

# GANDHI THE STATESMAN

*By*  
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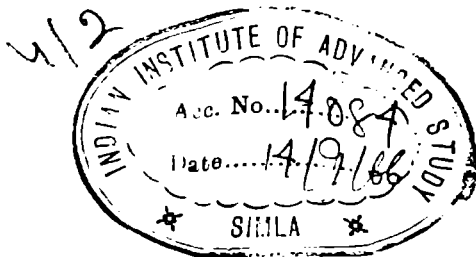


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## FOREWORD

The articles comprised in this book were contributed by me to the columns of the VIGIL. They were written, as explained therein, because Gandhiji's social, political and economic ideas and his schemes of reconstruction based upon them were being neglected and whenever an attempt was made to put them in effect, it was not as he would have had it or in the spirit of his teaching. It was held in many high quarters that his schemes as conceived by him could only be given effect to by a spiritual and moral giant like himself. They could not be introduced and worked by average politicians. I have tried to prove, with what success the reader can best judge, that Gandhiji was not merely a spiritual and moral reformer but a statesman who judged the political and economic situation in India correctly and devised well-con-

ceived measures to meet it. I have also pointed out that if he had not been a wise and shrewd politician, all his spiritual and moral fervour could not have achieved the country's freedom, entitling him to be called the Father of the Nation. I do not know how far my arguments will carry conviction.

I have seen that every effort is made not only by the ignorant but even by the educated and enlightened to assign a high place to Gandhiji in the pantheon of Hindu gods. Temples are dedicated to his name. His birth and death days are observed even as *Ramnavami* and *Krishnashtami* are. The Charkha, representing his economic programme, is then taken out as a symbol and worked for a few hours as a *yagna* in his memory. I believe that it will be disastrous for this country if an instrument of economic production is made into a religious symbol and periodically brought out from our lumber rooms to be plied for an hour or so in memory of our greatest social, political

and economic reformer and revolutionary.

I was a participant and witness to such a ceremony at Ahmedabad this year. It was on the 30th of January, the death anniversary of Gandhiji. The political leaders of the country, including many ministers from the Centre and the States, had gathered there for the A.I.C.C. meeting. They all attended the observance of the day organised at Sabarmati. Some of us had brought our own charkhas and others were supplied from the Ashram workshop. We were placed on a high dais with, what was but proper, the Prime Minister in the centre. Cameras were clicking all the time to take photographs. Some of us, instead of spinning yarn were spinning yarns and in the bargain wasting good cotton which has become so dear these days. I wondered if all this parody of what Gandhiji conceived as an economic programme for the amelioration of the condition of the masses was necessary on the occasion. It was all a big *mela*. Bapu's recorded

speech was being relayed. But the noise and the confusion was so great that not only could the speech not be heard but few even knew that it was being relayed. It is thus that we, specially the Hindus, celebrate the anniversaries of our *avatars*. Must we make Gandhiji also into an *avatar* whose idol we worship in temples dedicated to him and whose anniversary we observe in *melas* organised for the purpose and whose practical schemes of social and economic reforms are to be symbolised in formal service of the Harijans or in the plying of the Charkha on that day ?

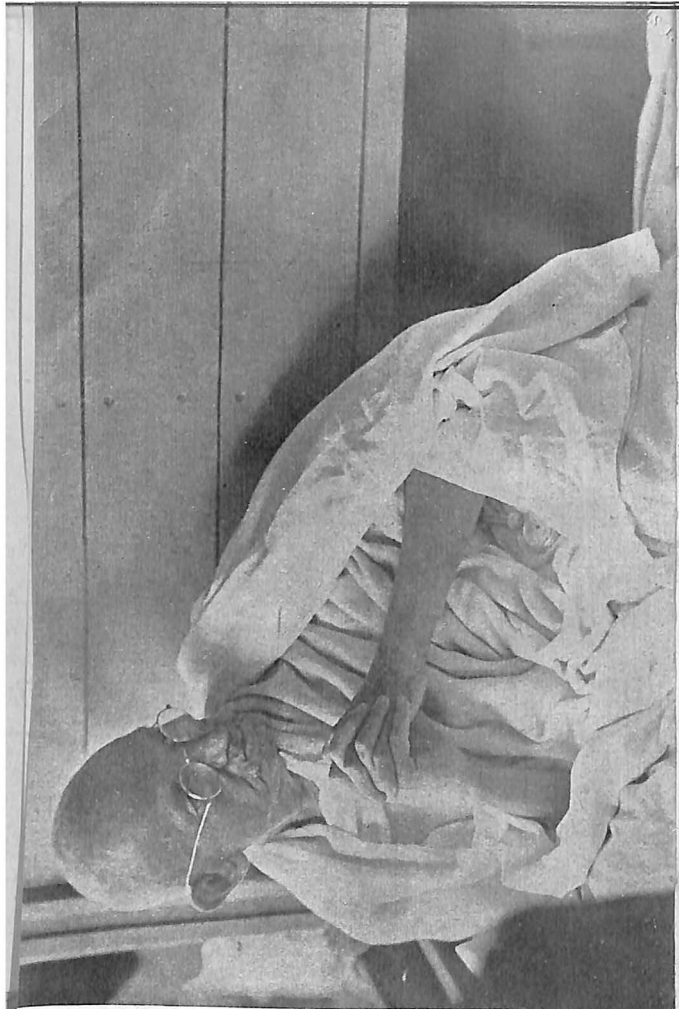
Today many Congress leaders know how to ply the Charkha, if they have not forgotten it amid more profitable pursuits. But a time may come when merely Bapu's picture and a Charkha will be kept on the altar for worship, even as every *avatar* or *devata* is worshipped on appropriate days along with his *vahan* or *sawari*—the animal or bird he is supposed to ride. This is the surest way of destroying Gandhiji's influence as a social,

political & economic revolutionary whose schemes were designed for the health and prosperity of the nation and not merely for the salvation of individuals, much less for political propaganda, advertisement or exhibition. If we are to live as a nation, this kind of deification of the greatest political leader must be severely discouraged. We have enough of gods and *avatars* of all sorts in the Hindu pantheon. Gandhiji is good enough as a human being with the high moral principles which he practised in life.

*J. M. Palani*

NEW DELHI,  
6th March, 1951.





# GANDHI THE STATESMAN

## I

**G**ANDHIJI was a moral and spiritual giant. He was in these fields one of the greatest reformers in human history. He was therefore called by his countrymen 'the Mahatma.' But it should not be forgotten that, in addition, he was a great social, economic, and political thinker and reformer. His revolutionary application of moral and spiritual principles to group life would never have succeeded, if he had not been able to assess properly the political and economic situation in the country and take requisite action at appropriate and psychological moments.

### *A superman ?*

Often his moral and spiritual greatness disables our political leaders from

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attempting what he attempted. It is felt that he was such a superman that what was possible for him is not possible in the case of others. Gandhiji, however, made no such high claim for himself. Rather, he often said that he kept only such tasks before the nation as average individuals with will, determination and right direction could perform. He repudiated the idea of his being an exceptional individual, a Mahatma. Speaking at the A. I. C. C. meeting at Wardha in 1942 in connection with a speech made by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad praising him for his non-violence which was a Mahatmic quality and could not be practised by ordinary average mortals, Gandhiji said : "I was not a little perturbed when the Maulana raised me sky-high. I do not live up in the air. I am of the earth, earthy. I have never seen an aeroplane. I am like you, an ordinary mortal made of common clay. Had that not been the case, we should not have been able to work together these twenty years.

Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of my life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before India, or for the matter of that before any one except in casual informal talks. I placed it before the Congress as a political method, to be employed for the solution of political questions. It may be it is a novel method, but it does not on that account lose its political character. I tried it for the first time in South Africa—after I found that all the so-called constitutional remedies, with which Congress work in India had made me familiar, had failed. The question there was exclusively of the political existence of Indians who had settled in South Africa as merchants, petty hawkers, etc. It was for them a question of life and death, and it was in dealing with it that this method of non-violence came to me. The various measures that I adopted there were not the work of a visionary or a dreamer. They were the work of an essentially practical man dealing

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with practical political questions. As a political method, it can always be changed, modified, altered, even given up in preference for another. If, therefore, I say to you that our policy should not be given up today, I am talking political wisdom. It is political insight. It has served us in the past, it has enabled us to cover many stages towards independence, and it is as a politician that I suggest to you that it is a grave mistake to contemplate its abandonment. If I have carried the Congress with me all these years, it is in my capacity as a politician. It is hardly fair to describe my method as religious because it is new."

### *No excess of modesty*

This was said not out of modesty—he felt it. Gandhiji was not a particularly modest person about things he knew and could perform. For instance, at critical moments he put himself forward as the supreme director for the conduct

of the various non-cooperation movements he initiated. Again he suggested that he be sent as the only representative on behalf of the Congress to the Second Round Table Conference. The resolutions of the Congress nominating him as the sole director in the non-violent fight against foreign rule or the solitary representative of the Congress in the Round Table Conference were drafted by him. All this does not indicate any super-abundance of modesty. Taking him then at his word and forgetting for the time being his Mahatmic character, I propose here to analyse the part he played in the Indian political drama as a politician and a statesman. I shall try to examine his activities from the point of view of the approved political standards.

# INDIAN POLITICS BEFORE GANDHI

## II

**W**HAT was the political scene when Gandhiji arrived in India at the end of 1914 from England where he had gone at the commencement of World War I after the termination of the Satyagraha struggle in South Africa? The country was in the grip of political despondency. There were two political parties, the Liberals and the Nationalists or, as they called each other in derision, the Moderates and the Extremists. The acknowledged leaders of these parties were the two great Mahatrans, Gokhale and Tilak.

### *Moderates*

What were their respective policies? The Moderates believed in constitutional

agitation for the attainment of their goal, a kind of Home Rule, a modified independence under the aegis of the British. They believed in gradualness. The Extremists did not believe in constitutional agitation for the attainment of the goal of Indian independence. They believed in some kind of action beyond prayer, petition and protest. They rightly pointed out, as against the Moderates, that advances through constitutional agitation implied a democratic constitution capable of evolution. India was only a dependency. It was being ruled from England.

