

MY SOCIALISM

BY
M. K. GANDHI



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MEMORANDUM

INVESTIGATION OF THE
EFFECTS OF THE
WATER SUPPLY

MY SOCIALISM

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CHAPTER 1

MY SOCIALISM

Real socialism has been handed down 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 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. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work for it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.

Harijan, 2-1-1937

Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism, even communism, is explicit in the first verse of *Ishopanishad*. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific socialists. It is true, however, that my approach is always and only through unadulterated non-violence. It may fail. If it does, it will be because of my ignorance of the technique of non-violence. I may be a bad ex-

ponent of the doctrine in which my faith is daily increasing. The A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. are organizations through which the technique of non-violence is being tested on an all-India scale. They are special autonomous bodies created by the Congress for the purpose of enabling me to conduct my experiments without being fettered by the vicissitudes of policy to which a wholly democratic body like the Congress is always liable.

Harijan, 20-2-1937

CHAPTER 2

WHO IS A SOCIALIST?

Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware in socialism all the members of society are equal—none low, none high. In the individual body, the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism.

In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity. Looking at society all the world over there is nothing but duality or plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. This man is high, that one is low, that is a Hindu, that a Muslim, third a Christian, fourth a Parsi, fifth a Sikh, sixth a Jew. Even among these there are sub-divisions. In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.

In order to reach this state we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us.

Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will count for ten and every addition will count for ten times the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste.

This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. Truthful conduct alone can reach truth. Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and *vice versa*. Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin. Either is inseparable from the other. Read the coin either way. The spelling of words will be different. The value is the same. This blessed state is unattainable without perfect purity. Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you.

Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there

is no country in the world which is purely socialist. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible.

Harijan, 13-7-1947

CHAPTER 3

SOCIALISM WITHOUT THE "ISM"

[In the wake of the suspension of the Civil Disobedience movement by Gandhiji in 1933 there emerged a "Socialist" group in the ranks of the Indian National Congress and at the first "Congress Socialist Conference", held at Patna in 1934, the programme of the Party was formulated. On the publication of this programme an attempt was made by some of the leaders of the Party to ascertain Gandhiji's views on it. Six questions were submitted to him and he answered them. These questions and answers were published for the first time in *Indian Parliament* (edited by Shri K. Srinivasan) in 1948 after Gandhiji's death. We are indebted to this journal for the same.]

1. How do you view the emergence of a Socialist Group in the Congress and what is your general criticism of the programme formulated by the Congress Socialist Conference at Patna?

2. Do you accept the socialist ideal of the progressive socialization of all the instruments of production (including land), distribution and exchange?

3. Do you contemplate the perpetuation of private enterprise under Swaraj or planned economy and production by the State?

4. What is your opinion of the socialist demand for the abolition of the rule of the Indian Princes?

5. Do you recognize the conflict of interest between the possessing and exploited classes resulting in a class struggle?

6. The Congress socialists claim that the organization of the masses on the basis of their economic interests and participation in their day-to-day struggle is the only effective method of creating a mass movement. How far is this method different from Civil Disobedience as envisaged by you?

Gandhiji's Reply

I welcome the rise of the Socialist Party in the Congress. But, I can't say that I like the programme as it appears in the printed pamphlet. It seems to me to ignore conditions, and I do not like the assumption underlying many of its propositions which go to show that there is necessarily antagonism between the classes and the masses or between the labourers and the capitalists such that they can never work for mutual good. My own experience covering a fairly long period is to the contrary. What is necessary is that labourers or workers should know their rights and should also know how to assert them.

"Abolition of the rule of the Indian Princes" is an arrogation of power which does not belong to the Party or which belongs as much as the power to abolish Portuguese and French authority in what is called Portuguese and French India would. It may be unfortunate; but the dismemberment of India is a fact which may not be ignored. It is surely enough to concentrate upon what is called British India. It is large enough territory for any party to operate in, and its successful operations in British India cannot but have their effects upon the other parts of India. On principle too I am not in favour of the abolition of the rule of the princes, but I believe in its reformation in consonance with the true spirit of democracy.

“The repudiation of the so-called Public Debt of India incurred by the foreign government” is too vague and too sweeping a statement in the programme of a progressive and enlightened party. The Congress has suggested the only real and statesmanlike proposition, namely, reference to an Impartial Tribunal of the whole of the Public Debt before any part can be taken over by the future free Government of India.

“The progressive nationalization of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange” is too sweeping to be admissible. Rabindranath is an instrument of marvellous production. I do not know that he will submit to be nationalized.

Regarding “State monopoly of foreign trade”, should not the State be satisfied with all the power it will possess? Must it also exercise all the powers in one swoop, whether such an exercise is necessary or not?

