

GANDHI'S CONCEPTION OF MAN

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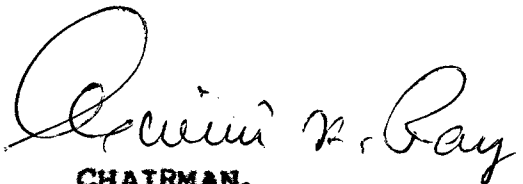
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P R E F A C E

This work is a modest effort to study the Gandhi's conception of man. Gandhi has been one of the most appealing personalities of the twentieth century. And, he will continue to remain a source of inspiration for research in the future, too. The present-day world has serious split and contradictions in itself. At the one hand the creative and inventive talent of man has put into his hands the tremendous power of science and technology. Nature has been made subservient to the needs of man. The barriers of time and space have been conquered. Men of one part of the globe do know and have concern for the events and happenings in the other parts. Various diseases and superstitions have been put an end to.

But on the other hand, man has lost himself in the giant structure of alienated, atomistic, material and mechanical culture. Inequality, aggression and exploitation are in full swing. The negative growth of science and technology in the hands of the greedy and jealous men has seriously threatened the balance of the nature and the nuclear holocaust is all the time staring into the face of mankind. The utmost deterioration in the value-structure of human society has made man worse than animal.

Various theories of life have been propounded by different thinkers at different times. Gandhi, too,

presented a new approach to human life. He emphatically proclaimed that man is not merely a biological entity but essentially a conscious-divinity. It is his privilege to realize his potentiality and to rise at the moral plane. The aim of human life is God-realization or self-realization. Truth and Non-violence are the twin principles on which all the activities of life-social, political and economic should be based. Satyagraha is the only means of conflict-resolution. These are the outlines of his approach which deserve objective analysis keeping in view the realities of the world and nature and their potentialities and possibilities.

Gandhi had an integrated approach to life. The various shades of his personality and thought-structure were so intermingled and interrelated that almost same concepts, facts, figures and events can be and have been described and analyzed under different heads of the study. But the fact remains that the prime concern of Gandhi was Man. All his activities and ideas together were an effort to present such an ideal theory of life in which divinity itself can be identified with humanity. Obviously, any good study of Gandhi's conception of man worth its name would include the analysis of the whole personality of Gandhi and his thoughts. But the present study does not go into that length and detail. However, main planks of the theory can be studied in a general way.

Again, Gandhiana (Literature on Gandhi i.e. work by Gandhi and works on Gandhi) is so rich that it is very difficult for a study of this nature to break the new grounds and add something new to it. Moreover, such work itself may seem mere duplication or compilation. But it is sufficient for me to have come to know, at least, in the process of this study the various ideas of Gandhi more objectively.

For the systematic presentation, the whole work has been divided into six chapters.

The First Chapter reviews in a general way the various theories of man forwarded by the Western and Indian Thinkers so as to have a comprehensive and comparative grasp of Gandhi's theory.

The Second Chapter makes an effort to look into the different influences, inspirations and glimmerings which went into making of Gandhi's conception of man. Obviously, making one's personality and idea is so complex a process, particularly in the case of a public man like Gandhi that it is difficult or impossible to ascertain all of them. Only a general and broad review can be made.

The Third Chapter goes into analysis of Gandhi's conception of man in detail.

The Fourth Chapter deals with the social-structure (including duty-right relationship, socio-political and economic system and the relationship of citizen and the state), which Gandhi considered to be most conducive to the realization of man's value-system.

The Fifth Chapter studies the Satyagraha - the unique invention and application of Gandhi - which in his view is the sole panacea of all conflicts - social, political and economic - without sacrificing the noble values of life i.e. Truth and Non-Violence.

The Sixth one is an assessment of the theory from the theoretical and practical point of view.

I am grateful to Prof. K. Seshadri for guiding this work patiently and for suggesting an objective approach to any problem.

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PRANAY KUMAR "SUMAN"

C H A P T E R - I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

'Conception of Man' occupies explicitly or implicitly, the central place in any political theory and analysis. A political theory which does not start from a theory of human nature tends to become either pretentious or trivial. But discussion of human nature has of different place in the formal discourse of Philosophers and political scientists. Sometimes it is popular and overt, at others it is dismissed with contempt, or buried. A theory of man seeks to answer basic questions like : Is man merely a physio-chemical aggregation or some ethical and metaphysical entity too? How far is he different from other living beings? What are his needs, powers and limitations? What is the relation between man and man on the one hand and between man and nature on the other? What are his rights and duties? How far is he the product of self-efforts or the environment and socio-economic matrix or the God's will? What is the ultimate aim of life? And what are the ways and means to realize the aim?

In the history of political thought 'the theory of man' has been presented differently at different times by

Political thinkers. The Great Greek thinkers—Plato and Aristotle thought of man as a Social and Political animal. Their teleological approach viewed, 'State as prior to man'. Though their conception was loaded with socratic overtone "virtue is knowledge", its consummate realisation was possible only in the Ideal State. Platonic conception of justice was highly abstract and aristocratic. Radical conclusions like 'communism of wives' were drawn. Comparatively, Aristotle's 'distributive justice' and 'the middle Polity' were more practical. But the greatest flaw in their theory of man was the intrinsic belief in the inequality of man or the validity of slavery.

During the middle ages, the 'idea of original sin' came to the fore. Man's entire fate was put in the hands of papacy. Man was relegated into the background in the name of religion. The perverted nexus between religion and politics gave rise to various superstitions, myths and false notions which led to disunity, fragmentation and loss of individuality. As a reaction against it came forward the machiavellian approach which detached man from the shackles of ethics and religion. 'End justifies the means' became the core of man's thinking and action.

While in the pre-modern age man was considered an integral part of a larger order, he is now treated as an autonomous, self-defining and self-sufficient subject.

For Plato, for example, the phenomenal world is simply a reflection of the world of Ideas. The perfection of things phenomenal can be measured by a reference to the extent they conform to their models in the world of ideas. On this view, reason is understood as the power by which man can apprehend the true structure of things and shape his behaviour accordingly. Again, christianity supposes the world to be a divine order ruled by God. Since God is goodness and reason, his creation must somehow be, even if not apparently so to finite minds, good and reasonable. The ideas, the customs, the institutions of men, if ever they are to attain perfection, must obviously be in accord with the laws that devine order implies.

Once the scientific revolution and intellectual movement that occurred in Western Europe in the seventeenth century denied the existence of a larger order, man was left to his own devices for providing a certain ground for apprehending truth and reality and defining grounds for action. This search brought about a fissure between the realm of ideas and the realms of events bringing, in its train, further splits between reason and desire, man and society and man and nature.

Hobbes presented an utmost pessimistic view of human nature. He considered self-interest as the sole guiding factor of all human activities. That's why in the state of Nature he thought of man as a totally selfish creature,

unconcerned with the cares of others, always propitiating one's interest and in the process always at war with each other. For the security of life, an atomistic society comes up out of a contract but that too under a 'Leviathon'. Still, there is no relatedness either between the ruler and ruled or among the ruled perse. Such mechanical society can only degrade the real human nature. In the same contractua-
listic line, Locke believing in natural law professed the natural rights (right to life, liberty and property) of man. This innate theory of rights led to definition of liberty as 'absence of all restraints' and the theory of laissezfaire out of which came the exploitative capitalis-
tic system and un-controllable social complexities. Owing to the clamour of rights without any sense of value-system and duties, men were caught in a highly unequal and mechanistic complex. Rousseau saw the 'noble savage' in man; assumed reason, science and technology as the pervessor of man and hence as a revolt against reason gave the call for return to nature. He proclaimed that 'man is born free but everywhere he is in chains'. But as a remedy he devised the concept of 'General will', which is the real common will of the people. And its logical conclusion was the theory of 'forced freedom'.

Bentham, in the Epicurean tradition, came with his hedonistic, utilitarian principle. Each and every action of man is regulated by two sovereigns; pleasure and pain. The sole aim of human life is to increase material pleasure.

Quantification of happiness is possible. Man's guiding factor is his own pleasure and that of the government is 'greatest good of the greatest number'. J.S. Mill, a more suave thinker, amended the Benthamite notion of happiness giving it a qualitative element. He could proclaim that to be a dissatisfied Socrates is better than to be a satisfied pig. He championed the cause of individual liberty but for one thing the wrong bifurcation of liberty into Private and Public.

Hegel following his dialectics established that the phenomenal world is the manifestation of 'universal spirit'. The process of reflection of this spirit goes in the increasing order of atoms, non-living beings, living beings, man, family, society and state. State is the march of God on earth. Man's liberty lies in his total subjection to state. To test the perfection of a particular state, war is a must. The victorious state represents the more perfect 'universal spirit'. Freedom means the free realization of a vocation which is largely given in a society to which man relates as to a larger life in which he is immersed. Such a society is not an aggregation of separate and free individuals but an organic whole larger than the individual. Individuals are phases of society and are related to one another in meaningful ways. Society gives content to a moral obligation which enjoins individuals to further and sustain its structures and live according to its precepts.

Kant recognized that man as a natural being must be dependent on nature. However, immersion in nature subverts the moral will and autonomy of the individual. Regaining autonomy, therefore, depends on installing reason as an imperial governor which, by promulgating a formal law, a categorical imperative, can keep nature under control. This, however, involves the accentuation of conflict between nature and reason. Enlarging upon the Rousseauvean idea that 'the new impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty,' Kant sought to ground moral judgement in unconditional, universal rationality. For Kant, motivation for happiness, even universal happiness, is inadequate for yielding a universal principle of morality since desires and motivation for happiness are contingent. Moral principles must, therefore, be transcendent and categorical and binding a priori. To be free means to rise above the influences of appetite, passion and inclination and to submit oneself to one's own moral will which acts at the promptings of practical rationality, a faculty common to all rational beings.

Marx transposing the Hegalian Synthesis from the cosmic spirit to man, saw man existing in nature and transforming it. While transforming nature, he also transforms himself and properly becomes man. But then, this process of transformation, moving successively from

primitive communism to feudalism, ends up in the degradation of a class society. The divisions inherent in a class society based on indigence and rooted in the realm of necessity can be overcome once man achieves mastery over nature and communalizes property by a violent revolution. Then the generic man will return to himself in his own embodiment, will enter a realm of freedom, that is integral expression, one which will belong indivisibly to the whole society, in which man will be reconciled with man".¹ Marx equates the realm of freedom with communism which as fully developed naturalism is humanism and a fully developed humanism is naturalism. It is a definitive resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man. It is the true solution of the conflict between existence and essence, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be this solution.²

However, this solution fails for four reasons. First, Marx fails to show how greed which he considers the basis of man's travesty will disappear once the product of man's alienated labour have been appropriated by the people, particularly the proletariat. Second, man as a

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1. Quoted in Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979) P.144
 2. Karl Marx, Early Writings, trans. and ed. by T.B. Bottomore, (New York, McGraw Hill, 1964), P. 155.

producer gives expression to his creative capacities in producing both material and non-material things. Man's self-externalization through work involves the transformation of nature. Harmony with nature, for Marx, is another name for domination, the conflict between the demands of freedom and that of real harmony with nature remains unresolved in Marx. Third, Marx never resolves the dilemma between the demands of efficiency and the urges of expression. The realm of freedom is supported by technologically sustained, large-scale production requiring a minute division of labour, specialization, orchestration of functions, centralization of decision-making, etc., in the name of efficiency. The stress on efficiency militates against the Marxian vision of the individual doing whatever he chooses to do whenever he pleases.¹ Moreover, even in communism, the industrial mode of production will require a control-mechanism not just for commercial undertakings but for the vast industrial economy as a whole. This will mean as much

1. The reference here is to Marx's statement that in the realm of freedom it will be possible for one 'to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.' Karl Marx and Frederic Engles, The German Ideology, (New York, International Publishers, 1939). P. 22

control over workers in communism as in capitalism. It would be as oppressive as that in capitalism since it would emanate not from the free will of all the workers but from some impersonal bureaucratic source.¹ And lastly, social engineering - imposing certain controls relating to the distribution of tasks - is necessary. But when it verges on identifying the determinants of people's behaviour, it becomes a means of control and manipulation.

A dominant modern conception of man's nature is rooted in the British empiricist tradition. This tradition insists that there is no impression of self, and therefore there can be no idea of self. According to Hume, the mind is a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed one another with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. The self is simply a synonym for whatever perceptions register at particular moments.

The question of how the self attains distinctiveness, stability and continuity when perceptions succeed one another with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement, needs to be answered. It is here that the principle of pleasure and pain becomes important for the empiricists. Similar to the role of material objects in causing sensation, the tendency of

1. See John Plamenatz, Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1977).

men to pursue their self-interest, that is, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain under all circumstances, occupies a central place in the social world and provides the seek-bed for morality to grow. The stimuli coming from the outer world register on man's mind either as pleasurable or painful perception. The passive self somehow becomes active in responding to these stimuli and controlling, manipulating, managing the outer world in order to increase the balance of pleasure over pain. The principle of pleasure and pain led the empiricists to instal self-interest as the active and dominant ingredient of man's nature. Recognizing passions as the dominant traits of human personality, and recognizing, too, the inadequacy of moralizing philosophy and religious percept in controlling passions, solutions for restraining the destructive passions of men came to centre around, first, entrusting the state with repressing the dangerous consequences of passions, and, second, harnessing the passions instead of simply repressing them. But the final solution was sought in the strategy of pitting passion against passion and identifying a master passion to be assigned the role of the tamer of all other passions. The solution took the form of opposing interests of men to their passions and of contrasting the favourable effects that follow when men are guided in their interests, to the calamitous state of affairs that prevails when men give free rein to their passions. In this process, the concept of

interest which originally signified the totality of human aspirations, came in the hands of Adam Smith, to be narrowed down to the 'augmentation of fortune'. The desire of bettering our condition thus came to be considered as the overriding motive of man and, therefore, placed at the highest pedestal for taming wild passions.

Once interest was defined as the most dominating passion capable of taming other passions, man came to be considered nothing more than an 'externalized' creature, an object. Interest in effect replaced man's inner being, and man became simply the reflexive creature of external, largely material, objects which attracted or repelled him, his relation to those objects, of course, being to a great extent determined by his class and economic position. Man became, in essence, a receptacle for interest.¹

In this perspective, human consciousness is treated as representation, turning the outer world into a picture. What is distinctive about persons, then, is their ability to conceive different possibilities, to calculate how to get them, to choose between them, and thus to plan their lives. The striking superiority of man is in strategic

1. Ellen Meiksins Wood, Mind and Politics: An Approach to the Meaning of Liberal and Socialist Individualism (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972), P. 111.

power. The various capacities definitive of a person are understood in terms of this power to plan. Central to this is the power to represent things clearly. The self then is pure egoism, acquisitive and possessive egoism, and its relationship with the outer world is purely instrumental.

Freedom, then, consists in being disengaged from the outer world, to drain it of its significance and to control it and to bend it to one's own will to serve one's ends. In this scheme egoism, as wood observes, itself becomes the principle of cohesion :

"The market society in a sense unites individuality and sociality, but only in so far as individuality is equated with egotism. The man whose individuality is expressed in terms of egoism—more specifically, acquisitive and possessive egoism — is also sociable in the utilitarian sense that his interests drive him into relations of division of labour, exchange and so on."¹

The achievement of self-identity through appropriation, that is, defining of 'I' through the 'my', constitutes the foundation of an atomistic society that emerges out of the aggregation of autonomous, self-defining entities.

1. Ellen Meiksins Wood, op.cit., P. 108.

Egoism as the basis of social cohesion, however, does not work in practice. Egoism generates conflict between the good and the right and between inclination and duty. Furthermore, it forces contradiction between individuality and sociality pitting the individual against society.

Conception of Man in the Western Political Thought and the modern civilization that results thereof, in general, has seen the proliferation of romantic views of individual life and fulfilment. However, the unchecked advance of industrialization and the ascendance of utilitarian public institutions have frustrated the urge for radical freedom and self-expression creating, in the process, the problems of alienation, rootlessness, etc. The frustration of expressive fulfilment takes men either to a private world beyond the compromises of the practical world (escapism); or to irrationalist movements (Nazism, Fascism, etc.). It has also frustrated the search for radical freedom.