### *Extremists*

While the Extremists were thus right in their criticism of their political opponents, their own goal and the means to achieve it were not quite clear and definite. They had very hazy ideas of what the political situation demanded. As compared to the Moderates, they were more vehement in their



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denunciation of foreign rule, they were more earnest about the creed of economic Swadeshi, they were more Indian in their outlook; but they had no definite idea of how the country was to be liberated from foreign rule. They vaguely felt that some radical action was needed by the situation but what that action should be they did not know or formulate. Having no definite programme of their own, inspite of public utterances to the contrary, they did lend moral support to the terrorist creed of the pistol, the bomb and secret assassination. The leaders were, however, too shrewd and mature to participate directly in these activities. But they deceived nobody, certainly not the Government, about where their sympathies lay.

### *After Surat*

What was the position of the two parties at the time of Gandhiji's advent in India? The Moderates had succeeded,

after the Surat split, in driving away the Extremists from the Congress and had captured the organisation. This afforded the Government a very good opportunity to suppress the latter group. There was ruthless repression in the name of putting down the terrorist movement. Tilak was serving out his long weary sentence of 6 years in Mandalay (Burma). Shri Aurobindo had taken refuge in spiritual life in French territory (Pondicherry). Bepin Chandra Pal was an extinguished force. To whatever party Lala Lajpatrai belonged (both parties claimed him) he was in foreign lands.

The Moderates, on the other hand, though they had captured the Congress, could not utilise its prestige or machinery to advance the national cause. They lacked imagination, drive and contact with the people. The Government rallied them as a check to the Extremists. But they could produce by their lukewarm agitation no effect upon the

foreign Government. The economic condition of the people was worsening and with it was coupled political frustration. The country was in a sense leaderless. The war had demoralised both the parties and had hushed all criticism of the Government, for criticism involved great risks.

*Mixed reception*

At this juncture came Gandhiji on the Indian political scene, with the prestige gained in the South African struggle. He had come under the influence of the personality of Gokhale, whom he called his political Guru, though as political leaders there was little in common between the two except the love of the country. Gandhiji had been advised by Gokhale not to rush into Indian politics but to observe the political atmosphere of India for a year. This restraint Gandhiji liked and readily accepted. It was in keeping with his character.

When he arrived in India, though he was very warmly welcomed by the country, the political leaders, whether of the right or the left, had no great expectation from him. Both the parties failed to understand or appreciate him. The proposal to make him, after Gokhale's death, President of the Servants of India Society was rejected by the members, and rightly so, for he appeared to be too uncertain and erratic a force to suit the even tenor of moderate politics.

The Extremists, while they appreciated his zeal and fearlessness, were upset by his talk of truth and non-violence. They had all along held that the political game could not be played successfully except in accordance with the principles laid down by Chanakya in the East and Machiavelli in the West—principles which had successfully worked and laid the foundations of the Mahratta power under Shivaji and the Peshwas. Nor could they understand

Gandhiji's attitude of friendliness towards the foreign Government. He believed at that time in their *bona fides* and often expressed the view that the sum-total of the activity of the British in India was for the good of the country.

*Dress and Manner*

Neither Moderates nor Extremists could appreciate Gandhiji's lapse from middle class respectability in dress, food, manners, etc. Moderates would have him adopt the respectable dress and manners of the English-educated middle-class. Extremists could not understand his fall from grace of the purely middle-class Indian style of respectability. He was an unknown quantity yet. But he was respected by the leaders of the two parties and, more specially, by the public for the part he had played in the South African struggle. The general public found him utterly sincere and fearless, and appreciated, as Indians usually do, what appeared to them, his ascetic way

of life. He suffered from few inhibitions induced by old orthodoxies or by the new foreign fashions. There was something novel and refreshing about him.

*The Ashram*

Gandhiji was in no hurry. He confined his activities to the social and educational fields and to organising his Ashram, which consisted then of his co-workers from South Africa and their families. He was, however, always sensitive to the needs and the cry for help of the masses. Before, therefore, he plunged into politics he was drawn to the agrarian troubles in Bihar and Gujrat and the labour problem in Ahmedabad. In all these struggles he had a fair amount of success. This, specially the Champaran Satyagraha, which never developed beyond his nominal arrest for a couple of days, greatly enhanced his reputation and prestige as a leader of men and causes. It made the country look to him in an emergency.

## WHEN GANDHI CAME ON THE SCENE

### III

**A**FTER the end of World War I the country was confronted with two momentous questions, the Khilafat and the Rowlatt Bill. One concerned Moslems, and the other the whole country in the matter of the fundamental rights and liberties of the people. No national leader was more suited than Gandhiji to unite the Hindus and Moslems in a joint agitation over what affected only one community—and that too—in what they considered as their religion. Though he called himself a good and even an orthodox Hindu, Gandhiji's Hinduism was that of universal love, brotherhood, tolerance and goodwill. He made no distinction between man and man. He recognised the great importance of communal unity for the

national movement. He often prophetically said that rivers of blood would flow if the two major communities in India did not make up their differences. The Muslim community, though in Ali Brothers it had dynamic leadership, lacked direction and the technique of fight. When all negotiations with the British on the Khilafat issue had failed, they readily accepted Gandhiji's leadership. This also ensured general country-wide support for a purely sectional issue. The Rowlatt Bill agitation too found the nation helpless and groping for a new leadership.

### *The Moderate approach*

It will be interesting to note here how the situation in the country would have been viewed and tackled by the old leadership, both Moderate and Extremist. The Moderates would never have concerned themselves with the Khilafat issue. They would have, by their learned researches, found that it was purely a



political agitation on behalf of an Islamic state, masquerading under religious guise; that the Khilafat institution had never been an integral part of Islam ; that the Khilafat had rarely exercised political power or precedence over Muslim kingdom and that its theological hold upon Islam, except in Turkey, was slight. So far as the Rowlatt Bill was concerned, they would have written learned articles in the press about the value of civil rights and liberties; they would have made long and logically convincing speeches in the Central Assembly; they would have petitioned, prayed and protested. All these proving ineffective, as they were bound to prove if history was a guide to political strategy, they would have sat silent and forgotten the issues involved. Custom and use make people tolerate a good deal of injustice and tyranny.

*The Extremist approach*

How would the Extremists have met the two situations? Unlike the Moderates, they would have supported the Muslim

agitation on the principle that any stick was good enough to beat the foreigner with. For the Rowlatt Bill they would have joined the Moderates in their popular demonstrations. They would have cursed and denounced the foreign rulers better and more vehemently than the Moderates. They would have excited popular feelings. For any effective action, they would have left it to the young, excitable and impressionable youth to have a little exercise with the pistol and the bomb, which would, more often, have killed an Indian than an Englishman. This would have resulted in ruthless repression, depriving the country of the service of whatever effective leadership it had, and impoverishing the future generation of such leadership. Repression would have depressed the country politically.

*The terrorists*

The agitation of the Moderates and the Extremists as well as terrorist action, if past history is any guide, would both have been infructuous. It would have

been so much national energy and effort wasted. The Moderates, by their very creed and its unalterable nature, could never admit a political situation to be revolutionary and repuring for its solution any but constitutional action. The Extremists, while they did recognise the revolutionary nature of the situation, had no effective technique of direct action to meet it, except the pistol and the bomb. It is now fully recognised that revolutionary situations are not tackled by individual terrorist activity. Such activity leads to terrorist repression on the part of the authorities resulting in long periods of political depression. Besides, it sacrifices human material, useful for any future activity in the right direction. Even when terrorist activity succeeds, it is now widely recognised that it is more likely to lead to dictatorship or counter-revolution than to revolution. It does not solve the problem.

*Gandhi's political genius*

Wherein then lay the political acu-

men and genius of Gandhiji? It lay, firstly in the intuitive recognition of the situation as revolutionary which could not be solved either by constitutional agitation or by terrorist methods but by direct action, and secondly in finding out a method of direct action suited to a disarmed people to meet a revolutionary situation. All this has nothing to do with the novel doctrines of truth, non-violence and the philosophy of means and ends, by which Gandhiji sought to moralise and spiritualise politics. So far as the true assessment of the political situation as revolutionary goes, any good politician and statesman could have recognised it as such. And he would have, situated as India was, realised that some kind of non-co-operation or nationwide strike was the only method of direct revolutionary action appropriate to meet the situation for an unarmed people. He need not have been a superman or a Mahatma to have assessed the political situation thus. Nor need

such a shrewd politician have sniffed at non-violence as a policy. It would have been sufficient for his purpose, as it is for a shrewd labour leader, to see that non-violence is the best policy and must be scrupulously adhered to, if one is opposed to an armed Government or capitalism backed by the armed forces of a modern State. This, the assessing of the situation as revolutionary, was then the triumph of Gandhiji as a politician and statesman of his time, judged by strictly orthodox standards.

*Political acumen*

Supposing he had not been a good politician and a statesman, would his technique of non-violence and truth have been able to accomplish anything? I believe that these laudable moral qualities would have succeeded in making him a pious man and a saint; he may even have occupied the exalted position of a moral and spiritual preceptor, and, if so inclined, have founded a protestant sect in Hinduism. But he would never have

been able to spiritualise and moralise politics. Nor could he have played the hero in a national struggle and become in course of time the Father of the Nation. He would have also missed his role as a practical lover of humanity and as the best exponent and leader of the world peace movement. Only if we put first things first can we assess Gandhiji's contribution in the social, economic and political fields. Let us not forget that he wanted to spiritualise politics. He did not want to make spirituality political, as priests of many religions through the ages have tried to do, to the injury of religion. They have employed the amoral or immoral methods of mundane activity to a superior and purer activity of the spirit.

