exploitation, inequality and good life. Specifically, in the Indian context, even from a purely realistic viewpoint, Gandhian economic programme of village reconstruction, including a rejuvenation of village industries, has an importance and relevance which cannot be emphasized too much.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

Many of the quotations of Gandhi have been taken from two anthologies: (1) *India of My Dreams* and (2) *Village Swarāj*. Both of these have been published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. The reference to the anthologies is given in brackets after giving the original source. The following abbreviations are used for the purpose:

IDM=*India of My Dreams* (Second revised edition, 1962)

VS = *Village Swarāj* (Second revised edition, 1963)

1. *The Harijan*, 9-10-1937 (IMD, p. 71).
2. *Autobiography*, Navajivan, p. 220 (1959 de-luxe edition).
3. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
4. *Hind Swarāj*, p. 36. (Navajivan edition 1962).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
7. *Young India*, 1-12-1927 (IMD, p. 7).
8. *The Harijan*, 28-7-1946, (IMD, p. 101).
9. 'But I have a great concern about introducing machine industry. The machine produces much too fast, and brings with it a sort of economic system which I cannot grasp. I do not want to accept something when I see its evil effects which outweigh whatever good it brings with it. I want the dumb millions of this country to be healthy and happy and I want them to grow spiritually. As yet for this purpose we do not need the machine. There are many, too many idle hands. But as we grow in understanding, if we feel the need of machines, we certainly will have them... .Once we shall have shaped our life on *ahimsā*, we shall know how to control the machine'. (Pyarelal, *Towards New Horizons*, Navajivan Publishing House, 1959, pp. 45-46.)
10. *Autobiography*, p. 311.
11. *Young India*, 13-10-1921, (VS, p. 36).
12. *Young India*, 3-11-1921, (VS, p. 18).



13. *Young India*, 15-11-1928, (VS, p. 34).
14. *Khadi—Why and How*, p. 166 (VS, p. 63); also see *Young India*, 25-4-1929, (VS, p. 65).
15. *The Harijan*, 29-8-1936, (IMD, p. 104).
16. *The Harijan*, 2-11-1934, (VS, p. 21).
17. *The Harijan*, 27-2-1937, (VS, p. 20).
18. *From Yeravada Mandir*, Chap. IX, (IMD, pp. 55-57); also see *The Harijan*, 29-6-1935, (IMD, pp. 59-60).
19. *The Harijan* 25-8-1940, (VS, pp. 49-50).
20. *Autobiography*, p. 23.
21. Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi*, Agra, 1948, Shivalal Agarwala, pp. 118 119, f.n.

RAJ KRISHNA

## Some Reflections on Gandhian Economics



IN THE numerous discussions of Gandhism inspired by the Gandhi Centenary we find three kinds of contributions. There are, in the first place, exegetic essays designed to show what Gandhi really meant. Then, there are the reaffirmations of faith by the faithful. In these it is emphasized that the proposals which he made for translating his social idealism into reality constitute an excellent and perhaps the only sane response to the challenges of the contemporary age. For India, in particular, they are shown to be pointers in the direction in which the country should move, if the country is to get out of the difficulties in which it finds itself due to the operation of a non-Gandhian party-politics and the policy of industrializing the country on the traditional Western pattern. If the country has failed to follow the Gandhian model, the reason, it is said, is not that the model is defective but the leadership has not been intelligent and/or wilful enough to steer the country in accordance with it; if the leadership still accepts the model sincerely, it can be realized. Finally, we find the very leaders who have led and are leading the country in an anti-Gandhian direction, paying their lip-service to the greatness and the 'relevance' of Gandhian thought. Most of these proceedings are un-Gandhian in spirit for they do not reflect

any sincere commitment to truth nor a harmony of thought and action. The artificial atmosphere created by them can be cleared only if two essential intellectual tasks are performed. First, the Gandhian model itself should be examined critically for its intrinsic merits and deficiencies.

And, secondly, the model should be confronted with trends in the real world and in India, in particular, so that its realizability may be critically assessed. This paper is an attempt in this direction. But it is restricted to a discussion of the economic ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

#### HISTORY AND UTOPIA

Gandhian economics is not a branch of positive economics which merely attempts to predict economic events on the simple assumption that citizens try to maximize their net material gain subject to the relevant constraints. It is, rather, a variant of normative economics which proposes an ideal economic order.

Models of the ideal economic system can be classified into two types: those which are designed to realize primarily economic values such as a high rate of growth, full employment, economic efficiency, stability and equality; and those in which economic choices are primarily governed by non-economic values. The Gandhian model belongs much more to this latter class. Like all such models it presupposes that when the ideal order is widely accepted everyone would adjust his economic behaviour in accordance with requirements of the order itself and thus the ideal would become real.

A student of contemporary economic history would find it extremely difficult to believe that this assumption can hold with regard to the economic behaviour of masses of men in normal times. Most people are not interested in believing in any general normative economic model at all. And the few who do, take care not to allow their beliefs to interfere with their normal economic acquisitiveness. That is why in recent history no ideal model whatever, Communist, Cooperative or Gandhian, has materialized anywhere on a large-scale. The perennial power of ordinary human acquisitiveness and the attractions and compulsions of modern technology, have combined to endow the economic process with an autonomous dynamic which is largely independent of ideal models, and has a high degree of universality. The institutional arrangements governing economic activity do, of course, differ from country to country. And

the designing of these arrangements has been partly influenced by ideologies. But cutting across institutional differences, the emergent economic structures and processes show many striking similarities.

Everywhere there is irresistible mass demand for the consumption goods which a modern industrial economy can turn out. Everywhere the technology used for producing these goods is essentially the same. Since most of this technology is large-scale technology, the structure of production is dominated by large-scale units with a large stock of capital and a large number of employees. Those who control these large-scale enterprises—capitalists and/or State bureaucrats—have enormous power concentrated in their hands—power to determine the material destiny of primary producers, industrial workers, consumers and even small investors. And this power grows as the accumulation of capital by large-scale enterprises progressively enlarges their domain. The establishment of a large-scale industrial structure is associated everywhere with rapid urbanization and a progressive specialization of functions. All economic relationships tend to get monetized. And all participants in economic activity learn to respond more and more to calculated monetary returns and costs which depend on prices. The process of price formation is governed everywhere by similar forces of supply and demand. And the institutions of production, finance and marketing assume a more or less similar form everywhere.

The Gandhian normative model of an economy has to be evaluated in the light of this evidence for the existence of a largely autonomous and universal dynamic of the economic process.

The question is not whether the Gandhian model is agreeable to our ethical sensibilities or not; but whether it has any prospect of being realized in the teeth of the strong historical tendencies of our period.

The contest between Gandhian thought and contemporary historical trends is just another instance of the perennial tension between history and utopia. Forces already at work in the historical process lead it towards some new equilibrium. The major characteristics of this equilibrium can be partly predicted by a mature social science. On the other hand, utopia itself can be a force which bends the historical trends in a new direction, though it seldom reverses them altogether. A judgement has to be made about the relative strength of the forces already operating and the force of the Gandhian utopia.

With his exceptional capacity for intuition Gandhi perceived the organic necessities which produce all the elements of the syndrome of modern industrialism simultaneously. And, therefore, he attacked not a few but all of them together. Thus he proposed his own alternatives to all the ingredients of modern industrialism. It is extremely instructive to summarize his proposals and to contrast them with contemporary trends under seven headings: Consumption, Technology, Scale of Production, Decentralization, Urbanization, Equality and Specialization.

#### THE GANDHIAN MODEL

1. *Consumption.* In opposition to the contemporary tendency for wants to multiply indefinitely, Gandhi advocated the limitation of wants. Hundreds of millions of people all over the world are currently engaged in a fierce struggle to acquire the goods and services which modern technology can provide. For the first time in history these goods and service promise the elimination of almost all physical suffering for all human beings, and an unprecedented intensity, continuity and variety in the enjoyment of life at the physical level. Therefore, the mad rush of a suffering and unsatiated humanity for these gifts of modernity is easily understandable. But opposing this rush, Bapu demanded that 'each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural wants and no more'.<sup>1</sup> 'He (who has made the ideal of equal distribution a part of his being) would reduce his wants to a minimum.... (T) here would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life.'<sup>2</sup>
2. *Technology.* Modern large-scale technology is rapidly replacing old techniques in almost all sectors in all the continents. But the Mahatma admitted large-scale technology in his model only in those sectors where it was unavoidable. And he wanted the use of machinery to be subject to many important constraints. It should not destroy village crafts. It should not increase economic inequality. And it should not displace manual labour. He visualized 'electricity, ship-building, iron works, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts.... Hitherto industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the State of the future it will subserve the villages and their crafts'.<sup>3</sup> 'I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many.'<sup>4</sup>'

am aiming not at eradication of all machinery, but its limitation... The supreme consideration is man.<sup>5</sup>

3. *Scale of Production.* Large-scale technology is progressively enlarging the scale of production everywhere but Gandhi proposed small-scale production as the norm of economic organization.

‘Mass-production, then, at least where the vital necessities are concerned will disappear. When production and consumption both become localized,, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears .... There could be no accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest.’<sup>6</sup>

4. *Decentralization.* Large-scale technology and large-scale organization tend to centralize power everywhere. But Bapu recommended decentralization of power through a combination of State ownership in a few fields and village ownership and trusteeship in the rest of the economy. ‘The heavy machinery for work of public utility ... would be owned by the State.’<sup>7</sup> ‘... (T)he village communities or the State would own power houses...’<sup>8</sup> ‘The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society’.<sup>9</sup> ‘I would be very happy in deed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence’.<sup>10</sup>

Although Gandhi recognized the need for a minimum of State violence in some situations, he was fundamentally opposed to Statism. ‘The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from the violence to which it owes its very existence’.<sup>11</sup> ‘The violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State’.<sup>12</sup>

5. *Urbanization.* In opposition to universal urbanization, Gandhi proposed the self-governing village republic, self-sufficient in basic needs. ‘My idea of village *swarāj* is that it is a complete republic independent of its neighbours for its vital wants’.<sup>13</sup> ‘As far as possible every activity will be conducted on a co-operative basis’.<sup>13</sup> The ‘Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.’<sup>14</sup>

6. *Equality.* No passion animated Gandhi’s economic thought more than the passion for equality. In fact, most of his proposals were

inspired by this passion. On the negative side, Bapu proclaimed that ‘possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity’.<sup>15</sup> On the positive side, he hoped for an absolute equality of wages. ‘All the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day’s work’.<sup>16</sup>

7. *Specialization*. In answer to increasing specialization, Gandhi demanded that ‘the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery’.<sup>17</sup> He sought even to bridge the gulf between physical and non-physical labour by advocating universal physical labour. ‘Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist is the necessity of physical labour for all. No man ought to be free from that obligation.’<sup>18</sup>

This brief anthology of Gandhi’s basic conceptions about the ideal economy shows that their realization would require a radical reversal of contemporary historical trends. We can tabulate the opposition between the two as follows:

<i>Historical Trend</i>	<i>Gandhian Proposal</i>
1. Multiplication of wants	Limitation of wants
2. Diffusion of large-scale technology.	Large-scale technology in a few sectors co-existing with small-scale technology and handicrafts in others
3. Mass production	Small-scale production except in a few sectors where mass production is unavoidable.
4. Centralization of economic power	Limited State ownership, widespread village ownership and trusteeship.
5. Rapid urbanization	Self-governing village republics self-sufficient in basic needs.
6. Inequality (ameliorated by progressive taxation and social insurance)	Equality of wages.
7. Increasing specialization	Universal physical labour.

#### TRENDS IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY

It has been widely believed that India would be an excellent proving ground for the Mahatma’s economic doctrines because

his proposals were developed in the specific context of the Indian economic situation. India had not gone far on the road of conventional industrialization before Independence; and a large section of the leaders of the ruling party and the intelligentsia have always proclaimed their allegiance to Gandhian ideas. Therefore, it is important to see whether in the last twenty-one years since Independence the Indian economy has been moving in the direction of the set Gandhian ideal or along the well-beaten path of conventional industrialism.

1. *Consumption.* We cannot get data about the volume of modern consumption goods desired by the people of India. But we can see from the table in the Appendix that the per capita production of these goods in India has increased at a very rapid rate during the three plan periods. The growth of production has been most striking in the industries producing rayon (26 times), refrigerators (63 times), air conditioners (22 times), razor blades (48 times), cycles (11 times), radios (7 times), electric fans (5 times), sewing machines (8 times), cars, electric lamps and paper (3 times) and sugar, coffee and footwear (2 times). We know that the consumption level of the rich and the upper middle classes has been escalated by the international demonstration effect. Thanks to the unrestricted openness of our society to foreign influence and pressure, these classes have already begun to live in the affluent American style. The high consumption level of these classes has led to a similar escalation of desired consumption in all the strata of society—particularly the urban middle classes and the upper strata of the peasantry—to the extent that the available income permits. For some of the goods listed above such as rayon fabrics, cycles and radios, the demand is rapidly filtering down even to low-income groups.

An index of the intense passion for modern goods is the large-scale smuggling of articles whose import is restricted. Another is the widespread desire to go abroad and bring trunk-loads of them as permissible baggage allowance. The passion is likely to grow as more and more people acquire them and stimulate in others a competitive desire to do so. In this respect, the country is clearly moving towards an obsessive pre-occupation with high and continuously increasing mass consumption, rather than a limitation of wants as proposed by Gandhi. All streams of traditional thought which have preached contentment, endurance and self-control are being ridiculed and discredited.

2. *Technology.* Except the Ambar Charkha and the cowdung gas



plant no small-scale machines have been specially promoted by Government agencies in the industrial field. Almost the entire growth of industrial production, which multiplied 2½ times between 1951 and 1966,<sup>19</sup> has been due to the installation of the most modern large-scale technology imported from abroad.

Even in the textile industry where the traditional handloom sector has been specially protected, about 20 to 30 new automatic mills have been set up every year. The Annual Plan for 1968-69, for instance, provides for 2000 new looms in the mill sector. In spite of heavy subsidies the share of handlooms in total cloth production has been just maintained at about one-fourth since 1951.<sup>20</sup>

Very heavy emphasis has been given in the Second and Third Plans to the growth of capital-intensive basic industries. During the six years 1961-1966, the output of consumer goods increased at an average rate of 2.8 per cent per annum, while the output of intermediate goods and capital goods increased by 7.6 and 9.8 per cent every year.<sup>21</sup> The capital intensity in these basic industries is usually more than twice or thrice the intensity in consumer industries.<sup>22</sup> Even in those activities where labour-intensive methods could be economically promoted, such as construction work, the use of imported automatic equipment is spreading very fast.

Under the new agricultural strategy, the number of mechanized farms is also growing. The stock of tractors has increased from about 21,000 in 1956<sup>23</sup> to nearly 80,000 in the current year. The current annual demand is estimated to be 50,000. Indian factories are already producing about 15,000 every year.<sup>24</sup> It has been announced that more tractor units will be licensed and for some years liberal imports of tractors will be allowed. The current import rate is about 25,000 per year.

Thus, we cannot say that there is anything specially Gandhian about the choice and diffusion of techniques in India. The available Western technology is spreading as rapidly as capital resources permit.

3. *Scale of Production.* Only 4 per cent of public sector outlay was devoted to village and small industries in the Second Plan and the Third Plan. In the draft Fourth Plan the provision was still less: Rs 370 crores out of Rs. 16,000 crores, or only 2.3 per cent.<sup>25</sup> Small enterprises contributed 9.5 per cent of national income in 1950-51.<sup>26</sup> But in 1964-65 their contribution had fallen to 6.6 per cent. The number of small establishments is, of course, very large, but their share in the national output is very small and falling. On the other

hand, the output of large-scale factories and mines has increased nearly 4 times (from Rs. 620 crores to 2290 crores) during the same period.<sup>27</sup>

In the agricultural sector, again, since the ceiling legislation remains unimplemented, the distribution of land remains as it has been. In 1961 about 5 per cent of holdings, exceeding 25 acres in size, operated about 32 per cent of the total area; and about two-thirds of holdings, less than 5 acres in size, operated only 19 per cent of the total area.<sup>28</sup> By all kinds of legal and illegal means the domain of large (tractorized) farms is being steadily increased.

Thus, one can safely predict that in India, as in other industrialized countries, the share of small-scale units in total industrial output will continue to decline; and in agriculture the large-scale sector of mechanized commercial farms will grow and, in due course, supply the bulk of marketed output.

4. *Decentralization.* The establishment of cooperatives and panchayats on a large-scale may be said to have been inspired by Gandhian thought. But it is well-known that no effective decentralization of power to the masses has come about. Power remains centralized in the hands of the government officers in charge of these institutions. Where strong large-scale cooperative or panchāyat institutions have come into being, real power in these institutions again vests either in the members of the old rural oligarchy of high-caste landlords and/or moneylenders or in the hands of the new managerial caste which often exercises and abuses its power even more callously than the old oligarchy.

Since small-scale institutions have proved to be unviable, there is growing pressure for the creation of large-scale cooperatives, and in the large-scale sugar cooperatives, marketing cooperatives and credit cooperatives, control is highly centralized. It is also well-known that cooperatives have not been operating so as to help the really small farmers. According to a Reserve Bank survey, only 3 per cent of the total lending of cooperatives has gone to the small farmers, owning assets less than Rs. 1000. More than half (55 per cent) was given to farmers in the two top asset groups.<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding Gandhi's views on Statism, the State in India has been growing into a powerful leviathan. It has extended its control, legally and financially, over almost all departments of life. The aggregate expenditure of all governments in India has increased more than 7 times from Rs. 861 crores in 1950-51 to Rs. 6257 crores in 1967-68. As a proportion of national income it has increased

from 9 per cent to 23 per cent.<sup>30</sup> The share of the State in investment has recorded an even more impressive increase. The estimated total investment in the economy during the first three plans was Rs. 21,483 crores. The Government's share in the total investment increased from 43 per cent in the first plan to 63 per cent in the third.<sup>31</sup>

The private sector is controlled by the State in great detail by means of taxation, labour legislation, company law, control of capital issues, commodity control, import control and exchange control. Apart from the cooperative sector the so-called voluntary sector consisting of non-profit voluntary institutions have also come to depend almost entirely on the finance, patronage and bureaucratic control of the State. Independence from the State is enjoyed only by those few institutions which manage to get a share of the unaccounted money held by the rich minority. But these institutions are not always dedicated to the service of the poor.

The doctrine of trusteeship has made no advance except for some inconclusive discussions in two seminars. In fact, even the old springs of charity by the rich are drying up, because of the heavy demands of the State on legal money. And even in the expenditure of unaccounted money conspicuous consumption claims a larger share than charity.

5. *Urbanization.* Between 1931 and 1961 the urban population had increased by 136 per cent from 3.35 crores in 1931 to 7.89 crores in 1961, or from 12 per cent to 18 per cent of the total population.<sup>32</sup> The number of cities with a population exceeding 100,000 had grown from 31 in 1931 to 113 in 1961, and 7 cities had a population exceeding one million in 1961. Projections of the Planning Commission show that by 1976 the urban population is likely to increase from 7.9 to 14 crores or about 22.4 per cent of the total population.<sup>33</sup> Thus, regardless of the views of decentralists, the outlook is that urbanization will continue to accelerate.

6. *Equality.* Unfortunately, no conclusive evidence is available about trends in the distribution of wealth and income in the country. The Mahalanobis Committee on Distribution of Income and Levels of Living reported in 1964 that

‘the required data are not available at present for a direct study of the question on income distribution referred to the Committee and no firm conclusions on the subject can be drawn’.<sup>34</sup>

On the basis of the incomplete statistics available for the decade 1951-1961 the Committee presented a few tentative conclusions.

The most important of these are summarized below:

1. There is greater concentration in the distribution of wealth, particularly in the form of land and company shares, than in the distribution of income.
2. The degree of inequality in income distribution is not higher in India than in some other developed or under-developed countries.
3. The distribution of income in the urban sector is more unequal than in the rural sector.
4. There has been no significant change in the overall distribution of income. Probably there has been some increase in inequality in the urban sector and some reduction in inequality in the rural sector.
5. The incomes of factory workers and miners have grown faster than the average income per employed person. But agricultural labourers have not shared in income increase.
6. There is considerable concentration of economic power in the form of control over the private corporate sector. But statistics do not show any significantly clear trend in concentration ratios during the first ten years of planning.

These conclusions were presented four years ago about the decade 1951-61; and we do not have any study of more recent distribution trends. We can derive some comfort from the fact that the overall inequality in the distribution of income was not increasing in the first decade of planning. However, from the Gandhian point of view there are two important disturbing facts: (1) that the poorest class in society, namely, the landless agricultural labourers, did not experience any significant improvement in their income in large parts of the country; and (2) that the total unemployment in the country has continued to increase. According to Planning Commission figures, unemployment increased from 7 million in 1961 to 9.5 million in 1966.<sup>35</sup>

7. *Specialization.* Finally, we note that a sharp division of labour between unskilled and skilled physical labour and mental labour has been crystallizing in the country. Instead of physical labour becoming universal as desired by Gandhi, the aversion to it has become universal. Rural youth who migrate to the city prefer to stick to low-paid clerical jobs even when more remunerative opportunities involving physical labour are available in the village or

the city. Physical work is resorted to only when there is absolutely no alternative to it. The city intelligentsia minimize work in the villages even when their professional duties require it. Thus in professions like engineering and agricultural extension, supervisory staff avoid all physical work even when it is necessary for demonstrative purposes, and merely order the purely manual workers to do it. In the field of intellectual activity itself there are increasing demands for specialization. There is nothing to suggest that the Gandhian concept of universal physical labour will find many adherents in contemporary India.

The evidence cited leaves no doubt that the Indian economy is progressing in an anti-Gandhian rather than the Gandhian direction. Many Gandhian friends who are painfully aware of the trends mentioned above, argue and act as if the trends can be reversed if the Gandhian movement is revitalized. Unfortunately, it is difficult to share this optimism. For the psychological and techno-economic forces operating in the Indian economy today render the Gandhian economic model intrinsically untenable and unrealizable. It is only in an utterly unhistorical and unempirical frame of mind that the faithful, and only the faithful, can still regard the model as realizable.

#### NINETEENTH CENTURY PRECEDENTS

Gandhian friends often represent this model as a unique gift of Bapu's mind. But Gandhi himself never emphasized his originality and in the light of the history of economic thought, his model does not really appear to be very unique. A number of nineteenth century Utopian socialists in Europe reacted to the prospect of industrialism in more or less the same way as Mahatma Gandhi did in this century in India. All of them proposed co-operativist, communitarian, decentralist or syndicalist models as alternatives to organization may have no future, the Gandhian concern for the well-being of the whole man and the uplift of the weak and underprivileged may add its energy to all kinds of social reform movements which attempt only to ameliorate the subtle sufferings created by industrialization. There will be nothing specially Gandhian in this for such movements have arisen all over the world. Just as other radical Utopian movements ultimately had to be content with social reformism within a conventionally industrialized society, Gandhism may also have to do so.

There is still another possibility. Small groups of dedicated Gandhians may create and maintain a few model institutions and

communities adhering to the principles of restricted consumption, small-scale production, community ownership and equalitarian distribution. But the number of such communities will always be small. They will be precious embodiments of what is possible on a small-scale and constant reminders of what is impossible on a wide scale without massive coercion.

#### TECHNOLOGY, TRADE UNIONISM AND THE END OF IDEOLOGY

As we stated at the outset, this set of prospects is not peculiar to the Gandhian economic model. The truth is that no ideal economic model whatever, which makes extraordinary demands on the economic behaviour of the masses, has been and is likely to be realized. In the light of recent history we can see that the growth of production everywhere has been primarily due to the adoption of modern technology. And progress towards distributive justice has been mainly due to the growth and strength of trade unionism. In so far as economic ideologies have promoted modern technology and trade unionism they can claim some credit for the progress of production and distributive justice. But all other elements in all economic ideologies have produced very little effect on the course of economic events. For example, the communist doctrines about the falling rate of profit, the recurrence of economic crises of increasing severity under capitalism, the progressive immiserization of the masses, the eruption of violent revolutions led by industrial workers and the inevitable breakdown of capitalism, the disappearance of the State and the realization of the distributive ideal ‘from each according to his ability and to each according to his need’, etc., have not been verified by recent history.

Similarly, the syndicalist and cooperativist models have been realized only in a highly diluted form in small sectors in an essentially capitalist-centralist landscape. Even in Israel where, under exceptional conditions, Jewish immigrants established highly communitarian kibbutzim, recent economic development has led to a very rapid growth of the more individualistic, capitalistic types of communities at the expense of the more collectivist types.

The lesson to be drawn from these episodes is that ideology should not be overstretched in the economic realm. The two basic economic values, viz., economic growth and distributive justice are likely to be realized by the two forces of technology and trade

unionism rather than by ambitious ideologies. The attainment of the other minor goals of economic policy such as stability, fuller employment, the avoidance of serious imbalances in the balance of payments, etc., also requires non-ideological, pragmatic expertise, rather than ideology. In short, the time has come to abandon an obsessive pre-occupation with ideology in the economic realm. All that we need by way of ideology is a general commitment to the values of economic growth and distributive justice. In the choice of the means to realize these values we must rely on a great deal of empirical, technical and organizational knowledge rather than a handful of *a priori* notions regarded as panaceas.

#### SOCIETISM AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Economic ideologism is the product of a deeper movement that has pervaded the world of ideas in this century. It may be described as 'societism' for want of a better word. It is rooted in the belief that the quality of human life can be improved *ad infinitum* by improving socio-economic organization. This belief leads to the idolization of particular institutional forms as the embodiments of societal perfection and to a naive neglect of the many levels and complexities of the *psychological* drives of individuals and groups. When schemes of institutional reform based on a grossly oversimplified view of the human psyche are launched, they invariably fail to produce the good society which they were expected to produce, because as psychological creatures its individual members remain unreformed. Then another round of institutional reforms is undertaken with similar results.

The lesson, again, seems to be that idealism wastes itself if it is excessively pre-occupied with institutional changes, particularly in the economic realm. The effort to reform institutions so as to absorb and make good use of technology and trade unionism should, of course, continue. But idealism must now turn to its most important assignment, namely, a radical transformation of man from within. This task can be accomplished if idealism turns inward and helps individuals, as individuals, to improve the quality of their small-scale inter-personal relations, their intellectual understanding of the world, their creative and appreciative activity in the realm of art, their capacity to manage their minds and explore and enjoy super-normal states of consciousness. The affluent neurotic of an industrialized society must turn to these dimensions of his being

if he is to find real and enduring fulfilment. There is much greater freedom of choice for the contemporary individual and society in these realms than in the realm of economic organization.

This view amounts to a dualist position with regard to social dynamics. In the field of economic activity it involves the recognition of compelling historical necessities, created by mass psychology and modern technology, which leave very little room for ideological or idealistic choices. But in the supra-economic realms of small-scale human relationships, knowledge, art and psychic exploration, it admits and allows a wide range of choice. Idealism of the Gandhian or any other variety has no future in so far as it takes the form of institutional economic utopianism. But its field is as large as ever if it pre-occupies itself with the improvement of the quality of life of the individual in these higher realms.

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**APPENDIX**  
**Production of Industrial Consumption Goods**

(Per million persons)

<i>Item</i>	<i>1950-51</i>	<i>1964-65</i>	<i>Ratio of Col. (2) to Col. (1)</i>
Cars, jeeps, etc. (nos)	21.8	69.9	3.20
Bicycles (nos)	271.5	2919.9	10.75
Cotton cloth (lakh metres)	93.7	96.0	1.02
Rayon yarn (tonnes)	5.7	69.4	147.60
Matches (million boxes)	10.7	11.2	1.04
Soap (tonnes)	212.8	326.5	1.53
Sugar ('000 tonnes)	2.9	5.9	2.03
Coffee (tonnes)	58.0	130.2	2.24
Tea (lakh kgs)	7.6	7.7	1.01
Vanaspati (vegetable oils) (tonnes)	468.6	751.1	1.60
Footwear (rubber) (lakh pairs)	0.5	1.0	2.00
Electric lamps ('000 nos)	3.9	14.0	3.59
Radio receivers (nos)	14.7	105.0	7.14
Electric fans ('000 nos)	0.5	2.6	5.20
Domestic refrigerators (nos)	—	62.9	
Air conditioners (nos)	—	21.8	
Typewriters ('000 nos)	—	0.1	
Razor blades (lakh nos)	0.4	19.2	48.00
Paper and paper products (tonnes)	319.2	1013.3	3.17
Footwear (leather) ('000 pairs)	14.2	2.05	
Hurricane lanterns ('000 nos)	9.0	11.0	1.22
Sewing machines (nos)	90.8	693.1	7.63
Cigarettes (lakh pieces)	644.2	1026.4	1.59
Telephones ('000 nos)	—	0.3	

Source: *Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy 1950-51 to 1965-66*, December 1966.

SECTION D

Gandhi's Political Ideas and  
Movements



MULK RAJ ANAND

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## Gandhi's Philosophy of Life



CERTAINLY Gandhi was one of the few men of our time, who has entered deeply into our lives, in a manner which is intimate and personal. In spite of the fact, that what he said and did is seldom followed even by his so-called followers (with a very few exceptions), the shadow of his presence is always there, as a challenge and a warning, if not as a deterrent, asking us to pause and think before we destroy ourselves completely, through the forces which we have all helped to release. From a few simple childlike and naive questions, he evolved a critique of modern civilization which is the most direct posed by anyone in our tragic age.

He did not write a philosophical system. He jumbled up some stray thoughts together and left behind a miscellany. He was like a shrewd peasant, who also has a philosophy of life though the learned do not suspect him of thinking at all. His wisdom of the heart often went beyond systematic rationalizations by the intellectualist professors cut off from the people in the sequestered shades of universities, weaving their cocoons out of their self-complacency. The lay philosophies of Gandhi cannot be categorized and pigeonholed. But he prevails because he is involved with life, in full engagement with it, in it up to the neck, making mistakes, rectifying them and blundering until he was crucified.

Beginning with the inherited idea of non-hurting, he stood

against man's cruelty to man and defined it into the hunch that *ahimsā* was absolutely necessary if men are to grow. And thus he became the embodiment of the protests against the mass violence of the twentieth century and said no to all wars.

Finding himself a despised coloured coolie, when he had fancied himself as a brown Englishman, he worked for one whole generation against the idea that the white race is superior to all others, because of its lack of pigmentation.

Defying British rule in India, because of the lack of freedom of speech and action, to which his countrymen were condemned by Imperialism, he, who had once believed in the good faith of the British crown, became the enemy of all establishment.

In fact, he became the symbol of the protest against the fundamental evils of our age—the mass cruelty of war, the racial discrimination of the whites against the blacks, browns and yellows, and power based on money, armaments and privilege.

Although the comparisons must not be forced, he has often reminded me of Caliban's protest in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*:

This island's mine, Sycorax my mother,  
Which thou tak'st from me, when thou cam'st first  
Thou strok'st me, and made much of me,  
                    would'st give me!

Water with berries in't, and teach me how  
To name the bigger light, and how the less  
That burn by day and night;  
and then I lov'd thee,

And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,  
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile

Curs'd be that I did so, All the charms  
of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!  
For I am all the subjects you have,  
Which first was mine own king; and here  
                    you stay with me

In this hard rock, while you do keep from me  
The rest of my island.

And this metaphor gives me the necessary parallel to present Gandhi not as the Mahatma (a title which he always rejected), but as a mere human being, who is distinguished from the common clay by the one important faculty he developed of integrating his ideas with his acts, and with the earnestness of a practical genius, so that he himself became an example to all of us.

I believe that the true homage to genius is to see him as he really is, a man who cultivates insights through his deep experiences, recognizes the inner qualities in himself, and other people, in the workaday world, in total involvement with life and not as an isolationist. Most men and women are born with potential talent. Only a few of them have the courage to grow into the potential of excellence in them. It is because Gandhi pushed almost everything in life to its ultimate conclusions, and tried to act upon his findings, that he seems to be a superman whose words and deeds have overflowed into our lives. And in this sense, he is a humanist as compared to the good man like Aurobindo, Ramana Maharishi, or the sage of Arunachalam. They also wished to evolve the individual to a higher form of consciousness, but chose to shut out the bulk of humanity from their view, except the few in whom they could see excellence.

The relevance of Gandhi lies in the fact that he was one of us and accepted us all, rich and poor, high and low, and the mass. It seems only yesterday that he lived and moved among the lowliest, the most oppressed and the humblest of us. We have heard his gentle broken voice. We have seen him. Some of us have even touched his feet or joined hands to him and talked to him.

I would like then, to dissociate the Mahatma, the hero of the centenary celebrations, from the man, and bring him down to earth, as he was, working out a philosophy of the individual life within the group, often confused, sometimes committing Himalayan blunders, but always insisting on his felt experience as a test for the validity of his ideas.

I would like to think of him as one of us, who, more than all of us, practiced what he preached, became human and showed what a man could be, not only to us but to millions of other human beings in their private lives.

Who was this man? What did he do that we worship him? And what is the simple philosophy which refused to define but which appears from his experiments, and which may become the saving grace of our civilization if it survives.

Gandhi was born in a small middle class family in Kathiawad (Gujarat). Lop-eared, wide-mouthed, with angular jaws and a lean awkward figure, he was not distinguished for his good looks, except that he had searching eyes and an innocent expression, rather like that of a yokel.

He was brought up by his devout mother as a Sanatani Hindu to

recite the thousand and one names of God. His father was descended from the hereditary family of ministers to a little princely state. And, thus, to the Gandhis, the established order seems to have been a sacred thing, with the Queen Victoria on top, the Raja in the middle, and the *praja* below.

In his early days, Gandhi did not ask many questions but became conscious of ‘sin’.

He stole a few coins from the purse of the maid-servant in the house and suffered a moral crisis. He got over this after a confession.

The other sin he committed was to eat meat in the company of a fellow student. This led to the second intense conflict in his mind. And from this he emerged as a fanatical vegetarian.

He had been married early and when his father was dying, he confesses to have been more pre-occupied in making love to his wife. For this ‘sin’ he did penance later by constantly resisting the sexual desire.

During his studentship in London he reacted against the big carcasses of beef. So he sought out the vegetarian society, presided over by Sir Edwin Arnold. And he read the latter’s *Light of Asia*, a long poem about the Buddha.

He was tempted to flirt in Plymouth by a forward landlady, but, he says, he conquered his temptations by running away.

As a full-fledged Barrister, he found, gradually, that the lure of money, the false prestige of frock coat and striped trousers, and the need to tell lies, were hindrances in the way of his growth, towards becoming a human being. This coincided with his experience of the hardship of the Indian coolies in South Africa, where he had gone to argue a case. So he gave up legal practice, to devote himself full time to social welfare.

The libertarian ideas he had imbibed in London, were intensified when he was turned out of the first class railway compartment by the whites and he felt the humiliation of colour prejudice.

At the instance of an English solicitor friend, Pollock, he read Ruskin’s *Unto This Last*. And this brought about ‘an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life’. He says: ‘I couldn’t sleep at night. I determined to change my life on the light of the book.’ He had learnt three lessons more or less from his Indian inheritance but was touched off by Ruskin’s light.

1. The good of the individual lies in the good of all.
2. The labour of a barber has the same value as the work of lawyer;



because human beings have the same rights of earning their livelihood from their labour.

3. The life of labour, that is to say, the tiller of the soil, and the crafts man, is the most worthwhile life.

These truths had been implicit in his inheritance, but he had only vaguely recognized them before. He says: 'I awoke to the dawn ready to those principles to practice.'

The seeds of his later beliefs, hunches and habits, were laid by this conversion.

In India, for instance, he saw the discrimination against the outcastes, being actively and passively practised by the caste Hindus, both orthodox and unorthodox. He began to work against untouchability by cleaning latrines, interdining with the untouchables, and adopting an untouchable girl as a godchild.

He travelled to and from Africa and India in search of himself. Thus he experienced, at first hand, the disabilities of the slave societies under Imperialism. As a man who believed in the goodness of others, and as a natural conservative, he had not wished to believe that the British power would refuse freedom to subject peoples. In Africa he had even believed that 'the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world'. A genuine sense of royalty prevented him from wishing ill to the Empire. In fact, from this feeling he had formed an ambulance unit for the Red Cross work at the time of Zulu rebellion in 1907. But he found that the wounded in this battle were negroes, 'flogged under Martial Law'. And he repented from his participation in this criminal battle.

Again, however, he offered to join the war of 1914 against Germany. But, reluctantly, he realized that his faith in individual Englishman could not be given to the whole British nation.

And his mind turned from thought of collaboration to non-violent, non-cooperation. In this formulation he was helped by Tolstoy's writings. And in the 'solemn solitudes', he began to ponder over the application of *satyāgraha* which he defined as 'soul force or truth force'.

Actually, this practical doctrine remained an experiment from the beginnings in South Africa until the very end of his life.

Because *satyāgraha*, truth—*satya*, and 'taking possession of it' *graha*, seemed to be difficult to practice, he reinforced his belief from the Indian tradition. He found everything pointing towards this kind of application of soul force.

The compassion of the Buddha and the non-violent behaviour of the Buddhist monks, as well as of Mahavira and the Jains, against the Brahmanical oligarchies had come down as a substratum of guilt in the Sanatani Hindu.

The physical weakness of the average Indian, beaten by centuries of feudalism, and foreign conquest, had produced allergy to the idea of fighting back in the average Indian; which amounted to near cowardice. Instinctively, Gandhi wanted to transform this weakness into moral courage.

And the exigencies of the political situations in which an unarmed people were contending against a highly organized militarist empire with a large police force seemed to suggest that the application of collective soul force would be an asset.

Thus Gandhi combined the concept of *satyāgraha* with traditional feeling of *ahimsā*, non-hurting (again derived from the Buddhist and Jain strains) with the popular practice of *dharna*, which was the practice of sitting down on the threshold of the oppressor until the grievance was settled.

The synthesis of these popular beliefs was then applied in the various civil disobedience campaigns.

In bouts of self-examination, Gandhi realized that the practice of *satyāgraha* demanded genuine non-violence in the person. In order to cultivate this kind of truthful non-hurting, he began to experiment with self-control. In the first instance, he realized that the sex desire in him must be conquered. And, therefore, he took the vow of *brahmacārya*, strict control of sex appetite. The way had been prepared for this already by eating only vegetables. In adopting the cliché *brahmacārya*, as a moral precept, for whoever may wish to serve India, he said: 'I had not realized how indispensable continence was for self-realization, but I clearly saw that one aspiring to serve humanity with his whole soul could not do without it. I could not live both after the flesh and the spirit'. Thus he took the vow to free his body from it.

Throughout his life, he was aware of the difficulties of observing this vow, if not in himself than in other people. And he made concessions to himself and others. Essentially human in most of his impulses, he realized that he may be guilty of violating his principles in some secret thought or overt deed. And, in view of these dangers, he took recourse to an emphasis on asceticism which pulled him from humanism towards the discipline of the godman, the saint. This conflict persisted and he could not settle it till the end.

Actually, his ideas were quite new to the Indian National Congress, which he had joined and which he tried to make into a dynamic protest organization, to rescue it from the Janus-faced liberals, in frock coats, who spoke in terms of Mill and Burke and Hobbes. Soon he was able to gather together a section of the National movement.

And, after his lead in the campaign against the Rowlatt Act, he became the unquestioned leader of the liberation movement. The Jallianwalla Bag shooting in 1919, which led to the banning of his entry into Punjab, brought him into direct confrontation with the British Power.

It was inevitable to the new method of *satyāgraha* that it would take various forms, which seemed not to cohere together as a doctrine. On the one hand, there was implicit in it, civil disobedience, or refusal to pay taxes, taking service under government, and boycott of foreign goods. These actions could not be inspired by the hatred of the alien imperialism. On the other hand, the overall stamps of non-violence covered a variety of such actions. (And such non-violence could not ostensibly be genuinely felt by more than one person, that is to say Gandhi himself who had tried to cultivate *ahimsa* through *brahmacārya* and other ascetic practices).

This kind of contradiction was noticed by the poet Tagore who wrote in 1922 to a Gujarati poet: 'in the efficacy of *ahimsā* as the means of overcoming the congregated might of physical force on which the political powers in all countries mainly rest. But like every other moral principle *ahimsā* has to spring from the depth of mind, and it must not be forced upon man from some outside appeal of urgent need. The great personalities of the world have preached love, forgiveness, and non-violence, primarily for the sake of spiritual perfection and not for the attainment of some immediate success in politics or other similar departments of life. They were aware of the difficulty of their teaching being realised within a fixed period of time in a sudden and wholesale manner by men whose previous course of life had chiefly pursued the course of self. No doubt, through a strong compulsion of desire for some external result, men are capable of repressing their habitual inclinations for a limited time; but when it concerns an immense multitude of men of different tradition and stages of culture, and when the object for which such repression is exercised needs a prolonged period of struggle, complex in character, I cannot think it possible of attainment'.

Gandhi seems to have realized the truth of this criticism, he withdrew almost every campaign of civil disobedience when it

became violent. He even talked of his Himalayan blunders. Although political exigencies required confrontation of British rule at every juncture, he only chose certain situations and his later actions, seem to partake more and more of *dharna*, that is to say, sitting down on the threshold of the Viceroy's house as it were. Also, he began to undertake fasts of purification as a kind of compensation of any ignoble motif he may have had at the back of his mind. And at the most crucial moments he initiated the campaign himself.

One of the most important of such defiances was Gandhi's march to Dandi beach in Gujarat to make illegal salt as a protest against what he thought was the oppressive salt tax. He was arrested, charged and sent to prison. But the idea of revolt became symbolic to the Indian people and perhaps to the whole world.

There is no doubt, that by taking off his frock coat and pantaloons and putting on the loin cloth Gandhi had also made a deliberate conversion of his middle class mind to the mind of the peasant. And in the years of work on behalf of the people, he acquired the felt experience of being one of the dumb millions. At any rate, he had either acquired or originally possessed an uncanny genius for being able to feel the pulse of the masses. Somehow, he had sensed in his bones that all the complex rationalizations must be reduced to a simple integral act, to show that what a man believed and what he could do to sustain the belief were one and the same thing. This kind of integration of idea and act brought an honesty such as only the medieval saints, Nanak, Kabir and Tukaram had shown long after the previous demonstrations by Gautama. In a country where deceit, prevarications, treachery to friends, intrigue, cruelty and terror had been left as hangovers of feudalism, the one man who was mad enough to say what he meant and do it, was likely to become the example.

This was the reason why inspite of failures, hindrances, contradictions and tragic lapses he was raised by the people to the status of the Mahatma, great soul. This was the reason why half a million or more people went to jail for various causes. And this was the kind of example which made stalwarts proud and fighting Sikhs sit down before the police in *dharna* and receive police beatings without answering back.

We cannot generalize about the influence of Gandhi on the Indian people as a whole—the impact of his actions on the British power and the residuum of his heritage among us. Such intangible realities cannot be measured. But no one can gainsay that the

greatest contribution to the struggle for the intensification of the consciousness of the people of their own libertarian urges was made by him. The white heat of his passion burnt out much of the lowness, squalor of all kinds and the filth, decadence and corruption and weakness of our people and lifted some of them to norms of moral integrity which have now been adopted by the negroes in America and a number of individuals elsewhere.

In all this, it must be remembered that it is Gandhi the individual poised against the powers that be, against wrong doing by other individuals and against the money values, violence and corruption of world civilization who comes before our eyes, an essentially a solitary, almost helpless individual whose feelings and ideas became stronger by the association with the struggle of peoples, and those whose feelings, ideas and actions spill over into the lives of many people.

Of course, Gandhi himself remained humble throughout his life. He also confessed to his failure in achieving the many causes which he took up. Often, surrounded by those who made a cult of him, flatterers and hangers-on—he felt alone. He was always experimenting with himself and when he found that people doubted his 'inner voice' he also doubted it. In fact, he welcomes the criticism of those like Nehru who charged him with sentimentality, inconsistency and with bringing religion into politics. His words frequently ring like those of St. Paul in revulsion against himself: 'Lord what wilt thou have me do'. And when, after his own and other people's political mistakes, he went during the Hindu-Muslim riots to Noakhali, he preferred to go to the help of the minority community, almost as a penance for the mistakes he may have committed. We can see that once again, this time in the midst of the utmost cruelty and terror, hatred and revenge, he tried to be *Niskāṃ*, desireless.

It is likely that towards the end of his life, when he saw that he could not stop the anger, bitterness and suspicion between the communities, he was on the brink of despair and somewhat hopeless about being able to improve the world. Is it possible that the emphasis he laid on prayers, on devotions and fasts, was through a compensatory emotion that reason had failed. The integrity of his daemon is best illustrated in his calm acceptance of death, when he was shot by one of his own countrymen for a legal crime of favouring the Muslims.

The manner of his going like the crucifixion of Jesus or the poisoning of Socrates, perhaps completes the drama of his life.

There could be no fitting end to the individual, who had become involved from the compulsion of involvement.

In the brief one page answer to the questionnaire of Dr. Radhakrishnan, he had written in 1936, about his religion the following:

‘The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all sparks of truth. The sum total of these sparks is indescribable as yet unknown truth, which is god. I am being daily led nearer to it by constant prayers. The bearing of this religion on social life is or has been seen, in one’s daily social contact. To be true to such religion one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life’.

This shows that he has a naive faith in the daemon of each man. And thus he had hope for humanity.

This hope he tried to realize by his love of man, in spite of his agony about his own failure and the failure of man.

The success of his humanism is in his total engagement even in failure.

And thus he brings dignity even to weakness, and remains an example of the courage to go on, in spite of betrayal, lack of ultimate faith, and lack of friends.

The failure of every individual among us in the struggle to live by our daemons is the success of the other individuals, into whom our courage to love has spilled over.

The struggle for survival, on a higher plane of awareness is important, because it is essentially the struggle for equal participation through communication of impulse, feeling and thought, it is the struggle to live truly, intensely and intimately with the group.

The three fundamental ideas of non-violence, self-reliance and struggle against wrongdoing, which he put into practice still remain relevant to our age.

Perhaps this is more so today than in his own time, as is shown by the application of his methods by Martin Luther King against racial discrimination in U.S.A., by various groups of intellectuals in France, by the Czech communists against the Warsaw Pact armies, and by the fighters of peace in various parts of the world. The process by which neo-imperialisms and neo-colonialisms, and their allied power complexes, exert their overlordship through new forms of make-belief of aiding weaker nations on behalf of the luxury goods societies, based on the making of atom bombs and a technology run mad, can only be met through the consciousness by the intelligentsia

of the Gandhian techniques of disobedience. Because, everywhere, monolithic armament economies leave the individual, and the underdeveloped peoples, more helpless than ever before if they wish to realize their sovereign rights, free of interference from the top Imperialists powers, with their vast networks of espionage, bribery and indirect control of mass media of information and advertising.

And there is urgent need for fresh appraisals of these techniques for their application for our own country.

The crises of growth in our country has been intensified during the last generation by the coming in of a consumer goods oriented civilization, with the inevitable gap between the very rich and the very poor. There is a demand for the making of the Bomb, on top of a military budget of 800 crores. There is an immense amount of unaccounted underground money. The prices and wages chase each other as in other affluent armament economics. The politics of power has brought large-scale breakdown of morality and corruption into almost every branch of administration.

This is perhaps the moment for making a moral recovery against the breakdown of those human values which Gandhi stood for. Such a moment may not come again.

I believe that non-violence is the only technique which can be posed against the violence of contemporary civilization, both expressed in small total wars and in the potentially held out threat of a final nuclear third world war. Only it is not possible to practice non-violence, unless we ourselves give up the thought of making an atom bomb of our own. Also, our vast defence budget, spent on an imitationist military machine, is the very negation of Gandhian non-violence. The conversion of our army into a police force alone can ensure our integrity if we believe in non-violence. The strategy of defence on the border can be changed to policing the border and of making generous peace with our neighbours.

The resultant saving from the Army budget can be effectively used to promote self-sufficiency in food and industry. The call to the people to sacrifice in the tasks of reconstruction will be answered.

And it becomes obligatory, in the centenary year, (if this is not a mere offering of hypocritical tributes to a saint to salvage our bad consciences) for each of us to make a personal vow to inquire into our motivations and to act on what we preach. This may bring a search of a kind of honesty that may save us from hypocrisy. And it may save our people from going down on the slippery slope of corruption, moral decay and dissolution in the network of a social

system based on the dictum of self-aggrandisement: ‘Get rich quick and kick everyone else in the ditch!’ And, further, it may help us to avoid the pitfalls of the aggressive civilization based on commodity fetishism, which itself rests on armament economies, that make ten per cent of the population affluent and leave the ninety percent embroiled in the race between prices and wages, making for the neuroses of insecurity, which is the enemy of any balanced society.

We must remember that Gandhi was for the individual against all establishment, against all wrongdoing and against war. We must remember that he was against a civilization built of by the merchants of death, the makers of demands for shiny goods, where three-fourths of mankind is in dire want of food and clothes and houses. We must remember that he worked for the whole of mankind, and even wished to offer India as a sacrifice for the good of the world.

In the light of his teaching, which he tried to practice himself, let our daily prayer be:

‘Work is worship!’

and

‘Love one another!’



BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARYYA

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## Gandhi's Attitude towards Political Power



### POWER, THE CARDINAL ISSUE OF POLITICS

THE question of power has acquired particular importance both in the realm of theory and in the realm of practical politics. Power remains the central axis about which the social commonweal spins. Power distinguishes 'politics' from other human activity. Politics is the study of the shaping and sharing of power.<sup>1</sup> True, Gandhi did not engage himself in politics in the current English usage of the term—'politics' had a different connotation for him—and his philosophy was not power-oriented, but placed as he was he had to define his attitude vis-a-vis the established authority and political power of his days and he tried in his own way to build up a society based on a new type of power—power from below. Gandhi's attitude towards political power and the political ideal that he stood for will be the subject matter of our discussion.

As is well-known, Gandhi was no political theorist; he was a political actionist or a *karmayogin*.<sup>2</sup> He did not set himself to the task of a systematic presentation of his views about the nature of political power. His ideas were thrown off as comments on given, concrete realities and were intended to give a new shape to events and for the re-making of man as a moral person. It was in the nature

of the circumstances that Gandhi did not, nor could he possibly, evolve a definite and clear-cut political theory. For him ‘theory is all grey—evergreen is life’ (Goethe). The place of theory was subordinate to that organic unity, i.e., life. He raised questions of *how* and only occasionally those of *what*. It would be an unrewarding task to look for a consistent, systematized body of thought in Gandhi’s writings for he owned absolute allegiance to none of the prevailing schools— anarchist, Marxist, liberal, democratic, etc. And construction of any rigid, fixed ‘ism’ was alien to his nature—such a continually evolving personality he was.

### METHODOLOGY

From the standpoint of methodology, Gandhi’s approach was deductive, empirical and pragmatic. He deduced certain conclusions from his basic assumptions—metaphysical and ethical. Metaphysics, Ethics, Economics, Sociology and Politics were intertwined. He was for, in Toynbee’s<sup>3</sup> language, ‘etherialization’ of politics or spiritualization of politics. Spiritualizing meant for Gandhi moralizing. But he was no moral fadist. Any student of Gandhi’s political thought and his eventful life will readily see for himself that he developed a keen empirical outlook towards life in general and political and social events in particular. And pragmatic approach necessarily leads one to eclecticism. He was eclectic enough to draw from different sources and schools that fitted in with his basic outlook of truth and non-violence. His approach to politics was indeed moral. And that lends a special significance to his theory in this age of amoral politics. It is true that he did not care much for the historical and quantitative methods of politics as has been noted by Dr. V. P. Varma,<sup>4</sup> but the deficiencies that follow therefrom have been more than compensated in the form of giving a moral direction to politics. This moral orientation is evident in his analysis of the concepts of political theory, viz., state, democracy, freedom, rights, etc. It is from a normative or valuational standpoint—norms or values as he understood and accepted **to** be fundamental—that he elaborated his concepts of political theory.

### TWO GANDHIS

Gandhi being ‘built of tremendous opposites’,<sup>5</sup> a unique combination of **a** prophet and a politician of genius, sometimes spoke and wrote in terms of the ultimate ideal and sometimes in terms of the immediately realiable objective. And there emerged two Gandhis—

One philosophical and the other practical politician eager to come to grip with the realities, with a keen sense of the objective. The citizen-leader Gandhi moved with the times and his theory underwent a continuous process of evolution. This evolution is a distinctive note of Gandhian theory. Gandhi would have been marked as a political leader of least significance if he could not have moved with the times and reflected the historical urges and aspirations of the Indian masses. There was, indeed, a gap between the ideal political order he envisaged and the national democratic state for the creation of which he led the Indian nation. This hiatus between the ideal and the actual was not of his making; it was implicit in the given objective situation in Gandhi's India. This was not a case of political opportunism as has sometimes been alleged, but a clear expression of astute realism which speaks of his sagacity and political maturity.

#### STATE AS THE ORGAN OF VIOLENCE

Gandhi held that violence was evil. Violence includes not only physical coercion but also economic and social coercion. Power of physical coercion belongs to the state. In the modern absolute state there is no limit to the extent of this power. This power of the state to coerce is, according to Gandhi, a kind of organized violence in which lies the essence of the modern state. To quote Gandhi: 'The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form'.<sup>6</sup> His characterization of the state as the organ of 'violence in a concentrated and organized form' indicates how repellent he was to the omnipotence and the coercive character of the state. As one who believed in the sanctity of the individual and for whom non-violence was a fundamental creed it was but natural that he would characterize the state in such a term. But creed or subjective faith apart, he drew enough lessons from the world he faced—a world where imperialist domination, economic exploitation and racial discrimination were inseparately tied up with political authority.

Objectively considered, the following events and factors might have influenced Gandhi to develop such an attitude towards the state.

- (1) His direct experience of the Zulu 'rebellion' (1906). Gandhi's *Autobiography* records that at that time he considered himself a citizen of Natal and he then believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world. A genuine sense of loyalty prevented him from even wishing ill to the Empire.

The tightness or otherwise of the ‘rebellion’ was, under the circumstances, not likely to affect his decision. So he made an offer to the Government to raise a Stretcher-bearer Corps for service with the troops. The offer was accepted. The scene on battlefield was indeed ghastly and revolting for such a sensitive soul as his.<sup>7</sup>

- (2) General Smuts’ ‘breach of faith’ during the Satyāgraha movement (1907-8) for the repeal of the Asiatic Registration Act shocked him badly. The ‘foul play’ of this ‘heartless man’ might have been instrumental in making a deep impact on his thought process.
- (3) The vulgarity and monstrosity of British domination and the subhuman existence of the people of this country had struck him to the roots of his being and there emerged a rebel who organized and mobilized the non-violent strength of the nation against the ‘leonine violence’ of the political power represented by British Government.

Gandhi’s encounter with the racialists in South Africa and British imperialists in India could only lead him to see the essentially violent character of the state.

#### ON POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY

The premise of the theory of absolute sovereignty of the state is that the laws of the state are the highest arbiters of the conduct of the citizen irrespective of the conformity of the laws to the general interest of the community. Obligation of the citizen to the state, according to this theory, is unlimited and unconditional. Gandhi resisted political sovereignty understood as absolute, non-responsible power. Both Hindu and Western political theories give sanctions for such resistance. For Gandhi, as for Green, the relevance and justification of politics is an expression of moral life. The state is to be judged by the qualities of its citizens whose moral development it can help or hinder. It may be said that for both Green and Gandhi the crucial questions of politics are those of obedience to law and the employment of force.<sup>8</sup>

‘Our first duty’, Laski wrote, ‘is to be true to our conscience’.<sup>9</sup> For Gandhi, ‘disobedience to the law of the state becomes a peremptory duty when it comes in conflict with the law of God’.<sup>10</sup> As early as 1909 he wrote in *Hind Swarāj*: ‘It is contrary to our manhood, if we obey laws contrary to our conscience.... So long as the superstition that

men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist.<sup>11</sup> And later in 1921: 'Submission to a state wholly of largely unjust is an immortal barter for liberty.'<sup>12</sup> To Gandhi 'political power is not an end in itself but one of the means of enabling people to better their conditions in every department of life'.<sup>13</sup> Their attitude to the state stand counterposed to the Hegelian metaphysical theory which endeavours to exhibit the state as the embodiment of greatness and glory and an expression of the spirit or the Absolute.<sup>14</sup>

Glorification of the sovereignty of the state was, according to Gandhi, a challenge to the moral right of man to shape his own destiny. Even the moderate version of parliamentary sovereignty would make little impression on his mind. He believed in the 'sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority'.<sup>15</sup> But this should not be taken to mean that the 'moral authority' should take the place of state sovereignty. He did have a decided preference for self-reliance and voluntarism. But the Gandhian theory of trusteeship does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth. He would even go to the extent of dispossessing the rich through the instrument of the state with the minimum exercise of violence.<sup>16</sup> He would prefer trusteeship, but if it was unavoidable he would support a minimum of state ownership.<sup>17</sup> This leads us to the question of compatibility or otherwise of anarchism with sovereignty which will be discussed in connection with the Gandhian ideal of state.

#### DISTINCTION BETWEEN STATE AND SOCIETY

Gandhi made the essential distinction between state and society. In modern political theory this distinction has been taken note of. Professor Barker in his celebrated book *Principles of Social and Political Theory* has drawn the distinction between state and society, and further between 'within the state' and 'in terms of the state' and 'the area of society' and 'the activity of social thought'. Political obligation is due within the state, and in terms of the state it may be granted that it is unconditional. But there is a sphere of activity in man's life, which transcends sometimes even the well-known sphere of the political state and enters the wide arena of society. Here political obligation is to be qualified and becomes conditional.<sup>18</sup> Barker observes that the area of society is voluntary cooperation, its energy is good-will and its method is elasticity; while the area of the state is mechanical action, its energy is force and its method is rigidity. He says: 'A new and a super political obligation enters as soon as we take into our view the socially created and socially developed idea of

justice; an obligation which we may call ‘social’.<sup>19</sup> Barker considers the social obligation to be higher. One may recall here the position of Rabindranath who enunciated the philosophy of indifferentism to the state in *Swadeshi Samāj* (1904).

The above discussion shows that Gandhi was opposed to the absolute sovereignty of the state as propounded by Hobbes, Austin and Hegel. He might not have come across any of the writings of these theorists but that is of no consequence. What is relevant is that he could very well hit at the core of the problem of sovereignty, a concept that has raised many conflicting issues yet to be resolved. His objection to the state sovereignty may be presumed to be based on the following grounds: First, his metaphysical belief in the primacy of spiritual authority over temporal authority. Secondly, his faith in the inner moral conscience of the individual as superior to the organized might of the state. Thirdly, his belief in the sovereignty of the people based on moral authority as against the organized power system of the legal sovereign.

#### GANDHI’S POLITICAL IDEAL

‘If the individual ceases to count’, Gandhi asked, ‘what is left of society?’<sup>20</sup> Gandhi regarded the individual as the centre of authority and value. He was categorical in his estimate of the relation between the individual and the state. To quote him: ‘Ultimately it is the individual which is the unit’.<sup>21</sup> He held that the state and government derive their existence and power from the individuals. This concept of the ultimate authority of the individual logically paved the way for the enunciation of the theory of non-violent non-cooperation with the state and the exploitative system that stand in the way of the all-round evolution of the individual. For Gandhi ‘*The individual is the one supreme consideration*’<sup>22</sup> (emphasis added). This emphasis on the moral authority of the individual is the keynote of Gandhian philosophy. His anguish and indignation expressed in the pages of *Hind Swarāj* against modern civilization, including modern power-system, was based on this fundamental belief. And he insisted on this fundamental belief till his last day.

In 1916 on the occasion of the opening of the Benaras Hindu University, Gandhi called himself an anarchist, but of another type<sup>23</sup> (the reference was to the violent revolutionaries or terrorists as they were generally called). One may not be sure that the distinction that he made between the two types of anarchism was a result of his acquaintance with the prevalent literature of anarchist political

philosophy. But as is generally known, he was influenced by Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* to a very considerable extent while he was engaged in his experiments of *satyāgraha* in South Africa. Stefan Zweig described Tolstoy as 'the boldest heretic' and 'revolutionary anarchist'.<sup>24</sup> Tolstoy did not call himself an anarchist, because he applied the names to those who wished to change society by violent means; he preferred to think of himself as a literal Christian. Nevertheless, he was not entirely displeased when, in 1900, the German scholar Paul Eltzbacher wrote a pioneer survey of the various trends of anarchist thought and included Tolstoy's ideas among them, demonstrating that, while he repudiated violence, his basic doctrine—and particularly his categorical rejection of the state and of property—fitted clearly into the general anarchist pattern.<sup>25</sup> Gandhi, it may be noted here, did not regard Tolstoy as a philosophical anarchist.<sup>26</sup> Tolstoy's anti-authority—anti-state-and-church—philosophy influenced Gandhi in choosing and formulating his political ideal.

One may guess that Kropotkin also had influenced Gandhi's political thought, though no authentic evidence in support of this is at hand.<sup>27</sup> D. G. Tendulkar, the biographer of *Mahatma*, records: 'Gandhi's three years' stay in England (1888-1891) was eventful. Those were the years of great intellectual activity and unhindered freedom of thought and speech. The country as a whole had become a living university.... Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* was appearing serially in the *Nineteenth Century* and Kropotkin himself was propagating his ideas in England.'<sup>28</sup> It seems likely that Gandhi's young mind was exposed to the anarchist philosophy preached by Kropotkin.

Sources of influence apart, Gandhi, it may be presumed, when he described himself as an anarchist, did not mean it in the sense of unruliness (negative condition) but in the positive sense of being unruled because rule is unnecessary for the preservation of order.

As has been observed earlier, there were two Gandhis—the idealist and the realist. In his role as the foremost leader of the national liberation movement the realist in him was sufficiently awake to the objective reality and he pressed forward for the establishment of a democratic political order. In 1924 he told an interviewer that he wanted the unavoidable heavy machinery to be either owned or controlled by the state.<sup>29</sup> But it would be a mistake to infer that he shifted his loyalty, in so far as his ultimate philosophical standpoint was concerned, from the anarchist ideal to the socialist programme of state-ownership. Speaking of his own ultimate political ideal he

wrote in 1931: 'If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state therefore, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that Government is best which governs the least'.<sup>30</sup>

The ultimate ideal of 'purest anarchy' or stateless society being unrealizable, Gandhi's political thought was moving in the 'direction' of the evolution of a predominantly non-violent state. The word 'non-violent state' was used by Gandhi himself in *The Harijan* (25.8.1940), who wrote, 'the ideal non-violent state will be an ordered anarchy'. A non-violent state<sup>31</sup> is a contradiction in terms because the state 'represents violence in a concentrated and organized form'. One may object to the employment of such contradictory terms in defining an ideal from the semantic point of view. But the essence of the term is explicit and as is well known, Gandhi was not much interested in giving names to things, rather he was more concerned with the substance of things. It is from that point of view that the term 'the ideal non-violent state' is to be understood.

Gandhi's occasional reference to 'enlightened anarchy' has, like his ultimate political ideal, given rise to varying interpretations. Some call him a 'philosophical anarchist' while some hold the view that though some of the elements of Gandhian political thought bear resemblance to some of the anarchist thinkers he cannot be categorized as an anarchist thinker.<sup>32</sup> In the terms of the ultimate ideal of stateless society, anarchists, Marxists and Gandhi would agree. But differences are still there. Each of these theories carry a distinctive note of its own. A student of Gandhian political theory shall have to find out where Gandhi stood in relation to anarchism and marxism.

#### GANDHIAN IDEAL OF STATE: A COMPARATIVE EVALUATION

Gandhi's ultimate ideal was a stateless society. Self-government, according to him, means continuous effort to be independent of government control.<sup>33</sup> Anarchism despite many distinct conceptions and tendencies within the fold, stands for elimination of the state as an institution and its replacement by an entirely free and spontaneous cooperation among individuals, groups, regions and nations. While anarchism stands for the abolition of



the state, Marxian Communist ideal is the withering away of the state. Anarchism, Marxian communism and Gandhism stand on common philosophic ground, the underlying sentiment being the establishment *jus naturale*. But the difference between Marxism and Anarchism is so fundamental in respective attitudes towards man, society, politics and in the application of methods, that the two schools of thought stand removed farthest from each other. It is not, however, necessary for us to go into that age-long controversy. What is relevant here is to assess, as briefly as possible, Gandhi's ideal of state in relation to these two political philosophies.

Gandhi did not approach the problem of power from a class point of view on which the Marxian theory of state puts its primary emphasis. Briefly summed up, the Marxist political and state doctrine is as follows:

1. The state is the product of the irreconcilable class antagonism and the instrument of oppression by which the ruling class holds down the subject and the exploited classed. The state is therefore by no means an instrument of class reconciliation poised *above* classes and parties, as is sometimes put across the mass of the people through the phrase 'civil truce'.
2. The public power-structure erected by the ruling class (standing army, police, prisons, and so on) is strengthened in proportion to the sharpening of the class antagonism within the state. It acts by force, internally and externally (the plunder policy of imperialist states).
3. The civil service, including that of the democratic republic in particular, shows itself likewise to be an organ of capitalist rule (the corruption of public servants and the brotherhood of government and capital).
4. Indispensable for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is the *revolutionary seizure* of state power by the proletariat. Only when the establishment of the communist society is completed does the state wither away altogether.
5. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the state of the proletariat, organized as the ruling class therein, with the object of carrying socialization through.
6. The bourgeois, parasitical and oppressive state machine cannot be taken over and carried further by the victorious proletariat. On the contrary, the bureaucratic-military state machine must be smashed.<sup>34</sup>

Gandhi, while asserting that the state is the embodiment of violence in a concentrated and organized form would not, however, agree with a Marxist that this violence is, in its essence, violence of class domination.

Secondly, the Gandhian programme is not ‘the revolutionary seizure of power’,<sup>35</sup> which Marxism holds to be the *sine qua non* for the higher phase of Communism, the stage of withering away of state—but ‘generation of power’ from below. His programme of ‘generation of power’, from below, he hoped, would avoid the incongruity of people’s power with the centralized state-power.

Gandhi would never approve of centralization of state power even as a temporary expedient or as a transitional phase like the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Thirdly, the difference lies in the method. It is generally supposed that Gandhism and Marxism, while sharing the common ideal, depart from each other on the question of means. It has been the especial accusation against Marxism that it advocates the dictum: End justifies means, and as such it places its reliance on violence as an instrument of capture of power. Gandhi himself while appreciating the ethical ideal of communism was opposed to Marxism on this ground, apart of course from that of his basic philosophical belief. We submit, however, that this is not a correct reading of Marxism. Marxism is not Machiavellianism. Marxism recognizes the dialectical inseparability of means and ends. This interrelation of means and ends in no way implies that any end justifies any means. It implies rather that means and ends are so inextricably connected that the question cannot be answered by any simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The means to social progress must be adapted to their end and be harmonious with it. According to the Marxism doctrine, the means by which the moral goal of socialism can be achieved in an immoral world are determined not only by the nature of socialism as the end but also by the nature of capitalist state power, the degree of democratic development, the relative strength of the opposing forces, specific situations, and so on. Marxism does not *advocate* violence for its own sake<sup>36</sup> (its condemnation of individual terrorist method is too well known); violence is thrust upon the oppressed by the ruling class, and the majority of the population as a measure of self-defence and of vindicating the ethical ideal of non-exploitation represented by communism, takes resort to just and necessary violence. The extent of violence which must be employed is a matter that depends on the intensity of the resistance which is countenanced. Gandhi, on

the other hand, quite like any other ethical idealist, would urge upon us that we must confine ourselves to *means that are in themselves good*. Violence is all evil and, therefore, to be eschewed, Gandhi held. A Marxist may allege that Gandhi in his eagerness to stick to the moral failed to draw a distinction between what is morally wrong. The difference between Marxism and Gandhism, therefore, is fundamental and lies in the domain of ethics.

Fourthly, according to the Marxian theory of state, it is only in the Communist society, where there would be no classes (i.e., where there would be no difference between the members of society in respect of their relationship to the social means of production), that the state as such ceases of itself: the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the process of production. The state is not abolished, it withers away. But during the transitional period of the dictatorship of the proletariat a series of restrictions on the freedom of the oppressors, the exploiters and the capitalists are imposed *simultaneously* with an immense expansion of democracy, which *for the first time* becomes democracy for the poor, democracy for the people. Democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people, this is the change that democracy undergoes during the transition from capitalism to communism. Gandhi, on the other hand, would not approve of forcible suppression of adversaries under *any* circumstances. He would stand for conversion of the adversary through non-violent non-cooperation. There is never the need for the Satyāgrahi, according to Gandhi, to wait until all opposition has been liquidated.<sup>87</sup> Voluntary associations of the people would spring up in the present, and not in some distant future, which would regulate, as far as possible, the economic and political life of the community. The constructive programme of Gandhi, it may be noted here, not only accompanies and follows non-violent direct action to eliminate the state authority, but it precedes that as well. Gandhi described this progress as 'one of automatic adjustment'. In other words, the chief difference between Marxian socialism and Gandhi's political ideal lies in the fact that in the latter the process of the elimination of state authority begins from the immediate present,<sup>38</sup> while 'withering away of the state' presupposes 'expropriation of the expropriators'<sup>3</sup> and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Was Gandhi a philosophical anarchist? Gandhi's reference to 'sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority' and other

similar statements expressing abhorrence of State as an institution have lent the impression that he was a philosophical anarchist. But the opinion that Gandhi was a philosophical anarchist has not been shared by all.<sup>39</sup>

We have argued earlier that there were two Gandhis—the idealist philosopher and the realist politician—who, paradoxically enough, represented a singularly unified character. Dr Atindranath Bose correctly noted that Gandhi’s ‘methodology had a pragmatic and an idealist aspect while his philosophy was purely idealistic’.<sup>40</sup> That explains why Gandhi went far ahead of his time and reality. Gandhi dreamt of an enlightened anarchy and led the movement for the establishment of a free democratic state. The contradiction between the abstract and the concrete, the ideal and the real, we repeat, can only be appreciated if we take note of the gap between the role that history assigned to Gandhi<sup>41</sup> and his subjective yearning for perfection. His astute sense of realism led him to fight for the creation of a sovereign national state, which he knew would be far from perfect. Gandhi, unlike some anarchists, did not contemplate dispensing with the machinery of the state so long as it was a necessity. His concession—preference for the control or ownership of the means of the production to lie with smaller, decentralized, more or less autonomous units—in regard to state ownership of heavy industries brought him close to the socialist programme. Here his position is distinctly different from that of the anarchists who are out to ‘abolish’ the state. Secondly, while the anarchists are a political or even anti-political,<sup>42</sup> Gandhi was intensely political. As a politician he knew that politics refers to the disposition of power. And so he moved for a shift of power from the hands of foreign imperialists to a democratic national state. Here a point is to be restated. As the champion of the disinherited he would certainly like to see the interests of the toiling people to get the priority in such a state. Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose succinctly sums up the position when he says: ‘Gandhi’s conception of the state is neither completely like that of the Anarchists nor of the Communists. It approaches the former with regard to its aim of political and economic decentralization, and that of the latter in that the interest of the toiling millions will have a dictatorial position within the state.’<sup>43</sup>

One notices that Gandhi did not ignore the demand or underrate the value of the immediate and the temporary for the sake of the ultimate. It was somewhat unique on his part to reconcile the apparent contradiction; in his corporate activity he laid stress on the immediate—

one step was enough for him—only to draw further sustenance for attaining to the ideal he cherished. Gandhi, in a rather exalted philosophical mood, could well share Shelley's anarchist vision<sup>44</sup> of man in a world which still lies outside history and outside time but the realist in him would wake again to come to grip with the realities with a grim determination to reshape this timebound world. The distinctive merit of Gandhi lies in the fact that he could dream as well as act.

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  37. 'I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightway make a beginning with myself'—*The Harijan*, 31.3.45, pp.63-64. 'Gandhiji's Communism' by Pyarelal.
  38. Dr. Mahadev Prasad comments: 'like orthodox Marxists, Gandhi does not dream of *withering* away of the state but in *scattering* away of it'—*Social Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, Viswavidyalya Prakasan, Gorakhpur, 1958, p. 327.
  39. See note 29.
  40. Atindranath Bose's article, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
  41. 'The task put before him (Gandhi) by history is circumscribed.' J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhian Thought*, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi, Orient Longmans Ltd., Bombay, Calcutta etc., 1961, p. 56.
  42. Woodcock, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
  43. Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Studies in Gandhism*, Indian Associated Publishing Co. Ltd., Calcutta, 1940, pp. 85-86.
  44. The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains  
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man  
Equal, unclassed, tribeless and nationless  
Except from awe, worship, degree, the king  
Over himself, just, gentle, wise.  
—*Premethus Unbound*, Act III, 11. 193-97.

BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARYYA

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## Gandhi's Concept of Freedom People's Swarāj



THE term freedom needs constant redefining. This is both a tribute to its unlimited breadth of meaning and to its utility among us. No word has been dearer to the modern heart or has been more on modern lips. But what does freedom mean? The term is commonly supposed to be obvious, clear, self-explanatory. There is a sense in which this is true. But as generally used, it requires definition and clarification, and as Lincoln so eloquently showed, it means contradictory things to different persons in modern society based on political subjugation, economic exploitation and racial discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Of all the varied and often contradictory meanings given to the term freedom, the most dominant in our age, the one most invoked and most heralded, is that of freedom as synonymous with political democracy. Gandhi, with his ear to the ground, close to the toiling masses of India, was able to give a concrete meaning to freedom or *swarāj* and we shall see, as we closely pursue Gandhi's concept of freedom, that he repudiated 'the wolf's dictionary'.

Gandhi, it may be noted at the outset, employed the term *swarāj* in its specific and generic senses, to borrow an expression of Green. While he organised the Indian masses for *swarāj* conceived as a constitutional, democratic political order,<sup>2</sup> he, at the same time,



stressed on its economic, mass or 'organic' content. *Swarāj* which first acquired its political meaning (of independence) through its use in that sense by Naoroji,<sup>3</sup> and latter through its popularization by Tilak is closely allied with the meaning of *tapas* as renunciation. *Swarāj* literally means 'self-rule' and in its original connotation meant autonomy of the moral self (as in the *Byhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*) where strict control is exercised over the senses. The philosophical meaning of *swarāj*, as Gandhi conceived it, is beyond the scope of our present discussion. What is relevant to note here is that he seized upon a traditional religious notion and transformed it into a meaningful part of the technique which was to operate not for individual salvation alone, but within the sphere of social polity. Asceticism and sacrifice, which had characterized the efforts of the devotee withdrawing himself from social contact, were drawn back into the mundane arena and rendered as means whereby common social ends might be attained.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi for the first time enunciated his ideal of *swarāj* in *Hind Swarāj* or *Indian Home Rule*. While drawing a comparison between Italy and India, he wrote in 1909:

'If you believe that because Italians rule Italy the Italian nation is happy, you are groping in darkness. Mazzini has shown conclusively that Italy did not become free. Victor Emanuel gave one meaning to the expression; Mazzini gave another. According to Emanuel, Cavour and even Garibaldi, Italy meant the king of Italy and his henchmen. According to Mazzini, it meant the whole, of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturists. Emanuel was only its servant. The Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery. At the time of the so-called national war, it was a game of chess between two rival kings with the people of Italy as pawns. The *working classes* in that land are still unhappy. They therefore, indulge in assassination, rise in revolt and rebellion on their part is always expected. What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the withdrawal of the Austrian troops? The gain was only nominal. The reforms for the sake of which the war was supposed to have been undertaken have not yet been granted. The condition of the people in general still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, *not that you want the reins of Government in your hands*. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing: *how can the millions obtain self-rule?* You will admit that people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English, and if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall never agree. My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the hell of Indian princes just as much as that of the English. *By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people*, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my hand to them. If any Englishman dedicated his life to

securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land, I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian<sup>5</sup> (emphasis added).

Gandhi's conception of government, as one reviewer has correctly noted, was in harmony with Mazzini's, that is, he tested the government's every move, every scheme, every law by its effect on the nameless many. 'He was not a class fighter in the Marxian sense, yet he came near to the philosophy of pro-letarianism'.<sup>6</sup>

In 1924 he wrote:

'*Swarāj* for me means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen. I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange "king log for king stork".'<sup>7</sup>

The mere form of political self-government cannot satisfy the desiderata of any essentially democratic concept of freedom or *swarāj*. In 1925 he wrote:

'I, however, feel that fundamentally the disease is the same, in Europe as it is in India, inspite of the fact that in the former country the people enjoy political self-government. *No mere transference of political power will satisfy my ambition*, even though I hold such transference to be a vital necessity of Indian national life. The peoples of Europe have no doubt political power but no *swarāj*. Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. At the root, therefore, the disease appears to be the same as in India. The same remedy is, therefore, likely to be applicable. Shorn of all the camouflage, the exploitation of the masses of Europe is sustained by violence.

'Violence on the part of the masses will never remove the disease. Anyway up to now experience shows that success of violence has been short-lived. It has led to greater violence. What has been tried hitherto has been a variety of violence and artificial checks, mainly dependent upon the will of the violent. At the crucial moment these checks have naturally broken down. It seems to me, therefore, that sooner or later, the European masses will have to take to non-violence if they are to find their deliverance....

'From what will the masses be delivered? It will not do to have a vague generalization and to answer from "exploitation and degradation". Is not the answer this that they want to occupy the status that capital does today? If so it can be attained only by violence. But if they want to shun the evils of capital, in other words, if they would revise the viewpoint of capital, they would strive to attain a juster distribution of the products of labour. This immediately takes us to contentment and simplicity, voluntarily adopted. Under the new outlook multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of life, the aim will be rather their restriction consistently with comfort. *We shall cease to think of getting what we can but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get.*<sup>8</sup> It occurs to me that it ought not to be difficult to make a successful appeal to the masses

of Europe in terms of economics and a fairly successful working of such an experiment must lead to immense and unconscious spiritual results. I do not believe that the spiritual law works in a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields. If the masses of Europe can be persuaded to adopt the view I have suggested, it will be found that violence will be wholly unnecessary to attain the aim and they can easily come to their own by following the obvious corollaries of non-violence. It may ever be that what seems to me to be so natural and feasible for India, may take longer to permeate the inert Indian masses than the active European masses'.<sup>9</sup>

As the basic argument in favour of non-violence in relation to the self-rule of the masses or *swarāj* has been so clearly and precisely formulated in the passages quoted above that these have been reproduced *in extense*. One comes across this plea of non-violent *swarāj* in many of his writings stretched over a long span of time.<sup>10</sup>

Discussing the more concrete question of political power and its organization, Gandhi wrote in 1925:

'By *Swarāj* I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-bom or domiciled, who have contributed by *manual labour* to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having registered their names as voters.... Real *Swarāj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words: *Swarāj* is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.'<sup>11</sup> (emphasis added)

*Constructive Programme* (1941) conveys the same idea:

'We have long been accustomed to think that power comes only through Legislative Assemblies. I have regarded this belief as a grave error brought about by inertia or hypnotism. A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may chose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people. It has been my effort for the last twenty one years to convince the people of this simple truth. Civil Disobedience is the storehouse of power. Imagine a whole people unwilling to conform to the laws of the legislature and prepared to suffer the consequences of non-compliance: They will bring the whole legislative and executive machinery to a standstill. The police and the military are of use to coerce minorities however powerful they may be. But no police or military coercion can bend the resolute will of a people who are out for suffering to the uttermost.'<sup>12</sup>

The intervening years between 1920 and 1930 were significant years in the history of the national movement of India. A new wave of

radical and socialist ideas made its onrush and there arose a number of independent economic and political organizations during this period. The radicals inside the Congress voiced the demand for a clearer definition of *swarāj*. The Indian National Congress passed an important resolution on Fundamental Rights in its Karachi Session (1931).<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the Karachi Congress, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* (1.5.30): ‘The *Swarāj* of my ... our ... dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of the lettered persons not yet of moneyed men. *Swarāj* is to be for all, including the former, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, *the starving toiling millions*’.<sup>14</sup> (emphasis added)

Similarly, Gandhi wrote on another occasion (*Young India*, 26-3-31): ‘The *Swarāj* of my dream is the poor man’s *Swarāj*. The necessaries of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed men. But that does not mean that they should have palaces like theirs. They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost, in them. But you ought to get all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys. I have not the slightest doubt that *Swarāj*’ is not *Poorna Swarāj* until these amenities are guaranteed to you under it’.<sup>16</sup>

In the same month of that year he clarified his concept of *Poorna Swarāj* or complete independence as follows:

*‘Poorna Swarāj*—“Poorna” complete because it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much as for the rich landowner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Mussalmans, as much for Parsis and Christians as for the Jains, Jews, and Sikhs, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life.

‘The very connotation of the word and the means of its attainment to which we are pledged—truth and non-violence—precludes all possibility of that *Swarāj* being more for some one than for the other, being partial to some or prejudicial to others’.<sup>18</sup>

Gandhi’s *Swarāj* was egalitarian and secular. On the eve of his voyage to England in 1931 he said:

‘It has been said that Indian *Swarāj* will be the rule of the majority community, i.e., the Hindus. There could not be greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it *Swarāj* and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for to me *Hind Swarāj* is *the rule of all the people*, is the rule of justice. Whether under that rule the ministers were Hindus or Mussalmans or Sikhs, and whether the legislatures were exclusively filled by the Hindus or Mussalmans or any other community, they would have to do

even-handed justice. And just as no community in India need have any fear of *swarāj* being monopolized by any other, even so the English should have no fear. The question of safeguards should not arise at all. *swarāj* would be real *swarāj* only when there would be no occasion for safeguarding any such rights. I may tell you that the Congress does not belong to any particular group of men; it belongs to all, but the protection of the poor peasantry, which forms the bulk of the population, must be its primary interest. *The Congress must, therefore, truly represent the poor.* But that does not mean that all other classes—the middle classes, the capitalist or zamindar—must go under. All that it aims at is that all other classes must subserve the interest of the poor.<sup>17</sup> (emphasis added)

Again,

'I will therefore state the purpose. It is complete freedom from the alien yoke in every sense of the term, and this for the sake of the dumb millions. Every interest, therefore, that is hostile to their interest, must be revised, or must subside if it is not capable of revision.'<sup>18</sup>

And freedom 'for the sake of the dumb millions' can never mean a form of political freedom merely for the sake of it, it must include economic freedom which alone enables the people to enjoy the fruits of political freedom. He knew well enough that political freedom, devoid of its economic content, was a mere philosophical abstraction. Gandhi was quite categorical and emphatic on this point. To quote him:

'Let there be no mistake about my conception of *swarāj*. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is *Dharma*, i. e. religion in the highest sense of the term.... Let us call this the square of *swarāj*, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue'.<sup>19</sup>

A brief outline that we have drawn of Gandhi's concept of *swarāj* is fairly suggestive. First, it was Gandhi who for the first time in Indian history gave a mass or democratic orientation to the concept of freedom. Political independence in the sense of transfer of power from one set of rulers to another set did not satisfy him. The freedom he sought was not merely the absence of alien bondage. It was something more than that. His perceptive mind could easily diagnose the basic malady of political self-government unaccompanied by economic freedom. It did not require him much intellectual attainment to see that politically free nations were nominally free in the sense that power did not belong to the people. This keen sense of reality led him to enunciate his ideal of *swarāj*. As he was interested

not in name but in the substance of things it was only natural that he would prefer the content and not the shell or outward form of political self-rule. His politics was not power-oriented<sup>20</sup> in the current sense of the term. But he knew well enough that power was necessary as one of the means to enable the people to better their condition in every department of life. But power to whom? Who will wield that power? Gandhi did not suffer from equivocation on this point as was the case with many nationalist leaders of his time. The key point of his concept of *swarāj* was that power must belong to the people. It was not legal sovereignty that he aspired to, the sovereignty or supreme power that he wanted was for the people at large. The people was not an abstract concept for him. A careful study of his writings would suggest that he meant by the people—primarily the toiling people in the fields and factories. As India was (and still is) a predominantly agricultural country he spoke more in terms of the Indian peasants.<sup>21</sup> It is true indeed that he represented peasant India<sup>22</sup> the real India as Gandhi used to call it— more than anybody else. It was for this toiling and suffering humanity that he wanted freedom—freedom from political abjection, economic exploitation and social tyranny—and his concept of *swarāj* evolved not out of academic theorizing but out of his personal encounter with living reality.

Gandhi understood that constitutional *swarāj*, a liberal political concept, would not touch the fringe of the basic maladies that India suffered from. His realistic mind and sensitive soul could see through the inadequacy of upper-class *swarāj*—*swarāj* of moneyed men and educated classes. That explains why he always insisted on poor man's or people's *swarāj*.

Secondly, Gandhi believed that real *swarāj* could only be established by awakening the masses into a sense of their power and dignity. This could only be achieved, he thought, through non-violent non-cooperation and ancillary programme. He held that violent revolution would fail to bring about the desired state as it would, because of its inherent nature, bring political power to a minority section of the population, or to a party or the elite of that group. In that state of affairs the masses would have no effective power to exert their will since they would remain under the rule of that party. Such a condition is not *swarāj* or rule of the masses. He was of the opinion that the non-violent method was a more potent weapon to bring about *swarāj* for the masses. Non-violent strength would elevate the masses to a new sense of dignity

and fortify the humblest of citizens to stand up to any authority, if power be abused. One may or may not subscribe to Gandhi's creed of non-violence—that is a matter of one's intellectual preference or philosophical commitment—but the argument he advanced in favour of ushering in *swarāj* through non-violent revolution deserves close scrutiny. Thirdly, the true *swarāj* that Gandhi envisaged was a multi-class *swarāj*, no class or stratum of the society being excluded. While admitting that his inclination was towards the toiling masses and that he tried to give a new dimension to the concept of national freedom, he at the same time, let it be noted, conceived of *swarāj* as an all-class state. One may argue that this was in essence a bourgeois-liberal concept: its chief purpose being to enlist the support of the masses and mobilize them for gaining national sovereignty which would pave the way for native capitalist rule. One may further add that although he had sympathy for the masses, but the theory and practice of Gandhi was the philosophic rationalization of bringing about a bourgeois-democratic revolution and no further than that. We submit that this sort of judgement flows from a mechanical understanding of the processes of history and of the role Gandhi played in Indian political life.

Gandhi indeed pleaded for a multi-class approach and an all-inclusive *swarāj* composed of all classes. Here his *swarāj* presents itself as 'being not partial to some or prejudicial to others' but at the same time he was emphatic in his statements that every interest, not subserving the interests of the poor, shall have to go under. It was not merely a question of sympathy for the poor, as has often been made out, rather it was more in the nature of feeling of solidarity<sup>23</sup> and identification with the masses. And this oneness with the toiling people of India that he symbolized in his self—in thought, words and deeds—gave a new content to the basically bourgeois concept of nationalism. The Gandhian concept of *swadeshi* and *swarāj* marked a departure from the orthodox remedy. The remedy he suggested for putting an end to political domination and draining of national resources, was something different from the conventional capitalist way of sitting things right. The poverty and exploitation of India he judged to be the result of its being drawn into the system of capitalism—'the vortex of mad and ruinous competition'. And that is why he, who was over-zealous about the individual power to resist exploitation, tried to introduce a new system of production. The remedy he suggested may be all wrong, but one cannot miss the bias in favour of the underdogs which is more than pronounced.

Fourthly, one notices that Gandhi, who in *Hind Swarāj* was tranchant in his criticism of the parliamentary form of Government, came to acquiesce in the demand for parliamentary *swarāj*. Here one should take the help of history to note that while endorsing the demand for parliamentary *swarāj* he did not forsake his earlier position enunciated in *Hind Swarāj*. It may be presumed that as the tallest leader of the nation he supported parliamentary *swarāj* as the immediate political objective, but as an ideal to strive for, he pinned his faith in *Hind Swarāj*, rule of all the people, or rule of justice as he called it. There was certainly a gulf between India of his dream and the immediate objective of the nation. This gulf was not of his making, but it was in the given, concrete situation of India. His keen sense of realism found its expression in a letter he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru as early as April 1, 1928.

‘I am quite of your opinion that someday we shall have to start an intensive movement without the rich people and without the vocal educated class. But that time is not yet.’<sup>24</sup> Inauguration of a bourgeois-democratic state was on the agenda of history, with the class question remaining in the background, and as an astute politician he could well read the situation and he moved, he had to, within the confines of history. The law of history, after all is inexorable.

Fifthly, his ideal of rule of justice or rule of all the people may be subjected to a fundamental criticism. Strictly speaking, rule of all the people is an amorphous term. A Marxist or even a Laski would argue that the state is not above classes. It does not transcend particular interests and does not lead to the expression of the total good of society. It is not a way of moving towards the fulfilment of the desires of its citizens. It does not seek to realize the rights they must claim in order to maintain the full dignity of their capacity as moral beings.<sup>25</sup> The fundamental question relates to the basic postulates of social relations on which the state is based. Gandhi did not approach the problem of power from a class point of view. Considered from such a standpoint, Gandhi’s theory suffers from limitations. This may be considered to be an element of weakness, but there are some positive points in Gandhi’s favour. P. Spratt observes: ‘The Gandhian scheme would not depend solely upon the interests of a class. It could probably mobilize both nationalistic and revolutionary idealism, and idealism is no less important than class-interest’.<sup>26</sup>

One more point. Gandhi’s stress on the people as the ultimate repository and wielder of power—the bias remaining on the side



of the downtrodden—carried a new note at a time when political freedom was conceived as an end in itself. In the sense of giving a new jolt to the conventional way of political thinking, it was indeed a great departure and as such, Gandhi's concept of poor man's or people's *swarāj* bears an impress of its own.

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17. *Young India*, 16.4.31, pp. 78-9.

