











**THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY  
OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI AND SARVODAYA**

**BY THE SAME AUTHOR:**

- 1. Irrationalism** (*Motilal Banarsidass, Banarus, 1951*)
- 2. Hindu Political Thought** (*1951*)
- 3. Rajniti Aur Darshana** (*1956*)
- 4. Rajnitik Lekhmala** (*In Press*)

**THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY  
OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI AND SARVODAYA**

BY  
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**AGRA**  
**LAKSHMI NARAIN AGARWAL**  
EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHERS

**1959**



*Price* { STUDENT EDITION : Rs. Twelve  
LIBRARY EDITION : Rs. Fifteen

Durga Printing Works, Agra.

## PREFACE

This book entitled *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and Sarvodaya* incorporates the results of my studies, researches and reflections extending over a number of years. It was in the year 1939 that I first read Gandhi's *Autobiography* in a Hindi edition. In 1940 I did some reading in the comparative analysis and evaluation of Gandhism and socialism. The 1942 "Quit India Movement" intensified my interest in the field of Gandhology. In that year I studied the writings of Gandhi in the *Young India* and the *Harijan*. From May 1947 to August 1950 I was in the U.S.A. and in Europe and I got several occasions to address meetings, seminars and symposia on Gandhian philosophy and political thought. I was present at the meeting organized in February 1948 by the United Nations Security Council in the New York City Hall to pay homage to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi. After my return from the United States I got a number of opportunities of addressing meetings organized for the discussion of Gandhism and Sarvodaya. Since 1957 the Sociology Department of the Patna University has organized a plan for the preparation of theses by M.A. students on Indian political and social writers and leaders under my guidance. All these different types of intellectual activities have deepened my interest in the critical, analytical and comparative study of Gandhian political and social thought.

I have also been interested in the movement of Mahatma Gandhi. I had the occasion of having the "Darshan" of Gandhiji in 1934 at Madhubani, in 1939 at the Brindaban meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh in Champaran, in 1940 at the Sadaquat Ashram Patna and for several days in 1947 I attended his prayer meetings at the Bankipore Maidan subsequently named Gandhi Maidan. Thus I have been an occasional sharer in the dramatic and momentous energy released by Gandhi's personality.

I owe my initial attraction for the personality of Mahatma Gandhi to my late revered father Sri Ram Charitra Prasad. Although my father was in government service, he had a tremendous admiration for the Mahatma and was a habitual wearer of Khaddar.

I put a comprehensive meaning on the term "political philosophy". It includes a study of the philosophical, ethical, sociological and economic foundations and implications of political propositions. I have thus included in this book not only a study of the explicitly and formally political propositions, concepts, categories

and entities but have also elaborately discussed the foundations of political thought. Gandhism is not an explicitly and narrowly analytical and positive body of political knowledge. Gandhi had a comprehensive approach to political life. He wanted the subordination of political and social considerations to moral considerations. Hence only a comprehensive theoretical enquiry can do justice to Gandhism.

After the tragic passing away of Mahatma Gandhi his thought is being developed, extended and reinterpreted by the exponents of Sarvodaya school of thought. I have included in this book, hence, two chapters also on the thought of Sarvodaya.

I am thankful to the energetic publishers of this book, Messrs Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, but for whose zeal and enterprise this book would not have been brought out in this form.

Patna 6  
March 31, 1959

Vishwanath Prasad Varma

## CONTENTS

### **Part I : *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi***

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Page</i>
1. The Personality and Leadership of Mahatma Gandhi	1
2. Philosophical and Psychological Foundations of Gandhi's Political Thought ... ..	37
3. Religion and Politics in Gandhian Thought .. ..	65
4. Ethics and Politics in Gandhian Thought . . . .	81
5. Sociological Foundations of Gandhi's Political Thought	116
6. The Theory and Practice of Satyagraha ... ..	145
7. The Political Theory of Mahatma Gandhi . . . .	168
8. The Economic Foundations of Gandhi's Political Thought	242
9. Mahatma Gandhi's Contributions to Political Philosophy	259
<b>Part II : <i>The Political Philosophy of Sarvodaya</i></b>	
10. Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of Sarvodaya	259
11. The Political Philosophy of Sarvodaya ... ..	285
Select Bibliography	



PART ONE

**THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF  
MAHATMA GANDHI**



## CHAPTER I

# THE PERSONALITY AND LEADERSHIP OF MAHATMA GANDHI

### 1. Mahatma Gandhi as a Social and Political Philosopher

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) was not a systematic thinker in the field of metaphysics and political philosophy. But he has stressed some fundamental ideas for the regeneration of man and the reconstruction of society and in this sense he can be regarded as a moral and political thinker. He was an inspired leader, teacher and prophet. But he was neither a Shankara nor a Kant. Instead, he is far more akin to Socrates and Buddha pouring forth the results of his deepest feelings and his most sincere realizations of truth. His singularly rich and uniquely moral personality adds immense weight and prestige to his writings. He has written almost half a shelf. In all the writings of Gandhi from 1908 onwards, one finds an unity of theme with the minimum amount of contradiction although like all creative minds Gandhi was susceptible to the changing demands of the times and hence a kind of slow transition and evolution is marked in his works.

Mahatma Gandhi was not primarily a theoretical analyst perfecting the methodological technics for the study of the social and political situation. He was a man of action—a leader of gigantic stature who wielded tremendous influence over men. He was also a writer of great force and power. His two big books *Autobiography* and *Satyagraha in South Africa* reveal him as a writer who had a powerful and moving pen. His writings are characterized by fervour and lucidity and reveal the personality of a man of immense depth of feeling and profound



sincerity. But with all his supreme greatness as a prophetic leader of colossal dimensions and his power of the pen, Gandhi cannot, in fairness, be considered a systematic social and political philosopher. Gandhi's greatness lay in his preeminent and lofty character, his political and moral leadership, his inner intuitive experiences and realizations and his prophetic message. His genius did not lie in the realm of the construction and perfection of concepts and theories. He was content with giving vent to immediate pragmatic and technical suggestions for the solution of contemporary problems. He was modest enough not to claim to have originated any new system of thought. He said that he was only concerned with putting into practice the perennial truths contained in the great religious books. He stated that there was no specific 'ism' like Gandhism but he also said at the Karachi Congress in 1931 that Gandhi may be dead but Gandhism is imperishable. Like Buddha and Socrates, Gandhi stressed certain basic values and did not systematically elaborate the underlying dominant philosophical assumptions and the sociological implications of his theories. Hence there is no philosophical "system" of Gandhism in the sense of a rational and conceptual construction of metaphysics and sociology which, for example, we find in Platonism or Hegelianism. Gandhism signifies the reassertion and the concrete subjective reaffirmation of the old spiritual truths substantiated by the experiments and *sadhana* of Gandhi himself. Gandhi had neither the inclination nor the genius to construct a great encyclopædic intellectual system. He was a genius not of the intellect but of the spirit. The insistent urge of the social and political problems demanded radical and immediate solution and till the last moments of his life Gandhi devoted all his time to the pressing challenges. But although not an academic philosopher or a systematic conceptual thinker Gandhi had enough of the scientific spirit of quest in him. He had a keen and sharp mind. He was a scientist experimenting with truth in his own life and in the life of the

nation. Gandhism is not a systematic well-worked out political philosophy with explicit theoretical assumptions and clearly drawn out social and political propositions therefrom. It does not claim to apply only logical procedure and scientific methodology as the positivists do. But it is very comprehensive and synthetic in its orientation. The writings of Gandhi touch almost all the social, educational, cultural, economic and political problems of contemporary India. Although I miss in Gandhism the pure delight of logical reason and conceptual construction I am impressed by the concreteness and solidity in the suggestions put forward by Gandhi. But what Gandhism lacks in the shape of a systematic major book on advanced political theory written by the leader himself, is more than compensated by the majestic life of the man. He demonstrated the seriousness of his teachings by the sanctification of his own life and conduct, a work which no mere speculative thinker has done so far. He practised the principles put forward by him and hence there is great magnetic power of appeal in his writings.

## **2. The Personality of Mahatma Gandhi**

The problem of the regeneration of humanity has been a subject of enquiry and attention at the hands of several sociologists and thinkers. The phenomenal eminence that Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi achieved in the application of the technics of the creative altruism of *ahimsa* to the problems of social and political existence has inspired several social scientists and has once again made prominent in our times the theme of the collective moral emancipation and ennoblement of man. There are large number of common moral and psychological assumptions in Gandhi and those western social scientists who believe that the social sciences should have an ethical orientation and should keep in view the realization of the teleology of justice, peace and fraternity. The common points between Gandhi and the western social idealists, pacifists,

solidarists, mutualists and humanists are considerable. But the moral personality of Gandhi adds an additional charm to his writings.

Schopenhauer regarded Buddha and Christ as the ideal men of history because they had renounced home life and taught abnegation. Oswald Spengler, on the other hand, regarded fact and power as more significant elements in history than contemplation and truth. Mohandas Gandhi was one of the epoch-making figures in the world. He combined moral idealism and political success. He was not only a stupendous figure in world history but also an angelic prophet of a superior stature. He was the remarkable combination of a mystic and a moral dictator wielding power by love. He was a truthful, noble and gentle soul. He fought the battle of freedom with the spiritual weapon of non-violence. He was generous and unsophisticated. His historical greatness was unquestioned. He was a much greater figure than Savonarola, Luther and Calvin. Greatness symbolises strength to move peoples and to cast impressions on the evolving and changing form of the historical structure. It means the power and the ability to enact intended effects on the stage of history. Ninus and Semiramis, Vesoges, Tiglath Pilaser, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Augustus and Barbarossa were powerful figures and did, in their times, give a shake to history. Those who are able to produce motion and dynamism on an imposing and large scale are world-historical individuals and heroes. They effectuate certain significant changes in the course of history. Millions and millions of human beings are born and die and are content to lead a normal and routine life. They find delight in their homes and neighbourhood. The demon of political ambition does not torment the mass of the people. But there are some who attempt to rule the destiny of men. A good man may not always and necessarily be a great man in the historical sense. Goodness means humility, gentleness and forgiveness. The large number of saints and seers who have led dutiful and religious lives and have

allowed their bodies to be extinguished in hills and forests and valleys were certainly good men but they have not necessarily been able to effectuate great action in the social and political spheres. On the other hand, great men may necessarily not be good men. Pisistratus, Epaminondas, Julius Cæsar, Aurangzeb, Napoleon and Mussolini were impelled by terrific arrogance and imperialistic desigus. They were not noted for their spirit of charity and humaneness. They wanted the acquisition and aggrandizement of political power. But no student of history will deny the designation of greatness to these figures. The Egyptian pharaohs of the twelfth and eighteenth dynasties were great because they attempted the political expansion of the country. The great Assyrian emperors who swore by violence, punitive justice and slaughter were great in the historical sense. Charlemagne and Peter the Great were great from the political angle of vision. Some of the rulers of the Mongol and Ottoman empires were great conquerors but had no spirit of service to man. By greatness, hence, we only mean to stress the power to impress upon, move, shake and impel the mechanics of social and political structures at a certain place and time. Greatness signifies the concentration of power and its utilization in the public domain. It is evident that greatness in this sense is a morally neutral concept. A great man may not necessarily represent the typification of decency and nobility. Nero, Mahmud of Ghazni and Nadir Shah have a place in history but they were not virtuous. We may sometimes feel that a historical figure is lustful, vain, mean, revengeful and ambitious but nonetheless we have to consider him great if he performed some important action. Machiavelli regarded the political adventurer Cesare Borgia as his political hero. A great man primarily embodies the qualities not of *sattva* or illumination but of *rajas* or dynamic action. Historical greatness is measured by the acquisition of external political authority and not by the cultivation of the sentiments of service and altruism. We can say that

Vidura and Vibhishana were good men but not great men. Ananda was a good man but not a great man. Ravana was great but not good. A good man may be content with the annihilation of personal egoism. His philosophy is *paramartha*. He may be too selfless and quiet to assert his powers and personality. He may like to follow the path of resignation and retirement rather than that of asserting the will to power. His aim is self-conquest and not the rule over others. Greatness, on the other hand, is acquired by successful self-assertion and proclamation of oneself as the conscious or unconscious agent of some vast historical idea-force. Gandhi, rather strangely enough, rose to success by adopting the vows of self-effacement, voluntary purity and self-sacrifice, austerities and penances. He achieved great magnificence by having made the traditional moral technics also the efficacious instruments of political action. Thus fasting, suffering and prayer were turned by him into potent instruments of mass action.

Moral virtue and political grandeur may be synthesized in one personality. Asoka, Harshavardhana, Lincoln and Wilson were both good and great. Gandhi is a supreme example of the combination of goodness and greatness. He was a great nationalist leader but political opportunism and personal self-seeking had no place in his life. The resort to lies, intrigues and conspiracies had no place in his political dictionary. He has the same place in the historical records of India as Washington and Jefferson have in America. Sometimes he has been compared to Khalifa Omar in the patriarchal simplicity of his life. He was not merely a politician or a statesman but a mighty phenomenon in world politics. He appeared as a political captain for the cause of distressed, embarrassed and anxious Indians, in South Africa, and on a far greater scale in India. But he was also a prophet like Lao-Tse, Buddha, Zoroaster and St. Paul. He was a seer of humanity.

### 3. Satyagraha in South Africa

M. K. Gandhi returned to India in July 1891 after obtaining a barrister's degree from London. But soon destiny sent him into another theatre of action. In April 1893 Gandhi started for Durban. From 1893 to 1914 he worked in South Africa for the restoration of justice to his fellow-countrymen who were subjected to degrading and mortifying discriminations. Indians had been going to Natal since the sixties of the last century as indentured laborers. Gandhi in the course of his journey in South Africa met several indignities and humiliations. At Maritzburg he was pushed out of the train compartment although he had a correct first class ticket. Once a policeman pushed him into the gutter for walking past the footpath near the mansion of President Kruger. Such incidents vividly revealed to the sensitive mind of Gandhi the abjectness and degradation of the Asian peoples in South Africa. He determined to revolt against the tyranny of the white races. Gandhi rose as the protector and defender of liberty and equality. He was the acknowledged leader of the Indian community in the protracted Satyagraha movement from 1906 to 1914. The Natal Indian Congress had been formed in 1894 mainly at his suggestion. Earlier than the formal launching of Satyagraha he had given evidence of his generous spirit by organizing an Indian ambulance corps of nearly four hundred Indians in the Boer War (1899-1902). He himself acted as a sergeant major. His sympathies were with the Boers but he felt that so long as the subjects owed allegiance to the state it was their duty to accord to it support. In 1906 he organized a stretcher-bearing unit of nearly two dozen Indians in the course of the Zulu rebellion. These activities were organized by him in the hope that if Indians were to become full citizens they must perform their duties to the legally constituted government of South Africa. But because the Asiatic Department of Transvaal and General Smuts kept devising ways for inflicting additional affronts and insults on them, Gandhi organ-

ized and led the Satyagraha movement. On October 28, 1913 Gandhi began the historic march from New-cattle to Volksrust at the head of nearly three thousand people. Finally in 1914 Gandhi and Smuts arrived at a settlement. On January 21, 1914 Satyagraha was suspended and the £ 3 tax was repealed. Gandhi through the Satyagraha movement rendered great service to the cause of racial equality in South Africa. Although he was working there for the amelioration of the cause of Indians it was no mere parochial fight of a minority. At a meeting in 1914 in Johannesburg Gandhi said: "Behind that struggle for concrete rights lay the great spirit which asked for an abstract principle, and the fight which was undertaken in 1906, although it was a fight against a particular law, was a fight undertaken in order to combat the spirit that was seen about to overshadow the whole of South Africa....." It was a struggle for the vindication of the great truth that all men are free and equal. In the early stages of the movement Gandhi said: "No matter what may be said, I will always repeat that it is a struggle for religious liberty. By religion, I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion, but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker. If you cease to be men, if, on taking a deliberate vow, you break that vow, in order that you may remain in the Transvaal without physical inconvenience, you undoubtedly forsake God. To repeat again the words of the Jew of Nazareth, those who would follow God have to leave the world, and I call upon my countrymen, in this particular instance, to leave the world and cling to God, as a child clings to its mother's breast" And it was this great message which made Rev. C. F. Andrews, one of the greatest Christians of this century, the devoted friend and follower of the Mahatma since the days of the South African Satyagraha movement. Leo Tolstoy in one of his letters to Gandhi had written: "Your activity in

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Doke : *M. K. Gandhi*, p. 7.

the Transvaal, as it seems to us at this end of the world, is the most essential work, the most important of all the work now being done in the world, wherein not only the nations of the Christian but of all the world will unavoidably take part."

#### 4. Gandhi as a Nationalist Leader

The uniqueness of Gandhi's leadership lay in his successful application of the technics of non-violence at a political and social level. He was a great nationalist leader but he never forgot his supreme loyalty to mankind as a whole. The South African Satyagraha was the first great example of the social and political application of non-violence on a great scale. But it was only the prelude to Gandhi's far bigger work in India. Gandhi returned to India on January 9, 1915 after having performed a giant's work in South Africa. In 1917 in the Champaran Satyagraha he demonstrated the political efficacy of Satyagraha in action.<sup>1</sup> He proclaimed a *hartal* against the Rowlatt Bill in 1919. The Non-Cooperation movement (1920-1922), and Civil Disobedience movement from 1930 to 1934, prepared the foundations for independence. During the Second World War Gandhi first started the individual Satyagraha movement during 1940-1941. Finally came the spectacular, historic and dramatic struggle of 1942. It is difficult to make final and absolute pronouncements in history but it may safely be said that Gandhi is in a great measure the leader of Indian independence who led an almost elemental struggle against the British Empire. He will be regarded as the liberator who deserves the greatest gratitude for the political emancipation of four hundred millions of human beings. I do not mean to minimize the achievements of the other galaxy of foremost Indian patriarchs and leaders—Dadabhai, Gokhale, Lokamanya Tilak—that foremost indomitable veteran of Indian

In the *Harijan*, November 4, 1939, Gandhi wrote: "To my mind the most perfect demonstration of non-violence was in Champaran."



extremism—Surendranath, Lala Lajpat Rai, and the other leaders of the country. All are great and deserve supreme admiration. But history willed it so, that on the basis of their foundations built up through great sorrow, suffering, pain and persecution Gandhi should erect the magnificent structure of Indian independence. He had the good fortune of being the instrument of the World-Spirit for India's independence. He performed the Herculean task of stimulating and galvanizing the Indian people for the performance of cooperative efforts for achieving independence. In August 1942 he proclaimed his utter irreconcilability to the perpetuation of the political slavery of India. He said: "I have travelled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to an extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes, which I now want to turn to good account in fighting this empire upheld on untruth and violence." Mass movements on a great scale in modern Indian politics and history owed themselves primarily to Gandhi's initiative. He had an intuitive capacity to feel the political pulse of the people and that accounted for his political success. Gandhi was lean and frail but he had a mighty and fearless spirit within. Due to his austere living, penances and fasts the body was emaciated but the inner spirit was resplendent with light and power. To the prostrate, weak and desperate Indian people he appeared as a messiah of new dispensation. He symbolized the dauntless quest for Swaraj. Gandhi was the Moses of India's freedom. His stress on *abhayam*—fearlessness—was aimed to bring about a psychological revolution in India. He taught the spineless people to stand erect and gaze straight and undaunted into the eyes of the oppressors. He infused into the people courage and the capacity of resistance to authority. He has done a prodigious work. From 1920 onwards, due to the stiffening of the engine of British repression, sometimes it appeared that we were fighting

a losing battle. Several times, in 1922, in 1931, in 1933 and again in 1934 and 1941, the movement of Satyagraha had to be suspended. But Gandhi symbolized the unyielding sentiments of the struggle for liberty. Even in the dark and gloomy days of 1943 he vindicated the political conscience of India by undertaking at the age of seventy-four a fast of twenty-one days. He was permanently unreconciled to Indian slavery. On April 9, 1942 he had publicly asked the Britishers to leave India and championed an open rebellion in August 1942 and always refused to withdraw his stand. It may be said in all frankness that the great event of the 15th August 1947 owes itself in a great measure to his leadership. It will be unfair to lose sight of the contributions of the terrorists, the I. N. A. of Subhas Chandra Bose, the socialists and of some of the other organizations but the Indian National Congress galvanized by the technics and moral fervour of Gandhian Satyagraha had the most significant role to play in the freedom movement in India from 1920 to 1947. In all the movements of trial his unshakable belief in the sovereignty of the spirit seemed to make the darkness of the present only a stepping-stone to the glorious future of life and optimism. Against the vaunted arrogant threats of Dyer, Birkenhead, Churchill and Amery Gandhi stood unperturbed in the calmness of his fearless spirit. An irrepressible optimist and an undaunted fighter, Gandhi was thoroughly opposed to British imperialism. He wrote in 1924: "The greatest menace to the world today is the growing, exploiting, irresponsible imperialism which through the enslavement of India is threatening the independent existence and expansion of the weaker races of the world. That imperialism is a negation of God."<sup>1</sup> Gandhi, to a great extent, came to represent India's legitimate aspirations to freedom. Against the forces of reaction he stood for freedom and right. Gandhi will go down in history as the chief architect and builder of Indian independence.

“The Great Soul in a beggar’s garb” manifested the Indian desire for national self-determination. Leader of a vast number of human beings for over a quarter of a century without any control of the material sources and avenues of social and political power, Gandhi triumphed as the embodiment of the Indian will to complete freedom from the iron chains of British imperialism. There were sceptics who stated in 1924-1927 and again in 1941 that Gandhi has to yield leadership but soon they were given convincing demonstrations of the immense hold of the Mahatma on the Indian people. Gandhi will be remembered and revered as the great political leader and the mighty moral and social liberator. Gandhi’s crusade against untouchability and his leadership of Indian independence movement were based on ideals of social, political and economic justice. Thus there were major liberalist and humanist orientations to Gandhi’s concept of nationalism. He worked for raising the dignity and extolling and elevating the spirit of a vast nation. He felt that before India could play its role in world politics and culture, Indian manhood was to be strengthened and revitalized and purged of all political perversities and moral weaknesses. He wanted that India should develop the positive virtues of truth, non-violence and fearlessness. Hence his cry of Swaraj or independence was not a gospel of aggressive isolation or economic autarchy. Swaraj was a call for the vindication of denied justice. In a speech at the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University he said: “If we are to receive self-government, we shall have to take it. We shall never be granted self-government.” He had already indicated his devotion to justice by temporarily suspending the Satyagraha of the Indian community when the South African government was faced with a strike of workers. He did not want to take advantage even of the opponents. He inculcated love even for his antagonists. He stood for universal justice and he claimed that the Indian National Congress stood for the interests of all sections of the country. He championed

the conception of justice as an attribute of the soul. But he also wanted social, political and economic justice. Justice has to manifest its active power in all the spheres of one's existence. By his devotion to the pursuit of the undying ideals of political liberty, equality, justice and welfare Gandhi succeeded in welding, to a great extent, the Indian people into an organized if not organic political community. The theory of Swaraj was a counterpoise to the forces of social reaction and vested interests. Before his star rose on the Indian public firmament India was a nation in the making. When he was dead in 1948 India was an independent political community, in tears at the tragic ending of the great liberator. Like Rousseau's "legislator" Gandhi accepted the need of the social spirit. He succeeded in giving to the disorganized and disintegrated Indian people a sense of the common good and the general will. Although he could not prevent the "vivisection" of the country, at least, the alien rule was eliminated. This was a great success. Gandhi was the great victor who triumphed as the political leader of the dumb, semi-starved millions of India. He was the concrete embodiment of the latent aspirations of the mute millions. It is historical blasphemy to represent Gandhi as the protagonist of the Indian bourgeoisie. Gandhi collected money from the pockets of the rich to finance the activities of the Congress and his other organizations but it is a travesty of truth to regard him as the political leader of any one section. He stood for the national demand and his mandate to leadership was based on the prolonged and dedicated service of "the hungry and the naked millions." He made no tall talks about social revolution or capture of power but he was a solid political realist and his unimpeachable devotion to the cause of the Indian nation is writ large in the deathless achievements of the great leader himself.

## **5. Technics of Gandhi's Leadership**

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi assumed leader-

ship at a time when Indian public opinion was becoming anti-British. The propaganda of the Home Rule Leagues under the leadership of Lokamanya Tilak and Annie Besant had created a great longing for Swaraj. The Jallianwalla Bagh massacre of April 1919 had thoroughly alienated the Indian masses. The coercive technics used by the British for recruiting soldiers during the first World War had produced great bitterness among the public. Gandhi appeared as the concrete embodiment of the legitimate political aspirations of India. He had the generosity to struggle for the Moslem brethren who were alienated against the British for the betrayal of Turkish interests. Tilak with his Home Rule agitation in 1916 had begun the practice of bringing the masses into politics; Gandhi carried this trend forward to its logical culmination. He claimed to be a peasant and weaver,<sup>1</sup> and he definitely transformed the Congress into a mass organization though its leadership remained middle class.

What explains the phenomenal political success of this London-trained Indian barrister who has been acclaimed by his devotees and admirers as the greatest Indian after Gautama Buddha, and perhaps the greatest figure in human history after Julius Cæsar and Jesus Christ? Not a great military commander like Alexander or Napoleon, not a politician occupying great posts like Chancellor Bismarck or Prime Minister Gladstone, not an academic philosopher like Plato or Sankara, Gandhi, nevertheless, was a unique and remarkable figure as a leader. He did not have any pretence to deep and profound learning in the ancient texts which was the great asset of Dayananda and Tilak. Gandhi's powers as an orator were considerably limited. His speeches were severely simple, direct and pointed. There was no ges-

<sup>1</sup> At the famous trial in 1922, Gandhi said that he was, by profession, a peasant and weaver. This was the case of a middle class intellectual and barrister deliberately emancipating himself from the snobberies of his class and identifying himself with the styles of living of those in the lower strata of society.

ture and no attempt at the use of flamboyant and rhetorical elegance. He was able, nevertheless, to acquire an amazing hold over Indian public opinion. The pettiest details about his life, movement and actions were flashed in the press. The Indian people idolized him and it will not be an exaggeration to say that in a sense he was the greatest spokesman of Indian public opinion for over a quarter of a century.

As a leader Gandhi was an emblem of what Max Weber would call charismatic authority. His power was not due to his being a representative of the conservative ecclesiastical and traditional forces of Hindu society. Gandhi's power and influence were not based on the possession and assumption of some high and dignified office. His authority over the Indian people had been acquired by long years of patient, devoted and selfless service. He was not a czar or imperator or a leader of 'machine politics' in the American sense. He built the foundations of his leadership through great suffering. He was derided, ridiculed, and assaulted but his mighty spirit rose victorious. His power and authority were really charismatic<sup>1</sup> because they were based upon his own moral and spiritual discipline. He rose to supreme eminence by dint of his tenacity in loyalty to principles, his self-confidence and heroism. His was the power not of the body and the material forces but of the spirit. His leadership was attained through heroic sufferings in the path of what he regarded as the divine way—the *marga* of Hari. His personality showed the strength of individual purification and dedicated philanthropic service. He claimed to follow the dictates of the inner conscience which indicates the intimations of the spirit. His charisma expressed itself in the transform-

<sup>1</sup> Max Weber has distinguished three kinds of authority: (a) traditional, (b) rational or legal and (c) charismatic. "There is the authority of the extraordinary and personal gift of grace (charisma), the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism or other qualities of individual leadership."

Max Weber : *Essays in Sociology*, (Oxford, 1946), pp. 78-79.

ing power of his distinctive personal character. Several interviewers have testified to the magnetic element in his character and being which evoked passionate loyalty. The almost natural and unconstrained acceptance of his leadership by millions and millions of people was made possible only because of charismatic authority. Gandhi thus acquired immense hold on the people by virtue of his tremendous personality. His great leadership was the consequence of his supreme dedication to the cause of the people. Gandhi succeeded in becoming the most ardent champion of Indian nationalism through his leadership in the Champaran Satyagraha (1917), the Kheda Satyagrah (1918), the Non-Cooperation movement (1920-22), the Civil Disobedience movement (1930-1934) and the Quit India movement. Both in India and the west he began to be regarded as completely identified with the nationalist movement. He was the sole representative of the Indian National Congress at the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. He was venerated as a national hero. His leadership rested on the fact of his being the most significant symbol of India's national fight.

Gandhi's political leadership was reinforced by his spiritual personality. He pleaded for the incorporation of moral and spiritual values in politics.<sup>1</sup> His constant references to God and inner voice, his daily prayers and his solemn vow of Brahmacharya since 1906 when he was thirty-six, made him a great saint and a prophet and the Indian public deeply revered him. Gandhi's leadership was unique because to his tremendous political eminence he added the greatness and profundity of a saint. For the secularist and the materialist, there might have been an element of enigma or inscrutability in Gandhi's leadership but a large section of the Indian public opinion almost defied him.

Gandhi gave to the Indian people a concrete and

V. P. Varma: "Gandhi and Marx", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, June 1954

comprehensive program. He advocated Hindu-Muslim unity, village regeneration and uplift, Khadi and cottage industries, the abolition of untouchability and the winning of Indian independence. He thus showed his intense interest in mundane things and values. He was one of the greatest embodiments of the old Indian values of spirituality, morality, austerity and devout saintliness. He reminded the Indian people of the old sages and moral prophets. He was a link in the traditions of Vasistha, Buddha, Mahavir and Tulsidas. But he was not a mere conservator of the dominant moral values contained in the Upanishads and the Gita. He combined the two aspects of conservation and new creation in his works. He appeared as active puissant social and political worker for the redemption of the sins, sufferings and deprivations of contemporary India. His technic for social change was peaceful but the amount of the changes brought about by his methods amounted to a great social revolution. Like Vivekanand's Gandhi's mind was lit by visions of a great and glorious future for India. He thought that an awakened India would stand for the message of non-violence in the world. He was not a visionary and an utopian philosopher and conceptualist. Like Tilak, he believed in Karmayog. He was Karmayogi incessantly toiling for the realization of his ideals. As a Karmayogi the great secret of his power was that he appeared to the Indian masses as a prophet and leader giving hints of spiritual power. He confessed: "That I respond to the mass mind and the masses know me instinctively is a fact which cannot be gainsaid."<sup>1</sup> The masses considered him a man of God. But there was also a mundane source of his great power. He consciously and deliberately tried to live as an Indian peasant. The Indian people found in him only an accentuated embodiment of themselves and hence they clung to him. In his tastes and in his simplicity, even in some of the so-called paradoxes and contradictions of



his life he was the magnification of the Indian peasant. His identification with the Indian peasants' external mode of action and living was never a mere technic of political manipulation. It was genuine. Like Buddha, he adopted the language of the people. Buddha preached in Prakrit. Gandhi took recourse to Hindustani and Gujrati as far as possible. His spirit clamoured for removing the great poverty of the Indian masses and because every Indian could not get adequate clothes, hence Gandhi only wore a loin-cloth and occasionally a shawl. He took up the loin-cloth on September 21, 1921 and tenaciously clung to it throughout his life. Indians have a great veneration for simplicity. Buddha became great not as a Sakya prince of Kapilavastu but as a monk. Gandhi's great efforts resulted in dynamising the Indian population with a great and active spirit. Gandhi might have been an "enigmatic personality" for Mr. Amery in March 1943, but the simple Indian masses recognized in him their own will to independence writ large. His success symbolised the awakening of the mighty sleeping titan—the Indian masses. Gandhi claimed to be the leader not merely of the feudal aristocrats or the middle-class intellectuals and the bourgeoisie but of the entire Indian population. In no sense can it be said that the Gandhian movement was the conscious or unconscious expression of the interests of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie. It is true, however, that a section of the capitalists and the bourgeoisie was interested in the Gandhian movement because due to the agitation of the latter the former were rescued from the rugged competition of the foreign capitalists. Gandhi and the Indian National Congress were opposed to commercial discriminations in favour of the British capitalists who had invested in India. He said that as a villager he became one with the ocean of Indian humanity. He was the democratic spirit concretely embodied. Only thus the experiment of the independence of a vast sub-continent by mainly non-violent means could succeed. Gandhi's triumph meant the explicit political realization of the rising Indian soul.

Gandhi used the power of journalism to accentuate his leadership. In South Africa he edited *The Indian Opinion*. His *Young India* became the Bible of the rising Indian nationalism. His *Harijan* defined the course of India's nationalistic politics for a number of years. The press as the most powerful source in formulating and moulding public opinion, was fully utilized by Gandhi. Besides his own papers, a great part of the nationalist press in India helped to accentuate Gandhi's leadership.

As a moral prophet and a political leader, Gandhi had the capacity to arouse and to dramatize public opinion. In 1920-21 he promised to bring Swaraj in one year—the last date fixed was December 31, 1921. Although the promise proved to be fantastic, it heightened the emotional appeal of his leadership. His famous Dandi March of 1930 excited Indian public opinion to a tremendous degree. He was compared to Rama on his mission to Lanka and to Krishna. His famous mantra of "Do or Die" in 1942 had a similar emotional and imaginative appeal.

Gandhi had become invincible because his leadership also, like that of Dayanand, Vivekanand and Tilak, was based on self-abnegation. Having renounced the desire for fame and wealth no temptations could seduce him nor threats could overawe him. He became the centre of homage and reverence as a servant of the nation and a man of God. Gandhi's authority was not due to his holding any office. It was based on personal efforts. Due to the power of his personal charisma, he was able to evoke to some extent the immense reverence associated with the *avatara*, in the illiterate sections of the Indian society. Gandhi symbolised prophetic leadership. His simple dress, his vegetarianism, the staff in his hand and the seating posture that he took up, like Buddha, at the time of making speeches, served to turn conservative religious opinion in his favour. His fasts in 1924, 1932, 1933, and 1943 and at other occasions touched deep emotional

chords in the public heart, and the reaction of public opinion was almost immediate and instantaneous in his favour.

Gandhi was absolutely devoted to truth and his constant confessions also eventually turned public opinion in his favour. He did not want to keep anything hidden or secret. Even the confession of his Himalayan blunder in April 1919 after the mob violence in Nadiad and Ahmedabad did not eventually antagonize Indian public opinion. Thus we see that the confessional technic of St. Augustine and Rousseau was used by Gandhi in the field of public leadership.

There were a few occasions when Gandhi had to face the hostility of public opinion. His crusade against untouchability, his consent to the ending of the life of a calf in deep physical agony,<sup>1</sup> and what was regarded as his pro-Moslemism did turn conservative Hindu opinion against him but the deeper sentiments of the public were always in his favour.

## 6. Gandhi as a Social Reformer

Gandhi was not only a political leader but also a social reformer. He was opposed to reactionary cultural traditions and antiquated meaningless social customs and relations. His successful struggle against the dark sin of untouchability will always be regarded as a vital, noble and dynamic contribution to Indian civilization and culture. He had the boldness to fight against a system and a prejudice sanctioned by centuries old conservatism. Buddha, Kabir, Ramamohan and Dayanand were prophets of social equalitarianism and Gandhi extended that tradition. His fast unto death in 1932 against the infamous Communal Award which was calculated to sever the body of Hindu community by providing separate electorates to the so-called untouchables will be always regarded as an example of monumental self-sacrifice. By the Poona Pact, joint electorates were

<sup>1</sup> *Yaung India*, March 20, 1930

provided although there were reservations of seats for Harijans. Gandhi was the revolutionary leader preaching social equality to a conservative tradition-gripped Hindu India. Due to his efforts many conservative groups had to open temples to Harijans. His protracted campaign against untouchability was an advance in the direction of the recognition of human rights. In 1933 Gandhi fasted for twentyone days to make penance for the sins of the caste Hindus against the Harijans. To Gandhi the virus of untouchability was only a prominent phase of the devil of social arrogance and chauvinism. The curse of untouchability gave deep agony to his heart. He once said: "I do not desire to be born again, but if I am really born again, I desire to be born amidst the untouchables, so as to share their difficulties and to work for their liberation." As a Vedantist and Vaishnava Gandhi believed in the spiritual oneness of all life and hence he was absolutely opposed to untouchability. He began public work for its removal since 1915. In 1932 he considered its removal as an issue of transcendental value, surpassing even political independence. He once declared: "I am a reformer through and through, but my zeal never leads me to the rejection of any of the essential things of Hinduism." But untouchability had no integral connexion with the essence of Hinduism. He honestly confessed that his fight against the deadly sin of untouchability was a fight against the impure in humanity. The eradication of untouchability root and branch was a matter of atoning for the sins of the cruel sections of the Hindu world. Gandhi declared in poignant terms: "One hundred lives given for this noble cause would, in my opinion, be poor penance done by Hindus for the atrocious wrongs they have heaped upon helpless men and women of their own faith." Hence he earnestly pleaded for "real brotherly embrace".

## **7. Gandhi as a Great Asian**

The reawakening of Asia is one of the most dominant phenomena of the modern world. Since the Maji

Restoration in Japan, slowly, Asia has realized a sense of political realism. The Russo-Japanese war, the rise of the Swadeshi movement in India and the Young Turk movement in Turkey as well as the Chinese Revolution of 1911 unmistakably demonstrated that the people of Asia were being imbued with a new spirit of political assertiveness. Mahatma Gandhi was a great Indian and was an all-India leader for over a quarter of a century and his leadership was created out of the powers of the spirit. But Gandhi was not only a great Hindu, not only the greatest Indian of his time but he was decidedly the greatest Asiatic of the modern world. He interpreted the political struggle of Indian freedom as the process of the liberation of Asia. He wrote: "Freedom for India will bring hope to Asiatics and other exploited nations. Today, there is no hope for the Negroes, but Indian freedom will fill them with hope."<sup>1</sup> He was proud of being born in Asia because it was Asia where arose the great empires and where were born all the great religious teachers and prophets—Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Confucius and Mohammad. As Hegel said: "In Asia arose the Light of Spirit, and, therefore, the history of the world." To the members of the White race, proud of its so-called "White man's burden", Gandhi appeared as the quintessence of the resurgent and defiant spirit of modern Asia. His Satyagraha struggles in South Africa were aimed against the infective venom of racial supremacy. Political racialism is mainly the product of modern western history. Gandhi symbolised the spirit of human equality and racial fraternity. When he was fallen, Asia almost felt that it had lost its champion. Undoubtedly more than Sun-Yat Sen and Chiang-Kai-Shek, more than Kamal and Ibn Saud and more than any other Asiatic leader, Gandhi will be regarded as the greatest Asiatic of today. Through his leadership of the Indian freedom movement, indirectly, he has helped the revi-

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<sup>1</sup> Press Statement by M. K. Gandhi, July 12, 1944

talization of Asian political consciousness. Indeed, he will be regarded as the greatest figure in Asiatic history after Gautama Buddha. To a politically weak Asia Gandhi taught the reawakening of the Asian spirit. Asia had ceased to be a significant category in world politics from the fifteenth century onwards. Gandhi's rise, indirectly, also led to the intensification of Asian consciousness. The work of the Mahatma as the awakener of the East to its '*lebensraum*' is immensely significant. At the Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi in April, 1947 Gandhi said: "Asia shall live and live as free as even western nations." He championed the claims of the Asiatic nations to an honourable and self-determinate place amidst the comity of world nations. He wanted Asia to be dynamic once again and shake off her lethargy and inertia. He could not tolerate patronization and domination. He wanted the brotherhood of all human beings to be recognized. In his letter to President Roosevelt on July 1, 1942, Gandhi had written: "I venture to think that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for the freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow, so long as India and for that matter Africa are exploited by Great Britain, and America has the Negro problem in her own home." Gradually not only some of the great leaders of Asiatic independence but also the leaders in the struggles of suppressed minorities and nationalities in the U. S. A. and Europe looked to him for guidance. Recently in Alabama an attempt was made by the Negro minority to apply the Gandhian technic of non-violent resistance. Gandhi's triumph also indirectly symbolized the victorious emergence of the rising Asiatic soul. He was the embodiment of the Asian spirit of nobility, decency, generosity and an intuitional apprehension of reality. But he did not stand for an Asian bloc versus the western bloc. At the meeting of the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi on April 1 and 2, 1947 he advised the rising nations of Asia to harness their efforts for the eventual realization of one

world. He stressed that the message of Asia had been one of love and truth and he hoped that this message stressed by Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, Rama, Krishna and others would conquer the west.

### **8. Gandhi's Message to Mankind**

Although a great nationalist leader Gandhi was a noble humanitarian and has a message for the world. He believed in the unity of mankind. Gandhi's superb humanity and his generous heart made him a world leader. His fight for the removal of untouchability, his successful fulfilment to eventual victory of the Indian struggle for freedom and his championship of the cause and claims of Asia to a self-determinate existence on earth reveal the active side of his personality. He had a supereminent faith in divine beatitude but was also absorbed in prolonged political action for the sake of the poor and the oppressed. Earlier than the triumphs of Mussolini, Stalin and Hitler, Gandhi used to address half a million human beings in his meetings. He was a leader of a splendid and gigantic stature. If authority over millions unsupported by any kind of external coercion and totalitarian dictation be the criterion of leadership, Gandhi has been the greatest leader in human history. He was a world-historical individual of a titanic stature. His personality was the typification of the synthesis of great action and prayerful contemplation. Like Mohammad, Gandhi would begin to fast whenever he would be faced with a moral crisis. But to the qualities of a leader Gandhi added the noble attributes of a teacher and prophet of mankind. Romain Rolland regarded him as the Saint Paul of our times. Gandhi's greatness was confined not only to the realm of historical action but it appealed also to the realms of the mind and the soul. To the world sick with the clash between different conceptions of right Gandhi has taught the sanctity of social and political service. The true revolutionaries in human history are not the political leaders but the great teachers, prophets, philosophers and scientists who create revolution in society by the

accumulated momentum generated by their teachings. The real revolutionaries were not Philip of Macedon but Plato, not Cæsar but Cicero, not Clarendon but Newton and not Hitler but Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi was not only a great leader but also a noble and good soul. Unlike Goethe, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche the Mahatma was not a prophet of the will to be or the will to power. He cherished the will to suffer. He was meek, humble, generous, forgiving and compassionate. He has been regarded as the modern Saint Francis. He was an ever-expansive soul—the Mahatma. Gandhi's message to the Indian people became so appealing because he simultaneously utilized the technics of political and prophetic leaders. He attempted in a sense to combine the spiritual and the temporal—the *sacer dotium* and the *imperium*. No other leader during his life-time had the hold on public opinion which Gandhi had. But he always remained the simple, lovable, reasonable and sympathetic soul. Certainly Gandhi embodied in himself some of the noblest ideals of a renascent and reinvigorated Hinduism, certainly he was the greatest Indian political leader from 1920 to 1948, certainly he was the champion of Asiatic aspirations for complete emancipation from western imperialism but it is also true that he was a moral leader of mankind and his message constitutes an addition to the heritage of the humanist and intellectual mankind. For a bewildered and chaotic world Gandhi has reasserted the spiritual and moral approach to the solution of problems of man. His noble message of truth and non-violence, liberty and equality, justice, welfare and peace has moved the hearts of the thinking and sensitive peoples of a considerable section of the whole world. He was a saviour of souls and not the wrecker of civilizations. He came to build and not to destroy. His ideal was: "concord in the place of discord, peace in the place of strife, progress in the place of retrogression and life in the place of death."<sup>1</sup> He was a

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 30, 1947



profound and firm believer in the values of the spirit. Never was he a moral relativist or nihilist. Against the unreasonable doctrine of exploitation and domination he preached the profound cult of the innate sanctity of life. His ideal was to become, in the language of the Gita, a Bhakta or a *trigunatita* and to subjugate the passions and prejudices of the lower empirical ego. He was meek and humble and had no arrogant pretensions to any supermanhood either of the Dionysian or the Apollonian or the Faustian type. He was a saint who wanted to atone for his own sins and faults. He was a leader of Olympian dimensions but his inner heart delighted not in discussions with diplomats, statesmen and governors but in serving the sick and the poor. He was essentially a wise man offering his counsel to all who sought his guidance. After the 15th August, 1947 he was the supereminent advisor to the new Indian nation. In the eyes of mankind he was more of a prophet aiming to know and practise the divine way and not a politician in the narrow and sophistic sense of the term. People compared him to Christ and Krishna and never put him in the category of Alexander or Bismarck. In the early twenties some critics regarded him queer and eccentric. Churchill called him "naked fakir", in 1931. Some of the diehard imperialists were determined "to crush" him and his movement. But he became victorious and his personality revealed its Himalayan stature and after 1920 almost assumed the powerful sweep and vastness and the grandiloquent dimensions of a mighty spirit. He transformed his social and political actions into the *sadhana* for the intuitive oneness with God.

Gandhi was a prophet of human perfection. He also would have said, "Be ye as perfect as your Father in Heaven." He had a great appeal for the advocates of a Christian way of life. Western students of human behaviour soon found in him the moral and spiritual genius who had divined better than they, the impending catastrophe of the human civilization unless man was to undergo a psychological revolution, a moral regenera-

tion and spiritual illumination. He pleaded for the spiritual tonic of non-violence as the necessary factor for the restoration of civilization. To the westerners Gandhi appeared as a new Socrates or a new St. Francis. He was one of those who "have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord." They regarded him as the synthesis of William Penn and Leo Tolstoy. Gandhi's absolute devotion to truth and non-violence made the western pacifists regard him as the new Christ born this time not in Jerusalem but in Kathiawad. Sometimes he was regarded as the first Christian politician since Jesus Christ. Christian public opinion both in India and the world favoured Gandhi. To some people Gandhi appeared as a Tolstoyan. One of the earliest biographers of Gandhi was a Christian—Rev. Joseph J. Doke, Baptist Minister at Johannesburg. Some of the greatest admirers of Gandhi in the west like Rolland were devout Christians. Gandhi was influenced by Biblical teachings and he found additional support for his theories of Satyagraha in the famous writing of Thoreau—*Civil Disobedience*. Gandhi's trip to the Round Table Conference in 1931 brought English public opinion, to some degree, on his side. He lived in the East End of London, fraternised with the labourers, absolutely stuck to his daily prayers with great fidelity and had his interview with the King-Emperor in his simple dress. He charmed the English people with his deep humility and simplicity. To some extent western Christian public opinion regarded him as the greatest Christian after Christ. Gandhi's feeble body and the stubborn and persistent nobility of his gentle soul were the most outspoken defiance of the traditions of western power-politics based on the theories of Thrasymachus, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Treitschke. In place of sovereignty Gandhi was a champion of freedom and moral emancipation. Against the exalted Hegelian glorification of the omniscient rational actuality of the State, Gandhi taught the dignity of the humble man and inculcated the simple virtues of love, truth and devotion

to God. Against the dreaded cults of bureaucratic omnipotence and governmental centralization Gandhi stood for the claims of moral conscience and the small community.

Gandhi had a moral message for mankind. His approach was spiritual and moral. In India, Gandhi primarily appeared as a great social and political leader and taught that political freedom will be the basis of economic security and constructive enrichment. Hence he stressed the attainment of Swaraj. But to the world outside Gandhi prescribed not a political but a moral cure. He preached a brotherly union of hearts—*concordia*. His personality appeared as the synthesis of the eastern tradition of philosophic disinterestedness and pious sincerity and the western traditions of social equality and political liberty. He taught the importance of personal purification as the necessary foundation for social, national and international harmony. Indians were primarily interested in him as a leader, outsiders were mainly concerned with him as the great teacher and prophet of Ahimsa. On July 23, 1939 he wrote a letter to Adolf Hitler to plead the cause of humanity. He wrote: "Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate, and that I must make my appeal for whatever it may be worth. It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object, however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success?" Gandhi constantly endeavoured for the realization of brotherhood, peace and justice. He had perfect faith in creative love. He taught the negation of the bondage to the flesh and pleaded for the recovery of faith in God and His mercy. He had the spiritual vision of the unity of

all mankind. He believed in the moral unity of humanity and also accepted the ideal of world federation. He accepted the inner oneness of all existence in the cosmic spirit. He became a world teacher because of his eminent spiritual integrity. His life was dedicated to the concrete realization of the teaching of the Vedas and the Gita that the one supreme spirit pervades all existence—*Isa Vasyamidam Sarvam* and all living beings are the representations or manifestations of the eternal divine being. Gandhi had realized that genuine autonomy meant the governance of one's conduct by the supreme canon of spiritual living. Because Gandhi preached and practised truth and Ahimsa, hence his greatness was not a surface formation of external pomp and power but it was related to the depths and profundities of the human soul. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whom Gandhi recognized as his political Guru, said with reference to him: "In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Mr. Gandhi does—our great patriarch Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji and my late master Mr. Ranade—men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that is unworthy." Real importance and distinction are determined not by its external width but by its inner depth. Gandhi was a champion of the moral will and ethical consciousness. Hence like Buddha and Christ and Chaitanya, Gandhi attempted to find a place for himself and his teachings not in the intellect and emotion of men but in their souls. He appealed to the permanent and inner nobility of human nature and was not concerned with the quantitative increase in the number of his followers. The immediate and spontaneous sense of sorrow and grief that went round all the corners of the world at the news of the pathetic and calamitous demise of the great soul was only an indication that Gandhi's message was intensely significant for mankind. Leon Blum said: "...I feel the same sorrow as if I had lost someone near and

dear." As a world prophet Gandhi has taught the ideal of moral liberation and increasing perfection of character. He was convinced that one could not pursue the path of true religion without being ready for self-immolation. He used to quote the lines of Pritamdas:

"The pathway of the Lord can only  
be trodden by heroic souls:

The laggards shrink from it.

The divi goes deep beneath the ocean  
to find the pearls of great price."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi heralded a moral dispensation for a tormented humanity. He was much more than the liberator of country. Although as a patriot he will be ranked with Washington, Mazzini and Sun-Yat-Sen, his achievements are not confined to bringing independence to four hundred millions. Besides being a political leader he was a world prophet. He stood for universal harmony or *concordantia*. By his insistence on the application of purity to politics he has re-stressed the aspirations of the noble humanity of all ages. He had stood for conversion and persuasion as technics to solve national and international tensions in place of coercion and compulsion. It is immaterial whether he was in a minority of one or a majority of a million. He showed an unwavering resolve to apply only methods of civility and gentleness against his most ruthless political antagonists. He was a pilgrim of the spirit. He said: "I belong to the tribe of Columbus and Stevenson who hoped against hope in the face of heaviest odds." He had the supreme courage to stand alone for the vindication of what he considered the truth. His stand on truth and the attempt at the crystallization and concretisation of the perfectionistic dreams of humanity in his own person as indicated in his various fasts and his utter readiness to sacrifice himself for the good of man impart to him a place all unique and beyond the grasp of a narrow patriot or

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, March 11, 1939

a power politician. He wanted to be a *jivanmukta*. His constant aim was the realisation of God through service of mankind.

Mahatma Gandhi listened to the silence of the soul and not to the loud cry of the platform, the radio and the multitude. He was sober, calm, quiet and composed. He stressed forbearance, patience and co-operation. His fundamental ideal was to become a *sthitaprajna*—a person of steady intellect.<sup>1</sup> He had achieved a calmness of spirit and an integration of personality which are reserved for a few. But in spite of his moral and spiritual attainments Gandhi was not the serious sombre ascetic. He was very human. He could laugh and laugh mirthfully. He could shed tears. Tears came to his eyes when the body of his devoted wife was being cremated. He would cry in times of deep anguish as he did in 1918.<sup>2</sup> But still Gandhi was a man of God who had transcended most of the normal human failings and dualities. Psycho-analysis points out that the real cause of misery and conflict in the world is the division of personality. Sociologists and social psychologists have made us aware of the increasing trend towards psychopathic and neurotic elements in modern civilization, consequent upon the disintegration of the morally autonomous personality of man. A moral renaissance is essential as a counterpoise to the fragmentalization and dispersion of personality. This would strengthen the case for the Gandhian emphasis on the practice of the moral vows for the purpose of emotional integration. Gandhi's message for the unification of emotions and the coherence of personality is very significant for the millions of disturbed and unhappy persons throughout

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<sup>1</sup> According to Mahatma Gandhi, the last eighteen verses of the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita (verses 55 to 72) indicate the pattern of life of "a *sthitaprajna* or the man of steady wisdom i.e. a satyagrahi."—*Harijan*, 7th April, 1946

<sup>2</sup> Rajendra Prasad: *Atmakatha* (In Hindi, Sahitya Sansar, Patna, 1947), pp. 113-115

the world. It is cynical to regard Gandhi as a masochistic personality as M. N. Roy has done.<sup>1</sup>

The life of Gandhi was a manifestation, a vindication of the noble truth of the great scriptures of humanity that one grain of truth is infinitely more powerful than mountains of falsehoods. The theory of Satyagraha is based on the sanctity of truth. He stated: "I have often said if there is one true Satyagrahi it would be enough. I am trying to be that true Satyagrahi." Belief in this spiritual point of view often made Gandhi champion a cause which to the majority appeared not to have much chance of success. He was an extraordinary man who became in a sense the spokesman of the conscience of mankind. His lonely pilgrimage in Noakhali in Bengal was a significant demonstration of his faith in his spiritual mission. His determination in 1946-1948 to end the blood bath of the communal orgy of violence is the story of epic sublimity and dignified suffering. There was a spiritual unity running throughout his life which was full of ceaseless activities. This made him a world prophet. In his actions he was not guided by prudence or expediency but by the simple canon of charity and love. This made his appeal irresistible. As a world teacher Gandhi stood for the effective realization of the values of uprightness, candour, purity and Godward-orientation of conduct.

## 9. Gandhi's Place in World History

Gandhi belongs to the category of the elect of world history. He was an overwhelming spiritual presence. He left the world better than he found it and the void created by his death can hardly be ever perhaps fulfilled. Gandhi was not only the prophet of peace and the advocate of unity and brotherhood, he has been the martyr of his ideals. His death imparted a dramatic finale to his teachings and career. The inexorable hand

<sup>1</sup> M. N. Roy: "Psychoanalysis of Gandhism", *Problem of Freedom* (Calcutta, Renaissance Publishers, 1945), pp. 28-38

of Necessity or the inscrutable desings of an ineluctable Destiny cut him down at the hour of his great victory. By a tragic irony of Fate, death had to put the final seal of triumph and conquest on the career of this man whose life was an unremitting toil in the cause of man's spiritual renaissance. The death of Gandhi, as he himself used to say, only meant the release of the immortal soul from the chains of the body. The spirit is always alive. Gandhi's martyrdom only sheds additional radiance on his strength of character, his purity of motivation and his profound sense of duty, his supreme tenacity of purpose, and his absolute sense of responsibility. His belief in the spiritual interpretation of history and his ideal of the emancipation of the soul receive additional authenticity from this act of supreme sacrifice. His tragic end glorifies the life of undaunted self-determination for the assertion of the concepts of conscience, common welfare and universal good. Gandhi always held that the concept of freedom as the power to do or forbear from doing any act upon preference of the will was inadequate. He always attempted to do the absolute right. This immense fidelity to the canon of right and good eventually cost him his life. Gandhi's martyrdom immortalizes the spiritual categorical norms and maxims of moral faith, duty and non-violence, and will be regarded as a permanent vindication of the power of the human spirit to suffer in a just cause. Against the prerogatives of external compulsion and tyranny Gandhi's spirit of self-immolation vindicates the sanctity of inner moral disposition and freed conscience. Deliberate acceptance of death carries firm belief even into the hearts of the antagonists and the sceptics and since the time that a misguided countryman of his, a Pathan Mir Alam, had almost fatally assaulted him in South Africa, Gandhi always defied death. Voluntary acceptance of death is the sanctified act of atonement—*prayaschitta* for the sins of oneself and of others. He was not in the least afraid of dying for the safeguarding of his ideals. He always welcomed death in a noble cause. It can only be hoped



that the frightful tragedy enacted by Nathuram Vinayak Godse in New Delhi on January 30, 1948 at 5:06 P.M., may prove to be the most potent warning against any future act of human madness on a great scale. His assassination was absolutely un-Hindu. It was not the act of organized Hinduism but was the deed of a misguided fanatic. The apparent reason of his martyrdom was political. He was regarded as the subtle supporter of the political interests of the foreign state of Pakistan and as being blind to the cause of Hindu sufferers. Godse said in the Court: "I sat brooding intensely on the atrocities perpetrated on Hinduism and its dark and deadly future if left to face Islam outside and Gandhi inside." It was an act of superb generosity on the part of Gandhi to persuade the Indian Government to pay over fifty crores of rupees to Pakistan, when India and Pakistan were colliding over Kashmir. But certainly he was never a danger to the Indian State and he was not murdered because he was a threat to the Indian Government. Hence his self-immolation is not political in the same sense as that of Socrates or Jesus Christ. He was not killed for reason for the state. Neither was his murder a deliberate act of any political government.