If Gandhiji was to succeed in the mission of his life of raising political morality to square with spiritual canons of conduct it was essential that he should be a good and careful politician first. If he had been a good moralist but a defective

or indifferent politician he would never have succeeded. The success then of his peculiar mission of spiritualising politics depended largely upon his right political acumen and judgment. Those therefore who would follow him in his high mission must never lose sight of this fact or else they are likely to miss the central point of his teachings and his life work. His opponents, the English politicians, never made that mistake. They always considered him a shrewd politician and a keen diplomat. As a saint and a moralist they could have ignored him, as they ignored other politicians who had turned a new leaf and engaged themselves exclusively in spiritual activity. But Gandhiji throughout his career remained pre-eminently a good and astute politician, and the Englishman knew this and feared him. If the word 'politician' has some bad odour about it we shall substitute it by the word 'statesman' which Gandhiji pre-eminently was.

# THE COIL OF A SNAKE

## IV

**P**OLITICS was for Gandhiji only a means to an end. "If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake."\* The end of all his political activity was the economic, social and moral well-being of the masses.

### *Assessment of Economic situation*

As in politics, so in economics, his moral passion was never divorced from an objective assessment of the facts of the situation and the needs of his people. In

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\* For references to this and other quotations in this article, see Nirmal Kumar Bose's "Selections from Gandhi", and "Studies in Gandhism".



fact, he could hardly have played an effective role, if his economics had been defective and if he had not been well posted with the essential economic requirements of his country. What India needed then and needs even now is increased production which would reduce unemployment and semi-employment of millions of our countrymen, scattered in seven lakhs of poverty-stricken villages, enjoying a precarious tenure of their meagre agricultural holdings, which range from a few acres to half or even quarter of an acre. Gandhiji had the wisdom and the foresight of a true and scientific economist, one who does not merely calculate in terms of industrial goods and commodities but for whom human beings are more important. He realised that the only possibility of any partial economic recovery under foreign domination was through decentralised industry, which would supplement the meagre agricultural produce and earnings of the peasant. He was also shrewd enough to see that there

was only a limited scope for private enterprise to build up a real, big mechanised industry and that even then, that would not solve the human problem of unemployment. He therefore advised the nation to utilize its human and material waste to the best possible advantage. He also indicated to the nation the future possibilities of decentralised industry in terms of a democratic social order based upon justice and equality and free from economic exploitation of the masses. The following question and answer, published in *Harijan* of March 3, 1947, gives the key to Gandhiji's diagnosis of India's economic malaise :—

Q. "The Government has been introducing schemes of industrialising the country for the maximum utilization of her raw materials, not of her abundant and unused man-power which is left to take care of itself. Can such schemes be considered Swadeshi ?"

A. "Gandhiji remarked that the question had been well put. He did not

exactly know what the Government plan was. But he heartily endorsed the proposition that any plan which exploited the raw materials of a country and neglected the potentially more powerful man-power was lop-sided and could never tend to establish human equality.

“America was the most industrialised country in the world and yet it had not banished poverty and degradation. That was because it neglected the universal man-power and concentrated power in the hands of the few, who amassed fortunes at the expense of the many. The result was that its industrialisation had become a menace to its own poor and to the rest of the world.

“If India was to escape such a disaster, it had to imitate what was best in America and other Western countries and leave aside its attractive-looking but destructive economic policies. Therefore, real planning consisted in the best utilization of the whole man-power of India and the distribution of the raw products of

India in her numerous villages, instead of sending them outside and rebuying finished articles at fabulous prices.”

*As a Social Reformer*

Again he tackled the question of social reform not in the way the ordinary social missionary does but as a militant reformer. He convinced his people that what are called social evils are not merely social but political hindrances in the way of the country's freedom. Without their removal there can be no advance in any sphere of national life and activity. As early as August 6, 1921, he wrote in *Young India* :

“My work of social reform was in no way less or subordinate to political work. The fact is that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former. I must therefore confess that work of social reform or self-purification of this nature is

a hundred times dearer to me than what is called purely political work."

### *Untouchability*

The Extremists before him, though passionately desirous of freedom, never looked upon national defects and shortcomings as the cause of slavery but always blamed the foreigner for all our ills. They therefore could see no contradiction in a Free India retaining the institution of untouchability. All that they wanted was the removal of foreign rule. But Gandhiji could not think of Swaraj wherein untouchability was considered a pious and respectable institution. He therefore linked its abolition with the freedom movement. Gandhiji was also wise enough to see that the corner-stone of the caste system was untouchability. Once that was removed it would be easy to have a casteless society. Gandhiji always put first things first. He, therefore, without talking about the abolition of caste, tackled untouchability. When

victory in that field was merely a question of time, he proclaimed in his later days that he stood for a casteless society. During the interval he was silently ignoring it. He never asked a worker his caste. He never respected it in the marriages that were solemnised in his Ashram, which he treated as a kind of laboratory for testing his social theories. The Ashram recognised no distinction of caste, and every intending inmate was initiated in its life by doing what is considered the lowest work, that of the scavenger.

### *Equality of sexes*

In the matter of equality of sexes he merely ignored the fact of inequality. He asked for the cooperation of women in all the work that he undertook and gave them opportunities in fields which had been closed to them. Though a great believer in sex-restraint and sex-purity he had no objection to widow re-marriage or to divorce. Child widows, he proclaimed, were maidens because child-marriage was

no marriage at all. "To force widowhood upon little girls," he wrote in *Young India* (5-8-1926), "is a brutal crime for which we Hindus are daily paying dearly. If our conscience was truly awakened there would be no marriage before 15, let alone widowhood, and we would declare that these three lakhs of girls were never married." As he did not believe in the institution of property he advised women who were deserted or ill-treated by their husbands to go their way and behave as if there had been no marriage. "Scriptures," he said, "cannot transcend reason and truth. They are intended to purify reason and illuminate truth."

#### *Grasp of essentials*

Whether in politics, economics or social reform, apart from the new moral values he introduced in these fields, he was an expert, expert in the accepted sense of the term. Among contemporary politicians he was a statesman with an insight and imagination rarely met with in

history. He beat the politician and the diplomat at their own game. He had a thorough grasp of the essentials of his job. In economics he was a great economist inasmuch as he correlated economics with sociology and ethics, without which it has very little human value and is likely to produce more misery than happiness. In matters social he knew where exactly the trouble lay in India. Every social evil was buttressed by pseudo-Hinduism. He therefore tackled it there. Hence his insistence on temple-entry for Harijans. He knew the essentials of his religion as given in the Upanishads and the Gita. He lived in and with the light of these scriptures and he could silence the orthodox who quoted scriptural authority against him. "Error can claim no exemption even if it can be supported by the scriptures of the world," he was bold enough to write in *Young India* (26-2-1925).

Gandhiji's leadership in economics and politics and social reform would not have



been effective to the extent it was if he had not been an expert in these departments of human activity. This fact, I am afraid, has not been brought out clearly by those who have tried to interpret him, nor is it in practice respected by those who follow the Mahatma.

## A MASTER OF STRATEGY

### V

**T**IME and again Gandhiji proved that he was a consummate politician. He knew when to act and when to lie low. In 1920 if he had not begun his civil disobedience movement he would have left the political field to be exploited by the terrorist patriots. The anger and indignation of the country against the Rowlatt bills, the Punjab humiliation and the Khilafat wrongs were mounting to fever-heat. All these had to be canalised not only in a nationwide opposition and struggle, but also in constructive fields. He did both. If, instead, the terrorist had come in the field (in that context there was no room for the mere Moderate or the Extremist), the movement of resistance would have been drowned in blood and there would

have been no constructive activity on a nation-wide scale nor would the masses have been brought into the struggle.

*Swarajists and No-changers*

In 1922-23 it appeared that the resistance movement was over and the Congress exhausted. This naturally led to a controversy between those who favoured the continuance of the movement and those who favoured council entry. But as soon as Gandhiji was released he silenced the controversy by allowing the Swarajists to fight the elections, and advised the "No-changers" to stick to the constructive programme. In both fields the Congress succeeded. The Congress success in the elections to the Central Assembly was almost complete. The constructive work, begun in 1920, was reorganised and put on a permanent basis.

*Independence League*

Again, in 1928 there was a rise in the political thermometer. The Inde-

pendence League was established within the Congress organisation. There was stir and unrest in the country. The result was that the terrorist and the bomb-thrower were again getting active. To marshal this unrest and give it expression at the proper moment required great insight and judgment in a political leader. This is how he himself analysed the situation :

“Hatred and ill-will there undoubtedly are in the air. They are bound sooner or later to burst into acts of fury if they are not anticipated in time. The conviction has deepened in me that civil disobedience alone can stop the bursting of that fury. The nation wants to feel its power more even than to have independence. Possession of such power is independence.

“That civil disobedience may resolve itself into violent disobedience is, I am sorry to have to confess, not an unlikely event. But I know that it will not be the cause of it. Violence is there

already corroding the whole body politic. Civil disobedience will be but a purifying process and may bring to the surface what is burrowing under and into the whole body.”

### *The Salt Satyagraha*

Gandhiji had the necessary wisdom to start at the psychological moment the Salt Satyagraha. If he had not done so, apart from not taking advantage of the political revival in the country, he would have allowed the Congress to split into two groups, even as at Surat. The old leadership would have been left without a following and the new—that of the Independence League—would have been crushed by the authorities on the plea of putting down terrorist activity. Gandhiji by his Salt Satyagraha neutralised the terrorist by allowing him an opportunity to play an honourable and patriotic role in the freedom fight and allayed his thirst for sacrifice and martyrdom. He also cemented the

bond between the old and the new leadership.