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BUDDHADEB BHATTAHARYYA

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## Rāmarājya



FOR a Western student of Gandhian political ideas it is rather difficult to comprehend the indigenous terms like *Rāmarājya*, etc., which Gandhi used on different occasions in defining his political idea. But he was no traditionalist to cling to the age-old meanings of those terms. It was quite characteristic of him to add new meanings to them, so that in quality they became quite different from what they popularly stood for.<sup>1</sup> As has been noted by Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose: 'Perhaps this was one of the mechanisms by means of which Gandhi kept himself rooted in the past, and yet tried to carry India forward in directions radically different from ancient tradition'.<sup>2</sup> The French historian and sociologist, Professor Louis Massignon, has aptly remarked; 'He was a genius in investing common words with unique meanings'.<sup>3</sup> Hence, one must try to understand the terms employed by him in the sense he did so and in the connotation he attributed to those terms.

*Rāmarājya* embodied Gandhi's dream of the perfectibility of man and society. He gave to his ideal society the name *Rāmarājya*. The term *Rāmarājya* derives from the *Rāmāyana*'s classic depiction of the victory of Rama, symbolizing the forces of good, over Ravana symbolizing the forces of evil<sup>4</sup> and the consequent establishment of a reign of righteousness and justice in the land. Gandhi's reference to *Rāmarājya* aroused fear and suspicion in the minds of the Muslims

and provoked a host of critics to aver that he wanted to go back to the mythical Golden Age. We have seen above that as a medium of communication with the common people he employed traditional terms and gave them new meanings, as he himself admitted.

In his presidential address at the Third Kathiawad Political Conference held at Bhavnagar, January 8, 1925, Gandhi said:

‘Rama did justice even to a dog. By abandoning his kingdom and living in the forest for the sake of truth Rama gave to all the kings of the world an object-lesson in noble conduct. By his strict monogamy he showed that a life of perfect self-restraint could be led by a royal householder. He lent splendour to his throne by popular administration and proved that *Rāmarājya* was the acme of *Swarāj*. Rama did not need the very imperfect modern instrument of ascertaining public opinion by counting votes. He had captivated the hearts of the people. He knew public opinion by intuition as it were. The subjects of Rama were supremely happy. Such *Rāmarājya* is possible even today. The race of Rama is not extinct. In modern times the first Caliphs may be said to have established *Rāmarājya*. Abubaker and Hazrat Umar collected revenue running into crores and yet personally they were as good as fakirs.’<sup>5</sup>

But later, Gandhi modified his position. In 1927 he said that ‘I assure you will find nothing there (in Gandhi’s heart) but love for Rama whom I see face to face in the starving millions of India’.<sup>6</sup> This is an instance of his utilizing a mythical symbol in the interest of public service. He said in 1947, ‘Rama, Krishna, etc., are called incarnations of God because we attribute divine qualities to them. In truth they are creations of men’s imagination. Whether they actually lived or not does not affect the picture of them in men’s minds. The Rama and Krishna of history often present difficulties which have to be overcome by all manner of arguments’.<sup>7</sup> And ‘My Rama, the Rama of our prayers, is not the historical Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second.’<sup>8</sup>

The picture of *Rāmarājya* that Gandhi visualized was an expression of the yearning for a just and perfect society—the kingdom of righteousness on earth. *Rāmarājya* meant more than *Swarāj*<sup>9</sup> or political self-government.

In 1929 he wrote:

‘I warn my Mussalman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the words ‘Ramaraj’. By Ramaraj I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by Ramaraj Divine Raj, the kingdom of God. For me Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one of truth and tightness. Whether Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of

Ramaraj is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure'.<sup>10</sup>

That Gandhi did not advocate Hindu Raj by the Kingdom of Righteousness may be illustrated from many of his statements made towards the close of his life.<sup>11</sup>

Referring to the criticism of the employment of the term *Rāmarājya* for his ideal society, he said:

'It is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I visit the Frontier province or address predominantly Muslim audiences I would express my meaning to them by calling it Khudai Raj, while to a Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on earth.'<sup>12</sup>

In 1937 Gandhi described *Rāmarājya* as sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority, as distinguished from the British, Soviet or Nazi system of rule.<sup>13</sup>

Later, Gandhi added a concrete meaning to the term. In an editorial on 'Independence' (*The Harijan* 5.5.46) he wrote:

'Friends have repeatedly challenged me to define independence. At the risk of repetition, I must say that independence of my dream means *Rāmarājya*, i.e., the Kingdom of God on earth. I do not know what it will be like in Heaven. I have no desire to know the distant scene. If the present is attractive enough, the future cannot be very unlike.

'In concrete terms, then, the independence should be political, economic and moral.

'Political' necessarily means the removal of the control of British army in every shape and form.

'Economic' means entire freedom from British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterpart. In other words, the humblest must feel equal to the tallest.<sup>14</sup> This can take place only by capital or capitalists sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least.

'Moral' means freedom from armed defence forces. My conception of *Rāmarājya* excludes replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation. A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so-called weakest member can never rise to his full moral height.<sup>15</sup> (His concept of 'square of freedom' may be recalled here.)

Nearly a year before he made the above statement he drew a similar picture of *Rāmarājya*.

#### WHAT IS RĀMARĀJYA?

'It can be religiously translated as Kingdom of God on Earth: politically translated it is perfect democracy in which inequalities

based on possession and non-possession, colour, race or creed or sex vanish. In it, land and state belong to the people, justice is prompt, perfect and cheap and, therefore, there is freedom of worship, speech and the press—all this because of the reign of the self-imposed law of moral restraint.

‘Such a state must be based on truth and non-violence, and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities. It is a dream that may never be realized. I find happiness in living in that dreamland, ever trying to realize it in the quickest way.’<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi held that ‘there can be no *Rāmarājya* in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat’.<sup>17</sup>

The political transfer of power in India did not enthuse Gandhi. In a prayer speech dated 2.12.47 he said that ‘the independence of today stifled him. It was unreal and unstable’.<sup>18</sup> He looked beyond the present for the state that would belong to the people. His pronouncements on the subject made during the last days of his life indicate that he improved upon his earlier abstract concept.

To sum up, *Rāmarājya*, notwithstanding its religious tenor and nostalgic reference, stands for an egalitarian non-violent democratic order, with moral values forming the base of such an order.<sup>19</sup> Gandhi did not like the ancient myth to be transformed into a reality but at the same time he envisioned a future which transcends the present to become a reality. Whether this ‘utopia’ is realizable through the method he advocated is a matter of sharp controversy, for it is a question as one’s intellectual preference, but the urge behind this vision can hardly be ignored. It truly inspires.

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Professor Viswanath Prasad Varma suggests: 'The theory of *Ramrajya* amounts to the synthesis of the Augustinian conception of the kingdom of God on earth with the democratic ideal of the sovereignty of the people'. And also: 'It may be regarded as a realization of the synthesis of the Thomistic conception of natural law and the Rousseauic conception of general will'.—*op. cit.*, p. 216, p. 218.

GEORGE E. G. CATLIN

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## The Pacifist Philosophy of Gandhi Reconsidered



I HAD the honour of meeting the Mahatma five times, and I wrote a book about him and his India, just as I wrote a little booklet about Tagore. Since I was involved in the politics of Indian Independence and was, for a while, Provost of a College in Travancore (which really meant adviser: I advised the study of agriculture and its chemistry; and this, after my time, has happened—oddly as a Kennedy Memorial), I am perhaps rather more than a tourist. But I do not set myself up as any expert in the Mahatma's writings. Indeed I declined to write a major biography since I was sure that this should be done by some man from Gujarat or somebody who could enter into his intimacy. However professionally I am concerned, as political scientist, with peace and pacifism and it was about these things that I persistently questioned him. Some of the record here will be found in my book about him, also translated into Telegu.<sup>1</sup>

There has recently been a tendency to suggest that the Mahatma's pacifism was of purely local application, a matter of a convenient technique of non-violent civil disobedience to the *Rāj*, in the campaign for Independence. This contention is, I am sure, both false in fact and does less than honour to the Mahatma's intentions. To say that his policy could be a success in dealing with Westminster



and Viceregal Lodge, Delhi, but would not be a success, e.g., in Stalin's Russia, is a quite different argument. What did emerge from the record stated in my book, mentioned above, is that in one sole respect he was not an absolute pacifist. While expressing a doubt whether international tribunals were ever in fact fully impartial, he stated that he would support police action to execute the decisions of an international tribunal that was fully impartial. It is also noteworthy that he told Pakistani representatives, on the Kashmir issue, that if they continued their military policy, war would *in fact* be the consequence.

I shall not here enter into the scholarly discussion whether the Mahatma's interpretation of the *Gītā* is or is not legitimate. It so happens that my reading of the *Gītā* was one of the factors that persuaded me, in 1914-18, that taking part in war was legitimate; and I am now inclined to the view that this interpretation of the *Gītā* is too functional to a warrior caste to answer the main issues we confront. Conversely, in the West, the doctrine that the clergy must not bear arms is also functional, although in the opposite sense.

As you will be aware, the study of the causes of Conflict, War and Peace is one of the major problems of scientific research and of political priority at the present time. It was raised some years ago by the Pugwash group of scientists. It is one of the three working studies of the World Academy, of which sometime President Radhakrishnan is an honorary Fellow and of which I have the honour to be vice-president and sectional chairman. To President Radhakrishnan I recommended that an Indian Institute for Conflict, War and Peace Research, affiliated to W. A. A. S., would be a most appropriate centenary memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. You will also be aware that, in these studies, a great deal of work has already been done, not only by political scientists and lawyers on the explosive dangers of archaic notions of absolute national sovereignty, well illustrated by the dynamic spirit of contemporary Gaullism (not to speak of, for example, the relations in terms of an oppressive nationalism of Arabs and Israelis and even zealot Jews), but also by biologists, ecologists, anthropologists and psychologists studying the sources, motivation and conditioning of aggression. To some of these studies we shall return.

The fundamental issues which the Mahatma raised were: (a) the human priority of achieving stable peace, especially in an atomic age, and the imperative need for the abolition of national war; (b) the relation of the cause of stable peace to the moral demands of

internal justice; (c) the moral relation between the attitude of mind which inculcates peace and love or charity and the virtue of justice.

Hitherto the approach to this kind of question has been by consultation with the historians, the international lawyers, the theologians and the moral philosophers. This, however, is a new age of inter-disciplinary studies, in which it seems less than competent not to appeal to the findings of the natural and social sciences. It must be admitted that, although there has been a wealth of studies during the last few decades and especially today, the conclusions offered to us make the problems seem more and not less complicated than they were before.

One familiar point, indeed, made anew, is that the core of aggression is the obstinate, disproportionate and even irrational determination to have our own way, together with a very good opinion of it, which is specifically identified as pride. This is, of course, also the traditional identification of the theologians as the cause of the universal and original bias of mankind towards sin. On the other hand, psychologists and physicians warn us that, if all the vital aggressive instinct is eradicated, human nature becomes distorted and passive, uncreative; and that the true therapeutic task is to canalize the impulse into constructive and creative channels. Meanwhile the zoologists document the assertion that the animal world has, in so many species, a sense, more demanding than the sexual instinct itself, to assert private territorial property, but that this can be mollified by following certain ‘rituals of negotiation’. The simple walrus, before boarding the floe occupied by another walrus, kowtows or raps his head humbly on the ice after which symbolic actions of non-aggression he is allowed without challenge to land himself on firm ice. One could wish that there were contemporary schools for young diplomats and politicians in which the ritual of the walrus was duly instilled.

All I wish to say here is that it is short-sighted and inept to ignore the lessons about conduct which we can learn from the animal world, social or solitary, which has its definite rituals for maintaining territorial possession but, nevertheless, of avoiding actual physical conflict, harmful to the species.

As has been said from Aristotle to Freud, in its basic fundamentals the human genus is not an especially pleasant one in its relations to its fellows. Thomas Hobbes remarked, with cynical severity, *homo homini lupus*, ‘man is to man a wolf’—a remark which, as it happens,

was unfair to wolves, who are gregarious and friendly animals enough among themselves. I have emphasized the constant need for further wide-ranging research, to which India should contribute; but it is perhaps to the social sciences and even to the sociological and analytical lawyers that we should especially turn for the answers to the question how the human race is to be prevented from destroying itself in arms. Here the physical and technological scientists are merely sorcerers' apprentices who act, to the best of their talents, under the instructions of their pay-masters, the state, or are infected by the same patriotic fevers as the politicians.

One conclusion emerges, I suggest, quite clearly from studies in political science and international law. The sixteenth-century practice and theory of the absolute sovereign state, well designed to maintain against anarchic noblemen the civil peace, is entirely anachronistic today in coping with problems of international peace. It is more than anachronistic. It is a major factor leading to rigidity in international relations, misdirected passion and war. It is about as dangerous as the use in contemporary engineering, with pressure up to explosion point, of some antique engine which is an unreconstructed museum piece. Sovereignty in some respect, so far as it has contemporary value, is a judicial concept of the final tribunal. In some respect it is a functional and conditional concept, pointing up to the need for a world authority to maintain stable peace. What today makes M. de Gaulle even more dangerous 'in theory' than Mr. Kosygin is that his views on sovereignty are as archaic and as rigid as those of Louis XIV.

However, since the days of Danton and the French Revolution, the arthritis of absolute legal sovereignty has been complicated by the difficult fevers of nationalism, which inflames popular masses and governments, ranging from a mild and decent patriotism to the warlike excesses of chauvinism and, fascism. (This last with the fatal defect, all else apart, that every fascist hates the fascists of the next country.) The whole philosophy of 'community' needs re-examination, since its moral and civic virtues are obvious but the dark side of the moon is xenophobia. An unbalanced nationalism or tribalism is reactionary and a major cause of war. Here I entirely agree with the views of that great 'sentinel of India', Rabindranath Tagore. In the last resort the threat of nationalism is not that of an ideology, even the ideology of romanticism, but to the power structure. And even the rule of world law requires a power structure.

The new nationalism demands prestige and status symbols, a

nuclear bomb. As the Premier of India has recently said, the peace of India is not necessarily secured by a small bomb. It would be, I suggest in accordance with the thought of Gandhi (which, remarkably enough, so impressed President Makarios of Cyprus) for India to refuse to enter, with de Gaulle, into the little bomb competition and to see her protection in her clear national frontiers and the high Himalayas, so difficult for supply lines to cross, rather than in an emphasized cult of exaggerated nationalism. The trouble with Pakistan is rather religious than nationalist. With Harold Macmillan we can say: what we want is interdependence, not just independence. Canada offers perhaps a warning. Between the wars there was an emotional demand (which Australia did not share), not for the facts, but for the rhetoric and symbols of nationalism. But the ideological nationalism which could be urged in Ottawa could also be urged by the *habitants* in Quebec. The issue could be the breakup of Canada. I have always favoured a measure of home rule for a united Bengal. But the ideology of nationalism for India could become the ideology of nationalism, not just for Burma or Ceylon, but for Tamilnad or for a specifically secessionist Bengal. It is a dangerous path. Tagore was wiser.

What, however, has even this milder internationalism and support for the world rule of law to do with the downright pacifism of Gandhi? I do not propose to repeat or elaborate here tactical arguments which I have recited elsewhere. (a) That, in a world of exaggerated militarism and of what President Eisenhower in his last and most important presidential speech called the ‘military-industrial complex’, an obstinate and even unreasoning pacifism has its counterbalancing political value. (b) That no civil police force can be successful unless it has the broad support of the mass of thoroughly peace-minded citizens; and that the same principle and education in human charity also applies in international affairs. The real question is more profound and indeed turns upon the issue of human congenital sin, i.e., irrational, disproportionate self-assertion and aggressiveness. The almost politically anarchist Church Fathers asserted that secular government is by reason of sin. In fact much of the contemporary work of government is not punitive and ‘by reason of sin’, but regulative and plan-conscious. Here the state will not ‘wither away’. Nevertheless, an essential core in government, the *vis coactiva*, the coercive power, is retained. Should it be?

The pacifists are concerned with peace. So, however, are many others. The pacifists prefer the short, personal cult. Sometimes this

and non-violent resistance may be the most expedient and effective; but it does not make it, for example, for the Czechs, a principle. Resistance and revolution, as Aquinas said, must have some prospect of success. But what about when it has? Should the Pope approve violence in Latin America? Should we substitute passive resistance for passive obedience?

I hope to elaborate my own views in a book, *Power and Violence*. However, my conclusions I can state quite briefly. We need to educate the minds of the masses of mankind in peace, charity, tolerance of what it is rational to tolerate and profound distrust of bellicose and 'warfare' ideologies. Here, in forming habits, which William James called the 'fly wheel' of human behaviour, our chief instruments are schooling, parental influence, religion. There remains, in civil life and in international relations, the problem of deliberate and calculated aggression in the contests of power and of human exploitation for economic profit. The logical goal and conclusion lies in the establishment of an international authority or sovereign, with power. Here alone I differ from Gandhi's view. However, there is no reason to suppose that this authority and sovereignty cannot be cooperative and by consensus; and every optimist will hope that it may be.

Nevertheless, we shall not see this world authority established in our life time, an authority in which necessarily India but also China will have a massive role to play. It follows that we have to approach the achievement step by step; and, first, by pragmatic cooperation between the Super-Powers, a cooperation not improved by Soviet conduct in Prague, even if we reluctantly admit that there are centralized spheres of influence. In passing I would add that it is not to the interest of India prematurely to connect Delhi to such external centralization in what is still a plural world. What we do yet, however, have to welcome, as an advance beyond the archaic national state conception, is the consolidation of regions sharing, for this purpose, some of the same sentiments of freedom and also of justice. In the words of Gilbert Murray, which I have frequently quoted: 'The pooling of sovereignty supposes community of values'.

One further observation. This globe has millions of years behind it. There is no reason why the human race should not have millions of years ahead of it. It might be of interest if some of our social scientists and philosophers could sit down and sketch, however roughly, just what it is thought the human race would do during these millions of years. I suspect that some of the answers would involve selections

for a better human race that would be extremely embarrassing for democracy. What, however, emerges clearly enough is the list of negative imperatives—of what shall *not* be done: not pollute air or water; not recklessly use up irreplaceable national resources; not extinguish spaces; and, not least, not blow the human race up from insane ambitions for victory, moral enthusiasm or even from simple leisure and boredom.

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DEV DUTT

# Indian Nationalism and Gandhi



## THE PROCESS OF NATION MAKING

THE process of making and breaking of a nation is complex. Considerable investigations and indepth research are required to understand as to how, as a general phenomena, nations came into being, how long does it take them, what is the sequence of evolution and finally what constellation of factors act together or separately to make a nation.

However, on the basis of available knowledge it appears that, though a particular people need not go through them, the following are the sequence of the stages of the formation of a nation: 'open or latent resistance to political amalgamation into a common national state; minimal integration to the point of passive compliance with the order of such an amalgamated government; deeper political integration to the point of active support for such a common state but with continuing ethnic and cultural group cohesion and diversity; finally, the coincidence of political amalgamation and integration with the assimilation of all groups to a common language and culture'.<sup>1</sup> In some cases, it is quite possible that cultural and linguistic assimilation have long preceded the amalgamation into a single state, and political integration, likewise, may develop well before the ultimate decision-making powers of several governments are amalgamated into one.<sup>2</sup>

There is another point—an almost existential view—according to which, nation building is an act of choice or rather a sequence of choices in terms of the needs inherent in an individual's personality and in his external situation. This choice has the following ingredients: community consciousness, will to be a people and will to create a state and political will.<sup>3</sup>

#### INDIAN NATIONALISM

Seen in the light of the above-mentioned hypotheses, the process of nation-building in India has been different from the one in Europe, where the nation state of old was mostly deeply rooted and where nationalism first emerged and matured in the form we know it today.

In India, nationalism, by and large, being our major response to the political aspect of the domination of Britain, the will to statehood (i.e., 'to be politically independent in the sense not to be ruled from outside, to be organized in the sense to provide a constituency for a government which exercises effective rule within it, to be autonomous, and to accord to this government such acclaim, consent, compliance and support, as to make its rule effective'),<sup>4</sup> developed effectively and preponderantly; the will to achieve a composite and fuller national definition was not so pronounced. The will to be a people was also rather weak. There is considerable evidence to show that the efforts to hasten political processes leading to the formation of the nation got attenuated and received greater attention than other aspects of nationalism. In other words, political socialization took precedence or command over other equally important forms of socialization.

Take for instance the nature and scope of the nationalist struggle under the Congress. At best, it was tantamount to a series of exercises in political pelmenism—nay, bad pelmenism. It all amounted, in a sense, to making the British rulers in India to concede status of equality and respect to the Indian people. The Congress was often willing to make compromises on substantive issues, provided that its point was conceded. Masses were organized, pressures were put, new centres of influence were established, in order to rouse political consciousness, to generate fearlessness and self-confidence. This ferment had various aspects and expressions—for instance, peasant unrest, trade unionism, youth turmoil, etc. But the Congress did not take full cognizance of this upsurge. It was selective in picking up only gross anti-British political issues as a basis of national campaigns, (boycott of Simon Commission, civil rights, war issue,



claim to full independence, salt *satyāgraha*, etc.) a fact which affected the content of nationalism in India.

Quite understandably, a people suffering under colonial yoke for more than one and a half century needed these exercises to help them to develop self-confidence. But the whole of the national movement should not have been conceived as just a means to rouse people with little attempt to enrich it; little groundwork—both intellectual and operational—was done to strengthen cultural and social tissues of our collective life.

On the contrary, certain features of the national movement diverted the people from dynamically thinking about positive social contents in a fresh way. It may be stated that, broadly, the national movement had two aspects since 1920: (1) direct mass action, (2) this followed by negotiations regarding constitutional changes. The direct mass action became a means of effecting transfer of power in small doses of constitutional concessions. It was not conducted for the conquest of power. There was an insistent drift in the direction of legislative work or parliamentarianism. This was due to the composition and character of leadership which was drawn from the Westernized and half-modernized urban middle classes who equated freedom and independence in terms of political change or transfer of power leading to more patronage, more influence and more authority to Indians to manage their affairs. They could not have conceived of it as a means of creating conditions precedent to bringing about basic changes in social, cultural and economic relations. In spite of emphasis on mass struggle, it was admitted that at a particular stage of development in late 1930s, constitutionalism had come to stay as a major aspect of India's national struggle. Whatever little was done to inject ideology (either from within or without) into the Congress movement, it not only failed, but it divided the movement and promoted 'double thinking' in it.

In fact, this development exacerbated Hindu-Muslim antagonism and hindered the fruition of those processes which could have lessened the tension between the communities. Introduction of franchise and other forms of representative institutions embittered communal relations. Religion got politicized. Militant Hindu and militant Muslim nationalism grew up. There were strong elements of revivalism in these movements. As India approached 1930, it became quite clear that unity was as important a question in India as was freedom. India, in fact, was heading towards partition; the making of two nations were in the offing.

There were other aspects of the process as well. Though, unintended, the British policies also helped in promoting social ferment. For instance, such factors as the emergence of the middle classes, spread of education, growth of effective means of communications led to the reduction of the social and psychological and spatial distances and to the creation of a sense of common collective identity and, thus, laid the social basis of nationalism. As a matter of fact the process of social and cultural modernization and amalgamation had already set in, independently, though in a small way, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century itself. There was a desire to discover the moorings and to bring certain important aspects of our collective life in tune with the times.

There were also areas (for example, in Maharashtra) where nationalist sentiments had a positive social and cultural and economic content.<sup>5</sup> There is also evidence to show that some groups of individuals and organizations (for example, Dadabhai Naoroji, R. C. Dutt, etc., and moderates and extremists) were aware of the importance of these questions. Later on, science, socialism and modernism and Gandhian ideas of social reconstruction also began to acquire more significance.

However, all these positive elements did not acquire an independent, nay, preponderant position. They operated at a lower key and the dominant component remained political. The political socialization was faster and more assertive. Consequently, the tasks of thinking basically of social and cultural reconstruction which were to become the base of the social order in free India were neglected—for instance, the work relating to forward thinking, clarification of issues and creation of a consensus about language, education, caste, and values was not effectively undertaken.

There is one more feature of the process of nation-building in India in recent times. On the whole, the sweep and scale (taken territorially) of the national movement under the leadership of the Congress was certainly of an all-India character. But, in effect, it did not reflect all the dominant trends, emphases, and attitudes of the whole area, that is, India. It was, very largely, Indo-Gangetic in its perspectives. It may be argued that the Congress had its following in all areas and even its leadership was drawn from several parts of India. Yet, in terms of its dominant leadership, major compulsions and general direction, the epicentre of the Congress lay in the Hindi-speaking areas. To be more precise, it was what has been called in ancient text ‘The Madhya Desh’ nationalism—in line with the

general trends of the history of India over thousands of years. It did not cover the princely states, the *Kirat desh* (i.e., the Himalayan areas), the tribal population all over India and several other areas. It was, thus, not comprehensive enough to fully reflect the geographic and the ethnic sweep of the Indian sub-continent.

Finally, there was one more interesting aspect of Indian nationalism. In spite of the growth of sectarianism, the ethnic, cultural, religious and social differentiations which in Europe had led to the formation of nation-states, was as such accepted in India as a basis of our constitution and the national movement, and this led to the general acceptance of the ideal of a universal state—all-inclusive, non-sectarian nationalism.

Along with the growth of sectarian trends, there were elements of universalism' and liberalism also. It had a world outlook. It viewed India's freedom in the context of world forces of imperialism, racialism and peace. This element was to flower into, what we call, the policy of non-alignment.

#### THE PRESENT SITUATION

India embarked on the voyage of statehood with this legacy. The idea of nationhood was tentative, imitative and derivative; it was incomplete— territorially, ethnically, religiously and socially. Even partition did not settle the issue of unity. There was, of course, a frame of politics, a few effective political and economic institutions and certain traditions of administration. There was also a will to be a nation in the international context.

But on account of the weaknesses of the social and cultural components, the forces of division began to manifest themselves. The concept of an all-inclusive, secular nationalism, on which our state rests, is being challenged. The issue of India as an identity is still an open question. The syndromes of disunity show themselves up in many forms—the resurgence of R. S. S. as an upholder of exclusive militant Hindu nationalism, the rise of the Senas, the functioning of Jamiat-e-Islami—icebergs which conceal more than they reveal. There is also the problem of linguism, casteism and the tribals. The federal relations are in a state of tension. The inter-state border disputes, the incessant wranglings over river waters and education promote disharmony and a climate of opinion which weakens the national will.

We seem to be helpless about this schism in the soul of India. In its very nature, it is not within the competence of the state, for

that matter, any political agency alone to promote unity by legal and political palliatives; it is in this field that most of our efforts have been made, state cannot promote national unity of the order India needs. It is a psycho-social and cultural question—a question which does not admit of political treatment.

### GANDHI'S IDEAS

Gandhi realized that social evils impeded India's march to unity and *swarāj*. For this he did not depend upon the state and its political agencies. He mobilized social energies of the people. His constructive programme was an aspect of his philosophy of nationalism and national unity. He conceived of it as a means of strengthening the social aspect of our collective existence at grass roots. Take for instance his work of untouchability. He considered it as part of the movement for unity.' Similarly, basic education was originally evolved as a tool for social transformation by bridging the gulf between the intellectual and working classes.

The fact that Gandhi did not wait for political freedom and worked simultaneously for the reordering of society shows that he did not consider the purely political aspect of national struggle exclusively significant. This concern for the non-political aspect of our national life and his attempt to enrich it by the voluntary efforts of the people is relevant for the promotion of national unity, for, then alone, he thought, will India be able to evolve a style of living of its own.

Gandhi's ideas can also help us to achieve our definition as a nation and thus remove the badge of imitativeness and lack of identity. Freedom, to him, did not mean English rule without Englishmen. It meant conditions to be able to live according to our own genius, according to the inner law of our being! He knew almost intuitively that culture does not travel in parts. One thing leads to another. If India accepted machines and goods and ideas from the West, indiscriminately and wholesale, it will lose its soul.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, Gandhi tried to persuade us to turn our gaze within and to discover our roots and sources for renewal. He tried to make us aware of the importance of being ourselves and not to be swept away by the Westerly winds. His nationalism was not against an imperial system but against a value system, against a civilization which had the potency to demolish our identity. Today, India needs this inward looking tendency, it needs the Swadeshi spirit, about which Gandhi spoke incessantly. This component of Gandhi's

heritage alone can give sharpness, depth and substance to national idea.

The acceptance of this concern of Gandhi about our identity does not mean that his answers to achieve the identity are also to be accepted—we can reject his anti-science slant and anti-Western civilization proclivities.

Today, fascist forces are again gathering strength and gaining respectability. The militant and revivalist Hindu nationalist philosophy of R.S.S. is winning considerable followers and adherents in large numbers. They hold that religion is the basis of nationalism and as the original inhabitants of India, Hindus alone are the nationals of this country. This view ignores the multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-linguist and multi-racial character of Indian polity. It will lead India on the road to fascism and narrow nationalism.

Gandhi was opposed to Hindu nationalism. Though himself a Hindu, he did not consider it as a basis of nationality. He believed that India is a land for all. It is not only of and for Hindus. If Hindus want non-Hindus to live as slaves of Hindus they will, he thought, kill Hinduism itself.<sup>9</sup> This concern of Gandhi with all-inclusive non-sectarian secular concept of nationalism is of utmost relevance.

Gandhi believed that religion is not a factor in the creation of a nation. The followers of the respective faiths are not different nations.<sup>10</sup> In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms;<sup>11</sup> nor has it ever been so in India. The quarrel between Hindus and Muslims recommenced with the advent of English.<sup>12</sup> The way to promote national harmony is: 'If everyone will try to understand the core of his own religion and adhere to it and will not allow the false teachers to dictate to him, there will be no room left for quarrelling'.<sup>13</sup> Further, he thought, that as Hindus are better able to shield themselves from attack ... they should not oppose the concessions Muslims ask ... and thus avoid taking our quarrels to a third party. He thought Hindus should be brave enough to trust and all will be well.<sup>14</sup> He argued that Hindus by their action should prove or disprove two nation theory.<sup>15</sup>

Gandhi, in fact, interpreted<sup>16</sup> the Koran in a manner which shows that the religion of Islam is not antagonistic to Hinduism. He tried to find common grounds and points of similarities between Hinduism and Islam and to establish that all great religions spring from the same source and the fundamentals are common to them all and he thought one of them is non-violence.<sup>17</sup>

Gandhi also interpreted Hinduism to show that it is not antagonistic to other religions. He said:

‘My Hinduism...includes all that I know is best in Islam, Christianity...<sup>18</sup> it demands the fulfillment of all cultures.... It is all-inclusive. It stands for tolerance’. He said that ‘all should forget their religious affiliations’.<sup>19</sup>

He also based the concept of unity on other factors. What conflict of interest can there be between Hindus and Muslims in the matter of revenue, sanitation, police, justice...?<sup>20</sup> Economic conflict is likely to make Hindu-Muslim tensions less acute.<sup>21</sup> He thought that it could be best promoted by ‘cooperating to reach a common goal<sup>22</sup>... bridging social distance consistently with religious belief...by going out of my way to seek common ground on political fields’.<sup>23</sup> ‘Common birth, common distress, common manners and common bondages are ... a real cohesive force. He thought all these will prove a force that will make the nation irresistible’. But he thought that if Hindu and Muslim cannot come to an agreement<sup>24</sup> ‘we must fight till we are exhausted and come to our senses without seeking the intervention of British justice ... or bayonets...’<sup>25</sup>

Gandhi did not think that interdining and intermarriage between Hindus and Muslims will promote unity. ‘It is tantamount to asking the Hindus to give up their religion.... It is a reformation outside practical politics. And when that transformation comes, if it is ever to come, it will not be Hindu Muslim unity.’<sup>26</sup> The inter-religious marriages should follow harmony. It will be disastrous, so long as the relations are strained. They have no bearing on unity. The causes of discord are economic and political...’<sup>27</sup>

Gandhi advised adoption of two scripts (Hindi and Urdu), which will be used as inter-provincial speech—the best suited<sup>28</sup> inter-provincial language will be Hindustani, even if Muslims do not learn Devanagari.<sup>29</sup>

Now the above-mentioned points may be considered as Gandhi’s answers to Hindu-Muslim question. Gandhi was a successor to militant Hindu nationalist revivalist movements in the nineteenth century and he himself was a devoutly religious person. Therefore, there is a considerable amount of religion in his ideas and approach. He tried to resolve Hindu-Muslim conflict within the frame of reference of religion rather than within a militant secularist frame, thought and action. No doubt there is evidence to indicate that Gandhi did not rule out the importance of secular ideals and approaches, yet this aspect of his ideas was not militant

enough and he sought to resolve communal difference mainly by exhorting each of the communities to be better religionists. He was building nationalism on the basis of harmonious co-existence and reconciliation, rather than on assimilation and amalgamation and fusion.

There can be two possible ways of looking at the answers which Gandhi evolved to deal with the Hindu-Muslim question. One is to note his shrewd understanding of the fact that in a congenitally religious society such as it exists in India, no social and political question can be completely isolated from religion and, therefore, it is more politic to keep on finding out the point of equilibrium at which the two forces get suitably balanced than to discard religion outright and, thus, to alienate the action of the Indian people. The second is to reject the above approach outright and adopt an absolutely militantly secular stand and note the weakness of Gandhi's approach and the inadequacy of his answer, namely, in a religious oriented society, involved intensely in a process of deep political socialization, any attempt to purify politics by religion was likely to have failed. The more Gandhi tried to press religion in the service of politics, the more rapidly did religion get politicized.

For taking up a more scientific and militantly secular approach to nationalism, we should gain a keener understanding of India's history, society and traditions. For instance, it will be necessary to de-condition the mind of both Hindus and Muslims in respect of their present notions of Indian history. They think that Indian history is equal to the history of the middle ages—nothing beyond it is relevant today. But this is incorrect, for, the most potent traditions of materialism and secularism which we need so much are to be found in the ages that preceded the middle ages.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is no doubt that in Gandhi's own life-time his ideas did not succeed wholly and that he made several mistakes (for instance, with respect to *Khilafat*, cow, mixing religion and politics, etc.). But that does not diminish his stature as a great builder and liberator. Therefore, whatever position be adopted Gandhi's experience, his experiments and his basic ideas, particularly his concerns in respect of nation-building in India, have deep relevance for India today. It has the potential to improve upon the anomalous character of Indian nationalism, to enrich it, to render it home-spun and more comprehensive.

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SHARDA JAIN

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## A Critique of Gandhian Ethics



MAHATMA GANDHI said—‘As the means, so the end. Violent means will give violent *swarāj*....There is no wall of separation between means and ends.... If we take care of the means we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. Truth is my God. Non-violence is the means of realizing Him.... I have been endeavouring to keep the country to means that are purely peaceful and legitimate’.

We are disillusioned today to find that a country which employed ‘peaceful and legitimate’ means in her struggle for freedom has not at all reached the end she strove for. Freedom won through *satyāgraha* and non-violence has, in fact, turned out to be chimerical, substituting the ‘Gandhi cap rule’ in place of the ‘English top hat rule’. True, the country did not put into practice many of the Gandhian ideas of economic planning (their practicability itself a debatable issue), but it cannot be denied that the struggle for freedom under Bapu’s leadership was notable for its non-violent and peaceful character. If means are all and if we accept the maxim which Gandhi adopted from the *Gītā*—‘Action alone is thine, leave thou the fruit severely alone’, how shall we explain the contradiction of the good means leading to the not-so-good end.

Gandhi’s concept of means and ends is typical of the idealistic and deontological ethics and opposed to the teleological view that

the 'end justifies the means'. Like deontological moral philosophers, Gandhi regarded some classes of action as indefeasibly right or wrong, regardless of any good or bad consequences. He derived his moral maxims from his faith in the supremacy of the Divine Law which he identified with Truth.

Apart from the justifiability of metaphysical idealism, the problem of means and ends may be considered independently. Is the value of the end causally determined by the value of the means or can it be independent of means? It is quite possible that the latter is the case. The relation between means and end can be explained on the analogy of the relation between parts and whole. To borrow Moore's phraseology, though the parts are necessary for the existence of the whole (and so are means for the end), the value of the whole is independent of the value of the parts; in a similar manner, the independence of the value of the end can be upheld. A few examples will clarify this point. Appreciation of beauty, to borrow Moore's example, is a complex whole whose parts are (1) beauty and (2) a sense of admiration. In themselves, the two parts have certain values of their own, but the value of the whole is independent of the values of the parts. Hatred of evil is a complex whole, too, its parts being (1) evil and (2) an attitude of hatred. In themselves, both the parts have negative values, but the whole thus formed has an immense positive value. This model can explain the relation between the value of means and the end. A causal connection between the means and end does not necessarily imply an identity of the quantum of value of the two.

The causal connection between the means and end is a factual question, not one of moral valuation. But although the question is factual, our attitude towards it raises one of the most fundamental moral problems—the problem whether we ought to rely in such cases on our conviction that such a causal connection holds or whether we should adopt a sceptical attitude. Some people feel certain of the assumed causal connection, but the certainty of their belief is emotional rather than rational. Gandhi's faith in the efficacy of non-violence was an offshoot of his personal religious experience, a faith which, according to him, transcends reason and works in ways which are without the purview of reason. But is it not a most important moral duty as well as intellectual modesty to adopt an attitude of scepticism towards one's causal theories, especially in such cases where certainty is a matter of faith rather than reason?

Assuming the causal relation holds and assuming we can be reasonably certain of it, the problem becomes chiefly one of choosing the lesser of the two evils—that of the contemplated means and that which must arise if these means are not adopted. Even if we accept that the best ends do not justify bad means, the attempt to avoid results may justify actions producing in themselves bad results.

Thus we are led to the problem of assessing consequences. Should we blindly follow the moral rules, irrespective of the consequences which will flow from our actions? Who is to be the judge of the ethical validity of those rules? What are the criteria for accepting one set of moral rules and not others? Some of the rules sometimes accepted by society as moral are by any humane standard cruel and unjust. Often circumstances arise in which what is enjoined by one accepted rule is forbidden by another. Yet, if bad rules are ever to be criticized and rejected, if we are to be guided by reason in deciding what rules to adopt and if we are to make a rational choice between following one rule or the other, it can only be done by a consideration of the consequences and resort to teleology in one form or another. It is essential to the very idea of moral philosophy that morality be referred to in end of some sort and not left in the dominion of vague feeling or inexplicable internal conviction, and that it be made a matter of reason and calculation.

We do not have to accept the principle that the end justifies the means, but an important place is to be assigned to consequences and also to the context in which action takes place. Gandhi insisted that evil means can never, factually speaking, lead to a good end. Unfortunately, this is, except perhaps to the eye of faith, quite clearly untrue. Indeed it would have been a better world if such were the law of nature. The pious saying that ‘evil will always result in evil’ and ‘truth always prevails’ reflects man’s innermost desire for goodness and truth to prevail, but the desire in itself is not proof that these principles describe the working of Nature.

To reject the pious part-truth that good end cannot as a matter of fact be achieved by evil means does not amount to rejecting the relation between the means and the end. Means are necessary to bring the end in existence, without the means the end would never be. But the relation of means to end is certainly not the same as between the seed and the tree. The seed is not the means, the seed is the tree, the microcosm, as it were, of the macrocosm. To grow a particular tree we must sow the seed of that tree only, but certainly

to achieve an end, alternative means are often available. True, means must be suitable for the end, but this in no way establishes a relation between the value of the means and the end. You may arrive at your destination by a variety of means—on foot, on horseback, in a buggy or a taxi. Whatever means you employ, the character of the destination remains unchanged.

When we talk of ‘evil means’ and ‘good ends’ or vice-versa a more fundamental question is raised—what is good and what is evil? Is there some absolute standard of good and evil? In a contextual situation when we are concerned with the suitability or appropriateness of a particular set of means, the problem of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ complicates the problem all the more. Gandhi derived his notion of ‘good’ and ‘evil’—in fact, all his basic moral maxims—from the traditional idealistic Indian thought. The factual problem of ‘end-means’ was placed by him in the framework of spiritualistic-idealistic philosophy. But in a country like India with fundamentally different socio-cultural-religious groups, to apply the norms of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ based on one particular philosophical world-view is certainly not very wise.

The Mahatma’s concept of duty and action were based on the ethics of the *Gītā*. What is the nature of action as enunciated in the *Gītā*? To exercise activity as dictated by your caste, not action done from self-reflection or self-chosen responsibilities—action done from a blind sense of duty without considering the means or consequences of the action. On the premise of *sva-dharma*, *dharma* dictated by your station in life which again is determined by caste (hereditary station) how shall we explain the actions of those leaders of humanity, including Bapu himself, who chose to go by their ‘conscience’ and give up the station which was natural and hereditarily determined for them? Howsoever noble the ideal of duty may be and whatever be its emotional appeal, reflective conscious thinking has to be allowed. Here, again, the conflict in Gandhi’s thought is evident.

An ethics of duty based on faith in a Divine Law transcending reason is bound to lead to some sort of authoritarianism. As an example, I refer here to Gurudev Tagore’s criticism of the Gandhian ‘dictate’ to make bonfire of foreign cloth. Poet Tagore wrote—‘When I wanted to ask questions and decide for myself, my well-wishers clapped anxious hands to my mouth—‘Pray be silent’. There is a tyranny in the air—even if intangible, it is worse than open violence.... The idea prevails that all questioning must stop; there

should be nothing but blind obedience. Obedience to whom? To some charmed words of incantation, to some reasonless creed.... Our minds must accept the truth of love.... *Swarāj* is not a matter of a stick and a single string. It is a vast enterprise involving complex processes and needing as much study and clear thinking as impulse and emotion. The intellect of the people must be fully awake, so that the spirit of inquiry is untrammelled; minds must not be overawed or made inactive by compulsions open or secret.’

Gandhi’s view of morality and his ethical doctrines were based on his personal spiritual experience and were the results of his deepest feelings and direct realization of Truth. His appeal was to direct experience which transcends reason and logical complexities. Howsoever lofty the claims of personal experience may be, if objective truth and ontological status is to be granted to the contents of experience, the data must stand the test of Reason.

Although Gandhi called himself a ‘practical idealist’ and a man of action (which undoubtedly he was) his philosophical idealism compelled him to accept and preach eternal principles and values. This conflicts with the realistic aspect of Gandhi’s thought. On the one hand, Gandhi spoke of *satya* and *ahimsā* as two eternal principles (very often he referred to them as the two faces of a coin), on the other, he himself seems to deny absolutism in the realm of values when he concedes the individual’s duty to respond to his ‘inner call’, the call of Truth which presents itself to an individual at given moment. But if there is no absolute truth and absolute *ahimsā*, it is better to talk of ‘truths’ rather than ‘Truth’ with a capital ‘T’.

Two mutually inconsistent and conflicting strains are evident in Gandhian ethics—one derived from idealistic-spiritualistic philosophy and the other from an awareness of the concrete problems of reality. The traditional idealistic Hinduism provided the premises on which Gandhi tried to build a positive system of ‘world and life-affirmative’ ethics, a system responsive to the brute facts of reality. To take the obvious example—Gandhi was deeply moved by the condition of the untouchables and he struggled for their betterment, yet he accepted and defended *varṇāśrama* law—a principle of hereditary determinism. Whatever the importance of this law be as a principle of social stability, you cannot at the same time accept this principle and reject the natural and logical consequences which are its outcome.

Gandhi’s Utopian approach envisaged far-reaching and sweeping changes in human nature and society and an attempt to recast the

society as a whole. Like all Utopian engineers, he advocated the need for social experiments, which must not be confined to a narrow area, but must be on a large scale covering the entire humanity, if possible. He was convinced that while we experiment we must recast the social structure. The Utopian method leads to a dangerous dogmatic attachment to a blueprint for which countless sufferings have to be made.

Though ready to learn by trial and error, Gandhi had firm conviction and unflinching faith in his vision of a beautiful world, a world of love and beauty, unspoilt by the jargons of modern civilization, but the appeal is to emotions only, not reason. With his eyes fixed on the Kingdom of God, an ideal kingdom based on love, justice and righteousness where harmony, cooperation and mutual confidence reign supreme Gandhi led the country on the way of non-violence, self-purification and self-discipline. But the India he left behind is miles and miles away from his vision. It rather presents a grim and depressing picture. Why? If means and ends are the two faces of a coin, as Bapu claimed they are, why this dark face of the pure and spiritual means of non-violence and *satyāgraha*. There must be something wrong with the faith which he had.

An inherent contradiction in Gandhi's thought is due to the acceptance of metaphysical idealism on the one hand and his realistic approach to the problems of the society on the other. He had an idealist's faith in eternal Truth and on his faith he tried to base his ideal society—a stateless, non-violent democracy. But the spirit of democracy, to my mind, is against the notion of eternal and infallible truth and welcomes diversity of beliefs, actions and values. Democracy is opposed to a criterion of human value and policy other than human needs and aspirations. The empirical mind is best suited for the requirements of a democratic *modus vivendi*. Its tendency to proceed by trial and error, its flexibility and its adherence to facts, its instinctive concern with the way things work out—all seems expressly designed for dealing with the concrete problems of a free society.

What, then, is the relevance of Gandhian ethics in the context of contemporary situation? Even if one doubts whether Gandhi's method is right in itself and whether the way he has carried out his experiment can give satisfaction, we must nevertheless recognize the significance of the positive values in Gandhian ethics—more so in the present social set-up. The most important lesson to learn from Gandhi is the courage of conviction—the courage to act on what one

is convinced of. Love—the positive aspect of Gandhian *ahimsā*—and selfless service are two values which need to be cultivated vigorously today in a society torn by hatred and mutual distrust. To cultivate these values, one need not invoke the support of any religion, but a religious attitude or better still a humanistic approach to life is all that is necessary.



K. J. MAHALE

## Society and State (*Rāmrāj* and *Swarāj*)



IN THE course of the history of man, the terms ‘Society’ and ‘State’ have assumed varied meanings. The fact that there are several definitions of and approaches to these terms shows how difficult it is to accept any one of them as a standard one.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was neither a political philosopher nor an academic sociologist, does not seem to have accepted fully the existing concepts of either of the society or of the state. One has to examine his ideas expressed in the course of his writings and speeches in order to understand his notions about the society and the state.

Gandhi often used the words *Rāmrāj* and *swarāj* for indicating his concepts of an ideal society and state. There is a general misgiving about Bapu’s *Rāmrāj*: it is believed that by *Rāmrāj*, Gandhi meant the rule of *Rāma*, son of Dasharatha, king of Ayodhya. But he has made it amply clear that his *Rāma* is not the *Rāma* of Ayodhya and that his *Rāmrāj* is not the same as the kingdom of Dasharatha’s son. He used the name of *Rāma* to describe God, ‘the eternal, the unborn, the one without the second’. For him Truth was God. He then coined the word *Rāmrāj* to describe the kingdom of God on the earth. He wanted this kingdom of God on the earth in the present and not merely in the heaven in the future.

Gandhi believed that each nation should have its own system of government in keeping with its own history, traditions, culture and civilization. Writing in *The Harijan* in 1937, he said, ‘by political independence I did not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be is more than I can tell. I described it as Rāmrāj, i.e., the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority’.<sup>1</sup> At another place, he identifies Rāmrāj with *swarāj*. *Swarāj*, he says, ‘is synonymous with Rāmrāj—the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness on earth’.<sup>2</sup> Once when he was asked by a reporter to define *swarāj* he said that the word is indefinable. However, he proceeded to describe it as ‘complete freedom of opinion and action without interference with another’s right to equal freedom of opinion and action’.<sup>3</sup> He used the word *swarāj* to also mean ‘self-rule and self-restraint’.<sup>4</sup>

From the above statements one can get an idea of the type of the society and the state, Gandhi was aiming at. Being a practical idealist, he placed before himself an ideal and strove hard to realize it.

The ideal society for Bapu would be a non-violent society where individuals would enjoy perfect liberty, equality and social justice. The basis of this society is moral law resulting from the practice of truth and *ahimsā*. Though he did not define absolute Truth, he pursued and lived and also invited others to search and live the life of particular truths till absolute Truth was attained. *Ahimsā*, as was practised by him, had both negative and positive aspects. A man practising *ahimsā* had not only to abstain from doing harm to a living being in thought, in speech and in action but had also to show affection and love even to his enemy. Gandhi, therefore, felt that for building up a non-violent society it was necessary to guarantee an individual his freedom and independence. Accordingly, he envisaged his own system of education, economics, religion and political organization, which would, in his opinion, produce free and independent moral beings who would stick to truth and non-violence, come what may. To Bapu, society is just like a family having a close interdependence among its members. While he recognized the right of the individual to fundamental liberties, he rejected unrestricted individualism that ignores social obligations. ‘The true source of rights’, he says, ‘is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they will escape us like a

wil'-o-the wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther will they fly'.<sup>5</sup> Again he writes, 'I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has arisen to the present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.'<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi knew that in a society individuals may not have the same talents and abilities, but he placed a moral obligation on the persons of superior talents to act as trustees and share their surplus wealth with the other members of the society on a voluntary basis. 'My idea of society', he says, 'is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc.; therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize kindly, they will be performing the work of the state. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talents. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the state, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees. It may be that I would fail miserably in this. But that is what I am sailing for.'<sup>7</sup>

In a society of Gandhi's conception, an individual will have the upper hand. He would prefer a stateless society—a society in which there would be no police and military, no law courts, doctors, heavy transport and centralized production. He thought that such a society could be built up if men would acquire complete personal *swarāj* and spontaneously perform their social obligations without the operation of the state.

For Gandhi, political power is not an end but only one of the means of enabling people to better their conditions in every department of life.

Gandhi's conception of the state is democratic. In his *Rāmraj*, the sovereignty is given to the people who entrust it for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Even the parliaments have no power or existence independently of the

people. Contrary to Hegel, who considered the state as its own end, Gandhi considered it as one of the means, only for the service of man.

The Mahatma regarded the state as a ‘soulless machine’. It was for him a symbol of ‘violence in a concentrated and organized form’.<sup>8</sup> He viewed with apprehension the powers of the state and subscribed to Thoreau’s belief that that government is best which governs the least. He would prefer a society of ‘enlightened anarchy’, where every one is his own ruler, to a coercive state. According to him, in a perfect non-violent social order men will spontaneously cooperate with each other in a spirit of true love and self-sacrifice. There will be no need for coercion in regulating human relations and hence the state will become unnecessary. One cannot help remarking that Gandhi’s conception of the state is Utopian. He himself was aware of it. For he says, ‘In the ideal State...there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life.’<sup>9</sup> He, therefore, proposed a state with limited functions, and provided measures to control the powers of the state.

Gandhi believed that if people consciously retained political powers in their hands, the state interference with their freedom would be reduced to the minimum. ‘Self-government’, according to him, means ‘continuous effort to be independent of government control whether it is a foreign or whether it is national’.<sup>10</sup> In a real *swarāj*, it is not enough to delegate governmental authority to a few. On the contrary, *swarāj* is to be attained or preserved by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority. For achieving this, the means proposed and practised by Gandhi are non-violent, as he believed that good ends can be realized by good means only. His weapons of non-cooperation, civil-disobedience, fast, *satyāgraha* are quite effective. He expects citizens to employ such non-violent means not only to defend their fundamental liberties but also to get social justice in the state. He deprecates the use of violence because the success of violence is temporary and leads ultimately to greater violence.

‘I have always held’, writes Gandhi, ‘that social justice, even unto the least and lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have believed that it is possible by proper training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure the redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means is non-violent non-cooperation. At times, non-cooperation becomes as much a duty as cooperation. No one is bound to cooperate in one’s own undoing or slavery. Freedom

received through the effort of others, however, benevolent, cannot be retained when such effort is withdrawn. In other words, such freedom is not real freedom. But the lowliest can feel its glow, as soon as they learn the art of attaining it through non-violent non-cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, civil disobedience is regarded by Gandhi as ‘the inherent right of a citizen’.<sup>12</sup> While he recognizes the right of the state to put down criminal disobedience, he denies that right to the state in respect of civil disobedience. In his opinion, ‘to put down civil disobedience is to attempt to imprison conscience.’<sup>13</sup>

Gandhi aimed at the democratic state based on moral authority. Although in 1920, he said, ‘My *swarāj* is the Parliamentary Government of India in the modern sense of the term for the time being...’, he thought that the states in the West were only democracies in name. As Gopinath Dhawan rightly puts it, ‘To Gandhi democracy remains unachieved more on account of the prevailing belief in the efficacy of violence and untruth than on account of mere institutional inadequacy’.<sup>14</sup> Gandhi’s notion of a democratic state is that ‘under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest’. He was convinced that such a democracy could never be attained except through non-violence.

Thus, in his *Rāmraj*, Gandhi wanted ‘Perfect Democracy in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race or creed or sex would vanish’.<sup>15</sup> In it the state has the obligation of realizing the ‘greatest good of all’ rather than the ‘greatest good of the greatest number’.

The state has to perform legislative, executive and judiciary functions. Being against the concentration of power, Bapu advocates decentralization of political and economic power, reduction in the functions of the state, establishment of voluntary associations, elimination of economic inequalities through trusteeship system and the decentralization of the administration of justice.

Mahatma Gandhi admits the necessity of police and military organizations; but the police and military will play much different roles than what they play in modern states. While the police, whose rank will consist of believers in Non-violence, will act as servants and not masters of the people, the military will be required to face the external enemy, until they are replaced by non-violent *satyāgrahīs*.

A Gandhian state will have relations with other states as well. ‘My notion of *purna swarāj*’, writes Gandhi, ‘is not isolated independence but healthy and dignified inter-dependence’. He believed that the

doctrine on non-violence held good between states and states.

Bapu did not expect aggression against a non-violent state. And even if there was one, he wanted it to defend itself non-violently. As he puts it, ‘A non-violent man or society does not anticipate or provide for attacks from without. On the contrary, such a person or society firmly believes that nobody is going to disturb them. If the worst happens, there are two ways open to non-violence. To yield possession but non-cooperate with the aggressor. Thus supposing that a modern edition of Nero descended upon India, the representatives of the state will let him in but tell him that he will get no assistance from the people. They will prefer death to submission. The second way will be non-violent resistance by a people who have been trained in the non-violent way. They would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor’s cannon. The underlying belief in either case is that even a Nero is not devoid of a heart. The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply lying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery.’<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi suggested in vain to the Abyssinians, Czechs, the Poles, the English and other victims of aggression during the Second World War to refuse to fight but to offer non-violent resistance. India, with her age-old tradition of non-violence and non-violent movement for her independence to her credit, could not act non-violently against either Pakistan or China. It is doubtful whether any country will ever face an armed enemy with the weapons of non-violence.

Gandhi would have liked India to become a non-violent state of his dreams and deliver the message of non-violence to the rest of mankind. But can she afford to do it now? Even to become a non-violent nation it has first to survive. To get flowers from the plants in the garden one has to put a strong fence to protect them from the beasts.

The religious aspects of Gandhi’s Rāmraj—the establishment of kingdom of righteousness on the earth—will still remain a distant dream for the world to work for. The idea of reducing economic inequalities through trusteeship system is far from realistic, Decentralization of political power in a country where there is political instability may prove to be dangerous and disastrous. Similarly, in a developing country, decentralization of economic power will hamper the growth of economic progress of the nation and may not equip it with sufficient resources to meet the needs of the growing population. However, decentralization of the

administration of justice in a big country like India is essential as the administration of justice will then be prompt and within the reach of common man.

Whether one accepts Gandhi's conception of society and state or not, he, like Jean Jacques Rousseau, has made people think over their lot, present and future. His most humane concern for the individual in a state, his strong plea for preserving liberty and dignity of man, his insistence on living a life of truth and self-sacrifice for the sake of others, his call for vigilance on the growing power of the state and his non-violent techniques in the form of non-cooperation, civil disobedience, *satyāgraha* for fighting against injustice are certainly invaluable contributions to mankind's forward march in the right direction.

Gandhi has definitely weakened the old concept of Machiavellism of gaining one's ends by trickery and violence and has inaugurated a new era in man's history by proposing and practising himself the doctrine of truth and non-violence, not only in the field of religion but also in the domain of politics. His insistence on using good means to attain noble ends is a great challenge to the builders of a new world order.

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BIMANBEHARI MAJUMDAR

## Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas on State and Society



IN HIS earlier years Mahatma Gandhi considered a self-regulated stateless society as his ideal. But the imperfections of the individuals who constitute society compelled him to search for a more practicable ideal. He had to content himself with the second best, namely, a society with a predominantly non-violent government which governs least. A similar fate overtook Plato, the teacher of the father of politics, twenty-three hundred years ago. The failure of his three successive attempts at Syracuse to implement the ideal setup in his *Republic*, forced him, in his maturer years, to draw up a moderate scheme in his last great works, entitled the *Laws* and the *Politicus* or *Statesman*. Like Plato, Mahatma Gandhi tried to eliminate poverty from society. Plato attributed pauperism to a lack of proper education and training, as well as to unjust social laws and an unjust constitution of the state. Suggesting the means of quelling communal riots non-violently Gandhi wrote in September, 1940: 'Goondas do not drop from the sky, nor do they spring from the earth like evil spirits. They are the product of social disorganization, and society is, therefore responsible for their existence. In other words, they should be looked upon as a symptom of corruption in our body politic. To remove the disease we must first discover the underlying cause.'<sup>1</sup>



There lies a fundamental difference, however, between Plato and Gandhi with regard to the relation between society and individual. To Plato, a just society is one in which every person finds his place of greatest usefulness to the state and fulfils his entire obligations in that place. While in the Platonic thought individual is but a means to the social end, in the Gandhian thinking the 'individual is the one supreme consideration!'<sup>2</sup> He elaborated this idea eleven years later in 1935: 'I look upon an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by "destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress".'<sup>3</sup> His concern for the freedom of the individual led him to propound a view which bears a close resemblance to philosophical anarchism. But it is worth noting that with the growing importance of the Socialists in the Congress organization from 1934 onward he did not hesitate to call himself a socialist and on some occasions even a communist. In 1937 he claimed that socialism, and even communism, are explicit in the first verse of the *Ishopaniṣad*.<sup>4</sup> In 1940 he wrote: 'I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed'.<sup>5</sup> In 1946 he claimed to be a foremost communist.<sup>6</sup>

Socialism is usually taken to mean a form of society and government under which the state assumes ever-increasing functions regulating the life of the individual in different fields of activity. Is it in this sense that Mahatma Gandhi professed Socialism? It is necessary to go into these problems in chronological order with a view to finding out the extent, if any, to which his ideas on state and society underwent change in course of time by the impact of changing circumstances. In every age and in every country the social and political environments have moulded political thought. Mahatma Gandhi could not have been an exception to this.

The influence of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and John Stuart Mill (1806-73) was predominant when Gandhi was receiving his education in England (1888-91). He refers to the works of Spencer and Mill in his *Hind Swarāj*.<sup>7</sup> But he was not an Individualist like Spencer and he differed considerably from Mill. The latter made a distinction between self-regarding faults and the faults which chiefly interested society. For example, he said that 'no person ought to be punished simply for being drunk; but a soldier or a policeman should be punished for being drunk on duty'. In 1930 Mahatma Gandhi attacked this theory when he wrote: 'There are some people who think that we can afford to act as we please in matters that affect only

ourselves, but no man can, in fact do anything in the world which does not, directly or indirectly, affect the welfare of his fellowmen.<sup>8</sup> He goes so far to emphasize the importance of thoughts, because evil thoughts affect not only the individual but also his fellowmen and society. He was generally averse to compelling an individual to adopt a particular course of action. But during his crusade against drinking in 1921 he departed from this principle. He wrote: ‘You will not be deceived by the spacious argument that India must not be made sober by compulsion, and that those who wish to drink must have facilities provided for them. The state does not cater for the vices of its people. We do not regulate or license houses of ill-fame. We do not provide facilities for thieves to indulge in their propensity for thieving. I hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps, even prostitution. Is it not often the parent of both?’<sup>9</sup> He supported compulsion on the ground that drinking propensity is more a disease than a vice. As such, he held that diseased persons have got to be helped even against themselves.<sup>10</sup> In another case too, he was in favour of using compulsion. This was concerning the parents or guardians neglecting to send their children to a primary school. This may be justified on the ground that the guardian is a trustee of the children under his care and that he becomes guilty of breach of trust if he does not send them to a school in a community where free and compulsory education is provided. But barring such exceptions, Mahatma Gandhi was against the use of compulsion even with a view to making an individual virtuous. Asoka appointed a special class of officials to preach morality and religion to his subjects, but he did not adopt any compulsive measure to enforce the law of piety, excepting the prohibition of slaughter of some specified categories of animals.<sup>11</sup> He admitted that persuasive exhortations proved more effective than imposing positive restrictions.<sup>12</sup> In contrast we may cite the practice of the seventeenth century ruler of Vishnupura (Bankura) named Gopal Simha who compelled his subjects to recite the name of God (Hari) a certain number of times every day. The compulsion became so odious that the counting of the beads along with the recital of the name of God became known as Raja’s *Begar* or the forced labour exacted by the king. Mahatma Gandhi fully realized the futility of all attempts at making an individual lead a virtuous life by compulsion. In August, 1946 he, therefore, observed: ‘How can I, the champion of Ahimsā, compel anyone to perform even a good act? Has not a well-known Englishman said

that to make mistakes as a free man is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them? I believe in the truth of this. The mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve; in fact, it worsens. And when compulsion is removed all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force.<sup>13</sup> The idea of freeing the individual from social and political coercion came into vogue from the time of Rousseau and Voltaire.

William Godwin (1756-1836) attributed human misery to coercive institutions in his *Enquiry Concerning Justice*, published in 1793. He considered government as an evil and advocated its abolition. A French writer named Fourier (1772-1837) had great faith in the autonomy of small commune or Phalange, consisting of from twenty-four to thirty-two groups of people divided into some four hundred families or eighteen hundred persons. He believed in the possibility of a complete transformation of human nature. Another writer who was in considerable vogue in the formative period of Gandhi's life was Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). In his *Mutual Aid, a Factor in Evolution* he showed that cooperation and mutual help played a far more important part than struggle for existence in the survival of the species. By citing numerous examples from animal life he came to the conclusion that species survived because individual members co-operated for the good of the group. There is no positive evidence to show that Mahatma Gandhi ever studied the works of Godwin, Fourier or Kropotkin, but it is difficult to be totally immune from the influence of such writers whose ideas floated as it were, in the air. Gandhi acknowledged with gratitude the inspiration he received from the study of the works of Henry Thoreau (1817-62), John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). He advised the readers of his *Hind Swarāj* to study some of their specified works. To all of them the State is a suspect. To both Gandhi and Thoreau, government appeared to be unnecessary if and when individuals acquire perfect self-control. In 1931 Gandhi wrote: 'Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least.'<sup>14</sup> We shall have to

examine carefully whether he stuck to this theory to the last.

To Thoreau as well as Gandhi the voice of the enlightened conscience of the individual was superior to the dictates of laws of the state. Thoreau appealed to the citizens to have the courage to rise in revolt against laws which appeared immoral to them. Bapu stated before the Magistrate of Champaran: 'I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience'.<sup>15</sup> He had written four years earlier: 'Whether, therefore, I am in the minority of one or I have a majority, I must go along the course that God seems to have shown me'.<sup>16</sup> Green allows disobedience to law only when there is public opinion in favour of the person claiming to voice forth the grievance of the people. But he makes an exception in the case of worst governments under which public spirit is crushed.<sup>17</sup> Gandhi probably had no acquaintance with Green's political philosophy but he considered the public spirit so much crushed in India that the disobedience to law by an ethically disciplined *Satyāgrahī* appeared justifiable to him. When India attained independence Mahatma Gandhi laid emphasis on the necessity of obeying the law of the State. He wrote in September, 1947: 'In democracy, the individual will is governed and limited by the social will which is the state, which is governed by and for democracy. If every individual takes the law into his own hands, there is no state, it becomes anarchy, i.e., absence of social law or state. That way lies destruction of liberty. Therefore, you should subdue your anger and let the state secure justice.'<sup>18</sup> He admitted that in a reasonably good state citizens did not refuse to obey every single unjust law. He wrote: 'I should be deeply distressed if on every conceivable occasion every one of us were to be a law unto oneself and to scrutinize in golden scales every action of our future National Assembly. I would surrender my judgement in most matters to national representatives, taking particular care in making my choice of such representatives. I know that in no other manner would a democratic government be possible for one single day.' The note of caution, however, is prominent even here. He considered it necessary to reserve the right of individual judgement in some special cases.

In discussing the Gandhian concept of the relation between society and individual it is necessary to remember the findings of some of his elder contemporaries, From Ruskin's *Unto This Last* Gandhi got the idea that good of the individual and good of society are not by any means contradictory. The idea received a scientific

treatment from Max Weber and Charles Harton Cooley, both of whom were born five years before Gandhi. Weber (1864-1920) pleaded for 'democratic individualism', under which man will be able to breathe the air of a reasonable degree of freedom. It will provide just that much of authority and aristocracy as to make it unnecessary to resort to an authoritarian state. He feared that the organization in the factories and the use of scientific techniques might transform men into automatons. Between 1902 and 1918 Cooley (1864-1929) produced three books of great sociological importance. In his *Social Organization* (1909) he showed that individual and society are twin-born and twin-developed. Not only do the individuals make society, but also does society make individuals. The views of Mahatma Gandhi may be fruitfully compared to those of the above-mentioned writers. In 1939 he wrote: 'I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.'<sup>19</sup> Such an idea occurs also in the *Justifiable Individualism* written in 1922 by F. W. Blackmar, who writes: 'The only individualism that is justifiable is that which is built up in the service of others'. He holds that if individualism is essential to progress, then socialization of human attitudes is essential to individualism. In view of the ideas held by all these elder contemporaries of Gandhi it does not appear justifiable to hold 'that Gandhi's deliberate onslaught on the creed of individualism as it has been in operation during the last two or three centuries gave it a mortal blow'.<sup>40</sup> But the important conclusions which Mahatma Gandhi drew from the theory of democratic individualism are strikingly original.

In 1940 he wrote: 'As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is Ahimsā in his venture. Moreover, if man's mind turns towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness'.<sup>21</sup> Mahatma Gandhi finds justification for the peaceful transformation of the acquisitive society into the socialistic pattern through a change in the outlook of the individual towards society. He held that 'every individual must have the fullest liberty to use

his talents consistently with equal use by his neighbours but no one is entitled to the arbitrary use of the gains from the talents. He is part of the nation or say the social structure surrounding him. Therefore, he can only use his talents not for self only but for the social structure of which he is but a part and on whose sufferance he lives. The present inequalities are merely due to people's ignorance. With a growing knowledge of their natural strength the inequalities must disappear.<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting, in this connection that he holds the people responsible as much for their political slavery as for their economic thralldom. It is their tacit acquiescence which makes it possible for an oppressive government to subsist. Similarly, he reminds them that the 'rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society'. If the wealthy persons do not care to regard themselves as trustees of the poor, he suggests non-violence, non-cooperation and civil disobedience to bring about an equitable distribution of wealth.<sup>23</sup>

The type of socialism he envisages is much more difficult to attain than what passes for socialism in the western world. He seems to have been influenced by the ideal of the *Bhagavat Purāṇa*, which states that one is entitled to take as much as is sufficient for filling up the stomach; he who takes more than this is guilty of theft and deserves to be punished as a thief.<sup>24</sup> He does not refer to it anywhere but what he writes in 1933 appears to be a commentary on this memorable verse. He states: 'Possession implies provision for the future. A seeker after Truth, a follower of the Law of Love cannot hold anything against tomorrow. God never stores for the morrow. He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If, therefore, we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured that He will give us everyday our daily bread, meaning everything that we require.... The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need and which are, therefore, neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want and all would live in contentment.'<sup>25</sup> The Gandhian socialism was to be brought about by peaceful persuasion and a radical transformation of the character of individuals.

Private property need not be abolished in this type of socialism. Gandhi was fond of quoting the opening verse of the *Ishopanīṣad* which prohibits coveting anybody's riches. This implies the recognition of private possession of wealth. In his view land belongs to the state, which, however, he equates with the people.<sup>26</sup> It should

be worked on a cooperative basis.<sup>27</sup> In 1909 he condemned the use of machinery in his *Hind Swarāj*, but in 1924 he recognized the use of Singer Sewing Machine, though he was still against the use of bicycle and motor car. He also admitted that he was socialist enough to say that the factories for producing machinery should be nationalized or state-controlled.<sup>28</sup> In 1935 he recognized the need of having printing presses and factories producing surgical instruments.<sup>29</sup> In drafting the constructive programme for the Indian National Congress in 1941, he supported the need of nationalizing heavy industries. In September, 1946, when the transfer of power was imminent he wrote: 'Without having to enumerate key industries, I would have state ownership where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour whether skilled or unskilled will vest in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force, but would invite their cooperation in the process of conversion of state ownership.'<sup>30</sup> In the pursuit of this policy some of the new key industries have been started under the ownership and control of the State, while many of the old industries and factories have been allowed to continue under private management. But the State which owns and manages a number of key industries is far removed from the State which performs the least number of functions. Gandhi also entrusted the Government with the function of ensuring to every labourer the supply of sufficient food and clothing for himself and his family. His conviction was so strong on this point that he declared: 'A Government that does not ensure this much is no Government. It is anarchy. Such a State should be resisted peacefully'.<sup>31</sup> But he was not prepared to support the grandiose national planning for the future. As Pyarelal puts it, 'Planning', Bapu insisted, 'must grow out of the people's felt needs and begin with the neglected primary needs of the poorest. Till these were satisfied, everything else must wait. When the people had gained more experience and their means had increased, it would be open to them to add more ambitious items if they so wished.'<sup>32</sup>

In spite of his recognition of the nationalization of certain industries, Gandhi was generally against the centralization of authority of the State. Imposition of controls in peace-time was vehemently opposed by him. In 1947 he wrote: 'The method of rationing of food and clothing is highly injurious for the country'.<sup>33</sup> We know to our cost how rationing, control and food zones have increased the power of the bureaucracy enormously.

One of the cardinal features of the Gandhian Society was the insistence on bread-labour. The American writer, Edward Bellamy (1850-1898) proposed that every one should work as common labourer for three years before he selected his profession. Gandhi tried the experiment of inducing the members of his Tolstoy Farm to undertake labour voluntarily in 1910. In 1925 he propounded the view that franchise should be restricted to those adults who perform some kind of bodily labour. In 1947 he elaborated the idea and stated, 'Thus a simple labourer would easily be a voter, whereas a millionaire or a lawyer or a merchant and the like would find it hard, if they did not do some body-labour for the State.'<sup>34</sup> In his view the only way of eradicating idle parasitism in society is to insist on the performance of physical labour.

It is well known that Gandhi was an advocate of Rāmarājya. In 1937 he described it as sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.<sup>35</sup> In 1946 he said that his conception of Rāmarājya does not mean mere replacement of British army by an Indian army. A country which is governed even by its national army cannot be morally free. Again in 1947 he wrote that 'there can be no Rāmarājya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat'.<sup>36</sup> All these are negative description. The best positive statement was made by Gandhi in June 1945, when he described it as the kingdom of God on earth. In such a kingdom inequalities based on possession, colour, race, creed or sex would vanish. He adds: 'In it land and State belong to the people, justice is prompt, perfect and therefore, there is freedom of worship, speech and the Press—all this because of the self-imposed Law of Moral restraint. Such a State must be based on Truth and Non-violence and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities'.<sup>37</sup> In one of his essays, published posthumously, he equated the villege Panchāyat with Rāmarājya.<sup>38</sup>

His ideal village unit consists of one thousand souls.<sup>39</sup> Every village was to be a republic, having power not only to administer its internal affairs but also 'capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world'. This could be possible only in a perfectly non-violent society. Under such a society the State would be a federation of villages, but 'life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages,



till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals never aggressive in their arrogance but even humble, sharing the majority of the oceanic circle of which they are integral unit'.<sup>40</sup>

By *swarāj*, Gandhi did not mean mere emancipation from the British Imperialism. In 1925 he did not find it inconsistent with the maintenance of the British connection, provided it was on equal and honourable terms.<sup>41</sup> In 1931 he reiterated this view when he wrote that *Purna Swarāj* did not exclude association with any nation much less with England.<sup>42</sup> In 1946 he emphasized the importance of self-discipline or rule over self as the first condition of *swarāj*.<sup>43</sup> In 1939 he had equated *swarāj* of a people with the sum total of the *swarāj* (self-rule) of individuals.<sup>44</sup> In 1942 he emphasized again the importance of truth, non-violence, and steady building-up from the bottom upwards as the true means of achieving *swarāj*. He warned the people that otherwise it would give rise to 'an anarchical state for the overthrow of the established order in the hope of throwing up from within a dictator who would rule with a rod of iron and produce order out of disorder'.<sup>45</sup> The history of many of the Asiatic countries since 1947 illustrates the truth of this remark.

In conclusion we may state that the supreme achievement of Mahatma Gandhi in the field of political thought has been the substitution of the ideal of the Legal State by that of the Moral State. He has placed before the world the idea of replacing force and violence by the technique of persuasion through truth and non-violence.

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5. *Ibid.*, 20.4.1940.
6. *Ibid.*, 31.3.1946 and 16.12.1939.
7. *Hind Swarāj*, p. 30 (Navajivan ed. 1962).
8. *Ethical Religion*, p. 59.
9. *Young India*, 8.6.1921.
10. *Ibid.*, 6.7.1921.
11. It is interesting to note that he does not prohibit the slaughter of all sort of goats, sheep and cows. He specifically states: 'Those she-goats, ewes and cows, which are either pregnant or milch are not to be slaughtered nor their young ones which are less than six months old'. He prohibits the killing of bulls set at liberty and of boneless fish. Pillar Edict V.
12. D. C. Sircar, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, (Pillar Edict, VII), pp. 22, 76.

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ETHEL MANNIN

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## The Arab Need for a Gandhi



SOME five years ago in Lebanon, up in the mountains behind Beirut, I met an English Roman Catholic priest who ran a home for deaf-and-dumb and crippled children, and in the course of our talk he said something which I have always remembered. It made a profound impression on me at the time. I had been in Jordan and seen something of the misery of the Palestinian refugee camps, and I had seen camps if anything even more terrible in Lebanon, and it was inevitable that we should discuss this human tragedy. This good man said to me, 'In Jordan why don't they just march out of the camps, men, women and children, old and young, a vast, unarmed, hungry, ragged multitude asserting their right to return home? Who could stop them?' I told him, 'The United Nations Emergency Force, and the Jordanian guards. They would be shot down.' He persisted, 'They couldn't shoot down thousands of them, men, women and children. They would just march on, like the villagers in Gandhi's salt march to the sea during the civil disobedience campaign in India 1930. They would be *satyāgrahīs*. Why not?'

There was, and is, no logical reason why not. It is simply that such an idea is totally alien to the Arab mentality. It is not that they are an essentially violent people; they are not more violent than any other people; in all human beings there is the capacity for violence; but to date the Arabs in their long and stormy history have had no great spiritual leader preaching non-violent resistance

to evil; they have never had, and they desperately need, a Gandhi. Upon this that Catholic priest and I were agreed, and I recalled the conversation in the tragic aftermath of the Arab-Israeli war of June, 1967. Now, I thought, when Palestine is no longer partitioned but totally occupied by the Zionists, the Palestinian Arabs are at last in the position to mount a massive campaign of non-cooperation and civil disobedience such as ran like a flame through British-occupied India, under the inspiration of Gandhi. A resistance movement was quick to stir to life, underground, in occupied Jerusalem, but it was not non-violent. There was no Bapu to give the essential spiritual leadership. Nevertheless, the *Guardian* correspondent Michael Adams, was able to report from Jerusalem on February 1, 1968, that although the Israelis had been able so far to contain the *active* resistance movement on the West Bank of the Jordan, the newly occupied territory they had ‘no answer as yet to the growing movement of passive resistance’, which, he significantly added, ‘may have more important implications for the future’.

Not a great deal has happened since Michael Adams wrote that, but there was the courageous demonstration of some 200 Arab women in Jerusalem marching in protest on April 25, 1968, against the proposed military parade to mark the twentieth anniversary of Israeli independence on May 2. There has been the refusal of Rouhi Al-Khatieb, the Arab mayor of Jerusalem, to cooperate with the Israeli authorities, and his subsequent deportation to Amman. There has been the refusal of the Moslem religious leaders to allow the occupiers to dictate to them. There have been, also a number of isolated incidents of non-cooperation, always resulting in severe repressive measures and reprisals. There has been this sporadic passive resistance and a degree of civil disobedience, but the reluctance of Arabs to cooperate with the occupation authorities, reported to be growing shortly after the June war, has not really developed. Instead we have seen the rise of the resistance movement in terms of guerillas, and along with it savage Israeli reprisals far in excess of the damage inflicted on them. Leadership for guerilla warfare has been forthcoming, but not for non-violent resistance. The Palestine resistance movement looks to Algeria, and its seven years of guerilla warfare against the French, for example, not to India and its very much longer non-violent struggle for independence against British imperialism.

India, as we know, did not continue in the spirit of non-violence after the achievement of independence, and Gandhi himself died

as an act of violence. But at least we can say that he died when his work was completed. The Algerians achieved the same objective, independence, in seven years, but at the cost of a million lives and the establishment of the pattern of violence in the Arab world. Arab history has been as violent as the history of any other great civilization; there have been the great Arab conquests, and Islam itself conquered by the sword. The Arab Empire was founded on conquests; and Ottoman rule was in due course overthrown by violence in the great Arab Revolt. The Palestinian struggle for independence, between World War I and World War II, at the time of the British mandate, was conducted for the most part on violent lines; there were strikes, but there was also a campaign of violence, as the result of which many nationalists were hanged. It will always be inescapable, inexorably true, that violence begets violence. No Arab leader arose to point the way to non-violent resistance, nor has any arisen since, unfortunately.

Yet in 1938 Gandhi was writing in *The Harijan* regretting that the Arabs had not chosen the way of non-violence in resisting—and here I quote—‘what they rightly regarded as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their country’. Palestine belonged to the Arabs, he pointed out, in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French, and it was wrong and inhuman, he said, ‘to impose the Jews on the Arabs’. ‘The nobler course’, he wrote, ‘would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they were born and bred; the Jews born in France were French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France were French’. ‘The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract,’ he wrote. ‘It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb. They can settle in Palestine only with the goodwill of the Arabs’.

Gandhi maintained that the Jews could offer *satyāgraha* to the Nazis, and what he wrote of this applies absolutely to the positions of the Palestinians today in their occupied country. ‘I am convinced,’ he wrote, ‘that, if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope.’ ‘There could be,’ he said, ‘a determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given them by God’. His advice to the Jews in Hitler’s Germany applies equally to the

Arabs in occupied Palestine, Gandhi wrote in 1938, that if he were a Jew in the Germany of that time he would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. ‘And for doing this,’ he wrote, ‘I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance, but would have confidence that in the end the rest were bound to follow my example.’ He added that suffering voluntarily undergone would bring an inner strength and joy which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the outer world could bring.

These quotations from *The Harijan* I have taken from a volume entitled *Non-violence in Peace and War*, published in India, at Ahmedabad, in 1942, with an introduction by Mahadev Desai, who quotes Professor Arnold Toynbee, that great defender of the Palestinian Arab cause, as saying that ‘Violence annihilates itself and leaves Gentleness alone in the Field’. How to persuade the angry and bitter and frustrated Palestinians of this? Desai points out that there is no royal road to train individuals or communities in the difficult art of non-violence, except as Gandhi says ‘through living the creed in your life, which must be a living sermon.’ ‘There has to be recognition of the tremendous superiority of the spiritual force over physical force, for the Kingdom of Heaven is *ahimsā*. *Satyāgraha*, said Gandhi, is the law of love and therefore the law of life. Departure from it leads to disintegration. A firm adherence to it leads to regeneration. It can be urged that in Algeria violence did not lead to disintegration, but to regeneration through achieved independence. Certainly it achieved its objective after seven exhausting years and at a fearful cost in human suffering and death. The Zionists, the Arabs point out, achieved their objective, to occupy the whole of Palestine, through the violence of military aggression; why should not Palestinian violence in the just cause of liberation, similarly succeed? Perhaps in the end it can succeed; perhaps guerilla warfare can regain the lost land of Palestine if enough Palestinian young men are thrown into prison or killed, and enough Jordanian villagers are killed by way of reprisal, and enough Jordanian villages destroyed, and children, both Arab and Jewish, killed by accident. Can that be called regeneration? God forbid another Vietnam should be created in the Holy Land.

In 1938 Gandhi urged that the Jews, who claim to be the chosen race, should prove their title by choosing the way of non-violence for vindicating their position on earth, adding that ‘every country is their home including Palestine not by aggression but by loving service’. His words are still true today, both for the Jews and the Arabs. The Palestinians themselves declare, in their paper, *Free*

*Palestine*, for July 1968, that they ‘welcome the prospect of living with fellow human beings of the Jewish faith who would repudiate the aggressive and fascist Zionist ideology’. What they have still to recognize is that meeting aggression with violence only intensifies the violence of the aggressor, whereas by offering *satyāgraha*, and a willingness to die, if need be, undefended, they will win the great weight of world opinion over to their side. Before the June war it used to be said that the Palestinians could not liberate their country because owing to partition they were not collectively in it; now that occupation has replaced partition this is no longer true, and they are in the position as never before to bring about their liberation non-violently, through a massive movement of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance. To the militant Palestinians this idea would no doubt seem very tame compared with the excitement and daring, the splendid heroism, of guerilla warfare, but as Gandhi said, the physical possession of arms is the least necessity of the brave; *satyāgraha* takes tremendous courage—and an equally tremendous faith. The Palestinians have the one, abundantly, and given the spiritual leadership they might in time develop the other. I do not believe that they can regain their lost land and national sovereignty by force of arms or acts of sabotage, because they are opposed by an enemy of vastly superior technique, organization and discipline, whereas the Arab dream of unity endlessly eludes realization, and this failure is their undoing. It was not of the Arabs that the American-Irish poet, Shaemas O Sheel, wrote early in this tragic century:

‘They went forth to battle, but they always fell...  
Nobly they fought and bravely, but not well,  
And sank heart—wounded by a subtle spell.’

It was, I think, of his own people, the Irish, that he wrote those sorrowful words, but it could have been written of the Arabs in their struggle against those who have usurped their ancestral lands and scattered them, displaced and dispossessed, into the wilderness, to rot in refugee camps or live out their lives in exile in the West. Is it too much to hope that the Arabs, with their high courage and impassioned love of their ancient land of Palestine, which they have continuously inhabited for thousands of years, might come in time to realize that the way of violence is the way of death and destruction, and as Gandhi, the greatest apostle of non-violence since Jesus, has said, in his profound wisdom, that *satyāgraha* is the surest victory. May the spirit of Gandhi come to them, for their need is great.

V. V. RAMANA MURTI

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# Gandhian Concept of Power



## INTRODUCTION

AMONG the basic ideas of Gandhi on the political theory and practice, none is perhaps of more crucial significance than that of 'power'. Considerations of power were historically an unavoidable determinant in the evolution of the Gandhian technique. As Gandhi's non-violent method invariably involved England as well as India, both the nations had to take into account this major criterion in formulating their policies. The British Government, when confronted by the systematic non-violent action of the Indian National Congress, was eventually found to reconsider her national interests including national power. The decision-making of the Indian National Congress in fighting the alien government of the Great Britain with its technique of Gandhian politics, was also susceptible to the centres of power in the two spheres of action and reaction.

Besides the historical significance, there is also the factor of contemporary relevance in this enquiry. Political and social theories in recent times have articulated the universal impulse to power to an extent that is unprecedented. It is now common place to define 'all politics' in the words of a famous theorist, as 'a struggle for power'.<sup>1</sup> That the power hypothesis has gained wide currency among the social sciences is abundantly clear from the spate of literature



on the subject by well-known writers like Harold Lasswell, Charles Merriam, Bertrand Russell, Max Weber and George Schwarzenberger. Reviewing their theories of power in his conclusive study, George Catlin categorically states that 'Politics is the science of power'.<sup>2</sup> The new science of power politics is no less in evidence in the emerging states of Asia and Africa.

Their historic predicament is aptly illustrated by the case of India. While the Indian Nationalist movement in the past was indebted to the characteristic technique of Gandhi, its impact on the present political state of India is open to doubt. The freedom of India is generally attributed to the Gandhian method, but the same technique is not seriously considered for the security of the nation or defence of her freedom. When the territorial integrity of India is threatened by the hostile neighbours, there is a nationwide demand for increasing the power-potential. This is deemed to be the only way for maintaining the national security.

The spirit of this realistic view is strikingly manifested in India's case, currently very much in vogue, for manufacturing her own atomic weapons.<sup>3</sup> Curiously enough, even the name of Gandhi is sometimes invoked in support of an Indian Bomb. The evidence of Gandhi comes from some of his important statements on familiar topics. And these sources are usually cited in favour of a fairly popular conclusion of atomic armament. It is doubtful if they are subject to close scrutiny. It is precisely for this reason that the whole approach of Gandhi to power needs to be examined in the present context.

There are three aspects of the question which have to be discussed. In the *first* place, the role of power in the working of the Gandhian technique has to be determined. *Secondly*, the concept of power in Gandhian thought will have to be delineated from Gandhi's writings.<sup>4</sup> *Thirdly*, a contemporary review of the power prescription may be undertaken especially with reference to the Indian context. The relevance of the Gandhian approach as a whole may be then more appropriately discussed in relation to the current theories of power.

#### GANDHIAN TECHNIQUE AND POWER

The central issue of the Gandhian technique is to encounter conflict through non-violence. What Gandhi insisted was the rejection of violence for this purpose and not conflict itself. As Arne Naess pointed out in his recent study of Gandhi's non-violence, it was

natural for Gandhi to gravitate to the centre of conflict.<sup>5</sup> This was accomplished by Gandhi solely through the non-violent technique. Gandhi wanted to prove thereby that violence was not indispensable for the resolution of conflicts.

It is actually in this context that the Gandhian technique is confronted with the problem of power. In working out the non-violent strategy of fighting the ‘powerful’ enemy, the Gandhian method must first decide whether it would require power as a necessary part of its technique. This may be needed either in successfully resisting the opponent or reinforcing its own basic strength at any stage of the struggle. The Gandhian technique of non-violent direct action, since the beginning of its evolution in South Africa during 1906-1914, has had valuable evidence on this matter.

It is interesting to recall the controversy about an appropriate name for Gandhi’s new movement of non-violence that animated the pages of *Indian Opinion* from December, 1907, to March, 1908. Ever since Gandhi found the customary phrase of the ‘passive resistance’ too passive, he was in search for a new title to convey the whole meaning of the new technique of non-violent direct action. One of the suggestions was *pratyupaya*, meaning a counter-move. Gandhi rejected this new phrase of ‘counter-move’ as squarely as he did the familiar term ‘passive resistance’. Writing in *Indian Opinion* of March 7, 1908, Gandhi observed: ‘One of them says that ‘passive resistance’ can be rendered as *pratyupaya*. He explains the word as...being passive to whatever happens and taking all possible remedial measures. The word and the explanation are both worthless. *Pratyupaya* means counter-measure. Opposing good to evil will then be *pratyupaya*, but so will be the use of force to solve a problem....The explanation offered betrays ignorance’.<sup>6</sup> We all know that finally Gandhi coined the word *satyāgraha* (Soul Force) to express the complete idea of his new politics.

The use of wrong means for the achievement of right ends is alien to the Gandhian technique as it regards the means and ends to be convertible terms. If non-violent action involves counter-moves or remedial measures for any purpose, it ceases to be Gandhian. The method of non-violence, as Gandhi evolved it, does not admit of the positions of strength or of bargain.

There were several other incidents in the successive phases of the *satyāgraha* movement in South Africa that were characteristic of this unique approach of Gandhi. It was basically different from the ‘power’ approach. The conventional patterns of political behaviour

are altered in the Gandhian politics. An incident from the campaign that Gandhi led in 1913-14 is notable for understanding the true character of Gandhian non-violence, and its implications.

When Gandhi found that Smuts did not implement the agreement in 1913, he planned a protest march of the *satyāgrahīs* from Durban on January 1, 1914. The plan was in preparation, and all efforts were being made to make it a success. In the meanwhile, Gandhi went to Pretoria with C. F. Andrews. There, Gandhi learnt of an impending strike by the white employees of the Union Railways. Gandhi was faced with a potential dilemma.

If Gandhi was keen on bargaining with the enemy by exploiting his weakness, here was an excellent opportunity waiting for him. In fact Gandhi admitted in his book *Satyāgraha in South Africa* that some of his colleagues urged him to take advantage of the situation. Gandhi wrote: 'I was called upon to commence the Indian march at such a fortunate juncture'.<sup>7</sup> But Gandhi was guided by the ethics of his non-violent technique alone. It required that he should not press his demand at a time when the government was confronting a genuine difficulty. He resisted all pressures from his followers, and decided to postpone the contemplated march. Gandhi wrote about this decision: 'But I declared that the Indians could not thus assist the railway strikers, as they were not out to harass the Government, *their struggle being entirely different and differently conceived*'.<sup>8</sup> This is the difference between the Gandhian technique based on non-violence, and the violent technique based on power. The difference is also with regard to the strict adherence to 'means' for realizing 'ends'. The working of the non-violent technique is not affected by the considerations of power.

What is even more noteworthy about this decision of Gandhi was his citing the great influence that this move created on the enemy. 'This decision of ours', Gandhi added, 'created a deep impression, and was cabled to England by Reuter'.<sup>9</sup> This gesture of rare cordiality amidst an acute conflict evoked a natural response from the adversaries. One of the secretaries of Smuts was reported to have told Gandhi: 'I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us

to sheer helplessness.<sup>10</sup> Here was a testimony from the enemy about the impact of the non-violent technique. The adversary was not humbled, but enabled by the Gandhian method. This was because Gandhi always sought a genuine reconciliation and settlement, and not a one-sided victory by his non-violence.