After reviewing the conception of Man in Western Political Thought, it is desirable to have a look into Indian thinking, too. The Indian renaissance and reformation movement was heralded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the propounder of Brahma Samaj. His was a liberal, rational and modern conception of man. He was against

the idolatries and superstitions of all creeds. He tried to lay a common foundation of Universal Religion in the doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead. A distinguishing feature of this universal theism was social reform. He fought bravely with the evils of caste system and the subjection of women. But for his courageous persuasions, one of the greatest evils of India, the Practice of the Sutte, could not have been abolished.

While Ram Mohan was a rationalist to the core, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore often swung from reason to intuition and vice versa. Out of his desire to know more of metaphysics and religious texts Debendranath founded Tattva Bodhini Sabha (Society for the perception of knowledge of Truth). The result of his quest for religious truth was in essence the religion of bhakti. The pure, unsophisticated heart was the seat of Brahmaism. He was in quest for an adequate formulation of a moral code to parallel the religious principles of his Brahma Dharma. The outcome was a sincere statement of ethical duties which recognized the need for changes in Hindu Social Life particularly in matters relating to the treatment of women. In his later years, he was drawn towards mysticism which marked the culmination of his theism.

Keshab Chandra Sen who succeeded Debendranath was the most dynamic of all the leaders of the Brahma Samaj.

In Keshab were found the conflicting strains of Brahma rationalism, Vaisnava emotionalism, christian supernaturalism and Vedantic mysticism. Apart from preaching an eclectic faith, he was greatly interested in social reforms. The passing of the 'Brahmo Marriage Bill' was the greatest triumph of his career as a social reformer. As a result of this Act, early marriage was abolished, Polygamy was made penal and it sanctioned, widow remarriage and inter-caste marriages. He laid down some broad principles of social life which he called Nava Samhita to be followed by an Indian, irrespective of caste, religion or creed, He was imbued with the best traditions of Western liberalism and rationalism.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati had a more conservative approach than the Brahma Samajists. He founded Arya Samaj as a religious reform movement in national and indigenous lines. He sought to liberate society from poverty and ignorance. The assertion of the soul's uniqueness coupled with the injunction to work for social amelioration and liberation were intended to revolutionize Hindu life. He believed that the hereditary caste system, based on birth and not merit and the outrage of untouchability had no sanction in the Vedas. He attacked polytheism and idolatry as being inconsistent with the teaching of the Vedas. He also opposed child marriage and supported widow remarriage and female education.

B.G. Tilak was a Vedantin by instinct and training and a true democrat. He held that society should be based on social duty and that all have equal dignity and equal reward. He admitted that disinterested service of humanity was the future form of religion. His attitude may be summed up as 'spiritual humanism'. He believed that if needed, violent method can be adopted to defeat and crush the forces of evil and injustice. To him, ethics must have a spiritual basis and the mystic experience is valid. He, however, laid stress on knowledge more than on intuition. He believed that freedom is the basic condition of all progress. "Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it" reflects the flaming utterance of his soul.

Rama Krishna Paramhansa was the greatest exemplar of the mystical tradition which runs right through the religious history of India from the days of the vedic rishis. To him, life has no meaning if it cannot be an expression of the spirit. T.M.P. Mahadevan observes :

"Not only did the saint of Dakshineswar reveal to us a new the excellence of the Vedantic truth that God alone is real and nothing else, but also, he showed the way of realizing this truth through the service to humanity. We cannot take a leap to the plenary wisdom without proper equipment. Disinterested service (Karma Yoga) is the best preparation for leading the soul to its goal. He who is callous or indifferent

to the sufferings and needs of his fellow-beings cannot make even the least progress towards the spirit. The self that is sought to be realized by the seeker after Truth is not the narrow self of the individual. It is the self that is the same in all the universal spirit, there is no division. Hence egocentricism is a great enemy of spirituality."¹

In short, Ram Krishna taught that all religions are true and enunciated the concept of the divinity of man. He stressed that people should practice ethical and religious teachings and try to be better men in order to gain spiritual realization.

Swami Vivekananda, the disciple of Ram Krishna, propounded the conception of 'Practical Vedanta' as the way to success in individual and national life. The service of the poor, the ignorant, the sick and the downtrodden is the first duty of man. He visualized that the truth (Tattva-jnana) which has no place in our everyday relationship with our fellow beings is useless and inane. He placed a new emphasis on the ideal of social service. Although he had mastered all the disciplines of yoga, he gave the highest place to jnana-yoga or yoga through knowledge. It should, however, be noted that service can be synthesized with knowledge even from

1. T.M.P. Mahadevan, Outlines of Hinduism (Bombay, Chetna Ltd., 1960), P. 222.

the stand point of Advaita, if by service, we mean only those actions which are perpetuated by the wise for common weal (Loka-sangraha). Actions do not become his duty in the sense that they are obligatory on him. On the other hand, any humanitarian service done by the wise is a spontaneous manifestation, in a dynamic form of the nectar of wisdom that he has drunk. He becomes the master of all actions by cultivating detachment and faith in the Absolute. It is the absolute, the self that serves as his light (atmaivasya jyotir bhavati). The free souls work for the guidance of men who are still steeped in ignorance (avidya). He is the doer of the work and is yet not the doer, because he has no sense of 'thine' and 'mine'.

Service rendered in a spiritual attitude, uplifts both the giver and the receiver. The central teaching of Vedanta is that man must grow spiritually and morally. By doing service in a spirit of reverence an individual not only ensures the welfare and happiness of his fellow human beings, but also gains in spiritual stature himself.

He had equal respect for all religions (Sarvadharmasamabhava). He wanted a national as well as international unity and harmony and understanding in the various races and creeds. This is possible only if we realize that we are spirit or Atman essentially, and that we must look upon each life or each being as a manifestation of the Divinity

within. He advocated that men should develop a perfect character - a harmonious synthesis of jnana, yoga, bhakti and karma.

He said, 'First let us be Gods and then help others to be Gods. Be and make, let this be our motto'. It means the reverent service of all as God - nothing less. Romain Rolland observes :

"In two words-equilibrium and synthesis, Swami Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit; the four yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical."¹

Rabindranath Tagore was an idealistic, spiritualistic, non-dualistic philosopher who believed both in the theory of qualified monism and the practice of ethical life to attain self-realization. His sole purpose of philosophizing was to reconcile spiritualism with empiricism, and mysticism with realism. He pleaded for the unity and fulfilment of mankind on a cultural plane. The ethical idea is self-realization i.e. the realization of the Universal Man in Art. His notion of beauty as truth links aesthetic with ethics through metaphysics.

1. Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel, (Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1961), P. 281.

His message for mankind is the message of love, harmony, peace, universal brotherhood and spiritual unit. He was a poet-prophet of integral humanism. To him, the central problems for the modern age is not political, nor social, nor educational, nor economic but the application of religion to daily life, Amiya Chakravarty observes :-

"Tagore's religion indicate that his religion features four important concepts; first, inward sensitiveness and cultivation of the feeling of relationship will deepen the spiritual values; second, renunciation of the world which is a manifest part of the divine creation, is a rejection of reality; third, sympathy must be extended to the entire human world; and fourth, the necessary and enriching cultural differences of East and West have a common core of spiritual aspirations."¹

Aurobindo was a synthetic thinker in the sense that for him the truth of evolution lies in the assimilation of the Indian and western theories in a spiritual, integral, cosmic and dynamic philosophy of evolution which is the process of the revelation of the spirit. As spirit is involved in matter, its manifestation in grades of consciousness is 'truth' of evolution. The goal of

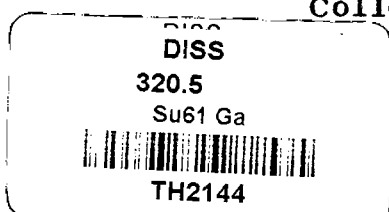
1. Amiya Chakravarty, Modern Humanism - An Indian Perspective, (Madras, University of Madras, 1968), pp. 57 - 58.

spirituality is the flowering of the Divine in collective humanity. His integral yoga aims at divinising humanity. He gave the theory of an exalted and sanctified nationalism. But his political philosophy was not limited to nationalism; he was thinking in terms of a world state. His was a vision not of mechanical political unity of man, but that of an inner oneness of all human beings. He thought that the ideal law of social development must harmonize the claims both of the individual and the collectivity. He said :

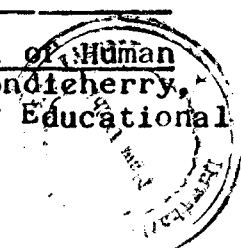
"A spiritual oneness which would create a psychological oneness not dependent upon any intellectual or outward uniformity and compel a oneness of life not bound up with its mechanical means of unification, but ready always to enrich its secure unity by a free inner variation and a freely varied outer expression, this would be the basis for a higher type of human existence."¹

It is very much clear from the above observation that the primary concern of Indian thought, in striking contrast to the interests of the modern Philosophers of the West - has always been, not information, but transformation as complete as possible, such as will amount

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1. Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, War and Self-determination, (Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Educational Collection 1025), p. 776.



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when successful to a total conversion or rebirth.¹

It is in this tradition that Gandhi is rooted and it is from this perspective that he views man and his relationship with the outer world. However, while doing so, he effects certain radical changes. While Indian thought emphasizes repelling and overcoming the forces of life, he accepts the reality of this world and, proceeding on this basis, insists on remaining in this world and seeking salvation through serving the world. For Gandhi, the spiritual quest remains the primary objective of existence. But this quest must proceed in the world of here and now through service of the distressed. This requires the cultivation of the self in a particular manner and of a particular style.

Before proceeding to the study of Gandhi's conception of man, in detail, it is useful and desirable to grasp the major inspirations and influences that went into making his theory of man. So, the next chapter deals with those influences.

1. Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India, ed. Joseph Campbell, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), p.3.

CHAPTER - II

INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED GANDHI'S CONCEPTION OF MAN

It is very difficult to analyze various influences, inspirations and experiences which go into making of anyone's character and thought. It becomes more difficult in the case of a man like Gandhi whose entire life was utmost public, dynamic and sensitive. A man like him takes lessons even from the meanest of the creatures and smallest of the events. Therefore, what can be attempted is to study the major under-currents.

To begin with, his family background and his native Gujarati tradition and culture had great bearing on his thought-structure. It won't be wrong to say that seeds of almost all the main planks of his conception and strategies were rooted in the native soil. The influences of later life were not the original influences as such but rather the mere confirmation of his dormant convictions and ideas which lay in his sub-consciousness. His impressionable age was spent in the environment of an orthodox Hindu family as also an equally orthodox and religious society. The religious conduct of his mother Putli Bai, whom he adored, reciting Bhagavadgita, reading aloud verses from the great Ramayana and constant reciting of the hymn by the saint Poet Narsimha Mehta 'Vaisnav Janto' led Gandhi to the conviction that morality was the basis of things and truth was the substance of all morality.

The notion of religious-tolerance also originated there. "In Rajkot, writes he, "however, I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions. For my father and mother would visit the Haveli as also Shiva's and Rama's temples, and would take or send us youngsters there. Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father, and would even go out of their way to accept food from us - non-Jains. They would have talks with my father on subjects religious and mundane. He had, besides, Musalman and Parsi friends, who would, talk to him about their own faiths, and he would listen to them always with respect, and often with interest. Being his nurse, I often had a chance to be present at these talks. These many things combined to inculcate in me a toleration for all faiths"¹

The lesson of pure love, ahimsa, and confession also came to him. The pure confession of his guilt of theft and meat-eating before his father and the latter's weeping with forgiveness overwhelmed him. He writes : "Those pearl-drops of love (tears) cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is. As the hymn says: only he who is smitten, with the arrows

1. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, ed. by Mahadev Desai, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1966), p.24.

of love, knows its power. This was for me, an object lesson in Ahimsa when such Ahimsa becomes all embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power..... A clean confession, combined with a promise never to comit the sin again, when offered before one who has the right to receive it, is the purest type of repentance. I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me, and increased his affection for me beyond measure."¹

The triple vow² which his mother had administered to him on the eve of his departure to England 'provided the guide-rails'. His later self-discipline and self-control, are firmly rooted in the triple vow. The way the vows saved him many a time from indulgence, indicated the importance and inevitability of vows for a seeker after Truth.

Porbandar, his own city of birth attracted pilgrims to its numerous temples. These temples in Gandhi's childhood had a far greater signficance in society, than they have today. The whole atmosphere of Saurashtra was charged with the spiritual forces proliferated by the Buddhist, Jain and Brahman worshippers. Vallabhacharya, Mirabai, Sahajananda, Narsimha Mehta, Swami Dayananda Saraswati and many others had their following in this region. All this

1. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, op.cit. pp 19-20.

2. Not to entertain non-vegetarian food, wine and woman.

created a devotional and religious outlook in Gandhi.

Gujarati ethico-religious tradition also made a deep impact. He writes, "A Gujarati didactic stanza likewise gripped my mind and heart. Its precept - return good for evil - became my guiding principle. It became such a passion with me that I began numerous experiment in it. The didactic is as follows : 'For a bowl of water give a goodly meal; For a kindly greeting bow thou down with zeal; For a simple penny pay thou back with gold; If the life be rescued, life do not withhold Thus the words and actions of the wise regard; Every little service tenfold they reward, But the truly novel know all men as one, And return with gladness good for evil done."¹

K. Seshadri writes, "Gandhi more than any other leader had his feet firmly on the native soil and many things that Gandhi popularised are Gujarati Traditions, including spinning. The techniques that Gandhi adopted were in vogue in his native region of Saurashtra even during the times of Rajas. These are :

1. Traga : Self-infliction of pain to express indignation
This has its origins in Jainism.....
2. Dharna : To bring moral pressure on the oppressor by squatting before the opponent's house and fasting.
One can see this in Gandhi's many fasts though he

1. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, op. cit., p. 25

declared that they were for his own purification. They resulted in pressuring the British Government or Ambedkar (Poona Pact....)

3. Baharvatiya : This was to outlaw one's self voluntarily and attack the officials to demonstrate that the king's writ does not run throughout.

One can see clearly how Gandhi was successfully adopting these age-old tactics."¹

Above everything else, Hinduism exercised the profoundest of all influences in shaping Gandhian thought and action. Among the Hindu scriptures Isopanishad seems to have influenced him most. Its verse 'Isavasyam Idam Sarvam' (The entire universe is pervaded by the Absolute) became the kernel of his thought. Upanishads taught him that Ahimsa, truthfulness, straightforwardness and austerities are superior to the actual performance of ceremonial sacrifices. Much of the Gandhian thought already lies buried in the Upanishads.

The Gita inspired him a lot. "The verses in the Second chapter :

If one ponders on objects of the sense, there springs attraction; from attraction grows desire, desire flames to

1. K. Seshadri, "The Mahatmatics", The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol.XLVI, 1985, p.357.

fierce passion, passion breeds recklessness; then the memory - all betrayed - lets noble purpose go, and sobs the mind. Till purpose, mind and man are all undone'.

made a deep impression on my mind, and they still ring in my ears. The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of Truth."¹

Again, "..... to me the Gita became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily refernece.... Words like aparigraha (non-possession) and Samabhava (equability) gripped me."² The essentials of the Gita like renunciation, abstinence, self - sacrifice etc. stimulated Gandhi in his south African compaigns. The follower of the Gita, in Gandhi's opinion, is bound to follow satya and ahimsa. Swadharma requires that one's duty ought to be determined by one's nature and station. The message of the Gita is one of detached action without the intention of any reward. It taught him to conquer hate by love and untruth by the power of truth. He seems to have learnt renunciation from the teachings of the Gita. Under its inspiration, he renounced his insurance policy, thinking it as inconsistent with his faith in God. The qualifications

1. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, op. cit., p. 50

2. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, op. cit. , p. 198.

which Gandhi requires of a civil resister such as truth, non-violence, purity, brahmacharya, austerity, silence, self-control, gentleness, cheerfulness, purity of means and so on were formulated under the inspiration from the Gita. Even the idea of trusteeship came to him from this sacred scripture. The Gita for Gandhi was a gospel and mantra in his moments of gloom and despair. It was from the Gita that he learnt the lesson of non-co-operation with evil, the very basis of satyagraha, submits Gandhi : "That the Bhagavad-Gita is a gospel of non-co-operation between the forces of darkness and those of light."¹ Through Gita he could learn that self-realization is against any line of demarcation being drawn between salvation and worldly pursuits and 'that what cannot be followed out in day-to-day practice cannot be called religion."²

As a young boy Gandhi listened to the Ramayana of Tulsidas and was passionately interested in it. Mahabharata enjoins "ahimsa parmo dharma" (non-violence is the highest duty). Gandhi's interpretation is that Mahabharata does not establish "the necessity of physical warfare", on the contrary it proves its futility."³ Mahabharata preaches satya or truth, spells out Gandhi.