“Cancellation of debts owing by peasants and workers” is a proposition which the debtors themselves would never subscribe to, for that will be suicidal. What is necessary is an examination of the debts some of which, I know, will not bear scrutiny.

I should educate the masses to cultivate habits of thrift. I should not be guilty of maiming them by letting them (know) that they have no obligation in the way of taking preventive measures in the matter of old age, sickness, accident and the like.

I do not understand the meaning of the phrase “the right to strike”. It belongs to everybody who wants to take risks attendant upon strikes.

Does “the right of the child to care and maintenance by the State” absolve the parent from the duty of caring for the maintenance of his children?

"The elimination of landlordism" clearly means usurpation of the zamindari and *talugdari* tracts in clause 13. I am not for elimination but for just regulation of the relation between landlords and tenants.

How do you seek to oppose the "introduction of religious issues into politics" if you regulate and control all religious endowments? What we really want to do is to observe strictest religious neutrality. But, when professors of the religions in the State desire some kind of internal reform without which progress will be impossible for them State aid will become inevitable.

These are some of the observations as they occur to me on a cursory glance of your printed programme.

Detailed Discussion

[The following are notes of the discussion that took place on the subject:]

Q.: What is your attitude towards socialism?

A.: I call myself a socialist. I love the very word, but I will not preach the same socialism as most socialists do.

Q.: Are your objections to scientific socialism as understood in the West, fundamental objections in principle, or are they only objections to its applications in India?

A.: I do not know what scientific socialism is. I have not read any books on it. But if the socialist programmes I have seen represented, I think, it is not applicable in that form to this country.

Q.: Do you agree with the socialist ideal of the nationalization of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange?

A.: I believe in the nationalization of key and principal industries as is laid down in the resolution of the

Karachi Congress. More than that I cannot at present visualize. Nor do I want all the means of production to be nationalized. Is even Rabindranath Tagore to be nationalized? These are day dreams.

Q.: For the landlords, don't you think coercion is necessary?

A.: You must convert both landlords and the landless. It is easier to convert the former than the latter, for with landlords it is only a question of economic interest, whereas with the landless it is a matter of relation. It is no use getting angry with the landlords. They also deserve our pity, for it is the land that is eating them up. So many American millionaires have come to me and asked me how they can find happiness.

Q.: Are you not talking in terms of individuals while socialists think in terms of classes?

A.: But what is after all a class? It is an aggregate of individuals. You cannot convert landlords and capitalists by violence but only by persuasion. We can tell them that they are entitled to amass wealth, but they cannot spend it in any manner they choose. They must become trustees of their own wealth. "You have the capacity to make money", I would tell them, "for that you will be allowed to take a commission for yourselves. But you must abandon unfair means." I would see by what means they amass wealth. If it is ill-gotten I would take it away. At the Round Table Conference I caused consternation to people like Sir Cowasji Jehangir by saying, I would examine every title-deed of property.

Q.: Is that not quite impracticable? How can you go through millions of cases of property holders?

A.: I would take the cases of ten such landlords and capitalists as sample cases and if the decision was adverse the rest would relinquish their claims themselves.

Q.: Don't you recognize the conflict of interest between the possessing and the exploited classes resulting in a class struggle?

A.: Today there is a conflict of interest between the capitalist and the worker because the former dreams of profits of lakhs of rupees without giving anything to the worker. I would stop the capitalists from doing so. I have told them particularly in Ahmedabad, that they must regard the workers as partners. I say to them: "You bring your capital into the concern, they bring their only capital—their persons." When the Ahmedabad mill-owners came to me for a wage-cut, I told them: "It is true you have a right to your interest, but first you must guarantee the men's wages."

Q.: But socialists deny the very right to draw interest.

A.: But won't they reward brains?

Q.: Are you contemplating the perpetuation of private enterprise and free competition or planned economy by the State?

A.: I believe in private enterprise and also in planned production. If you have only State production, men will become moral and intellectual paupers. They will forget their responsibilities. I would therefore allow the capitalist and the zamindar to keep their factory and their land, but I would make them consider themselves trustees of their property.

Q.: How will you do it?

A.: By non-violence. I would make them undergo a change of heart. It is possible to convert them.

Q.: Will you adopt economic pressure as a means of conversion?

A.: Yes, but it must be non-violent.

Q.: Non-violent in the sense of not shedding blood?

A.: Once socialists accept non-violence, they must accept me as the expert on non-violence. But I believe in legislation. There is an element of coercion in it; but that cannot be helped.

Q.: On what basis would you like peasants and workers to be organized?