The political experiment in *satyāgraha* that Gandhi conducted in South Africa constituted a total challenge to the power-politics and its basic assumptions. If the Gandhian technique repudiated anything very clearly, it was the need for a power-criterion in a political struggle. This was evident in many stages of the civil resistance that the coloured people offered in protest against the laws of racial discrimination. Even when the Smuts-Gandhi agreement, embodying the substantial acceptance of the demands of the Indian settlers in South Africa, was signed on January 30, 1914, Gandhi was urged by his associates to press for more demands. But Gandhi declined this plea as it would be contrary to the very spirit of *satyāgraha*. Referring to this question, Gandhi wrote in the *Indian Opinion* of February 11, 1914: 'It needs to be understood, once and for all, that the path of truth is not meant for ends not consistent with truth. It is our belief that raising our demands will amount to untruthfulness.'<sup>11</sup> Gandhi urged his followers to exercise restraint which was an essential element in the non-violent method.

The Gandhian technique in the Indian nationalist movement developed these characteristics to a remarkable extent. The method of non-violent resistance was easily conspicuous amongst them. It grew out of the historic challenge of the Indian nationalism. At the time of Gandhi's advent in the Indian politics in 1919, the Indian National Congress represented two major attitudes on the question of fighting the foreign government. They were divided between the extremist and the liberal wings of the Congress. None of them was averse to power, but each had its own particular method of upholding it. The extremist view was completely opposed to the British power which it sought to replace by the nationalist power. The liberal or moderate view was equally opposed to the foreign power of the British government, but it was conditioned to share this power gradually in the process of transition from alien rule to self-government. Both the extremist and the liberal nationalists were unanimous on the objective of national power, though their methods for obtaining it varied. The extremists, like the revolutionary sects, might have sanctioned violence and force. And the liberals might have stressed the constitutional methods. But the two streams of the

Indian nationalism had similar objective on the question of power.

It was the non-violent technique of Gandhi alone that made a real difference to two sections of the Indian National Congress by projecting an alternative to power of either kind. In Gandhi's view, the method of violence or revolution would not ensure Indian independence while the constitutional method could not bring out the real home-rule. The technique of non-violent non-cooperation was devised by Gandhi as a 'way out of the unnatural state' of the Indian politics.<sup>12</sup> Gandhian politics derived its rationale from this historic condition. Gandhi observed in the course of his great trial at Ahmedabad on March 18, 1922: 'I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil and that, as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-cooperation with evil.'<sup>13</sup> Thus non-violent resistance with the British Government emerged as a valid alternative to the previous methods of national agitation that were based upon the customary sanctions of violence and power.

The Gandhian technique as it was operated by the Indian National Congress, was marked by a positive rejection of power. It was especially true of the non-cooperation movement in its later phases. When the Congress demonstrated its faith in the non-violent movement by implementing its programme with unprecedented enthusiasm in 1919-21, the whole nation seemed to vindicate Gandhi's leadership. Romain Rolland wrote in his biography of Gandhi: 'In 1921 Gandhi's power was at its apogee. His authority as a moral leader was vast, and without having sought it, almost unlimited political authority had been placed in his hand.'<sup>14</sup> The non-violent non-cooperation movement was thoroughly shaken by the tragedy of Chauri Chaura on February 4, 1922, when mob violence by the nationalist erupted and claimed many casualties.

The technique of Gandhi was again on the horns of a dilemma. If Gandhi was keen on attaining power, he could have continued the movement despite the happenings in Ghauri Chaura. In view of the mounting popular participation, he might not have been deterred by usual norms, from the course he took, as an unquestioned leader of his people. But Gandhi immediately suspended the non-cooperation movement after Chauri Chaura incident, and made a public confession of his mistake. Writing in *Young India* of February 16, 1922, Gandhi explained his unexpected move: 'Suspension

of mass civil disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for further progress, indeed indispensable to prevent further retrogression. I hope, therefore, that by suspension every Congressman or woman will not only not feel disappointed but he or she will feel relieved of the burden of unreality and of national sin'.<sup>15</sup> In fact, while referring to the disappointment of the Congress, Gandhi was only anticipating the most likely reaction.

Jawaharlal Nehru mentioned his reaction to this decision of Gandhi in his Autobiography. Nehru wrote: 'Suddenly...we in prison learnt, to our amazement and consternation, that Gandhi...had suspended civil resistance.... We were angry when we learnt of this stoppage of our struggle *at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts*'<sup>16</sup> (italics supplied). What Nehru voiced on this matter was also the common criticism amongst the national leadership of the Congress, of this aspect of Gandhi's politics. But the withdrawal of a political movement when it was deviating from the main principle was basic to Gandhi's notion of *politics without power*. It was not an aimless measure, but an implicit ethic, involved in the Gandhian technique. The non-violent movement was also withdrawn in 1932. The withdrawal of the political struggle was an integral part of the Gandhian technique.

The working of *satyāgraha* clearly shows that it is not a power-technique. Gandhi was profoundly sceptical of power. He openly declared his fundamental reservations to the acceptance of office by the Congress in 1937.<sup>17</sup> His criticism of power continued even at a time when the non-violent technique was triumphant in securing the historic transfer of power from Great Britain to India on the eve of Indian independence in August, 1947. Independent India found the Father of Nation completely disinterested in political power—a fact of great significance that is rare in the recent history of the world.

#### POWER AND THE GANDHIAN THOUGHT

In formulating non-violence as the core of his thought, Gandhi was aware of the formidable challenge of violence and its allied forces. Since non-violence was regarded by Gandhi as emanating from what he characteristically called as 'soul-force' he distinguished it from 'brute-force'. In *Hind Swarāj* or *Indian Home Rule*, Gandhi wrote in 1909, he had argued against 'brute-force' and pleaded for 'soul-force'.<sup>18</sup> Passive resistance also belongs to the category of soul-force. On the difference between brute-force and passive resistance,

Gandhi wrote: 'To use brute-force to use gun-powder, is contrary to passive resistance, for it means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not. And if such a use of force is justifiable, surely he is entitled to do likewise by us. And so we should never come to an agreement'.<sup>19</sup> The use of brute-force is thus a vicarious process. It is capable of complicating the conflict and rendering its solution very difficult. Therefore, Gandhi agrees that 'passive resistance, that is, soul-force is... superior to the use of arms'.<sup>20</sup> It is never a weapon of the weak. Gandhi always stated that non-violence is for the courageous and not for the weak. But non-violence was not for the aggressive either, as they would solely rest on power.

During the several campaigns of the non-violent movement that Gandhi led, his attitude to power in relation to the Indian National Congress was often solicited. Gandhi's observations on this question were particularly significant. When Gandhi's attention was drawn to the need for the acceptance of power, he categorically rejected its acceptance. Writing in the *Young India* of May 7, 1931, Gandhi stated: 'Office and power must be avoided'.<sup>21</sup> He did not rule out acceptance of office, if it was only meant for a greater cause. It would then be a conditional acceptance of power. Speaking of office and power, Gandhi adds: 'Either may be accepted when it is clearly for greater service'.<sup>22</sup> He would not deny the very notion of power as such. Under certain circumstances it might be useful, but it would be a qualified power, capable of rendering good to the community.

Gandhi was sometimes drawn to compare the military power with the power of non-violence. Non-violence in its working did release those effects that were generally attributed to the source of power. Referring to the attitude of the Congress to the World War II, Gandhi wrote in *The Harijan* of October 14, 1939: 'I have every hope that the Congress will also be able to show the world that the *power* that armaments give to defend right is nothing compared to the *power* that non-violence gives to do the same thing and that too with better show of reason'<sup>23</sup> (italics supplied). Gandhi was justifying the practice of non-violence that the Congress was cherishing under his inspiration.

As India was suddenly involved in the World War II, the progress of the war only succeeded in focussing the national concern to the need of military defence and the power of armaments. Gandhi had reiterated his categorical rejection of the power-prescription. Gandhi wrote in *The Harijan* of February 1, 1942: 'Power invariably

elects to go into the hands of the strong...If today we decide that we should try to get power by force of arms, we shall have to do undo all the work of twenty years among the masses. We shall have to spend a considerable time in giving people a contrary training'.<sup>24</sup> In Gandhi's opinion, the contrary training would be the training in arms or military power. While the cost of this power is prohibitive, its benefit is doubtful.

Gandhi's rejection of power was not only negative, but also quite positive. He was not content merely with advising the Congress to decline power. His vision of a non-political society took a concrete form in the organization of constructive workers within the national fold of the Congress. Gandhi attached the greatest importance to the role of the constructive workers. They were not to function only as a subordinate and secondary group to the predominantly political wing of the Congress. The constructive workers had to discharge a more important duty by remaining outside the politics in the Congress. Gandhi observed in an address to them on February 21, 1940: '...You will see that we must see eschew power politics...'<sup>25</sup> Then only the constructive workers could act as a corrective to the political workers in the Congress, and supplement its pre-eminent mission of the independence of India.

When the Congress first decided to accept power in 1937, Gandhi's misgivings about this decision bordered on a major controversy.<sup>26</sup> It is clear that Gandhi's initial reaction was that Congress should accept office only if it was found to be in the larger interests of the nation.<sup>27</sup> He was reluctant to advise the Congress to accept power as an end itself. Gandhi also felt that once the Congress was in office, it might be tempted to abuse power. The record of the Congress governments was not wholly approved by Gandhi, particularly its resort to force. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his *Discovery of India*: 'When the Congress Governments were functioning in the provinces, many of them were eager to encourage some form of military training.... Gandhi no doubt disapproved of these tendencies.... He did not even like the use of the police force as an armed force for the suppression of riots, and he expressed his distress at it.'<sup>28</sup> This indicates that Gandhi was not completely reconciled to the Congress in power.

Gandhi's objections to political power were not minimized with the establishment of a national government in 1947. He was even more sharply critical of the manipulation of power by the Congress. Gandhi was singularly alone in this respect of declining power even



in a free nation. Architects of other great nations were absorbed in power soon after they were victorious.

This was very true of those leaders who led a successful revolution and established powerful regimes in their countries. But Gandhi was unique amongst all builders of nations. In his last testament on January 29, 1948, Gandhi warned the Congress about the dangers of power politics and solemnly recommended its dissolution as a political party.<sup>29</sup>

#### CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

From the foregoing analysis, it is reasonable to infer that the Gandhian approach to politics belongs more appropriately to the category of *influence* rather than *power*. The distinction between the two is not merely nominal, as is shown in the writings of contemporary theorists like Lasswell and Catlin. In his pioneering work on Politics, Lasswell states that 'by the study of politics is here meant the study of influence and the influential'.<sup>30</sup> Lasswell's later definition is more illuminating. In *Power and Society* Lasswell and Kaplan write that 'by influence is meant the value position and potential'.<sup>31</sup> The nature of influence is best known when it is viewed as a kind of moral influence as different from power politics.

In contrast to influence, power is often regarded as containing the entire political process. Its chief characteristics are known to be 'control' and 'coercion'. Lasswell and Kaplan state that 'the exercise of power is simply the exercise of a high degree of coerciveness'.<sup>32</sup> 'Bargaining' is another notable feature in the analysis of power. These elements render power into a formidable phenomenon. Though Morgenthau makes a subtle distinction between political power and force, still the predominant character of power is defined by him in terms of control and authority. Morgenthau's pantheistic elevation of power to national and international politics does not disguise the inherent problem of organizing power effectively in a political system. In his classical work *Politics Among Nations* Morgenthau writes: 'Political power ... may be exerted through orders, threats, persuasion, the authority or charisma of a man or of an office, or a combination of any of these'.<sup>34</sup> In this way the political power is bound to admit sanctions for its execution. It revives the ancient question of force or violence in one form or another.

In retrospect, what Gandhi insisted all along was the creation of a *moral influence* by the Congress through the technique of non-

violence. He sought the conversion of the opponent, and not his destruction. *Satyāgraha* was the chosen weapon of Gandhi to bring about this transformation. When the British government agreed to the peaceful withdrawal of power on August 15, 1947, it was but a historic recognition of the great influence of Gandhian non-violence. During a conversation with Gandhi on April 1, 1947, Lord Mountbatten was reported to have told him ‘...it had always been the British policy not to yield anything to force, but the Mahatma’s non-violence had won’.<sup>35</sup> And the last English Viceroy also added: ‘They had decided to quit as a result of India’s non-violent struggle’.<sup>36</sup> This momentous change between the age-old relationship of England and India was the lasting achievement of Gandhian technique. It is a vindication of *influence* and not of *power*.

The distinction between influence and power is already acknowledged. A more relevant distinction was suggested between power and domination by George Santayana. In his thought-provoking book *Dominations and Powers*, Santayana wrote: ‘All dominations involve an exercise of power, but... not all Powers are Dominations’.<sup>37</sup> Santayana showed how there could be initially a power, and eventually it might become a domination.

In the nuclear age, with the availability of the weapons of mass destruction, power tends to become a domination. The advancement of the nuclear arms race, with its threat of universal annihilation is no longer an apprehension, but an irrefutable fact.<sup>38</sup> What we need with regard to this problem of power in the present age is what Bertrand Russell called in his book *Power* in 1938, the *taming of power* by all possible means.<sup>39</sup>

It is instructive to reflect that Gandhi came to a similar conclusion on the logic of nuclear weapons. Gandhi was usually called the Father of the Nation. But there is more justification in celebrating in him the Prophet of Peace in the Nuclear Age. With the advent of the nuclear weapons, Gandhi realized that all violence would be nullified. Speaking at Poona on March 3, 1946, Gandhi asked the question: ‘Has not the atom bomb proved the futility of all violence?’<sup>40</sup> Again, in an address on July 1, 1946, Gandhi observed: ‘It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in *ahimsā* as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn it away from violence for the time being.’<sup>41</sup> Gandhi believed that non-violence is the only alternative to bomb.

‘The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that’, Gandhi said, ‘it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs’.<sup>42</sup> Gandhi repeatedly declared that non-violence was the only weapon to meet the nuclear weapon. Referring to non-violence Gandhi said on September 24, 1946: ‘It is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy...when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima.... I said to my self, ‘unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind’.<sup>43</sup> These conclusions of Gandhi are subsequently reinforced by the highest scientific opinion in the world.<sup>44</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Gandhi’s concept of power is extremely relevant in the nuclear age as it is capable of suggesting an alternative to violence in the present crisis of civilization. It is especially related to the current debate in India about the question of obtaining nuclear power. There are many reasons, historic, political, economic, social, scientific and technological, against the manufacture of atomic weapons by India.<sup>45</sup> And all these objections for the acquisition of nuclear power by India are greatly supported by the overriding factors of the Gandhian legacy.

The Gandhian heritage has also a lesson for India in her external crisis. In particular, the conflict between China and India is often viewed in terms of power. In the present stalemate between China and India, it may be interesting to recall Gandhi’s comment on this issue as it presented itself in 1942. During the conversations with Louis Fischer on June 7, 1942, Gandhi evinced keen sympathy in China’s struggle. But Gandhi also added: ‘I do not want to be independent like China.... I wanted to emphasize that I do not wish to imitate China. I do not want India to be in the same predicament as China’.<sup>47</sup> This was Gandhi’s opinion even at a time when China was struggling for freedom and evoking sympathy from all the subject nations in Asia. His words have a prophetic ring now.

Gandhi’s warning to India that she should not regard China as a model has great relevance to the contemporary crisis of India. Advocacy of India’s nuclearization today is often derived from the view that an Indian bomb is the only answer to the Chinese bomb. Actually if India decides for a nuclear bomb of her own, it amounts to India’s accepting the Chinese way.

If power alone is to be met with power, it is only a meeting between the likes and it does not make for a real difference in a contest. Power

can be encountered only by its opposite which is available in non-violence. For exploring the greater potentialities of non-violence as well as meeting the challenge of power, the Gandhian concept is undoubtedly timely.

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3. See Raj Krishna, 'India and the Bomb', *India Quarterly*, Vol.21, No. 2, April-June, 1965, pp. 130-37.
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12. See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XXIII, Government of India, 1967, p. 118.
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K. SATCHIDANANDA MURTY

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## A Critique of Satyāgraha



### THE GANDHIAN PROGRAMME

WITHOUT going into details, we can say that the following were the important shaping influences on Gandhi: Christ's Sermon on the Mount as interpreted by Tolstoy reinforced Gandhi's childhood convictions, which were engendered by the Jaina environment of his native Gujarat and by the doctrines of Vaishnava saints. The impossibility of Indians ever getting the unity and the military might that will enable them to throw the British out of India, along with the success of strikes, demonstrations and mass-meetings in Britain on many occasions made him forge a weapon which can be used for driving out foreigners. The attitudes of the 'extremists' like Tilak and others, the success of boycott and passive resistance in, especially, Bengal, and Aurobin-do's doctrine of nationalism and passive resistance must also have influenced Gandhi. Moreover, the supreme merit of the weapon was that its use could be justified by invoking the Buddha, Christ and the Vaishnava saints. The writings of men like Thoreau, and the experiences and martyrdoms of the weak but spiritually strong in history which in the end converted tyrants and despots, made him conceive of a new type of political action. The Gandhian method was not that of passivity or of non-resisting acquiescence in evil. The good man does not agree with what the wicked man says, however powerful the latter may be; he does not

also do whatever he is dictated to do by men in authority; at the same time he does not fight with the evildoer. He sticks to his principles while seeing the opponent's point of view, and disagrees with the opponent without any fear. Refusal to do anything which is not in tune with his principles and convictions under any circumstances; efforts to bring about a change of heart in the opponent without in anyway injuring him—these are what the good man will resort to. In seeking to convert the opponent one must be ready for suffering, taking care to see that the opponent does not suffer. Thus to bring about the opponent's conversion one must be ready to resist evil and violence only with love and tolerance. But at the same time one can subject oneself to all sorts of sacrifices and sufferings, in order that this may be an atonement for one's own sins, and so that it may also generate a spiritual force which will make the opponent reasonable and reconciling.' It was by this kind of technique called *satyāgraha* that Gandhi energized the Indian masses. The theory underlying it was believed to be in tune with Christianity and with some of the fundamental Indian beliefs. Gandhi claimed the *Gītā* supported it. So it obtained general support both in the West and in India. It appeared to many that from the standpoint of religion and ethics there could be no criticism of it. The only general criticism of it was that it was impracticable. But after the second world war when India became free without any revolution, the prestige of Gandhian ideology and technique went up very high. The temper of the people in India, international public opinion and lack of adequate power and resources to keep India within their empire made the British withdraw from India. It was true that the influence of Gandhi made Indians more or less fearless, made the educated and vocal sections yearn for freedom, and made the British will to power weak and waver. But subsequent to independence, it satisfied the pride of some patriotic Indians to claim that the non-violent struggle for independence under Gandhi's leadership was solely responsible for the freedom of India, though the political philosophy of Locke, Burke and Mill, British traditions, the changing pattern of power politics and international public opinion were as much responsible as Gandhi for the freedom of India. However the post-partition massacres and riots in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent showed Gandhi and the world that the doctrine of non-violence had as much influence in India as Christianity in Europe and that *satyāgraha* was adopted by the majority of Indians as the only possible tactics to win independence.

## PRE-SUPPOSITIONS AND NATURE OF NON-VIOLENCE

According to Gandhi, love is the source and end of life and the law of human race. While he admits that this cannot be proved by argument, he puts forward five suggestions regarding it. (a) All great teachers have preached love. (b) If love had not been the law of life, we would have perished long ago. (c) But for the practice of it there can be no distinction between man and beast. (d) All the saints have been the living illustrations of this law of love, which is the law of our being. (e) What was possible for some men should be possible for all.<sup>1</sup> Many of the developments in science show that what was once impossible may later become possible.<sup>2</sup> Given proper training and leadership, love or non-violence (Gandhi popularized this mistranslation of *ahimsā*) can be practised by the masses.<sup>3</sup> Non-violence is not passivity, but the most active force.<sup>4</sup> It is a quality of the heart.<sup>5</sup> The alternative to non-violent resistance to aggression and oppression would be to meet it in the ordinary way, which will only show we have not gone beyond the law of the jungle.<sup>6</sup> While conquest cannot change one's heart and bring permanent peace, non-violent resistance can do so.<sup>7</sup> The effects of Non-violence are not overtly visible, but are lasting. Gandhi thinks that while the effects of the Buddha's non-violent activity still persist, that of Chengis's slaughter do not.<sup>8</sup> Non-violence involves getting rid of fear and the ability to resist. To run away from danger, or to meet danger in a violent way cannot be non-violence.<sup>9</sup> Nobody, thinks Gandhi, can practise perfect non-violence; still it can be used in politics as we do in the domestic sphere.<sup>10</sup> Non-violence is spiritual and moral; so before it even the deadliest weapons like atom bombs cannot be effective, because they are material.<sup>11</sup> A society based on non-violence will be the least governed; it will be the purest anarchy.<sup>12</sup>

The origins of non-violence are to be found (says Gandhi) in such behaviour as that of a Hindu wife who quietly submits to the suffering her husband inflicts on her, but does not bend to his will.<sup>13</sup>

## TYPES OF NON-VIOLENCE

Non-violence according to Gandhi, is of three types: (1) that which is used against constituted authority; (2) that which is applicable during internal disturbances; and (3) that which can be used against external aggression.<sup>14</sup> Of these no successful method of dealing with internal troubles like communal riots was discovered by Gandhi.<sup>15</sup> His attempts to form peace brigades for this purpose failed.<sup>16</sup> India has had some success in the first sphere; but then India's fight was



(Gandhi said) the passive resistance of the weak.<sup>17</sup> India offered such resistance not because she was unwilling to offer violent resistance, but because she was unable to do so.<sup>18</sup> India's struggle for independence was not (Gandhi admitted) unadulterated non-violence.<sup>19</sup> Her non-violent action was half-hearted, for violence was harboured in the breasts of many; practice did not conform to profession.<sup>20</sup> As non-violence was not successful even in the domestic field in India, it was not entirely successful even against constituted authority.<sup>21</sup> India, said Gandhi, has no experience of the non-violence of the strong; so she has no good example to furnish the world, and no contribution to make to the peace movement.<sup>22</sup> The technique of the unconquerable non-violence of the strong, declares Gandhi, has not yet been fully discovered.<sup>23</sup>

#### APPLICATION OF NON-VIOLENCE

The way of applying non-violent technique in international affairs has been elaborated by Gandhi in response to three problems: can it help oppressed peoples like the Jews under the Nazis? Can it help the victims of external aggression like the Abyssinians, the Czechs and the Poles, who were overrun by the Italians and the Germans? What should have Britain done in her hour of distress?

Gandhi's answers to these problems are based on the supposition that human nature is one in its essence, and responds to love. Even dictators and aggressors have the feelings of tenderness and affection, as is shown by their dealings with their families.<sup>24</sup> 'They have the same soul that I have', remarked Gandhi.<sup>25</sup> Further, a non-violent man does not depend upon the goodwill of dictators, but on God's unfailing assistance.<sup>26</sup> He cannot succeed without a living faith in God.<sup>27</sup>

#### AGAINST THE OPPRESSORS

To the oppressed peoples like the Jews, Gandhi's advice is that they must refuse to submit to discriminative treatment and should not allow themselves to be expelled from the country of their birth.<sup>28</sup> When a slave resolves not to be a slave any longer, his fetters will fall. Voluntary suffering and civil resistance (thought Gandhi) would have given the Jews an inner strength and joy, and would have settled their problem.<sup>29</sup> Gandhi recognized that all sufferers may not see the results during their life; but, he argued, neither can violence guarantee results. Non-violent resisters should have the faith that their victory would be certain if their cult survives, and that if they

die they would set an example for the future.<sup>30</sup> Even if an oppressor is not affected by non-violence, the non-violent man (said Gandhi) preserves his honour by his death.<sup>31</sup>

#### AGAINST THE AGGRESSORS

To the victims of aggression like the Abyssinians, Czechs and Poles, Gandhi's advice was that they should not offer armed resistance to the invaders, but allow themselves to be slaughtered, without shedding a drop of the aggressor's blood.<sup>32</sup> Such suffering and self-sacrifice without bitterness would melt the hearts of the invaders,<sup>33</sup> and make them retire.<sup>34</sup> Gandhi thinks that small nations have no other alternative except non-violence.<sup>35</sup> Countries like Poland would not have fared worse if they had adopted non-violence.<sup>36</sup> The smallness of a country might also be an advantage, for, Gandhi remarked, a compact disciplined nation like Czechoslovakia could have put up better non-violent resistance than a huge nation like India.<sup>37</sup> But if a big country like China were to adopt non-violence it would be bound to succeed.<sup>38</sup> When one nation invades another, according to Gandhi, there are two ways in which the victim can resist non-violently. The nation as a whole can offer itself as fodder to the aggressors' cannon.<sup>39</sup> There is a likelihood of a small nation like Poland being massacred, but they might share this fate even if they fight. The other alternative would be to yield possession of the country to the aggressors, but non-cooperate with them. They must then prefer death to submission,<sup>40</sup> and must be prepared to be broken to pieces, but not bend.<sup>41</sup> In 1940, Gandhi advised Britain to lay down her arms, and allow Hitler and Mussolini to take what they wanted, except their (Britons') souls or minds.<sup>42</sup> His argument was that possessions have nothing to do with souls, and one can keep one's possessions only so long as the world allows, so there should be no hesitation in following this course.<sup>43</sup> Britons, he suggested, should vacate their homes, if the aggressors wanted to occupy them, and allow themselves to be slaughtered if free passage was not given.<sup>44</sup> A truly non-violent man never retaliates, and has no malice towards those who bring disorder.<sup>45</sup> Gandhi believed that a new technique like this would confound all the tactics of modern warfare.<sup>46</sup>

At one time (January, 1939) Gandhi was not ready to sympathize with any nation fighting even if it be for its own defence. Thus he did not then wish for China's success, but only put his technique before her.<sup>47</sup> Later (October-November 1939) Gandhi was able to say that a war-resister can judge between two combatants and wish success to

the defenders, side with them in a non-violent manner, and give his life in saving them.<sup>48</sup>

Even when there is no personal contact between aggressors and victims, such as when a nation bombs another nation from the air, Gandhi believed that non-violence, would succeed, because (he thought) behind every activity (including bombing) there is the human heart faced by the non-violence of the strong.<sup>49</sup> Tyranny is based on the assumption that violence applied in a sufficient degree will succeed, but when it is not met by its own methods, it fails.<sup>50</sup> This is based on Gandhi's belief that an aggressor will in time be mentally and physically tired of killing non-violent resisters.<sup>51</sup>

To sum up: Gandhi thinks that the non-violence of the strong can successfully resist external aggression. Complete sincerity, faith in Non-violence and God's unfailing help are necessary for non-violent resisters.<sup>52</sup> A true non-violent resister should be unwilling to use arms and violence even if he can and has the means; he should be able to feel more courageous by laying down arms than when he uses them.<sup>53</sup> Gandhi also recognized that there must also be perfect mutual cooperation and discipline among non-resisters<sup>54</sup> and they must have a good leader.

#### GANDHIAN ASSUMPTIONS

In his advocacy and practice of non-violence Gandhi relies on two assumptions: (a) it is the law of life and the fundamental moral virtue, and (b) human beings are alike in nature, which is essentially godliness. Of these two, since Darwin it has been difficult to believe that all nature is nothing but love and cooperation; though nature does show these factors at work both in the biological and the sociological sphere. That it is a fundamental virtue which ought to be practised at all times and by all men can never be finally disproved or proved. Very great moralists like Manu and Kṛṣṇa, Aristotle and St. Thomas, Confucius and the Buddha did not think so. To think that all men are alike is to ignore psychology and common experience; there are several types of men depending both upon their birth, childhood and upbringing. It was a superstition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that man is essentially sweet and reasonable in nature, and that he will not resort to war when he progresses further. Thus Gibbon in the middle of eighteenth century asserted that, 'A philosopher may be permitted to enlarge his views, and to consider Europe as one great Republic whose various inhabitants have attained almost the same level of politeness and cultivation.

The balance of power will continue to fluctuate but partial events cannot essentially injure our general state of happiness.<sup>55</sup> In 1850 Spencer predicted: ‘As surely as there is any efficacy in educational culture, or any meaning in such terms as habit, custom, practice—so surely must the things we call evil and immorality disappear’.<sup>56</sup> In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries Dostoevski, Freud and others have rediscovered the reality and power of evil lurking in modern civilization. The two World Wars, Nazism, and Stalinism have proved their analysis. Gandhi knew very little about the power of fear and terror which could make human beings incapable of doing good in return for evil, or of doing anything at all. In *The Devil’s Share*, Denis De Rougemont has shown how the Diabolic is at work even in post-war contemporary society. Human nature cannot function in a vacuum; it develops within a social structure. But, for Gandhi, non-violence is a creed, and even if it falls he would think that it has not been operated by proper men and not that it useless.<sup>57</sup>

#### WAS GANDHI SUCCESSFUL?

Of the three types of non-violence mentioned by Gandhi, he himself had said that he had not found out how to exercise the second type; of the third type, beyond theorizing, no nation has experimented and succeeded. The Norwegian resistance began with a brief military struggle and had a chequered end due to increasing terrorism. It cannot qualify itself to be called the non-violence of the strong. With the first type of non-violence Gandhi showed much success. In South Africa his success was great, because the Indians there were a compact minority community, the ends sought for were modest, and the antagonists were democrats like Smuts. Regarding the non-violent struggle for Indian independence, he has admitted it to be the non-violence of the weak, who were unable to adopt the alternative, and has showed it to be insincere.<sup>58</sup> He has gone to the extent of saying that the internecine feuds in India in 1948 were the direct outcome of the energy set free during the thirty years’ action (i.e., the Indian struggle for independence) of the weak.<sup>59</sup> But I do not agree with this judgement. But for ‘the thirty years’ action’ and Gandhi’s influence, more blood would have flowed in 1948.

#### IS PASSIVE RESISTANCE GENUINE NON-VIOLENCE

The technique of Gandhi in South Africa was to break law and organize a mass movement to break law, without rousing feelings of vengeance and hatred either in the authorities or the oppressed

people. In India he added two more devices: strikes and boycotts of governmental institutions like law courts, offices, state colleges and foreign goods, and self-starvation. I am not sure that strikes and boycotts are non-violent, especially when they are engineered by organization and propaganda, and are not undertaken voluntarily with a conviction of the wrongs done and the remedy sought for. And, can one strike and boycott against foreign goods and institutions of constituted authority without disliking them, if not hating them? If it is possible to go on strike without dislike, is it impossible to wage war or resort to violence without a hatred? A strike, if it remains peaceful throughout, avoids physical violence, but does it avoid violent thinking? Thinking with hatred, jealousy or even dislike of another people cannot also be moral. A boycott of foreign goods is meant to provide work and wages for indigenous workers and deprive the same for foreign workers. Perhaps genuine non-violence cannot be founded on national interests, or patriotism, but only on universalism, which sees no difference between one's own nation and others. Further, do not strikes and boycotts cause great hardship and misery to the families of those who resort to them? Does not all this breed discontent, the tendency to laxity of discipline and flouting of constituted authority? Many responsible men attribute the prevalence of indiscipline, discontent and corruption in independent India to the habits of thought and action and the frustrations that were generated by the successive civil disobedience movements during the pre-independent period. Lastly, do not the devices of strikes and self-starvation give pain to the opponents' minds, if they are sensitive? Do not these rouse the feelings of fear, shame, repentance and sympathy in the minds of the opposite party? Is that non-violence? Cannot one cause mental violence? The desire to overwhelm and coerce the minds of opponents seems to have been at work in many of the Gandhian movements and fasts. To substitute the word 'move' in the place of 'coerce' may be more polite; but can one fast against another's action unless it is resented?

Persuasion and reasoning till they succeed, and the setting of a good example by one's own life and humility seem to be more in accordance with non-violence than organization of civil disobedience, boycotts and self-starvation. To exhort others to defy and humiliate themselves before opponents reveals only passion and indignation (though they may be righteous) but not equanimity and love. He who cares not for the possessions of this world and for difference in race and nation, will perhaps find it difficult to justify national

movements against either new aggressors or old oppressors. If all men can be moved and if all human nature is good, why should one despair of it and resort to movements? One's duty should be to try to convince the oppressors by reasoning and example, and convert them; one may not succeed in this life, but that would set an example, and others will take it up later; for even so-called non-violence, civil disobedience, non-cooperation may not succeed in the life-time of the first resisters. Freedom from hatred and love do not seem to fit in well with mass passive resistance.

#### IS PASSIVE RESISTANCE CHRISTIAN?

It does not seem to be correct to call passive resistance or civil disobedience Christian in spirit. The majority of the Jews of Judaea looked upon the Herodian and Roman Rule as an outrage, and some of them were ready to overthrow it by armed strike. Every few years outbreaks occurred and were suppressed. For over a century before Jesus, the Jewish mind concerned itself very much with national redemption and how it would come. The most dominant hope was that a royal leader would come, expel the Gentiles and the oppressors and establish a permanent righteous kingdom. Armed national risings such as that under Judas Maccabaeas did occur before Jesus. Now what was Jesus' reaction to this situation? He considered not only the Jews but the Gentiles as God's Children and his teaching to love even enemies included the Herodians and Romans. His judgement that it was right to pay tribute to the Emperor, and his advice that it was wise to patch up with adversaries to avoid enmity and massacres show that he wanted Israel to reconcile itself with the Roman Empire and give up vengeance and resistance.<sup>60</sup> In the light of this historical evidence of Christ's own attitude, it is perhaps too much to claim civil disobedience or passive resistance as inspired by the spirit of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was, it may be noted, not for the sake of national or worldly interests.

#### IS NON-VIOLENCE POSSIBLE IN MODERN CIVILIZATION

The two clinching arguments against non-violence as conceived by Gandhi are provided by himself. If defensive warfare is wrong, is it right to have the police, law courts and prisons? Non-resistance to evil must be not only in foreign affairs, but also in home affairs. Gandhi's answer is that a modern state based on force cannot non-violently resist internal disorder or external disorder. 'A man cannot serve God and Mammon'.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, can genuine and lasting

pacifism be based on a technological civilization which believes in fundamental restlessness, discontent with what one has, perpetual progress and constant increase in material standards of life? Are not strife and discontent implicit in the contemporary civilization itself? Gandhi's answer is honest: 'You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages.'<sup>62</sup>

Gandhi envisaged the perfect society as anarchical, where each individual is a law to himself, living peacefully and with goodwill towards all, controlling all his passion, and living by his own labour. It is a romantic ideal which attracted men like Rousseau and Ruskin and is opposed to the sort of social organization idealized by Plato in the *Republic*. Some of the great religious orders like the Buddhist Sangha, the Franciscans, etc., were motivated by impulses similar to those of Gandhi; but they at least took into account the necessity for organization and rules. Perhaps Gandhi is right in thinking that centralized finance, mass production, centralized organization of government and society, technology and planning are not conducive to peace among nations or men. Aldous Huxley at least thought that Gandhi was right.<sup>63</sup> To me it appears that the insight of Gandhi that only a decentralized rural economy, not based on machines, avoids exploitation and have violence, and that 'you have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent'<sup>64</sup> is true. Is any nation, not to speak of the whole world, ready to accept this challenge? Will it, for the sake of becoming non-violent, revert to the past, renouncing technology, industries, centralized government and law?

#### VIOLENCE AND FORCE

Men of the Gandhian way of thinking confuse two very different things with each other, namely violence and force, and also tend to think that a concealed application of force is ethically more justifiable than an open use of it. They also try to mix up the spiritual with the worldly type of activity, love with resistance for gaining material ends, (for example, to get tax abolition or the end of foreign rule), which weakens both and is bound to fail.

#### NON-VIOLENCE, A PERFECTIONIST'S DREAM

Gandhi himself has said that the reason for the lack of a genuine spirit of love in those who participated in the struggle for Indian independence was their lack of training.<sup>65</sup> Without chastity, adoption of poverty, truth and fearlessness, Gandhi held, non-violent resistance would not succeed. Use of village economy and

crafts is the pillar of *ahimsā*; and non-violence has to start at home, then extend to one's community and country. Constructive work (to rely on one's own manual labour, to simplify life, to serve the oppressed and downtrodden, to use only rural products made by hand-labour), according to him, prepares one for non-violence. But one may not, he thought, realize *ahimsā* in this life even with all this effort.<sup>66</sup> Gandhi admitted several times that men trained thus did not participate in his movements. But he justified his leading the movements on the ground that if he had waited till men of this type were developed, he might have waited till doomsday. That day might never come. So he believed it was proper on his part to have asked people to resist slavery.<sup>67</sup> On this ground it may be possible to justify armed resistance against aggression as well as punishment of evil-doers in accordance with law, as courses which are preferable to the alternatives of accepting the slavery of a foreign nation, or becoming the victims of wrong-doers in one's own community, if one has not requisite non-violent strength to resist them.

#### THE REALISTIC COMPONENT OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT

All over the world, Mahatma Gandhi is known for his advocacy of non-violence; by and large India's struggle for independence was non-violent, and the British transfer of power peaceful, 'one of the greatest acts of reconciliation in history' as President Radhakrishnan called it. But at the same time it must be remembered that Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence is neither simple nor entirely pacifist. Forty years ago Gandhi wrote that we need not eschew violence in dealing with robbers, thieves, or nations who invade India (*Young India*, September 29, 1924). Gandhi applied the principles of Non-violence to the needs of the Indian freedom struggle as conceived by him. In the first world war he recruited soldiers for the British, as he thought the sacrifice of Indian soldiers in defence of the British empire would strengthen the fight for freedom within that empire. In the second world war, he was against India's participation in it, because in the circumstances then the threat of an opposition to the British war effort would, he believed, strengthen the Indian struggle for independence; yet during certain phases of the second world war he allowed the Congress to negotiate with the British on the basis of participation in the war, though he personally kept himself aloof so that he could remain free to launch a struggle against the British if necessary. He never advocated absolute non-violence without a consideration of the circumstances, and he also realized that what



India practiced under his leadership was the non-violence of the weak, as he called it. As mentioned by Maulana Azad in his autobiography, the resolution of the Indian National Congress Working Committee passed on July 14, 1942, which must have had Gandhi's approval, implied that if the British government arrested the Congress leaders, people were free to adopt any method, violent or non-violent. The Kashmir operation in 1947 was approved by Gandhi. He also repeatedly said that while it was best to resist evil non-violently, it was better to fight than to give in from cowardice or apathy. It is better to fight with a sword, he thought, than to have a sword in one's heart. In 1946 he wrote much on Goa. Maintaining that 'in free India, Goa, the little Portuguese settlement, cannot be allowed to exist as a separate entity in opposition to the laws of the free state' *The Harijan*, June 30, 1946). He declared: 'The hands of imperialism are always dyed red' (*Op. cit.*, September 1, 1946), 'the blood of the innocent (civil resisters) will cry out from their tombs or ashes' with a voice 'more potent than that of the living' (*loc. cit.*). Finally Gandhi never hoped that non-violence would be ever accepted as a state policy; nor did he think a modern state based on force could accept it (*Satyāgraha*, p. 385; *For the Pacifists*, p. 42-4).

If one develops the realistic component of Mahatma Gandhi's teaching, it would amount to this: (1) Non-violence is good, it is great, it is the highest law. If anyone practises it absolutely and rightly, by his soul-force he would be able to prevail over all evil, hatred and injustice. If a community of men were to cultivate it, they would become the perfect society. But all this cannot be done, thought Gandhi, by men unless they practise virtues like celibacy, manual labour, non-possession, truth-speaking, etc. But no one has achieved this, and no society or state constituted as it is at present can, he realized, practise such non-violence.<sup>68</sup> (2) He preached non-violent non-cooperation with the British as a means for getting national independence; he knew the nation would not have accepted this if other means were available. Without conviction, India resorted to the non-violence of the weak in its fight for independence. India's scant respect for non-violence was exhibited in the post-partition riots after independence came, and recently.<sup>69</sup> (3) Moreover, Gandhi recognized these facts: (a) Modern states are based on force and cannot non-violently resist internal disorders or external aggression<sup>70</sup> (b) states have the right to wage defensive as well as just wars;<sup>71</sup> (c) military training and military service are duties for citizens of independent states, who enjoy the security, rights and benefits provided by their

states which are supported by their taxes,<sup>72</sup> (d) those who are disloyal to their states can be shot as that is a great crime.<sup>73</sup>

It is clear that according to Mahatma Gandhi, participation in war or resort to violence is not unjustified to win or maintain national independence, though non-violence of the brave is certainly preferable.<sup>74</sup> He did not preach ‘universal non-violence’, but ‘non-violence restricted strictly to the purpose of winning our freedom’.<sup>75</sup> Non-violence, he said, had no ‘pertinence’ if independent India was invaded; and for securing national unification, he implied, a state might use force as in Hyderabad and Junagadh.<sup>76</sup> An independent state may go in for a just war when all other methods fail, in which case its citizens have an obligation to serve it in return for the security and benefits it gave them throughout life. To sum up, a nationalist, Gandhi knew, cannot be a pacifist, and politics based on patriotism and independent states is irreconcilable with non-violence in all situations. While he held that violence is preferable to cowardice or passivity in the face of tyranny and injustice,<sup>77</sup> he was opposed to the use of force in any form and at any time to serve the ends of aggression or tyranny.

Gandhi’s was a patriotic and nationalistic view. His mission was to secure the establishment of an independent and united Indian state. He wanted truth and non-violence to be the means and bases for this.<sup>78</sup> If, however, people were not prepared or qualified to achieve this through Non-violence, they should secure it through courage, violence and even a just war, if necessary, for national independence, unity and justice were the highest values.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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60. C. J. Cadoux, *The Life of Jesus*, Pelican Books, pp. 84-5, 158-64.
61. P. 218.
62. Gandhi, *For Pacifists*, p. 101.
63. See his *Science, Liberty and Peace*; and his article in *Gandhi, Essays and Reflections on His Life and Work*, edited by Radhakrishnan, 1949.
64. *For Pacifists*, p. 101.
65. *Towards Lasting Peace*, p. 137.
66. *For Pacifists*, pp. 16-21.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 175.
68. Gandhi clearly stated non-violence cannot be built on factory civilization or an industrial society; nor is it possible in the absence of a belief in God (a self-existent, all-knowing, all-embracing living force and light). See Gandhi, *For Pacifists*, pp. 101-2, 104-5.
69. If India had possessed a sword to fight the British, said Gandhi, it would not have listened to his gospel of non-violence (quoted by M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life*, Vol. I, p. 395). Non-violence was a temporary ideal to secure India's independence. (P. F. Power, *Gandhi on World Affairs*, p. 58). India adopted only non-violence of the weak; its non-violent action was half-hearted (Gandhi, *Delhi Diary*, pp. 73, 346; *Towards Lasting Peace*, pp. 207-8). According to him, when people capable of fighting behave non-violently with self-control and voluntarily take on themselves suffering as the substitute for injury to others, that is the non-violence of the strong and the brave. Its antithesis is non-violence of the weak and the cowardly.
70. *For Pacifists*, p. 42.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 58; *Delhi Diary*, p. 40, 44-5.
72. Citations in C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, pp. 141; *For Pacifists*, p. 46, 57.
73. *Delhi Diary*, pp. 25, 37, 259.
74. Gandhi's participation in World War I, readiness to make India 'a defence theatre' against Japan in World War II if Britain liberated it, and his support of many national liberation movements, confirm this.
75. *For Pacifists*, p. 44.
76. Power, *op. cit.*, Ch. 3; *Delhi Diary*, passim; *For Pacifists*, p. 48.
77. Power, *op. cit.*, p. 39. He also believed war has 'redeeming features and admired courage and heroism' displayed in just wars. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
78. I know very well that Gandhi sometimes wrote and spoke about non-violence in absolute terms. Thus he made a few statements to the effect that he worked for truth and non-violence and not for the freedom of the country. He advised nations attacked by aggressors or groups victimized by tyrants to resist non-violently. This, he said, can be done by yielding to the aggressors' possession of everything they want, simultaneously refusing to cooperate with them and refusing allegiance to them. Another alternative for the defenders would be to offer themselves unarmed as cannon fodder to the aggressors inviting them to walk over their own corpse. If

a nation 'has one mind as also the will and the grit to defend its honour and self-respect,' it can, he said, by these methods non-violently defend itself against the whole world in arms. Such non-violence will change the aggressors' hearts and convert them. All this is the idealistic and Utopian component of Gandhi's thought, which had as much effect on anyone or any party in India as the Sermon on the Mount on Europeans.

URMILA PHADNIS

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# Gandhi and Indian States

## A Probe in Strategy



### INTRODUCTION

IN 1915 Gandhi came back from South Africa after conducting a long-drawn movement for the civic and political rights of the Indians in South Africa. Within a remarkably short time, he had emerged as an unrivalled leader of the Indian nationalist movement. From 1919 onwards he led several movements and inspired many more which were led by his stalwarts all over India. Not all the movements produced the desired results. Some were suspended and others withdrawn. Even so, they served a purpose of historic significance. More and more people were drawn into the nationalist movement; the masses had a sense of involvement and of active participation in it. The charisma of Gandhi not only evoked a popular response but what is more, his leadership was effective in channelizing this response in a purposeful manner. Gandhi succeeded to a remarkable extent in drawing the mass support for his overall objectives, namely *swarāj* and *sarvōdaya*. While *sarvōdaya* (upliftment of all) envisaged an ideal society characterized by economic self-sufficiency and political decentralization, *swarāj* (self-rule) in its broadest sense meant independence. Freedom from the British rule became an immediate objective in this context.

The attainment of this immediate goal necessitated working out a strategy the prerequisite of which could broadly be (a) an understanding of the aims and intentions of the adversary, (b) awareness of the potential and capabilities of the adversary, (c) appraisal of the possible moves and countermoves of the opponent, (d) appraisal of the capacity of the oppressed to counteract them, and (e) the effectiveness of the means to be harnessed for the purpose. Notwithstanding the ambivalence and seeming contradictions characterizing part of the voluminous writings and speeches of Gandhi, it is possible to reconstruct a coherent analysis of Gandhi's strategy *vis-a-vis* the nationalist movement.

A perusal of the studies on Gandhi shows up a scanty treatment of his attitude towards the Indian States. His writings on the subject however reveal that not only did he take full cognizance of the 'Princely India' but what is more, ascribed it a distinct place in his strategy against the British rule. This paper is an attempt to analyze Gandhi's attitude towards the Indian States with a view to assess the position they were ascribed to in the 'grand' strategy of the national leader and the impact of his policy on the Indian States' system.

#### INDIAN STATES' SYSTEM

Covering about 45 per cent of territory and 24 per cent of population of the pre-partitioned India, the Indian States presented a mosaic pattern; in terms of population and income, the States ranged from Hyderabad, with a population of 1.4 crores and an annual income of Rs. 8.5 crores to the State of Bilbari, a tiny speck too small for the map, a population of 27 and an annual income of Rs. 80.<sup>1</sup> The political status of these States *vis-a-vis* the British Government was determined by the treaties and 'sanads' which they signed with the British from time to time. Indeed, many of them had hardly any historical claim to semi-sovereign status and existed as such only because of the British. According to these agreements, the Princes while having no *locus standi* in international matters were given internal autonomy. The extent of this autonomy, however, was subject to the 'paramountcy' of the paramount power. In other words, though generally speaking, the British Government subscribed to the policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Indian states, it did interfere as and when it was politically expedient and was necessary for Imperial interests. As a result of this, the nature of polity varied from State to State and ranged from undiluted autocracies to constitutional monarchies. As late as 1924,

for instance, Lord Reading commented that the Legislative Councils in most of these States were largely ‘formal with little real influence’<sup>2</sup> and in 1930 Lord Simon reported that only 30 out of a total of 562 States had instituted ‘a form of legislative council invariably of a consultative nature’.<sup>3</sup>

#### GANDHI AND THE STATES: WHY NON-INTERVENTION?

Gandhi himself was born in an Indian State—Porbandar—and in a family which had served the ruler for generations. His father was the Prime Minister of the State and at one time, amongst all his brothers, he was deemed to be the potential successor for the premiership. Not only did this not happen but what is more, soon after his arrival from South Africa, Gandhi declined the offer from three States to settle down there.<sup>4</sup> He decided to make British India the centre of his activities.

In 1920 Gandhi was elected the President of the Congress. Soon after he revised its constitution.<sup>5</sup> The new constitution, defining Congress’ objective to be ‘*swarāj* by the people of India by all peaceful and legitimate means’ took note, for the first time, of Indian States. While permitting the formation of Congress Committees in the Indian States, the constitution, however, maintained that the inclusion of Indian States should not be taken to imply ‘any interference by the Congress with the internal affairs of such States’.<sup>6</sup> The Congress, in a separate resolution, however, requested the Princes to establish responsible governments in the States immediately.<sup>7</sup> Except for a slight shift in the Congress policy in 1928, as will be explained later, the Gandhian policy continued to be synonymous with the Congress policy.

The main planks of the Congress of Gandhian policy towards the Indian States, till 1938, were that (a) the Congress could form committees in the States but should not indulge in political activities; (b) the Congress however should urge the princes to act as the ‘trustees’ of the people, enjoying a liberal commission for their services and establishing representative governments in their respective States; and (c) the States’ people, if they felt dissatisfied with the princes’ performance, should not use either the Congress name or the organization but should form different organizations to wage their battle with the princes through *satyāgraha*, i.e., non-violent non-cooperation movement. Gandhian policy thus, stipulated that the Indian National Congress—the major political organization of the British India—should lend its moral support to the just demands



of the States' people but should refrain from giving its political support as an organization. Individual Congressmen belonging to the States could take the lead in the movements for representative governments in their respective States but they should do this in their individual capacity and not as Congressmen.

Gandhi's policy of non-intervention in the Indian States highlights certain facets of Gandhian strategy. To begin with, believing that the existing system of government was 'wholly bad...requiring special national effort to end or mend it', Gandhi concluded that 'to preach disaffection towards the existing system of government has become almost a passion with me'.<sup>8</sup> India had to be made free from the British bondage through non-violent means. Where did 'Indian India' fit into this? An answer to this was given by Gandhi, not in one statement but in bits and pieces. Writing in *Hind Swarāj* as early as 1909, Gandhi, referring to the princes, maintained that their tyranny was greater than that of the English. 'My patriotism', he continued, 'does not treat me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of the Indian princes, if only the English retire. *If I have the power*, I should resist the tyranny of Indian princes just as much as that of the English.'<sup>9</sup> Believing that the British imperialism was responsible for the perpetuation of such tyranny, Gandhi affirmed that the present princes were 'puppets, created or tolerated for the upkeep and prestige of the British power'. They were the 'British officers in Indian dress'. A Prince was in the same position as a British officer. He 'has to obey'.<sup>10</sup> Besides, the British policy of non-intervention, coupled with the unparalleled extravagance of the British rule had so 'demented' the Princes that unmindful of the consequences, they aped the British and 'ground their subjects to dust'.<sup>11</sup> This 'gigantic autocracy'—the greatest 'disproof of British democracy'<sup>12</sup> and one of the two 'arms of British imperialism'<sup>13</sup> (the other being bureaucracy) was bound to be hostile to the nationalist aims as cherished by the Congress.

As is mentioned earlier, Gandhi's constitution of the Congress comprised in its fold both the Indias. At the second Round Table Conference in London in 1931, Gandhi, as the sole plenipotentiary of the Congress, reaffirmed that the Congress represented 'in its essence, the dumb, semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its 7,00,000 villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India or what is called Indian India'.<sup>14</sup> And yet, in a query from the president of the All India States' People's Conference, N. C. Kelkar, Gandhi maintained as late as

1934, that the Congress should continue to pursue its policy of non-intervention in the Indian States.

Gandhi's policy took into consideration various factors—political, legal as well as constitutional. Legally, the States were 'independent' entities and the British India had no power to attempt to shape their administration than it had, for instance, of Ceylon or Afghanistan. The autocratic rule of the Princes in some of the States was well known and it was understood that 'Indian India' had not only its own might to suppress any movement for democratic rights but had also the backing of the Imperial government. Notwithstanding this support, apparently, while the nationalist struggle in British India was a direct confrontation against the British domination, a movement for the grant of fundamental rights to the State's people amounted to an indirect confrontation with the British power. In effect, it could also be interpreted as one part of India fighting the other. The launching of this movement by the Indian National Congress could still be justified on moral and political grounds. Congress in its constitution envisaged to represent India as a whole and Gandhi reiterated this in his speeches. The just right of the States' people anywhere in India (even outside India) needed redress and demanded Congress' support but this brought in its wake two pertinent questions: at this stage, when the Indian National Congress had still to entrench itself in British India, was it expedient for the British Indian people to initiate the movement in Indian States against the Princes? Was the time opportune? And more important than even the first question was—was the Indian National Congress strong enough to man effectively the struggle on two fronts which though politically and geographically indivisible, had different legal status Gandhi's reply to both the questions was in the negative.

Pondering on the question in 1920s Gandhi maintained that at the juncture when people in British India had just begun their battle against the British rule, any interference in the affairs of the States would only betray their 'impotence'. Congress, had to solidify itself in British India first before it could think of operating on the other front—the 'Indian India'. At the juncture, Gandhi felt, the Congress had neither the organization nor the trained personnel to open the second front. Besides, a pertinent point in the context was as to whether the States' people themselves were ready for the popular movement. No mass movement could be launched unless and until the people of the area themselves were prepared for it. The uneven

development in the States posed further problems in this context. All the States could not be measured by the same yardstick. As such, a uniform policy, even conceived, could be least effective.

In these circumstances what the Congress could immediately do was not to start a political movement in Indian States but to encourage the launching of its constructive-socio-economic programme—in the States. Congress Committees could be established in the States. British India could be the training ground for the States' leaders who, after being initiated in the nationality movement in British India, could build up the popular organizations in the States and thereby in due course could prepare the mass base. The onus of mass movement within the States, in order to be effective, had to come from the States' people. Congress could step in as and when it thought that could effectively do so. The advice against launching a struggle on two fronts simultaneously at this juncture was, however, not borne out of indifference and 'lack of will' on the part of Congress but was due to its 'want of ability an opportunity'. 'Prudence', Gandhi remarked, 'therefore, dictates inaction where action would be waste of effort if not folly'.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Congress could help the 'Indian India' by being stronger and stronger in the British India.

Speaking in the Kathiawar Political Conference as early as 1925, Gandhi stated that 'to the measure that the Congress becomes powerful and efficient to that measure also is levelled up the condition of the subjects of the State. The moral pressure of the Congress must be felt all over the country either directly or indirectly.' Gandhi further believed that if one component India could succeed in becoming self-governing 'all will be well'. British India had to lead in this context; the liberation of British India spelt the liberation of Indian India. Gandhi hoped that 'when the auspicious day of the freedom of British India arrives, the relation of ruler and ruled in the Indian States will not cease but will be purified. *Swarāj* as conceived by me does not mean the end of kingship.'<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, however, Gandhi made it clear that this process of 'purification' need not wait liberation of British India. Congress could expedite and hasten the process, without however eliminating the States' system, if it had the strength and ability to do so.

#### GANDHI, CONGRESS AND THE STATES' PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Gandhi's policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the Indian States was not just the opinion of an individual but was the official policy of the Congress till 1938 of which he remained the political

philosopher as much as the undisputed leader. The quality of a leader is not simply in expounding a policy: that might impart him the position of political philosopher but not that of a leader. A leader had to have the ability to lead his lieutenants and followers. Gandhi seemed to be a born leader in this context.

Technically, Gandhi was out of the Congress in 1934; he was not even a ‘four anna member’ and yet he was very much in it as well as above it. His ‘advice’ was sought virtually on every issue and though there were occasional murmurs, it tended to be a dictum. He himself lost no opportunity of giving his comments on every issue. All the possible communication media were used by him, as much to state his viewpoint as to convince his opponents and dissentients. This was done at different levels. Prayer meetings were meant not merely to recite the verses from the holy books but were also a forum to communicate his views to the masses. Interviews were another such channel. Gandhi’s correspondence remained ever heavy, necessitating his using of both hands for replying to the letters. Discussions with individuals or with groups of persons were always welcome and last but not least, for moulding the opinion of the English knowing elite *Young India*, to be replaced by *The Harijan* in 1930s appeared regularly. Apart from providing the guide lines to the people, the editor-leader also used the journal for provoking controversies, for eliciting the opinions of others on the problems of the day. These viewpoints—when necessary—were followed by Gandhi’s comments. His ideas, often thrown as comments and intended to mould men and events, though firm, were persuasive and portrayed him more as man of action than that of ideas only. Gandhi’s comments on the States reflected this more than once. Speaking on the Indian States in 1938 Gandhi said: ‘People say that I have changed my view, that I say today something different from what I said years ago. The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same. My words and deeds are dictated by prevailing conditions. There has been a gradual evolution in my environment and I react to it as a Satyāgrahi.’<sup>18</sup> His reaction to a given situation not only indicated a sense of realism in his approach but also imparted it a certain amount of resilience and flexibility. This flexibility remained one of the secrets of his success as a leader.

In the Congress session of 1939, one of the Congressmen described the role of Gandhi thus—‘Mahatma Gandhi occupies the same position among Congressmen as that held by the leadership

of Mussolini among Fascists, Hitler among Nazis and Stalin among Communists. The Congress, as at present constituted, is the creation of the Mahatma. The various struggles for independence...were started, carried out and terminated in accordance with his dictates. True, the Mahatma has no place assigned to him in the written constitution of the Congress, but who will deny that a practice has grown up to elect as the Congress president the person upon whom Mahatma's choice falls.... In brief he is all in all in the Congress'.<sup>19</sup> We have the testimony of another Congressman, Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya who remarked that Gandhi was 'the one consultant on all States' matters'.<sup>20</sup> Was this an overestimate of Gandhi's position?

The proceedings of the Congress as well as the stray writings on the subject clearly indicate that there were many who did not agree with his policy. What was remarkable was that though the dissentients did not agree, Gandhi succeeded in obtaining their acquiescence on the question. He led the troops and though some did murmur they all obeyed. Besides, Gandhi's flexible approach towards issues left enough scope for a drift, if necessary. A brief resume of the Congress policy towards the States and Gandhi's role therein will perhaps illustrate many of the points mentioned above.

As has already been mentioned, the 1920 Congress policy, formulated by Gandhi hinged on three points: (a) assertion of the position of Congress as an all-India body without interfering in the internal affairs of the States, (b) sympathy with the democratic aspirations of the States' people, (c) beseeching the Princes to be the trustees. These points in reality tended to contravene each other. Most of the Princes did not seem to be in a mood to oblige either Gandhi or the Congress. Yet, Congress decided to give them quite some time to introduce democratic reforms. The Congress reaffirmed the position in 1927<sup>21</sup> and again the following year but in 1928 a significant change was brought about. On the recommendation of the Subjects Committee the clause in Congress constitution (which stood against Congress intervention in Indian States) was deleted. Presumably this move was initiated by the members of the All India States' People's Conference—an organization which had come into being in 1927 and whose leaders were active Congressmen. The All India States' People's Conference members proved to be the greatest antagonists of the Congress policy of non-intervention and maintained that it should at any rate take the responsibility of political organization in the States as it claimed to be an all-India

body. That they scored this point is evident from the fact that in the revised constitution of 1934 this clause stipulating non-intervention in the internal affairs of the States did not appear.

This deletion (which was not in consonance with Gandhi's policy on the subject) did not however seem to serve the purpose of the protagonists of the interventionist policy. Gandhi, as the sole emissary of the Congress in the second Round Table Conference clearly stated that the Congress had endeavoured to serve the Princes by 'refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs'.<sup>22</sup> Soon after, in reply to a letter from N. C. Kelkar, Gandhi reiterated his stand. Apart from the queries which were pertinent, Kelkar's letter threw light on Gandhi's position *vis-a-vis* the Congress, 'since in the final determination of the Congress policy on these points your personal views play such a *decisive part*'.<sup>23</sup> The president of the All India States' People's Conference, therefore, was anxious to know his views on the subject. Gandhi's reply showed that he had so far stuck to his 1920 stand—the Congress policy of non-intervention was wise and sound; intervention could damage the cause of the people and there was still a hope of princes taking pride in becoming trustees of the people at a later date.

Gandhi-Kelkar correspondence was published in July 1934. Soon after, in a long press statement, Congress president Dr Rajendra Prasad stated Congress' 'traditional' attitude of friendliness towards Indian States and of non-intervention with their administration.<sup>24</sup> Lest such a statement be interpreted as the Congress succumbing to the Princes' pressure, the Congress also repeated that it would never be guilty of sacrificing the States' people in order to 'buy' the support for Princes. While declaring that States' people had to initiate their own battle, the Congress assured the States' people's movement its moral and friendly support. It reaffirmed this position in its Lucknow session in 1936.

The Congress' stand in 1936, though fundamentally the same as in 1920 was more positive. This was understandable; apart from the States' peoples pressure within the Congress, the radicals within the Congress particularly the Congress Socialists sharply disagreed with Gandhi on this subject. They were however in a minority in 1936. The official stand remained identical to that of Gandhi's.

In 1937, the popular rebellion within the States began. It sparked in Mysore which, in certain respects was even more developed than the British India. The State Congress opposed the ruler on certain issues and the agitation became political. Mysore State Congress

suffered the royal repression and the Congress flag was insulted. The AICC reacted with alacrity and adopted a resolution in Calcutta in October 1937 protesting against the ruthless policy of the ruler of Mysore, sending its 'fraternal greetings to the Mysore people' and wishing them success. It further appealed to the British India and other Indian States to 'give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in their struggle against the State for right of self-determination'.<sup>25</sup>

The AICC resolution indicated the dilemma of the Congress' stand on the Indian States. It was obvious that Congress could not afford to follow a policy of non-intervention, and at the same time pledge its support to the States' people. Presumably, the AICC stand was taken in the background of the formation of the Congress ministries in the adjoining provinces of the British India which meant that in case of the States seeking any support from the British India, the Congress ministries could hamstring this. Evidently, according to some, the opportune time for Congress intervention had come.

Gandhi however did not share this view. To him the AICC had been emotional and rash in passing such a resolution which was '*ultra vires* of the resolution of non-interference'.<sup>28</sup> The AICC should have ascertained facts regarding the state of affairs before adopting the resolution. Apart from his comments on the AICC resolution no statement seems to have appeared but the proceedings of the Congress in 1937-38 make it obvious that the protagonists of Gandhi's policy within the Congress argued his case ably. In the Haripura session which was held in February 1938, the protagonists maintained that only 15 States had Congress Committees and they were also like toys—organizations in name only. Congress could not bear the burden of States' people's fight. Some of the members went even a step further and advocated scrapping of the Congress Committees in the States. This position however was not acceptable to the majority but nor was it Gandhi's stand either.

What is of great significance about Haripura resolution is the fact that though, in effect, it was not a fundamental departure from the traditional Congress policy, it definitely showed a marked shift in emphasis; Congress did not talk any more of urging the Princes to grant self-government. On the other hand, it deplored the 'present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and suppression of civil liberties in many of these States'. While considering its 'right and privilege to work for the attainment of this objective in the States' the Congress again expressed its inability to work effectively

to this end within the States. The ‘inability of the Congress to give protection or effective help when hopes have been raised, produces helplessness in the people of the States and hinders the development of their movement for freedom’. The Congress, therefore, directed that for the present, Congress Committees in the States should work under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee without engaging themselves either in parliamentary activity or launching ‘direct action in the name of and under the auspices of the Congress’.<sup>27</sup>

Gandhi’s comments on the Haripura resolution were revealing. He did not seem to be in favour of the formation of Congress Committees in the States but was willing to be conciliatory on this point. In his comment however he made a significant point: ‘Whenever the Congress can effectively help the State people it would do so not by actively meddling with their affairs but by acting as an intermediary’.<sup>28</sup> Congress had succeeded in playing this role at Mysore. This however again seemed to be an interim measure because, soon after, in a press interview in January 1939, Gandhi who had been commending the States’ people for non-violent struggle during 1937-38 made it clear that as and when necessity arose, Congress could intervene. ‘The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion, a perfect piece of statesmanship when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-round awakening among the people of the States and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights. If once this is recognized, the struggle for liberty wherever it takes place, is the struggle for all India. Whenever the Congress thinks it can usefully intervene, it must intervene.’<sup>29</sup>

In October 1938, Gandhi had already given the guidelines to the Congress. Examining the implications of the policy of non-intervention followed by the Congress in the past, Gandhi emphatically maintained that this policy was ‘never regarded as a principle. It was a limitation imposed on itself by the Congress for its own sake and that of the people of the States...’.<sup>30</sup> The resolution adopted in the February 1939 session of the Congress at Tripuri seemed to echo the spirit of these statements of Gandhi despite his absence from the Congress session.

After reaffirming its solidarity with the States’ people in their just demands for democratic rights, the Congress resolution maintained ‘the Haripura policy was conceived in the best interests of the people



in order to enable them to develop self-reliance and strength. This policy was dictated by circumstances and by a recognition of the limitations inherent in the circumstances, but it was never conceived as an obligation. The Congress has always possessed the right, as it is its duty to guide the people of the States and lead them with its influence. The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation or to the complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever-increasing identification of the Congress with the States' people.' The Congress further reiterated that its objective, i.e., complete independence was, for the whole of India 'inclusive of the States' which were 'integral parts of India, which cannot be separated and which must have the same measure of political, social and economic freedom as the rest of India.'<sup>31</sup>

The strategy of working on one front and simultaneously attempting to strengthen the other had borne fruit. Popular awakening had begun in the States. The popular movements in Travancore, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Nilgiri, Talcher, Dhenkanal, and several other States seemed to be a relay action—one almost following the other.

While the movements varied in intensity and strength from State to State, by and large, they were rooted in certain grievances as well as aspirations of the people and were both economic and political in character. Besides demanding the rule of law, freedom of association and speech as well as other constitutional reforms such as the establishment of elected governments, they also pressed for the redressal of economic grievances. Though in certain cases the movement was mostly confined to urban areas, in others it was essentially agrarian in character and was based on peasants' economic demands such as the reduction of land revenue and rent and was manned by the village folk in large numbers. In some cases the movement was led by local people who hardly had any previous political experience, although in others it was inspired by those who had participated in the civil disobedience movement and were inspired by the Gandhian spirit. While some of them could claim the able leadership of persons like Vallabh Bhai Patel and Jamnalal Bajaj almost from the start, in other, leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya Kripalani intervened when occasion demanded. The most notable case of such intervention was the memorable fast of Gandhi at Rajkot in 1938. In some cases the movements were constitutional; in others the people had to resort to civil resistance

and civil disobedience. If in States like Travancore and Hyderabad, the agitation had to be suspended on Gandhi's advice (for, while in the former, violence was resorted to, in the latter it became communal in character) in others the princes yielded to popular pressure in varying degrees.<sup>32</sup>

With the support of the people from within, the battle against the British could now be waged by the Congress on both the fronts under the leadership of Gandhi.<sup>33</sup> In the 1939 session of the All India States' People's Conference, Jawaharlal Nehru, obviously with Gandhi's blessings, was unanimously elected as its president. In due course Nehru was to be at the helm of the political negotiations with the British and simultaneously he continued to be the president of the All India States' People's Conference till it was merged in the Indian National Congress when India became free.

The gradually increasing identification of the All India States' People's Conference and the Indian National Congress thus culminated in the former submerging its identity with the latter under the leadership of one who had as much belonged to a State as to the British India. The events during 1947-48 vindicated the effectiveness of the Gandhian policy; Congress organization in the States could neither be suppressed nor be ignored by the rulers when the question of accession came and where the ruler demurred or tried to go against the wishes of the people, there was trouble. Political workers who emerged out of this movement provided the cadre for leadership in their respective areas when India became independent.

#### GANDHI AND THE PRINCES

In the post-1939 era, Gandhi's speeches on Indian States mostly dealt not with the duties of the people but with those of the Princes. In his significant speech of 1925 to the Kathiawar Political Conference, the emphasis was as much on the rights as on the duties of the Princes and the people. The people, during 1937-38 had shown that they were ready to use *satyāgraha* as a weapon to fight for their rights. The Princes were yet to be tackled for their appropriate role in the India of the future. Gandhi declared that the Princes could be sadly mistaken if they thought that they could survive as autocrats and as faithful allies of the British power. India could not be kept a slave country for all the times to come. Once it was ready for freedom, neither the British nor the Princes nor any combination of forces could keep it away from attaining her destined goal. Once the British power was withdrawn from India, it was impossible to keep the two

Indias separate. Nor could undemocratic rule prevail anywhere in a democratic India.<sup>34</sup> The Princes therefore had to see the writings on the wall and behave accordingly.

Believing that there was no half way house between autocracy and total extinction of the Princes, Gandhi maintained that, if the Princes did not become trustees of their people on their own accord, force of circumstances would compel the reform unless they courted utter destruction.<sup>35</sup> If the Princes did not act in accordance with the times, their future might be even more uncertain. 'It is my duty to warn the Princes', reiterated Gandhi 'that if they act while I am still alive, the Princes may come to occupy an honourable place in free India. In Jawaharlal Nehru's scheme of free India, no privileges or privileged classes have a place.... He likes to fly; I do not. I have kept a place for the Princes and zamindars in India that I envisage. I would ask the Princes in all humility to enjoy through renunciation'.<sup>36</sup>

What did Gandhi mean by saying that he had 'kept a place' for the Princes in India that he envisaged? Did he wish to retain all the 562 States? In his long commentary on Jaya Prakash Narayan's blue print for free India, Gandhi maintained that in his own picture of free India, the big States would retain their status.<sup>37</sup> This however did not mean that they became independent. The intransmissibility of paramountcy was a vicious doctrine. All the powers enjoyed by the British in India had to devolve on the successor government. The princes under the new regime could enjoy only such powers as were given to them by the Constituent Assembly.<sup>38</sup> As regards the smaller States, in his talk with some of the rulers of the Deccan States (who were thinking of forming a Deccan States' Union) in 1946-47, Gandhi asked them not to do anything in a rush but to leave the problems of future integration of the States to the Constituent Assembly where representatives of both the Indias could discuss and evolve the constitution of free India.

Partition of India raised another problem. What criteria were the States to follow to accede to India or Pakistan? Gandhi's answer came unhesitatingly: Let the people decide. It was the people's will which mattered. It was on this plea that he supported accession of Junagarh and Kashmir to India.<sup>39</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In retrospect, Gandhi's attitude towards the Indian States reflected strategy he adopted for the development of a broad-based national movement. The success of the nationalist movement lay in mobilizing

all possible opposition to the British. In this context, Gandhi seemed to be fully aware of the constraints within which he was working. He seems to have been aware that, if cornered, the princes who were the strong arm of imperialism were bound to identify themselves more closely with the British which in fact most of them did. Even so, Gandhi feared that by antagonizing the Princes, the capitalists and the zamindars, there might be a blurring of the basic objective of India's struggle for freedom and might result in a split in the united front which he was striving to develop against the British. Not that Gandhi did not realize that the States system could not be mended *in toto*. But as a shrewd political leader, he wanted to win as many to his side as was possible. His victory in this context had a logical corollary of weakening British imperialism. Besides, had he not tried to give the Princes all the opportunity to join the mainstream of national struggle? Friendly advice was followed by persuasion. Warning was given at a later stage. If the Princes did not see the writing on the wall, the responsibility for self-destruction lay on their shoulders.

Gandhi's strategy towards the Indian States not only envisaged the weakening of the British rule in India but it was also a critical appraisal of the capability of the Indian National Congress *vis-a-vis* the States. His policy, born out of realism, took into account the fact that in a country steeped in political apathy, the masses had to be awakened and organized. Gandhian strategy, though not his means, thus seemed to be identical with that of a leader of a revolution. Revolution, if imported from British India, might be abortive if not initiated from within, specially in view of the constitutional status of the States. The States' people, in order to be emancipated, had to take the initiative. Ground was prepared for this in the Indian States and it was only when the time was opportune that the Congress discarded its non-interventionist policy.

Looking back, the logic of Gandhi's policy reveals itself and the apparent contradictions reconciled themselves. If Congress would have made an attempt to launch its battle for freedom on two fronts at an early stage, it is possible that the entire movement would have been nipped in the bud. Once an awakening had taken place in the States and the popular movement started in several States almost simultaneously, it was difficult for the Princes to repress them, specially when the Congress ministries were functioning in many of the adjoining provinces.

The socio-political implications of Gandhi's strategy towards

the States had far-reaching implications. Notwithstanding the uneven development in the States, Indian India was gradually being prepared for a democratic form of government. In states where the political development had already taken place, such movements made people more politically articulate and responsive to the nationalist movement. Democratic values were given an impetus to some extent. In States where the development had not taken place to such an extent, a beginning was made. Last but not least, the popular movements in the Indian India provided the cadre for future political leadership in these areas.

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P. GOVINDA PILLAI

## Gandhi vs. the Duumvirate



FOR three decades Mahatma Gandhi strode the Indian scene like a giant. A study and understanding of this historic phenomenon is an absolute necessity if one is to know anything of modern and contemporary India. But as we delve deeper into this rich and varied history of our country, this giant who dominated the arena for so long eludes easy definition or categorization or assessment. I am leaving for the present the attempts at deifications indulged in by those who are dumbfounded by the magnificence and inscrutabilities of the phenomena of Gandhi and resort to the easy course of worshipping at his altar and lose themselves in ecstasies of extremes. I would confine myself to the problem faced by those who try to assess him from a so-called left angle.

For long it had been usual in left circles to indentify Gandhi with the conservative and right wing in the nationalist movement in general and Indian National Congress in particular. Gandhi's revivalist proclivities and opposition to modern science and technology certainly afford the ideological basis for such categorization. Gandhi's practice of class collaboration which naturally follows from his famous 'Trusteeship' theory of the capitalist-labour relations and reformist attitude to the problem of depressed classes in India, etc., are certainly points one cannot ignore in this respect. His organizational identification with 'no-changers' as against the

Swarājists in early twenties, the role he played thwarting the socialist resurgence in the thirties and his open association with the right wing in their challenge to the militant nationalism of Subhas Bose in the thirties are supposed to show not only his ideological affinities but organizational commitments, in favour of the Right. The avowed rightists in Congress like Rajagopalachari, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Kripalani and others received not only spiritual sustenance but also organizational protection from the benevolence of the Mahatma. Gandhi was able to swim against the rising tide of militant nationalism by withdrawing the struggle after Chawri Chowra, signing the Gandhi-Irwin pact and launching the individual *Satyāgraha* in the early twenties, thirties and forties, respectively, because of the staunch and even blind support of these right wing stalwarts. These and many other factors came in handy for those who adopt the easy course of dumping him in the rightist landwagon and finishing the job there.

But there are certain factors which challenge such easy and dogmatic categorizations and assessments. For the purpose of this paper I am confining myself to one phase, incidentally the last phase, of Gandhi. During this phase Gandhi took certain positions which had more in common with the left wing outside Congress than with either the left or right in Congress. The difference between right and left in Congress during those days was blurred and both tended to coalesce. I also think that Gandhi's role in these two or three crucial years summarize his entire career, views, failure and victories, I am more reporting here than commenting or analysing.

On 14-15 August 1947 at the dead of night Jawaharlal Nehru's famous words rang: 'When the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.' We had a 'Tryst with Destiny' he said. When the hated union jack slithered down the mast and the tricolour rose triumphantly at that dawn of freedom, the millions of this ancient land worked themselves to an ecstasy of fulfilment at the impassioned oratory of Jawaharlal Nehru. The galaxy of veteran leaders who were 'out of dust made into men' by the magic wand of the Mahatma, flanked to the left and right of Jawaharlal. Many did not realize at that moment the significant absence at rostrum of one man, 'Gandhi'. But a few realized, and among them were the Duumvirs of the late forties of Indian history, Nehru and Patel. Gandhi did not come and did not even condescend to send a message. Gandhi's biographer says: There were festivities all over the land. But the man who, more than anyone else has been responsible for freeing



India from alien rule did not participate in these rejoicings. When an officer of the Information and Broadcasting department of the Government of India came for a message, Gandhi replied that 'he had run dry'. When told again that if he did not give any message, it would not be good, Gandhi replied: 'There is no message at all, if it is bad, let it be so !' (Tendulkar, *The Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, 1st. edn. pp. 95-6).

Gandhi gave poignant expression to his disappointment again and again before he met his martyrdom. Four days before he was murdered, he said on his last Republic Day:

'Now! We have handled it (Independence) and we seem to be disillusioned. At least I am, even if you are not'. (*Ibid.*, p. 338)

As a matter of fact, Gandhi's disappointment and anguish began quite some time before the dawn of independence. With his unerring political realism and sensitive fingers on the pulse of the people, Gandhi sensed the holocaust of communal fury and distinction that was to accompany freedom. He was sceptical about the outcome of the negotiations between the British representatives and Indian leaders. He opposed the partition of India. It was not because of any animosity towards Muslims, as in the case of Akhand Hindustanis, but because he thought it was a cure worse than the disease. He even advocated handing over power entirely to Muslim League if that could save India from communal war. Gandhi's epic trek in Noakhali and his final fast and the heroic fight he put up with Sardar Patel and Congress Cabinet to pay up the treasury balances to Pakistan prove beyond doubt his honourable intentions towards the Muslim community in India and the Muslim state that was newly formed.

It is true that the religious and ethical overtones that Gandhi gave to his political pronouncements and style in a way indirectly affected the secularism of Indian politics. But Gandhi, subjectively, was never a party to the communalism and sectarianism. In that connection we have to demarcate him from the Extremists of the early decades of this century like Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh and others. As a perspicacious author observes:

'In spite of the similarity between these broad statements made by Gandhi and the Extremists there were many differences between him and the latter. While the extremist leaders maintained that they were primarily inspired by *Bhagvadgītā* and other Hindu religious texts, Gandhi acknowledged his indebtedness to the scriptures of other religions also.

'Gandhi's attempt to blend religion, morals and politics was aimed at making

an appeal to the masses of Indian people as a whole and not to a particular sect or community. Another of his objectives was to give the movement a unique sense of self-discipline which was necessary for the success of non-violent non-cooperation movement on a national scale. Gandhi's concept of the role of religion in politics was more broad-based than that of the Extremists. He rarely made use of such terms as "Hindu nation" and "Hindu solidarity". But many of his expressions such as 'Rām Rājya' had an appeal only to the Hindu masses; his programme and utterances, however, never antagonized the Muslim masses during 1916-21' (K. P. Karunakaran, *Continuity and change in Indian Politics*, pp. 138-9).

The limitations of nationalist politics and its assumptions coupled with the intricacies of Indian situation and manoeuvring of the alien rulers during the next decades certainly cut adrift the Muslim community from the mainstream of Indian struggle. But Gandhi's name and personality attracted the confidence and affection of Muslim masses in the crucial years for the transfer of power and translation. But he did not have the magic and power which he wielded with phenomenal effect during those early years 1916 to 1921. He was at the fag end of his career, and it was too late. He was between Scylla of separatist Muslim communalism and the Charybdis of power politics personified in his two beloved disciples, Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru.

The former was famed for his political and organizational attachment to him, the latter for his spiritual affinity and ultimate obedience, in spite of ideological gulf. But both united from the left and right to oppose their mentor and leader at the most crucial moment in India's history. Nehru's political biographer writes:

'Nehru's crucial role in the great decision (Partition) is confirmed by many who witnessed and participated in the momentous events of the spring and summer of 1947. On the Congress side it was he and Patel who carried the party in favour of Partition, however reluctantly. In a sense Nehru was the decisive member of the triangle of Congress leaders, for while Patel controlled the machine he could never have won the majority in favour of the Mountbatten Plan, had Nehru opposed and stood by Gandhi. By supporting Patel, Nehru tilted the Congress balance in favour of division of country. By that time they were the two dominant figures in the Congress, Gandhi having been pushed to the periphery in terms of decision-making. It was ironic that, having followed him faithfully for almost thirty years, with very few exceptions, Nehru and Patel should have broken with the master on the most significant issue affecting India in modern history.' (Michael Brecher, *Nehru, A Political Biography*, p. 375)

But the 'irony' is only apparent not real. The inexorable laws of political and social evolution asserted at a crucial moment in history,

when the question of power was placed on the agenda for immediate decision. The rising ruling-class leadership now personified in the duumvirate of Nehru and Patel, did not wish to take a risk. Any gambling for higher stakes might result in riding a slippery path.

Gandhi's solution seemed to them such a path. Brecher continues:

'Gandhi was heartbroken by the decision. However, he did not attempt to challenge his disciples. Apparently the Mahatma favoured a final resort to civil disobedience.... Patel and Nehru were firmly opposed to another mass campaign'. (*Ibid.*, pp. 375-6).

Here we see the great divide in Congress history—from broad mass politics to narrow class politics. Thus the Gandhi era came to a close even before his illustrious life did. The Duumvirate of early years of Independence took absolute command and the politics thereafter, even after the exit of one of the duumvirs in 1950 never lost its indelible stamp.

A strong critic of Gandhi pays this tribute to Gandhi's role during that phase:

'It is characteristic of Gandhi, that while all his lieutenants were celebrating attainment of complete Independence, he was more concerned with the instability of the newly created Indian state than feeling happy at its formation. While the other leaders of the Congress were acclaiming the transfer of power as the triumph of Indian national movement under their leadership, he made it his job to draw peoples' attention to the two main sources of India's political instability: *first*, the strained relations between Hindus and Muslims, which, in its turn led to strained relation between the two newly-created states of India and Pakistan; and *secondly*, the decay degradation inside the Congress organization.' (E. M. S. Namboodripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism*, p. 111).

Even after twenty years of freedom, the maladies India suffers from can be traced to these two factors. It goes to the credit of Gandhi that only he could perceive with clear insight in those formative years the shape of things to come.

As on the question of Hindu-Muslim and India-Pakistan relations Gandhi's advice on Congress reorganization also was rejected by his disciples. Gandhi's famous draft for reorganization of the Congress advised its dissolution as political body and the reorganization of it as a Lok Sevak Sangh.

After twenty years of freedom we see the communal problem still alive, aggravated further in the form of tribal revolts and other centrifugal tendencies. Indo-Pakistan relation is still where it was,

if not worse. The Congress organization which has outlived its purpose, and unable to fulfil its professed role, is facing a forced disintegration, breaking-up into shambles with none else to fill up the vacuum. As a result of all these, India's future is hanging in the air, national stability and strength still eluding our grasp.

Gandhi's solutions may be controversial, but his diagnosis was perfect. His solution of a mass civil disobedience, as mass movement to shape out heart's desire, and his opposition to compromises under extraneous pressure and the lure of immediate power seem sound.

Gandhi's idea of a mass movement certainly has its limits. As a matter of fact this limitation is sought to be covered up by a lack of clarity and a sort of mystic aura around the concept of Satyāgraha. Pattabhi Sitaramayya said:

'Mass civil-disobedience was the thing that was luring the people. What was it? What would it be? Gandhi himself never defined it, never elaborated it, never visualized it even to himself' (*History of the Indian National Congress*).

Subhash Bose criticized Gandhi's methods of mass struggle as a means to power:

'Either he did not want to give out all his secrets prematurely or he did not have a clear conception of the tactics whereby the hands of the Government could be forced.' (*The Indian Struggle 1920-34*).

Nehru too shared the views of the critics:

'Gandhi was delightfully vague on the subject, and he did not encourage clear thinking about it either' (*Autobiography*).

But out of all these mystic and delightful vagueness one thing stands out: Gandhi's struggles are often a prelude to compromises and so necessarily must confine themselves to well-defined contours drawn by the leader. Even on the eve of transfer of power, when Gandhi visualized the need of a movement, he did not think it expedient to encourage post-war upsurges like the RIN revolt and Postmen's strike.

In spite of this, there is evidence to show that Gandhi after 1942 was certainly different from Gandhi after Chawri Chawra and Gandhi of Gandhi-Irwin Pact, and Gandhi of individual *satyāgraha* days. The violence of the Quit India movement did not deter the leader and he did not condemn the people as was his wont. On the contrary, he put the blame squarely on the authorities who unleashed

'leonine violence'. It is interesting to note that he even foresaw such possibilities.

On the eve of 1942 struggle, Gandhi had a conversation with the American journalist Lius Fischer. Gandhi talked of mass struggle of peasants and even forcible seizure of zamindar's land. It is recorded thus:

'With violence?' Mr. Fischer asked.

'There may be violence', Gandhi replied, 'but then again, landlords may cooperate.'

'You are optimist', Mr. Fischer remarked.

'They might cooperate by fleeing', Gandhi said.

'Or', Mr. Fischer said, 'they might organize violent resistance'.

'There may be fifteen days of chaos', Gandhi said, 'but I think we would soon bring that under control'.

As E. M. S. Namboodripad says: 'We would, however, be wrong from this to conclude that Gandhi had visualized a real revolutionary struggle of the people', for he did not care to make any preparations for such a struggle. Still we can see that as days passed by, unlike his colleagues who became tired and conservative, Gandhi kept his fire burning, brighter and brighter. This attitude of Gandhi was quite different from that of his younger colleagues and disciples. Brecher was correct when he described the mental climate of the leaders like Nehru and Patel at the time of transfer of power:

'For those who have been in opposition most of their political life, the prize of power is tempting. The Congress leaders had already tasted its fruits and were naturally reluctant to part with it at the moment of triumph' (*op. cit.*, pp. 378-9).

Hence they parted company with their preceptor and satisfied themselves with worshipping at his altar and singing his praises rather than follow his path. The result was disaster, though not immediate sure, slow and corroding.

We have seen that the most effective undoing of Gandhi's plan was the work of Nehru, whom he affectionately designated his successor. But Gandhi's quarrel with Patel in those days was fierce, though mostly behind the scenes. Patel was all along a tower of strength to Gandhi from the days of Barodoli Satyāgraha which crowned him the Sardar. He was a pliant but effective tool in Gandhi's hands for

his headlong clashes with rebels like C. R. Das and later Subhash Bose and Nariman—militant nationalists and socialists in general. On the Hindu-Muslim question Gandhi and Patel were poles apart, and the bellicose stand of Patel cut Gandhi deep. On the question of payment of balances to Pakistan the relation between the teacher and disciple became very strained. Gandhi had to undertake a fast not against aliens or the sin of the masses, but mainly against the intransigence of His disciples. Still Patel defied his aged and fasting Master.

Brecher records the moving scene:

‘Gandhi lay flat on his back, weak and silent. There was no response. Then Patel began again. After a few minutes Gandhi raised himself slowly, with tears streaming down his cheeks. Turning to Patel, he said in a barely whisper: “You are not the Sardar I once knew”, and then fell back’ (*op. cit.*, p. 383).

The visit ended abruptly, and, of course, Gandhi won and the sum was paid to Pakistan.

Gandhi was above the groups, and though certain groups and persons stuck to him, he kept himself above, away from the squabbles below. His strength was his faith in the masses and his solutions too often were mass actions. He combined mass action with clever negotiations and he had a knack to open the mouth of the most tight-lipped opponent. His correspondence and negotiation with Lord Irwin, M. A. Jinnah, Lord Linlithgow and many others will ever remain master strokes of political negotiations and manoeuvre, even when their immediate results seemed disappointing.

Alter the first World War Gandhi took politics of freedom to the fields and streets and thus inaugurated the new era in Indian politics. Not only did he teach the masses to organize and fight, but he also learned from them.

Hear the touching references he makes to some of his followers in the South African struggle. Gandhi was replying to an address of welcome at Madras in 1915:

‘If one tenth of the language that has been used in this address is deserved by us, what language do you propose to use for those who have lost their lives, and, therefore, finished their work on behalf of your suffering countrymen in South Africa? What language do you propose to use for Nagappan and Narayana Swamy, lads of seventeen and eighteen years, who braved in simple faith all the trials, all the sufferings and all the indignities for the sake of the honour of our Motherland? What language do you propose to use with reference to Valliamma, a sweet girl of sixteen years, who was discharged from Motisburg prison, skin and bone, suffering from fever to which she succumbed

after about a month's time. You have said that I inspired those great men and women, but I cannot accept the proposition' (Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, nd. I).

Gandhi gave them the credit for inspiring him and not vice-versa. Not only that, he mingled with the lowliest and the lost and lived like them and shared their lives and miseries. As stated in his eloquent reply to the famous criticism made by Poet Tagore, Gandhi respected the primary and simple needs of existence as sacred. It is there, he said, that even God would appear before a hungry man only in the form of bread. But he understood the needs of the poor folk in a general and humanitarian way and not as higher wages for the worker; security against retrenchment, reduction of land rent—let alone as abolition of wage slavery and private property in land and other forms of wealth.

These limitations are granted. But the Nagappans and Valliammas of the late sixties of India are still awaiting their inspirer. The kindly light that lit up, however feebly, the thousands of dark villages of India was blown up cruelly at the dawn of freedom. Those villages still remain dark. The strong voice to protect our minorities has since been never heard. When we look up to Gandhi, during the present struggles and tribulation, we learn a lot; we critically reject a lot. But in this process of study and assessment, easy categorizations and definitions lead us nowhere. On many crucial issues our country is facing, I consider Gandhi relevant.

MOHIT SEN

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## Power, Satyāgraha and Communism



IT IS a fashionable exercise nowadays to reduce the significance of Gandhi by cutting him down to the image of an eminent Indian liberal democrat, a sort of eccentric wag whose liberalism was central and whose eccentricity was only a matter of adapting liberal values to the primordial backwardness of the Indian mind. The trick, is usually done by cutting passages from the writings and speeches of the Mahatma where he inveighs against Bolshevism and sharply contrasts his ideals and methods to those of Lenin. The facile conclusion is then drawn that Gandhi stood for ‘democracy’ against Communist ‘totalitarianism’ and innate attachment to ‘violence’.