His martyrdom has released the forces for the revivification of the spiritual approach to life, politics and society. Both in his life and his death Gandhi justified the effectiveness of his powerful humanity. He was the complete, the full and the integral man who became identified with his great ideals. From a "coolie barrister", he voluntary became a "farmer and weaver" and finally became a martyr as a prophet of peace and good will. He was essentially a lover of man and it has been said that like Christ who is reported to have uttered, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," Gandhi also by the last movement of his hand forgave his assassin. His last words were "Hey Ram"—O God. Nearly thirty-five years before Gandhi's tragic end, Gopal Krishna Gokale had remarked: "He is without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made."

Gandhi triumphed in his death. He was the great moral conqueror. From the physical standpoint he is dead but he will be permanently celebrated in the annals of his country and in the records of the world. He will have a permanent and eminent place in world history. His physical body is dead but his spirit will always stand as the evidence and declaration of the supremacy of the great religious and moral teachings of mankind. To a sceptical world he revealed the values of saintliness. His life and his personality will continue to be the sources of great and permanent inspiration to future thinkers, philosophers and leaders. He will be revered as the incarnation of soulforce and the prophet of Ahimsa. Gandhi's role in world history was mighty and powerful. He was a powerful soldier of God. One of the greatest leaders of men and action he will be venerated as the teacher who preached and practised brotherhood, equality, moral harmony, freedom of the spirit and the commensurability of noble means and good ends. He preached faith and strength in days of gloom and frustration. He will be always a permanent force in the ethicization of politics. He stood for the sanctity of Ahimsa which means universal rational will for the realization of the highest good of all. He will be regarded as a comprehensive and integral soul—the *Mahan Atman*--who tried to realize in his life the synthesis and harmony of the east and the west. A man engaged in the intensest social and political action, Gandhi adhered to the concept of *Moksha* or eternal blessedness to be realized by love and service. The great and luminous personality of Gandhi will continue to be a spiritual source of guidance and enlightenment for future generations. Gandhi, although a product of the agrarian semi-urbanized Hindu society of Kathiawad, was basically a saint and a prophet. He represented in his person the values of abnegation, asceticism, austere morality and spirituality which are dear to the Hindu heart. But he had a profound message for man. He has taught us the doctrine of the incorporation of moral values in the texture of our civilization.

In place of lust and pride and cupidity; Gandhi has taught the values of moral life and universal love. He stresses that man has to be consciously moulded into becoming a moral animal. Man is not merely a political animal as Aristotle pointed out but a spiritual entity. Gandhi has restressed the spiritual and moral criteria. Therein lies his eminent and abiding contribution to the ennoblement of mankind. Amidst the atmosphere of disillusionment and frustration in the world memories and heritage of Gandhi symbolize the hope, faith and confidence of creative good will. The stress on moral and spiritual approach only serves to illustrate the prophetic character of Gandhi's role in modern civilization. He will be regarded as a member of a company that includes Socrates, Buddha, Christ, Tolstoy and other prophets. Gandhi, unlike Oswald Spengler, does not merely offer the gloomy philosophy of the decline of western civilizations but like a world-teacher offers the hope of the renaissance and rejuvenation of cultures by including and embodying a moral and spiritual dynamic. He was an inspired and gifted soul. He was a man of deep faith and noble love. For ages to come he will be revered as an extraordinary figure who trod over the course of history in his surpassing majesty and grandeur. To endless generations he will be the abiding symbol of an exceeded, a transformed and regenerated humanity. He was a wise man, a noble man, a mystic, a political visionary and above all a prophet of humanity. He heralded the dawn of a spiritual epoch in human history. In a distracted world the deathless spirit of Gandhi symbolizes the triumph of moral redemption. For ages he will be reckoned as the prophet of the divine kingdom of love, truth and peace.

## CHAPTER II

# PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

### 1. Metaphysical Idealism

A study of metaphysics is not only important for the reason that it affords insight into the problems of the origin of the cosmos and the value and final destiny of man but also because it vitally determines our social and political thought. Metaphysical assumptions are at the base of our social and political propositions. The fundamental basis of Gandhism is the conception of an omnipresent spiritual reality, "an all-embracing Living Light" which can be called Sachchidananda or Brahman or Rama or simply Truth. Gandhi has immense, deep and constant faith in God as Truth. God is a "self-existent all-knowing Living Force which inheres every other force known to the world." God is even more intangible than ether.<sup>1</sup> He is both immanent and transcendent. The supreme absolute, everpresent spirit or God is the starting-point and the final goal of Gandhian thought. Gandhi wrote: "I do perceive that whilst everything around me is ever-changing and ever-dying, there is, underlying all that change, a living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves, and recreates. That informing Power and Spirit is God.....I see it as purely benevolent, for I can see that, in the midst of death, life persists; in the midst to untruth, truth persists; in the midst of darkness, light persists. Hence I gather that God is life, truth and light." Like the ancient Vedanta Gandhi accepts Sachchidananda as the highest conceptual formulation

<sup>1</sup> Mahatma Gandhi: *Ramanama*, (Karachi, 1947), p. 76

of reality. *Sat* is the supreme essence and the vital primordial being. Gandhi conceived of *Sat* or Truth not only as an ethical category but as an ontological being of the highest realm. Truth is not merely a value or ideal but is the highest concrete reality. God as Truth is the eternally perfect infinite consciousness. This truth according to Gandhi is not only the supreme existence but also the *Chit* or the highest gnosis and consciousness because there can be no knowledge apart from truth. It is clear that truth as an ontological absolute is not the personal God of the theistic religions but nevertheless as a great Vaishnava devotee Gandhi always engaged in prayers to God every morning and evening. He regularly prayed even during the committee meetings of the Round Table Conference in 1931. In place of physical gratifications and esthetic pleasures Gandhi stressed dedicated humanitarian service and self-contemplation for the realization of God. In the Gandhian conception, truth as the highest self-subsistent infinite objective being is to be realized by a pure and holy living and is thus to be subjectively perceived and intuitively felt in the inner depths of one's experience. Like Plato Gandhi regarded God as the supreme God. There was no trace of evil in God. Gandhi inherited the strong faith in the existence of a deeper spiritual existent from his family background, specially from his devout mother, Srimati Putlibai. Gandhi came from a Vaishnava family and the austerity and rigorous self-control that we find in his character are to be traced to his family background. His philosophy is incomprehensible unless interpreted in the context of the supreme and abiding influence upon him of the moral norms of Vaishnavite Hinduism. Perhaps his most famous religious song was the one by Narsi Mehta describing the attribute of a true Vaishnava. This song inspired Gandhi's attachment to Satyagraha. So intense was his loyalty to the fundamental teachings of purity, chastity and love inculcated in Vaishnavism that he refused to yield to several temptations that came his way during the early years of his life in England and

South Africa. The deep and profound devotion of Gandhi to the moral code left its indelible impress also on his political technics. He refused to take advantage of the weaknesses of his opponents and would willingly give up his hard-won political victories if that would satisfy the minority. The writings to Tolstoy, the studies of the Gita<sup>1</sup> and his contacts with Raichandbhai,<sup>2</sup> had deepened and strengthened his religious convictions.<sup>3</sup> He said: "I cannot recall a single instance when, at the eleventh hour, He (God) has forsaken me."

Gandhi was a metaphysical idealist but not of the Sankarite school. He did not reject the cosmos as *Maya* or illusion. The utter and absolute majesty of God is expressed both in the realms of cosmic phenomena and in human history. He did sometimes adhere to the concept of an undifferentiated abstract absolute but also believed in a God who is kind and responsive to the prayers of the devotee. He believed in God as the indweller (*Antaryamin*), the all powerful and the omniscient. His views are similar to those of the theistic interpreters of the Vedanta like Ramanuja and Madhva. Sometimes he conceived of the ultimate reality as an immutable impersonal cosmic order and at other times regarded it as a personal subject and supreme being who could

- <sup>1</sup> It may appear a little strange that Gandhi, one of the greatest exponents of the philosophy of the Gita should receive his initiation into this scripture through a translation of this book by an English writer.
- <sup>2</sup> Although Gandhi did not accept Raichandbhai as his Guru or spiritual preceptor, he had been enormously influenced by the latter's intellectual, moral and spiritual attainments and he (Raichandbhai) became a refuge to him (Gandhi) in moments of spiritual crises.
- <sup>3</sup> Gandhi in the chapter entitled "Quickened Spirit of Sacrifice" in his *Autobiography* gives credit to the Christians and theosophists for having reinforced and strengthened his religious convictions. Gandhi, however, had never experienced any serious torment or anguish of lack of faith although he was something like an agnostic for several years. He was not impressed with the religious teachings of the *Manusmriti*.

be adored and who could respond to the prayers of the devotee. He regarded God as above all attributes, indescribable, immeasurable, but still he claimed that *Ramanama* was his infallible remedy and the staff of his life. In spite of his belief in the impersonal supremacy of an inexorable cosmic order, Gandhi believed that merciful, divine intervention in favour of the devotee was possible. He believed in the story of the divine protection offered to Prahlad. He also believed in the story of the elephant king and the alligator—*Gajendra Moksha*—as given in the *Bhagavat Purana*. It is a story of divine response to a crying devotee. As a Hindu, Gandhi accepted the truth conveyed by the concepts of *Karma* and reincarnation. The concept of *Karma* stresses moral energy and is opposed to the notion of predestination. In his letters to Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi had asserted his faith in the genuineness of the theory of the reincarnation of the soul while as a Christian Tolstoy only adhered to the possibility of immortality of the soul but did not accept the concept of rebirth. Gandhi believed in the conservation of moral and spiritual energy and like a religious devotee accepted that “death after a life truly lived is but a prelude to a better and richer life.” A God-fearing life was the greatest conquest of man because it robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory at the end of the journey of life.

The spiritual truth, according to Mahatma Gandhi, was not to be realized by dialectical skill or abstract conceptual cognition but by spiritual experience obtained through pure and disciplined holy life and by the persistent endeavour to concretize the norm of Ahimsa in one's action. The wickedness of the human heart was the greatest barrier to God-realization. However, if man started the journey on the path of moral illumination the vision of God would begin to dawn slowly. Gandhi differs from a philosophical absolutist in not stressing theoretic cognition or conceptual dialectical *noesis* as the way to the realization of this divine being. He accepted the limitations of rationalism both as a

theory of knowledge and as a guide of human conduct. Gandhi did not concern himself with the rational demonstration of the cosmological or ontological or teleological proofs of the existence of God. He said, "humble and mute acceptance of divine authority makes life easier." However, the problem of the reality of God could be reasoned out to a limited extent. Like the Vaishnavas he stresses faith and devotion. He preaches the synthesis of knowledge and devotion—*jnana* and *bhakti*. No worthy action for human good is possible, according to him, without belief in and sincere acceptance of the spirit as truth. He accepted the religious view of man's spiritual relationship to the universe. The notion of service to one's kind is only a logical deduction from this conception of supreme truth and supernal eternal consciousness. For the realization of God as the supreme unity it was essential to realize unity with all the creatures of the world. He made conscious in theology a new note and that was that by holy personal life one could feel and experience God. He gave a new subjective connotation to the Vedic and Upanishadic concept of *sraddha*. Through faith and purity the immediate cognition and realization of God is possible. *Sraddha* or devout deep faith is the incorporation of the power of the supreme spirit by the human soul and is not a mere intellectual adherence. It is divine communion and spiritual fellowship. It means unreserved surrender to God. It signifies complete consecration of the human life to the divine master. This type of *sraddha* generates a new, strengthened and vitalized nature and out of that righteous action for the good of mankind naturally follows. Gandhi yearned for the deep intense faith "as immovable as the Himalayas and as white as the snows on their peaks." To him *sraddha* was a dynamic force especially when it is conceived as inseparable from the principle of cosmic and universal love which Gandhi interprets Ahimsa to be. God can be realized by super-rational intuition. "Reason is a poor thing in the midst of temptations.....Faith that transcends reasons is our



only Rock of Ages." We find a synthesis of the Vedantic spiritual metaphysics and the Jaina-Buddhistic-Vaishnava ethics of Ahimsa in Gandhi. Although the concept of Ahimsa is inculcated in the Upanishads, the Yoga philosophy and in the Gita, still Jainism and Buddhism have put enormous emphasis upon it. According to Gandhi, God-realization is not possible without the sense of dynamic identification with the poorest and the humblest. This is the essence of Ahimsa. Experience is the starting-point of any philosophy and Gandhi claimed that the more disciplined he became the more did he approximate to the realization of truth. He said: "The whole of God's law is embodied in a pure life." There is a note of radical individualism in Gandhian thought because great stress has been laid on the sanctity of personal experience of truth. The greatest mystics and religious teachers of humanity have testified to the inward intuitive experience of some eternal values and real absolute existence. Hence the concrete depths of religious experience as vouched by the great teachers was more authentic than formalistic logic or rationalistic metaphysics. Gandhi wrote: "There is an indefiable, mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within. Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself." Gandhi's faith in the reality and providence of God was absolute. "It can never be a matter for argument. If you would have me convince others by argument, I am flooded. But I can tell you this—that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. I can also testify that I may live without

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<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, October 11, 1928

air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that will not kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God and I am dead."<sup>1</sup> God is invisible and hence the only way to know about God is to understand the lives of the Godseekers and the mystics and the devotees.

Gandhi, although a mystic, did not negate rational arguments and practical observation. He claimed to be a true scientist in the sense that he constantly experimented with truth and tried to make his propositions sounder by repeated observations. But this scientific and rational process of enquiry was only applicable to the world of social and political existence. Gandhi's faith in a fundamental ultimate spiritual truth was not born out of arguments and external observations but out of spiritual apprehension and intuition. Hermann Cohen, Croce, Gentile, Bradley, Bosanquet and others have tried in recent times to substantiate idealism on grounds of reason. But Gandhi accepted the fundamental truth of spiritual idealism on the basis of faith and experience. He said in a speech at Colombo: "I claim to be a man of faith and prayer, and even if I were to be cut to pieces, I trust God would give me the strength not to deny Him, but to assert that He is. The Mussalman says, 'He is, and there is no one else.' The Christian says the same thing, and so does the Hindu. If I may venture to say so, the Buddhist also says the same thing, only in different words. It is true that we may each of us be putting our own interpretation on the word 'God'. We must of necessity do so; for God embraces, not only this tiny globe of ours, but millions and billions of such globes and worlds beyond worlds. How can we, little crawling creatures, possibly measure His greatness, His boundless love, His infinite compassion? So great is His infinite love and pity that He allows man insolently to deny Him, to wrangle about Him, and even to cut the

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, May 16, 1938

throat of his fellow-man !” Like a humble seeker Gandhi claimed to have stressed only fragmentary aspects of the vast infinite immeasurable truth. In the last chapter of his *Autobiography* he refers to the Supreme effulgent Truth which is a million times more lustrous than the physical sun. This imagery is in the Vedic and the Upanishadic tradition. His adherence to the conception of reality as many-sided, only some of whose phases and aspects can be known by the human mind, is in tremendous contrast to the dogmatic assertions of the Hegelian rational intellectualism which claimed to have known the whole truth. In a sense Gandhi was *anekantvadi* and *syadvadi*. He recognized the limitations of sense perception and he believed in the authenticity of infallible realization alone. He would not have accepted Hegel’s ridiculous treatment of mystics as simple souls. Gandhi had an immovable faith in God and in the moral government of the world.

Prayer was the essence of Gandhi’s personality. He said that he could live without food but not without prayer. Prayer was the expression of the longing of the soul. The act of prayer was a daily homage to the supreme spirit. Prayer was the daily demonstration of *sraddha*. Prayer was not the monopoly of old women but was the most potent instrument of action. It was a preparation for sharing in the sufferings of mankind and it postulated a sense of inner divine communion. Prayer was the technic of sharing in the boundless compassion of God. Prayer was a call to humility based on the consciousness of one’s imperfection judged from the standard of truth and non-violence. Prayer gave peace and was a response to the yearning of the heart. Life would be dull and vacant without prayer. Prayer is the first and last lesson in learning the art of deliberate self-abnegation to vindicate the honour and liberty of the nation. Gandhi introduced congregational prayer in Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa for imparting training to India people in the use of Satyagraha. Prayer as the conscious determination to share in the

sufferings of mankind indicated that Gandhi accepted a universalistic and organic community of humanity as a whole—*universitas hominum*. He was, by implication, opposed to interpreting human interpersonal relations merely in the formal and abstract terms of economic contract and the dynamics of self-interest.

By means of deep faith and prayer Gandhi prepared himself to realize God in the hearts of the dumb millions. "I recognize no God except the God that is to be focussed in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do." Gandhi does believe that if God and Truth are identical and if all existence is merely the manifestation of one truth, then there can be no question of a separate emancipation or isolated salvation. The concept of collective liberation follows from the philosophy of the absolute oneness of God. Hence humanitarian service was integrally connected with the conception of the all-pervasiveness of the supreme spirit. Spirituality does not mean satisfaction with unfounded dogmas and superstitions or a contentment with false gods and fetishes. It means a quest for eternal values and religious self-consciousness. Spirituality means the awareness of the synthetic power of the creative soul. It means the incorporation of the powers of the soul also in the operative mechanism of social and political collectivities. The spiritual man cannot be blind towards the sufferings of humanity. To Gandhi, hence, Ahimsa should be used on a big and mass scale. Ahimsa is not merely an individual moral attribute. There should be a constant interdependence between the operations of the moral laws in personal lives and in group activities. Thus the conception of spirituality signifies the notion of a progressive and purposive evolution. The work of individual salvation has to go hand in hand with the work of collective emancipation. Hence efforts have to be made for the enhancement of the good of all. The world is not a physico-chemical aggregation but is the creation of the divine spirit. The resplendence

of culture is synchronistic with the growth of the sentiments of truth, love, service, suffering and mutuality. The supreme sign of spirituality is the greatest readiness to lay down one's life for the good of others. Gandhi interpreted religion as the sentiment of cosmic awareness of the sanctity of life and of the intuitional representation and apprehension of God and hence no department of life, least of all politics, could remain untouched by it. He was no recluse retiring from the world and rejecting its claims and demands. He said that he could realize the supreme reality only through devoted service to mankind. The primordial nature of God is to be realized not by abstract contemplation in a cave or cloister but by serving and helping the fallen and dejected sections of humanity. Hence in Gandhi's life one finds a genuine sympathy for the suppressed and the humiliated. He wanted to restore the rights of the disinherited and the forlorn. He has no Platonic or Aristotelian disdain for the manual workers. "And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest;" hence identification with the downtrodden sections of humanity through service was essential. Gandhi thus tried to attain God-realization by disinterested service to mankind through political and socially constructive activities. The sanctification of service really constitutes a contribution to contemporary civilization and thought because thus he stressed the conception of genuine heart-unity and not the formal and indeterminate concept of mechanical solidarity of modern times which has failed to unify peoples. He wanted to perfect the technic of "melting" the hearts of even the modern editions of Neroes. According to Gandhi every act of sincere fraternizations and genuine identification with the members of the different communities and sects has a super-individual contribution to make. Social service is a pathway to God. In a spiritual organic universe all should attempt to share in the misfortunes and tragedies of our neighbours. The services rendered to a poor untouchable or a forlorn

refugee or a sick individual are not only acts of socially-oriented piety but represent solid advances in the path of the conscious comprehension of God as all-pervasive truth. Gandhi was the prophet of God as "Daridra Narayan". Gandhi did not consider that human suffering and tragedy could be dismissed as being unreal illusory as has been sometimes stated by the arrogant priests of an indeterminate absolute Brahman. He did not prescribe only psychological and philosophical remedies for the eradication of human misery and pain as the Buddhist philosophers had done but he actively engaged himself in social, political and humanitarian service. Albert Schwertzer and several other Christian interpreters of Gandhian thought consider the emphasis on social service to be indicative of Christian influence on Gandhi. Service to man, however, is not alien to Indian thought. Asoka was a humanitarian. Gandhi attempts to give a modern version to the old Mahayana concept of *Mahakaruna*. He is attempting in a sense to concretize the ideals of the Bodhisattva. His ideal is analogous to that of Maitreya. He is not content with only the form of a universal pure and good will but he wants to fill that moral will with the concrete contents of humanitarian duties and altruistic virtues. Gandhi's devotion to human well-being amounts to a repudiation of the Benthamite identification of the good and the useful or of the Hobbesian identification of the legal and the just. He wrote: "I do not believe that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives."

According to Gandhi the supreme criterion is love and truth. Any exaltation of the canon of utility as propounded by the Philosophical Radicals or the Hobbesian canon of the identification of justice with the dictates of the political sovereign is unacceptable to him. Justice according to Gandhi should be rooted in truth. To Gandhi truth is absolute and any compromise with it

is unpalatable to him. He said: "Not even for the freedom of India would I resort to an untruth." Even Krishna is supposed to have made some compromise with truth for the sake of the victory of the Pandavas. Plato prescribes 'remedial lies' on certain occasions to be resorted to by the ruling guardians. Cavour of Italy and Lala Lajpat Rai in India would be willing to tone down the rigours of ethics for the sake of the emancipation of the country. Gandhi, the ethical absolutist, refuses any compromise with truth on grounds of reasons of politics or state. He would at times embarrass and irritate his political followers by saying that he regarded truth to be a higher category than Swaraj. But although devoted to truth, Gandhi never thought of imposing his creed on any one. He was the embodiment of the democratic spirit of civility and tolerance. Plato also accepted God to be true but in his *Laws* he prescribed the acceptance of his theological creed by the citizens at the cost of death. Even Rousseau would favour coercion for the acceptance of the dogmas of civil religion by the citizens. Gandhi accepted universal tolerance. The democratic concept to tolerance is thoroughly inculcated by Gandhi. Hence Gandhi's philosophy is more oriented to the demands of a free, liberal and open society. He believed in the evolution of moral consciousness in man through successive births. He did not accept constrained growth.

Gandhi's loyalty to truth was absolute and uncompromising. Truth is supreme. There is no conception of an absolute eternal beauty in Gandhi's thought as in Plato's *Symposium*. Truth is, for Gandhi, more important than beauty. The aesthetic criterion is subordinate to the quest for the true, the holy, the pure. "Truth is the first thing to be sought for and Beauty and Goodness will then be added unto you." There can be no genuine art bereft of truth. Gandhi like Immanuel Kant admired the beauty and sublimity of the starry heavens. He would consider Socrates as beautiful although from a superficial standpoint his external form

was not happy. Gandhi considered Jesus Christ as a supreme artist because he expressed truth. As a philosopher of culture Gandhi considers truth to be the criterion of art and aesthetics. Like Tolstoy and Aurobindo, Gandhi also had a spiritual approach to art. Gandhi considers the realization of the moral values in the lives of individuals to be the genuine criterion of progress and hence he said: "True art is thus an expression of the soul." He was conscious that in sophisticated circles he was regarded as a puritan with a feeble appreciation of art. He once said: "I know I have earned notoriety as a philistine in art." But Gandhi did appreciate proportion and harmony which are the essence of art. In his whole life there was a planning, a symmetry and a balance. He was constantly moulding himself and others according to a pre-established ideal. But it has still to be acknowledged that Gandhi was a puritan. He would refuse to appreciate any art unless it depicted either a divine theme or could be of any use in serving the masses. He wanted the beautiful to be an element of the holy.

## **2. The Concept of Human Nature in Gandhi's Political Thought**

Gandhi is optimistic of the future of man because he absolutely believes in the inner goodness of man. Man is sacrosanct. According to Gandhi the individual is an immortal spiritual entity. The Atman is an eternal essence. It is not a mechanical aggregation of physical and chemical elements but is a divine spark and is the citizen of the moral kingdom of ends. The human being has a sense of spiritual self-consciousness and moral internality. The concealed divinity of human nature can be revealed by *tapasya* or penances. He wrote: "Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for spiritual growth."<sup>1</sup> From the fundamental spiritual essence of man is derived the conception of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 17, 1946



immense social and political significance of the individual. The individual, conceived in moral and spiritual terms, is the supreme consideration of Gandhian political thought. Gandhi wanted to bring about a psychological regeneration of man. He sincerely believed that there was something inherently divine in man's nature. The empirical man has elements of the demon in him but the inmost ideal being of the same man has divine potentialities. Gandhi said: "Man in the flesh is essentially imperfect." He may be described as made in the image of God but he is far from being God. Hence the task of moral education is to transmute the lower self of man into his higher ideal self. Gandhi sincerely believed in the at least dormant presence of the divine element even in the Nazis, whom the world regarded as base, barbaric and brutish. He never despaired even of their eventual conversion.<sup>1</sup> He thought that the active non-violence of the Jews could melt the stoniest German hearts. Instead of being passively killed Gandhi wanted the German Jews to have practised organised, prayerful, non-violent resistance. According to Gandhi the human soul is the basic category in any plan for social reconstruction. Institutions represent only the externalization of the human psychological propensities. The true remedy for social evils is the realization of ethical ideas. Like Plato he felt that the community is the result of the qualities and character of the individuals. Hence he advocated a moral change of the human heart. He did not start with the lifeless mechanisms of institutions and collective apparatus. He believed in touching the heart of his political opponents. He had faith in the efficacy of the technic of appeal. In South Africa he published two pamphlets which had the word "Appeal" in their title.<sup>2</sup> He always

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gandhi's letter to Hitler written on July 22, 1939. The text of the letter is given in the *Harijan*, September 9, 1939

<sup>2</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *The Indian Franchise, An Appeal ; An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa.*

appealed to the man and especially to the *sattvika* and the divine in man. In a talk with Miss Agatha Harrison on the 6th March, 1939, Gandhi remarked soliloquizing: "Somehow I am able to draw the noblest in mankind and that is what enables me to maintain my faith in God and human nature." He felt that a disciplined and determined individual can do a lot in reforming his neighbourhood and the institutions of which he was a member. The conscience of man takes delight in effectuating the good of all. Hence while the Greek philosophers put the primacy on the *polis* and the Roman thinkers stressed the *civitas* as the methodological postulate of their enquiries in social and political realms, Gandhi started with the Atman—man as a subjective entity—and hence dreamt of cosmopolitanism and internationalism. The human Atman has social, political, economic and intellectual aspects but none of them exhaust its confines and possibilities. The human being is an integral and organic unity of different phases of being and hence a comprehensive solution is needed. But this radical solution is dependent upon the energisation of moral sensibilities and feelings. The stress always should be on the moral and spiritual rather than the intellectual and the scientific. While Marxists and technocrats believe in the efficacy of the rational approach, Gandhi believes in the soundness of the appeal to the human heart. As a spiritual individualist Gandhi teaches concern with the performance of one's own duties and is opposed, like Plato in the *Republic*, to meddling with the vocations of others. The concepts of *swadharma* and *swadeshi* are allied. He supports his conception of spiritual individualism by the Hindu theological idea of reincarnation. The theory of reincarnation implies the assumption of the slow moral and spiritual evolution of the human personality. In his letter to Tolstoy he says that the philosophy of reincarnation has been a great consolation to the Satyagrahi fighters in South Africa. By his stress on spiritual individualism Gandhi is emphatic on the necessity of

constant efforts for the moral and spiritual redemption of man. Indirectly he is opposed to all those sociologists who taught a mechanical automatism of human progress brought about by the inevitable working of objective forces. Gandhi accepts the creative power of human individuals. By his philosophical notion that incessant efforts for the perfection of individuality lie at the root of progress Gandhi makes aware in modern thought the significance of spiritual subjectivism. According to him social betterment depends upon individual efforts for self-purification. A holy life reveals the inner potentialities of the soul and is the most potent technic for influencing the people of the neighbourhood. In the dark days of communal massacres in 1946 and 1947, Gandhi taught the technic of influencing the conduct of others by setting personal examples in nobility, decency and absence of communal bitterness. Thus the revelation of the moral powers of the human subject is a cardinal point in the psychological and philosophical thought of Gandhi. In the writings of Gandhi also we find that he attempts to win the hearts of the readers by revealing to them his own experiments in the search of God as truth through Ahimsa. The moral and subjectivist note pervades Gandhian literature. The emphasis on personal self-experience and the sanctity of the inner conscience in Gandhi's life and thought may be regarded as a vital contribution to Indian thought and philosophy where there has been thin and weak stress on the revelation of the writer's personality. We have no knowledge of the inner history of Panini and Vyasa. In the writings of Sankara, Ramanuja, Sri Harsha and Tulsidas there is no revelation of their own conflicts and struggles as we find in those of St. Augustine or Rousseau or Tolstoy. The Indian seers and thinkers regarded confessions of personal experiences as unnecessary exhibitionism. Hence they wrote the minimum about themselves. Gandhi, on the other hand, is intensely self-conscious and always in his books and articles there is repeated

reference to his own self and to his experiences. Although a gigantic social and political leader Gandhi was keenly introspective and profoundly subjective. This self-conscious subjectivism, as a corollary of spiritual individualism, in Gandhism, may be taken as a new note in Indian thought. We find subjectivistic trends in Vivekanand, Ramtirtha and Tagore. Gandhi carries forward that tradition. But Gandhian self-consciousness was never a disguise and masquerade for overbearingly unwarrantable self-assertiveness which are carried to ridiculous and repulsive extremes in Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. Gandhi's subjectivism has spiritual and not egoistic roots. His spirit is totally different from the megalomaniac fantasies of Mussolini and Hitler. Gandhi is the humble servant of man and God. It is essential to do social duties if one is to serve God. Only through social and humanitarian service can one realize his spiritual self and have awareness of God. Thus in Gandhian thought spiritual realization and social service are integrally connected. The noble side of human nature cannot be expressed without the performance of duties for the good of the neighbourhood and the society. This is the meaning of Swadeshi according to Gandhi. There is no antithesis between genuine social service and growth of moral individuality. His individualism arises out of a religious perception of things. Individualism in Gandhi is not egoism but arises from a recognition of the powers of the human spirit. He does not stress the blind performance of socially-conforming duties but perhaps he would not be prepared to accept complete liberty in the choice of vocations. Thus his ideal is different from that of some of the exponents of German idealism and subjectivism who stress moral voluntarism and a determination of one's action by the guidance solely of the rational faculty.

Gandhi had a deep faith in the goodness of man's nature. The essence of his philosophy of human nature is contained in this statement: "Man is higher than the

brute and has a divine mission to fulfil . . . . . To find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny." Man's destiny is not the conquest of external nature but the conquest of his own self. *Atma-nigraha* or the suppression of the lower self alone vindicates the greatness of the human spirit. He accepts that man is essentially good and hence he should advance in the path of self-conquest. But the belief in the fundamental and essential goodness and purity of the human soul does not imply the belief that society is the breeding-ground of perversity. There is no conception in Gandhi, of the vitiating and corrupting effects of society on the individual, as in Rousseau or in Christianity.

The Gandhian conception of spirituality accepts that God as truth is the author only of goodness and never of sin, impurity, evil and falsehood. He affirmed his logical inability to explain the existence of evil but nevertheless emphasized that evil should be conquered and eradicated. Like Surdas and Tulsidas Gandhi always prayed to God for the divine mercy which alone could cleanse a man's heart. He traces the evil in man to his own evil *samskaras*—past tendencies. But there is no idea of an inherent all-dominating conception of the sinfulness of human nature in Gandhian thought. The evil according to Gandhi is not social but psychological. Gandhi wrote: "I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am, therefore, humble enough to recognize evil as such, and I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Himself and yet if there is evil He is the author of it and yet untouched by it." He always emphasizes individual purification. It is possible to conquer evil by prolonged *sadhana* and grace of God. Thus he appears to be in a different category from those sociologists whose basic orientation and approach is societarian. The regeneration of man consists in the disposition to will the good of all and to act accordingly. Gandhi believed in the

innate goodness of man and hence he stressed incessant endeavours for the realization of human perfectibility. Perfection is attained by a transcendence of the immoral depravities and perversities. Hence Gandhi stressed Ahimsa and the other virtues. He thought that if there will be no moral progression, retrogression was inevitable and hence he urged unblemished faultless moral and psychological excellence. This was to be made possible by the actualization of the law of Ahimsa in human relations. Like the ancient Vedanta he believed in the theory of "eternal cycle" and therefrom followed his notion of incessant moral action. Man can regenerate his nature by the performance of *sattvik* actions. Nothing good is lost in a spiritual universe. Hence in Gandhi we find not historical pessimism or cosmic gloom but the ardent faith in the moral governance of the world-process and the consequent faith in the psychological regeneration of man. He thoroughly believed that divine justice must be finally victorious. In spite of the apparent successes of crude tactics of manipulation, treachery and violence in society and politics, Gandhi was adamant in his belief that the superior wisdom of God must triumph in the end.

Gandhi adhered to the concept of the religious remaking of human nature as the antecedent to social and political transformation. The theory of the spiritualization and ethicization of politics centering around the concept of Ahimsa demands the fundamental remaking of human nature. Gandhi wrote: "Human nature will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be beastly or brutal. Though we have the human form, without the attainment of the virtue of non-violence we still share the qualities of our remote reputed ancestor, the ourangoutang."<sup>1</sup> Human nature is certainly not a static immutable substance but is a plastic organism and is amenable to changes by processes of conditioning. Gandhi wrote: "My belief in the

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, October 8, 1938

capacity of non-violence rejects the theory of permanent inelasticity of human nature." If we study the evolution of social structures and morals then we find that compared to the primitive clans there has been at least partial improvement in a moral sense in human nature. In some primitive groups the notion was dominant that whosoever is not a member of that group is to be killed. I believe no group today will sanction cannibalism or human sacrifice. Whatsoever there is of stability in the human family system, that only represents the triumph of affection, love and non-violence. Thus the development of sentiments and emotions round the institution of the family is an additional testimony to the concept of the slow moral evolution of human nature. Even in the other realms of social, economic and political life there is evinced a slow tendency towards the lessening of the areas of conflict. Cooperation and mutual aid as well as social beneficence are also socially operative factors although increasing tensions of international power-politics in the twentieth century are dangerous portents. As a believer in the eternality and essentiality of the soul (*Atman*) of man, Gandhi accepted that by a process of prolonged *tapasya* or purification it was possible to remake human nature. He accepted that "man can change his temperament, can control it" although he confessed in his *Autobiography* that it is very difficult to fight with strong *samskara*. He accepted the cleansing process of the vow of Ahimsa and never despaired of human nature, however. So much seems evident to me that if there has to be a change for the better in human nature it is to be brought about not by institutional mechanics but by the energization of moral feelings. I do not concur with Lenin's thesis that the socialization of the means of production will effectuate a change in human nature. The concept of the change of human nature has been discussed by Buddha and by Patanjali and if even partly realized will do a great deal in the moralization of politics. Gandhi stressed the technic of cultivation of

altruistic virtues and feelings for bringing about a change in human nature.

Gandhi was a moral and spiritual humanist. Service to mankind was the basic passion of his soul. He would not sanction any coercion for making people good. He once said: "How can I, the champion of Ahimsa, compel anyone to perform even a good act? Has not a well-known Englishman said that to make mistakes as a free man is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them? I believe in the truth of this. The reason is obvious. The mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force."<sup>1</sup> Moral and spiritual goodness is acquired by a process of introspective scrutiny, cultivation of character and the realization of the sense of unity of living beings. It is fantastic to hope that sermons from the press and the pulpit and the threats of the administrative system will make the individuals moral. Only *sewa* and *sadhana* can lead to the true moral evolution of man. The moral evolution of man is dependent upon the slow inwardization of the great vows or *vratas* inculcated in the scriptures and accepted by Gandhi for himself and for the members of his Ashrama. He emphasized the dignity and sanctity of the conscience of the individual. He prescribed an internal judgment for the rightness or otherwise of human actions and motives. The individual seeking to better his character by moral technics is the theme of Gandhian psychology. Gandhi had a supreme faith in the nobility and decency of human nature and hence he accepted the superiority of voluntary suffering for the conversion of the antagonists. But he would not consider structural changes to be sufficient. There should be no cooperation with evil but there should be no hatred against the evil-doer. Ill-will proceeds out of weakness and helpless ignorance. Gandhi claimed that he was

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, August 29, 1946



“transforming the ill-will from men to things.” The immanent presence of God has to be realised even in the thief, the robber and the scoundrel. Like Buddha he believed that the enemy has to be converted into a colleague and helper.

Gandhi is not opposed to institutional changes. He did believe in changes in the structure of society and politics. It is true that he sponsored the radical gospel of the moral remaking of human nature. But this does not mean that he was unmindful of changes in the political, economic and social structure. His career offers the momentous example of the leadership of a lone individual challenging the government of the Union of South Africa and the empire of Great Britain. Just as Aristotle in his critiques of Phaleas of Chalcedon and Hippodamus<sup>1</sup> pointed out that man’s moral faculties have to be ennobled and that the sole reliance should not be placed on surface external changes in the outward organizations, so also Gandhi wanted not only the end of the British regime and of the Indo-British capitalistic and feudal exploitation of society but the final elimination of the desire to exploit. It is evident he adopted a moral and psychological approach for the solution of economic and political problems. Gandhi accepted the necessity of social, economic and political changes but the root of the matter was the psychological remaking of man. The human heart holds the key to all social and political dynamics.

### **3. Gandhi’s Spiritual Humanism**

Gandhi was a great devotee of God but he had also immense faith in man. According to him there are physical as well as spiritual elements in man. I consider Gandhi a humanist in two senses. First, he has attributed a significant and exalted character to the ideals and aspirations of the common man—the untouchable, the peasant, the weaver, the worker. He was the spokesman of their aspirations. The world is dominated by

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle: *Politics*, Book II

the fetishism with which man loves commodities, capital and accumulation. To a growingly dehumanized world Gandhi taught the sacredness of the feelings even in the hearts of the most distressed and indigent individuals. The sufferings of the Indian peasants brought forth all the agonies of Gandhi's soul. He tried to identify himself with the loneliest, the disinherited, the meek and the humblest. He cried: "It is the greatest tragedy I know of, these men and women—our brothers and sisters—dying a slow, torturing death. Theirs is an eternal, compulsory fast. And as they break it occasionally with rice, they seem to mock us with the life they live." Gandhi used the word *Daridranarayan* - God of the poor or God appearing in the hearts of the poor. He got this word from Deshabandhu C. R. Das.<sup>1</sup> Earlier than Das, Vivekanand used this word. He was not a Junker, nor an aristocrat nor a bourgeois intellectual. He was a leader of the people and loved the people from the depths of his being. In the tattered bodies of the peasants and workers in Champaran he saw the concrete embodiment of God, Truth and Ahimsa. His overflowing love for humanity revealed his intense humanism. The essence of the humanist spirit is deep love for the people. Gandhi's sincere love and regard for the people was an expression of his devotion to Ahimsa. Even General Smuts testified to Gandhi's humanism. Smuts wrote: "However often we may differ from him, we are conscious all the time of his sincerity, his unselfishness, and above all of his fundamental and universal humanity. He always acts as a great human, with deep sympathy for men of all classes and all races and especially for the under-dog." His humanism inspired his sufferings in serving the sick and the leper. He derived satisfaction from affectionate service and ministrations to the victims of disease. There were others in the Ashrama who could have been glad to take care of the sick. But Gandhi's

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<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, April 4, 1929

humanity was so deep that he would personally take care of the sick. To the dilapidated hovels of the Indian farmers Gandhi brought a message of love, hope and kindness.

Secondly, Gandhi was a humanist because he had faith in the redemption and regeneration of man. He pointed out: "No human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption; no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he considers to be wholly evil." Gandhi's adherence to the absolutism of truth and non-violence made him hostile to the destruction of life in any form. Life postulates respect for it. There was no antithesis between his humanism and his belief in divine providence. He said: "My faith is in God and, therefore, in the people." God is organically bound up with mankind and all living beings. Hence love for man leads to the cognitive illusionation of God. Gandhi believed in the eventual ennoblement of man because man was a divine spark. He regarded all life as sacred. Hence human life is entitled to dignity, consideration and love. Gandhi never despaired of man. In 1946-1947 due to the upsurge of communal frenzy on an unprecedentedly furious scale he was a little perturbed. He saw the edifice he had built with the ardent *tapasya* of over twenty-five years tottering but still he was hopeful. Like a profound spiritual humanist he wrote: "You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty." Gandhi's humanism was based on spiritual foundations. Gandhi's humanism can be characterized as based on spiritual rather than materialistic or agnostic assumptions. His integral conception of the political, economic and moral freedom of man proceeded from his deep spiritual humanism. He claimed that his conception of freedom signified "the freedom of man in all his majesty."<sup>1</sup> He championed the essential individuality of the human being and stood

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, June 7, 1942

for the perfectibility of man's capacities and faculties. He quoted the saying of the Gita that the human spirit is the master of its destiny. In support of the view of the Gita Gandhi quoted Milton's statement: "The mind is its own place and in itself can make a heaven of hell and hell of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

In the west humanism is regarded as a philosophy which champions the cause of man against a theological world-view. The Renaissance humanists like Erasmus and the eighteenth century humanists like Herder were opposed to the claims of the Bible, the Papacy and the general theistic orientation. The humanism of Ludwig Feuerbach and of Karl Marx in his earlier writings is frankly materialistic in its assumptions. Due to the impact of western thought sometimes it has been assumed that there is an antithesis between belief in a religious world-view and the adherence to humanism. The exponents of scientific humanism argue that humanism is opposed to the theocentric world-view. But the Indian tradition of humanism is different. Lord Buddha remains unexcelled in his boundless love for mankind although he accepted the concepts of *Nirvana* and *Samadhi*. Even in modern India, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have been champions of spiritual humanism although both had profound belief in God. In the west humanism is oriented to raising man, as if, against the imperialism of God. In Indian thought the status of man is sought to be exalted by stressing his spiritual potentialities. In the Gandhian philosophy genuine service of one's kind has been regarded as a hallowed path of saintliness and godliness. Service or *sewa* is one of the key words in the philosophy of Gandhi. The essence of spiritual humanism as enunciated by Gandhi is the significance of the universal values in man. The differences between men are apparent and superficial. The grave is the final destiny of all particular men. But the fundamental spirit of

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, May 12, 1946

men is undying and perennial. Hence all men should be treated with respect and decency and the rights of all should be protected and defended.

#### 4. Gandhi's Philosophy of History

Gandhi was not a philosopher of history. But if we reconstruct his scattered ideas into a philosophy of history we find that he accepts theological determinism. He wrote: "Nothing can happen but by His Will expressed in His eternal, changeless Law which is He." God signifies an unchanging and living law. 'The great prophets through their austerities provide to mankind a faint glimpse of that law.' He said that he literally believed that not a leaf moves without sanction from the divine. Carried to its extreme limits a theological determinism can lead to the philosophy of Occasionalism. Gandhi believed that in the ultimate sense, God or truth being the final reality and the omniscient being, it was the supreme determinant of things and movements in the world. Gandhi claimed that God had indicated to him the Salt March on Dandi in 1930 and the "Fast unto death" against the Communal Award in 1932. He attributed, perhaps half-magically and half-mystically, the Bihar Earthquake of 1934 to the divine wrath against the practice of the mighty illegitimate evil and taboo of untouchability. These views may not appeal to the sceptic, the agnostic, the positivist or the materialist. But Gandhi stuck absolutely deeply and sincerely to his supreme faith in the divine governance of the cosmic and the human processes. Hence he felt that for moral sins, cosmic catastrophes like the earthquake could occur. But divine determinism in Gandhi applied only to the final explanation of things. It never degenerated into fatalism. He was a strong advocate of the theory of Karmayoga or the strenuous activism and energism of the Gita. His whole life was full of ceaseless actions,

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<sup>1</sup> Gandhi said that not every person could know God's will. It required great training to attain the spiritual vision through which God's will could be known.

all inspired by the artistic vision of a spiritual whole which imparted a meaningful dimension to his diverse actions as a social worker, a journalist, a political leader and a moral prophet. Gandhi combined a faith in the supremacy of God with the insistence on constant actions. Man is to have a supreme faith in God and is to perform the actions that fall his way. This is the essence of the teachings of the Gita as interpreted by Gandhi.

As philosopher of history and culture Gandhi is a believer in spiritual ideational determinism which follows from his belief in the reign of God in the universe. Because God is all-pervasive, omnipotent and conscient hence the great ideas of truth and love have the chance of sure and ultimate success. Gandhi's tremendous optimism follows from his deep faith in the beneficence of God. He attributed the discovery of the law of Ahimsa to the great rishis whom he regarded greater geniuses than Newton. He affirmed the creative and dynamic role of Ahimsa in saving the world-process from submergence by the law of the beasts. Life persists amidst violence and slaughter. Gandhi stressed, however, that in order to be historically operative the great ideas should be suffused by the power of human suffering. He said that there is no limit to the power of Ahimsa to suffer. Human history contains numerous instances of the authentic success of Ahimsa. He referred to the transforming power of the teachings of the great religions and the great prophets. He repeatedly pointed out that for the successful practice of Ahimsa it was essential to cultivate the virtues of humility, impartiality and piety. He was thoroughly optimistic of the eventual success of Ahimsa in human history.

Gandhi believed in the creative role of spiritual ideas like Ahimsa when they are embodied in the character of sincere souls who are ready to embrace death for their principles. He stood as a critic of the political and materialistic conception of the occidental philosophers

and sociologists who interpret history in terms of imperialistic power-politics and economic calculations and who do not cognize the operations of the soul-force and Ahimsa in human history. Gandhi advocates a spiritual and moral interpretation of history. To Gandhi history did not mean only the great political upheavals and socio-economic revolutions or the regimented parades and pageants of the dictators. To him history was the accumulated record of the activities of mankind. If history is conceived in this sense, one certain finds that in history countless instances of group conflicts and tensions have been solved by resort to the moral and spiritual law of Ahimsa. But history as conceived by western sociologists is "really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul . . . soul-face being natural is not noted in history." To this kind of materialistic objectivism Gandhi was thoroughly opposed.

Gandhi absolutely accepted the theory of divine determinism in history. He repudiated the analysis of history merely in terms of objective forces howsoever powerful. Behind all changes, movements and transformations he read the inscrutable hand of a kind Providence. In spite of all dualities, contradictions and antagonisms in history the ultimate justice of God was sure to prevail. In 1930 at the time of the Salt Satyagraha Gandhi said: "God who is guiding this movement, He ever dwells in the hearts of all and He will vouchsafe to us the right guidance if only we have faith in Him." In 1932 he said that he was undertaking the "Fast unto Death" against the Communal Award at divine dictation. So absolute was his faith in divine determinism that when pistol shots were fired upon his chest he calmly surrendered himself to God. No curses but the name of God was his last utterance.

## CHAPTER III

# RELIGION AND POLITICS IN GANDHIAN THOUGHT

### 1. Theory of Ethical Religion

Since Gandhi believed in truth and non-violence, he accepted the creative stupendous force of religion in human history. He claimed to be a practical idealist and was not much interested in the transcendental and eschatological aspects of religion. He did not interest himself in the supernal mysteries of the beyond. He was primarily and mainly concerned with the ethical aspects of religion. But since he accepted the teachings of the Gita which also contains disquisitions regarding the metaphysics of the *Brahman*, the *Atman*, the *Kshetrajna*, the two paths of *Devayana* and *Pitriyana* etc., it will be a valid interpretation of his ideas to state that he accepted the fundamental conceptions of the Hindu religion. The dominating theme, however, of his writings is the inculcation of the norms of truth and non-violence. He thus always spoke of religion in terms of ethical idealism. Spiritual perfection is the consummation of moral endeavours. Religion signified to him belief in the ordered moral governance of the world. It meant the spirit of faith in and dependence upon the absolute truth. It demanded a complete consecration of our being and personality to Truth which is God. Gandhi condemned the Godlessness and violence associated with Bolshevism.<sup>1</sup> Religion, according to Gandhi, implied an emphasis on the moral values of man as spirit. Hence Gandhi always talked of "Ethical Religion". He wrote: "For me morals, ethics, and religion are convertible terms. A moral life

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *Non-Violence in Peace and War*, Vol. I, p. 38



without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads."<sup>1</sup> As soon as the moral basis was lost one ceased to be religious. The Gandhian concept of religion is similar to Matthew Arnold's view of religion as morality suffused with emotion. "All religions are founded on the same moral laws. My ethical religion is made up of laws which bind men all over the world." Religion provided the dynamic impetus to Gandhi's actions and life. His political actions and technics followed from his religious world-view. In his letter to Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald indicating his determination to "fast unto death" if separate electorate was provided for the Harijans, Mahatma Gandhi stated: ". . . . . as a man of religion that I hold myself to be, I have no other course left open to me." He stated that his proposed fast would be undertaken in fulfilment of a definite philosophy of life that he had been following.<sup>2</sup> He said that he was essentially a religious man in quest of *Moksha*—redemption and emancipation of the soul from the clutches of *Maya*. But emancipation to Gandhi did not signify isolation. It did not mean the negation and repudiation of the claims of the society and the human kind. Gandhi repeatedly said that for him there could be no realization of the soul apart from the service of mankind.

The true religious attitude, to Gandhi, meant the voluntary acceptance and the enthusiastic fulfilment of the duties that naturally came one's way—*Swadharma*. In the spirit of the Gita he felt that if pursued with a sense of detachment and disinterestedness the life of *Karmayoga* could lead to the attainment of *Moksha*.<sup>3</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> *Harijans* October 3, 1936

<sup>2</sup> M. K. Gandhi's letter, August 18, 1932, written from the Yervada Central Prison.

<sup>3</sup> Gandhi said that if the central theme of the Gita was *Anasakti* (disinterestedness) it also taught non-violence.

life of dedicated service to one's kind does not generate an attitude of aggressive or self-righteous altruism, but will lead to a progressive expansion of the human self till it came to comprehend almost the whole of human kind. Religious life means the cultivation of an attitude of equanimity. Karmayoga means disinterested pursuit of one's obligation and duties and that signifies a cosmic and spiritual awareness. The religious spirit implies an observance of one's duties not out of the fear of penal sanctions but of a sense of inner compulsiveness generated by compassion for human beings. In the human heart an eternal battle was raging between the forces of good and evil and Karmayoga signifies the elimination of the latter and the victory of truth, good and virtue. Gandhi accepted the Biblical precept that it is far better to lose the world than to lose one's soul. In the present materialistic, sensate phase of human civilization Gandhi's conception of Karmayoga, as established on the basis of the teachings of the Gita, is a fundamental contribution. It reasserts the significance of ethical idealism.

Gandhi's philosophy was based on ethical idealism. His advocacy of the ethical and religious approach to politics is based on the view that human history bears witness to the conquering power of religious consciousness. He wrote: "Superstition, evil customs, and other imperfections creep (into society) from age to age, and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains. Because the existence of the world, in a broad sense, depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the law of God. God and His law are synonymous terms. Therefore, God signifies an unchanging and living law. No one has ever really found Him. But prophets have given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law." The great religions of the world have rendered vital service in the shape of their attempt at the gradual chastening of human brutalities. The fundamental aim of religious evangelization has been the

enhancement of the moral perfection of man. The different religions of the world were studied by Gandhi in a devout spirit and he found that the moral element was common to them. During his early life, he had found similarities of a fundamental character in the Bhagavadgita, *The Light of Asia*, and the Sermon on the Mount in the *New Testament*. At the time of his wife's cremation in 1944 the Christian hymn of Cardinal Newman "Lead Kindly Light" was sung. Hence it is clear that Gandhi is not teaching any dogmatic, conservative or reactionary gospel. His aim is not to exalt the existing political structures and powers as ordained and sanctified by God but to raise them to higher moral planes. He is not a champion of the divine right of political authority but stands for purifying even the structure of politics. That the ethics of piety, forgiveness, meekness, humility and universal tolerance should influence political action is the basic view of Gandhi. His views are a challenge to the arrogance of politicians some of whom claim infallibility for their views and actions.

Gandhi had a more penetrating, intense and personal grasp of the depths of religious experience than Plato and Rousseau who also preach the doctrine of the religious foundation of politics.<sup>1</sup> Plato and Rousseau were at best intellectuals and philosophers. Possibly Plato had some mystic perceptions. Gandhi's spirit, on the other hand, clamoured for the personal realization of God. He wanted to make a purified life the criterion for social and political action. Hence in Gandhi's conceptions of religion as morality or Ethical Religion and the moralization of politics there is the presence of the convincing power of his personality. He practised what he preached. Gandhian theology postulated belief in God, the transmigration of the souls, the belief in Karma and the supremacy of the moral vows. But there was

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<sup>1</sup> Plato in the *Laws* and Rousseau in the chapter entitled "Civil Religion" in *The Social Contract*.

no question at all of any dictation or authoritarian imposition of these doctrines. Coercion is opposed to genuine moral and religious growth. Gandhi's technic was "appeal" to the conscience. His speeches and writings always have a great personal appeal. His letter to Irwin in 1931 and to Linlithgow in 1943 have profound moving power because they proceed from deep religious convictions. He himself practised the moral virtues and wanted that they should be practised by other individuals on a social and political scale.

According to Gandhi what was fundamental was a personal realization of the religious truths. Empty verbal professions were not of much avail. While the dogmatists, the fanatics, the theologians, the scholastics and the religious bishops and pontiffs were fighting for safeguarding their own rights and leadership, Gandhi stood for the development of the purity of personal character. It was ridiculous to fight in the name of religion, according to him. All religions, barring certain difference in emphasis, believed in the same fundamental maxims and postulates of the moral code.<sup>1</sup> Hence Gandhi wanted the end of all religious struggles. He said in a prayer meeting in Noakhali on the 8th January, 1947: "All religions were equal. Religions were like leaves of the same tree. There was nothing to quarrel among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others."

## 2. Gandhi's Concept of Hinduism

Mahatma Gandhi called himself a Hindu but he was no narrow orthodox sectarian. There was a time when he wavered between Hinduism and Christianity. But finally he decided that salvation for him was possible only through Hinduism. Gradually his experiences in life deepened his faith in the central teachings of Hinduism. He once wrote: "Hindu Dharma is like a boundless ocean teeming with priceless gems. The deeper you dive, the more treasures you find."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the views of Asoka and Locke,

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, June 2, 1946

Gandhi in an article entitled "Hinduism", *Young India*, October 6, 1921, wrote: "I call myself a Sanatani Hindu, because: (1) I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and, therefore, in avatars and rebirth; (2) I believe in the Varnashrama Dharma in a sense, in my opinion, strictly Vedic, but not in its present popular and crude sense; (3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular; (4) I do not disbelieve in idol worship." Like Buddha and Ramakrishna, Gandhi was above the bounds of creeds, cults, rituals and ceremonies. He not only believed in the fundamental spiritual tenets of Hinduism but he accepts all religions to be equally true although for himself he recognised the supreme consoling power of the teachings of the Bhagavadgita, the Isha Upanishad and the Ramayana of Tulsidas. He accepted the spiritual and moral essence of Hinduism which according to him was the essence also of all the great religions of mankind as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Zoroastrianism.<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental point according to Gandhi is not adherence to dogmas and creeds but a God-fearing life. A truthful and non-violent life is far superior to the empty loyalty to creeds and cults. Hinduism signifies a relentless search after truth. He wrote: "I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas, I believe the Bible, the Koran and the Zend-Avesta to be as divinely inspired as the Vedas. . . . Hinduism is not a missionary religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets in the world. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes in its fold, but this absorption has been of evolutionary, imperceptible

<sup>1</sup> Because of his liberal, comprehensive and tolerant approach, Gandhi was sometimes ridiculed and even mobbed in Hindu orthodox circles as in Vaidyanathdham and Madras during his anti-untouchability campaign. It may be noted that his last pilgrimage, only a couple of days before his martyrdom, was to Mehrauli, the Seat of a Moslem divine,

character. Hinduism tells every one to worship God according to his own faith or Dharma, and so it lives in peace with all religions." Gandhi was a great Hindu, one whose whole life was in a sense a great and graphic commentary on the teachings of the Karmayoga of the Bhagavadgita. But he had risen beyond the bounds of any credal denominationalism and he embraced the followers of all religions. He believed in genuine religious fellowship and fraternity. His synthetic mind found out points of common fundamental ethical significance in all the scriptures of the world.

Gandhi was a devout Hindu. He held that Buddha also subscribed to the essential metaphysical and ethical basis of Hinduism. Gandhi had been inspired by the life and personality of Buddha. He had read the life of Buddha written by Ashwaghose in an English translation by E. Arnold. He exhorted the Buddhists to follow the way of righteousness inculcated by Lord Siddhartha Sakyamuni Buddha. Like Vivekanand, Gandhi also took the view that Buddhism was not antithetical to Hinduism but was only a modified restatement of Hinduism.

Gandhi's attitude towards Hinduism was liberal and comprehensive. He was no dogmatist. He was opposed to the attempt of Swami Dayananda and Arya Samaj to make Hinduism rigid.<sup>2</sup> He felt that conversion is a matter of inner transformation and concerns the individual and his God. Hence he was not in favour of the proselytizing attempt of the *Shuddhi* and the *Tabligh* movements.