A.: With the idea of improving their position and redressing their grievances. What I object to is their being used for political purposes. For instance, it may be that my efforts for the Harijans may result in their supporting the national struggle, but that is not why I am fighting for them. That motive is not even present in my mind. Similarly socialists should not organize workers with the idea of using them against British Imperialism. That is why I do not feel happy about the Bombay textile strike. I have an idea, it is called and led by people to gain political power for themselves.

Q.: Do you think it is wrong to tell the workers that what they are really fighting is the system of imperialism and that so long as that system remains their conditions cannot improve?

A.: Yes. At present the workers should only be taught to impose their will on the mill-owners. To bring in the Government also is to overprove your case. Whatever State there is even your own Capitalistic Government will support the mill-owners. Even under this system I can teach labour to use its power and to claim partnership with capital. I would ask them to take possession of the mills.

Q.: But so long as the Imperialist Government is there that is impossible.

A.: Even without control of the State there can be nationalization. I can start a mill for the benefit of the workers.

Q.: Socialists would consider that Utopian. Do you know that the Third International believes that socialism is not possible in one country alone, much less in one industry or mill?

A.: The ambition of the Third International is the same as that of Chengis Khan, only one is collective and the other was individual.

Q.: What is your opinion of the socialist demand for the overthrow of the Indian princes?

A.: I do not agree with it. They should seek to make the princes constitutional monarchs or leaders of the people ruling according to their wishes. To demand their overthrow is like asking for socialism in Afghanistan.

Q.: But surely we need not accept an artificial division between British and Indian India except purely on grounds of expediency?

A.: It is expediency amounting to a principle. The division is there whether we like it or not. If we have our say in British India, it will have its effect in the States. Because communism believes in spreading itself in other countries, it contains the seeds of its own destruction. We may persuade, but not compel. If it can be done by conviction well and good, but coercion, propaganda and subsidies cannot be countenanced. To say you will do something which is entirely beyond your power is unnecessarily to make the princes your enemy.

Q.: What is your general criticism of the programme proposed for the Congress by Congress socialists?

A.: It discloses lack of faith in human nature. The setting is all wrong.

Q.: Don't you think the Congress should include active resistance to the participation by India in any war in which Britain may be involved as a part of its programme?

A.: To resist war one must be prepared to die, but to prepare the masses for such resistance is not the duty of the socialists. A new party must look before it leaps. It must step cautiously.

Q.: Should not war be resisted by general strike of railwaymen, dockers, telegraphists and munition workers?

A.: Yes. There should be strike when war breaks out, but we should not declare our intentions from now.

Q.: But your method has always been to give notice to the opponent?

A.: Why should I give notice of what I propose to do in the future?

Q.: What programme do you propose then to prepare the country for resistance to war?

A.: The influence of the Congress on the people is in itself a preparation for war resistance. Similarly if socialists establish their influence now, the people will listen to them when the time comes.

CHAPTER 4

JAYA PRAKASH'S PICTURE

The following draft resolution was sent to me by Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan. He asked me, if I accepted his picture, to put it before the Working Committee at Ramgarh:

“The Congress and the country are on the eve of great national upheaval. The final battle for freedom is soon to be fought. This will happen when the whole world is being shaken by mighty forces of change. Out of the catastrophe of the European War, thoughtful minds everywhere are anxious to create a new world—a world based on the co-operative goodwill of nations and men. At such a time the Congress considers it necessary to state definitely the ideals of freedom for which it stands and for which it is soon to invite the Indian people to undergo the uttermost sufferings.

“The free Indian nation shall work for peace between nations and total rejection of armaments and for the method of peaceful settlement of national disputes through some international authority freely established. It will endeavour particularly to live on the friendliest terms with its neighbours, whether they be great powers or small nations, and shall covet no foreign territory.

“The law of the land will be based on the will of the people freely expressed by them. The ultimate basis of maintenance of order shall be the sanction and concurrence of the people.

“The free Indian State shall guarantee full individual and civil liberty and cultural and religious freedom, provided that there shall be no freedom to overthrow by violence the constitution framed by the Indian people through a Constituent Assembly.

"The State shall not discriminate in any manner between citizens of the nation. Every citizen shall be guaranteed equal rights. All distinctions of birth and privilege shall be abolished. There shall be no titles emanating either from inherited social status or the State.

"The political and economic organization of the State shall be based on principles of social justice and economic freedom. While this organization shall conduce to the satisfaction of the national requirements of every member of society, material satisfaction shall not be its sole objective. It shall aim at healthy living and the moral and intellectual development of the individual. To this end to secure social justice, the State shall endeavour to promote small-scale production carried on by individual or co-operative effort for the equal benefit of all concerned. All large-scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control, and in this behalf the State shall begin by nationalizing heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries. The textile industry shall be progressively decentralized.