A grosser misrepresentation could scarcely be imagined. And let it be added that this misrepresentation owes part of its success to the failure of many Marxist thinkers, in India as well as abroad, to properly assess the phenomenon that is Gandhi. There have been violent oscillations in many Marxist circles between an attitude of ridicule (Saklatvalla’s famous letter is not the only case in point) or of artificial reverence (P. C. Joshi’s letter to the ‘Nation’s Father’ is, again, not the only conspicuous example). Both these seemingly diametrically opposed views unite on the central point of wanting to wish away the phenomenon of Bapu instead of critically analyzing it.

There is no question of denying the fact that the Mahatma was bitterly opposed to Bolshevism and Marxism and that he regarded



it as his aim to be able to present an alternative to this doctrine and mode of action. He makes this very clear at the very outset of his active work in India.

On March 30, 1919 he categorically states 'some friends have argued, 'Your *satyāgraha* movement only accentuates the fear we have of the onrush of Bolshevism'.

'The fact, however, is that if anything can possibly prevent this calamity descending upon our country, it is *satyāgraha*. Bolshevism is the necessary result of modern materialistic civilization. Its insensate worship of matter has given rise to a school which has been brought up to look upon material advancement as the goal and which has lost all touch with the finer things of life. Self-indulgence is the Bolshevik creed, self-restraint the *satyāgraha* creed. If I can but induce the nation to accept *satyāgraha* if only as a predominant factor in life, we need have no fear of the Bolshevik propaganda'.

Again, in June 1919, Gandhi emphatically declares 'But in India against all odds, the high principles of our hoary civilization have still a strong hold on the masses; and if the rapidly widespread growth of Bolshevism which is attacking one nation after another in Europe was to be successfully arrested in India, and even any possibility of its finding a congenial soil safeguarded against, it was necessary that the people of India should be reminded of the legacy of their civilization and culture comprised in the one word *satyāgraha*'.

In all of the three decades of the intense activity and dramatic changes which followed these utterances, Gandhi never wavered with regard to this basic assessment of Bolshevism and Communism. In some later statement he would refer to the 'sacrifice' of 'master spirits like Lenin'. He would visit the Communists at the Meerut jail and tell them that in the next round of national struggle there would be no withdrawal even if incidents like Chauri Chaura were repeated. In his last period of imprisonment and shortly afterwards he would study the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin and in his correspondence with P. C. Joshi he would admit the sterling worth of so many Communists whom he personally knew. But the basic fixation and a fundamentalist kind of opposition remained.

And this in a man who did not hesitate to devise consistency as the 'hobgoblin of little minds' and who could write movingly about Truth thus: 'If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that, for myself, God is Truth.

'But two years ago, I went a step further and said that Truth is

God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz., God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth, which began nearly fifty years ago....I never found a double meaning in connection with Truth, and not even atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of Truth. But, in their passion for discovering Truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that, rather than say that “God is Truth”, I should say that “Truth is God”.’

It was not only with regard to the means to be adopted in the struggle against British imperialism that Gandhi opposed the Communists. As a matter of fact on the question of the use of violence Bapu was not absolutely consistent. He consented in 1941 to the Congress leadership declaring that in the struggle against the Japanese, a National Government would not be averse to the use of arms. Earlier he had, most paradoxically, refused to approve the action of the Garhwali Regiment to fire against non-violent demonstrators in Peshawar, publicly declaring that an army needed discipline and that in a free India a disciplined army and police force would be indispensable. Right towards the end of his life he approved of the action of the Government of India in sending army units to defend Kashmir. Nevertheless, his hope and endeavour remained that non-violence should prevail, and on this account he was implacably opposed, let us remember, not only to the Communists but also to the anarchist revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and his Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, to the Chittagong Armoury Raiders and to Subhas Bose and his INA. It is of importance to stress this latter point since many who conveniently make use of Gandhi’s opposition to the Communists on the ground that the latter refuse to accept non-violence as a creed, equally conveniently omit to mention whether, on the same ground, they would put all others who adopt a similar approach, beyond the pale. In that would end up being as lonely and forlorn as the Mahatma was in his last years without, of course, the saving grace of his ceaseless activity and sacrifice.

The Mahatma’s opposition to Bolshevism and Communism stemmed, however from a still more basic position than the absolutization of non-violence. It stemmed from opposition to modern civilization itself from which, he correctly saw, Bolshevism sprang and which it was pledged to develop fully by negation of its

source, i.e., through the accomplishment of the socialist revolution. It is the outlook embodied in *Hind Swarāj* that was the bedrock of his determination to hold back Bolshevism. It will be recalled that though the book was written in 1909, far from being repudiated by the Mahatma, it was always upheld by him as the embodiment of his most profound beliefs. Tendulkar correctly points out that '*Hind Swarāj* is the quintessence of Gandhi's ideas'. It will be recalled that in that book the author declared that 'it is not the British people who are ruling India, but it is modern civilization.... India's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the past fifty years or so. The railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and such like have all to go.' He sharply assails Saklatvalla: 'Comrade Saklatvalla swears by the modern rush. I wholeheartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth for their satisfaction'. Still later in 1936 he declares 'The revival of the village is possible, only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use'. In the same year he tells Basil Mathews of his difference with Jawaharlal Nehru: 'He believes in industrialization. I have grave doubts about its usefulness for India'.

It was not only the material basis of modern civilization that stand in Bapu's nostrils. It was also the rationalism which was its philosophy, the scientific outlook that alone was consistent with it. One has only to recall the noble controversy between the Mahatma and Tagore and to read again the rebuke the poet administered when Gandhi termed the 1934 Bihar earthquake as an 'Act of God': 'It is all the more unfortunate, because this kind of unscientific view of phenomena is too readily accepted by a large section of our countrymen. I keenly feel the indignity of it, when I am compelled to utter a truism in asserting that physical catastrophes have their inevitable and exclusive origin in a certain combination of physical facts.'

Thus, it is not as a liberal democrat we find Gandhi opposing Bolshevism and Communism but as an opponent of modern, capitalist civilization. It can be said that in the conditions of the 1920s and thereafter in India there were two ideological forces which superseded or negated the then petitionist liberal democracy—Gandhism and Communism. Two polar opposites which united in

their mutual opposition. There was identity as well as opposition; indeed, the identity as well as the opposition sprang from a common source—implacable hostility to the type of ‘civilization’ which was responsible for the British exploitation of India. The hostility was equally keenly manifested against the attitude of compromise towards this ‘civilization’ that the liberal democrats essentially based themselves upon. If Gandhism was the negation of this liberalism (carrying forward Tilak’s thrust), Communism was the negation of the negation. Communism negated the irrational and archaic protest of Gandhism but carried forward the latter’s negation of liberal democracy—totality of opposition, a total concept of power and civilization and a total approach to the problem of mass activity.

At this point one would like to emphasize that Gandhi has essentially the same approach to the problem of power as the Communists. For both power is not a matter of politics alone, nor of a certain institutional arrangement of checks and balances. Power is the concentrated essence of social achievement, the summing up of the social situation. The Communists carry forward the concept with an analysis of the contradictions inherent in any society and, therefore, in a class-divided society they postulate the existence of a ruling class, itself based on the ruling relation of production. Therefore, the problem of power is always the problem of civilization and cannot even begin to be tackled unless the particular civilization of which it is the concentrated essence is itself tackled—accepted, rejected or sublated. Gandhi was far too profound an nutritionist to be beguiled by liberalism, even though the failure of instinct to rise to the level of intelligence made his failure, as well, more profound than the neat schemes of liberal reform. Liberals are notoriously adaptive but persons like Bapu all too often feel the darkness closing in upon them—he had no message to give on Independence Day, the man who said that his life was his message.

The total nature of the Mahatma’s concept of power is manifested in two basic forms, first and foremost in his indictment of British rule. To him British rule was Satanic not only because it had reduced the vast majority of Indians to the position of starving cattle but because by doing this and in other ways it had debased the very soul of the people. It had reduced the people not only to the position of slavery but what was worse made them unaware of freedom and identity. The second manifestation of his concept of power has already been touched upon earlier, i.e. his idea of what should replace British rule, his idea of *swarāj*. What he proposed was

the replacement of the ‘civilization’ imposed by British imperialism by the revival of the village community, by Rāmarājya as he called it. It was not easy for even many of his colleagues to take him seriously. Just as with his non-violence, his *khaddar* and his wearing of the loincloth, they took this, too, as an useful gimmick which would enable the Congress to endear itself to the people, particularly the rural masses. But this was not how the old man saw it. To him the replacement of British industrialism by Indian industrialism might mean somewhat less of a crushing burden but in no sense was it a real alternative power, i.e., a new focal point of change of civilization. To put it in scientific terms, the replacement of British imperialism by Indian capitalism was not his perspective precisely because the latter was only a slightly less painful version of the former. He was in deadly earnest about non-attachment, the circumscribing of desires, the re-establishment of the union between agriculture and village industry in the village community. It is based on this concept that he conceives of *pañchāyatirāj*: ‘In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But, it will be an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of villages.’ It is significant that once again at this time (1945) he repeats ‘I do not believe industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India.’ And this whole approach was conditioned by the fact that he believed that industrialism or modernism was a total power which would do away with the village and thence, with Indian identity and, thus, had to be opposed by a power as total and with as much countervailing force, i.e., the resurrected Indian village. It was because of this outlook that while he refused to believe that reforms would be of any help, he was always ready to compromise with the British rulers until he felt that his countervailing power was ready to transform itself into true independent rule.

Gandhi was a shrewd tactician and had a marvellous feel for the mood of the masses at any given point of time. But his tactics were linked to a strategic objective and conditioned by it. His means were what they were because his end was what it was. It is rather puerile to postulate that he believed in the supremacy of means over ends. On the contrary, as is the case with any profound and thought through philosophy means—ends are an organic entity. The means that Bapu

advocated—though he was never able to fully realize them—were consistent with the end he wished to achieve—which, too, remained unrealized. Since the end was Rāmarājya or the resurrected Indian village, the means could only be *satyāgraha*.

One has to remember that *satyāgraha* as Gandhi conceived it was radically different from the kind of mass action that he was able to lead. There is truth in his contention that he was the only true *satyāgrahī* and that Vinoba, perhaps, also passed the test. Nevertheless, *satyāgraha* remained as a norm and the very rigour and difficulty of it was eminently suited for the end which was to be attained by it. *Satyāgraha* involved the transformation of the personality of he who would embrace it. It involved the strictest possible discipline, even to the point of the extinction of the individual. Self-control, *brahmacārya*, vegetarianism, shunning of sophisticated civilization, the embracing of poverty so as to achieve non-attachment, being shot through with the *karmayogi* concept of Hinduism and the entrance into an *āśrama*—this was what being a *satyāgrahī* meant. It was this kind of training that Gandhi visualized for the leadership he wished to create, the vanguard he wished to be able to head to realize the awakening of India. There is nothing of liberal democracy in all this nor even the same approach to the problem of party organization that Western political systems have familiarized us. If one searches for an analogy the only fitting one will be Mao and the training of cadres at Yen-an in the 1940s. Indeed, one can say that the two original and unique leaders so far produced by the Asian resurgence are Gandhi and Mao—with obvious differences in outlook, methodology, objective and circumstances. Both grasped the peasant as the central fact of their civilizations, both wished to achieve total power and complete awakening, both sought to create and recreate their vanguard organization. Both achieved immensely and both suffered profound failure.

For Bapu, the Congress was an instrument for bringing together those sections of the masses who had achieved a certain level of awakening. And it was from among them that he hoped to rear the genuine *satyāgrahīs*. To put it in another way, the Congress was an united front mass organization, a transmission belt as well as a reservoir from whom the vanguard was to be shaped. This attitude of his alone explains the apparent inconsistency of his links with the Congress. To start with, he establishes his *satyāgraha sabha* in addition to the Congress. Then he remoulds the Congress into a functioning mass organization through the reforms he sponsors at

the 1920 Nagpur session. He retains more or less complete control of this organization and yet he maintains separate set-ups for various kinds of constructive activities. Then in 1934 he severs his formal link with the Congress. When he announces his retirement he states that he has the impression that ‘a very large body of Congress intelligentsia were tired of my methods and views, and the programme based upon them.... I seem to be going in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take, if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me.... If they (socialist ideas—M. S.) gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress’. But this formal retirement never made him indifferent to the kind of dominant leadership that was in actual control of the Congress. Whether it was soothing and smoothening out Jawaharlal Nehru or implacably pushing out Subhas Bose, he was very much concerned that whoever was at the helm in the Congress should be, ultimately, amenable to his control. Those whom he could not hope to control he had removed with a ruthlessness most appropriate to any organizer of mass action. It is also significant to recall, in this connection, that whenever the question of mass action came on the agenda of the Congress, Gandhi not only assumed control but publicly proclaimed himself ‘general’ with the power to appoint local ‘dictators’ as representatives responsible to him. And these are the people he wanted to mould in his own image who would function as the vanguard of mass action as well as of the mass organization.

It needs emphasizing that just as his concept of power and of the means to that power were total so was his approach to the individual. There was no division, in his view, between the public and private selves of those who had pledged themselves to his movement. His own *Autobiography* and the letters from Noakhali on further experiments in *brahmachārya* are not eccentricities but integral to the very outlook of the Mahatma. Those who have had the experience of being inmates of his asrama know this only too well. He was an interventionist at every level of living.

It is here that one comes across yet another basic line of division between Gandhi and the Communists. If the two are united in a total ideological-social vision of power and insist equally upon the total discipline of struggle, the two part company not only on the approach to science, industrialization, rational analysis and social conceptions, but the two also differ radically on the problem of the emancipation of the masses. Certainly, he wanted the uplift

of the masses, an end to the scourge and blight of the abysmal poverty which reduced them to nothingness, no less strongly than the Communist revolutionaries. But to Gandhi the masses were always the dumb millions whose representative he sought to be and from whose every eye he wished to wipe every tear. They were not visualized by him to be capable of revolutionary initiative, much less of self-emancipation. He would never have appreciated the aphorism of Marx that the emancipation of the workers would be accomplished by the workers or it would not be accomplished. He would lead the masses to his goal, not enlighten them to win control over their own destiny. He was an adherent of the trusteeship theory not only in regard to the relation between workers and capitalists or tenants and landlords but in general towards the masses. It is this opposition to self-emancipation, this adherence to ‘guided’ advance to a goal fixed by the guide that explains his very strong reaction to any transgression by any section of the masses of the rules and regulations he laid down for any struggle. It also explains why after the very early actions in Champaran and Ahmedabad he never encouraged local struggles by any section of the masses for their own specific demands—the best manner by which the mass mind is cleared for enlightenment as to the general issues pertaining to their self-emancipation. As a matter of fact, he specifically discouraged both Dr Rammanohar Lohia and Nirmal Bose when they turned to him for his blessings in their endeavours to use *satyāgraha* for sectional and local struggles. This was only natural for a leader who wanted not advance but resurrection.

In any evolution of Gandhi’s ideological outlook one has, of course, to keep in the forefront the tremendous role that religion played in his makeup. Indeed, his totalist approach, if one may be permitted to use this clumsy phrase, to the problem of power and of the means to attain it, is founded on a consuming devotion to religion, specifically to Hinduism and still more specifically, to a particular, *karmayogin* understanding of the essentials of Hinduism, based on an activist interpretation of the *Gītā*. ‘I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face. The whole of my activity, whether it may be called social, political, humanitarian or ethical, is directed to that end. And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of his creatures than in the high and mighty, I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service. Hence my passion for the service of the suppressed classes. And as I cannot render this service without entering politics,



I find myself in them. Thus, I am no master. I am but a struggling, erring, humble servant of India and therethrough of humanity—For me, the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and therethrough of humanity.’ He adds ‘The only two eternal principles are Truth and Non-violence (*ahimsā*). I would go even further and say that the only eternal principle is Truth. For, although Truth and Non-violence are one and the same thing, if circumstances arise in which I have to choose between the two, I would not hesitate to throw Non-violence to the winds and abide by Truth, which is supreme in my opinion.’ A religion of Truth and the pursuit of Truth through ceaseless toil—this is the *Gītā* of Gandhi. And were it not for the constraints of prejudice from which he could not unshackle himself, this could have been the path of praxis, the self-creating practice based on, penetrating into and transforming objective reality which is the path of the modern revolutionaries, the Communists.

An interesting point with which one would like to conclude this brief review of the relation between Gandhi and the Communists *vis-a-vis* power and action, is whom did the Mahatma reflect, whom did he present and whom did he benefit? This composite question has become much easier to answer now that the avowed disciples of the Mahatma, who still swear by his name, have ruled us for the last two decades. It has also become easier with the development of the Marxist method of analysis, or rather its return to the manner in which Marx deployed it in his *The Eighteenth Brumaire*.

Gandhi reflected with amazing approximation the ruined peasant who had lost the village community but not yet won anything, for whom, therefore, the only way to live was to achieve resurrection. He was the very embodiment of what Marx described as the ‘peculiar melancholy of the Hindoo’. The passivity of the peasant, however, was breaking down, even as his misery was increasing, in the last years of the nineteenth century and the dawn of the present one. He was reacting and differentiating along with the start of the development of a particular type of capitalism in the village which came with the full onset of the commercialization of agriculture and the link with the world market. The peasants were turning into commodity producers and a thin stratum among them achieving extended reproduction and the beginnings of capital accumulation. Such a process coincided with a far more rapid growth of the Indian capitalist class in the field of industry and urban trade—a class which did not cut its connections either with the village or with precapitalist

modes of exploitation. This class had made clear turn to acquiring an industrial base in the last decade of the nineteenth century without giving up its mercantile mode, however. Nevertheless, the turn to industry inevitably implied a turn to opposition to imperialism with, of course, the retention of the propensity to compromise. Finally, there was a large urban intelligentsia, spawned before the onset of industrial capitalism but gravitating towards it. Reflecting the mood of the peasant, Gandhi represented the link and the bridge between the ensemble of these diverse class forces but which were headed in the same direction of opposition to British imperialism. The one class to whom he remained alien, despite the episode of Ahmedabad, was the working class. But this class, in the India of those days, was not only younger but also far weaker than its capitalist counterpart. The representatives of this class in India had a much tougher job ahead of them than their Chinese colleagues, though the latter had to face specific difficulties of their own, especially after the success of the revolution. These representatives could not obtain on time the requisite maturity to grasp and then to transform the Indian reality of the quarter-century before freedom was won. Leadership through alliance and participation and playing a forefront anti-imperialist role was never fully grasped as a strategic scheme and much less consistently applied. This historic failure combined with the objective organized striking power and articulation tilting in favour of the urban industrial capitalist class led to the consequence that the movement led by Bapu, ultimately, benefitted it the most. And, let it be said, in the name of the Truth that Bapu himself, certainly, tilted towards this class.

So to say, the liberal democrats triumphed over the peasant radical, utilized his tremendous ‘great-rooted’ popularity and discarded him at the proper time, all the while hopefully retaining him as a mascot. Perhaps the time has come when in the centenary year even the mascot-role will be abandoned —there is a symbolism about the reported meeting between Rajaji and Golwalkar on the eve of the Gandhi centenary celebrations. The ‘conscience keeper’ of Bapu as Rajaji was termed for decades, met the ‘conscience maker’ of Godse. If this is historic irony, the scene can be relieved by a cheering paradox. Gandhi’s polar opposite, his negation takes up his *satyāgraha*, combines it with more traditional forms of action, and transforms the *hartāl* into the *bandh*. If there is discarding at one end there is sublating at the other. The centenary year will release its own tensions.

GENE SHARP

## Research Areas on the Nature, Problems and Potentialities of Civilian Defense



CIVILIAN defense is a policy for preserving a society's freedom against possible internal threats (as *coup d'etat* or minority guerilla war) or external threats (as invasion) by advance preparations to resist such usurpation by action of the civilian population. The sanction relied upon to deter such attempts or to defeat them in emergencies is the technique of non-violent action, such as strikes, boycotts, political non-cooperation, and massive defiance. Such action would be aimed not simply at altering the will of the usurper but at making it impossible by both massive and selective non-cooperation and defiance of the citizens for the usurper to establish and-or maintain his control. It is thus the adoption and adaptation of the technique of non-violent action to the development of a national defense policy as a practical substitute for military defense and nuclear deterrence.

This policy by its nature requires a vast amount of research and analysis. Such research would help to determine whether or not a significant proportion of the numerous and difficult problems involved in its possible operation could be solved, and if so how. This information would contribute to an improved ability to evaluate the policy of civilian defense as such, and to determine whether or not it merits further attention. If so, such research would help to

establish in what types of situations and areas it may be practicable if adequately prepared, and also help in deciding the extent to which civilian defense may be suitable as a supplementary capacity in addition to military defense, and the extent to which civilian defense may provide, as it has been designed, a full effective replacement for military means.<sup>1</sup> The research areas listed below are suggestive—there are doubtless other relevant ones—and within each of these it would be necessary to carry out a variety of specific projects.

### 1. CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND FOREIGN RULE

There have been a number of instances in which extended foreign occupation and rule has resulted in the extremes of (1) the elimination of an identifiable distinct culture of the conquered population, and (2) the survival of the culture in face of these conditions for hundreds of years. Individual and comparative studies of such cases might shed important light on the conditions under which it is possible for a people to preserve its way of life under the most adverse conditions.

### 2. STUDIES OF WEAKNESSES OF TOTALITARIAN AND OTHER DICTATORIAL REGIMES

Resistance to a possible dictatorial enemy requires that that enemy must be known well, not only in terms of his ideology and objectives and obvious strengths, but in terms of his inadequacies, weaknesses, vulnerable points and the like, in short, his Achilles' heels. There is much evidence that extreme dictatorships are often much weaker and fragile than they are believed to be. Knowledge of these general features and specific characteristics of a particular system may be highly important in determining the appropriate strategy for resisting and undermining it.

### 3. OCCUPATION POLICIES AND MEASURES

It would be foolhardy to concentrate all research attention from the standpoint of the civilian defenders. Therefore, one must also focus attention on the types of occupation policies and measures which have been used in the past by international aggressors and empires in efforts to subdue and rule the conquered territories and their populaces. Particular attention may be required also to recent possible innovations and changes in such policies and measures, and to possibilities of future developments. These studies will provide suggestive insights into the kinds of situations and measures which the civilian defenders may have to face.

#### 4. COUP D'ETAT AND PARTICULAR PROBLEMS OF INTERNAL USURPATION

The recent multiplication of the number of instances in which constitutional and other regimes have been overthrown by internal *coup d'etat* (with or without foreign support) underlines the importance of research attention to the related problems which might be faced by a country with a civilian defense policy when an internal political or power-seeking group sought to use organizational and military power to seize control of the government and the country. Past experiences and existing studies of the phenomenon need to be examined with a view to determining possible lines of action by such a group, the vulnerable points and periods in such *coups*, the types of influences which may weaken or strengthen resistance to such an internal attack (as distinct from a foreign invasion), and various possible strategies which might be employed against the usurpation. Attention would also be required to the possibilities of new types of coups which might arise in countries with civilian defense policies, such as a coup, in the change-over period by supporters of military defense, or later by tiny fanatical groups which might estimate the country to be vulnerable to even them.

#### 5. GUERRILLA WARFARE AS USURPATION AND CIVILIAN DEFENSE COUNTER-MEASURES

Examination is needed as to (1) whether a country with a prepared civilian defense policy would be vulnerable to attempted guerilla warfare or related terrorization of the population to produce non-cooperation with, and the collapse of, the legitimate government, and (2) if so what types of strategies, tactics, and methods might be most appropriate in meeting such attempted guerilla usurpation. Further, study would be needed to examine whether in the absence of advance preparations a country (as Vietnam) under guerilla attack could by civilian defense measures defeat the guerillas by non-cooperation and refusal to become terrorized into submission.

#### 6. RIOTS IN CIVILIAN DEFENSE COUNTRIES

Riots within a civilian defense country are possible under such conditions as the following: the existence of deep divisions within the country on political, economic, cultural, linguistic, or racial lines; the existence of a strong group intent on using violent means to obtain a restoration of military defense; the presence of a significant number of sympathizers with a hostile foreign power; widespread

boredom among youths seeking excitement in non-political rioting. Various investigations are required of such rioting in relationship to civilian defense. For example, determining effects of such rioting on civilian defense capacity; whether, and if so how, civilian defense preparations might include measures to reduce or prevent rioting; the nature and workings of both non-lethal and non-violent means of controlling large crowds and halting rioting; examination of existing experience in the use of police and military means of riot control, and the relationship of such means to other factors.

#### 7. MEASURES TO COUNTERACT NON-VIOLENT ACTION AND CIVILIAN DEFENSE

The enforcement problems against a group or population using non-violent means of struggle are quite distinct from those arising in cases of general lawlessness or from some type of violent struggle. Experience has gradually begun to accumulate as a result of governmental, police and military counter-measures and it is certain that a group or regime seriously contemplating military usurpation against a civilian defense country would not only try to assemble this experience but to seek to examine possible innovations. It is therefore highly important that the civilian defenders themselves should be aware of these in some detail in order to be able to meet such measures and to prepare possible countering responses.

#### 8. BLOCKADES AND CIVILIAN DEFENSE

Certain countries or other political units are, because of their geography, size and economy, especially vulnerable to external pressures by land, sea, or air blockades, or a combination of them. Britain and West Berlin are two obvious examples, but there are many other possible ones. If a hostile foreign regime were successfully deterred from military invasion by the civilian defense, country's resistance capacity, the frustrated regime might seek to use its military forces to make the threatened country surrender or grant certain demands by imposing a blockade. This would be especially serious when it could drastically affect the supply of food and the economy. Or, blockades might be imposed in quite different contexts, as the famous Berlin Blockade. The question then arises whether, and if so how, measures compatible with civilian defense could be used to break the blockade, and what within the blockaded country might be done to help it withstand the pressures. The Berlin experience and the successful airlift of food without military exchange would

be a case for study, but attention would be needed to quite different situations and varying types of blockades.

#### 9. BOMBINGS OF COUNTRIES TRANSARMED TO CIVILIAN DEFENSE

Opposite views have been expressed concerning the possibility that a foreign enemy recognizing the immense problems of ruling a country with civilian defense might simply seek to impose its will on the country or remove this peculiar type of threat by destroying its cities or other important points with conventional or nuclear bombs, either on a progressive basis, or in one all-out attack, or on a periodic basis. Some have reacted to this suggestion by stating that there was virtually no possibility of a nuclear attack at least against a country which had neither nuclear nor conventional military capacities. Others have asserted that under certain conditions at least such bombings might well take place, and that hence civilian defense presumes pre-nuclear world war II conditions and has no relevance in today's world. In either case, or some other possible conclusion, a variety of strategic military and political factors may be involved for the attacking country. For the country with civilian defense, several problem areas would require attention, including (if such attack were assumed) measures which would reduce the chances of attack, responses to threatened nuclear blackmail, how to encourage internal rebellion against the threatening regime at home, and how to carry on if such threats were carried out.

#### 10. CATALOGUE OF CASES OF NON-VIOLENT AND 'MIXED' RESISTANCE

The aim of this project would be to compile as complete a listing as possible of cases of socially or politically significant non-violent action. Certain minimal information about them, and bibliographical and research clues. Such data as the following might be included: the groups involved, their nature and status; the issue at conflict (specific and general); dates and place of the conflict; motivation for selection of non-violent behaviour; specific methods of action used (as social boycott, civil disobedience, etc.); opponent's methods of repression and/or reaction; results of the struggle. If a typology of non-violent action has by then been developed, the case could be catalogued accordingly. It might be desirable to have a system of cross-filing under the various listed qualities of the struggle to facilitate comparative analyses.

Among possible uses of such a catalogue are the following:

(A) A catalogue of non-violent cases would make possible the

selection of the most relevant cases for study in examining (a) the validity of hypotheses and claims made by proponents and critics concerning the applicability of such methods; (b) the significance of a number of variables operating in non-violent action as these affect the processes and outcome of the struggle.

(B) Such a catalogue would be of considerable assistance in the study of the cultural, political, religious, and other conditions under which this technique has been previously applied.

(C) It would provide a means of compiling research clues and bibliographies which may be of considerable assistance later to researchers preparing documentary accounts and analyzes of such cases.

The compiling of such material could be divided, roughly, into: (1) historical cases which would involve library research, and consultation with individuals and groups with specialized knowledge; and (2) contemporary cases, involving constant scanning of selected periodicals and communication with persons and groups in various parts of the world who are likely to have such information. This project would be a continuous one, issuing new revisions of the catalogue and new information from time to time.

#### 11. HISTORICAL DOCUMENTARY STUDIES OF CASES OF NON-VIOLENT ACTION AND 'MIXED' RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

Generally speaking there has hitherto been extremely little effort to learn from past cases of non-violent action with a view to increasing our general understanding of the nature of the technique, and gaining particular knowledge which might be useful in future struggles, or which might contribute to an expansion of the use of non-violent action instead of violence. Study of past cases could provide the basis for a more informed assessment of the future political potentialities of the technique.

There are far too few detailed documentary accounts of past uses of non-violent action; such accounts can provide raw material for analyses of particular facets of the technique and help in the formulation of hypotheses which might be tested in other situations. An important step, therefore, in the development of research in this field is the preparation of documentary factual descriptive accounts of a large number of specific cases of non-violent action, accompanied if possible with separate collections of existing interpretations and explanations of the events.

This consists of the preparation of documentary factual



descriptive accounts of past cases of non-violent action. From these can be learned, for example, exactly in what kind of a situation the technique was applied, how it was applied in particular cases, how the actionists and population behaved, how the opponent reacted, what types of repression were imposed, how the actionists and population responded to the repression, how volunteers were obtained, the actionists and population disciplined and organized, etc. These accounts need to be as detailed and thorough as is reasonably possible in order to serve best the educative function of enabling the reader to learn directly from the past events and also to serve best as the basis for analyses and evaluations. It is important that these studies be as objective as possible, be both intensive and extensive in their coverage, and be written in a factual, descriptive and readable style. They must also be scholarly to ensure that greatest possible knowledge may be learned from them and reliance placed upon them.

These accounts could be prepared for as many examples from Europe, the Americas, Africa, India, China, and other places as resources and personnel permitted. It will, however, be necessary to make a selection of those cases on which a serious effort will be made to prepare historical accounts, on the basis of such criteria as these: (1) the estimated present significance of the case determined by what it is anticipated may be learned from it; (2) the special characteristics of the case which set it off from others; and (3) the availability of resources, research workers and historical material.

Examples of cases which may be particularly relevant include the following:

A. The Russian 1905 Revolution and that of 1917 (prior to the Bolshevik *coup*) consisted to a very significant degree of political non-cooperation and strikes and various types of political disintegration within the autocratic system on a massive scale.

B. Resistance to the 1920 Kapp *Putsch* in Germany in which the Weimar Republic was saved after a period of uncertainty in face of the *Freikorps coup* and unreliability of the *Reichswehr* largely by a general strike called by the government and trade unions and various types of political non-cooperation, as by civil servants.

French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 was met by government-initiated and supported passive resistance by workers, civil servants, shopkeepers, and general populace. It ended with formal German defeat but also without victory for the invaders who achieved neither their economic nor political ends.

C. The 1930-31 independence *satyāgraha* campaign in India, planned by Gandhi is a classic case of a national struggle by a large populace using a great variety of non-violent methods within a coherent strategy against a colonial occupying power. The impending alternation of the ‘50 year rule’ on British Government archives to thirty years will open the way for a definitive study of that year’s events.

D. Hungarian passive resistance versus Austrian rule, esp. 1850-67. This is one of the few cases of a nationwide non-violent resistance movement extending over a considerable period, involving a variety of resistance methods, and including a constructive program of building alternative social, political and economic institutions in place of those of the occupation authority. The non-cooperation struggle followed the defeat of military efforts.

E. The ‘Servants of God’ Pathan Moslem non-violence movement of the North-West Frontier Province of British India. The Pathans were a war-like people with a well-deserved martial reputation; the British never claimed to have fully subjected them. Among them Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan developed one of the most remarkable non-violence movements in history. During the Indian independence struggle this group spearheaded much of the non-cooperation and non-violent revolutionary program in this province. Khan, now an old man, lives in exile after years of Pakistani imprisonment, and British archives are about to be opened under the relaxation of the ‘fifty year rule’ to thirty years.

F. Korean non-violent protest against Japanese rule, 1919-22. This campaign which failed to remove Japanese rule, generally was limited to methods of ‘non-violent protest’ (as distinct from non-cooperation). (Its failure may have been an important factor in Sydnngman Rhee’s later policies.)

G. Cases where the use of non-violent resistance has been followed by abandonment of such means in favor of violence, such as Nagaland, Tibet and South Africa, require detailed study to provide data which would be necessary for analyses of the processes, causes and consequences of such courses.

H. In her struggle against Tsarist rule and Rassification, Finland used a variety of forms of disobedience and political non-cooperation between 1898 and 1905.

I. A number of Latin American dictatorships appear to have been toppled by various forms of non-cooperation, such as the dictatorship of Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez of El Salvador by

a general strike and other non-cooperation in the spring of 1944, Jorge Ubico's regime in Guatemala by similar means in the same year, and General Magliore's dictatorship in Haiti is said to have fallen because of 'a passive general strike' in November 1956.

J. General Aboud's regime in the Sudan was overthrown in a 'bloodless revolution' in December 1964-January 1965, during which the army proved hesitant to fire at peaceful demonstrators.

K. The South Vietnamese Buddhist campaign against the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in 1963 was largely credited with fatally weakening it, although the actual toppling of the regime was by a military *coup d'etat*. The 1966 Buddhist campaign against the Ky regime also demonstrated considerable political power.

L. Communist-ruled countries have experienced a series of cases of resistance, risings and less dramatic pressures for liberalization which merit serious study. These include, for example, the East German Rising of 1953, strikes in political prisoners' camps in the Soviet Union in 1953, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Polish popular pressures for reforms, and certain types of pressures for 'de-Stalinization' in the Soviet Union.

M. Resistance movements involving the use of non-violent action in Nazi-occupied countries merit careful attention. Of these Norway, the Netherlands, and Denmark are particularly important. In each case a variety of forms of non-violent struggle were used and constitutes a very significant political factor. These projects would include both survey of existing studies and of possibly necessary new investigations.

N. Governmental and popular measures to nullify Nazi attempts to implement 'Final Solution' measures in Nazi-allied or Nazi-occupied countries, such as Bulgaria, Italy, France and Denmark, in which high percentages of the Jewish populations were saved.

O. German pressure and resistance to save Jews in Berlin 1943. Early in the year plans to make Berlin 'Jewfree' received setbacks, following a crowd demonstration against the evacuation of a home for aged Jews, and a demonstration by non-Jewish wives resulting in the release of their Jewish imprisoned husbands.

## 12. SIMULTANEOUS RESEARCH ON ON-GOING STRUGGLES

Also highly important here is the preparation of documentary accounts while a non-violent campaign is proceeding. These may, at times, suffer from unavailability of secret government reports, etc., which might be opened to the public some decades later, but

this disadvantage would be offset by the advantage of being able to gather day by day detailed information and clues which might otherwise be lost forever. These would be case studies in the writing of contemporary social history drawing upon as much material as possible while the events take place and recording clues to be followed up at a later point. The researchers would thus aid in producing their own data from original sources which might otherwise never be recorded; the principal participants would be available for questioning, and the kind of data which has a way of disappearing could be noted. Hypotheses as to the possible course of events and the processes involved could be noted, although this merges into a related type of study, discussed below, which might or might not be combined with this. In addition to the descriptive account, the teams of researchers could prepare analyses of the course of events. This type of project for cases of non-violent action is very similar to that launched by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on instances of inter-state conflict.

These on-the-spot research projects will be dependent in part upon the cases of non-violent action now occurring or likely to occur, on geographical proximity or funds for travel, financial resources available, and the quality and number of research workers available.

### 13. ANALYSES OF THE DOCUMENTARY STUDIES

The completion of such detailed documentary studies will make possible a series of individual and perhaps also comparative analyses of these struggles. A considerable variety of specific aspects would require attention, either individually or as parts of an over-all analysis of the struggle. These could take a considerable variety of specific forms, of which the following are only suggestive. The role of the nature of the contending groups, their objectives and perceptions of each other. The role and consequences of the means and modes of combat, i.e., for the civilian defenders the specific methods applied, and the tactics, strategy and grand strategy relied upon, possibly with consideration of alternatives which might have been used, for the enemy, the means of repression and other counter-measures used, those available to him but not used, and the consequences of his actions, possibly with examination of other means not applied. The short-term outcome of the conflict, in terms of the degree to which each side achieved or denied its objectives. Comparative analyses of a variety of cases might suggest whether or not there are any common factors in struggles resulting in 'success' and those with defeat and

mixed consequences. The dynamics and mechanisms of struggle and change operative in the particular conflict, or those being compared, in terms of how and why the struggle took the course it did with the particular results; and how these factors in this particular conflict affect general insights and theories of the dynamics and mechanisms of non-violent action. Longer term consequences of the conflict for the respective contenders and possibly third parties.

#### 14. THE DYNAMICS AND MECHANISMS OF CHANGE IN NON-VIOLENT ACTION

Since civilian defense relies upon the technique of non-violent action as its technique of struggle, it is important to give further detailed attention to the dynamics of the course of struggle and the mechanisms of change which operate with this technique, as distinct from other techniques of struggle and sanctions. Historical research on past cases and empirical studies of current instances may, along with other means, shed light on how these processes and forces operate, and the conditions in which the mechanisms (conversion, accommodation and non-violent coercion) may operate, and may assist in the testing of hypotheses.

#### 15. TESTING RESPONSES TO VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR

Psychological experiments and tests and careful examination of past experiences may shed some factual light on the question of the type of responses which may be expected to (a) violence, (b) non-violent resistance and (c) passivity. Various extant assumptions need to be tested such as these: That when faced with violent behaviour only the threat or use of superior violence will halt the original violence. ('The only thing they understand is brute force.') That violent behaviour tends to provoke a violent response which tends in turn to provoke further violence, that non-violent behaviour similarly tends to non-violent behaviour, and that repeated non-violent responses to violence tends to reduce or eliminate the violence. That an absence of strong resistance to aggressive behaviour tends to reinforce such aggression and violence. It is desirable to have empirical data on these and comparable assumptions, including the conditions and possible time-lags under which they may operate.

#### 16. METHODS OF NON-VIOLENT ACTION

Further attention is needed to the study of the methods or specific forms of non-violent action, which might be useful in civilian defense (such as particular types of political non-cooperation, strikes,

boycotts, etc). Attention would then be needed to possible existing methods which are largely unknown, to innovations producing new methods in the course of actual struggles, to more original thought about possible new methods which might be developed. Further more, detailed studies would be most useful concerning the specific methods, and possibly classes of methods themselves, particularly using comparative historical material which might shed some light on the conditions in which they may be most applicable and successful, on the possible necessity to combine them with other types of methods, on whether they really influence the power relationships of the contending groups are largely symbolic and psychological in their impact, various similar questions. Attention would be needed to determine whether deliberate efforts could increase the effectiveness of methods which in the past have not proved outstandingly effective, and on the question of the possible influence on such factors of advance preparations and training.

#### 17. STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE

The field of strategy and tactics in civilian defense is at least as complex as in conventional military defense, and may even be more so as the combatants are likely to consist of nearly the full population of the transarmed country and virtually ail of the organizations and institutions of that country are likely to be involved, Attention will be needed, firstly, to the various general principles of strategy and tactics in non-violent action as a political technique of struggle, and this will require examination of past strategies and tactics. Possible new innovations in general types may be considered in the light of the dynamics and mechanisms of non-violent action.

But in addition to such general principles, attention will be needed to possible alternative strategies and tactics to meet a large variety of specific types of situations, as influenced by factors such as the country of part of the country threatened, the nature of the internal or foreign usurper (including his ideology, sources of power, means of repression and other influence, etc.), the objectives of the opponent, and his possible strategies and tactics. It would be important to systematically work out a considerable variety of strategic and tactical responses to such stages of attack as well as to develop the stages and measures by which one goes from strictly defensive measures to offensive measures in an attempt to disintegrate the usurper's power and regime.

## 18. SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN CIVILIAN DEFENSE

Certain special problems in the waging of civilian defense struggles may require particular attention. The following queries are simply suggestive: What are the forms and effects, respectively, of full or selective social boycott, and of fraternization and other types of contact (without collaboration) with the personnel of the occupying forces. 'What role should the legitimate police play in resistance against an 'occupation or internal takeover; for example, should they resign, disappear, continue the legal duties but refusing illegitimate orders, pretend to collaborate but be inefficient (lose records, warn persons to escape before attempting arrests, be unable to locate wanted person, etc.), seek to arrest individuals of the occupation force or usurping regime, etc.? What capacity do armed forces and police units have for disciplined non-violent action? This might be important in two types of situations: firstly, if civilian defense were initially adopted by a country for the limited purpose of dealing with a *coup d'état* and, secondly, if it were deemed desirable to keep together existing disciplined groups and teams, giving them new tasks for carrying out security duties. What should civil servants do in particular types of crises, for example, full strike, selective non-cooperation, carry out legitimate policies only and 'work-on', 'lose' key records, etc.? If enemy armed forces occupy the capital, should the main governmental officials flee and maintain a new headquarters elsewhere in the country or abroad, should they try to continue to carry out legitimate duties until arrested, or go underground as a basis for resistance and a parallel government in the country itself, or some combination of these, with perhaps different persons assigned to different roles? What is to be learned from past experience with parallel government which is relevant to civilian defense? What is the contribution of international economic sanctions against aggressors or usurpers generally, and especially in relation to support for attacked civilian defense countries? What is to be learned, positively or, negatively, from past international attempts at boycotts and embargoes, as against Mussolini's Italy, South Africa and Rhodesia, and what are the conditions which must be met if they are to be most effective?

## 19. COMBINING CIVILIAN DEFENSE WITH MILITARY DEFENSE, GUERILLA WARFARE AND SABOTAGE

While most exponents of civilian defense have recognized the inevitability of a period of transition in which both civilian defense

preparations and military defense preparations would co-exist, some people have argued that as a permanent policy there should be a combination of these. Some have advocated combining civilian defense with conventional military defense, so that the former would go into operation after the failure of the latter. Others have advocated abandoning of frontal military defense measures, but combining civilian defense with guerilla warfare and/or sabotage measures with different tasks being assigned to the different types of struggle. Others have argued that although it seems immediately appealing to use all possible types of struggle in the attempt to get the maximum total combat strength, the problem of the ‘mix’ is not that simple. Instead, such a combination may destroy some highly important strategic advantages of civilian defense alone, and because the techniques possess quite different mechanisms and dynamics, the use of violent means may seriously interfere with or destroy the power-altering capacities of civilian defense. For example, it may be part of a strategy of a civilian defense struggle to seek to obtain the mutiny of the enemy’s soldiers, or at least attain sufficient uncertainty or sympathy from them that they are deliberately inefficient in obeying orders; but if they and their friends are being shot at or killed, this possibility is enormously reduced. Because of the complexity of the problem of ‘the mix’, therefore, it requires serious research and analysis.

## 20. CASE STUDIES OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE—GUERRILLA WARFARE MIXES

A number of serious strategists have proposed that it would be more effective to combine civilian defense measures with guerilla warfare and possibly terrorism or other types of violent resistance than it would be to use any one of these alone. In addition to other projects directly relevant to this problem, it would be of considerable assistance to have case studies of instances in which such a combination happened or was attempted.

## 21. CASES OF MINIMAL, OR ABSENCE OF, DEPENDENCE ON AN OCCUPIED POPULACE

In most types of usurpation, there is a considerable degree of dependence on the population of the country which has been seized, and hence a strong basis for opposition by non-cooperation. However, in certain unusual types of aggression this is not the case, and therefore if civilian defense measures are to operate at all in such cases, they must do so by quite different means. These situations



are illustrated by military occupation of unpopulated mountainous or desert areas for such purposes as military bases, transportation or communication purposes, or international psychological effects; the seizure of a limited coastal area or port as a naval base (such as Gibraltar) without other attempt to control the country as a whole; or cases in which an invader would intend to deport or annihilate the entire original population and replace them by his own colonists.

## 22. THE MEANING OF SUCCESS IN RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

Another subject meriting careful study concerns the meaning and conditions of success in non-violent action. The varying meanings of the terms 'success' and 'defeat' themselves would need to be distinguished, and consideration given to concrete achievements in particular struggles. The matter is much more complex than may at first appear. For example, failure within a short period of time to get an invader to withdraw fully from an occupied country may nevertheless be accompanied by the frustration of several of the invader's objectives, the maintenance of, a considerable degree of autonomy within the occupied country, and the initiation of a variety of changes in the invader's own regime and homeland which may themselves later lead either to the desired full withdrawal, or to further relaxation of occupation rule. With various types of 'success' and 'defeat' distinguished, it would be highly desirable to have a study of the various conditions under which they have occurred in the past and seem possible in the future. These conditions would include factors in the social and political situation, the nature of the issues in the conflict, the type of opponent and his repression, the type of group using non-violent action, the type of non-violent action used (taking into account quality, extent, strategy, tactics, methods, persistence in face of repression, etc.), and lastly the possible role and influence of 'third parties'.

## 23. FORM AND STRUCTURES FOR RESISTANCE ORGANIZATIONS

Under conditions of severe repression and dictatorial or totalitarian controls, the problems of operating an organized resistance movement become serious. That organized resistance has happened in the past, however, proves that these obstacles are not insuperable although they do require both research into how these were dealt with in past cases and examination of possible new innovations which might be of use in future emergencies. In addition to problems of structure and day-to-day communication within the movement and

with the general population, attention will be needed to the degree to which the actual organization can or cannot be setup in advance of the usurpation and the degree to which unstructured or spontaneous mass actions may play a role. (In the latter actions, the population would act on the basis of predetermined plans which would operate in the case of given anticipated events even if a separate resistance organization were unable to act because of arrests, etc.) Various other factors in relation to organization need examination, including the roles of neighbourhood and occupational groupings, religious and political bodies etc., i.e., the normal institutional structure of the society.

#### 24. TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND CIVILIAN DEFENSE

Modern developments in the technology of communication, transportation, police methods, and in the field of various forms of psychological manipulation and influence have potentially highly important consequences for the problems of civilian defense. Quite opposing views have been presented concerning these consequences for example, in the field of communication and transportation. On the one hand it is undeniable that rapid communication and transportation make it much easier for a tyrant or aggressor to move against centres of resistance and rebellion. But isn't there perhaps also another side to the question? Could technology be used to help the resisters (for example, might small transistorized broadcasting and receiving sets aid in the resistance)? More difficult questions arise in connection with some of the other listed developments, but these all require attention by people with detailed knowledge of such developments and understanding of civilian defense and its problems.

#### 25. THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY ON CIVILIAN DEFENSE

Production and distribution systems are important in the conduct of civilian defense and for any ruler or occupation regime. But since the social organization and the technology for these systems can differ widely, these differences may produce diverse influences and problems for civilian defense. Even in terms of centralized industrial systems, opposite conclusions have been reached by those who have considered the problem, ranging from the view that extreme agrarian decentralization is necessary for effective resistance to those who regard resistance as more effective in a centralized industrial

system as there are more highly vulnerable key points at which the non-cooperation of a relatively few persons may disrupt the whole system. Complex problems are also associated with the question of the influences of the degree of national self-sufficiency in the economy and the degree of international economic interdependence. Automation introduces quite new factors into an already difficult problem area, about which again quite contrasting suggestions have been made. In addition to such general problems, examination would need to be made of the most appropriate types of economic non-cooperation which might be suitable against possible usurpers who may have a variety of political and economic requirements and objectives.

#### 26. POLITICAL FACTORS IN CIVILIAN DEFENSE

As civilian defense is much more intimately associated with the political conditions of the defending country than is military defense, serious attention is required to what political conditions may be required for or most suitable for effective civilian defensive measures. Various questions arise here of which these are only suggestive. Is there a minimal degree of popular participation in government required for this policy? Is a considerable degree of political decentralization required or not? Is a particular degree of formal political education among the population required? Can civilian defense be adapted for newly-independent countries? What are the differences in the conditions for the operation of the defense policy between various types of countries, as thinly and densely populated, large, medium, and small, with various types of terrain and climates? Could civilian defense make possible greater degrees of democracy within the country itself? What of the possible role of indirect influences or direct efforts to encourage the liberalization or disintegration of dictatorial foreign and domestic regimes as a contribution to reduced incidence of international conflict and aggression? Is there an intrinsic connection between democratic political systems and the requirements for popular participation in civilian defense struggle, or not?

#### 27. RESEARCH ON CONCEPTIONS OF NON-VIOLENT ACTION AND OBJECTIONS TO IT IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

If one is considering the possibility of trying to convince Americans that non-violent action is a practical alternative to violence, or that a civilian defense policy could be a practical substitute for military

defense, one would need to know more about the present American views of these phenomena: (1) How do Americans conceive of non-violent action? What is the extent of their knowledge and understanding? What do they think of when they hear or read the words ‘non-violent resistance’, ‘passive resistance’, ‘non-violent action’, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, etc.? (2) What arguments do they offer in favor of the technique and against it? (3) Is there any conception at all, and if so what type, of the possibility of resisting by popular action a foreign occupation or attempted internal takeover? (4) Is there any, more or less, evidence of understanding of the phenomena themselves if differing terminologies are utilized in the investigations?

Especially the second and third parts here would require more than simply answering straight questions, the answers to which might be superficial or even inaccurate representations of the real attitude; depth interviews or some similar method would probably be required. It would be important to search for both ‘intellectual’ and ‘emotional’ reasons, as those possibly associated with sex roles. It is possible, but not certain, that these two objectives might be realizable with the same project. It would seem important that answers be sought to these questions among various sections of the populace to find out, for example, what differences may exist between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, Negroes and non-Negroes, urban and rural people, upper, middle, and lower classes, various broad religious groups and possibly part of the country. Careful control of the samples chosen would be essential.

One or more pilot experiments might be provided to follow up the major studies in which given previously interviewed subjects would be subjected to attempts to provide them with arguments or information attempting to answer their main objections or correct their misconceptions, and would then; after a time lapse, be interviewed again to determine what, if any effect, effort had made. A control group would, of course, be necessary.

#### 28. THE CHANGE-OVER PERIOD, ADVANCE TRAINING AND OTHER PREPARATIONS

The transarmament to civilian defense would require not only vast advance research and planning, but immense programs of training the population in how to conduct such resistance and otherwise preparing for these eventualities. These other preparations might include a large variety of steps, such as provision of material

supplies, means of communication, food supplies, etc. In addition, there would be a difficult transition period of some years between full dependence on military defense to full dependence on civilian defense in which these preparations and training were being carried out and the country was increasing its civilian combat strength to the point where it was felt possible to abandon the military element. These extraordinarily complex problems require very careful and full examination.

### 29. CIVILIAN DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY

Under past and present conditions foreign policy and military defense are usually seen as inter-related and often highly so. Probably a much closer relationship would exist between civilian defense measures and the country's foreign policy. Measures to reduce the prospects of international aggression, the rise and continuation of dictatorships, the gaining of friends abroad (including within possible enemy countries), and the expansion of the number of countries relying on civilian defense policies, mutual aid of various types among them, etc., would all require careful advance and continual attention.

### 30. PILOT FEASIBILITY STUDIES

One or several pilot projects to examine the feasibility of civilian defense in specific situations of relatively limited scope against a particular type of threat. These studies would require consideration of a considerable number of factors in the situation, such as: the assumed opponent, his objectives, ideology, probable strategies and methods, international position, degree of internal stability and support, and possible explanations or justifications for his attempted usurpation. Knowledge of the general situation of the defending country or area would also be required, including: the social structure, political system and traditions, intensity of commitment to the society and principles being defended, the state of the economy including its vitality, structure, composition and degree of dependence on external markets or supplies, the degree and type of presumed advance training for civilian defense and experience with non-violent action, the communications and transportation systems, geographical characteristics, general and particular characteristics of population and the like. Various possible factors in the international situation would also need to be considered, including: the degree of dependence of the usurper on other countries, the type, intensity and distribution of sympathies

and attitudes throughout the world towards the defenders and usurpers, the existence or absence of advanced agreements and preparations for other countries and international bodies to offer various types of concrete assistance in such situations; the specific forms of such international assistance, such as supplies, food, monetary, radio, printing, diplomatic, economic sanctions vs. the usurper, non-recognition of the usurper and/or expulsion of his regime from international organizations and/or the like.

Keeping in mind such concrete factors and options, very concrete plans would need to be drawn up to meet presumed usurpation, each considering possible alternative strategies and methods of resistance which might be most appropriate, giving consideration to the above factors and the opponent's possible and probable types of reaction and repression, and means of countering these, the roles of resistance by the general population, and by specific occupational, age, or geographical groups and other specific factors.

Such pilot feasibility studies might be worked out to meet such situations as the following:

(1) The defense of West Berlin against an attempted East German or Soviet military take-over.

(2) The defense of Norway against a conventional military attack and occupation, either by the Soviet Union or some other power.

(2) The defense of Poland against a revanchist German attack.

(3) The defense of civilian constitutional government against military or other *coups d'état* in Zambia, Tanzania, the Dominican Republic, or Italy.

(4) Resistance to attempts to impose minority one-party dictatorships by guerilla warfare, as in Thailand or Burma (or a what-might-have-been-done study on Vietnam), including attention to the economic and political factors on the one hand and on the other specific means of non-cooperation and refusal to submit to terrorism.

### 31. SELF-LIBERATION OF COUNTRIES ALREADY UNDER TYRANNICAL RULE

The use of non-violent struggle in countries already under a domestic or foreign dictatorship does not formally come under 'civilian defense' which implies advance preparations and training in peacetime to meet attempted usurpations. Such self-liberation is, however, related to the defense policy in a number of ways; for example, the chances of international aggression may be reduced by

the alteration or overthrow of expansionist dictatorships, or military aggression by such a regime against a country with a civilian defense policy under certain circumstances (according to some exponents of civilian defense) lead to a rising in the invader's homeland, or in peacetime liberation groups might be stimulated by preparation in civilian defense countries to apply similar methods and related strategies against their own internal oppressive regime. All these, and many other related possibilities, and the numerous problems they involve, would require considerable research and analyses.

### 32. CIVILIAN DEFENSE AND DISENGAGEMENT IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Proposals for various types of disengagement in Central Europe as a means of further reducing East-West tension and the prospect of military conflict all have to face the question of how such countries would be expected to defend themselves once American or Russian troops had been withdrawn in case of foreign invasion or attempted minority take-overs, without in the process setting off a major East-West war. The existence of a self-reliant effective defense capacity in Central Europe could facilitate a pulling back by both Russian and American armed forces, because their presence is now supported by fears in non-Communist countries of the area that otherwise they would be subject to Communist invasion or take-over, and in East European countries that without Russian forces they might again be victims of neo-Nazi German aggression. The possibilities of civilian defense would need to be examined and developed for specific cases, and its potentialities and problems would need to be compared with those of alternative defense policies, whether conventional military, paramilitary or some combination of one or both of these (and their subtypes) with civilian defense.

### 33. INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO THE LIMITED ADOPTION OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE

Attention is needed to the various possible international consequences of the adoption by only one or a few countries of civilian defense while others maintained their military capacities. Obvious extreme reactions might be invasion by an expansive military power regarding this as an invitation to aggression, and on the other end, the inducement of a rival power no longer fearing attack to transarm similarly to civilian defense. The situation, however, would be at best much more complicated than all this, and

attention is needed to anticipate such reactions in order to see if they can be prepared for or simply in taking them into consideration in evaluating the policy.

34. CONSEQUENCES OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE CAPACITY FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS EXAMINATION NEEDS TO BE GIVEN TO AT LEAST THREE ASPECTS OF THIS AREA.

Firstly, there is the question of the consequences, the development of the internal capacity of a country for this type of self-defense for altering past relationships and forming new ones with a particular country (or countries) which has in the past exercised some form of dominance or outright occupation over it. The beginnings of a change in the past relationship may rest in a large degree on a recognition by the formerly dominant country that the use or threat of military power is no longer capable of achieving domination, and a recognition by the formerly subordinate country that its self-reliance is basically dependent on non-military factors. The alteration of the relationship between Norway and Sweden (the turning point being the crisis of 1905) so that today despite some feelings of hostility, recourse to violence between the countries is today virtually inconceivable, may be an instructive case. Altered relationships between ex-colonial powers and their former colonies may also provide insights. In addition to the specific role of capacity for effective struggle associated social economic conditions would probably merit attention.

Secondly, attention is needed to the kind of international relationships which might exist in a world in which one or several or even many countries had transarmed to civilian defense while others maintained their traditional military or nuclear capacities. This problem requires not only speculation but careful examination of the variety of influences and forces which might be operative under diverse circumstances.

Thirdly, examination is necessary of the possible forms which international relationships and international organizations might take in a world in which many or most countries had transarmed to civilian defense. Such an international system would obviously differ not only from that of today, but also from a world government with a monopoly of military power. The system itself requires examination and the question of the most appropriate forms for concerted international action for dealing with aggressive militarily armed countries either fighting each other or attacking countries with civilian defense policies.



### 35. THE RELATIONSHIP OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE TO BOTH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

Civilian defense would involve a number of changes in the laws of a nation adopting it. These would involve not only the Acts authorizing its adoption for defense of the country and particular ways for handling the change-over period. In addition there would be a whole series of other legal measures required, including authorization for various types of preparations, training, research establishments, planning agencies, defense organizations and institution. Legislation might also be appropriate to deal with the obligation of citizens to participate in training for civilian defense, and to defend the country in times of crisis, potentially including certain standards and some type of sanctions against collaboration. In a large country, and especially a federal system as the United States, various types of state, provincial or local legislation would also be required.

It is possible that a reformulation or refinement of certain standards of international law might be needed, especially concerning the rights and duties of citizens of occupied countries, the duties of other governments in their relations with an aggressor country, and the legitimate government and population of the country which is the victim of international aggression or internal minority usurpation against the constitutional regime. These are simply illustrative of legal questions requiring attention.

### 36. THE UNITED NATIONS AND CIVILIAN DEFENSE

There are whole series of possible roles related to civilian defense for various branches and agencies of the United Nations and other international organizations. The following are simply suggestive: Research and dissemination of information about this defense policy to member countries; international inspection of transarmed civilian defense countries to ensure to others that the change-over is genuine; investigation and dissemination of facts when international aggression takes place; condemnation of the aggressor before world opinion; the institution of various types of international political economic sanctions against the aggressor, and the launching of various types of help to the attacked civilian defense country, such as monetary, supplies, broadcasting facilities, continued recognition only of its legitimate government, etc.; possible action by certain types of U. N. forces intervening in the situation. It is also possible that the United Nations might play a role if civilian defense were

adopted simultaneously by several countries in a coordinated and phased program of transarmament, say, on a continental basis or as a part of a program of tension reduction and demilitarization in certain areas. Other roles might exist for the United Nations in relation to civilian defense. The best means for implementing U. N. support would require advance examination and planning.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Introductory discussions of the nature of civilian defense, its strategies and some of its problems are offered in the following publications: Adam Roberts, Editor, *The Strategy of Civilian Defense* (London: Faber & Faber, June 1967); Gene Sharp, *The Political Equivalent of War—Civilian Defense* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, whole number *International Conciliation*, November 1965); and T. K. Mahadevan, Adam Roberts and Gene Sharp, Eds., *Civilian Defense: An Introduction*, 265 pp. New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, and Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, April 1967. Numerous research problems and topics have been incorporated here from suggestions of a large number of individuals, made in articles, memoranda, correspondence, and conversations. Acknowledgement is made especially to the Hon. Alastair Buchan, Daniel Katz, Irving Jannis, Kurt H. Wolff, April Carter, Theodor Roszak, Herbert Kelman, Lars Porsholt, Theodor Ebert, Adam Roberts and Robert Nozick. Apologies to any I have not remembered.

V. M. SIRSIKAR

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## Gandhi and Political Socialization



THIS short paper attempts to examine the Gandhian techniques used for the political socialization of the Indian masses and the consequent popular mobilization which took place in the freedom movements in India before 1947. It is said that the political development and democratic growth in the post-1947 period are deeply influenced by the Gandhian techniques and movements. But the paper does not attempt to evaluate the impact of these phenomena on the political development of free India. Even in its restricted area it is not possible to deal with individual techniques or their use in different *satyāgraha* movements conducted by Gandhi. What is attempted is a brief general discussion of political socialization before the advent of the Mahatma on the political scene and after. The paper tries to bring out some of the distinctive features of the Gandhian process of political socialization.

The process of socialization indicates the way in which members of a system internalize values, beliefs and commitments to the system. In an integrated stable society the general socialization of the child is taking place in the family, school and in peer groups with a common core of values. The general socialization of the adult is a continuation of this process and takes place through various organizations in which he participates. Political socialization could be considered as a part of this general socialization process. In the case of political socialization youth movements, the press, meetings,

trade unions and political parties become important. 'Isolation tends to make a person apathetic; group memberships in themselves increase his political interests and activity'.<sup>1</sup> Thus, social groups help the transition from political apathy to political involvement. Personal political behaviour is influenced by these reference groups whether or not a person is, in fact, a member of these groups.

Political socialization may take place either in an integrated or in a non-integrated society. India after the British conquest represented a classic example of a non-integrated unstable society. In such a society rival systems of political socialization existed side by side. The Imperial rulers created their own system of socializing the native population to a foreign rule, Western ideas and education and Western ways of life. The British conquest of India was not merely a victory of arms. It was a cultural conquest of a civilization, with its own system of values and beliefs. The British tried different ways to socialize the conquered population to the new alien rule. Terror had been effectively used to cow down the population. The English education was yet another way. But the distribution of patronage, titles and honorifics was a clever way of winning loyalties of the 'native' elites. The gradual absorption of Indians in the civil services, specially in the higher echelons, was yet another. In all fields of life it was a subtle penetration of Western ideas, institutions and values with an overtone of superiority of the White. The White supremacy was not only asserted by the rulers, it was ungrudgingly accepted by the non-Whites. The cultural conquest was complete.

Indian freedom movement can claim a long history beginning with the revolt of 1857. But the aftermath of the revolt was the benumbing of the whole country due to the unlimited terror unleashed by the British occupation forces. The second stage comes with the establishments of the Indian National Congress in 1885 as 'A safety valve' to let off the accumulating discontent among the more vocal sections of the population. From 1885 to the end of the Tilak era the politics remained confined to a few urban centres and the English-educated Indians—the emergent urban elites. The English-educated urban elites were drawn into politics through their intellectual understanding of the British parliamentary government and by reading of works of Liberal thinkers like J. S. Mill, Herbert Spencer and others. Political socialization of this small minority took place on an individual basis and through intellectual processes.

If an attempt is made to analyse the processes of political socialization in the pre-Gandhian India three main trends appear

to be important: the constitutionalists, the revolutionaries and the militants. The constitutionalists never challenged the system of socialization established by the foreign rulers. The English-educated leaders during the early British rule honestly believed that the British Raj was a 'divine dispensation'. It could be said that they were very much impressed by the British rule and aspired to be the junior partners in the new society created by the rulers. Hence their efforts were of a conciliatory nature. They followed the constitutional path—the path about which they had read in the contemporary English literature and the one which they believed was operative in Britain. Their demands were limited to asking for a certain share in the administration of the country. The constitutional trend meant that a few intellectuals got together and discussed certain immediate problems—the recruitment of Indians in the higher civil services—and tried to get these solved by way of petitions and representations which were most humbly submitted to Her Majesty's Government. The political socialization induced by the constitutional method was a very limited phenomenon. It affected only a small section of the English-educated urban elites who were not satisfied with the arrangements of the society made by the Imperial rulers. The constitutionalists never thought of socializing a larger number of people, let alone the masses. They had no place for the masses in their efforts to advance the constitutional development of the country.

The revolutionaries derived their inspiration from two distinct sources. The revolt of 1857 was eulogized as the first war of independence, and it was considered that the fight with the foreign occupation forces was continued. The second source of inspiration was the revolutionary struggles against imperialism in Europe—Mazzini of Italy and De Valera of Ireland typified the examples of such struggles. The nature of revolutionary activities was conspiratorial and by definition limited to a small cadre of devoted young men who were determined to lay down their lives for the emancipation of the country. The fear of death had been conquered by the self-effacing revolutionary patriots. But this was a feat beyond the achievement of the common people. Martyrdom did not appeal to the masses as a path to follow. It was not possible for them to reach these heights of supreme sacrifice for the distant and abstract ideal of a free India. It was believed by the revolutionary groups that their efforts would result in weakening the hold of the occupation forces on the country to such an extent, that it would need only a mere push to throw them out. They would never allow

the invaders to enjoy peace and rest. Their plan of action consisted of killing and terrorizing the more important, strategically situated British officers. They believed in individual acts of terror and in ‘the propaganda of the deed’. They had sympathy and affection for the common people but not much faith in them. They never attempted to undertake political socialization of the masses. They had pinned all their hopes on a select cadre.

The militants in the politics of those times were represented by Lokmanya Tilak. In the Tilak era of Indian politics, conscious efforts were made to socialize a larger number of people by giving a new socio-political content to traditional festivals—the Ganesh festival and the Shivaji Jayanti. This might have resulted in unknowingly creating a Hindu revivalist trend in Indian nationalism. However, the efforts did not spread much beyond the Marathi-speaking areas of the country. Lokmanya Tilak was a fore-runner of Gandhi in enunciating *swadeshi* and *bahishkār* but he did not fully operationalize these valuable concepts. It was left to Bapu to develop them further. Even the efforts of Lokmanya Tilak to broad-base the fight against foreign rulers only touched the fringe of the dormant masses. Though Lokmanya Tilak was called the leader of the masses, in reality his sphere of political influence remained very limited, not far beyond the urban middle class. There was no serious and conscious effort to build up a mass movement. To suffer imprisonment for vindicating the ‘birth right to freedom’ was even then the lot of a few leaders and not of the masses.

In striking contrast to the above described trends, Gandhi created a powerful rival system of socialization, challenging the system of the rulers and at the same time not becoming revivalist. In his fight with the British he relied on the strength of powerful and novel ideas which were not alien to the common people. By using an easily understood terminology he provided against the failure of a communication flow between him and the masses.

A major fact of social significance of these times was the widening gap between the elites and the masses. The former were being increasingly Westernized, having a new world outlook while the masses continued to be illiterate, ignorant and tradition-bound. It is of interest to note in this connection that most of the reform movements of the time, the Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and others remained confined to a few urban centres and the urban middle classes. A major agency of political socialization was the press. It was mostly an English press and even when it was in Indian

languages it remained mainly confined to urban areas having the literate classes. The illiterate rural masses remained untouched by the winds of social change. Gandhi faced this problem of the widening gap between the educated urban elites and the illiterate rural masses. It appears that spinning and wearing of handspun and handwoven Khadi was a technique used not so much against the foreign rulers but more as a means to bridge the gap between the elites and the masses. It was to end the alienation of the self-alienated educated elites. It was almost a process of 'unlearning' for the elites. They had to give up their Westernized dress, accept the coarse clothes and learn to spin and in the process learn the dignity of manual labour. Mahatma Gandhi thought that this was necessary to bring them nearer to the masses who were wearing coarse Indian dress and who were toiling in their fields. The emphasis on Khadi had an entirely different dimension. It opened new possibilities to those who could not do any active political work. Wearing of Khadi was the beginning and not the end of Gandhian way of socialization. It gave the wearer a new feeling of a community of freedom fighters, and emotional identification with an ever-widening circle of patriots.

An examination of Gandhian techniques indicates the revolution carried out by Bapu in political socialization of both the urban elites and rural masses. He knew that 'the process of socialization into politics does not follow one law for all individuals but follows several laws for different sub-classes of individuals'.<sup>2</sup> In view of this he shaped his different techniques of socialization. Though socialization is an individual process, in the special circumstances of a colonial country an effort was made by Gandhi to enlarge this individual process into collective socialization of the masses. A process which made the subservient meek Indian masses, firstly, political beings and made these political beings valiant fighters for freedom. Recruitment of an individual into active political life requires a higher level of both involvement and participation on the part of that individual. In the case of the Indian masses the degree of political involvement was generally very low before the Gandhian era. Involvement leads to and determines the nature of participation. The politicization processes—socialization and recruitment—ultimately determined the quality and extent of political mobilization.

The Gandhian techniques of socialization included both traditional techniques like the press, meetings and associations and non-traditional instruments. The non-traditional could be listed as follows: The list is not exhaustive but merely illustrative.

- (1) Satyāgraha
- (2) Non-cooperation
- (3) Purification fast
- (4) Khadi and constructive work—Harijan work
- (5) Boycott—picketing—*Hartāl*
- (6) Non-violence
- (7) Civil-disobedience
- (8) Prayer meetings

It is common knowledge that Gandhi wanted these techniques to be used not merely for achieving political independence of the country but to build the new social order. From this point of view the whole Gandhian process differed from the earlier efforts which were concerned only with the attainment of independence. It is apparent that the main obstacles to political socialization of Indian masses were clearly perceived by Bapu. The utmost fear of the foreign ruler, the deep-seated feeling of individual helplessness, the ever-present inferiority complex towards the foreign ruler, and consequent apathy and apolitical attitude were universally present in rural India. The task of socializing these masses into a freedom struggle was a stupendous one. The fear of the imperial rulers had to be removed. It was a psychological remedy which was needed to instill courage in the minds of millions. The insistence on non-violence could be properly appreciated if this context is kept in view. It was for developing the confidence of the unarmed masses against the armed might of the British. The failure of the revolutionaries to enthuse the common masses and neglect of the masses by the constitutionalists have to be taken into consideration while evaluating this bold and novel approach of Gandhi.

The national emancipation of a colonial country could not be achieved in a day. A long-drawn-out fight was envisaged by both the parties. The various *satyāgraha* movements carried out by Gandhi indicated this nature of the struggle. From another angle it could be argued that every movement was an imaginatively planned effort to socialize the masses and build up the necessary political mobilization for the final struggle. From this angle it is revealing that Gandhi chose 'salt' and 'Jungle' *satyāgraha* which affected the rural masses more than the urban classes. The support structure of Gandhian movement was ever-widening. It encompassed new strata of society. This resulted in removing the apolitical character of the people, especially of the rural masses.



Some of the Gandhian techniques had more a demonstrative effect than anything substantial. For example, the public burning of foreign cloth which was objected to by C. F. Andrews, was justified by Gandhi. The justification might be due to the demonstrative and psychological impact on the masses who could readily grasp the 'abstract' principle of Swadeshi by this very 'concrete' destruction of foreign cloth. Abstract principles by themselves do not appeal to common people.

The process of political socialization leads to recruitment of such individuals into active politics. In the Weberian terms Gandhi taught his followers how to 'live for politics'. Those who became very active followers of Bapu had to sacrifice their careers, their properties and in some cases even their lives. In the pre-1947 India to 'live for politics' was a supreme test of one's own loyalty to the country. Thus the Gandhian process of political socialization was flexible enough to accommodate any one, from the habitual Khadi wearer to the *satyāgrahī* who fearlessly faced the bullets. Thus it was a process useful for both, the elite cadre of freedom fighters and the masses who gave the emotional and material support to the struggle.

The effectiveness of Gandhian techniques of political socialization could be understood in a correct perspective if it is remembered that the non-political forms of socialization were under the strict control of the foreign government. It can be stated here that Gandhi started a rival system of education. But he concentrated his best efforts in the political field. On a close examination of the techniques it becomes apparent that there were certain distinctive features of the Gandhian process of socialization. It was more psychological than intellectual, it was more a collective phenomenon than an individual conversion, it was more moralistic than practical and finally it was more secular than revivalistic. In any effort to reach the mass it was not possible to use intellectual arguments. It was more effective to use emotional appeal. The constitutionalists, revolutionaries and the militants had tried individual conversion by intellectual process. But it had never resulted in the necessary mobilization of the masses to create an adequate support structure for the freedom struggle. Thus the process had to be a collective one. In the non-integrated society Bapu thought that an emphasis on morals was necessary. In short one could say that he had been successful in discovering some novel short-cuts to the socialization of the masses.

The Gandhian techniques of political socialization deserve to be studied in detail and with reference to their use in the pre-1947

and post-1947 periods. The political mobilization which occurred because of the use of these techniques is another aspect which deserves a critical examination.

Gandhi's unique position in the processes of socialization and popular mobilization remains unchallenged. Neither his Gandhian follower nor his opponents have been able to use his techniques with the same amount of success. They have not been able to discover any new techniques to supplement the old.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Robert E. Lane, *Political Life*, 1959, p. 187.
2. Herbert H. Hyman, *Political Socialization*, 1959, p. 156. See also, Clifford Geertz, *Old Societies and New States*, 1963, p. 280.

SECTION E

Gandhi's Legacy and  
Contemporary Relevance



S. N. BALASUNDARAM

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# The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi



WE ARE living in a world whose scientific and sociological thinking has been fundamentally governed by the ideas of Darwin, Marx, Freud and Einstein. The dominant Western culture has penetrated into India where it has created the problem of reconciling and adjusting the values of a traditional, collectivist society with those of a progressive, individualistic one. The scientific and technological achievements of the West are guided by the dogma of progress that is evaluated in terms of man's multiplying wants, and emphasizes material welfare as the goal of human endeavour. Western achievements have cast a spell on the tradition-loving Indians, made them discontented with their mode of living; and induced in them a morbid desire to give up their civilization, since the way of life it represents has become an intolerable burden of sin that they, like Christians, must cast off, if they were to make progress along Western lines. This new pilgrim's progress, a travesty that would have horrified the puritan soul of Bunyan, has produced a conflict in the psyche of the Indian nation; and the Indian people have remained divided in their loyalty. The pro-Western, liberated Indian wants a social revolution that will free the individual from the dominance of the group, since it is an essential condition of progress, as he conceives it. On the contrary, the tradition-loving Indian regards any such drastic alteration of the social system as an attack on ancient values that have stood the

test of time and conduced to social contentment by reconciling the individual to the group. A coherent system of values should not be lightheartedly tampered with, especially when it carries the rich wisdom of the past experience of the people.

This psychological conflict has become more intense ever since we achieved our freedom. Contrary pulls are exerted on the nation by the two opposing social forces. The struggle between the modern and the ancient, between the liberal and the conservative, constitutes a modern *devasura* war. It is against this social and political background that we have to examine the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and try to find out whether it offers a solution to the conflict. The new generation, gradually growing to maturity, can know Gandhi only through his writings and cannot be infected with the felt experience born of constant association and intimate fellowship with a great teacher and leader of the men of his day. The great drama of India's struggle for freedom of which he was the hero—a hero he was indeed, since the tragedy of Partition shattered to pieces his dream of United India—has become an historical event that evokes no emotion in its heart. To such a generation the Mahatma does not appear as a living symbol of human perfection, as he did to his admiring contemporaries, but as a historical figure, lifeless and stripped of his hallowness, glory and grandeur. It is apt to view his achievements with the critical eye of a historian who, like *Yama*, judges the dead souls of history.

Gandhi's personality was rich and complex. He lived like a simple peasant, though he was not one whose behaviour moulded by an agricultural environment, could be predicted. In his honest attempt to imbibe the spirit of the Indian *daridranārāyaṇa* he assumed the carriage of a rustic and deliberately eradicated the instincts of an English-educated Indian. He was no ordinary Hindu. He accepted the *Bhagavadgītā* as his spiritual guide but horrified the orthodox by rejecting untouchability as contrary to Hinduism. 'He was a Hindu who was deeply Christian. He was fundamentally a Hindu. The roots of his spiritual life were not in Christ—they were in the *Bhagavadgītā*. And yet in spite of himself, and in spite of his constant protests against the Christian faith as represented in the missionary movement in India, he was more christianized than most Christians.'<sup>1</sup>

He did not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. To him the Bible, the Koran and the Zend Avesta were as divinely inspired as the Vedas.<sup>2</sup> His religious eclecticism was matched by his spirit of Protestantism when he declared that

he was not 'bound by an interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense'.<sup>3</sup>

The teachings of a complex man, like Gandhi, can be differently interpreted according to the subjective preferences of the writer. A liberal Hindu may discover in Gandhi a wise and far-sighted reformer who saved his religion from the disintegration that had set in with the diffusion of Western-type education and the large-scale defection of the Harijans from the Hindu religion because of the practice of untouchability. An orthodox Hindu may view Gandhi's uncompromising crusade against the caste system as the maniacal exhibition of an irreligious impulse defying the sanction of the *dharmaśāstras* and tending to create social chaos. To the separatist, Jinnah and his Muslim League followers demanding Pakistan, Gandhi's insistence on the Hindu-Muslim unity was a snare spread by subtle, soft-spoken Hindu who wanted to perpetuate a permanent Hindu political majority in a United India under the guise of a Western democratic system. The Indian nationalist apotheosized Gandhi, since he was honestly convinced that but for the divinely-inspired presence of this frail man who listened to his inner voice for taking momentous political decisions, the Indian people would not have achieved their freedom. The contemporary Westerner, the inheritor of the rich, diversified culture of post-Renaissance Europe, thinks that Gandhi's opposition to the industrialization of Indian society and his repudiation of material welfare as the goal of human endeavour reveal the outlook of a mediaeval ascetic who found contentment in accepting poverty as the rule of his life. Lastly, the pacifist abhorring war, finds in his creed of non-violence an alternative to the annihilation of man by thermo-nuclear weapons. In short, Gandhi will remain a controversial historical figure; for his interpreters will differ in their estimates of the man who was both a patriotic Indian and a teacher of ideas of universal applicability, both a mystic worshipping the spinning wheel, a symbol of his protest against the slavery of the machine age, and a prophet preaching *ahimsā* as the *dharma* that will save man in the fear and sorrow-ridden *Kaliyuga*.

Philosophy in the West from the days of the Greeks has been an intellectual pursuit closely bound up with the humanistic tradition. It is an attempt to humanize the knowledge, and synthesize the wisdom of man. Such an intellectualist attitude to man, society and the universe can exist independently of the religious experience of the community. On the contrary, there has not existed such an

independent, intellectualist, humanistic philosophical tradition in India. Indian philosophy, especially the philosophy of the Hindus, has been closely bound up with the Hindu religion. The religious experience of the community has determined the philosophical approach. Fundamental religious conceptions have been accepted as the first principles of philosophy. The task of the Indian philosopher is not to synthesize human wisdom but to enquire into the true nature of the relationship between Soul and God, the two vital elements of the Universe. The fundamental religious ideas of the Hindus have not changed, because the social system has not felt the impact of anew religious experience affecting, in turn, philosophic speculation; hence, our philosophic tradition is based on the constant reiteration of old concepts. Under such circumstances the role of the philosopher is merely to provide a re-interpretation in a modern garb. Such an intellectual condition is possible, because the social system has continued to exist undisturbed and people have been content to accept ancient ideas that have satisfied spiritual hunger. Another significant factor contributing to the stability of the old philosophic tradition is that the political upheavals of the past did not produce such far-reaching social catastrophes as would have destroyed the old set of philosophic ideas. The endurance of the Hindu religion throughout the past and its vitality in the present are other factors strengthening the old philosophic tradition.

Given such an intellectual state of affairs, it is not illogical to conclude that the philosophy of Gandhi can be understood only in the context of the Hindu religion that he believed in. He was essentially a religious man and his religious beliefs guided his action, speech and thought. He was a political leader by necessity and religion was the very essence of his being. In the introduction to *My Experiments with Truth*, he says,

‘What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.’<sup>24</sup>

As Gandhi was not a humanist, like Jawaharlal Nehru, and critically reviewed the postulates of his philosophy of *satyāgraha* from his religious point of view, ‘an examination of his religious beliefs is a necessary prelude to the understanding of his philosophy of action.



Gandhi described himself 'a *Sanātani* Hindu' because he said,

- (1) I believe in the *Vedas*, and *Upaniṣads*, the *Purāṇas* and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in *Avataras* and rebirth;
- (2) I believe in the *varṇāśrama dharma* in a sense, in my opinion, strictly Vedic but not in its present popular and crude sense;
- (3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular;
- (4) I do not disbelieve in idol worship.<sup>5</sup>

In these words, Gandhi expressed his faith in the essentials of Hinduism. But, as Romain Rolland points out, it is apt to puzzle a Westerner since it reveals 'a mentality so different from ours and so far removed in time and space as to make comparison with our ideals impossible owing to the lack of a common measure'.<sup>6</sup> Gandhi's belief in the *varṇāśrama dharma* requires a closer examination. He thought that it was inconsistent with Hindu social practice of untouchability. It is difficult for a Westerner and a Westernized liberated Indian to comprehend it, since they cannot reconcile it with their belief in the equality of man. Gandhi justifies *varṇāśrama dharma* thus, 'I am inclined to think that the law of heredity is an eternal law and that any attempt to alter it must lead to utter confusion.... *Varṇāśrama* or the caste system, is inherent in human nature. Hinduism has simply reduced it to a science'.<sup>7</sup> It must be borne in mind that his conception of the caste system is, as he qualifies it, strictly Vedic and is not based on vain social superiority claimed on the basis of birth in a higher caste. According to him the four classes of Hindu society 'define duties, they confer no privileges'. In his view all are born 'to serve God's creation, the Brahman with his knowledge, the Kshatriya with his power of protection, the Vaishya with his commercial ability, the Shudra with his bodily labour'.<sup>8</sup>

Gandhi is quick to point out that neither is the brahmin absolved from manual labour nor the Sudra is prevented from acquiring knowledge. However, it is better if each confines himself to the performance of the duty that he is fit to discharge in virtue of his training and heredity. For *varṇāśrama* is 'self-restraint and conservation of economy and energy'.<sup>9</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi regarded the *Bhagavadgītā* as 'a synthesis of Hindu religion at once deeply philosophical and yet easily to be understood by any unsophisticated seeker'.<sup>10</sup> He claimed to be a *Sanātani* Hindu 'because for forty years I have been seeking literally to live up to the teachings of that book'.<sup>11</sup> The *Gītā* is Truth because, as he says,

‘it compels me, by an appeal to my reason and a more penetrating appeal to my heart, in language that has a magnetic touch about it, to believe that all life is one and that it is through God and must return to him.... Life does not consist in outward rites and ceremonial but it consists in the utter most inward purification and merging oneself, body, soul and mind in the divine essence’.<sup>12</sup>

As the teachings of the *Gītā* constituted the Truth for Gandhi, he tested everything that came under the Hindu rubric in the light of that Truth. ‘Whatever is contrary to the main theme’, he says, ‘I reject as un-Hindu’.<sup>13</sup> His *sanātana dharma* is the *dharma* prescribed by the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Gandhi accepted *varṇāśrama dharma* because it was based on the teachings of the *Gītā*.

‘The law of Varna’, says Gandhi, ‘teaches us that we have each one of us to earn our bread by following the ancestral calling. It defines not our rights, but our duties. It necessarily has reference to callings that are conducive to the welfare of humanity and to no other. It also follows that there is no calling too low and none too high. All are good, lawful, and absolutely equal in status. The callings of a Brahmana—the spiritual teacher—and a scavenger are equal, and their due performance carries equal merit before God and at one time seems to have carried identical reward before man. Both were entitled to their livelihood and no more’.<sup>14</sup>

*Varṇāśrama dharma* is different from the present-day caste system. The former is ‘a rational scientific fact’ and the latter ‘an excrescence, an unmitigated evil’.<sup>15</sup> ‘Caste has nothing to do with religion. It is a custom ....It is harmful both to spiritual and national growth’.<sup>16</sup> *Varṇāśrama* is ‘a healthy division of work based on birth. The present ideas of caste are a perversion of the original’.<sup>17</sup> *Varṇāśrama* transfers ‘human ambition from the general worldly sphere to the permanent and the spiritual’.<sup>18</sup> The aim of the *Brahmana* and the *Sudra* is common, viz. ‘*mokṣa* or self-realization not realization of fame, riches and power’.<sup>19</sup> It is ‘the antithesis of competition that kills’.<sup>20</sup> The caste system is evil; for it sanctions inequality based on birth, between man and man, which negates the fundamental principle of equality, presupposed by *varṇāśrama dharma*. It thus offends against the ‘rock-bottom doctrine of Advaita’ in which Gandhi believed. ‘My interpretation of Advaita’, says he, ‘excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage whatsoever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal’.<sup>21</sup>

While Gandhi accepted the *varṇāśrama dharma*, he totally rejected the present-day caste system, because the former was based on the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the latter derived its sanction

from the *smrtis*, such as *Manusmṛti*. He did not regard the *smrtis* as revelation. He rejected 'as interpolations everything in the *Smrtis* or other writings that is inconsistent with Truth and, Non-violence or other fundamental and universal principles of ethics'.<sup>22</sup> The rejection of the caste system involves the rejection of untouchability which is the extreme manifestation of inequality that the caste system seeks to preserve and which is incompatible with Hinduism understood in the light of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*. In other words, untouchability is contrary to the *varṇāśrama dharma*.

'Arrogation of a superior status by any of the Varnas over another is a denial of the law. And there is nothing in the law of Varna to warrant a belief in untouchability'.<sup>23</sup>

As the *varṇas* have been four in number there is no warrant for believing that the untouchables are *pancamas*, i.e. members of a fifth class. When Gandhi advocated the removal of untouchability, he meant that the *pancama*, the abortion of the caste system, should become the Sudra, the normal human being envisaged by the *varṇāśrama dharma*. If he becomes so, he ceases to be untouchable. The restoration of pristine purity of the *varṇāśrama dharma* requires the abolition of untouchability. Such a condition is essential to the spiritual growth of the Hindus.

'The four divisions', observes Gandhi, 'are not a vertical section but a horizontal plane on which all stand on a footing of equality, doing the services respectively assigned to them. In the book of God, the same number of marks are assigned to the Brahmaṇa that has done his task well as to the Bhangi who has done likewise'.<sup>24</sup>

In his approach to untouchability, Gandhi differed fundamentally from the liberal Indian. Inspired by the Western ideology of liberal democracy and believing in its secular values of freedom and equality, the liberal-minded Indian approaches the problem from the point of view of the rational intellectual. The humanistic tradition of the West is the source of his inspiration and moral strength. That all men are free and equal is the liberal dogma to which he subscribes. The liberal's attack on the Hindu social system, whether it is *varṇāśrama dharma* or the present-day caste system, is motivated by his conviction that both are inconsistent with the freedom and equality of the individual. He believes that he is the reformer of Hinduism; he is sustained by the conviction that the injection of Western liberal values will give strength to Hinduism and this is possible because of its resilience and its capacity for absorption of new ideas. Hinduism,

when purged of the narrow-mindedness and the built-in inequality of the caste system, will be a force working for national unity. In short, the motivation of the liberal Indian is political.

Gandhi was also moved by the impulse of religion. He attacked untouchability vehemently on the sole ground that there was no sanction for it in the Hindu religion,

‘Untouchability in its extreme form’, observes Gandhi, ‘has always caused me so much pain because I consider myself to be a Hindu of Hindus saturated with the spirit of Hinduism. I have failed to find a single warrant for the existence of untouchability as we believe and practise it today in all those books which we call as Hindu Shastras. But as I repeatedly said in other places, if I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself.’<sup>25</sup>

This revolutionary idea dawned on him when he was hardly twelve years old. When he accidentally touched the scavenger, his mother asked him to perform ablutions. He obeyed but protested that it was impossible that Hinduism had sanctioned untouchability.<sup>26</sup> At this early age he could not have come under the influence of Christianity. To his critics who said that he drew his protestant ideas after he had studied the Christian scriptures he answered,

‘It is equally wrong to think—as some people do—that I have taken my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back at the time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible.’<sup>27</sup>

On the face of such irrefutable evidence we have to accept that Gandhi’s belief in the *sanatana dharma*, the ‘eternal law’ of his native land, convinced him that untouchability was not a social disability that could be removed by law, but a moral evil that had to be abandoned by a thorough reformation of the soul, since it contradicted the truths of his religion. The *sanātana dharma* that he accepted was not the one interpreted by the Brahmins in the *smrtis*. He rejected the Brahmanical interpretation of the *sanātana dharma* on the same ground as Martin Luther had rejected the interpretation of Christianity by the Catholic Church. The *dharma* dictated by the conscience of a truthful man which was fortified by an understanding of the *Bhagavadgītā* was to be the touchstone of Hinduism that Gandhi preached. He was an unselfconscious Protestant Hindu just as Martin Luther had been an unselfconscious Protestant Christian. Both revolutionized the world in which they lived. The truthful man of any age to whom Truth is not an intellectual awareness but a deeply

felt experience of his soul, faces the dilemma, whether to accept the interpretation of those in authority or to obey his conscience which appeals to a higher law. So far as the non-conformist is concerned the dictate of his conscience is the higher law. As the conscience of a truthful man, like Mahatma Gandhi, does not lead him astray, his conscientious objection does not inject an anarchical element into the accepted social order but rouses its dormant moral sense. Such a rousing requires the deeply-felt experience of religion which justifies the criteria of man's moral conduct ultimately. The dilemma of a man who has the vision of the Truth existed from the days of Socrates to those of Gandhi and it will continue to exist as long as man values the freedom of conscience and vindicates it by becoming a martyr.

Gandhi's belief in the *varṇāśrama dharma* as an efficient means of maintaining a balance in society among various classes contributing to social contentment and happiness may not carry conviction to the liberal-minded, progressive Indian who wants to liberate the individual from his deep-rooted attachment to caste in an effort to establish social equality among men as individuals. In the secular Indian society that is slowly rising on account of the rapid industrialization and the faith of the people in the political ideals of Western liberal democratic system, the individual now enjoys the freedom to pursue any profession, irrespective of the caste or religion to which he belongs and he is now reckoned as the unit of society. Is it politically wise, then, to advocate a Hindu view of social organization in the contemporary, multi-religious, Indian society, since it is liable to be misunderstood and opposed by religious minorities as a denial of their fundamental rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution that has now become the new *Rgveda* of the modern Indian people?