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1. Young India, 1919-1922, Ganesan, p.239
 2. Louis Fischer, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1957) p.48.
 3. M.K. Gandhi, The Message of Gita, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1950)p.3

The principle of non-violence which forms the crux of Gandhian thought was also advocated by Patanjali in his yoga-sutra, which did influence Gandhi. Patanjali reveals the meaning of non-violence that hatred disappears as soon as non-violence reaches perfection in the yogi. It takes the form of positive love for all creation. It is not merely a negative doctrine in the sense of avoidance of violence; it also involves goodwill towards all creatures. Yogasutra enshrines the panchayamas, the five cardinal Hindu disciplines for spiritual realisation. Satyagraha is a practical application of the yamas. "The theory of satyagraha, is nothing new. It is elaborated and enunciated by Patanjali."¹ Purity of thought and action is a necessary condition for any spiritual discipline. Yoga is a rigorous spiritual training. Gandhi has owned that satyagraha has its origins in the idea of purity."² His thought and action spring out of the yamas. His ascetic life, passive self-suffering, boycott, and resistance are instances in point.

Significant for the development of Gandhi's premises was his reading of the book - Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia, a romanticised version of sayings attributed to Buddha. He learnt from Buddha's life that ethical life alone keeps us to gain salvation. Buddha's avoidance of profitless

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1. Rajendra Prasad, vide Pyarelal, Last Phase, Vol. I, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1950), p.7
 2. Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG), Vol. XVI, (New Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1967), p.123.

metaphysical discussion and his emphasis on ethical conduct impressed Gandhi a lot. The Buddha, by opening the doors of Nibbana for all aimed quite successfully a death blow at the social injustice of caste which reduced the people to intellectual slavery. He declared : - not by birth but by deed does one become a brahmin or an out-caste. Thereby, the Buddha advocated social reforms based on the quality of man. He exercised friendly feelings towards all irrespective of class, caste and creed. Gandhi, like the Buddha believed in the equality of man. S.A. Bari writes, "Although shridharani traces the origin of satyagraha to the vedic practice of yajna, he admits that it was influenced by Buddhism. Satyagraha is in a way implicit in Buddhism, but Gandhi forged it as a secular and political weapon. Satyagraha is the conscious application of Buddha's teaching in public life..... Fearlessness is an important aspect of the teaching of Buddhism. The Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism constitutes Right views, Right Aspirations, Right Conduct Right Livelihood, Right effort, Right Mindedness and Right contemplation. The Gandhian disciplines, however, have nothing uncommon with the middle path of Buddhism."¹

T.S. Devadoss writes that Albert Schweitzer and several other christian interpreters of Gandhian thought consider the emphasis on social service to be indicative

1. S.A. Bari, Gandhi's Doctrine of Civil Resistance (New Delhi, Kalamkar Prakashan, 1971) p.16.

of christian influences on Gandhi. It should, however, be noted that the old Mahayana concept/^{of}Mahakaruna was imbibed by Gandhi. In his emphasis that service to living being results in God-realization (moksa), Gandhi attempts to give a modern realistic interpretation of the above concept of Mahakaruna. He is attempting in a sense, to concretize at social and political levels the ideals of Bodhisattva. His ideal, thus is an extension of that of Maitreya."¹

Pyaralal writes that three things in Jainism influenced Gandhi most - "Ahimsa on the religious side, anekantved or syadvad on the philosophical side, and institutions of vows on the ethical side."² It is universally known that Jaina philosophy accepts and advocates non-violence (ahimsa) as the highest ideal of life and as the means of attaining liberation (moksha). Three of the vows included in Jainism are- right knowledge, right faith and right conduct. Right conduct which is the most important part of ethical discipline of Jainism consists mainly of the five great vows, of non - injury (ahimsa) truthfulness (satya), non-stealing (asteya),

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1. T S Devadoss, Sarvodaya And The Problem of Political Sovereignty, (Madras, University of Madras, 1974) P. 83.
 2. Pyarelal, Early Phase, Vol. 1, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1950) p. 276.

celibacy (brahmacharya) and renunciation (aprighraha).

It is notable that all these vows found place in Gandhi's eleven vows too.

Islamic influences were no less prominent in the life and teachings of Gandhi. The personal character of Prophet Mohammed, Hazrat Ali, Imam Hassan and Imam Hussain did influence him in no small measure. Generally Islam has been associated with violence, but Gandhi regarded it as a religion of Peace, like Hinduism, Budhism and Christianity. Of course, when peaceful means fail, Islam permits violence as a last measure and supports war for a righteous cause. But Islam never glorifies violence. Gandhi's interpretation is that Islam, believes in the brotherhood of man, and not the brotherhood of Muslims alone. This concept of universal brotherhood in islam, he admits, led him to non-violence.¹ The democratic brotherhood and the concept of equality deeply touched him. He was encouraged to find that in moments of despair and confusion, Mohammd also fasted and prayed. Mohammad's practical instinct as a reformer and his monotheism has been a constant strength and support to Gandhi. Paying a glowing tribute to Imam Hussain, Gandhi writes : "Imam Hussain and his little band

1. Extracted from S.A. Bari, Gandhi's Doctrine of Civil Resistance op, cit., p. 180

refused to yield to what to them appeared an unjust order if they yielded to it they felt that their manhood and the religion would be in jeopardy.... Imam Hussain preferred the slaughter, rather than submit to what appeared to them an unjust order."¹ So, the non-co-operation with evil became the important tenet of Gandhi's conception of man. What impressed Gandhi was the zeal and passion, which he considered to be the mighty force and virtue of Islam. Regarding the influence of Islam on the concept of Satyagraha, S.A.Bari writes that "although Gandhi was influenced by Islam in no small measure, it is difficult to trace his doctrine of satyagraha to the Islamic influences alone. Bondurant, however, is doubtful though she has not ruled out the Islamic impact on Satyagraha."²

After Hinduism, Christainity seems to have exercised a profound influence on Gandhi. The Sermon on the Mount especially created an indelible impression on the mind of Gandhi. Gandhi's detachment from worldly possessions, non-violence, and universal love owe much to this exalted scripture. The sermon ordains :

Love your enemies

Bless them that curse you,

Do good to them that hate you...

1. S.A.Bari, Gandhi's Doctrine of Civil Resistance op, cit., p. 20

such an attitude is bound to overwhelm and transform the adversary. Here is very clearly seen the technique of satyagraha or civil resistance. Christianity believes that love conquers violence. Christ prayed to God that his assassins be forgiven, for he thought, they were ignorant of what they were doing. Inspired by this Gandhi based his doctrine of satyagraha on love for the opponent. Satyagraha is un-compromising campaign against evil, and approaches the evil-doer through love.

"Three moderns", writes Gandhi, "have left a deep impression on my life, and captivated me". Raychandbhai by his living conduct: Tolstoy by his book, The Kingdom of God is within you; and Ruskin by his "Unto This Last."¹ Again, "I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths, and I must say that no one else has ever made on me the impression that Raychandbhai did. His words went straight home to me. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness, and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always confide to me this innermost thoughts. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore,

1. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, op, cit., p 65

he was my refuge."¹

Tolstoy's influence on Gandhi was pronounced and fairly decisive. Tolstoy's The Kingdon of God is Within you overwhelmed him. Tolstoy's simplicity of life and purity of purpose influenced Gandhi very much. His views on christianity, its church, its teachings roused Gandhi's feelings. He came to consider the 'organised' church as the greatest enemy of true christianity, and found a profound human meaning in christ's 'sermon on the Mount' where, among the fine preachings, he laid special emphasis on 'Do not resist evil by force'.

Tolstoy accepted love to be the law of life. It was his ambition to revive this law of love and to go back to a simple life of peace and equality. He was so much critical of Western countries because they, in their practical life, violated the law of love which was preached by Jesus. The principle of non-violence is based on love for the entire mankind. Love is the aspiration for communion and solidarity with other souls, and that aspiration always liberates the sources of noble activities. That love is the supreme and unique law of human life, which everyone feels in the depth of one's soul. Reading Tolstoy removed the scepticism in Gandhi and made him a firm believer in Ahimsa which can cure all social maladies,

1. Ibid.

remove political ills, and establish peace on earth and goodwill among mankind.

It was Tolstoy who impressed upon Gandh's mind the importance of hand labour. For Tolstoy, the man who abstains from manual labour is a thief of the society. He believed that only those men deserve to eat bread who actually till the ground, spin cloth and produce things.

Tolstoy strongly preached against the assumption of Darwinism, Eccleasticism, and contemporary science and art and he preached a return to the simple innocence of the teachings of the gospels. In his interpretation of the trends and foundations of contemporary civilisations, Gandhi was greatly influenced by Tolstoy.

Tolstoy's philosophical anarchism inspired Gandhi much. His ideal society was a stateless and classless society, society of enlightened anarchy where social life had become so perfect to be self-regulated. The progressive march toward a classless and stateless condition of mankind depended upon the moral stability and perfection of each individual through observance of the supreme law of love and the consequent repudiation of every form of violence. To him, all the injustices and cruelties customary in present day life have become habitual only because there are men always ready to carry out these injustices and cruelties.

State-law is not an eternal law, it is imperfect, palpably false and unjust. The kingdom of God for Gandhi had furnished the genesis of non-violent civil resistance. Tolstoy's Letter To a Hindu stimulated Gandhi to non-violent civil resistance. According to Gandhi, the purport of Tolstoy's message is : (1) not to accumulate wealth; (2) no matter how great wrong a person does, we should always do him good; (3) no one should take part in fighting; (4) it is sinful to wield political power; (5) man owes duty to his creator and should, therefore, pay more attention to his duties than to his rights; and (6) education is the true occupation of man."¹

Another western philosopher with whom Gandhi felt spiritual brotherhood was the American Pacifist Thoreau (1817-1862) who was the champion of the free spirit and was repelled by established political and economic routine of the time. In him was an element of moral individualism culminating in his concept of 'civil disobedience'. He was a rebel and he challenged the basis of the state in the name of reason and wisdom. It is clear that Gandhi did not derive his idea of 'Civil disobedience' from the writings of Thoreau. In fact, the resistance to authority in south Africa preceded Gandhi's reading essay of Thoreau on 'Civil Disobedience'.

1. CW MG. Vol. V, p. 56

Whether Gandhi knew Thoreau on the eve of his first satyagraha or later, he was certainly influenced by him in the perfection of his non-violent technique of resistance.

It is significant that Gandhi drew his inspiration from the works of Thoreau, for Thoreau was deeply indebted to East. He did not believe in narrow sectarianism and felt that man was meant to experience God, not to theologise about him. Thoreau sought for his fellowmen a fuller and more natural realization of the self. He once said: "To the philosophers, all nations are alike. I believe Brahma, Hari, Buddha, the Great spirit, as well God."¹

Man according to Thoreau was a social being who is generally disposed to co-operation with fellow beings for social good. He felt that the immoral institutions of the state supported by coercive authority hampered the individual's moral and spiritual freedom. He, therefore, visualised a society in which government will disappear. That government is best which governs not at all or which governs least. It is only in such a society that an individual can have full liberties and

1. Henry D. Thoreau, Civil Disobedience (New York, The Civil Press, 1952), p. 10.

enjoy utmost freedom - socially and spiritually. Such a society can be organised on the basis of Truth and non-violence. A society like this would equalise the ambition of men by eliciting the spiritual or divine instinct in man and suppressing and eliminating the irrational element in it. The ideal society is characterised by a respect for individual liberty and free growth and a simultaneous respect for the needs, efficiency, solidarity, natural growth and perfection of the corporate being, the society or nation. Thus Gandhi heard an echo of his own thought in Thoreau.

The Gandhian concept of sarvodaya (Welfare of all) can be traced to the fundamental teaching of India's spiritual heritage (Sarve bhavantu sukhinah) although Gandhi had immediate inspiration from Ruskin's Unto This Last. Gandhi writes: "of these books, the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was Unto This Last. I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it sarvodaya (the welfare of all).

I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin, and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life

The teaching of Unto This Last I understood to be :

- (a) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- (b) 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.
- (c) That a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the hand craftsman, is the life worth living.

The first of these I knew, the Second I had dimly realised. The third had never occurred to me. Unto This Last made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn ready to reduce these principles to practice."¹

Besides the above mentioned sources, Gandhi had read a number of other books and articles. Moreover, his entire life was an experiment with Truth. He was

1. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, op. cit., p.224

one of the greatest public figures that the world has ever produced. Hence, his numerous contact with general mass and important leaders made a new turn in his theory or made his convictions deeper and more enduring. All these had a composite impact in making Gandhi's conception of man. Gandhi had a unique quality of combining the various inspirations and influences into a coherent system of thought of his own. Hence, in the next chapter will be seen this mosaic of His conception of Man.

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CHAPTER - III

" WHAT IS MAN - A BIOLOGICAL ENTITY OR CONSCIOUS - DIVINITY ?"

Gandhi's view about human nature is bound up indissolubly with his metaphysical assumptions and the ethical principles he considered to be fundamental. Man for him was not a physio-chemical aggregation, but a spiritual entity. He was concerned not only with man's being, but also with his becoming. It is customary among philosophers to define man as rational being. What is meant by this is that there are two constitutive principles in man - 'animality', the brute force in man, and 'rationality', the distinguishing mark of man. But Gandhi, in addition to both these, postulates a third principle, 'soul'. If body and mind are taken to be concrete expressions of the principles of animality and rationality, soul is taken by Gandhi as the expression of God indwelling in man. He was fond of quoting the Islamic saying :

"Man is not God; but neither is he
different from the light (or spark)
of God - adam khuda nahin; lekin
khuda ke nur se adam juda nahin."¹

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1. Raghavan N. Iyer, "Gandhi's view of Human Nature", Gandhi Marg, Vol. VI, No.2, (New Delhi, Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1964), P. 137.

Again,

"We were perhaps all originally brutes, and I am prepared to believe we have become man by a slow process of evolution from the brute. We were thus born brute strength, but we were born in order to realize God who dwells in us. That indeed is the privilege of man, and distinguishes him from the brute creation."¹

In other words, man is bestial in origin, but he is human precisely because he is potentially and essentially divine. It, however, will be wrong to presume that by making these statements Gandhi denied the presence of soul in sub-human beings. The only distinction he made was that while man is capable of 'conscious striving to realize the spirit within, in brute the soul lies ever dormant. Hence it is not the attribute of divinity as such that distinguishes man from the brute; it is rather his ability of its conscious cultivation,

i.e. the faculty of 'conscious-divinity'.

As the off-shoots of man's attribute of conscious-divinity, Gandhi prominently included the virtues of moral progression, non-violence, benevolence and self-restraint. Subscribing to the view that there is nothing in this world which is not subject to change, he

1. Harijan, 2.4.1938, P. 65.

he regarded human nature also to be dynamic and not static. He declared that human nature either goes up or goes down. And, this virtue of moral progression, he thought, distinguishes man both from the God and the beast. He argued that for them the question of progression does not arise, as God is already perfect and the beast is essentially dormant. No one can remain without eternal cycle unless it be God himself. And progress is man's distinction, Man's alone, not beast's. This distinction enabled him to regard man as a special creature of God, precisely to the extent that he is distinct from the rest of His creation.

Emphasizing the non-violent aspect of man's Divinity he said,

"Man as animal is violent, but as spirit is non-violent. The moment he awakens to the spirit within, he cannot remain violent."¹

The belief in the essentially non-violent nature of soul led him to declare that "Not to believe in the possibility of permanent peace is to disbelieve in the godliness of human nature."²

1. Harijan, 11.8.1940, P. 245

2. ibid, 16.5.1936, P. 109.

Again,

"the chief difference between man and beast is that man is a benevolent creature. All live happily where one feels happy in the happiness of others".¹

The basis of this conviction was his belief that there is something good in every man.