### 3. Religious Basis of Politics

Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the Indian Gladstone, although only three years senior to Mahatma Gandhi, was regarded by the latter as his political *guru*. Gandhi

<sup>1</sup> "All religions are like different roads leading to the same goal."  
(*Hind Swaraj*)

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 1924

wanted, like Gokhale, a spiritualization of politics. Gokhale also stressed the incorporation of moral values in politics and this principle was incorporated in the constitution of the Servants of India Society. Gandhi wished to be guided by that message. But Gandhi's attachment to the concept of non-violence was far deeper and more extensive than that of Gokhale. Gandhi said that he wanted to bring religion into politics. "For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and of humanity. I want to identify myself with every thing that lives. In the language of the Gita, I want to live at peace with both friend and foe. So my patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there are no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul." But by this kind of statement Gandhi did not mean the establishment of any theocracy. His conception of the religious basis of politics is the farthest removed from any medievalism or communalism. Religion means the assertion of unity with God. It is a dynamic moral force. Hence the incorporation of religion in politics meant a progressive movement towards justice and truth. Like Gokhale, Gandhi was opposed to considering politics as a pastime. For him politics was the pathway to the service of God. The central principle of the Gandhian political philosophy is that the fundamental religious ethic has to be made concrete in individual, social and political life. Gandhi is opposed to regarding political action as the sphere of the "non-moral". He said: "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not

know what religion means!" In Greek political thought religion is subordinated to politics but in Gandhian political thought religious considerations have priority over political considerations. Gandhi said: "Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise: I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man."

The religious basis of politics as enunciated by Gandhi signified the stress on moral values. Gandhi aimed to free politics from its Machiavellian implications. Like Augustine he wanted to base the commonwealth on justice. He wrote: "My motive has been purely religious . . . I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind: and this I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a thing of 'sound and fury, signifying nothing'." Like Plato, Cicero, Kant and Croce, Gandhi championed moral values in social and political life.

It is the concept of religion as dynamic altruism—or Karmayoga—that Gandhi wanted to make the basis for the transformation of social and political action. No stable good could be rendered to society unless man purified his own conduct. Gandhi claimed to adopt a religious attitude to political problems. He wrote: "But though by disclaiming sainthood I disappoint the critic's expectations, I would have him give up his regrets by answering him that the politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine, and if I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircle 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, as I have been doing with more or less success consciously since 1894, unconsciously, as I



have now discovered, ever since reaching years of discretion. Quite selfishly, as I wish to live in peace in the midst of a bellowing storm howling round me, I have been experimenting with myself and friends by introducing religion into politics. Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself."<sup>1</sup>

A religious life means a purified and chastened life and such a life is bound to cast immense social and political impact. Religions are meant to tame our savage nature and they bind man to God and man to man. They aim to suppress the beastly in man and to enshrine his rational and moral will. The victory of Rama over Ravana is a symbol of the conquest of physical power by spiritual strength.<sup>2</sup> Thus we see that when Gandhi talked of the religious basis of politics he was not preaching primitivism or paganism but emphasized a life of strenuous dynamic activity in quest of the good of one's soul and mankind. He said: "Religion is a thing not alien to us; it has to be evolved out of us. It is always within us; with some, consciously so, with others, quite unconsciously. But it is always there. And whether we wake up this religious instinct in us through outside assistance or by inward growth, no matter how it is done, it has got to be done, if we want to do anything in the right manner, or to achieve anything that is going

- <sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi: "Neither a Saint nor a Politician", *Young India*, May 12, 1920
- <sup>2</sup> M. K. Gandhi: "The Doctrine of the Sword", *Young India*, August 11, 1920

to persist." He pointed out that the lives of Buddha and Christ were inspired by the synthesis of active work and deep love. It is not correct to interpret Buddha and Christ as immersed in contemplation and illumination. They had great social interest. He wrote in an article entitled 'Neither a Saint nor a Politician': "What was the larger 'symbiosis' that Buddha and Christ preached? Gentleness and love. Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the enemy's camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple of Jerusalem and drew down curses from heaven upon the hypocrites and the Pharisees. Both were for intensely direct action. But even as Buddha and Christ chastised, they showed unmistakable gentleness and love behind every act of theirs."

According to Gandhi social and political plans for the future India should be constructed on the solid and substantial foundations of the Atman or human consciousness. Religion according to Gandhi was not merely a means for personal purification but it was an immensely powerful social bond. "Religion binds man to God and man to man."<sup>2</sup> "Religions are not for separating men from one another, they are meant to bind them."<sup>3</sup> The non-violent society of the future, which is almost the same as Panchayat Raj or Rama Raj, will be based on religion. This means that it will not be based only on secular unity but will have the foundation of spiritual consensus. Religion is not to be identified with any credal dogmatic theology. Gandhi never wanted the abdication of self-consciousness at the altar of superstitions. He condemned the weaknesses of organized religions. He wanted the religious spirit to flourish which means a recovery of divine faith and the consequent purification of motives and conduct. It implies

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, May 12, 1920

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, May 4, 1940

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, June 8, 1940

the cooperative adherence to the laws of God by the members of the society. Hence Gandhi wrote: "Politics divorced from religion, has absolutely no meaning. . . . Politics are a part of our being; we ought to understand our national institutions. We may do this from our infancy. . . . But we want also the steady light, the infallible light of religious faith." But it is essential to note that when Gandhi is referring to the religious basis of politics he is not preaching theocratic dogmatism. By his religious basis of politics one must not understand any replica of the regime of Solomon or David or any system like that of the theocracy of Tibet or the empire of the Incas. He is not referring to the alliance between the temporal and the secular powers. He is not advocating the mingling of the sphere of Cæsar and the sphere of Christ as was indicated in the doctrine of Cæsaro-papalism held by Justinian and Charlemagne. He does not have in his mind the possibility of a scholastic crusading politics because too often in the name of religion bloody battles have been fought. Gandhi would not sanction any political exploitation of religion. He had supported the Khilafat movement in 1920-1922 out of humanitarian and not bargaining considerations. He is opposed to the conception of politics as the realm of the unspiritual and the unmoralized. He wants that a radical moral orientation should be provided to political action and is not fighting for sectarianism and narrow group self-interest. By the religious basis of politics Gandhi meant the concept of moral right in place of the divine right of rulers, princes and other ascendant groups. He is not referring to the supremacy of the ecclesiastical pontiffs, or the priests, or the magicians. His political theory is different from that of Gregory or Boniface VIII. Gandhi is only stressing the sanctity of the purified inner light which should prevent men from doing in collective life what they would not do to themselves or their family. He is a prophet of the sanctification of the criteria of our action and is not a champion of any Church or a Sangh or a religious tribe. A

psychological cleansing of the moral structure of society will result in the elimination of those gross superstitions and customs which have usurped the place of true religion. Religion in the sense of philanthropy, forbearances, justice, fraternity, peace and all-embracing love is the basis of the existence of the world. No social structure can subsist on the basis of force, power or legal obligation alone. It must be rooted in the moral will of the people. Hence Gandhi said: "To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild-goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society." The quest of the religious consciousness in this sense is the basis of individual freedom and a stable social and political structure.

#### **4. Superiority of Loyalty to God to Political Loyalty**

A man of religion will never tolerate any kind of oppression and exploitation. The religious attitude is to struggle for the vindication of truth and not to acquiesce in the policy of the holders of authority. Gandhi was deadly opposed to the use of religion for the support of obsolete social customs and irrational political authority. Religion is not to be made an adjunct of social and political power. Hence Gandhi wrote: "It was a sign of religious atrophy to sustain an unjust Government that supported an injustice by resorting to untruth and camouflage." The man who wants to follow a religious life will be ready to lay down his life for the vindication of justice. Gandhi's stress on the religious concept of resistance to unjustified coercive political authority can act as a great deterrent to any totalitarian system. Satyagraha based upon the autonomy of moral will is an antidote to political tyranny. In Gandhi's political thought loyalty to the supreme virtues of truth and justice takes precedence over loyalty to any unjustified imperialistic and totalitarian system. In the political thought of Manu and Sukracharya, an attempt was made to invest the holder

of political authority with a religious halo. They pleaded for the deification of the king. But the political thought of Gandhi makes a radical departure from their standpoint. Gandhi never ascribes a religious foundation to political governance. He pleads for the autonomy of the loyalty to God or to the inner conscience. The obligation to laws of God had decided priority over the obligation to the state. The theory of divided allegiance implying the superiority of the obligation to obey God or the inner conscience is a monumental contribution of Gandhi to political philosophy. It is absolutely wrong to say that this concept of twofold loyalty as stated by Gandhi would apply only when India had been under British imperialism and is inapplicable in a democratic set up. To say so is a vulgarization of Gandhism. To Gandhi truth was perennially uppermost, regardless of the external structure of the state where it had to have its social or political application.

### 5. Secularism and Politics

Gandhi was a man of profound religious convictions. He wanted to incorporate moral values which are the essence of religion into politics. But although he wanted to strengthen the religious basis of politics he would not tolerate any privilege to any particular group or sect, neither would he discriminate against any group. He would certainly disfavour any attempt by the state to make men religious in the sense of forcing them to give loyalty to certain creeds and dogmas. Gandhi pleaded for "leaving every individual to follow that form of religion which best appealed to him without any interference from the State." Hence he wanted that "the state should undoubtedly be secular."<sup>2</sup> He did not accept the concept of State religion. He wrote: "he did not believe in State religion even though the whole community had one religion. The State

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 23, 1947

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, August 24, 1947 (See p. 74 of *Sarvodaya* by Gandhi)

interference would probably always be unwelcome. Religion was purely a personal matter. There were in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind had a different conception of God from that of the other. He was also opposed to State aid partly or wholly to religious bodies. For he knew that an institution or group, which did not manage to finance its own religious teachings, was a stranger to true religion. This did not mean that the State schools would not give ethical teachings. The fundamental ethics were common to all religions."<sup>1</sup> He categorically rejected the concept of coercion in the field of religion. It is possible to believe, however, that he would have accepted the teaching of the fundamental moral norms and ideals common to all religions, in educational establishments run or subsidized by the state.<sup>2</sup> He had sponsored such a program for the Gujrat Vidyapitha which, however, was a private institution. But he was opposed to the teaching of denominational and orthodox religious teachings in state institutions. "I do not believe that the State can concern itself or cope with religious education. I believe that religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. Do not mix up religion and ethics. I believe that fundamental ethics is common to all religions. Teaching of fundamental ethics is undoubtedly a function of the State. By religion I do not have in mind fundamental ethics but what goes by the name of denominationalism. We have suffered enough from State-aided religion and a State Church. A society or a group, which depends

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, March 16, 1947

<sup>2</sup> In the Wardha Scheme of education, however, the teaching of religions was left out as M. Gandhi said: "because we are afraid that religions as they are taught and practised today lead to conflict rather than unity."—Quoted in R. Coupland: *The Constitutional Problem in India* (Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 191

partly or wholly on State aid for the existence of its religion, does not deserve or, better still, does not have any religion worth the name. I do not need to give any illustrations in support of this truth obvious as it is to me."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, March 23, 1947

## CHAPTER IV

# ETHICS AND POLITICS IN GANDHIAN THOUGHT

### 1. Ethical Absolutism

Gandhi accepted metaphysical idealism and hence he believed in the supremacy of ethical values and the sociology of *Sarvodaya* (the good of all). The philosophy and sociology of *Sarvodaya* is based on the concept of the unity of existence and universal love. It implies a perpetual fight against untruth, injustice and cruelty to human beings and animals. It has its roots in the famous Mantra of the Yajurveda: "*Isavasyamidam Sarvam*"—the entire universe is permeated by the supreme omnipresent God. According to Gandhi, socialism, even communism, is implicit in this Mantra.<sup>1</sup> This idealistic conception of the spiritual unity of existence and the immanence of the divine absolute in all beings necessarily implies the values of truth, non-violence and justice. It stresses universal love as the only law of life. It seeks to replace individual egoism by common good. It refuses to be satisfied with the progress and well-being of a class or a nation. It advocates the good or *hita* and the emancipation of all living beings. Being a believer in the majesty and goodness of the spirit Gandhi adhered to the doctrine of the absolutism of ethical values. Gandhi considered truth and non-violence to be absolutely binding. "Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed."

The Gandhian theory of ethical absolutism can be traced to the Vedic concept of the *Rita*—the doctrine

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, February 2, 1937



that there are all-encompassing cosmic and moral ordinances which govern both men and gods. Buddha had deep faith in the existence of a moral order. The great Hindu philosopher Patanjali accepted that the cardinal concepts of ethics (the five *Yama* and the five *Niyama*) were beyond the relativism of space and time. Gandhi accepts these insights.<sup>1</sup> His own experiences in life convinced him of the superior efficacy of the moral norm. He was an absolute believer in the timeless determinate values of truth, non-violence, chastity, non-accumulation and non-stealing. These values were to govern universal human action. He believed in the sanctity of eleven great vows or *Mahavratas*. The great eleven vows or *Ekadasa Mahavratas* advocated by Gandhi are :—

- (i) *Satya*—absolute adherence to the supreme truth and reality which is God.
- (ii) *Ahimsa*—not only non-hatred and non-violence at all levels and in relation to all living creatures but the positive and absolute law of creative love.
- (iii) *Brahmacharya*—complete restraint over all sense-organs and turning them towards *Brahman*. It is more than continence.
- (iv) *Asvada*—control of the palate.
- (v) *Asteya*—non-stealing.
- (vi) *Aparigraha*—non-accumulation. One should not possess anything which is not absolutely essential.
- (vii) *Abhayam*—fearlessness. A coward can never be the true devotee of God. One who treads the path of God must be prepared to sacrifice everything including his own life.

<sup>1</sup> Gandhi stated that he literally believed in Patanjali's aphorism that in the presence of non-violence hatred will cease. (अहिंसा प्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः)

“There is hope for a violent man to become non-violent. There is no such hope for the impotent.” (*Harijan*, October 21, 1939) “I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence.” (*Young India*, August 11, 1920)

- (viii) *Swadeshi*—not only the use of articles produced in one’s country but also a desire to serve one’s immediate neighbourhood.
- (ix) *Srama* or Bread-labour—every body must do some productive manual work every day. “God created man to work for his food and said that those who ate without work were thieves.” (*Young India*, October 13, 1921). This law was first stressed by the Russian peasant T. M. Bondaref and was popularised by Tolstoy. This law eliminates the so-called distinction between those who live by intellectual labour and those who live by manual labour.
- (x) *Sarvadharmasamabhava*—not merely the negative concept of the toleration of the religions of other people but a genuine reverence for all creeds and scriptures and prophets.
- (xi) *Asprishyataniwarana*—removal of untouchability. “Let us not deny God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing.” (*Young India*, October 6, 1921)

Genuine morality means not a satisfaction with the traditional canons of conventional consensus but it means a deepening of the concern for the good of all. The man of faith in God will refuse to compromise with the social *status quo*. Hence ethical idealism signifies a slow transcendence of the theory of external obligation and sanctions and puts the stress upon the realization of the constraining power of inward virtue. Human conscience, the concealed Demon constantly

referred to by Socrates, has to provide the decisive norms of action in situations of psychological stress and conflict. A progressive cleansing of the human soul is essential for obtaining the right canons and standards of action.

Gandhi idealized social and political action. His fundamental contribution to human thought is his idea that the moralization of political action by incorporating into politics the values of love and justice in place of the craving for power, haughtiness and glory, is essential. In spite of differences of opinion with his most trusted lieutenants Gandhi was resolute in his firm upholding of the absolutism of Ahimsa. He is opposed to the reduction of politics to the game of cynical manipulation based on force, fraud, deceit and self-interest. Politics is not the art of getting power and prestige but is the pathway to social service. He wants to raise politics to a dignified, exalted and moralized plane. He would like politics to be made a branch of ethics. Politics according to him is an art which should be used for social good and as an instrument in the cosmic and spiritual self-awareness of man. Politics is not the game of successful manipulation or entrance into the councils or conquest of power. According to Gandhi the canons of moral and political action should be sought in the innate and fundamental goodness of the human soul. All action should spring from the virtuous disposition of the human soul. Since the universe is spiritual and organic there is no place in Gandhian ethics for the distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues. Although virtues arise in the disposition to self-perfection, all of them have social, political and even cosmic relevance. The supreme concept of God as truth implies the prevalence of an omnipotent moral governance of the world. The belief in God is the guarantee for the equalitarian orientation of human action. Hence all types of group and political action should be based upon the acceptance of the primacy and supremacy of the divine providence and its inexorable moral law. Dependence

upon God results in the growth of moral goodness and righteousness. In the supreme eternity of his being and awareness, God is the reality to which human beings are finally responsible for their individual and collective actions and hence there should be no separation between the criteria of moral and political obligation. The demands of humanitarian morality and individual elevation should provide the norms for the actions of men in all walks of life. No power in the world and no intellectual jugglery can eliminate the existence of the Atman and hence Gandhi always followed in his life the dictates of the inner voice. Like Dayananda, Gandhi would consider the promptings of the conscience as intimations from God. He honestly believed that social and political life could be substantially improved if the spiritual power of the Atman—the human spirit—could be brought to bear on them. Hence although Gandhi was bitterly opposed to several aspects of modern politics and civilization he did not despair of them. He felt that the world could be perfected if men become determined to live according to moral values. The trends of society and politics could be changed if only a few people became determined not to deviate from the path of truth. God must come to the rescue of virtue. Gandhi always repeated the saying of the Gita that God was *Avyakta* and extended beyond the world and hence the supreme theme in Gandhi, notwithstanding his at times seemingly complete absorption in social and political action, was, always, self-realization. But self-purification he regarded not only as an aid to the realization of God but also the perfect technic for bringing about social betterment. He would never sanction the intellectual sophistries practised in the name of the social sciences. He was painfully conscious of the fact that the educated classes at times practise the art of dialectic to support the life of immoral action. He accepted that the supreme element in human existence is not intellectual argumentation or rational substantiation of propositions

but the cleansing of life and conduct. He firmly held that for the regeneration of social and political action, there was the need of internal purification. Hence in Gandhi the dominant theme is not dialectical-comprehension and appeal to the rational faculty but the authenticity of pure and holy life. Personal moral growth and transformation of personality are essential. Social and political action performed in the spirit of non-concern for consequences and as a part of *lokasamgraha* has a ennobling and purifying effect. Hence social service is a path to the illumination of the soul.

Gandhi wanted a holy communion between the supersensible divine being and the inner conscience. His philosophy of the spiritualization of politics starts from his conception of the primacy of the internal light. Dharma according to Gandhi means not any conventional creed or ritualistic ceremonialism, but it means acceptance of a primordial moral order in the world. He regarded Ahimsa as *parama dharma* or ultimate basis of obligation. The world is pervaded by the spirit and man should act in the constant awareness of the spiritual presence. Thus alone can he attain purity and nobility. The disinterested performance of one's actions is the path to deepen one's belief in a spiritual cosmos. By doing one's duties — *swadharma* — man realized God. The supremacy of God essentially goes against the apothecosis of irrational customs and practices, social conventions and conservative traditions. They are good but only to the extent that they are justified by the high court of inner conscience. Gandhi stands for the sanctity of the human conscience or the inner voice. He advocates the dynamic morality based on the eleven "great vows". They are based on the sacredness of conscience against the deadening weight of conservative traditions, social inertia and obscurantist norms which are without foundations in sound logic and reason and represent only a closed and static morality and sometimes may be ideological supports of the ascendant classes. Hence Gandhi appeared on the historical stage as a great rebel. He revolted on

spiritual and moral grounds. He revolted whenever the *status quo* offered a challenge to his conscience. A devotee of God could not remain confined to the safe retreats of a sanctuary when the children of God were being tyrannized over. He would begin the battle of truth. Gandhi's life represents the protest of moral reason against unfounded scriptural dogmas, established vested interests, theological and ecclesiastical pretensions and the evergrowing claims of the omnipotent imperialistic and totalitarian Leviathan to impose norms of action and conduct on the individual. Gandhi was the permanent soldier of God and the perpetual crusader for truth. He always stood for safeguarding the criterion of truth because like Vyasa in the *Mahabharata* and like Bhartrihari he thoroughly adhered to the view that Dharma is eternal, while worldly joys and sorrows, favours and frowns are temporary. Gandhi taught the conquest of desires and passions and taught the purification of impulses as the path to the realization of the universal Truth.

## **2. Means and Ends in Gandhian Ethics and Politics**

Like Buddha, Gandhi was an ethical absolutist and refused to make any compromise with what he regarded as essential and fundamental principles. He had a religious approach to problems and hence he refused to exalt the cult of expediency. He held that the highest morality is the highest expediency. He claimed no infallibility for himself. He was self-conscious and humble not to be deluded by the appellation of "Mahatma". He confessed having made Himalayan blunders but never was he consciously guilty of any compromise with the purity of means. He always claimed to adhere to the commands of inner conscience. The principle of the sacrosanct character of human conscience and its incorporation in the structure of society and politics necessarily implies the purification of means and ends. In a spiritual organic universe good ends cannot be achieved

by evil methods. As a moral prophet Gandhi stressed nobility of technics for the realization of the agreed ends. Plato also accepts an immanent spiritual teleology in the world-process but even he does not put as much emphasis on the purity of means as Gandhi does. Gandhi was an advocate of the principle of pure Karma. Only by noble actions could a blissful goal be realized. Gandhi would never subscribe to any policy and action that can lead to a compromise with truth. Loyalty to truth is the supreme consideration according to Gandhi. Gandhi's religious personality is apparent in his emphasis on purity of means. Both in South Africa and in India Gandhi stressed the purity of means. He said, "For me, it is enough to know the means; means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life." For himself he prescribed not only purity of ends and purity of means but also purity of inner motives and intentions. Hence as a leader of men and action Gandhi symbolized the union of goodness and greatness.

Gandhi was an ethical idealist and upheld the sanctity of means. According to him what cannot be justified by inner human conscience cannot be justified on grounds political and patriotic. Cavour, the Italian leader had said that in the interests of the country some compromise with truth could be permitted. Gandhi would never sanction such practice. The politician and the statesman should not try to defend the interests of the country by transgressing the canons of morality and truth. Gandhi stressed that behind social and political action there should be the pure human spirit. He accepts the constraining character of inner obligation. Only morally justifiable action can be regarded as the correct course of action. He emphasized the purification of human action through the reinforcement of the concept of purity of means emphasized by the religious prophets. He wrote: "Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so *ahimsa* is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or latter. When once we have grasped this point, final

victory is beyond question.”<sup>1</sup> He was sanguine that political action could be made to conform to the ultimate values of the spirit. He said: “And where the means are clean, there God is undoubtedly present with his blessings.” Amidst a perplexed, bewildered and chaotic world Gandhi has done a great service to man by stressing the simple but profound norm of the purity of means. Under the guise of serving the masses, totalitarianism has unleashed a regime of unprecedented barbarism and ferocity. There is great realism in the Gandhian stress on the nobility of means. If one takes care of the means, good consequences are bound to emerge. But it would be wrong, however, to become unmindful of the goals and the objectives. The final aim has a great relevance for organizing man’s energies. One has not only to choose between different means but the choice of and the establishment of priority between goals is also equally significant a work.

### 3. Gandhian Ethics and Benthamite Utilitarianism

Gandhiji was an ethical absolutist. He regarded the cardinal moral values as being permanently obligatory on all human beings without regard to the relative distinctions of time and space. He was opposed to the lowering of the standard for suiting personal inconvenience. Being a metaphysical idealist and an ethical absolutist he pleaded for the good of all. Like Buddha, Gandhi also was concerned with the good of all living beings. Literally Sarvodaya means the good of all living beings and thus it has almost the same meaning as the concept of *sarvabhutahita* advocated in the Bhagavadgita. It is, hence, a legitimate implication that Gandhism is concerned with the good of all human beings.

Since Gandhi was an ethical absolutist he regarded the Benthamite formula of the greatest good of the greatest number as imperfect and inadequate. He wrote: “The fact is that a votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to

<sup>1</sup> From *Yervada Mandira*



the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will, therefore, be willing to die so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greater number, and, therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge at many points in their career but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself. The absolutist's sphere of destruction will be always the narrowest possible. The utilitarian's has no limit. Judged by the standard of non-violence, the late war was wholly wrong. Judged by the utilitarian standard, each party has justified it according to its idea of utility. Even the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre was justified by its perpetrators on the grounds of utility. And precisely on the same ground the anarchist justifies his assassinations. But none of these acts can possibly be justified on the greatest-good-of-all principle."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi as an ethical absolutist is always a believer in the purification of human motivation. It is not concerned merely with the external consequence. The motive prompting an act has to be good and noble. Even though the formal structure of the actions of two individuals may be the same, the difference in the inner propulsive motivation would mean a great difference. Gandhi differs from the Philosophical Radicals and utilitarians like John Stuart Mill in putting great emphasis on the purification of human motivations. According to Gandhi it is not possible to pursue a correct course of action without control over one's will and thought. The stress on fundamental motivational regeneration differentiates the Gandhian theory of sarvodaya from that of Benthamite utilitarianism.

#### 4. The Social and Political Implications of Non-violence

(a) *Non-violence in War and Peace.* Gandhi's greatness as a leader lay in his transformation of the individualistic message of non-violence into a successful technic for direct mass action. Buddha, Mahavira, Nagasena, Dharmakirti and Santarakshita had conceived of Ahimsa as a tenet of personal action and motivation. Gandhi transformed Ahimsa into a social and political technic. The supreme concept which is necessary as the foundation for the reformation of politics is non-violence. Non-violence is a comprehensive concept. Violence can be manifested both at the personal and the institutional levels. Evil thoughts, sentiments of revenge and brutality verbal pugnacity, accumulation of unnecessary things represent examples of personal violence. Falsehood, trickery, intrigues, chicanery and deceitfulness are also examples of violence, according to the comprehensive connotation given to the term by Gandhi. Physical punishments, imprisonment, capital punishment and wars represent examples of violence committed by government. Even excess of emulation and competition can become species of violence. Economic exploitation and strangulation of others are also manifestations of violence. Ahimsa is not merely the negative act of refraining from doing offense, injury and harm to others but really it represents the ancient law of positive self-sacrifice and constructive suffering. The aim of Ahimsa is even to love the so-called enemies or opponents. In 1930 Gandhi said that he would suck the poison out of a dying enemy of his if he was a victim of snake-bite. Ahimsa thus is equivalent to positive boundless compassion and love. It means the gladness and felicity involved in suffering for others. Ahimsa is implicitly latent in all human beings because all are sharers in the divine spiritual reality. Thus the supreme vocation of man is the purposive evolution of Ahimsa. The culmination of Ahimsa is the negation of self-subsistent particularity and a realization of the

feeling of love and substantive unity with the whole of creation. Ahimsa is the substitution of antagonism and alienation by love. Hence Gandhi wrote in his *Autobiography*: "I must reduce myself to zero. Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility."

Gandhi believed in the thorough practice of the ideal of *abhayam* or fearlessness along with non-violence. He pleaded for the heroic non-violent action of the brave. He was not attached to the non-resistance offered by the weak. He wanted the cultivation of courage as a preparation for ethical life. He only wanted this courage to be expressed non-violently and not violently. He insisted on the development of courage and strength which proceed from an indomitable will. He said in Noakhali on the 27th November, 1946: "The only real guarantee is to be sought in the personal courage of individuals. Everything else depends on it." The operation of Ahimsa is the exercise of soul-force. It is a gospel of strength according to Gandhi. There is a solid concern for the actual and the concrete in his saying that the sword is not the sign of strength but the symbol of fear and weakness. Fear generates suspicion and sometimes even arrogance. The accumulation of fear results in the formation of complexes. Sometimes it may produce aggressiveness. A great disturbing situation of our times is the growth of perverted and maladjusted personalities who are prone to being exploited by damagogues who raise bogeys and scares of different kinds and play upon the fear of the people. Hence like Buddha who taught the extinction of *Dukkha* by the "Aryan Eightfold way" Gandhi teaches the psychological efficacy of fearlessness based on spiritual faith as the way to counteract the blighting influences of political coercion, group jealousies and rivalries and individual appetites. Fearlessness is acquired by perfection of personal character and by deep faith in the existence of God. Ahimsa or positive creative love proceeds on the basis of fearlessness. The law of love if courageously practised is bound to lead to the eleva-

tion of the accent, quality and character of politics and civilization. Like Rousseau, Gandhi thinks that the growth of the military art and the display of the military livery by the soldiers is a sign of decadence and not of progress. The cult of armament and preparedness is the indirect testimony to the wide prevalence of fear, distrust and suspicion. Perfect Ahimsa means absolute fearlessness. But although opposed to militarism, power politics, violence and imperialistic vandalism Gandhi was not a believer in peace at any price. He said that he did not want the peace of the stone or the grave. Peace is not to be equated with feebleness, inertia and exhaustion. An individual or a nation can want only peace with honour. He wanted the non-violence of the strong but he explicitly, unconditionally and categorically stated that if the only alternatives were cowardice and violence he would choose the latter. Gandhi wrote: "The truth is that cowardice itself is violence of a subtle and, therefore, dangerous type, and far more difficult to eradicate than the habit of physical violence. A coward never risks his life. A man who would kill often risks it. A non-violent person's life is always at the disposal of him who would take it. For he knows that the soul within never dies. The encasing body is ever perishing. The more a man gives his life, the more he saves it. Thus non-violence requires more than the courage of the soldier of war. The *Gita* definition of a soldier is one who does not know what it is to run away from danger."<sup>1</sup> Non-violence is the summit of bravery. Gandhi pointed out that he could no more preach non-violence to a cowardly man than he could tempt a blind man to enjoy healthy scenes. He wanted India to follow the doctrine of non-violence not because she was prostrate. He said that India had an imperishable soul which could rise above all weakness. But after independence, however, Gandhi, a little pessimistically and with some amount of mortification, confessed that India had

adopted only the non-violence of the weak<sup>1</sup> because once the British power was out of the picture, the people engaged in unrestrained and intensely violent slaughter and internecine struggles. He said: "I have to hang down my head in shame." However, he stuck to his faith in the moralization and spiritualization of politics. He was thoroughly devoted to the principle that increasing adherence to Ahimsa would alone emancipate mankind from all kinds of dogmatism, conflict and evil.

Leo Tolstoy recognized the clamouring contradiction between the profession of Christianity and the simultaneous acknowledgement of the necessity of armaments for national security. Like Tolstoy, Gandhi accepted the immutability and obligatory character of the law of love. Gandhi was an exponent of ethical idealism. For himself, Gandhi accepted the law of Ahimsa as absolute. He had acquired Ahimsa after a long struggle but he considered it an infallible weapon, mightier than the force of arms. He believed in the categorical imperative of Ahimsa and hence he had deep faith in the sanctity of the right to life. The believer in Ahimsa would regard even the lives of the opponents as worthy of reverence. In an article in the *Harijan*<sup>2</sup> Gandhi wrote: "You are no Satyagrahis if you remain silent or passive spectators while your enemy is being done to death. You must protect him even at the cost of your life." He accepted the supremacy of the right to life not only because man is the subject of social and political rights but because man is a soul. As a Vedantist and a Vaishnava Gandhi regarded all life as sacred and precious. He would not kill even a snake. He said, "God alone can take life, because He gives it." Gandhi condemned war as an absolute evil and would not accept the plea of a defensive war or a just war.

<sup>1</sup> Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* (June 29, 1947): "I have already said that the non-violence that was offered during the past thirty years was that of the weak.....India has no experience of the non-violence of the strong."

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, April 7, 1946

He would have absolutely repudiated the notion of an anticipatory war. He felt that there is always some party which is guilty of initiating a war. It is not proper to state that war is the mechanism of devil or of uncontrollable forces. He said that behind the hand that hurls the sword, there is always the brain and the mind that prescribes the use of the sword. Gandhi wrote: "When two nations are fighting, the duty of a votary of Ahimsa is to stop the war." Gandhi taught the absoluteness of peace and had even visualized universal disarmament. But peace did not mean appeasement of the aggressor or acquiescence in his imperialistic adventures. Gandhi's comment on the Munich Pact of 1938 as being a settlement for peace without honour is significant. A genuine peace must be founded on the rectification of the forces that threaten peace. It must accept the conception of justice as the apportionment of due claims and rights and is thoroughly antithetical to the imposition of the will of the aggressor. Addressing a prayer meeting at Sodepur on November 1, 1946, Gandhi said that any peace to be substantial must be honourable, never at the cost of honour. He pointed out that he could never agree to any settlement which amounted to the humiliation or loss of self-respect for anyone. But on the other hand the Gandhian theory of peace did not mean the elimination of the antagonist. A comprehensive theory of Ahimsa postulates positive love even for the opponent. He pleaded for the moral regeneration of the opponents because like Buddha he felt that enmity or *vaira* leads to more enmity and thus a vicious circle is created because the antagonist ever remains disgruntled and hungers for a chance of revenge. Thus the best way is the "conversion" of the opponents. Ahimsa thus wants to replace the ferocious character of politics of power by the righteousness of individual freedom and universal moral will. This authority of moral inducement,

persuasion and prestige can be built up by adherence to the great vows which produce the requisite moral fervour and strength necessary for the life of a fighter for the cause of right. Hence the basis of the Gandhian philosophy of politics consists in stressing the persistent, overpowering and resolute power of love as a significant factor which can solve group and national tensions and antagonisms. A faith in the creative and beneficent power of the spirit provides to man a firm determination to fight all factors of injustice at the cost even of the sacrifice of one's life. A believer in the reality and kindness of God cares for truth and not for the satisfactions of a petty existence. Thus the theory of non-violence is based on the acceptance of a spiritual teleology and may not appear realistic to a sceptic or to an agnostic.

The social application of Ahimsa, according to Gandhi, is postulated upon the acceptance of spiritual metaphysics and the consequent growth of the purity of personal motivation. Gandhi stressed Ahimsa because the universe is permeated with a divine spirit and all life is sacred. The practice of Ahimsa requires deep self-introspecting. This means the gradual acquisition of freedom from envy, lust, hatred, malice, cupidity and uncharitableness. Resistance has to be offered to the oppression but for the wrong-doer there is to be love. It leads to the inculcation of a new standard of values and virtues. The acceptance of the norm of non-violence would amount to almost a moral transvaluation of values. This code of vows or *vratas* has to be followed by the Satyagrahi and has to become the pattern and standard for imitation for others. The tyrannical group leaders and governments which are the repositories of violence are to be firmly resisted, if they are proved to be in the wrong. Non-violence is only the replacement of retaliation and is no surrender to wickedness. Ahimsa as thus conceived by Gandhi is a power of profound social import. It has, according to Gandhi, almost an obligatory and compelling power to bring peace and unity to the world.

Gandhi was a spiritual and ethical idealist and hence he believed in the moralization of politics. He was not a metaphysical dreamer but a moral realist who wanted to reform the structure of modern social and political life. Hence he emphasized the application of honesty, integrity and beneficent purpose in public administration. He wanted to apply the theory of Ahimsa enunciated by the old prophets on a great social and political plane. His Ahimsa provides a program and plan of universal fraternity. He hoped that in world politics there would be the increasing resort to consultation and arbitration in place of armed conflicts. Aristotle had said that friendship is the cohesive bond of communities. Gandhi pleaded for brotherly ethic.

Ahimsa is vitally integrated with the idea of encompassing Truth or God. All men according to Gandhi are children of God. He holds that it is possible and advisable to resist a perverse system but "to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself." Ahimsa is the attitude of harmlessness even to the wrong-doer. It implies positive love even to the wrong-doer. But this does not mean rendering any help to the wrong-doer in the prolongation of his wrong. To slight a single human being is really to inflict injury upon the divine spirit in man and thus it amounts to an injury upon the world.<sup>1</sup> "The Bible rightly taught that vengeance belonged to God."<sup>2</sup> Mahatma Gandhi accepted the absolutism of Ahimsa. He interpreted it as signifying utter selflessness and universal love. He interpreted history in terms of the slow evolution and vindication of the superiority of Ahimsa."<sup>3</sup> "It is my firm faith that man is by nature going higher," he wrote. Ahimsa was the farthest removed from acquiescence in evil or from a false masquerade for one's weakness. Ahimsa is the symbol

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi: "A Tussle with Power", *Autobiography*.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, April 27, 1947

<sup>3</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *Non-Violence in Peace and War* Vol. I, p. 425



of moral and spiritual strength. It is the strongest force known. It is a force of the subtlest kind. It is a demonstration of the resolute strength of the heroic soul which refuses to hurt any body because every living creature is essentially spirit and fundamentally one with himself. "Meticulous care for the rights of the least among us is the *sine qua non* of non-violence."

Gandhi preached the gospel of Ahimsa both for the east and the west. But in their different situational contexts Ahimsa implied different things for them. For India, Ahimsa meant a pooling together of the energies of the people for the work of national liberation. For Asia, Ahimsa mainly signified the notion of the realization of a national community based on suffering, tolerance, self-abnegation and the neutralization of fissiparous trends. It amounted to the elimination of petty local jealousies, unfounded feelings of group and caste discriminations and notions of regional superiority. For the western world the Gandhian philosophy of Ahimsa mainly appeared as a gospel of renunciation of *machtspolitik*. In 1947 Gandhi wrote that if Europe was to save itself from suicide something along the lines of non-violence had to be adopted. Non-violence applied to politics signified the repudiation of "blood and iron" and "the mailed fist". It signified a moral substitute for war. It meant the negation of cults of power, stratagems, exploitation, enslavement, economic imperialism and war. In face of the advancements in nuclear energy Gandhi stood for the resort to technics of love. He was deeply concerned with the survival of man and there is a great realistic tinge in the Gandhian ideas of the moralization of politics through the application of the technics of non-violence. He laid down five simple axioms of non-violence:

"(a) Non-violence implies as complete self-purification as is humanly possible.

(b) Man for man the strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violence.

(c) Non-violence is without exception superior to violence, *i.e.*, the power at the disposal of a non-violent person is always greater than he would have if he was violent.

(d) There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.

(e) The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory—if such a term may be used of non-violence. In reality where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory.”<sup>1</sup>

(b) *Implications and Conditions of Non-violence.* Gandhi has summarized the implications and conditions of the success of this stupendous moral norm of Ahimsa in an article in the *Harijan* (September 5, 1936). They are: “(1) Non-violence is the law of the human race and is infinitely greater than and superior to brute force. (2) In the last resort it does not avail to those who do not possess a living faith in the God of Love. (3) Non-violence affords the fullest protection to one’s self-respect and sense of honour, but not always to possession of land or movable property, though its habitual practice does prove a better bulwark than the possession of armed men to defend them. Non-violence in the very nature of things is of no assistance in the defence of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts. (4) Individuals or nations who would practise non-violence must be prepared to sacrifice (nations to the last man) their all except honour. It is, therefore, inconsistent with the possession of other people’s countries, *i. e.*, modern imperialism, which is frankly based on force for its defence. (5) Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all—children, young men and women or grown-up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have, therefore, equal love for all mankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts. (6) It is a profound error to suppose that whilst

the law is good enough for individuals it is not for masses of mankind.”

(c) *Reservations to the Absolute Law of Ahimsa.* Gandhi believed in a spiritual purposive universe. He was a great idealist but he had also a realistic perception of things. He had an intuitive apperception of the social and political situation and hence his Ahimsa was never a plea for sentimental utopianism. Hence he made certain concessions to Ahimsa in applying it on a group scale. He said that even after India had won her independence there will be the need for fighters to defend the country but he stressed that India should have the smallest army imaginable. Although as a prophet of non-violence he did not approve of the military action of the Indian government in Kashmir he admired the resourcefulness of the defenders. He said: “though he did not approve of the use of arms by the Union Government for aiding the Kashmiris and though he could not approve of Sheikh Abdullah’s resort to arms, he could not possibly withhold admiration for either for their resourceful and praiseworthy conduct, especially, if both the relieving troops and the Kashmiri defenders died heroically to a man. He knew that if they could do so, they would perhaps change the face of India. But if the defence was purely non-violent in intention and action, he would not use the word ‘perhaps’, for he would be sure of change in the face of India even to the extent of converting to the defender’s view the Union Cabinet, if not even the Pakistan Cabinet.” Gandhi believed in the possibility of having a non-violent army of those citizens who honestly endeavour to observe the canons of non-violence in their lives. This army was to act as a counterpoise to all kinds of riots, disturbances and anti-social activities and had to be ready to cope with any “emergency”.<sup>2</sup> In 1940 Gandhi wanted Congressmen to

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 16, 1947

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, March 26, 1938

defend their country with a non-violent army.<sup>1</sup> He was ready to recognize the use of police force against those who run counter to or violate the due process of law. Gandhi wrote: "I have conceded that even in a non-violent state a police force may be necessary. This I admit is a sign of my imperfect Ahimsa.<sup>2</sup> But the police would act as the servants and not as the masters of the people. It will rarely resort to arms. The police in a non-violent state will rely on the strength of collaboration and cooperation. He was willing to permit the use of a police-force on behalf of a future world-government. He recommended punishment to wrong-doers. In the present state of society he prescribed that thieves and robbers should be confined. He, however, advocated the use of prisons more as reformatories than as places of punishment. He did not say that the police should cease taking cognizance of public crimes but as a spiritual doctor Gandhi wanted to apply the psychological and moral approach to crimes by treating them as a species of disease. Gandhi thus makes concessions to the absolutism of non-violence. The absolute application of non-violence would not favour the punishment even of thieves, robbers and murderers. But Gandhi was realistic enough to make certain concessions to the structure of our imperfect world. These concessions to the absolute law of Ahimsa are based on two factors. First, the absoluteness of Ahimsa as a gospel (and not merely as a policy) applied only to Gandhi because he was conscientiously and completely devoted to it. He went even to the extent of identifying non-violence with God. For others, and for organized institutions, Gandhi believed that there should be progressive approximation to Ahimsa. The Indian National Congress accepted non-violence as a policy and never as a matter of irrevocable faith. During 1940-41, the Congress was ready to share in war efforts if the British acceded to India's claims to

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, July 13, 1940

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, September 1, 1940

have a responsible central government but Gandhi stuck to his absolute attachment to non-violence. Secondly, he felt that it was unwise to bargain away the part, if the whole could not be immediately obtained. Gandhi believed that Satyagraha was based on the acceptance of the inevitability of compromise. He firmly accepted the truth of the saying of the Gita that even a partial and inadequate adherence to the path of good will lead to victory. He wrote: "Satyagraha is like radium in its action; an infinitesimal quantity of it embedded in a malignant growth acts continuously, silently and ceaselessly, till it has transformed the whole mass of diseased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even a little of true non-violence acts in a subtle, unseen way and livens the whole society." He went even to the extent of saying that non-violence generates socialism because if a man wanted to be actively non-violent he could not remain confined to introspection or meditation in a cloistered retreat. He had to rise against social injustice of all kinds and at all places. Active non-violence means the dynamization of the stubborn power of moral resistance. As a technic Gandhi felt that Ahimsa was superior because the sufferers for the cause of truth raise themselves in the opinion and judgment of the world because through the pains, sufferings and persecutions undergone they deeply touch and influence delicate sensitiveness, mental susceptibility and inner responsiveness of men and thus prevent the barbarization of mankind. The settlement of political and economic tensions, rivalries and animosities through the technic of non-violence prevents the possible malicious injury to the compromise formula by a group of counter-revolutionists. An attempt is made to convert the latter into integral supporters of the claims of the community.

(d) *Weaknesses in the Theory of Non-Violence.* The quest for Ahimsa represents the nobility of human aspirations and endeavours. It is a testimony to the spiritual foundations of the human being. But still

there are some points in the Gandhian theory of Ahimsa of which I feel critical. In an article in the *Young India* (August 11, 1920) Gandhi wrote: "My life is dedicated to the service of India through the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism." I feel that Gandhi is making an exaggerated claim in his interpretation of Hinduism as the religion rooted in Ahimsa. The word Ahimsa itself is not mentioned in the four Vedic Samhitas and begins to be used only since the Chhandogyopanishad. If the Vedas are literally interpreted, one can find in them sanction even for righteous warfare. There is reference in the Rigveda to the historic struggle of the Aryas and the Dasyus. There is reference to righteous warfare in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavadgita. The whole philosophy of the Gita is built against the background of war. Only Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism sanction, more or less, absolute Ahimsa. Gandhi was more influenced by the Vaishnava than by the Vedic tradition. Hence from the standpoint of the history of religions I do not consider Gandhi to be accurate in his absolutely pacifistic interpretation of Hinduism. There is a great place for Ahimsa in Hinduism. It is a monumental tenet of Hindu ethics but it can never be regarded as the root of Hinduism. Hinduism has sanctioned just war. Hence it is more correct to say that in Hinduism there is place both for violence and non-violence.

Gandhi was not merely a national leader. He dreamt of the application of Ahimsa on an international scale. He wanted world politicians and statesmen to use it. Thus he visualized its application to the rather chaotic structure of world diplomacy. He was sure that India could resist Japan non-violently. He wrote: "If we were a free country, things could be done non-violently to prevent the Japanese from entering the country. As it is, non-violent resistance could commence the moment they effected a landing. . . . Thus, non-violent resisters would refuse any help, even water, For

it is not part of their duty to help anyone steal their country. But if a Japanese missed his way, and was dying of thirst, and sought help as a human being, a non-violent resister, who may not regard anyone as his enemy, would give water to the thirsty one. Suppose the Japanese compel resisters to give them water, resisters must die in the act of resistance. It is conceivable that they will exterminate all resisters. The underlying belief in such non-violent resistance is that the aggressor will in time be mentally and even physically tired of killing non-violent resisters." But I have doubts whether the Gandhian formula would have been successful. Some of the suggestions of Gandhi for the use of Ahimsa in world diplomacy appear unrealistic and unconvincing to me. He said that in this atomic age there was no weapon like non-violent resistance. Gandhi believed that the prayer of the non-violent heart could reach the pilot ready to hurl the atom bomb. I feel that this cannot be the efficacious technic to deal with the serious problems of nuclear armament. Gandhi advised the German Jews to practise non-violent resistance against the Nazi invaders. He wrote: "But the Jews of Germany can offer Satyagraha under infinitely better auspices than the Indians of South Africa. The Jews are a compact homogeneous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians of South Africa. And they have organized world opinion behind them. I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading man-hunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resistance offered against the godless fury of dehumanized man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an

appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to fellow-Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire.”<sup>1</sup> But I do not think it could have produced any great consequence. He wanted the Jews in Palestine to “offer Satyagraha in front of the Arabs and offer themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea without raising a little finger against them.” This suggestion seems utterly utopian to me. During the March crisis of 1939 Gandhi recommended simultaneous disarmament on the part of the democratic powers as the solution to the threatening situation of world politics. But I believe that it would have been a very unsafe and hazardous adventure by the allied powers. The moral grandeur of non-violence appeals to me but the situational context for a complete application of Ahimsa is not yet provided. Any weakening on the part of the democratic forces may be the golden opportunity for the wicked tyrants and oppressors. It is true that Mahatma Gandhi would prescribe complete non-cooperation with the oppressors. He wrote: “A non-violent man or society does not anticipate or provide for attacks from without.” On the contrary, such a person or society firmly believes that nobody is going to disturb them. If the worst happens, there are two ways open to non-violence. To yield possession but non-cooperate with the aggressor. Thus, supposing that a modern edition of Nero descended upon India, the representatives of the State will let him in but tell him that he will get no assistance from the people. They will prefer death to submission. The second way would be non-violent resistance by the people who have been trained in the non-violent way. They would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor’s cannon. The underlying belief in either case is that even a Nero is not devoid of a heart. The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of



men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery. Practically speaking there will be probably no greater loss in men than if forcible resistance was offered; there will be no expenditure in armaments and fortifications. The non-violent training received by the people will add inconceivably to their moral height. Such men and women will have shown personal bravery of a type far superior to that shown in armed warfare. In each case the bravery consists in dying, not in killing." But for the successful operation of that technic there is necessary an amount of almost superhuman suffering. In the present day situation I would advocate gradual approach towards Ahimsa. Any unequivocal acceptance of Ahimsa may amount to catastrophic capitulation.

Another possible limitation in Gandhi's theory of ethics and politics is that it does not adequately probe into the group-aspects of the phenomenon of violence although it examines the psychology of violence. Gandhi holds the view that the state is the organized concentrated essence of violence. According to Gandhi there is violence in the state because there is the perverse craving for violence in the human heart. But Gandhi does not specify the concrete mechanics and processes of the manifestation of this internal basic drive or "residue"<sup>1</sup> of violence in the external institutional apparatus and structure of the state. The researches of the French sociologists have made us aware of the fact that group behaviour presents a qualitatively different pattern from that of the individuals. Those same persons who in private lives may act quite rationally are overpowered by emotions and passions when acting in a crowd. Group behaviour may represent the magnification of some aspects of individual emotion and the negation of some other aspects. Hence in the analysis of collective behaviour and group phenomena we require adequate data

<sup>1</sup>"Residue" is a term in Pareto's Sociology. It means a basic drive.

and more careful probe. If institutions are contaminated by violence it is essential to point out as to whose violence they represent and in what degree. Do they represent the violence in the hearts of all the members or only of the chosen group therein? Gandhi always prescribed individual purification as the effective antidote to all evils. This is quite an important solution but it is also essential to examine the group aspects of the phenomena. In the case of communal riots in 1946-47 Gandhi prescribed cleansing of the heart and social fraternization. This was a potent remedy but the deeper aspects of the economic, social and cultural foundations of communal troubles also required attention and analysis. The psychological approach to a problem has to be supplemented by a sociological approach. The problem as to the exact relation between the individual emotions and passions and the group manifestations of those emotions and passions requires more research than has been put in at present.

Gandhi believed in the absolutism of Ahimsa. He accepted its wonderful potency. Certainly non-violence is a great moral norm and maxim. Gandhi is justified in having stressed the necessity, consequence and import of non-violence for social and political action. But, after all, non-violence is, from the sociological standpoint, a technic and a means. But I consider that freedom as an ethical imperative is more important than non-violence. Freedom is the autonomous sense of a dynamic ability, enterprise and creativism. It means the realization of wholeness. Freedom thus, as Hegel said, is the essence of the spirit. Moral self-determination is the key of freedom. Compared to freedom, non-violence may appear at times to be of less significance. According to Lokamanya Tilak freedom was more important than non-violence while Mahatma Gandhi swore by the absoluteness of the law of Ahimsa. Furthermore what may appear to be an example of non-violent conduct may seem to be only an aspect of violence from a larger and a more comprehensive standpoint. It is

true, however, that in 1942 Gandhi contemplated that some compromise had to be made with non-violence. He said in 1942: "There is ordered anarchy all around and about us. I am sure that the anarchy that may result, because of the British withdrawal or their refusal to listen to us and our decision to defy their authority, will in no way be worse than the present anarchy. After all, those who are unarmed cannot produce a frightful amount of violence or anarchy, and I have a faith that out of that anarchy may arise pure non-violence. But to be a passive witness of the terrible violence that is going on, of the terrible anarchy that is going on in the name of resisting a possible foreign aggression, is a thing I can't stand. It is a thing that would make me ashamed of my Ahimsa. . . I have not asked the British to hand over India to the Congress or to Hindus. Let them entrust India to God, or in modern parlance, to anarchy. Then, all parties will fight one another like dogs, or will, when real responsibility faces them, come to a reasonable agreement. I shall expect non-violence to rise out of that chaos."

Sometimes Gandhi used to identify truth and Ahimsa. I think that Gandhi's emphasis on the cleanliness, correctness and sanctity of means is a great contribution to the practice of world diplomacy, but I do not accept the Gandhian formula that non-violence is the sole means of attaining truth. In the last chapter of his *Autobiography*, in bidding farewell to the readers, Gandhi wrote: ". . . if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader that the only means for the realization of truth is Ahimsa, I shall deem all my labour in writing these chapters to have been in vain." Truth is an integral concept and has an inclusive relevance. Ahimsa, on the other hand, is a moral precept and a technic evolved by man and is applicable, appropriate and suitable only to the human and not the cosmic realm. No body blames the fire or lightning for the violence it may cause. But fire and lightning are also aspects of truth. No body talks of the use of violence

in the infra-human realms. The serpent and the tiger are not condemned for being violent. But truth as an all-pervasive all-inhabiting real substance cannot exclude any stratum of reality from its comprehension and sway. Hence logically speaking I do not see the validity of the proposition of Gandhi that non-violence is the only means of the realization of truth as God. Truth is too momentous an element to be grasped and cognized solely by Ahimsa, although the moral concept of Ahimsa is an important means for the realization of truth. According to the ancient Hindu thought truth is regarded as vast—*brihat* and *virat*. Truth as an entity or being is timeless, spaceless and immense. Human creation is a phenomenon about a million years old. Hence any concept, proposition or ideal evolved by man cannot comprehend the immeasurable proportions of truth.

(e) *Merits of Ahimsa as a Social and Political Technic.* It is an imperfect world and hence several reservations have to be made to the social and political application of Ahimsa. I do not deny that it is a great ideal, however. In spite of shortcomings non-violence can to a major extent serve as the goal of democratic patterns of behaviour. It is true that it offers a great counterpoise to bloodshed, ravages and colossal destruction which are the consequences of large-scale military operations. War results in a slackening of morals. Hence both in internal and international diplomacy genuine and cooperative efforts have to be made for the concretization of Ahimsa, to the maximum extent possible. The lessening and possible elimination of pugnacity, brutality and warfare should be the criterion of the evolutionary progression of mankind. Machiavelli says that only those prophets succeed in history who have at the back of them political power. Moses, Cyrus, Theseus and Romulus succeeded because they had force while Savonarola was executed as a heretic because he had no support. John Stuart Mill refers to several instances in the history of mankind when the use of thwarting and neutralizing forces has resulted in the suppression of truth. He does

not accept that truth has an automatic power of successful assertion. It is difficult to deny the historical truth and insight in the statements of Machiavelli and Mill. But as a believer in the superiority of the power of love, Gandhi would urge along with the Upanishads that truth being the sole reality has eventually a conquering power. Man becomes dejected because he takes a limited viewpoint. It is man's imperative duty to work for personal self-purification, the reformation of social and political life and for the realization of God in the lives of living beings. He used to repeat "Truth is God". Gandhi's theory of the progressive application of non-violence to world politics certainly represents a great advance in the direction of idealism. His constant refrain was that for the achievement of real freedom the torchlight of non-violence has to keep burning with ever greater brightness "in the midst of the present impenetrable gloom".<sup>1</sup>

Even if the creed of absolute Ahimsa to be immediately implemented may sound sociologically unrealistic still it can serve as a useful conceptual pattern, a measuring-rod for our concrete courses of action and a fundamental moral *telos* keeping which in mind we may direct our purposive social formation and growth. Unlike Hegel, Gandhi thinks that our institutions are far from being ideal and hence he prescribes constant efforts towards their perfection. Our experience with crime and punishment makes it clear, however, that the concept of punishment as retributive and vindictive is giving place to the idea of punishment at least as deterrent if not as purely reformatory. This in itself is at least a recognition to the power of non-violence in penal and political life. Kropotkin has referred to the role of mutual aid in history. Sorokin recognizes the significance of dominant altruism. Krabbe said that the growth of feelings of community and civilization were gradually leading to the replacement of the sovereignty of the state conceived in terms of political power by the sovereignty of law.

The increasing importance of public opinion and the consent of the governed in modern political philosophy is, in itself, a recognition of the replacement of force by law and will. These developments only serve to stress that Ahimsa if adhered to as a moral value is neither unrealistic nor speculative, although absolute and perfect Ahimsa in the present chaotic state of world politics is certainly a sentimental piece of wishful thinking. Even Gandhi acknowledged that so long there was life, absolute Ahimsa could not be practised.

Gandhi gave to an aching world the gospel of change of heart or conversion. Too long the politics of power, constraint or *danda* has dominated this earth. Power over individual, over groups, over weaker neighbours has been regarded as the essence of politics. But power politics is only another name for concentrated violence and hence I agree with Gandhi in holding that there should be the spiritualization and moralization of the bases of politics. Violence has to be replaced by the ascendancy of will and right. Unmoralized rapacious political power if pursued in a relentless spirit, results in eventual frustration and despair. It leads to dissensions, animosities and corruptions. The collapse of the Assyrian, Persian, Hohenstaufen and German imperialism is a tragic epitaph on the nefarious and savage management and display of the politics of force. *Machtpolitik* is based on fraud, malice and brutishness. Gandhi pleads for tolerance, love and kindness. He wants to moralize political action. Moralization of politics means that there should be a quest for justice, creative freedom, right and rational good and universal welfare. Not the audacious and unwarranted conquest of a weak neighbour but the integration of personality through the harmonization of one's own impulses and the maximum satisfaction of the justifiable social demands of citizens should become the aim of action. Political action has to satisfy not merely the criteria of the minimization of the costs and the attainment of external efficiency but has to realize the essential ideals

of liberty, equality, justice and universal good or sarvodaya. Hence social accumulation, solidarity and fraternity on an increasing scale is necessary. Avarice, anger and treachery have to be conquered. But this realization of fundamental ideals has to be made possible by the gradual replacement of the coercive appliances and instruments of the state machine by a regime of moral authority and social justice. Gandhi believed in self-control and he rebelled against the automatic violence of governments. According to the ideal of non-violence, coercive control has to be replaced by voluntary self-discipline. Ahimsa is a quest for the incorporation of justice and virtue in our social and political life. Gandhi's stress on the ethicization of politics is an important contribution to political thought.