According to Vincent Sheean, 'When we consider Gandhi's teaching as a whole we see plainly that it falls into two distinct categories, that which concerns all men and that which concerns the special condition of India in the twentieth century'.<sup>28</sup> We may safely omit his teaching concerning the special condition of India; for it has become a subject of purely historical interest with the achievement of political freedom. His universal teaching merits careful attention since it points a way out of the morass into which mankind has fallen, thanks to its own ignorance, violence and hatred. He bases his philosophy of action on the solid ground of religion; he draws his inspiration from the deeper urges of man who surrenders himself before his Creator in an attitude of *bhakti*. He is

a refreshing contrast to the philosophers of the Western humanistic tradition. His universality does not appeal to the intellectual spirit in man. He is, as Romain Rolland observes, ‘a universalist through his religious feeling’<sup>29</sup> and ‘has introduced the strongest religious impetus of the last two thousand years’.<sup>30</sup> His humility is touching and recalls to one’s mind the humility of the Buddha and Jesus. He is not an arrogant intellectual who advances his claims to originality; he wants to remain ‘a humble servant of India and humanity’.<sup>31</sup> Claiming no special revelations of God’s will, he says,

‘I have no desire to found a sect. I am really too ambitious to be satisfied with a sect for a following, for I represent no new truths. I endeavour to follow and represent truth as I know it. I do claim to throw a new light on many an old truth’.<sup>32</sup>

The human soul, today, is helplessly enveloped in the dark, grim and gloomy world of Einstein, Darwin, Marx and Freud. It is marching towards its preordained doom of extinction, either because the sun is becoming cold, or because it sees no escape from historical materialism, or because the unconscious, like the Furies of the Greek tragedy, makes the conscious existence of man a nightmare of misery, or because the weak vanish in the struggle for survival, uncared for and dropping dead on the way. Such a nightmarish world as ours can be made a tolerable abode of living, if man, according to Gandhi, remembers God and follows *satya*, *ahimsā* and *brahmacārya*. The tragedy of modern man is that he scorns spiritual values and worships Mammon. In the pursuit of wealth and ambition he has lost his peace of mind. By cultivating the three cardinal virtues man can realize the best in him and keep the tiger in him under leash.

Gandhi’s contribution to the thought of mankind is his conception of *satyāgraha* as a principle of action in resolving conflict between men. Three great influences coincided in the shaping of the *satyāgraha* doctrine. Its revelation came to him in 1893 after reading the Sermon on the Mount. The revelation was confirmed when he read the *Bhagavadgītā*. Lastly, Tolstoy’s ideal explained in his ‘The Kingdom of God Is within you’, contributed to the moulding of the doctrine. The creed of *satyāgraha* was the blend of the teachings contained in the *Gītā* and the *New Testament*. The great common virtues of Hinduism and Christianity went in to make up the philosophy of Gandhi. What is characteristic of it is renunciation and a return to the monasticism of the medieval age. In a world abandoning itself to the joys and pleasures of material welfare

made abundant and easily available owing to the mechanization of means of production, Mahatma Gandhi chose deliberately to reject material abundance and wealth and made renunciation and poverty the staff of his life.

'*Satyāgraha* is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force.'<sup>33</sup> *Satyāgraha* is not a weapon of the weak. It is not meant to be used by the weak so long as they consider themselves incapable of meeting violence by non-violence.<sup>34</sup> It is not expediency that determines the offering of *satyāgraha*. It is offered by men of indomitable will and infinite courage and faith in the justice of their cause. It is, in other words, offered by men, 'who realize that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him and that the latter always yields to it'.<sup>35</sup> The basis of *satyāgraha* is non-violence or *ahimsā*. Violence is eliminated, because the opponent is as sincere as the *satyāgrahī* and what appears as truth to *satyāgrahī* may appear as untruth to his opponent.<sup>36</sup> The opponent 'must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy.... and patience means self-suffering'.<sup>37</sup> The *satyāgrahī* vindicates his stand by inflicting suffering on himself. Thus, non-violent pursuit of truth is the hallmark of *satyāgraha*.

Even though the goal of the *satyāgrahī* is good, he should be scrupulous about the means he employs to attain it. Gandhi rejects the Machiavellian argument that the end justifies the means. He considers it to be a grievous error to hold that there is no connexion between the means and the end. One cannot grow a rose through planting a noxious weed. 'The means may be likened to a seed and the end to a tree'.<sup>38</sup> One is unlikely to obtain the grace of God by prostrating before Satan. The adoption of different means yields different results. Gandhi points out,

'If I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall have to fight for it; if I want to buy your watch, I shall have to pay for it; and if I want it a gift, I shall have to plead for it; and, according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property or a donation. Thus we see different results from three different means'.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, motive determines the means and it, in turn, affects the end. Purity of motive leads to purity of means and it, in turn, produces good end.

*Satyāgraha* is of universal applicability. This spiritual force may be used by individuals and communities. It 'may be offered against

one's wife, or one's children, against rulers, against fellow citizens, even against the whole world'.<sup>40</sup> It can be applied in domestic and political affairs. In politics, it becomes constitutional opposition to the government offered by the law— abiding people who disobey it, because it does not listen to their appeal for reforms or passes an unjust law. *Satyāgraha* is no light-hearted affair. Its moral requirements are exacting. A *satyāgrahī* must 'observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth and cultivate fearlessness'.<sup>41</sup> The soul of *satyāgraha* is the active resistance that finds its outlet in the sacrifice of oneself which consists in suffering. Suffering is the law of life. For example, the mother suffers so that the child may live and the seed perishes so that wheat may grow.<sup>42</sup> Since love is the motive force of *satyāgraha*, one must not forget the distinction between the evil and the evil-doer. The only way to purge the world of evil is by trying 'to overcome evil by good, anger by love, untruth by truth, *himsā* by *ahimsā*'.<sup>43</sup>

Non-violence (*ahimsā*) is the hall-mark that distinguishes *satyāgraha* as a style of action resolving conflicts between man and communities. Two kinds of force can be used to resolve conflicts. Force of arms, or violence, is one kind and non-violence, or *ahimsā*, is another. Violence does not solve issues, though it may secure outward conformity and, in extreme cases, lead to the elimination of the opponent. When the opponent yields to you because he fears your capacity to do him harm, he yields out of expediency, not out of conviction that you are right, even though your stand is righteous. Righteousness backed by force of arms, is no righteousness at all; it partakes of the character of violence on which it rests. The forcible imposition of communism on the Russians by Stalin is a case in point. However righteous the cause of communism appeared to be, the harsh violence with which it was imposed on the Russian masses horrified men like Ignatio Silone who believed in communism, for it could not be distinguished from the violence which attached itself to the cause as a stigma. Moreover, to resort to violence can never be unilateral. If you consider the use of violence is justifiable, surely your opponent also is entitled to its use. Under the circumstances, there is no agreement between you and your opponent. Thus, the use of brute force 'means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not'.<sup>44</sup>

The alternative to brute force is non-violence (*ahimsā*). It is not merely a negative state of harmlessness.

'It is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil doer.



But it does not mean helping the evil doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsā*, requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically.<sup>45</sup> The normal impulse of man is to desist from violence as a means of settling conflicts. For example, in our domestic conflicts, we do not resort to violence. When a son objects to the wrong course that his father follows, he requests his parent to desist from it. If he fails in his attempt, he leaves the house. It is his parental love that induces the son to non-cooperate with his father. His non-cooperation is based on non-violence which springs from love, fearlessness and belief in the righteousness of his cause.

Now Gandhi believes that the sentiment of love which characterizes our domestic conflicts should inform the resolution of conflicts in other fields as well. When it does so, the conflicts between the government and the people, between one community and another, and between the majority and the minority, can be resolved in a non-violent way. The non-violent resolution of conflicts is in consonance with the dignity of man's spirit.<sup>46</sup> Man is no brute, though he evolved from a lower species. He is a spiritual being. It is his spiritual experience that differentiates him from the lower species of the animal world. When he has recourse to violence he descends to the low level of the brute and loses his spiritual essence. He can save his spirit by observing non-violence which is in tune with his spirituality. 'Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute'.<sup>47</sup> To Gandhi, non-violence is not merely a method of resolving conflicts. It is a spiritual experience which distinguishes man from lower animal species in his dealings with fellowmen.

The reason for observing non-violence in promoting one's cause is that the opponent is as sincere as the promoter. What appears to be truth to the *satyāgrahī* may appear to be untruth to his adversary. Men genuinely differ as to whether a particular act is just or unjust. Under such circumstances, violence does not carry conviction. The *satyāgrahī* is not a totalitarian; he is a liberal; for he concedes to his opponent the same right of independence that he reserves to himself.<sup>48</sup> Non-violence characterizes the use of soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self on the part of the *satyāgrahī*. For he alone suffers. Gandhi does not exclude the possibility of error on the part of the *satyāgrahī*.

'Men have before now done many things which were subsequently found to have been wrong. No man can claim that he is absolutely in the right or that a

particular thing is wrong, because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgement'.<sup>49</sup>

It is therefore proper that the *satyāgrahī* alone should suffer for his deliberate judgement. He has no right to inflict suffering on others who do not share with him his view of the wrong. There is a positive injunction for observing non-violence. The *satyāgrahī* pursues truth and his pursuit of truth does not admit of the infliction of violence on his opponent. The *satyāgrahī* must vindicate his truth not by inflicting suffering on the opponent but on himself.<sup>50</sup> This self-suffering springs from the *satyāgrahī's* love for his opponent.

'Love does not burn others, it burns itself. Therefore a satyagrahi, i.e., a civil resister, will joyfully suffer even unto death'.<sup>51</sup>

The non-violence of the Gandhian type does not proceed from a state of helplessness. It comes from the strength of one's will.<sup>52</sup> It is not a refuge for the coward. Only courageous men are non-violent. Gandhi was no visionary and he always claimed himself to be a 'practical idealist'.<sup>53</sup> Where there was choice between cowardice and violence, he would advise violence. 'When my eldest son', observes Gandhi, 'asked me what he should have done, had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend even by using violence'.<sup>54</sup>

When applied to politics on a mass scale, *satyāgraha* becomes civil disobedience, which is the opposition to error in the form of unjust laws. As the use of physical force with a view to making the law-giver see his error is ruled out, the only way of convincing him of his error is that the *satyāgrahī* must suffer in his own person by inviting the penalty for the breach of the law.

'Hence, *satyāgraha* largely appears to the public as Civil Disobedience or Civil Resistance. It is civil in sense that it is not criminal'.<sup>55</sup>

When the *satyāgrahī* refuses to obey an unjust law which is repugnant to his conscience, he commits a civil breach of the law. For example, the Rowlatt Act of 1919 was an unjust law because it restricted human liberty. Gandhi's civil resistance is a mode of securing rights by personal suffering. It is non-violent because the *satyāgrahī* uses soul-force which is expressed in the disobedience to the law and the willing acceptance of the penalty for its breach. The use of soul-force, involves sacrifice of self.<sup>56</sup> Civil disobedience as

practised by Gandhi covered the breach of any immoral and unjust law and 'signified the resister's outlawry in a civil, i.e., non-violent manner. He invoked the sanctions of the law and cheerfully suffered imprisonment.'<sup>57</sup>

The liberal democrat recognizes the fact that the collective force exercised by the state is essential to the preservation of civilized social life but insists that such a force must be exercised under the conditions determined by the Constitution. The constitutional regulation and control of the exercise of force is a precondition for the existence of the individual freedom that the liberal values most. The problem is not solved when once the conditions for the manner of the exercise of power are laid down by the Constitution. The liberal faces a dilemma under the democratic system. Men who, as governors, possess legal competence, exercise power and, in the last resort, enforce their authority by the coercive means which the law authorizes them to use. The governors, being human, are liable to error, whether impelled by their cynical selfishness or by their genuine belief in the righteousness of the course adopted; and therefore their actions are apt to be questioned. Their actions are no doubt legal, because they are exercised by the validly constituted authority. But what is questioned is not the legal validity of their actions but the legitimacy of their actions. For example, the Rowlatt Act was perfectly legal but Gandhi opposed it on the ground that it was immoral and unjust. Since men have different notions of what constitutes justice or right, the perfectly legal actions of the rulers will be disputed on the ground of violation of a higher law. Thus, the issue of legitimacy raises ethical considerations which are outside the sphere of law.

When the *satyāgrahī* opposes what he regards as the unjust law, he questions the legitimacy of the ruler's action and justifies his opposition on the ground that the law in question is repugnant to his conscience. In the eye of the law, his opposition to the constituted authority is an act of rebellion; but the justification of his rebellious attitude is that he obeys a higher law, what the Western jurists call the natural law. The *satyāgrahī* creates a deliberate conflict, when he chooses to obey the higher law which satisfies his conscience and disobeys the law of the state which violating the higher law, offends his conscience and, hence, becomes unjust in his deliberate judgement. He, thus, claims the right of private judgement which finally settles for him whether a particular law is just or unjust. He demands freedom to act in the light of his private judgement. But

the opponents of the *satyāgrahī* regard his attitude as anarchical and if his right be conceded, it will tend to undermine the foundations of the social order. The problem which the *satyāgrahī* raises is as old as political thought. The ancient Greeks, whose cool and clear rationalism started political speculation, were aware of it. When Creon, the ruler of Thebes, would not grant the right of the dead to be buried, Antigone, the sister of the dead Polyneices disobeyed Creon's orders and justified her act of disobedience by an appeal to the higher law. The problem shall continue to remain with us as long as the world unexpectedly produces active dissenters who refuse to conform to the wishes of the majority their dissent on ethical grounds.

Expressed in political terms, the issue is whether a majority can bind a minority. In other words, does the mere support of superior numbers make a thing morally right? Gandhi denies that the act of the majority binds the minority. He regards such a belief as

'a superstition and ungodly thing'. 'Many examples', he says, 'can be given in which acts of majorities will be found to have been wrong and those of minorities to have been right. All reforms owe their origin to the initiation of minorities in opposition to majorities. If among a band of robbers a knowledge of robbing is obligatory, is a pious man to accept the obligation? So long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist. And a passive resister alone can remove such a superstition.'<sup>58</sup>

There is a streak of anarchism in Gandhi's thought. To him, *satyāgraha* is not a rare medicine but a daily food. An indiscriminate obedience to laws, good and bad, is not the virtue of citizenship—as understood by him. 'That we should obey laws whether good or bad is a new-fangled notion. There was no such thing in former days.'<sup>59</sup> He asks, 'If the Government were to ask us to go about without clothing should we do so?'<sup>60</sup> He considers the teaching that we should obey all laws passed by the Government, as contrary to religion. Such a teaching advocates slavery.<sup>61</sup> He blames the slavish mentality that makes tyranny possible.

'We are sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.'<sup>62</sup>

In other words, the test of liberty is the individual's right to disobey the law. Gandhi claims a general right to disobey the law on the sole ground that the individual is to judge finally whether the law is good or bad.

'Disobedience', says he, 'is a right that belongs to every human being and it becomes a sacred duty when it springs from civility, or which is the same thing, love.'<sup>63</sup>

What conception of politics does the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi hold forth? It is certainly not a game in which power changes hands according to the uncertain winds of the public opinion in a democracy; it is not the conscious attempt to find out the terms of agreement for the time being through compromise, on the part of the people holding diverse views and pursuing different interests. To Gandhi, politics has none of the meaning the modern secularist invests it with; it is a *modus operandi* that—excluding religion from the sphere of public affairs—secures the greatest common measure of agreement between a majority and a minority.

Gandhi viewed politics in a different light; he viewed it exclusively from the point of view of morality. It is a constant exercise in morality the rules of which should determine the conduct of the ruler. Under his scheme of things, the ruler has no freedom of action; he cannot claim it by appealing to the doctrine of the Reason of the State. If for some reason or other the ruler does not observe the rules of morality, he faces the opposition of the *satyāgrahī*, whether organized or individual, because the *satyāgrahī* regards such an action of the ruler as unjust and unethical. The *satyāgrahī* holds the Damocles's sword of rebellion over the ruler's head.

This view of the ruler's position in the mundane world is similar to the position assigned to *Yama*, the ruler of the Kingdom of the Dead. According to the Puranic tradition of the Hindus, *Yama* is hailed as the *dharmarāja*, because he administers strict, even-handed justice to the dead souls. To make him conscious of the terrible responsibility he bears, he is made to sit on a throne over which a mountain held by a thin thread, hangs and beneath which a river flows. If *Yama* swerves from the eternal *dharma* the observance of which is his duty, the mountain will fall on him and roll him down into the river. It is very strange that the *satyāgrahī* threatens the mundane ruler with the same fate as *Yama* is threatened with for his failure to observe the *dharma*. In the world beyond, the eternal *dharma* prescribed by God sets the norms of righteous conduct for *Yama* with an inflexibility that allows no discretion to him on grounds of mercy or any other consideration. But in the mundane world, the *satyāgrahī* not only arrogates to himself the right to be the interpreter of the *dharma* but becomes the *dharma* incarnate himself. In other words, the *satyāgrahī* assumes the role of God; he prescribes the *dharma* for the ruler in

the same way as God prescribes the eternal *dharma* for *Yama*. This is supreme arrogance masquerading as obedience to the dictates of conscience or the inner voice. Thus, the logical ultimate of the *satyāgrahī* stand converts a fallible human being into an infallible Divine Being who is omniscient.

Let us forget the philosophical absurdity into which the acceptance of the *satyāgraha* doctrine lands one and inquire into its contemporary relevance to the conditions prevailing in India. It cannot be denied that there exists among Indians a widespread belief that their national freedom was achieved by the mass adoption of the techniques of *satyāgraha* such as non-cooperation and civil disobedience. This belief has invested *satyāgraha* with such a mystic hallowness that it has become a new religious creed. It has become the mystique of the politicians; it is the magical formula that we can adopt for the quick removal of our public and individual grievances. The doctrine of opposition to the government generated by *satyāgraha* is so deeply embedded in our thought that we fail to distinguish the fact that Gandhi used the technique of *satyāgraha* against a foreign government for the single great purpose of achieving national freedom. Today, *satyāgraha* is offered by men who do not possess the moral earnestness of Gandhi and are not inspired by great public causes. The moral weapon forged by the father of the nation to achieve a noble mission has descended to the low level of pressure tactics adopted by men who are motivated by narrow and petty interests. Trade union leaders become *satyāgrahīs* in order to compel the government to grant more dearness allowance and bonus to their followers, lest they shall lose their influence over their followers. Provincial agitators with the connivance of the state government offer *satyāgraha* with a view to compelling the Union Government to locate a steel mill or to start a new industry in their state. Political parties have adopted *satyāgraha* as their routine way of functioning and do not realize the illogicality and the inappropriateness of such a position in a constitutional democracy.

Thus, *satyāgraha* has replaced the constitutional method of solving our problems. We, as a nation, seem to be unconscious of the odd reality that we have built into our constitutional system an anarchical pattern of political behaviour to which we resort, whenever we fail to promote our interests through the normal constitutional machinery. Such a conduct is constitutionally unethical but we justify it by an appeal to the conscience, forgetting the fact that conscience can be arbitrary and tyrannical, and the man who appeals to his conscience can scarcely be

a liberal. In short, we have deprived it of its very essence the truth on which Mahatma Gandhi uncompromisingly insisted.

The functioning of the Indian democracy since 1947 reveals one truth. 'We have not yet learnt the lesson that the cultivation of the virtues of tolerance and compromise are essential to the successful functioning of a constitutional democracy. The *satyāgrahī* unilaterally insists that as he is convinced of the truth and justice of his demand, others should also accept it. His intense moral earnestness becomes a handicap, because he is not inclined to observe the virtue of limit, so essential to the maintenance of justice, as Plato argues in his *Republic*. The *satyāgrahīs* moral earnestness produces in him the mental disposition that prevents him from cultivating the virtues of tolerance and compromise, because he imports into politics the religious conception of sin. If such a disposition becomes fairly widespread and common, it will destroy the favourable climate necessary for the existence of a constitutional democracy. It is time that we become wise and realize that *satyāgraha* had served its purpose. It does not suit the sophisticated political behaviour expected of a people who have chosen to adopt a complex, Western political system. Such a system needs political maturity and the art of statesmanship for the solution of its problems, not the agitational tactics of pseudo *satyāgrahīs* who pervert the means adopted by a truthful man, because it pays political dividends.

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36. M. K. Gandhi, *Satyāgraha, op. cit.*, p. 6.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
42. M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
45. M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 161.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
48. M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
55. M. K. Gandhi *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.



S. C. BISWAS

# On the Goodness of an Act and its Gandhian Interpretation



## SYNOPSIS

1. Whenever a man is thinking rationally, he is always doing so in a certain intellectual framework of his. For a sympathetic understanding of his thoughts, therefore, it is very essential to have some acquaintance with this general framework of his ideas. I have tried briefly to provide this framework of Gandhian thought in the first two pages of my paper.
2. Against this background I have tried to state, in most general terms, certain principles which are deeply involved in the Gandhian thinking about actions, and some of their implications.
3. Having stated these, I have attempted to bring to the fore the under lying emphasis on the cognitive element—the ‘knowing’ aspect of an act.
4. This brings me to an analysis of human action in non-behaviouristic terms which reveals the intimate nature of the relation that holds between action and purpose.
5. I have tried next to read this analysis in the ethical context to determine the nature of the problems to which it gives rise, and the types of answers to these, that one get from the typically Gandhian standpoint.

6. At this stage, I have addressed myself to determining the meaning of ‘good’ in Gandhian thought and, finally, to point out its intimate connection with what Gandhi calls Truth.
7. Lastly, I should like to emphasize that I would not like my paper to be taken as a critique of Gandhian Ethics (which a few of the papers presented earlier claimed to be) but rather as an attempt to understand his thoughts in a certain sphere.

THE Gandhian philosophy of life, so far as one such could be conceived, is predominantly ethico-religious in temper. The real significance of all that he does and says will always be found to rest for their ultimate bearing on this uncompromising moral theology of his. In fact, the identification of the good, the true, and the divine constitutes the most deep and abiding tenor of the entire Gandhian thinking. Yet, it should be remembered that Gandhi had practically to rediscover his philosophical ideas by the peculiar exigencies of his life ‘demanding a plan of action with a theoretical justification’. But such ideas, in his case, are the very life-experiences actually lived by him, rather than academically theorized system of thought. And his own life, as he himself tells us, is only a series of experiments with truth, where the basic principle of action is *satyāgraha*, i.e., holding on to, or striving after the Truth. And since this Truth is not only God, but is also Love and infinite good-will according to Gandhi, the term under reference, as might ordinarily be supposed, does not denote only a particular category of actions, but is found to embody practically the whole of what may be termed as the Gandhian philosophy of action. Unquestionably, for Gandhi, all actions are on the same footing—whether private or public, whether personal and exclusively self-regarding, or social or religious or intricately political, involving clever diplomatic moves—and are to be judged as such by the same characteristic rigour of the Gandhian standard which, springing, as it does, from the deep and self-renewing motivation ‘to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life’<sup>1</sup> that characterize the efforts of all great humanitarian workers,<sup>2</sup> encourages an ideal of compassionate merciful and competent action.

On the question of a man’s morality, this much perhaps can be safely asserted that, that which a man regards as moral, whatever else it may be, is at least something which he takes to be of sufficient importance to merit careful consideration. ‘A man’s morality’, as a recent writer has put it, ‘is shown by the type of question of conduct that he takes seriously, by the type of decision about which he is

prepared to reflect carefully, and to entertain genuine and reasoned regrets and criticisms'.<sup>3</sup> The crux of Gandhian morality, in this sense, is, perhaps to be found in his unshakable conviction of the supreme value and importance of acting with love and good-will, so outspokenly stated in terms of his ultimate Trinity of Truth, God and Non-violence, i.e., love in the broadest sense. And it is only through his moral genius, which Gandhi certainly was, that it has been possible for him to give such a conscious, rational and forceful expression to life's instinctive purpose.<sup>4</sup> Another significant fact worth remembering is that in all his writing and thinking, Gandhi is always more interested in the realization of truth as it is encountered in the fuller realities of actual life and experience than in the striving after a theoretical, dry-as-dust, empty and abstract logical compatibility usually called formal consistency. Amidst the continual enrichment of his living experience, he is heard to proclaim in unambiguous terms: 'I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly... What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment...'<sup>5</sup> And, in fact, on a deeper view, the apparent inconsistencies of some of Gandhi's statements cease to conflict and get readily resolved in the richer harmony of his comprehensive conception of Truth in which are funded all the wealth of his life's actual experiences—the essential context which clearly confirms the ultimate compossibility of the statements concerned.

All of one's actions, according to the fundamentals of the Gandhian ideal—irrespective of whether they refer to one's friend or adversary—must necessarily be charged with an inherent and uncompromising good-will, reinforced, in the obverse, by an equally uncompromising attitude of aversion to evil. Evil, as the polar opposite of the good, has, here, to be carefully distinguished from the *doer* of it,<sup>6</sup> and in opposing it, it is of utmost importance to see that nothing is done which would betray the slightest speck of hatred, ill will, or bitterness against its doer, for, every action should emanate from this firm conviction that there is no one in this world so fallen but can be converted by love, so that each effort to overcome anger by love, untruth by truth, evil by good, becomes always immensely meaningful as attempts at, what a noted naturalistic thinker of our time has called creative transformation.<sup>7</sup> Flowing almost inevitably from this central principle of uncompromising good-will, as its

corollary, one notices in the Gandhian rule of the game a very great insistence on fair-play and fairness even while acting to one's bitterest opponent.<sup>8</sup> Leading again, from the same principle and going beyond it is the Gandhian practice, not unoften ridiculed by many of his 'modern' contemporaries, of discovering spiritual values even in the most ordinary worldly happenings as much as in common day-to-day human actions. Actions, as bearers of goodwill are held to have the unmistakable imprint of the Divine will.<sup>9</sup>

The close parallelism of this whole outlook with the basic spirit of Christian thought—woven round that ennobling longing of the soul called love, which flows out to human beings and also, in upward direction, to what is sometimes described as Divine—is easily noticeable; or, again, if one so chooses, one may as well see in it a striking resemblance with the great *Vaishnava* conception of an universal love and good-will as the cardinal guideline of all actions. These similarities are, in fact, too obvious to be missed. What is apt to be missed, however, is the highly significant cognitive overtones of this apparently normative principle. For, the simple injunction of acting with good-will does conceal behind its innocent conative-normative appearance an important demand of an antecedent *awareness* of a situation likely to follow from the performance of the action, on the basis of which the goodness or badness itself of the action is to be finally determined. Practically considered, the whole force of this normative principle is thus seen to be grounded on the cognitive—a desired fore-knowledge of the state consequent to the performance of the act—on which, again, the very meaning of the oughtness of the act so vitally depends. To do a good, as much as to be good, one must first *know* the good. But the attempt to know what is good can hardly be separated from knowing what is real—the reality of the situation in which it obtains.

In plain language, this simply signifies that for a moral action or an action performed with good-will there is always the important need for a vital and responsible concern for the consequences expected to follow from it. The good-will, thus, needs to be reinforced by good *intention* which, in the technical sense, has the implied reference to the consequences as well as the motives of the act concerned—to both, that is to say, that for the sake of which and that in spite of which, the action is performed. But the implied cognitive reference for an awareness or knowledge of the likely consequences of one's act, which gets meaningfully exemplified in the 'vital and responsible concern' of the agent, and is so essential for the principle under

discussion, need not necessarily be rational, with all its characteristic 'cogency' or 'rigour' about it nor, again, need this be some types of non-propositional apprehension; it might, for instance, just be the expert's intuitive foresight comprehending the probables. In fact, this cognitive factor, as veritably the implied logic of the moral, has even been sought to be covered by positing the presence in man of what has been called a *moral sense* which, according to some, is a kind of ethical insight, distinct from reason, and akin to feeling in nature.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, there are great propounders of the moral philosophy of good-will who have traced this factor to the basically rational element of man. Thus, for Kant, the only thing absolutely good for man is the good-will; and the good-will, for him, is the rational will, from which, subsequently, he goes on to formulate his historic triplicity of norms for moral actions.<sup>11</sup> With the details of this Kantian formulation, however, we are not here directly concerned. But what we are concerned with, in Kant, is his emphasis on the fact that the good-will necessarily implies the will to *know* the good in the totality of the probable consequences of the action to which the term applies. And the same implication, as we have already noted, is also discernible in the Gandhian exhortation that a good action need always be performed with unqualified good-will with which it is, thus, invariably conditioned. But before we can fruitfully consider the significance of this implication in the Gandhian system, it is very necessary that we should be clear as to what a 'good action' really means, and in what exactly does the goodness of a good action really consist. For the proper grasp of the typically Gandhian conception in regard to these, an initial redefinition of 'action' in non-behavioural terms seems to us to be a primary necessity to be followed subsequently by an attempt at determining the meaning of 'good' in the system of Gandhian thought.

Actions which may be called human, in the non-behaviouristic usage, comprise certain specific kinds of behaviours—observable and otherwise—about which the agent can be meaningfully ordered, requested or prohibited.<sup>12</sup> They range from such simple observable behaviours as involve, or are manifested in, bodily movements, to those imperceptible 'inner' activities usually called mental. Without attempting any universally acceptable logical definition of our term, we can perhaps arrive at certain logically valid generalizations in regard to the nature of what are called human actions which, we think, will be instructive for our purpose. Actions which are behaviours,

are nevertheless different from *mere* bodily motions and changes, and, in fact, can even be the absence of such changes. Further, any careful consideration of human actions would indicate that they are not things which just happen to somebody, but, contrarily, they are very significantly what he himself *does*, implying thereby their typically voluntary nature involving their performability at will, in contrast with the ordinarily understood ‘involuntary actions’. In plainer words, the conception of an ‘act’, of whatever denomination, always presupposes its author, as much as a *karma* its *karta*, with all the force of a Cartesian logic, where cogitation, as an *act* of thinking, vindicated the prior existence of a thinking ego as its agent. And the contextual indispensability of the agency-concept for any thinking about the performance of an act, is always there, if not for its physical instrumentation or for anything else, at least for ethical purposes, as the bearer of the responsibility of having done *the act* and, to that extent, morally answerable, i.e., praise or blameworthy. And furthermore, any careful study of the simplest kind of human action would not only reveal its essentially unanalysable character but would also clearly testify to the fact that as merely describable it cannot properly be conveyed through quantitative terms of pure physical causation or, for that matter, be translated in any conceivable category other than its own—facts which go strongly to support the absolute philosophical distinction as between acting proper and being acted upon, between persons and things.

And even such a descriptive analysis of the most simple of actions, in purely psychological terms, reveals but a part of the infinite complexity which it so unsuspectingly conceals. There arises a feeling of uneasiness resulting in a desire to get over it, together with a simultaneous awareness of the problem of overcoming the resistance associated with the bringing about of the desired change of state, followed closely by the interesting stage of deliberation (which, temporally, may be infinitely variable from a very short one to an endlessly long-drawn Hamletianism) to be finally resolved by arriving at a particular decision. It is only when this resolution, as finally decided upon, passes into execution that it becomes an action proper to be passed moral judgement upon, i.e., worthy of moral appraisal through approval or condemnation. That these various elements of feeling, desire, awareness of encounterable resistance, deliberative pondering and judgemental decision-making are all experienced in turn will be amply evident through an introspective scanning in the retrospect of our own act, say, of going over to the

switchboard from our reading table to put on the light and actually doing it amidst the increasing darkness of our room at sundown. The 'simple' action, is thus, not as simple as it looks, and not a little of the diversity of views amongst experts on the subject as to the proper object of moral judgement is due certainly to the unbelievably complex nature of this 'simple'—a point to which we shall return a little later.

From the above discussion, it will be evident that according to this usage every action, with the exception of the purely reflexive and the mechanical ones, is so intimately bound up with and influenced by its motivating purpose that for any correct understanding of it, a careful analysis of the imbedded purpose-factor has become almost indispensable. Actions, which significantly imply much more than mere observable behaviour, are, it must be conceded, essentially teleological in the context of life, i.e., they always imply pursuit of some goals, objectives and ends—immediate or remote—which, by supplying the ceaseless dynamic of their impulsion, act as their larger meaning, against which alone the individual meanings of each of these actions are invariably set. Such larger meaningfulness embodying the objective and the end of a particular action may be said to constitute its purpose. An action, thus, always implies a purpose of which it is an attempt at fulfilment and, from the other side, the purpose it is that always holds the clue to the fuller significance of the action. In a still larger perspective, a knowledge of actions in the complexity of their fuller purposive context, is a surer pathway to the more complete understanding of human nature itself. The style, then, as manner and expression of purposiveness, in a much more comprehensive sense than the mere literary, *is* the man; for, not only, as we already know, is a man known by the company he keeps, but also very largely a fuller—and to that extent truer and more real—knowledge of him is to be had from a reading of the expressions of his deep-seated purposiveness held forth in a lifestyle—his life of imperceptible motives and intentions, of objective and convictions, of goals and ideals and ends.

Yet, the ends, as mere effects, are not to be regarded as just the ethical counterpart of means. Means and ends, when closely looked at, will not be found to be quite identical with what we ordinarily understand by causes and effects, unless, of course, we are prepared to regard the cause to be something immensely more potent and predominantly rich and significant than the sum of its effects in contradistinction with the conception of their traditio-

nal commensurability. The ‘cause’ of an action, in this sense alone, may, perhaps, be translated as the ‘end’ which is always charged imperceptibly with an endless fund of dynamic from a very rich hinterland of purposive significance, only a fraction of the complexity of which is caught up in the observable ‘effect’. And if the effect is just the actualized consequence of a certain collection of events, its immediate determining factor or factors—even if latent as deep-lying and cleverly concealed, may be, from the agent himself—may very well be taken to be the motive.

An action, thus, is essentially the venture of an agent in the fulfilment of a purpose which is generally regarded as its motivating cause. But are we quite justified in thus trying to describe purpose in terms of motive alone? Does not purpose in a very significant way imply the end—that constant resource of incentive which, as the energizing entelechy, supplies the true dynamic of every action? And, are not all efforts at the achievement of such ends, on the mental side, properly describable as motives? This brings us to the consideration of the role of the end *vis-a-vis* the means in the determination of the goodness of an act. A lot of unnecessary complication is witnessed to be generated in the extant discussion of the problem at issue by the mischievous overlap—unsuspectedly accepted and freely employed—that vitiates the basic ethical distinctions between means and end and motive and consequence. And, further, in the absence of any undisputed concept of action, the thinkers are usually left with only a vague and indeterminate medley of the meaning of the term, which for evaluative purpose, is found, in actual practice, to be hopelessly inadequate, leading, as it very often does, to the many bewildering perplexities of moral judgement. The real problem, however, that still remains for moral philosophers to solve is about the importance to be attached to the cognitive and affective aspects of an action *vis-a-vis* the conative—whether, that is to say, for the proper apportionment of the moral worth, the executed and externalized actually-occurring consequent alone is to be considered or the involved elements of thought and feeling alone? And before a definite decision on this issue is arrived at the whole problem of moral judgement will remain as much of a murky mess as it ever was in the history of ethical thought, forced, eventually, to fall back upon the casuistry of individual cases which, after all, is just an expedient device of escaping the main problem itself.

Without referring, here, to the details of the intriguing confusions which have become trite textbook cases, we can, perhaps,



more profitably look at it from the typically Gandhian point of view. The essentially non-theoretician Gandhi, who was primarily the practical apostle of living action, did not make any such mistake in this regard; he just could not make any. For, about the question of the applicability of the purity-and-goodness-criterion to an action he has never had any doubt whatever in his own mind, and would hardly allow any of his readers to get away with the impression that he ever had. It is literally a thorough and wholesale application of the criteriology of the good that constitutes the bedrock of the whole Gandhian philosophy of action. Gandhi is, indeed, the moral purist *par excellence*. In determining the actual worth of an action, for Gandhi, the goodness-test has to be applied with the same uncompromising moral rigour to the action-as-a-whole as much as to its various constitutive aspects considered individually—to motive and consequence, to end and means. They, *all*, must need be indisputably good in order that the action itself can merit this sacred Gandhian epithet.

But action, when considered in this larger sense, is seen undoubtedly to presuppose thought. And this thought, as we have already noted, is really found to be involved in action in a largely complex manner: through the knowledge of its inherent purposiveness and awareness of the total obtaining situation, the deliberative thinking while weighing the contending alternatives, and the making of decision in the exercise of the choice. In fact, the deliberative process is perhaps one of the best specimens of what we might call an active purposeful thinking to a decision for acting in a particular way, where a plurality of such possible ways are open. Furthermore, the extent of his involvement in the various thought processes in the performance of an act determines a person's status as a free individual agency. Here, indeed, in this exercise of thought, is to be found a glaring instance of the confirmation of his fundamental freedom which, as the exercise of the autonomy of his will, is repeated every time he consciously chooses his line in the performance of an action—the action which, in its own way, reflects the nature of the person acting in the fulfilment of a purpose, and, to that extent, is a revelation of his character; for, character, as the permanent inwardness of conduct, is nothing more than a stable system in which the will regulates the functional organization of desires and motives in confronting a situation, where the will is regarded as the self itself, consciously moving towards an object of interest in the realization of a purpose, or, simply, as the active or

the dynamic aspect of the self. A good action, therefore, in its fullest sense, is the expression of the good man behind it. And equally, from the other side, to make one's action perfectly good, one must first be a perfectly good man himself. The inevitable supreme emphasis on character enjoined in this moral theory fully captures the basic tone of Gandhian moral idealism,<sup>13</sup> the theoretical framework of which he has drawn up in his own fashion in different ways on different occasions, vindicating an interlinking complementariness between the ideas of God, Truth and the Good.<sup>14</sup>

But what, after all, is the connotation of 'good' in Gandhian literature? Good, in Gandhi, is to be conceived in its wider context with reference to life and existence, and to their fundamental law which, according to him, is Truth. Starting from the point of view of life, it is argued that although violence and destructiveness are found to be rampant in the whole animal world, including man's, yet, one cannot but marvel at the fact of life's persistence in the midst of this perpetual destruction. This fact of the unbroken continuity of life, coupled with our knowledge of the more vital law of biogenesis, viz., that life begets life, engender the legitimate feeling that there must be a higher law than that of destruction, under which alone a well-ordered society, giving priority to the livableness of life, is conceivable. And this superior law of life, which, as *living* creatures, we must incorporate into our daily life, is the law of love—charged with the sacredness of life.<sup>15</sup>

The implied Gandhian argument, at this point would be, that the very respect for life should not allow one to think of doing any thing that has the slightest tendency to deter it. And, as a rule, therefore, anything that fails to promote life or offers hindrance to it, by any form of coercion or destruction, must be regarded as a definite *dis*-value from the point of view of life; to encourage these in any manner is, thus, plainly to go counter to the basic biological law. Life's deeper instinctive purpose lies in its flourishing fulfilment and fruition, which can be realized only through the recognition of its sanctity by practising non-injury to life. Non-injury or non-violence, then, in so far as it encourages and augments life-principle, is *valuable* and good for life itself, and, therefore, for man. To be good, in this context, is to be strictly non-injurious—both physically and mentally—to be unharmed, non-offending and absolutely hateless. But to be non-offending and not to have hatred, or, not bearing malice and not harbouring ill-will against anybody, is only to have mastered into a state of love—the positive obverse of these

all. Non-injury or non-violence, therefore, which, as the vehicle of unbounded love represents ‘the power of God-head within us’,<sup>16</sup> according to Gandhi, should be the first article of faith in a life of good-will, and the sole determinant of the goodness of an action. Goodness, in this sense, as obedience to the law of life, thus, works out to be the simple law of love. The golden rule of the good life in the Gandhian ethics, as it is in the Christian, obliges one to love all men without exception and to love them sincerely.

Yet, the good, in Gandhi, is also the true; for, violence, as essentially a dis-value, is necessarily false—false to life. To follow the good is only to follow the truth in one’s life. The fullness of life in the realization of the true according to Gandhi, consists in performing good actions by way of social service while merging oneself in the ‘limitless ocean of life’.<sup>17</sup> It is his firm conviction that ‘Man findeth the fulness of life through Truth’ and, therefore, for him, any sincere pursuit of truth carried out with love in courageous hopeful devotion is to be regarded as good, since, ‘Thus doing, ye shall find this earth filled full of goodly things’.<sup>18</sup>

Truth, in Gandhian thought, is a multi-dimensional reality; it has many facets. As the Law of universe, it is *dharmā*; as the essence of all existence and thought, it is the absolute logico-epistemological ideal; as God, it is the sustainer of all religious inspiration concerning the High and the Holy. Underlying them all, and binding them in one, we find in Gandhian philosophy the great principle of love as the universal law of being. An unique ensemble of boundless love as the touchstone of the good, thus, represents the very heart of Gandhi’s moral thinking. The goodness of an action, he would solemnly declare in the true Christian and *vaishnava* spirit, is to be purchased with the precious price of love alone. This, above everything else, may, perhaps, be taken as the last word of Gandhian morals.

Yet, ideologically, the Gandhian way of life is most exacting. It demands of the agent an uncompromising and all round purity—of words and thoughts and deeds. Such an unblemished life of purity is possible only for a genuine and unflinching seeker of truth in the typically Gandhian sense—relentlessly steadfast, who would not abandon his vision of truth:

‘Not to fulfil a desire,  
Not from fear or ambition,  
Not even to save his life’.<sup>19</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. M. K. Gandhi in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan, London, 1958, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 21.
2. Who ‘must add to the inheritance left by our ancestors’ by way of making new history, without repeating it. M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, May 6, 1926.
3. S. Hampshire, *Thought & Action*, London, 1965, Chatto And Windus, p. 240.
4. As following from the retrospective reflexion on one’s action, there may also be a morality of regrets, compuncions and self-criticisms, making itself felt in the form of an unresting awareness of some shortcoming thereof—of that which one has neglected in one’s intentions—which might justify the agent undergoing expiatory penance like self-purificatory fasts, etc.
5. *The Harijan*, 29-4-1933, p. 2.
6. Gandhi, on his own part, always tried to live up to this distinction. He was deadily averse, for instance, to the British Empire which he regarded as a thing of evil and, therefore, was absolutely convinced that it had to go. Yet, he was always scrupulous in appraising the British character and the British people.
7. Henry Nelson Wieman, in *Man’s Ultimate Commitment*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, p. 3.  
The implied idea, here, is that there is somewhere a sane spot in every person; and a proper appeal to it through our action, radiating an aura of favourable feeling, is bound to evoke an appropriate response, in the form of, what has been called, ‘the melting of the heart’.
8. He will, for instance, instead of keeping his enemy guessing all the time about his moves, directly and frankly confess about his intentions, and straightway lay down all his cards on the table—as he always did in his historic fight with the British Government.
9. ‘I share the belief with the whole world—civilized and uncivilized—that calamities (such as the Bihar earthquake of 1934) come to mankind as chastisement for their sins’. *The Harijan*, 2.2.1934, p. 1. And again, ‘There is a divine purpose behind every physical calamity’. (*The Harijan*, 8-6-1935, p. 132) ‘And since God is love, we can say definitely that even the physical catastrophes that He sends now and then must be a blessing in disguise and they can be so only to those who regard them as a warning for introspection and self-purification’. *My Dear Child*, 1959, pp. 104-05.
10. This *moral sense*, or Conscience, Gandhi prefers to call the ‘Voice of God’ to the correct and clear hearing of which he claims to have developed a capacity. (See *The Epic Fast*, 1933, p. 34). ‘My claim’, he tells us, ‘to hear the voice of God is no new claim.... His voice has been increasingly audible as years have rolled by. He has never forsaken me even in my darkest hour’. (*The Harijan*, 6-5-1933, p. 4). We have it on the authority of no less an intimate associate of his than the great G. F. Andrews, who tells us: ‘I have seen the whole course of his life changed in a few moments in obedience to

an inner call from God which came to him in silent prayer. There is a voice that speaks to him, at supreme moments, with an irresistible assurance; and no power on earth can shake him when this call has come home to his mind and will as the Voice of God'. ('The Tribute of a Friend' by C. F. Andrews in *Mahatma Gandhi*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan, London, 1939, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., p. 48).

And here as it comes from the deepest conviction of Gandhi himself, speaking in his usual straightforward and clear terms:

'For me the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth or the Inner Voice or 'the still small Voice' mean one and the same thing. I saw no form.... But what I did hear was like a Voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. The determination was made accordingly, the date and hour of the fast were fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight.

'Could I give any further evidence that it was truly the Voice that I heard and that it was not an echo of my own heated imagination? I have no further evidence to convince the sceptic. He is free to say that it was all self-delusion or hallucination. It may well have been so. I can offer no proof to the contrary. But I can say this—not the unanimous verdict of whole world against me could shake me from the belief that what I heard was the true Voice of God.

'And every one who wills can hear the Voice. It is within every one. But like every thing else, it requires previous and definite preparation'. *The Harijan*, 8-7-1933, p. 4.

11. Which enjoins upon us, as rational creatures, the duty to act in such a manner that the underlying motive of our actions could be generalized into a law of nature, or that the inner principle of our action could be universalized into general principle of human society, or that our action should be such as to treat every human being always as an end in himself and never instrumentally as a means only.
12. It is interesting to compare, at this point, the different distinguishing 'marks of behaviour' indicated by McDougall in his classical polemic against mechanistic behaviourism.
13. The maxim of Gandhian morals is not merely 'Do good' but also 'Be good', for, according to him, it is only by being good that one can possibly *do* good.
14. 'To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these'. (*Young India*, 5-3-1925, p. 81). In fact, the Gandhian God as an informing power or spirit, lends Himself to a whole diversity of human perspectives: 'I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst

- of darkness light persists. Hence, I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme Good'. *Young India*, 11-10-1928, pp. 340-41.
15. 'The safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of Truth and Love'. M. K. Gandhi (compiled by R. K. Prabhu), *My God*, Ahmedabad, 1962, Navajivan Publishing House, p. 7.
  16. M. K. Gandhi, *The Harijan*, November 12, 1938, p. 326.
  17. M. K. Gandhi, *Songs From Prison*, London, 1934, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 27; and *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan, London, 1958, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 21.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
  19. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

N. K. BOSE

## Mahatma Gandhi's Last Advice



MAHATMA Gandhi looked upon the problem of war as the most important problem which faced the contemporary world. He believed that unless we were able to devise a method of collective action which would be more efficient than war in the resolution of conflicts, humanity would be involved in a race for armaments which might prove disastrous and suicidal in the end.

Gandhi's chief criticism was that war frequently led to results different from those originally aimed at. Moreover, it tended to concentrate power in the hands of a few, who, by that very act, became isolated from the rest of those whom they originally represented. In other words, it led to the creation of a new class, the members of which tended to act as priests and interpreters in order to prove that they held power, though temporarily, only on behalf of the toiling millions.

It was in order to prevent this eventuality that Gandhi took every possible measure to keep his movements within the bounds of non-violence. The steps which he recommended in non-violent resistance were to be progressive in character, so that the pitch of battle would rise higher and higher as the masses became better organized and more skilful in its operation.

In the course of nearly three decades of leadership in India, Gandhi was directly or indirectly responsible for initiating or guiding

or inspiring nearly forty large or small movements for the redressal of economic, social or political grievances. A systematic and critical study of these movements may help us in learning something about the technical aspects of the organization of non-violent resistance.

The economic plans of Gandhi were an integral part of his preparation for leading the masses into power. It was a war-measure rather than a peace-time activity, designed merely for the sake of economic growth. With this end in view, he held that ‘the means of production of the elementary necessities of life (should) remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God’s air and water are ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others.’

It is reasonable to expect that under a highly centralized organization of production, a community’s standard of living can be raised to a high level. But if the central authority went wrong, and took recourse to action which was not in the best interest of the masses, it would still be possible for them to bend the latter to their will by withdrawing economic support.

It was in order to prevent this contingency that Gandhi recommended and worked for decentralization of the productive system as far as that was practicable. But he also held that in order to enrich life further, the decentralized units should engage in voluntary cooperation to the maximum, but necessary extent. And these circles of cooperation would and should cut across State-made frontiers. In case, however, such cooperation was used in the pursuit of wrong ends, the decentralized units could withdraw from forced cooperation and fall back upon their own limited resources for the satisfaction of their vital needs.

In other words, the masses were to preserve their independence and not barter it away for a purely mechanical, higher standard of living.

As a practical idealist recommending a democratic form of government for Free India, Gandhi wrote as early as 1925: ‘By *Swarāj* I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-born or domiciled, *who have contributed by manual labour* to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters. I hope to demonstrate that *real Swarāj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused.* In other



words, *Swarāj* is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.'

In regard to cultural—or as Gandhi called it—'moral' freedom, Gandhi held that religion was a completely personal affair, and it should not be allowed to interfere in the affairs of the State. In a secular State, no specifically sectarian custom or code of morals should be enforced upon the rest of the population by means of State-made laws. If the political and economic structure of India became unified, and if these were oriented towards the interests of the 'masses' instead of the 'classes', then men could be left free to profess their religious beliefs, or pursue their customs in freedom, provided they assured the same freedom to others also.

It is natural that with greater inter-communication and economic cooperation, specifically local cultures will begin to come closer to one another; but this should be a natural process, never to be hastened by political pressure. Integration at the levels of economic and political life should be promoted much more than an artificial unity brought about at the linguistic and cultural levels.

In India today, we have given to ourselves a Constitution which tries to guarantee equality and freedom to its citizens. But the economic and social framework which we have inherited from the past is far from that ideal. The pace at which the old is being transformed into the new leaves the under-privileged sections of the population in a state of discontent or frustration.

The most important task which lies before us is extensive political education of both the rural and urban folk. They have to be helped in organizing themselves so that they can enjoy the rights to which they are entitled. In this endeavour, they have to be made equally conscious of their duties, and helped in the endeavour to make proper use of all the aid which is offered to them by government departments, with which they will also cooperate through their own voluntary associations. The legal apparatus has also to be fully utilized for the preservation of their constitutional rights.

In this way, a beginning can be made in the task of building up new institutions, which will be like alternate sources of power, which will work in cooperation with the authority exercised by a representative government, and also keep it in check if it departs violently from the popular will.

Gandhi personally believed that in this task, all political parties will have to take their due share. Three days before his death, he

prepared an instruction for the Indian National Congress in which he said, 'The Congress has won political freedom, but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom. These freedoms are harder than the political, if only because they are constructive, less exciting and not spectacular. All-embracing constructive work evokes the energy of all the units of the millions.' He then advised Congress workers and sympathisers to scatter themselves all over the country in order to serve the villagers in their own homes. His instruction was, 'These servants will be expected to operate upon and serve the voters registered by law, in their own surroundings. Many persons and parties will woo them. The very best will win. Thus, and in no other way, can the Congress regain its fast ebbing unique position in the country.... If it engages in the ungainly skirmish for power, it will find one fine morning that it is no more. Thank God it is no longer in sole possession of the field.'

R. K. DASGUPTA

## Gandhi and Tagore



AFTER the death of Rabindranath Tagore, Nehru said in a letter:

I have met many big people in various parts of the world. But I have no doubt in my mind that the two biggest I have had the privilege of meeting have been Gandhi and Tagore. I think they have been the two outstanding personalities in the world during the last quarter of a century. As time goes by, I am sure this will be recognized, when all the generals and field-marshals and dictators and shouting politicians are long dead and largely forgotten.' Nehru, however, added:

'The surprising thing is that both of these men with so much in common and drawing inspiration from the same wells of wisdom and thoughts and culture, should differ from each other so greatly! No two persons could probably differ so much as Gandhi and Tagore.'

The difference has been a curiosity among students of modern Indian history. It has occasioned quotable antithetical remarks on the natures and interesting studies in contrast. But we must, nevertheless, relate it to the fact that the two were spiritual associates in their common task of regenerating their people. Tagore called Gandhi the Mahatma and Gandhi called Tagore 'the Great Sentinel'. Their tributes to each other are unreserved: their differences on some major political issues are fundamental. We may conveniently explain this paradox as a necessary polarity between an artist and an

ascetic who were too gentle to permit their differences to keep them apart. We can relate the difference in temperament to the difference in their task. Romain Rolland has said:

‘The controversy between Tagore and Gandhi, between two great minds, both moved by mutual admiration and esteem but as fatally separated in their feeling as a philosopher can be from an apostle, a St. Paul from a Plato, is important. For on the one side, we have the spirit of religious faith and charity seeking to found a new humanity. On the other, we have intelligence, free-born serene and broad, seeking to unite aspirations of all humanity in sympathy and understanding.’

But this would be too simple a formula to bring into clear perspective the essential affinities between the two souls whom future historians may call the spiritual wins of the first half of the twentieth century.

Tagore himself felt this affinity as soon as he came in contact with Gandhi. That contact began in 1914 when Gandhi closed his Phoenix School at the Transvaal. The twenty students of the school were sent to Gurukul at Haridwar. Tagore, knowing about them from C. F. Andrews, invited them to stay at Santiniketan. When the boys arrived at Santiniketan, Tagore wrote his first letter to Gandhi and it is a very significant document in the history of their relationship:

‘That you could think of my school as the right and the likely place where your Phoenix boys could take shelter when they are in India has given me real pleasure—and that pleasure has been greatly enhanced when I saw those dear boys in that place. We all feel that their influence will be of great value to our boys and I hope that they, in their turn, will gain something which will make their stay in Santiniketan fruitful. I write this letter to thank you for allowing your boys to become our boys as well and thus form a living link in the *sadhana* of both our lives.’

To discover this living link in the *sadhana* of both their lives, we have to go deeper into their spiritual and moral affinities than their sharp differences on the Non-cooperation Movement would seem to justify.

We can assume that when Tagore wrote this letter to Gandhi in 1915, he was acquainted with his work in South Africa, his Satyagraha Movement against the Black Act of Transvaal, his services as a member of the Indian Ambulance Corps in the Boer War and as a Sergeant-major in the Zulu Rebellion. He must have also read Gandhi’s *Hind Swarāj* published in 1909.

It is extremely unlikely that Gandhi knew much about Tagore in 1915. His rigorous political life left him little leisure for purely

literary studies; it may be that he had read the English *Gitanjali* for which Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913. So far as I have been able to ascertain, it seems the first mention of Tagore by Gandhi that is on record is in a cable that the latter sent to Gopala Krishna Gokhale about C. F. Andrew's lecture on the poet at Gape Town. The cable which is dated 18 February 1914 refers to the warm reception in Gape Town of the 'higher Indian life and thought such as Tagore represented'. In another cable to Gokhale sent the following day, Gandhi refers to the remarks of the Governor-General after the Lecture on Tagore by C. F. Andrews that 'the personality of Tagore was the intense expression of Indian imaginative national life'. In a letter written from Natal to Mahatma Munshiram and dated 27 March 1914, Gandhi mentions Andrew's indebtedness to Munshiram, Gurudev and Principal Rudra of St. Stephen's College, Delhi. The letter is included in volume XII of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*.

In a speech at a reception in London of Gandhi held on 8 August, 1914, Gandhi referred to Tagore as C. F. Andrews's Master 'the poet saint at Bolpur whom I have come to know through Mr. Andrews, Rabindranath Tagore'. By this time Gandhi had developed some interest in Tagore's works. When he wanted to show his appreciation of Dr. James Gentlie for the Indian Ambulance Corps in the first World War, he presented him with a set of Tagore's works. It was at a public meeting held in London on 1 October 1914 presided over by Gandhi and attended by among others by the Aga Khan, Kasturba, Sarojini Naidu, Ameer Ali and Kallenbach. In a letter to Maganlal Gandhi dated 4 December 1914, Gandhi says 'Out of respect for Gurudev and by way of inducement to you all, I have started study of Bengali in my bed'.

But Tagore was spiritually close to Gandhi about ten years before his first letter to him in 1915. When Gandhi was conducting the Satyagraha Movement against the Black Act in Transvaal in 1906, Tagore was one of the inspirers of the Anti-Partition Movement in Calcutta, delivering addresses and composing songs for the boys who were burning Lancashire cotton goods in its streets. Both were endeavouring to preserve the dignity of their people in an unhappy colonial situation. Gandhi was a leader and an initiator. Tagore's contribution to the Swadeshi Movement was that of a poet and a thinker.

Secondly, while Gandhi became unpopular when he opposed the extremism of his political associates in the Transvaal, Tagore

became unpopular in Bengal when he strongly disapproved of the violences of the Swadeshi Movement. Gandhi was beaten by his own client Mir Alam when he agreed to cooperate with Smuts. Tagore was criticized by large sections of people in Bengal for his plea for restraint in politics. Thirdly, both affirmed the supreme necessity of a moral regeneration as a preparation for the attainment of political ends. Fourthly, both founded schools for training young minds for the new tasks of a growing society.

But what is still more striking as an example of affinity between the two minds is the fact that Tagore wrote in 1909, the year of the publication of Gandhi's *Hind Swarāj*, a drama called *Prayaschitta* (Atonement) which anticipates Gandhi's non-violent civil disobedience and no-tax campaign. The play dramatizes the novel *Bouthakuranir Hat* (The Young Queen's Market) written in 1883; but it has a political and a moral theme of profound significance, particularly in the context of Rabindranath's reaction to the excesses of the Swadeshi Movement. The spokesman of the poet's own ideas in the drama is Dhananjay Bairagi who is in a way a proto-type of Gandhi, a mendicant and popular leader who refuses to pay tax and incites people not to pay it on the ground that no king has the right to exact it from a starving subject. He is a non-violent and gentle rebel who, by his brave defiance of an unjust law, hopes to convert a tyrant.

It was Tagore's reply to his detractors who thought his repudiation of the excess of the Swadeshi Movement was a most unfortunate desertion of a great national cause. The play was published early in 1909 and was written some time in 1908. *Hind Swarāj* was published late in 1909. But we can assume that the poet was acquainted with the work of Gandhi in South Africa although the acquaintance was not necessarily essential for the moral inspiration which went into the making of the play. But it is indeed very striking that the moral temper of Dhananjay Bairagi and his philosophy of a popular struggle against an unjust rule are so close to the spirit of *satyāgraha* as explained by Gandhi in his articles in *Indian Opinion*. The paper entitled 'Who can offer *Satyāgraha*?' which Gandhi wrote in Gujarati for that journal in May, 1909, an English translation of which is included in the ninth volume of *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. It presents a conception of truth in non-violent struggle of which Dhananjay Bairagi is an exponent in his resolve not to obey his king. 'The first thing necessary for a *satyāgrahī*', Gandhi says in the article 'is pursuit of truth, faith in truth'. This truth, Tagore

thought, was more important in a public movement than political noise and political movement. Dhananjay Bairagi is an embodiment of moral urge in public work. He is the herald of the doctrine of civil disobedience which gained in strength in the twenties.

So, when Gandhi met Tagore for the first time on 6 March 1915 he met a kindred soul and both knew that they stood some common ideals in respect of their countrymen's moral responsibility as a subject nation. Gandhi had visited Santiniketan a few weeks earlier when the poet was in Calcutta. The students extended to him and his wife a very warm welcome about which he later said: 'The teachers and students overwhelmed me with affection: the reception was a beautiful combination of simplicity, art and love'.

Arriving at Santiniketan for the second time on 6 March 1915, Gandhi suggested to the poet some changes in the working of the hostel. He suggested that there should be no caste distinction at the meals and that students and teachers themselves should do the cooking and other jobs instead of depending on paid *servants*. The poet said that he did not himself believe in caste but at the same time did not favour the idea of forcing his students to accept something against their wishes. Gandhi did not accept the argument. On the question of self-reliance in the management and working of the hostel, the poet agreed with Gandhi and the experiment commenced on the 10 March in the presence of Gandhi and Kasturba. It could not, however, be continued but the institution still honours Gandhi by observing a Gandhi day on 10 March when the teachers and students do the work of servants and cooks. On 11 March Gandhi left for Rangoon.

The next meeting between the two took place in December, 1917 when Tagore recited his poem 'India's Prayer' at the thirty-second session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta that year. That prayer could be put in the lips of Gandhi who must have heard in it the voice of regenerate people proclaiming its national ideals:

In thy name we oppose the power that would plant its banner upon our soul,  
Let us know that thy light grows dim in the heart that bears its inside in bondage.  
That the life when it is feeble timidly yields thy throne to untruth.

Gandhi was deeply touched by the words and recalling his few days at Santiniketan in March, 1915 called at Tagore's house in Calcutta. He witnessed a performance of Tagore's play *Dakgar* (Post Office) at the Bichitra Club Hall in the company of Tilak, Malaviya and Basant. The poet himself acted in the play and the cast

included three distinguished painters of Bengal, Abanindranath, Gaganendranath and Asit Haldar. There is no written record of Gandhi's appreciation of the play.

They met for the third time on 2 April, 1920 at Ahmedabad where the poet presided over the Gujarati Literary Conference that year. The invitation to the presidentship had come from Gandhi himself who wrote to the poet about it on 18 October 1919 and again on 14 January the following year. The poet reached Ahmedabad on 1 April and delivered his presidential address the next day and then visited Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram where he attended the morning prayer the following day.

This meeting is particularly significant because it took place between Tagore's renunciation of his knighthood on 8 May, 1919 and Gandhi's return of his Kaiser-i-hind medal on 1 August, 1920. Both were symbols of the protest of the Indian conscience against a heartless bureaucracy.

About a year before this meeting, Tagore had for the first time publicly expressed his disapproval of Gandhi's Passive Resistance Movement. When *Rowlatt Sedition Committee Report* was published on 8 July 1918, there was great resentment throughout the country. The passing of the Rowlatt Act on 23 March 1919 prompted Gandhi to decide on a Passive Resistance Movement for its repeal. 30 March was declared to be a day of *Hartal* and this led to disturbances in Delhi. Gandhi declared another *Hartal* for 6 April and this too produced ugly clashes between unruly mob and irresponsible police. Gandhi was then in Bombay and when he was proceeding towards Delhi to control the disturbances, he was stopped on his way and sent back to Bombay by the police. On 10 April the Government of the Punjab declared Martial Law in the Province and put Amritsar in the hands of General Dyer. On 12 April, Tagore addressed an open letter to Gandhi which was published in the *Indian Daily News* on 16 April. Addressing Gandhi as Mahatmaji, Tagore wrote:

'Power in all its forms is irrational. Passive Resistance is a force which is not necessarily moral in itself: it can be used against truth as well as for it. The danger inherent in all force grows stronger when it is likely to gain success for then it becomes a temptation. I know your teaching is to fight against evil by the help of the good. But such a fight is for heroes and not for the men led by impulses of the moment. Evil on one side naturally begets evil on the other, injustice leading to violence and insult to vengefulness. Unfortunately such a force has already been started, and either through panic or through wrath our authorities have shown us their claws whose sure effect is to drive some of us into the secret path of resentment and others into utter demoralization....'



This is the first and the most important document in the history of the Gandhi-Tagore controversy about the Non-cooperation Movement. This letter was written a day before the Amritsar Massacre which took place on 13 April.

There is no record of Gandhi's conversation with Tagore at Ahmedabad. They must have debated a great deal about the whole question of a Non-cooperation Movement; they must have differed sharply and yet respected each other as deeply as ever.

When the Non-cooperation Movement was launched on 31 August, 1920 Tagore was in Europe. His unhappy experience of the indifference of his disloyalty of renouncing his knighthood made him a little sour about the British people. Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate politely declined to preside over his lecture and when he visited Cambridge, even men like Keynes, Dickinson and Anderson were cold to their host. The British Home Office appointed a spy to watch his activities.

Reaching France from England, the poet wrote to Andrews: 'Your Parliament debates about Dyerism in the Punjab and other symptoms of the arrogant spirit of contempt and callousness about India have deeply aggrieved me and it was with a feeling of relief that I left England'. This was written on 13 August, 1920, only eighteen days before the beginning of the Non-cooperation Movement. The thirty-fifth session of the Congress held in December, 1920 under the presidentship of Vijayaraghavachariar confirmed Gandhi's non-cooperation resolution passed in the special session of the Congress held in Calcutta in September. On 2 March, 1921 Tagore wrote to Andrews from America:

'I hope that the spirit of sacrifice and willingness to suffer will grow in strength. It is in fitness of things that Mahatma Gandhi should call up the immense power of the weak that has been waiting in the heart of the destitute and insulted humanity of India. The destiny of India has chosen for its ally the power of soul and not that of muscle. And she is to raise the history of man from muddy level of physical conflict to the higher moral attitude.'

Gradually, Tagore began to realize that the Non-cooperation Movement could not bring salvation to this country. His first objection to it was that it had started as a Khilafat Movement. Secondly, Tagore wanted constructive work on a larger scale as a preparation for a national movement for political freedom. He was keen to do his part in this constructive work in Santiniketan and he told Andrews in a letter dated 3 October, 1920: 'Santiniketan must be saved from the whirlwind of dusty politics'. Thirdly, he feared

that the Non-cooperation Movement would not remain non-violent as it proceeded and would soon lead to wasteful popular fury.

In March, 1921 Tagore wrote three letters to Andrews to tell him that Non-cooperation could lapse into a form of *Himsa*. Gandhi wrote in *Young India* on 4 June 1921 to assure Tagore that ‘non-cooperation is intended to give the very meaning to patriotism that the poet is yearning after’. Tagore’s considered reply to this was an address that he delivered in Bengali at a public meeting in Calcutta held on 29 August 1921. An English version of it appeared in the *Modern Review*, in October, 1921 and it is included in the volume of essays by Tagore called *Towards Universal Man* published in 1961. The Bengali original first appeared in *Prabasi* in October, 1921 and was later included in *Kalantar*, published in 1937. It is Tagore’s most powerful and comprehensive statement on the Non-cooperation Movement. His whole argument against the Movement was that it was cramping obsession with a set of formulas and tools which could only retard the growth of a nation:

‘From my master, the Mahatma, may our devotion to him never grow less!...we must learn the truth of love in all its purity, but the science and art of building up Swarāj is a vast subject. Its pathways are difficult to traverse and take time. For this task, aspiration and emotion must be there, but no less must study and thought be there likewise. For it, the economist must think, the mechanic must labour, the educationist and statesman must teach the contrive. In a word, the mind of the country must be kept intact and untrammelled, its mind not made timid or inactive by compulsion, open or secret.’

Gandhi’s repudiation of English education and his remarks on Raja Rammohun Roy in an article in *Young India* of 27 April 1921 had already provoked a reply from Tagore in two letters written to Andrews. Gandhi’s reply to this is one of the finest things he ever wrote. It appeared in *Young India* of 13 October 1921 under the title ‘The Great Sentinel’.

‘The poet deserves the thanks of his countrymen’, he said, ‘for standing up for Truth and Reason’. ‘I regard the poet as a sentinel warning us against the approach of enemies called Bigotry, Lethargy, Intolerance, Inertia and other members of their brood.’ But he powerfully defended the Non-cooperation Movement, the *Charkha* and *Khadi* and ended his letter by saying: ‘I found it impossible to soothe the suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food.’

In November, 1921, Gandhi had to suspend the no-tax *Satyagraha* at Bardouli owing to the riots which broke out at Bombay on 17 of

that month, the day of the arrival there of the Prince of Wales. In December that year, the thirty-sixth session of the Congress held at Ahmedabad decided to resume the Satyagraha Movement and this surprised the poet who feared a recurrence of riots like the one which had led Gandhi to call off the movement at Bardouli. On 1 February, the poet addressed an open letter to Rana Lal Balpat Ram, the distinguished Gujarati writer, saying:

I believe in the efficacy of *ahimsa* as the means of overcoming the congregated might of physical force on which the political powers in all countries mainly rest. But like every other moral principle, *ahimsa* has to spring from the depth of mind and it must not be forced upon man from some outside appeal of urgent need.

The letter was published on 3 February and on 4 April took place the disturbances at Chauri Chaura in which 21 Indian policemen and chowkidars were killed by an angry mob. Gandhi called Chauri Chaura 'the bitterest humiliation and a Himalayan miscalculation'. The Congress Committee meeting at Bardouli on 12 February drew up a constructive programme of spinning and social reform and village reconstruction.

About six years before all this Tagore had written a novel called *Ghare Baire (The Home and World)* (1916) as a full statement of his ideas on patriotism and humanism. 'It is my feelings that are outraged', says Nikhil in this novel, 'whenever you try to pass off injustice as a duty, and unrighteousness as a moral ideal'. Nikhil is a humanist who is sharply contrasted from Sandip, the unscrupulous Machiavellian patriot and politician. The conversation between the two schools of political thought is significant as a debate which had emerged in the country in the wake of the Swadeshi Movement.

But it was in the play *Muktandhara* published in 1922 that the poet gave a profound expression to his faith in the Gandhian ideal of a non-violent popular movement. The play is a rehandling of the theme of *Prayaschitta* on which it is certainly a great improvement both in construction and style. Dhananjay, the popular leader in *Prayaschitta* is a more vivid character in this play and his words on non-violence could be put in the mouth of Gandhi when one of his followers says that he knows how to give a good beating to his adversary, he exhorts him to realize the greater power of non-beating:

Can't you show him what non-beating is? That needs too much strength I suppose? Beating the waves won't stop the storm. But hold your rudder steady and you win.

What do you tell us to do then?

Strike at the root of violence itself. How can that be done, Master?

As soon as you hold up your head and say that it does not hurt, the roots of violence will be out.

It is not so easy to say that it doesn't hurt.

Nothing can hurt your real manhood, for that is a flame of fire. The animal, that is the flesh, feels the blow and whines.

The question then is—Why should Tagore oppose a non-violent movement when he is such a profound interpreter of it in his writings? There is an answer to this in the drama itself. When Dhananjay explains the ideal of non-violence, he discovers that his listener is just wondering at what he has to say.

But you stand there gaping; don't you understand?

We understand you, but your words we don't understand.

Then you are done for.

Time passes, Master and your words take so long to understand. But we understand you and so we shall have an early crossing.

Early? But what of the evening time? When you find your boat sinking within sight of shore? If you can't make my words your own, you will be drowned.

Don't say that, Master, we have found shelter at your feet, so we must have understood somehow.

It is only too plain that you have not understood. Your eyes still see red, and there is no song on your lips.... Cowards! You either flee to avoid the blow, or fight to ward it off, it is all one. Whichever you do, you merely follow the flock—you do not see the Shepherd.

This is the essence of Tagore's thought on non-violence as a means of a popular movement. The master is respected but not understood by his followers whose eyes still see red and who follow the flock and not the shepherd.

It is important to remember that the play was written after the fourth meeting between the two men had taken place in Calcutta in September 1921 when Gandhi called on Tagore with a view to converting him. There is no record of this conversation. The differences remained. But the deep affection between the two was not affected by this disagreement. Tagore visited the Sabarmati Ashram on 4 December 1922 when Gandhi was in jail. The brief address he delivered on the occasion was published in *Young India* of 21 December the same year. Tagore adored Gandhi even at the very moment he rejected his Non-cooperation as both wasteful and dangerous.

Tagore was unhappy about his differences with Gandhi but he could not change his mind about *Charkha* and Non-cooperation even when his personal regard for Gandhi was the deepest. Writing on *Charkha* in the *Modern Review* in September, 1925, he said:

It is extremely distasteful to me to have to differ from Mahatma Gandhi in regard to any matter of principle or method. Not that, from a higher standpoint, there is anything wrong in so doing; but my heart shrinks from it. For what could be a greater joy than to join hands in the fields of work with one for whom one has such love and reverence? Nothing is more wonderful to me than Mahatma Gandhi's great moral personality. In him divine providence has given us a burning thunderbolt of shakti. May this *shakti* give power to India—not overwhelm her—that is my prayer!

In his reply to the poet's criticism of the *Charkha*, Gandhi wrote a long article in *Young India* of 5 November 1925. In the controversy about *Charkha*, Sir P. C. Roy was on the side of Gandhi and Sir B. N. Seal supported the poet. Gandhi said that the poet had misunderstood his ideas about the Charkha. He affirmed that he never meant the 'poet to forsake his music, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief and the doctor his lancet.' 'I have indeed asked the famishing man or woman who is idle for want of any work whatsoever to spin for a living and the half-starved farmer to spin during his leisure hours to supplement his slender resources'. He very imaginatively added that 'if the poet spun half an hour daily, his poetry would gain in richness'.

Gandhi and Tagore came very close to each other about seven years later when Gandhi decided to fast unto death as a protest against the Communal Award of Ramsay Macdonald. Tagore was in complete agreement with Gandhi in his stand against the award. Gandhi decided to begin his fast in jail on 20 September 1932.

The poet was deeply moved and so unbearable was his anxiety about the Mahatma that he cancelled his public engagements to be able to concentrate on the grave situation. On 24 September he left for Poona and sent a telegram to Macdonald about Gandhi's condition. When the poet arrived in Poona on 26 the news of the Pact had reached and Gandhi broke his fast the same day. The poet was present in the jail and sang his favourite song (No. 58, *Gitanjali* and No. 39 in the English *Gitanjali*):

When the heart is hard and parched up,  
Come upon me with a shower of mercy.  
When grace is lost from life,  
Come with a burst of song.

Amongst those present on the occasion were Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Kunzru, Ballavbhai, Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Nehru. At a public meeting held at Sivaji Mandir next day, Tagore's address on the Mahatma was read by Govinda Malaviya. Tagore's writings on Gandhi on this occasion were published in a volume called *Mahatmajee and the Depressed Humanity* and it was dedicated to Sir P. C. Roy.

But there is little personal happiness for those who place truth above all other consideration. There was again a dispute between the two in February, 1934. After the great earthquake in Bihar which occurred on 15 January that year, Gandhi said that it was God's chastisement for the sin of untouchability. This the poet could not accept and he at once wrote a letter which was published in *The Harijan* on 16 February, 1934. 'We, who are immensely grateful to Mahatmaji', he wrote, 'for inducting, by his wonder-working inspiration, freedom from fear and feebleness from the minds of his countrymen, feel profoundly hurt when any words from his mouth may emphasize the elements of unreason in those very minds—unreason which is a fundamental source of all the blind powers that drive us against freedom and self-respect'. Gandhi's reply appeared in the same issue of the paper and it was prose lyric of a devout soul:

'With me the connection between cosmic phenomenon and human behaviour is a living faith that draws me nearer to my God, humbles me and makes me readier for facing Him. Such a belief would be degrading superstition, if out of the depth of my ignorance I used it for castigating my opponents.'

Perhaps there was no reply to this simple and profound expression of piety. It has the power of a Hebrew psalm and for once at least Gandhi seemed to be more poetical than Tagore.

When Gandhi visited Santiniketan for the last time on 17 February, 1940, it was again a meeting between two kindred souls. Gandhi wrote with feeling about this visit in *The Harijan* of 2 March, 1940. In a letter dated 19 February the same year, the poet had appealed to Gandhi to protect Visva Bharati 'as a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life's best treasure'.

In reply Gandhi said: 'Though I have always regarded Santiniketan as my second home, this visit has brought me nearer to it than ever before'. When the poet died on 7 August 1941, Gandhi said in his condolence message: 'There was hardly any public activity on which he has left no impress of his powerful personality'. Obviously, he felt that the impress of the personality was also left on his public activity.

Tagore's many tributes to Gandhi in his public statements and essays are now too well known and Gandhi's tributes to the poet too have now become things of recent Indian history. But perhaps we are yet to realize that both were two great lonely men in spite of their tremendous popularity and that they clashed on some principles because they placed truth above everything else and in this they were equal minds. Gandhi called the poet Gurudev but in the only poem which Tagore wrote on Gandhi and it was composed a little over six months before his death he calls himself one of those who had the mark of Gandhi on their brow. It now seems significant that one of the songs of Tagore which Gandhi loved in particular was:

If they answer not to thy call walk alone,  
If they are afraid and cower mutely facing the wall,  
O thou of evil luck,  
Open thy mind and speak alone.

Both had this courage and spirit of speaking alone and walking alone. It was this which at times made the two seem apart from each other. At the same time it was also the spirit which made them the collaborators in a common task.

MOHAN SINGH UBEROI DEWANA

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# Gandhism is Dead Long Live Gandhi



THE thesis of the present paper is that the main items in matured Gandhism were picked up from the traditional repertory, in reaction; were applied only partially on a limited scale and in haste; and have been dropped, put back into the box, by Gandhi's more eminent and powerful successors with no regret, with, in fact, a sigh of relief, as brakes on modern India's material and mental progress. On the other hand, Mohandas Karamchand will enjoy immortality not as the hero of a cult but as the hero of heroic resistance struggles, on the strength not of his pronouncements and programmes, but of his personality, personal example and of his right societarian attitude.

## THE GANDHIAN ATTITUDE

If today a Harijan leader glibly talks of a 'bloodless social revolution', and asserts that the plutolalous congress is wedded to the socialistic pattern of society, if a *Sarvodaya* thinker dares comment on the violence displayed in border disputes, language agitation, labour unrest, student upheaval, and warns that Indian intellectuals would soon begin to think that dictatorship alone can solve the problems facing their country, it is because Gandhi had fifty years ago started to think in terms of a change from feudalism, capitalism



and colonialism, and to nourish a dynamic Hope<sup>1</sup> born of Faith recaptured from a study of the laws of history and the role of the history-makers, the individual man and the collectivist man, the People. He did rouse 'social consciousness, as a reflection of social being'. He had started to think of the Masses and the Future. He had also begun to realize that: 'It would be wrong to think that all nations will advance to socialism along the very same paths followed by the peoples of the Soviet Union. Historical processes recur in essence, but not in specific content and form'. He well knew of 'the strength of numbers', and of 'the strength of revolutionary awareness, determination and organization'. From the very start Gandhij had the right attitude towards change, and a peaceful change at that. The Gandhian revivalistic, emotional socialism emerged out of Indian history and social tradition; it used India-validated means; it formulated goals indicated by the Indian eclectic and amalgamative culture, characterized by poverty, piety and pacifism.

#### THE MAKING OF GANDHI

'Everything in its time'. 'Happily, history is providential'. To underline historical continuity, had there been no Ramakrishna, no Thoreau, no Tolstoy, no Mrs. Besant, no Ajit Singh, no Tilak, no Gokhale, no Bose, there would have been no Gandhi. Bapu was no original thinker; but he reacted sensitively, sincerely and strongly to his contacts and to the imminent situations and their existential solutions. He not only inherited what his immediate predecessors had left but he had tucked up somewhere in his brain the whole of the dynamic element in Indian history,<sup>2</sup> in the Indian masses, who had effected the transition from *Veda-Vedānta* to *Bhakti bhāva*; from Sanskrit to *Hindvi*; from the *Chauka* to the *Langar*; from *Hatha*, *Nigraha* and *Nirodha* to *Sahaja* and *Anugraha*; from the *Avatāra-Rishi* to the *Santa-Guru-Bhakta*; from the *farman* to *Bakhsbish* and the *Gurmata*; from the *Asana* and the *Ashrama* to the *Dharmasāla* and the *Gurdvāra*; from the *Yajna-Grha* to the *Sangat* and the *Sabhā*; from the individual disciple to the collectivist man, the *Khālsā*. Historically, it was the South African situation that forced Gandhi to burst his intellectual shell, and the Chairman of the Gandhi Centenary Literature Propaganda Committee was in part right when he recently remarked rather boastfully that the Mahatma was the gift of Africa to humanity (much like Diwakar's: 'It is *satyāgraha* which made Gandhiji'), adding that he could well have joined the ranks of

thousands of doctors and lawyers of India had he not gone to South Africa where the foundation of his subsequent greatness was laid. I believe Bapu was the gift of history and of the God of history to a nation to whom such a gift was long overdue. By the way, does Bapu really need such propaganda? And as to joining the ranks, with his particular brand of conscience Gandhi could hardly have stayed as a lawyer, in any case, as the author of *Hind Swarāj* (1909 A.D.).

The greatest single factor in Bapu's make-up was his openness allied with inclusiveness. He refused to let himself be bottled and labelled. He tried to do much, and so became a theatre of numerous tensions and contradictions. He entered politics and tried to ethicalize it; he lived among the untouchables and tried later to obstruct their passage to Sikhism and Buddhism; he fathered Gujarati and played a cousin to Hindustani; he linked education in the humanities to handicrafts; he made the unclassifiable *Gita* easy; he attempted to revive the self-sufficiency of a primitive society with its tiny rural units, and talked anarchically of no-Government; he made love to reason while underscoring listening in to the voice of the supreme, beneficent Divine. This openness involving a multiple confrontation, brought out of him scintillant gems of thought of varying hues and weights, found in the *Young India*, and the *The Harijan*, with their tell-tale names.

The rich assimilativeness of Gandhi in his formative period when he read and imbibed, saw and selected freely in the U.K. and South Africa,<sup>3</sup> was followed in India by a free, unattached experimentation in diverse arenas of thought and action. These well-organized, broad-based, variegated experiments were, according to himself, experiments with Truth. Less grandiosely, they were experiments in self-discovery, and in the discovery of dumb India, the India of the masses who were then ready to turn their backs on the past. In his erratic, eccentric, ego-centric, religion-tinged experiments he failed as much as he succeeded but his right attitude, in the Buddha's sense, to himself and his people, his trust in the basic goodness of human nature, and his faith in the inexorable laws of history in the operation of which man, nature and providence cooperate, kept him ever whole and above the waters. Those are the characteristics of a transforming mind. Gandhi was thus the right leader for a changing India, when the direction, speed and volume of the change were being determined experientially. He may have been betrayed by his beneficiaries but never by his ardent worshippers—the masses.

## THE EVOLUTION OF GANDHISM

Being no theoretician and disinclined to probe dialectical materialism in its practical adventures, Gandhi just actually reacted to (1) The oppressiveness and humiliating pressure of feudal and caste-class relations; (2) Poverty; (3) Disfranchisement; (4) Police rule; (5) Costly wars; and (6) National oppression.

In addition, Bapu also reacted to the inner antagonisms and tensions of the contemporary social structure and of his own mental equipment. He also reacted to the two world wars, to the Khilafat movement, the Amritsar Massacre, and the partition of India. To the last he reacted so violently that he was almost dead in 1947,<sup>4</sup> dead in his isolation and loneliness: he felt he had lost all he had staked. It was so because he had not prepared his mind for the savageries of nationalism<sup>5</sup> and internationalism. His compromising, also called statesmanship, could not help here, and the violence that erupted before and at the partition and later, inclined him to relativate his non-violence, which he was ready to make responsive, like ‘responsive cooperation’.

The four pillars of the projected Gandhian society were to be: (1) Decentralization in politics and economics; (2) Non-mechanization; (3) Non-industrialization; and (4) Ruralization or village-unit self-dependence, sufficiency.

The central idea in the Mahatma’s mind was to minimize the chances of exploitation and enslavement, of unequal distribution, of undesirable, uncontrollable production, and of shirking of manual labour. He wanted to bridge the gap between qualification and employment, between overwork and leisure, between hoarding and over-investment.

For most Indians in the saddle today there is not enough philosophy in, nor sufficiently long application behind, these items proposed in our most dynamic twentieth century for free Indian society since 1947, when all kinds of races have to be run and competitions to be faced on all scales, in all fields and at all levels. It is maintained that the admitted material and technical basis of socialism—complete electrification, perfection of industrial techniques, comprehensive mechanization of production, and automation, use of chemistry, collective farming, elimination of distinctions between town and country, and between physical and mental labour, and abolishing of personal property—nowhere figure seriously in Gandhi’s thinking. In any case, industrialization with its

gigantism was *oversize* for the mind of Gandhi.

It has also been asserted on good ground that Bapu was averse to a definition of *Swarāj* and specification of Rama Raja; he would leave the details of his Utopia to the god of Time.

Since 1948 Indian socio-economic policy-makers have neglected or ignored Gandhi's basic postulates, and through five-year plans are working for a mixed economy and a mixed society, all of which is, to some observers, more a confession of weakness and fumbling and imitation than proof of a national or regional modification of an international scientific pattern. If we still hear of Khadi Boards, Bhoodans, Harijan Leagues, Sewak Samajs, Sadachar Samities, Hindu-Muslim-Sikh Integration Councils, North-South Rapproachments, side by side with electrification, and science and technology pools, it is because our leaders and subleaders do not want to admit that Gandhism is dead; the Congress wants to go on exploiting the name of the Hero who, the day before his murder, had signed the death-warrant of the Congress itself. The organizations mentioned above are only fanning the ashes; there are no embers.

## THE HERO

Judging from classical Hindu literature, and Hindu fairs and festivals, the Hindu *elite* theory of society insists on a fourfold classification even of the hero; the *avatāra*; the *rshi*; the *cakravartin*; the *acārya*. As to the cult of the hero, what counted most in the ancient mind was the abnormality of the hero's achievement and the consequent impossibility of emulation of his conduct and cultivation of his attributes. What the hero has done no mere man may do.

The cruelties, tortures, inequities, the medieval *bhaktas*, *santas*, *sufis*, *gurūs*, high and low, suffered, and the sacrifices they voluntarily made, had by the time of Gandhi fixated a new image of the hero in the people's mind. The hero arises from any caste, class, creed, stratum. He suffers. He trusts in God. He faces the persecutors fearlessly. He returns good for evil. He smites as God, the destroyer of *asuras*, does. He is the idol of all, rich and poor. He is outspoken. He is a poet. He uplifts, energises, enfranchises, liberates his motley followers, loving them and trusting in them as equals. This hero is equally god-sent, with the difference that while the *avatāra* and others represent the descent of God, the medieval hero displays the ascent of Man. The people's hero can afford to be equivocal, ambivalent, harsh, devious, self-contradictory. He has a gospel which promises along with spiritual liberation, economic prosperity, socio-political

equality and solidarity, and aesthetic satisfaction—all the four, *dharma, artha, kāma, moksa*.

There is hardly any traditional Sanskrit adjective which has not been applied to Bapu: a *brahmacārin*, a *tapasvin*, a *mumuksu*, a *jivana mukta*, a *vairāgyavan*, an *ahimsaka*, a *vratin* or *vratacari*, a *bhakta*, a *samkirtanacārya*, a *sannyasin*, a *parivrajaka*, a *sanātana dharmavalambin*, a *mahatma*, a *yuga purusa* an *avatāra*. The day after his assassination I saw his drab clay bust circled round and worshipped with a big bronze plate full of silver and paper money, bowed to and garlanded. The wives of the subordinate officers vied with the wife of the head of the district who had set the standard in devout adoration. A symbolic or mimetic funeral was also arranged.

Political freedom has come to India as much through able leadership and determined following as through historical compulsions and British gentlemanliness, mature international behaviour, and wise, far-seeing salesmanship. But our social structure, our social climate, our social irresponsibility remain. There is no sign of *truthfulness* and *honesty* in the dealings between the employer and the employed, the seller and the buyer; there is no sign of *non-violence* in the relations between the ruler and the ruled; there is no sign of *love* or even amity between language and language, community and community, religion and religion. A cynic may well say: Truthfulness, honesty, love and non-violence are a cottage industry, which even as such needs a protective wall.

But we still continue to wonder at and pay homage<sup>6</sup> to the man who acquired and applied qualities like courage, truthfulness, tenacity of purpose, capacity to make decisions, etc., all determinants in major historical events. We adore the Father of the Nation, the Maker of History, but we cannot or will not become makers ourselves.

The masses<sup>7</sup> are not only the real makers of history, but are the best judges of history, too, as witnessed by their folk-songs, folk-sayings, folk-proverbs, folk-tales. In the mass mind, Gandhi means (1) Active 'passive resistance' to all injustice, iniquity; (2) Voluntary poverty; voluntary simplicity of village life, and slowness; (3) Self-control, self-abnegation, self-help, self-sufficiency; (4) Castlessness, classlessness; (5) Faith in Divine dispensation, which can and does make Hitler and Gandhi contemporary.

One need not ask what direct place these 'filtered-down' items have in the daily life of the masses. In my view, the Mahatma primarily aimed at man-making, and to that imperial task no one is prepared to bend his shoulders.

## GANDHI ON HIMSELF—A CONFESSION AND A DISAVOWAL

Attempts are still being made to prove Gandhi a statesman, a socialist revolutionary, a representative Hindu, a spiritualizer of politics, a fundamental ethicist, a subjective sociologist, a cult-hero and, finally, an accredited messenger of God. Here are a few statements by Gandhi which point in a very different direction and confirm him—what he dubbed himself—as a heroic straggler, a seeker of God, the Truth, and an experimenter with Truth, the God. Incidentally, we get the finest definition of religion, and, ironically, we hear Bapu almost foretell his fateful end.

‘By religion I do not mean formal religion or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions, *which brings us face to face with our Maker*’. (Italics mine; *M. K. Gandhi*, Joseph J. Doke, 1909, p. 7).

‘Every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion, because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, *God rules your every breath*’. (Italics mine, *The Harijan*, 2-3-1934, p. 23).

‘What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and panting to achieve these 30 years—is self-realization, to see God face to face. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and *all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end*’. (Italics mine; *Autobiography*, pp. 4-5). ‘It is an unbroken torture to me that I am still so far from Him... whose offspring I am’. (*Ibid.*, p. 8)

‘For me the voice was more real than my own existence. And everyone who wills can hear the voice’. (*The Harijan*, 8-7-1933, p. 4)

‘Mine is a struggling, striving, erring, imperfect soul’. (*Young India*, 25-9-1924).

‘My firm belief is that He reveals Himself daily to every human being’. (*Ibid.*, 25-5-1921, p. 162)

‘Often in my progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that *He alone is real and all else is unreal*’. (Italics mine, *Autobiography*, pp. 6-7)

‘Reason is powerless to know Him. I am never tired of bowing to Him and singing His glory. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within. I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil at the cost of life itself’. (*Young India*, 11-10-1928 44, pp. 340-44).

‘In a strictly scientific sense God is at the bottom of both good and evil. *He directs an assassin’s dagger no less than the surgeon’s knife*’.

‘Nations have progressed both by evolution and revolution. The one is as

necessary as the other. Death which is an eternal verity is revolution as birth and after is slow and steady evolution. Death is as necessary for man's growth as life itself. God is the greatest Revolutionist the World has ever known or will know.'