Gandhi did agree that man has already risen to a higher plane of evolution after countless births in brute creation. He is able to stand, not to walk on all fours, or to crawl. But he insists, this alone cannot be the distinguishing mark of man. For, even as an erect animal he is very similar to all other animals in his performance of such physical functions like eating, sleeping, sex etc. What distinguishes him really from animals is, therefore, his effort to control the physical strength he derived from his animal ancestry and channelize it, in the moral plane. He said,

"What distinguishes man from the brute is his ceaseless striving to rise above the brute on the moral plane."²

And

"The brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is man because he is capable of and only in so far as he exercises self-restraint."³

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1. Quoted from Ram Rattan, Gandhi's concept of Political Obligation (Calcutta, The Minerva Associates, 1972), P.9
 2. Harijan, 7.4.1946, P. 75
 3. M.K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, op.cit. P. 238

Another distinction that Gandhi maintained between human and sub-human beings was that while the latter are merely feeling animals, the former have the faculty of reason by virtue of which they can think for their betterment.

Some questions may be raised here. Is not a man the only animal endowed with the discriminative power of reason? Why should not then, man's uniqueness be determined by the principle of rationality itself? Why should Gandhi distinguish man from animals by spiritual or religious life and not by merely his rational life? To such an objection Gandhi would say that 'reason' by itself cannot bring out the difference from the animal kingdom unless it is made subordinate to the third principle, soul. For, while animal behaviour is determined only by their instinctive drives, man alone possesses intellect, the power of discrimination. With the help of this power, as well as his will-power, man may try to control the brute force and redirect it towards progress. Or, he may also decide to make use of his intelligence to fulfil his animal desire in various, unrestrained, and indulgent ways. With the result there will be only violence and more immorality, leading to chaos and confusion, if not complete destruction of humanity itself. That means, Gandhi argues, the brute force cannot be allowed to be simply

left under the custody of reason. On the contrary reason itself should be guided and governed by the higher power of soul.

Sociability is another attribute of human being. He thought that man had risen to the present status by learning to adjust individualism to the requirements of social progress. He believed that unrestricted individualism is the law of beast. This supposition was the basis of his declaration that -

"Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member."¹

Gandhi, in his long public life, came across with both the darker and brighter sides of human nature. His Autobiography, the columns of 'Young India' and 'Harijan' are full of such observations. But, he insisted that there is no human being in this world who is wholly good or wholly bad. The difference between human beings is after all a difference only in the degree of virtues possessed by them and not the fundamental difference between the wholly good and the wholly evil as such. There is no one without faults, not even men of God.

1. Harijan, 27.5.1939, P.144. See also, 'Young India', 3.6.1926, P. 204

They are men of God not because they are faultless but because they know their own faults and are ready ever to correct themselves.¹ He believed that everyone of us is a mixture of good and evil.

But Gandhi believed in the original goodness of man. Man may fall into evil by seduction, by ignorance, by Avidya, yet the original constitution is adapted to good. We must presuppose that a germ of good has remained in its complete purity, indestructible and incorruptible. On this basis, Gandhi insisted : Man and his deed are two distinct things. Whereas a good deed should call forth the approbation and wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked, always deserves respect or pity as the case may be. Sin should be hated not the sinner. Gandhi was of the view that man is both matter and spirit, each acting on and affecting the other, that, however, bitter a man might be, he is sure to come round if we bestow upon him pure love in thought, word and deed, that generally those who believe in taking a tooth for a tooth, after a time forgive one another and become friends. He said :

"I have been taught from my childhood and I have tasted the truth by experience, that primary virtues of mankind are possible of cultivation by the meanest of human species.

1. Harijan, 28.1.1939, P. 446

It is this undoubted universal possibility that distinguishes the human from the rest of God's creation."¹

Man, according to Gandhi, will ever remain imperfect but it will always be his part to try to be perfect. Man believes and lives, and no one dare be dogmatic about the capacity of human nature, in any particular instance, for degradation or exaltation. 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 wrongly considers to be wholly evil. We must believe that every man can think for himself. The rationality of human nature is the precondition of its theoretical perfectibility. Every individual must be regarded as an end and none as a means. We must assume that every man can understand his own powers through the head and that he has the heart to affirm in practice his faith in himself. In fact, not only must we recognize that man is born to make mistakes, but we should magnify our own errors so as to be deterred from falling into them again. We must be conscious of the fallibility of human nature and this must make us humble, without destroying our confident conviction in the truth as we see it.

1. Harijan, 16.5.1936, p.109

Gandhi declared himself to be an irrepressible optimist! His optimism rested upon his belief in the infinite possibilities of the individual to develop non-violence. He refused to suspect human nature.

Gandhi was a believer in Advaita (the Indian doctrine of monism)- "the essential unity of God and man and for that matter of all that lives". This is similar to the stoic idea of the universe as a divine whole and of mankind as an essential unity in which the individual can realize himself. Man alone is made in the image of God. He argued that to prove the proposition that man is made in the image of God, it is surely unnecessary to show that all men admittedly exhibit that image in their own persons. It is enough to show that one man at least has done so. And, will it be denied that the great religious teachers of mankind have exhibited the image of God in their own persons?

Gandhi's position is identical with the upanishadic insistence of the oneness of everything, sensate and insensate. The adhyatmam-adhidaivam¹ posits a thorough going scheme of correspondence between the subjective and the objective and considers the two as dual aspects of the one sole imperishable entity, known

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1. Adhyatmam- the supreme spirit manifest as the self of individual
 - Adhidaivam - the supreme spirit operating in material objects.

respectively from the subjective and objective points of view. Gandhi completely subscribes to this doctrine and therefore insists on the oneness of all life. As Gandhi says :

The chief value of Hinduism lies in holding the actual belief that all life (not only human beings, but all sentient beings) is one, i.e. all life coming from the one universal source, call it Allah, God or Parameshwara.....

This unity of all life is a peculiarity of Hinduism which combines salvation not to human beings alone but says that it is possible for all God's creatures. It may be that it is not possible, save through the human form, but that does not make man the Lord of creation.

It makes him the servant of God's creation. Now when we talk of brotherhood of man, we stop there, and feel that all other life is there for man to exploit for his own purposes. But Hinduism excludes all exploitation².

The belief in the absolute God prevents man from arrogating to himself a superior position and

2. CWMG, LXIV, P. 141.

treating others as inferior. It also produces in him a sense of relatedness with other determinate beings which provides the ground for identification with fellow men. To relate oneself to the indeterminate, that is, the ultimate and to feel related with the determinate, that is, other beings, constitute the basis for an extended self which, in turn, manifests itself in compassion, the ability to be affected by the suffering of others. To identify with others is then to identify oneself with the suffering of others.

It is this awareness of the existence of widespread suffering and the necessity to share in and, if possible, alleviate the suffering of others that makes Gandhi recognize the reality of this phenomenal world despite his commitment to Advaita.

Belief in the oneness of humanity suggests, as Gandhi said, "It is quite proper to attack a system, but to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of the one and the same creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world."¹

1. M.K.Gandhi, An Autobiography, op.cit., p.337

Gandhi's advaitic doctrine also implies that what one man is capable of achieving is possible for all to attain.

There is the real self in everybody enveloped by the Phenomenal personality. As long as this phenomenal personality remains ascendant, the real self remains hidden, unmanifest and undiscovered. It is, therefore, necessary to pierce the shell of this personality. Gandhi recognized the brute in man, but he also believed that man can attain perfection if he so desires. He also conceded that it is very easy to remain a brute. As he said, "man must choose either of the two courses, the upward or the downward; but as he has the brute in him he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially- when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful garb."¹

To Gandhi, modern civilization does just that. It presents to man all the allurements of material comfort and tempts him to remain at the level of the brute. If man wishes to avoid the disaster being caused by modern civilization, he must rise above the level of the brute. It is man's destiny to become more than the brute. As he is maker of his destiny, he must strive to become perfect.

1. Harijan, 1.2.1935, p.410

The relentless pursuit of the ideal of self-perfection is, no doubt, difficult. The immersion in the phenomenal world is perhaps the greatest of fetters to this pursuit. In our ignorance we equate the pursuit of worldly concerns with the quest for self-realization. Gandhi was of the view that man, in our present time, no doubt, is in part man and in part beast and in our ignorance and even arrogance we think that we truly fulfil the purpose of our species when we behave like beasts. Again, there are samskaras or acquired tendencies of thought and character that pull us down to the level of the beast. However, we must reject the notion of permanent inelasticity of human nature. Gandhi believed that since man is a part of the divine, no one is beyond redemption.

Gandhi made a distinction between external freedom and internal freedom. He agreed with the proposition that a thousand laws enacted to protect man's freedom would fail to do so if he remains a slave internally. He rejected the notion that external freedom can be the means of measuring the freedom of the self within. Relying on external freedom to protect our internal freedom, we often find that the laws made to grant us freedom turnout to be shackles binding us.¹

1. CWNG, XXXVIII, P.18

Thus, for Gandhi, Swaraj or freedom means rule over one's self. Swaraj does not and cannot come from any external circumstances or through paying it lip service. Once this internal transformation occurs, the outward forms automatically change. Therefore what we should concerned with is a radical change more in inward spirit than in the outward form. If the first is changed, the second will take care of itself. If the first remains unchanged, the second, no matter how radically changed, will be like a whited sepulchre.¹

This radical inner transformation turns away from the Phenomenal, to be sure, but it does not imply that a man becomes a law unto himself or rises a above the law. ²Gandhi said ;

"If it be said that the restriction itself is barbarous, then freedom from all restraints should be the law of man. If all men were to act according to their lawless law, there would be perfect chaos within twenty-four hours. Man being by nature more passionate than the brute, the moment all restraint is withdrawn, the lava of unbridled passion would overspread the whole earth and destroy mankind."²

1. Ibid, LV, P. 62

2. Selected works of Mahatma Gandhi, VI, p.112

Laws are therefore necessary. But man-made laws do not make man free; if anything, they frequently prove to be shackles. What is necessary for man is to set himself free from the law of nature that applies to living being.

Gandhi's view of human nature is dependent on his interpretation of history as well as his view of cosmic evolution. He believed in the power of the spirit of man to shape its environment to some extent and thus affect the course of history. He explicitly rejected the Marxist interpretation of history. He could not agree that our ideologies, ethical standards and values are altogether a product of our material environment.¹ Gandhi said :

"The Marxist regards thought, as it were, as a 'Secretion of the brain' and the mind, a reflex of the material environment."

I cannot accept that..... If I have an awareness of that living principle within me, no one can fetter my mind. The body might be destroyed, the spirit will proclaim its freedom. This to me is not a theory; it is a fact of experience."² Again, "My quarrel with the Marxists is that even if the paradise

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1. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, The Last Phase, Vol.2, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1950), p.137
 2. Ibid.

of material satisfactions, which they envisage as their final goal, were realized on earth, it would not bring mankind either contentment or peace. But I was wondering whether we cannot take the best out of Marxism and turn it to account for the realization of our social aims."¹

While conceding the vision and dynamism of Marx, Gandhi explicitly rejected his reductionalism. He said :

"I do not consider economic factors to be the source of all the evils in the world. Nor is it correct to trace the origin of all wars to economic causes."²

Again,

"These people (Marxists) have concentrated their study on the depths of degradation to which human nature can descent. What use have they for the study of the heights to which human nature could rise."³

But it seems that Gandhi did not take to Marxism favourably, (though he was not totally opposed it). Marx, of course, envisaged that degradation of human nature is inevitable and it is bound to change into mutual love and co-operation in the Communist Society

1. Ibid.

2. Quoted from, Raghavan N. Iyer, The Moral & Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, (Delhi Oxford University Press, 1973), p.102

3. Ibid.

in which 'each according to his capacity and each according to his needs' will be operative. Gandhi will also concede that without satisfaction of the minimum material needs of man, all talk of morality, exaltation and spirituality is quite hollow. "A man who is forced to starve cannot be expected to pray to the God", he said, "A starving man will sell his soul".¹

In fact, Marx's concern for the poor and have-nots and in the long run for whole mankind was so intense, honest and sincere, and if Gandhi himself considers the concern and service of humanity as the service of God, then at the most what can be said is that Marx and Gandhi were not diametrically opposite—rather Marx and Gandhi were basically on the same line but Gandhi was just ahead of Marx in terms of transcendent aim of human life.

So far as the role of the economic factor in the determination of world history is concerned Marx and Engles were not of the view that economic factor is the sole determining factor. Economic factor, of course, plays the dominant role but other factors social, political, cultural etc., have also their due share.

1. D.G.Tendulkar, Mahatma, vol.2, op.cit.p.46

Our real source of hope lies in the progressive awareness by human beings of the need to replace brute force by deliberate non-violence, coercion by consent, paternalism by self-dependence. Human History, for Gandhi, is neither a unilinear trend of progress nor a static picture of eternal recurrence, but, rather, a spiral-like movement that is determined by the power of spirit over matter within the limits of the course plotted out by Karma, the compensatory law of ethical causation. There is a divine guarantee that good will ultimately triumph over evil, but he explicitly rejected the unilinear view of human progress, individual or collective. Life is not one straight road. There are so many complexities in it. It is not like a train which, once started, keeps on running.

Gandhi firmly believed that the natural course of man's evolution is from beast, through man, to God. He thought that it is possible for the soul to free itself from the bondage of the body and to attain 'moksha' and thereby, to become one with his creator.

Gandhi believed in the possibility of an ultimate realization of the absolute.

"Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God."¹

The ultimate reality that pervades the phenomenal world and yet is above it, transcendent yet immanent, is for Gandhi, the real meaning of God. But he did not believe in any personal God. He said :

"The Almighty is not a person like us. He or it is the greatest living force or law in the world. Accordingly. He does not act by caprice, nor does that law admit of any amendment or improvement. His will is fixed and changeless, everything else change every second"²

Earlier he said :

"God is Truth" but by 1932 he changed his position and equated truth with God- "Truth is God".

He observed :

"For me, Truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. The truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also,

1. Harijan, 29.8.1936, p.226

2. Harijan, 28.7.1946, p.233

and not only the relative truth of our perception, but the absolute Truth, the Eternal principle, that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because his manifestations are innumerable..... But I worship God as Truth only."¹

It is interesting to note that Gandhi's conception of God really refers to the substratum of existence and is very close to the concept of Dharmakaya of Mahayana Buddhism. Dharmakaya which means 'body or system of being'.....is the ultimate reality that underlies all particular phenomena; it is that which makes the existence of individuals possible; it is the raison d'etre of the universe; it is the norm of being, which regulates the course of events and thought.²

Gandhi emphasized that

"He and His laws are one. The Law is God. Anything attributed to him is not a mere attribute. He is the attribute."³

It is this ultimate reality which is truth which in turn is God. And it is this God that is the supreme object of man's quest for self

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1. Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, op.cit. vol. VI, p.95
 2. D.T.Suzuki, Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism (New York, Schocken Books, 1963)p.46.
 3. CWNG, LVII, P.165

Realization.

"Devotion to this Truth is the sole justification for our existence. All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without Truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life."¹

Again,-

"Only remember that Truth is not one of the many qualities that we name. It is the living embodiment of God, it is the only life, and I identify Truth with the fullest life, and that is how it becomes a concrete thing, for God is this whole creation, the whole Existence, and service of all that exists-Truth-is service of God."²

The Rigvedic and Platonic notion of the ever-existent Absolute Truth was essential to Gandhi for the purpose of endowing truth, as normally understood, with indisputable and universal sanctity as the highest moral value and the highest human end. Being chiefly concerned with individual integrity in human society, he appealed to the ultimate,

1. Ibid, VI, p.40

2. Harijan, 25.5.1935, p.115

final and preordained integrity.....

of the cosmic order. Furthermore, the moral order of the cosmos (rta) reflects sat as the Natural Law of Eternal Truth, which no man can ever elude. This metaphysical and transcendental conception of truth, which is an integral part of Indian tradition, implies the transiency of falsehood, the elusive but indestructible nature of Absolute Truth or Reality, the sustaining power and self-subsistent energy of every intimation of that which is ultimately real or true, the notion that repressed truth acts like magic when revealed and possesses a therapaetic effect., that truth is the only source of power in the long run, and that asat, or untruth, is incapable of binding universal conciousness or the Life-Force to the limitations of the individual. Further, whereas truth is universifiable, falsehood cannot secure universal assent.

Not only was the truth the most important and an all inclusive principle to Gandhi, but it was also logically prior to all the other human virtues and excellences. In daily life, we may gain only the faintest glimpses of the mighty effulgence and indescribable luster of Absolute Truth. But as truth is the very breath of our life, a man without even a particle of it would

be dead, and life without a modicum of integrity would be not only worthless but also meaningless. If everything is lifeless without truth, untruth is destructive and emasculating, despite apparent and temporary benefits that we may ascribe to it, it is the ability to determine truth for himself that distinguishes man from the brute. To find truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny to become perfect. Every truth is "self-acting" and has inherent strength, but it is latent until it is embodied in the actions as well as the thoughts of a human being. The world is not merely a spectacle; it is a field of battle, upon which those who care for the truth must play their part, whether as victors or martyrs. In this activist view of truth, Gandhi went even further than Marx. It is not enough for thought to be based upon truth; the life of the thinker must express it, must represent it visibly in his actions.