"The life of the villages shall be reorganized and the villages shall be made self-governing units, self-sufficient in as large a measure as possible. The land laws of the country shall be drastically reformed on the principle that land shall belong to the actual cultivator alone, and that no cultivator shall have more land than is necessary to support his family on a fair standard of living. This will end the various systems of landlordism on the one hand and farm bondage on the other.

"The State shall protect the interests of the classes, but when these impinge upon the interests of those who have been poor and down-trodden, it shall defend the latter and thus restore the balance of social justice.

"In all State-owned and State-managed enterprises, the workers shall be represented in the management through their elected representatives and shall have an equal share in it with the representatives of the Government."

I liked it and read his letter and the draft to the Working Committee. The Committee, however, thought

that the idea of having only one resolution for the Ramgarh Congress should be strictly adhered to, and that the original, as framed at Patna, should not be tampered with. The reasoning of the Committee was unexceptionable, and the draft resolution was dropped without any discussion on merits. I informed Shri Jaya Prakash of the result of my effort. He wrote back suggesting that he would be satisfied if I could do the next best thing, namely publish it with full concurrence or such as I could give it.

I have no difficulty in complying with Shri Jaya Prakash's wishes. As an ideal to be reduced to practice as soon as possible after India comes into her own, I endorse in general all except one of the propositions enunciated by Shri Jaya Prakash.

I have claimed that I was a socialist long before those I know in India had avowed their creed. But my socialism was natural to me and not adopted from any books. It came out of my unshakable belief in non-violence. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice, no matter where it occurred. Unfortunately Western socialists have, so far as I know, believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialist doctrines.

I have always held that social justice, even unto the least and the lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed that it is possible by further training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means is non-violent non-co-operation. At times non-co-operation becomes as much a duty as co-operation. No one is bound to co-operate in one's own undoing or slavery. Freedom received through the effort of others, however benevolent, cannot be retained when such

effort is withdrawn. In other words, such freedom is not real freedom. But the lowliest can feel its glow as soon as they learn the art of attaining it through non-violent non-co-operation.

It, therefore, gladdens me to find Shri Jaya Prakash accepting, as I read his draft, non-violence for the purpose of establishing the order envisaged by him. I am quite sure that non-violent non-co-operation can secure what violence never can, and this by ultimate conversion of the wrong-doers. We in India have never given non-violence the trial it has deserved. The marvel is that we have attained so much even with our mixed non-violence.

Shri Jaya Prakash's propositions about land may appear frightful. In reality they are not. No man should have more land than he needs for dignified sustenance. Who can dispute the fact that the grinding poverty of the masses is due to their having no land that they can call their own?

But it must be realized that the reform cannot be rushed. If it is to be brought about by non-violent means, it can only be done by education both of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. The former should be assured that there never will be force used against them. The have-nots must be educated to know that no one can really compel them to do anything against their will, and that they can secure their freedom by learning the art of non-violence, i.e., self-suffering. If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses.

Whilst, therefore, I have no difficulty in generally endorsing Shri Jaya Prakash's proposition in terms of

non-violence, I cannot endorse his proposition about the princes. In law they are independent. It is true that their independence is not worth much, for it is guaranteed by a stronger party. But as against us, they are able to assert their independence. If we come into our own through non-violent means, as is implied in Shri Jaya Prakash's draft proposals, I do not imagine a settlement in which the princes will have effaced themselves. Whatever settlement is arrived at, the nation will have to carry out in full. I can, therefore, only conceive a settlement in which the big States will retain their status. In one way this will be far superior to what it is today, but in another it will be limited so as to give the people of the States the same right of self-government within their States as the people of the other parts of India will enjoy. They will have freedom of speech, a free press and pure justice guaranteed to them. Perhaps Shri Jaya Prakash has no faith in the princes automatically surrendering their autocracy. I have. First because they are just as good human beings as we are, and secondly because of my belief in the potency of genuine non-violence. Let me conclude, therefore, by saying that the princes and all others will be true and amenable when we become true to ourselves, to our faith, if we have it, and to the nation. At present we are half-hearted. The way to freedom will never be found through half-heartedness. Non-violence begins and ends by turning the searchlight inward.

Harijan, 20-4-1940

CHAPTER 5

POVERTY AND RICHES

Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need and which are, therefore, neglected and wasted, while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multi-millionaire. The poor are often not satisfied when they get just enough to fill their stomachs; but they are clearly entitled to it and society should make it a point to see that they get it. The rich should take the initiative in the dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich.