'God is the greatest democrat the world knows. He is the greatest tyrant ever known'. (*Young India*, 5-3-1925).

## THE FUTURE

In a balanced study one must mention that Gandhi had some weak spots. His failure on some fronts caused a truncation of his ennobling influence. He failed to appreciate the role of Guru Gobind Singh in medieval Indian history and the value and validity of the Khalsa today. He failed to condemn absolutely the money-changers of today. He failed to visualize the glories of applied science and to sense the dangers of unsocialized religion, and unapplied spirituality. He failed to shed his appeasing and compromising. He under-rated the powers of Satan, howsoever temporary they be. These shortcomings however do not diminish in any way and to any extent the greatness of *this man of God, this hero of the people, this conqueror of the self*. His personal example, extending to many brilliant episodes, will always come to the aid of the future individual seekers of light and love. He lived so variedly, so intensely, so publicly that some facet or other of his life will always provide the necessary social norm in many a future situation. Here is a man who, within a generation of his exit, has passed into the human immortals, with whom love and compassion remain associated for ever. *Gandhi lives and will live without Gandhities and Gandhism*.<sup>8</sup>

During the presentation and discussions held so far a sevenfold criticism of Gandhism emerged. I propose to make my brief observations on it. The points made were:

1. Gandhi's assertions about ends and means were illogical and unpsychological. He ignored the pluralism of values or he accepted the pluralism.
2. He put forth his Utopia in 1909 and for forty years went on projecting its content without regard to concrete historical situations.
3. He suggested political and economic solutions which were pseudo-solutions or raw or ineffective.
4. He was no more than a humanist or a humanitarian.
5. He failed to retain his hold on the masses, and while the hold

lasted, he failed to exploit it in the interest of intensification of mass organization on a continental scale. He further failed to use his hold as a means for diverse politico-social ends.

6. He went on manouvering for a position of vantage, command or ‘vanguard leadership’ and, in the process, dared not break away completely from organizations and individuals of his choice, while on the other hand, he refused to have any truck with individuals and groups that were too minor or too provocative.
7. His faith in the inherent goodness of man-in-society was an illusion and the in-group Hindu-Muslim conflict was even to him, spiritually and psychologically a much more shattering experience than an out-group war. Taken all in all, Gandhi’s non-violence was a failure.

I would preface my point-wise observations by two general statements about Gandhi—not about Gandhism, which are a rephrasing of his own confession already quoted above.

To use the language of Quaker R. K. Ullmann (*Between God and History*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1959), ‘man is a being in relationship, a being-in-relationship, to God on the one hand, and to his fellow men on the other. The quality of these two relationships is interdependent; the more a man is aware of God’s Will for him, the better becomes his attitude to men. Correspondingly, a man who establishes right relationships with his fellow-men moves thereby nearer to God’s will for him’. Bapu was a man of God: the God in fellowmen called him to serve His creatures and this call constituted the Mahatma’s *End*. The oft-sounding or invoked voice of God in Gandhi himself provided him with the *Means* to that end. By creating evil, God has Himself thrown a challenge to Himself *in and as history*, a challenge which He Himself makes man to take up through both ‘evolution’ and ‘revolution’, through ‘democracy’ and ‘tyranny’.

Next, it is to do violence to Gandhi to assert that in his mind always revelled or lay hidden a dichotomy, a duality between the religious and the political, the individual and the collective, the end and the means, the future and the past, the idea and the deed, the material and the moral, the leader and the led, the national and the international, the human and the non-human. For him and, for the matter of that, for any man of God, all life was one, not a metaphysical unity but a real live oneness, and the infinite feliations of the one were interpenetrant. My observations are as follows:



1. Ends and means enter the womb of human awareness together as twins. All value rises from man's being in right relationship to God and flows into man's being in right relationship to his fellowmen.
2. It is wrong to say that because Gandhi's politico-economic hopes were often *Utopian*, his even-present, ever-operant *altitude of love and suffering resistance was equally utopian*. Unless realism has no meaning other than real-politik, his altitude was utterly realistic because he brought it to bear on the real conditions in time and '*helped to shape creatively the next historical moment*'.
3. All the *solutions* Gandhi suggested were *existential*, experimental, *situational* for he was fully aware of the roles both of change—the eternal flux, that is, of history and the plan of God. Did he not clearly say at a moment of crisis, God alone knows what next?
4. Bapu's method was fundamentally different from *humanism and humanitarianism*. He was throughout motivated by what he believed was demanded of him by *the God within him*, which he equated with relative truth as distinguished from absolute truth. In ethical terms, '*his immediate motivation lay in his own conscience, his own noblesse oblige*'. He wanted injustice and suffering for others relieved but he was even more anxious to rid himself of any guilt or responsibility for it. And he felt his responsibility acutely', perhaps overmuch.
5. Identifying himself completely with the masses, *Gandhi carried them all and whole within his heart*, becoming their voice, and if he would not allow others to exploit them, why should he exploit them himself. But he would do all at every time to teach them to stand on their own legs, to mature for enforcing their moral will in which lay true salvation for them. Organization is inherently coercive and awakened but unfulfilled desires for long breed violence of despair.
6. Gandhi was as fully aware of *human weakness resulting partly from the ambiguities, relativities and tragedies of history* as of *human strength flowing from the presence*. Further he knew well the fibre, the orchestration, the spectrum, the octave of past India and of contemporary India. He therefore acted in the spirit of active *compassion or self-imposed withdrawal or silence* so that those near him could be strengthened and purified, and those away from him be allowed to experiment for themselves, unhampered. We have no right to say that Bapu did not speak the whole truth at

any time or that he only partly acted on the promptings of his conscience.

7. On Gandhi's compromises and failures, I would again draw upon Ullman, modifying his words to suit him:

'Granted that the price of non-violence may be apparent impotence at the most crucial moments of history and that lack of efficacy in matters temporal may create a sense of inefficiency, failure and even damnation: only if we allow this sense to exhaust our spiritual resources, only if we lose faith in the meaning of failure, have we truly failed.' 'The temporal result may have the appearance of many *compromises and failures*, but the *impact of Gandhi's witness on the historical development is as undeniable as is that of many self-appointed realists who too achieve nothing better than compromises and failures.*'

There were two Gandhis, the historical and the eternal; let us distinguish between them.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. In September 1918, I wrote a book called *The Hope of Mr Gandhi*. Three chapters were published in *The Message of Hinduism* in November-December 1918, a fortnightly I then edited from Lahore. I first heard Gandhi in 1919 at Amritsar, where I was editor of *The Khalsa Advocate*. 'After my return to India from touring in the West, I found the whole country convulsed with the expectation of an immediate independence—Gandhi had promised *Swarāj* in one year. Such an assurance coming from a great personality produced a frenzy of hope even in those who were ordinarily sober.'—Tagore, *Gandhi, the Man*, written in 1938 and included in a 1949 publication, *Gandhi Memorial Peace Number, Vishva Bharati Quarterly*, Santiniketan, p. 10. Tagore is describing what he experienced in 1920-21. The Mahatma's own 'hope' in 1918 became in 1920-21 the 'frenzied hope' of the masses.
2. Louis Renou, *Gandhi and Indian Civilization*, GM PN, 1949, pp. 233-38. 'On the whole we must look for Gandhi's fore-runners in the leaders of sects, the countless men who "cleared paths" and "opened up ways". In the middle ages and up to the present, there are examples of such men, coming from all social and spiritual strata, gathering communities about them, adopting new gospels, sometimes trying to make their way in the social or political field by means which they invariably claimed to derive from those gospels. Such are Basava in the twelfth century with the Lingayats; Ramananda and Kabir in the fifteenth century; Nanak, the founder of the Sikhs, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But what these men viewed in terms of the locality and of the needs of the sect, Gandhi conceived for India as a whole'. 'The rejection of industrialization and mechanism was the programme of the old semi-autonomous village communities as often described in the inscriptions of the South'.

I subjoin some quotations from the Sikh *Adi Granth* to sample Indian societarian concepts during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I. *Guru Nanak (1469-1538)*.

- (i) Voluntary poverty is my Mace.
- (ii) God, the True, is attained only through Truth, not falsehood.
- (iii) The profits of our living are Truth and Justice.
- (iv) To misappropriate or exploit the Rights of another is to eat forbidden beef, for a Hindu, and pork, for a Muslim. (v) Let truth be your fasting, and universal compassion, your deity for worship.

II. *Guru Amar Das (1479-1574)*.

O *Sheikh*, free your mind of violence; fear God; and drop your Madness. Thou shalt placate thy Lord only through doing all thy work by Peaceful means (*Santi*). None has made enduring gains through lust and cruelty.

III. *Guru Ram Das (1534-1581)*.

Power (*Sakti*) must lose to universal Good (*Siva*).

IV. *Guru Arjuna Dev (1563-1606)*.

- 1. I am God's own wrestler.
- 2. God is the upholder and avenger of the poor (*garib-nawāz*).
- 3. The man of God is the perennial fountain of service to the people.

3. M. G. Polak, *Mr. Gandhi, the Man*, Vora and Co., Bombay, p. 97, and p. 93.

'In after-days he often said that he learned much of the value and methods of passive resistance from some of the British women and applied some of those methods himself in his own political struggles in South Africa. In particular he spoke very highly of the little group of women workers associated with Mrs. Despard. Mrs. Despard herself is a wonderful woman. I had long talks with her in London and admire her greatly, and much appreciate her advocacy of spiritual resistance. Mrs. Pankhurst too is a splendid woman.'

'Mr. Gandhi was also greatly attracted to the Ethical movement, some of whose members came at the time into close and sympathetic touch with him'.

4. In August 1947 Gandhi is reported by P. C. Ghosh to have said: 'My independence has not yet come. My conception of independence has not yet come'.

5. Aldous Huxley, *GMPN*, pp. 186-87. 'Gandhi failed in his attempts to modify the essentially tigerish nature of nationalism as such.... Gandhi's social and economic ideas are based upon a realistic appraisal of man's nature and the nature of his position in the universe....The mistake of Gandhi's contemporaries was to suppose that technology and organization could turn the pretty human animal into a superhuman being'.

'The larger a democracy grows, the less real becomes the rule of the people and the smaller is the say of individuals and localized group in deciding their own destinies.'

6. Gene Sharp, *Gandhi, His Relevance for Our Times*, B. V. Bhavan, Bombay, 1964, p. 45:

‘The homage which most pay to him by calling him *Mahatma* usually becomes a kind of vaccination against taking him seriously....As a *Mahatma* he can be revered while being placed in that special category of saints, prophets and holy men whose lives and actions are believed to be largely irrelevant to ordinarymen’.

‘It is sometimes the case that Gandhi’s own candid evaluations of himself and his work now appear to be more accurate than the opinions of some of his followers and homage-bearers’.

7. Gandhi: ‘The mass-mind is sound if only because it is unselfish’. *MG*, Bhagwan Dass, p. 72.
8. Homer A. Jack, *Gandhi*, B. V. B., 1964, Bombay, pp. 140-41.

‘For those concerned with the theory of non-violence, the failure of Gandhism in India to produce a successful development process after the “revolutionary” change, raises several problems’.

‘The next logical step, for the Gandhian movement would seem to be in *the direction of the social sciences*, in peace research, and in the testing of all images of society by the more refined means for discovering truth, which are now available to us’.

R. R. DIWAKAR

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# Satyāgraha

## A New Way of Life and A New Technique for Social Change



SATYĀGRAHA is primarily and essentially a new way of life. One of the very recent biographers of Gandhi, Geoffrey Ashe writes in his book *Gandhi*, in the chapter entitled 'Truth-Force': 'This new thing which came into the world through Gandhi was *satyāgraha*—variously but inadequately translated, 'passive resistance', 'civil disobedience' and 'non-violent non-cooperation'. Here, the author refers more to the new technique than the new way of life, which really is far more important. It is the new way of life which provides the real basis, the strategy and the philosophy for the new technique.

Gandhi pointed out as far back as the early days of the South African struggle in his speech at Germistone that his *satyāgraha* was quite different from passive resistance and such other methods and expressions. The orientation of *satyāgraha* was quite different from that of other methods of fighting evil and injustice. *Satyāgraha* being based on truth-force and non-violence, a *satyāgrahī* would never think of using violence even if he could and he would suffer without ill-will against his opponent. Therefore, even the name of the 'Passive Resistance Association' in South Africa was changed into Satyagraha Association as soon as Gandhi found an Indian name for his way of fighting evil. Passive resistance, civil disobedience

and such other methods when adopted in pursuit of truth and justice and when they eschew violence, are at best corollaries of the *saiyagraha* way of life. There is no doubt when a true *satyāgrahī* is faced by evil or injustice he does employ a new technique of non-violent resistance, which on its surface resembles any ordinary passive resistance. It is this resemblance, and the results which Gandhi achieved by the *satyāgraha* technique in various walks of life, which are responsible for the predominant interpretation of *satyāgraha* as only a non-violent way of resistance. In fact, what Gandhi conceived and practised was the *satyāgraha* way of life and for him, *satyāgraha* as a weapon for fighting evil and for social change was a by-product. Relentless pursuit of truth through love or non-violence alone would be the normal way of life of a *satyāgrahī*. But when confronted with evil or injustice, he would resort to non-violent resistance and self-suffering without the slightest ill-will towards the evil-doer. He would never shirk a struggle nor to try to find an escape. One of the most important characteristics of the *satyāgraha* way of life is never to tolerate or submit either to evil or to injustice or tyranny of any kind. The foremost duty of a *satyāgrahī* would always be to fight evil and injustice by non-violent resistance or be busy with steps which, if necessary, would culminate in such non-violent resistance even unto death. A *satyāgrahī* will always declare, resist evil you must but always through love and non-violence but without ill-will. To him the expression, resist not evil, means resist evil by good. What is totally banned is submission to evil, and the use of evil means. For, Gandhi stood for the principle that means must always be pure and ethical. Gandhi once remarked that *adharmavirodha*, that is, non-violent resistance of whatever was against the law of being, was the essence of the spirit of *satyāgraha*.

It may be pointed out here that unadulterated non-violent resistance without ill-will can be offered only by those who have adopted *satyāgraha* as a way of life. Gandhi often emphasized that in non-violent mass struggles, at least the leaders should be such as are imbued with the spirit of *satyāgraha*. A *satyāgrahī* offers non-violent resistance out of strength and bravery and not because he is helpless and cannot use violence. He would not use violence even if he could, Gandhi believed and declared that love and non-violence was the law of the human species as brute-force or violence was the law of the jungle.

If *satyāgraha* is a new way of life, what are its distinct features? Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills, as Gandhi himself has

said. But truth through non-violence *alone* is certainly a new feature. The application of this principle to every walk of life and all human affairs, and especially the use of this principle on a mass scale to fight evil and injustice, to establish truth and justice, is certainly a new feature. The emphasis on action which always has to be non-violent against all evil and every injustice also distinguishes the *satyāgraha* way of life. The extension of this principle to all fields of life and to the solution of all conflicts, socio-economic as well as political, is again a new feature. Two other features of the *satyāgraha* ways of life are identification in spirit with all life—not only human life—through love or identity of interest, and the constant endeavour to serve and sacrifice for the good and welfare of all, beginning with the lowliest of the low and the poorest of the poor. These two features are coupled with non-violent resistance to every obstacle which comes in the way of this kind of service and sacrifice for the benefit of the whole of mankind and all life.

It is our good fortune that Gandhi has provided us with a new word for this new way of life. Old words often come in the way of right interpretation. *satyāgraha* is a Sanskrit word. It is a compound of two words, *satya* (truth), that which is according to what is or exists; and *agraha* (insistence or adherence). Both together now indicate a new way of life. The word non-violence or love is not in the compound word. It is understood that the insistence on truth is non-violent. *satyāgraha* indicates or rather connotes the *dharma* or the law of being of the person concerned. There are several compound words in Sanskrit with *satya* as a component. For instance, *satya-sandha* (wedded to truth), *satya-vrata* (one who has taken a vow to speak and act truth), *satya-vān* (one who is truthful), *satya-dhrti* (one whose determination is firm), *satya-ashraya* (one who relies on truth) and so on. But I have not so far come across in the whole Sanskrit literature the word *satyāgraha* or *satyāgraha*. It was reserved for Gandhi to coin the word as well as to evolve its full connotation during his eventful life. It is now not only a way of life with a philosophy of action but also a new technique of social change with high potentialities in the future. Gandhi's life, thought and action can be said to be a running commentary, illustrative, interpretative, and expositive, on *satyāgraha*.

Gandhi has called *satyāgraha* a science and an art of life. He has mentioned that he is the author of *satyāgraha*. He was thoroughly conscious of the newness of the way; he also knew that he was evolving that new way by living it as well as by preaching it. He never

claimed that the evolution of *satyāgraha* was ever complete. On the other hand, if questioned, he would have said that *satyāgraha*, both as a way of life and means of social change, was still growing and there was nothing like finality; the evolution of *satyāgraha* is linked with human evolution itself.

Gandhi has significantly called his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*. *Satyāgraha* is an increasing quest for truth and an identification with it. It has to be sought through non-violence and sought to be established also through non-violence or love because there cannot be any identification without love or feeling of oneness and, when found, it cannot be forced on others by violence. Force, coercion, violence are the instruments of blind power and not vehicles of truth. Love, non-violence alone can permanently convey and establish truth. Moreover, however perfect a man might be, he cannot be sure that his perception alone is true, therefore it is best that he uses love and non-violence and self-suffering as his channels to convey truth to others.

Truth, to Gandhi, was both transcendental and immanent. In fact, whatever was immanent was but the manifestation of the transcendental. The way to the transcendental also lay through the immanent. His quest was for both in equal measure. It was this belief and experience of his which saved him from escapism into metaphysics and made him the torch-bearer for spiritualizing actively the whole of life. Truth of daily life and experience was not merely for knowing it intellectually. To find the truth was only the beginning. To understand it, to experience it, to express it and to establish it is the main function of a *satyāgrahī*. This he has to do through love alone. The law and experience of life, the evils and injustice, the misery and sufferings of millions were the things of utmost concern to him as he identified himself with the whole of humanity. Self-realization, seeing God face to face was his passion and it meant for him the constant consciousness of an eternal presence, of the truth of life, as well as the manifestation of that truth in daily experience. He was aware through identification of the sufferings of humanity and to him to serve man was to serve God. God was not in need of service but his creatures certainly were!

Now what are the means of knowing and having truth? It was, to Gandhi, *ahimsā*, an approach through love, through identification. Our own inner weaknesses and selfish desires come in the way of the observance of *ahimsā* in its entirety. Man is an animal. Like all other animals, he is full of fear about his own safety and security and his perpetuity. It is this desire which makes him fear everything 'other' than himself. Gandhi's endeavour was to see God or Truth in everything as he believed that there was some supreme power which



was all-pervading and in which everything lived and moved and had its being. To Gandhi God was truth, God was love and God was law. Once truth was realized through love or identity, non-injury, non-violence would follow as a matter of course. Though *ahimsā* would ordinarily mean non-injury to person and to all sentient beings, Gandhi extended it even to property because he argued that injury to property would mean injury to the person or persons who have interest in that property !

Thus a way of life evolved, the essence of which was quest of truth, both transcendent and immanent, through *ahimsā*, through love, through non-violence (non-injury) *alone*. This involved purification of the mind, shedding of all selfish desires, rising above the weaknesses of the flesh and a constant endeavour at seeing truth, knowing truth, realizing truth and establishing truth through service, and total sacrifice, if need be. Martyrdom is, thus, the crown and apex of this discipline and spirituality the supreme value spirituality here means the experience of essential oneness of all being and becoming.

To Gandhi, the decisive guide in the matter of finding truth was not any scripture or external authority or a Guru. He respected these traditional sources of light but his own conscience, evolving along the path of spirituality and based on reason and morality (ethics) was the real and *de facto* guide. He would say 'no' to all that did not pass the test of reason and morality, the twin god-given instruments of mankind,

A relevant question may be asked here as to why we should recognize *satyāgraha* of Gandhi's conception and practice as new. Some special characteristics have already been indicated. But let us see further. Gandhi himself, when questioned by different people at different times, has replied, and recognized his debt to various sources. But all that is like a seed and the growing plant expressing its gratefulness to the soil, the manner, and the water which nourishes it. Gandhi has mentioned the story of Hariscandra, or Prahlad. He has told of the maxim 'return good for evil' which he read in the poem of Shamalbhat, a Gujarati poet, and how it took firm hold of his mind. Raychand, a pious Jain jeweller, was almost like a spiritual advisor to him in the early days. Gandhi has recognized the influence of Socrates, of Christ of course, and of Mohammad, the prophet. Among books and writings, the *Gītā*, the Sermon on the Mount in the Bible, Tolstoy's *Kingdom of God is Within You*, Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* are prominent. The basic fact,

however, remains that *satyāgraha* as conceived and developed by Gandhi and as it evolved from stage to stage in his own life time and expressed itself in the form of mass campaigns in various fields of activity, from the domestic to the international, was new in its essence. Gandhi's claim to the authorship of the science and art of *satyāgraha* has to stand unchallenged. Gandhi was humble enough to generously acknowledge the various sources. But it has to be admitted that not only the newness of *satyāgraha* but its extension to the whole gamut of human affairs and its somewhat successful and persistent use for socio-economic changes on a vast and varied scale was due to the extraordinary and moral genius of one man, Gandhi. All the same, it is a matter for hope for mankind that this genius was not born but made.

If we scan the life of Gandhi from day to day, we see how a shy erring lambling fought bravely against his own weaknesses and built himself into a robust, mighty, moral force based on truthfulness and love. While alive, he shook and awakened the conscience of each man and of the whole of humanity along with shaking the very roots of the mightiest ever empire based and built on force, fraud and exploitation. It is our good fortune that his life has been documented more thoroughly and authentically than that of any great man, past or present. His life was an open book and what went on in his mind was also reflected in his own writings and was reported by many newspapers almost daily. He could be described as a public performer of Himalayan dimensions who let the audience peep freely into the green room all the time.

In the past history of man, many are the instances of individuals who have acted as *satyāgrahīs* and suffered martyrdom. In fact, the blood of martyrs has been the seed of new faiths and religions. There have also been instance of groups who have shown the same spirit and suffered patiently the same way as the *satyāgrahī* followers of Gandhi. *The Quiet Battle* by Sibley gives a number of historic instances of that type. But all those examples prove anew that Gandhi's conception and practice of *satyāgraha*, both as a way of life and as an instrument of social change, have something new and unique in them which is not found in earlier examples. At any rate, in Gandhi's hands, *satyāgraha* got its metaphysics, its philosophy, its mystique, its technique and its dynamic as well as its positive function in individual and social life.

It is true that Gandhi was born a Hindu and he declared also that he was a Sanatani Hindu. There is a powerful tradition of *ahimsā*,

non-injury to sentiment being both in Hinduism and Jainism. Hinduism asserts that there is no *dharma*, that is law of life, greater than truth, truth alone triumphs and never untruth. *Ahimsā* as a means has a sacred place in Hindu thought. For Jainism, *ahimsā* is the greatest *dharma*. This is the dominating background of the Indian mind. We have several instances, both mythological and historical of truthfulness and *ahimsā*. But they are mostly of individuals. When groups acted, as in the case of an exodus, though it was *satyāgraha* of a sort, it was passive non-resistance rather than positive resistance for the establishment of truth which Gandhi introduced. The militant *kṣatriya* type of positive non-violent resistance to evil and injustice is hardly found in the past history of India even though the atmosphere of truth and non-violence is to be found in the Indian tradition. The *Gītā* could yield the necessary militancy to Gandhi's mind only when he interpreted it as an allegory. Otherwise, Shri Krishna ultimately persuaded Arjuna to fight in a bloody fratricidal war and supplied him with the armour of supreme detachment. That freed Arjuna from the sin of bloodshed and even of some trickery. Looked at from this point of view, Gandhi's *ahimsā*, absolute and unadulterated *ahimsā*, is far in advance of the earlier interpretation and practice of *ahimsā*, especially as a social principle and an ethical value.

There is one more unique feature of Gandhi's *satyāgraha*. It has the quality of being contagious. The Pathans who had no traditions of non-violence, took it up as a means of resistance to tyranny and injustice. In distant U.S.A., Dr Martin Luther King (Jr.) adopted it with significant results. India and Indian traditions have been known to the world for several centuries. Yet no one in the world had discovered any thing like *satyāgraha*. This itself proves once again that it is a new way evolved by Gandhi. It was reserved for Gandhi to initiate this new kind of cultured non-violent yet powerful way of fighting evil and injustice.

It was the passion for realizing truth through love alone and the passion to establish truth in daily life for social salvation through service and sacrifice, which was the basic fact about Gandhi and his *satyāgraha* way of life. It is not easy to see truth as it is and therefore Gandhi laid down many rules for the guidance of *satyāgrahis*. The truth of any situation, the tightness and wrongness of any cause can be perceived only by a selfless, pure mind shorn of numerous weaknesses of the flesh. It is the realization of the truth of a situation, the unshakable convictions about the rightness of a cause, which

gives immense strength to the *satyāgrahī*. Because it is no longer the individual that acts but the strength of truth itself. The individual gets merged in the truth on account of love, identification, and his readiness to suffer unto death for the truth of his perception adds elemental strength to the cause. Non-violent fighting for truth is the shortest cut to success, for non-violence helps concentration on the cause of fighting and the common solution, without diverting the mind of either party to extraneous things.

The Gandhian approach, though spiritual in essence, is extremely a practical one. Once the individual's mind or the mind of the group engaged in *satyāgraha* gets rooted in the truth of the situation and in the rightness of the cause by identification, it is no longer the individual who works but the power of truth takes over. And that power is stronger than any physical force but it is the *satyāgrahī* who has to awaken that power of truth and harness it for the cause of truth. As early as 1931, Gandhi told the Swiss pacifist Pierre Caresole: 'Truth is God and the way to find him is non-violence. Anger must be banished and fear and falsehood. You must lose yourself ... purified, you get power. It is not your own, it is God's (truth's)'. God here obviously means, the ultimate supreme power, the very source of the cosmic law.

It should be remembered that Gandhian teaching, while it may help individual salvation, is not only not restricted to it, but it must overflow to include social salvation of the whole of mankind. In fact, the four words, namely, *satya* (truth), *ahimsā* (non-injury), *satyāgraha* (adherence to truth) and *sarvodaya* (welfare of all) constitute a whole system of thought and action which envisages the collective salvation of humanity.

GANESH D. GADRE

## The Reappearance of Gandhi



(AN IMAGINARY DIALOGUE)

OUR great dialogue on Gandhi is coming to an end. We have X-rayed the Mahatma from various angles. Does he give us any guidelines for future action? The consensus at our Seminar seems to be that the legacy of Gandhi does provide enough food for our future thinking. I shall attempt to lay down the guide-lines in Gandhi's own inimitable language.

Gandhi wrote *Hind Swarāj* in 1908 in the form of a dialogue. The context has changed in 1968. Our problem today is not *swarāj* but *sarvōdaya*. Hence, I have rewritten some passages from *Hind Swarāj* after making only a few verbal changes, namely, *sarvōdaya* for *swarāj*, businessmen for Englishmen, the Mahatma for Naoroji, Nehru for Gokhale, Bajaj and Birla for Hume and Wedderburn, Russia for Italy, Marx and Lenin for Mazzini and Garibaldi, etc. With these changes, the famous dialogue becomes at once relevant to our present predicament.

Q. Just at present there is a wave of *sarvōdaya* passing over India. All our countrymen seem to be pining for economic equality. Will you explain your views in the matter?

A. That desire led to the adoption of socialism as an objective of the Indian National Congress.

Q. That surely is not the case. Young India seems to ignore the Congress. It is considered to be an instrument for perpetuating economic inequality.

A. That opinion is not justified. Had not Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, prepared the soil, our young men could not have spoken about *sarvodaya*. Mr Nehru, in order to prepare the nation, gave twenty years of his life before independence and, till recently, he was serving us. Men like Mr Bajaj and Mr Birla have given their body, mind and money to the same cause.

Q. Stay, stay, you are going too far; you are straying away from my question. I have asked you about *sarvodaya* and you are discussing Indian independence. I do not desire to hear the names of businessmen, and you are giving me such names. In these circumstances, I do not think we can ever meet. I shall be pleased if you will confine yourself to *sarvodaya*. All otherwise talk will not satisfy me.

A. You are impatient. I cannot afford to be likewise. If you will bear with me for a while, I think you will find that you will obtain what you want. Remember the old proverb that the tree does not grow in one day. The fact that you have checked me, and that you do not want to hear about the well-wishers of Indian people, shows that, for you at any rate, *sarvodaya* is yet far away. If we had many like you, we would not make any advance. This thought is worthy of your attention.

Q. It seems to me that you simply want to put me off by talking round and round. Those whom you consider well-wishers of Indian people are not such in my estimation. Why then should I listen to your discourse on such people? What has he, whom you consider to be the father of the Nation, done for *sarvodaya*? He says that rich people may bring equality and that we should cooperate with them.

A. I must tell you, with all gentleness, that it must be a matter of shame for us that you should speak of that great man in terms of disrespect. Just look at his work. He had dedicated his life to the service of Indian people. We have learnt what we know, from him. It was Gandhi who taught us that the landlords and the capitalists were sucking blood out of the Indian peasants and workers. What does it matter that he continued to hope for a change of heart in the landlords and the capitalists? Is Bapu to be honoured less because, in the exuberance of youth, we are prepared to go a step further? Are we, on that account, wiser than he? It is a mark of wisdom not to

kick against the very step from which we have risen higher. We must admit that Gandhi is the Father of Indian Socialism.

Q. You have spoken well. I can now understand that we must look upon Gandhi with respect. Without him and men like him, we would perhaps not have the spirit that fires us. How can the same be said of Mr. Nehru? I am tired of reading his speeches.

A. If you are tired, it only betrays your impatience. We believe that those who are discontented with the slowness of their parents, and angry because the parents would not run with their children, are considered disrespectful to their parents.

Q. I now begin to understand somewhat your meaning. I shall have to think the matter over; but what you say about Mr Bajaj and Mr Birla is beyond my comprehension.

A. The same rule holds for the propertied classes as for the political leaders. I can never subscribe to the statement that all rich people are bad. Many rich people desire equality among all people. That the rich are somewhat more selfish than others is true, but that does not prove that every rich man is bad.

Q. All this seems to me at present to be non-sensical. Rich people supporting the cause of *sarvōdaya* is a contradictory thing.

A. It is quite possible that we do not attach the same meaning to the term. You and I and all Indians are impatient to establish *sarvōdaya*, but we are certainly not decided as to what it is. To drive the rich men out of business and industry is a thought heard from many mouths, but it does not seem that many have properly considered why it should be so. I must ask you a question. Do you think that it is necessary to drive away the rich men, if we get all we want?

Q. That question is useless. It is similar to the question whether there is any harm in associating with a tiger, if it changes its nature. Such a question is sheer waste of time. When a tiger changes its nature, the rich will change theirs.

A. If the rich become mass-minded, we can accommodate them. If they wish to remain in trade and industry along with their profit motive, there is no room for them. It lies with us to bring such a state of things.

Q. It is impossible that the rich should ever become mass-minded.

A. To say that is equivalent to saying that the rich have no humanity in them. And it is really beside the point whether they become so or not. If we keep our own house in order, only those who

are fit to live in it will remain, others will leave of their own accord.

Q. I cannot follow this. There seems little doubt that we shall have to remove the rich by force of arms. The rich in our country are like a blight which we must remove by every means.

A. In your excitement you have forgotten all we have been considering. Your hatred against the rich ought to be directed against their profit-motive. But let us assume that we have to remove the rich by fighting, how is that to be done?

Q. In the same way as Russia did it.

A. It is good that you have instanced Russia. Marx was a great and good man. Lenin was a great fighter. Both are adorable. From their lives we can learn much. But ambitions of Marx and Lenin have not yet been realized in Russia. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce similar conditions in India. I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, not that you want the government in your hands.

Q. From your views I gather that you would form a third party. You are neither a leftist nor a rightist.

A. That is a mistake. I do not think of a third party at all. We do not all think alike. We cannot say that all the rightists hold identical views. And how can those who want to serve only, have a party? I would work with both the leftists and the rightists.

Q. What then would you say to the businessmen?

A. To them I would respectfully say: 'I admit you are the owners. It is not necessary to debate the question whether you are the master by force or by consent. I have no objection to you remaining in trade and industry, but although you are the owners you will have to remain as servants of the people. It is not we who have to do as you wish, but it is you who have to do as we wish. Your function will be, if you so wish, to manage business; you must give up any idea of deriving commercial benefit out of it. We hold the civilization that you support to be the reverse of civilization. If you realize this truth, it will be to your advantage, and if you do not, you will have to remain among us only as we do. We have hitherto said nothing because we have been cowed down, but you need not consider that you have not hurt our feelings by your conduct. We are not expressing our sentiments through base selfishness but because it is our duty to speak out boldly.

'This has not been said to you in arrogance. You have great financial resources. Your manipulating power is matchless. If we wanted to fight with you on your own grounds, we should be unable to do so, but if the above submission be not acceptable to you, we



cease to play the role of your servants. You may, if you like, cut us to pieces. You may shatter us in any manner that you choose. If you act contrary to our will, we will not help you, and, without our help, we know that you cannot move one step forward.

‘It is likely that you laugh at all this in the intoxication of your power. We may not be able to disillusion you at once, but if there be any manliness in us, you will see shortly that your intoxication is suicidal, and that your laugh at our expense is an aberration of intellect. We believe that at heart you are a religious people. We are living in a land which is a source of religions. We can, if we so wish, make mutual good use of our relations. So doing, we shall benefit each other and the world.’

Q. What will you say to the people?

A. Who are the people?

Q. For our purposes it is the people that you and I have been thinking of, that is, those of us who are affected by the exploitation of businessmen and who are eager to have *sarvodaya*.

A. To these I would say: ‘It is only those people who are imbued with real love who will be able to speak to businessmen in the above strain without being frightened. Those only can be considered to be so imbued, who, having experienced the force of the soul within themselves, will not cower before brute force, and will not, on any account, desire to use brute force. Those only can be considered to be so imbued who are intensely dissatisfied with the present pitiable condition, having already drunk the cup of poison. If there be only one such Indian, he will speak as above to the businessmen and they will have to listen to him.

‘In my opinion, we have used the term *sarvodaya* without understanding its real significance. I have tried to explain it as I understand it, and my conscience testifies that my life henceforth is dedicated to its attainment’.

B. R. NANDA

## The Relevance of Gandhi



THE question whether Gandhi was relevant is not so novel or striking as it may seem. It was repeatedly asked during his life time from the day when, at the age of twenty-four, he plunged into the stormy politics of South Africa to the fateful evening 55 years later in New Delhi, when three pistol shots posed this very question in the most tragic and dramatic manner possible. It was a question which recurred during the twenty years of Gandhi's struggle in South Africa, in the course of which he evolved his technique of Satyagrāha for righting wrongs and redressing injustice without hate and without violence. It was only natural that he should have appeared as a tenacious and dangerous adversary to his opponents, but there were not a few in his own camp, who chafed at his self-imposed restraints and discounted the possibility of changing the hearts of the dominant race.

Gandhi left South Africa in July 1914 and, after spending a few months in England, returned to India in January 1915. In the eyes of many of his countrymen he had the halo of a victorious campaigner around him, but he also seemed (in the words of J. B. Kripalani) an 'eccentric specimen of an England-returned Indian'. Gokhale, whom Gandhi acknowledged as his political *guru*, laughed at some of his ideas and told him: 'After you have stayed in India, your views will correct themselves'. It had long been Gokhale's wish

that Gandhi should join his Society—the Servants of India Society—but before long, it became plain to Gandhi as well as to the members of that Society that he would be a square peg. Nor did Gandhi's political views fit in with those of the Moderates or the Extremists in the Indian National Congress. His advocacy, as a *satyāgrahī*, of unconditional support to the Government during the first World War, hardly carried conviction to the British, but it intrigued and exasperated fervent nationalists like Tilak and Mrs. Besant, who wanted, on the Irish model, to turn England's difficulty into India's opportunity.

During these early years, Gandhi seemed to both European and Indian observers strangely unpolitical. In 1917, Edwin Montague noted in his diary that Gandhi was 'a social reformer with a real desire to find the grievances and to cure them.... he dresses like a coolie, forswears all personal advancement, lives practically on the air and is a pure visionary'. The Viceroy and his advisers watched Gandhi with mingled hope and anxiety. They wondered whether his energies would be drained off in harmless channels of religious and social reform, or whether he would repeat his South African performance. His denunciation of Western civilization, industrialism, modern education grated on the ears of the Indian middle class which dominated the counsels of the Indian National Congress at that time. When he published his Satyagrāha pledge as protest against the Rowlatt Act in February 1919, the veteran politicians of India were shocked, almost horrified, and with a rare unanimity rushed to the press to give vent to their alarm and to warn their countrymen of the dangers ahead. Within the Congress organization it took Gandhi nearly two years to have his ideas accepted. It was not until December, 1920, after the Nagpur Congress that some of the sceptics such as C. R. Das, were converted, and others, like Jinnah, walked off the Congress stage. Gandhi hastened to convert this sedate body of well-educated and well-dressed gentlemen into a mass organization, and summoned the illiterate millions in towns and villages to direct action. The sober politicians of the day had no doubt that the march to disaster had begun. 'What the consequences of this may be', Jinnah wrote, 'I shudder to contemplate'. Srinivas Sastri, Gokhale's political heir, warned his countrymen against the perils of the course to which they were drifting by adopting 'an impracticable programme in unreasoning opposition to the government'. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in the *Modern Review*, criticizing non-cooperation 'as a doctrine of negation, exclusiveness and despair which threatened to erect a

Chinese Wall between India and the West'. These doubts and alarms found full expression in a book entitled *Gandhi and Anarchy*, by Sir Sankaran Nair, a former president of the Indian National Congress, who had also been a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council.

For the next 18 months, the murmurs of dissent in the Congress were stilled by the roaring tide of non-cooperation which Gandhi had launched. But even during this period, some of his colleagues, such as C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru, were disturbed by the moral, almost mysterious aspects of the Mahatma's technique. When Gandhi refused to attend the Round Table Conference with Lord Reading, proposed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and other intermediaries, C. R. Das, who was in Alipore Central Jail is reported to have exclaimed that Gandhi was repeatedly bungling! A few months later, when Gandhi withdrew the civil disobedience campaign after the Chauri Chaura tragedy, not only C. R. Das but a majority of the senior leaders of the Congress felt that the moral prepossessions of the Mahatma had reduced his political movement to a pious futility.

In the summer of 1922, soon after Gandhi had been sentenced to six years' imprisonment, an important part of his programme was challenged by an influential section of his own following resulting in a split in the ranks of non-cooperators on the issue of contesting elections to the legislatures. A fierce struggle for the control of the party machine followed; it was resolved only when Gandhi gave in to the Swarājists and let them dominate the political stage.

During the mid-twenties, Gandhi retired from politics and buried himself in his *āshram* at Sabarmati, for 'constructive work': the propagation of Khadi, the preaching of non-violence, communal unity and social reform. Neither the British Government nor the Indian parties took these innocent activities seriously; they tended to regard 'the Saint of Sabarmati' as a spent force. It was only with the dramatic Salt Satyagrāha in the spring of 1930 that Gandhi once again became a dominant factor in national politics. His pact with Lord Irwin revived doubts and criticisms in some of those who were close to him. And when the non-cooperation movement declined under the hammer blows of the government in 1932-33, and he called off civil disobedience, he was again under fire. Subhas Chandra Bose and V. J. Patel, who were in Europe at that time, went so far as to issue a statement that Gandhi 'as a political leader has failed, that the time has come for a radical re-organization of the

Congress on a new principle and with a new method for which a new leader is essential’.

The five years immediately preceding the Second World War found Gandhi engaged in the promotion of village handicrafts, sanitation, nutrition and basic education. Again, he was accused of side-tracking the ‘main political issue of Indian freedom’. ‘I do not see’, he replied, ‘how the thinking of these necessary problems (of village uplift) finding a solution for them is of no political significance, and how any examination of the policy of the Government has necessarily a political bearing. What I am asking the masses to do is such as can be done by millions of people, whereas the work of examining the policy of the rulers will be beyond them. Let those few, who are qualified, do so; but until these leaders can bring great changes into being, why should not millions like me use the gifts that God has given them to the best advantage? Why should they not clean their doors and make of their bodies fitter instruments?’

The Second World War revealed a conflict between Gandhi’s doctrine of non-violence and his passion for Indian freedom. The proposition that India could defend herself with unadulterated non-violence against foreign aggression was one which few of his adherents were prepared to accept. Gandhi felt, he himself could not give up his faith when it was being put to the hardest test: ‘My position is confined to myself alone. I have to find whether I have any fellow-traveller along my lonely path....Whether one or many, I must declare that it is better for India to discard violence altogether even for defending her borders’. To the Government and people of Britain, locked in a desperate duel with Hitler’s Germany, Gandhi’s suggestion smacked of starry-eyed idealism, if not of deliberate sabotage. Many people in India feared that the Mahatma’s idealism was outrunning his practical sense, that he was adopting the role of a prophet rather than that of a responsible politician. This fear found expression in Rajagopalachari’s comment on the Quit India Movement: ‘The withdrawal of the government without simultaneous replacement by another must involve the dissolution of the state and society itself’.

We come now to the concluding stage of the Indo-British struggle: the Muslim League’s agitation for Pakistan, the arrival of the Cabinet Mission, the celebration of the Direct Action Day by the Muslim League, the lighting of the fires of fanaticism at Calcutta, which spread over the land and tortured the last days of Gandhi’s life. He desperately tried to quench this conflagration by living and working in the riot-torn countryside of Bengal and Bihar. The Hindus blamed him for allowing himself to be outwitted by the Muslim League; the Muslim League proclaimed him Enemy Number

One of Islam. The growing bitterness and bloodshed weighed heavily upon him. He had a tragic sense of isolation during these last days; his fasts at Calcutta and Delhi shamed the Hindus and moved the Muslims, but it was not until his final martyrdom that the futility and fatuity of communal violence was seen in the subcontinent as if in a flash of lightning.

The responsibility for Gandhi's murder rested not only on Godse alone, but also on those—some of them quite respectable and well-meaning men and women—who had given in to communal hatred and thus contributed to the creation of that surcharged atmosphere in which such a crime could be committed.

From this brief historical retrospect we may safely infer that January 1948 was not the watershed in Gandhism as some of us may have imagined. It would not be altogether correct to assume that we adhered to Gandhi's teachings during his lifetime and ceased to do so after his death. Even while he lived among us, and tried to guide us, we followed him fitfully and with faltering steps. His public life was not a triumphal procession; it had a stormy passage; he had continually to reckon with misunderstanding, ridicule, opposition; his movements had ups and downs; he had more than his share of disappointment and frustration. Despite his undoubted magnetism and unrivalled prestige he could command a mass following for his *satyāgraha* campaigns only sporadically, in 1920-22, 1930-32 and 1940-42. The educated class, the political elite of the day was inclined to discount his politics as romantic and his economics as unpractical. It was too much to expect that the British would welcome the idea of being evicted from India even non-violently. There, however, were intelligent and patriotic Indians, who did not accept that the patient, peaceful methods of *satyāgraha* were capable of producing radical changes. Some left-wing critics indeed went so far as to describe Gandhi a reactionary, and to suggest that he was not serious about fighting the British, that his real game was to harness the discontent of the peasantry, the lower middle and working classes to swell the profits of the tycoons of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Calcutta.

The politically conscious classes wanted quick results; they liked the spectacular side of *satyāgraha*, but were reluctant to understand, much less to believe in the deeper motives and the long-term strategy of the Mahatma. In 1920 they had welcomed non-cooperation because he promised 'Swarāj within a year'. The promise was remembered, but not the conditions precedent to the fulfilment of that promise. Curiously enough, before Gandhi came

on the scene, Indian political opinion was largely resigned to the idea of gradual political changes; but after he had sharpened the mass consciousness, *Swarāj* was seen, not as an inevitable reward of a long and hard struggle, but an immediate necessity. Gandhi knew only too well that his technique was not a magic wand; it required sustained effort and sacrifices which were forthcoming only intermittently in periods of intense political excitement. *Satyāgraha* was seen, not as it appeared to Gandhi, a way of life, but something like a *coup*, capable of producing basic changes overnight. Too often the operation of *satyāgraha* was seen on the lines of a violent conflict; it was forgotten that in *satyāgraha* it is not a question of capturing a particular outpost, isolating and overwhelming an army corps, or bombing an industrial town or a military target out of existence, *satyāgraha* seeks to initiate certain psychological changes, first in those who offer it and then in those against whom it is directed. Gandhi's vegetarianism, Bernard Shaw once said, could not appeal to the tiger; Gandhi repudiated the suggestion that imperialism was all tiger, and not at all human or susceptible to change.

The changes which Gandhi sought to bring about in society and politics presupposed changes in the minds and hearts of men. We know that such changes operate consciously and unconsciously and at various levels, and success can be delayed or stimulated by imponderables. These changes cannot be accelerated or even anticipated beyond a point; in society, as in the human organism, there is a safe rate of change. Voluntary and peaceful changes may be slow, but they may be more enduring.

Critics are not wanting today who dismiss Gandhi as a 'traditionalist', an impossible idealist, even 'a peasant reactionary' whose virtues and limitations, useful to his country in the special context of the struggle against colonial rule are, no longer valid. It is argued that Gandhi was opposed to technology and scientific progress, that he glorified poverty, that he exaggerated the possibilities of non-violence in a harsh and cynical world, that his economics do not make sense today.

It is important to remember that Gandhi was not a philosopher or an economist; his ideas grew out of his own early experiences, and crystallized while he was in South Africa; they were amplified, modified and refined by him later, but in essentials, they remained intact. These ideas were not drawn from books. The writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin served to confirm Gandhi's inchoate convictions, rather than provide him with ready-made formulae. *Hind Swarāj*,

which may be described Gandhi's 'confession of faith', was published in 1909. That this book was confiscated by the Government is not surprising; no government, and no foreign government, could miss the social and political dynamite it contained. Gandhi's position in this book approaching philosophic anarchism is an extreme one; his rejection of materialism, industrialism, violence is almost total; his judgements on the shams and equivocations of modern society and state are sharp, penetrating, merciless. It was this book which made many Indians and Europeans doubt whether Gandhi would ever be able to make a practical contribution to the country's public life. It is difficult to think of any prominent politician or any established political party avowing the creed of *Hind Swarāj*. Neither Gokhale nor Tilak, nor indeed any politician of the day would have subscribed to it.

Thus, very early in his career, Gandhi was faced with the not unusual dilemma of an idealist in politics; on the one hand, he had to discover and define his ideals for himself and on the other, he had to discover the terms on which he could work with others towards the realization of these ideals. The first of these problems, difficult as it was, Gandhi was able to solve before he had turned forty. But the second problem of discovering the terms on which he could cooperate with others, he could not solve to his own satisfaction, though he went on trying till the end. The gulf between him and between the men and women with whom his lot was cast, was sometimes wide, sometimes narrow; it was rarely bridged. It was open to him to adopt a lofty attitude, to offer a compact and consistent political programme and to say 'take it or leave it'. This may have made his own life more comfortable, and enhanced his reputation for consistency, but his sphere of action would have been narrowed a great deal, and his ideas would have made less impact than they actually did by being practised even in a diluted form.

Gandhi's personal creed, as adumbrated in the *Hind Swarāj*, was never tried by him in South Africa, much less in India, on the political organizations through which he functioned from time to time. Indeed, in 1920-21, when his opponents charged him with subversion of society and quoted *Hind Swarāj* to support their thesis, Gandhi wrote in the *Young India* of January 26, 1921: 'I am individually working for the self-rule pictured therein. But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swarāj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India. I am not aiming at destroying railways or hospitals, though



I would welcome their natural destruction. Nor am I aiming at a permanent destruction of the law courts much as I regard it as a consummation devoutly to be wished for. Still less am I trying to destroy all machinery and mills? It requires a higher simplicity and renunciation than the people are prepared for. The only part of the programme which is now being carried out in its entirety is that of Non-violence. But even that is not being carried out in the spirit of the book.'

Thus, Gandhi's personal beliefs did not in their entirety become the operative principles of the political organizations which he led. For him an act was not moral, unless it was also voluntary. He knew too much about human nature and the facts of public life to fall a willing victim to the fallacy that to define a Utopia is to create it. He, who had spent his life battling against racial prejudice, religious dogmatism and social obscurantism and colonial domination, knew that great changes could not be ordained at will and at short notice.

Gandhi was able to chart his own course with great clarity and confidence, but found it less easy to do so for masses of men. He seems to have adopted, both in his philosophy and technique, the principle of 'each according to his capacity'. His faith in *ahimsā*, (non-violence) was boundless, but there were few who were prepared to go the whole hog with him. It was not opportunism, but a strong practical vein in the Mahatma which permitted the Congress to subscribe to non-violence as a 'policy' in the nationalist struggle; the majority of its members and leaders had no faith in non-violence as a creed.

During the second World War, Gandhi twice (in 1940 and 1941) found that most of the members of the Congress working committee did not believe in the possibility of India offering effective non-violent resistance to the Axis Powers. Rather than ram his ideas down the throats of his colleagues, he resigned from the working committee. If he had waited for ideal conditions and for colleagues who believed unreservedly in his philosophy and technique, he may have waited till the end of his life. He was, therefore, ready, within a fairly broad framework, to cooperate with others in order to promote the causes on which he had set his heart. 'If I was a perfect man', he once wrote, 'I own I should not feel the miseries of life which I always do. As a perfect man I should take note of them, prescribe a remedy and compel its adoption.... but as yet I see only through a glass darkly; and therefore, I have to carry conviction by a slow and laborious process and then too not always with success. Mine is a struggling,

striving, erring, imperfect soul'. The difficulty was not in Gandhi alone; it was inherent in the position of a national leader seeking to lead a mass movement peacefully. In 1942, as Gandhi looked back on the non-cooperation struggle of the early twenties, he gave his reasons for having taken what he described as the 'maddest risk' a man can take. 'In South Africa....I introduced (*satyāgraha*) as an experiment. I was successful there, because resisters were a small number, in a compact area, and therefore easily controlled. Here (in India), we had numberless persons scattered over a huge country. The result was that they could not be easily controlled or trained. Any yet it is a marvel the way they have responded. They might have responded much better and shown far better results. But I have no sense of disappointment in me over the results obtained. If I had started with men who accepted non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself.'

Tagore once described Gandhi as 'essentially a lover of men and not of ideas'. The Mahatma himself disclaimed that he had discovered any new principle or doctrine; he was merely trying in his own way to apply eternal truths to the problems of daily life. But this application was in itself a highly original and radical process. Those who described Gandhi as a traditionalist or revivalist misread him, as well as the political and social context of his activities. During the first five years after his return from South Africa even when he had not yet plunged into militant politics, Gandhi looked like a hurricane, shaking the cobwebs of make-believe spun by Indian politicians and social reformers and British bureaucrats. He was not an iconoclast by temperament, but his mind was too alert to accept anything as sacrosanct simply because it had the sanction of custom or authority. He would not accept every Hindu tenet or practice and insisted on applying the acid test of reason. When scriptural sanction was cited for inhuman or unjust practices, his reaction was one of frank disbelief. The oft quoted text from Manu: 'For women there can be no freedom', he regarded as an 'interpolation'. If it was not an interpolation then he could only say that in Manu's time women did not receive the status they deserved. He lashed out at those who supported untouchability with verses from the Vedas. His Hinduism was ultimately reduced to a few fundamental beliefs: reality of God, belief in the supreme unity of all life and value of love (*ahimsā*) as a means of self-realization. In this bedrock religion there was no scope for exclusiveness or narrowness. To him, true religion was more a matter of the heart than the intellect; genuine

beliefs were those which were literally lived. This was something beyond the grasp of those who had acquired in the words of Swift, enough religion to hate one another, but not enough to love one another. In his lifetime Gandhi was variously labelled a Sanatanist Hindu, a renegade Hindu, a Buddhist, a Theosophist, a Christian and a Christian-Mohammedan. He was all these and more; he saw an underlying unity in the clash of doctrines and forms. 'God is not encased in a safe', he wrote to a correspondent who had urged him to save his soul by conversion to Christianity, 'to be approached only through a little hole in it, but He is open to be approached through billions of openings by those who are humble and pure of heart.'

The fact that he was deeply religious did not prevent Gandhi from battling ceaselessly against excrescences on Hindu society. In this he achieved greater success than many of the earlier social reformers, partly because he did not let his campaigns develop into an assault on Hindu religion and culture, and partly because his own *bonafides* were beyond question in the eyes of the millions to whom he directed his teachings. If his message was to go home he had to communicate with those millions. He did not content himself with writing articles in newspapers and addressing meetings in towns as the earlier reformers had done; he travelled from one end of the country to the other, penetrating into the interior of the Indian countryside which had been off the beaten track of political leaders. While speaking to these unsophisticated, wide-eyed, reverent multitudes, he did not quote from Mill or Marx, or even from Sankara; he talked to them in the idiom which they could easily follow. When he spoke of 'Rama Rajya', he was not plotting a return to the social and political institutions of ancient India. Indeed, he regarded the epics allegorical rather than historical writings, the battle between Ravan and Rama, he argued, had not been fought long ago, but was waged every day in every human heart.

It is odd that a man who shook the British Empire, sounded the death-knell of imperialism in Asia and Africa, waged relentless battle against the social abuses sanctioned by immemorial tradition, should be called a traditionalist. Far from being a conformist, Gandhi took a new, critical look at everything under the sun, from industrialism to ethics and from nature-cure to basic education. One may not always agree with him, but one cannot resist the impression that his was essentially an alive, creative mind, taking nothing for granted. He evolved his own code of ethics as a barrister, as a politician, as a journalist and as a social reformer. His ideas may not

fit into the moulds to which many of us have become accustomed, but they were far from being those of a traditionalist; perhaps the misunderstanding was helped by Gandhi's habit of clothing the most radical ideas in simplest and most unpretentious language.

I would now refer to the two crucial questions of our time to which the relevance of Gandhian techniques is often debated; one is the possibility of social and economic changes being brought about by non-violent methods, and the other is peace between nations.

Gandhi believed that it was possible to end social injustice by applying his method. He stressed the simple truth too often forgotten that there are two parties to every process of exploitation, that no tyranny can continue without the active support or passive acquiescence of the victim. Thus viewed slavery is essentially a mental state. While talking to a group of university-educated students from West Africa in 1946, Gandhi said: 'The first thing is to say to yourself: "I shall no longer accept the role of the slave"', and tell your master, "I shall not work for your love or money".... This may mean suffering. Your readiness to suffer will light the torch of freedom which can never be put out'. 'It may be through the negroes', he said, 'that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world'. This hope may turn out to be a prophecy, if the leaders of the struggle for de-segregation in America invoke non-violent techniques to their aid, as they seem to be doing to some extent.

While returning from London, after the Round Table Conference, Gandhi visited Switzerland in 1931 and spoke on class struggle in a similar vein: 'Labour does not know its power. Did it know it, it would have only to rise for capitalism to crumble. For labour is the only power in the world.' The Swiss merchants and bankers were so shocked that they talked of expelling the subversive saint from their country; luckily, he was in any case scheduled to leave Switzerland the next day.

It would be wrong to imagine that Gandhi fostered passivity among the masses; he was not the kind of leader who makes religion the opiate of the people. 'A semi-starved nation', he wrote, 'can have neither religion, nor art, nor organization'. No one was more haunted by the skeletons behind the ploughs in the Indian countryside; no one did more to make the upper crust of Indian society conscious of the mountain of misery and poverty on which it was sitting; no one did more to explore practical steps to alleviate that poverty. Functioning within the framework of colonial economics, with the government secretly suspicious or frankly hostile, Gandhi sought to

add a few annas a day to the income of the under-employed peasant by promoting Khadi and other village industries. He did not get his insights from blue-books or statistics; his views on village sanitation, education, nutrition, housing, fertilizers were based on personal observation and experiments. Socialism was not an intellectual exercise to him, nor a Utopia to be brought into being by somebody else. Like his Swarāj, it was something which began, with oneself, here and now. We have on record an interesting interview he gave to a group of socialist students. 'Now tell me', he asked 'how many of you have servants in your own homes'. They said: 'A servant in each home'. 'And you call yourselves socialists, while you make others slave for you. The first step in the practice of socialism is to learn to use your own hands and feet'. He repudiated the idea that politics were a remote, complicated, or abstract business which somehow could miraculously legislate us into a golden age. He had, in any case, his own priorities. 'What would you do if you were made a dictator of India for one day?' 'I would not accept it', he said, 'in the first place, but if I did become a dictator for a day, I would spend it in cleaning the stables of the Viceroy's House, that the hovels of the Harijans in Delhi area'. 'Well, Sir', went on the questioner, 'suppose they continue your dictatorship for the second day'. 'The second day', replied Gandhi, 'would be a prolongation of the first.'

The charge that Gandhian economics are static or even 'reactionary' was levelled in his life-time and is heard even today. It was argued that he favoured the *status quo*, and the vested interests of landlords and princes and businessmen. It is true that Gandhi did not call these classes the enemies of the people, but even while the movement for national liberation was on, he generated or stimulated forces which were to abolish landlordism and princely rule. In September, 1931, he told a customs official in France: 'I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of six spinning wheels, prison dishes, a can of goat's milk, six homespun loin cloths and towels and my reputation, which cannot be worth very much'. It is obvious that property could have little personal significance for a man who had shed it himself; infact he put the debate on property in proper perspective when he said: 'Millions of men have no property to transmit to posterity. Let us learn from them that it is better for the few to have no ancestral property at all. The real property that a parent can transmit is equality in his or her character and educational facilities'.

Gandhi was all for social justice but he wanted it to be brought

about without violence. He believed that just as no government could survive for long without the cooperation, willing or forced, of the people, economic exploitation was impossible without the active or passive acquiescence of the exploited.

The *second* major issue of our time is that of antagonism between national states and the preservation of peace. Gandhi had the courage and the vision to see beyond nationalism and militarism, even 60 years ago, when they were both at a premium in a world that had not known the ravages of two global wars and the lengthening shadow of a third world war. As Gandhi tried his *satyāgraha* technique in India, he cherished the hope that he had a message for India, and India had a message for humanity. In his weekly papers he occasionally commented on international affairs, but he knew that the best commentary on non-violence was a successful demonstration of its application by millions of his countrymen. That demonstration, alas, was not as satisfactory as he had hoped, but even the success he achieved was enough to suggest that his method could work. In any case he felt that there was no better method; that violence was a clumsy method, creating more problems than it solved. The problem of world peace had to be tackled at its very roots. Those who plotted war did so for a definite purpose—to exploit men and materials of the territories they set out to conquer. The aggressor's effort was to apply terrorism in a sufficient measure to bend the adversary to his will. 'But supposing', argued Gandhi 'a people make up their mind that they will never do the tyrants' will, nor retaliate with the tyrant's own method, the tyrant will not find it worthwhile to go on with his terrorism. If all the mice in the world held a conference together and resolved that they would no more fear the cat, but all run into her mouth, the mice will live. While advising the Czechs to resist Hitler non-violently in 1938, Gandhi wrote: 'There is no bravery greater than a refusal to bend the knee to an earthly power, however great'.

Gandhi knew that the creation of this heroic spirit of resistance in an entire nation was not easy. When he suggested non-violent resistance to the Axis Powers by India in 1940 and 1942, during the Second World War, he could not carry with him even a majority of the members of the Congress Working Committee. The task of instilling non-violent resistance into four or five hundred millions of people is a gigantic task. But, so is the task of mobilizing the resources of a nation for armed resistance. Even the most brilliant general with the best trained armies requires the exertions of millions of men and women in the fields and the factories to win a modern war. There is

nothing magical about *satyāgraha*; it would be an illusion to imagine that one man, a Gandhi or a Vinoba alone, without the backing of thousands of dedicated men, could transform a society and usher in a golden age. How long has it taken countless men and women in succeeding generations to pool their efforts in the laboratory, in staff colleges and in battle-fields to perfect the science of war, since the discovery of gun-powder? How much dedication has gone, if one may use the words, into the refinement of the atom bomb, into a progressively more powerful weapon of destruction during the last twenty years? The spirit of non-violent resistance will develop only when it evokes similar dedication. The spirit of non-violence has to permeate our domestic life, our inter-group, inter-communal and inter-regional relations, and our national life, before we can even think of using it to counter external aggression. The non-violent struggle for peace does not depend upon the doings of statesmen and scientists in world capitals; it begins with the individual in his home, village or town. The capacity for discarding hatred and violence and for resistance without retaliation is first developed in humbler fields before it is invoked for larger issues.

The world trembles today, half in hope, half in fear, in the shadow of a precarious peace produced by a balance of atomic terror. The perfection of technology and military might may seem a standing refutation of Gandhi's vision of a brave, new, non-violent world. But perhaps this very fact might add greater relevance and urgency to that vision. Having reached the edge of the precipice humanity may yet take a new turning along the road to which Gandhi had beckoned it. Gandhi's message was not for India only. Indeed, it is not impossible that Tagore's prophecy may come true: 'The West he said, 'will accept Gandhi before the East. For the West has gone through the cycle of dependence on force and other things for life and has become disillusioned....The East hasn't yet gone through materialism and hence hasn't become disillusioned as yet'.

PREM NATH

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## Non-violence and Human Destiny



IT IS proposed to discuss in this paper some of the theoretical and practical implications of non-violence, making reference, wherever possible, to Gandhian thought.

Let us first examine the two extreme views about human nature which impinge on the question of violence and non-violence. The nature of man, according to one theory, is that he is inherently violent in the service of his biological instincts and his animality. And, as such, wars are an indissoluble part of human nature. A step further and wars are beneficial to world order whether from the point of view of keeping balance in population, developing discipline and heroism or as a weapon of class struggle towards ultimate justice. On the other extreme is the rather theologically biased belief that man is basically good after the image of the Divine and that evil is foreign to his original nature. ' This romantic and taken-for-granted view causes its exponents a painful perplexity in the face of savagery.

It is difficult to fix up the original nature of man when we keep in mind the millions of years that man has been evolving on earth. Whether historical man has inherited war-like behaviour from pre-Neolithic man is difficult to establish in view of the difficulty in disentangling the intricately interwoven threads of heredity and environment and that too in the debris of the pre-historic past. Nor, granting our ancestry with the animals, does the animal world give



any clue that man is condemned to the regrettable necessity of war. For animals do show violence, tenderness and even cooperation each distributed differently in different species. In any case, the animals of the same species do not generally indulge in any large-scale mutual destruction as the *homo sapiens* do. If man is basically good, why does the core of human personality allow itself to be afflicted by evil and why millions upon millions of men are helpless spectators to the other and millions indulging in collective insanity that is war? Why, on the other hand, the individuals and masses of people from time to time sacrifice themselves in the service of fellow-men or on behalf of lofty causes or truth?

To explain human nature along unilateral lines and to make one factor as absolute is to be oversimplistic and goes against both historical experience and the findings of the social sciences. Man's emotions, sentiments, attitudes and actions are greatly determined by a variety of factors themselves the product of culture. And since there are patterns and patterns of culture, it stands to reason why education of people in the broadest sense of the term differs from culture to culture. Both historical evidence and the evidence of the social and pedagogical sciences go to show that man is vastly educable, can make good his freedom, and defy the deep-rooted belief in the inevitability of war. Of course, historically, the masses of people have been hypnotized into worshipping violence as highly institutionalized military organization with all its socio-political prestige and with all its gripping ritualism and symbolism, almost bordering on the holy, as most neatly exemplified in 'holy wars' and *Dharam Yudh*. Since war is an ancient institution, it is not easy for a large number of people to imagine that there ever can be a world without wars. But surely human consciousness has touched a point in human history where on a fairly large scale the inevitability of war theory is being seriously questioned and a new consciousness is gradually emerging in favour of peace and 'will to live'.

This is not to say that war, and for that matter man himself, is not much of a problem. It is undoubtedly an enormous problem and has to be fought about and tackled as such. Unless we are disposed to dismiss man as a 'useless-passion', some serious thinking and hard and earnest work have to be done to throw out war from human life.

While man is ruled by love and hate, egotism and humility, dominance and submission, fear and trust and a host of other forces, none of these forces are beyond acculturation and control by intelligence. Man is not of a piece but a mixture of various elements.

Which forces in what combinations and what degrees are dominant at a particular period of history would depend upon the totality of the cultural situation. Why hate and aggression would often have the better of love and cooperation is because enough thought, effort and courage have not gone into the building up of the forces of love and altruism. It goes without saying that peace technology lags far behind war technology.

Realistically, what cannot be just wished away is the phenomenon of conflict in human affairs.<sup>1</sup> But it does not follow that conflict must necessarily lead to or be resolved through violence. As a matter of fact, violence has never resolved a conflict. If anything, it aggravates it. The net result of the use of violence is more violence and its becoming a law unto itself. Human history is replete with the instances of the chain of violent activities following the initial violence. While the conquerors in war develop a greater appetite for violence and domination, the vanquished, humiliated and hateful lie low for a while to wait for their earliest opportunity to return to violence. Violence, as it were, becomes a group or national habit in the face of any conflict, real or imaginary, minor or acute. In fact, it corrupts the capacity to see any socio-political reality in either proper perspectives or proportions or in any humanistic framework.

Besides the colossal waste of human life and energy, violence not only brings in its train obvious misery but also moral laxity corroding the possibility of sound socio-political structure. The decency and social conscience built as a long process of socialization are the first casualty in any socially approved violence. When a highly respected leader of a community preaches and uses violent means there is no stopping the crowd from following their leader with a vengeance. Justification in the form of rationalizations always come very handy and even a guilt-ridden person sooner advances justifications for a violent act. Once violence has the approval of the group what matters is not the ultimate moral issue but immediate self-approval and self-esteem, leaving aside a few conscientious objectors often sulking in their helplessness against moral degeneration. As for the military personnel, not only do they have the vital sense of role-fulfilment but also get a rare honour and ovation which motivate them to kill and get killed. To preserve the fine values of civilization and to be able to live in peace and mutual trust, man must set on a high road to the eventual elimination of military as an institution.

Nor is violence justifiable when it is, so to say, sanctified as *only* a means to noble ends. This separation of the means from the end

is a tricky thought, meant only to deceive people. The means and the ends do in fact run into each other and although seemingly the same result may be obtained from two different sets of means, yet in the final analysis the result will never be the same in two cases. Peace through violence, for example, will always remain at best a truce while peace through non-violence will be a genuine enduring peace. Besides the two types of peace will release different formative forces in a culture. Gandhi, one of the greatest apostles of non-violence since Buddha and Christ, saw this point deeply, as against Marx, and emphasized the purity of means for noble ends.

The Mahatma considered non-violence as truth, both as means and an end, a moral force par excellence. His faith in non-violence never flagged throughout his life. On the eve of the partition of India, when people of different communities indulged in brutal killing he was a sad man searching for the flaws of his technique of non-violence but never losing his deep faith in it. ‘...Failure of my technique of non-violence causes no loss of faith in Non-violence itself. On the contrary, that faith is, if possible, strengthened by the discovery of a possible flaw in the technique’.<sup>2</sup> Again in the same self-searching mood he says, ‘...If we grant that such liberty as India has gained was a tribute to non-violence as I have repeatedly said, the Non-violence of India’s struggle was only in name, in reality it was passive resistance of the weak. The truth of the statement we see demonstrated by the happenings in India.’<sup>3</sup> To be sure, Gandhi never claimed that his technique had a finality about it since he was only ‘experimenting with truth’. And if he partly failed in his mission, as some of his critics maintain, let it not be forgotten that he was a mortal trying to reconstruct humanity used for long to large-scale violence. What the critics need see is that his thoughts and actions were surely most worthy of the great theme and do hold a bright promise for humanity.

For Bapu, non-violence or love is ultimate principle of life. ‘If love was not the law of life, life would not have persisted in the midst of death.... If there is a fundamental distinction between man and beast, it is the former’s progressive recognition of the law and its application in practice to his own personal life’.<sup>4</sup> And again, ‘The law of love will work, just as the law of gravitation will work, whether we accept it or not. Just as a scientist will work wonders out of various applications of the law of nature, even so a man who applies the law of love with scientific precision can work greater wonders.... The more I work at this law the more I feel the delight in life, the light in

the scheme of this universe. It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mysteries of nature that I have no power to describe.<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi's application of non-violence extends from the smallest group to the global society. Non-violence or love releases a tremendous moral force and is doubly blessing, to the practitioner as well as on whom it is practised. It makes for a climate of understanding, goodwill, mutual trust and cooperation, knocking out prejudices, suspicions, fear, hatred and an overall sense of insecurity which are the general causes of violence. It opens a new channel of communication with a new language of heart which scrupulously shuns secrecy and, therefore, inspires confidence in the opponents. Its aim is to help the violent man see the wrong and to win him over to the path of non-violence and moral rectitude. By making an appeal to the higher self of man, it brings about a moral conversion in him. Even in the case of people hardened by violence, it succeeds by dampening their morale and bringing about instant or gradual change in their attitudes and behaviour. Its success however depends upon the faith, moral integrity, discipline and correct judgements and actions of its practitioners.

For Gandhi non-violence or *ahimsā* is a way of life synonymous with moral and spiritual growth, a very definition of man. It entails renunciation of fear except of God, high moral and spiritual discipline, capacity for and readiness to suffer and sacrifice and to learn the 'art of dying' in the cause. Without self-discipline and self-sacrifice, non-violence is a mere sham and man a mere trifle, for as the *Upanisad* says, 'Man verily is sacrifice'. Gandhi's weapon to outfight violence is *satyāgraha*, i.e., persistence in truth and demands the highest self-discipline and love. Non-cooperation, as one of the wings of *satyāgraha*, means only non-cooperation with the opponent in evil but full cooperation with him, as friends, in good. Non-cooperation and dislike are not to be in regard to the individual but to evil. This capacity to dislike and dissociate with' a particular trait in man for it is not in keeping with morality, and yet love the man is a high water-mark in self-discipline. '....I must continue to repeat, even though it may cause nausea, that prison-going without the backing of honest constructive effort and goodwill in the heart for the wrong-doer is violence and therefore forbidden in *satyāgraha*'.<sup>6</sup>

Fast is for the Mahatma a very valuable part of *satyāgraha*, a method of self-purification, a penance for failure to correct others, a prayer unto the Lord. 'Suffering even unto death and, therefore, even through a perpetual fast is the last weapon of a *satyāgrahī*. That is the last duty which it is open to him to perform'.<sup>7</sup> But in no case should a fast have an element of coercion, for coercion and non-violence are contradiction in terms. Fast should be undertaken only by those who

have fully qualified themselves for it. '...the mere fast of the body is nothing without the will behind it. It must be a genuine confession of the inner fast, an irrepressible longing to express the truth and nothing but truth. Therefore, those only are privileged to fast for the cause of truth, who have worked for it and who love in them even for opponents, who are free from animal passion and who have abjured earthly passions and ambitions.'<sup>8</sup>

Genuine *satyāgrahīs* can face any military might by non-violent resistance, by yielding passions but not cooperating with the aggressor, and die in large numbers if need be rather than use arms. This is bound to perplex the aggressors and may bring about change in their hearts. This is not for Gandhi a counsel of despair or moral cowardice but the morality of the brave. For him there is 'no sin like cowardice'. It needs more self-control and courage not to retaliate violence than to use violence. A violent man has already lost control of himself and to that extent dehumanized himself. Eventually, his moral prestige must go down. Genuine non-violence has, therefore, a sure chance of uniting a large number of people across cultures and if this force is properly harnessed, it should make violence a taboo in human relation.

Fully realizing that not all men as yet will accept non-violence as a way of life, Gandhi is in no case prepared to substitute cowardice for non-violence. Fear and lack of courage are foreign to his philosophy, for fearlessness and courage are both intrinsically and extrinsically good. This is evident from an answer he gives to a questioner, '... I do not believe in retaliation, but I did not hesitate to tell the villagers near Bettiah ... that they who knew nothing of Ahimsā were guilty of cowardice in failing to defend the honour of their women-folk and their property by force of arms. And I have not hesitated ... only recently to tell the Hindus that, if they do not believe in out and out Ahimsā and cannot practise it, they will be guilty of a crime against their religion and humanity if they fail to defend by force of arms the honour of their women against any kidnapper who chooses to take away their women. And all this advice and my previous practice I hold to be not only consistent with my profession of the religion of Ahimsa out and out, but a direct result of it. To state that noble doctrine is simple enough; to know it and to practise it in the midst of a world full of strife, turmoil and passions, is a task whose difficulty I realize more and more day by day. And yet the conviction too that without it life is not worth living is growing daily deeper.'<sup>8</sup>

The last sentences in the above-quoted statement are a pointer

to the historic and contemporary socio-political situation on the one hand and human faith and vision at their best on the other. It is childish to believe that without proper concern, sacrifice and organization we can have the reign of non-violence overnight. Nor does it need more than sane common sense to realize what destruction of humanity and its values do violence and war imply. In fact, common sense has been cheated by grandiose and sophisticated ideologies and philosophies of war, and common man by clever war mongers and vested interests. The challenge in the face of savagery and destruction which give a lie to humanity is to swiftly reverse human consciousness in favour of peace and decency. Ever larger number of people both as leaders and the led in different walks of life have to realize the stakes in the human situation today, make a solemn commitment on behalf of peace and articulate their conscience effectively. Undoubtedly, though climate for peace is not yet created to outlaw war for settling disputes. Nor by purely political and economic measures can lasting peace be assured though they may go some way in averting a grave crisis momentarily. The need of the hour is a complete transformation of our outmoded outlook and re-education of our emotions to enable us to make good our potentialities and opportunities on behalf of creative, altruistic and joyous living. ‘Our “Age of Anxiety” is, in great part, a result of trying to do today’s job with yesterday’s tools—with yesterday’s concepts’.<sup>10</sup>

We need a new philosophy or, let us say, philosophies, of life and peace, which must make the right impact on intellect, inform our emotions and motivate us to worthy actions while the time lasts. Gandhi has offered his own philosophy without claiming it as final or absolute. It is the duty of others, big or small, to contribute their share with new insights and new techniques to carry forward humanity to its cherished goal. The first large-scale experiment in non-violence conducted in human history by Bapu is only the beginning of a new chapter, a new glow of hope amidst passion and destruction. It is possible to conceive of competing philosophies of peace in terms of social, political, economic and educational implications. It is also possible, and to me urgently desirable, to develop a wholesome philosophy of peace entirely in humanistic framework in contrast to the rather religious framework of the Gandhian philosophy. However, what essentially matters is the commitment of these philosophies to peace and good life and dedication to the search for the right causes of discord and disharmony and for the right remedies. So long as the destructive

forces within the human mind are not exercised, this world cannot be safe for peace. Therefore, all the anthropological knowledge which can be employed in the 'reconstruction of humanity' need to be availed of efficaciously. What sort of education and conditions of life, socially, politically and economically are conducive to love and cooperation on familiar regional and a global scale are exactly the issues which any philosophy of peace must examine critically and suggest ways and means of achieving the ends successfully. This re-education of the whole humanity is a worthy task handed down to our times by Gandhi and other saintly predecessors of his.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Heraclitus in ancient Greece and Havellock Ellis in our time consider conflict as the supreme principle of Cosmos.
2. M. K. Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War*, Volume II, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 14, p. 324, 1960.
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6. *Ibid.*, p. 307.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 314.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
9. M. K. Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War*, Volume I, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 14, 1962, pp. 53-54.
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K. J. SHAH

## Some Presuppositions of Gandhi's Thought



IN THIS paper, I have attempted to formulate some of the presuppositions of Gandhi's thought. For this I have limited myself to a very small and what may be regarded as a very unimportant part of his thought, namely, his thought on animals and non-violence. Even if this procedure has limitations, it does, I believe, reveal a pattern of thinking which is not altogether limited only to this part of Gandhi's thinking or even to Gandhi's thinking alone. And it has the advantage that his thought on this topic is manageable in bulk, and most of it is limited to a period of four or five years in the twenties of this century. In the collection of his writings I have relied upon (M. K. Gandhi: *Hindu Dharma*, Section VII, pp. 162-219) only one small piece—but a very significant piece—is given which belongs to the year 1946. I have also attempted to examine these presuppositions and their interrelations and I have found that the general principles adopted by Gandhi and the principles of his thinking about particular concrete problems are not only different but irreconcilable. Incidentally, I have noted some features of his thinking which make it very difficult to understand, formulate and examine his thought.

In the first section I present the outline of Gandhi's thought



on the subject. In the second I group into four classes (personal, traditional, general arguments and specific arguments) the grounds on which objections were raised to Gandhi's thought and briefly consider the personal and traditional grounds of attack and Gandhi's reply. It is in the third and the fourth sections respectively, that I consider the general and the specific arguments against Gandhi's position and his reply to them. In the fifth section I consider some general objections to my treatment of Gandhi's thought, and in the last I try to summarize the results of the discussion.

## I

According to Gandhi, there can be no two opinions on the point that Hinduism regards killing a living being as sinful. By 'living being' Gandhi means all life, including 'the lion and the tiger', 'even sub-human life not excluding noxious insects or beasts', and the protozoa and the bacteria in the air. But if Gandhi includes all these among 'living beings' and killing a living being is sinful, then, since it is impossible to live without killing living beings, living itself is sinful. To be born is sinful, and to die is perhaps to be delivered from sin. (I do not know why some Christian thinkers say that the Hindus do not have the concept of the original sin, the Hindu concept seems to refer to a more original sin than that conceived by Christianity.)

Unless one wants to advocate universal suicide, one must reconcile the principle of non-killing with the claims of life. Gandhi puts forward many considerations, only one of which seeks to work out a practical reconciliation. The considerations are:

(a) Gandhi seeks to establish the claim of life against death by the following argument: 'A votary of ahimsā always prays for ultimate deliverance from the bondage of flesh. But of what use is it to force the flesh merely if the spirit refuses to co-operate?' There is no point, therefore, in accepting death until one is free from the desire to live. Though Gandhi does not mention it here, perhaps he has in mind the doctrine of rebirth almost universally accepted by the Hindus. Unless one accepts the doctrine of rebirth, the argument does not succeed in establishing the claim of life against death; and even then am I not killing life for my own sake?

(b) Another consideration Gandhi puts forward seeks to understand non-violence not in terms of non-killing, but in terms of good-will. This consideration is in the form of a story. 'A sage looked at someone who was killing for the sake of his own body. He deduced therefrom the duty of complete self-effacement.

He saw that if man desires to realize himself, i.e., truth, he could do so only by being completely detached from the body, i.e., by making all other beings safe from himself. This is the way of Dharma.’ In another context, he talks of non-violence as good-will towards all life. This does not succeed, because while one is alive, how can one make all life safe from oneself? And surely you cannot be said to have good-will towards those whom you destroy; and if you can be said to have good-will, non-killing is not so relevant to non-violence.

(c) And so Gandhi accepts that the principle in its original form cannot be saved in practice. But this is no reason to think that something is wrong with the principle, but only to realize one’s limitations. ‘There is generally no difficulty in determining a principle. The difficulty comes in when one proceeds to put it into practice. A principle is the expression of a perfection, and as imperfect beings like us cannot practice perfection, we devise every moment limits of its compromise in practice.’ (Before I go on I want to point out that Gandhi is here taking a crucial step, and does not realize its implications. I shall later try to show that this is the basis of many confusions in his thought.)

But how is one to limit the principle? Gandhi appeals to the Hindu tradition: ‘Hinduism has laid down that killing for sacrifice is no *himsā*. This is only a half-truth, violence will be violence for all time, and all violence is *sinful*. But what is inevitable, unavoidable, is not regarded as a sin, so much so that the science of daily practice has not only declared the inevitable violence involved in killing for sacrifice as permissible but even regarded it as meritorious. But according to Gandhi, unavoidable violence cannot be defined, for it changes with time, place and person. What is regarded as excusable at one time (say, the violence to insects involved in lighting a fire in winter, may be inexcusable at another (lighting a fire in summer). Though unavoidable violence cannot be defined, it can be illustrated. He mentions three classes of unavoidable violence:

(i) We do destroy as much life as we think is necessary for sustaining the body, for example, (a) we breathe, (b) we use disinfectants, (c) we eat food.

(ii) We commit violence for protecting those under our care, or for the sake of others, i.e., for the benefit of the species, for example, we kill (a) the carnivorous beasts, (b) a man run amuck.

(iii) Sometimes we kill or commit violence for the sake of those whose life is taken. The classic case was that of a heifer who was hurt

in an accident, was in extreme pain and beyond cure, and put to sleep on Gandhi's orders.

Besides the examples already mentioned I should mention another—the case of the stray dogs in the compound of a mill, which were killed on Gandhi's advice. Gandhi's defence of his advice was: 'I have not suggested the extirpation of dogs as an absolute duty. I have suggested the killing of some dogs as a "duty in distress" (*apaddharma*) and under certain circumstances, for example, when the state does not care for the stray dogs, nor the Mahajan, and when one is not prepared to take care of them oneself, then, and if one regards them as a danger to society, one should kill them and relieve them of a lingering death.' This sort of case falls under both (ii) and (iii).

Though these three are all classes of unavoidable violence, according to Gandhi, they are not all on a par. The last two cases are not really cases of *himsā*, but the first one is. In making this distinction Gandhi is not consistent within the space of a single article, for example, he calls the case (ii), sometimes a case of *himsā*, sometimes of *ahimsā*.

Gandhi's views about non-violence and animals raised a storm of controversy. Most protesters said that Gandhi did not realize the implications of his views, though they differed in their opinion about what these implications were. Whatever their views, the protesters were divided into two main groups, one group saying that Gandhi was not non-violent enough, another group saying that he was drawing the limits of permissible violence too narrowly. These attacks were made on several different grounds. They could be grouped as under:

- (a) personal
- (b) traditional
- (c) general arguments
- (d) arguments arising from specific cases

In the remaining part of this section I shall briefly consider (A) and (B).

(A) Protest based on personal attack: A correspondent wrote that Gandhi was no real *mahātma*, but only a fake, because he was advocating the killing of the stray dogs. Gandhi's reply to such attacks is well-known. He replied that he never claimed to be a *mahātma*, and that he was an erring human being trying to practice truth and non-violence.

(B) Protests based on traditional considerations.

(i) It is worth noting that the protests on traditional grounds also said that Gandhi was not non-violent enough, and that such protests were based more on the Jain tradition than on the Hindu tradition. A correspondent, in order to point out the wrongness of Gandhi's view, wrote that the Jain view was different. According to the Jain view:

(a) One should not kill even beasts of prey in the belief that by killing one such, he saves the lives of many.

(b) Nor should one kill them out of compassionate feeling that if they were to live longer, they might sink deeper into sin.

(c) Nor should one kill distressed creatures presuming that he would thereby shorten the length of their agony.

In reply, Gandhi tried to interpret the Jain view so as not to conflict with his own. He said that he understood the Jain view as saying: (a) that a particular theory should not be the spring of action in any case; and (b) that one should confine one's energy to work that comes one's way without seeking fresh fields of activity. And Gandhi implied that he was not guilty of either of these.

(ii) Besides, there was also the charge that he was too much under the Western influence. To this his reply was that: (a) he had condemned the Western tradition for its acceptance of vivisection, use of animals for pleasure, etc., and; (b) he did not care if it was Western influence so long as he was right according to his own understanding.

Some interesting points emerge from this discussion:

(i) As far as possible, and even when it was not possible, Gandhi tried to claim that his views were consistent with Indian traditions. In doing so, he put not only farfetched but almost impossible interpretations on traditional views. It is not at all clear that his interpretation of the Jain view is a possible one, let alone its being right.

(ii) Still if there was insistence that he was advocating something contrary to tradition, he was hardly perturbed. In fact, he said that it was so much the worse for tradition. Take, for example, the following passage: 'I have arrived at my views independently of any authority, though originally they may have been drawn from various sources, and I submit that they are in perfect consonance with *ahimsā*, even though they prove contrary to the teaching of the philosopher'. Note the last word—philosopher, he is only a thinker, not one who lives his philosophy!

(iii) He does make use of rhetoric, for example, his dubbing certain kinds of conduct *himsā*, and certain other *ahimsā*.

In making these remarks it is not my purpose to concern myself here with whether a particular tradition was rightly quoted or understood by Gandhi or his correspondent. I am also not concerned with Gandhi's motives nor with the social effects of Gandhi's attitude to tradition. My purpose is to point out some features of Gandhi's thinking in relation to tradition, for example, that tradition which at one time *might* have been his master was later for him, at best, an instrument.

### III. GENERAL ARGUMENTS

In this section I shall consider two general arguments that were brought against Gandhi and his reply to them.

#### A. *Gandhi is a utilitarian:*

1. One of Gandhi's numerous correspondents wrote that Gandhi was merely a utilitarian (and not an idealist and/or a moralist). Gandhi strongly denied that he was a utilitarian in general or in this particular case of the stray dogs. (Neither the correspondent, nor Gandhi is using the term 'utilitarian' in any well-recognized philosophical or technical sense. Whatever the sense in which the term is used, it is accepted as derogatory by both.) Gandhi's reason for the denial in the particular case of the dogs is that his 'suggestion of destroying the dogs was not made in a purely utilitarian spirit. The utility to society accrues from the act.' Let us see what we can learn from this: (i) It must be noted that this is an ambiguous reply, and the ambiguity increases if one considers this reply, along with what Gandhi has said earlier about the same case. To one of his correspondents Gandhi writes: 'The measure that I have suggested is actuated no less by a consideration of the welfare of the dogs, than by that of society'. In this statement the so-called utilitarian consideration is accepted to be as weighty as the consideration of the welfare of the dogs. The first sentence of the reply to the charge of utilitarianism denies that the suggestion of destroying the dogs was made purely from a utilitarian spirit, but does not deny that it may partly have been the motive. The next sentence says that the good of the society is incidental, and implied the absence of the utilitarian motive.

(ii) Though I do not want to do so, it is possible for someone to see in this a deliberate attempt to whittle down the importance of the utilitarian motive. Even if I do not do this, I cannot but feel that Gandhi's writing on this point is very confused and confusing.

It is hardly intended to encourage clear and independent thinking among his readers so as to enable them to carry on an intelligent discussion. The intention, deliberate or not, seems to be to persuade the other party, by appealing to several considerations and hoping that one of the considerations will appeal to the other party. And the likely consequence is that it will make people depend on their ‘intuitions’ or if they have no confidence in their own intuitions, on someone else’s ‘intuitions’. I think this is one of a large number of cases where the anti-intellectualism of Gandhi is evident.

2. Not only does Gandhi deny having been a utilitarian in suggesting the destruction of the dogs, he wants to point out in general that his position is fundamentally different from that of a utilitarian, even if in a number of concrete cases including the case of the dogs, the course of action adopted by Gandhi and the utilitarian is the same. Gandhi describes the difference between the two positions in the following ways:

<i>Gandhi’s position</i>	<i>The utilitarian’s position</i>
(a) The goal is the greatest of good of all.	(a) The goal is the greatest good the greatest number.
(b) Gandhi is ready to die for securing the ideal.	(b) The utilitarian is never ready to sacrifice himself.
(c) The sphere of destruction permitted is the narrowest possible.	(c) The sphere of destruction permitted is the widest possible.

Let us first consider how far Gandhi succeeds in making this distinction. When the differences between the two positions is stated in this manner, the two positions appear to be very different, but if one examines these differences, one does not clearly see the difference between the two positions.

(i) The phrases ‘the greatest good of all’ and ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’ are ambiguous, because are ‘all’ and ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’ to be understood to have been used collectively or distributively? If the phrases have been used collectively, then ‘the greatest good of all’ or ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’ does not describe what we ordinarily accept to be an ideal; and if they have been used distributively, are we to take the two phrases to mean ‘the equal good of all’ and ‘the equal good

of the greatest number'? But can we say what is 'equal good' or even what is 'equal good as far as possible'?

(ii) It is true that the greatest good of the greatest number implies the greatest good of the greatest number, but not *vice-versa*. But it must be noted that the greatest good of the greatest number' does not exclude the greatest good of all, and the greatest good of all amounts to no 'more than the greatest good of the greatest number, because in the case of any social or governmental action, it is not clear how it could be taken without harming one group of people or another atleast in the short term.

It is sometimes said that according to the utilitarian view, one can sacrifice the life of an innocent individual for the sake of the community. In so far as a form of utilitarianism maintains this, and in so far as the goal of the greatest good of all does not permit this, certainly the utilitarian position is fundamentally different from Gandhi's. But the afore-mentioned version of utilitarianism is not the only form of utilitarianism, nor is it its most widely accepted form.

If I am right in the two previous paragraphs, then (a) does not provide a basis for distinguishing between the utilitarian position and Gandhi's position. (In this discussion I have left out of consideration the fact that Gandhi includes animals in 'all', whereas the utilitarians are concerned only with human beings. I shall take note of this later.)

(iii) It is not at all clear why the ideal of the greatest good of the greatest number, as much as the ideal of the greatest good of all, may not require a person to sacrifice his life; whether a person would actually sacrifice his life will depend on other factors. So (b) cannot be used to distinguish between the two positions.

(iv) Now we are left with the last point of distinction according to which the utilitarian permits the widest possible destruction, whereas Gandhi's position restricts destruction to a minimum. The distinction surely does not hold if the term 'the sphere of destruction' is understood with reference to human beings only. But it may be said to hold if the term 'the sphere of destruction' is understood with reference to both the human beings and the animals. The fact this is the point of difference is also brought out by the fact that Gandhi mentions vivisection and the use of animals for food as the two concrete cases in which the attitude of the utilitarian is different from his own.

But is this sufficient ground for drawing a distinction between the two positions? By raising the question, I do not want to imply that there is no distinction between the two positions, but I do want to imply that Gandhi has not clearly understood the difference, nor has he clearly formulated it.