He himself had been the chief instrument in creating the latter and he fostered it like a good parent. He understood its mood of revolt, and recognised the fact that the child he had brought up with care and under proper restraint had come of age and must be assigned a proper sphere of free activity, which must yet be guided by the old and experienced leadership to avoid the pitfalls that always confront youth, endowed with more valour than discretion, with more enthusiasm than wisdom. In the Salt Satyagrāha the old and the new leadership marched shoulder to shoulder to jail, to the policeman's baton and to lathi-charge. The distinction of age was obliterated. Old and revered Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, at the head of a Congress volunteer squad, squatted for a night in pouring rain on a public thoroughfare in Bombay, prevented by the police from continuing the

procession he was leading. From his sick bed, Motilal Nehru, the great lawyer, experimented with salt-making and guided the movement to break the salt-law till he was arrested and put behind the bars. Gandhiji had already been locked up. So were many other old leaders who a short while back had not seen eye to eye with members of the Independence League. In the fight, all distinctions of parties, of young and old, of right and left, of neo-Moderates and neo-Extremists were obliterated. All were soldiers in the national army. To combine all these divergent forces, with diverse ideologies and passions, was the work of a master political artist. If an inspired genius in any field of activity is not an artist, he knows not his business. Such a one was Gandhiji. In all this there is no question of the new moral values that he sought to introduce in the political field. He handled the situation with masterly strategy even as a revolutionary political leader of insight & genius would have done.

The Salt Satyagraha lasted for more than a year. Then there was talk of cease-fire compromise. Again, there was a rift in the lute. But Gandhiji had the wisdom to see that his powder was well-nigh exhausted, and he was therefore ready for an honourable compromise initiated by the opponent. He was shrewd enough to realise that the offer of this peace by the Government was itself a triumph. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed none too soon. It virtually amounted to a victory for the Congress. Thus, like a consummate political leader, he snatched victory from a stalemate.

*An unstable truce*

Then followed a year or so of unstable truce between the Congress and the Government. The manoeuvrings of British diplomacy had succeeded in isolating Gandhiji, the sole representative of the Congress, from other Indian delegates invited to the Second Round Table Conference. At home the bureaucracy



was smarting under a sense of what they thought was their defeat in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Agrarian troubles in U. P. and the continuance of the repressive policy pursued in the N. W. Frontier, in spite of the truce, brought things to a head. The foreign rulers took quick advantage of the situation they had created and challenged the Congress. Shri Jawaharlal Nehru and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan were arrested before the arrival of Gandhiji in Bombay. What was he to do? He at once realised that a revolutionary leader cannot afford to ignore and refuse a challenge thrown by his opponents in power. He cannot wait to choose the vantage ground for battle. If he refuses to accept the challenge he loses ground. He must have the political wisdom to see that in a freedom fight defeats are only apparent. The army must be kept in proper trim and exercise. A challenge refused would mean retreat and demoralisation of the fighting forces. In his letter to the

Viceroy, dated March 2, 1930, Gandhiji wrote :

“It is common cause that, however disorganised, and, for the time being, insignificant it may be, the party of violence is gaining ground and making itself felt. Its end is the same as mine. But I am convinced that it cannot bring the desired relief to the dumb millions. And the conviction is growing deeper and deeper in me that nothing but unadulterated non-violence can check the organised violence of the British Government. My experience, limited though it undoubtedly is, shows that non-violence can be an intensely active force. It is my purpose to set in motion that force, as well against the organised violent force of the British rule as the unorganised violent force of the growing party of violence. To sit still would be to give rein to both the forces above-mentioned. Having an unquestioning and immovable faith in the efficacy of non-violence, as I know it, it would be

sinful on my part to wait any longer”  
(*Studies in Gandhism*, Pp. 251-252).

*Calls halt*

For a couple of years, the struggle, for which the Congress was not ready and in which the Government had the initiative, dragged on its weary course. At last Gandhiji, taking advantage of the national disaster of the Bihar earthquake, in which the Government were willing to make common cause and co-operate with the people, brought the nominal struggle, which had exhausted itself, to an end, on a plea which nobody could appreciate or understand. But the fact remained that a halt was called for by the objective situation, and Gandhiji had the political wisdom to see it and did not allow false ideas of prestige to deflect him from a course which had been necessitated by circumstances. He had also the breadth of vision to realise that Satyagraha being indefinitely suspended, the nation must necessarily have, apart from the

constructive, a more directly political, programme. He therefore readily accepted, at Patna, the proposal for a return to the Parliamentary programme which, like a political seer that he was, he declared had come to stay. And this was said by him who had once declared that going into the councils and assemblies established by the foreigner was a sin, for through them was consolidated the imperial yoke. The fact of the matter is that Gandhiji spoke the language of the masses, but the social sins he denounced were not quite mortal. They were venial sins which could be rehabilitated into innocent and even necessary acts under changed circumstances.

*Back to compromise*

The council-entry decision soon resulted in the sweeping victory of the Congress at the polls. This proved that even though the Congress appeared for the time being to be crushed, its inherent strength was intact. Government repression acted like a heavy weight

upon a spring whose elasticity had remained unimpaired. Once the weight was removed, it resumed its normal functioning. The Congress achieved success in the elections to the Central Assembly. In most provinces, even though the vote was over-weighted by communal electorates, it swept the polls. The question that then arose was : should the Congress accept responsibility in the provinces when the Governor was clothed with almost dictatorial powers ? There were prolonged negotiations. The British Government was not prepared to change the theoretical bases of the Constitution. However, Gandhiji knew when and where to end a controversy. He accepted the assurance that the Governors will not interfere with the day-to-day working of the Provincial Governments. This was not because Gandhiji merely put faith in the words of the rulers, as is often hastily held, but because he had faith in the inherent strength of the nation and he

knew that he could call forth its strength in times of emergency.

*Congress runs provinces*

Rebel Congress was thus running the administration in most of the provinces. In the Centre, the new Federal Constitution having been rejected and not introduced, the position remained the same, that is, the Viceroy ruled. As the Central Assembly was constituted, the Congress could with difficulty manage, in alliance with other groups, to have a majority. This majority it secured often. Repeatedly, the Government was defeated on the floor of the House but the executive was irremovable. However, this damaged the prestige of the Government. It was some gain. But the game could not be played with advantage indefinitely.

# GANDHI AND WORLD WAR II

## VI

### *India and the War*

**T**HEN came the War. India was dragged into it without her consent. Whether India liked it or not, the British were determined to use Indian men, material and money for carrying on the war. All negotiations about transfer of power to enable India freely to join in the effort and do her bit for the Allies proved abortive. It was no use arguing that a slave nation could not fight a war for the preservation of freedom. When negotiations failed Gandhiji insisted that Indians should at least be allowed the freedom to express their views about the nature of the war and India's participation in it. Gandhiji did not want to hamper war effort made by Indians who felt and re-

cognised its justice. What he said was that those who felt otherwise should enjoy freedom of speech to express their opinion. As the Government would not accept this position Gandhiji induced the Congress to start individual civil disobedience to vindicate the right of free speech. This movement had a marked success, inasmuch as thousands went about expressing their views regarding the war, without any action being taken against them. A law that can be broken with impunity ceases to be a law.

*People's war without people*

However, the Congress was anxious to do its best in a war that seemed ominously to presage victory for Nazi and Fascist powers. The Congress had often expressed opposition to Fascist and Nazi rule. It, therefore, continued making offers to the British to be allowed to render co-operation. Its anxiety in this direction increased after the participation of Russia in the war. Yet only a free



people could participate in a war which was ostensibly fought for Freedom. Congress overtures were rejected. Congress put its demands at the minimum, but the British distrusted the Congress. They held they could get whatever help they needed from India at the point of the pistol. This they did, specially after the fall of Singapore, and the signal triumph of Japan in the East and in the Pacific. Japan was on the borders of India. The Government, in panic, followed the scorched-earth policy, euphemistically called the 'self-denial policy'. By this, not only were standing crops destroyed by the authorities in Bengal, Assam and Orissa, but fishermen's boats and villagers' carts and even bicycles were taken away lest they should be used by the invading Japanese forces. The Government also obliged people to move away from the border areas to the interior without making any arrangements for them. All this entailed great misery and hardship for the people. Congress which had al-

ways resisted in the past such inroads, by authority upon people's rights, privileges and property, felt helpless. It was also plain to the country that, in an emergency, Englishmen and English officials in Asiatic colonies did not show the tenacity of character and purpose they had exhibited at home after Dunkirk. Rather at the first shot of the enemy they got unnerved, deserted their posts and fled to places of safety in India, leaving an unarmed people at the mercy of a cruel invader.

*People helpless*

Gandhiji was greatly exercised over the tragic helplessness of the people, their inability to save themselves from the war-time tyranny of a foreign army of occupation and the possibility of India falling prostrate before the enemy, like other imperial dependencies in the East without striking a blow in her self-defence. In his speech before the A. I. C. C. on August 7, 1942, he said :

“Never believe that the British are going to lose the war. I know they are not a nation of cowards. They will fight to the last rather than accept defeat. But, suppose, for strategic reasons they are forced to leave India as they had to leave Malaya, Singapore and Burma, what shall be our position in that event? The Japanese will invade India, and we shall be unprepared. Occupation of India by the Japanese will mean the end of China and perhaps Russia. I do not want to be the instrument of Russia’s or China’s defeat. Out of this agony has emerged the proposal for British withdrawal. It may irritate the Britishers today, and they may even look upon me as their enemy. But some day they will say that I was their friend.”

*Congress must lead*

He also realised that, at this critical juncture, if the Congress abandoned the leadership of a distressed and harassed people, it would write not only its own death-warrant but with it of the freedom

movement. He, therefore, was not willing to let the Government have its own way. We know what happened to national socialism in Europe. To save the movement its leaders temporised with the Fascist and Nazi powers and were consequently swept off the political board. At critical times and under difficult circumstances a revolutionary has to take large risks. Gandhiji therefore held and said that if the Congress must disappear from the field of the freedom fight, it would be better for it to fall fighting than allow itself to be self-defeated through inaction or by yielding ground to forces of evil because they appeared at the time to be overwhelming. He placed the logic of the situation before the people and his own reaction to it. There was great popular response. But Gandhiji always waited for the leadership to be converted. That saved trouble and energy. It made the organisation of the struggle comparatively less difficult.