From Yerauda Mandir, pp. 23-24, Edn. 1951

Why should all of us possess property? Why should not we after a certain time dispossess ourselves of all property? Unscrupulous merchants do this for dishonest purposes. Why may we not do it for a moral and a great purpose? For a Hindu it was the usual thing at a certain stage. Every good Hindu is expected after

having lived the household life for a certain period to enter upon a life of non-possession of property. Why may we not revive the noble tradition? In effect it merely amounts to this that for maintenance we place ourselves at the mercy of those to whom we transfer our property. To me the idea is attractive. In the innumerable cases of such honourable trust there is hardly one case in a million of abuse of trust....How such a practice can be worked without giving a handle to dishonest persons can only be determined after long experimenting. No one, however, need be deterred from trying the experiment for fear of the example being abused. The divine author of the Gita was not deterred from delivering the message of the *Song Celestial* although he probably knew that it would be tortured to justify every variety of vice including murder.

Young India, 3-7-1924

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it, I thief it from somebody else....It is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day; and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world....I am no socialist, and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions; but I do say that personally those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody; I should then be departing from the rule of Ahimsa. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated... I dare not possess anything which I do not want. In India we have got many millions of people who have

to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal consisting of a *chapati* containing no fat in it and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these many millions are clothed and fed. You and I, who ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed, and clothed.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 384-85

The golden rule to apply...is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to rearrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality.

Young India, 24-6-1926

Every palace that one sees in India is a demonstration not of her riches but of the insolence of power that riches give to the few, who owe them to the miserably requited labours of the millions of the paupers of India.

Young India, 28-4-1927

I have no hesitation in endorsing the opinion that generally rich men and for that matter most men are not particular as to the way they make money. In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response. Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, only not for personal aggrandisement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable

of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I therefore suggest that my advice that moneyed men may earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound. “तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः” is a *mantra* based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour.

Harijan, 22-2-1942

CHAPTER 6

ECONOMIC EQUALITY

My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc.; therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees.

Young India, 26-11-1931

I want to bring about an equalization of status. The working classes have all these centuries been isolated and relegated to a lower status. They have been *shoodras*, and the word has been interpreted to mean an inferior status. I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist and of a schoolmaster.

Harijan, 15-1-1938

Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good. I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent....

This non-violent experiment is still in the making. We have nothing much yet to show by way of demonstration. It is certain, however, that the method has begun to work though ever so slowly in the direction of equality. And since non-violence is a process of

conversion, the conversion, if achieved, must be permanent....

It (non-violent Swaraj) will not drop from heaven all of a sudden one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort. We have travelled a fair way in that direction. But a much longer and weary distance has to be covered before we can behold Swaraj (Sarvodaya) in its glorious majesty.

Constructive Programme, pp. 21-22, Edn. 1948

“Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument. The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen — the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Every one must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one’s children and adequate medical relief.” That constituted his picture of economic equality. He did not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessities, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

[From the Article “Gandhiji’s Communism” by Pyarelal]
Harijan, 31-3-1946

Q.: What is the difference between your technique and that of the communists or socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?

A.: The socialists and the communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality today. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour and to

that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say, 'when they get control over the State they will enforce equality.' 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. 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 although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it.

Harijan, 31-3-1946

Gandhiji had no doubt that if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal but it was the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India was to be a happy land.

Harijan, 16-3-1947

To day there is gross economic inequality. The basis of socialism is economic equality. There can be no *Ramarajya* in the present state of iniquitous inequalities in which a few roll in riches and the masses do not get even enough to eat.

Harijan, 1-6-1947

CHAPTER 7

EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

What India needs is not the concentration of capital in a few hands, but its distribution so as to be within easy reach of the $7\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of villages that make this continent 1900 miles long and 1500 miles broad.

Young India, 23-3-1921

The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent too shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning if they feel that the objective cannot be

had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

Indeed at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is Ahimsa in

his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale in non-violence. Somehow or other the wrong belief has taken possession of us that Ahimsa is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should, therefore, be limited to that sphere. In fact this is not the case. Ahimsa is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples. 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. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in 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 really found Him. But *avatars* and prophets have, by means of their *tapasya*, given to mankind a faint glimpse of the eternal law.

If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man) that the knowledge of the strength of Ahimsa entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

Harijan, 25-8-1940

CHAPTER 8

NON-VIOLENT ECONOMY

I must confess that 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 country to prey upon another are immoral. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour.

Young India, 13-10-1921

According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally utilized only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. Their monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too.

Young India, 15-11-1928

True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its

name must at the same time be also good economics. An economics that inculcates Mammon worship, and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life.

Harijan, 9-10-1937

I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it were made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be wise, temperate and furious in a moment.

I would have our leaders teach us to be morally supreme in the world. This land of ours was once, we are told, the abode of the Gods. It is not possible to conceive Gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories, and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after, who are often absent-minded and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers who would oust them if they could and whom they would, in their turn, oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 353-54

Strictly speaking, no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. What we have to do is to minimize it to the greatest extent possible.