Gandhi believed, like Thoreau, that any truth is better than make-believes, and that the individual and society must, like nature, rest on an underpinning of granitic truth, the lowest primitive rock. The universe reflects sat or Absolute Truth

and society must ultimately rely on the same foundation, which is possible only when its members become truth-worshippers, common votaries at a single shrine consecrated to the unattainable, but ever-existing and all powerful, deity of sat, revealed in the world as the Eternal Law of Truth.

Even God's existence had to satisfy the criteria of Truth, the satisfaction of all the tools of knowledge with which man is endowed. It is only then that the knotty problem of existence is cleared, all doubts are resolved and all the impediments in the way of knowing and realising the reality are removed, ('Bhidyate hradayagranthi chhidante sarva samshayah') making way for the illumination, enlightenment, or Sambodhi as Buddha put it. This shows how meticulous Gandhi was about the value of Truth ; God himself had to pass through the test of Truth.

It is easier to believe in God as a matter of routine or straightway deny the existence of God. Gandhi came across many persons denying God. He (God) was not necessary for them, nor inevitable, one can do without Him. Some went to the extent of preaching that belief in God was harmful, because it,

according to them, came in the way of human effort to change for the better, Many turned fatalists in the name of God. Many others cursed God; wondering if at all he was there, why this imperfect and miserable world? Some people declared that God was dead by the twentieth century, if at all he was there before. Some high intellectuals believed that if science can explain everything and can solve all problems, why should we owe allegiance to an unknown and unseen God who seems to be absent-minded anyway, in many matters.

Gandhi found the solution in the simple formula, 'Many deny God, none can deny Truth to which one is himself witness'. So, he said, 'Truth is God'. As long as Gandhi spoke about God, it was a familiar ground, even though the word 'God' meant different things for different people. One aspect was common and that was that God was the supreme power and the highest reality. But by declaring 'Truth is God', he lifted us from our ancient moorings of theism, theology and all that they mean by it, and ranked us afresh with every seeker of Truth, with radical thinkers, with rationalists, and so on. Truth, arrived at after observation of facts, after controlled experiments is the 'God' of modern science. Gandhi too had a

scientific approach in arriving at 'God'. His laboratory was his consciousness in its widest sense—the power to know; his experiments were with Truth itself; several saints and spiritual seekers were witness to the finding of 'God', the supreme reality. But when he found people denying 'God', he said that we must begin afresh and we are sure to come to the same conclusion, that Truth itself is the highest value in life and pursuit of it. is worth one's whole life; and if found necessary 'one should hold one's life cheap in that pursuit'.

The terms, 'Truth' and 'God' were synonymous with each other for Gandhi. When Gandhi said, 'Truth is God', some must have exclaimed, Gandhi is bringing back 'God' through the back door. Nothing of the kind was intended nor planned, Truth of one's own total experience, by employing all the tools of knowledge, cannot be denied. To deny it would be to deny oneself, to deny something to which one was a witness with total awareness. Gandhi named such Truth, arrived at in this way, as God; that is 'God' immanent, 'God' operating as Law, the process of nature, of cosmos or of cosmic law, the moral order of the universe; one may not call such Truth as 'God', but one cannot object to Gandhi's calling it God. One may simply say such Truth is scientific

truth, but it is Truth all right, and is the highest value, as everything exists, lives, moves and has its being in the cosmos as per that Truth, that law, that regulatory orderliness which is its own; it is inherent, it is built-in and not imposed from outside. It is the real guide for life and action.

For Gandhi, to say that 'Truth is God' was easy, and he gained immensely by putting himself right with those who denied God, and with the scientists who are after experimental Truth. But that has made a world of difference to all others if one examines the implications. When one is in search of God, one naturally turns to all the sources of knowledge of God, the religious scriptures, the saints, the philosophers, the God-man and so on. But when Gandhi raises the status of Truth-both transcendental and immanent-and instals Truth on the pedestal of God, every individual seekers of Truth is called upon to fall back on his own resources and be an ardent scientific seeker of the truth of things. As regards, 'Truth Transcendental', there need not be much controversy as all will have to agree that it is, in the very nature of things 'undescribable' and beyond

normal experience of the present-day human being. But about mundane truth, truth of daily life, there would be and are differences, not only between different persons and groups of persons, but even in one individual's mind, there are differences from day to day and from time to time about many a thing that affect our lives. Just as in the case of 'freedom', every one is free, no doubt. But freedom has always to be limited and regulated by equal freedom to the 'other'. Similarly, everyone is free to arrive at his own 'truth' by the tools he is invested with by nature and environment, but equal freedom has to be given to the other. It is in this respect that Gandhi has made the greatest contribution by declaring that Ahimsa-Non-Violence-Love should be our sole, Singular and unexceptionable guide in asserting one's own 'truth', and in one's attempt to live and establish one's own 'truth' as the norm for others. One should be willing and ready to suffer oneself for one's own truth, lest the truth is on other side. To impose by force or fraud or coercion or any other means one's own 'truth' on the 'other' is an anathema to the Gandhian conception of truth, and its votaries. The propagation and establishment of 'truth' has to be through love and what love dictates.

The observance of this law of love lifts man from the category of the brute and takes him to the domain of mankind. To Gandhi, observance of the law of nonviolence in the propagation of 'truth' of one's own finding was as important as the finding of 'truth' itself.

But what is the interrelationship as well as the interaction of these two concepts namely 'God is Truth' and 'Truth is God'? It is obvious that one who believes in 'God is Truth' is not absolved from his duty to be in quest of Truth, both transcendental and immanent, because, Truth, which means the Law of Life, of living and of action, and its quest is not merely restricted to the world of thought and theory but is a compulsion for daily living and acting. Just as 'action' is a compulsion and there is no option or choice in the matter, so too in the matter of the Law of Life one has to know it and act accordingly if one is to live meaningfully and purposefully. In this context, Truth, that is Law of Life, assumes two aspects :one is to know the Law of Life, Living and Action generally; and the other is to find the details about the day-to-day problems as one encounters them. So, God or no God, belief or no belief in God, the pursuit of the Truth of Life,

both in its general aspects and in its almost moment to moment aspects has to be the very breath of one's life. If one is not alert and aware of this Truth of Life, he would be living without understanding it. In fact, it would be a life in ignorance. Moreover, when one is in search for the law of living from day to day, he may one day stumble on the basic law of life and have illumination. Thus, between the two 'God is Truth', 'Truth is God', the latter assumes primary importance, while the former may be derived in the course of finding the Truth of Life itself. From a general point of view, belief in God is usually traditional while search for truth of daily life is a personal responsibility which one would avoid at his own risk and would live an irresponsible life and betray the trust of nature which has given man the tools for finding the truth.

By raising the status of Truth to godhood, Gandhi has called upon each individual to assure the responsibility of finding the Truth himself with the help of the tools of knowledge which nature has given to man. He has to adopt the role of a scientist and not be satisfied with being a camp-follower. He has to be alive, alert, aware and awakened. In fact, he has to participate in the evolution of man towards a

truth-conscious life by playing a responsible role. It is a great call as 'Uddharet atmanatmanam'. ('Seek and find your own salvation'), of the Gita. It may also be likened to Buddha's exhortation 'atmadeepo bhava' (be a light unto yourself; 'Seek and ye shall find', (Knock and it shall be opened').

When Gandhi said, 'Truth is God', it might have seemingly been for those who deny God. But it equally applies to those who believe in God. Believers in God do not automatically know the Truth, either the Transcendental Truth or the Immanent Truth. Truth is a more difficult God to propitiate than God himself.

To find truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny. However, the realization of this absolute truth is not possible. Being necessarily limited by the bonds of flesh, we can attain perfection only after the dissolution of the body. Besides, where would be room for that constant striving, that ceaseless quest after the ideal that is the basis of all spiritual progress; if mortals could reach the perfect state while still in the body? This idea stems out of two convictions in Gandhi. Firstly, Gandhi intertwined Satya and Ahimsa with each other. Now, total adoption of non-violence is impossible while in bodyframe as the very existence of human life

always commits some sort of violence. Breathing, eating, drinking, moving, etc. all sorts of activities involve violence. If total non-violence is an impossibility, how can the Truth be realized in perfection? Secondly, Gandhi recognized the role that circumstances play in moulding man's nature, though he could never be sure as to how far a man is free and how far a creature of circumstances, how far free-will comes into play and where fate enters on the scene,- all this is a mystery and will remain a mystery. The last point to be noted in this context is the extent to which the all-pervading force, the God Himself allows man to strive to cultivate his special virtues. It may be observed that though Gandhi upheld the proposition that no one should dogmatize about the capacity of human nature for degradation or exaltation, he ceaselessly tried to determine the extent of the role that 'circumstances', 'God's Will', and 'Man's efforts' play in moulding man's nature or destiny. His numerous statements on this point, when put together, indicate that he kept on shifting places within a sort of triangle of the 'force of circumstances', God's Will', and Man's efforts, till in the twilight of his age he came to a remote conclusion that in cultivating his special virtues man can strive only in so far as he is allowed by the Great Power which overrides all our

intentions, all our plans and carries out his own plans."¹

Gandhi's idea that perfection or salvation during life-time is not possible does not seem to be correct. In history many spiritual leaders like Buddha, Muhammad, Christ attained supreme Truth in their very life-time. Again, actions involving violence out of innocence, ignorance, disinterestedness or detachment do not amount to violence as such. We would see later that Gandhi also agreed that violence committed out of pure motive and love does not amount to violence, rather it is equivalent to nonviolence. A detached man is very eligible for total salvation, even if his bodily presence makes some violence.

Again, if God is Truth and Truth is the Law of Life or cosmos, then an act done in accordance with the eternal law of nature is sure to bear fruit, there should be no doubt about it. Gandhi himself admitted that God himself has to pass the criteria of Truth. He is not above nor different from Law of Life. So, if Gandhi really was attached to Truth, he should not have given a rather pessimistic tone that

1. Harijan, 20.4.1947, p.113

man's truthful effort can be reduced to naught by the Almighty. It reflects the desperate state of his mind in the twilight of his life. The terrific blood-bath in Hindu-Muslim riots, division of the country, isolation of the Mahatma after independence by the contemporary leaders and India very much marching on against his dream had left him near total confusion. That gigantic fire of truth and scientific spirit seems to have been extinguished by that time and he had taken shelter like an traditional Indian in the lap of the God, personal one.

However, Gandhi distinguished the Relative Truth from the Absolute Truth. He said, "But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. The relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler."¹ While we must have faith in the Absolute Truth that we can imagine but cannot attain, there is nothing wrong in every man following Truth according to his lights. Indeed it is his duty to do so. Then if there is a mistake on the part of anyone so following Truth, it will be automatically set right. For "The quest of Truth involves tapas or self suffering, sometimes even unto death. There

1. Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, op.cit,
VI, p.95

can be no place in it for even a trace of self-interest. In such selfless search for Truth nobody can lose his bearings for long. Directly he takes to the wrong path he stumbles, and is thus redirected to the right path. Therefore the pursuit of Truth is true Bhakti (devotion)..... There is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat."¹

Gandhi said,

"Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of the humanity. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan Cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from Humanity."²

Contrary to Gandhi's view-point, Dr. Radhakrishnan opined :

"In India, under the influence of thinkers like Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda, Gandhi and Tagore, a social gospel is becoming

1. Young India, 3.7.1931, p.105

2. Harijan, 29.8.1936, p.226

popular. The Bhagvadgita, with its insistence on work has become the most important Hindu Scripture. In religion accent is the vital thing, and it is now shifted to social reform. But we cannot forget that the essence of religion is spiritual redemption and not social reform. Sanctity and holiness may imply service and fellowship, but cannot be equated with them. Religion to-day has to fight not only unbelief and secularism, but also the subtler rival in the guise of social reform"¹.

Gandhian way of service-action-oriented self-realization seems more humanistic, practical and hence appealing and worth adopting particularly in the context of nation-wide, world-wide poverty, hunger, disease, struggle and conflict, ignorance and arrogance. But it does not mean that traditional tapasya, Sannaysa, contemplation and meditation are in any way inferior to action and social reform. No doubt, Karmayoga is a path in the Search of God But there are other paths like Jyanyoga, Bhaktiyoga etc. too, whatever be the path, the basic principle is that the seeker after God must have detachment and annihilation of Ahamkar (ego). The moment one breaks the bondage of 'Self', one comes face to face the

1. Extracted From, J. Bandyopadhyaya, Social and Political Thought of Gandhi, op.cit., p.29

supreme Reality, The Truth, The God . Even a traditional Tapaswi may and does serve the humanity, the cosmos through his sacred spiritual power. So, Gandhi's emphasis on his path of service or action as the only way of God-realization does not augur well and it tantamounts to condemnation of the long tradition of Rishis, Munis. Who can deny that the Buddha and the Mahavir attained enlightenment in their deep meditation and tapasya ?

Gandhi believed in social salvation. From the fundamental unity of mankind, Gandhi derived the collective or social nature of every human act.

"The sin of one is the sin of all. And hence it is not upto us to destroy the evil-doer. We should, on the contrary, suffer for him."¹ Likewise, If one gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole falls to that extent."² Again,

"There is not a single virtue which aims at or is content with, the welfare of the individual alone. Consequently there is not a single moral offence which does not directly or indirectly, affect many others besides the actual offender. Hence whether an individual is good or bad is not merely his own concern, but really the concern

1. CWMG, Vol. 43, p.82

2. Young India, 4.12.1924, p.398

of the whole community, nay of the whole world."¹

Thus Salvation cannot be achieved perfectly until the whole of humanity is redeemed along with the individual.

Again, this idea of Gandhi is disputable. The way he talked of suffering for the offence and sin of others is very likely to interfere with the Gita's theory of Karma, 'As you sow, so you will reap'. An offender is bound to bear the fruit of his actions, no one else can share it. Likewise, the concept of 'Social or Collective Salvation' is not theoretically and practically sound. If a man pursues ethical and spiritual life, adopts truth in thought, word and deed, he is most likely to attain enlightenment or liberation, no matter, rest of the world gets the same or not. Everyone has to rise on himself, others can merely inspire and guide to some extent. A liberated soul, like Gautama Buddha, may come to help and guide the ignorant masses the path of truth and enlightenment out of Mahakaruna (Supreme affection and sympathy); but it does not suggest that until he gets the entire humanity liberated, his own liberation itself is a question-mark.

1. As quoted by T.Thekkinedath, Love of Neighbour In Mathama Gandhi, (Alwaye Political Institute of Theology and Philosophy, 1973). p.47

If service is the way of self-realization, it is must, according to Gandhi, for every seeker of Truth to actively participate in the mundane activities i.e. in politics with a view to make relative truths more approximate to and consistent with the Absolute Truth i.e. just immanent and transcendental law of life. In 1927, Gandhi emphatically argued :

"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."¹

Critics have tended to argue that intermingling of religion and Politics has introduced a large element of irrationality in the life and thought of Gandhi and thus made Gandhian thought intellectually repulsive. But true religion and true

1. M.K.Gandhi, An Autobiography, op.cit.p.370-371

politics, Gandhi argued, both have to concern themselves primarily with human life and action, and both must have a common basis in a common morality determined by a common set of values. A true politician must also be a religious man. Asked by Lord Montagu why he had

"found his way into this crowd?,

Gandhi replied :

"I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities to-day constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, 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 maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'"¹

Again, in 1925 he wrote :

"I do not believe that the spiritual law operates on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields."²

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1. D.G.Tendulkar Mahatma (New Delhi, Publication Division, Government of India, 1960) Vol.IV, p.318.
 2. Young India, 3.9.1925, p.106

In our age the terms 'Religion' and 'Politics' are used in altogether different sense. Religion is understood purely in terms of narrow sectarian and organised theology. And politics is considered to be an strategy and technique of manipulating things and facts, capturing and holding power irrespective of means adopted therefor. It is only in this sense that separation or divorce between politics and Religion is demanded.