*His hold slackens*

After the individual Civil Disobedience Movement it must be admitted that Gandhiji's hold upon the leadership was not what it used to be. The leaders did not see eye to eye with him. They thought he was more concerned with India remaining non-violent than with India participating in a violent war and gaining political advantage thereby. Gandhiji held, as we have said above, that he was giving the best political advice in a difficult political situation. This the leaders could not understand. Also some of them thought that any action against the obstinacy of the British to part with power, even for effective prosecution of war, would be misunderstood in China, Russia, the U. S. A. and by some groups in England who sympathised with the Indian cause, though they had no influence over British politics. The leaders were, therefore, hesitant about taking any action that might be made to look as if India had some sympathy with the ene-

mies of the Allies. Their apprehension was not ill-founded.

*No narrow nationalism*

Gandhiji himself was anxious for the freedom of China and Russia and, generally, was in favour of the Allies. He was the greatest international propagandist we ever had or can expect to have in the near future. But this propaganda was not, as most international propaganda is, through words, often misleading, but through right action for his country which, he held, in spite of appearances to the contrary, was not inconsistent with the best interests of humanity. He felt that India, by asserting herself against the tyranny of the British, would not be injuring but strengthening the cause of world freedom. On August 8, 1942, he said in his concluding speech to the A. I. C. C.

“I have been the author of the non-embarrassment policy of the Congress and yet today you and me are talking in strong language. My non-embarrassment

plea, however, was always qualified by the proviso, "consistently with the honour and the safety of the nation". If a man holds me by the collar and I am drowning, may I not struggle to free myself from the stranglehold? Therefore there is no inconsistency between our earlier declarations and our present demands. I have always recognised a fundamental difference between Fascism and the democracies, despite their limitations and even between Fascism and British Imperialism which I am fighting. Do the British get from India all they want? What they get today is from an India which they hold in bondage. Think, what a difference it would make if India were to participate in the war as a free ally. That freedom, if it is to come, must come today. For she will utilise that freedom for the success of the allies including Russia and China. The Burma Road will once more be opened and the way cleared for rendering really effective help to Russia.

“Englishmen did not die to the last man in Malaya or on the soil of Burma. They effected, instead, what has been described as a “masterly evacuation.” But I cannot afford to do that. Where shall I go, where shall I take the 40 crores of India? How is this mass of humanity to be set aflame in the cause of world deliverance unless and until it has touched and felt freedom? Today there is no life in them. It has been crushed out of them. If lustre has to be restored to their eyes, freedom has to come not to-morrow but today. Congress must therefore pledge itself to do or die.”

### *Quit India*

However, it was no easy task to convince all the members of the Working Committee. But he was so convinced of the rightness of his step that he was prepared to stand alone and start the Quit India movement with those who believed in it and in him, rather than abandon the idea of resistance. However, this contingency did not arise. He was able to per-



suade the Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. to vote for Satyagraha.

It is not my purpose here to trace the history of the Quit India movement as it developed. I am only concerned with pointing out that if Gandhiji had not taken at the time the risk that a revolutionary politician of insight must take at critical times, the ultimate success of the Indian national struggle would not have been so quick and so non-violent. By taking action at the psychological moment he convinced England that India was ready to stake her all on her independence and that in future it would not be possible to keep a revolutionary and insurgent India in slavery by mere force of arms and repression.

# WE FAILED TO FOLLOW GANDHIJI

## VII

### *Britain negotiates*

**A**FTER the release of the leaders in 1945 and the end of the War, the British began a tortuous series of negotiations for solving the Indian problem. Gandhiji tried to regulate the course of these negotiations as far as the leadership in the Congress allowed him. But it has to be regretfully admitted that his hold upon the leadership was progressively diminishing. It is not my purpose here to go into the details of this last phase of British diplomacy that ultimately divided the country and gave us some sort of freedom. This is best left to the historian of the future if he can unravel all the tangled threads. This much I may permit

myself to say that if Gandhiji had carried on this last phase of negotiations, from which he was often absent or, after the negotiations were complete, if the leadership had followed his advice and retraced the steps they had already taken without consulting him, the country would have been saved the horrors it has witnessed during the last three years, and future generations would have been spared the misery that seems to be in store for them.

*Partition in haste*

Today, I hope, we all realize that we were rather in a hurry and were not prepared to take any more political risks, as Gandhiji was prepared to take, in spite of his age and failing health. Often, after the release of the leaders in 1945, the present writer heard Gandhiji say that he would have liked to give one more battle to imperialism before he had done. We, on the other hand, appeared to be too tired and weary of repeated struggles. Perhaps we thought our sands were running out and we wanted an opportunity

to try our hand at making the country. Whatever the reasons, motives and ambitions (motives for human actions are often mixed) which influenced the decision of the Congress High Command in those momentous days, the fact remains that at that crucial moment of our history Gandhiji was no more our leader. He was, however, anxious not to challenge the leadership or injure its prestige and, in fact, wanted the country to look to it for future guidance. He perhaps had an apprehension that his sands too were running out. He was therefore not prepared, as in 1942, to go his way and appeal to the country over the heads of the leaders. Consequently, he advised the nation to accept their judgment in preference to what he considered his better judgment. In this final phase, as the reader will see, there was no question of violence or non-violence involved. Right judgment depended on the right appraisal of the facts of the political and communal situation. Today it is difficult

to deny that his better judgment was borne out by subsequent events.

*A policy, not a creed*

Throughout this narrative I have avoided talking about Gandhiji's non-violence and truth as applied to politics, and have instead stressed his tackling of the problems of Indian freedom as any revolutionary leader of insight, acumen and judgment would have done. He knew when to remain adamant and when to yield and compromise, when and in what things to co-operate and when to non-cooperate ; when to strike and when to lie low, be it for years, and engage himself with apparently non-political activities, sometimes of a nature that would seem to a superficial observer unimportant and trivial. Whatever he did and planned, or whatever for the time being he refrained from doing, was in pursuance of the one revolutionary aim of freeing the country from the foreign yoke and of building on that freedom a

social order that would be without any exploitation, social, economic or political. There is no doubt that in this he was greatly helped by his technique of truth and non-violence. And when he kept his moral technique before the nation, he kept it as a political weapon, as an effective and quick means of achieving Swaraj. He often said that truth and non-violence were the cheapest and the speediest way of achieving independence. As such he kept these principles before the nation, and would be satisfied if the nation accepted them as mere political strategy which must be pursued faithfully as such if it was to succeed. Listen to his words :

“I adhere to the opinion that I did well to present to the Congress non-violence as an expedient. I could not have done otherwise, if I was to introduce it into politics. In South Africa too I introduced it as an expedient. It was successful there because resisters were a small number in a compact area and therefore easily controlled. Here we have

numberless persons scattered over a huge country. The result was that they could not be easily controlled or trained. And 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. Imperfect as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an uncharted ocean. Thank God, that though the boat has not reached its haven, it has proved fairly storm-proof."—*Harijan*, 12-4-1942.

*No individual abandonment*

He did not, however, want it to be taken up and abandoned at the will of individuals or groups :

"I have not put before India the final form of non-violence. The non-violence that I have preached from Congress platforms is non-violence as a policy. But even policies require honest adherence

in thought, word and deed. Non-violence being a policy means that it can upon due notice be given up when it proves unsuccessful or ineffective. But simple morality demands that whilst a particular policy is pursued, it must be pursued with all one's heart."—*Young India*; 2-3-1922.

If it was to be abandoned it must be by a resolution of the organisation. Often in later years he advised the Congress to drop the words, 'peaceful and legitimate,' from the objective resolution of the Congress if it had no faith in the efficacy of these means. (The Congress had always rejected the words 'non-violence and truth' which Gandhiji would have liked in place of 'peaceful and legitimate.')

#### *What is Revolution?*

I have said that Gandhiji is one of the great revolutionary leaders in world history, apart from his moral and spiritual grandeur, though the latter made the struggle of Indian freedom consistent



with the larger good of humanity. I have also said that the first mark of a revolutionary leader is to recognise the fact that a particular situation that he is confronted with is a revolutionary one which cannot be effectively dealt with by the slow process of evolutionary reform and gradualness; that the latter treatment instead of solving the problems will aggravate the situation and make the revolution, when it inevitably comes, more harsh, cruel and ruthless and, in the process of its fury, destructive of a good deal of what is valuable, to reconstruct which would need a new or a counter-revolution or the long drawn-out and painful process of evolution.

*Other revolutions*

This point is well illustrated by a comparison of the English with the French and Russian revolutions. The French revolution soon degenerated into a 'Reign of Terror' and, for the time being, disappointed the high hopes of those who had hailed it as a new social

dispensation based upon liberty, equality and fraternity. This was so because the kings, nobles and the clergy had allowed the situation in France so to degenerate that when the revolution burst it came with thunder and storm, with fire and sword, sweeping everything before it, good and bad. The result was a reactionary dictatorship. In Russia too a like situation was created by the tyranny of the Czar, the bureaucracy and the landed aristocracy with almost similar results. Russia today is ruled by a dictatorship. This dictatorship having, in its revolutionary zeal, ruthlessly destroyed many things good and bad is busy restoring the former which it need not have destroyed. In contrast to these two are the two revolutions in England, one bloody and the other bloodless. The revolt against Charles I, though it led to his losing his head, was of a very mild character as compared to the French and the Russian revolutions. The dictatorship of Cromwell was also of a milder type,

and it soon ended. There was comparatively not much loss of life and property or change in basic institutions. Then came what is called the bloodless revolution, when James II had to flee the country. Though apparently there was merely a change of ruler and dynasty, in reality there was a great change in the attitude of future monarchs to their Parliaments. The initial victory had been won with comparative ease, setting in motion a long evolutionary process which has now put a socialist Government in power.