(f) *Ahimsa and Western Sociological and Political Thought.* The Gandhian notion of the progressive realization of Ahimsa in social and political life gets confirmation from the theories of a sociologist like Jacques Novicow who believes in the replacement of the physiological, economic and political struggles of man by a form of bloodless intellectual competition. Auguste Comte also hoped for the supremacy of beneficence and universal consensus. The stress on Ahimsa represents the emphasis on the creative role of the moral mind and human heart as a factor in human evolution. It postulates that evolution is not automatic dictated by the progress of objective forces but is influenced by the rational and moral powers of man. In sociological terms Ahimsa represents social coordination, mutual adjustment and socio-mental correlation and integration. In place of tension, conflict and antagonism it stands for accommodation and cooperation. It wants increasing coordination and mutual relationship between the different groups, classes, races and nations into which humanity is apparently divided. It pleads for the replacement of imperialism by the dynamics of creative love. The triumph of Ahimsa would signify

victory over brutality, mutual rapacity and pugnacity. Ahimsa is the farthest removed from passive acquiescence in or conservative adulation of the *status quo*. It means the dynamization of love for the extirpation of social evils. The survival and continuity of the world and of the various species amidst cruelty, war and destruction is a proof according to Gandhi of the superiority of the love over the law of force. Survival triumphs over extinction. Suffering triumphs over brutality. The potency of Ahimsa is revealed by the millions and millions of cases and instances in human life where tensions and conflicts are solved by love. Gandhi wants that this law of love should not remain confined to individual conduct alone. It should invade by its concentrated dynamic the political realms also. Hence he wants that concrete and immediate steps have to be made to reform that individual and that kind of individual change of heart will have social and political repercussions. Gandhi's acceptance of spiritual determinism imparted to him great faith in the inevitable emergence of the non-violent society in the future. God could not be a witness to the holocaust of man. This notion of inevitability is a consequence of Gandhi's faith in the conquering power of the spirit. He was sure that eventually the force of violence would be replaced by the overpowering authority of justice, truth and peace. To this extent his view is analogous to the views of Kant, Spencer, Cobden and Bright who firmly believed that the progress of reason, individuality and right will lead to the nullification of power politics and to the realization of the ethical state based on peace. But the failure of the hopes of the eighteenth and nineteenth century optimists of liberal humanism, peace, progress and cosmopolitanism makes us sceptical of those plans and formulas which want the battle of peace to be won in the hearts of human individuals. The human heart is not an isolated factor in the world but is one variable in a complex web of several mutually related factors. The role of objective social, economic



and political faces is immense. Hence I think that the battle of peace has to be fought not only in the individual human soul but deliberate attempts have also to be made to transform that defiled and polluted political structure which exploits the human heart by means of domination, constraint and propaganda. The ending of poverty and imperialism is imperative. The change of human heart has to proceed simultaneously with the change of the social and political structure.

The Gandhian Ahimsa is a higher concept than the general will as propounded by Rousseau because the latter only accepts the voluntaristic conception of will for the public good while Gandhi prescribes a conscious moral training for the growth of the power of universal love. Ahimsa as taught by Gandhi is also a higher concept than the real will of Bosanquet. Bosanquet identified the real will of the individual, the general will of the society and the political will of the state. Even at its highest levels this real will is only the will to voluntarily accept the social norms, canons and conventions and the accumulated cultural heritage of the national community while the Gandhian Ahimsa as a political force pleads for universal fraternization. While Bosanquet regarded the nation-state as the guardian of moral values Gandhi believed in ethical universalism and cosmopolitanism. Furthermore Ahimsa is a more spiritual conception than the notion of socialization, responsiveness, accommodation etc. popularized by the western sociologists, because it is more sincere in its belief in the power of spiritual *sadhana* and suffering. Being a believer in the "evolutionary revolution" brought about by the matchless weapon of Ahimsa, Gandhi prescribes a technic of social change by the energization of the faculty of positive suffering. Conflicts and animosities are solved in his theory not by superior acceleration of force but by a deliberate, conscious act of self-abnegation.

For the realization of the non-violent society which will be a thoroughly transformed society having trans-

cended power-politics, there is no necessity according to Gandhi for a biological transmutation. Gandhi would have reacted with horror to the suggestions of the geneticists. Gandhi's new man is not a biologically new type but is the embodiment of the moral truths of love and purity. He is a perfect Satyagrahi and *sthitaprajna*. In place of the improvement of the human species through genetic solution Gandhi adopts the constructive moral approach. Gandhi's approach is more in the Christian tradition.

## CHAPTER V

# **SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT**

### **1. Gandhi's Theory of Civilization and Culture**

(a) *Gandhi's Theory of True Civilization : Civilization and Ethics.* Gandhi had a moral approach to civilization because he accepted a spiritual interpretation of the universe and history. No civilization according to him was worthwhile unless it provided the criteria and opportunities for the fullest development of the humblest of citizens. A civilization without ethics was sterile and doomed to destruction. The sociology of civilization brings out the moral nature of Gandhi's analysis and prognosis of our critical and chaotic epoch. He did not confine civilization only to the external and technological constructions for a social, civilized and easy living. Gandhi does not make any sharp analytical distinction between civilization and culture as is done by Danilevsky, Spengler or Berdyaev but almost uses them interchangeably like Schweitzer. Like Cicero, Kant and Fichte, Gandhi had a moral approach to social, civil and political problems. He was an ethical idealist. He said: "Civilization is the mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty." Thus Gandhi equated the growth, development and evolution of civilization with the progress in moral values. Moral growth according to Gandhi depends upon the restraint of the lower ego. Hence a true civilization was to point out to man the way of inner progress and moral cleansing and sanctification. But moral progress, in the Gandhian philosophy of civilization, meant not only conquests in the field of self-contemplation but it connoted a sense of dynamic identification with the exploited,

downtrodden, suppressed and humiliated people. Hence Gandhi was persistently absorbed in humanitarian service. As an advocate of moral civilization Gandhi claimed to be only "a humble servant of India and humanity". He claimed to serve the world through serving the Indian masses. He was a prophet of the moral spirit challenging the foundations of political and economic imperialism and an externalistic and technological civilization. Gandhi's radical challenge to modern civilization was made in name of the spirit. Like Rousseau, Gandhi felt that the advancement in the external art of modern civilization had been synchronistic with the decline of faith, piety and the spirit of noble charity. Hence he stood up as the critic of modern industrial and scientific civilization.

Gandhi believed in the spiritual and ethical foundations of civilization. He was repelled by materialism and the accumulation of commodities of comfort. His championship of the creative role of moral ideas in human history is related to his basic conception of spiritual idealism. He was the prophet of "true civilization". To Gandhi there are three basic principles of a "true civilization": (i) First, there is a quest for reality in place of external illusory charms and fascinations. Gandhi was a devout Vaishnava and did not accept that the world was an apparent false perception or an illusion. But nonetheless compared to God, the world and its phenomena and its multiple celebrations were only subordinately real. He believed in the power of the spirit and had only a subsidiary regard for phenomenal attractions. He wrote: "Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt and so perhaps most countries of which we have any historical record. The descendants and kinsmen of the royal and divine Krishna too fell when they were rolling in riches."<sup>1</sup> He felt that civilization signified that man should transcend the demands and satisfaction

of the body and the senses and should make a search for the supreme truth. Gandhi had a repugnance for the superficial attempt to find satisfaction in external embellishments of the flesh. He felt the urgency of the quest of the immanent, infinite and eternal God. The prophets of materialism believed in the power of reason to build a new society based on the maximization of commodities. Gandhi as a spiritualist accepted the limited potency of reason. Reason could not reveal all the knowledge about man and the universe. He stood for piety, faith and a spirit of charity and fellowship.

(ii) Secondly, in the Gandhian philosophy of civilization one finds a quest for simplicity. Simplicity as a criterion of civilization means a condemnation of luxury. Gandhi accepted the purifying power of voluntary poverty. Freedom depends not upon vain accumulation of commodities of comforts but upon the cultivation of the spirit of simplicity. According to Gandhi engrossment in vanities, luxuries and wealth is degrading and demoralizing. He wanted the substitution of extravagance by care for the social good. Gandhi's life showed a deliberate indifference to the solicitations of pleasure, material wealth and comforts and a readiness to sacrifice one's every thing for the good of all. Austerity and simplicity follow naturally as concomitants of devotion to one's duty. If there is the rigid adherence to one's moral and social duties then because of the presence of the sense of the good of all and of the moral norm of self-determination of conduct by spiritual values, austerity does not seem painful but becomes, instead, a matter of joy and pleasure. Gandhi's adherence to the vow of austerity amounted to rejection of sophistication ostentation, involved complications and intricacies. He said: "We may not barter away our ancient simplicity for anything on this earth. Now, you will perhaps understand my determined opposition to the modern rush, the hypnotic dazzle that seems almost to overcome us and overtake us; and that is coming to

us with such violent force from the West.”<sup>1</sup> Gandhi urged a quest for simplicity but this simplicity did not arise out of ignorance and primitivism but was the natural openness, sincerity and outspokenness of a man striving after the perfection of his motivation and conduct. When man is absorbed in moral quest it finds mere show and external equipments and apparatus to be inadequate. Simplicity has to be manifested all-round, in one’s life, tastes, actions and behaviour. Genuine simplicity is a principle of spiritual aesthetics and it prevents a man from taking an unmannerly, awkward and clumsy step. It means the absence of crudeness and commonplace coarseness into which civilization has a tendency to degenerate. The sure and certain touch of the spirit has to be manifested in all departments and sectors of life. Simplicity should express the natural candour of the soul and is not to be a man for hypocrisy. Gandhi’s utter spirit of simplicity and devout humility is revealed in his famous speeches at the Federal Structure Sub-Committee and at the plenary session of the Round Table Conference of 1931. Since Gandhi believed in austerity and simplicity he wanted to raise the standard of living of the Indians only to a limited and moderate extent. He was opposed to the possession of commodities for comforts on moral and economic grounds. Gandhi wrote: “Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession requires that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread, but it will be God’s business, and not his, to provide it. Only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions, and try to reduce them. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi’s address at the Jaffna Students’ Congress, November 26, 1927

multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service."<sup>1</sup> Accumulation of commodities cramps the soul and degenerates into the fetish of external goods of life. The luxury of the ascendant class makes them morally depraved and distressed. The monopolization of the things needed by all by a few men at the top is unjust. Moreover, accumulation is condemnable because it is not possible to be practised by all. Hence Gandhi simultaneously glorified voluntary poverty while he was trying to improve the living conditions of the Indian farmers and workers. His voluntary acceptance of poverty amounted to an identification with the humble folk. This indirectly provided a healthy counterbalance to the philistinism of the pseudo-westernized Indian middle class which despised the people in the lower ladders of the socio-economic strata. Thus Gandhi's stress on simplicity was both a maxim for inner moral growth as well as a principle of civilization. It challenged the very bases and assumptions of modern diplomacy, imperialistic rivalries, exploitation and property-accumulation which are based upon the unhealthy exaltation of the drive for possessiveness. He said: "Simplicity is the essence of universality."<sup>2</sup>

(iii) Gandhi was a whole man. He stood for the synthesis of spiritual and temporal elements. He was not a recluse refusing to do anything with the world. A quest for harmonious integration is the third principle of the Gandhian philosophy and sociology of civilization. Gandhi pleaded salutary and wholesome synthesis and co-ordination of the demands of the soul and the body, of God and the world. He did not reject the claims of the physical self. He was extremely careful about his diet and his physical exercise. He was absolutely punctual and regular in his daily walks. He was a lean man

<sup>1</sup> *From Yervada Mandira.*

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, April 9, 1946

but during the march in the course of the South African Satyagraha he could walk forty to fifty miles a day. By having fasted several times for three weeks at a stretch he demonstrated the solid strength of his body. He was small in stature but was strong. He advocated the ancient exercise of the *Pranayama*. He believed in nature cure. He did not favour unproductive athletic exercises but nonetheless he always said that the Satyagrahis must be vigorous and hardy. He stressed *Brahmacharya* for the conservation of moral and physical strength and vitality. He wanted the raising of the body and not its rejection. He said: "Man's body is the temple of God." He was a saint and a prophet but his interest in the values of social and economic justice, political liberty and human unity was profound and continued till the end. His spirit was wholly different from that of the medieval ascetics like St. Teresa who glorified punishment of the body as a preparation for mystic illumination. Instead of the negative concept of self-torture he stressed proper body culture. Hence integration or successful reconciliation between the spirit and the world, between the soul and the body, can be regarded as the third basic principle in Gandhi's philosophy of culture and civilization. Gandhi's life was an example of this concept of harmony and integration. It will not be correct to regard him as a prophet of world-and-life-negation. He synthesized inner prayer and social action, political leadership and God-realization. Hence he stood for balancing the demands of the spirit and the claims of the world. To a compartmentalized and fragmentalized world, Gandhi's philosophy of integration may serve as a meaningful message.

(b) *Gandhi's Theory of Nationalism, Romanticism and Civilization.* Gandhi wanted India to be a "truly spiritual nation" which valued truth more than material possessions, fearlessness more than force and power, and

Gandhi's speech at the Muir Central College Economic Society, Allahabad on December 22, 1916



charity more than love of self. Gandhi advocates the spiritual concept of nationalism. Being a metaphysical idealist he accepts the romantic conception of "the soul of a people" which provides the dominant foundation and basis of its culture. Like Hegel, Renan and Spengler Gandhi accepts that the soul of a nation is mighty and creative and cannot be injured and corrupted by external attacks. Nationalism according to Gandhi grows in the process of historical evolution and cannot be created by political pronouncements or maxims of expediency. He was immensely opposed to the "Two Nation" theory propounded by M. A. Jinnah. In a letter written on the 15th September, 1944 to M. A. Jinnah, Gandhi wrote: "I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. If India was one nation before the advent of Islam, it must remain one in spite of the change of faith of a very large body of her children. You do not claim to be a separate nation by right of conquest, but by reason of acceptance of Islam. Will the two nations become one if the whole of India accepted Islam? Will Bengalis, Oriyas, Andhras, Tamilians, Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, etc., cease to have their special characteristics if all of them became converts to Islam? These have all become one politically because they are subject to one foreign control. They are trying today to throw off that subjection. You seem to have introduced a new test of nationhood. If I accept it, I would have to subscribe to many more claims and face an insoluble problem. The only real, though lawful, test of our nationhood arises out of our common political subjection. If you and I throw off this subjection by our combined effort, we shall be born a politically free nation out of our travail. If, by then, we have not learnt to prize our freedom, we may quarrel among ourselves and, for want of a common master holding us together in his iron grip, seek to split up into small groups or nationalities."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Gandhi-Jinnah Correspondence,*

In the *Hind-Swarajya* the idealization of the glories of ancient Indian culture is pronounced. In his exuberance of nationalistic fervour Gandhi held that the Indian civilization has been the mightiest that has been constituted as far. He refers to the collapse of the Greeco-Roman and Egyptian civilizations and the westernization of Japan. He wrote: "We are dazzled by the material progress that Western science has made. I am not enamoured of that progress. In fact, it almost seems as though God in His wisdom had prevented India from progressing along those lines, so that it might fulfil its special mission of resisting the onrush of materialism. After all, there is something in Hinduism that has kept it alive up till now. It has witnessed the fall of Babylonian, Syrian, Persian and Egyptian civilizations." India has always held her own and the erstwhile village republic of India according to the *Hind-Swarajya* had been the nearest approach to civilization based on Ahimsa. In spite of the fact that it was crude and that it did not incorporate the real Gandhian sentiment of the Ahimsa of the strong, still it marked a great achievement. The greatness of Indian civilization lay in the inculcation of the limitation of wants and a distaste of elegance, refinements and free indulgence. The founders of Indian civilization realized that pleasure and pain are experienced due to our mental reactions and hence they were anxious to eliminate the pernicious and poisonous consequences of the destructive and anarchic tendencies of cut-throat rivalries and contests. While the megalopolitian centres of the modern industrialized west are places of physical and aesthetic degeneration, the rural civilization of ancient India was based on the sanctity of love, kindness and spiritual authority. Gandhi does not refer, however, to the immobility, the static culture and the general fatalistic outlook on life that are generated by the unchanging polity and economy of the village. Through the social structure of the caste, he

points out, the villages managed their local affairs and through it they resisted any oppressions of the interfering political potentates. The patriotic, romantic and conservative character of his philosophy of civilization is indicated in Gandhi's view that the absence of social change in the Indian world was based on the notion that foundational maxims whose vitality had been tested by historical experience did not need to be changed for the mere sake of change. Like Edmund Burke, Gandhi interpreted the political and social community as permeated with a sense of abiding partnership between the past and the future, the antique and the novel. Hence Gandhi wanted the Indians to accept the patterns of a reconstructed rural civilization in place of the adoption of urbanism. He said: "We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have in my opinion destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well-known but not one of them is irremediable. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility, unless we are prepared by some drastic means to reduce the population from three hundred million to three or say even thirty. I can therefore suggest remedies on the assumption that we must perpetuate the present rural civilization and to endeavour to rid it of its acknowledged defects."

The *Hind-Swarajya* is a passionate testament of revivalism. Mahatma Gandhi's soul yearned for the recrudescence of the dominant values and patterns of Indian culture. The *Hind-Swarajya* is a record of the anguish of his soul. He was sick to see that the blessed land of India was getting fast westernized and hence with an amount of pardonable exaggeration, Gandhi engaged in a denunciation of the western civilization. Gandhi's traditionalism and historicism is fully revealed in his view that in spite of all apparent weaknesses of modern

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, November 7, 1929

India which are due to superficial fair appearance of the imported western civilization, Indians should cling to the old civilization as children to the mother. Talking to a Polish visitor in 1938 Gandhi said that in the case of the Indian peasant a centuries old noble culture was hidden under an encrustment of crudeness. If the crudeness could be removed and adequate steps could be taken to furnish him education and the necessary requirements of life the Indian peasant would provide one of the finest specimens of a cultured, cultivated and liberalized citizenship.

Gandhi stresses the moral and spiritual categories for the comparative study of the Indian and occidental social and political systems. The former puts the primacy upon ethical conduct and belief in a primordial spiritual reality. The latter is atheistic and even encourages immoral conduct. Modern civilization represents the forces of evil and darkness while the Indian civilization represents a divine principle.' Gandhi's philosophy of the religious ideal-typical reconstruction of civilizations may be substantiated by those aspects of the modern studies in social psychology of world religions, for example the writings of Max Weber and Troeltsch, which emphasize the importance of the religious ethic in the differentiation of the characteristics of the civilizations of the world. Gandhi regarded religion as perhaps the most significant factor in the determination of the style of a culture. Hegel also emphasized the pre-eminent role of religion in the cultural and political evolution of mankind.

Gandhi sincerely believed that the predominance of religious ethic should be preserved in the resurgent India and he stressed the values of purity, chastity and equal respect for all faiths. Against the rising trend towards westernization Gandhi stood for a national trans-substantiation and metamorphosis. He wanted the awakening of the spiritual idealism. The basic

concepts in his ideal Indian civilization were the abolition of invidious distinction between the rich and the poor, the abolition of untouchability and intoxicating drinks, equal provision for the right of women with those of men, peace, mutual co-operation and human unity. He dreamt of the erection of a "paradise" in free India: "In such paradise, whether it is in the Union or in Pakistan, there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks or drugs. There will be the same respect vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one's wife will be treated by men of all religions as mother, sister or daughter according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers." Thus it is clear that Gandhi's philosophy of civilization stressed the values of Buddhistic-Vaishnava ethics and the modern western concepts of social justice and cosmopolitanism. Gandhi never accepted the adequacy of the rationalist epistemology. He had a genuine regard for the feelings of piety, devoutness, loyalty and reverence that are characteristic of old and historical civilizations. The agrarian civilizations are characterized by traditional attachment to the home and the hearth and they look with disfavour upon the alien encroachments of scientific audacity and the repacitees of economic imperialism. Tagore and Gandhi are the spokesmen of the sober values of ancient religious cultures.

(c) *Critique of Western Civilization.* Gandhi challenged the assumptions and basic principles of modern civilization. The sophisticated, technological, commercial, aggressive and lustful aspects of modern western civilization repelled him. The industrial civilization of the Occident was according to him based on the exploitation of the weaker peoples. Its complicated material life was inconsistent with high thinking. Gandhi wrote: "The

last war has shown as nothing else has the Satanic nature of civilization that dominates Europe today. Every canon of public morality has been broken by the victors in the name of virtue. No lie has been considered too foul to be uttered. The motive behind every crime is not religious or spiritual, but grossly material. . . . Europe today is only nominally Christian. In reality it is worshipping Mammon." The modern civilization based on the concealment and negation of moral and spiritual values was almost equivalent to darkness and disease. Gandhi prescribed a return to nature like Plato, Rousseau and Tolstoy. True civilization as interpreted by Gandhi consists not in the accumulation of commodities but in a deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. Earlier than Spengler, Gandhi prophesied the decline and doom of western civilization but he had tremendous faith in the rejuvenating power of the human spirit. Non-violence could provide a healing tonic to modern civilization. Since the Renaissance the western world has been undergoing a phase of the accentuated stress on this-worldly values. The dominant theocentric ethos of the Middle Ages was being replaced by the gospel of rationalization of society and the conquest of nature. The world which Gandhi had to face was dominated by Darwinian evolutionism, materialism, Spencerian agnosticism, vitalism, imperialistic racialism, and industrial technology and science. It was a world of "disenchantment". Rationalism was the order of the day and human reason was regarded as the sole guide to the knowledge of the universe and as the guide of human conduct. The triumph of rationalism meant the decline of moral piety. The older religious and moral values were being relegated, even by their advocates to mystical and transcendental regions. The world of social and political relations was undergoing a phase of secularization and there was a decline in the intuitive and spiritual apprehension of things. The

moral values were retreating from international and national politics. The tremendous growth of economic and politicalism was exalting patriotic and imperialistic considerations. Hence a thinker like Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) condemned the whole edifice built up by economics and science. He found no place in it for the divine kingdom. He said: "Science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us, 'what shall we do and how shall we live'." Tolstoy strongly reacted against the assumptions of Darwinism, ecclesiasticism and contemporary science and art and he preached a return to the simple innocence of the teachings of the gospels.<sup>1</sup> In his interpretation of the trends and foundations of contemporary civilizations Gandhi was influenced by Tolstoy.

It was a chaotic world seized with the malady of violence and it perturbed the soul of Gandhi. Gandhi had seen three continents. He had a deep and personal experience of western civilization in some of its uglier aspects of racial barbarism and reckless exploitationist effrontery. Hence he became intensely hostile to political and economic imperialism. He lived long to be a witness to two great holocausts of the world wars. Hence the world which Gandhi saw was full of powerful and engulfing strains, excitements and crises. Armed centres of formidable military and political power were creating factors of trouble and areas of conflict. There were crises, conflicts and the cult of "preparedness" was pursued with relentless and remorseless energy. Peace was only an intermittent interlude between wars and crises. It was also an era of armed peace. There was an unstable equilibrium between opposing and contending imperialistic coalitions. Hence the situation demanded a fundamental synthesis and the practice of the gospel of social accord and amity. Gandhi felt that western

<sup>1</sup> Leo Tolstoy: *The Gospel in Brief, The Kingdom of God is Within You, The Kreutzer Sonata.*

materialism, commerce and science could not prescribe this synthesis and this harmony. There were some thinkers of the school of historical materialism like Marx, Engels, Kautsky and others who prescribed an economic revolution and a radical social reconstruction. Gandhi, to the contrary, felt that a meta-economic solution was needed. Like Ruskin and some of the Christian socialists Gandhi felt that commercial and economic activity had to be conducted not on the mere basis of technical rationality and formal efficiency calculated in terms of the reduction of costs but on that of moral justice and limitation of wants. Gandhi advocated a restriction of acquisition and accumulation. There were some liberal thinkers who prescribed a political and institutional solution. They pointed out that if an adequate institutional set up, for example a world parliament or a world system of republics, could be built up, humanity will have an era of freedom and progress. But Gandhi was not happy with a mere institutional formula either. He taught the absolutism of Ahimsa which has as its political goal the cultivation and realization of the unity of mankind and which implies the activation of the sentiments of mutual loving considerations, harmony, peace, moral autonomy and non-constrained trend towards accommodation. Gandhi thus advocated a metapolitical approach. He could not be content with a mere surface change in the external structure of the social organism. He believed in the moral purification of man to be achieved through suffering, non-covetousness and a spirit of loyalty to truth. Gandhi felt that humanity was passing through the crisis of a whole civilization and it could be cured only by a restoration of the moral vows of truth and non-violence. Gandhi said that behind the political crisis lay the crisis of civilization. Hence he wanted that India should not imitate the west.

Gandhi outlined his views on civilization in his book *Hind-Swarajya* which has become a classic. It incorporates the most systematic elucidation of Gandhian sociology. Therein he categorically states that the trou-



bles of India lie not in the political sphere but in the adoption of the incongruous civilization of the mechanical and materialistic western world. The depression that was spread on the Indian political scene in 1908 was due, according to Gandhi, to the decline of these spiritual values, which had been giving strength and stability to Indian civilization throughout the vicissitudes of its long historical evolution. Thus like Vivekananda and Aurobindo, Gandhi also in the *Hind-Swarajya* upholds the resuscitating power of religion in Indian history. Religion has been not a force for weakness and decline but it has provided vital roots to the structure of Indian civilization.

Gandhi was a merciless critic of the industrial, materialistic civilization of the west based on external glamour and pomp. His bitterness against western civilization is thoroughly revealed in the pages of the *Hind-Swarajya*. Later on, Gandhi never indulged in similar trenchant denunciations but he never withdrew any view or statement from that classic book and hence it may justifiably be considered that that work reflects his considered opinions. Gandhi's moral and spiritual approach to the problems of Indian civilization and his quest for a spiritual teleology in the world resulted in his bitter disillusionment of western civilization. He found that the civilization of the west was seized with schism and disruption because of the persistent spectre of violent conflict and imperialistic struggles. There were two meaningful factors responsible for his bitterness against western civilization. First, it must always be remembered that he was a lover of the beauty of innocence. He was a devout soul and was attached to simple feelings. He judged things by the criteria of simplicity, morality and ascetic severity and rigour. He could not withstand the growing formalization, mechanization, depersonalization and bureaucratization which have become the characteristics of modern large-scale economic and social enterprises. The increasing complexity of the modern world repelled him and like Rousseau and Tolstoy he longed for the

simple agrarian life. He loved the simple community-oriented interpersonal relations which are possible in the life of an ashrama and a village. He admonished the students of the Gujrat Vidyapitha to cultivate true "rural-mindedness."<sup>1</sup> Hence his reaction against the ostentatiousness and to some extent the crudities, cruelties and brutalities of modern civilization had a Rousseauic element. Gandhi's feelings of unfriendly antagonism to western civilization were confirmed by the hypocrisy, the insincerity, the policies of discrimination and persecution and even inhumanity of the ruling white group in South Africa. The rampant racialism of that country repelled the sensitive soul of Gandhi. He even charges General Smuts with being a liar and a deceiver in his book *Satyagraha in South Africa*. In the bitterness of his disappointments and protests Gandhi regarded western civilization as tantamount to organized barbaric mechanical magnificence whose pernicious branches and configurations had to be prevented from corroding the sacred land of Hindustan. It should be remembered that Gandhi wrote his famous indictment of western civilization when he was returning to South Africa in a ship, after the failure in its mission of the Indian delegation to London in 1908. The *Hind-Swarajya* became the philosophical and sociological foundation of the Satyagraha movement from 1908 to 1914. It does contain a note of ridicule of the western civilization. The situational context amidst which this book was written explains its rather pungent remarks against western materialism.

Secondly, Gandhi was inspired by a section of western thinkers who had been vigorously critical of some of the dominant aspects of the west. His spirit had more kinship with Plato than with Aristotle. He had more in common with Rousseau than with Diderot and Voltaire. Thoreau, Ruskin, Tolstoy and Edward Carpenter provided him considerable additional intellectual evidence

for his views born out of the experiences he had encountered. Gandhi's approach to civilization was moral and philosophical rather than sociological and scientific.

Being a champion of the ethical culture manifested in his devotion to truth and non-violence Gandhi was opposed to the worship of wealth, political power and scientific reason in the western civilization. He stated that there were destructive tendencies immanent in the very framework and organization of western civilization. It betokened the age of Satan, or the *Kali Yuga*<sup>1</sup> of the Hindu social terminology. Plato and Seneca had also visualized the degeneration of civilization as compared to the previous Golden Age. Gandhi was hostile to modern civilization because it amassed physical and material comforts but it did not provide real courage and strength which come from an unshakable belief in God. He was opposed to the proposals of female emancipation which is a characteristic of modern civilization because it leads to the destruction of the stability of home life. He had the greatest respect, however, for the female sex. The woman symbolized to him the aspect of mother with the highest capacity for suffering. The woman was to be a colleague and comrade rather than a competitor. Gandhi called modern civilization to be a "monster"<sup>2</sup> which was spreading its tentacles in India and was aiming to spoil, ruin and demolish the religious foundations of Indian culture. He was not blind to some of the myths and superstitions gathering and clustering in the name of religion but he felt that even these religious myths were better than the superstitions of people engrossed in mundane considerations. He castigated modern civilization as a "*Chandal Civilization*"<sup>3</sup> and fulminated against its Indian advocates as traitors and sinners.<sup>4</sup> Hence it is clear that Gandhi's revolt against

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *Hind-Swarajya* (Hindi edition, Sasta Sahitya Mandal, 1939) pp. 46-47

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 56

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 104

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105

the west as formulated in the *Hind-Swarajya* is much more trenchant than that of Vivekananda and Aurobindo. It is true that in later years Gandhi moderated the tone of his strictness. But in the *Hind-Swarajya* the only remedy according to Gandhi was "to drive out" western civilization. Gandhi's indictment of the British rule is also relevant to his general sociology of civilization because according to him the political sway of Great Britain was only an aspect of the domination of western civilization. He indicted British imperialism for the widespread degeneration that it initiated and perpetuated in the country. He felt that the British rule has made India "poorer in wealth, in manliness, in godliness and in her sons' power to defend themselves". It is clear that in Gandhi there is a moral revolt against the deprivation of strength and enervation produced as an effect of British imperialism. He is a prophet of fearlessness and strength.

As an ethical idealist Gandhi stressed the purification of character. He had no affection for a mere bookish education. He wanted an education that would train the boys and girls to face the struggles of life. He was an advocate of national education in the twenties and later on, in the thirties, of Basic education. His critique of western education in India is related to his sociology of civilization. Western education is condemned by Gandhi because it does not lead to the growth of character. It has emasculated the Indian youth and made them dependents of an imperialistic system. In spite of its exaggerated claims for having provided political education to India it has not produced men of the type of Nanak, Dayananda and Samkara. It generates hypocrisy and aggravates the demands of the passions. Modern civilization has resulted in the oppression of Indians and in general has been responsible for India's economic slavery. English education, Gandhi states in the *Hind-Swarajya*, had produced a class

<sup>1</sup> *Hind-Swarajya*, p. 177

of lawyers who support the legal and political institutional apparatus of an alien imperialism for the sake of their own narrow purposes.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi gives only limited credit to the lawyers for the success of the Indian National Congress movement.

Gandhi believed in Nature Cure and he had recommended the writings of Kuhne, Just and Kneip. He sincerely believed in the view: "Disease is impossible where there is purity of thought."<sup>2</sup> He condemned the practice of modern western medicine. Like Plato he appears as a critic of the doctors and the medical profession.<sup>3</sup> There is no ethical inclination and disposition behind this calling which is dictated merely by sordid instinct of possession. It encourages men in intemperate living because rich people are sure to obtain some medical remedy. Gandhi once called medicine "the concentrated essence of black magic". It prevents the growth of temperate living. Modern medicine stands rejected because it contains fat of animals and also wine. Gandhi favoured naturopathy including "earth cure". In the bitterness of his protest Gandhi in the *Hind-Swarajya* considers the quack Vaidya to be better than the modern doctor but he would not uphold this view in his later writings.<sup>4</sup> It is undoubted that there is gross overstatement in Gandhi's protests against the medical profession. The career of a theologian-musician-philosopher-doctor like Dr. Albert Schweitzer would definitely tend to stress the moral foundations of the medical profession. But behind Gandhi's exaggerated bitterness lay the suspicion that modern medicine was only an outcome of the multiplying phases and aspects of the western civilization which was trying to stifle, suffocate and deaden the old Indian culture. At the same time that Gandhi wrote the *Hind-Swarajya* he also wrote and

<sup>1</sup> *Hind-Swarajya*, pp. 87-90

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, June 9, 1946

<sup>3</sup> *Hind-Swarajya*, pp 95-99

<sup>4</sup> For a mild criticism of Ayurveda see *Young India*, June 11, 1925

published a Gujarati translation of Plato's *Apology* and I have a strong feeling that in those days he might have been influenced by Plato's ideas and specially his criticisms against doctors and lawyers. -- Plato in his *Republic* had advocated that every man should be his own lawyer and doctor. He said that a return should be made to the days of Aesclepius and Homer when the practice of medicine was very simple, the nursing of disease having begun only with Herodicus. Gandhi believed that "the spread of *Ramanama* and pure living are the best and cheapest preventives of disease." All people may not agree with Gandhi's faith in *Ramanama* as an infallible remedy but all people will find great wisdom in his statement that "a balanced diet eaten in accordance with needs gives one freedom from disease."

(d) *Reflections on Gandhi's Theory of Civilization.* In his later writings Gandhi adopted the liberal and humanist concept of cultural synthesis and wanted that Indians should have an open and receptive mind ready to work out a synthesis between the best traditions of the east and west. But in his earlier writings, especially in the *Hind-Swarajya*, Gandhi shows his passionate attachment to the glories of Indian culture. Gandhi's hostility against western civilization and his exaltation of the stature and canons of Indian civilization is somewhat in line with the general drift and direction of the Indian revivalistic movement, some of whose exponents and leaders have been Dayananda, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Tilak, Aurobindo and Ramatirtha. Gandhi believed that the ancient land of Hindustan had to reveal the message of non-violence to a gloomy and hungering world. Indian revivalism is somewhat comparable to the Russian Slavophil movement which grew against the trend of the party of westernizers in Russia. Gandhi stated that the salvation of India lay in raising up the Indian village population. He never relished the superfluities and luxuries of civilization and he always loved the simple agrarian life of innocence. It is apparent that Gandhi's critique of western civilization

is much more deep-seated and fundamental than that of Marx. Marx was a critic of industrial capitalism and its several contradictions, Gandhi stood as an opponent of the entire tradition of *Machtspolitik*. As a believer in spiritual idealism and moral autonomy he could not tolerate the extension, glorification and perpetuation of force. He championed moral will in place of political coercion. He offered a spiritual interpretation of history and his profound faith in the eventual triumph of the law of Ahimsa set him apart totally from the Malthus-Darwin-Nietzsche-Kidd school of politics. Mahatma Gandhi quoted Wallace in support of his critique of modern civilization.<sup>1</sup> His opposition was not confined only to the European civilization as built up during the epoch of the Enlightenment and industrial revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but it extended to the basic assumptions of a socio-economic system having its roots in materialistic rationalism, power politics and economic nationalism. As a humanitarian Gandhi wanted the repudiation of the concept of the God-state which preaches the supremacy of force and violence. He taught cooperation and mutual confidence.

Gandhi was a humanitarian and an ethical universalist and hence he pleaded for a generous and tolerant attitude to the religions and cultures of the world. But although a critic of western mechanistic, materialistic and externalistic civilization, Gandhi pleaded for a cultural synthesis based on eastern and western religious world-views. Gandhi believed in cultural pluralism. He repudiated the concepts of cultural isolationism and cultural superiority. He advocated the building of a "new culture" based on the traditions of the past and also enriched by later experience. In place of cultural exclusiveness Gandhi stood for "a beautiful blend of cultures".<sup>2</sup> It will assure

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<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *To the Students* (Ahmedabad, 1949), pp. 31-32

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, November 2, 1947

to each culture its due and proper place. He wrote: "I claim to represent all the cultures, for my religion, whatever it may be called, demands the fulfilment of all cultures." The Gandhian theory of cultural synthesis and reconciliation was strengthened by his convictions that the essential and fundamental ethic was the same in all the great religious systems. The concept of cultural pluralism stressed by Gandhi can alone be the foundation of a stable world order. Any claim of the superiority of one's own culture is danger to world peace.

As an ethical universalist and an exponent of cosmopolitanism, Gandhi was genuinely concerned with the ever-recurring threats to peace in the modern civilization. Gandhi is justified in raising the question of the reconciliability of peace and a technological civilization. Peace or *tranquillitas* is always essential and more so when the atomic age has threatened the world with chances of international suicide. Peace is an attitude of social accommodation and limitations of one's wants and this postulates a religious view of things which, there is a danger, the endless morass of mechanical growth may endanger. Gandhi reasserts the sanctity of the moral and spiritual norms against the portentous and ominous advance of weapons of destruction brought by technology. But nevertheless Gandhi becomes unrealistic and unhistorical when he states that the rejection of technological civilization in old India was due to a conscious decision of the seers, founders and patriarchs of Indian culture. The growth of technological civilization is the end-product of a diverse set of social, economic and political and environmental forces and influences and it cannot be interpreted in the rather too simple terms of the exercise of the deliberation of will, this way or that, by the leaders and thinkers in a concrete context. The absence of an independently created scientific and industrial civilization in Asia cannot be



regarded as a social result of the religious ethic of transcendence advocated by the exponents of eastern cultures, because at several periods in its history a type of world-and-life-negating asceticism has also been prevalent even in the west. There are transcendentalistic trends in Plato, Dante, Eckhart and Robert Blake. However to the credit of Gandhi it must be said that he has raised a healthy voice of objection and disapproval against the trend toward ever-growing mechanization, in terms of moral and spiritual values, and has thereby made significant the discussion of the problem of formal mechanical rationality versus the ideals of peace, freedom and moral culture. He pleads for the discussion at social, political and economic problems in a more comprehensive context. He does exaggerate his critical and at times bitterly severe remarks against machines especially in the *Hind-Swarajya* but they have rendered an intellectual service in focussing attention on the fundamental problems of civilization, machine and ethics. Gandhi accepted the supremacy of the canons of truth and non-violence for the stability of civilizations. Against the dominance of machines and technics Gandhi stands for the minimization of social and political force and for an inclusive cultural synthesis and moral universalism.

## **2. The Social Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi**

Gandhi was not only vitally influenced by the Hindu philosophy of renunciation and detachment, he also accepted the social philosophy of varna. A really equalitarian society based on active mutual love and harmony was the goal of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi accepted the sociology of the varnashrama but he refused to acknowledge any sense of distance and superiority between the varnas. From his earlier days Gandhi had accepted the sociology of varnashrama. According to him the Hindu sociology of varna eliminated unworthy competition, was natural to man in his regenerate and civilized state and although determined by birth could

be retained only by the willing and spontaneous performance of the obligations entailed by it. He thought of it as a functional organization of society oriented to the realization of the harmony of the community without there being any sense of constraint and domination from the higher sections. He wrote: "The spirit behind caste is not one of arrogant superiority; it is the classification of different systems of self-culture. It is the best possible adjustment of social stability and progress. Just as the spirit of the family is inclusive of those who love each other and are wedded to each other by ties of blood and relation, caste also tries to include families of a particular way of purity of life (not standard of life, meaning by this term, economic standard of life). Only it does not leave the decision, whether a particular family belongs to a particular type, to the idiosyncracies or interested judgment of a few individuals."<sup>1</sup> He was candid enough, however, to recognize the grave social evils with which this system had become encumbered in the course of its evolution. He condemned in unmeasured terms the social evils and perverse exploitation practised in the name of caste superiority. He pleaded for the restoration of the essential principle on which the original varna was based—the elimination of competition and the realization of the common good in proportion to one's psychological attainments and faculties—*guna*, *karma* and *swabhava*. Gandhi was an exponent of the supremacy of the guiding inner norms. He was not satisfied with the external appearance only. But although a believer in varna, Gandhi was emphatic in stating that it conferred no privilege and resulted in no social subordination. He regarded the Hindu social structure based on varna to be true socialism. He wrote: "It is against the genius of Hinduism to arrogate to oneself a higher status or assign others to a lower. All are born to serve God's creation, the Brahman with his knowledge, the Kshatriya with his power of protection, the Vaishya

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<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, December 29, 1920

with his commercial ability, the Shudra with his bodily labour. This does not mean that a Brahman is absolved from bodily labour, but it does mean that he is predominantly a man of knowledge and fitted by training and heredity to impart it to others. There is nothing again to prevent a Shudra from acquiring all the knowledge he wishes. Only he will best serve with his body and need not envy others their special qualities for service. A Brahman who claims superiority by right of knowledge falls and has no knowledge. And so with the others who pride themselves upon their special qualities. Varnashrama is self-restraint and conservation of economy and energy."

The defence of the varnashrama is not a conservative apology for traditional social system. Gandhi took an evolutionary approach to history although in some of his social and political technics he was a moral revolutionary. It is impossible to go against the laws of one's being. Neither an individual nor a society could take a revolutionary leap and overturn the fundamental pattern of its action. Gandhi was a reformer through and through but he did not like to give a rough handling to social patterns for the sheer delight of novelty and social experimentation. His defence, in his earlier writings, of the sociological assumptions of the varna has to be seen in a historical perspective. He had written: "The vast organization of caste answered not only to the religious wants of the community but it answered to its political needs. The villagers managed their internal affairs through the caste system, and through it they dealt with any oppression from the ruling power or powers. It is not possible to deny of a nation that was capable of producing from the caste system its wonderful power of organization." He wanted to demonstrate the rationality of some social institutions which had been almost immanent in the historical evolution of the country. He accepted that the varnashrama recognized the significance of social purposes and of functional specialization. Hence like Burke, Bonald and DeMaistre, Gandhi

seemed to find meaning in the abiding persistence of historical traditions.

There are indications that towards the end of his life he said that in his ideal scheme of *Ramrajya* there would be no place for a differential structure based on castes and classes. He began to approve and bless inter-caste marriages. Perhaps it is correct to state that Gandhi (at least towards the end of his life) accepted the concept of an undifferentiated social structure. It appears that with the passage of time Gandhi's historicist conservatism slightly yielded place to some kind of radical social equalitarianism.

### **3. Gandhi's Ideals of Communal Unity**

Mahatma Gandhi was a protagonist of the concept of common good. As a religious man he believed in the spiritual unity and equality of mankind. He never made distinctions among people on racial, religious and caste grounds. His Satyagraha in South Africa was launched to redeem the civic rights of the Indian Community amongst whom the Moslems constituted a majority. His sole loyalty was to the concept of truth. He passionately believed in Hindu-Moslem unity on moral grounds. Gandhi supported the Khilafat movement because it offered "an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muslims as would not arise in a hundred years". He deeply felt that the Khilafat movement was initiated on the grounds of restoring justice. It is true that Hindu-Moslem unity if realized would have hastened the process of the achievement of political independence and would have negated the cry for the partition of the country. In 1920 Gandhi had emphasized Hindu-Moslem unity as a precondition for Swaraj. Even in 1942 he had said that Hindus and Moslems should unite on the issue of fighting for freedom. But Gandhi did not advocate Hindu-Moslem unity mainly for social and political reasons. It had spiritual roots. In the eyes of God all men are equally his children. Gandhi as a man of God was deeply anguished at the growing communal schism and tensions in the country.

The solution that Gandhi provided for the Hindu-Moslem problem was twofold. First, a sincere and devout understanding of the fundamental moral bases of the two religions was essential. He had studied the Koran. He believed that communal struggles are rooted in an insufficient understanding of the tenets of the two religions and cultures. He was encouraged to find that in moments of despair and confusion Mohammed also fasted and prayed. Gandhi admired the patriarchal simplicity of the early Caliphs of Islam. In 1924 Gandhi wrote: "When the west was sunk in darkness a bright star rose in the eastern firmament and gave light and comfort to a groaning world. Islam is not a false religion. Let Hindus study it reverently, and they will love it even as I do." Mohammed Ali from the presidential chair of the Indian National Congress at Coconada testified to the elevation and loftiness of Gandhi's character and called him as "Our generalissimo". Gandhi's concept of equal regard for all religions brought him the lasting affection and esteem of men like Hakim Azmal Khan, Abbas Tyebji, M. A. Ansari and Abdul Ghafar Khan. In South Africa Dada Abdullah greatly helped him in his public activities. It is true that since the decline of the Khilafat movement and the failure of Non-cooperation, communal struggles intensified in the country but in spite of all opposition and ridicule sometimes from both of the major communities Gandhi did not lose faith in his thesis that religion does not sanction violence. He sincerely hoped that a humble and devout study of the Koran would convince even the Moslem fanatics that the essential moral and religious values and norms inculcated by Islam are the same as in all other religions. He was not tired of repeating that Islam meant peace. It had in the past liberal traditions. Gandhi accepted that all the religious scriptures of the world should be studied in a spirit of genuine humility and for the sake of illumination. He disclaimed the use of religious scriptures as armoury for pugnaeous disquisitions and sectarian

animosities. He preached, instead, a process of "heart-unity".

The second basic point in Gandhi's approach to the communal problem was that he pleaded for generosity on the part of the majority community. He wrote in 1924: "The key to the situation lies with the Hindus. We must shed timidity or cowardice. We must be brave enough to trust, and all will be well." He had not much patience with the attitude of bargaining. He did not subscribe to the mathematics of the exact allocation of seats and shares in strict proportion to the numbers of the members of the communities. He wanted an attitude of love and generosity to be cultivated. He wrote: "I can disarm opposition only by being generous. Justice without generosity may easily become Shylock's justice."<sup>1</sup> He felt that being in a majority imposes some obligations. The majority had to inspire the minorities with confidence in their *bona fides*. They had to adopt an attitude of self-sacrifice. Reciprocity is good, and due justice is a worthy legal concept. Hence in cases of communal tension Gandhi advocated obligatory arbitration. But Gandhi, as a man of religious faith, wanted to go beyond reciprocity and legal justice. He wanted that the Hindus should embrace the Moslems as their own kith and kin. In place of the political solution of the communal problem on the basis of bargaining and legal justice Gandhi sponsored an attitude of widest tolerance, sincere love and generosity. It needs no elaboration to say that the Gandhian attitude if followed would strengthen the basis of the Indian democracy.

To the end of his life Mahatma Gandhi refused to accept the "Two Nation" theory. He was absolutely unreconciled to the "vivisection" of India. Gandhi wrote: "The Two Nation theory is an untruth. The vast majority of Muslims of India are converts to Islam or are descendant of converts. They did not become a

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, January 27, 1940

separate nation as soon as they became converts.”<sup>1</sup> Gandhi rightly pointed out that many of the external criteria of life were common to the Hindus and Moslems. But he was frank enough to acknowledge that Nationalism is a psychological phenomenon and so he said: “If the vast majority of Indian Moslems feel that they are not one nation with their Hindu and other brethren, who will be able to resist them?”<sup>2</sup> The true feelings of eight crores of Moslems could be found not by arbitration but only by some kind of referendum.

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, April 6, 1940

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, March 30, 1940

## CHAPTER VI

# THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SATYAGRAHA

### 1. Foundations of Satyagraha

(a) *The Origins of Satyagraha.* The Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha is a natural outcome from the supreme concept of truth. It is *agraha* or moral pressure for the sake of truth. If truth is the ultimate reality, then it is imperative for a votary of it to resist all encroachments against it. It was the imperative duty of the Satyagrahi to make endless endeavours for the realization of truth through non-violence. Jesus Christ and Harischandra are examples of the practice of this law of pure suffering. Prahlada is another great example of a perfect Satyagrahi. The ideal should not be lowered as a concession to one's weakness. A votary of God which is the highest truth and the highest reality must be utterly selfless and gentle. He should have an unconquerable determination to fight for the supremacy of spiritual and moral values. Thus alone can he vindicate his sense of ethical devotion and loyalty to truth. Gandhi had been immensely influenced by the story of King Harischandra enshrined in Indian legends. Harischandra's absolute and perfect loyalty to truth was accepted by Gandhi as the vindication of a great norm. Satyagraha is an attempt at self-purification. It signifies a genuine, intense and sincere quest for truth which is God. It means an assertion of the power of the human soul against political and economic domination. Satyagraha is the vindication of the glory of the human conscience. Conscience does not stand for abstract inwardness or withdrawal from the world. Conscience



reinforces the battle for the victory of social good. Sa yagraha is based on an invincible belief in the ultimate triumph of divine justice and right.

It is true that Gandhi had helped the British empire on different occasions because he felt that there was the possibility of being governed least in it but nonetheless once he was convinced that the imperial system was based on injustice, he utilized the science of Satyagraha which he had developed in South Africa. The sociology of Satyagraha is the theory and practice of resistance. Gandhi had inherited the spirit of resistance. His father Karamchand Gandhi *alias* Kaba Gandhi, the Dewan of Porbandar, had resisted the whim of the assistant political agent in Rajkot when the latter spoke insultingly of the ruler of Rajkot. The study of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* (1849) confirmed his own instinctive sentiments of reaction against oppression. But the movement of resistance to the political authority in South Africa was well advanced before Gandhi got a copy of Thoreau's book. He had a fine sensitive soul which found many situations in the contemporary social and political structure of the world which appeared confusing, perplexing and baffling. Hence Gandhi stood up against these situations.

The concept of Satyagraha or spiritual resistance is based on the old Hindu tradition of the victorious power of *tapasya* or penances and it is not correct to interpret it in terms of the Freudian concept of "masochism" as some western interpreters of Gandhism have done.<sup>1</sup> Discussing the origins of Satyagraha with Doke Gandhi said: "I remember," he said, 'how one verse of a Gujarati poem, which, as a child, I learned at school, clung to me. In substance it was this :—

'If a man gives you a drink of water and you give  
him a drink in return, that is nothing;

Real beauty consists in doing good against evil.'

<sup>1</sup> John Gunther: *Inside Asia* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1939), pp. 392, 404

As a child, this verse had a powerful influence over me, and I tried to carry it into practice. Then came the 'Sermon on the Mount'.

'But,' said I, 'surely the *Bhagavad Gita* came first ?'

'No,' he replied, 'of course I knew the *Bhagavad Gita* in Sanskrit tolerably well, but I had not made its teaching in that particular a study. It was the New Testament which really awakened me to the rightness and value of Passive Resistance. When I read in the 'Sermon on the Mount' such passages as 'Resist not him that is evil but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also,' and 'Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven,' I was simply overjoyed, and found my own opinion confirmed where I least expected it. The *Bhagavad Gita* deepened the impression, and Tolstoy's 'The Kingdom of God is Within You' gave it permanent form.'"<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi's concept of spiritual resistance was not a psychological compensation for his own physical frailty but proceeded from his deep belief in the holiness, purity and sanctity of the human spirit which can never permanently brook any injustice. Like Thoreau he believed that we should be men first and subjects afterwards. Because he was an advocate of truth and right he was opposed to force and instructed people to rely on moral will. Gandhi held that the will of the people and not political force should provide the justification of political structures. His firm faith in the supremacy of the spirit turned him into a resister against barbarity and injustice. It is significant that he regarded Socrates as the classic example of a non-violent resister.

(b) *Thoreau and Gandhi*. Mahatma Gandhi referred

<sup>1</sup> Joseph J. Doke: *M. K. Gandhi* (London, 1909). Rufus M. Jones has referred to St. Francis, James Nayler (17th Century), John Woolman (18th century Quaker) and William Law (18th century English mystic) as exponents of 'soul-force'.

to the teachings of Henry David Thoreau<sup>1</sup> (1817-1862). Thoreau of Concord wrote his anti-governmental treatise *Civil Disobedience* at the age of thirtytwo. He was a rebel and he challenged the foundations of the Community in the name of reason and wisdom. According to Thoreau: "A wise man will only be useful as a man, and will not submit to be 'clay' . . ." He was a prophet of liberty. He wrote: "Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then?" In an article in the *Young India* (July 7, 1920), Gandhi writes: "Men like Thoreau brought about the abolition of slavery by their personal examples. Says Thoreau, 'I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name,—if ten honest men only—aye, if one honest man, in this State of Massachusetts ceasing to hold slaves were actually to withdraw from this co-partnership and be locked up in the country gaol, therefore, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be, what is once well done is done for ever.' Again he says, 'I have contemplated the imprisonment of the offender rather than seizure of his goods—though both will serve the same purpose, because they who assert the purest right and consequently are most dangerous to a corrupt State, commonly have not spent much time in accumulating property.' "

But Gandhi stated that Thoreau was not a complete champion of non-violence. Probably Thoreau limited his breach of governmental laws to the revenue law. He refused to pay taxes but the dynamics of Satyagraha as formulated by Gandhi are broader and more universally applicable. From the family to the village, to the corporation and to the state—wheresoever one meets with injustice and untruth—one can resort to Satyagraha. In his *Autobiography* Mahatma Gandhi has referred to some sweet experiences of Satyagraha practised in his

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *Satyagraha*, pp. 3, 115

own family life.<sup>1</sup> He said that the alphabet of Ahimsa is learnt in the domestic school and can be extended to national and even international levels. Non-violent Satyagraha is a most potent weapon and it "enables a child, a woman or even a decrepit old man to resist the mightiest government successfully." During the various battles and wars after the thirties of the present century Gandhi felt that the Abyssinians, the Spaniards, the Czechs, the Chinese and the Poles could have offered non-violent resistance against the aggressors. Thus the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha is conceived at a more comprehensive level than the civil disobedience of Thoreau. Hence sometimes Gandhi used the concept "civil resistance" to differentiate his theory from that of the concept of "civil disobedience" as popularized by Thoreau. Resistance is a more dynamic and effective process of assertion of the will than disobedience. Both Gandhi and Thoreau are agreed in thinking that an unjust law should be broken. Thoreau wrote: ". . . if (injustice) is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine (of government)."<sup>3</sup>

(c) *Differences between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance.* Sometimes the Gandhian Satyagraha is confused with the passive resistance advocated by the Quakers. Passive Resistance includes the movement of the suffragettes and the resistance of the Non-conformists. But there are vital differences between passive resistance

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography* of M. K. Gandhi, Part IV, Chapter 19

<sup>2</sup> In an article in the *Young India*, July 19, 1928, Gandhi, however, gave a limited application to the term 'civil resistance'. He wrote: "The *civil resistance* does not mean even *civil disobedience* of the laws and rules promulgated by constituted authority. It simply means non-payment of a portion of a tax which former, the aggrieved ryots contend, has been improperly and unjustly imposed on them."

<sup>3</sup> H. D. Thoreau: *Civil Disobedience*, p. 95

and Satyagraha. To begin with, Satyagraha is a dynamic force because it contemplates action in resistance of injustice. Passive resistance may be compatible with internal violence towards the enemy. Satyagraha stresses continuous cleansing of the mind. It emphasizes even inner purity. Hence Gandhi differentiated his non-violence from Sinn Feinism because he would not sanction violence in his technics in any form. Passive resistance is mainly contemplated at a political level. Satyagraha can be practised at all levels—domestic, social and political. In 1946 Gandhi advocated the organization of Satyagraha brigades in every village and in every block of buildings in cities to avert communal strife. Satyagraha goes beyond passive resistance in the stress on a spiritual and moral teleology because the final source of hope and consolation for the Satyagrahi is God. Hence Gandhi wrote: "Satyagraha differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form."<sup>1</sup>

(d) *Differences between Satyagraha and Passive Resistance of the Swadeshi Period.* During the Swadeshi movement Tilak and the extremist school also advocated passive resistance. There were two differences between the Gandhian Satyagraha and the technics of the New Party in the Swadeshi period. First, the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha is far more comprehensive than passive resistance as advocated in India in 1906-1908. The passive resistance of 1906-1908 at the time of the antipartition agitation was a political technic of limited application. Sometimes it meant only Swadeshi and boycott while sometimes by Aurobindo in his articles on "The Doctrine of Passive Resistance" it was extended to cover even disobedience of unjust laws and decrees.

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi's statement to the Hunter Committee,

Secondly, Tilak and Aurobindo would not condemn violence on moral grounds. They themselves were not revolutionists but nevertheless they would not condemn the revolutionists on moral grounds although they could criticize them on grounds of expediency. But Gandhi accepted the absolutism of Ahimsa.