But for Gandhi, Religion is the recognition of immanent justice and action aimed at the establishment of relative justice in human society. And Politics is the art of transforming social relations in terms of relative justice in each particular case. Gandhi's argument is that under such definitions of religion and Politics, no aspect of human activity can be regarded as being outside the scope of either subject, since every sphere of human action is relevant to the ideal of justice, and they are thus two names for practically the same activity. Indeed, if God is kept out of picture altogether, and Gandhi's definitions of religion and Politics are accepted, there would seem to be no logical fallacy in his contention that the two are inseparable.

Gandhi made it obligatory for every seeker after Truth to follow certain moral principles as vows. These vows are - Truth (relative truth), Ahimsa, Fearlessness, Non-possession, Non-stealing, control of Palate, Removal of untouchability, Bread or Hand Labour, Sarvadharmā-Samabhava (equal regard for all religions), Swadeshi. This is a knitwork of vows. Non-observance of one vow would make it impossible to pursue other vows. But one particular vow deserves special attention and that is Fearlessness. Gandhi himself preferred violence to cowardice. Only a courageous man can observe non-violence and hence truth in real sense. Throughout life, Gandhi tried to make his countrymen fearless against the mighty British empire. Only an utmost fearless man can go for Satyagraha. Courage is the most vital aspect of character whether in the battlefield or in non-violent struggle. Only a courageous man can lay down his life for the sake of others. This message, indeed, is one of the best contributions of Gandhi.

Apart from observance of the vows, one must have faith in the universal truth of life i.e. the God. Faith transcends reason. Reason at best is a tool. Given a particular end it can tell us how we can attain it. It can never tell us fully about the

ends or values of life. It is upon faith we depend for living a meaningful life. Certainly, the faculty of reason plays a great role in the human consciousness. For it helps us to determine the choice of actions. But we cannot reason out all things on earth. Nor could we wait for securing complete rational conviction before we begin to act. So Gandhi said :

" There are subjects where reasons cannot take us far and we have to accept things on faith. Faith then does not contradict reason, but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are without the purview of reason."¹

If we need to go beyond reason and depend upon faith even in ordinary life, it is much more necessary in the pursuit of self-realization.

Thus, from the above study, it is clear that Gandhi regarded man necessarily a spiritual being whose sole aim is the self-realization. But it is possible neither by escaping the realities of the worldly life nor by indulging into it. It is attainable only through the service of mankind. To serve properly one must gradually proceed on the path of ethical life by remaining in this world. It

1. Harijan, 6.3.1937,p.26

is obvious to know what sort of socio-political and economic structure and the socio-political relationship would be most conducive for the pursuing of noble ideals of life which will ultimately lead to self-realization. So, the next chapter under the head "SOCIAL STRUCTURE" will deal with the same.

CHAPTER - IV

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Gandhi stressed the essential unity of things. He saw the manifestation of the supreme spirit in all-the self, all living beings and material objects. This perspective in itself constitutes an orientation that prevents superarrogation of the self. This projects an organismic vision of the cosmos, that overcomes the opposition between the self and the other, paves the way for the identification of the self with the external world and provides the basis for the self to relate meaningfully with others. Gandhi said :

"The Ocean is composed of drops of water; each drops is an entity and yet it is a part of the whole; 'the one and the many'. In this ocean of life, we are little drops. My doctrine means that I must identify myself with life, with everything that lives, that I must share the majesty of life in the presence of God. The sum-total of this life is God".¹

1. SNMG, VI, P. 109.

The quest for self-realization becomes, for Gandhi, also the quest for actualizing the spiritual and moral values one aspires for in the institutions and processes of the social order. The principle of inwardness that characterizes the process of self-transformation also becomes the ground for turning outward to the external world.

This turning outward does not, however, mean a licence for manipulative imposition of one's will on others. To try and impose one's own view on others about the true nature of things is to commit the error of absolutism ignoring the vital difference in things and values. Given the essential unity of everything, however, this essential unity evokes different shapes of meaning in different persons and communities. To impose one's own will is not only to ignore the vital difference but also to violate truth. The perception and manifestation of different shapes of meaning necessarily mean the recognition and acceptance of relativism within the overarching frame of Advaita.

The rejection of exclusivism and the respect for the integrity of others are rooted in satya and ahimsa. To pursue ahimsa in one's interaction with others does not mean a submission to collective social

sanctions. As a matter of fact, self-transformation means neither isolated self-control nor an uncritical submission to the restrictions or concerns of society. Nor does it undermine either social collectivity or the individual self. On the contrary, it forces one to transcend the duality of the individual and society.

The authentic person, in the Gandhian perspective, is true both to one's self and to one's responsibilities to society at large. Sociality is an integral part of one's self. Society is not conceived as something out there but as an extended self. The process of self-disclosure is transformed into the process of co-disclosure.

The extension of the self as a basis for identification with others implies interdependence. All societies, whether atomistic or organic, emphasize interdependence. But in many cases, it usually takes the form of functional interdependence restricted to the exchange of goods and services. Not based on the spiritual principle of oneness of all things, it gets eroded as soon as the inequality of exchange becomes apparent. It then becomes the breeding ground for conflict between groups and individuals. The interdependence of Gandhi's conception implies the value of harmony. To seek harmony is to initiate a process of integration of one's-self with others and society which necessarily means

strengthening the bonds of human-relatedness. True self-transformation consists, in Gandhi's view, not in detaching oneself from the world of human relations but in making sincere attempts to harmonize one's relationships with others.

Self-transformation cannot be ensured if one makes claims on others and on society and demands service from them. It can be ensured only on the basis of giving to others what one has, on the basis of being of some use to others, of serving others. That is why Gandhi speaks of the necessity of selfless service to others. Once the necessity of selfless service is recognized as the essential component of the process of self-transformation, the consciousness of rights disappears. In its place, duty-consciousness envelops one's perspective on others. Duty-consciousness is, therefore, a recognition of the irreducible necessity of others for self-transformation.

Gandhi said, "..... If all simply insist on the rights and no duties there will be utter confusion and chaos If instead of insisting on the rights, everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind It is, therefore, necessary to understand the correlation of

rights and duties. I venture to suggest that the rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed, are not worth having, they will be usurpation, sooner discarded the better."¹

Gandhi stressed the acquisition of those faculties, powers and ethical qualities which are necessary for the realization of rights as genuine claims. Moral training is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of rights, If the moral preparation is wanting, then rights can be only fetters and impediments. Thus, Gandhi had an axiological or valuational conception of rights because he affirmed that without the acceptance of altruistic aims and goals and without the effective ordering of life and its conduct of moral values, a man's existence would become empty and devoid of spiritual meaning.

Gandhi wanted a reconciliation of individual rights with the requirements of social progress. Individual rights and social restraints had both to be adjusted. An individual is a participant in the

1. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma ; Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Vol. VIII, (Bombay, V.K. Jhaveri and D.G. Tendulkar, 1951), P.P. 32-34

social process and hence he cannot be allowed to engage in the manifestation of unrestricted individualism. If the society has to be prevented from being a lawless jungle, the individual has to learn to make willing submission to the social and moral laws. True rights do not flow from mere legal recognition but from moral advancement and social service. For Gandhi, rights are created, not by the state or any other group, but by the individual himself as he acquires and develops fitness, for the right by the pursuit of satya and ahimsa. The state does not create rights; it only recognizes them.

Effective self-devotion to the development of one's character and dedication to the service of others are the true sources of rights. A right must be aimed at the liberation of man's faculties to enhance the good of all- 'sarvodaya'. He, thus, wanted harmonious reconciliation between individual freedom and social duties, 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. Gandhi said : "The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights,

they escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther will they fly. The same teaching has been embodied by Krishna in the immortal words: 'Action alone is thine - leave thou the fruit severely alone'. Action is duty, fruit is the right".¹

The Gandhian theory of rights lays emphasis on social service rather than on self-regarding propensities of the individual. He wrote : ".....People who obtain rights as result of performance of duty, exercise them only for the service of society, never for themselves".² Gandhi was of the view that the rights which different individuals may properly claim must vary according to their several ethical dispositions and capacities. Thus the man who by his striving has built up for himself an upright character has the right to demand from his fellow men a respect to which less honest neighbour can make no proper claim.

Gandhi recognized the mutual dependence between the self and society. However, the individual, for Gandhi, remained important not because the individual is prior to society but because he is the most active component of society and corporate growth is dependent entirely on

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1. Young India, 8.1.1925, pp 15-16, see also, Harijan, 27.5.1939, p. 143.
 2. Harijan, 25.3.1939, p. 64

individual growth. As Gandhi said : "And the one discovery I have made is that, really speaking, there is no distinction whether between individual growth and corporate growth, the corporate growth is therefore entirely dependent upon individual growth and hence that beautiful proverb in the English language that a chain is no stronger than the weakest link in it."¹ The importance of individual growth as an essential condition of corporate growth does not, however, mean the supremacy of the individual over society since the individual cannot become a moral person if society is subordinated to the needs of the individual. As a matter of fact, in Gandhi's view, one of the important traits of personality is the person's willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of society.

The social ideal of Gandhi was the ideal of anarchism. It is this ultimate ideal which to Gandhi's mind represents the maximum possible consummation of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, and is characterized by him as Ram Rajya (literally Divine Rule). But at the same time, he regarded the ideal of anarchism as an unattainable abstraction like Euclid's point or straight line. It represented the extreme of his social and political views, whose real function is that of a

1. CWVG, XXXIV, p. 505

direction-indicator.

Although Gandhi did not at any stage formulate a clearcut and comprehensive practical social ideal, as a relative counterpart to his ultimate social ideal, there are several important reasons for treating the sum total of his practical ideas in a single category which is different from (though to Gandhi's mind an approximation to) the ideal of anarchism as defined in Hind Swaraj. Thus, it is possible and necessary to distinguish between the two levels of the social and political thought of Gandhi - the ideal and the practical. The former, represented by a form of pure anarchy, called Ram Rajya. This ultimate social ideal can be called as the first-order social ideal of Gandhi. The practical social ideal, derived from the sum total of Gandhi's practical ideas resembles a form of libertarian socialism and embodies relative non-violence, freedom and equality. This practical ideal can be called as the second-order social ideal of Gandhi. However, it must be assumed that the second-order ideal was considered by Gandhi to be an approximation to the first-order ideal.

Gandhi's anarchist views had been developing during his South African days. As stated earlier, he was deeply influenced by a study of Tolstoy's The Kingdom of God is within you in 1893. In 1904 Ruskin's Unto This Last made

a profound impression on him. In Hind Swaraj (1909) he maintained that true Freedom would be possible only when modern civilization is completely destroyed and a new society created without governments, parliaments, railways and other fast means of transportation, machinery, doctors, lawyers and armed forces, in which violence is completely abjured by the people and authority is resisted by them through Passive Resistance (latter through satyagraha). Gandhi said : "The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, the state can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress What I disapprove of, is an organization based on force, which a state is. Voluntary organization there must be."¹

Gandhi had some broad conception of both a horizontal or geographical and a vertical or functional organization of the ideal society of his vision. As

1. D.G.Tendulkar, Mahatma, Vol. IV, op.cit; ,pp 11-13

for horizontal organization Gandhi said : "Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat, having full power. 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. But this does not exclude dependence on the 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 every woman knows what he or she wants, and what is more, knows that no one should want anything that the others cannot have with equal labour

"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be widening, never ascending, circles, Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But 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 will derive its own strength from it."¹

As regards the vertical or functional organization of the ideal society, Gandhi merely hints that the traditional four-fold division of society among the Hindus based on varna, (which according to him, is a qualitative and functional division, quite different from caste) might provide a useful clue to the organizational pattern of an anarchistic society. He said : "I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations the law of varna was deduced. It established certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition, while recognizing limitations, the law of varna admitted of no distinctions of high or low; on the one hand, it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours, and on the other, it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbour. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implica-

1. Harijan, 28.7.1946, p. 206.

tions of this law are fully understood and given effect to."¹

Gandhi thought that the castes had all developed originally as trade guilds, but it is contrary to historical and sociological evidence. It is this oversimplified view of the caste system which in turn enabled Gandhi to believe that the large number of existing castes can be reduced to four varnas through the exercise of moral power by a band of reformers. It is an evidence of his ahistorical approach to social problems and his basic unawareness of the complexities of social phenomena. That the caste system has grown up in India over thousands of years through the operation of the complex forces of religion, geography, economic relations, race, culture, etc. and that its solution requires, among other things, a high degree of horizontal and vertical mobility which may be brought about through rapid industrialization and the spread of education. Karl Marx was of the view that "Modern industry, resulting from the railways would dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian Power".²

1. D.G.Tendulkar, Mahatma, op. cit., vol. IV, p 13.

2. Karl Marx and F. Engles, On colonialism, (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), p. 80.

Marx was as un-scientific as Gandhi is so far as he regarded the economic factor as the ultimate determinant of social change and hence, industrialization as the only solution to the problem of caste; but he emphasized a very important aspect of a necessarily complex solution— an aspect altogether neglected by Gandhi.

Again, how are the different occupations in a modern society to be classified as varnas ? For instance, how is the vast army of white collar workers, which is engaged in the production process but performs no manual labour, to be classified ? There are high level technicians and bureaucrats who are by no means shudras in the old sense. The fact is that technological progress has not only led to an almost endless differentiation and diversification of the occupational structure, it has also reduced, and promises to reduce to the vanishing point in the foreseeable future, the distinction between intellectual and manual labour, and it is no longer possible to fit all possible occupations into the straight-jacket of Varnashrama.

Again, how are the millions of people, like Gandhi himself, who had not accepted the calling of their forefathers for earning a living, to be compelled to do so ? Will satyagraha be used for this purpose also ? Who will perform Satyagraha against whom ? Are we to visualize a

society in which millions of individuals are engaged in Satyagraha against one another, and for this kind of reason ? Such indeed are the absurdities to which Gandhi's views on caste and varna logically lead us (apart from the fact that satyagraha is by no means such a panacea for all social ills as Gandhi supposed it to be).

Gandhi argued that under the varna system a child will not have to go to school (since he can learn his father's craft or trade at home) and the leisure thus gained will be useful for his 'spiritual progress'. Firstly, the type of know-how that can be acquired at home can relate only to the kind of rudimentary handicraft or technique which constitutes the technological basis of Gandhi's ideal society but it would stultify the creative freedom of man and also militate against Non-violence and Equality. Secondly, mere acquisition of know-how for earning one's living is certainly not the object of education.

Gandhi argued that Varnashrama would eliminate competition and thus prevent the disruption of society. But he did not state how inter-varna economic competition and intra-varna (as well as inter-varna) social competition was to be eliminated. The history of the system of

varna in ancient India is one of perpetual competition between the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas, and sometimes among all the four varnas, for social ascendancy. Besides, not all competition is antithetical to social order and progress, as anyone with a nodding acquaintance with sociology would readily admit.

Finally, Gandhi argued that the varna system would lead to the equal distribution of wealth. But apart from the fact that what would be distributed in the type of economy advocated by Gandhi is poverty rather than wealth, it is difficult to see how the establishment of the four orders would by itself lead to the realization of economic Equality among them and within each varna, except that Gandhi desired it to be so.

An important aspect of social organization is to harmonize the relation between labour and capital, both in agricultural and the industrial sector. This was to be made possible, according to Gandhi, through the Trusteeship. The basic idea of Trusteeship is quite simple : "The rich man will be left in the 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".¹

1. Harijan, 25.8.1940, p. 103.

If this idea is accepted, argued Gandhi, the evils of both Private enterprise and State enterprise would be eliminated. The inequality and exploitation created by private enterprise as well as the violence and loss of freedom caused by state enterprise would at once come to an end. The institution of Trusteeship would eliminate all possibilities of class conflict and lead to the establishment of cooperative and harmonious relations between labour and capital. He did not believe that the capitalists and landlords are exploiters by any inherent necessity, or that there is a basic and irreconcilable antagonism between the interests of the former and those of the masses. In his opinion : "What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer".¹

Gandhi seems to make a distinction between legal ownership and moral ownership, legally, wealth belongs to the owner, morally to the whole society. This point is central to the entire idea of Trusteeship, especially because the means proposed by Gandhi for bringing about the state of affairs envisaged by him must be the voluntary conversion of the exploiting class to the cause of socio-economic justice by moral appeal to their conscience.