I am quite sure that the foregoing discussion will amuse those who would be tolerant of my ‘ignorance’ of Gandhi, and anger those who are intolerant of my ‘ignorant’ and ‘irrelevant’ criticism. But both the tolerant and the intolerant would say: you are a mere academician, an arm-chair philosopher, playing with words without an insight into, or an understanding of, Gandhi’s thought. The important question is: Is there or is there not a difference between Gandhi on the one hand and a utilitarian on the other? My answer to such a question is: it is important not only to give an answer to the question either in the affirmative or in the negative, but also to clearly and precisely formulate the reasons for our answer. And this latter is not merely a matter of words, but has serious practical consequences. One such consequence is that we, ordinary mortals, not blessed either with the insight or with the moral or religious athleticism of a Gandhi, can see our way better. This important task I shall take up at a later stage.

#### IMPOSSIBLE IDEAL

Another general objection to Gandhi’s views was raised by a correspondent in the following way:

‘Would you set forth as the highest religious ideal or code of conduct something which is altogether impossible of being fulfilled in its completeness by man? And if you do, what would be the practical work of such an ideal?’

Gandhi’s reply was: ‘My humble submission is that contrary to what this writer says the virtue of a religious ideal lies in the fact that it cannot be completely realized in flesh. For a religious ideal must be proved by faith and how can faith have play if perfection would be attained by the spirit while it was surrounded by its earthly vesture of decay?’

This question and answer are very significant. They bring out that both Gandhi and his correspondent are talking of a religious ideal. For the correspondent, the religious ideal is a code of conduct. This is not so clear in the case of Gandhi because the religious ideal cannot be attained while the body is there. It is a state of the soul without the body. Only in such a state is it possible for someone



to attain complete non-violence. Though the religious ideal is a state of the soul and not a code of conduct, Gandhi does think that there is a relationship between the conduct of the individual and the attainment of the ideal. The conduct which leads to the ideal state of the soul is completely non-violent conduct; and as completely non-violent conduct is not practicable, one must permit oneself only unavoidable violence.

An examination of these views raises a number of considerations:

1. Gandhi describes the ideal state of the soul as one in which complete non-violence is attained. But in this ideal state of the soul without the body, there is no question of conduct and, therefore, there is no point in attributing either violence or non-violence to it. In that state, the soul is, in the ordinary sense of the term, inactive and, at best, it is self-active or enjoying itself.

2. Though the religious ideal does not consist of conduct according to an ideal code, such conduct is relevant to the attainment of the religious ideal. If the ideal code of conduct is not practicable, then the religious ideal would be unattainable even in the disembodied state of the soul. But since, I presume, the religious ideal, according to Gandhi, is attainable in the disembodied state of the soul, the ideal code of conduct shall be practicable. If this is so, then what is impracticable in this life is the attainment of the religious ideal, and not conduct according to the ideal code which enables one to attain the religious ideal when the soul gives up its earthly vesture. And this does not exclude the role of faith in religion, because it is faith that tells us that the ideal conduct will enable us to attain the religious ideal. If this is so, then Gandhi is not right in saying that a religious ideal requires a perfect and, therefore, impractical ideal of conduct.

If I am right in the foregoing paragraph, then the ideal conduct may be the same whether it is taken to be constitutive of the religious ideal or a necessary (and sufficient but for the occurrence of death) condition of the attainment of the religious ideal. I must confess that I am making here or accepting here certain assumptions about the nature of the religious ideal, the nature of the ideal conduct, and the existence and the nature of the relationship between the conduct and the religious ideal which are not universally accepted—even among the Hindus. My grounds for making these assumptions are that (a) they are Gandhi's assumption, and (b) there are times when Gandhi talks of the religious ideal as attainable in this life, for example, the ideal of a *Sthitaprajna*, however difficult it might be to

do so. Granting this, it is possible to consider the nature and role of non-violence in an ideal code of conduct. I propose to do this by considering some hypothetical cases:

(i) Imagine a man, say X, who is non-violent to animals, is concerned about whether he kills an ant or a mosquito, let alone a cat or a dog or a cow; but is not concerned about inconsiderateness, dishonesty, etc., in his relationships with other human beings.

(ii) Imagine another man, say Y, who is not non-violent to animals. He does not mind using disinfectants to kill ants and mosquitoes, he does not mind eating meat. But he is considerate, honest, etc., in his human relationships.

(iii) Imagine that the man Y in (ii) continues to be honest, etc., but not to eat meat, etc.

Let us consider these cases:

(a) In a comparison of the first two cases, most people would regard Y's life as morally and/or spiritually more valuable. Gandhi also does the same. He says, 'Give me the man who has completely conquered self and is full of good will and love towards all and is ruled by the law of love in all his actions, and I for one offer him my respectful homage even though he be a meat-eater. On the other hand, the *jivaday* (non-violence to animals) of a person who is steeped in anger and lust but daily feeds the ants and insects and refrains from killing has hardly anything in it to recommend itself.'

(b) Now compare the cases (ii) and (iii). Is Y in (iii) a more spiritual person than he is in (ii)? Is he now more likely to attain *nirvana* than before? I think that these questions can hardly be clearly answered in the affirmative.

(c) It is sometimes said that those who eat meat have their sensibilities coarsened and they are not, therefore, reluctant to inflict pain or death on human beings. To such a claim I have the following answer:

(1) I do not know of any empirical study to establish the fact.

(2) I should not be surprised at all if it were found that the non-meat-eaters who do not inflict physical injury or death on animals or human beings, may make themselves insensitive to the torture either of human beings or animals.

(3) I do not know if the readiness to commit violence cannot become a cloak for one's cowardice and one's readiness to accept a sub-human existence.

If so, the role of non-violence to animals in the attainment of the religious ideal is not at all clear.

In the foregoing discussion, I am not trying to advocate non-vegetarianism or vegetarianism, but only to bring out that Gandhi has not shown that non-violence in the sense in which he understands it in relation to the animal world leads one nearer to the religious goal even in the sense in which Gandhi understands it. If so, even if one accepts Gandhi's religious goal, one need not accept his view of non-violence in relation to the attainment of the religious goal.

#### IV. ARGUMENTS ARISING FROM SPECIFIC CASES

In this section I want to consider Gandhi's consent of unavoidable violence. As I said earlier, he thinks that the concept cannot be defined, but he mentions three kinds of unavoidable violence along with certain examples. Many correspondents attempted to extend the principle involved in the examples to show, that Gandhi had gone either too far or not far enough. These are the considerations that I have grouped under the above heading.

A. Gandhi held that the violence involved in breathing, the use of disinfectants and the eating of food (even vegetarian food) is unavoidable.

(i) Some people held that the principle that one must commit minimum unavoidable violences (this I shall now call the principle of unavoidable violence) implies that non-vegetarianism goes beyond the principle of unavoidable violence. One should, therefore, be a vegetarian and should not entertain non-vegetarians with meat.

Gandhi did not accept this extension of his non-violence on the ground that to enforce temporary or permanent vegetarianism on non-vegetarians is a greater violence than to serve non-vegetarian food to them.

(ii) So far as the limits of the use of insecticides, etc., are concerned, Gandhi does not consider this issue and thinks that it is a matter to be decided by every person by himself.

How is the principle of complete non-violence modified in its application in these concrete cases? Its modification is based on the rejection of the principle: all life is one. Though in theory all life is one, in practice some life is more equal than another, for example, life of man is more important than the life of insects, cockroaches and so on.' Not only that, the freedom of opportunity of a human being to eat meat is more important than the life of an animal. To

put the matter differently, the evil of loss of animal life is less than the evil of loss of human life. Further, the evil of denying the opportunity to eat meat is greater than that of killing an animal for food. And between two evils we must choose the lesser evil. But how can such principles be defended? Gandhi does not ask this question and, therefore, does not answer it, but as we shall see, a possible answer emerges in another context.

B. Gandhi also said that it was right to kill a calf which is suffering from pain and cannot be cured. He also said that what was applicable to the calf was, in similar circumstances, applicable also to human beings.

Several correspondents wrote to Gandhi about actual cases where the principle was applied to human beings. One of the cases was about a Frenchman: he looked after his gargoyle (without arms and legs) imbecile daughter for many years. He was suffering from an incurable disease and was going to die: so he thought it best to put to sleep his daughter lest after his death she should suffer through negligence. The Frenchman was tried and acquitted in France. The correspondent asked whether the Frenchman's conduct was right. Gandhi replied that though the Frenchman was rightly acquitted by the court, he was not right in resorting to euthanasia because it showed want of faith in the humanity of those around him. This reply attracted further questions. One was on the same grounds, would it not be wrong to get rid of the stray dogs? Another was: is it not necessary to be considerate in putting a burden on the society? To the later question, Gandhi's answer was that he would expect to be looked after by society when he grew old and useless. This is clearly no answer, because the gargoyle daughter of the Frenchman had been no more than an 'animal' all her life. But the pressure of the correspondents was so great that Gandhi could not maintain the oneness of life among animals and men, and he drew a distinction between human beings and animals: 'I have certainly compared the case of an ailing human being with that of an ailing calf and recommended the killing of the former in exactly similar circumstances, but in actual practice such a complete analogy is hardly ever to be found.' Among the differences he points out, the most important and tenable difference is that 'a human being is able to express his wishes, but the animal is not'. So here we have a reason why a distinction is to be made between life and life.

But it is not clear how this difference justifies the different attitudes to be adopted towards human beings and animals in

respect of euthanasia; in fact, one might argue that the difference has to be the other way about. One may adopt euthanasia in respect of a human being because he can express his wishes, but one can never adopt euthanasia in their wishes. In adopting the attitude we, in fact, do adopt we have to make two assumptions: One is that the evils of death, disablement, pain, deprivation of freedom and pleasure are greater evils in a human being than in the case of animals. The other is that in the case of the animal, very often death is less of an evil than disablement and pain. But is there any justification for these assumptions? The justification seems to be that in the case of an animal, even if it were alive, the possibilities presented by its life are very limited, and not very different from the possibilities presented by another member of the same species. This is not true of human beings. But is it not true of human beings also sometimes? It is, but at such times there is the serious question whether it is good for any one concerned to keep the man alive, for example, when brain-death has occurred. This difference between human beings and animals is relevant in saying that human beings are ends in themselves, but animals are not.

(c) An attempt was made to extend the application of the principle involved in the case of the stray dogs to the monkeys and the deer. In both the cases, Gandhi was reluctant to do so on the ground that these cases were different.

But in the solitary writing from a later period included in the collection, Gandhi expresses his views in the strongest possible terms: 'My ahimsā is my own. I am not able to accept in its entirety the doctrine of non-killing of animals. I have no feeling in me to save the life of these animals who devour or cause hurt to man. I consider it wrong to help in the increase of their progeny. Therefore, I will not feed ants, monkeys or dogs. I will never sacrifice a man's life in order to save theirs....(The same principle does not apply to man, however bad, because) unlike the animal, God has given man the faculty of reason.'

Here we have from Gandhi an unequivocal statement about the distinction between human beings on the one hand and the rest of living beings on the other. And the distinction is that human beings have reason, whereas the animals do not. I am afraid I have hardly the time to enter into a discussion of what this difference is and what it amounts to. I shall attempt just to indicate these. It means that animals do not have such minimal knowledge as that others including human beings, do not like to be killed or injured, or that

certain actions of theirs would injure or kill others. Nor have they the ability to will. So the animals are not *capable* of rational action in the sense of moral action. So we cannot depend on the animals to regulate their action (including over procreation) in such a way as not to harm us.

#### THE CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE FOREGOING DISCUSSION

One fact becomes clear from the discussion of these concrete cases. In discussing the concrete cases, the general principle of non-violence or the principle that all life is one is not helpful. The principles that are employed are not only different, but even contrary to these general principles. One of the principles used is that human beings are distinct from all the other animals; so that the evil of deprivation of freedom, say, to eat meat may be greater than the evil of death to animals. Another principle that is used is that in the case of the animals the evil of death is not greater than that of disablement and pain. Given these assumptions, one may state the principles of decision in the concrete cases as follows: (a) do not do evil (b) one may do evil only to prevent greater evil. (This later principle is to be distinguished from another principle which looks equivalent but is not really so, namely, one may do evil to promote a greater amount of good.)

The crucial question is: what is the relationship between the principles involved in the concrete cases and the general principle of non-violence? Are the concrete principles derived from the general principle of non-violence or is the general principle formulated on the basis of these concrete principles? Gandhi thinks that the kinds of non-violence are derived some how from the principle of non-violence. But as I have tried to show, the principle of non-violence by itself cannot yield the classes of unavoidable violence. Can we say that the principle of non-violence along with some other principles yields us the kinds of unavoidable violence? But what other principles? That we commit violence for sustaining the body, for protecting those under our care, for the sake of those whose life is taken. But as principles these are very indeterminate. What is sustenance for the body—the income of the poorest or of the richest? To put it differently, does the standard of living determine what violence is permissible or is the standard of living to be determined by considerations of violence involved in it? It seems to me that we have to leave the matter to be decided either by the individual whim

or by the existing social norms; unless we can have some principle or principles according to which the standard of living consistent with unavoidable violence is to be determined, and which have greater objectivity or area of agreement. I think the principles I tried to formulate in the course of the discussion of particular cases and which I have recapitulated at the beginning of this discussion are the principles according to which we do decide the issues (this, of course, does not mean that the deliberate use of these principles is present in our processes of decision.) And there is a greater agreement about what are the elements of evil and their relative values than about a standard of living. If these principles are the principles employed in discussing the concrete cases, are they (a) used along with the principle of non-violence, (b) derived from the principle of non-violence, or (c) employed by themselves? Whichever of these three might actually be the case, the simple use of these principles is adequate to deal with the concrete cases we have discussed: there is no need of any general principle. While discussing the particular cases, even Gandhi sets aside the general principle. If this is so, why does Gandhi think that there is some close relationship between the concrete principles and the general principle?

One reason Gandhi thinks thus might be that he is aware of the social appeal of such a view. But I am not inclined to believe that it is a propaganda device; because there are several indications in his writings to show that he was convinced of this relationship. (a) In considering the three kinds of unavoidable violence (for living, for protection etc.) Gandhi says that the violence committed for the protection of those under our care, or for sake of the animal concerned is not really violence—is not really *himsā*, but is *ahimsā*. But in the case of the violence committed for one's own living, he says that it is violence. His reason for making this distinction is that in this case one is committing violence for the sake of one's own perishable body. How is one to understand this distinction?

(i) One might think that Gandhi was inclined to generalize from a common inclination of ours to accept the following: there are occasions when one should choose a course of action which avoids a lesser evil for someone else even if it causes a greater evil to oneself. This is obvious when I pay up a loan even though it avoids for another, say, some deprivation of luxury, though it prevents me from obtaining the bare necessities, say, a pair of shoes during the cold season. Even if this sort of reasoning has played a role in Gandhi's thinking, its role seems to be limited. Because if there are

occasions when we are ready to cause some evil to others, if by so doing we can prevent death or disablement to ourselves or our dear ones. And we can do this, and be absolved of any blame.

(ii) In making this distinction between oneself and the others, Gandhi is more influenced by his religious ideal. As we have seen, his religious ideal is the disembodied soul which is completely non-violent and the conduct required for it is completely non-violent conduct. For the sake of others there can be some relaxation, but not for oneself. One must always be sorry that one is alive !

(iii) A related factor which leads Gandhi in the same direction is that he is fascinated by the image of a *yogi* who has made himself completely non-violent and who, therefore, neither endangers nor is endangered from even the tigers and the snakes. What makes him think that it is the very ancient and popular belief in India. Stranger still that he should think this sufficient basis for making a distinction which is socially and individually very relevant.

(iv) Another related factor is his view of an ideal individual or social life. No doubt this was influenced by his repulsion from the Western civilization and his concern for the villages of India. But it was also influenced perhaps by his view of the religious ideal.

(v) His objection to vivisection is also derived from the religious ideal and not from the concrete principles.

All these considerations show that the distinction he makes between oneself and the others is ultimately based on the religious ideal, and not on the concrete principles. Regarding concrete principles, there is no need to make a sharp distinction between oneself and the others, though one might always add that one should beware of the tendency to minimize other people's evils and to maximize one's own evils. It would also be possible to ask whether vivisection prevents greater evil than it causes. (Does it not help the animal world also?) It will not be necessary to unduly restrict the view of ideal individual and social life, nor will it be necessary to conjure up a *yogi*.

If I am right in this, Gandhi is using two different criteria, two different principles while he is discussing issues of conduct; and they lead to different conclusions. The two principles are the general principle of non-violence and his religious ideal on the one hand, and the principles involved to the discussion of the concrete cases. If we accept the concrete principles, we cannot accept Gandhi's distinction between the self and the others. If we accept the general



principle of non-violence, then we cannot accept his solutions in the concrete cases. But Gandhi accepts both the principles, and thinks that the principle of non-violence is supreme, so, as soon as the application of the concrete principles seems to be getting out of hand, the supreme principle is brought into action. But there is no criterion telling us when the supreme principle is to be brought into action. In so far as this is so, the application of both the kinds of principles becomes arbitrary or dependent upon a messiah; independent thinking is not very much relevant.

Is it logically wrong to regulate one's conduct in this way? I do not know how this could be shown to be logically wrong. What is logically wrong is to think that the concrete principles are derived from the religious ideal and the principle of non-violence; or to think that the concrete principles cannot be used independently. But Gandhi held that the concrete principles were derived from religion. Not only did tradition seem to him to be on his side, he also believed that if these two were not intimately related there could be neither morality nor religion. But is this so?

Suppose we accept the concrete principles as independent, is it necessary for us to give up either morality or religion—say, the principle of non-violence? I do not think so, because the concrete principles we have formulated are the core of morality, and on this core it is possible to base a general principle of non-violence. But now the general principle of non-violence does not arbitrarily intervene at a particular stage, but evolves from the discussion of concrete problems in the existing situation. In this discussion the possibility of extending the limits of non-violence is always borne in mind. But if we cannot do so, we need not feel guilty; nor need we try to do so in order to cloak our laziness and cowardice, our compromise with a slovenly way of life. And when we do this, we realize that by depending on the concrete principles we are not giving up the religious ideal altogether. As I have pointed out earlier in my discussion of the hypothetical cases, the religiously ideal conduct can be one in which one is trying to extend the principle of avoiding evil in all practical ways.

If I am right in this, it is wrong to think that the relationship between the concrete principles and religion has to be conceived in one sort of way only, otherwise one is giving up the one or the other or the both. But is there a criterion by which we can choose one of the different relationships that can be conceived between the concrete

principles and religion? I do not think so. In choosing one of the relationships one is choosing a way of life; and in choosing a way of life, one is choosing a particular understanding of the relationship between morality and religion.

Gandhi chose the traditional relationship, if we want to choose a different relationship, we have to have a different understanding of religion and its relationship to morality. What we have to note is that we do not have to give it up. This is not to say that we may not give it up.

### SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. If logically there is no choice between the two alternatives (a) the concrete principles being derived from the general principle and (b) the general principle evolving from the concrete principles, then what is the point of the exercise? The point of the exercise is to lay bare the elements and the structure of Gandhi's thought in a small area so as to give a greater understanding to what is happening. The foregoing analysis brings to light a number of helpful points.

(i) The relationship between the principles which Gandhi uses in the discussion of the concrete issues and the general principle of non-violence is not what he or others have taken it to be. Theoretically, they do not mutually support each other; rather, they conflict. In the discussion of a concrete issue if one accepts it as a case of unavoidable violence, then one is not applying the principle of non-violence, but arriving at a practical compromise; and if one accepts the principle of non-violence as supreme, then one rejects the particular case as falling under unavoidable violence. Are there any considerations or criteria to decide whether the case is or not one of unavoidable violence? There do not seem to be any criteria. The decision to modify or not to modify the principle of non-violence by another case of unavoidable violence is an ad-hoc decision. It is true that in discussing the concrete issue one can bring in social and moral considerations (of evil caused or avoided), but whether one will follow up these considerations depends on whether one wants a change suggested by these considerations, or whether one thinks that the principle of non-violence requires that circumstances which gave rise to those considerations should themselves be changed (I think that in many cases Gandhi's thinking as also Gandhian thinking goes in the direction of changing the circumstances which point in the direction of change, for example, industrialization,

sexual relationships). But even when the decision is an ad-hoc decision it appears that it has been taken on principle—either the principle of non-violence or the principle of unavoidable violence. One can manipulate the two principles to justify any expedient decision! And yet it would appear that the principles are functioning in an integrated and harmoniously manner.

It would be interesting to see how a community which operates on this basis will relate itself to social change. In so far as the individual is concerned, such a society will be very permissive, but the attempt to make a course of action universally acceptable or unacceptable will require the superhuman efforts of a messiah, because that course of conduct will have to be seen to be falling under only one of the two principles—non-violence and unavoidable violence. The process of disallowing a particular case as falling under the principle of avoidable violence is the process of spiritualizing morality, and the process of disallowing a particular case as falling under the principle of non-violence is the process of moralizing spirituality. In the case of the calf and the stray dogs, Gandhi is moralizing spirituality—bringing the cases under our rational discussion. In the case of vivisection, he is trying to spiritualize morality. In the case of human relationships he was sometimes moralizing spirituality (for example, when he was transforming inactivity into activity) and ‘sometimes spiritualizing morals (for example, when he advocated complete non-violence in impossible cases). Was Gandhi aware of all this? I do not think so. He thought that the principle of non-violence and the principle of unavoidable violence were completely integrated in his thought and in his practice. But if I am right in my understanding this is not so.

(ii) Of the two processes, spiritualizing morality and moralizing spirituality, the former is the easier course. But whether we take up one course or another, we are not giving up either morality or spirituality.

(iii) Another interesting point that emerges from our discussion is that it is not true to say that Gandhi always extended the traditional frontiers of non-violence. This may be true in the case of human relationship, but not in the case of animals. In the latter case, he narrowed the traditional field of non-violence. But in both the cases it is possible to say that he was giving a moral content to spirituality.

(iv) The last point I want to mention here that it is also not true to say that for Gandhi the ends do not justify the means. In the case

of our attitude to animals, the ends justify the means. It should be interesting to consider whether there are not similar situations in human relationships.

2. Gandhi was not a systematic thinker, and he made this into an unchallengeable tactical weapon. But what my analysis tries to do is not to point out inconsistencies in his thinking at different times, but inherent features of his thinking which are ever-present and which make an intelligent independent discussion of his thought impossible. It is necessary to bring these to light because these are the inherent features of the thinking of most of us, and it was for this reason that Gandhi appealed to us so. If I have been right in delineating features, we can go ahead in our thinking with open eyes.

H. S. TAKULIA

## The Black American's Experiments with Non-violent Protest



IN THIS paper, an attempt is made to enumerate different episodes in the civil rights movement in which the leadership tried to use non-violent form of mass protest. Particular attention is given to the contributions of Martin Luther King in developing the technique to highlight different aspects of the problems of racial discrimination. An attempt has also been made to identify similarities and contrasts between the Indians and black American's experiments with the use of non-violence as an instrument of practical and social change.

Contrary to popular belief, it was not Martin Luther King who introduced Gandhian techniques of non-violent mass protest in the black American's struggle for his civil rights. This credit goes to A. Philip Randolph, a trade unionist and one of the most respected leaders of Negroes today.

When the World War II started, there was a phenomenal rise in the number of jobs in federal undertakings. The black Americans however continued to be excluded from the defence industries. Jim Crow dominated all walks of life to an extent that even though the blood bank techniques were developed by Charles Drew, a black, the American Red Cross did not accept black American blood without keeping it segregated.

Randolph, like every other black American, was deeply disturbed and, as a labour leader, he was constantly on the look out for a solution of this problem. On one fateful day it suddenly occurred to him that if 10,000 blacks assemble in Washington, march through the capital and demand jobs in defence plants and in integrated armed forces, they may succeed in forcing a change in the federal policy of segregation. He also thought of using this demonstration to force hotels and eating establishments in the capital to desegregate.

His plans, when publicized, were given considerable attention in the press. He was able to secure the support of all black leaders and civil rights organizations. In a dramatic appeal issued on May 1, 1941 announcing July 1, 1941 as the date for ‘March on Washington For Jobs in National Defence and Equal Integration in the Fighting Forces of the U.S.’, he recommended ‘an all out thundering march on Washington ending in a monster and huge demonstration at Lincoln’s monument, that will shake up white America’. He demanded that the President issue an Executive Order abolishing discrimination in federal employment policies.

Some liberal friends of this cause, including Mrs. Roosevelt, voiced their concern and opposed the suggestion. But Randolph persisted and, in a meeting with President Roosevelt, demanded immediate action. He threatened that if his demand was not conceded he would have 100,000 (sic) blacks march in the nation’s capital. Seven days later, President Franklin Roosevelt issued his famous executive order establishing a war time Fair Employment Practice Committee<sup>1</sup>, the first federal action, since Lincoln’s 1863 proclamation giving the blacks federal protection. In view of the executive order the proposed March was postponed.

Roosevelt thus assumed a responsibility on behalf of the black Americans which no subsequent administration could ignore. But hereafter, the blacks’ strategy of struggle was based, implicitly or explicitly, on the necessity for decisive intervention by the federal government and sustained pressure on the government.

This was the first time that the Gandhian concept of ‘non-violent goodwill direct action’ was introduced in the black American struggle for civil rights even though this possibility was mentioned by Gandhi himself. As a continuation of the idea of mass protest, Randolph proposed boycott of schools, street cars and buses, mass marches on the city-hall ‘until the country and the world recognize that the black American has become of age and will sacrifice all to be counted as a man, as a free man’.<sup>2</sup> He succeeded in creating the first

black mass movement which was not based on black nationalism. He worked in close collaboration with and active support of such biracial organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), the National Urban League (NUL), the American Civil Liberties Union, various churches and trade unions. He claimed that his March on Washington demanding desegregation in jobs, although primarily a black effort was not an anti-white, anti-Catholic, anti-labour or anti-semitic in character.

Following inter-racial rioting in the summer of 1943, Randolph was compelled to discontinue civil disobedience in all its forms. He realized, and some of his followers said so openly—that he did not succeed because the March was not actually organized, Randolph was not arrested, but above all, because he did not make any preparation at the local levels before starting a national civil disobedience movement.

After the World War II was over, Randolph began once again to agitate for integration in the armed forces. In 1947, President Harry S. Truman called for a peace time draft. Randolph organized a 'League for Non-violent Civil Disobedience Against Military Segregation'. The League demanded that segregation in the armed forces be abolished through a Presidential executive order. Randolph told President Truman: 'The blacks are sick and tired of being asked to shoulder guns in defence of democracy until they get some at home. They are prepared to resort to civil disobedience and refuse to register for draft if it means serving in a Jim Crow army'. The President told Randolph that he did not like what he was told; the black leader said he was sorry he had to say it but that 'truth was truth'. Later, in a testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, he said that he 'would personally and openly counsel, aid and abet youth, both black and white in an organized refusal to register and be drafted'.

Randolph enjoyed a near unanimous support of all the black Americans in the country. Black leaders and organizations refused to serve on an advisory committee set up by the Secretary of Defence to find a solution to this problem. Lester Granger, then the executive director of the National Urban League who would have welcomed such an opportunity for expanding job opportunities for blacks, said that no one wanted to serve in an advisory capacity on the basis of continued segregation in the armed services.

Once again, the establishment conceded the demand and the black Americans did not have to resort to protest march and to offer

other forms of resistance. The armed forces were integrated through an executive order issued by President Truman in July 1948. Both blacks and whites fought the Korean war in mixed units and it was clearly demonstrated that desegregation worked.

The period between 1948-1954 saw the most dramatic series of court decisions beginning with the out-lawing of the court enforcement of racial covenants in private housing and ending with the reversal of the Plessy decision that established ‘separate but equal’ as the law of the land in 1896. The 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court on school desegregation was followed by integration in Washington, D. C. through the personal initiative of President Dwight Eisenhower. The integration of armed forces and the desegregation in the capital initiated by two different administrations clearly demonstrated to the black-Americans that if the federal government wished, things could change.

Soon after the Supreme Court’s ‘with all deliberate speed’ directive for schools’ desegregation, the civil rights struggle became broad based. Curiously, it began with a seemingly innocuous incident in Montgomery, Alabama.

Under the city regulations covering local bus service, the black Americans were required to occupy vacant seats from the rear forward and had to vacate even those when a white passenger got in and could not find an unoccupied seat in the bus. They habitually followed the custom. The bus drivers were given sufficient police powers to enforce this law.

On a fateful day in December 1955, a seamstress got into a bus that she had used for years. She was tired after the day’s work, so when the driver asked her to vacate her seat she refused, was arrested and fined \$10. The local black community decided to boycott the public bus system for one day as a token protest.

The incident caught the black American leaders completely unawares. They organized the well-known organization, the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and elected Dr Martin Luther King as their President, primarily because he was new in town and had few opponents.

King had, at least in the beginning, no idea what he was destined to lead. It is on record that when he was designated to lead the M.I.A., he had no idea that non-violent passive resistance techniques would be effective in the situation. He had heard about Gandhi only in the context of the Indian freedom struggle and did not know enough about him. He later admitted that he gained his regulating ideals



from his Christian background and his operational techniques from Gandhi.

The first person to see the similarities between the Montgomery struggle and the Gandhian crusade was a southern white woman, a librarian, Juliette Morgan. She outlined these in a letter to the editor of a local newspaper. This was the beginning of the use of Gandhi's name by the M.I.A. leadership in their appeals to keep their constituents from resorting to violence.

As an American, King did not believe in non-violence in respect of self-defence and for a while even carried a gun. However, soon he saw the contradiction in the leader of a non-violent mass protest movement equipping himself with a gun and discarded the weapon.

From the very beginning of the Montgomery struggle, King talked the language of peace and brotherhood and advised his followers to keep calm. He recommended non-retaliation as the most practical approach. As a black, he knew that, outnumbered and poorly armed as they were, they could never win with violence. When his house was bombed and his followers assembled to find out what had happened to their leader, King saw anger in their eyes. He spoke to them from the porch of his bombed house. His words to the gathering clearly spelled out his thinking: 'He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. We are not advocating violence. We want to love our enemies.... Do not get your weapons. Put them away.... If I am stopped, our work will not be stopped, for what we are doing is just and God is with us'.

But more important than his personal fate was his contribution in using the Gandhian techniques in the black Americans' struggle for civil rights. His position as a minister of Church enabled him to preach the new gospel.

The next phase of the black American movement sparked off quite as unexpectedly, as did the Montgomery bus strike. Four black teenage college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, walked into a Woolworth five and ten cent store, made some purchases, collected their receipts, sat on the lunch counter and demanded that they be served. When they were refused service, as they had expected, they kept sitting. Several people from the management tried to talk to them, pleading their inability to serve them because they had to adhere to the Southern mores. But like Rosa Parks, who refused to budge from her seat in the bus, the students also moved out when the store closed but were back the next day, and the following days. The chairman of the local chapter of the NAACP, of which

all these four students were members, requested help not from his own organization's headquarters, but from the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). Meanwhile, these students were able to gather more students around their efforts and organized themselves into a Students' Executive Committee for Justice.

The sit-ins, a new weapon in the civil rights agitation, had started. This technique was very simple. Request service at a 'white' facility, when refused, keep sitting; if struck, refuse to retaliate and if ordered to leave by police officers, refuse politely.<sup>3</sup>

The movement in Greensboro was a planned rebellion on the part of the students.\* The young rebels were convinced of the justice of their rights and knew that they had the power to get their demands conceded. They were not led by any outsider. Their inspiration came from within. They had late-night 'bull sessions' in their dormitories; they formulated detailed plans of action, decided on their tactics and even their target. They chose Woolworth because they knew that the store had branches in the North and that public pressure could be exercised on the Woolworth establishment on a national scale.

The other important feature of this movement was that the four student-initiators neither consulted the leaders of the established black civil rights organizations nor did they invite them to join in. They were critical of the established black leadership, including Martin Luther King and, in fact, deliberately ignored all of them. They honoured and respected King but did not want to be led by him because they did not think he was radical enough. They borrowed from his tactics of direct action. In addition, they mass-based their movement. They also happily accepted King's example and readily went to jail rather than stay out on bail.

The student's action created a critical situation for the established black leadership in which the latter either had to join the protest or to retire. NAACP and the National Urban League were slow in making up their mind; so others came up. GORE, that had been invited by the chairman of the local NAACP, shared the leadership honours with the newly formed Students Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

But the person who reaped a rich harvest from this movement was King. The students borrowed the concept of confrontation from him but showed him that the direct mass action could be more effective. King kept on talking in moral and philosophical tones and the need to educate the white brethren, whereas the SNCC

student activists talked of the interaction of black and white 'power structures'

The SNCC was dedicated to the idea of creating 'a new social order'; in fact, they 'intended to free America'. SNCC really concentrated the bulk of its efforts in the preparation of black American masses for a prolonged struggle. Their educational campaign for voter registration meant hard work under difficult field conditions. Their efforts were aimed at creating a hard core of activists in each community, who would assume leadership in the black's struggle for equal political participation. This strategy was adopted as an insurance against the traditional charges made by southern racists that outside agitators caused problems and created unrest. The young agitators believed that negotiations with whites could be successfully carried only from a position of political and economic strength.

Although on the surface the conflict was between southern white mores and the demands of the black students to be served lunch on payment, in effect, the students' initiative created a three-faced confrontation between the blacks and the blacks, whites and whites and blacks and whites. This confrontation brought out the inherent contradiction in the competitive American economy and segregationist practices because of which some people were not able to buy a cup of coffee even though they had the money to pay for it. It also brought out the fact that blacks and whites were, for the most part, two separate societies and that the blacks had no share in the process of giving directions to the state machinery, even though they paid taxes.

The movement started a revolutionary process in the minds of men. Every white southerner or northerner was forced to take a stand for or against the rights of the young blacks to buy a hamburger on the lunch counter of a department store in which they could buy other items of 'impersonal' nature. The blacks were also able to demonstrate their political and economic strength. Increasingly they resorted to 'selective buying' and the older generation of blacks suddenly realized that they had been lying to their white countrymen when they told the latter that they were happy 'with the race-relation situation'.

The most amazing thing that happened behind the scenes during this period was a shift from direct mass action form of protest to more traditional form of creating a political base from which the

fight for black American rights was to be waged. Simultaneously with the sit-ins and other extensions of this form of protest, all civil rights organizations got involved in voter registration programme. Dr. King supported this broad objective and vigorously worked to demonstrate the difficulties the blacks faced in voter registration as also in exercising their franchise.

King's principal contribution to civil rights movement, however, was his experiments with mass direct action. Even though in Montgomery the mass involvement was in the form of refraining from the use of buses, in Chicago, Birmingham, Selma and even in Memphis, he adopted the tactics of open confrontation coupled with mass involvement.

Before his death King came to realize that his method of protest did not continue to be as popular as it was soon after he shot into prominence. All through his life he advocated patience and perseverance and was ever hopeful that his dreams would come true. But the younger generation of political black American activists were impatient. Their thinking was epitomized in the slogan 'Freedom Now' that they raised.

Although King believed that the goal of first class citizenship could not be achieved by the use of second class methods, not all the militants were concerned with this means and ends controversy. In fact, for some of them, even this was inadequate. For instance, Cecil Moore, President of the Philadelphia chapter of the NACCP, demanded an immediate solution of the problem and said that 'his definition of now (was) yesterday'. In fact, Stokley Carmichael who led the Students Non-Violent Coordinating Committee for years, publicly stated that he had never rejected violence as the means to achieve the desired end. Despite King's commitments to the contrary the view that they would be justified in helping themselves to what was their due by any means they found effective was gaining ground in all parts of the country and, more particularly, in the North.

While he was alive, King's constant struggle was to contain the potential for violence and to turn it into non-violent direct action. As Andrew Young, one of the aides of Dr King, once said, 'we have to deliver results—in a northern city to protect the non-violent movement', because it was in the north that non-violent mass action did not deliver the goods.

The prejudices in the North were subtle and therefore more difficult to tackle. In fact the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (of which Dr King was the founder-President) got into

serious financial trouble when King decided to try his methods in some northern communities. King's interest in Vietnam also lost him some liberal and the establishments' support. Consequently his non-violent approach received a further setback.

It is known that even in his lifetime it was not easy for King to keep his followers peaceful and free from bitterness. When he died, Floyd McKissick of CORE declared that 'non-violence is dead and it was not the black people that killed it'.

At that time, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was the only civil rights organization ideologically committed to the use of non-violent action as a technique of protest. The adherents of the black power movement, on the other hand, were growing in number. CORE, the other most important civil rights organization that was committed to non-violent passive mass direct action for more than 20 years, adopted black power as its goal in July 1966 at its Baltimore convention. Whitney Young Jr., the executive director of the conservative National Urban League who had talked of green-dollar-power for years, also endorsed the black power slogan. There was no one among the black American leaders with sufficient charisma to once again promote the concept of non-violent mass action.

When Martin Luther King adopted it, the non-violent mass protest was not widely known in the United States. He was able to establish his bonafides with the black masses because of his personal sacrifices: he was stabbed thrice and was attacked three more times; his home was bombed three times and he went to jail fourteen times. Moreover, he fought in the south where the north-based established civil rights organizations did not involve themselves too deeply. Montgomery was one of the first battles won by the blacks in the south.

King and his followers created tensions in the communities in order that the problems of the black Americans could no longer be by-passed as they had been ignored for decades. His endeavour was to keep prodding its conscience and to shame the nation into action. Non-violence was for him a holy order. He was not willing to disclaim it despite the fact that last four summers of his life were embarrassingly riotous. He went back to Memphis with a plan to organize a protest march despite the fact that in the previous week 'the March' had resulted in window smashing.

King's death jeopardized non-violence mass protest as a tactics of the civil rights movement. Despite the fact that this form of

protest succeeds admirably in drawing attention to the problem, it does not automatically bring solutions any nearer. The problems of the black Americans arise out of the institutional structure that has existed since emancipation and even earlier. Truman's 1948 executive order outlawing segregation in the armed forces and the 1954 Supreme Court decision were the two principal changes in race relations introduced within the framework of American institutions. However, in the following years, the pace of desegregation that caused sufficient desperation among the blacks was so slow that it caused deep frustration among them. The established civil rights leadership may have been satisfied but the masses were not, so they decided to by-pass their leadership and initiate direct mass action.

As a result, demonstrable changes occurred in opening up of the public facilities for black Americans. Public transportation, recreational facilities and eating houses were by and large, desegregated. But the basic problems of slum dwellers, namely poor housing, high rate of unemployment and poor quality ghetto schools, was yet to be solved. Non-violent mass protest can be used to highlight these problems, but these have already been sufficiently highlighted. They have to be solved by constructive action. A number of remedial legislative actions have been offered in response to protests and pressures but unfortunately these have not been honestly implemented. It is not surprising that blacks indulge in rioting and other forms of violence to show their resentment.

At present there are two principal methods being used in the civil rights struggle. NAACP, NUL and other organizations that are engaged in finding solutions to the problems of their black constituents through legal redress, voter registration, political and economic pressures, creating better employment opportunities, etc. Their appeal is basically to the American conscience through a variety of means. The other approach is symbolized through the politics of black power which occasionally goes to the extremes of demanding a separate state for the black Americans. It also involves rioting as an extreme form of protest. Non-violent direct mass action does not figure in either of these alternatives.

This brief review of the use of non-violent direct action is extremely fascinating for Indian students of the black American civil rights movement. There is a temptation to read the influence of Gandhi even where it may not, in fact, exist and to draw parallels between the Indian and American experiments with non-violence.

Undoubtedly there are some very notable similarities between these two movements which have been briefly outlined below.

Gandhi went to South Africa in 1893. He was then an unknown Indian and, in the South African terminology, a non-European. While on his way to Pretoria he was kicked out of a train at Matisberg even though he held a valid ticket for the class in which he was travelling. It was after this, his first experience with racial discrimination, that Gandhi decided to fight for his rights. This was also the beginning of his experiments with non-violent techniques. Similarly, the first successful American experiment in non-violent direct action which, in its turn, started a chain of inter-racial confrontation all over the United States, also started when an unknown seamstress, Rosa Parks, refused to abide by the local segregation laws in public transportation.

With both the American and Indian experiments, whatever their other goals, the betterment of inter-group relations—Hindus and Muslims in India and the blacks and whites in the U.S.—was one of the most important objectives. A section of the extremist elements in the majority communities in both countries were stoutly opposed to this objective. In fact, both the Indian and American apostles of non-violence met with violent deaths at the hands of individuals belonging to the majority.

For both Gandhi and King, non-violence was the cardinal principle of their philosophies; it was a way of life. To their followers, however, this doctrine was, at best, a tactical weapon, an expedient and practical course in the prevailing socio-political circumstances; and they renounced it while the leaders were still alive. The Indian National Congress, it is common knowledge, was ready to take up arms if a political settlement were possible in 1939. In the black struggle for civil rights, the students adopted mass based non-violent action as the technique of struggle in 1960 when they banded themselves into the Students Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Within a span of four years, however, this militant organization repudiated its commitment to non-violent action and adopted black power as their slogan.

In the application of the principle non-violence to specific situations, both Gandhi and King often failed to keep their followers non-violent and were compelled to withdraw the direct action movements launched by them. From the relatively longer Indian experience in this connection the Chauri Chaura incident

is the most widely known. The last mass movement organized by Martin Luther King was in Memphis, Tennessee on behalf of the garbage men. When a section of the demonstrators indulged in window smashing, King promptly suspended the agitation and left the town but was back again to organize another peaceful protest march. He was, unfortunately, killed before he could do that.

Both King and Gandhi were guided by their respective religions in formulating their ideas and relied heavily on the use of religious idioms in communicating with their followers. Gandhi borrowed a great deal from other religions notably Christianity, and King followed Gandhian techniques. Their religious commitments assured both a wide constituency within their own and other societies. A garbage collector and a Nobel-prize winner joined King. Similarly, Gandhi was loved by rugged peasants and sophisticated intellectuals alike. Both received worldwide attention, respect and support and yet relied mainly on their own inner strength and faith.

Gandhi developed the strategy to involve the masses in peaceful and open protests, an example that King followed. The Dandi March which Gandhi organized and the March on Washington in which King had a notable role involved very large number of people and impressively demonstrated their mass following.

As a result of the examples set by them, jail-going became an honour badge. They aroused in their people a deep consciousness of their rights and privileges and an unmatched pride in themselves. This was, in both cases, their unique contribution to the process of the liberation of their people.

While the above are some interesting and obvious parallels between the two movements, there are also certain areas of contrasts.

Before he introduced the concept of non-violence in India's struggle for freedom, Gandhi experimented with this new technique of mass struggle in South Africa. *Hind Swarāj*, in which he outlined the basic elements of his thoughts, was written in 1909, while he was still unknown in Indian politics. These ideas were not amended despite thirty years of experimentation in India. On the other hand, the leadership of the civil rights movement was literally thrust on King. He certainly did not know the direction the Montgomery bus-boycott would take. His approach, at least in the beginning, was pragmatic. He realized the potentials of the Gandhian concept of non-violent direct action only after he was catapulted into world prominence.



Non-violent direct action was used as effective form of protest for the first time ever in the political struggle for India's independence from foreign rule. The black-Americans used this technique in challenging the social and institutional structure that discriminated against them. Their struggle was primarily aimed at getting their rights, guaranteed them between 1863 and 1954, translated into concrete administrative and legislative action within the confines of the American system. Though ethnically of different stocks, King regarded black and whites as one people, and always talked of 'converting the white brethren'.

The followers of Gandhi defied British laws, got themselves arrested and happily went to jail. Once inside the jail they behaved like ideal prisoners, and obeyed most prison regulations. The black American participants in King's direct action mass movements, on the other hand, did not like to concede that they belonged in jails or that the authorities were justified in detaining them. Some of them even offered some kind of non-retaliatory physical resistance at the time of their arrest. While in jails some of them refused to work.

Unlike the Indian followers of Gandhi, they were not committed to asceticism or self-denial. On the contrary, the youthful members of the several 'marches' organized by King believed in having a good and gay time before and during the demonstrations lest they miss their last chance of having fun.

Gandhi's experiments with non-violence covered various aspects of life: politics, education, religion, social institutions, diet, clothing and even sex. He trained a cadre of what he called constructive workers who were not, as a rule, allowed to engage in electioneering and party politics. The political and the constructive workers' wings of Gandhi's followers were complimentary although they functioned independent of each other. Gandhi kept in constant touch with both kinds of activities and actively guided those engaged in 'self-improvement' programmes. Martin Luther King, in the short span of his public life, concentrated only on highlighting the black Americans' problems arising in the context of racial discrimination. Even though he could find work in the North he chose to go South of Mason-Dixon line because the 'problem' there was more acute. His excursion into the North, the Vietnam war and other wider problems of world peace, although logical corollaries of his policies, ended in near disasters for his movement. He had a very small following among civil rights activities. Occasionally, he talked about

‘putting our house in order’ and about identifying reasons ‘which whites gave for discriminating against us’. Unfortunately he did not have enough time and/or workers for undertaking, what might be described as ‘constructive work’ among the black Americans.

As far as I know, no systematic and comparative study of the Indian and American experiments with non-violent direct action has yet been made. It is only on the basis of specific and comparative case-studies that an objective assesment of Gandhi’s influence on the American civil rights movements can be made.

During Gandhi’s lifetime and since his death, several non-Indians have studied the theoretical aspects of the application of non-violence to social problems. It is important that such contributions be evaluated scientifically to enrich the traditions of non-violence and to develop it as an effective instrument of social change. I am convinced that only such studies and analyses will enable us to determine the relevance of Gandhi today.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The FEP Committee did not get any appropriations to carry on its operations and was, thus, ‘killed’ by the Congress in 1945.
2. Talking to Howard Thurman of the Howard University, one of the many black Americans who visited him, Gandhi said that perhaps it would be through the black Americans that the principle of non-violence would enter the world.
3. The students code of conduct read: Don’t strike back or curse if abused. Don’t laugh out. Don’t hold conversations with floor workers. Don’t block entrances to the stores, and show yourself courteous and friendly at all times. Sit straight and always face the counter. Remember love and non-violence. May God bless each of you.
4. As were all the subsequent forms of protest—the freedom rides, marches in different parts of the country whether demanding purely local changes or in the nation’s capital to focus national and/or international public opinion on the problems of the black Americans.

PART THREE

Discussions

*Chairmen*

Dr Gyanchand  
Professor A K Dasgupta  
Professor K Satchidananda Murty  
Professor A R Desai  
Professor Bimanbehari Majumdar

*Rapporteurs*

Dr Arabinda Poddar  
Dr S C Biswas  
Dr M K Chaudhuri  
Dr K P Karunakaran  
Dr K J Shah

## SECTION A

### *General Lectures*

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE,  
Non-violence and Defence  
and T.K. MAHADEVAN,  
An Approach to the Study of Gandhi

#### DISCUSSION

Mr K. Damodaran said that it appeared that Mr Mahadevan had established a dichotomy between truth and non-violence. But it was extremely doubtful if such a dichotomy could be accepted; for, truth and non-violence were integral parts of the Gandhian system of political action. It could not also be said that Gandhi knew the truth, he really did not; he was always in search of truth. Sri Mahadevan's other statement that Gandhi always stood by existential truth could not also be accepted. For, the existential truth was never Gandhi's objective. So, the new interpretation given by Mahadevan did not correctly interpret the Gandhian technique.

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti said that in Gandhi's technique there was no conflict between truth and non-violence; they were one. As to the truth, Gandhi sought to discover it in society, which was the object of his study and action. In respect of Kashmir, when the Government of India sent the army there to confront the invading Pakistani army, Gandhi was not consulted. It was also on record that he did not approve of the military assistance to Kashmir. Mahadevan had said that in the question of truth, Gandhi always stood firm but he was flexible in respect of non-violence; but it could not be maintained that he ever vacillated even on questions of non-violence. Moreover, it could not be said that Gandhi stood by Hindu Dharma alone, for other religious persuasions had considerable influence on him.

Mr Dev Dutt said that he found it rather difficult to accept

Mahadevan's contention that truth rather than non-violence was the cardinal principle of Gandhi's thought. If that was conceded then the entire significance of the national movement under the leadership of Gandhi stood nullified and lost the importance Gandhi attached to it as an experiment in non-violence.

Mr Mahadevan's approach was the approach of a fundamentalist and it rendered Gandhi socially irrelevant.

Mahadevan seemed to have made a saint of Gandhi. The greatest disservice which could be done to Gandhi, in the present day, was to project on the public mind the impression that Gandhi was yet one more of the many saints (like Tuka Ram, Nanak, etc.) that India had produced.

'I believe that though himself a very religious person, Gandhi was a great leader of men who stood for drastic social changes in favour of the unprivileged sections of society. He was a statesman, politician and a great builder and leader and not a saint interested in truth as such,' Mr Dev Dutt said.

Mr B. R. Nanda remarked that it might be accepted that Gandhi had very often been misinterpreted, yet the dichotomy of truth and non-violence could not be accepted. Throughout his life Gandhi fought for the freedom of the masses, and his nationalism had a positive humanist content. And he fought his battles in a non-violent way; so, non-violence had got to be emphasized. Non-violent mass-action was for him more important than anything else. 'True and sincere Gandhians, to my mind, will always be in a minority. Gandhism is a philosophy of dissent, and it will act as a corrective; it cannot be supposed that the Gandhians will some day become the majority and rule the country,' he said.

Dr Mulk Raj Anand said: 'I think if we intellectualize Gandhi and his message, our attempt will take away something from his life. With him, felt experiences were far more important. So, what we should do is to make a systematic historical analysis of all the phases of his life, and not philosophize about his mission. In that case, we may miss the horse and get the limbs merely.'

Mr B. R. Dubey narrated an incident, said to have occurred in Bihar, and maintained that, contrary of Professor Bose's assertion, Gandhi, at times, was also led by emotions.

Mr T. K. Mahadevan, in reply to some of the points raised, said that he would like to stress that in case of payments of assets to Pakistan, Gandhi took the extreme step of resorting to fast, but nothing of the kind was done by him in respect of Kashmir. Gandhi rediscovered Jesus through Tolstoy, and that discovery urged him to go to the roots of Indian thought. With Gandhi, truth was also a means; that was why he called his movement *satyāgraha* and not *ahimsāgraha*. He ever tried to refine his capacity to absorb truth in his everyday life, and proceeded from truth to truth. His approach to truth might be described as heuristic.

‘In regard to non-violence, I maintain that it has obvious limitations, but truth has no limitation. Moreover, non-violence is not transferable to all situations; Gandhi also realized this. Non-violence, in order to succeed, must get response from the power that be, otherwise it cannot gather strength. President Kennedy responded to the non-violent movement in U.S.A. but President Johnson did not; so, the civil rights movement there gradually fizzled out. In his life Gandhi put accent on *dharma*; it does not deny or negate the material world. One can have all the world through *dharma*—That was Gandhi’s message to the people,’ he said.

A.K. DAS GUPTA,  
Gandhi on Social Conflict  
and K. P. KARUNAKARAN,  
Some Perspectives on Gandhi

DISCUSSION

Mr Dev Dutt said: ‘I have listened with interest the papers presented today. I think that it will do us no good to “intellectualize” Gandhi. It is futile to attempt to build a system of Gandhi’s thought on the basis of his writings only and that, too, on the basis of his words, torn out of historical context. I hold that Gandhi is not “revisable”; the question of enrichment of Gandhi does not arise; it is historically

impossible. We will have to forget Gandhi in the sense that we outgrow him exactly in the same way as Gandhi outgrew his own traditions and evolved new approaches and techniques. Let not Gandhi become a sort of a fixation with us. Of course, that does not mean that we cannot learn from the life of Gandhi. Indeed he can teach us such lessons as, deep social involvement, profound courage, dynamism and lust for life and a capacity to fight all alone and single-handed. It would be worthwhile to reinterpret his basic approaches to social changes, namely, *swadeshi bhāvana*, *samabhav*, *sarvōdaya* and *swarāj*.<sup>7</sup>

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti pointed out that there was a fundamental difference between Marx and Gandhi. Gandhi was never a materialist in the sense Marx was. Moreover, their vision of socialism and techniques of political action were also dis-similar. In our study of Gandhi, the non-essential elements should be eliminated from the essential. Mahadevan has said that non-violence has limitations; but with Gandhi non-violence had no limitations. To say otherwise was to misinterpret him.

Mr H. S. Takulia referred to a letter written by the late Aga Khan some twenty years back in which he made an appraisal of Gandhi vis-a-vis Marx. With Marx the end was important, but with Gandhi the means.

Dr K. J. Mahale remarked: ‘The French scholars, nowadays, are taking much interest in Gandhi, and many new studies on Gandhian technique have come out. The French are in search of a new word to replace Non-violence, which, they think, is inadequate to express both the negative and positive aspects of Gandhi’s teaching. Again, a pertinent sociological question may be raised in respect of such studies. European civilization has produced aggressive personalities like Napoleon, Bismark, Hitler, etc., whereas Asian civilization has produced Jesus, Buddha, Gandhi, etc. Are particular types of personality linked to particular types of civilization?’

Mr D. G. Tendulkar observed: ‘I do not think Gandhi fasted only for repayment of assets to Pakistan, there were other reasons also. Truth, I think is not easy to understand and to express. I know at least one instance when Gandhi also deviated from truth—he did not allow a private dialogue he held in 1919 to be published. So,



simplification is not fair. I think there was and is no Gandhian after Gandhi.’

Professor S. N. Balasundaram said: ‘Mr Mahadevan described himself as a heretic, but I find him to be a fundamentalist, and also a man in the establishment. To my mind, humanistic approach is needed for appreciating Gandhi. From that angle, Professor Bose’s approach to Gandhi throws more light on the Gandhi phenomenon than anybody else.’

Professor A. K. Dasgupta, in his reply, said that both Marx and Gandhi tried to apprehend a particular problem in a specific social content, and so, points of affinity could easily be discovered. But, of course, there were fundamental differences also. For example, Gandhi did not express himself in favour of nationalization of land, but with Marx this was fundamental. In his paper, he said, he had tried to draw the picture of Gandhi as a materialist; in his view, it was possible to uphold, with some reservations, the Gandhian model of the economic structure of a socialistic society.’

Professor N. K. Bose, in order to clarify certain points, elaborated Gandhi’s theory of trusteeship, which was a sort of a half-way house for the peasants and landowners to meet together. The peasants would struggle for their rights, while the landlords would cooperate with them by becoming trustees of their wealth. That movement aimed at the conversion of the rich to the position of trustees. Gandhi considered the possession of wealth to be a crime against humanity in India. In his view, the nation should inherit the wealth left by a person after his death.

Gandhi, Professor Bose maintained, was a realist, and always sought to adjust his programmes to the possibility of their being executed. In the thirties, Gandhi wanted the Congress ministries under the 1935 Act to universalize education, but they did nothing of the kind. He, on the whole, did not support Congress ministries then. He advocated what may be called economic moralism; that was to say, everyone should work for the nation.

But Gandhi had no sentimental illusion about India, nor any excessive love. He took the people as they are, and was clever enough to see that with the inert Indian masses it might take longer for non-violence to permeate than in Europe where the people are active and assertive.

Dr Gyanchand, in summing up, said that Gandhi was flexible and was always growing through experiences. Though he was a man of very high stature, he was yet educable. That was something unique about him. So, Dr Gyanchand thought, our approach to him should also be flexible. Gandhi, he said, was indeed a realist in the sense of knowing one's limitations, a realist in the sense of welcoming confrontation with the total situation. He was always aware of the present state of things and was full of humility.

As regards Marxism and Gandhism, Dr Gyanchand said, both the men thought of the establishment of socialism based on the movement of the masses. At that point Gandhi and Marx met but Gandhism could never be equated with Marxism. Marx's historical and dialectical materialism, his vision of classless society, the structure of the state, the economic structure, etc., were entirely different. In these matters, Gandhism had absolutely no affinity with Marxism. He thought that a lot of confusion existed in the present time among Marxists themselves in respect of both theory and practice; but the flaws in Marxist thinking had to be changed from within. Yet Marx's theory appeared to Dr Gyanchand to answer better to the problems posed by the present-day society. 'So, we should not try to understand our situation through Gandhism alone,' he said.

## SECTION B

### *Gandhi on Social Cohesion and Social Change*

MARGARET CHATTERJEE,  
Gandhi's Conception of Collective Action

MARGARET CHATTERJEE,  
A Harijan Woman's Viewpoint

K. DAMODARAN,  
Ends and Means

DEV DUTT,  
Sarvodaya, Our Times and Gandhi

GANESH D. GADRE,  
Trusteeship  
and T. K. N. UNNITHAN,  
Gandhi and Social Change

#### DISCUSSION

Professor Bimanbehari Majumdar questioned the advisability of asking young people to take resort to 'social disobedience', which Dr (Mrs) Chatterjee seemed to him to have suggested in her paper. Regarding Sri Gadre's reference to Proudhon in his paper, Dr Majumdar pointed out that such ideas were already existent in Indian thought. The Sarvodaya idea was also there quite earlier, he said.

Dr V. V. Ramana Murthi asked: (1) What was the significance of individual Satyāgraha? (2) Did Gandhi support violence? The same passage from Gandhi was quoted both by those who supported violence and those who did not, he said. Did the supporters of violence need the Gandhian support for their way of action? he asked.

Mr Vasant Palshikar had some difficulties in understanding what exactly was the *instrument* of social change. Referring to Dr Chatterjee's paper, he made certain statements from Gandhi to show that such instruments were Satyāgraha and Trusteeship.

Dr Gyanchand made three points: (1) Gandhi's views were subject to growth and change. (2) Immediate task was to build up overwhelming mass pressure and social pressure to make social change by effectively irradicating social evils. The communal relations had got to be improved as a most vital necessity in our country. (3) What Mr Gadre called Trusteeship, was, according to Dr Gyanchand, only nationalization. And he thought that was Gandhi's basic intention. It was, in effect, public ownership and public management, he said.

Mr Mohit Sen, referring to Dr (Mrs) Chatterjee's paper said that she had not fully understood Marx's views on collective action, which had been misrepresented in her paper. Class action did not preclude united fronts of different classes. Secondly, he commented on Mrs Chatterjee's conception of 'intellectual'. 'It is really the intelligentsia of which he is far more hopeful today than in Gandhi's time.' Thirdly, as to the question 'Could Gandhism be developed?' his answer was an emphatic 'yes'. That could be done by modifying the theory of Trusteeship till it came to a point of nationalization. And that was certainly something for which Marx stood.

Regarding Comrade Damodaran's conception of means and ends, Mr Sen said that although he had developed these concepts very ably, he had failed to develop the *chain* of means and ends. At every given moment, means and ends had to be concretely determined.

Mr T. K. Mahadevan, while referring to Mrs Chatterjee's paper suggested that Gandhi's collective action had some important significances: (1) Marking time; (2) Establishing rapport; (3) Means of keeping the workers together, i.e., consolidating workers.

Satyāgraha was immensely more than a 'tool'. Gandhi, thus, would read much more in these actions than mere techniques.

Regarding Mr Unnithan's paper Mr Mahadevan asked: 'Are Gandhian proposals all reviseable, as Mr Unnithan thought?' On his own part, Mr Mahadevan had grave doubts. He thought that our task was not to modify Gandhism according to our society but to modify our society according to Gandhism.

Referring to Mr Damodaran's paper, Mr Mahadevan remarked that there was much more of Marx in it than Gandhi.

Referring to Mr Gadre's paper, which he described as a 'political tract', Mr Mahadevan said that Gandhi's conception of Trusteeship was, in a sense, supported capitalism. It was just a manifestation of old Indian habit to Indianize everything.

Dr (Mrs) Sharda Jain found some 'conflicting' statement in Dr Unnithan's paper which concerned the evils of untouchability.

Dr K. J. Mahale thought that in Mr Unnithan's paper the use of the word 'tolerated' should better be replaced by 'respected'; not merely toleration of other religions, for instance, but *respect* for them, ought to be the correct description of our attitude.

Regarding Mr Gadre's paper, he pointed out that Trusteeship had to be replaced by legislation. And about Panchayats he asked as to what would happen if it went in the hands of corrupted and undesirable people? Regarding the role of intellectuals, he said that they played two kinds of roles, depending on the goals which must first be clearly stated.

Mr B. R. Dubey, commenting on Mr Unnithan's paper, emphasized the *direction* of social change, which he thought, was not spelt out in Dr Unnithan's paper. Mr Dubey further added that though Gandhi respected all the religions, he prized Hindu Dharma above all. Mr Dubey felt that Dr Unnithan's presumption that Gandhi believed in egalitarian values was not correct, because Gandhi believed in Varnashram Dharma and was not opposed to accumulation of wealth by non-violence.

Mr B. R. Nanda found in the papers presented two contradictory views:

(1) absolute irrelevance of Gandhian thought in the present context; and

(2) absolute relevance of Gandhian thought in the present set up. He illustrated his contention by referring to the papers of Mr Dev Dutt and Mr Gadre respectively.

While praising Mrs Chatterjee's excellent analysis of collective action, he suggested that it was one of the fundamental characteristics of the Gandhian technique that the results come quite late so that

one has to wait in endless patience. He illustrated this from the history of Gandhian Movement.

Gandhi, he said, never believed in ‘All or Nothing’ formula. He was pragmatically clever enough to accept compromises, and proceeded step by step, patiently, according to the exigency of the time.

In her reply, Dr Margaret Chatterjee thought it should be possible for ‘social disobedience’ to be undertaken in a courteous and non-violent manner and it was this that she was advocating. Answering Mr Mohit Sen she conceded that Marxism did speak of multi-class action in certain circumstances. For example there might be an alliance between the proletariat, the Lumpen proletariat and the intelligentsia. But Marxism also held that some classes were natural enemies, such as the upper classes and the peasantry, or the working class and the middle class. She did not think it made much difference whether one spoke of ‘intellectuals’ or ‘the intelligentsia’. In any case, the connotation of these terms according to Marxists these days was extremely elastic. Not only were intellectuals involved with the establishment but many were under the spell of foreign powers.

In his reply Mr Unnithan pointed out that if we wanted Gandhism to contribute to our social existence, it was necessary to find out the essential dynamics of the Gandhian thought-system and make it grow so that it continued to be a living ideology relevant to the society of the present as well as of the future. This was possible, according to him, only by revising Gandhism to the extent necessary. It might not be necessary or even possible to alter the basic structure or the core of the Gandhian thought-system without tending towards its total rejection; however, it was possible, according to Mr Unnithan—or even necessary—to neglect that which was peripheral in Gandhism, namely, in Gandhian ideas and actions. If this was not done, the Gandhian would be always between the horns of a dilemma without having any sense of direction. The model suggested by Mr Unnithan would, according to him, get over the dilemma for, Gandhian propositions once subjected to constant experimentation and revision would make Gandhian theories grow. As he thought this to be the only way to make Gandhism a living ideology, he recommended undertaking of research into the various aspects of changing social situations with reference to relevant Gandhian ideas. And this was so, since he thought that the major question today was to make Gandhian system adjustable to social conditions.

Mr Dev Dutt, in his reply, said that he would like to clarify his statement further. He believed that Gandhi was a great phenomena and his life and life's work represented yet another glorious high water-mark of the possibilities of the flowering of human nature. Like all phenomena, Mr Dev Dutt thought, Gandhi too could not be reduplicated. 'Surely, you cannot launch projects to produce Shakespeares, Picassos, and Tagores,' he said. 'It is in this sense', Mr. Dev Dutt thought, 'Gandhi is irrelevant'.

But then, Mr Dev Dutt continued, traditions and history would pursue us as inexorably as, to use a Yeatsian phrase, the tail pursued the dog and, therefore, it was difficult to ignore the heritage of Gandhi. The task of the historian committed to social change was to undertake 'operations sifting' in order to disengage pure quantities of Gandhi's heritage from those elements which were dated and topical and to examine their relevance. For this purpose, Mr Dev thought that it would be essential to critically and thoroughly re-examine Gandhi's programmes, his movements and his personal life and his broad approach to life and society as a corrective to the ills of our age. He felt that a real appraisal of Gandhi was yet to be made.

Mr K. Damodaran remarked that what Dr Ramana Murti had said about his paper was not correct. He further pointed out that Mr Mohit Sen's remark regarding the absence of the chain of means and ends in his paper was also not true, since that was just what his whole paper was upon. Mr Mahadevan's remark regarding his paper, he thought, was similarly incorrect.

Mr. Ganesh D. Gadre replying to Dr Gyanchand said that in his paper he had only pointed the *root* cause and not the subsidiary ones. He felt that the views he had presented were his own understanding of Gandhi's views, and he had no objection if Mr Sen calls these Marxian.

Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose said that the varieties of images presented in the Seminar were not only images but were often *imaginary*, for the simple reason that most of them had freely modified (according to each one's suitability) the words which Gandhi had used in a definite context in a definite sense.

He pointed out, further, that different varieties of Marxism were being freely referred to without ever taking care to define what brand of Marxism one was meaning while comparing it with Gandhism. At this stage he referred to some remarks of Mr Mohit Sen regarding

Gandhi as ‘striking’, coming as it did from a Marxist, he said.

The reliance on the trustees to convert themselves into willing, partners of the system of trusteeship was not meaningless, he said, if we looked at it from the point of view of the *time* when Gandhi was prescribing this. ‘Trusteeship for Gandhi had meant more than what it has been interpreted to be’, Professor Bose pointed out. ‘For one thing, it certainly meant no *inheritance* of wealth’. Professor Bose wanted to demolish a certain image of Gandhi created by the Communist Party—namely, as the saboteur of all mass-movements—by copious references to Gandhian actions and writings.

Altogether, Professor Bose thought that the present Gandhites and the Communists in our country might, in a sense, be said to be sailing in the same boat: both are equally guilty of not desiring the real uplift of the masses, and, to that extent, both remained the same middle-class movement that they both essentially were.

BHAGAWANT RAO DUBEY,  
Gandhi’s Views on Status of Women In India  
A. B. SHAH,  
Gandhi, Communalism and National Unity  
MOHIBBUL HASAN,  
Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian Muslims  
D. N. PATHAK,  
Gandhi: Tradition and Change—A Study in  
Modernization  
and HOSSAINUR RAHMAN,  
Gandhi: The Messiah and the Politician

#### DISCUSSION

Dr Niharranjan Ray raised a few questions in connection with Professor Mohibbul Hasan’s paper. ‘Is there not an unconscious effort in his paper to oversimplify the problem?’ he asked. The great



Muslim population who were not in the cities were completely ignored. The statements of the few individuals are considered and on these alone his general conclusions were based. Dr Ray supported his contention by giving concrete illustration— positive and negative— from various impressions of the period.

Symbols and images played a much more important part than mere words, he said, analyzing the various reforms movements of the time. Gandhi, as a leader of the people was naturally obliged to make use of certain symbols and images to effectively appeal to the people, but these tended to be 'Hindu' almost exclusively.

Professor V. M. Sirsikar, referring to Mr A. B. Shah's paper, said that there were persons having two religions: one which they professed in public and the other which they held privately. In the same fashion, with most of us, he said, there was a political religion and a private one.

Dr S. Naqvi, referring to Professor Mohibbul Hasan's paper, fully supported Dr Ray's contention. Dr Naqvi supported his statement by referring to relevant incidents from the period. He thought that Mr. Shah's paper had also oversimplified things.

Professor Bimanbehari Majumdar referred to some factual mistakes in Professor Pathak's paper. He further said that he would not allow any bracketing of Gandhi and Kautilya even for the limited purpose of astrology.

Referring to Mr Dubey's statement that nowhere in the world the minimum age of marriage for women was less than 18, he said that this statement was seriously questionable. Referring to Mr Dubey's paper, DR MARGARET CHATTERJEE suggested that the Mahatma's stress on manual work might have been connected in his mind with the role of women in society, for every woman was familiar with at least some manual work. There were two new factors in our present-day society which he had not foreseen. The first of these was the growing economic independence of women, which, she said 'has brought along with it a new form of exploitation, the obligation of the bride to earn'. The second was the biological emancipation of women through family planning— something which Bapu would not have supported.

Mr Dev Dutt commented on Mr Dubey's paper by saying that no

practical benefit was to be derived from a few facts and quotations which were already well known. Mr Dubey should have discussed Gandhi's views on sex, he said.

On Professor Pathak's remarks regarding modernism and Gandhi, he said that Gandhi was certainly not 'modernizing' if we took the true connotation of the term 'modern'. Gandhi was not Kamal Attaturk, he said.

MR DEV DUTT had only one question to ask from Dr Hossainur Rahman, viz., was it possible to psychoanalyze a dead man?

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti interpreted Khilafat Movement in a different way from Professor Hasan's and suggested that Gandhi's role in Khilafat was supported by facts of history as well as by Gandhi's own philosophy.

MR T. K. N. UNNITHAN wanted to remind Professor Hasan that if Gandhi had not been able to understand the Muslims, he had also failed to understand the Hindus. He thought that Mr Shah's assessment that Gandhi's understanding of man was not correct enough because he lacked sociological knowledge, was sound. He wanted Shah to throw more light on this problem.

Mr B. R. Nanda said that the analysis given by Professor Hasan for the creation of Pakistan was not correct. Mr Nanda tried briefly to analyze the situation to show the significance of his point. It was very unfair, he said, to charge Gandhi and others of leaning towards communalism. 'What we should remember is that this communal problem is too complex and requires more close analysis', he said.

Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose made certain observations regarding two problems: (1) *Khilafat*. He read from Tilak and Bipin Chander Pal to show that Gandhi had wrongly been made the blameworthy person for that movement. More careful and factual study was needed on that field to arrive at scientific conclusion, he said. (2) 'Modernization', Professor Bose quoted Tagore to say that according to the poet 'the true representative of modern India was not Gandhi, but Nehru'. And he quoted Gandhi to show that Gandhi thought himself, and not Nehru, to be a true representative of real India. Yet, in spite of those varying judgements, Gandhi was, in a certain sense, modern and was certainly very rational, he held.

Dr Urmila Phadnis said that Gandhi wanted to 'renovate' a system

rather than demolish it. Thus, while opposing untouchability, he did not propound the abolition of caste system as such.

Dr Mulk Raj Anand, commenting on the Hindu-Muslim question, felt that there was a feeling throughout that Gandhi was seeking cooperation from the Mullahs only and never from the masses. On that particular point Dr Anand supported Dr Naqvi. Gandhi the man had to be clearly separated from Gandhi the Ideologue.

Mr T. K. Mahadevan said that he had no great faith in historical judgement and not rely on them too much. The *modus operandi* of the man had to be carefully understood if we wanted to get a more dependable picture of his. He said, Gandhi was against modernization.

Participating in the discussion, DR GYANCHAND commented on four points: (1) Regarding Gandhi as an innovator. He illustrated his point by explaining the significance of Satyāgraha. (2) Regarding modernization, he discussed the sense in which Gandhi was a modernizer. Yet he thought that Gandhi had certain essential limitations. (3) Glass approach, Dr Gyanchand conceded, was necessary for effecting the Hindu-Muslim unity, i.e., the appeal to the masses. Yet, the fanaticism—the deep inhibition—of the Muslims was a very important factor in what had actually happened, he said. (4) Regarding Gandhi's attitude to sex and women, Dr Gyanchand said, 'that sex has a place of its own, this Gandhi did not sufficiently appreciate'. He referred to some of his personal discussions with Gandhi on this point.

Mr K. Damodaran, referring to Professor Hasan's paper, said that he had been a little one-sided in his analysis of the Hindi-Urdu controversy. He expressed his doubt about the soundness of the sense in which Mr A. B. Shah had used the term 'modernization' in his paper.

Mr M. Zuberi, however, endorsed the views expressed by Mr Shah.

Dr Satish Saberwal, referred to there being represented in the seminar a diversity of attitudes regarding the actions of Gandhi. Each one of those had to be carefully considered, he said.

Mr D. G. Tendulkar deplored our having altogether forgotten one

great fact, viz., the presence of Badsha Khan—a proper consideration of which, he thought, might perhaps clarify some of the perplexing issues with which we were faced. ‘How did Badsha Khan, without any nationalistic background whatever, become so effectively involved in the national movement?’ he asked. It was possible, he said, by Gandhi’s influence, as also by Badsha Khan’s own reading and understanding of Islam.

Referring to ‘modernism’, Mr Tendulkar said that it was essentially a relative term. ‘What exactly do we mean by saying that since somebody is talking in terms of religion, he is necessarily not “modern”, and hence backward?’ Mr Tendulkar asked. In many cases, even in the most acceptedly advanced countries, people were coming to accept things which were once supposed to be signs of ‘backwardness’, he said. Mr Tendulkar supported his contention by referring to many contemporary facts.

Commenting on Dr Pathak’s paper, Mr Dev Dutt made the following points:

It was indeed a fact that Gandhi had set up several new institutions and had started several movements which were intended to bring about change in our polity; he led India in its struggle towards a new kind of social order. But that whole process could not be denoted as ‘modernization’. ‘In fact, Gandhi’s essential significance lies in the fact that he had raised a ‘voice of revolt against Western civilization and modernism’. He said, Gandhi’s *Hind Swarāj* was a clear example of his *basic* attitude towards modern civilization, Mr Dev Dutt pointed out.

Gandhi wanted India to change, on its own terms, independently, uniquely and to evolve its own framework of thought and action. He stood for a culture of constraint as opposed to the culture of uninhibited expression. He refused to accept any external pattern as a model for Indian renaissance. He wanted India to remain India, and to change in response to the compulsions of its inner needs, ‘to stand in our boots and be ourselves’

Indian people were being sucked into the whirling pools of Western influences. Even the tallest of the Indians looked at the West, almost spellbound, as if it epitomized the highest and the best expression of human culture and civilization. ‘Under these circumstances, it is necessary to cultivate the spirit of *swadeshi* which Gandhi emphasized throughout his life’, he said.

Mr Dev Dutt exhorted: ‘Let us not attribute to Gandhi as a leader, virtues he did not have. He was for India, for an Indian response to

its problem, yet always willing to learn from others in any case.’

In his reply, Professor D. N. Pathak said that he took ‘modernization’ in this particular context to refer to any rapid transformation of society on a large scale. In that sense, he said, Gandhi *was* a ‘modernizer’ and this fact could be supported by many incidents from Gandhi’s life.

At that stage many objections were made to this observation, and it was generally thought that ‘renovation’ was a more suitable term to explain facts under reference than ‘modernization’, as Professor Pathak had thought.

Dr Niharranjan Ray spoke about the evolution of the term ‘modern’, on the further discussion to which Dr Karunakaran also contributed.

Replying to the questions, Mr Bhagwant Rao Dubey said that Gandhi’s views on sex, being beyond the purview of his paper had not been discussed. However, it had been stated that Gandhi was against treating women as objects of masculine lust; he permitted sexual union only for procreation. In reply to a question about age of marriage, he said that there was a big difference between a ‘fact’ and a ‘trend’. Though there was a trend in American Society for lower age of marriage, the average of females is above 20 years. Similarly, in India, the trend was for late marriage, though the average of marriages actually performed continued to be below the average age of marriage.

About the economic independence of women, Mr Dubey said that Gandhi was of the view that women should be part-time workers. Referring to Gandhi’s views about legal remedies, Mr Dubey said that Gandhi was not opposed to legal remedies but he emphasized more on cultivation of public opinion.

Dr Hossainur Rahman, in his reply, remarked that he had absolutely no doubt that psycho-analytical study of Gandhi was possible even if he was no more. He went on to explain at some length his meaning of ‘indigenous model’ and of a certain other ‘mistakes’ of Gandhi which he had referred to in his paper.

Professor A. K. Dasgupta remarked that in spite of the occasional heat that was generated in the debates, they were, on the whole, very instructive. He referred in particular to the many comparisons

between Gandhi and Marx that were made during the course of the discussion. Perhaps Gandhi could have been analyzed even without referring to Marx, he said. What he was doing, on his own part, was only to try to mention *some* common features between the thought of these two great leaders. It was, he said, only an inherent weakness of a teacher for comparison.

As to the question: ‘Is Gandhi irrelevant today?’, Professor Dasgupta’s answer was that if Gandhi had been relevant in his own time, he was so even at the present time, since nothing had changed so vitally in the meanwhile as to make him irrelevant. The old problems—almost all of them—were still very much there; they had changed their complexions only, he said. On one point, however, he thought that Gandhi’s relevance had become much more vitally important in our time than in his own: it was the Gandhian emphasis on austerity.

He then briefly outlined a certain scheme vindicating the economic relevance of Gandhi today—a scheme which he thought was viable. ‘Thus’, said Professor Dasgupta, ‘not only Gandhi gave us a technique but he has also given us an economically sound basis for a system of national life’. In the end, he referred to a certain statement of Gandhi (which, he thought, was comparable to another similar one in Professor Marshall) in support of the thesis that he maintained.

Mr B. R. Nanda spoke on the issue that was raised regarding the mistake of Gandhi’s leadership of the Khilafat Movement. The entire Muslim intelligentsia was swept by that movement, had said. ‘And Gandhi was trying to use this movement to inject nationalism in the Muslim masses’.

Mr Nanda remarked that the charge had been brought that by his unwise use of the symbol of *Rāma Rājya* and *Purna Swarāj* Gandhi had antagonized the Muslims. But what else could he have done as a leader of such a great multitude of people that constituted the Indian masses? When he was speaking to this great mass of people he was obliged to speak in terms of some symbol—and the symbol he used was the one which was understood and effectively responded to, by the largest number of people of the country. He could not probably help it, under the circumstances, Mr Nanda remarked. It was not, therefore, Gandhi’s mistake but it was the mischievous propaganda of the Muslim League and other similar organizations that, by twisting those symbols with the sole purpose

of antagonizing the Muslims, had succeeded in bringing about a setback in the movement. Gandhi, here was certainly defeated by Mr Jinnah in winning over the allegiance of the rank and file of the Indian Muslims, Mr Nanda said.

Speaking on the issues raised in Professor Hasan's paper, which he commended, Mr Mohit Sen wanted to supplement the views held by Dr Naqvi. He did not think that Mr Shah's remedy is going to work. It was essentially anachronistic in temper, he said.

In that connection he referred to two focal points: (1) Our experience of channelizing the struggle on revolutionary lines was that whenever such revolution had been allowed to take place there was never any communal disturbance. On the contrary, only when there was a frustration in the people because of the withdrawal of such movements that communal troubles had broken out, he said. (2) But to whom were we to turn to solve the Hindu-Muslim riots? he asked. Not certainly to the 'petty bourgeoisie', but to the toiling millions who really suffered and who were directly involved. 'And we must turn to them with an appropriate ideology equal to the problem,' he said. He called for a new concretization of Indian nationalism and identity.

Speaking next, Dr K. P. Karunakaran pointed out that as a political leader Gandhi was dealing with *all* Indian Muslims and Hindus. Jinnah took up the leadership of the Muslim League when he found that this organization was becoming powerful. The very fact that Gandhi could always appeal to the Hindus over the head of the Sanatanists, showed that he was above communalism.

Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose presented one fact on which he found himself to be fully in agreement with Mr Mohit Sen. This was the presence in many minds of an uninformed view that Gandhi was afraid of violence. What Gandhi had actually said with reference to the Chauri Choura and other movements was read out by Professor Bose. It was *not* his fear for violence that had led him to call back the movements, Professor Bose said. On the contrary, it was when Gandhi found that the very organizational framework of his movement was giving way—when his own lieutenants appeared to him to be not following him properly—that he withdrew the movement, and not out of fear of outbreak of violence.

Dr K. J. Mahale, referring to Mr Shah's paper, said India was a secular country and its present constitution did not recognize separate

ideologies for Hindus and Muslims. Yet if there were conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, they should be nipped in the bud and the secularism in the country should be fortified, as was suggested by Mr A. B. Shah.

Dr Mulk Raj Anand, speaking on the issue of communal problem, referred to his personal experience of meeting Iqbal who said that he had started feeling the communal element of the Hindu Congress. Some nationalist Muslims, like Mr Ansari and others, had also stated to have similar feeling, he said.

Referring to Mr Shah's paper, Dr Anand thought that Mr Mohit Sen was rather unfair to him. Dr Anand found nothing wrong in Mr Shah's suggestion of amending the Muslim Personal Law. Factional solutions will not do he said. Unity of secular forces on platform of social justice alone might rid us of communalism. He appealed to the participants—who were for him, primarily an assembly of intellectuals—to assert themselves impartially to that end.

Dr Niharranjan Ray gave some historical evidences of incidents which, he said, were at the root of separatism. He went on to remark that accepting that as our basic premise, what we were doing afterwards through many of our attempted solutions, was only trying to come to some *political understanding* between the parties while yet accepting the basic separateness. No wonder that our remedies had always remained only *symptomatic* without ever reaching the root of the vital problem which they were intended to cure.

Replying to the criticism, Professor Mohibbul Hasan selected only some of the points made against him.

Among other things he said that: (1) 'I agree with Dr Ray that I should have discussed the influence of the Wahabi and Pan-Islamic movements on Muslim leaders. But since I had already gone beyond the 5,000 words as prescribed by him, I was not able to discuss this question. However, I feel that after the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, those nationalists like Azad, Ansari, Kidwai and all others who came to nationalism by way of the Khilafat had got rid of the idea of Pan-Islam or Darul-Harb or Darul-Islam. A man like Maulana Mahmudul Hasan, when he left India during the non-cooperation movement, established a republic of which he made a Hindu, Raja Mahendra Prabhat, as its President.'

(2) 'I do not agree with Dr Naqvi', he said, 'that the Khilafat Move-



ment was confined to the middle-class only, because the peasants and workers also took part.' Mohammad Ali and Azad and others attracted large crowds. Actually, the upper classes had remained aloof from the Khilafat Movement.

(3) Professor Hasan further pointed out: 'From Mr Nanda's comments it appears that it was impossible to settle the Hindu-Muslim problem. I believe it *could have been done* in the twenties if Gandhi had come to terms with the Nationalist Muslims while still they enjoyed considerable influence.'

Professor Hasan remarked 'the criticism that he surrounded himself with upper class leaders is not true. Ansari, the Ali brothers, Azad, etc., did not belong to the upper class; they were from the middle class; just as many of the Hindu leaders who surrounded him and enjoyed his confidence were from the middle class. But Gandhi did not ignore the Muslim masses. The movements in 1918 and 1919, the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Quit India Movement were not meant for Hindus alone. They were for *all* Indians. That the Muslims did not participate in the last two movements was due to other reasons.'

(5) He further said: 'Mr Nanda and Mr Shah referred to the statements of some Muslim communalists that they wanted to establish Muslim rule in India. I think that if they had not said so, they would not have been communalists. Similarly, Hindu communalists wanted to establish Hindu Raj. But as far as I have gone through the writings of Muslim nationalist leaders and even of Jinnah before about 1940, I have not come across a single statement which might create the impression that they wanted to establish Muslim rule.'

Finally, Professor Hasan said: 'Now the question whether or not there has been any self-criticism among Muslims. I feel that there has been self-criticism and a renaissance. Unfortunately, it has not been enough and it has been within the framework of religion. Perhaps this was inevitable considering the objective conditions of Muslim society in the twenties. But as regards the present, I broadly agree with the views of Mr Shah as mentioned by him in section IV of his paper. I also agree with Mr Mohit Sen's proposal for solving the Hindu-Muslim problem'.

Professor A. A. A. Fyzee expressed his whole-hearted agreement with the suggestions of Professor Hasan if he was prepared to add *two things* to them: (1) There must be a complete separation between law

and religion, and (2) a compulsory study of the Middle-East of the recent period. Both of these, he said, have been able to solve many problems of Islam and Christianity—problems which were quite similar to the ones with which India was faced today.

Mr A. B. Shah in the course of his reply to some of the points raised against his paper in the discussion said: ‘Let me at the outset agree with Mr Mohit Sen that the Muslim renaissance of the nineteenth century: I know my dialectics well enough to understand that history moves “in a spiral” and not in a circle. The Muslim renaissance, if it comes, will be different from the Hindu and be related to the situation of Islam in the second half of the twentieth century. However, it will have to be based on two principles. One, the acceptance of science and scientific method as the only course of valid discursive knowledge: and two, the acceptance of the universal human values embodied, for example, in the U.N. Charter of Human Rights or the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of India, as the touchstone for the injunctions of religion’.

‘I also agree with Mr Sen’, continued Mr Shah ‘that we have to project an Indian image as distinct from a Hindu or Muslim image. Indeed, I myself have suggested it by implication towards the end of my paper. But the problem is: how can an Indian image be projected unless we oppose the religion-based image that obscurantism, Muslim as well as Hindu, seeks to project? This is not a question of combating communalism alone—one can deal with communalism by compromise and adjustment. If this has not been possible so far, that is because it is rooted in religious obscurantism and this later exploits communalism for its own purposes.’

Before turning to the remaining points, made by both Dr Naqvi and Mr Sen, Mr Shah briefly referred to certain remarks of Dr Damodaran and said that there was a significant difference between the two societies Mr Damodaran was talking about. The Hindu renaissance threw up an articulate liberal class whose members subjected the Hindu doctrine and tradition to merciless scrutiny from the standpoint of reason and secular human values. Muslim society had *not* so far, anywhere (except Turkey) from Egypt to Indonesia thrown up such a class, he said. There certainly were individual Muslims who were as modern in their approach and outlook as any Hindu. But they did not constitute a group that was bold and articulate enough to promote the growth of the modern

spirit among the Muslims. On the contrary, even as individuals they were generally very cautious in their public stand.

Regarding Dr Naqvi's and Mr Sen's remarks concerning the agency of modernization, Mr Shah said: 'I have once again gone through my paper and to the extent I understand it, I do not seem to have said anywhere in it that the "elite" can by itself modernize Indian society. What I *have* done is to assign to the elite the *leadership* of the process of modernization, which, however, cannot be carried through the involvement of other social groups. The point is: which class, other than the educated middle class, can provide leadership in this process? And isn't it true that the leadership of all political parties which stand for modernization, including the communist party, come overwhelmingly from the middle class?'

This brought him to a consideration of the non-economic factor. Mr Sen's statement that communal riots were the doing of the 'petty bourgeoisie' was just not correct, he said. While the provocation of communal riots, might have come from that class, participation in a riot was not confined to it. The 'working masses' also joined them with gusto. What was more significant, he said, was that no political party, not even the communist party nor any trade union, had been able to prevent communal riots. Nor did they have the courage to criticize the obscurantism, especially of the Muslims, for fear of losing the Muslim vote. Worse still, communists like Mohammed Elias had sometimes exploited Muslim obscurantism for the party's ends, instead of educating Muslim masses into a secular outlook. Similarly, political parties like the Congress and S.S.P. dared not to oppose the Shankaracharya's demand for a ban on cow-slaughter.

In such a situation who else but educated persons, who were not interested in the games of power politics, could tell the people the truths that were in the public interest but against public sentiment? he asked.

## SECTION C

### *Gandhi's Economic Ideas and their Implementation*

VIVEK RANJAN BHATTACHARYA,  
Economic Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi

RAJ KRISHNA,  
Some Reflections on Gandhian Economics

S. N. MISHRA,  
A Model of Gandhian Economy:  
Technology, Industry and Growth

S. NAQVI,  
Economic Thinking of Gandhi—  
The Concept of Trusteeship  
and VASANT PALSHIKAR,  
Gandhi's Economic Ideas and their Present  
Relevance

#### DISCUSSION

MR GANESH D. GADRE opened the discussion by pointing out that trusteeship was the very life blood of Gandhism whereas many-sided constructive activities launched by Gandhi were only the limbs. He felt that Dr Naqvi's fear about trusteeship being Utopian and Dr Bhattacharya's hesitation in recognizing the practicability of this idea resulted from a misunderstanding that cooperation or change of heart of the capitalists was the only way for the implementation of the trusteeship theory. They forgot that the capitalists could also cooperate by running away, he said.

Referring to Mr Palshikar's paper, Dr Margaret Chatterjee said that Gandhi wanted that the villages should be made so attractive that people would not want to drift to the towns. Gandhians needed to work out the 'constructive work' in towns. What exactly was the

role of voluntary organizations in a welfare state? she asked. She reminded Dr Naqvi that Gandhi had made a distinction between the classes and the masses and that by the latter he meant the peasantry. Commenting on the concept of 'needs', she said that the primary needs of all must be satisfied before the acquired needs of a few were satisfied. She deplored the determinism implied in Raj Krishna's paper. Having learnt all that we could about the winds and tides we should never lose faith in our capacity to navigate, to control our own destiny as a nation.

Dr K. P. Karunakaran pointed out in the discussion that it was not possible for India to go the American way to reach American level of production because of so many problems involved. He further emphasized the need of developing Indian economy free from interference from either the U.S.A. or U.S.S.R.

Dr M. A. R. Panikkar remarked that by following a middle path India could avoid the totalitarian grip of economic laws as elaborated by Mr Raj Krishna in his paper. He added further that today West was moving towards East in many ways. For example, the appeal for non-economic profession was increasing in the West. India could also learn from the West by taking advantage of technical innovations made in the West.

Dr Gyanchand pointed out that Mr Raj Krishna had not explicitly stated the internal logic of his deterministic approach and did not take note of social values and purpose. As such, his system seemed to be operative in a social vacuum and he was the greatest Utopian. Dr Gyanchand emphatically expressed his faith that mankind would shape its own destiny by knowing the laws of social hydraulics and making use of them. Referring to Dr Naqvi's paper, he added that it was wrong to say that Gandhi did not understand the process of growth. Gandhi learnt from experiences and grew; but not by compulsion of circumstances as described by Dr Naqvi. Gandhi's experiments had failed and yet Gandhi, without doubt, offered an integrated system, he said.