(e) *Theory of Satyagraha.* Satyagraha means the exercise of the purest soul force against all injustice, oppression and exploitation. Literally it signifies "Truth pressure". It denotes the operation of the soul or spirit. Suffering and trust are attributes of soul-force. As an advocate of the ineradicable and inalienable right of resistance against any oppressive system Gandhi upheld the conception of the sanctity of positive love. Like Tulsidas, Gandhi regarded love or kindness as the basis of Dharma. According to Gandhi the fighter for the cause of justice should create within himself a constellation of feelings for collective welfare, altruism and heroic transforming love. Satyagraha is inconsistent with jealousy towards or hatred of the opponent. The opponent has to be converted and not coerced. Soul-force according to Gandhi is the force of love and it is based on the conception that genuine Swaraj is the achievement of the mind. The active non-violent resistance of the "heroic meek" makes an immediate appeal to the heart. It wants not to endanger the opponent but to overwhelm him by the overflowing power of innocence. Satyagraha does not flourish on the basis of malice, ill-feeling and anger but is the application of the gentle process of conversion by love. The concentration of the energy of love can be irresistible. This Satyagraha or protracted effort at conversion can be applied both against the government and against the social czars and leaders of orthodoxy. The Gandhian theory of Satyagraha is a philosophy of life and politics and it contemplates stupendous mass action for paralysing the total structure of a despotic government. But the basis of this mass movement is individual suffering. It is true that the sacrifice of one evokes sympathetic

feelings in others and thus big movements are produced. But the success of Satyagraha depends on individual discipline. In the armed struggles the stress is on collective attack and defence. But in a Satyagraha struggle the individual effort at self-suffering and conversion of the heart of the oppressor is the supreme element. The stress on individuality is far stronger in Gandhi than in Comte. He was a prophet of the inner conscience. This conscience is not subjective fancy or imagination but represents the sanctuary of the spirit. While Gandhi was a prophet of active prolonged non-violent resistance to all forms of tyranny and domination, Comte stressed the aspects of conformity and social order.

Satyagraha is an inherent birth right of a person.<sup>1</sup> Since Gandhi regards Satyagraha as a right inherent in the human being hence it is evident that he would not consider it as a right arising from the establishment of the social and political relations. He would regard Satyagraha as an analienable right which may be considered as a right antecedent to the state. Gandhi was absolutely devoted to God and he might regard Satyagraha as a moral prerogative of the human being. It is not merely a sacred right but it can also be a sacred duty. If the government does not represent the will of the people and if it begins to support dishonesty and terrorism then it should be disobeyed.

A Satyagrahi who wants to vindicate his right should be prepared to bear all kinds of suffering. Self-suffering replaces retaliation as the technic of the redemption of right. If Hampden and Wat Taylor would not have been able to bear suffering they could not raise the standard of revolts.<sup>2</sup> The aspirant after the vindication of truth undergoes all types of suffering for its sake. Real, organic non-violence is a mighty force and can be used against the most powerful government.

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, January 5, 1922

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, July 19, 1920

Gandhi wrote in an article: "Suffering is the mark of the human tribe. It is an eternal law. The mother suffers so that her child may live. Life comes out of death. No country has ever risen without being purified through the fire of suffering. . . . It is impossible to do away with the law of suffering which is the one indispensable condition of our being. Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone. . . . the purer the suffering, the greater is the progress."<sup>1</sup> Ahimsa for Gandhi meant infinite love and this in its turn meant infinite capacity for suffering. "Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. . . . The Rishis who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence were greater genises than Newton, greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught a weary world that salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence. . . . The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit . . . . I want India to practise non-violence, being conscious of her strength and power. I want India to recognize that she has a soul that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world." Hence the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha is based on the acceptance of the powerful and dynamic concept of suffering. Suffering serves three purposes. It purifies the sufferers. It intensifies favourable public opinion. It makes a direct appeal to the soul of the oppressor. The deliberate acceptance of suffering for a great cause not only purifies and ennobles the sufferer but it creates a powerful situation of invincible potency whose dynamic effect

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, August 11, 1920

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, April 6, 1921



almost physically compels the oppressor to yield to the demands of truth and justice. The 'voluntary acceptance of suffering does make an appeal to the implicit moral sense of the oppressor. Its intensity would show the hollowness of the moral foundations of the antagonist's position and it would solicit the sympathy of the vast number of people who may not be immediately involved in the situation.

## 2. Technics of Satyagraha

There are different technics of Satyagraha. Fasting can be one form of Satyagraha but it has to be applied only against those who are bound by ties of close personal affection, or are responsive to moral persuasion.<sup>1</sup> The several fasts that Gandhi undertook to protest against different abuses were dictated by his inner light or "the candle of moral reason". In South Africa he fasted only for the purposes of self-purification but his famous fasts undertaken in India in 1924, 1932, 1933 and 1943 had also social and political objectives.<sup>2</sup> His fasts in Calcutta in August 1917 and in Delhi in January 1948 were undertaken for the purpose of effecting communal unity and concord. In terms of historical experience it can be said that these fasts had purifying social and political influences. But Gandhi was categorical in his view that fasting should be used as the last resort when all other technics have been explored but have proved wanting. It has to be resorted to only when absolutely necessary. There is no room for imitation in fasts. Ridiculous fasts have to be avoided at all costs. Only he who has inner strength should take recourse to it and should take to it as a matter of doing his duty and should not be only

<sup>1</sup> According to Jan Christian Smuts the technic of persuasion by self-starvation becomes effective by arousing the emotions of fear, shame, repentance, sympathy and humanity.

<sup>2</sup> In 1924 Gandhi undertook a fast of twenty-one days to bring about Hindu-Moslem unity. In 1932 he began a "Fast Unto Death" to undo Ramsay MacDonald's Communal Award. In 1933 he undertook a fast of twenty one days for purification. He also fasted in 1939—what he called "the ill-fated Rajkot fast",

thinking of the results. It should be undertaken at an irrepressible inner call to vindicate denied justice. As the author of Satyagraha Gandhi laid it down that those who wanted to undertake fasts should seek his permission in writing. Some people criticized the technic of fasting as coercive. Gandhi, however, considered fasting unto death as an integral part of Satyagraha program and as the greatest and most effective weapon in its armoury.

Voluntary migration can be another form of Satyagraha. "Tyranny is a kind of plague and when it is likely to make us angry or weak it is wisdom to leave the scene of such temptation." Gandhi even supported Hijrat. The *Evodus* refers to the planned flight of the Israelites. In Russia there was the flight of the Doukhobours who were non-violent.<sup>1</sup> *Hartal* or peaceful stoppage of work is another form of Satyagraha. Peaceful picketing is a valid and useful form of Satyagraha. Its legitimacy was accepted even by the Gandhi, Irwin Pact of March 4, 1931. Gandhi would not consider the 'scorched earth' policy to be a form of Satyagraha. Gandhi also ruled out underground activities even though entirely innocent as a part of legitimate fight for freedom based on truth and non-violence.<sup>2</sup>

There are other technics of Satyagraha. Non-cooperation with the evil-doer is a mild form but can be immensely potent a technic when undertaken on a mass scale. The most spectacular example of non-cooperation was the movement of 1920-1922 in India aimed to redress the wrongs of the Khilafat and the Punjab massacres and for the attainment of Swaraj. Gandhi had outlined this program in a statement issued on

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, January 6, 1940

<sup>2</sup> Press Statement, July 28, 1914. According to an interview to the Associated Press representative a "general strike" was not outside his contemplation for ending the rule of the British. It may be pointed out that the dramatic concept of the general strike has been popularized by the French Syndicalists like G. Sorel and others.

March 10, 1920. The policy of non-cooperation was approved by the special session of the Indian National Congress held in September 1920 in Calcutta by 1886 votes against 884. The items of the program were as follows :—

“(a) surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in Local Bodies;

(b) refusal to attend Government levees, durbars, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials, or in their honour;

(c) gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and, in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in the various Provinces;

(d) gradual boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants and the establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes;

(e) refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia;

(f) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed Councils, and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election;

(g) boycott of foreign goods.”

The Non-cooperation Movement was intensified in 1921 but was suspended in 1922. It was a phenomenal manifestation of mass awakening and brought about a revival of Indian manhood. It was a great movement for the restoration of lost liberties and Sir George Lloyd admitted that it had come within an inch of success. Rabindranath Tagore had criticized non-cooperation as being asethetical to the historical ideal of synthetic universalism of which India had been the spokesman for centuries. But Gandhi's argument was more realistic and pungent. He rightly pleaded that cooperation

postulated equality. Cooperation was meaningless in the context of political degradation and humiliation. Gandhi himself had been a devoted collaborationist with Great Britain but repeated betrayals by the imperial power had turned him into a staunch non-cooperator.

Civil disobedience of the laws of the government is an active, dynamic, strong and extreme form of Satyagraha. Gandhi believed in the birth right of civil disobedience. He wrote: "I wish I could persuade every body that civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man. . . Civil disobedience, therefore, becomes a sacred duty when the state has become lawless, or which is the same thing, corrupt. And a citizen that barter with such a state shares its corruption or lawlessness . . . But the right itself cannot be allowed to be questioned. It is a birth right that cannot be surrendered without surrender of one's self-respect." Gandhi made a distinction between civil disobedience and civil resistance. He said that criminal disobedience could lead to social and political disintegration but not civil disobedience and consequently any attempt to put down civil disobedience was tantamount to the imprisonment of conscience. Gandhi thus made explicit in political philosophy the critical instrument of human conscience. Gandhi meant by the word civil, in the concept of civil disobedience, a sense of discrimination, discipline, civility and non-violence. There can be individual as well as mass civil disobedience. The latter means spontaneous action by the masses. In the beginning masses will have to be rigorously trained for action. Gradually they will learn this art. According to Gandhi complete civil disobedience implying a refusal to render obedience to every single state-made law can be a very powerful movement. No state has the right to make laws which run counter to the will, aspirations and traditions of the people. Hence there is the necessity for Satyagraha in the form

of civil disobedience. It could become "more dangerous than an armed rebellion". The stupendous power of innocent suffering undergone on an organized mass scale has great potency. By bringing the scrutinizing glare of public opinion on the evils of an autocratic state, the fall even of tyrannical political regimes is ensured. Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion and in the end all sections of society are convinced of the justice of the cause and thus victory is assured. There is nothing like defeat in the dictionary of Satyagraha. What apparently looks like defeat is only an occasion for additional preparation. In the process of the struggle for Indian independence it appeared in 1922-1924 and again in 1933-1934 that the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements had failed. But Gandhi as the true Satyagrahi was undaunted and ultimately his optimism was vindicated in 1947.

### **3. Conditions for the Success of Satyagraha**

Gandhi laid down strict canons of moral discipline for the Satyagrahi. He must have an unshakable faith in God, otherwise he will not be able to bear calmly the physical atrocities perpetrated on his person by authorities with superior force of violence at their command. Faith in the omnipotent majesty and kindness of God is essential for the Satyagrahi. This faith imparts to him immense strength even in the face of great concentrations of earthly power. He remains firm and unmoved trusting in the holy and superior wisdom of God. Hence Gandhi declared: "The only weapon of the Satyagrahi is God." A living faith in God as the unfailing protector makes one fearless. William Penn also had said: "Men must either be governed by God or they must be ruled by tyrants."

The Satyagrahi must not hanker after wealth and fame. He must obey the leader of the Satyagraha unit. The stress on obedience to the leader does not show the dictatorial temper of Gandhi but is only the rationalization of the plain truth that no concerted effort is possible

without source of guidance. He should strengthen his body by physical exercises like *Hathayoga*. He should practise Brahmacharya and should be absolutely fearless and firm in his resolve. His purity of life should be so deep as to compel reverence even from the opponents. He must have patience, single-minded determination and must not be swayed from the path of duty by anger or any other passion. Satyagraha is not a movement of bluster or bluff but demands solid, sincere and silent self-sacrifice. It requires steady discipline and firm purposefulness. Satyagraha can never be resorted to for personal gains. It is a "love process" and the appeal is to the heart and not to the sense of fear of the wrong-doer. Love is the sword of the Satyagrahi. Instead of killing the hooligans that confront him he would prefer to die at their hands and thereby live. Thus Satyagraha is based on personal purification. This Gandhian stress on purity as a criterion of political power is a great contribution to political thought. It is essential to employ pure means for serving a righteous cause. Plato also prescribed physical, mathematical and dialectical training for the philosopher-guardians of his perfect state as outlined in the *Republic* but Gandhi goes beyond Plato in stressing Brahmacharya. It is, of course, true that Gandhi does not put much emphasis on rigorous intellectual training in sciences and philosophy as Plato does. He would be satisfied with a study of the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Ramcharitmanas* of Tulsidas so far as the educational training of the Satyagrahi is concerned. Satyagraha does not require scholastic learning but it does require the stout heart that comes from suffering and faith. The essence of Satyagraha is the dynamization of the concealed potency of what the ancient Rishis have called *tapasya* and *sadhana*. Gandhi used to repeat the celebrated answers of Rama to Vibhishana when the latter was utterly perturbed at the prospect of a battle between the poorly equipped Rama and the mighty king and warrior Ravana. Tulsidas has described the answers of Rama. Rama says: "The chariot, my dear Vibhishana, that wins

the victory for Rama is of a different sort from the usual one. Manliness and courage are its wheels; unflinching truth and character its banners and standards; strength, discrimination, self-restraint and benevolence its horses, with forgiveness, mercy, equanimity their reins; prayer to God is that conqueror's unerring charioteer, dispassion his shield, contentment his sword, charity his axe, intellect his spear, and perfect science his stout bow. His pure and unwavering mind stands for a quiver, his mental quietude and his practice of *yama* and *niyama* stand for the sheaf of arrows, and the homage he pays to Brahmans and his *guru* is his impenetrable armour. There is no other equipment for victory comparable to this; and, my dear friend, there is no enemy who can conquer the man who takes his stand on the chariot of *dharma*. He who has a powerful chariot like this is a warrior who can conquer even that great and invincible enemy—the world. Harken unto me and fear not.”<sup>1</sup> The views which Rama advocates were interpreted by Gandhi to summarize the moral foundations required in a Satyagraha movement.

According to Gandhi Satyagraha to be effective requires certain psychological and sociological conditions. (i) The Satyagrahi is not to harbour any hatred in his heart against the opponent because in the long run hatred is a waste of energy. (ii) The issue for which Satyagraha is launched should be a true and substantial one. In all the Satyagraha campaigns launched by Gandhi—in South Africa, in Viramgam (1915), in Champaran (1917), in Ahmedabad, in Kheda, against the Rowlatt Act, the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements in India—the cause was always legitimate and just. (iii) The Satyagrahi must be prepared to undergo all kinds of humiliations, persecutions and sufferings. In the end he must be ready to lay down his life. Hence Satyagraha can be practised only by the stout in heart.

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, August 25, 1940

Mahatma Gandhi laid down some important rules for the Satyagrahi:

“(i) A Satyagrahi, *i. e.*, a civil resister, will harbour no anger.

(ii) He will suffer the anger of the opponent.

(iii) In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.

(iv) When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by the authorities.

(v) If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate

(vi) Non retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.

(vii) Therefore, a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and, therefore, also not take part in any of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of *ahimsa*.<sup>1</sup>

Compromise is an essential part of Satyagraha. Gandhi had a love for compromise although in his personal life he was rather puritanical. Compromise is based on two assumptions. First, it shows the spirit of meekness and gentleness of the Satyagrahi. Secondly, it shows that the opponents have at least partly come down. They should be given opportunities to see the justice of the case at issue. In spite of facing some ridicule and criticism from his colleagues Gandhi suspended the Satyagraha campaign in 1922 and 1934. In 1931 he entered into the Gandhi-Irwin Pact although all his

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, February 27, 1930



terms were not agreed to by the then Governor-General of India. Compromise, according to Gandhi, is an integral part of Satyagraha.

#### 4. Satyagraha and Democracy

Satyagraha as conceived by Gandhi is not a formula of social and political disintegration. But never is Satyagraha for the sake of truth and justice to be given up. A Satyagrahi must have first rendered willing obedience to the laws of the state. One must have shown an intelligent, spontaneous and willing obedience to the laws of the state. Gandhi writes: "A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a person has thus obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just and which unjust and iniquitous. Only then does the right accrue to him of the civil disobedience of certain laws in well-defined circumstances." But the Satyagrahi obeys the laws of the state not because of the fear of the sanctions but because he regards them as promoting the common good. Mahatma Gandhi claimed to have been by nature law-abiding. The capacity for civil resistance comes from the discipline undergone in process of obeying the civil and moral laws of the state. "Democracy comes naturally to him who is habituated normally to yield willing obedience to all laws, human or divine. I claim to be a democrat both by instinct and training. Let those who are ambitious to serve democracy qualify themselves by satisfying first this acid test of democracy."<sup>2</sup> A Satyagrahi while resisting the laws of the government should see that the social structure is not subverted.

Gandhi was a believer in the superiority of loyalty to divine law to man-made law. He would never sanction

<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography* of M. K. Gandhi, Part V, Chapter 33, "A Himalayan Miscalculation".

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, May 27, 1939

any submission to any law if it conflicted with the moral stature of a man. The voice of the Atman—the inner conscience—was the “higher law” and was supreme. Like St. Paul, Luther, Kant and Thoreau, Gandhi stresses the significance of the individual conscience. In the name of conscience Gandhi would be thoroughly opposed to the coercive and authoritarian features of modern social systems which are dominated by organization, coordination and even regimentation. The dictates and commands of any government, if they conflicted with the sense of higher duty to God, had to be resisted. Gandhi said that if the commands of even his father were repugnant to his conscience he would resist it.<sup>1</sup> It is not correct to say that Gandhi would not sanction Satyagraha in a democratic governmental set up.” Gandhi had no special faith in the sanctity of the mechanisms and institutions of democracy although for the present he had accepted for India the mechanism of parliamentary government based on adult suffrage. But, in terms of ideals, he would not accept the axiomatic superiority of the majority will represented in parliament as Locke did. Gandhi looked to the moral essence of the matter. The basic problem according to him was life in accordance with the canons of truth. Several times it occurred in the course of Indian national history that Gandhi said that he would oppose any law or system even if he were in a minority of one. He said: “Non-cooperation with evil is a sacred duty.” The ethics of Satyagraha is certainly never synonymous with the ethics of democracy based on the arithmetical device of counting of numbers. Satyagraha is independent of numbers participating in it.<sup>2</sup> A democracy can be swayed by all types of passions, prejudices and petty considerations. A devotee of truth would not tamely accept this. He would not be content with merely trying to change the personnel of the legislatures after four to

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi's evidence before the Hunter Committee.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. G. Mashruwala: *Gandhi-Vichara-Dohana* (In Hindi) p. 70

<sup>3</sup> M. K. Gandhi: *Satyagraha*, p. 347

five years in a general election. He should certainly educate public opinion. "A Satyagrahi, for instance, must first mobilize public opinion against the evil which he is out to eradicate, by means of a wide and intensive agitation. When public opinion is sufficiently roused against a social abuse even the tallest will not dare to practise or openly to lend support to it. An awakened and intelligent public opinion is the most potent weapon of a Satyagrahi." According to the political teachings of Gandhi, Satyagraha is a perpetual law against anything repugnant to the soul. Even if alone, a man of truth and conscience will resist the laws and commands issued by a representative legislature if they go against the higher law of the Atman. Gandhi wrote: "Whether, therefore, I am in the minority of one or I have a majority, I must go along the course that God seems to have shown me."<sup>1</sup> A true Satyagrahi will risk all dangers for the sake of truth. Gandhi wrote: "But even so a call may come which one dare not neglect, cost it what it may. I can clearly see the time coming to me when I must refuse obedience to every single state-made law, even though there may be a certainty of bloodshed. When neglect of the call means a denial of God, civil disobedience becomes a peremptory duty."<sup>2</sup>

The following evidence given by Mahatma Gandhi before the Hunter Committee conclusively proves that he was categorical in his view that Satyagraha could be resorted to in a free democratic India.

"Q. You can resort to no other remedy to oppose the irresponsible, foreign officials and that is why you have started this movement. Is it not ?

A. I cannot say that with certainty. I can conceive the necessity of Satyagraha in opposition to the would be full responsible self-government. Our ministers can never claim to defend themselves on the score

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, December 1, 1927

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, August 4, 1921

of their ignorance, whereas such a defence is available today for the English officers.

Q. But with all the rights of self-government we shall be able to dismiss the ministers.

A. I cannot feel on that point so assured for ever. In England it often happens that ministers can continue in the executive even though they lose all the confidence of the public. The same thing may happen here too and, therefore, I can imagine a state of things in this country which would need Satyagraha even under Home Rule."<sup>1</sup>

## 5. Gandhi and T. H. Green

There are some similarities and important differences between the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha and T. H. Green's concept of resistance. Both Gandhi and Green are spiritual idealists. Gandhi accepts truth as God. Green accepts the reality of an infinite consciousness. Both Gandhi and Green are champions of moral will and adhere to the ideal of moral purification. Both accept the necessity of maintaining the stability of the social structure. Both believe in the right and duty of resistance.

But the Gandhian concept of Satyagraha is at once more spiritualistic and more individualistic than Green's concept of resistance. There is no idea of a living burning faith in the compassion and justice of God as a requirement for the resister in Green's political theory as in Gandhi. Green belonged to the school of Oxford idealism and was influenced by the Aristotelian concept of the moral personality of the community. Gandhi's temper was far more individualistic. He was ever ready to immolate himself for the sake of loyalty to God and

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<sup>1</sup> But although Gandhi would stand for the inalienable right of Satyagraha on grounds of conscience even in a democracy, he would not advocate mass Satyagraha. He emphatically stated: "Total non-violent non-cooperation has no place in popular Raj, whatever its level may be." (*Harijan*, July 14, 1946)

truth. This fundamental spirit of martyrdom is almost foreign to the whole theoretical structure of Green.

## 6. Conclusion

The Gandhian theory of Satyagraha is a permanent vindication of the individual right of resistance against coercive authority. It pleads for the sanctity of individual conscience. Conscience, in the philosophy of Gandhi, does not refer to the mere internalized experience of social conventions and traditions and beliefs of a society but is a spiritual force. It is present in the hearts of all human beings and by a life of purity its presence can be felt by all. Gandhi taught resistance in all those cases where the conscience of man was wounded. This teaching of Gandhi is a permanent vindication of the individual's right to fight injustice and tyranny. But the Gandhian sociology of resistance postulates in the resister a spirit of perfect fearlessness as well as the sentiment of good will and charity for the exploiter or the oppressor. One is to hate the sin and not the sinner in the language of the Bible. The Gandhian theory of Satyagraha thus represents the synthesis of the democratic conception of the individual's inalienable right of resistance with the Buddhist and Kantian philosophy of the pure good will. Gandhi would say that the sanction of governance is provided by the conscience of the individual. Both in his life and in his teachings Gandhi had been a determined champion of the sanctity of individual conscience. The highest sanction to laws, statutes, orders, directions and writs of the state is provided by the Atman. If the inner conscience or the Atman of men revolts against any unjustified law, ordinance, convention or decree of the state then the individual should resist against that. But he, certainly, should take care that there is no threat to social stability. He should resort to Satyagraha only if all other peaceful ways of getting what he considers an unjust law, ordinance, convention or decree changed have failed. Thus Gandhi wants to establish the authority of the state in the consent of the indivi-

dual's conscience. But in the name of conscience he is not attempting to exalt frivolity, individual arrogance or self-assertiveness. The resistance to unjustified authority is to proceed from love and not from jealousy, envy, hatred or criminality. One has to cleanse his own heart before one embarks upon the path of social reform and social or political resistance. Gandhi's advocacy of the inalienable right of resistance on moral grounds is one of his most significant contributions not only to political thought but also to world civilization. Gandhi has been the most determined exponent of individualism in the modern world.

The Gandhian philosophy and sociology of Satyagraha is a spiritualized and moralized form of the concept of resistance. The theory and practice of resistance is referred to in ancient Hindu thought. In western political thought resistance has been advocated. John of Salisbury pleaded for tyrannicide. The *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* advocates resistance to monarchs who infringe the religious conscience of subjects. John Calvin advocated partial resistance by 'inferior magistrates'. Thoreau was a great champion of civil disobedience. Satyagraha as conceived by Gandhi is a deepening and a spiritualization of the element of resistance. The political concept of resistance has been invested with moral grandeur and spiritual halo. Gandhi transforms resistance into a pilgrimage for the restoration of the dignity and worth of the human soul. The fight against unjust authority assumes the shape of the realization of the spiritual self. Satyagraha thus becomes a vindication of the majesty of the spirit. Gandhi has given us a penetrating and forceful presentation and analysis of the foundations and technics of non-violent Satyagraha. This represents one of the most significant and remarkable creations of Indian political thought in modern times.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE POLITICAL THEORY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

#### 1. Methodology of Gandbian Political Theory

From the methodological standpoint it can be said that Gandhi's approach is both deductive and empirical. He deduces certain conclusions from his metaphysical assumptions. He was a thorough believer in metaphysical idealism and hence he accepted the sanctity of moral precepts in politics. Because he believed in the universality of God, hence he accepted the theory of human equality because all men are really one in essential spirit. From his conception of the absolutely binding character of loyalty to truth followed his theory of Satyagraha or resistance to untruth, injustice and tyranny. But Gandhi's approach is also empirical because a lot of his political and social propositions are derived from his own observations and experiences. His stress on the removal of untouchability, his plea for communal concord and his emphasis on rural rehabilitation and reconstruction are grounded upon the lessons derived from his experiences as a social and political leader. The richness of personal experience was Gandhi's strong point. It may be pointed out, however, that there is slender use of the historical method in Gandhi's political philosophy. Furthermore, there is no place for the application of the more sophisticated quantitative methods of politics in Gandhism.

Gandhi takes a religious and moral approach to politics. His theory of Satyagraha is an idealization of the concept of moral right. He would disfavour the modern stress on the study merely of the processes, procedures and dynamics of political phenomena in isola-

tion. There is no disparate department called "political". It is only a phase and aspect of life. Because life is a concrete organic unity hence all its actual phases, sectors and aspects have to be made perceptible to the mind in their interconnectedness. This philosophical conception of the attempt at the comprehension of the whole of life provides the rational justification of Gandhi's stress on the good of all. The problems of economics, sociology and political science have to be studied in the context of life itself. According to him political action and moral self-determination should be synthesized. The purified will is to be the source of all kinds of action—social, political and moral. He refuses to accept the absolute separation of the secular and the sacred. Even to the secular there is to be a religious orientation. But this only means the necessity of moral approach and is thoroughly removed from supernaturalism and theocracy. This comprehensive philosophical and moral orientation of Gandhi is apparent in his analysis of the dominant concepts of political theory, *viz.*, liberty, rights, state, democracy etc. He brings to political science a comprehensive valuational standpoint.

## 2. Theory of Rights

(a) *Civil and Political Right.* Gandhi claimed to be a "born democrat". From his earliest years he accepted human equality. Hence in his political career he always stressed the rights of man. He was opposed to the ravages of imperialism and foreign exploitation because they compromised the dignity and stature of man. One of the prime propositions in his political philosophy is the conception of right because the entire theory of Satyagraha is based on the notion of the individual's inalienable right to resist a coercive social and political system. Against the claims of state omnicompetence Gandhi puts up the right of the internality of judgment. The entire life and activities of Gandhi were a revelation of his fighting spirit in quest of justice, truth, right and universal peace and union of hearts.



He urged that men should obey God rather than an aggressive imperialism. Loyalty to God has a higher obligatory character than loyalty to the political superior. He had a passionate desire for the reign of right in the world. By his advocacy of the claim of the superior binding character of inner conscience he has rendered a great service to the appreciation of the concepts of right and liberty in the modern world. In his actual life and his writings one finds the agony and torment of his heart revealed, whenever he had to meet a situation that thwarted and crushed the individual. He regarded the fulfilment of the rights of the dispossessed as the indispensable condition for peace and justice in the world. Gandhi's belief in the holiness and sanctity of the inner voice was only a religious way of registering his fidelity to the right of individual conscience. Without a capacity for the exercise of rights the individual cannot attain the realization of personality. The conception of unconditional obedience had absolutely no place in Gandhi's thought. The individual had a moral right to oppose a law, command, decree or direction that goes against either divine laws or against the canons of conscience. Gandhi repudiated the divine right of kings to rule. Like Seneca and St. Augustine, Gandhi taught the priority of obedience to God to political obedience. Like Socrates, Gandhi was struggling against all illegitimate and unjustified social traditions, irrational political conventions and barbaric established customs and privileges. Gandhi's philosophy of right is a cardinal point in his philosophy of politics. He championed the enormously revolutionary doctrine that obedience to the laws of God takes priority over obedience to the state. Rights are claims to serve the commands of God.

Gandhi was a strong champion of the rights of man. He was a political individualist. He believed in the equal rights of man. His advocacy of freedom and right was most emphatically revealed in the famous Satyagraha in South Africa from 1908 to 1914. The issues that were involved there referred mostly to civil

rights. Gandhi wanted racial equality in South Africa. (i) The first demand of the Indian community was the abolition of the annual tax of three pounds on indentured Indian labourers who desired to settle in the province of Natal at the end of their covenanted term of service. (ii) The second demand was the civil right to unrestricted freedom of movement in the Union territories. The other demands concerned (iii) the legal legitimization and validation of all non-Christian marriages whose moral and legal binding character was being threatened by a possible odious law of the Union, and (iv) the removal of the anti-Asiatic bias in the immigration policy of the Union government. Thus the basic demands of the Indian community did not refer so much to the political right of participation in the institutional and administrative mechanism of the government but to the civil and personal rights of the citizen. But although in South Africa Gandhi embarked on the historic road of Satyagraha for the vindication of civil rights of Indians he was opposed to Indians claiming any superiority to the Negro peoples. As an outspoken champion of civil rights Gandhi attempted to get a legal and social recognition for the inalienable moral worth and sacrosanctness of man as a spiritual being. Gandhi synthesized the political conception of right and the moral conception of the spiritual personality of man. Hence it is possible to interpret Gandhi's Satyagraha as partly a political crusade in making actual the democratic notion of the significance of the inalienable rights of man. As a man of the people Gandhi stood for the rights of the lowliest and the humblest. Against the prerogatives of racial ascendancy Gandhi stood for a deep humanitarianism and equality. Kant confessed that Rousseau had made him aware of the vastness and meaningfulness of the feelings and sensibilities of the common man. It can be justifiably said about Gandhi that the plain forgotten Asian peasant assumed a concrete political shape through his efforts. He wanted the distressed and disinherited people to become "apostle of

life-giving freedom” and to hold aloft the brilliant torch of non-violent liberty.

Gandhi was never convinced of the glories of racial imperialism. Even when he believed in the benefits of British rule he valiantly fought the unfounded dogma of the supremacy of the white man in Africa. In India he had to fight the unchallenged sway of an arrogant imperialism. He gave the slogan of non-cooperation in 1920 which became the prelude to the war-slogan of “Quit India”. Gandhi was meek, humble and compromising but he could not tolerate any attack on the right of man. Gandhi’s leadership of the Satyagraha in South Africa was based on his fearless advocacy of the cause of civil rights. The Indian theatre witnessed an extension of his activities. His leadership of the Indian nationalist movement indicated primarily his fight in quest of political rights. In a speech in Madras Gandhi advocated “the right to rebel” as the indefeasible right of a British citizen. He stood for the political solidarity of the Indian people based on voluntary and peaceful cooperation in place of the imperialistic domination of the country by a foreign bureaucracy and an alien capitalism. He interpreted political right as equivalent to the acquisition of Swaraj. He regarded national independence as the inalienable right of Indians. In his famous Trial Speech of 1922 Gandhi condemned the Rowlatt Act as designed to rob the people of all real freedom although its declared purpose was only to suppress sedition. He said that the Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code under which he was being tried was designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Gandhi’s emphasis upon the political right of freedom of expression is also brought out in this speech. He says: “Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection so long as he does not contemplate, promote or incite to violence.” With eminent courage and devotion Gandhi fought for political rights. Gandhi’s leadership

of the movement of Indian nationalist independence was a momentous struggle for the assertion of the political rights of the Indian population. In 1928 Gandhi was content with dominion status provided it was granted within one year. But in 1929 he blessed the Congress proposal for *Purna Swarajya* or complete independence. For the realization of political right, it was essential to cultivate an indomitable will and not force of arms. "If we develop the force of will, we shall find that we do not need the force of arms."<sup>1</sup>

(b) *Rights and Duties.* As the prophet of Satyagraha Gandhi stood for the inalienable, natural and moral right of man to stand against untruth, injustice and wrong in any form. But although one of the greatest champions of the rights of the exploited and humiliated individuals, groups and nations in modern times, Gandhi stressed the correlation between rights and obligations. If he repudiated the divine right of kings to rule he also spoke against "the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions" as equally injurious.<sup>2</sup> He stressed the acquisition of those faculties, powers and ethical preparations which are necessary for the realization of rights as guaranteed and recognized claims. Rights are essential because they contribute to the realization of some good but moral training is a prerequisite of the enjoyment of rights. If this preparation was wanting then rights could be only fetters and impediments. In order that a man could get genuine and effective recognition of his rights, his actions had to be oriented to the constant practice of moral norms of life. Gandhi had an axiological or valuational conception of rights. Without the acceptance of a system of aims, goals and values of life and without the effective ordering of life and its conduct by them, a man's life would become empty and devoid of meaning and spiritual orientation. It was essential, therefore, to integrate the

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, May 29, 1924

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, July 6, 1947

rights of a person with a system of ends and purposes. Without this integration there was bound to result social disruption. Hence Gandhi puts the greatest stress on the conformity to the *Vratas* or sacred vows. The thing of paramount importance in Gandhi's teachings is the performance of duties or Karma. Thus Gandhi, like T. H. Green, had primarily a teleological conception of rights. If rights are correlated with duty in the sense of obligation to the eleven vows or Mahavratas then the other meaning of duty as postulating that the rights of A require that B and C have the duty of letting A act unhindered in the sphere of his rights becomes only an elementary conception of civics. Gandhi always said that true rights do not follow from legal recognition but from social service. Effective self-devotion to the development of one's character and dedication for the service of others is the true source of rights. It is preposterous to demand the right to do as one likes. A right must be aimed at the liberation of man's faculties to enhance the good of all—Sarvodaya. A parent could demand legitimate obedience from his children if he performed his duties to them. Rights not flowing from duties well-performed are mere "usurpations" in his terminology. Gandhi thus primarily advocates a teleological conception of rights. In a cable to H. G. Wells, in reply to his on the Rights of Man, Gandhi had written: "Received your cable. Have carefully read your fine articles. You will permit me to say you are on the wrong track. I feel sure that I can draw up a better charter of rights than you have drawn up. But what good will it be? Who will become its guardian? If you mean propaganda or popular education, you have begun at the wrong end. I suggest the right way. Begin with a charter of Duties of Man, and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter. I write from experience. As a young man I began life by seeking to assert my rights,

and I soon discovered I had none—not even over my wife. So I began by discovering and performing my duty by my wife, my children, friends, companions and society, and I find today that I have greater rights, perhaps, than any living man I know. If this is too tall a claim, then I say I do not know anyone who possesses greater rights than I.”<sup>1</sup> Gandhi wrote in a similar spirit to Julian Huxley. Only the right obtained by service performed in the light of wisdom is a true right. There will be social disruption and chaos if all people simply insist on rights and not on duties.

Gandhi had a comprehensive conception of the rights and duties of man. If on the one side like Jefferson and Thomas Paine he advocated the rights of man, like Mazzini he put equal stress on the duties of man. Like the Greek philosophers he felt that only by serving the common good could any demand for rights receive its justification and validation. Gandhi's philosophy of rights represents a synthesis of the teleological and the individualistic conceptions of rights. Like the philosophical idealists he stresses duties in the sense of the moulding and governance of life by divinely-oriented spiritual and moral laws. But he does not teach social compliance and acquiescence or complete political subordination. It is the duty of the individual and not only his right to raise his voice if there is corruption and degeneration in society. Gandhi's conception of Swaraj is also partly based on the individualistic theory of inalienable rights because he is an advocate of resistance to unjustified social and political authority. Gandhi repudiated the Hobbesian conception that all laws proceeding from the sovereign are just. Instead he stood for the doctrine of Satyagraha against injustice.

### 3. Theory of Freedom

(a) *Political Freedom.* In Mahatma Gandhi we find a comprehensive concept of freedom. Swaraj for

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, October 13, 1940

him is part of Truth which is God. This implies a sanctification of freedom. Freedom is the essence of man's personality. The renunciation of freedom would be the repudiation of human conscience. Political freedom or Swaraj could be obtained only by intense suffering and struggle. It would be chimerical to believe that it could come as a gift. He said at the Second Round Table Conference in 1931: "...the page of history is soiled red with the blood of those who have fought for freedom." In an article entitled "Tampering with Loyalty" Gandhi wrote that spreading disaffection against the British government in India was the Dharma of Indians. In 1929 he said: "A man who is made for freedom has got to take tremendous risks and stake everything." With great sociological insight Gandhi warned the imperialistic countries that domination over others would jeopardize the moral fibre of the great powers. In a speech delivered in 1931 at Eton Gandhi warned: "No one chains a slave without chaining himself. And no nation keeps another in subjection without herself turning into a subject nation." Gandhi accepted the truth of the famous Mantra given by Tilak that Swaraj is the birth right of Indians. He said: "for me every ruler is alien that defies public opinion." He believed that Indians were entitled to freedom because of the immense sufferings they had undergone for it. In his historic speech at the All India Congress Committee in August 1942 Gandhi thundered: "I want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn. . . Today they (the masses) have no touch of life left. It has been crushed out of them. If lustre is to be put into their eyes, freedom has to come not tomorrow but today."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi emphatically pleaded for freedom in the sense of national independence. He passionately and

In his famous radio broadcast for American listeners during his visit to England to attend the Second Indian Round Table Conference Gandhi had appealed to the conscience of mankind "to come to the rescue of a people dying to regain its liberty".

eloquently demanded "the rose of liberty". He wrote: "We are challenging the might of this Government because we consider its activity to be wholly evil. We want to overthrow the Government. We want to compel its submission to the people's will. We desire to show that the Government exists to serve the people, not the people the Government. Free life under the Government has become intolerable, for the price exacted for the retention of freedom is unconsciously great. Whether we are one or many, we must refuse to purchase freedom at the cost of our self-respect or our cherished convictions." Primarily Gandhi was engaged in abolishing the unjust economic and political exploitation of India. He condemned British imperialism because it resulted in the political and economic prostration of India. In his famous Trial Speech of 1922 he said: "I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations before she can achieve the Dominion status. She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines." He dedicated his whole life to secure the freedom of India from imperialistic bondage. He said: "I cannot conceive a people governing themselves rightly through a government imposed from without, even as the fabled jackdaw could not walk like a peacock with feathers borrowed from his elegant companion."<sup>1</sup>

The Swaraj of Gandhi's conception was to champion the interests of the down-trodden and starving millions. Gandhi wanted the Swaraj for the millions of India. He had a democratic conception of Swaraj. He said: "I want the rule of and for the masses of India. Lokamanya has taught us that Home Rule or Swaraj

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 25, 1939



is their birth right." He had a thoroughly democratic conception of Swaraj. He said: "But the Swaraj of my—our—dream recognizes no race or religious distinctions. Nor is it to be the monopoly of lettered persons nor yet of moneyed men. Swaraj is to be for all, including the former, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the starving toiling millions. A stout-hearted, honest, sane, illiterate man may well be the first servant of the nation."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi had an idealistic approach to politics. Hence he prescribed a rigorous self-control, social discipline and moral exercise for the winning of Swaraj. He wrote: "Voluntary discipline was the first requisite of corporate freedom. If the people were well-behaved, the Government officials would become their true servants." Only firm, steady and organized efforts could succeed in realizing freedom. Only a Swaraj won by patient suffering and sacrifice could be lasting and stable. The regeneration of India demanded ceaseless efforts and suffering. Only constant, regular and habitual efforts could rehabilitate the shattered society. Political freedom could be postulated only upon social cohesiveness. A divided and disrupted social structure could not wage successful political struggles. Hence Gandhi stressed communal unity and the absolute elimination of untouchability. Gandhi pleaded for the adjustment of individualism to the criteria and requirements of social progress. He wanted harmonious reconciliation between individual freedom and social discipline and order. By the willing discharge and execution of social and political duties man learns the meaning and value of his obligations to his group, his neighbourhood, the community and the state. Only a community constituted by persons imbued with a sense of vigorous creative citizenship can attain the benefits of Swaraj. Hence it is essential to combine the quest for

political individuality with the voluntary acceptance of social and political discipline.

Being a believer in the concept of political and national freedom Gandhi adhered to the theory of "self-determination". He stated in 1940 that the demand for a Constituent Assembly was in response to the desire to realize the concept of self-determination. In his letter to M. A. Jinnah in September 1944, Gandhi accepted that "the first condition of the exercise of the right of self-determination is achieving of independence by the joint action of all the parties and groups composing India."

(b) *Personal and Civic Freedom.* Gandhi had a deep attachment to fundamental freedoms. With his blessings the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress in 1931 passed a resolution on fundamental rights. Gandhi pleaded for personal freedom and civic freedom. On March 17, 1917 Gandhi was served with a notice to quit the district of Champaran. But he disobeyed it on political and moral grounds. He accepted the sanctity of the ideal of the freedom of the person. He declared: "The person of a citizen must be held inviolate. It can only be touched to arrest or to prevent violence."<sup>1</sup> He also advocated freedom of speech and pen. This freedom was the foundation of Swaraj. In his opinion civil liberties are the very foundation of democracy. When India had been made a party to the European war in 1939 against her will, Gandhi strongly pleaded in 1940 for freedom of speech even during war time. He wrote: "But freedom of speech and corresponding action is the breath of democratic life. Freedom of propagating non-violence as substitute for war is the most relevant when indecent savagery is being perpetrated by the warring nations of Europe."<sup>2</sup> He said at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee on September 16, 1940: "But if they (the British) fight unto death

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, April 24, 1930

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, September 22, 1940

for their freedom and if they are at all reasonable, they must recognize our right of free speech." In 1940 Gandhi pleaded for "freedom of speech, a free press and pure justice" even for the people of the Indian States.<sup>1</sup> He also wanted the independence of the judiciary and "complete civil liberty".<sup>2</sup>

In the case of trial in a court it is one of the primary rights of the accused to get the help of a counsel or advocate. This is a most important civil right because it prevents the punishment of a person without giving him a chance to defend himself. Gandhi also accepted this right of defence by a counsel as an important civil right but for persons arrested and prosecuted in Satyagraha cases he would not like any defence to be made. Occasionally statements to the court, however, would be read out.

(c) *Economic Freedom.* Gandhi realized that economic resources act as an effective apparatus for the realization of man's will. As a man with a tremendous knowledge of social and political work and activities, he stressed the economic prerequisites and foundations of freedom. He felt that freedom was bound to remain a mere philosophical abstraction unless the vast masses had some gainful employment. Unemployment snatches the morsel from the mouth of the poor villagers and completely damages the personality of the victims. "Political freedom has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness."

As a moral prophet Gandhi accepted the doctrine of equal distribution. A fundamental step in actualizing genuine economic freedom will be the revolutionary step of the acceptance and practice of equality of wages for the lawyer, the doctor or the teacher who are entitled to no more than the *Bhangi*. This would provide the key to true civilization and be the basis of the reconstruction of an ideal humanity.

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, April 20, 1940

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, July 13, 1940

He pleaded that all useful labour should bring the same and adequate wages to the worker. But until that rather remote ideal of equal distribution was realized, Gandhi prescribed a more realistic formula. Every labourer should get enough remuneration to feed and clothe himself and his family. It was the imperative duty of the government to ensure this much to all. "A government that does not ensure this much is no government. It is anarchy. Such a State should be resisted peacefully."<sup>b</sup>

(d) *Moral and Spiritual Freedom.* According to Gandhi moral and spiritual freedom depend on the effective resort to the two ancient virtues of truth and non-violence. He never accepted the theory of freedom as arbitrariness or license. Freedom results in self-denial for the sake of society, license means the desire to enjoy exclusive privileges even by resort to violence. Moral freedom for him lay not in the self-centred assertions of the claims of the individual ego but in identification with the spiritual being. The self-subsistence of the particular will has to be purified by the devoted adherence to truth and non-violence. Freedom means conquest of the demands of the senses and the appetites, for the realization of the moral self. Self-indulgence leads to destruction. The conquest of empirical desires is the path to immortality. Hence he stressed the rigid adherence to the code of *Mahavratas* (the eleven great vows) in his Ashrama. The daily repetition of the vows was a deliberate attempt to strengthen one's moral resolve. Gandhi firmly believed that immature persons subjected to the fluctuations of temporary emotions and arbitrary fancies and passions could not enjoy Swaraj. He wrote: "Freedom is a fruit of suffering, license is born of violence. What we are all pining for is freedom that imposes restraints upon itself for the sake of society. License imposes suffering upon society so that it may

enjoy exclusive privileges.”<sup>1</sup> Genuine Swaraj is a function of the development of the inner sources of power. Self-government does and should require continuous enterprise (Karma) and ready spontaneity for action by the citizens. Gandhi went to the extent of stating at the Belgaum Congress in 1924 that Swaraj is part of truth. This view amounts almost to a sanctification and spiritualization of the work of national emancipation. For Gandhi the ethical and spiritual idealist, social and political activities had a significant moral dimension. If truth is God and if the constructive program and Satyagraha oriented to Swaraj are part of truth, then it implies a conception of God as concrete real unity, an organic universal manifold including different entities, particulars and even social and political action, and not an undifferentiated abstract universal absolutely removed from human struggles. Gandhi also interprets Swaraj as moral freedom. In his theory holy living is the sole way to the realization of God as truth. He said: “On the principle that the greater includes the less, national independence or material freedom is included in the spiritual.” Gandhi’s conception of spiritual freedom is a concrete synthesis of political freedom, moral liberty and the natural right of the individual to attain his best self. Thus he does not maintain any sharp separation between inner freedom and outer freedom. Moral freedom must become the basis for political and economic freedom. To him inner freedom is bound to consummate also in external freedom from the bonds of society, church and state.

Gandhi laid down stringent moral prerequisites for the enshrinement of Swaraj as moral and spiritual freedom. Gandhi’s conception of moral Swaraj or integral freedom postulates the cultivation of *anasakti* or disinterestedness. Disinterestedness or desirelessness as the consequence of the synthesis of will and reason results in concentration of energy. Non-attachment as stressed in

the theory of Karmayoga accepted by Gandhi is completely removed from the charge of passivity sometimes levelled against it. As an advocate and follower of the Karmayoga of the Bhagavad Gita Gandhi stressed the harmony of devotion, gnosis and action. Absolute disinterestedness, complete imperturbability and a resignation to the will of God are the essence of Karmayoga. Disinterestedness involves spontaneous devotion to the cause of the good of all living beings. The essence of the Karmayoga of the Gita is the subjective disposition to will the good of all and to work according to what is inherently right.

Besides disinterestedness, another necessary moral requirement for Swaraj is fearlessness. This fearlessness can be acquired by making a surrender to God and by an absolute refusal to be bound by mundane temptations and threats. According to Gandhi a man who realizes his spiritual humanity is not afraid of any law except the law of God. In his famous speech at the Gurukul Kangri Gaudhi said: "In my humble opinion, fearlessness is the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything permanent and real. This quality is unattainable without religious consciousness. Let us fear God and we shall cease to fear man. If we grasp the fact that there is a divinity within us which witnesses everything we think or do and which protects us and guides us along the true path, it is clear that we shall cease to have any other fear on the earth save the fear of God. Loyalty to the Governor of governors supersedes all other loyalty and gives an intelligent basis to the latter."<sup>1</sup>

To Gandhi freedom was a whole.<sup>2</sup> Moral freedom as emancipation from the slavery to passions, national freedom as emancipation from the bondage of alien

<sup>1</sup> Gandhi's concept of loyalty to God reminds one of the Christian theory of "divided allegiance".

<sup>2</sup> In an article written in the *Harijan*, August 19, 1939, Gandhi had supported the demand of the Arya Samaj and showed his acceptance of "religious and cultural" freedom.

rulers and exploiters, and spiritual freedom as emancipation from subservience to the demands of physical nature were all phases of freedom. To one whose life was permeated by the belief in the presence of a higher spiritual reality, any compromise with evil, lust and slavery was wrong. Thus we see that Gandhi's great gospel was that freedom is a whole. He wrote: "I do not divide life into watertight compartments."<sup>1</sup> In western psychology and philosophy there has been created an unhealthy separation of the different forms of freedom—the metaphysical freedom of the human self against cosmic necessity; the psychological theories of freedom of will and action; and the discussions about the reconciliation of individual freedom and social and political authority. Gandhi's attitude was integral. To him freedom was a process of growth in quest of an articulated system of coherent moral purposes and actions. To him true freedom consists in the undaunted discovery of truth through Ahimsa. That is genuine blessedness. A man who obtains freedom over his passions would not tolerate the social and economic exploitation of his neighbours because they are really his own selves.

According to Gandhi all war is unjust but still the aspirant after freedom would distinguish between the aggressor and the defender and render all moral support to the latter.

Gandhi was a spiritual idealist and hence he was an optimist. Although critical of the mechanical and technological aspects of modern civilization, Gandhi had eminent and abiding faith in the realization of equilibrium of toleration in the future. He is more optimistic than Max Weber according to whom there are slender prospects of human freedom because of the accentuated technological rationality of modern age. According to Gandhi it is possible to have freedom in the modern age if there is a moral renaissance of man. Moral and spiritual

freedom would require a crusade against mechanization for its own sake. There can be no genuine freedom without the practice of moral obedience to the laws of the spirit. Against the immense and engulfing power of the objective social and political structure, Gandhi stood for the purification of motives and conduct as the sure way to freedom. Hence by his firm assurance that freedom is possible, Gandhi provides a new hope.

#### **4. Concept of Equality and Justice**

According to the Gandhian theory of rights, racial and social equality was a necessary accompaniment of freedom. Every man is equal in the eye of God as the Gita points out. Hence every man should also be legally equal. Gandhi said: "Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical communists." Gandhi was a great champion of the right to equality. He would not confuse equality with patronization or condescension. He wanted genuine regard and respect for the rights and dignity of others. In South Africa he discovered that he had no rights as a man and as an Indian or, better, he had no rights as a man because he was an Indian. Hence he eloquently and actively defended the claims of equality of the Indian population. He said that in 1899, 1905, 1914 and 1915 he came to the help of the British empire because he felt that due to his voluntary services rendered in times of need the empire would grant to Indians "a status of full equality" in the empire. But because to his amazement he discovered that imperialism is a soulless machine he became a staunch non-cooperator. The Satyagraha in South Africa was a fight for civic and social equality. To the great credit of Gandhi and Gokhale it has to be recognized that due to their efforts the indenture system was first prohibited in Natal and then in the whole empire. Gandhi was greatly per-



turbed by the recrudescence of racialism in South Africa. He wrote in passionate terms: "The real 'White man's burden' is not insolently to dominate coloured or Black people under the guise of protection, it is to desist from the hypocrisy which is eating into them. It is time White men learnt to treat every human being as their equal. There is no mystery about whiteness of the skin. It has repeatedly been proved that given equal opportunity a man, be he of any colour or country, is fully equal to any other."<sup>1</sup>

Being a spiritual and ethical idealist Gandhi refused to make the least distinction either in theory or practice between man and man. He stood for the recognition of the equal rights of Indians and Asians. Gandhi felt that the widespread racial discrimination against Asiatics and Negroes practised by the white imperialistic groups of Europe and America and the unwarranted irrational practice of untouchability practised by the Hindu community were both manifestations of the same virus of inequality. Being a champion of equality and the rights of man Gandhi fought both the evils. Gandhi's devotion to equality was a necessary consequence of his deep and passionate belief in the spiritual essence of all human beings. He had an immense concern with the acquisition and extension of the rights and dignity of the human being. Because he had a moral reverence for life, hence he stood for the equality of man. He felt that political freedom without social and racial equality was thoroughly inadequate and even illusory.

Like St. Augustine, Gandhi stood for justice in the commonwealth. "The first condition of non-violence is justice all around in every department of life." The central evils against which Gandhi fought were racialism, imperialism, communalism and untouchability. In South Africa he fought against the racially discriminatory politics of the whites. In India, as a reformer, he fought against social injustices, tyrannies

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, June 30, 1946

and oppressions. According to him no one could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustices. His noble crusade for the liberation of the suppressed lower class in India shows his deep attachment to the concept of social and economic justice.

## 5. Gandhi's Theory of Democracy

(a) *Critique of Western Democracies.* Gandhi accepted the consensual theory of government. He thoroughly believed in the "immutable maxim that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be governed."<sup>1</sup> Gandhi's devotion to individual rights made him a fighter for the democratic freedoms. In South Africa he launched the Satyagraha movement for safeguarding the civil rights of Indians. He stood up for the rights of the poor suppressed indigo-planters in Champaran in 1917. He effectively sponsored the cause of the labourers in the spinning factories in Ahmedabad in February-March 1918. He also championed the rights of the peasants of the Khaina district in March 1918. He advised the peasants not to pay rents because crops had failed. The government reluctantly acceded to the demands of the peasants.

But although a fighter for the democratic conception of individual rights he was opposed to the procedures and practices of British parliamentary democracy. The *Hind-Swarajya* contains Gandhi's indictment of the British parliamentary practices and procedures. He regarded the British Parliament as sterile and barren. He criticized the inertia, apathy, ostentation and selfishness of the members of that assembly. Quoting a saying of Carlyle he regarded the parliament as a talking-shop. He could not sympathize with the almost blind voting system on party lines. The dictation of parties leads to the decline of the voice and personality of private members. He referred to the almost hopeless surrender of

the parliament into the hands of the prime ministers who would often lack honesty and purity of feeling. The legislative and constitutional activity of parliament is marked by sharp fluctuations of party and political opinion. At times the misguided press creates sensations and scandals by magnifying small issues into big crises.

With great political realism Gandhi emphasized that the western democracies were dominated by the ruling classes. The ruling classes carried on a game of unhindered imperialistic exploitation in the colonial world. It is true that a part of the spoils obtained from this spoliation was also given to the masses of western humanity. But the masses "are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. . . . Shorn of all the camouflage, the exploitation of the masses of Europe is sustained by violence."<sup>1</sup> Hence Gandhi concluded with great insight: "The peoples of Europe have no doubt political power, but no Swaraj."<sup>2</sup>

Gandhi condemned bitterly western democratic politics because they were infected with threefold contradictions.<sup>3</sup> First, they believed in limitless expansion of capitalism and this resulted in the exploitation of the weaker peoples. Gandhi condemned the vindictive imperialism and ruthless repression carried on in Asia and Africa by "the so-called democracies."<sup>4</sup> Secondly, some of them even took recourse to fascistic technics. "Western democracy as it functions today is undiluted Nazism or Fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the nazi and the fascist tendencies of imperialism."<sup>5</sup> Like L. T. Hobhouse and W. G. Sumner Gandhi is a critic of imperialism. Unlike Kidd, he refused to see any social good in imperialism and hence from 1920 onwards

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, September 3, 1925

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, May 18, 1940

<sup>4</sup> *Harijan*, April 15, 1940

<sup>5</sup> *Harijan*, May 18, 1940

he engaged in a protracted struggle against imperialism. He frankly stated that it was not through democratic methods that Great Britain had conquered India. He wrote: "I assert in all humility, but with all the strength at my command, that liberty and democracy become unholy when their hands are dyed red with innocent blood. I hear the living Christ saying, 'These so-called children of mine know not what they are doing. They take my Father's name in vain, for they disobey the central command of my Father!' . . . . And why have I uttered the Truth? Because I am confident that God made me the instrument of showing the better way. If Britain seeks justice, she must appear before the Imperial court of God with clean hands."<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, he criticized the policies of racialism followed in South Africa and the Southern parts of the U. S. A. Hence due to the prevalence of these contradictions, with a degree of exaggeration characteristic of a moral prophet, Gandhi said: "The European democracies are to my mind a negation of democracy."<sup>2</sup>

As a spiritualist and as a believer in non-violence Gandhi could not tolerate the autonomous sanctity of the verdict of the 51% howsoever procured. He would not be satisfied with the formal adherence to the external mechanism of the parliamentary type of government. Gandhi wanted a democratic government where individual liberty and freedom of opinion and action would be scrupulously protected and even the minority would be not coerced but persuaded, respected and converted. Gandhi's theory of conversion of the minority is a great antithesis to the almost threatening and ominous implications of Rousseau's view that the general will can force the particular wills to be free. His opposition to the Lockean majoritarianism and the Benthamite formula of the greatest happiness of the greatest number

<sup>1</sup> Both Gandhi and Marx point out the antithesis between Christianity and colonialism.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, July 21, 1940

proceeds from his spiritual concern about the good of all human beings. Being a champion of truth and non-violence he would never agree to any arrangement that the interests of the minority should be sacrificed.<sup>1</sup> That a minority should yield always to the majority, Gandhi considered as an unfounded dogma of political science because like John Stuart Mill he also accepted that all reforms are rooted in the initiative, efforts and plans of a few daring and adventurous people.