1. N.K.Bose, Selections From Gandhi, (Ahmedabad, Nivajivan Publishing House, 1957), p. 93.

His emphasis on moral conversion, however, included, in addition, to the moral transformation of the exploiters, the awakening of the workers and peasants into a realization of their own moral strength, the realization that exploitation could take place only with their cooperation, and that non-cooperation on their part would at once deprive the exploiter of his power to exploit. This mutual realization of the importance and needs of the conflicting interests, judged from the moral point of view, would lead to the establishment of moral equality between them.¹ Gandhi's object was thus to eliminate no class division but class conflict.

If the rich, the landlords and the capitalists refused to be converted to this new way of life, the peasants, the poor, the labourers would compel their adherence to trusteeship through non-violent non-cooperation.

But Gandhi was profoundly aware of the possibility of the frustration of his entire scheme. Neither moral appeal to the employers, nor non-violent non-cooperation by the workers might, he realized, lead even to an approximation to the institution of Trusteeship. He said: "It is highly probable that my advice will not be accepted and my dream will not be realized Trusteeship. as I

1. N.K. Bose, Selections from Gandhi, op. cit., pp 97-98.

conceive it, has yet to prove its worth".¹

And if trusteeship fails, the state should, said Gandhi, step in to confiscate the property concerned, with or without compensation, using the least possible violence. In his own words: "I would be very happy indeed if 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".²

The difficulty with this kind of utopian engineering is that it is based on an under-estimation of the strength of man's "selfishness" and other "deeper urges" which do not easily respond to ethical stimuli, or what is the same thing, an overestimation of man's capacity for moral effort. The manner in which Gandhi proposed to harmonize the relations between labour and capital through the institution of Trusteeship was obviously the outcome of

1. Harijan, 20-2-1937, p. 253.

2. Young India, 26-11-1934, p. 104.

his simplistic approach to the question of social-conflict. To build a social model round the nucleus of a hypothetical pattern of ethical response on the part of organized social interests is to ignore major and powerful variables in the social system and to build in the abstract for human societies which as yet do not exist. Such an abstract model is so irrelevant to contemporary human society that the question of its acceptance or non-acceptance is a matter of purely academic interest.

Gandhi's uneasy awareness of such difficulties is proved by his belief that his idea of Trusteeship would most probably not succeed. When he suggested that in that case the state should step in to confiscate the properties of the owning classes, with or without compensation, using the least possible violence, he was expressing a view which is much more down-to-earth -- one of the more radical brands of the libertarian socialist view of property relations, and by no means an original contribution of Gandhi.

Gandhi's views on machinery, science and technology are very important in regard to the social structure. To him, machinery was a sin and the industrialization detrimental to the growth of non-violent society.

Machine creates idleness which is repugnant to the moral development of man. It also generates unemployment and concentrated urban culture. It is responsible for exploitation, domination and imperialism etc. But Gandhi was also aware of the inevitability of the existence of some machines in the society. He stated: "Ideally, I would rule out all machinery, even as I would reject this very body, which is not helpful to salvation, and seek the absolute liberation of the soul. From that point of view I would reject all machinery, but machines will remain because, like the body they are inevitable."¹ Considering the inevitability of machine he suggested that if instead of welcoming machinery as a boon, we look upon it as an evil, it would ultimately go.² So, what Gandhi opposed/^{to,} was not machine as such rather 'the craze for machinery'. K. Seshadri observes that "Gandhi is opposed to 'unrestricted growth of machine civilization' and not to machine civilization per se. The adjective is the enemy of the noun, 'unrestricted' is an elastic term and under it one can go justifying any machine as having not trespassed Gandhian boundaries."³ In fact, the list of machinery

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1. M.K.Gandhi, Towards Non-violent Socialism, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1951) p.29.
 2. Collected Works, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 60.
 3. K. Seshadri, "The Mahatmatics" op. cit., p. 360.

given by Gandhi, which will be desirable in his practical society, is very impressive and exhaustive. He included heavy machinery for public utility works and still heavier machinery to produce these heavy machines, electricity and the machinery implied by it, ship-building, railways, ironworks, medicine-making, also heavy machinery for producing such as smaller machines as the singer sewing machine, printing presses, surgical instruments, etc.

As a matter of fact scientific and technological progress is but one manifestation of the many-splendoured creativity of man, realization of potentialities of which may be said to be the best index of good life. A revolt against technology is also a denunciation of the principle of creativity which essentially distinguishes man from sub-human forms of life and is the hallmark of the evolution of human society and the ideal of human freedom. It is by the conquest of unyielding and unthinking nature through the power of technology, the product of human intelligence, rather than by passive surrender to her relentless forces, sometimes bewitching but often sacrilegious, that human freedom and creativity can be vindicated. J. Bandyopadhyaya has rightly pointed out, "What Gandhi and the other anarchists have failed to understand, I think, is that moral progress represents only one dimension - the

fourth dimension, as Julian Huxley calls it - of the inevitably multi-dimensional progress of human society. The social and moral problems created by the mechanization of production can be solved, as Proudhon has half-realized, as Tolstoy had anticipated on rare occasions, and the Marxists, non-Marxist socialists and humanists in general subsequently insisted, by a suitable reorganization of the production and distribution systems and of social relations as a whole, rather than by a sojourn of the human race back to primitivity."¹

It may be noted that even amongst the metaphysical thinkers of modern India Gandhi is alone in his general opposition to machinery. Sri Aurobindo has written at length in praise of technological progress which he regards not only as consistent with, but as complimentary to spiritual progress. Tagore has similarly emphasized the need for technological progress and the mastery of the laws of matter for the all-round development of man. To him, the responsibilities of life are part of the responsibilities of the material universe, and to rise to the spiritual universe, we must go through them and sublimate them, instead of evading them.

1. J. Bandyopadhyaya, Social And Political Thought of Gandhi, op. cit., p. 150.

But such arguments in favour of science and technology, machinery and industry do not mean that any scientific invention and any sort of industrialization are just. It is, indeed, very difficult to draw a cut and dry line of demarcation between desirable and unnecessary, necessity and luxury. However, one cannot fail to realise the negative and destructive growth of science and technology. Man has been exploiting nature with the help of science and technology. But such an exploitation has been responsible for the degradation of the natural environment so much so that human existence itself is being endangered. Mad race of research and production in chemical, biological and nuclear weapons has imperiled the very survival of mankind. Humanity as a whole has been forced to breathe under the ever-present fear of extinction. So it must be understood that science and technology to a certain extent serve the purpose of breaking the bondage of natural casualities and usher into the realm of creativity and freedom but after that it becomes shackles of humanity. It has rightly been said that science is a good servant but a bad master.

Our whole perspective of scientific and technological progress must be guided by moral and spiritual values and with a concern of whole humanity. Greed and lust must not be allowed to overpower our scientific journey. A

balance between man, animal and nature must be striken. Then, science will be a boon, not a curse.

From above discussion it is clear that though Gandhi ideally was an anarchist, he accepted the existence of state practically in the second-order ideal. Then, a question naturally arises as to what should be the relation between the citizen and the state i.e. what should be the nature and bases of citizen's political obedience and disobedience ? So far as the obedience to law is concerned it must be, according to Gandhi, willed or reasoned. In his note on the coronation of King George V, he observed : "The loyalty of a slave is no loyalty. He only serves. If a slave can be loyal, that must be due to coercion."¹ He argued with Thoreau that there was no obligation imposed upon us by our conscience to give blind submission to any law. Accordingly, the only obligation worth assuming is to do at any time what one thinks to be right. Political obligations must reflect critical awareness, reflection and evaluation on the part of the political obligors. The citizen ever retains his moral authority which is logically prior to the authority of any state. The misuse of power

1. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XI, op.cit., p. 113.

is an endemic danger under any state so that the citizen can never afford to let his conscience go to sleep or to lose his distrust of state authority, which is founded upon suspicion rather than trust of the citizen. Even when the state confines its sway over the life of the citizen to the minimum, Gandhi believed that "every citizen renders himself responsible for every act of his government"¹ Here we find the most extreme statement ever given of the doctrine of the Collective responsibility of all citizens for the acts of the government and the very nature of the state.

Gandhi advanced the view that loyalty to one's state is always subordinate to loyalty to God, for he thought that Divine Law is distinct from and better than the laws of the state. In other words, political obligations, to be morally binding, must conform to the limits set by moral laws are automatically nullified if they conflict with these laws. With reference to the modus-operendi of his South African Satyagraha-participants, he wrote to Natesan :

"They hold that loyalty to an earthly sovereign or an earthly constitution is subordinate to loyalty

1. Young India, 4-1-1925, p. 103

to God and His constitution. In interpreting God's constitution through their conscience, they admit that they may possibly be wrong. Hence, in resisting or disregarding those man-made laws which they consider to be inconsistent with the eternal laws of God, they accept with resignation the penalties provided by the former, and trust to the working of time and to the best in human nature to make good their position."¹

Why ought one to obey the political authorities and the laws of the state ? To this question, Gandhi gave two co-relative answers. First, they ought to obey if in some sense they have consented to laws. Secondly, they ought to obey the law to the extent it helps them to realize their ethical self, as expressed in the ideal of sarvodaya, the welfare of all. Thus, in full consonance with his views about man's ideal of self-realization through the service of humanity, justified obedience to that political authority which is one's own making and which is ultimately beneficial to the ruled.

The above grounds of obedience indicate the bases of disobedience, too. So, Gandhi declared that

1. CWMG, op. cit., vol. ix, 507

men are not bound to a state whose laws are in conflict with their conscience, religion or self-respect. He proclaimed : "It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience man-made laws are not necessarily binding If man will realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him."¹ Again, "Freedom and slavery are mental states. Therefore, the first thing is to say to yourself : I shall no longer accept the role of a slave. I shall not obey orders as such but shall disobey them when they are in conflict with my conscience."²

Gandhi questioned the legal authority of the Government which is established in violation of man's faculty of self-governance. He believed that man possesses an innate capacity of governing himself and, as such, must actually govern in such a self-dictated way that he may be able to attain the goal of his life-self-realization, through service. Conversely, he must not submit to any rule which impairs his capacity of self-governance. This was the philosophy that ultimately captured his mind and enabled him to proclaim

1. M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

2. Harijan, 24-6-1946, p. 18.

that rule by foreigners, imperialists, or militarists is repulsive to the distinctive nature of man. Gandhi thought it to be proper for every human being to disobey all those acts of government which amount to the perpetuation of oppression, tyranny, or humiliation.

If a state is corrupt and many of its laws governing the conduct of a person are positively inhuman, if its administrators are capricious and regulated by nothing but their own whims and fancies and form an almost secret but extremely powerful corporation, if the system of government is based upon a merciless exploitation of millions of people then, to Gandhi, loyalty to a state so corrupt is a sin, disloyalty a virtue. Allegiance to an evil administration is to partake in the evil. A good man will, therefore, resist an evil system of administration with his whole soul. Disobedience of the laws of an evil state is, therefore, a duty. A just and truly democratic state deserves active loyalty, while the citizen retains the right to disobey particular laws which are unjust or repressive, and a corrupt, undemocratic, tyrannical state is one in which sedition itself becomes a religion.

But what should be the ways and means to get

Justice-social, political and economic ? Gandhi would suggest satyagraha as the only means worth. One must be committed to truth (relative truth approximate to Absolute Truth) and fight untruth non-violently. So, in the next chapter, the efficacy, desirability and justification of satyagraha will be analyzed.

C H A P T E R - V

S A T Y A G R A H A

The doctrine of satyagraha was conceived by Gandhi as an extension of the rule of domestic life into the Political. He held that family disputes and differences are generally settled according to the "Law of Love". Satyagraha is literally holding on to Truth and it means "truth-force or soul-force". It excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute Truth and is, therefore, not competent to punish. It is not conceived as a weapon of the weak, and it includes all courageous but non-violent resistance in order to uphold the truth.

The pre-requisites, conditions and rules of satyagraha may be listed as follows :

First of all, there can be no satyagraha in an unjust cause, as it is, by definition, a commitment to upholding truth.

Secondly, satyagraha excludes the use of violence in any shape or form, whether in thought, speech or deed. To Gandhi, civility is the most difficult part of satyagraha- not merely outward

gentleness and courtesy of speech, but an inward gentleness and genuine desire to do the opponent good and wish him well. There should be no hostility to persons, but only to acts when they are subversive of morals or the good of society. There should be no intention to embarrass the wrong-doer.

Thirdly, satyagraha presupposes a reasoned and willing obedience to the laws of the state, i.e. a compliance which is free and voluntary and fearless. A precondition of satyagraha is tolerance—the toleration of many laws even when they are inconvenient. It is only when people have proved their active loyalty by obeying or tolerating the many laws of the state which are not actually immoral that they have earned the right to offer satyagraha against intolerable, immoral laws.

Fourthly, satyagraha presupposes the capacity and willingness to suffer. He who has not the capacity of suffering, of suffering his property, of undergoing the "fiery ordeal", should not attempt satyagraha.

Fifthly, discipline is obligatory. Individuals must engage in constructive social work in order to develop the required qualities. In order to offer satyagraha individuals must be able to remain calm and

unperturbed under fierce fire of provocation.

Satyagraha requires the cool courage that comes from discipline and training in voluntary obedience.

Sixthly, satyagraha requires the unobtrusive humility of those whose solid actions are allowed to speak for their creed and whose strength lies in their reliance upon the correctness of their position.

Seventhly, satyagraha cannot be resorted to for personal gain but only for the good of others. It can be resorted to only under wise guidance or other prolonged discipline.

In short, " a satyagraha struggle is impossible without capital in the shape of character."

It is a test of our sincerity. It requires solid and silent self-sacrifice. It challenges our honesty and our capacity for national work. It is a movement that aims at translating ideas into action. And the more we do, the more we find that much more must be done than we had expected. And this thought of our imperfection must make us humble."¹

It is obvious from all this that most movements today that employ methods of passive resistance and

1. Young India, 4.1.1921, p.46

non-cooperation cannot be commended in terms of the doctrine of satyagraha, though it is often invoked together with the halo around the name of Gandhi.

Gandhi said :

"Satyagraha is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result of anger or malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, never vociferous. It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence. The reformer must have consciousness of the truth of his cause. He will not then be impatient with the opponent, he will be impatient with himself....Even fasts may take the form of coercion. But there is nothing in the world that in human hands does not lend itself to abuse. The human being is a mixture of good and evil, Jekyll and Hyde. But there is least likelihood of abuse when it is a matter of self-suffering."¹

Gandhi assumed that if the votary of satyagraha is wrong, he can harm only himself, not his opponent. Hence he felt that despite the possibility of its abuse, satyagraha is the most harmless as also the most potent remedy against wrongs.

1. Harijan, 2.4.1933, p.64

Again, Gandhi said that it is contrary to the spirit of satyagraha to do anything secretly or impatiently, and a satyagrahi has no secrets to keep from his opponent or so-called enemy. A satyagrahi bids goodbye to fear and is, therefore, never afraid of trusting the opponent.

"Even if the opponent plays him false twenty times, the satyagrahi is ready to trust him the twenty-first time; for, an implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed. No matter how often a satyagrahi is betrayed, he will repose his trust in the adversary so long as there are not cogent reasons for distrust.... Distrust is a sign of weakness and satyagraha implies the banishment of all weakness and, therefore, of distrust which is clearly out of place when the adversary is not to be destroyed but to be won over."¹

The satyagrahi may not regard anybody as irreclaimable, and should try to understand the psychology of the evil-doer, who is very often the victim of circumstances. He must believe in truth and non-violence as his creed and, therefore, have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature which he expects to evoke by his truth and love expressed through his suffering.

1. Mahatma Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa (Ahmedabad, Narajivan Publishing House, 1950), pp.159, 332-33.

Further, a Satyagrahi must always allow his cards to be examined and re-examined at all times and make reparation, if an error is discovered.

Also,

"a Satyagrahi never misses, can never miss, a chance of compromise on honourable terms, it being always assumed that in the event of failure he is ever ready to offer battle.....his card are always on the table."¹

Gandhi was aware of the abuse and misuse of Satyagraha but he argued that risk of misuse has undoubtedly to be run, but with the increase in knowledge of its right use, the risk can be minimized. He thought that one safe thing about Satyagraha is that in the end its abuse recoils more upon the users than upon those against whom it is used.

The Satyagrahi must avoid artificiality in all his doings so that all his acts spring from inward convictions, he must embrace poverty, engage in the ceaseless process of self-purification, develop an unshakable faith in Truth or some supreme power, prepare himself by deliberate training for the

1. Young India, 1.4.1921, p.81

eventuality of martyrdom, perfect his grasp and exemplification of Satya, Ahimsa and Tapas. On his return to India, Gandhi stressed the role of the Satyagrahi as a good citizen, an exemplary servant of society.