### *Revolutionary situations*

The success of a revolution as well as its cost depend upon the recognition by the leadership of the fact that a situation is revolutionary and taking the necessary steps at the proper time. If the right psychological and sociological approach is missed the revolution is likely to be of an extreme type, destructive for the time being, at least, of the very values it seeks to establish. It was the greatness of

Gandhiji that he recognised the situation as revolutionary and acted promptly. Also his technique of non-violence avoided many of the pitfalls that have in the past confronted violent revolutions. But, as I have said, his technique of non-violence would not have worked and yielded results if he had failed to realize in time that the situation was revolutionary and must be tackled by some kind of direct action. Supposing Gandhiji's reading of the situation had been the same as that of Gokhale, whom he called his political guru, he would, no doubt, even then have used his technique of non-violence, but the result would have been the aggravation of an already ugly situation, which might have led afterwards to a revolution more bitter and sanguinary. But Gandhiji knew that "there is no such thing as slow freedom. Freedom is like a birth. Till we are fully free, we are slaves. All birth takes place in a moment." Another result of such a misreading of the

political situation would have been that he would not have been able to illustrate that the moral law of non-violence and truth could effectively work for the solution of political and group problems. But the proper estimate of a situation is only the first condition for a successful revolution. There are other conditions too which must be fulfilled.

# CONGRESS AND THE MASSES

## VIII

### *People's part*

**R**EVOLUTIONS are not brought about by parties or cliques. A genuine revolution is a movement of the people, of the masses. Whoever may initiate it, whether an individual, a group or a class, at some stage, early enough, the people must come in. After its successful conclusion the people may be cheated of the fruits of victory (as has been the case with many revolutions in history and as appears to be the case in India today) but it is they, the people, who lend to the struggle their will and their collective spiritual force.

Revolutions are no accidents. They are historical events with their roots in

the past. They are the result of preceding social and economic circumstances coming to a head at a particular historical time. A revolution is something like a spiritual rebirth of an organised portion of humanity. As an individual's spiritual rebirth is preceded by a crisis, which comes as a violent break with the past, changing his ideas, ideals and modes of thought, feeling and action, so is a revolution a spiritual crisis in a particular social order. It means a more or less radical break with past ideas, ideals, modes of thought, feeling and action. It is the rebirth of a people. Therefore the people must participate in it.

*Masses make revolution*

There may be movements in society, but if they don't take in the common people, the masses, there will be no revolution. This can be illustrated from the religious history of the world. Very often learned and philosophical schemes

for a religious reform are proposed but if the people in general are not brought in, the result is the creation of some temporary and short-lived sects. For instance, Emperor Akbar tried to build on the basis of philosophical eclecticism a universal religion based upon reason. But this sane proposal of his was confined to a few intellectuals and was not taken up by the masses, with the result that this universal religion (Din Ilahi) died with its founder. In recent history we have examples of reforming sects in Hinduism, which, though they stood for very laudable aims of purifying Hinduism, ceased to grow because they were confined to the educated classes and had no influence over the life of the masses. Theosophy with all its wisdom has no future because it has not been taken up by the masses. Every revolution, religious, ideological or political, must bring in the masses to ensure success and duration. If the Indian situation was in its nature revolutionary,



then for its success the masses had to be brought in.

*Leadership of masses*

They could be brought in only through a leadership that was revolutionary. Gandhiji's was such leadership. He knew what he wanted free India to be. Even before he returned from South Africa he had written his book "Hind Swaraj." It contained in outline the essentials of a plan for a resurgent India. One may agree with the plan or not, but there is no doubt that what Gandhiji proposed was quite novel, radical and bold. He had also tried, on a small scale, experiments in the same direction in his home life as also in the ashrams he had established in South Africa. Tentatively he had been carrying on propaganda for his way of life. His Satyagraha struggle in South Africa was fashioned upon his revolutionary ideas. The new way of life was not conceived or an individual or a class but for

society as a whole, including the masses.

In whatever he attempted or did, Gandhiji brought in the masses. Their good was his first and paramount concern. He tried to fashion his life in conformity with the life he intended the masses to live. He was a believer in economic, political and social equality. He exalted physical labour. He believed that every individual, whatever his profession, must do some physical work. He believed it was a tonic not only for the body but also for the intellect and the soul. It made the intellect more practical and realistic. It made morality shed its pharisaical tendencies and its cant and hypocrisy. It was a great leveller in society. This is what he wrote in *Young India*, as early as 1921:

“Why should I, who have no need to work for food, spin?—may be the question asked. Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the course of every pice that finds

its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write.

“I must refuse to insult the naked by giving them clothes they do not need, instead of giving them the work which they sorely need. I will not commit the sin of becoming their patron, but on learning that I had assisted in impoverishing them, I would give them neither crumbs nor cast-off clothing, but the best of my food and clothes and associate myself with them in work.

“God created man to work for his food and said that those who ate without work were thieves.”

*Identified with the masses*

With this background he came to India. Before he joined the general political movement he took up, as we have said before, the cause of the poor cultivator and the labourer. In his dress and external outfit he lived the life of the masses of India. He discarded all the vestiges of a European way of life

which he had adopted during his long stay in England and South Africa. In public meetings he always spoke in Hindi, however broken. In that Hindi he tried to express his thoughts clearly. He knew that his broken Hindi would be better understood by the masses than the simplest English. Only in private talk, when he was specially requested, did he use the foreign language.

*A mass organisation*

Afterwards, when Gandhiji definitely entered the political field and led the Khilafat and Independence movements, he tried to make of the Indian National Congress a mass organisation. He changed its constitution. The Congress was the organisation of the English-educated classes. The official language through which its deliberations were carried on was English. Its aims and objects had reference to the rights and privileges of the educated classes. It wanted greater association of Indians in the administra-

tion of the country, specially in its higher branches. It advocated simultaneous examinations for the I. C. S. in England and India. It wanted the expansion of local self-government institutions and of the provincial and central assemblies so as to provide for greater representation of Indians. It agitated for the inclusion, first of any Indians and then of non-official Indians, as executive councillors. It worked for equal citizenship in empire. Though latterly it had changed the goal of its political aspiration to Swaraj, yet in practice this was envisaged in terms of an expanding association of educated Indians ('educated' meaning the English-educated) with the administration. The greatest pundit in Sanskrit or in any provincial language was not considered educated.

The Congress did not advocate independence but a sort of semi-dependence on England. It was a platform to agitate for increased opportunities for educated Indians. It was a propagandist

organisation. It met for three days in the year at Christmas time when the educated had a holiday, passed resolutions and dispersed to meet again the following Christmas. It did vaguely talk of some sort of industrial revival in India but its leaders patronised foreign goods and fashions, and had no clear ideas about the economic basis of industrial revival. They believed, taught by their English masters, in what was to them the best advantage of British industry, Free Trade. They had some hazy idea of the poverty of India, mainly learned from books. But they had no clear conception, of what that poverty meant in the villages and in city slums which they never visited, nor of what could cure that chronic poverty. Altogether the Congress politics of those days were sentimental and unreal.

*In Gandhi's hands*

All this was changed by Gandhiji. He gave the Congress a new constitution

making it a representative democratic organisation for the masses. He changed its official language from English to Hindustani. He defined its goal and introduced revolutionary means of achieving that goal. No longer were resolutions passed merely for the rights and privileges of the educated. There was no talk of simultaneous I. C. S. examinations, nor were there resolutions about the expansion of the toy legislative assemblies that had no power and little representative character. Under Gandhiji Congress ceased to be merely a propagandist and agitational organisation. It became a working institution, with its committees spread over the whole length and breadth of India, with whole-time Presidents and Secretaries, covering villages in the interior never visited before by educated Indians, except in their capacity as Government servants. The committees had their office and their day-to-day work cut for them.

This work was not merely political. It embraced in its large sweep social and economic reform. With this contact with the masses Gandhiji made the grinding poverty of their country real to the educated. They now knew what it was. The renovated Congress had a comprehensive constructive programme covering all aspects of national life. Its resolutions were no longer exclusively addressed to the Government. Instead, most of its resolutions were now addressed to the people. Swaraj was not conceived as a gift from a foreign nation. It was the birth-right of the people for which they must work, sacrifice and suffer and, if need be, lay down their lives. Its motto was "nations are by themselves made." It no longer petitioned, prayed and protested. It demanded and was ready with its sanctions if the demands were denied. The constructive programme was to be worked out by the mass of the population, whether it was Swadeshi, khadi, village



industry, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity or national education.

*New outlook*

Not only were these radical changes introduced in the national organisation but the outlook of the whole nation—its ideas, ideals and values—were changed. And in all this the fulcrum had shifted from the educated classes to the masses. The strength of the latter's organised numbers was brought to bear not only for independence but for a new social order based upon justice and equality. Love of the country was not a monopoly of a class but embraced the whole population. The young and the old, men and women, even children, were given work, appropriate to their sex, age and capacity, to make them conscious that they too were participating in a worthy cause and a good fight. Even as the nation insisted upon rights it was

taught to be prepared to bear the burden of obligations. If there was any rivalry it was in the field of useful and patriotic service and not in emoluments and power. The biggest among us were proud to be "Congress volunteers"—a word now used in derision for all those not in office. Satyagraha or civil disobedience, too, was conceived in terms of the masses. It is they who filled the jails, bore lathi blows and faced bullets. It is they who periodically paralysed the administration and ultimately convinced the foreigner that he must 'Quit India'.

In addition to the purely political, the Congress had an economic and social programme. The economic programme was not merely to destroy the economic dominance of England, but also the domination and exploitation of the masses by the indigenous capitalists and the landlords. It aimed at economic equality. It was meant to build up the country. In the social field it tried to abolish untouchability and with it the

caste distinctions in public life. It created, by joint suffering, the equality of the sexes. Men and women fought shoulder to shoulder in the non-violent struggle. There was no bar to Indian womanhood achieving the highest in any field of activity.