Mr Dev Dutt commenting on Mr Raj Krishna's paper said that he was surprised to note that Raj Krishna was speaking like a 'determinist'. He pointed out: "The sordid view of irreversibility of historical trends hurts you somewhere. The picture of the inevitability of historical

processes let loose by technology which Raj Krinshna has painted is too gruesome to be believed.’ In fact, it was a gross oversimplification of the actual process of history, for it ruled out completely the possibility of even marginal success of human violation. Mr Dev Dutt remarked.

Dr V. V. Ramana Murthi drew attention to the close relationship between Gandhi’s economic and political ideas. In his view, they could not be separately discussed.

Mr K. Damodaran congratulated Mr Raj Krishna for his brilliant economic analysis. He agreed with him that Gandhi’s economic ideas were based on non-economic values and that modern civilization led to neurosis and Marx loved human freedom and social development based on human ideas. Both started with non-economic motives while they analyzed and formulated their economic ideas. Mr Damodaran further added that there were certain positive values in economic growth despite all the ills pointed out by Mr Raj Krishna, and those positive values could be better achieved and ills minimized if we chose neither the American nor the Soviet way but the Indian way to economic progress remembering that man was supreme.

Professor A. R. Desai pointed out that rural society was being idealized for getting the class conflict and polarization of classes that was actually taking place there. Urban and rural exploiters joined hands to exploit the poor masses. He also felt that technology was needed in agriculture to provide the people with their minimum food. He further added that the destruction of an exploiting system was being confused in the discussion with the destruction of individual’s personality.

Professor S. N. Balasundaram remarked that Mr Raj Krishna’s speech was intellectually artistic but emotionally frightful. Mr Raj Krishna used the methodology of Marx to arrive at the conclusions of a liberal. His intellectual posture was brilliant though rarely convincing. He further added there was always an element of unpredictability in human behaviour and Mr Raj Krishna’s assumptions on human behaviour might not be valid in future as well as the compulsions of technological growth based on high mass consumptions.

Mr Bhagwant Rao Dubey drew attention to the compulsion of

democratic process where a politician had to promise many things to obtain votes. He added that it was impossible to deny the benefits of Westernization to the masses.

Dr Mulk Raj Anand congratulated Mr Raj Krishna for his paper which had the effect of a thriller. Mr Raj Krishna was right to emphasize the impacts of technology. Yet he felt that Dr Karunakaran's hunch that a kind of Indian cultural and technological revolution would be there in response to Indian conditions and problems of growth, might prove to be true.

Dr M. K. Chaudhuri agreed with Mr Raj Krishna that high mass consumption had its technological compulsions. Yet he felt sure that the level of Indian consumption would remain low in the next decades as a result of following the American path to industrial development. Because of mass unemployment and general poverty of the people he felt that certain elements of Dr Mishra's Gandhian model would be relevant for the growth of Indian economy in the near future though he agreed that Mr Raj Krishna's points were to be conceded once the high level of mass consumption was reached. He further expressed his conviction that certain ills of modern industrialization could be avoided if destructive competitive atmosphere generated by private ownership of means of production was substituted by constructive participation in planned economic growth based on socialization of means of production.

Dr (Mrs) Sharda Jain asked as to why had we to choose from the two extreme models and why should we not have an Indian model for the growth of our economy.

Professor Maqbul Ahmed pointed out that Gandhi was not an economist and that he was essentially a man of religion. Whatever economic ideas he had were not based on positive economics but were related to a system of values. He felt that Gandhi's religious thoughts were more relevant.

In reply to the discussion MR VASANT PALSHIKAR drew attention to the logical conclusion of Mr Raj Krishna's reasoning, namely, the inevitability of war and annihilation of mankind. Therefore, he pleaded for acceptance of the need of acting in a manner whereby man could change the direction of development in a significant degree. He agreed with Dr (Mrs) Chatterjee that villages should

be attractive so that people might choose to live there. He further added that Gandhi was conscious of the existence of classes and exploitation within the villages. He concluded by pointing out two aspects of trusteeship which had been overlooked in the discussion. Babu talked of trusteeship not only in connection of capitalists and landlords but also in connection of every one who had more of anything—money, talent, physical power, etc.—than the common people. Each was to use his talents or profession or strength for himself only to the extent of his need, the rest was to be utilized in the service of the society. The other aspect was that Gandhi appealed to the capitalists for change of heart because he was careful and insistent not to advise a course of action which could not be, at least on a minimum level, successfully consummated. Gandhi's appeals to the large heartedness of the capitalists and landlords dated from a period in the twenties when the workers and the tillers were in his opinion not strong enough for a non-violent non-cooperation with landlords and, the capitalists. Besides, Gandhi's prime objective was the achievement of political independence.

Dr Naqvi in his reply pointed out that economic growth in the proper sense was not visualized by Gandhi though he accepted the need of a little increase of production in agriculture and industry. Gandhi, he thought, did not realize that the problem of over-population could be solved by intensive cultivation by reinvesting the surplus in land. He also did not realize that there were compulsions of market economy namely competition and ruin of small-scale sector. Gandhi was indeed compelled to make all kinds of compromises by the compulsion of circumstances and he became radical only when he realized that this was the only path to solve Indian problems.

Dr Vivek Rajan Bhattacharya in his reply said that if modification of trusteeship meant a kind of social control, that might be much nearer reality and hence realizable. He emphasized that he did not say anything against Marx. He was convinced that misuse of Marx led to suppression of the liberty of masses. Referring to Mrs Jain, he asked her to look to the masses to find out true Gandhians if she failed to discover one among the leaders.

Dr S. N. Mishra in his reply said that no social revolution could be achieved by reference to individual incentives. The incentives for the purpose had to be social. He also said that the laws of



thermodynamic were applicable to all societies. He concluded by saying that non-violence would not succeed. In Gandhi, non-cooperation, non-violence and finally, violence, occur as successively ordered instruments of policy.

GYANCHAND,  
The Substance of Gandhian  
Economic Approach  
SHARDA JAIN,  
A Critique of Gandhian Ethics  
BIMANBEHARI MAJUMDAR,  
Gandhi's Ideas on Agriculture and  
Food Shortage  
and V. M. SIRSIKAR,  
Gandhi and Political Socialization

#### DISCUSSION

Dr Niharranjan Ray opened the discussion with remarks on the role of villagers in Indian civilization. He pointed out that the authors of the *Arthasastras* had always advocated for the growth and nourishment of cities whereas the authors of *Dharmasastras* had glorified and pleaded for rural civilization. As a result the civilizations of Mohenjodaro, of the Greeks, Romans and Muslims had been ruralized in India. Gandhi's emphasis on villages perhaps resulted from misreading of Indian history and culture. Villages never existed without cities of some kind or other which provided market for surplus rural products. Dr Ray felt that the future of India would be similar to that of Kerala where one hardly saw any village. Gandhi, he further added, was unable to visualize the impact of technology on rural life.

Mr T. K. Mahadevan expressed his feeling that Gandhi's personality had been too much fragmented in the discussion and he was afraid that as a result one might fail to visualize the whole man. He took the opportunity to emphasize once more that Gandhi equated truth with God and he primarily wanted to serve the people of India. Mr Mahadevan wanted to put it on record that as a Gandhian, therefore, he saw no objection in having atom bomb in India if that served the interest of the people.

Dr M. K. Chaudhuri spoke on the problems of population and choice of techniques in industries. He drew attention to the fact that even if population control programme was successful that would increase the growth of per capita income per annum by hardly more than one per cent. Therefore, he felt that other problems of economic growth must also be tackled and bold decisions had to be taken which helped to explore the potential resources. On the choice of techniques in industries, he felt that that was a very complicated subject of planometrics and decision should emphasize the need of maximum production of means of production after satisfying the agreed need of the whole population in consumption goods. Once the consumption fund for the whole population was secured, there need be no unemployment as people who could not be employed in productive spheres could still be employed in the service sector if they could be paid from the general consumption fund. In the process, the choice of techniques might favour the use of labour intensive techniques in many industrial activities for maximization of the growth of national economy.

Dr M. A. R. Panikkar said that just as it was of no use for the mother of a pilot to ask her son to fly slow and low, it was meaningless to advocate for slow mechanization. He felt that though man had total power to control the machines of the first degree, for example, tools, man had to adjust himself to the machines of the second degree. Machines were discovered mainly by foreigners and India needed a kind of anthropological revolution to make successful use of the discoveries in that sphere. He concluded by saying that Gandhians and non-Gandhians could cooperate in bringing about that revolution.

Mr Dev Dutt saw nothing wrong in Gandhi's emphasis on non-economic problems as he felt that every system required correctives.

Birth control and urbanization would not solve all the problems of economic growth.

Mr Bhagwant Rao Dubey pointed out that Gandhi was opposed to population control on moral grounds. He felt that the solution lay in population control and increase in production. Referring to Professor Majumdar's paper, he said that increase of prices was necessary for stimulating growth processes of the national economy. Dr M. K. Chaudhuri interrupted to say that he knew of cases where planned growth had been realized without inflation.

Mr Mohit Sen felt that people were unnecessarily afraid of machines. After all, machines were an agency for human liberation. He agreed with Mr Raj Krishna that there were imperatives in economic growth. But the basic imperative was social ownership to cover socialization of production. He drew attention to the consequent colonization of Asia and Africa in the process of capitalist industrialization of Europe. Capitalist industrialization in a few cases meant de-industrialization of various areas. He pointed out that capitalistic method of industrialization is only one of the ways of industrializing the economy. Machines of third degree, for example, automation etc. have brought new problems with them and he felt that American road to industrialization was not the best way for industrializing India. Better lessons could be drawn from the Soviet pattern of industrialization.

Professor Amlan Datta pointed out that village was for Gandhi a symbol of a particular kind of community life based on family-feelings or good neighbourliness. It was in that context that other key concepts in Gandhian thought, such as, the idea of restriction on consumption should be interpreted. What was prescribed there was not a quantitative limit, but any level of consumption on the part of some people was compatible with the Gandhian ideal so long as it was not in excess of the general standard to such an extent as to undermine neighbourly solidarity. Professor Datta, however, felt that there was a latent danger in stressing the communitarian ideal exclusively. The Gandhian Utopia would not be good enough as a Utopia if it did not incorporate the positive aspects of city life, for example, the freedom it gave to individuals. He added further that the course of history was always a resultant force between the forces represented by Utopian ideas and that of realities of production

and consumption needs. As such, he saw the positive role of Utopia in shaping the human destiny. Professor Amlan Datta also drew the attention to the logic of Mr Raj Krishna which, if followed, consequently led to the conclusion that high mass consumption ultimately led to mass destruction through war.

Mr A. B. Shah remarked that Gandhi's economic ideas could not be separated from the whole system of Gandhi's thought. If it was remembered that Gandhi expressed his economic ideas in different contexts and that it was difficult to define acceptable social purpose for all, it was clear why one hardly found any relevance of Gandhi's economic ideas when applied to problems of today. He agreed with Mr Mohit Sen that capitalist industrialization was accompanied by colonization of the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America but he asked if that was not so because of political aspects of the system prevailing then. He felt that the problem of freedom of man was to be considered while choosing a particular social structure. Any social structure which inhibited individual's freedom was to be rejected.

Professor V. V. Ramana Murti pointed out that the main reason for failure of Gandhian ideas and experiments was the nearness of Gandhians to the seats of political power. He further added that the cost of producing atom bombs was prohibitive and if we produced atom bomb today we should participate in an arms race with no end.

Professor D. N. Pathak felt that as Gandhi was much more successful in his time than many others, he would definitely have understood even the present time if he were alive today. He had considerably changed the course of history and the environment of his time and gave the people of India an identity which was relevant to his time.

Mr Ganesh D. Gadre quoted Jay Prakash Narayan on trusteeship and said that just as idealists helped revolutions in the past, idealists were today required for realization of the ideal of trusteeship.

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand remarked that Mr. Mahadevan did not understand the deterministic approach of Mr Raj Krishna though it was of much importance even for Gandhians to grasp it. Nobody was obliged to accept Gandhi as a whole, just as Nehru did not, as his time was different from that of Gandhi. But it was not necessary to use the Gandhian fig leaf to cover one's own nudity. He failed to

understand how anybody could justify production of atom bomb in India in the name of Gandhi. He was sure that Nehru's planning had not converted India into another America and would not do so in the next fifty years. India would have an Indian revolution—in spirit neither American nor Russian. Gandhian values pointed out by Mrs Jain would find a proper place in that revolution.

Dr K. J. Mahale, while accepting the inevitability of technology, pointed out the unhappiness that it had brought in America and Western Europe. He felt that while the quantity of population should be controlled the quality of the people had also to be raised through education.

Mr T. K. N. Unnithan expressed his agreement with Dr Gyanchand that power complex was to be altered. But did not Gandhi fight all his life to change that power complex? he added. He further remarked that Gandhi was against the evils in villages and he was not totally against urbanization.

Dr K. J. Shah: 'I have two comments to offer on Mrs. Jain's paper and one comment on Professor Sirsikar's.

'First, Mrs. Jain has suggested that there is a conflict between the idea of duty being determined by one's station and the idea of conscience. But I do not think that there is a conflict here, because when there is a conflict between two duties demanded by one's station in life, or, when the traditional duty of one's station is felt to be inadequate, conscience will come in.

'Second, Mrs. Jain has suggested that what we can accept from Gandhi is his advocacy of certain values such as truth, austerity, etc. I should like to say that what is important is not the acceptance of these values—they are generally accepted—but their hierarchy and the context. I shall not go into the question of hierarchy. As for the context, I should like to point out that austerity may be accepted for different reasons, for example, to raise the standard of living later on, or to accept a lower standard as a value in itself, or for its demonstration effect in a community which values austerity as such.

'With reference to Professor Sirsikar's paper, I should like to say this: One factor in Gandhi's success in politicizing the masses was his ability to break through the barrier of language—which he did with his symbols like Ramarajya—which had universal significance. But as literacy spreads, especially through the regional languages,

I am not at all sure if this means of politicizing the masses will be available to the same extent.’

Mr Dev Dutt, commenting on Professor V. M. Sirsikar’s paper said: ‘Gandhi did not initiate process of political socialization. It had already begun earlier under extremists. He only intensified it. He also enriched its social content and related it to India’s own sources of strength.

‘But this process of political activation of the masses was not in step with the process of radicalization of their social ideas and thinking. India’s unavoidable preoccupation with political struggle and its organizational questions and the state of unpreparedness of the masses could be enumerated as factors which were responsible for our inability to refine and radicalize our social and economic ideas. But, whatever the explanation, this gap between radical political movement Gandhi led and the less radical social ideas he enunciated had serious consequences for not only the national struggle but the developments in the post-independence era.’

Mr K. Damodaran pleaded for population control, remembering the role of family planning in the happiness of family, spiritual and physical beauty of the mother, educational problems of the children and the imperatives of economic growth. He felt that abstinence was ugly and unnatural.

Dr B. L. Abbi raised the problem of fixing the minimum requirements for the whole population as the range of requirements differed from section to section. He doubted if the range of requirement of an average individual would be the right kind of minimum requirement. Besides, men never lived by the minimum and there was also no static minimum requirement.

Professor S. N. Balasundaram reminded everyone of Plato who said that no Utopia could survive without political power. If we wanted Utopian happiness, we could have it under the British Raj (with external autonomy) leaving problems of our international relationships to the British people to solve.

Mr M. Zuberi said that a violent society could not face aggression with the means of non-violence. The talk of moral leadership of the world was foreign propaganda which nobody took seriously.

That was meant to restrict and influence the course of our action as desired by super powers. 'We need to rethink our defence strategy', he said.

Professor Amlan Datta, in continuation of his earlier remarks, further added that Gandhian idea was to develop productive forces in such a way that least harm was done to family relationship. There was, for example, always a choice between family based agriculture and collective farming. Both were technically feasible. Another such choice could be large-scale production with workers' participation in management and profit. He once more emphasized the inter-connection between Utopia and compulsive forces of history and the importance of the kind of utopia one had in mind as that influenced the reorganization of human relations and the quality of decisions.

In his reply to the discussion, Professor Bimanbehari Majumdar said that he could not understand Mr Raj Krishna when he objected to his quoting Gandhi as his paper was on Gandhi. Gandhi was concerned with the problems of productivity in agriculture and he actually wrote on the use of military personnel in peace time in digging wells to raise the productivity of agriculture. Gandhi did not object to the rise in prices of agricultural products if the benefit would go to the agriculturists but objected to the rise as the middlemen always appropriated the benefit of such a rise. Professor Majumdar emphasized the need of popularizing birth control methods in villages and concluded by saying that one should also remember that Krishna was the eighth child and Rabindranath Tagore was the fifteenth child of their parents.

Dr Gyanchand insisted in his reply that Gandhi had neglected the power structure in the country while formulating his economic ideas. If Satyāgraha had to have any meaning, if it was to be converted into a social force, it must be for the masses and by the masses. Gandhians had failed in that. The country was passing through a crisis and was calling for clear and definite commitment even from the intellectuals which was very much lacking. To say that acquisitiveness would always remain as unchanged and oligarchy would grow as a result of imperatives of large-scale production was fatalism. Technology and even automation was to be employed but social implications of technological imperatives were also to be taken into account. Machines were but man's mind in action.

If that was so, man could also control machines though it might require certain mental and social adjustments and not necessarily surrender to machines. Agriculture had to be given priority in our strategy of development but the present strategy of agriculture would only intensify contradictions. Five per cent growth of the national economy required release of new social forces which called for a different agricultural policy and allocation of investment among various sectors. Towns always existed and would exist and grow but they should not enslave villages. Urban development was to be planned in such a way that monstrous evils of large cities could be avoided.

Dr Sharda Jain in her reply said that Gandhi minus God was still much and his ideas had a relevant place in shaping the future of our society.

Professor K. Satchidananda Murty, in his concluding remarks as the Chairman of the Fourth and Fifth Business Sessions, pointed out the general agreement among all the participants in the discussion on the evil aspects of affluent society and on the contradictions inherent in modern industrialized society. Advocates of modern industrialization believed that that would bring more freedom and raise the level of mass consumption. But that also meant the superimposition of the institutions of the two blocks and that led to neocolonialism. The alternative might be found if there was another way of 'industrialization which was different from capitalism and communism, based on traditions in the developing countries. Though that might mean that the industrialization would not be so rapid. Otherwise, one might opt for American way of industrialization with all its inherent contradictions with hopes that ultimately that will give birth to a new and better kind of civilization. One could share the belief of Herbert Marcuse that certain tendencies in such a society can be developed to bring in a new kind of civilization.



## SECTION D

### *Gandhi's Political Ideas and Movements*

MULK RAJ ANAND,  
 Gandhi's Philosophy of Life  
 BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARYYA,  
 Gandhi's Attitude Towards Political Power  
 K. J. MAHALE,  
 Society and State—Rāmrāj and Swarāj  
 BIMANBEHARI MAJUMDAR,  
 Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas on State and Society  
 and MOHIT SEN,  
 Power, Satyāgraha and Communism

#### DISCUSSION

Dr Margaret Chatterjee, who began the discussion, said that she did not agree with the view that Gandhi was not a liberal democrat. He was a liberal who applied liberal ideas to suit the conditions of his times in India. For example, his concept of liberal democracy involved Harijan welfare, something which of necessity was not there in the West. Gandhi's direct action did not repudiate liberal democracy, but only supplemented other methods of constitutional agitations which were sanctioned in liberal democracy. Dr Margaret Chatterjee also expressed the view that Gandhi was not against modern civilization as such. The fact that he wanted the material advancement of the peasants showed that he was for a regulated acceptance of the advantages of modern civilization. He did not, however, think that the mere capture of power by the industrial proletariat would bring that about. Both Gandhi and Marx wanted exploitation to be ended. We should never confuse the *bundh*, *dharna* and *gherao* techniques with *satyāgraha*.

Mr Bhagwant Rao Dubey felt that the use of such expression as *Rāmarājya* by Gandhi was unfortunate and that it had many

undesirable effects. He pointed out that Gandhi did not use such expression as *Rahimrāj*. As a result of this Jinnah, the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, had to part company with Gandhi. For Gandhi, mankind was one and patriotism was same as humanity. Therefore, it is necessary to define the concept of State and Nation in Gandhian thought.

Mr K. Damodaran observed that as far as the society was concerned, the ends of Gandhi and Marx were the same. He wanted to make a distinction between the ruthlessness of Gandhi and that of the communists. He made a plea to the followers of Gandhi and Marx to work together and for the development of an Indian thought which would be a synthesis of Marx, Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru.

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti said that the list given by Mr. Mohit Sen to show that Gandhi was not a liberal was not convincing. He said that there could be a counter list to show that Gandhi was a liberal. He gave a few cases in that connection. Rebutting Mr Raj Krishna, Dr Murti said that the absence of a successful non-violent resistance against an aggression was not an argument against it.

Dr M. A. R. Panikkar thought that a nation's security could not be protected by its military alone. He said that there was a gradual trend towards interdependence of nations and, historically, there were cases of countries like Switzerland that were preserving their freedom by not making adequate preparation for defence.

Professor S. N. Balasundaram felt that Mr Mohit Sen was behaving like an efficient salesman and that his observations suggested that he was selling *Das Capital* with a Khadi binding.

Dr Gyanchand thought that the weakness of Gandhi's thought was that it did not envisage class conflict. That was true of the concept of the Panchayats also. According to him the Panchayats, as they *were* constituted in the present day, were instruments of class oppression. He said that the partyless democracy and consensus which some 'Gandhians' were advocating were illusions. He welcomed the rethinking on many matters by the communists and the present trend towards a realistic appraisal of Gandhi by them. He also expressed the hope that Gandhians would also make a realistic study of communism.

He thought that Mr Raj Krishna left out some fundamental factors in his discussion on defence and foreign policy. 'To take an instance, a good economic and political structure was the first priority for successful defence and this was ignored by Mr Raj Krishna,' he said.

Mr Dev Dutt said that he disagreed with several points in Mohit Sen's paper. But the general draft of his paper filled him with hope that men of Mohit Sen's persuasion were looking to Gandhi afresh for strength. Mohit Sen had broken another stereotyped picture of Gandhi. He was glad that Mohit Sen thought that Gandhi was anti-capitalist, anti-Gandhi and that he was great leader of men who meant business and that he was out to change the *status quo* in India totally. He expressed the hope that Mr. Mohit Sen would go further to places where his own logic would take him. He did not believe that communism was a negation of Gandhism, because communism appeared first. Although some of Gandhi's political campaigns had a touch of opposition to liberalism, Gandhi was not a anti-liberal in non-political fields and in the totality of his programmes.

Mr M. Zuberi thought what the Czechs did recently could not be equated with non-violent non-cooperation. It was only prudent self-restraint when faced with the superior strength of a mighty power. Without a non-violent society, there would not be non-violent defence. Under the present circumstances, there could also be no interdependence of nations. He was, therefore, for the preparation of adequate defence by military means, including the manufacture of bombs.

Mr P. Govinda Pillai expressed the view that in India the communists should follow an Indian path to communism. He said that it was not surprising that Indian communists had started a deep study of Gandhi, because that was in line with the tradition of Marx who made a deep study of the thought of many great men who preceded him. He was of the opinion that the present methods employed by the opposition parties such as the gheraos and the bandhs were only an extension of Gandhi.

Mr A. B. Shah maintained that Gandhi was against any centralization of power even as a temporary expedient measure. Although Marx was a humanist, the communists, who came to power, were not, and it

would be difficult to combine Gandhi's humanism with the practice of the communists. Mr Mohit Sen's analysis of Gandhi's concept of power only indicated his desire to use Gandhi for the purpose of the communists. Gandhi was also not a democratic centralist as the communists understood the term. It was significant that he did not exclusively depend upon the Congress, but developed other centres of power outside it. On the question of India's defence, Mr Shah said that India must develop close relations with countries in South and South-East Asia. He did not rule out the desirability of India making nuclear weapons if China continued to blackmail and threaten India.

Professor Amlan Datta did not agree with Mr Mohit Sen's view that Russia's rate of progress was due to Lenin's leadership, as contrasted with that of Gandhi. Russian industrialization had started at a fairly rapid pace towards the end of the nineteenth century and even without a communist party government, Russia by the middle of the twentieth century would have become a strong military and economic power. He also emphasized the importance of the new technique of non-violent resistance developed by Gandhi and observed that the prudent self-restraint, as was displayed by the Czechs recently, was in line with Gandhi's ideas and practice.

Dr K. J. Shah: 'I am astonished at the objections—expressed and unexpressed—to an intellectual analysis of Gandhi. It is said that Gandhi is not a theoretician but a prophet and a practising politician; and, therefore, we should not examine his thought. This argument has some point—and I want to insist that it has only some point—if all that we wanted to do was to judge Gandhi either as a politician or as a prophet. But if we want to learn from Gandhi then the formulation of the principles of his action is necessary for understanding and critical evaluation. This is the sort of analysis that Mr Raj Krishna has given to us about his economic thinking.

'It is true that such analysis has its dangers; it simplifies by ignoring details and it, therefore, may lead us to a mis-application of the thought. But, then, not to undertake such an analysis is to resign oneself to blind intuition. Intuition is useful only if it is well informed and disciplined,

'I would like to submit that an examination of Gandhi's thought only adds to his greatness by making clear his greatness to us.'

Dr K. P. Karunakaran thought that a comparison and contrast between Mao and Gandhi could be made to show the relatively poor performance of Gandhi in the political method because no one could maintain that China had a better start than India. But he also said that unlike Mao and Lenin, Gandhi had many achievements in other fields. He thought an infiltration of Gandhi's ideas would humanize communism, while a small dose of communism would make Gandhism more effective.

Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose maintained that Gandhi's attempt to make an organization effective must by no means be equated with the ruthlessness of the communists who liquidated their opponents. He also did not agree with Mr Mohit Sen's view that the concept of the role of vanguard in Gandhi's campaigns was similar to that of the communists. He repudiated the view that Gandhi was patronizing to the masses and that he did not envisage their role as emancipators of themselves. He quoted extensively from Gandhi's writings to substantiate his views.

Professor Bose added that the achievements of the communist government of the Soviet Union should not be compared to those of India for the purpose of the argument that Gandhi's achievements were less than those of Lenin. In the first place, those who were ruling India were not Gandhians. In the second place, the challenges which Gandhi faced in India were much more enormous than those faced by Lenin. India was not only less developed economically, it was also almost a continent with people of different religions, languages and cultures and it was also relatively over-populated. He also felt that the type of economy envisaged by Gandhi was an ancillary to the organization of defence on non-violent lines.

Mr. Mohit Sen, in his reply, denied that he was trying to sell Marxism through subtle means. He pointed out that despite great achievements communists were self-critical while Gandhians continued in sectarian arrogance despite very slender triumphs. He was only making a realistic appraisal of Gandhi and although the aims of the communists and Gandhi were different, there was much that the communists could gain from Gandhi's methods. The Gandhians too should attempt to reappraise communism and come to terms with it. He conceded that Gandhi did not physically liquidate his opponents; but that did not make him less ruthless.

All mass movements wanted vanguards and as Gandhi led mass movements, he rightly gave a place to the vanguard. Only when communists did the same thing they were pounced upon. Gandhi's reference to the 'dumb' millions and Gandhi's method of the struggle suggested that his concept of the masses was not that of those who could emancipate themselves, which was what the communists aimed at. Mr. Sen reiterated that Gandhi rejected those aspects of liberal democracy which envisaged that the methods of political agitations should exclusively be constitutional and as such he was not a liberal democrat. He asserted that what the communists were doing in India by way of Bandhs and strikes were only an extension of Gandhi's methods of the struggle. He criticized the pseudo-deterministic approach of Professor Datta. The denial of the breakthrough of the October Revolution would mean denying the value of any historical event including Indian independence.

Dr Mulk Raj Anand warned against India making bombs. Even in developed countries like the Soviet Union and France, an armament programme had disrupted the economy.

Dr K. J. Mahale, in his reply, said that by *Rāmarājya* Gandhi meant only a just social order and he pointed out that Gandhi used different expressions in different places; for instance, in the North West Frontier, he used the word *Khudai Raj* because it made a tremendous appeal to the Muslim masses. He also said that Gandhi was not advocating non-violence exclusively for India. He wanted the whole of the world to adopt non-violence.

S. MAQBUL AHMAD,  
 Gandhi and Islam  
 BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARYYA,  
 Gandhi's Concept of Freedom: People's Swarāj  
 BUDDHADEB BHATTACHARYYA,  
 Rāmarājya  
 V. V. RAMANA MURTI,  
 Gandhian Concept of Power  
 and URMILA PHADNIS,  
 Gandhi and Indian States—A Probe in Strategy

#### DISCUSSION

Professor Amlan Datta, referring to Dr Murti's paper, said that Gandhi's concept of power was connected with the emphasis he placed on love, freedom, truth and God. Gandhi was not concerned so much with the seizure of state power as with the question of substituting state power with truth power, which meant in effect the replacement of administrative coercion by restraints voluntarily accepted by individuals in the spirit of service to the community. In his choice of means Gandhi kept that end in view. Mr Datta made comparisons between Gandhi on the one hand and Christ, Muhammed and Marx on the other. Christ was against violence, Muhammed was for resisting aggression by all means and Gandhi combined the two. The gods of Marxism took for granted that the enemy would use violence and, therefore, sanctioned violence from the very beginning.

Mr K. Damodaran contended that Murti's paper was only a half truth. Of course, Gandhi stood for the dissolution of the Congress but not the state, he said. Mr Damodaran was against the use of force by any power—communist or non-communist. He wanted a genuine mass movement for peace and the combination of the ideas of Marx, Tagore, Nehru and Gandhi.

Professor S. N. Balasundaram pointed out that power was a reality

and it could not be washed away. The real issue was who would control the power. Gandhi did not face this question squarely. Professor Balasundaram felt that nuclear power only added a new dimension to weapons and power and the people should not be scared by it.

Mr M. Zuberi contended that Gandhi had always exercised power. There was not only corruption of power but also such a thing as the discipline of power; and the Great Powers were exercising the discipline at least in regard to the use of nuclear weapons, Mr. Zuberi said.

Mr T. K. N. Unnithan felt that non-violent struggles did imply power. But he said that Gandhi gave always an ethical interpretation to it and he felt that there should be an increasing emphasis on ethical values in international decision-making, although the world-state remaining a far-off possibility.

According to Mr Vasant Palshikar Gandhi understood power and even accepted the use of force by the state. But he did not develop his ideas logically in relation to international relations and in regard to the use of force by the state against those who differed from the authorities and resided within the state.

Dr Niharranjan Ray pointed out that Gandhi always developed centres of powers other than the state and gave importance to them.

Elaborating the concept of power, Professor D. N. Pathak pointed out that it was a relational concept; power was exercised by man over man. The amount of power depended, therefore, on the obedience rendered. It presupposed communication channel between the one who commanded and the one who obeyed. With the growth of technology, absolute weapons, education and increase in communication, the concept of power seemed to be undergoing a change. Perhaps, ‘communication model’ was replacing ‘power model’. After the Cuban crisis in 1962, the two super-powers decided to open hot-line communication channel to obviate possibility of precipitate action. A good example of such a model was to be found in the United Nations.

Professor Pathak thought that non-violence model presupposed better and fuller communication between the parties concerned.



Struggle based on non-violence involved and presupposed open communication channels. It operated openly as was the case with Gandhi. It was in that way that the future role of non-violence might be explored and envisaged.

Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose said that Gandhi did take an absolute position in regard to non-violence, but he watered it to make it acceptable to Congress. He agreed with Dr Ray that Gandhi helped the development of many centres of power other than the state. Professor Bose explained Gandhi's concept of *Swarāj* in which the working class had a major role and power. But Gandhi also realized that there were limitations of time and space in regard to the success of the policies and programmes and in regard to giving them that role and power.

Dr Gyanchand said that the elites and masses had different roles in society and that the elite should be responsible to the people. He thought that those who were in power should be made to yield to the overwhelming pressure of the masses. According to him, those concepts of Gandhi which had become fetters on the thinking of the people, should be given up. Gandhi went wrong in some respects because he did not realize that every society had a power pattern.

Dr Naqvi disagreed with Professor Amlan Dutta's interpretation of Marx and maintained that he did not start on the assumption that the political opponents were violent. However, political experience in Russia, Spain and all over did make it clear that the opponents of the working class were always aggressive and violent. He had his own doubts of the U.N. helping internationalism. On the other hand, in Korea and elsewhere, the U.N. was an instrument of power. Commenting on Professor Maqbul Ahmad's paper, he said that the practice of *zījya* pointed out that Islam was intolerant towards other religions.

Mr P. Govinda Pillai said that whatever might be the intentions of Gandhi, such concepts as *Rāmarājya* did confuse the people and create many problems. He did not agree with Mrs Phadnis' analysis of Gandhi's role in the states. According to him, Gandhi was responsible for the political backwardness in these areas by not allowing the people to go ahead with the struggles in the states.

Mr Dev Dutt partly agreed with Mr Govinda Pillai and said that Gandhi refused to take an active part in the states from the very beginning and this was against the idea of territorial concept of Indian nationalism.

Dr Margaret Chatterjee said that what was remarkable about Bapu's leadership of the independence movement was that the transfer of power had taken place in an atmosphere devoid of hate. There was no other parallel to that anywhere in history.

Dr K. J. Mahale said that Gandhi accepted the concept of state power. He was opposed to violent methods, and non-violent resistance on a mass scale was his unique contribution.

Dr K. J. Shah said: 'Some of the differences in the assessment of Gandhi and his thought and his policies can be understood if we were to put them in a theoretical framework. One such framework will have three elements: the ideal, the actuality as it existed then, and the policies and programmes that Gandhi implemented. These three elements are not unrelated; and they mutually influence one another, for example, the ideal had a traditional garb, but its elements were widely and strongly present in the community, and yet in order to be implemented the ideal was transformed into an untraditional policy. If the ideal is the top of the ladder and the actuality the bottom, the policy was supposed to take the community to some intermediate step of the ladder.

'If here we look at the intermediate step from the top of the ladder, then the distance makes us think of the ideal merely as a trick of the trade of appealing to the masses—involving all the mean calculations of profits and losses of a political struggle. If we look at it from the bottom of the ladder, then the intermediate step represents a great advance from abject demoralization and degradation to a sense of dignity and self-respect. And so the dilemma, was Gandhi an idealist who wandered into politics or a politician who was shrewd enough to don an acceptable ideal garb?

'If one has a different ideal of society, it gives us a different understanding of actuality and therefore also a different policy, for example, a Marxist understanding of the historical evolution of society and the social ideal flowing from it. But can these ideals be put forward in a community which believes in a *yogi* attaining

several *siddhis*? To make the Marxian ideal work, one will have to work against these beliefs.’

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti, in his reply, said that Gandhi did not deny the role of any power as such; but he was against the use of force to compel anyone to do anything. He always wanted to *influence* others. And he also stood for finding an alternative to military and political power in the traditional sense of the term. He agreed with those who said that Congress was always interested in power, but he pointed out that Gandhi was not. He welcomed the dialogue on the matter of Gandhi’s concept of power. Dr Ramana Murti added that force was always absent from Gandhi’s concept of power and its use. And this made it different from other concepts of power.

Professor Bimanbehari Majumdar in his reply said that there was a difference between legal state and moral state. He said that occasionally Gandhi accepted the concept of parliamentary majority. Only partially Gandhi rejected the coercive state, because Gandhi said that the individual will would be governed by social will. He also expressed his appreciation of the attempts at realistic appraisal of Gandhi by Marxists like Mr Govinda Pillai and Dr Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya.

Dr Urmila Phadnis in her reply said that Gandhi did not rule out the ultimate removal by force of the princes if they did not march with the times. She felt that if Gandhi and the Indian National Congress would have intervened in the internal affairs of the states at an early period, it would have weakened the struggle for Indian independence. Mrs Phadnis pointed out that the level of political consciousness in different states varied. Gandhi advised the people’s movements to be suspended in the states of Travancore and Hyderabad because while there was the possibility of out-bursts of violence in the former, in the latter the movement had tended to be communal.

Dr Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, in his reply, said that Gandhi’s concept of *Rāmarājya* was not of a paternosteric nature. He disagreed with Mr Govinda Pillai on that matter. Gandhi wanted the people to participate in the political life and ultimately to become the welders of power. According to Dr. Bhattacharyya, Gandhi was committed to philosophic idealism. There was no sociological basis to Gandhi’s

philosophy. Gandhi knew the art of revolution, but not the science of revolution. He had no knowledge of history. Gandhi would not envisage the material and socialist foundation of a new state. But one must not expect too much from one individual, he said. Gandhi's relevance in the present day was that he gave the message of fearlessness and resistance to evil. His technique of mass struggles was also not out of date. Gandhi was an empirical humanist. His attack on the concentration of power was also relevant.

Professor Maqbul Ahmad said that such terms as Ramarajya did give wrong ideas to the people. He added that political aspect of Indian nationalism—as against religious and cultural aspects—should be stressed.

In reply to the question connected with *jizya*, Professor Ahmad said that although it was referred to in the religious scriptures, it went against the spirit of brotherhood of man preached by Islam. Again, it was the rulers who wanted to expand their power who glorified it and their aim was mainly political.

## DEV DUTT, Indian Nationalism and Gandhi

### DISCUSSION

Dr Niharranjan Ray agreed with the view that the political aspects of nationalism were given an emphasis and that nationalism could not be built strongly except on the solid foundations of cultural unity, social cohesion and economic inter-dependence. He said that the moderates did connect nationalism with social and economic questions. It was under the leadership of the extremists that such matters receded to the background. Then again, Gandhi tried to bring them to the forefront.

GEORGE E. G. CATLIN,  
 The Pacifist Philosophy of Gandhi Reconsidered  
 ETHEL MANNIN,  
 The Arab Need for a Gandhi  
 K. SATCHIDANANDA MURTY,  
 A Critique of Satyagraha  
 P. GOVINDA PILLAI,  
 Gandhi vs. the Duumvirate  
 and GENE SHARP,  
 Research Areas on the Nature, Problems and  
 Potentialities of Civilian Defense

#### DISCUSSION

Mr P. Govinda Pillai, critictizing Mr Catlin's paper, said that it was a subtle attempt to justify the *status quo*. He said that in the present context the inter-dependence between the states could only be an inter-dependence between the wolf and the sheep and the war was only a continuation of politics. He added that armed struggles in favour of nationalism of the under-privileged still had some useful function.

Professor Maqbul Ahmad said that Miss Ethel Mannin's paper was a little unreal, because it did not take into account the realities of the Arab situation.

During his concluding remarks as the Chairman, Professor A. R. Desai observed that there could be two approaches to the assessment of a historic figure like Gandhi: one was to make an objective assessment of the consequences of their actions and the other was to examine their motivations and intentions. He was inclined towards the first approach. Looking from this angle, one could not deny that Gandhi's legacy was a divided India and an Indian constitutional and political framework in which sanctity was given to the right of property, but not to the right to work. In one sense, secularism was accepted by free India because the state was supreme in many

matters and there was no reference to matters other than worldly in the constitution. And in a big way, the state was also neutral to all religions. But in such matters as marriage, there were separate codes to followers of separate religions and in these respects the state was not approaching them from a purely secular angle.

Professor A. R. Desai also said that most of the so-called religious movements in India had their political repercussions and very often there was a politico-economic content to the programme of organizations which were apparently communal in character.

Referring specifically to Gandhi's role, Professor Desai asserted that although his movements awakened the people, Gandhi did not give a direction to them in favour of their economic rights and progress. Gandhi favoured some peasant and labour movements, but was opposed to or neutral to other movements which would have taken them forward in regard to their emancipation and economic progress. The legacy of Gandhian era, whatever, might be the intentions of Gandhi, was bourgeois democratic state and capitalist economic structure and, according to Professor Desai, those consequences of Gandhi's movements could not be left in an assessment of the great leader.

## SECTION E

### *Gandhi's Legacy and Contemporary Relevance*

S. N. BALASUNDARAM,  
The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi  
MOHAN SINGH UBEROI DEWANA,  
Gandhism is Dead: Long Live Gandhi  
GANESH D. GADRE,  
The Reappearance of Gandhi  
and H. S. TAKULIA  
The Black Americans Experiments with  
Non-Violent Protest

#### DISCUSSION

According to Dr. K. J. Mahale it was wrong to think that in a democracy *satyāgraha* was of no use and it had to be put in cold storage. In fact, one could imagine and cite even actual cases where *satyāgraha* had been or could be used against unjust laws, for example, (a) Antigone's disobedience, (b) if some people were to defy laws in Nazi Germany, (c) Sartre's call to the French soldiers in Algeria to desert the army. 'To say this is not to say that it is not possible to formulate the circumstances under which *satyāgraha* is justified or suitable. Jacques Maritain mentions three such circumstances: (i) against the imperialist government, (ii) for social justice, and (iii) by minorities if the majority pass an unjust law', he said. Dr Mahale suggested that the question of circumstances in which *satyāgraha* was justified or suitable should be further explored.

Dr Margaret Chatterjee said that *satyāgraha* was not incompatible with constitutionalism. If, in the national movement *satyāgraha* had been an alternative to revolution or to constitutional struggle, at the present time it was a complement to constitutional procedures, and it could make for the people's closer participation in the

government. In that form (as she had pointed out in her paper), *satyāgraha* was a technique of collective cooperation as distinguished from individualistic action.

Mr. P. Govinda Pillai said that a *satyāgrahī* could not claim infallibility; like any one else he also made mistakes: even Gandhi did. But there was nothing wrong in using *satyāgraha* to gain political dividends. At one time it was said that the Marxist's goal was good, but their means to achieve the goal were bad. 'Now even when we use *satyāgraha* to achieve our goal, we are blamed. These attitudes are based on the failure to realize that the means and the ends represent a continuum, and if a good end is achieved the means must have been good; and the use of bad or wrong means is bound to modify the good end', he pointed out.

Dr Naqvi did not understand why people objected to *gheraos* even when they were resorted to after all the other alternative methods had failed. If on account of private property rights, canals could not be dug and the irrigation projects failed, what was wrong with resorting to *gheraos*? he asked.

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti contended that Professor Balasundaram had overlooked a basic distinction made by Gandhi as early as 1914-17 and as late as October 3, 1947 (*The Harijan*) between *satyāgraha* and *durāgraha*. He also said that our failure to follow Bapu in recent times in the matter of that distinction or in other ways did not show that he was irrelevant. His contemporary relevance was clearly shown by the black American movement led by Martin Luther King in the U.S.A. (as mentioned in Mr Takulia's paper), and Earl Russell's protest movement against nuclear armaments, in the U.K.

Mr T. K. N. Unnithan thought that we were not justified in blaming Gandhi for the misuse of *satyāgraha* for political pressurization. He thought that that misuse arose from a lack of understanding of *satyāgraha* as an instrument of socio-cultural change, 'To understand it as such we need to make a distinction not between *satyāgraha* and *durāgraha*, but between *sadāgraha* and *satyāgraha*. The former is based on an individual's evaluation of what is good, and this may not be identical with the evaluation of the society. Only when the two coincide, is *satyāgraha* possible', he said.



Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose said that there was a distinction not only between *satyāgraha* and *durāgraha* but also between *satyāgraha* and *satyāgraha*. The *satyāgraha* for a limited economic, political or social objective and the *satyāgraha* for a complete re-orientation of the structure of society should not be mixed up. Gandhi was quite clear that for *satyāgraha* for limited objectives, say, against an unjust water tax or against local practice of untouchability when an opinion against untouchability has already been created, no preparation was necessary. But when the *satyāgraha* was meant to completely alter the political and social structure of the society, Bapu thought that previous preparation was absolutely necessary. Just as preparation in terms of heavy industry, national sentiment were necessary to fight a violent war, so also preparation was necessary for a non-violent 'war'. Today that was forgotten, and it was assumed that no preparation whatever was necessary whether *satyāgraha* was for a limited purpose or for the creation of a socialistic society. For the latter, it was enough, so it was thought, that the ideal was just and that some party leaders were aware of it. 'But in that case what we have is a fake *satyāgraha*', he pointed out. Professor Bose called this a blackmarket in *satyāgraha*.

Professor Bose drew an analogy between Gandhi's method, the homeopathic medicine and the other methods of allopathic medicine, and said that a dilution of the allopathic medicine did not turn it into a homeopathic medicine. The intention of the *satyāgrahī* was different from that of a passive resistor. The former wanted not only social justice, he also wanted to win the cooperation of the opponent. In that light, say, the suffragists' movement in England, could not be called *satyāgraha*. That did not mean that the question was of changing the heart of the opponent. What was relevant to completely alter the society was that we should make it impossible for the existing structure to function. Until the whole world was free from exploitation, the establishment of a completely non-violent society was impossible. What we could do and must do was to make an honest effort. After all, we did not give up taking medicine, because all people die in the end. For preparation Gandhi used constructive work. 'The constructive work of today will be different from that of yesterday, for example, he wanted lathe work, etc., to be taught to the refugees in Delhi; and there are Gandhians today who are helping the tribal people to acquire land or even grab land when they are illegally deprived of their share. There is at least one

such Gandhian who had succeeded in getting the land for the tribal people’, he said.

In conclusion, Professor Bose appealed that whatever we did, let us be either honest allopaths or honest homeopaths.

Professor Bimanbehari Majumdar was surprised that in an assembly of educationists the so-called *satyāgraha* of the students was not mentioned. Very often, the students resorted to a mass strike on untenable grounds, for example, because the Principal did not send up a student for a university examination. It was necessary to consider that aspect of Gandhi’s legacy.

For Dr Gyanchand, *satyāgraha* meant mass protest and mass resistance in an organized manner with a period of preparation by people who commanded confidence and who could bring about effective organization and cooperation. According to him, it was necessary to create public opinion against the abuse of the word *satyāgraha* which was a sacred word and which should have a sacred content. He referred to the language riots during November, 1966 to January, 1967 when the students raised such slogans as ‘Angrezee Hatao’ in the North and ‘English ever, Hindi never’ in the South; and they burnt public property. While all that happened, the whole country—the parents and politicians—looked on helplessly. Not one students’ organization, nor any leader, condemned that as anti-social. The blackening of boards or burning of buses or trams were crimes against society which all responsible people should condemn openly. He also referred to the anti-cow slaughter agitation on 7 November in Delhi produced a mass hysteria. According to him that agitation was supported by foreign interests and financed from P.L. 480 Funds. That, he said, was obvious from the fact that thousands of people with *trishuls* who had come from outside Delhi, disappeared soon after 7 November. In all that, the Government and the political parties acquiesced. Dr Gyanchand appealed that the Gandhian concept of *satyāgraha* should not be allowed to be used to support the *status quo*.

He also thought that it was necessary to awaken and attack the public opinion to make people sensitive to day-to-day problems, for example, of filth in Delhi, of the harassment of women by the goondas, of the degeneration in the behaviour of the Gandhians. In those cases, a solitary individual could not do much and it was necessary to resort to *satyāgraha* for dealing with those problems.

Apart from the legacy and the contemporary relevance of *satyāgraha*, many other related points came up for discussion.

Dr. Margaret Chatterjee said that, according to Professor Balasundaram, Gandhi was not a humanist and that he derived his inspiration from religion. She said that labels did not matter and yet it was important to note that both in India and abroad there were points of contact between humanism and the various religious streams.

Speaking on Gandhi's ideas about *varnāśrama dharma*, Dr. Chatterjee said that, originally, *varna* indicated a link between quality and function. In that connection the Mahatma's ideas on education were relevant. He wanted the development of the potentialities of all so that social mobility would increase and there would be a greater correlation between quality and function. His insistence on manual labour was also meant to achieve the same objective.

She also said that in India, though the state was supposed to be secular—'supposed' because sectarian religious ceremonies and rituals were performed at the inauguration of dams etc., the society was not secular. In that connection, she wondered if Gandhi could not be secularized and if that would not make him more relevant to our own times.

Dr. Urmila Phadnis pointed out that while considering Gandhi's legacy and relevance, it was important to note that though the situation had changed, very often certain statements of Gandhi had been taken to be literally relevant even in the post-independence era. For example, with reference to the Indians abroad, Mr Nehru's approach was identical to Bapu's approach.

Mr T. K. N. Unnithan suggested that the paper of Mr Takulia brought out another dimension to the perspectives that the seminar had considered so far. He said that in talking of Gandhi's influence in America, we should not forget his connection with Thoreau. He also said that the former's contribution to the African national movement also deserves attention. According to him, both Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta drew inspiration from Gandhi's movements.

Dr Margaret Chatterjee suggested that it would be interesting in that connection to take note of the movement led by Danielo Dolai in Sicily.

Dr Niharranjan Ray suggested that the black Movement in the U.S.A. was for jobs and equality in the armed forces, and he asked if Gandhi would have launched movements on the same or similar objectives. Dr V. V. Ramana Murti thought that there was a parallel between King's movement in the U.S.A. and Gandhi's *satyāgraha* in South Africa during 1906-14. Dr Urmila Phadnis thought that the purpose of the black American Movement was naturally limited because the country was already independent. She thought that, in that connection, Professor Satchidananda Murty's paper on the previous day was relevant because it distinguished various types of *satyāgraha*.

Dr Phadnis wanted to point out that the influence of Gandhi on the black Movement in the U.S.A. was generally accepted. But what was important in this that was not so much his influence, was the fact that it brought out the importance of *satyāgraha* as an instrument of social change.

Mr P. Govinda Pillai thought that Mr. Takulia's paper was valuable in that it brought out the limits of the use of non-violence. The black Movement as well as Dr King's were growing out of a belief in complete non-violence. 'Take the Black Power Movement. It has a negative aspect illustrated in the demand for separation; but it has also a positive aspect, illustrated in the fact that the Negroes are not interested in sharing formal equality but in sharing power. And this cannot be done within the constitutional framework of the U.S.A.', he said.

Dr K. J. Mahale wanted to know the attitude of the Indians toward the black Movement. His impression was that not only did they not give moral support to the movement, they seemed even to side with the whites.

Mrs Patricia Uberoi said that we had concentrated on the political and economic thought and relevance of Gandhi, but ignored certain aspects of his life and personality. He was a charismatic leader and embodied in his person spiritual and heroic values. If we looked at Gandhi in that light, the papers by Dr Dewana and Professor Balasundaram raised an important issue (not only for the leader but also for his followers), namely, the validity and scope of the religious experience. A more detailed discussion of that could be pursued by investigating the structure and sociology of other movements. For

example, (a) one could compare the rise of the various religious sects with the progress of Gandhi's movements, (b) one could compare the elements of revivalism in persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others with the similar elements in Gandhi, (c) one could compare Bapu's movement with other social, political and religious movements, for example, the Teiping rebellion in China.

Mr T. K. N. Unnithan said 'only if the individual's evaluation of the good coincides with the society's evaluation of its own good, there is *satyāgraha*; if not, there is only *sadāgraha*. By this criterion the Andhra movement about the location of the steel mill is not *satyāgraha*, because the Andhra evaluation and the Nation's evaluation of the desirability of establishing a steel mill in Andhra is not the same, thus, this distinction between *satyāgraha* and *sadāgraha* provides a good theoretical framework for analysis and study.'

He also said that Professor Bose had provided another framework for analysis and understanding by distinguishing between *satyāgraha* with a limited objective where only the consciousness of wrong, but no preparation, was required, and *satyāgraha* with a broad objective where it was imperative also to prepare for the movement. The frame, he thought, would be complete, if another dimension was added, namely, *satyāgraha* when used in the international context, for example, the confrontation between Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. There the objective would be a broad one; it would not be to completely alter the structure of society but would be to prevent forcible alteration by other societies and to promote peaceful co-existence.

Dr Naqvi said that the problem of student unrest was so grave that he would like to suggest a separate seminar for it.

Referring to the several attempts to distinguish genuine *satyāgraha* from fake *satyāgraha*, he pointed out that it was generally agreed that our society was a class society, and in such a society laws operate in the interests of the owning classes. The important thing, therefore, was to confront these laws by (a) using them as far as possible and (b) by going beyond them. In that respect Gandhi's methods were relevant not because he used them but because of the historical situation. We must remember that it was the Mahatma who called for the first nationwide hartal on 6 April, 1919. 'So, first, we have to decide that the ends or objectives are desirable. Then alone adequate means could be decided upon. And one should not

forget that Gandhi did allow the use of violence as has been pointed out over and over again', he said.

In that connection he said that he would invert what Professor Bose had said. Professor Bose talked of black-marketing in *satyāgraha*, but there could be no black-marketing without hoarding. The Gandhians and some others had hoarded *satyāgraha* in their private storehouses and were sitting tight on that, saying that others could not use it. And just as the hoarder made rice available at a price; so those people also were prepared to allow the use of *satyāgraha* only at a price. 'But why allow *satyāgraha* to be rusted? Why should its use be not allowed? In fact, the Gandhians should cooperate in the effort,' he said.

Referring to the charge that Marxists were parading as 'Gandhians', Dr Naqvi observed that any Marxian could accept some aspects of Gandhi, for example, (a) Gandhi's conception of a Utopia of a classless and casteless, peaceful national and international social order; (b) the concept of mass mobilization and mass participation without the idea of conversion; and (c) his asceticism or, rather, austerity. (The Marxists followed that for a time in India; 'but they follow it now only when they are canvassing for elections and they want to impress the peasants and the workers that they are no different from them. This remains, though in the selection of candidates, caste and other un-Marxian considerations prevail', he said. He continued: This last is necessary also on account of our scarce resources. All these could be accepted by the Marxians from Gandhi. But if it is said that the Marxists should not use Gandhi's name and his prestige, then the Marxists should leave it to the Gandhians'.

Mr M. Zuberi attempted to clarify the several ways in which the relevance of Gandhi was considered. (a) There had been no disagreement that his life itself was an example and as such had a contemporary relevance. (b) Some had thought Gandhi to be relevant in point of technique but not in point of his political or economic ideology. (c) Some others had interpreted whatever Bapu said and did in terms of his intention and then he was seen to be dynamic and his political and social ideas were also accepted as capable of development and relevant (d) Professor Desai, in his intervention, had suggested that it was instructive to consider Gandhi's relevance not in terms of his intentions, but objectively, i.e., in terms of the consequences that had followed from them. In that light, the constitution which made

property a fundamental right and work for all merely a directive principle, was in favour of the classes and not the masses. According to that, in so far as the good of the masses was our objective, the relevance of Gandhi was negative. (e) Mr Pillai suggested that Gandhi was betrayed by Nehru and Patel. If he was right, then Professor Desai's analysis could be brought into question. But it was also possible to ask whether Gandhi was really betrayed. Rather, there was a gigantic upheaval which, though Nehru and Patel tried to control, led both of them. (f) With reference to Gandhi's relevance to India's defence problems, Mr Zuberi wanted to state dogmatically that so far as Shanti Sena and other such organizations were concerned, they were of little or no relevance.

Replying to the discussion, Dr Mohan Singh Dewana emphasized what he considered to be the most relevant features of Gandhi's life and thought. Whatever one's conception of evil and whatever one's way of fighting it—those were individual personal matters—the important teaching of Gandhi, in Gandhi's own words was 'I will not know God until I fight against evil'. Another relevant feature of Gandhi's teaching, according to Dr Dewana, was freedom from the fear of death. He pointed out that in a meeting in 1920 at Amritsar, Gandhi told the Punjabis that they should be ashamed to call themselves brave because none of them had dared to court death by defying the order which required anyone crossing a particular street to crawl on all fours. According to Gandhi one must always remember: who lives if the *Ātma* dies, and who dies if the *Ātma* lives? One must derive strength from the knowledge of the immortal self. Here Bapu was preaching not humanitarianism but the triumph of fearlessness. That fear had not disappeared was Gandhi's sorrow and tragedy, not successes or failures, he said.

Professor S. N. Balasundaram in his reply said: (1) Dr Ramana Murti seemed to be regretting that India had abandoned Gandhi while the West had adopted him. But that was no argument in favour of the relevance of Gandhi. (2) Professor Balasundaram agreed that a comparative study of the Teiping rebellion will be helpful. He also thought it important to investigate the roots of Gandhi's charisma in Vaishnavism, etc. In that way we should have a better understanding of the influences that shaped Gandhi, than by trying to find these influences in the West. (3) Mr Unnithan raised the question whether we could blame Gandhi. Professor Balasundaram

said that he had the highest personal regard for Gandhi, and he did not blame him. He only described the situation and it raised a politico-philosophical problem about the conception of justice. (4) There was a difference between the communists and Gandhi in their conception of justice, though presently the communists were trying to make Gandhi their guru. This was the softening influence of Hinduism on communism. 'If as between individual evaluation of good and social evaluation, the latter is emphasized then we have Marxism. If the former is emphasized, then we have liberal utilitarianism. Gandhi is different from both, and wants to focus on the mean, the limit', he said. (5) Mr Pillai's conception of ends and means was Marxist. The liberal view that there was absolute morality was a bourgeoisie conception for him. There was no meeting point between the two. Gandhi emphasized purity of means and the purity of motives. For the Marxist, the subjective aspect did not matter. (6) Gandhi approved of *satyāgraha* for just cases. But the conception of what was just was connected with the conception of what was truth. Otherwise, as between individuals there would be no common point of reference. But he was a truthful man, Gandhians were not. What Professor Balasundaram condemned was abuse of *satyāgraha* and not *satyāgraha*.

Mr H. S. Takulia, replying to the discussion said: (1) It was true that Indians in the U.S.A. were unfriendly to individual blacks, and the black movement. That was born of our extreme colour consciousness, which was reflected in our treatment of African students in India, as shown by letters in the newspapers. Mr Takulia said that when he used to visit the NAACP often, his Indian friends used to remark that he should have stayed at home if he wanted to mix only with the blacks. (2) It was Philip Randolph and not King who launched the movement for jobs. For Mr Takulia the question whether Gandhi would have launched such a movement was irrelevant. The important thing to note was that there was another and a different context. Whether purists would approve of the use of Gandhi's name was another matter. (3) Mr Unnithan's suggestion about more studies in the field of non-violent action, Mr Takulia said, needed to be taken up.



## PREM NATH, Non-violence and Human Destiny

### DISCUSSION

Dr Margaret Chatterjee thought that the central point of Professor Prem Nath's paper was that Gandhi was a great educator for peace. She pointed out that Gandhi was impressed by William James' idea of a moral equivalent of war. Such a moral equivalent could have a twofold manifestation: (a) transformation of nature, (b) transformation of human society. Words such as pragmatic and experimental had been used with reference to Gandhi, and it would be interesting to investigate his relation to pragmatism.

Mr T. K. N. Unnithan thought that we had referred to it, we had not discussed the question of modernization in the context of Gandhi's thought. According to him, it was extremely difficult to say when modernization began. Tradition and modernization existed side by side not only in a developing country, but also in a modern developed country. The problem was to identify the elements of modernity and the elements of tradition and to consider which elements were compatible with Gandhi's thought. Mr Unnithan thought that, in that connection, Professor Prem Nath was right in emphasizing the importance of the existential factors.

With reference to the building up of a peace research movement, another point raised by Professor Prem Nath, Mr Unnithan said, that in recent years social scientists in many countries had undertaken the study of peace technology for the resolution of international conflicts and inter-group conflict within a country.

Professor S. N. Balasundaram said that Professor Prem Nath tried to revive the humanistic attitude towards Bapu by emphasizing that Gandhi was an educator. That had similarity with the views of Plato in so far as he thought that education could improve the individual and the society, and religion need not come in. But that account did not fit with the basic fact that Gandhi was a religious man.

But, Professor Balasundaram added, in looking at Gandhi, we were all like the proverbial or mythical blind men wanting to find out what the elephant was like. And yet that was justified, because

as professionals we narrow down our point of view. (That was a professional trick or conspiracy against the laity). Within that limit, he said, Professor Prem Nath had developed a reasonably consistent view and it had a relevance, because there was a point in not insisting upon the Hinduness of Gandhi. 'If one insists too much on this then Jana Sangh may take him over, just as he has already been taken over by the communists because Gandhi was a Marxian', he said. In trying to be truthful, one should be careful and remember the saying of our ancestors that the Sastric truth was not for all but only for the deserving—the *adbikarins*.

Dr Naqvi disagreed with Professor Prem Nath's view that Marxism advocated war or thought it desirable. That was not so. But in the present situation, the present order and structure of society bred war and made war inevitable. That fact could not be wished away. It could be exterminated only by a change in the social order.

Replying to the comments of participants, Professor Prem Nath made the following points:

1. His own point of view was essentially secular and humanistic and he thought that there should be a social revolution without the help, though, of course, with the full understanding, of myth, religion, etc.
2. Referring to Dr S. Naqvi's comment, he remarked that in a particular context he spoke of Marxism in relation to the question of ends and means. So long as one used violence it was going to lead to mere violence. It was here that Gandhi was more profound than Marx, because as he rightly pointed out, hatred can be won over only by means of non-violence.
3. If one kept the short-term end and a very limited context in view, Bapu could be considered to be philosophically having a utilitarian strand. 'If must we call him a pragmatist, he was not one in the sense in which Dewey was understood to be a pragmatist. Gandhi may best be called a religious pragmatist', he said.
4. One fundamental principle of a free society was the right to dissent and the duty to enter a dialogue. Professor Prem Nath thought that our culture had not been studied properly with the result that we were wanting in our knowledge of our national psyche and in that of the conditions of the social action. As such, we needed to earn an understanding and create an atmosphere which would encourage healthy social action. At present, intellectuals had become careerists and

our capacity for sacrifice had decreased in proportion to the rise in our standard of living and to our self-centredness. In that context, Gandhi's advocacy of simple living and social concern was relevant, because it enabled us to meet the challenge of social action with greater ease.

5. Without general political education of the nation, improvement in the present situation was not possible.

## S. C. BISWAS

### On the Goodness of an Act and its Gandhian Interpretation

#### DISCUSSION

Complimenting Dr Biswas on his very closely argued paper, Dr Margaret Chatterjee remarked that Dr Biswas saw in Gandhi's philosophy both an ethics of motives and ethics of consequences. He did not think that the distinction produced a dichotomy.

The appeal of reason was to head, but the appeal to the heart was different. It was in the case of the latter that the Mahatma showed that one could be moved by the sufferings of others and voluntarily took on suffering oneself. This did not mean that he underestimated the role of intellect. In fact, Bapu said that for the practice of *ahimsā* one required the keenest intelligence and a wide-awake conscience.

Dr Chatterjee remarked that in academic philosophy of the present day, the problem of the analysis of practical reasoning was attracting considerable attention. According to her, an examination of Gandhi's thought should reveal to us his pattern of practical reasoning. It was her feeling that Bapu was protesting against intellect devoid of emotion in matters of practical reasoning. He said the appeal of reason was more to the head but the penetration of the heart came from suffering.

Incidentally, Dr Chatterjee posed a problem about the relationship between morality and religion. In India, the problem did not arise because whether one was talking of morality or of religion, one could use the same word *dharma* almost as if it was not

possible to be moral without being religious and vice-versa. In the West, there had been a gradual process of secularization of morals and it was possible to have the one without the other. She thought that in India too, the process of secularization was inevitable. If so, along with secularism would come Pelagianism as distinguished from Augustinianism. According to the former it was possible to hoist oneself by one's own bootstraps in order to attain salvation, but according to the latter grace alone could save one. If there was a move towards Pelagianism, then there would be need for rethinking on the part of both the Gandhians and the non-Gandhians.

In his reply DR S. C. BISWAS made the following points:

1. While agreeing generally with the main points of the comments of Dr Chatterjee and with some of the implications she had drawn therefrom, Dr Biswas did not think that those directly affected the thesis he had maintained, and particularly the way he had worked it up in the background of Gandhian thinking. 'I have not concerned myself with the practical or the performative side of the goodness of an act, but I have spoken of the goodness of act theoretically—as an ideal form—and that, too, in the typically Gandhian context, in the framework of Gandhian thought', he said.

2. Regarding the question of spelling out of the actual relation between morality and religion, Dr Biswas felt that that was too general an issue for him to go into in detail, although he had tried to bring out that relation as expressed in Gandhian thinking for the limited purpose of his paper. He concluded by saying: 'My only submission is that to attempt more than this would be to go far beyond the scope of my present paper'.

## K. J. SHAH, Some Presuppositions of Gandhi's Thought

### DISCUSSION

Professor S. N. Balasundaram said that Dr Shah's paper was admirable as a piece of intellectual artistry. But the suggestion that

theory was autonomous and had criteria of validity independently of an attempt to relate it to life, did not seem to him to be quite sound.

Dr Margaret Chatterjee said that the contradiction between the general principle and the specific principles employed in the discussion of specific cases, that Dr Shah tried to point out, did not really exist in Gandhi's thought. Gandhi's meaning was simple. 'Only if we try to complicate it, we shall find contradiction', he said. Bapu was not putting forward a rule ethic, the rules of which conflicted. What he was driving at was that we should strive after the ideal, not that we should achieve it in practice. In fact, he said that we cannot achieve it in practice.

She pointed out that here one could refer also to Kant's corollary to the second formulation of the categorical imperative, that so far as oneself was concerned, one had to strive after perfection, but as far as others were concerned we must work for their happiness.

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti said that there was no contradiction or dichotomy between the principle of complete non-violence and the concrete principles employed in the discussion of particular cases. Gandhi's own explanation of his attitude to animals in few cases was that though the principle of 'all life is one' was valid, he had to make concession to his own weaknesses.

Generally approving of the comparison between the views of the Mahatma and the utilitarians, Dr Margaret Chatterjee said that in spite of Gandhi's rejection of the greatest number principle there was an unusual resemblance between Gandhi and the utilitarians. Both said that our duty was to remove obstacles to happiness. The removal of evil, therefore, was a basic duty, according to the standpoint of both.

Dr V. V. Ramana Murti thought that it was not possible to compare Gandhi's attitude with that of the utilitarians like Bentham, because the question of numbers was alien to his attitude. Dr Murti said that it was wrong to say that Gandhi's was a closed system. In fact, it was a graded system, and it was necessary to have a graded system. What was important in Bapu's system was as mentioned by A. Schweitzer (in his *Indian Thought and its Development*), reverence for all life.

Dr Shafiq Naqvi also objected to Dr Shah's tangential attack on Marx, saying that Gandhi's system was a closed one, as was Marx's. Dr Naqvi said that he did not understand what Dr Shah meant by a closed system. In any case, Marx's was not a closed system as change was taking place in it.

Dr Margaret Chatterjee thought that Gandhi's religious ideal was the disembodied soul. One can see this from his writing in 1925 where he says that having ascertained the law of our being, we must set about reducing it to practice to the extent of our capacity and no further. That was 'the middle way'. Gandhi was putting forward a doctrine of the mean almost like that of Aristotle. What he considered to be a religious ideal was the ordering or founding of a new order of society.

Dr Chatterjee also pointed out that Gandhi used other criteria besides the two (ability to express wishes and reason) mentioned by Dr Shah for distinguishing between a human being and an animal. One important difference between the two was that man had the capacity of renunciation which an animal did not have. That distinction was relevant to understanding the role of asceticism in life. Gandhi said that both his continence and non-violence were in response to the call of duty and not for their own sake, nor for some ethereal ideal of a disembodied soul or individual *mokṣā*.

Professor S. N. Balasundaram pointed out that the principle of non-violence came mainly from the Jains (Jainism prohibited to its followers even the calling of agriculture, because it caused violence. This was one explanation why so many Jains were traders and money-lenders) and to a certain extent from the Buddhists, and the Hindus had accepted the tradition. Otherwise, the Hindus never believed in absolute non-violence and they never had anything but a relative sense of life. For example, Yagnavalkya was fond of beef; the custom was to honour the guests by offering them beef; 'or take the fishermen's dig at the Brahmins in *Shakuntalam* (which brings out an extensive use of meat as food)', he pointed out.

Professor Bimanbehari Majumdar pointed out that in 1946 when there was acute food shortage, Gandhi endorsed the proposal of some non-vegetarian friends that the non-vegetarians should preferentially eat deer, rabbits, etc., which were easily available.

Mr T. K. N. Unnithan pointed out that an empirical investigation of the elite had shown that there was no correlation between vegetarianism and non-violence. Dr Gyanchand intervened to say that these researches, if they were to be broad-based, had to be in democratic action—so as to avoid being sectarian in reality or in appearance. Such research should be combined with a sense of urgency and social earnestness. Research in a leisurely fashion with bibliographies, footnotes, etc. would not do.

In his reply, Dr K. J. Shah said that he could not accept the left-handed compliments about the intellectual artistry of his paper, because he was not interested in intellectual artistry for its own sake, but for its relevance to concrete problems. Even if the intellectual analysis did not do anything more, which it could and which in his opinion it did, it should make for a greater understanding, communication and critical appreciation of Gandhi's thought. To say that these were not relevant to concrete problems was to say that thought had nothing to do with life. For any relevant criticism of a theoretical analysis, it was necessary to show either (a) that it was an untenable analysis, or (b) that it was an analysis with which one cannot do anything further. Professor Balasundaram had done neither of those things.

Dr Shah also wanted to say that for this purpose it was necessary to distinguish between Gandhi's thought and Bapu himself. To point out contradictions in or limitations of his thought was not to point out the limitations of Gandhi as a great human being. The criteria for the greatness of a human being are related to his thought in a rather complex manner.

Even regarding Gandhi's thought, Mr Shah did not want to point out the contradictions. In fact, as soon as there was more than one principle, there was always the possibility of a conflict of principles in a concrete situation. Such a conflict would arise even if there were an accepted hierarchy of the principles.

Explaining his use of the phrase 'a closed system', Mr Shah said that when there were alternative courses of action open, the system enabled us on principle to adopt any one of the courses of action. It was in that sense only that he had talked of the Marxian system as a closed system, because it enabled us on principle either to condemn, say, cooperation with the U.S.A., or to support it. But this was not the same in which the term 'closed system' was used. In fact, the use of the phrase, 'closed system' was wrong in that context.

Mr Shah also said that he did not object to a closed system

as such. What he had tried to point out was that the Gandhian system leaves the decision really to intuition; and it was possible to substitute it by another system which depended more on rational thinking than on intuition. That could be done if in that other system instead of thinking that the specific principles were derived from the general principle, we were to think of the general principle as an ideal suggested by the use of the principles in the concrete cases. And even in that system, neither morality nor religion needed to be given up. In fact, both could be preserved.

Dr Shah pointed out that even if the meaning of Gandhi was simple, his expression of it was not. And that was a source of misunderstanding not only to others but also to Gandhi himself, for example, Gandhi himself thought and decided as if the ideal was not an ideal but a principle of action.

He also agreed that Gandhi has expressed differently in the other places the religious ideal or the distinction between a human being and an animal; but that he had confined himself to Gandhi's writings as presented in *Hindu Dharma* (ed.) Kumarappa, Bharatan, section 7, pp. 162-219. He also thought that the argument of his paper would not be altered by these further distinctions.

Leaving aside the philosophy of Gandhi, Professor Desai wanted to speak about the mundane relevance of Gandhi. He proposed three issues for the consideration of the participants. (i) He called upon the participants to find out, by an examination of the existing situation, what exactly was left in the political, economic, cultural and educational fields which was valuable and which bore Gandhi's imprint. (ii) If in those fields, investigations bore out that in the various experiments, there was an imprint of Gandhi, what were the limitations of those experiments and what could we do about it? (iii) Was it true to say that what had emerged from discussion of Gandhi's thought was that his unique contribution was the technique of transforming evil into good—the technique of conversion?

Taking up the first problem, he said that 20 years of independence had revealed four major characteristics on which both empirical and analytical observers were agreed.

'(1) A small group of industrialists is gradually becoming more and more powerful. Only 10 to 15 business houses control almost the entire economic life of the country. And these monopolies are increasing their grip on the economic life.

'(2) In the agrarian areas, a class stratification is developing



inspite of reforms, community projects, etc. A strong wealthy class—a group of owners —has developed a tremendous control over agriculture. India is not a land of peasant proprietors. Of those connected with agricultural production, 30 per cent are landless labourers and 60 to 65 per cent own uneconomic holdings. This process too is sharpening and developing. If this is the situation whatever the programmes—increased monetization, land reforms, development blocks that have been undertaken in the matrix of the existing society, the landless and the disabled are more so now, than earlier, and the larger proprietary class is getting stronger.

‘(3) As far as the political aspect is concerned, the constitution itself protects property but not the right to work. The right to property is a fundamental right, whereas work for all is merely a directive principle. In this connection Professor Bose’s statement that Gandhi advocated labour franchise is relevant. The constitution does not accept this criterion; and the real source of power are the proprietary classes.

‘The experience of Europe, as is shown by Marshall, fabians and others— is that even for elementary democracy, right to work and education are relevant—to establish enlightened democratic processes. Even today education remains only a directive principle, only 30 % of the population is literate. That the progress of literacy is related to and determined by the need of the economic policies etc. is another matter.

‘(4) Communication channels and institutional power. Communication channels like the press, etc., are controlled by the few who are the property owners and are wedded to a policy of strengthening the rich. Institutions like the colleges, panchayats, community development blocks etc. strengthen a certain section of population.

‘From all these features of the national, situation it emerges that all power is concentrated in those who are income-owning rather than income-generating classes. It is necessary to investigate who are the people or groups that are being strengthened’.

As there was no time, Professor A. R. Desai could not elaborate on his second and third questions.

Dr Urmila Phadnis: ‘We cannot impute to Gandhi things where he is in no way responsible. *Gheraos, patharaos* and so many other things are happening. It is good to be critical, but is Gandhi responsible for these? And even if he is, let us not underrate his achievements’.

Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose agreed with the dismal picture painted by Professor Desai, and said that he would like to agree with him when he said that we should consider Gandhi's relevance with reference to this dismal picture. But he could not do so because Professor Deasi had overlooked some simple facts: (1) The structural weaknesses of the Indian society, (2) The people who followed Gandhi, (3) The people who formulated the three five-year plans, (4) The Gandhian approach to problems which was non-sectarian and non-absolutist.

During the post-independence period, there had been three five-year plans, one of the chief architects of all of them was an anti-Gandhian—Professor P. C. Mahalnobis. It was true that Professor Mahalnobis too recognized that now the rich were richer and the poor poorer; but Professor Bose thought that Professor Mahalnobis had only himself to blame or thank for the outcome, because the plans Were his plans; and it was no use blaming the patient (the people) as if he had chosen to die in order to spite the doctor.

Professor Bose continued: 'To come to the structural weakness of the Indian society, even now nationalism in India is very weak, and sub-nationalisms are strong. Gandhi worked when there was hardly any nationalism and therefore he worked under severe limitations.' That he was aware of this was brought out by Professor Bose by referring to a conversation between Gandhi and the Fabian Mr Nehru before partition. Nehru thought that by accepting partition he would stop the communal war, whereas Gandhi thought that it was really the beginning. Professor Bose thought that Gandhi had been proved to be right.

Referring to Gandhi's approach to problems, Professor Bose emphasized that (A) Gandhi was not sectarian, and (B) Gandhi was not absolutistic.

A. Professor Bose said that the Mahatma's technique of changing the society in the direction of greater non-violence was not on the basis of any sect of which Mr Morarji Desai or Mr Dhebar are members. Gandhi worked through the national democratic organization to involve people in a movement for independence and inject into them the idea of a state which was for the poor. He also pointed out that one who wanted to exercise the right of civil disobedience should have contact with the villages. Thus, by trying to create internal resources, he tried to organize a non-violent 'war'. 'Today what is left is Gandhi's technique and preparation is regarded as unimportant', he said.

B. Gandhi was not an absolutist. It was true, he took anarchism as a pole star but he walked on the earth' and he no more thought that he would reach the pole star than did the navigator.

Some people thought that Gandhi was an absolutist, but in one instance Professor Bose quoted Gandhi to Acharya Kripalani and Dr Kumarappa to show that that was not so. Dr Kumarappa remarked that on the day Gandhi wrote the relevant remarks, Gandhi was not a Gandhian.

'But let alone his writing. All through his career, Gandhi worked through the Congress, which is bourgeoisie and democratic—and that too degenerate! Gandhi's only hope was that if he could carry them with him to the villages, they would shed their nationalism. This was not just a hope, he attempted to work for it. He suggested labour franchise, as far back as 1919, in India, but this was not accepted because the proposal was native country stuff and did not have the stamp of the English Fabianism', he said.

Professor Bose pointed out, 'Gandhi advised against fighting elections in 1937, but the Congress did fight and succeed. It has been suggested by some that Gandhi supported the interests of the ministers. Rather, he used the instrument of the Congress power to universalize education through his scheme of basic education. But it was never seriously taken up.

'And when partition came, what was Gandhi's role? What was the role of the others—the Congress leaders and the leftists? To begin with the leftists; when the debate for partition was going on, the Communists, through the Adhikari thesis, suggested that the Muslims should be treated as a nationality. It is true that the thesis was withdrawn, but no Marxist said that the Muslims were divided into the rich and the poor. Another suggestion of the leftist parties was that there should be parity between the Congress and the Muslim League. This is neither leftist nor Marxist; it is pure expediency or opportunism. When the communists wanted settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League, Gandhi, on December 6, 1946 wrote that such a settlement arrived under the aegis of the British would virtually leave India under the protection of the British forces. If we had a certain strength and status, we should convene a constituent assembly on our own and settle our problems. At this time, it was not left, nor the right, but Gandhi alone who called for a nation-wide struggle. When radicalism was there, instead of supporting it, the left left Gandhi. And the right has got the power.'

But why did not Gandhi fast to avoid partition, when he was

ready to fast for the payment of her share of money to Pakistan? Professor Bose's reply to this question, which was earlier raised by Professor Desai, was that (a) as we have already seen, the leftists were not prepared then, though now they want to become homeopaths by diluting allopathic medicines, and (b) the Congress leaders were tired and wanted to settle in power. Nehru wanted to accept partition because he was afraid that India might go the China way and there would be bloodshed. Patel wanted to accept partition if that was the condition on which the British would quit, and he wanted to settle with Pakistan later. Gandhi warned Patel that, if he were alive, he would not allow any later settlement and said that if they accepted partition they should do so honestly, or they should accept Gandhi's advice to resort to mass civil disobedience. To Nehru's reply that he (Nehru) was afraid, Gandhi said 'then leave me alone'. And so Gandhi was alone. Gandhi rushed to the Viceroy and told him that he had no right to divide the country. If partition had to come at all, it should come through an understanding between the two parties or through an armed conflict. But the Viceroy had the trump; and he said 'Today the Congress is with me and not with you'.

And even then Gandhi did not stop working—when there were floods in Pakistan, Gandhi telegraphically requested the Government of India to divert a food ship, which was coming to India, to Pakistan. Thereby, he was not supporting the leaders of Pakistan, but the people of Pakistan in the interests of the people of India—the undivided India. He was thinking of dissolving the Congress party so that it would compete with others on equal terms, and he wanted soon enough to go over to Pakistan and settle amongst the Pathans.

All that and more would have to be taken note of in passing a judgement on Gandhi!

If Professor Desai brought discussion from philosophy and idealism to mundane matters, Dr Ray wanted to bring it from theory and history down to the earth present-day realities. Dr Niharranjan Ray, like Professor Bose, agreed with Professor Desai's analysis. Though there had been improvements after independence, the picture drawn by Professor Desai, he said, was by and large right. But the problem was: what was to be done? What were the alternatives?

Dr Ray asked: 'If we analyze the political and social situation, what do we find? Consider the left.' Dr. Ray was not interested in what Marx or anyone else said; he was interested in what the leftists

in India *did*. According to him, the behaviour of the leftists from 1942 onward did not instil hope. 'It is true that today they are talking of the Gandhian technique, but so long as Gandhi lived and he was the first in Indian history to rouse the sleeping leviathan by his own techniques and programmes of action—they did not take advantage of the masses roused by Gandhi. So the left does not instil confidence.'

The Congress, though it had been long in power, it had not succeeded either. And the Jana Sangh bolstered by the RSS, and the Swatantra both went against Dr. Ray's grain. That was the total situation.

The Institute, Professor Ray said, had organized the seminar on Gandhi to ask some pertinent questions and to answer those questions to the extent it was possible to do so. The questions were: If the alternative suggested by Gandhi was not accepted when he was alive, was there anything in Gandhi from which we could draw lessons? He said that he was more concerned with what Gandhi *did* than with what he said. How could we realize the alternatives suggested by him in the present set up? That was important because despite what was often felt, the revolution was not certainly round the corner. He never dreamt that it was. Perhaps it was a little easier to expect a revolution in 1947; after 1955-56 the forces that Professor Desai spoke of were strongly entrenched and the revolution had receded.

In such a situation, according to Dr Ray, Gandhi's relevance was that he advocated creation of centres of power other than the State. In the present day, the state was almost conterminous with the society. The instruments that Gandhi created were relevant in those circumstances. What we should do was not to follow Gandhi literally, but in essence. If we were to take the essence of Gandhi's suggestion, what we needed was not a large organization, but small pockets. That could be done by following Gandhi's technique of creating alternative centres of power, as he did from 1919 onwards.

He further pointed out, 'Apart from decentralization of power, we need to create mass opinion, for example, in favour of stopping foreign aid either from the West or from the East or against caste and casteism. Unless we do this we shall not develop our own strength.' Caste was not a political issue but a canker and a curse. If we could remove it, we would have done something. Creation of centres of mass opinion was in his opinion, a source of strength.

Dr Ray asked: In the context of the world situation, was anyone interested in a social revolution in India? Even if we in India wanted to, world forces would not let us have it. The national situation was such that even if the government was overthrown, there would be merely a change of party complexion. The modern state was not the state of twenty-five years ago. Its military and political power was overwhelming. It was therefore a daydream to think that slogans could overthrow the government.

It was in such a context that Gandhi's advice of creating alternative centres of power was relevant, Dr Ray concluded.

When Dr Shafiq Naqvi asked Dr Ray what his advice would be to the working classes, he said that it was a matter of detail.

Mr. Dev Dutt said that Dr Ray had talked of creating alternative centres of power, but he (Mr. Dev Dutt) was not sure of the generation or group to which the problem was being addressed. The new generation is a political, the old cartridges were all spent up and the a-political intellectuals could not be expected to create centres of power. According to him, the centre of power being created by the new property class.

He felt that the crucial question was that of political education. 'The intellectual must come out from his cocoon in order to create political awareness', he said.

Dr Gyanchand thought that the technique of mass resistance on a planned basis was the unique contribution of Mahatma Gandhi. It was an instrument of liberation of the masses, by the masses and for the masses. But the technique could not depend merely on speaking in the name of Rama or Hari, it demands organized, planned resistance. But the mass action led by Gandhi was never planned or organized. It was the impact of his personality that made people to follow him so we have no precedents for planned organized mass action.

If we wanted to plan action, we would need preparation and a high command. Dr Gyanchand thought that neither the Gandhians nor the communists can provide those. The latter did talk of broad-based democratic unity and so on, but they mean that they would be in control. Such plans and organizations were to be created by different groups of people. Dr Gyanchand was for the separation of religion from public action. Though he agreed with Gandhi on

the Khilafat issue in 1926, now he realized that it was a mistake. He wanted that the civil law should not be based on religion, and that polygamy should be illegal.

And yet he thought that secularism or no secularism, unity was needed, and if one wanted to unite the nation at the highest and the deepest level, it could be done only at the spiritual level. 'This is necessary even in the U.S.S.R. One does not live by bread alone, and compassionate living and communism with reality are to be attained', he said.

Dr Gyanchand did not see the possibility of India defending herself non-violently. He, therefore, said that India must have a strong army. 'But an army alone will not be enough. Even if there were a well-trained disciplined army, a society without courage and organization, a society like ours, will be defeated. It is necessary to bring out a social revolution in the economic structure of the society', he said. Dr Gyanchand thought that it was better for us to have our own arms rather than depend on foreign countries.

Dr Gyanchand said that in international relations, the Indian record was good as compared to the Chinese or the Pakistani record. The policy of non-alignment—Gandhian policy operated by anti-Gandhians—was something to be proud of. We should treasure it and work out its implications. But he thought that in respect of Pakistan as also of China, we must do serious rethinking, though we could not break our heads against stone walls.

He thought that the Gandhians had failed (in creating a new social order). As had been shown, the inadequacies of Gandhi were that he never took into account the power-pattern, the class relation, the overall influence of what has come to be known as the industrial military complex.

Professor Desai's statement, though depressing was true, he said. 'Senior employees of the Tatas and the Birlas and the Oil Companies—all work for the establishment. We too all belong to a class with an uneasy conscience. Great effort and sacrifice are needed to pull ourselves out of the situation'.





# Statement

At the Seminar the participants representing various academic disciplines and shades of opinions, discussed Gandhi's ideas and movements for one fortnight. While agreeing that some aspects of Gandhi's life and thought had relevance to the present times, some members expressed divergent views on the following principal issues:

- I. Non-violence and violence
- II. Social order, methods of social change, and promotion of communal harmony
- III. Nature and role of the State
- IV. Economic order
- V. Peace and War
- VI. Contemporary relevance of Gandhi

## I. NON-VIOLENCE AND VIOLENCE

As regards non-violence and violence the following different points of view were expressed:

- (a) that Gandhi stood for non-violence on principle under all circumstances;
- (b) that though he considered non-violence an ideal method, and strove hard to extend the limits of non-violence in several domains of life, he did not rule out the adoption of violence under certain circumstances; and
- (c) that Gandhi regarded non-violence as a technique specially suited to the Indian condition.

## II. SOCIAL ORDER AND METHODS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

It was held by a large number of participants that Gandhi wanted to change the present social order radically and to establish a new order

in which the interests of the masses should be supreme and all other interests should sub-serve their interests. This view was contested by a section of the participants who observed that Gandhi's conception of the new social order was not as radical as it was made out to be, and in actual effect it amounted to slight reform of the existing social relationship in which the toiling masses would continue to be subservient to the owning classes. A few others pointed out that Gandhi believed in social equality and he also felt that *Varnasrama* as expounded in the *Bhagavad Gita* was not against this concept.

As regards the methods of bringing about social change, Gandhi believed in the adoption of both legislative action and *satyāgraha*.

There was a sharp difference of opinion about the concept and the use of *satyāgraha* in the present day.

### III. NATURE AND ROLE OF THE STATE

According to one section of the participants Gandhi conceded the vital but limited role of the State, and thought that the broad pattern of the political system should be based on the principle of decentralization. They also held that the constructive programme of Gandhi, suitably remodelled, could serve as an effective means of creating alternative centres of power which would keep the central authority in check.

The other view was that the State in a class society, being organized as an instrument of the economically dominant class, would always militate against the interests of the toiling classes and therefore, until the power of the State was seized by the latter, there would be no possibility of their emancipation. Hence the Gandhian state would continue to be an instrument of the owning classes.

There was yet another view that in Gandhi's ideal State only those who contributed to the service of the State by manual labour should have the right to vote.

There was general agreement that notwithstanding the terminology and the symbols used by Gandhi, his conception of the State was democratic and secular.

### IV. ECONOMIC ORDER

A section of the participants expressed the view that Gandhi's economic order would not promote economic growth. The opposite view expressed was that under the existing conditions in India the Gandhian economic plan was practicable and could lead to a viable economic system. A third view was also expressed that Gandhi's

economic plan should be regarded as a war measure designed to prepare the masses for effective non-violent resistance.

According to one group, Gandhi's conception of economic structure involved rural orientation with more or less self-sufficient villages. The urban centres were to serve primarily as clearing houses of the village industries. According to another group the Gandhian economic structure would serve to perpetuate the existing property relation.

A large number of participants expressed agreement with Gandhi's view that the formulation and implementation of India's economic plans should be based on the resources of the country and not on foreign aid.

The concept of Trusteeship was variously interpreted. One view was that Trusteeship had revolutionary implications and its implementation could pave the way for peaceful transition to democratic socialism. The other view was that Trusteeship was impracticable and would frustrate the struggle for the social ownership of the means of production. A third view was put forward that the concept of Trusteeship had undergone continuous change from 1909 to 1947 and in its final form it revealed the three following distinctive aspects: first, there was to be no inheritance of property; secondly, the wages of the Trustees were to be decided by a committee largely consisting of workers; and thirdly, the Trustees would have the right to suggest the name of the successor but the finalization would be by the State.

## V. WAR AND PEACE

It was generally held that non-violence was not a complete substitute for war. Some held that it was a useful preparation for war under the existing conditions in India. The other view held by the minority, was that non-violent action could be developed into a complete alternative to war and it could be adopted for the protection of interests acquired not through violence. While preparing for non-violence the community in question would try to remodel its internal economic relationships by getting rid of exploitation to the maximum attainable extent by means of applying the methods of *satyāgraha* at home.

A large number of participants held the view that the application of Non-violence for defence was completely impracticable. India should, therefore, prepare for armed defence to the utmost practicable extent.

It was also pointed out that according to the Gandhian scheme a nation had to develop and share its resources with every other country in need of them. But the general view was that under the present states system this was not practicable.

## VI. RELEVANCE OF GANDHI

The seminar revealed the urgent need for intensive study and theoretical and action-oriented research on the following principal aspects of Gandhi's life and thought:

- (a) Gandhi's ideas of peace and non-violence;
- (b) a fresh study of the various movements initiated by Gandhi and inspired by his philosophy;
- (c) collective social action;
- (d) the nature and causes of inter-group, intra-group and international conflicts;
- (e) the study of his ideas on comparative religions of India; and
- (f) the study of his ideas on communal harmony.

The entire discussion took place in the context of the contemporary situation in India which, it was admitted, was not satisfactory.

It was also generally accepted that as most of the available modes of thought and action relating to problems of national reconstruction seem to have been found wanting in many respects, there was urgent need for fresh thinking in order to evolve a new framework of ideas.

It is in this context that it was felt that the heritage of Gandhi, might have considerable relevance, especially, his example of spirit of resistance to evil, and organizing mass-action and resolution of all types of conflict in that spirit, and to change the *status quo*.

For this purpose, it was considered imperative on the part of men of thought to take greater interest and engage their talents in the task of creating a climate of opinion in favour of social change, to restore confidence and to promote social consciousness and initiative among the people.

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