Indeed the very word non-violence, a negative word, means that it is an effort to abandon the violence that is inevitable in life. Therefore, whoever believes in Ahimsa will engage himself in occupations that involve the least possible violence. Thus, for instance, one cannot conceive of a man believing in non-violence carrying on the occupation of a butcher. Not that a meat-eater cannot be non-violent...but even a meat-eater believing in non-violence will not go in for *shikar*, and he will not engage in war or war preparations. Thus there are many activities and occupations which necessarily involve violence and must be eschewed by a non-violent man. But there is agriculture without which life is impossible, and which does involve a certain amount of violence. The determining factor therefore is—is the occupation founded on violence? But since all activity involves some measure of violence, all we have to do is to minimize the violence involved in it. This is not possible without a heart-belief in non-violence. Suppose there is a man who does no actual violence, who labours for his bread, but who is always consumed with envy at other people's wealth or prosperity. He is not non-violent. A non-violent occupation is thus that occupation which is fundamentally free from violence and which involves no exploitation or envy of others.

Now I have no historical proof, but I believe that there was a time in India when village economics were organized on the basis of such non-violent occupations, not on the basis of the rights of man but on the duties of man. Those who engaged themselves in such occupations did earn their living, but their labour contributed to the good of the community. A carpenter, for instance, ministered to the needs of the village farmer. He got no cash payment but was paid in kind by the

villagers. There could be injustice even in this system, but it would be reduced to a minimum. I speak from personal knowledge of the life in Kathiawad of over sixty years ago. There was more lustre in people's eyes, and more life in their limbs, than you find today. It was a life founded on unconscious Ahimsa.

Body labour was at the core of these occupations and industries, and there was no large-scale machinery. For when a man is content to own only so much land as he can till with his own labour, he cannot exploit others. Handicrafts exclude exploitation and slavery. Large-scale machinery concentrates wealth in the hands of one man who lords it over the rest who slave for him. For he may be trying to create ideal conditions for his workmen, but it is none the less exploitation which is a form of violence.

When I say that there was a time when society was based not on exploitation but on justice, I mean to suggest that truth and Ahimsa were not virtues confined to individuals but were practised by communities. To me virtue ceases to have any value if it is cloistered or possible only for individuals.

Harijan, 1-9-1940

CHAPTER 9

LAND TO THE TILLER

If Indian society is to make real progress along peaceful lines, there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that the ryot possesses the same soul that they do, and that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor. They must regard themselves, even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards, the ryots. Then they would take no more than a reasonable amount as commission for their labours. At present there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the ryots in whose midst the former are living. A model zamindar would therefore at once reduce much of the burden the ryot is now bearing, he would come in intimate touch with the ryots and know their wants, and inject hope into them in the place of despair which is killing the very life out of them. He will not be satisfied with the ryots' ignorance of the laws of sanitation and hygiene. He will reduce himself to poverty in order that the ryot may have the necessaries of life. He will study the economic condition of the ryots under his care, establish schools in which he will educate his own children side by side with those of the ryots. He will purify the village well and the village tank. He will teach the ryot to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself doing this necessary labour. He will throw open without reserve his own gardens for the unrestricted use of the

ryot. He will use as hospital, school or the like most of the unnecessary buildings which he keeps for his pleasure. If only the capitalist class will read the signs of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which today pass muster as villages can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain. There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other, the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will pluge the country and which, not even the armed force that a powerful government can bring into play, can avert. I have hoped that India will successfully avert the disaster.

Young India, 5-12-1929

I expect to convert the zamindar and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For it is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized. What can the poor zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class

conflict. If I thought it inevitable, I should not hesitate to preach it and teach it.

Harijan, 5-12-1936

The *kisan* or the peasant, whether as a landless labourer or a labouring proprietor, comes first. He is the salt of the earth which rightly belongs or should belong to him, not to the absentee landlord or zamindar. But in the non-violent way the labourer cannot forcibly eject the absentee landlord. He has so to work as to make it impossible for the landlord to exploit him. Closest co-operation amongst the peasants is absolutely necessary. To this end special organizing bodies or committees should be formed where there are none and those already in existence should be reformed where necessary. The *kisans* are for the most part illiterate. Both adults and young persons of school-going age should be educated. This applies to men and women. Where they are landless labourers their wages should be brought to a level that would ensure a decent living, which should mean balanced food, dwelling houses and clothing, which should satisfy health requirements.

The Bombay Chronicle, 28-10-1944

CHAPTER 10

THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

Suppose I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry, I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me, what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. I enunciated this theory when the socialist theory was placed before the country in respect to the possessions held by zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with these privileged classes. I want them to out-grow their greed and sense of possession, and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. The labourer has to realize that the wealthy man is less owner of his wealth than the labourer is owner of *his* own, viz. the power to work.