In matters of conscience Gandhi refused to be bound by the decisions of the majority. He declared: "It is slavery to be amenable to the majority no matter what its decisions are." Explaining his theory of real democracy Gandhi said in a Press Conference on September 28, 1944: "The way of approaching a question is not to examine the numerical strength of those behind the opinion, but to examine the soundness of the opinion on merits, or else we will never reach a solution, and if we reach one, it will be a blind solution simply because it is the wish of the largest body. If the largest body goes wrong, it is up to me to say you are wrong and not to submit. 'The rule of majority does not mean that it should suppress the opinion of even an individual, if it is sound. An individual's opinion should have greater weight than the opinion of many, if that opinion is sound on merits. That is my view of real democracy.'"<sup>2</sup>

(b) *Foundations of Democracy.* Gandhi thoroughly believed in the democratic concept that power belongs to the people. He wrote: "A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that

<sup>1</sup> At the New Delhi Seminar on "*Gandhian Outlook and Techniques*", Prof. Massignon suggested that Gandhi's views with regard to minorities could be realized by creating zones of security for minorities where they could retain their own culture without interference from the side of the majority. I personally do not accept any delimitation of a cultural zone for minorities. In India it would increase the trends towards disintegration.

<sup>2</sup> Gandhi thus exalts intelligence above numbers.

power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time-being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people." Gandhi had laid down very exacting requirements for the success of democracy. The democracy of his conception postulates not a mere institutional framework but claims and demands a cleansing of our consciousness. Politically, democracy implies scrupulous exactness in dealing with opponents.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi regarded it wholly wrong and undemocratic for the individuals to take the law into their own hands.<sup>2</sup> Economically, democracy means that the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest.<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi's principal contribution to the theory of democracy lies in his attempt to provide a psychological and moral bulwark to democracy. He was not much interested in the specification of the institutional fabric and framework calculated to lead to democratic growth. He had an ethical approach to politics. He insisted on the strengthening stabilization of the bulwarks of the democratic process. He wanted to make democracy a citadel of autonomy and progress. Against the encroachments of imperialistic totalitarianism Gandhi felt that heroic courage and resistance were the only bulwarks of the democratic forces.<sup>4</sup> He said that military force is a dangerous antithesis of the free growth of the soul and hence it will "be a poor democracy that depends for its existence on military assistance". To him there is a radical incompatibility between the evolution of democracy and the dependence upon the police and the army. A true democracy must cease to rely on the army. Democracy and violence cannot be reconciled. Gandhi stressed that non-violence alone could lead to

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, August 12, 1920

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, September 21, 1947

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, May 18, 1940

<sup>4</sup> *Harijan*, January 1, 1947

true democracy. He even went to the extent of defining democracy as the rule of unadulterated non-violence and insisted on recognizing non-violence as a living political bond. A true democratic government derives its justification from its readiness to serve the public good. If it becomes non-responsive to the demands of public opinion Satyagraha may be needed. It is true that in several democratic countries the ruling class has assumed ascendancy through political and military force. It is also true that in most democratic countries the legal and political structure would punish the recalcitrant groups who do not abide by the established law and order still it remains true that the democratic philosophy is based on the unequivocal acceptance of the supremacy of unrestrained public consent and public opinion. The growth of law and public opinion is expected to minimize the role of violence in politics. The true test of democracy according to Gandhi is that it attempts to replace force by social will. He wrote: "In democracy the individual will was governed and limited by the social will which was the State, which was governed by and for democracy."<sup>1</sup>

As a spiritual idealist Gandhi felt that people's voice is God's voice. Hence he thought that the democratic spirit had to be actively cultivated and it could not be imposed from any external source. According to Gandhi the true democrat defends his personal freedom, the national freedom and the freedom of mankind through the means of non-violence.<sup>2</sup> Democracy requires the synthesis of freedom, equality and the stability of the community. Public opinion is the basis of democratic governance and hence Gandhi recognized that "Legislation in advance of public opinion has often been demonstrated to be futile."<sup>3</sup> Gandhism can perform a great political service to man-

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, September 28, 1947

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, January 1, 1947

<sup>3</sup> *Young India*, July 2, 1931

kind by making pronounced emphasis upon the moral foundations of democracy by its deliberate stress on the tolerance of the opinions of political antagonists, co-operation, love, service and right. Tolerance was one of the essential basis of democratic political philosophy. Gandhi wrote: "Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side. We shut the doors of reason when we refuse to listen to our opponents, or, having listened, make fun of them. If intolerance becomes a habit, we run the risk of missing the truth. Whilst, with the limits that Nature has put upon our understanding, we must act fearlessly according to the light vouchsafed to us, we must always keep an open mind and be ever ready to find that what we believed to be truth was, after all, untruth. This openness of mind strengthens the truth in us." The perfection of the value of liberty, equality, social justice and fearlessness will act as foundations for the kingdom of God on earth. Gandhi's life was dedicated to this end and this is his great message. He always stated that political obedience could not be elicited by coercive sovereign power. According to Gandhi obedience could be rendered only to an authority which was rooted in the traditions, aspirations and sentiments of the people. But whether the political authority was genuinely entitled to obedience or not could be decided not by any formal edict or promulgation of ordinance but by winning the allegiance of man's inner conscience. Thus the inner conscience was the supreme test for judging the validity of any law or any political authority.

Like Plato, Gandhi wanted that the members of the governing group should lead a simple life. The governors and administrators must be content with being the servants of the nation and their esteem, status and prestige should be based not upon the acquisition of power, wealth and external pomp but upon devotion to a noble cause. He wrote: "Even free India will not



be able to accommodate a greater number of public servants. A Collector then will not need the number of servants he has got today. He will be his own servant."<sup>1</sup>

For the stabilization of the democratic commonwealth, Gandhi felt that it was essential to discharge one's duties to the community and to the state. Although he was a prophet of Satyagraha he was also candid to stress the necessity of the due discharge of the duties by the citizens. Gandhi's stress on strict adherence to one's proper duties to the government reminds one of Socrates's views in the *Crito*. Gandhi said that so long as one enjoyed the amenities, facilities, security and privileges provided by the government constituted according to law, it was one's duty to help the government. The clamour for the assertion of rights without the corresponding adherence to the philosophy of duties is an anomaly of modern times. Hence Gandhi's contribution to the philosophy of democracy lies in his stress upon the realization of common public good and universal welfare<sup>2</sup> which prescribes transcendence of regional and provincial interests and the pursuit of specific advantages and stresses a voluntary performance of one's duties to the community. Non-violence as positive love implies the thorough cultivation of the attributes of tolerance and elimination of distrust, suspicion and fear.

Gandhi said that self-government signifies incessant efforts towards freedom from government control. He emphasized the moral foundations of democracy. In Gandhism we find the synthesis of the idea of the democratic political structure and the tradition of natural law philosophy. Like Cicero and Aquinas, Gandhi believed in a higher law. He thinks that above the civil law is the law of God, obedience to which is categorical. Gandhi is willing to accept the worth of the

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, March 20, 1930

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, January 29, 1925

modern institutional ingredients of democracy like representation, decentralization etc. Unlike the extreme realists and historical materialists, Gandhi would not consider all legislation as the coercive apparatus of the ascendant classes. He said: "Legislation imposed by people upon themselves is non-violence to the extent it is possible in society."<sup>1</sup> He refers to the sovereignty of the people and to the consent of the people. He also stresses the educational foundations of democracy. He wrote: "In democracy even pure men may unconsciously give wrong decisions. The remedy is more and purer education, greater awakening of the public and in such quickened atmosphere the rise of a number of public workers whose sole duty will be to speak, write and act so as to serve as bright examples for the public."<sup>2</sup> He never forgets to emphasize the moral foundations of democracy. Gandhi believed that the moralization of democracy meant the cultivation of the sentiments of sympathy, fellow-feeling and freedom from bigotry. The moralization of the democratic process meant the cultivation of spiritual humanism. Popular sovereignty is expressed through governance by representatives who have the consent of the electorate. Gandhi categorically stated that power resides in the people and he was unequivocally committed to the enshrinement of the popular consent. Moral authority is obtained through the adherence to spiritual norms and values. Gandhi pleaded for the harmony between political power and moral authority. This synthesis of the modern democratic institutional mechanism with the spiritual and moral traditions of politics as enunciated by Vyasa, Bhisma and Thomas Aquinas is in line with the fundamental Gandhian ideal of spiritualizing the bases of political life and action. For him democracy means the sovereignty of the unrestrained consent of the dumb, starving millions as well as the autonomy of the moral will of all. Gandhi championed the common

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, July 21, 1940

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, March 17, 1946

rational good of all people. He wanted the harmonization of individual right and public welfare.

(c) *Democracy in India.* Although in the *Hind-Swarajya* Gandhi was bitterly hostile to the mechanics of the British parliament, he prescribed for India a parliamentary government based on universal suffrage but he stressed the necessity of the growth of discipline and political intelligence in the electorate. The Gandhian conception of Swaraj inculcated a government based on the consent of the people. This consent of the people was to be ascertained by the largest number of adult population. He wrote: "By Swaraj, I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters."<sup>1</sup> But Gandhi's stress on popular consent differed from the theory of Jefferson because Gandhi insisted not only on "sovereignty of the people" but insisted upon basing it on "pure moral authority". He felt that for the success of democratic government it was essential that the representatives should be given only general instructions and should not be subjected to detailed dependence on the electorate. It will not be possible to run the governmental mechanism if the representatives were compelled to consult the constituencies on all issues. In general terms of political theory it could be said that he upheld the mandate and not the delegate theory for the representative. For himself, he was ready to surrender his own judgment in most matters to the national representatives. But he also stated that if national life became so perfect as to become self-regulated representation would be rendered unnecessary.<sup>2</sup>

He wanted India to evolve "True Democracy".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, January 29, 1925

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, July 2, 1931

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, May 18, 1940

He was a realist, however, and hence he did not cherish the utopian dream that the India of the future will do away with the army and accept complete non-violence. However, he wanted progressive approximation to the true democracy without violence.

Gandhi laid down six conditions for the realization of true democracy in India:

- (i) Satyagraha expressed through the Charkha;
- (ii) Growth of village industries;
- (iii) Primary education through handicrafts;
- (iv) Removal of untouchability;
- (v) Communal harmony; and
- (vi) Non-violent organization of labour.

He was categorical in his belief that constructive program could build the solid foundations of "Non-violent Responsible Government."<sup>1</sup> That would provide the stable social, economic and educational basis of democracy.

After the achievement of independence Gandhi stressed service more than political power. He did not favour the clamour of political contestants for votes. He demonstrated his signal spirit of self-abnegation by not claiming any post for himself. He allowed his lieutenants and followers to shoulder the burdens of power. He wanted the renunciation of power politics and instead pleaded for pure selfless service to the people. He also visualized the necessity of an organization that would not concern itself with power politics but teach people to use their franchise intelligently. During the month of December 1947 Gandhi discussed these problems with the Constructive Workers. He felt that if the social workers sought no advantage for themselves and were only content with service to the people, the latter would willingly render them voluntary obedience and even call them to shoulder the responsibility of political power.

## 6. Decentralization: Village Republics

Gandhi stood for the decentralization of political power and economic production. One of the basic sociological and economic concepts in the philosophy of civilization as developed by Gandhi is decentralization. In the context of modern India decentralization would be primarily expressed in the development of self-sufficient village communities. The reconstruction of villages was to be the effective basis of the emancipation of the centres of national energy. According to Gandhi India became impoverished when Indian cities became foreign markets and began "to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands". He felt that there could not be any spirit of moral and cultural dignity and freedom left if villagers were deprived of almost the whole result of their labour. The rationality of the political sphere consists according to Gandhi not in the magnification of the state but in the reorganization of the villages through the practice of the "constructive program".

As an economic philosopher, Gandhi wanted India to evolve a decentralized structure of power based on the effective reconstruction of self-reliant villages. The village organization was to be based on the principle of constructive social and economic efforts, sacrifice and the abnegation of illegitimate self-interest. The political structure of independent India was to be not a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom but there was to be the solidarist spirit of mutual interdependence and harmonious cooperation. The communal tensions which were spreading to the rural areas from the towns had to be eliminated. The self-sustained villages were to manage their own affairs. They were not to rely on the help of a central army for defence. They should morally develop themselves to the extent even of perishing in the attempt of self-defence. They could also depend on willing help from neighbours or from the world but the basic point was the cultivation of genuine strength of their own. There was to be the progressive reali-

zation of equalization of wants and of equal distribution and this was to be the criterion of real cultural and economic advancement. The strength of the country could be built only if the villages led a life of harmony and self-sufficiency. Since the time Gandhi wrote the *Hind-Swarajya* he was an advocate of the rehabilitation of village polity and economy. Since 1925 Gandhi laid increasing stress on constructive program. The village Panchayat was to conduct the government of the village and was to be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined in one. The Panchayats can only work through the laws of their own making. Public opinion will be the most significant force in the *Panchayat Raj*. Gandhi does stress certain significant points. In the *Panchayat Raj* the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist would be treated as equal.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi accepted the cooperative ideal of a village commonwealth. In his last public document of January 30, 1948, which may be regarded as his political testament, Gandhi did specify the processes and institutions for the organization of the whole country on the line of village panchayats. Gandhi wrote: "The A. I. C. C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organization and flower into a Lok Sewak Sangh under the following rules with power to alter them as occasion may demand :---

Every *panchayat* of five adult men and women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit. Two such contiguous *panchayats* shall form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves. When there are 100 such *panchayats*, the 50 first grade leaders shall elect from among themselves a second grade leader and so on; the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of 200 *panchayats* shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of *panchayats* electing second grade leaders after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole

of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups. As the final formation of provinces or districts is still in a state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into provincial or district councils and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been established in the group or groups that may have been formed at any given time. It should be noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master, the whole of India.

(i) Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A.I.S.A. and must be a teetotaler. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person or in his family. He must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity with equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all, irrespective of race, creed or sex.

(ii) He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

(iii) He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a register of all these.

(iv) He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

(v) He shall organize the villages so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through their agriculture and handicraft.

(vi) He shall educate the village-folk in sanitation and hygiene and take all measures for prevention of ill-health and disease among them.

(vii) He shall organize the education of village-folk from birth to death along the lines of Nayee Talim, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

(viii) He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters' rolls are duly entered therein.

(ix) He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification to acquire it, for getting the right of franchise.

(x) For the above purposes and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty."

According to Gandhi the reconstructed village republic would be an example of perfect democracy based upon individual freedom and postulated on non-violence. In the days of modern industrial megalopolitanism Gandhi's stress on rural decentralization may sound anachronistic. Some regarded it as medieval feature. Some regarded it a going back to the days of primitive tribal economy and polity. But there is truth in his emphasis on decentralization. Centralization is a form of regimentation and authoritarianism. If not the essence of democracy, at least decentralization can be considered a constituent element, or an accompanying and constant phenomenon of democracy. Concentration of power amounts to the deprivation of the vast majority from all exercise of authority. There have been occasional movements both in the U.S.A. and in Great Britain for extending decentralization as a revitalizing force for democracy. If democracy is to be the institutional perfection of the sovereignty of the people and if the consent of the governed has to be the justification of the exercise of political power, decentralization is bound to be a necessary element of democracy. The local authorities are to be not branches of the central government exercising delegated powers but in the Gandhian scheme they are to be almost autonomous republics. Gandhi was sanguine enough to believe that voluntary cooperation between villages should produce self-reliance, self-sufficiency and will be a genuine basis for village



autonomy. By stressing the deep import of the cooperative commonwealth built on the organization of the village republics Gandhi has championed the cause of the rural countryside. He was opposed to considering villages as backward relics of a primitive economy and society. To him villages were the soul of India and he wanted them to be creative forces in the advancement of the country.

The advance of western civilization in India resulted in the growth of big cities. These huge concentrations of population were immensely different from the *pura*, *nigama* and *nagara* referred to in the ancient and medieval literature of the country. The political and social impact of the newly arisen megalopolitan centres was great and hence several thinkers in India pleaded for a restoration of the simple system of the villages. Gandhi was a prophet of rural reconstruction. This advocacy of the significance of rural civilization represents a Platonic and a Rousseauic element in the Gandhian sociology. Jefferson and Wilhelm Von Humboldt were also advocates of agrarianism. Although it is true that Plato and Rousseau were not referring to the exact counterpart of the Indian village, yet certainly they were advocating the importance of the small community. According to Rousseau bigness is the enemy of self-government. The return to rural simplicity would, according to Gandhi, eliminate the evils of competitive industrialism. It would solidify cooperation and would prevent any horrible future class-war. It is not correct to represent Gandhi as the advocate of a decadent agrarian feudal society because he emphasized rural rehabilitation and reconstruction. The real role of Gandhi was in being the prophet of a reconstructed commonwealth of mankind based on universal peace, non-violence as active, positive love and unrestrained mutual relations. The small communities can certainly be important forces for the strengthening of personality by creation of a centre round which there can be the crystallization of organic density. Big urban establish-

ments generate a sense of *anomie* and normlessness. They generate a frustrating sense of void and unbearable individualism. They loosen the moral fibres of man. In small communities active and creative participation in self-government or Swaraj is possible because genuine civic and social participation is facilitated. Aristotle stressed the necessity of *koinonia* and friendship for the *polis*. Only in small groups there can be effective opportunities for love, affection, active communication and deep consensus. Hence the exaltation of the peasant in Gandhi is not a reaction of a patriarchal society. He felt that a perfect democracy based upon individual freedom could be based only on the foundation of the *panchayat*. Hence Gandhi stood for villagism. It represents the sensitive reaction of the simple soul of India wounded and injured by the gigantic materialistic and imperial civilization of the Occident. Only time will decide with the force of convincing authenticity as to whether Gandhi's plea for simple ruralism or the colossal military preparations for the nuclear deprivations of humanity which may lead to the midnight of the threatened dark ages is the retrograde step in human civilization. Even in the West, Berdyaev, Toynbee and Albert Schweitzer prescribe a recovery of the forgotten powers of the spirit. Gandhi was not a rural reactionary but a moral futurist.

Gandhi's stress on decentralization and village republics is an important element in his political philosophy. He advocated decentralization both in the political and the economic spheres. The deep attachment to the concept of decentralization indicates the radical and fundamental nature of his theory of democracy because he wants to begin the reform at the bottom. According to Gandhi the common masses have to feel the thrill of participation in the exercise of power. Thus alone can the universal will of the people become a reality. The quest for decentralization represents his reaction to Indian suffering and exploitation. Concentration of political and economic power was the neutral-

ization of liberty. He sincerely believed that urbanization was one of the important factors responsible for the growing poverty of India. He had regarded the towns of India as the foci of an exploitationist ruthless foreign imperialism. Lenin also spoke against the excess of urbanization. Gandhi's stress on the revival and reconstruction of rural communities was suited to the Indian conditions. The profound agrarianism in Gandhi is a testimony to his realistic social and political approach. If the vast labouring population of India living in the villages could be made to harness all energies for the realization of the constructive programs, then alone India could be saved the dependence upon foreign capital. Gandhi stressed the building up of India's own resources. "We would be able to produce those things that the world would voluntarily and willingly take from us." Gandhi, thus, in his criticisms of the mechanical, economic, commercial and imperialistic civilization of the west puts constructive emphasis on the growth of village republics and decentralization. The only way, according to Gandhi, to lift the nation from its age-long torpor and frustration was to make the village of India self-sufficient and self-reliant. Thus alone could the villagers also develop their intellectual powers and could acquire the consciousness necessary for "the contemplated non-violent society of the future". Thus according to Gandhi decentralization was a technic for revolutionizing the psychology of the people and for building a more perfect society. A non-violent society would be one based on villages and not on a factory civilization. Even a ferocious tyrant like Adolf Hitler "could not devastate even hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process".<sup>1</sup>

Being a supporter of the cooperative organization of self-sufficient villages Gandhi would emphasize the possibilities of buttressing the democratic structure by

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 4, 1939

the promotion of social and economic associations. He had blessed the workings of the All-India Spinners<sup>1</sup> Association and the Gandhi Sewa Sangh. He does not relish the centralizing role of the political party and political structures. He pleaded that after independence the Indian National Congress should transform itself into a Lok Sewak Sangh. Gandhi had no definite scheme of occupational representation. He dimly visualized, however, the gradual replacement of the top-heavy parliamentary structure by a cooperative federation of self-managing village republics.

### 7. Gandhi's Philosophy of the State

(a) *The Actual State as an Engine of Violence.* Gandhi considered the state as an organization of violence and force. The compulsiveness of force leads to the destruction of the plasticity and subtlety of personality. Hence Gandhi said: "I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress." He was the protagonist of a divine kingdom on earth. He was repelled by the resort to force by political institutions. Unlike St. Augustine and other Christian political thinkers, he did not regard political force as the divinely appointed punishment or remedy for the sins of man. As a votary of Ahimsa, Gandhi condemned the use of violence. Gandhi never regarded social and political associations and the state as the actualization and objectivization of universal reason or the revelations of an all-pervasive spirit. Against the proclaimed universality, objectivity and determinateness of the laws of British Indian State Gandhi had stood up as the champion of the sanctity of subjective conscience. Being an apostle of non-violence he was repelled by the coercive character of the state. Gandhi is not a conservative historicist to identify the existing institutional

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, December 12, 1938

mechanism with the realized realm of free will. He is not an exponent of the servile cult of state omnipotence. He does not regard the state as being almost the second nature of the individual in the external world.

It is possible to note down certain events and factors which might have generated hostility towards the state, in Gandhi's mind: (a) The brutalities perpetrated by the South African government upon the poor defenceless Zulus were indeed shocking and even horrifying. (b) The betrayal by Smuts during the South African Satyagraha movement in 1907 was a rebuff to Gandhi. General Smuts failed to make good his pledge that the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance would be repealed if Indians consented to register voluntarily. (c) The atrocities committed by the British imperialistic power in India turned Gandhi into a rebel. In the arrogance of imperialistic irresponsible coercive power Curzon, Dyer and other representatives of the empire trampled the demands of the people. It could be legitimately inferred that from these experiences Gandhi came to regard not a particular government as such but the entire structure of the state with deep suspicion and hostility.

(b) *Gandhi's Opposition to the Hegelian and Austinian Theory of Sovereignty.* Gandhi would be thoroughly opposed to the Hegelian and Austinian concepts of law and sovereignty. Positive law and the sovereign political structure, due to their reliance on violence, authoritarian dictates and compulsive commands, do not help the genuine realization of the system of individual rights. Gandhi's conscience revolted against the sovereignty of the state. Sovereignty is the magnification of power, howsoever clothed in legal terminology it might be. Any concept of the exaltation of the absolute, uncontrolled, illimitable power of the state was, according to Gandhi, an attack on the moral fibre of civilization. The glorification of the sovereignty of the state was a challenge to the moral right of man to shape his own destiny. Gandhi would be unconvinced even of the

more moderate doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. Against the doctrines of Hobbes, Austin and Hegel, Gandhi appeared as the spokesman of the moral sovereignty of the people. The purified, regenerate will of the community can alone be the sovereign. Gandhi's opposition to the concept of sovereignty as propounded by Hobbes, Austin and Hegel was based on three grounds. First, as a devout theist Gandhi regarded spiritual authority to have a higher validity than the temporal authority of the political ruler. No ruler could set himself up against God. Secondly, as the founder of the science of Satyagraha Gandhi preached the right of inner conscience to oppose an unjustified law, statute, order, decree, ordinance or proclamation of the state. Thirdly, against the organized power of the legal sovereign Gandhi stood as the prophet of the moral authority of the people.

(c) *The Ideal of the Non-Violent State.* Gandhi did not, however, contemplate the deliberate destruction of the state machine but believed in the final end of the coercive state by increasing observance of non-violence in political action. He once opined that possibly the Mauryan King Ashoka presided over a non-violent state. He wrote: "It is claimed that a State can be based on non-violence, *i. e.*, it can offer non-violent resistance against a world combination based on armed force. Such a State was Ashoka's."<sup>1</sup> According to Gandhi the non-violent state must be based on the willing allegiance of an intelligent body of citizens. The government in such a state will represent the will and ideals of the overwhelming majority of the people. "If it is expressed non-violently, it cannot be a majority of one but nearer 99 against 1 in a hundred."

Gandhi propounded the concept of a progressively non-violent state. He wrote: "I believe that a State can be administered on a non-violent basis if the vast majority of the people are non-violent. So far as I know,

India is the only country which has a possibility of being such a State. "I am conducting my experiment in that faith." But as a realist he was not very hopeful of the immediate acceptance of non-violence as a principle of state policy.

(d) *The Religious Anarchism of Gandhi.* The final concept in Gandhian political thought is Ramraj or the kingdom of God on earth. In terms of western political science this ideal can be more concretely expressed as enlightened anarchy. In this condition coercion is replaced by will. It means the political manifestation of Ahimsa. But although a believer in the perfection of the community as a moral organism, Gandhi was not for the immediate ending of the state power. The increasing moulding of the state according to the canons of Ahimsa should be the immediate goal although the ultimate aim is philosophical and moral anarchism. Gandhi has in mind the vision of the perfection of mankind and hence he is hostile to the modern state which to him is a mechanical structure representing organized and concentrated violence. There is no element of moral spontaneity in the state. Gandhi's hostility to the violence of the state may possibly be due in part to the influence of Tolstoy on him. Tolstoy wrote: "This superstition resembles exactly the religious one, and consists in affirming that, besides the duties of man to man, there are still more important duties towards an imaginary being, which theologians call God, and political science the State." Gandhi had no love for the organized institutions of political power. He accepted the worth of the plasticity and spontaneity generated by non-violence. He refused to see in the state the manifestations of any superior reason or any inscrutable national purpose. We find that like Gumplowicz, Oppenheimer and Bluntschli as well as the anarchists, Gandhi regards the state as the organization of force and does not conceive of it, unlike the idealists as the self-actual-

sation of conscious reason. He visualizes the possibility of a more perfect social order without the operation of the government as an intermediary. Gandhi regards the ideal society based on non-violence to be some kind of enlightened anarchy. It is true that sometimes Gandhi has used the word anarchist to mean the terrorist. In his famous speech at the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University, Gandhi said: "We may foam, we may fret, we may resent but let us not forget that India of today in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists. I myself am an anarchist, but of another type. But there is a class of anarchists amongst us, and if I was able to reach this class, I would say to them that their anarchism has no room in India, if India is to conquer the conqueror . . . I honour the anarchist for his love of the country. I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country ; but I ask him—'is killing honourable ?'" But at other times he means by anarchy the elimination of coercive political power based on the automatic operations of dominance. Gandhi wrote: "Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state therefore, there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realized in life"<sup>1</sup> He used to quote Thoreau's statement that that government is the best which governs the least. He wrote: "That state is perfect and non-violent where the people are governed the least. The nearest approach to purest anarchy would be a democracy based on non-violence."<sup>2</sup> But Gandhi was not an anarchist of the virulent type although he castigates the evils of modern industrial capitalist

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, July 2, 1931

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, July 21, 1940



civilization. Bakunin preaches a war against God and the State. Gandhi did not teach the immediate neutralization of the state. He stressed on cultivation of moral strength and discipline. Gandhi's stress on truth, non-violence and purity has no parallel in the thoughts of Max Stirner or Bakunin or Kropotkin or Tucker. Because Gandhi preached resistance to unjustified law and advocated no rent campaigns hence the Indian conservatives and liberals regarded him as an anarchist. But Gandhi should be regarded as a religious anarchist and not as an intellectual anarchist. Anarchism to Gandhi was never a negative plan and formula. He felt that obedience to moral laws would slowly but certainly render unnecessary and even useless any reliance on the external mechanism of the public administration of an exploitationistic, imperialistic sovereign state. The primary emphasis in Gandhian thought is not on the deliberate and violent destruction of the state machine as in some schools of Western anarchism but on truth and non-violence which alone can be the basis of the enrichment and enhancement of the moral personality of man. Hence Gandhi wrote: "A society organized and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be the purest anarchy."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi believed in the superiority of spiritual authority. The eternal and divine law of God he considered to be superior to the positive laws of the commonwealth and the state. If a choice had to be made between loyalty to the commands of God as revealed through the inner voice and loyalty to the laws of the state, Gandhi would unhesitatingly recommend obedience to the laws of God. The overwhelming majesty of the divine power had pre-eminence in Gandhi's thinking. He emphatically declared in the speech at the inauguration of Banaras Hindu University: "If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one, not Maharajas, not Viceroy, not the detectives, not even King George."

<sup>1</sup> *Hanijan*, July 21, 1940

(e) *Distinction between Ideal Society and Swaraj.* In an article in the *Young India* (9th March, 1922) Gandhi draws a distinction between the ideal society and swaraj. In the ideal society there will be no railways, no hospitals, no machinery, no army and navy and no laws and law courts. But he emphatically states that under swaraj these five entities and institutions will continue to function. Under Swaraj, laws and law courts will be the custodians of people's liberty and not the bureaucratic instruments of oppression. He visualised that in the future independent Indian State, soldiers will form a national militia and would be used not for offensive but defensive and protective purposes.

## 8. Internationalism

Gandhi was intensely attached to the concept of nationalism. But he was also an internationalist. Mahatma Gandhi always emphasized his role as a citizen of the world. The South African and Indian politics had been the laboratory in which he experimented with his formulas of truth and non-violence. There is a supreme humanitarian standpoint in Gandhi. Gandhi was a very great national leader of formidable dimensions but he was unsurpassed in modern times as a lover of humanity. He was a great fighter for Swaraj but he would consider human welfare to be a matter of greater concern. While he was leading the Satyagraha campaign in South Africa he refused to take advantage of the government which was temporarily faced with the strike of the railway workers. He fought against the British empire but he loved the British people. He considered no person to be an enemy. Beyond the sovereignty of the nation he looked to the categorical imperative of human brotherhood. He believed in a union of hearts—*homonoia* of all men and women of the world. This was the essence of sarvodaya. Gandhi's humanitarianism was only a sociological application of the great norm of Ahimsa which means universal non-hatred and non-violence. Buddha and St. Francis showed the tenderest care for

the meanest creatures of the world. Their love extended also to the animal kingdom. Gandhi believed in the doctrine of absolute and universal compassion for all living beings. A believer in God naturally has the feeling of identity with all creatures because all are the creations of God. Hence love of the human kind was only an aspect of his Ahimsa.

Gandhi wanted that before internationalism could become a reality, those countries which were still suffering under feudal overlordship and colonial dependence should have the political freedom to determine their own future. He cried for a halt to the nefarious game of "gangsterism" among nations. Nationalism was a stage towards the realization of internationalism. He said: "How is this vast mass of humanity to be aflame in the cause of world deliverance, unless and until it has touched and felt freedom." India had first to be free before she could cooperate on terms of equality with other nations. The units that could form any international union should do that from their own will and this implied the previous attainment of national sovereignty. Hence Gandhi wrote: "It is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only when nationalism becomes a fact, i.e., when peoples belonging to different countries have organized themselves and are able to act as one man. It is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Each wants to profit at the expense of, and rise on, the ruin of the other. Indian nationalism has struck a different path. It wants to organize itself or to find full self-expression for the benefit and service of humanity at large." Nationalism would not mark the climax of political evolution. It was not an end but a stage. In Gandhi the dominant concepts were always truth, non-violence and purity and hence as a believer in positive love for man he believed in internationalism and in the essential unity of man. He was a spiritual and moral internationalist. Although one of the greatest of nationalist leaders of all

times, he has been one of the greatest exponents of cosmopolitanism. He stood for a nationalism that was "health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian". He felt that Indian nationalism should be a step towards internationalism and human unity. India's freedom could be preserved only if there was "goodwill towards the whole of the human family." He believed in the replacement of sovereignty by international cooperation and trust in a world order. He wanted India to be a free nation in order that she could sacrifice herself for the service of mankind. Hence Gandhi wrote : "I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country may be utilized for the benefit of mankind. Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, and the province for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love, therefore, or nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism." Nationalism was thus not the pinnacle of human endeavours but was only a stage in the political evolution of man. Through national consolidations it was possible to get over the obstacles of caste, group and local prejudices, conflicts and struggles. Nationalism is a means of political and psychological integration. Once, local and sectional hatreds had been consumed by the fire of nationalism, the time would come when the nation would sacrifice itself for the good of the world. Gandhi wrote : "My patriotism includes the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service of India includes the service of humanity. The whole scheme for the liberation of India is based upon the development of internal strength. It is a plan of self-purification." He wanted that Indian nationalism

should mean the development of the national strength of India so that India could serve mankind. The destiny of India lay not in militarization but in the realization of the noble mission of the establishment of friendship and peace in the world.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi's conception of internationalism is an effective theoretical counterbalance to the almost blind adherence to the cult of national patriotism and absolute sovereignty which we find in Hegelianism, Austrianism and Fascism. He said "My patriotism is subservient to my religion."

Gandhi, like a political utopian visualised a plan of human unity to be realized by friendly interdependent states. He had a great devotion to the noble goal of international cooperation and universal harmony. He pleaded for world order and world cooperation. He wrote: "Isolated independence is not the goal of the world states. It is voluntary interdependence. The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states warring one against another, but a federation of friendly interdependent states. The consummation of that event may be far off. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about our expressing our readiness for universal interdependence rather than independence. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence". Hence it is clear that Gandhi's romantic conception of the soul of a nation although somewhat comparable to the *Volksgeist* of the German writers, was not meant as the psychological support to virulent national chauvinism but was only a means to extol the soul of a people against the effective organizations and combinations of imperialistic powers that may attempt to suppress rising nationalism. Gandhi was never tired of repeating that men could receive divine grace and affection only if they loved their brethren. He said: "We are all tarred with the same brush; we are all members of the vast

human family". Thus we see that Sarvodayavada teaches the conception of transcendence of narrow, exclusive, aggressive and chauvinistic nationalism and affirms the fundamental proposition that one's good consists in the good of mankind. In a note addressed to Maurice Frydman on 28th July, 1942 Gandhi had asserted his faith in a world state. "I have your letters. You still misunderstand me. I told you that I was at one with you and that I was trying to take the Congress and everybody towards world federation. I also told you that if it ever comes, it will come through Sevagram or the Sevagram way. I want Free India, too, for that purpose. If I can get freedom for India through non-violent means, power of non-violence is firmly established, empire idea dissolves and the World-State takes its place in which all the states of the world are free and equal, no state has its military. There may be a world police to keep order in the absence of universal belief in non-violence."

## 9. Ramrajya or Perfect Society

Mahatma Gandhi claimed to be a practical realist. But besides giving forth his suggestions on the concrete social, political and economic problems facing the country Gandhi provided us the concept of the utopian *Ramrajya*. Like Plato and St. Augustine, Gandhi hoped that the principle of divine reason and divine kingdom should be concretely realized in the world. Hence he postulated that in the ideal state of Ramrajya or the Kingdom of God upon Earth there will be the sovereignty of the moral authority of the people and the state as a structure of violence would be extinct. He was convinced that stop-gap arrangements will not bring perfection. The mere correction of the institutional structure will not suffice for the concrete realization of rights. A formal political change may mean only change of rulers. The real remedy is to foster the inner moral strength of the people. Hence he postulated the ideal of *Ramrajya* which means the kingdom of love,

justice and righteousness. For the realization of *Ramrajya*, self-discipline is of the uppermost significance.<sup>1</sup> Rama stands not for any concrete human personality but for the all-pervasive divine spirit.<sup>2</sup> Gandhi had been a devotee of Tulsidas from his childhood and hence he worshipped God as Rama. In his earlier writings nevertheless Gandhi accepted the historical ideal represented by Rama the perfect king of Ayodhya. In his presidential address at the Third Kathiawad Political Conference held at Bhavanagar, January 8, 1925 he had said: "Rama did justice even to a dog. By abandoning his kingdom and living in the forest for the sake of truth Rama gave to all the kings of the world an object-lesson in noble conduct. By his strict monogamy he showed that a life of perfect self-restraint could be led by a royal householder. He lent splendour to his throne by his popular administration and proved that Rama Rajya was the acme of Swaraj. Rama did not need the very imperfect modern instrument of ascertaining public opinion by counting votes. He had captivated the hearts of the people. He knew public opinion by intuition as it were. The subjects of Rama were supremely happy. Such Rama Rajya is possible even today. The race of Rama is not extinct. In modern times the first Caliphs may be said to have established Rama Rajya. Abubaker and Hazrat Umar collected revenue running into crores and yet personally they were as good as *fakirs*." But later on Gandhi meant by *Ramrajya* the notion of a society founded upon spiritual and moral principles.

The theory of *Ramrajya* amounts to the synthesis of the Augustinian conception of the kingdom of God on earth with the democratic ideal of the sovereignty of the people. The Christian philosophers dreamt of a *Civitas Dei* on earth. The eighteenth and nineteenth century political theorists stressed the sovereignty of the people.

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, November 21, 1936

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, April 28, 1946

Gandhian Ramrajya is not merely a political ideal but also represents the fructification of the moral spirit. In this society there will be the abolition of tensions, conflicts and egoistic interests. Behind social contradictions and national and international tensions Gandhi traces individual perversities and hence for his *Ramrajya* Gandhi wants the intensification of moral will. Sympathetic accommodation, non-coercive organization and spontaneous co-operation will be the characteristics of Ramrajya. Everybody would earn an honest living by the sweat of his brow and there would be no distinction between intellectual and manual labourer. It will not be a functionally undifferentiated society. There will be social organizations of the several functions but the entire structure will be characterized by the absence of any pyramidal and vertical polarization, coercion and exploitation. Ramrajya will be a state of economic equality. "There will be no Ramrajya in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat."<sup>1</sup> Gandhi adhered to the sociology of varnas which prescribes not the abolition of the various varnas but pleads for the nullification of all social distance, privilege and discrimination. With the passage of years Gandhi tended towards the concept of radical equalitarianism and he felt that equal distribution will be a feature leading to the realization of *Ramrajya*. This ideal society will be characterized by credit, mutual confidence and spontaneous non-coercive organization. In this society lustfulness will be replaced by reverence for the rights of the womenfolk. Petty local patriotism will be replaced in it by a broad public spirit and devotion to the ideals of justice, peace and rights. Positive non-violence means universalism. "The silken net of love" will provide the social bonds that knit the community together. This ideal society will revolt against the ostentation and glamour of civilization and will try to fight inequality in

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, June 1, 1947



all its virulent phases. Ramrajya means the realization of universal peace and humanitarian ethics. There is no place in it for pugnacity, barbarity and war. The realization of the kingdom of God would depend however on a sincere faith in the supreme spirit by millions.<sup>1</sup> It is evident that this *Ramrajya* will be more a society than the state and its social bonds will be more cohesive than the formal bonds of legal organization. It may be regarded as a realization of the synthesis of the Thomistic conception of natural law and the Rousseauic conception of general will.

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, April 21, 1946

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATIONS OF GANDHI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

#### 1. The Psychological and Moral Approach to Economics

Gandhi accepted the spiritual orientation to politics, sociology and economics. Once he said that Jesus Christ was the greatest economist of his time. He condemned the "monster god of materialism". He pleaded for simplicity. The individualistic propensity towards the acquisition of private wealth is the central devil. Hence Gandhi advocated "a wise regulation of riches and absolute social justice". The malady of modern civilization was fundamentally psychological because there is an over-expanding quest for commodities. The greed for accumulation is insatiable. Hence Gandhi wanted that the rich men should recognize the immanence of God in all creatures and should take the initiative in voluntary dispossession with a view to the diffusion of universal contentment. God was not the friend of those who secretly coveted the wealth of others. Absolute minimization of personal wants is the path to the realization of God. Hankering after riches forced one to resort to exploitation in some form or the other.<sup>1</sup> The suppression of the drive towards the avaricious collection and continuous addition of capital and the negation of the monopolistic possession of things that may be and are needed by others, would alone bring into being the perfect society. The renunciation of soul-destroying competition and endless wants will result in

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi : *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*, p. 149

the abolition of engines of economic destruction. This will mean the substitution of false and non-human economics by true and human economics. Gandhi regarded economics as a moral science instead of a positive and analytical science. He wrote : “.....I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful. Thus the economics that permit one county to prey upon another are immoral”.

The central conception of man as a spiritual entity is dominant in Gandhi's discussions of economic theory. He traced the roots of significant economic ideas in the religious scriptures. The economic philosophy of Gandhi is rooted in his stress on the replacement of greed and accumulation by generosity and love. He wanted that justice should be done to the millions and they should be given their “due”. He was opposed to the selfish utilization for profit of social resources. He was emphatic on assuring to the laborer a daily wage and wanted to remove drudgery from his work. He was keen on providing to the toiling millions a standard wage or a living wage. He also criticised the pervasive economic exploitation engineered by capitalism but unlike the positivistic school of sociologists, he stressed also the psychological roots of exploitation. “Exploitation thrives on our sins. Remove the sins and exploitation will stop”. Gandhi was influenced by the exalted life of abnegation of Buddha and the philosophy of the Bhagavadgita and hence he stressed non-accumulation, non-stealing and philosophic disinterestedness or *anasakti*. In Gandhian thought economics is subordinated to moral considerations. To some extent the traditional Hindu conception of the *Sannyasin* who is supposed to transcend the sentiment of egoistic attachment influenced the personal life and conduct of Gandhi. He thoroughly believed in the ideal of non-possession. He wrote : “Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of Non-possession requires, that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his

head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread, but it will be God's business, and not his, to provide it. Only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions, and try to reduce them. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants".<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Ruskin's Influence on Gandhi

With the advance of capitalist industrialism in the west there appeared two pronounced theoretical standpoints in economics. The positivists championed the cult of the rationality of self-preservation and self-interest. They felt that the pursuit of self-interest on the basis of rational economic calculation produces the common good. Locke, Adam Smith, Ricardo and Jeremy Bentham were the advocates of this school. There was another school which challenged the foundations of a pure positivistic theory of economic action. John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy were the leaders in advocating the extension of the normative valuational standpoint even in economic action. Gandhi's economic philosophy is inspired by John Ruskin (1819-1900)<sup>2</sup>. Gandhi stated in the preface of the abridged Gujrati version which he (Gandhi) prepared of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (1862) that the latter expounds and extends the ideas of Socrates. Ruskin indicates how they who accept the ideas of Socrates should behave and act in the different professions. Ruskin challenged the assumptions of modern political economy which is founded on an "ossifiant theory of progress"<sup>3</sup> conceived almost on the negation of the human soul. He regarded the worker as "an engine whose motive

<sup>1</sup> From *Yevada Mandira*

<sup>2</sup> John Ruskin, *Unto This Last* (1860), *Munera Pulveris* (1862)

<sup>3</sup> Ruskin, "The Roots of Honour", *Unto This Last*, p. 116

power is a soul". Hence he advocated the moralization of commerce and suggested that even the merchant should be ready to die for the nation. Instead of the contractual conception of economic relationships Ruskin proposed a genuine familistic approach. He said, "... treat the servant kindly without any economical purpose and all economical purposes will be answered; in this, as in all other matters, whosoever will save his life shall lose it, who so loses it shall find it."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in a train journey from Johannesburg to Durban and was immensely inspired, almost "captured", by this book. Gandhi learnt from *Unto This Last* three basic ideas :

"(i) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

(ii) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

(iii) That a life of labor, *i. e.*, the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living".

Gandhi, from the very beginning of his mature life had a pronouncedly spiritual and moral approach to problems. Gandhi's antichrematistic tendencies which were born out of his spiritual orientation to life were reinforced by his studies of Ruskin. Like the Hindu philosophers Kautilya, Bhishma and Sukra Gandhi did not negate the significance of *artha* but was opposed to the preponderance of the economic factor in life. Like Aristotle, Gandhi regarded economics as an instrument for moral action and not good in itself. He repudiated, however, the explanation of human history and individual motivation solely in terms of the economic calculus as is fashionable in some schools of western sociology and economics. In place of personal satisfaction he put forward the ideal of collective good. Both Gandhi and

<sup>1</sup> John Ruskin, *Unto This Last*, p. 120

Ruskin are certainly very realistic in stressing that the wealth of a nation consists not in the accumulation of external commodities but in the growth and development of a strong and healthy population. A hardy and sturdy population which can suffer for the country is its greatest asset. Ruskin was interested in having "full-breathed, bright-eyed and happy-hearted human creatures". Gandhi was never tired of repeating that the sinews of India's wealth consisted in its unutilized man-power. India's tremendous labour-force was the greatest capital that the country had in its possession.

### 3. Gandhi's Critique of Capitalism

Gandhi condemned the nineteenth century doctrine of *laissez-faire*.<sup>1</sup> He refused to attribute any prescriptive title either to capitalists or the landholders. He was a critic of capitalism. He was unreconciled to the capitalistic system of production and technological growth. He criticized the iniquities of capitalism at a time when the capitalist economy had not yet become the dominant aspect of the total economy in India and that indicates his foresight. Gandhi was opposed to capitalism because it was based on violence. The concentration and centralization of capital result in strengthening the engines of violence of the richer sections. The exploitation of the laboring sections repelled him. In Ahmedabad he organized one of the most powerful unions of textile workers in the country. He wanted the capitalists to become the trustees of their wealth. He criticized the accumulation of capital as immoral because it was radically antithetical to the concept of *aparigraha*. Accumulation in any form, as Gandhi points out in the *Mangal-Prabhata*, was a kind of theft. It was an indication of one's lack of faith in the encompassing goodness of the supreme divine being. Gandhi literally believed in the sayings of Jesus Christ and other saints including Malukadas and

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, March 19, 1931. Gandhi was pained to find that many cloth merchants still "parade the doctrine of individual freedom".

Rahim Khankhana that God is the supreme giver of all our requirements and hence like birds we should not accumulate for the morrow. He often said that a believer in God should have no worries on account of money. Gandhi had cancelled his insurance policy quite early in his life because he regarded having a life insurance policy as a negation of one's earnest faith in the supreme beneficence of God.

Towards the end of his life Gandhi became more trenchant in his criticism of capitalism.<sup>1</sup> But he would not sanction the forcible overthrow of capitalism. He claimed to fight capitalism in his own way. He wrote : "Labor was far superior to capital. Without labor gold, silver and copper were a useless burden. It was labor which extracted precious ore from the bowels of the earth. He could quite conceive labor existing without metal. Labor was priceless, not gold. He wanted marriage between capital and labor. They could work wonders in co-operation. But that could happen only when labor was intelligent enough to co-operate with itself and then offer co-operation with capital on terms of honourable equality."<sup>2</sup> He stated that he wanted to end capitalism almost if not quite as much as the most advanced socialists and communists. He stated that a repudiation of the thesis of capitalism meant a philosophy of "juster distribution of the products of labor."<sup>3</sup> And that implied the voluntary acceptance of simplicity and contentment. Certainly, the Gandhian technic of ending the evils of capitalism would be different from the methods and instruments of the extreme advocates of forcible expropriation. There is no place in Gandhian economic thought for the operations of a "vanguard" of trained proletarian workers for bringing the conquest of the bourgeois state and effectuating the expropriation of the expropriated.

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi "No Moral Right to Capital", *Harijan*, 16 February, 1947

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, September 7, 1947

<sup>3</sup> *Young India*, September 3, 1925

Gandhi was a critic not only of capitalism based on the private ownership of the means of production, but also of state capitalism. Like the anarchists, he held that the state was an organized engine of violence and hence he felt that the violence of private ownership will be less injurious than that of the state. State capitalism therefore could not provide the remedy for social and economic evils. Gandhi is thus opposed to the theory of state capitalism advocated by the historical school of German economics to which Schöller, Wagner and Knies belonged. Between state capitalism and private capitalism Gandhi regarded the latter as the lesser evil. He was opposed, however, to capitalism in all its phases. Hence instead of the centralization of power under a monocratic state structure Gandhi favoured the extension of the sense of trusteeship.

The problems of social tensions and struggles were bound to assume a different character in a non-violent state. Gandhi wrote: "Quarrels between labor and capital and strikes will be few and far between in a non-violent state, because the influence of the non-violent majority will be so great as to command the respect of the principal elements in society".<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi was a spiritual idealist, but his position with reference to property is much more radical than that of the traditional idealists who regard property as the objectivization of personality and a means to virtuous life. Gandhi felt that personality is realized not by the accumulation but by the renunciation of property. He is more radical than Hegel and Green but is conservative in comparison to Plato and Rousseau in the *Republic* and in the *Discourse on Inequality* they condemn private property. Gandhi was opposed to the concept of communism as the alternative to capitalism. Plato in the *Republic* absolutely condemned private property and he proposed to divest the guardians and auxiliaries of all property. Gandhi never did go to that extreme.

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<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, September 1, 1940



As a believer in simplicity, however, he would like the people to have only some amount of property for use.

#### 4. Theory of Trusteeship

Being influenced by the idealism of the *Ishopanishad* Gandhi stated that things of the world should be enjoyed by renunciation. Gandhi wanted that the rich should become trustees of their surplus wealth for the good of society. The society was only an extension of the family. The conception of trusteeship is old and is to be traced to St. Ambrose and other patriotic philosophers but Gandhi got it from books of jurisprudence. Gandhi discovered great similarity in the conception of *aparigraha* (non-possession) of the Gita and Snell's discussions of the maxims of equity.<sup>1</sup>

But Gandhi stated that in case the rich would not become willing trustees Satyagraha was to be resorted to against the holders of wealth. With the passage of time Gandhi went on adding an economic and sociological content into the rather moralistic conception of trusteeship. In 1938 he said "A trustee has no heir but the public".<sup>2</sup> This implies that the community or the state has also a right in the property of the moneyed classes.

#### 5. Critique of Machinery and Industrialism

Gandhi advocated, like Tolstoy and Rousseau a return to simplicity and nature. In the *Hind-Swaraj* published in 1909 he opposed large-scale industrialism and mechanization. He criticized industrialism because it was based on exploitation. But he was not a complete ruralist advocating an unmitigated return to village Arcadianism. During the course of years there was a gradual transition from the exalted heights of the ideas of *Hind-Swaraj* to the more cautious realism of his articles

<sup>1</sup> In the chapter entitled "Result of Introspection" in his *Autobiography* Gandhi says: "My regard for jurisprudence increased, I discovered in it religion". The word *Aparigraha* occurs in the *Bhagavadgita*, VI, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Hanjan*, April 13, 1938

in the *Harijan* in the forties. Hence later on, we find him realistic enough, at least in the context of the future Indian society, advocating a reconciliation of large-scale and small-scale industries, the nationalization of key-industries<sup>1</sup>, and the organization of urban centres not as lop-sided out-growths but as units catering to the enhancement of the interests of the villages where the real soul of India lay.

In the South African period Gandhi was far more critical of the machine civilization than in his later period. Gandhi was hostile to machines. He considered machines to be a "snake-pit" but even in the *Hind-Swaraj* he did not advocate the immediate destruction of machines. Nevertheless he categorically denied that the machine could produce any good. The machine led to the slavery of the laborers both male and female. It took away from the laboring population their traditional means of subsistence. Thus it deprived them of the source of livelihood. It led to private monopoly. It resulted in the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small section of population. He wrote: "Today it is used to pour wealth in the hands of the chosen few. Little attention is paid to the crores of people from whom the machine snatches away their bread". Like Marx, who formulated the theory of technological unemployment or the industrial reserve army, Gandhi condemned machines on the ground that they lead to unemployment. Marx was opposed only to the private ownership of the means of production. He condemned the use of property as means to power. But Gandhi criticised the mechanical civilization itself. He condemned the railways because through them moral corruption spreads in different places. He pointed out that the railways were introduced by the British in India not to serve popular interests but to be the foundation of the edifice of British imperialism by making possible the quick movement of troops.

Thus he is opposed to technological civilization both on economic and moral grounds.

With the passage of time Gandhi's attitude became more realistic. The ethereal idealism of the *Hind-Swaraj* yielded place to caution. His more sober view on the subject was that he wanted not to destroy machines but to impose limitations on them. If machines could be used to lighten the labor of the vast number of workers and millions of people he would have no opposition to them. He would not mind "villagers plying their instruments and tools with electricity." Gandhi's opposition lay not to the machines as such but to the irrational craze for machinery. He could not see much logic in piling labor-saving devices. He stated that the machine should not tend to atrophy the limbs of human beings. He advocated nationalization of key industries. If there were to be established some factories for producing essential commodities, Gandhi wanted them to be nationalized and not to be retained under private ownership because that would result in the exploitation of the laborers. He was not opposed to those machines which do not create or protract the under-employment of the wage-earners and which can be driven not by power but by hands and feet. He was not even opposed to rural electrification. He wrote: "If we should have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools, with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the state would own power-houses just as they have their grazing pastures". He felt that there was a possibility involved therein to combine rural and urban patterns of action and behaviour because electricity would make possible the deconcentration of industry over large areas and would consequently eliminate the necessity of huge urban establishments.

From the extreme ruralism represented in the *Hind-Swaraj* to the later concept of nationalization of key industries as represented in the articles of the *Harijan*, Gandhi undergoes a long period of transition and evo-

lution. With the encountering of later experiences in life Gandhi made greater concessions to the demands of the social and economic reality. He came to realize that the absolute neutralization of the machine civilization was an impossibility. His later and more mature view about machines was that "the heavy machinery for work of public utility which could be undertaken by human labor has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the state and used entirely for the benefit of the people". Hence the concessions that Gandhi finally made to machines were tempered by threefold reservations : (i) nationalization of key industries, (ii) the dispersion of the centres of industrial production and (iii) production not for private accumulation but for social service. But it remains certain that in the Gandhian sociology of civilization technological rationality is never a dominant category. His fundamental ideal is limitation of wants and not the creation of a gigantic machine civilization. His basic theme is not the accentuation of production and the economy of plethoric abundance. He believed in the traditional religious concept that accumulation of riches is a bar to moral life. Hence Gandhi advocated the limitation of acquisitiveness and the moralization of group living. His attachment to village industries and Khadi was intense and deep. He had a strong fear and suspicion that the India of the future might become a highly militarized and industrialized country and that might result in the submergence or even elimination of village industries and Khadi which to Gandhi were symbols of non-violence. Thus Gandhi even in his later days stood for only a limited degree of machine civilization.

## **6. Rural Economy**

There is a deep element of agrarian concern in Gandhi. He had the insight to realize that the emancipation of India could not be brought about by the reform of the towns. Rural rehabilitation was essential if the standard of lives of the people was to be raised,

Hence he turned his attention to the villages. Gandhi's heart bled to see the misery of the Indian villagers and he formulated his famous "constructive programme" for them. He lived like a farmer and a weaver. Gandhi preached a return to simplicity. Non-violence could be realized not on the basis of a factory civilization but only on the basis of self-contained villages. In the context of the early writings of the *Hind-Swaraj* Gandhi appears to be a ruralist but in his later writings in the *Young India* and the *Narijan* the extreme idealism of the earlier period has slowly given way to a more cautious realism. Later on it appears that he was only opposed to the perversities of modern engineering and technology. The basic theme in his economic philosophy is that he stood for safe-guarding the integrity and foundations of the villages. His heart was deeply anguished to see the disintegration and utter ruin of Indian villages.<sup>1</sup> He believed that the devastating effects of British capitalism had threatened the very existence of the village economy.<sup>2</sup> Free trade had destroyed India's cottage industry and hence ruined the peasantry. Hence Gandhi was a protectionist. He pleaded for rural reconstruction. He said : "Before the British advent, India spun and wove, in her millions of cottages, just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes, as described by English witnesses. Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do

<sup>1</sup> In *Young India*, October 13, 1921, Gandhi referred to the suffering and exploitation of Indian villages as "the bleeding process" that has gone on for the past two-hundred years.

<sup>2</sup> Gandhi stressed the revival of the Charkha as a counterpoise to the British monopoly in textiles. He pleaded for the fostering of spinning and handloom industry.

they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity, which is perhaps unequalled in history".<sup>1</sup> Gandhi bitterly protested against the grievous wrong of the rampant rural exploitation carried under the British regime and he held the British government and the Indian town-dwellers responsible for "this unequalled crime against humanity" perpetrated on the semi-starved masses of India slowly sinking down to lifelessness. He wrote : "Over 75 per cent of the population are agriculturists. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labor."<sup>2</sup> Hence Gandhi prescribed a thorough improvement in the life of simple peasant. Rural economy as conceived by Gandhi altogether eliminates exploitation. That only could provide genuine happiness. He emphatically declared that the salvation for Indian civilization consisted in India forgetting every thing that she had learnt from the west. He preached "the gospel of rural-mindedness".<sup>3</sup> Gandhi felt that India lived in the villages. Hence his slogan "Back to the village" was not an abstraction or a reactionary trend. The regeneration of India he felt to be impossible without village reconstruction. The growth of big megalopolitan centres has been also condemned in the west because vast concentration of populations in a small area is an undesirable phenomenon both from the economic and moral points of view. Like some of the western sociologists, Gandhi felt that a strengthened and

<sup>1</sup> Mahatma Gandhi's Trial Speech, 1922

<sup>2</sup> Gandhi's keenness about the economic roots of Swaraj is pronounced

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, May 16, 1936

economically sound village economy would revitalize Indian democracy. Hence he championed the cause of Khadi with great urgency.