The classes identified themselves with the masses by wearing thick khadi, simplifying their lives and working in the villages among the kisans and the Harijans. In the cities the Congress organised industrial labour. It stood for an equalitarian revolution in which the masses fully participated. The fruits of victory were also to go to them. Inasmuch as the masses have not yet come into their own, the revolution may be said to have failed, which explains the discontent in the country and the all-round sense of frustration. Gandhiji and the Congress under his leadership boldly declared that whenever and wherever the interests of the masses conflicted with those of the classes, the former must prevail.

# GANDHI'S REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL

## IX

### *Swaraj and the masses*

**T**HUS was the second condition of a revolutionary movement fulfilled by Gandhiji. Progressively he brought in the masses in a comprehensive struggle that was to change the face of India. They were not only to have the vote but were also to manage their own affairs and their economic life by a decentralisation of political and economic power. This is how he himself defined Swaraj as early as 1925 :

“By Swaraj I mean the Government of India by the consent of the people, ascertained by the vote of 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 also (to demonstrate) that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the **acquisition of capacity by all to resist authority when abused.** In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses into a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority."—*Young India*, 29-1-1925.

*Missing the goal.*

To the extent the Congress has failed in this, in its hour of triumph, it has missed its goal—at least the goal that the Father of the Nation kept before the country and which the Congress had accepted in many of its resolutions reiterated year after year. May be, the instruments that Gandhiji selected or got were not equal to the task and a future social revolution will complete the work so well begun. It is impossible

that free India can remain content with a formal political democracy on the basis of universal franchise. New tasks lie ahead of the country for which the old leadership may, perhaps, be no more competent. The near future will decide the issue.

*Now or never*

The third condition of a revolution is that those who lead and guide it work under a compelling sense of urgency. They feel that if they do not change the existing order immediately, society will go the downward path to destruction. This sense of urgency is exemplified in the lives of converts to spiritual life and of religious reformers and prophets of new faiths. Thousands of individuals go through life without any sense of hurry or urgency. A rare one among them feels the call of the spirit. It is insistent. He cannot postpone or deny it. His whole life depends upon the immediate response he makes to that higher

call. He can no more rest in peace. Every moment that he works in any other activity is so much time wasted and opportunity lost. He must, in the pursuit of the light, leave his hearth and home, mother and father, wife and child. He must leave his work and his profession. He must abandon even his social duties. He has only one duty and one obligation and that is to follow the new light that has been vouchsafed to him. Why? Because he feels the more he delays the more difficult, nay, even impossible, will be his task. He works under the sense of "now or never."

### *Buddha and Christ*

It is in this sense that Christ called upon his disciples to abandon all and follow him. He told them not to wait even to bury their dead—"Let the dead bury the dead." When his father and mother asked him where he had been, he said he had no father or mother and he knew only one father, the Father in

Heaven whose will he must carry out in the world. Christ worked in the spirit that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"; if you do not be quick about it the Day of Judgment will be on you and you will be lost and on that day there will be much weeping and wailing and beating of the breast. What we have said about Christ was true of all great prophets. Buddha in the garden of pleasure, prospective heir to a throne, could not wait. He left his pleasure palace and his young wife and his child at the mother's breast in search of Nirvana. Mohamed left the leadership of his tribe, bore all hardship and danger to deliver the message of God that was vouchsafed to him. Examples can be multiplied. All this sense of urgency may be a spiritual illusion but it is of the essence of spiritual rebirth. Those who have not felt its claim cannot understand it. It does not quite square with reason or logic. It has a logic of its own. It is regulated by the logic of



revolution.

*Sense of urgency*

From the beginning Gandhiji felt this sense of urgency. In 1920 he said he wanted Swaraj inside the year. He had collected a crore of rupees through the Tilak Swaraj Fund. He wanted the workers to spend it all inside the year. If they didn't they would be considered incompetent and as having failed in their job. Of course, when confronted with the impossibility of the task he did talk of certain conditions to be fulfilled but he added that those conditions could be fulfilled inside the year if the nation so willed it. But no person in his reasonable and calculating moments could believe in the possibility of the fulfilment of those conditions and the consequent Swaraj inside the year. Yet such was the contagion of the revolutionary spirit, that people forgot for the time being their logic and their sense of the actual and the possible, and

worked as if their lives depended upon the fulfilment of the dream they considered for the time being as reality. In everything else their reason worked normally, but in this revolutionary aspect of their life logic itself changed its character. It no more followed the laws of formal logic but the logic of a new dispensation.

Throughout his career Gandhiji was, as it were, haunted by this sense of urgency. He failed in 1920. Swaraj was nowhere in sight. But a revolutionary never loses his inner faith. Failure cannot shake it. In 1930 again, he said : "Now or never." He swore that he would return to his ashram alive only in a Free India. It was this sense of urgency that made the Salt Satyagraha so contagious and powerful. "Those who had come to scoff remained to pray." But even this second failure did not deter him from raising the slogan of "Do or die" in 1942. The risks were never counted. It was nothing if the

Congress perished in the attempt. It was nothing if all the constructive activity was swept off the board. It was nothing if, infuriated by war-time passions, the rulers lost their heads and indulged in "leonine violence" which might make political life difficult in India for a decade or so. It did not matter if the Chinese, Russians and Americans misunderstood and English friends turned hostile and condemned him and the movement.

*Ties do not matter*

A thousand ties of love and affection may break but the revolutionary goes his way. Nay, in violent revolutions, the loved ones, the comrades in fight, if they are suspected of deflecting the course of revolution, are ruthlessly removed or liquidated; not because revolutionaries are by nature cruel but because the cause is supreme and paramount. Millions may suffer and die but the cause must prevail. In all other respects a revolutionary is

often a sensitive, loving soul, a faithful friend and comrade, who gives more than he demands. But in the case of his ideal he neither makes compromises nor counts the cost to himself or others. It is well known that Gandhiji sent those whom he loved most to perform the most arduous and dangerous tasks. When a dear companion of his was shot at and escaped with a slight wound Gandhiji wired to him that he would have been glad if the bullet had pierced his (companion's) breast in the service of the country. The revolutionary knows that if he does not act he is lost. If the nation does not act, the nation is lost. Only those who give up life have eternal life. The revolutionary neither looks to right nor left, much less behind. He always looks forward to the fulfilment of his dream.

*Impatiently patient*

If he has the sense of urgency, he has also, in as large a measure, the virtue of waiting. He is impatiently patient. If

his time is not come, and if appropriate opportunity does not present itself, he will lie low and that for years. But his mind is never off the track. While waiting every act of his is a preparation for the appropriate opportunity. This impatient patience is amply illustrated in Gandhiji's life. Sometimes even his own companions and followers gave up hope and believed that Gandhiji had ceased to count politically and that he had turned merely into a social and moral reformer. But they soon found that they were wrong, and that he was again at the head of the revolutionary movement at the psychological moment. The revolutionary never forgets his mission. Nature itself seems to have cut him out for it. To others he may look a fool or a visionary, but his own estimate of himself always is that he is most practical and recognises the true worth and value of objective facts and conditions, which can be interpreted only in his way. In the end, however, he often turns out to have been the most practical

and realistic politician inasmuch as he makes his vision come true. How many laughed at and ridiculed the Charkha! But Gandhiji succeeded in introducing it in our lives to a remarkable degree. Whoever believed in the Salt Satyagraha? Neither friend nor opponent. But the movement succeeded beyond all expectations. Whoever believed that the English would want to quit India in the midst of a war in which they were fighting for their very existence, just to oblige Gandhiji and his companions? And yet at the end of the struggle and the war they did quit India.

*The aim supreme*

Closely connected with this, which is the fourth condition of a revolution, is the attitude of the revolutionary to almost every activity of life. Every action is seen and valued only in one perspective—that of the revolution. Somehow, whatever the revolutionary plans and does is in some way correlated to his mission. Even as the spiritually awakened does nothing

except in pursuance of his newly discovered aim in life, so does a revolutionary. The saint maintains his body and takes care of it, because it is the instrument of his effort and the temple of God. If he keeps his surroundings clean it is because he is ever expecting his Beloved. If he has any human affection that too is sublimated. The beloved is the embodiment of the Lord. If he serves the poor he finds in them the Daridranarayan. If he entertains a guest that too is the Lord gracing his humble home. There is complete identification. There is no activity that is not related to the central theme of a saint's life. Waking, sleeping and dreaming, he thinks only of one object. His every act of life becomes a sacrament. He never rests whether he is a contemplative or an active mystic. He has a tremendous psychic energy which is truly inexhaustible.

*All for Swaraj*

These facts are amply illustrated in Gandhiji's life. Every activity of his was correlated to his revolutionary aim. If it was the charkha it was no mere instrument of economic production or gain. He saw Swaraj in it. Plying it was a national duty, a *yagna*. Untouchability was not merely a social evil. It was a political hindrance. It was a sin. Swaraj without it had no meaning or significance. (As if all other nations that worked for independence did not suffer from like social evils!) Swadeshi was not merely an economic measure but the essence of Swaraj. Revival of village industry was no mere revival. It was a revolutionary activity in pursuance of the ideal of an equalitarian society. Reform in clothes, in food, and in hygiene was not reform in some particular departments of life, but was the way to the fulfilment of the ideal of an independent India. Physical work had meaning and value in relation to the



new nation that was in the building. Everything and every act, however small or seemingly unimportant, gained importance as a cog in the wheel of the revolution. If Gandhiji gave half an hour of his valuable time to teach a girl in the ashram how to cleanse utensils, it was time as well spent as in any other obviously national work. If the latrines were properly cleansed that too was work for the nation. Even his prayer meetings were to discipline his people and educate them politically. Some of his most important pronouncements were made at prayer meetings. There he took the people into his confidence. Whether they were the whisperings in the Viceregal Lodge or the deliberations of the Congress Working Committee, they had their place in the post-prayer talks of Gandhiji. There was not an activity which he did not correlate to the central theme of his work and mission.