The question how many can be real trustees according to this definition is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction, if you accept the principle of Ahimsa, you have to strive to live up to it, no matter whether you succeed or fail. There is nothing in this theory which can be said to be beyond the grasp of intellect, though you may say it is difficult of practice.

Harijan, 3-6-1939

You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.... It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself, and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship. The fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence.... (That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny, and confiscation ordered where necessary... with or without compensation as the case demanded.) What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship; as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State-ownership.

The Modern Review, 1935, p. 412

It has become the fashion these days to say that society cannot be organized or run on non-violent lines.

I join issue on that point. In a family, when the father slaps his delinquent child, the latter does not think of retaliating. He obeys his father not because of the deterrent effect of the slap but because of the offended love which he senses behind it. That in my opinion is an epitome of the way in which society is or should be governed. What is true of the family must be true of society which is but a larger family.

Harijan, 3-12-1938

I hold that non-violence is not merely a personal virtue. It is also a social virtue to be cultivated like the other virtues. Surely society is largely regulated by the expression of non-violence in its mutual dealings. What I ask for is an extension of it on a larger, national and international scale.

Harijan, 7-1-1939

My theory of 'trusteeship' is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it. That possessors of wealth have not acted up to the theory does not prove its falsity; it proves the weakness of the wealthy. No other theory is compatible with non-violence. In the non-violent method the wrong-doer compasses his own end, if he does not undo the wrong. For, either through non-violent non-co-operation he is made to see the error, or he finds himself completely isolated.

Harijan, 16-12-1939

CHAPTER 11

THE NON-VIOLENT SANCTION

If the legislature proves itself to be incapable of safeguarding *kisans'* interests they will, of course, always have the sovereign remedy of civil disobedience and non-co-operation. But...ultimately it is not paper legislation nor brave words or fiery speeches but the power of non-violent organization, discipline and sacrifice that constitutes the real bulwark of the people against injustice or oppression.

The Bombay Chronicle, 12-1-1945

Q.: What is the place of Satyagraha in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?

A.: The same as against the foreign power. Satyagraha is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family its use can be extended to every other circle. Supposing a landowner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants or those who have espoused their cause and have influence will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they

will not submit. They will quit if asked to do so but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure.

The conditions necessary for the success of Satyagraha are- (1) The Satyagrahi should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent. (2) The issue must be true and substantial. (3) The Satyagrahi must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause.

Harijan, 31-3-1946

CHAPTER 12

THE CURSE OF INDUSTRIALISM

Industrialization is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors.... India, when it begins to exploit other nations — as it must if it becomes industrialized — will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation, viz. that we

can find work for our 300 million unemployed, but England can find none for its three million and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England? The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, France, Japan, and Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources — natural, mineral and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble, but no savages; and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India?

Young India, 12-11-1931

I do not believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that Independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly.

Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however large geographically and numerically, in the face of a world armed to the teeth and in the midst of pomp and circumstance is a question open to the doubt of a sceptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth

making even though only an individual or a group makes the effort.

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 labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no *pariahs* of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers. The two are sores of the same disease. And all are men "for a' that".

Harijan, 1-9-1946

CHAPTER 13

TRUTH AND AHIMSA IN SOCIALISM

Truth and Ahimsa must incarnate in socialism. In order that they can, the votary must have a living faith in God. Mere mechanical adherence to truth and Ahimsa is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence have I said that Truth is God. This God is a living Force. Our life is of that Force. That Force resides in, but is not the body. He who denies the existence of that great Force, denies to himself the use of that inexhaustible Power and thus remains impotent. He is like a rudderless ship which, tossed about here and there,

perishes without making any headway. The socialism of such takes them nowhere, what to say of the society in which they live.

If such be the case, does it mean that no socialist believes in God? If there be any, why have they not made any visible progress? Then again, many godly persons have lived before now; why have they not succeeded in founding a socialist State?

It is difficult completely to silence these two doubts. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that it has perhaps never occurred to a believing socialist that there is any connection between his socialism and belief in God. It is equally safe to say that godly men as a rule never commend socialism to the masses.

Superstitions have flourished in the world in spite of godly men and women. In Hinduism itself untouchability has, till of late, held undoubted sway.

The fact is that it has always been a matter of strenuous research to know this great Force and its hidden possibilities.

My claim is that in the pursuit of that search lies the discovery of Satyagraha. It is not, however, claimed that all the laws of Satyagraha have been laid down or found. This I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral.