Towards the latter part of his life Gandhi became more radical in his economic ideas. He advocated the revolutionary doctrine that "Land belongs to him who tills it."<sup>1</sup> This radical notion regarding the legal possession of land is far more in advance of the other doctrine of Gandhi regarding landlords being the trustees for the tenants. In a speech at the Federal Structure Committee of the Second Round Table Conference, in 1931, Gandhi had said : "There is no desire on the part of the Congress, and there is no desire on the part of these dumb paupers to dispossess landlords of their possessions, but they would have landlords to act as trustees for the tenants."<sup>2</sup> In 1934 he had told the landlords that if their rights were threatened he would side with them. Even in "draft of instructions" prepared in August 1942, the peasants were asked to pay the revenue to the landlords. But with the passage of time Gandhi advanced in the direction of radicalism and he was thinking in 1946 in terms of the capture of land by peasants if the landlords refused to capitulate.<sup>3</sup>

## 7. The Economics of Khadi

Mahatma Gandhi pleaded for complete Swadeshi or cent per cent Swadeshi. He stood for the revival of the village communities. This demanded the revival of village industries and especially of Khadi. Khadi was the symbol of Swadeshi. The importance of Khadi and the spinning wheel dawned on him as early as 1908. In the Charkha he found not the symbol of crudeness but the means and instrument of helping our people in at least getting the barest morsel of food. For the economic

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, March 31, 1946

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, October 8, 1931. For an attempt to reconcile the two points of view see *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*, p. 128

<sup>3</sup> Ruskin also had favoured the nationalization of land, mines and waterfalls

rehabilitation of the villages, with his blessings, the Village Industries Association and the All-India Spinners Association had been started. The science of Khadi could succeed only if based on the decentralization of production and consumption. The Charkha as he used it was not only calculated to offer immediate economic advantages to the poor weavers but symbolised the sentiment of protest against the machine civilization. The Charkha was an attempt to eliminate the exclusiveness and the exploitationist character of modern machinery. It symbolised the dignity of labor. In immensely powerful words Gandhi wrote : "Give them [the laborers] work that they may eat ! '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 source of every coin that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write. Every one must spin. Let Tagore spin like the others. Let him burn his foreign clothes ; that is the duty today. God will take care of the morrow. As it says in the Gita, Do right !"<sup>1</sup>

Khadi, as interpreted by Gandhi, was not only an economic but also a political phenomenon. He had an absolute belief in the conception that the universal adoption of Khaddar by Indians was equivalent to the acquisition of Swaraj. The acceptance of the spinning wheel was a symbolical offering to India. Khadi was the symbol of the unity of India. Hence spinning was a daily sacrament and participation in this *Tajna* for the unification and revivification of India. Khadi was a most potent instrument of mass uplift and mass education. The spinning wheel, therefore, was a divine instrument<sup>2</sup> and one calculated to satisfy the needs of the meanest and humblest of human beings. Since the resort to

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, "The Great Sentinel", October 13, 1921

<sup>2</sup> Once Gandhi said : "It is because I see in the spinning wheel the hand of God working. . . ."



khadi meant the enhancement of the economic resources of the Indian villages hence khadi also indicated the decentralization of the production and distribution of the useful commodities for existence.

### 8. Gandhi's Theory of Spiritual Socialism

Towards the latter part of his life there was evidenced in Mahatma Gandhi's thought an increasing radicalism. He even accepted the theory of spiritual socialism. Swaraj, he said could not be complete unless the lowest and the humblest sections got "all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys". In the Gandhian conception of socialism the prince and the peasant, the poor and the rich, the employer and the employee were to be treated equally.

True socialism was not to be attained by the conquest of political power by insurrection by an organized party. The spiritual socialism which Gandhi wanted was to begin with the moral regeneration of the individual. "Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeroes to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeroes will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeroes will be so much waste".<sup>1</sup> It was of the utmost importance that socialists should be truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted. They could effect a genuine transformation by the impact of personal character. Socialism is pure as crystal and hence it requires crystal-like means to achieve it. The emphasis in the Gandhian scheme of politics is always on individual purification. He wrote: "I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost Communist".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, July 13, 1947

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, March 31, 1946

Gandhi said that truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in socialism. The western theory of socialism was born in an atmosphere full of violence. Satyagraha was the only means to bring about spiritual socialism.<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi claimed to have read Marx's *Capital* when he was interred in the Agakhan Palace. But while the modern Marxist socialism is based on the sociology of historical materialism which regards the entire recorded history of mankind to be the history of class struggle, Gandhi believed in the violent expropriation of none and was opposed to the sociologists who advocate class-struggles. Instead of the Marxist theory of dialectical materialism, Gandhi stood for metaphysical idealism. Gandhi was emphatic in stressing the theory and technic of non-violence. Instead of revolutionary violence and capture of the power of the state Gandhi advocated a direct action of love and non-violence. In place of the dictatorship of the proletariat Gandhi stood for the rehabilitation of rural economy and preached the neutralization of political power for all classes. There are enormous theoretical differences between Marxism and Gandhism and it is far from the truth to say that Marxism minus violence is equal to Gandhism. Gandhi never accepted the dogmatics of Marxian socialism- dialectical materialism and the three laws of the transformation of quantity into quality, the interpenetration of opposites and the negation of the negation, and the economic theory of surplus value and the sociology of class-struggles.

In 1916 Gandhi had denied being a socialist and stated that dispossession of the properties of the owners would be against the spirit of Ahimsa. Even in 1940 he said that socialization cannot solve the evils generated by modern industrialism. But in his own way he was a socialist in spirit. Sometimes he claimed to be a socialist

<sup>1</sup> "Socialism and Satyagraha", *Harijan*, 20 July, 1947. Gandhi was firmly of the conviction that Satyagraha could rid society of all political, moral and economic evils. He said that the socialism of Godless people led nowhere

even while he was in South Africa. Several of the sociological and economic implications of the Phoenix farm established in 1904 by him in South Africa are socialistic in orientation. Regardless of colour or political nationality every person working in the press was to get a living wage of three pounds. It was a big international family constituted by members belonging to different races who were fed by a common kitchen. Kallanbach who was a Jew was an important member of this group. It was managed by the labor of all the members voluntarily given according to capacity. The land round the press had been parcelled out in pieces of three acres each to enable every one to live by manual labor. Gandhi himself had one such piece.

Gandhi was to a great extent an ethical and a humanitarian socialist. He stressed the concepts of mutual trust, love and confidence. He claimed to befriend his enemies and this spirit of universal goodwill and compassion is socialistic according to him. He believed in winning the love and affection even of his opponents. He felt that all the members who constitute the community are fraternally related. This also is a socialistic idea according to Gandhi. Socialism as he interpreted it is an extension of brotherly ethic. Bread labor is an aspect of socialism according to Gandhi. He used to work for several years among the laborers and this spirit of equalitarianism is also socialistic. He was not an intellectual or philosopher teaching socialism from Olympian heights but concretely embodies the socialist ideal of humanism and fraternity. He claimed to be a traditional Hindu socialist believing that all land belongs to Gopal or God or in modern terms to the people or to the state.

It would be incorrect, however, to regard Gandhi as a mere ethical and utopian socialist in spite of his supreme concern for the personal regeneration of man as the prior condition for the uplift of society. Towards the latter part of his life Gandhi made a considerable headway towards the acceptance of the socialistic ideas

of equal distribution of rewards, nationalization of basic industries etc. He wrote : "At the same time I believe that some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key industries, I would have state ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labor, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the state. But as I can conceive such a state only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no pariahs of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers"

### **9. Critique of Communism**

Gandhi was hostile to the technics of communism. He did not enter into any elaborate analysis of the economics and sociology of communism. But he was thoroughly repelled by the association of communism with atheism and violence. As early as March 30, 1919 Gandhi had said in a speech : "Bolshevism is the necessary result of modern materialistic civilization. Its insensate worship of matter has given rise to a school which has been brought up to look upon materialistic advancement as the goal and which has lost all touch with the final things in life". He never appreciated the technics and ideas of the Indian communists but he had more intimate contacts with the Indian socialists. The communists inside India and outside often accused him of being a spokesman of the bourgeoisie and hence a hindrance to the impending mass revolution. But this accusation is thoroughly unfair. Gandhi was a national leader of all sections of the people and not simply of the "proletariat". He wanted that parties and groups should practise the tenets which they professed.

### **10. Bread Labor**

Gandhi had a deep regard for labor. The real

wealth of the nation consists according to him in labor. He wrote : "Coins are but a measure of labor performed. They have no other value. If I buy a rupee worth of flour, I have paid for the labor of cultivation, carrying and grinding. Therefore the real owner of wealth is one who puts in a certain amount of labor with a conscious productive aim."<sup>1</sup> Although Gandhi would not accept the strict assumptions of the labor theory of value either in its Ricardian or in its Marxian forms, still he adhered to the moral idea of the sanctification of labor. He said "Labor has its unique place in a cultured human family."<sup>2</sup> The idea that man should earn his bread by the sweat of his labor, inspired several Christian preachers as also ascetics and members of the medieval monasteries. St. Paul had said : "If any would not work, neither should he eat". Saint Augustine regarded labor as a means for the perfection of man. Tolstoy advocated bread labor. He popularized the ideal of bread labor originally sponsored by Bondareff. Tolstoy's conception of "bread labor" was a magnificent description of rural work on the farms.

Gandhi not only preached but also practised this concept of bread labor in his South African days. The Phoenix Farm was originally based on the practice of this principle. He was sincere in his conviction that the theory of bread-labor if adequately practised would go a long way in creating the moral and social atmosphere for the realization of equality. He wrote : "everyone should deem it a dishonour to eat a single meal without honest labor. If we could shed the aversion to labor and adapt ourselves to unexpected changes of fortune, we would go a long way towards the acquisition of fearlessness and thus towards an upliftment of our national character."<sup>3</sup> Bread labor will strike at the roots of that unjust distinction between mental labor

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, March 25, 1939

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, July 28, 1946

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, January 19, 1947

and manual labor which has been made the basis of the psychological defence of slavery by Aristotle. The social equalitarianism of Gandhi, as differentiated from Aristotle's defence of inequality, stems from his spiritual approach. Life is to be consecrated as a sacrifice according to the Gita. Everybody must work. Those who ate without working were parasites. The economic foundations of the Gandhian political philosophy are inspired by moral orientation. In 1925 Gandhi had said that body labor in some form or other would be the criterion for franchise in the free India of his dreams. He reiterated this belief of his also in 1947 on the eve of independence.

### **11. Concept of Equal Distribution : Economic Equality**

Gandhi accepted the concept of economic equality. Ruskin proposed remuneration according to the eternal principles of justice instead of the mechanical doctrine of demand and supply. He said : "the best labor always has been, and is, as all labor ought to be paid by an invariable standard."<sup>1</sup> Gandhi extends Ruskin's conception of the equality of wages to all kinds of labor and pleads for equal distribution. According to the Gandhian theory of Sarvodaya, in the ideal society there should be equality of wages not only for laborers but also for other members of the different professions. All persons should be supplied with the necessaries to satisfy their natural needs. The revolutionary doctrine of equal distribution implied that each man should have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs. There should be no accumulation and no useless possession. Gandhi, in his later years, subscribed to the Marxian formula : "to each according to his need".<sup>2</sup> The constituent elements of economic equality were, a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, medical relief and facili-

<sup>1</sup> John Ruskin, *Unto This Last* p. 123

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, March 31, 1946

ties for the education of children, for every family. For the concrete realization of economic equality it was essential to take recourse to the Charkha and the allied industries. This would go a long way to bring about social and economic equality. Gandhi inculcated the revolutionary doctrine of equality of wages for the lawyer, the doctor, the teacher and the scavenger as the panacea for socio-economic evils. For the realization of economic equality he would not wait for state action. He pleaded for concrete immediate personal action. He wrote: "Under my plan the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten bighas of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor."<sup>1</sup>

By economic equality Gandhi does not mean the doctrine of absolute equalization of the possessions of individuals. This form of equalization is neither possible nor desirable. It is too arithmetical. Gandhi would not have favoured the Aristotelian conception of proportionate equality either. According to Aristotle equality should be dispensed according to one's qualities and attainments. When Gandhi pleads that the lawyer and the scavenger should receive equal payments he is repudiating the Aristotelian conception. In the first stage of communism Marx prescribed the formula of payment according to work while for the second stage of communism he accepted the criterion of payment according to needs. Gandhi does not clarify whether he wanted pay-

ment according to needs for the first stage, that is Swaraj or for the highest ideal society, that is Ramraj. It is possible to hold that he wanted the application of this formula for Ramraj. In Swaraj, however, Gandhi would like the elimination of all forms of economic exploitation through non-coercive technics.



## CHAPTER IX

### MAHATMA GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

(a) *Synthetic Character of Gandhian Political Thought.* Gandhi was a great personality of creative and constructive powers. He was a great idealist believing in the everpresent reality of God. He aspired after divine illumination and emancipation of the soul. But he was also keenly interested in the mundane world and its activities. Gandhi was also a thinking realist but with the touch of the celestial prophet and the ethereal mystic in him. He foresaw that the kingdom of God could not be immediately realized in the world but he wanted that strenuous endeavours should be made for the remaking of human nature. The devilish propensities towards wickedness, vanity, depravity and lustfulness have to be conquered. He emphasized that moral regeneration was essential even for political and social betterment. The final and ultimate loyalty is always to God and the divine law. But Gandhi would not feel frustrated if the celestial city was not within the range of proximate realization. He constantly repeated: "one step is enough for me." He was not tired of preaching the significance of the "constructive programme". Hence the Gandhian political philosophy represents a synthesis. If on one side it has its eyes fixed upon the eschatological conception of the salvation of the human soul, it is, on the other side, no less emphatic in its urgent appeal for bettering the economic and social conditions of the Indian villages by stressing the use of Khadi and the practice of the rules of hygiene and cleanliness.

Gandhi had the instinct of the scientist. His autobiography is entitled *Experiments with Truth*. The word *Experiments* is of immense significance, because it shows

the practical and the observing cast of Gandhi's mind. For Gandhi the essence of spirituality lay in holy and devout living. He would not have sanctioned the concept of salvation by mere faith. He stressed incessant disinterested action in quest of the realization of truth. In his interpretation of the Bhagavadgita the supreme merit that Gandhi claims for his annotations and comments is that behind his writings there is the strength gained from a sustained practice of the teachings of the great scripture for nearly half a century. When Gandhi became convinced of the superiority of nature-cure system of treatment he practised it on his own body and on the bodies of his wife and children. Gandhi had the spirit of the martyr for truth and he deemed no sacrifice too great for the sake of truth. But to his scientific instinct he added the mystical notion of inner voice, and the metaphysical belief in a primordial spiritual substance.

It can be said that Gandhi's fusion of the teachings of the Gita and Buddhism, with the teachings of Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy points to a cultural synthesis of the east and west.<sup>1</sup> The Gandhian philosophy of sarvodaya is partly based on Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. John Ruskin had started with the basic aim of moralizing the economic assumptions of the classical economists. As a system of thought Gandhism represents different streams of intellectual currents in a process of synthesis. The element of synthesis in parts to Gandhism great powers of appeal. Like Plato, Rousseau, Tolstoy, Dayananda and Tilak, Gandhi represents a reaction against civilization, its sophistries and its ostentations, and its maximization of luxuries and pleasure. Like Fichte and Mazzini, Gandhi is a champion of nationalism. Like Cicero, Aquinas and Kant, Gandhi upholds the cause of moral authority in politics. Like Spencer, Seeley and other individualists we find in Gandhi a distrust of the action of government.

<sup>1</sup> In his letter to Franklin D. Roosevelt written on July 1, 1942 Gandhi wrote: "I have profited greatly by the writings of Thoreau and Emerson."

Like Marx, Kautsky and Lenin, Gandhi is opposed to social and economic exploitation. Like T. H. Green, Wallace and Hobhouse Gandhi preaches the orientation of individual claims and rights to the realization of the notion of a common rational good of all men. Like John of Salisbury, Hotman, Calvin and Laski, Gandhi vindicates the right of resistance against unjustified authority.

The political philosophy of Gandhi has its basic roots in his intuitions and spiritual perceptions. But in its details it has references to almost the whole history of Indian and world politics from about 1893 to 1948. It has a comprehensive orientation because Gandhi gave out his views on almost all the important questions of Indian society, economics and politics as well as problems of world diplomacy. He did not cast his views in clear-cut rigid logical categories. Hence there is an element of fluidity and intellectual catholicity in the Gandhian system. Gandhism is not a finished and closed system of thought. Gandhi recognized the necessity of further determinations and reflections to keep in touch with the demands of the times. But there was to be no compromise with the concepts of truth and non-violence. Just as Gandhi has added new sociological and political meaning in the application of the old concepts of truth, Ahimsa and love, so the Gandhian concepts and principles have to be reinterpreted and new meaning has to be added to them. The central spiritual and moral emphasis is to remain unchanged but the actual contents can be widened and extended. Thus Gandhism can adjust itself to the demands of the times. The great merit of Gandhism is that it is an open synthetic and comprehensive system of social and political philosophy and it can incorporate newer elements from other kindred systems of thought. Throughout his life Gandhi had a wonderful resilience of mind. The addition of fresh categories of understanding, or a reinterpretation of some of its details, it will not regard as examples of deviation or apostasy. One of the greatest teachings of Gandhi was cultural

synthesis. Hence intellectual comprehensiveness and theoretical catholicity shown by the willingness for ever-growing synthesis of diverse types of abstractions and propositions is the basic methodological contribution of Gandhism to modern thought. This indicates its constructive strength. Gandhism is not a system of dogmatic scholastic political thought. The very fact that Gandhism is an open system also implies that it is not a complete philosophy. Completeness would imply the exhaustive analysis of all relevant facts and data and would require almost superhuman capacity. No dynamic philosophy can be ever complete. But the same charge of incompleteness can also be made against any other system of organic thought-structure --Platonism or Lockeanism or Marxian dialectical materialism. The creation of any absolutely complete system of thought will signify the decadence of human power of constructive intellectual creativism. No finite mind can create an eternally perfect system of ideas.

(b) *Ethical Idealism in Gandhian Political Thought.*

It is essential to stress the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's political philosophy which makes an appeal to the values of the human personality in an age when the dignity, worth and sacrosanct character of the human personality have been rudely and savagely attacked by the extraneous might of weapons of mass destruction. The Malthusian-Darwinian-Nietzschean emphasis on the victory of the strong over the weak has provided the theoretical support to some of the perverse political creeds of the modern world. The modern critical and sceptical intellectual initially finds it difficult to accept the message of Gandhi which is the reassertion of the Vedantic-Buddhistic-Stoic-Christian belief in the final victory of truth (as contrasted to the theory of the survival of the fittest). In an age full of sickening horror, and secrecy and espionage carried to perfection, the gospel of the essential spirituality of man proclaimed by Gandhi sounds somewhat anachronistic but at the same time it is a terribly tragic commentary on the transfer of the

loyalty of the modern man from Buddha, Mahavira and Christ to Lamarck, Marx and Haeckel. Our world today is threatened with darkness, disintegration, normlessness and decadence and the possible prospects of eventual disaster, disease, extermination and even extinction are being discussed in certain thinking circles. Philosophers are warning us of the chances of an impending annihilation. Gandhism re-asserts at such a grim hour the eternal value of the spiritual truths and it appears as a source of hope and moral optimism. To the modern world professing atheism, vitalism, mechanism, realism or an absorption in sense-data Gandhi's has been the most determined attempt to reveal the substantive rationality of the old religious and moral tenets. The recognition of divine purpose even in a disorderly and struggling world and increasing exertions for the realization of that purpose have been the central goals of Gandhi's private and public life for over half a century. In a sense his tragic martyrdom in 1948 might have set the wheel of Dharma of Buddha and Asoka rolling again. Gandhi's martyrdom is the symbol of the undying worth of the human spirit. The *Atman* is above all death and dualities. Gandhism reinforces the valuational and teleological approach to politics which we find in Plato, Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas, Kant and Croce. Gandhi was inspired by the moral teachings of Buddhism, Gita, Ruskin and Tolstoy. This fact together with his own sanctified character of a moral prophet always in quest of the divine reality will substantiate our interpretation of Gandhian political thought as being, by implication, opposed to the modern positivist attempt at a *Wertfreiwissenschaft*—a value-free social science. Gandhi would subordinate economics and politics to ethics. Gandhi appears as another Plato and Cicero vindicating the cause of the spiritual and moral approach to political problems. No external change can be lasting without an inner change. Gandhism represents a meaningful social and political gospel. It teaches the repudiation of *Machtpolitik*. It stresses the replacement of

conflict, discord, barbarity and pugnacity by freedom, will and right. It advocates a spiritual philosophy of history and civilization. The political thought of Gandhi teaches the replacement of the vulgarity of force by the authentic power of the changed human heart. Gandhi is pessimistic of mere institutional changes and he places great emphasis on moral education, inner purification through the practice of the moral vows and the transfiguration of the soul. He is a prophet of the inner conscience and the internal light. Satyagraha stands for the superiority of the moral quest. Gandhism stands for the great values of liberty, equality, social justice, individual rights and fundamental freedoms, fearlessness and non-violence. These basic sociological and political values are to be realized by the attainment of an integral culture of the spirit. Spiritual synthesis is the only abiding method of dealing with the problems of man. Behind political governance there has to be inner governance. Thus Gandhism represents the reassertion of the idealistic foundations of politics. This gospel has been provided additional and convincing dynamic power by the lofty character of Gandhi. Gandhi was against the terrible depredations against human personality made by the two world wars. The supreme concern of Gandhi was the renaissance of moral and altruistic virtues. He stood for universal love and positive beneficence. At a time when the irrational gospels of class struggle and war among nations are being sometimes openly and sometimes secretly preached the emphasis on the humanitarian element in Gandhism is to be regarded as a welcome addition to world political philosophy. In the world today there is a craze for planning, economic development and the increase of the standard of living. I do not deny the great social significance of these programmes. But it is equally urgent to stress the immense necessity of the moral and spiritual renaissance of man. Hitherto historians have been taking a "Ptolemaic" conception of world progress because the western world is regarded by them as the centre of civilization. The "Copernican" revolu

tion in the idea of world civilization—the only hope of civilized humanity—can come only with an increasing conformity to Gandhian teachings which are a restatement of the dominant moral and spiritual values enunciated in all schools of religions and ethics. In his attempts to bring about the consummation of ethical universalism Gandhi has heralded the dawn of new era. There have been speculations so far about the “philosophical state” by Plato, about the “ethical state” by Fichte and about the “culture state” by German theoreticians. Gandhi stood as the prophet of the non-violent state, enlightened anarchy and *Ramrajya*. He became a martyr for vindicating the truth of the superiority of self-abnegation to the criteria of worldly success. This is not an original gospel but the momentous significance of Gandhi’s appeal lies in the fact that behind his writings there is the convincing power of his pure personality. Gandhi’s stress on the incorporation of moral values in politics represents a great contribution to political thought.

Gandhism is not merely a political and economic creed, it is a philosophy of life. It wants to bring about a transformation in human society. It aims to substitute coercion as the dominant criterion of political action by the supremacy of self-suffering love. It seeks to stress the perennial moral virtues of man and thus it stands as a great critic of those political theories which exalt power, class-struggle or imperialistic exploitation. Gandhi dreams of a non-violent society. It is essential to cultivate an integral spiritual outlook before we can have this type of society. Gandhi’s outlook was far more comprehensive than that of the religious scholastics and priests who are dogmatically and fanatically teaching the respective superiority of their own limited creeds. He stressed peace, modesty, gentleness, philanthropy and a sense of devout respect for the religious views of others. Gandhi has vindicated the age-old wisdom of Asia by resting in our perplexed and chaotic world the values of truth, non-violence, chastity and social justice. This

comprehensive orientation of Gandhian teachings can very well make it the moral foundation of socialism and democracy. The moral approach to the solution of social and economic problems as indicated by Gandhi has to be stressed. The dispossession of the richer sections by force is not the proper remedy. Gandhi was right in his insight that the application and utilization of material force does not really provide any solution. It may give merely an immediate semblance of solution. But the very same sections who have dispossessed the holders of political and economic power, in turn, assume power and pelf for themselves and henceforth begins a fresh period of political and economic tyranny for the masses. Thus forcible expropriation and violent revolution are not the proper methods. Hence Gandhi and Comte are right in stressing a conscious adoption of the moral values and norms. Today it has become a fashion with some socialists and communists to ridicule any talk about morality as an infiltration of opportunism, muddle-headedness and conservatism. They have the boldness to characterize the champions of an ethical approach as the apologists of the ascendant classes and the enemies of the plebian strata. This is downright falsehood and blasphemy. The vicious trade in human blood that has been carried on in the name of conceptual ghosts and fantastic abstractions like classless society, democratic centralism, dictatorship of the proletariat (which should really be called the dictatorship of the agents of the polit-bureau), accentuation of production etc. should make us thoroughly vigilant and alert. The peril to liberty from the godless creed of totalitarian collectivism is imminent. It is essential to work out a moral renaissance and spiritual ennoblement of mankind as indicated by Gandhi if the foundations of democracy and socialism are to be strengthened.

The world is faced with a baffling and difficult situation. It is immensely important at such an hour to restress the moral and spiritual assumptions of social, economic and political existence. A clarification of the



assumptions will help in the building of a detailed programme of positive action and concrete technics. But the correct technics can be only applied if the initial moral and spiritual assumptions are understood and properly stressed. It is essential to have a comprehensive social philosophy which will give us a theory of social adjustment, group accommodation and social reconstruction and at the same time will stress the moral and conscious governance of the processes of human history and growth. It is sheer inertia and pessimism to be content with the automatic workings of social forces. Gandhi pleaded for dynamic and strenuous efforts to bring about the moral salvation of humanity. His spirit was the complete antithesis of passivity and acquiescence in things. Gandhi has a valuational and teleological approach to the problem of social, economic and political structure. He repudiates the standpoint of some organicists and evolutionists who plead for a theory of supreme non-intervention in the social process. He toiled ceaselessly in spite of his advanced years for the concrete realization of truth, non-violence and purity. The conscious and deliberate power of human will, emotion and cognition has to be brought to bear upon the workings of the social structure.

Gandhi was a prophet of cosmopolitanism and internationalism. He transcended the spheres of localism, sectionalism, casteism, provincialism and patriotism. His teachings of truth and Ahimsa were meant not for a group or a class. He wrote not for a city or a country but for mankind. Gandhi did not speak of sectional supremacy, whether it be of the Greek or of the Hindu, of the aristocrat or of the military elite, of a class or a group. For the first time in the recorded history of man Gandhi led such a colossal movement from 1893 to 1948 for the recovery of the dignity and esteem of the simple, the forlorn and the neglected common man of India, and indirectly, also of Asia. Hence humble and gentle and exploited folks everywhere found only an explicit echo of their own sentiments in his writings and his message.

His humanism made him an enemy of imperialism. He was not content to teach the traditional morality of faithful adherence to historical conventions or the sentimental hedonistic effusions of vague aesthetic and emotive satisfactions. Gandhism teaches the deepening and inwardization of moral life. Gandhi stood for the more exalted sermon of the sanctified creeds of truth and love. He stood for embracing all mankind in fraternal embrace. He stood not for the happiness of a class but of mankind. Fundamentally he was a cosmopolitan because he was a prophet of Ahimsa. His deep and burning love and sympathy for the oppressed, the anguished and the humiliated had great rock-like spiritual foundations. He loved man because he himself was a devotee of God. He was a humble, meek and determined fighter for truth and ceaselessly toiled to realize the eternal spiritual values. In an age of the blighting twilight of moral values Gandhi was creating a spiritualized transvaluation of mundane values or, which is the same thing, he was trying to create the foundations for the kingdom of God on earth. He believed that Swaraj was only the first stage. Perfection belongs to the highest stage—the stage of Ramraj or universal sarvodaya. Hence his life and his work and his ethical philosophy will continue through the future to be the greatest monuments to him. His life was his testament. A grateful humanity will raise buildings, pillars, statues and megaliths in bronze and stones but the real monument to the Mahatma can only be raised in the religious transformation and illumination of one's own life and the moral reconstruction of society. By his personal example finally sealed by his martyrdom and his elevating and inspiring teachings he has helped in the conservation and reinforcement of the moral values contained in the conscience of man and the scriptures of the world. By his dedicated life of service he has imparted a new and vitalized efficacy to the perennial teachings of spiritual worth. The old moral and religious truths have once again obtained added value and significance. His undying, blessed and immortal

spirit has a message for the reconstruction of humanity. Gandhi teaches the eventual victory of the powers of the spirit over the amassed and consolidated strength of armaments and material prosperity and political power. He had supreme faith that the moral and spiritual power must be finally victorious. Against the terrifying doctrines of war, conquest, revenge and exploitation, Gandhi as a world prophet taught the holiness of the spirit and authenticity of the doctrines of truth, non-violence and purity.

(c) *Non-Violence in National and World Politics.*

Gandhi was a saint and a moral revolutionary. He believed that violence interrupted the real revolution of the social structure for the realization of solidarity and fraternity. Non-violent Satyagraha alone could revolutionize social ideals and prepare the foundations of a society based on justice, freedom, peace and cosmopolitanism. Gandhi stressed like Tolstoy the moral bankruptcy of modern civilization and prescribed the sanctity of ethical substance and moral principles. He sincerely believed that violence would spell the doom of mankind. The advance of nuclear energy has intensified the threats to the extinction of human civilization. He thought that a peaceful solution of our problem was not only possible but was also the only way to have a stable solution for the complex and difficult problems of man. I do not think it possible, however, that the entire philosophy and sociology of Gandhi can be put to practice immediately. The technics and plans of the present government of India are also not based on a total application of Gandhism. But I also think that it is sociologically wrong to put perfect Gandhism or non-Gandhism as the only two alternatives amongst which some irrevocable choice has to be made. There is a long line of transition between absolute Gandhism and non-Gandhism just as there are immense shades of differences between white and black. Even that great admirer of Gandhi and his message - Romain Rolland - did not recommend the application of Gandhian technics

in Europe in the late thirties when the Rome-Berlin Axis had threatened to be the most dangerous portent in world policies. The great truths take time to become the permanent possessions of mankind. Hence Gandhi always warned us against pessimism. But the fact that one may not recommend absolute Gandhism does not mean that we should renounce Gandhism. Gradual attempts have to be made to approximate slowly towards the Gandhian ideal. No philosophy of *real politik* can be practised wholesale either. Those who talk glibly of realism, cannot say that the whole of the ideas of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Bismarck and Nietzsche can be practised by any politician or state. No social and political structure can be raised and maintained on the basis of the concepts of mere egoism, power, pugnacity, force, cupidity, exploitation and aggression. Social and moral will and not political and military force can be the stable basis of any political entity. If only base and baneful sentiments were to operate, the whole commonwealth would be converted into a group of brigands and robbers. Hence if absolute idealism is utopian, no less utopian is to think that it is possible to apply the programmes and technics of absolute realism. The actual world moves and progresses by the union of both idealistic and realistic constituents and elements. The great contribution of Gandhian political philosophy is that it can serve as a conceptual pattern. It can serve as a system of norms and moral values that can guide our actual behaviour in society and state. It can act as a measuring-rod for our conduct as men and citizens. Even the citizens of the state have to look to the requirements of world citizenship. Gradual, habitual and constant attempts to realize the values stressed by Gandhi in social and political life may be regarded as the criteria of judging our success in the art of civilization. It is true that some unscrupulous agents of imperialistic power politics may mock Gandhi's concern with technics of civility, gentleness and love but humanity will have to turn to his teachings if the devastation of civilization

is to be avoided. The arbitrament of sword has always a sinister attraction provided the issue can be decided in one's own favour. The fundamental value of Gandhism lies in its stress on the incorporation of moral and spiritual categories in human thought, which are sadly neglected in a materialistic and atheistic civilization. It is true that the communal murders perpetrated in 1946-47 in Bengal, Bihar and the Panjab on an enormously great scale indicated that India had not taken the Gandhian teachings to heart. Indians had taken to non-violence against the British because they were helpless against the British might. But they had not cultivated the non-violence of the brave. Regardless of this failure of Indians to stick to Gandhian teachings, there is no cause for despair. Gandhi had an invincible faith in the nobility of human nature. Perhaps man will be compelled by sheer necessity to become noble, because the alternative to goodness is imminent peril and possible destruction. The United Nations Charter stresses the pacific settlement of international disputes by methods of diplomatic negotiation, mediation or good offices, conciliation, commissions of enquiry, arbitration and judicial settlement. While he was pursuing the career of a lawyer Gandhi had always pleaded for arbitration in place of prolonged waiting for justice in the courts. He would have stressed the pacific technics for the settlement of international tensions. By his constant readiness to sacrifice his own life in the settlement of social and communal tensions in India he had vindicated in a sense the method of mediation for the resolution of conflicts. It is possible to argue that he would have wholeheartedly recommended mediation and arbitration for the settlement of disputes which threatened the peace of the world. But the essential point in Gandhi's political thought is the purification of man. Hence unless in man there is the spirit of confidence, trust and cooperation the pacific technics of resolution of world conflict have no chance of success. Therefore

Gandhi insisted on the reality of an all-embracing positive love which he interpreted Ahimsa really to be.

(d) *Gandhi and Plato.* Gandhism is significant in the history of thought for some of its dominant moral, sociological and political insights. It is possible to reconstruct a system of Gandhian political philosophy by developing the suggestions and formulae contained in Gandhi's writings. The value of such a political philosophy can be indicated, if, for example, we compare some aspects of Gandhi's teachings with those of Plato. Gandhi accepts that what is required for human salvation is that there should be an intense activation and growth of those moral faculties and attributes which have thus far only dimly and inadequately revealed their potentialities at social levels. Hence it is clear that Gandhi's solution is similar to Plato and not to that of Nietzsche. Both Gandhi and Plato have a spiritual approach to history. Freedom according to both can be obtained through a process of inner purification. Ethics is not a matter of outward conformity but should be founded upon knowledge. Both condemn power politics and are apprehensive of democratic excesses. It is very true that Gandhi is more of a humanitarian than the aristocratic Plato. While Plato sanctioned defensive wars, Gandhi was an absolute pacifist. According to Plato, the guardians even after the acquisition of dialectical cognition can engage in military activities but Gandhi felt that an entirely new awareness of cosmic fraternity dawns upon man by the practice of Ahimsa as creative love. Ahimsa is organic and humanitarian in its orientation. Plato and Aristotle were the teachers of the perfected and idealized *polis*. Gandhi was a world teacher and a mighty humanitarian. In spite of all dialectical training and a transcendent vision of the idea of the good, Plato's highest guardians do not rise above the sense of aggression and defence. They are essentially watch-dogs or guards of the city. Both Plato and Gandhi are agreed that it is essential to change the present human consciousness for effectuating a radical solution

of the problems of mankind. But while Plato stresses a transformation of consciousness by dialectical reason, Gandhi emphasized the change of heart. Gandhi felt that reason has to be substantiated by the power of suffering. Where rational arguments do not carry conviction suffering makes effective and spontaneous appeal. Gandhi realized that mere academic training and intellectual refinement is not of much avail because it does not impart that solidity of character which is needed to give a man moral strength to withstand temptations and fear. Hence he was a little indifferent to mere accumulation of information about things. He had a partially Platonic conception of education as recollection of the spiritual heritage of man. He wanted training in moral virtues. He condemned mere "book education". Education has to lead to purification of character and salvation of the soul. If moral education was perfected it could become the guarantee of a silent social revolution because if the individuals succeeded in building their characters society could take care of itself. Society is only the complex network of individuals. Hence Gandhi taught that the transformation of individual character was essential for the moralization of society and politics.

PART TWO

**THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF  
SARVODAYA**





## CHAPTER X

# THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SARVODAYA

### 1. Introduction

Sarvodaya, today, does not represent a mere vision or notion. It has assumed the dimensions of a movement and a social force of great potentialities and power. It has been even regarded as a dynamic philosophy which can make possible the advent of a radically transformed humanity. Hence it is important to study its philosophical and psychological foundations as also its political and social implications. The concrete shape of this movement is crystallizing very fast and students of political and social philosophy are becoming interested in it.

There are numerous social, economic and cultural problems facing India. There is the problem of land reform and reorganization, there is an agitation for fixing ceilings on land and there is the movement for rehabilitating agrarian democracy as symbolized by the plea for strengthening *panchayat*. There is the great problem of concretely realizing liberty, equality and justice for over three hundred millions. There are other economic and cultural problems too. In a large perspective it can be said that the Directive Principles of the Constitution and the universal Declaration of Human Rights have to be implemented. There is the important problem of adjusting the concept of the sovereignty of a newly arisen nation-state with the global perspective of internationalism. Sarvodaya seeks to build a new society on the foundations of the old spiritual and moral values of India and thus to meet the challenge of the contemporary problems.

The problems which the western world had to face in the course of five centuries have to be faced by India in the course of a century and a half. In the fifteenth century there was the Renaissance, in the sixteenth appeared the Reformation, in the eighteenth came the challenge of the Industrial and the French Revolutions. The formidable challenge of Marxian socialism appeared in the nineteenth century. The devastating challenges of Freudianism and Totalitarianism and the outburst of the fourth estate are the phenomena of the twentieth century. These movements together have absolutely convulsed Europe and have transformed the total shape of the medieval west. In India also almost all of these movements are being generated and fostered because of the contact with the west. In this country the problems of harmony and adjustment have been extremely complicated because the total impact of all these colossal movements have been experienced in such a short time. Hence to some extent India is undergoing a phase of formless transition and crisis. We have won political independence but have not yet fully discovered our national soul and self. The attempt at the discovery of our national soul and self began with spiritual endeavours of great teachers like Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Lokamanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo. It is a world full of competing ideologies and rampant challenges to the existence of mankind. The sarvodaya movement as conceived by Gandhiji and as extended and developed by his followers is an attempt at the discovery and enshrinement of the soul of India.

Whenever and wherever the movement of capitalistic industrialism expands there is engineered a counter-movement of protest. This protest movement seeks to buttress once more the values and ethos of an agrarian civilization. The greatest exponent of this kind of patriarchal agrarian *weltanschauung*, in our times, has been the Russian religious anarchist prophet, Leo Tolstoy. In India also as soon as the western capitalistic industrialism

and colonial imperialism began to make devastating onslaughts on the old culture there arose movements which asserted the primacy of our moral values and social traditions. Plato, Rousseau, Tagore and Gandhi were the pronounced antagonists of the commercial type of civilization based on the concept of accumulation. Sarvodaya envisages the rebuilding of the political and social structure on the basis of the agrarian traditions and patterns of behaviour of India.

The philosophy of Sarvodaya is integral and synthetic in character. The synthetic approach is of great merit in political philosophy. Plato built his philosophy by the synthesis of the ideas of Parmenides and Pythagoras. Aquinas synthesized the ideas of the Bible and Aristotle. Marx synthesized the dialectic of Hegel and the materialism of the French philosophers and Feuerbach. The philosophy of sarvodaya is based on the mystical intuitions and social and political experiences of Gandhi. In his long life Gandhi attempted the synthesis of the ideas of Vedanta, Buddhism, Christianity, Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau etc. The synthesis that Gandhi wanted to bring out was at an intuitional level. Gandhism is a synthesis of intuitions. But a pronouncedly intellectual character is being given to the sarvodaya philosophy by its protagonists and advocates. Sarvodaya takes up the Gandhian synthesis and tries to work out the implications of these ideas at more critical and analytical levels. It has tried to incorporate some ideas from the socialist philosophy as well. If Gandhism was a synthesis of intuitions, sarvodaya philosophy represents a synthesis of theoretical abstractions and political and economic generalizations.

## **2. Philosophical Foundations of Sarvodaya**

The fundamental concept in the sarvodaya philosophy is the primacy and ultimateness of the spirit. Gandhi's dominant concern was with the realization of God as an all-pervasive truth. His political, economic and social endeavours and programmes were oriented

towards progressive enlargement of the human consciousness through the service of the *Daridra Narayana*, into the intimate and intuitive realization of the divine spirit. If a man exceeds the limitations of the ego he approximates to the realization of God as the supreme truth. The belief in the all-governing majesty of the spirit imparts to man the compassionate ethical incentive to share in the pain and anguish of all creatures because all are the manifestations of the supreme truth. Gandhi had sincere, unquestioning and deep faith in the divine being. He wanted to realize God through selfless dedicated social and political service. The overwhelming belief in the supremacy of the spirit provided a meaningful integration, poise and equanimity to his life which was full of diverse and multifarious activities. This spiritual orientation and devout faith of Gandhi has left its fundamental impact on other leaders and workers in this movement of Sarvodaya.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to be dogmatic or categorical about ultimate metaphysical problems. They are matters of inward realization and subjective experience. There is no direct or objective proof for the reality of *Brahman* or a spiritual ultimate being. It is true that the firm acceptance of the reality of a spiritual existent does provide great consolation to man by explaining many things and elements which appear contradictory and irrational otherwise. It makes even death meaningful

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jayaprakash Narayan: *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order* (Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, Tanjore, 1955), p. 6: "This movement (Bhoodan) is based on the principle of change of heart. It is being conducted in the belief that man is amenable to change. That is so, because all of us are essentially one, fragments of the same Almighty Father." Narayan, *Ibid*, p. 20, accepts that the Gandhian stress on conversion is rooted in a spiritual view of things and of human origin and destiny. In his famous article entitled "Incentives for Goodness", Narayan says: "I feel convinced, therefore, that man must go beyond the material to find the incentive to goodness. As a corollary, I feel further that the task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of a materialist philosophy."

because physical death is regarded as the pathway to immortality. But such faith has to be inwardly won. Certainly it has great social relevance. It may be possible, to justify power politics and oligarchical plutocracy and tyranny if one believes that matter in motion is the sole reality. But if there is a spiritual governance in the world and if there is a pervasive law of the moral vindication of truth and justice, then man, if he believes in that truth, will be afraid of taking a wrong step against himself or against the society.

But whenever I begin to think about the belief in God and the relevant ethical action consonant with that belief I am perturbed by two doubts. God is relevant to personal belief and experience. But there are groups and individuals who never had any experience of God. Perhaps most of the people who talk about God and claim to believe in him do so as a matter of verbal profession. On the other hand, moral laws are for the betterment of the individual and social conduct of all people. Morality has a collective orientation. All people have to be moral. Hence sometimes I feel that it may not be worth-while to base a system of laws of the widest possible socially inclusive relevance, which moral laws certainly are, on the foundation of a metaphysical proposition which is controversial and capable only of personal verification which, after all, is a highly subjective and immensely fluctuating criterion. A second point also disturbs me. I wonder how could Buddha, universally recognized as one of the greatest seers and moral prophets of humanity, attain such tremendous elevation of character without any theistic belief? I do not want to enter here into the details of early Buddhist metaphysics. But I think, most students and scholars of Buddhism will agree on this point that Buddha did not pray to any God nor did he base his noble ethical eight-fold path on the foundation of any positive belief in a supernatural entity or a spiritual substance or a metaphysical person. Hence I begin to doubt the truth of the statement that for being good or for being a true

servant of society or for suffering for the sake of justice it is essential to believe in a spiritual view of the universe. On the other hand I am repelled by the blasphemous doctrine of ethical relativism. I believe that for the elevation of humanity it is essential to accept some canons as being of universal and absolutely binding character. Without the acceptance of some moral absolutes, there will be a struggle of rival groups and individuals for personal self-seeking and mutual glorification without there being any common ground for appeal and arbitration. Hence for the good of humanity it is essential to have some supremely valid moral laws which should and will bind all groups and all countries. It may be possible to have these fundamental principles of ethical idealism without any corresponding adherence to the belief in some divine reality.

Indian culture has always stressed the significance of moral and spiritual values. The foremost builders of our culture—Rama and Krishna, Buddha and Samkara—have stood for the primacy of moral values.<sup>1</sup> Even in modern times the teachers and prophets of our land have stood for the sanctity of ethics and spirituality. The great teachers and leaders of our land have not only taught the great truths but have embodied them in their own lives and hence they have a great appeal for our people. Buddha and Gandhi will go down for ages as the great concretizations of moral values. The movement of sarvodaya is an attempt at the reinforcement of these abiding and significant values. One of the most distressing phenomena of the modern times is the worship of worldly success. Success has come to be measured in terms of efficiency. It is computed by statistics and long

<sup>1</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. II, pp. 151-156, claims to be a preacher of the Vedantic metaphysics as interpreted by Samkara. He claims that spiritual gnosis and compassion for human beings are the two cardinal concepts of Hinduism. This quest for the Vedantic foundation of sarvodaya is in line with the devotion that Gandhi had for the *Ishopanishad* and the *Bhagavadgita*.

charts. But in the craze for success, power and strength, there is a repudiation of the perennial significance of the human spirit. But Gandhi would refuse to barter the human soul for external success. The latter may be temporary and ephemeral. It may have only superficial glamour. But the continuing vitality of civilizations and cultures is built by the human spirit which is oriented to the realization of a noble and decent existence for all. Our political, social and economic life has been seized with a malady. The malady of our times—perhaps of all times, is the mad quest for power. Sovereignty is preferred to sacrifice and suffering. Service is being given up in quest of personal aggrandizement. Humanity is undergoing a phase of moral collapse and ethical nihilism. In an era of the mad rush for power, the significance of sarvodaya lies in stressing the permanent value of self-abnegation.<sup>1</sup> It wants to replace party stifes, jealousies and competition by the sacred law of cooperative mutuality and dominant altruism. Party struggles have corrupted and perverted our political life. In its stress on the replacement of majority voting by unanimity in the village panchayats, sarvodaya is giving expression to a moral principle of cardinal importance because it wants to enshrine the primacy of goodness and character in place of the skill of manipulation and self-assertion. Sarvodaya appeals to our mind and heart in terms of values and goals which are ingrained in our culture. The decadence and corruptions which infect the best possible organized institutional mechanisms can be removed only by the

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Socialism to Sarvodaya* (Socialist Book Club, Madras, 1956), p. 23, refers to two types of values: (a) certain values which are conditioned and determined by environments, and (b) "certain basic values which are absolute and eternal". The dominant values enunciated by Patanjali in the form of *yama* and *nyama*, which had been reinforced by Gandhi in his dedicated life, are being restressed in the form of the replacement of *rajniti* by *lokaniti* because politics, left to itself, has a tendency to become ethically neutral, if not positively immoral.



reassertion of moral and spiritual values and their progressive and ever-growing incorporation in social, political and economic life. That is perhaps the only way to the salvation of India and the world.

The autonomy of moral values has been pulverized by three critical thought-currents of today. Ethical relativism on the basis of the diversity of ethical judgments and conceptions prevailing in different social groups, tribes and civilizations pleads for the relativity of all social values and norms. Marxism upholds that the dominant ethical ideas are the ideas of the ascendant classes. The Marxian approach to ethics is a near version of what Thrasymachus said in ancient Greece—justice is the interest of the stronger. By interpreting moral conceptions in terms of the antagonism between rival classes Marxism also has debunked the authenticity of moral values. The third challenging creed today is the concept of ethical neutrality. In the name of scientific objectivity and scholarly precision it is stated that the research worker in the field of social sciences should not prescribe values, he should only analyse values. Against the nihilistic tendencies implicit in these three creeds sarvodaya pleads emphatically for the sanctity and supreme significance of moral values. Like Buddhism and Kant, sarvodaya stands for the supremacy and absoluteness of moral values. The moral collapse and prostration of our world needs the revitalizing tonic of ethical idealism. I agree with the stress on the moral approach to social and economic problems which sarvodaya envisages.

### **3. Socialism, Communism and Sarvodaya**

Although the situational background from which socialism and sarvodaya have emerged is different still their moral idealism is almost similar.<sup>1</sup> Socialism arose

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Socialism to Sarvodaya* (Madras Socialist Book Centre, 1956), p. 96 : "Sarvodaya represents the highest socialist values."

in the west as a philosophy of the industrial proletariat. It stood for its rights and gave coherence to its aspirations. It challenged the pretensions of the contemporary state which bolstered the interests of the capitalists. But although socialism spoke for the exploited labouring sections of the nineteenth century, in its fundamental aim it goes back to the days of Plato and the Biblical prophets who pleaded for the neutralization of the ego and the assertion of the good of the community. Hence the basic aspiration of socialism is moral and spiritual in its nature. It is true that in modern times the trade unions and the labour parties have spread the socialist ideology and it is also true that in some of the radical forms of communism the violent cult of class struggles and the expropriation of the expropriators has been endlessly repeated, nevertheless the moral appeal of socialism is derived from its outspoken championship of the good of those who have been exploited and are suppressed and backward. In spite of its associations with the dialectical methodology and the technological-economic interpretation of history, the dynamic fervour and agitational momentum of socialism are derived from its being the intellectual crystallization of the interests and aspirations of the downtrodden millions. No body can deny the deep appeal to the human heart which the lives of sufferings, persecutions and abnegations led by Marx or Lenin, Luxemburg or Plekhanov have. They suffered because they hoped to rescue the millions thereby.

Sarvodaya stands for the emancipation, the uplift and the elevation of all. It traces its roots in the Vedic and Vedantic teachings that from a higher standpoint all men are participants in a super-material reality. Hence the good of all beings has to be positively fostered. It repudiates, therefore, the limited gospel of the greatest good of the greatest number. It aims to serve the good of all and not only of the numerical majority. It is not opposed to the concept of social and economic equality. Since all beings are reflections or manifestations of a supreme spiritual ultimate hence all have to be provided

the opportunity for their greatest development and perfection. In socialism the stress is on material and vital perfection attained through the devising of a socio-economic structure which eliminates wasteful competition and private appropriation. In the theory of sarvodaya also there is no negation of political and economic satisfactions<sup>1</sup> and requirements. But there is an all-dominating moral and spiritual approach. Economic amenities have to be oriented to serve the needs of the human spirit and it is wrong to cramp the free movement of the spirit by suffocating it with the all-governing dominance of the sinews of production.<sup>2</sup> Sarvodaya, however, is not merely a theory of ethical justice. It is emphatic in its quest for distributive social and economic justice. In its acceptance of the concept that all forms of wealth belong to society, sarvodaya has shown its radical and even revolutionary character. Towards the end of his life Gandhi came to advocate a radical conception of trusteeship and became a theorist of spiritual socialism. Sarvodaya has been more deeply influenced by the socialistic and communistic ideas of the west. It has read the economics of social appropriation of wealth in the simple adage that "all land belongs to Gopala".<sup>3</sup> Both socialism and sarvo-

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<sup>1</sup> It will not be correct to characterize sarvodaya as negativistic in its approach. It does not negate the importance of material commodities. It would refuse, however, to regard them as the dominant goal of all human endeavours. Like Aristotle, sarvodaya would like to use the external goods for the satisfaction of the human spirit. It would regard them as means and not as ends in themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jayaprakash Narayan: *From Socialism to Sarvodaya* (Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Kashi, 1958), pp. 25-26. Narayan pleads for a "balanced or whole view of life" and is opposed to "an outlook on life that feels an insatiable hunger for material goods". He warns us that due to the triumph of competition there would be the danger that equality, liberty and fraternity may be "submerged in a universal flood of materialism".

<sup>3</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. I, pp. 251-257. Gandhi in an article in the *Harijan*, January 2, 1937, wrote about the indigenious roots of socialism; "Real socialism has been handed down

daya are thus radical anti-individualistic doctrines and that accounts for their moral appeal. In capitalism the primary quest is for production. But both socialism and sarvodaya emphasize that the system of production cannot be divorced from the ethics of distribution on an equitable plane. It is true that we do not have to distribute poverty and hence the acceleration of production is essential. But the problem of production has to be linked up with the immediate problems of equitable and just distribution of the resources of society.<sup>1</sup> Both socialism and sarvodaya refuse to be satisfied with the abstract creed of the accentuation of production. The concrete problems of social justice and the collective ownership of the goods of society cannot be shelved. Thus we see that socialism and sarvodaya are kindred philosophies in two respects. Both derive their profound moral appeal from their rootedness in the fundamental belief in the good of the whole community in place of the narrow pursuit of the interests of the oligarchical minority of plutocrats. Both stress that there should be a social appropriation and equitable distribution of the goods of the society.

But in spite of some fundamental similarities between socialism and sarvodaya there is great difference between them on the question of means and methods. From the standpoint of sarvodaya there are two shortcomings in the socialist philosophy. First, the basic technic for effectuating socialism is supposed to be nationalization. But nationalization may entrench the

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to us by our ancestors who taught: "All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can therefore unmake it." Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it means the State, *i.e.*, the People. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it. I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence."

<sup>1</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Sarvodaya ke Adhar* (In Hindi) (Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Kashi, 1956), pp. 62-63.

control of the bureaucrats and may be another name for state capitalism. According to sarvodaya the socialist belief in the majesty of state action as the sovereign remedy for human ills is unfounded. Sarvodaya feels that if the final political aim is the elimination of the state then concrete immediate steps have to be taken here and now towards the minimization of state functions and state control. It is unrealistic to dream of the dawn of a stateless society through the aggrandizement of state power in politics and economics. Sarvodaya, hence, pleads for villagization. Sometimes it has been argued that in place of the socialist and communist theory of collectivization of land which in practice has wrought great havoc on the peasant population, villagization or ownership of the land by the villages would be a more effective remedy. The individual tenants and agricultural labourers can understand and appreciate the ownership by the concrete village community but ownership by the state or the nation seems to be a remote and abstract concept which does not have adequate power of attracting the people. In an agrarian society, collectivization would have to be enforced by the coercive technics of totalitarianism because the farmers will not willingly part with the ownership of land. Hence sarvodaya pleads for the ownership of land by the village community. Thus while socialism believes in nationalization, sarvodaya accepts village ownership. Secondly, socialism adheres, at least in some cases, to the concept of violent revolution. But sarvodaya has no place for violence in its philosophy and technic.

The differences between sarvodaya and communism are far more basic and fundamental. Communism in Russia is a totalitarian system wedded to the cult of regimentation, violence and party dictatorship. Its all-pervasive aim has been the transformation of a backward feudal agrarian economy into a modern industrial-collectivist economy and this immense transformation has been sought to be achieved by the revival, in more intensified forms, of the old Czarist technics of intimi-

dation, coercion, persecution and even wholesale liquidation of the dissentient elements. Sarvodaya believes in persuasion and change of heart. Gandhi has taught the ethics of self-suffering to convert the opponent. Violence can never be the foundation of a just and equal society.<sup>1</sup> Violence breeds violence. It is a species of unfounded romantic utopianism to accept that once the capitalist exploiters are liquidated, the reign of liberty, equality, justice and abundance would be introduced. Violence in the process of its action has a logic of generating other sources of maladjustment, contradiction, injustice and further violence. It is futile to believe that a party can obtain power through violence and then one fine morning it would undergo a process of spiritual trans-substantiation and fraternity would replace violence. The experience of historical movements shows that individuals and parties become wedded to the means and methods through which they obtain ascendancy. Hence if the aim is to realize a society of justice, freedom and equality the means have to be equally pure and noble. Only non-violence can be the foundation of a society free from exploitation and injustice. In face of the annihilationistic capacity of modern weapons of destruction it is blasphemy to sing the Heraclitean song of "war is the father of all good things". A society of liberty and equality cannot be built by the capture of state power.<sup>2</sup> Sarvodaya thus is intensely and trenchantly critical of the methods and technics of Russian communism.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the relation between state and non-violence, Vinoba Bhave. *Swarajya Shastra* (In Hindi) (Sasta Sahitya Mandal, New Delhi, 1953), pp. 58-68.

<sup>2</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan has been mercilessly exposing the totalitarian and despotic trends of Russian politics. The exposures of the deeds of Stalin by Nikita Khrushchev should be an eye-opener to all. It makes imperative a re-examination of the alternative to violence and communism.

<sup>3</sup> According to Vinoba Bhave: *Swarajya Shastra*, pp. 26-27, there are four elements in capitalism: (i) Centralization, (ii) Mechanization, (iii) Armaments, and (iv) Exploitation. He feels that communism eliminates only the fourth element and retains the other three.