# GANDHI THE REVOLUTIONARY

## X

### *Measure of value*

**M**EN and women who come in contact with a revolutionary are valued principally in so far as they further the objects of the revolution. Otherwise they touch the revolutionary but slightly. He has no personal or sentimental ties. It is not high standing or superior intellect that gains his confidence but loyalty and devotion to the cause. This point too is illustrated in religious history. There were many able, learned and even sincere people in Palestine, when Christ preached his doctrine ; but his disciples came even from the humblest and the least intellectual strata of society—sinners, publicans, prostitutes,

tax gatherers, fishermen and the rest. These had the virtues of constancy and loyalty to a far greater degree than those who were considered their superiors and betters. One who has the right faith, however inferior he may otherwise be, is saved, because he is free from the greatest sin of denial of the right doctrine, on which depends his relation with the one and only true God. This was the creed of Mohamed's revolutionary innovation in society. He thought that it was the one most urgently needed at the time. The Islamic prophet put the oneness of God above everything else. Even today pious Muslims would consider a person damned, however good he may otherwise be, if he did not believe in the doctrine of oneness of God. Both Christian missionaries and Muslim divines were sincerely anxious to convert Gandhiji to their respective faiths, even though they would have admitted him to be a better and juster man than themselves—as if, good as

Gandhi was, he was not good enough unless he subscribed to some of their theological views. With them, not straight conduct but the rightness of doctrine was of paramount importance. All this may be the exaggerated zeal of the followers of a fanatical faith. But in some form or other a revolutionary's preferences are guided by his mission. All other standards of conduct are subordinate to loyalty to the cause.

*Promote the cause*

The revolutionary likewise values men only as they hold to the right doctrines and are useful to the cause. If they are not, he has no need for them. This trait too is present in Gandhiji, though in a very modified form, owing to his belief in truth, non-violence and purity of means. He could not hate a man or injure him for any cause. His religion was the moral law. "The reforms required," he wrote in 1926, "are more from within than from without. A per-

fect constitution super-imposed upon a rotten internal condition will be like a white sepulchre." Therefore the moral individual, apart from the views he held, the doctrines he believed, the ritual he followed, was for him the religious man. With all this he preferred those who were most helpful to his cause. He had no personal relations. He deprecated intimate and sentimental connections. Love for him was a collective and not an individual tie—love of the poor, love of humanity. Many men and specially women came to be attached to him, attracted by his personal charm and greatness. He accepted their love and attachment only to utilize them for the revolution. Such people were often not interested in politics but he managed to make them instruments in that sphere and suffer privations and march to jail as they would never have done if left to themselves. Psycho-analysed, such persons underwent all this suffering for *his* sake and not for the country's cause. They

may have explained their actions to themselves and others as impelled by patriotism and love of the country, but the real motive was to please their master and win his good opinion. It is therefore no wonder that, after his death some personally attached patriots can't function in the political field. The incentive, the personality of Gandhiji, being absent, they revert to their non-political natures, or if they yet by circumstance are in the political field, they play a very subordinate and passive part. No political initiative can be expected from them.

This is, however, by the way. The main point is that men and women were valued by Gandhiji, apart from their character, only in so far as they were useful for his cause. Gandhiji used his wife too for his revolutionary purpose. Kasturba, left to herself, would never have adopted his social, economic and political views. In her case he sometimes admitted that he was guilty of violence

in enforcing his views. He brought up his children and utilised them for the same purpose, in spite of the protest of some of them. Ultimately, they left the political field for activities more normal and congenial to their natures. His friendships were also of a similar nature. The Ali Brothers were at one time his "blood brothers." As soon as they ceased to be useful for his purpose they dropped out of his circle. In this case the indifference was mutual for they too had a purpose of their own which Gandhiji, they thought, no longer served. Many came under his influence, worked with him for a time and were his trusted comrades ; but in a few years, they were to be found nowhere near him.

*He could be ruthless*

This trait of the revolutionary is again brought out in his treatment of objects of art. Boycott of foreign cloth was necessary for his mission. In pursuance of his policy he advised the

nation to burn foreign cloth. This sacrificial fire consumed many artistic fabrics. Even costly pieces woven in gold and silver shared the same fate. No amount of protests from saner, non-revolutionary friends and admirers was of any avail. The burning of material goods was symbolical of his burning zeal for Swaraj. Friends pointed out that his zeal smacked of violence, but to no purpose. He said all the costly and artistic fabrics were tainted goods. I am sure if by any logic the destruction of the Taj Mahal had been necessary for the triumph of his cause, a bonfire would have been made even of that monument of love and beauty. This was nothing unusual in Gandhiji, the revolutionary. "Nations have progressed," he wrote in 1922, "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 had ever known or will know. He sends deluges. He sends storms where a moment ago there was calm. He levels down mountains which he builds with exquisite care and infinite patience."

Such acts have been done by those possessed with an idea of serving a cause. How many fanatical puritans of different faiths, in history, have not destroyed temples, churches, artistic statues of gods and goddesses and mutilated them in the service of the ideal! Gandhiji was saved from such vandalism by the restraint of non-violence under which he worked. If an idea is to be followed with all the devotion, fervour and fanaticism of a revolutionary, it is a great relief and advantage to humanity that the restraint of non-violence be put upon it. This, mercifully, Gandhiji's unbounded faith in the moral law put upon him. "The spiritual weapon of self-purification," he said, "intangible as it seems, is the most potent means of revo-

lutionising one's environment and loosening external shackles. It works subtly and invisibly ; it is an intense process though it might often seem a weary and long-drawn process ; it is the straightest way to liberation, the surest and quickest and no effort can be too great for it."

Non-violence works for tolerance, patience and self-suffering in the service of an idea. All these virtues Gandhiji possessed in abundance. Within the restrictions imposed by these, his cause for him was supreme, and in its service he could be non-violently ruthless. Had he not had that over-mastering faith in non-violence, who knows he might have, with his zeal and passion for the cause, been one of the great revolutionary scourges of mankind.

When he was collecting funds for his schemes, if a poor man gave him his last pice and starved himself to death, Gandhiji would write a column of praise for such supreme sacrifice, oblivious of the fact that that money might be mis-

spent by a misguided volunteer in his army. It was sometimes painfully interesting to watch Gandhiji, in his efforts to collect funds for his cause, inducing little children to part with their gold and silver trinkets. The poor kids knew not what it was for which they were parting with their bright and shining bits of precious metal. These trinkets could not possibly make much difference to the Cause. But the gifts deprived the little ones of some joy. But, when did a prophet care for the joy of life even of the little ones? Gandhiji would have argued that they had compensatory joy derived from the performance of a patriotic act! May be, who knows? There is no yardstick to measure revolutionary zeal and the conduct based upon it.

*True revolutionary*

To conclude then, Gandhiji, apart from his moral and spiritual greatness, was a social and political revolutionary of insight and judgment. As such he assessed the situation in India correctly

when he entered the political field in 1919. He tackled the situation, as a revolutionary would, by direct action, even though the action was non-violent. Practical non-violence was more suited to the situation than any other method for an unarmed people fighting against a powerful foreign Government with a modern army of occupation. Gandhiji, like a good revolutionary, had a social philosophy and a plan which he had outlined earlier in South Africa in his book "Hind Swaraj". Like a good revolutionary, Gandhiji, in various ways, brought into the struggle and his constructive schemes the mass of the population. He had also the revolutionary's sense of urgency coupled with the virtue of patient waiting for long periods till a suitable opportunity presented itself. Again, like a good revolutionary he had his hand upon the pulse of the people. He knew their heart-beats. He took advantage of every rise in their political tempo. He knew when to give battle, when to retreat and

when to lie low, what challenge to accept and which to ignore. He valued men and women, apart from his moral preferences, from the viewpoint of the central theme of his life, the Indian revolution.

I have not in the preceding discussions laid any stress upon the moral qualities of non-violence and truth which he preached and practised and in the light of which he carried on his revolutionary activities. It is far from me to suggest that the insistence upon these moral qualities did not greatly help and affect the revolution. The point that I want to emphasise is that if Gandhiji had not been a social revolutionary, all his moral qualities would not have affected the political situation in India and brought about national freedom. In India then, and even today, there are moral giants whose spiritual stature is in no way inferior to Gandhiji's. Yet they are unable to affect the Indian political and social scene. This scene today is none too happy. It does need radical

readjustments. But whenever, this comes it must come from a social revolutionary and not from a mere moralist or a saint. It is useless to look in that direction, as our Socialist friends did a little while ago—calling upon saints, philosophers and scholars to come to their aid.

This does not mean that great saints, sages and reformers are not revolutionaries. But their kingdom is not of this world. They are primarily concerned with the salvation of the individual. Their effect on social, economic and political life is indirect. As a matter of fact, they generally leave social, economic and political questions severely alone. They hold that, even under crippling external and organisational conditions, the spirit of man can soar in regions of freedom and emancipation. Gandhiji, on the other hand, held that for the common man's moral and spiritual advance, wise and suitable external arrangements of organised life are as necessary as a healthy body. He was

not working merely for the spiritually chosen. He was working to raise the mass of mankind to a higher moral level to live the good life, which they could do only in a just and equitable external organisation of society. He held that moral virtue did not exist in a vacuum but entered into all social, economic and political situations. The social organisation must therefore be informed and reformed to reflect the moral law. Man is born, lives and dies in society. That society, like the human body itself, must be made an appropriate temple of God. It is neglected at the peril of higher life for the average individual. Buddha, after he had attained enlightenment (nirvana), wished that he be born again and again till the last man was redeemed. Gandhiji in another way and from another angle wanted to bring the possibility of the moral life within the reach of every ordinary man and woman engaged in their everyday work, performing the citizen's duty in society arrang-

ed and organized on an equalitarian and democratic basis.

Those who make of Gandhiji merely a moral reformer, a saint and a Mahatma, miss the central point of his teaching and life. Truth and non-violence as supreme moral virtues are nothing new in the world's history. They have been preached by Christ, Buddha and other prophets and reformers, old and new. What is novel is their application to group life and to the needs of a political revolution. If this central point of Gandhiji is missed, his mission fails. It will survive merely as a brilliant and unique episode in Indian and world history.