Harijan, 20-7-1947

CHAPTER 14

THE NON-VIOLENT STATE

Many have shaken their heads as they have said, "But you can't teach non-violence to the masses. It is only possible for individuals and that too in rare cases." That is, in my opinion, a gross self-deception. If mankind was not habitually non-violent, it would have been self-destroyed ages ago. But in the duel between forces of violence and non-violence the latter have always come out victorious in the end. The truth is that we have not had patience enough to wait and apply ourselves whole-heartedly to the spread of non-violence among the people as a means for political ends.

Young India, 2-1-1930

To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal State, therefore, there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least.

Young India, 2-7-1931

I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently

doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress.

What I disapprove of is an organization based on force which a State is. Voluntary organization there must be.

The Modern Review, 1935, p. 412

Centralization as a system is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of society.

Harijan, 18-1-1942

As to whether in an ideal society there should be any or no government, I do not think we need worry ourselves about this at the moment. If we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it. Euclid's line is one without breadth but no one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that we have made progress in geometry. What is true here is true of every ideal.

It must be remembered that nowhere in the world, does a State without government exist. If at all it could ever come into being, it would be in India; for, ours is the only country where the attempt has, at any rate, been made. We have not yet been able to show that bravery to the degree which is necessary and for the attainment of which there is only one way. Those who have faith in the latter, have to demonstrate it. In order to do so, the fear of death has to be completely shed, just as we have shed the fear of prisons.

Harijan, 15-9-1946

Police Force

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.

Harijan, 30-12-1939

A Government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it.

Harijan, 9-3-1940

Even in a non-violent State a police force may be necessary. This, I admit, is a sign of my imperfect Ahimsa. I have not the courage to declare that we can carry on without a police force as I have in respect of an army. Of course, I can and do envisage a State where the police will not be necessary; but whether we shall succeed in realizing it, the future alone will show.

The police of my conception will, however, be of a wholly different pattern from the present-day force. Its ranks will be composed of believers in non-violence. They will be servants, not masters, of the people. The people will instinctively render them every help, and through mutual co-operation they will easily deal with the ever-decreasing disturbances. The police force will have some kind of arms, but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact the policemen will be reformers. Their police work will be confined primarily to robbers and

dacoits. Quarrels between labour 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. Similarly there will be no room for communal disturbances.

Harijan, 1-9-1940

CHARPTE 15

SOCIALIST WITH A DIFFERENCE

[Mr. Louis Fischer, the well-known American journalist, had talks with Gandhiji on a variety of topics during the latter's stay at Panchgani in the last week of July, 1946. The following is an extract from Shri Pyarelal's report, relating to the discussion on socialism and communism:]

Gandhiji: "Whilst I have the greatest admiration for the self-denial and spirit of sacrifice of our socialist friends, I have never concealed the sharp difference between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non-violence through and through."

That turned the discussion on to socialism. "You are a socialist and so are they," interpolated Fischer.

Gandhiji: "I am, they are not. I was a socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid socialist in Johannesburg, but that is neither here nor there. My claim will live when their socialism is dead."

Fischer: "What do you mean by *your* socialism?"

Gandhiji: "My socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and

the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body."

Fischer: "Yes, but there are variations. My socialism in its modified form means that the State does not own everything. It does in Russia. There you certainly do not own your body even. You may be arrested at any time, though you may have committed no crime. They may send you wherever they like."

Gandhiji: "Does not, under your socialism, the State own your children and educate them in any way it likes?"

Fischer: "All States do that. America does it."

Gandhiji: "Then America is not very different from Russia."

Fischer: "You really object to dictatorship."

Gandhiji: "But socialism is dictatorship or else arm-chair philosophy. I call myself a communist also."

Fischer: "O, don't, It is terrible for you to call yourself a communist. I want what you want, what Jaya Prakash and the socialists want—a free world. But the communists don't. They want a system which enslaves the body and the mind."

Gandhiji: "Would you say that of Marx?"

Fischer: "The communists have corrupted the Marxist teaching to suit their purpose."

Gandhiji: "What about Lenin?"

Fischer: "Lenin started it. Stalin has since completed it. When the communists come to you, they want to get into the Congress and control the Congress and use it for their own ends."

Gandhiji: "So do the socialists. My communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two. Communism, as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of socialism."

Fischer: "Yes, you are right. There was a time when the two could not be distinguished. But today socialists are very different from communists."

Gandhiji: "You mean to say, you do not want communism of Stalin's type."

Fischer: "But the Indian communists want communism of the Stalin type in India and want to use your name for that purpose."

Gandhiji: "They won't succeed."

Harijan, 4-8-1946

CHAPTER 16

A SOCIALIST PATTERN OF SOCIETY

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or *panchayat* having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and

willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God meaning a self-existent, all-knowing Living Force which inheres every other force known to the world, and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing Living Light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want,

before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verietiy for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

Harijan, 28-7-1946

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