#### 4. The Village Community

There is a Rousseauic element in sarvodaya's philosophy of civilization.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenal growth of urbanization is everywhere leading to the growth of megalopolitan centres—the big cities which contain vast numbers of human beings living in close physical and material proximity but without the development of the organic bonds of fraternity, co-operation and mutuality. Modern civilization is the result of the growth of legal and contractual relationships which are impersonal in character. The gigantic framework of modern civilization is based on the concept of increasing formal rationalization in social and economic spheres. Its root idea is the accentuation of the production of those commodities which cater to the comforts of man. But the deep bonds of love and affection and mutual give-and-take which characterize small groups cannot be reproduced in vast urban concentrations. The growth of urban centres leads to the loss of the bonds and restraints of the small co-operating groups which are responsible for keeping the anarchic and rebellious tendencies of the individual under control. The absence of the social and moral control exercised by the small community results in the growth of a sense of helplessness and despair whenever the rampant assertive individualism of the modern man living in big cities fails to be reconciled to the environment or whenever its walls of social expectations begin to crumble. Hence there is a great value in the small communities from both the social-psychological and ethical standpoints. From the psychological standpoint they reinforce the bonds of mutuality and organic altruism and consensus. From the ethical standpoint they are centres which impose a

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Towards a New Society* (Congress for Cultural Freedom, New Delhi, 1958), p. 155, says that the Lincolnian concept of democracy can be realized only in small communities but "large communities with representative system and party system would not square up with this definition of democracy."

system of social norms which integrate the individual to the community and thus put a healthy restraint upon the encroaching ravages of individualism for the growth of which there is greater scope in the towns and cities. These are solid psychological and ethical gains whose value cannot be negated or minimized. Nor is the Rousseauic argument in favour of small communities absolutely anachronistic and meaningless. Rousseau had fancied that the proportion of personal share in the exercise of governmental authority is greater in a small community than in a big community. Let us take the case of two communities, one consisting of a hundred and the other of a thousand members. In the first case the share of each member in governmental power is one-hundredth of the total power, while in the second case the share of the individual is only one-hundredth of the total. We may not agree with the mathematics of Rousseau but his insight has great truth in it. Genuine exercise of power by the vast numbers of human beings is possible only in small-size republics. Hence there is great meaning in the stress on the organization of village commonwealths by the leaders of sarvodaya.

The modern man, in India and elsewhere, is being fragmentalized. He is losing the scheme of dominant values and symbols round which he can organize and focalize his psychic energies. There is a dispersion of personality and a neutralization of the sense of community-cohesiveness. Since the old Rigvedic times the Indian teachers have inculcated the annihilation of egoistic selfishness. They stress the concept of *vayam*—we and not the concept of *aham*—I or the ego. The Rigveda wants the realization of prosperity for all.<sup>1</sup> Devotion to the community is essential to evoke powerful individual responses of initiative and vigour for dedicated work of social service. Continuous individual initiative and efforts can alone maintain the organic structure of the community. Hence in the Buddhist philosophy we

<sup>1</sup> वचम् स्याम पतयो रञ्जीणाम् ।



find insistence upon *apramada* and *virya*. Dynamic efforts are essential to stabilize the foundations of a shattered economic and social organization. India lives in villages and the movement of sarvodaya is an attempt to integrate the agrarian social and economic life in terms of the eternal and abiding value of the neutralization of the ego and of dedication for the good of all which has been perennially emphasized in Indian culture. The need of the hour is vast initiative and constructive efforts oriented to the goal of rebuilding our village society and economy. Sarvodaya wants to release the energies of the sleeping village population. The impact of British imperialism had been immensely damaging for the village life of India. Before the advent of British rule the village had been an autonomous community with almost economic self-sufficiency. The imperialistic rule of Great Britain turned the villages into feeders or adjuncts of the towns. Hence the villages have gradually been losing their charm and villagers are looking with great expectations to the towns. They would be glad to have some petty jobs in towns but would not like to find out ways and means to rehabilitate the social and economic life of the villages themselves. Due to their adherence to the Marxist ideology, the Asian Socialists also had concentrated their efforts on the incipient industrial proletariat but it is a happy sign that now they are turning their efforts also to the villages. It is imperative to realize that no socio-economic movement can succeed in India which neglects the villages and concentrates only on the urban population. It is essential to reconstruct village life. This was the great dream of Mahatma Gandhi. Sarvodaya makes efforts for turning that dream into actuality.

Sarvodaya emphatically pleads for small communities. I do believe in the psychological, ethical and political value of small communities but there are some limitations also to the concept of small communities in the modern civilization. The problem of realistic sociology is: is it possible to check the growth of megal-

politan urbanism? Is it possible to realize Gandhi's dream of an autonomous self-sufficing village commonwealth? I do not think that it is possible to check the rampant triumph of urbanization. One finds oneself, as if, in a vicious circle. If we want the country to be strong and able to protect itself against the deprivations of the neighbours, we have to industrialize and the pace of our industrialization will be determined by the competitive march of other powers in the race of industrial and military supremacy. If we want industrialization at a high speed, we will have to tolerate the slums and the chimneys and the smoke and the other attendant evils of industrial life. With the growth of industrialization in India we see new big urban centres growing. It can be expected that within some years Chittaranjan, Durgapur, Vishakhapatnam and Sindri will begin competing with other large industrial towns like Tatanagar in terms of having a large area and a big working population. Theoretically it may be possible to conceive of the dispersion of the centres of production but the concentration of production is in the usual logic of economic rationality. It may be possible theoretically to conceive that instead of producing fifteen lacs of tons of steel at Tatanagar we could produce three lacs of tons of steel at five centres each, but that will mean huge waste, duplication and even loss of efficiency. Of course attempts can be made to control and minimize the adverse effects of modern industrial life. But it is not possible to build a system of village commonwealth and at the same time to have an economically and militarily powerful country.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Mahatma Gandhi had some peculiar notions on this subject. In an article in the *Harijan*, dated December 30, 1939, he wrote: "I suggest that, if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing; the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well equipped with military, naval and air forces."

choice between a confederate system based on small community republics and a strong nation-state, is very difficult. India's greatest drawback in the past has been localism and centrifugalism. There can be a grave apprehension that the stress on self-reliant and self-governing village commonwealths may reinforce that centuries old curse of Indian history and instead of political integration we may have trends towards regionalism. To talk of internationalism and world citizenship has a strong emotional fascination for me. But when I read that our neighbours are arming to the teeth and when irresponsible fanatics are talking of an inevitable war with India I feel inclined to favour a strong centre even at the possible cost of individual liberty and civil rights. I am putting, perhaps, the two alternatives of a strong centralized country versus individual liberty maintained in small village communities in an abstract and antithetical juxtaposition. Perhaps the situation may not shape itself in that polarized way. Let me not be misunderstood. On aesthetic and moral grounds I stand for small village communities but I have doubts about the realization of a federation of village republics in modern India.

## 5. The Economics of Sarvodaya

Sarvodaya starts with the acceptance of the fundamental primacy of the spirit. Its ethics of love, conversion and heightened good will are derived from its metaphysical idealism. To the Vedic-Vedantic conceptions of the supreme existence of an utter spiritual ultimate from which the universe and mankind derive their being and value, sarvodaya adds almost a communistic approach on wealth.

From the metaphysical arguments for theism, Vinoba Bhave has deduced several sociological implications. If God is the supreme existent and men are only temporary sojourners on this earth then everything be-

longs to God.<sup>1</sup> Thus Vinoba puts forward a divine theory of land ownership. God is the supreme owner and hence individuals subjected to ultimate death should not claim ownership over land. This simple argument, I feel, will fail to convince the village people whose attachment to their land is deep and elemental. Vinoba's other statement that all the great saints in this country have taught that land should not be kept under personal or private ownership<sup>2</sup> does not seem correct. It amounts to reading Marxist and Proudhonist ideas in the simple mystical songs of the Indian teachers and sages. Modern sarvodaya extends the connotation of the rather individualistic and moralistic Gandhian conception of "trusteeship".<sup>3</sup> Although sarvodaya has its roots in Gandhian thought, in the context of the grave social and economic crises of the present day world it has advanced towards the concept of a radically equalitarian social and economic structure. It does not seem correct to interpret the famous verse of the *Isavasyopanishad*—*tena tyaktena bhunjitha*—as teaching the ownership of all wealth by society. This verse accepts the individualist concept of property and simultaneously inculcates a spirit of non-attachment. It may be pointed out that the social ownership of wealth is a concept foreign to ancient Hindu thought.

Sarvodaya pleads for (a) the repudiation of the proprietary possession or *malkiyat* of the non-producers, (b) the establishment of the proprietary possession or *malkiyat* of the producers, and (c) the neutralization or

<sup>1</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Ek Bano Aur Nek Bano* (In Hindi) (Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Kashi, 1957), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> In an article in the *Harijan*, dated 25th October, 1952, Pyarelal, however, says that towards the end of his life Gandhi had agreed that trusteeship "does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except in as much as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare." He had further accepted the possibility of the "legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth" and of "state-regulated trusteeship".

the negation of ownership.<sup>1</sup> It claims to establish a society of producers or labourers. *Bhoodan* and *sampattidan* are regarded as steps towards the realization of that kind of society.

Some of the basic technics of sarvodaya are *bhoodan*, *sampattidan* and *gramdan*. One great economic advantage that has been claimed for *bhoodan* is that it effectuates the redistribution of land without the payment of any compensations. The landholders are asked to keep only that portion which is essential for their requirements and surrender the rest to the community. The protagonists of *bhoodan* believe in the social origin of all wealth and hence they interpret this surrender by the landholders as an act of giving to the community what really belongs to it.<sup>2</sup> If *bhoodan* and *gramdan* are technics of agrarian revolution based on moral force, *sampattidan* is a significant path in the transformation of capitalism into the sarvodaya society. Man is, at first, to utilize one-sixth of his wealth for the sake of society. Jayaprakash Narayan says: "The next step is that of 'Full Trusteeship'. Under 'Trusteeship', commercial and industrial enterprises would belong to the society and there would be no employer and employee. The management and labour would have joint responsibility to run them not for themselves but for the good of the society as a whole."<sup>3</sup>

## 6. The Gramdan Movement

One of the gravest economic problems in Asia is the question of agrarian reform. The problem of land redistribution is facing all people interested in the rehabilitation and expansion of Indian economy. Although Zamindari has been abolished in India there are still great feudal oligarchs who have monopolized thousands of acres of land. The fragmentalization of holdings is a

<sup>1</sup> Dada Dharmadhikari: *Sarvodaya Darshan*, p. 233

<sup>2</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Kranti ka Adhunik Prayog* (In Hindi) (Janata Prakashan, Patna), p. 13

<sup>3</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 17

severe handicap in the way of rationalized farming even on a small scale. There is also the problem of landless labour, chronic unemployment and constant under-employment. All these economic problems have to be understood in the more comprehensive sociological framework of rampant exploitation, the domination of the so-called higher castes, terrific illiteracy and the mounting cost of living which is turning the lower strata of the people into the state of semi-starvation for prolonged periods. The forcible expropriation of the legal owners of land as a remedy is out of the question now. No party in India believes in the violent seizure of land. The protagonists of sarvodaya do not favour that the great agrarian problem of India can be solved by making laws for land redistribution. They are genuinely devoted to the Gandhian theory of change of heart.<sup>1</sup> They put forward the alternative of *gramdan*, a scheme which was first put into operation in September 1952 in a village

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Socialism to Sarvodaya* (Madras, 1956), p. 24, says that a real revolution is a revolution in the values of life. Law cannot change minds or hearts. According to J. Narayan: *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 9, there are two reasons why sarvodaya does not believe in redistribution of land by legislation. (i) Sarvodaya wants to bring about a moral revolution which cannot be effected by laws. (ii) It accepts the Gandhian maxim that legislation without conversion is a dead letter. There is danger of the counter-attack of the expropriate landlords in case land is re-distributed by law. Narayan says: "We also see ejection going on every day even though there is a provision in the law against such a course. I am afraid, well-to do persons would make it impossible for weak landless people to take possession of lands even if there be legislation for redistribution of land. That makes it clear why we need not be sitting idle looking forward to legislation." Narayan, however, does not rule out legislation. He says, *Ibid*, p. 13: "It is not as if legislation has no place in this technique, but it does not precede but follows conversion." According to Narayan: *Kranti ka Adhunik Prayog* (In Hindi) (Janata Prakashan, Patna, 1954), p. 5, Vinoba is of the view that he (Vinoba) is preparing the ground for legislation. Once the message of Bhoodan has spread in the villages of India, immediate and better legislation regarding land redistribution is bound to come.

named Mangroth in the Uttara Pradesh. Jayaprakash Narayan says: "In the beautiful revolution of gramdan, ownership was not *abolished* by force of any kind, but freely surrendered to the community."<sup>1</sup> A target of five lacs of villages for *gramdan* has been fixed for the whole of the country. It is a phenomenal achievement that nearly four thousand villages have been obtained in *gramdan*.<sup>2</sup> It has been argued that in the *gramdan* villages self-reliance and self-sufficiency would be developed. The villages will have, in reserve, stock of food grains and other articles of consumption sufficient to meet the needs of the inhabitants of the villages for two years.<sup>3</sup> This will foster a sense of community strength, cohesiveness and initiative. A cardinal economic principle in the *gramdan* villages is supposed to be productive labour without competition.<sup>4</sup> Production is to be carried on mostly by manual labour.

Some of the accounts that I have read of the *gramdan* villages have fascinated me. There appears to be remarkable similarity between the ideals of the *gramdan*

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- <sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *From Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 43
- <sup>2</sup> The protagonists of sarvodaya have repudiated that *bhoodan* and *gramdan* are experiments in charity. They offer a Samkarite interpretation of it as *danam samvibhagah* (*dan* is equal division and equal sharing).
- <sup>3</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Towards a New Society*, p. 161, makes the rather extreme proposal that "whatever is grown should be used first of all for the village and if, after feeling the village, there is a surplus, *then and then only should they be asked to pay taxes or do whatever else they like.*" (*Italics ours*).
- <sup>4</sup> It is interesting to study what Gandhi said about co-operative farming in the *Harijan*, March 9, 1947: "Gandhiji said in answer to a question that his notion of co-operation was that the land would be held in co-operation by the owners and tilled and cultivated also in co-operation. This would cause a saving of labour, capital, tools etc. The owners would work in co-operation and own capital, tools, animals, seeds etc. in co-operation. Co-operative farming of his conception would change the face of the land and banish poverty and idleness from their midst. All this was only possible if people became friends of one another and as one family."

villages and some features of socio-economic life in Israel. But some limitations of *gramdan* villages can be noted. First, what would be the solution if some individual raises the question of the reprivatization of the land to which he has voluntarily renounced high rights? Is this renunciation of rights made for perpetuity? I do not sanction such an irrevocable step. Even Hobbes, that great apologist of the sovereignty of the leviathan, has laid down that in case the sovereign fails to protect, the individual is not bound to obey the sovereign. Suppose the individual is not satisfied with the workings and operations of the *gramdan* village, then some acute social and economic problems may arise. If within the same family, the descendants of the same ancestors can kill each other for petty things, I do not believe that it is utopian to think that even in the *gramdan* villages there will be grave problems of mutual struggle and there is bound to ensue a competitive struggle for power, unless one believes that the kingdom of God has been concretely actualized in the *gramdan* villages. It is possible that in a wave of enthusiasm an inhabitant might have agreed to renounce his right to his land in favour of the village but after some years he may discover that he had made a mistake. Hence I think that the right of reprivatization of land should be reserved to the individual.

Another reservation that I will like to make is that if in the *gramdan* villages an outlook hostile to the mechanical civilization is fostered, perhaps it may not act detrimentally to the gigantic schemes of industrialization that are being carried out in the rest of the country. We have to think in terms of India as a whole. It is harmful to think in terms of two Indias—a vast sector of village India and another sector of industrial and urban India. A uniform and organic policy has to be devised for the entire country. If the villages wedded to the cult of self-sufficiency and agrarianism will refuse to buy the products of the urban centres, the industrial growth of



the country will be retarded.<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that the *gramdan* economy will lead to the accentuation of production and to the increase of the purchasing power of the villagers. But if the *gramdan* economy is not co-ordinated with the economy of the rest of the country there may be a lop-sided growth and we may miss the exhilarating effects of the integral growth and expansion of the country's economic life.

Perhaps a third reservation may also be noted. So long as the pyramidal-vertical structure of the caste system operates it will be immensely difficult to operate the schemes of *gramdan*. Several high castes consider it a sin to touch the plough. Moreover, in some villages there is the problem of the absence of effective social communication between Hindus and Moslems. Hence the community ownership of land is only one aspect of the immense problem of village reconstruction. In some cases there may arise the problem of the ownership of those additional implements for cultivation which a man buys from his personal savings which he has made from his earnings in cities. Hence I find there are serious problems which have all to be considered together. It is highly utopian to view that once the economic rights of private ownership of land have been surrendered to the village community an absolute moral and spiritual revolution has been effected in the country-side. The formula that the *gramdan* movement visualizes village ownership of land as well as individual cultivation by the villagers (*Khet Gaon ka Kheti Kisan ki*) will face great complications in its actual operation. It may be possible that individual cultivation may become the prelude to the claim for individual ownership of the land. Furthermore, the problem of the reform of the village

It is true that sarvodaya is not against industrialization. It aims to foster village industries. See Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga*, vol. II, pp. 141-142. But there is an undertone of hostility to urban industries. See Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga*, vol. II, p. 232

economy is linked up with the entire problem of changes in the social structure also.

## 8. Conclusion

In its supreme quest for the preservation and ennoblement of the village community sarvodaya is trying to bolster up a social entity which has been the bulwark of Indian culture and society for ages. At a time when the ruthless impact of industrialism and urbanization is trying to take the life out of the villages of India, sarvodaya has stressed the immense significance of the village community. It has seriously taken to heart the pregnant cry of Gandhi that India could not live if the villages declined. It is true that the trend of the modern world is towards industrialism, technology, megalopolitanism and sovereign concentration of political and economic power. Hence it may be said, and it is also true to a great extent, that sarvodaya is a philosophy of agrarian protest. But even if this charge were true this would not detract from the eminent meaningfulness of this system. Buddhism started as a protest against the contemporary decadent Hinduism; Christianity was launched as a protest against the contemporary Israelite religion and Marxism is a protest against the evils of capitalism. Thus it is evident that being a philosophy of protest does not detract from the vitality and significance of any system of thought. Sometimes sarvodaya may be charged with being a philosophy of reaction, even. True it is that the villagism of sarvodaya may appear as a reaction against the modern industrial trends of civilization, but it is the merit of this system that to the accepted social philosophy of village reconstruction it has added the new radical gospels of the ownership of all land of the village in the village community itself and the erection of a decentralized village commonwealth. Hence in sarvodaya there is a synthesis of the old and the new. It does not preach the preservation of the patriarchal village system with its stable economy, its caste stratification and its fossilized outlook. Instead it pleads for breathing new life in the

villages through the radical slogans of the political and economic sovereignty of the village.

The philosophy and sociology of sarvodaya based on the insights and experiences of Gandhi is a reassertion of the valuational and moral approach to the problems of mankind, which has been a part of ancient Indian culture for ages. The dissatisfaction with a merely institutional and external approach to problems, it shares with Vivekananda and Aurobindo. It is very easy to talk of speculative idealism and moral conversion so long as a group is striving to gain converts. But when it becomes organized and itself obtains power and influence it becomes amenable to all kinds of perversities and malformations. Communism started with a supreme moral idealism but when the communists captured power, they have manifested the virulence and rapacity of power in all its shamefaced ruthlessness. Like Plato, sarvodaya also believes in a regeneration of the human heart and mind. The philosophy and sociology of sarvodaya can add the moral tonic to Indian civilization. I will appreciate the utilization of its moral idealism for the perfection of the mechanisms of representative democracy, the rule of law and social and economic justice. For the quest of the perfectionist goal of mankind we have to start with reforming and slowly bettering the imperfect institutional and legal devices that have been built up in the course of human evolution. I do believe in the necessity of ethical idealism for political and economic reconstruction. We should progressively perfect our institutional mechanisms and should simultaneously try to incorporate the spirit of ethical idealism in them to the maximum extent possible. The great contribution of sarvodaya lies in the assertion of a moral approach to the problems of man.

## CHAPTER XI

# THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SARVODAYA

### 1. Philosophical Anarchism

The quest for power is one of the fundamental urges of man. At the elementary level, one may desire power for self-preservation and security. In a hostile world it is imperative to have some power to maintain one's existence. Without power one feels helpless and at the mercy of opponents who would like to control him as a means for serving their own selfish ends. At a more complicated level, when one has amassed a considerable amount of power over others, he is driven by a relentless logic to seek for more and more power. There is thus established a vicious circle of competing groups which clamour for power and for ever-growing power. The danger is that if the one group would not obtain ever greater power, its opponents will begin to dominate over it. In political struggles we find the causal role of this ruthless competition for power and dominance. In this dangerous game of politics we can discover the action of a fundamental urge for domination over others and also the working of an elementary rule that if one person renounces the attempt for obtaining power, others will begin to dominate over him. This never ceasing quest for power has perverted the face of politics.

The communists dreamt of a stateless society based on cooperation and management of things. But the monopolistic control of both the political and economic avenues, instrumentalities and resources of power have given to the leaders of Soviet communism a degree of coercive control undreamt of even by the pronounced champions of state sovereignty like Hobbes, Hegel and

Austin. The concentration of power in the so-called socialist system of Russia is appalling and phenomenal. It was one of the major insights of Plato that in the *Republic* he separated the holders of political power - the guardians - from the holders of economic power - the husbandmen. Liberalism also postulated that the state should be concerned only or mostly with political functions. Socialism guarantees jobs to every one but the corollary of that is that all people are made to be dependent on the state for the barest morsel of food and hence they cannot resist its encroachments upon their freedom. After all, the power of the state is wielded not by some exalted abstraction but by normal human beings and party leaders and bureaucrats are the last examples of the human species who can be trusted to be the true and just custodians of the rights and justice of the people.

From very early times both in theory and practice politics has been equated with power. The radical school of Greek sophists interpreted politics as the art of the dominance of the stronger. Callicles ridiculed the philosophical quest for moral perfection. Hobbes interpreted human psychology in terms of an endless quest for power. The German conservatives and imperialists stood for the power of the militarist state. But Gandhi condemned the state as the concentration of violence. He dreamt of a society rid of all violence and force. The Marxists and anarchists also refer to the exploitationist character of the present capitalist state which flourishes on the suppression of the workers.

Sarvodaya accepts the sacrosanct character of the human spirit. It is supremely emphatic on the inculcation of the values of freedom, equality, justice and fraternity. Hence it is opposed to the state machine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order* (Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, Tanjore, 1955), p. 43: "It is not possible to achieve any success through developing the power of the state."

The state is not the terrestrial reflection of the merciful divine being but is a soulless mechanical instrument to effectuate the will of those who have the manipulating skill, dash, cunning and capacity to control the governmental structure. In tracing the evolution of the state Vinoba Bhave says: "In the early stages it was unrestrained violence that held the faith. Gradually man learnt to curb and limit his violence and the institution called the state came into existence. The formation of the state did limit violence up to a degree. The advent of the apparatus of government created a new kind of law and order. Even Vedas had said that coercive power of the state was personification of Dharma. But gradually the state grew stronger, became more and more powerful till it became an all-powerful state with the power of destroying the whole world with its military might based on nuclear weapons."<sup>1</sup> In most cases the state does operate by methods of intimidation, coercion, persecution and organized violence. Hence Gandhi was thoroughly opposed to the state. Like Leo Tolstoy, he was immensely hostile to the state. He pleaded for *Swarajya*—the inner rule of man over himself. He wanted that their *Swarajya* should be based on the moral sovereignty of the people. Gandhi believed in the spiritualization of politics but Vinoba stands almost for the nullification of politics. Sarvodaya aims to replace the politics of power by the politics of cooperation.<sup>2</sup> It emphasizes mutualistic activities spontaneously engaged in by the people. According to Vinoba Bhave, there are ten criteria of an ideal polity:<sup>3</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan to Gramdan* (Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, Tanjore, 1956) p , 7
- <sup>2</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *From Socialism to Sarvodaya* (Kashi, 1958), p 48, distinguishes the politics of the people from the politics of party and power. The aim of sarvodaya politics is to see "that all centres of power are abolished. The more this new politics grows the more the old politics shrinks. A real withering away of the state"
- <sup>3</sup> *Swarajya Shastra* (In Hindi) (Sasta Sahitya Mandal, New Delhi, 1953) p., 25

- (i) International fraternity.
- (ii) The conscious, spontaneous (as far as possible) and hearty cooperation of all the inhabitants of the country.
- (iii) The identity of the good of the capable minority and the general majority.
- (iv) The orientation towards the universal and equal development of all.
- (v) The widest dispersion of political sovereignty.
- (vi) The least amount of government.
- (vii) The easiest availability of *tantra* or justice (?)  
—(*Sulabhatam tantra*)
- (viii) The least possible expenditure.
- (ix) The lowest degree of external protection.
- (x) The universal, uninterrupted and neutral or objective spread of knowledge.

## 2. Partyless Democracy

The activities and operations of the political parties in modern states are oriented to the ruthless pursuit of power. In democracies, in spite of the theoretical adherence to the principles of the sovereignty of the electorate and the consent of the people as the basis of government, in actual practice, there is the domination of the all-powerful parties.<sup>1</sup> There are no occasions for

The criticisms of representative democracy by sarvodaya, however, do not imply in the least, any support of absolutism or regimentation. True it is, that both absolutism, totalitarianism and fascism as well as Gandhian sarvodaya are critics of the democratic system but that does not mean that they are similar. As a matter of fact they are poles asunder. While totalism, of all types tend to subvert the values of democracy, Gandhian sarvodaya postulates an extension of democratic ethics. It pleads for the moralization and spiritualization of the democratic set up. Both Jayaprakash Narayan, *Towards a New Society* (Delhi, 1958), pp. 89-90, and Vinoba Bhave, *Rajniti se Lokaniti ki Or* (In Hindi : Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan 1957), p. 21, have criticized the democratic practice of giving one vote to every individual, irrespective of his attainments and qualities. But I think that the alternative to equal suffrage will be plural voting or weighted suffrage which is an adjunct of oligarchy and aristocracy and which will never be supported by sarvodaya.

the continuous dynamic political initiative of the masses and for the sovereign exercise of that general will of the community conceived as a moral entity which Rousseau regarded as the essence of democracy. In the eighteenth century Rousseau had said that the people of England are free only during election days. But with modern devices of propaganda and the dominating and corrosive influences of wealth which can be brought to bear on the electorate, it is not possible for the people to make genuinely independent choices even from amongst the limited number of candidates who are put forward at the time of elections. Some organized parties in India, it is said, have resorted even to physical assaults of their opponents. Hence the people in modern democracies are not genuinely free even during election days. The reckless use of violence and money for the sake of gaining offices and power has done havoc to the democratic political system.<sup>1</sup> It is true that direct participation by the people in all the important activities of the state is not possible today. But the moment indirect or representative democracy is accepted as the governmental form for a country, parties with their octopus-like grabbing hold appear on the scene. But it will not solve the problem if the crudities, the vulgar devices for obtaining power and the perverse technics for maintaining themselves in office resorted to by parties are regarded as final and inevitable. The concept of *lokaniiti* is a

<sup>1</sup> The principal defects of modern parliamentary (and even the presidential system) democracy in the opinion of the advocates of sarvodaya are:—

- (i) Corruptions and perversities attendant upon the acquisition of political power.
- (ii) Rampant economic and social inequality.
- (iii) Accentuation of the competitive craze for more and more commodities resulting in the dislocation of international political balance.
- (iv) One of the principal defects of the Indian parliamentary democracy is that this system is a foreign importation in India and hence has not been able to draw the natural affection and loyalty of the people.



way to solve the problem.<sup>1</sup> Sarvodaya is definitely hostile to the mechanism of representative democracy<sup>2</sup> which amounts in actual practice to the dictatorship of the cabinet and party oligarchy. Hence sarvodaya advocates partyless democracy.

The concept of partyless democracy will be thoroughly realized at the full consummation of the *bhoodan* movement. But steps in that direction have to be taken immediately. *There are four dominant technics for the realization of partyless democracy.* The ways to realize partyless democracy have to start at the bottom.

(I) In the nearly six lacs of the villages of India attempts should be made to nominate the workers whom by universal consensus the village-inhabitants consider to be their best "servants".<sup>3</sup> These workers will constitute the members of the *panchayat*. This nomination would be a reflection of the confidence which these workers

<sup>1</sup> Dada Dharmadhikari would almost support the Guild Socialist proposal for functional representation, in his view that the political units should run parallel to the economic units. Dada Dharmadhikari: *Sarvodaya Darshan* (In Hindi) (Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, Kashi, 1957), pp. 227-229, says that for the transformation of the foundations of democracy it is essential that there should be the minimum separation between the economic unit, the political (*i.e.*, administrative unit) and the unit for representation.

<sup>2</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: "The Political Theory of Bhoodan", *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 25: "The device of democratic elections cannot equate 500 representatives with eighteen crores (counting only the adults) of the people. To the extent the eighteen crores look after their affairs directly, to that extent the powers and functions of the state are restricted and real democracy is practised."

Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Yajna* (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1954), p. 108, says that the *gram-panchayat* was based on the unanimity of the five. He pleads for the adoption of the principle of "the unanimity among all persons of honesty and good will" in place of the principle of deciding issues by a majority vote.

have created in the minds of the village population. The various technics of *bhoodan*, *gramdan* etc. are concrete and vital steps in the rehabilitation of the community spirit and the unanimous nomination of the members of the *panchayat* by the villagers without the operation of any of the traditional mechanisms of party action, will be an important tribute to the growth of community sentiment. The pattern devised at the village level will be repeated also at the other higher levels. The *thana-panchayat* will be chosen by the members of the *village-panchayat*. The *district-panchayat* will be chosen by the members of the *thana-panchayat*. The provincial administration and the central administration will be constituted on a similar principle.<sup>2</sup> This will be the institutional device for the realization of partyless democracy.

From the theoretical standpoint we can find the possible operation of two significant principles in this scheme of partyless democracy. The first, obviously, is that party politics and electoral mechanisms are replaced by the operation of community consensus. The principle of majority decision is to be replaced by unanimity. The second principle is the operation of indirect nominations. For example, the members of the *thana-panchayat* are chosen not by all the inhabitants of the thana but by the members of the *village-panchayats* of that thana. Similarly the *district-panchayat* is not to be nominated by all the inhabitants of the district considered *en masse* but only by the members of the *thana-panchayats* of that district. The provincial and central administrators or members of the *provincial panchayat* and *central panchayat* are also to be chosen on the basis of indirect nomination. Thus at the levels of the province and the

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Kranti ka Adhunik Prayog* (Janata Prakashan, Patna, 1954), pp. 11-12

<sup>2</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga* (Kashi, 1957), Vol. I, p. 253, says that the material power will reside in the villages while the moral power will be exercised by the people in the centre (*i. e.*, central government).

centre, a colossal principle of indirect nomination or choosing<sup>1</sup> is to be set up.

This principle of indirect nomination or indirect election<sup>2</sup> is defective from two standpoints. Its first principal defect is that in one sense it seriously detracts from the moral and political stature of the individual citizens. At present, the individual elector directly elects the members of the parliament and the legislature. In the scheme of partyless democracy contemplated by sarvodaya the individual villager will have a share only in choosing the members of the *village-panchayat*. He will not directly choose the members of the *thana-panchayat*, the *district-panchayat*, the *provincial panchayat* and the *central panchayat*. Thus in the name of choosing by consensus, the individual villager is being deprived of a very important political right he enjoys today, that is, of directly choosing members of the state legislature and the parliament.

Another defect of the principle of indirect nomination from the practical standpoint will be the enormous complication in the choosing of the different panchayats. Students of political science know that the functions of the political parties are not confined to the conquest of power. They also educate public opinion and crystallize political issues. They focus the merits and demerits of the different contestants in the election field. At the village level or even at the thana level it may be possible to choose the members of the *panchayat* by consensus because the villagers or even the numerous inhabitants of the thana are expected to know their "servants" or in the Aristotelian language their best "friends". But I do not see how without the operation

<sup>1</sup> Dada Dharmadhikari: *Sarvodaya Darshan*, p. 241. Jayaprakash Narayan: *Towards a New Society*, p. 168 says: "Perhaps some sort of indirect system of election to the higher levels of government or management or administration would be necessary."

<sup>2</sup> For support of indirect election, see Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Ganan* Vol IV pp 28-29.

of the party mechanism, the members of, say, over fifty *district-panchayats* in the Uttar Pradesh will discover their best servants so as to nominate or choose them for being members of the *provincial* or *state panchayat*.

(II) There is a second significant technic advocated by sarvodaya for the realization of partyless democracy. The aim of sarvodaya is to establish a society which will be free from the malady of parties.<sup>1</sup> It refuses to meddle with present party politics. A person who has dedicated himself to this movement will not seek any elective post "and for life he will not be able to participate in elections. He may however cast his vote as his conscience tells him."<sup>2</sup> Partyless democracy is supposed to be the final political consummation of the sarvodaya movement. But so long as that final stage has not been realized, in casting his vote, the believer in the philosophy of sarvodaya, will exercise a judicious choice between the contenders. He will vote for the candidates of that party which in his judgment can best serve the interests of the people.

(III) The fundamental aim of sarvodaya is to create a genuine non-party democracy and hence a third formula of partyless democracy has been pointed out. An important technic, to be followed in the early stages of the movement, is to invite various parties to cooperate in sarvodaya work. These parties may have different ideologies but their help can be solicited to the extent they are willing to cooperate. This kind of cooperative work will bring home to these workers the urgency of effectuating the all-round revolution which sarvodaya envisages. A further stage in that same direction will be the concentrated efforts by all political parties towards the realization of the ideal of sarvodaya.

Jayaprakash Narayan: *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 10:  
 "We in India have decided not to fight village elections on party lines. And what is right for a village is also right for the nation."

*Ibid* p. 30

Vinoba says: "As regard the related question of our policy towards the different political parties, I am inclined to take the view that they should cease as different parties and combine to form a united front made up of all good and honest people in the country carrying out commonly agreed programmes. And to that end I try to put before the people a programme of work which may be acceptable to all and in which all can join forgetting their differences. This will tend to draw the parties nearer one another with the result that their differences will gradually shrink and the points of agreement increase. Now we have such a programme in *bhoodan* which is acceptable to all, which helps the country go forward and withal makes for the growth of *jana-shakti*—the inherent strength of the people."<sup>1</sup>

(IV) Sometimes it has been suggested that a fourth important concrete step in the evolution of partyless democracy will be the neutralization of the party sting in the legislatures and the parliament. Even if the present technic of getting elected to the legislative bodies on party tickets continues, it may be devised that having entered those bodies, the element of party-belongingness of the representatives ceases. Instead of voting as party members they should vote as representatives of the nation. Instead of being guided by the party whips they should look to the high court of their best conscience. The ministers will not be chosen on party lines. Every member will be asked to submit a list of names and those obtaining the highest preferences will be elected. This seems to be a nice proposal provided it can work. I have serious doubts about the workability of this proposal and hence for the present I support the organization of the cabinet on the basis of party homogeneity.

It is true that the growth of factionalism and partisanship is one of the greatest evils of democracy. But it does not seem possible to abolish parties. *We have*

*to abolish partisanship and not parties.* Sometimes I feel that it is not possible to identify politics with party politics. After all, parties are a creation of the modern western civilization. Parties begin to crystallize in the seventeenth century England. But can any one be correct in saying that there was no politics before the seventeenth century? For centuries there has been some form or other of organized political activity without the party mechanism. It is true that with the growth of the enfranchisement of the people, parties have come to occupy very significant positions. But if sarvodaya workers are sceptical of modern party politics, they can work as advisors in the administrative set-up. They may do so in their individual capacity. With the growth of the complexities of modern civilization the significance of advisory councils and advisory bodies has increased. Hence I think that instead of renouncing all types of politics it will be advisable if the sarvodaya workers choose to work as members of advisory councils and advisory bodies at all levels --central, provincial, district and taluka. This can be a type of work of concrete immediate significance. Instead of retiring into works of purely agrarian reconstruction if the administrative institutional mechanism is sought to be reformed I think it will be of great value and will confer solid advantages. Hence I believe that instead of getting identified with purely rural work and activities the problems of administrative reform should also be tackled by the workers and leaders of sarvodaya. If leaders who are men of strong moral character and abnegation choose to become political and administrative advisors there is a chance that the noble impact of Gandhian teachings can be felt on the Indian government.

### **3. Decentralization or Gram-raj**

Both democracy and communism are engulfed by great corrosive forces. The competitive struggle for power by the various parties with their oligarchical-pyramidal structure of the leadership-hierarchy renders

democracy a farce. It converts the concept of popular sovereignty into an empty slogan. The key decisions are made by a few leaders and the vast masses are expected tamely to acquiesce in them. The people have retired from the function of governing. Theirs is the glorious privilege of choosing their governors from amongst a few powerful competing candidates who have behind them all the paraphernalia of influencing and occasionally even intimidating the people. Hence democracy needs radical transformation. The experiments of communism in some countries have still further tightened the control of an authoritarian party over the people. Communism dreamt of establishing the rule of the proletariat and the peasants in place of the dictatorship of the minority of the bourgeoisie but in practice the communists have built up a gigantic state machine bolstered up by an army and a band of officials and working like a mechanical automaton under the whimsical dictates of the fortunate few who have managed to get themselves flung to the topmost positions. Hence the people as a concrete whole composed of vast millions have ceased to be operative political entities both in the democratic and the communistic systems. Against this nauseating whirlpool and dirty quagmire of violent struggles for power, sarvodaya makes a healthy reaction.

In place of the ever-growing centralization of power sarvodaya pleads for decentralization. Gandhi was hostile to all types of concentration of power and he pleaded for deconcentration both at the economic and the political levels.<sup>1</sup> Jefferson also had visualized that the foundations of democracy lay in small-scale

In an article in the *Harijan*, January 18, 1942, Gandhi wrote that without decentralization it was impossible to achieve human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. He wrote: "Centralization as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society." J. C. Kumarappa: *Economy of Permanence* (Kashi, 1957, third edition), pp. 159-167 says: "Democracy in economics must be based on decentralized production in villages on individual basis." (p. 160) Also p. 171

agrarian communities. He had a genuine fear of the concentration of power at the federal centre. Decentralization requires the healthy evolution of creative citizenship. It is fantastic to believe that a law of the parliament or the diet or the assembly can bring about the desired change. What is essential is that the people should be trained and disciplined into the management and control of their own affairs. This requires that in the early stages there should be a band of self-abnegating workers on the spot who should help the people in the art of doing their own business. These workers should be the brethren of the people and not their rulers. They should educate the people through their cooperative solicitude. The enervated Indian population which has lost the habits of dynamic initiative and self-reliance for centuries is becoming utterly dependent on the officers of the state. Gandhi wanted that the village panchayat "should function only under a law of its own making". But our population has almost lost its moral character and even these panchayats have become the dens of casteism and other perverse types of baneful factors and influences. One of the foremost problems of decentralization is to make the panchayats function as spontaneous training-grounds in village republicanism and community democracy. Thus the problem of decentralization is not solved by merely speaking against the evils of concentration of power or by conferring minor judicial and executive functions and powers on the *panchayat* or on the *mukhia* and the *sarpanch*.<sup>1</sup> According to the philosophy of sarvodaya, instead of bolstering centralization, nationalization and state socialism in the name of the welfare state, the primary need is to discipline and train the people in the art of managing

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Towards a New Society*, p 158, says: "The present panchayats are not democratic. They are not working on a democratic basis. You might give them votes and you might give them some powers and you may hold elections, but in the village itself neither in the economic, nor in the social, nor in the political sphere is democracy at work."



efficiently their economic, social and administrative problems. One of the arguments advanced by the protagonists of sarvodaya is that in a decentralized political system there is less of difference of opinion and hence there is greater hope for realizing the concept of party-less democracy.<sup>1</sup>

According to the sarvodaya conception the realization of the village self-government—*gram-raj*—is postulated upon the exercise of all political authority by the village.<sup>2</sup> The same principle of genuine and real administration by the people themselves would operate at the district and provincial levels of administration also. Instead of being mechanical foci executing the will of the central government these will be organic areas of self-government. The advocates of sarvodaya are quite correct in holding that if genuine self-government or real democracy is practised at the village level, then that would be the greatest bulwark against any totalitarian encroachment.

The fear has sometimes been expressed that this *gram-raj* may become an exercise in parallel government

Sometimes it has been stated by the protagonists of sarvodaya that centralization is the root cause of party strifes. Once the attempt is made to discuss and decide local issues at local levels there will be no scope for partisanship. See Bhagvandas Kela: *Raja Vyavastha: Sarvodaya Drishti se* (Bhartiya Granthamala, Daraganj, Allahabad, 1955), pp. 76-81. But Kela's arguments do not appear convincing to me. The experience of the village affairs is enough to show that on the pettiest problems there are chances of great divergences of opinions. Wherever the interest of some individuals or a group are threatened, they tend to fight for the preservation of their rights and interests. Hence there does not seem to be any significant and necessary logical connexion between centralization and the growth of party system.

According to Jayaprakash Narayan: *Towards a New Society* (New Delhi, 1958), pp. 163-167, *gram-swaraj* is the result of two important precedents: (a) *gramdan* and *gram samkalpa* or *gram svavalamban*, i.e., village self-sufficiency: Narayan: *Ibid*, p. 99, asserts that the surest foundation of democracy in India would be the self-governing village units.

with little means of coordination. But there is no plan or idea to dispense with the mechanism of the central government. So long as the central government exists its services may be utilized as occasion arises. "The central authority, so long as it exists, would be like a danger chain in a railway train. Passengers do not always have their attention fixed on this chain, but they make use of it in times of danger."<sup>1</sup>

Sarvodaya accepts the universalization of self-government. This means the emergence of the people to vigilant active participation in cooperative action. If the officials at the top are liable to perversity and corruption, it is equally essential to guard effectively against the corruptions of the workers and petty officials at the level of the villages. Sarvodaya wants to elevate the people. The people and not the central parliament or cabinet has to become the focus of political attention. This is the significance of the replacement of *rajniti* by *lokaniti*.<sup>2</sup> Vinoba says: "Swaraj has come. But do people feel the warmth of it? The very term *swaraj*, or self-government, implies decentralization of authority. The principle has, therefore, to be applied to every practicable limit, to all fields of life, social, economic, and political. *Gramdan*, or villagization, brought to their very cottages the power that really belonged to them, but of which, unfortunately, they were not conscious, and which, again not less unfortunately, indeed, was progressively centralized at places like Delhi and Kurnool, resulting in the progressive decline of their liberty and progressive rise in their poverty and suffer-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jayaprakash Narayan: *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order* (Tanjore, 1955), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The difference between the orientations of *rajniti* and *lokaniti* can be thus indicated:—

<i>Rajniti</i>	<i>Lokanti</i>
(a) government	(a) self-restraint
(b) power	(b) freedom
(c) control	(c) discipline
(d) competition for obtaining sovereignty and rights	(d) performance of duties

ings. It is through *gramdan* alone that the Delhi Raj of today could be transformed into the *gram-raj* and *Ram-raj*. Every village would then become a state in miniature with all the departments efficiently functioning in the village itself."<sup>1</sup>

The movement of sarvodaya is keen that immediate steps should be taken for the implementation of those policies and methods which are calculated to establish a truly non-violent democracy. Even the welfare state has a tendency to become totalitarian because under it the state assumes ever larger number of functions and with the increase of functions is bound to come increase of power.<sup>2</sup> According to sarvodaya this infantile parasitic tendency to lean on the state would lead to the withering away of the instinct and habit of liberty. It will eventually lull the people into the dungeons of totalitarian regimentation. Hence it is essential to learn the art of self-reliance and discipline.<sup>3</sup> If freedom is the desired objective, then sarvodaya wants people to take to heart the famous maxim of Thoreau which Gandhi used to repeat that the government is the best which governs the least.<sup>4</sup> It stresses the cultivation of real

- <sup>1</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan to Gramdan* (Tanjore, 1956), p. 41. Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. II, p. 107, pleads for a federation of four lacs of villages. The central authority therein will be merely advisory.
- <sup>2</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Towards a New Society* (Congress for Cultural Freedom, New Delhi, 1958), p. 83; Jayaprakash Narayan: *A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order*, p. 44: "It (the welfare state) is a slow-moving conception of changing society into a socialistic one." For criticism of the ideal of welfare state see Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. IV, pp. 26-27
- <sup>3</sup> Hence sarvodaya pleads for the substitution of *shasan* by *anushasan*.
- <sup>4</sup> The Sarvodayists have borrowed the Marxist formula for the communist society that there will be only administration of things and not government over persons. See Dada Dharmadhikari: *Sarvodaya Darshan* p 233

*janashakti*—the power and strength of the people.<sup>1</sup> Only this can be an effective antidote to the dominance of *dandashakti* or the power of coercive violence. As an ultimate ideal, however, sarvodaya is satisfied not with limiting or regulating the state machine but with the total elimination of the state.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Political Implications of Sarvodaya

(a) *The Repudiation of the Marxist Theory of Class Struggle.* The fundamental theme of sarvodaya is the realization of the happiness and elevation of all.<sup>3</sup> At the political level this has two significant implications. First, the repudiation of the theory of class struggle, and second, the safeguarding of the interests and rights of the minority. The concept of class struggle is based on the acceptance of the existence of divergent and even antithetical interests in the social structure. Sarvodaya, on the other hand, starts with the notion of the community as a reality *sui generis*. The aim of social and political efforts is not to serve the disproportionate interests of the ascendent classes but to maximize the good of the entire community. Sarvodayism attacks the repugnant and preverse consequences of egoism and the lust for power and wealth. Hence it

According to Sarvodaya there are two technics for the stabilization of the power of the people—of *janashakti*: (i) Constant propaganda and publicity (*vichar-prachar*) and (ii) decentralization of power. The aim is not merely to change the opinion of the people but to change their heart. Thus alone can the environmental and institutional change be brought about. See Bhagvandas Kela: *Raj Vya'ostha : Sarvodaya Dristhi se*, pp. 92-94

Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan to Gramdan*, p. 8

According to Vinoba Bhave : *Swarajya Shastra* pp. 56-57, there are four pillars on the basis of which the edifice of the ideal state oriented to the happiness and good of the people can be erected.

- (i) *Sevabhava* : =The instinct of service.
- (ii) *Svavalambana* : =Self-reliance.
- (iii) *Ahimsak trana* : =Non-violent protection.
- (iv) *Tulya Parisramik* : =Equality of wages.

stresses the necessity of disinterested service. Service, dedication, and the realization of common good are its technics and formulae and it is opposed to the Marxist theory of class struggle which smacks of violence.<sup>1</sup> Once it is accepted that violence has to be renounced as a basis of organized social existence, there is no place for the disruptionist theory of the struggle of mutually opposed classes. Sarvodaya pleads for the replacement of the concept of class struggle by the more rational theory of social good and harmony.<sup>2</sup> This social harmony is to be realized not by mere verbal profession. It is to be experienced in daily conduct. There has to be a deliberate extension of good feeling. The aim is not the forcible expropriation of the wealth of the rich but the conscious and spontaneous practice of "sharing" the goods one has ready at hand. In this way there can be an overpowering accentuation of the ideal of sharing and almost a mass moral revolution oriented to be effectuation of a peaceful social reconstruction can be brought about. The aim of this revolution is not to seize power but to bring about a change in one's outlook and hierarchy of values. The propensity to accumulate has to give place to the propensity to share.<sup>3</sup>

Explaining the difference between the Marxian and the Gandhian approaches to the social structure, Jayaprakash Narayan: *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 25, says: "Socialism wishes to advance by setting class against class, Gandhism by cutting across classes. Socialism wishes to destroy classes by making one class victorious over the other—which seems to be somewhat illogical. Gandhism wishes to abolish classes by so bringing the classes together that there are no class distinctions left."

Cf. J. B. Kripalani: *Class Struggle* (Kashi, 1958), p. 93. Dharendra Mazumdar: *Bhoodan Yajna : The Great Challenge of the Age* (Banaras, 1954) p. 31, says that in place of class conflict Vinoba stands for class-conversion.

Jayaprakash Narayan: *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p. 116: "Wealth can be distributed by law, but shared only voluntarily. Distribution of wealth may be uncertain step towards socialism, but sharing of wealth is real and full socialism."

But the repudiation of the concept of class struggle and the acceptance of the ideal of social harmony do not mean the perpetuation of the present *status quo* with landlords and farmers and the exploitation of the latter by the former. In his earlier days of political leadership Gandhi was in favour of retaining the Zamindars but later on his views underwent a radical transformation and he talked endlessly about a social structure rid of all class stratifications.<sup>1</sup> Sarvodaya contemplates not the retention of the system of exploitation and coercion but it wants to bring about a regime of absolute social equality and the maximum of economic equality too. On the plane of social idealism sarvodaya and communism both accept social equality and liberty. The vital difference is found in the profound attachment of sarvodaya to the ethics and technics of non-violence. Sarvodaya contemplates a regime of liberty, equality and justice to be brought about by the dynamic transforming power of love and non-violence.<sup>2</sup>

(b) *The Repudiation of the Concept of Majoritarianism.* The second implication from the sarvodayist conception of the organic reality of the community is the repudiation of the element of superior virtue supposed to be contained in the judgment of a majority of heads.<sup>3</sup> If the community is an organic structure and if all the individual members of it are bearers of moral and cul-

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Socialism to Sarvodaya*, p 20

<sup>2</sup> Mahatma Gandhi was tremendously opposed to the concept of class war. He wrote, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 3, 1934: "In India a class war is not only not inevitable, but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class war as being inevitable, have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin-deep." He pleaded that the struggle of labour against capital was a vicious circle and was to be avoided at all cost.

<sup>3</sup> Vinoba wrote in the *Harijan*, January 17, 1953: "Rule of the majority is the law of the day; whether the majority has or has not scruples and character, it does not matter at all. Is not rule of the majority only brute force? How can you differentiate between the rule of the regiment, rule of money and rule of the majority? What is it if it is not brute force?"

tural values then there is no place for jeopardizing the lives and interests of even the lowest and the humblest. From the superficial standpoint of having got oneself registered in a specific group or having paid the requisite fees for membership of a particular party, one may be in a majority or a minority. But if truth is the supreme canon and if the opinion, wish and aspiration of every one member is precious, then in that case one has to work by consensus and not by majority. There has to be discussion and debate and through the dialectics of argument and counter-argument some fundamental areas of mutual good will emerge. This, and not the artificial counting of heads, is the genuine method of social action. Hence according to sarvodayism the concept of majoritarianism has to be replaced by the concept of consensus. Sarvodaya is not satisfied with the various safeguards of proportional representation that have been devised to protect the interests of the majority. It adheres, rather, to the Gandhian concept that the superficial numerical criteria of many and few have to be replaced by a fundamental adherence to the good of the community. Sometimes it is said that different types of party formations arise in response to the diversity of social interests. But sarvodaya thinks that this mechanical conception of plurality of social interests has to be replaced by the moral conception of the homogeneity of the fundamental interests of the society. Thus sarvodaya aims to replace the concept of majoritarianism by the concept of fundamental consensus.

(c) *Bhoodan and Satyagraha.* Satyagraha was one of the cardinal concepts in the Gandhian sociology. Satyagraha means a deliberate and conscious assertion of truth and right against the entrenched strength of the vested interests. From individual non-cooperation to organized civil disobedience on a mass scale, there are different forms of Satyagraha. It may appear that Satyagraha as conceived by Gandhi, was a more dynamic and aggressive technic as compared to the supposedly passive technic of *dan*. But Vinoba believes that *bhoodan*

itself is a Satyagraha. He believes in argumentation and compromise. He, however, does not rule out peaceful struggle.<sup>1</sup> It is possible to visualize numerous occasions when the enlightened conscience of even one single citizen may feel that the verdict of the group is repugnant to the canons of truth. On such an occasion he will take recourse to Satyagraha.<sup>2</sup>

It appears to me, however, that in the sarvodaya movement the original Gandhian emphasis on Satyagraha has been toned down. May be, it is so because Gandhi's main fight was against an alien imperialistic system. The sarvodaya movement, on the other hand, is aimed at the constructive rehabilitation of village life and hence, perhaps, there is not that emphasis on Satyagraha which we find in Gandhi's life and thought.<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes it has been said that there is no place for the technic of Satyagraha in a democracy. But I think that it is a mistaken view. True it is that democracy adheres to the formula of peaceful change. But if in a democracy a citizen genuinely and sincerely feels that the cause of justice and truth is being flouted he can take to the path of Satyagraha. I do not think that Gandhi would have ever regarded Satyagraha as undemocratic. He stated that for the sake of truth he was prepared alone to give battle to all the entrenched sources of power. I would go a step further and state that if Gandhi would have to choose between Satyagraha and democracy he would have championed Satyagraha. I do not see much relevance in the arguments of those who harp on the

<sup>1</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan: *Kranti ka Adhunik Prayog* (In Hindi) (Janata Prakashan, Patna, 1954), p. 5; Vinoba Bhave: *Sarvodaya ke Adhara* (Kashi 1956), pp. 63-64; Dada Dharmadhikari: *Sarvodaya Darshan*, pp. 242-243

<sup>2</sup> Vinoba Bhave: *Swarajya-Shastra* (In Hindi) (Sasta Sahitya Mandal, New Delhi, 1953), pp. 43-47. Vinoba Bhave: *Bhoodan Ganga*, Vol. I, pp. 104-105

<sup>3</sup> According to Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodana Ganga*, Vol. IV, pp. 307-308, Satyagraha after the attainment of *Swarajya* should be "more positive, explicit and full of strength."



fact that in a democracy a citizen should try to convert the legislature to his opinion and thus see that an undesirable piece of legislation is taken off the statute book. This certainly is a plausible and valid technic. But if the individual feels that the spontaneity and autonomy of the human self is jeopardized by a particular piece of legislation, for the sake of vindicating truth and justice he is entitled to his birth right of Satyagraha. The concept of political resistance has been partly supported by Hotman, Calvin, Thoreau and Laski. If a tame liberal idealist like T. H. Green flourishing in the firmament of the Oxford University could champion the cause of political resistance provided (i) all available peaceful avenues for the removal of a grievance were taken recourse to, (ii) public opinion had been made aware of the importance of the problems and (iii) steps had been taken to prevent social disruption, I see no ground why Satyagraha can be banned in the context of Indian democracy. Satyagraha is a valid technic for vindicating the plasticity, moral freedom and spiritual value of the human spirit. If the protagonists of sarvodaya contemplate the whittling away of Satyagraha I believe they are propounding something un gandhian.

## 5. Conclusion

The political philosophy of sarvodaya is a powerful intellectual attempt to build a plan of political and social reconstruction on the basis of metaphysical idealism. It is based on the insights of Gandhi. It makes a healthy attempt to develop the ideas of Gandhi in the framework of independent India. Gandhi stood for the village commonwealth. He was a persistent critic of modern western democracies wedded to the cult of violence. Sarvodaya is an attempt to develop the Gandhian idea regarding decentralization and villagism. But although modern sarvodaya derives the concept of decentralization from Gandhi, its concept of partyless democracy is an original contribution to political thought although there are chances that perhaps this concept

has been derived from the intellectual armoury of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Nevertheless the synthesis of partyless democracy and village self-government is a notable contribution from the standpoint of Indian political thought and practice.

In its hostility to the omniscience of the centralized state machine, sarvodaya reminds us of the pragmatic and pluralistic political doctrines that became fashionable after the first world war. We, in India, have had long centuries of despotic traditions. It is possible, nay probable, that under the guise of a welfare state and the socialistic pattern of society we may be heading towards the concentration of political and economic power eventually leading to dictatorship. Sarvodaya is a prophetic attempt to warn us of the dangers of political power and its monocratic concentration. In making us aware of the growing trend towards political concentration of power and the threat to individual liberty the leaders of the sarvodaya movement have rendered inestimable services to our infant democratic republic. India is not to be a pale reflection of England or America. For building a strong country we need to have noble traditions. Sarvodaya is the concrete embodiment of some of the noble and sublime themes of Indian culture and philosophy. In western countries we find that sociologists and political scientists have been so much dwarfed in their vision by the omnipotence of parties that they no longer believe seriously in the Lincolnian definition of democracy. One sociologist makes the shamefaced assertion that democracy is not a way of governing but of choosing who will govern and to what ends. At such a period of intellectual staleness and inertia and an abject surrender to the *status quo* the prophets of sarvodaya want to concretize the noble Gandhian dream of *svarajya*—the government of the individual over himself in all its comprehensive connotation. It is true that an immense amount of original thought and socio-political experimentations are needed for the realization of the Gandhian philosophy,

Even if for several decades we may not be able to practise this philosophy, I have been considerably inspired by the noble conception of sarvodaya that democracy has to be made a genuine experiment in the art of real self-government. In the twentieth century, perhaps, this is the only political philosophy that has genuinely and sincerely clung to the formula that democracy and self-government of the vast millions have to be made real. It will not serve any worthy purpose if we stick to the ghosts of party dictatorship or state absolutism or police domination. Swarajya and democracy have to be won for every citizen of this republic. Every inhabitant of this country, and for that matter, of the entire world, is a sacred entity. I do not agree with all the detailed technics and formulae of sarvodaya political thought, but its basic and radical resolve to make the government of the individual over himself real, is a source of perpetual inspiration. Its vision is definitely majestic and inspiring.

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