"The Solitary Satyagrahi has to examine himself. If he has universal love and if he fulfils the conditions implied in such a state, it must find expression in his daily conduct. He would be bound with the poorest in the village by the ties of service. He would constitute himself the Scavenger, the nurse, the arbitrator of disputes, and the teacher of the children of the village. Every one, young and old, would know him; though a householder, he would be leading a life of restraint; he would make no distinction between his and his neighbour's children; he would own nothing, but would hold what wealth he has in trust for others, and would, therefore, spend out of it just sufficient for his barest needs. His needs would, as far as possible, approximate to those of the poor; he would harbour no untouchability, and would, therefore, inspire people of all castes and creeds to approach him with confidence. Such is the ideal Satyagrahi.....such a satyagrahi will not find himself single-handed for long."¹

1. Harijan, 3.8.1940, p.67.

The doctrine of Satyagraha rests upon a religious and metaphysical belief. He declared :

"It is a fundamental principle of satyagraha that the tyrant, whom the Satyagrahi seeks to resist, has power over his body and material possessions, but he can have no power over the soul. The soul can remain unconquered and unconquerable even when the body is imprisoned. The whole science of satyagraha was born of knowledge of this fundamental truth."¹

Gandhi's belief in the sanctity and efficacy of Satyagraha was absolute.

"This I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infalliable means, the greatest force.... Satyagrahis can rid society of all evils, political, economic and social."²

But Gandhi was cautious too. He said :

"Since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a Satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will, therefore, constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to

1. Young India, 7.3.1931, p.46

2. Harijan, 4.11.1947, p.38

listen to him; and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha."¹

There can be any form of satyagraha- Fasting, Defiance of violence, suffering other than Fasting, Non-cooperation (including strike), civil disobedience at any level-individual, Group, mass,international level. Gandhi had not exhausted all the forms and modalities of satyagraha. New methods can be employed according to the exigencies of time and situation. However, the spirit of satyagraha,i,e. truth and non-violence must be adhered to.

Fasting was regarded by Gandhi as the last resort of the satyagrahi, to be undertaken only when all other non-violent methods have failed or are destined to fail, and there is no other alternative left to the satyagrahi for the rectification of some social injustice. Gandhi himself undertook a great many fasts in his life like the fast against the communal award in 1932, the "epic fast" of 1943 against the policy of the British Government towards the Indian National Congress, fast against communalism in 1948,

1 Young India, 4.10.1927,p.29

etc. But fasting is a sort of coercion, an exploitation of the noble sentiments of the opponent without convincing him of justice of his point. S.A.Bari rightly observed :

"In Satyagraha Suffering is adopted as more or less a matter of policy. Suffering with the intention of suffering degenerates into a bargain and investment for a desired goal and in coercion of a subtler and more effective type than crude physical violence. To deliberately create a situation of psychological coercion, which is common phenomenon in fasting, is a negation of satyagraha and also an exploitation of the finer sentiments of the adversary. Satyagraha becomes the instrument of non-violent coercion. Mental coercion, however, is worse than physical coercion."¹

For example, if Gandhi's fast of 1932, which led to the Poona Pact be analysed, it will be found that even the successful implementation of individual satyagraha depends to a certain extent on the liberality and humanism of the opponent. As one of the parties against whom Gandhi had started the fast, the British Government showed remarkable consideration. Not only did they give wide publicity to the fast and treat Gandhi with great courtesy

1. S.A.Bari, Gandhi's Doctrine of Civil Resistance, op.cit., pp.173-174.

both with regard to correspondance and the provision of all reasonable facilities including visits from friends and relations and private medical attention, but also showed a democratic spirit in promptly accepting the Poona Pact. Whether all this would have been possible under a more tyrannical form of government, national or foreign, is highly doubtful. On his part Dr. Ambedkar showed at least some respect for conventional morality and humanist values in being unwilling to see Gandhi die even when he believed that the cause for which Gandhi was fasting was a wrong one. One is tempted to speculate that had the adversary been Jinnah, who was uncompromisingly critical of Gandhian methods and rather adamant in his own views, and against whom significantly Gandhi never resorted to a fast, although he had more conflicts with this individual in his life than with any other person, the result of the fast might have been quite different.

If other forms of styagraha like champaran Satyagraha, Non-cooperation movement of 1919, Vykom Satyagraha, Bardoli Satyagraha, Kheda Satyagraha, Dandi Satyagraha of 1931, Civil Disobedience movement of 1942 and other Satyagraha in South Africa be analyzed

objectively¹, it can well be assessed that Satyagraha cannot be the universal panacea for all social conflicts; as Gandhi expected it to be. Satyagraha has a reasonable chance of success only in a relatively liberal Socio-political system, in which minimum democratic freedoms like those of expression, organization, publicity, propaganda and agitation are guaranteed; by the same logic its chances of success in a totalitarian socio-political system would be rather meagre.

Satyagraha has greater chances of success against an individual, a group or a Government which is Sympathetic to the cause, than against a heartless adversary.

Satyagraha can succeed only when there is a general support for it among the people.

Satyagraha has greater chances of success when well known national leaders are associated with it, especially in the case of an individual satyagraha, than when relatively unimportant and unknown individuals are involved.

Its success is often facilitated by external assistance or extraneous factors.

1. For the detailed analysis of various forms of Satyagraha see, Jayantunjaya Bandyopadhyaya, Social and Political Thought of Gandhi, op.cit. pp. 235-375.

Since there are no universally accepted criteria of Justice, even when the direct action involved in Satyagraha results in the opponent accepting the demands of the Satyagrahi, it is by no means certain whether the opponent has agreed with the Satyagrahi's conception of justice or merely yielded to what he may consider to be undue pressure.

Even when it achieves apparent success, its impact often turns out to be purely emotional and temporary.

The main reason for the relative failure of satyagraha is that it is based on a relatively simplistic, and, therefore, unscientific approach to social conflict and its resolution. Gandhi's approach to social, political and economic questions ignores the realities of social evolution and the deep-rooted historical, political, economic, social and cultural causes of social conflict - the given data on the basis of which alone a scientific understanding of a conflict situation and a scientific attempt to find a solution for it can be possible. Aldous Huxley has rightly observed, "Good intentions and personal devotion, are not enough to save the world If the world is to be saved, scientific methods must be combined with good intentions and devotion. By themselves, neither goodness nor intelligence are equal

to the task of changing society and individuals for the better."¹

In spite of its serious limitations, Satyagraha has some merits. Firstly, it leads to an awakening of the people participating in it. The discipline involved in Satyagraha helps the acquirement of virtue and self-perfection. A satyagraha is also a purely voluntary act aimed at the transformation of social relations, and it involves the free exercise of moral power. Although, Satyagraha cannot always resolve a conflict, it can prevent the conflict from getting aggravated, and create a relatively peaceful atmosphere in which other non-violent means of conflict resolution can come into operation; in other words, it can often act as a palliative, though not a cure, for social conflict.

It should not, however, be construed that satyagraha has no role to play in a modern state. What is to be noted is that it cannot be the substitute for all other means of social control. In a modern democratic state social control is exercised by the people through the normal institutions of democracy, that is, adult franchise through secret ballot, the party system, the free press, platform and Communication media, strike, parliamentary debates, various forms of peaceful agitation, etc. Satyagraha can be regarded as one of the important

1. Aldous Huxley, Ends And Means, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1940), P. 159.

means of social control in a democracy, and nothing more than that. Its special role would seem to lie in the interregnum between general elections, when direct action may be necessary on the part of the people to keep the Government under control. Moreover, even in a democratic political system minorities of various types may suffer from the tyranny of the majority, and can, therefore, fruitfully resort to Satyagraha to register their protest and arouse public opinion, although such Satyagrahas may not always be directly successful in rectifying the particular grievances concerned.

As regards the use of force, an important distinction must be made between the use of force by the people in a democracy, either against the Government or against individuals and groups, and that against a dictatorial form of Government. In a democracy the Government can be removed through the instrumentality of adult franchise, conflicts between individuals and groups can be resolved through the rule of law, any other desired change can be brought about by influencing public opinion, the parliament and the Government through free publicity and propaganda which characterize a democratic political system. Satyagraha as a supplementary means of social control may also be fruitfully used for various purposes. There would, therefore, seem to be no justification for relying on force as a means of social control by the people in a democracy. So long as the basic institutions

of a democracy are in operation, the use of force by the people against the Government or by individuals and groups against one another can only undermine the foundations of democracy and lead to dictatorship by an armed minority in one form or another. The rather exceptional and individual cases in which Gandhi would regard the use of force as consistent with his ultimate values can certainly not be treated as equivalent to the deliberate and organized use of force by minority groups for their own sectional or class interests.

The use of force against a dictatorship belongs to an altogether different category. A dictatorship by definition does not leave any scope for free elections or a peaceful change of Government by another means. It does not allow the free expression of opinion through the press, platform and other means of publicity and propaganda. In it there is no freedom of organization or of peaceful opposition to the Government. Non-violent resistance against such tyranny will be extremely difficult, though not altogether impossible in every case. How then, are the people to put an end to such tyranny and injustice without the use of arms? An armed uprising against a dictatorship will in all probability lead only to a new and different **form of** dictatorship. But there are many degrees and types of dictatorship, and a change

of the status quo may sometimes result in progress towards the realization of goal-values in certain respects. In any case, when the choice is between cowardly submission to the oppression of a tyrannical Government and an armed uprising against it, the latter would be justified even according to Gandhian principles.

In practice, therefore, social conflict in a contemporary state would have to be resolved through a plural and complex process involving the use of constitutional method, Satyagraha and force. The state cannot in any case objure the use of force altogether. Constitutional processes, wherever these exist, must be made use of by both the Government and the people. The use of force by the people for the resolution of conflicts among themselves can and should be replaced by Satyagraha, wherever the constitutional processes are inadequate for the purpose. Satyagraha should also be the only extra-constitutional means to be used by the people against the state, with the possible exception of certain types of dictatorship.

There is, however, atleast one field where people at large of the world do not have any other option but to take shelter under enlightened Satyagraha and that field is to counter the threat of nuclear holocaust. The very

survival of the entire mankind is at stake. Its threat is so menacing and total that in order to get rid of it not only a group or groups of one or some countries but the "global Satyagraha" is required. In this particular case, people cannot resort to any sort of violent method. They will have to put their entire soul-force to put an end to this menace. It is this field wherein Gandhian Satyagraha has become so relevant.

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CHAPTER VI

E P I L O G U E

Gandhi's conception of man is imbued with metaphysical and ethico-religious fervour. It does not visualize man as mere physio-chemical entity but necessarily a conscious-divine spiritual being. Man is endowed not only with body and mind but with soul, too. Man is worth his name only to the extent he submits his body and mind under the supervision of soul. Moral progression is the law of human being. From the historical evolutionary point of view, man may be brute in originality but from the Aristotlean teleological angle, nevertheless, man is potentially and essentially a soul possessing intrinsic goodness. It implies that at the present state of evolution every man may be a mixture of good and bad, a combination of brute force and soul force, but it is his privilege to cultivate his nature and raise it at moral plane.

Gandhi's theory is an effort to break the shackles that come in the way of real human development and to relate man with the entire cosmos. It harmonises the relationship between man, society and nature. It heralds that entire living, non-living world is the creation of the Almighty supreme power, the God.

Believing in the Advaitic Philosophy, Gandhi's theory establishes the unison between man and God and hence the unity of entire mankind. It implies that the concept of inferiority and superiority among human being is totally false. All men are equal potentially and are brothers in terms of the progeny of the same creator. Whatever achievement is possible by an individual is also possible for any other, subject to the honest effort and discipline. It is not desirable to attack an individual but to the system he propounds as attacking others is tantamount to attacking oneself. Man must be considered apart from the system.

Human liberty does not consist in the abstention of all outer restraint rather in the inner realization of moral strength. The moment one subjugates one's lower self to his higher self, he basically becomes free. The external state and social laws do not provide liberty but as soon as a man rises to his ethical self, he becomes an embodiment of liberty, Self-respect and glory. He feels enormous strength within himself. Gandhi's philosophy believes that freedom is a process of growth in quest of an articulated system of coherent moral purposes and actions. Liberty consists in being able to obey one's own will and conscience rather than the will and conscience of others. An individual must be free to do what he considers best for self-realization. The moment man discards the chains of slavery of his senses, he is a free man. Raghvan Iyer writes :

"Gandhi grounded the concept of freedom in in the very nature of man as an autonomous moral agent and at the same time argued that the survival of society, the continuance of a community, were contingent upon the effective freedom of the individual. Proponents of negative liberty, from Mill onwards, have justified it as man's natural right which is seen as sacred and inviolable against the claims of society. On the other hand, the upholder of the concept of positive liberty like Hegel, have made man's rationality dependent upon the fact of community and the rule of the state. Gandhi, however, conflated the notion of the moral and social necessity of individual freedom. He incorporated freedom into the definition of man and his very conception of society. He saw the authoritarian position as springing from his inability to universalize the notion of freedom, his inconsistency in denying it to others while requiring it for himself."¹

The aim of human life is the realization of God or the realization of self. Initially Gandhi propounded "God is Truth" but by 1932 he changed his position and said "Truth is God". The implication is that one can deny the existence of God but one can not deny the existence of Truth (Satya) which is derived from 'Sat' (being) because he himself is the proof of his existence. The law of natural being, the law of substratum is sat and that is God. If one comes to know this

1. Raghvan N. Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Gandhi, op.cit., P. 351.

Great Law, he realizes Truth, the God. Truth is what one's conscience speaks but this may be different in various persons depending on one's moral training and discipline. These are, however, relative truths, which after a stage, seem to be emanating from one Absolute Truth. To obey one's conscience obliges to be sympathetic towards other's right to obey their conscience. A man who is truthful to his conscience, is not supposed to impose one's relative truth on others. He can only persuade others. Hence, one must be non-violent while dealing with others. Violence by itself would be negation of Truth. Thus, Truth and Non-violence become the twin principles in the path of self-realization.

But in the quest of self-realization one need not isolate oneself from the realities of world but must accept this. To Gandhi, service of the mankind is the only way to realize God. One should very much remain amidst the mundane activities of society, however, it does not mean indulgence in worldly affairs. What is to be done is to serve the society disinterestedly or with detachment. This commitment enjoins upon the individual to adopt an integrated approach to life. Life should not be segmented into watertight compartments of social, ethical, political, economic, religious and so on. The basic values of life like Truth, Non-violence, must

permeate all the spheres of life. Political and economic life should not be allowed to degenerate into immorality in the name of strategy, opportunism, expediency, deception, treachery and exploitation. Religion, in its ethical sense and not in any sectarian one should be wedded to politics.

Gandhi's conception of man visualises a social life in which individualism is neither allowed to pervert into arrogance nor is merged into collectivism. Social life is not based on the external mutual interest and on bargaining. It is an organic life in which individual finds his happiness in the happiness of others. The society becomes the extension of his noble self. So, a sense of toleration, humility and equality pervades the whole gamut of inter-relationship. Then one's rights do not remain barren claim rather become "earned rights". A man has rights exactly in proportion to his performance of social, political and moral obligations. A claim of right is unjustified without due performance of duty. So, here duty and right are inter-related to each other.

As regards the social structure which will be most conducive to the realization of ultimate values of life, Gandhi presents a Tolstoyean type of anarchical society. It will be predominantly rural society devoid of any central control and Government, of any police and army; or sophisticated machines and industry. The four varnas

of Hindu system, distinct from the preverted caste system, will be the basis of vertical organization of the people. The principle of trusteeship will be the principle of reconciliation between labour and capital, between poor and rich.

Here, Gandhi's advocacy of varna system deserves outright rejection. Man must adopt his vocation according to his ability, merit and aptitude and not on the basis of his birth. Gandhi's criticism of science and technology, machine and industry is the negation of creative freedom of individual. Man applying his mind and labour wins the barriers of nature and ushers in a new era of development. To block this creative talent is to block the multi-dimensional flowering of human personality. However, it does not mean that man should become utmost materialistic and in the process lose himself. The negative consequences of science and technology must be checked. Man should understand the harmonious law of Nature and must not trifle with it to an extent that the very survival of man and his value system are in jeopardy. The inventive talent of man must be imbedded in the spiritual and moral values. Only then science will become a boon serving the vast mankind.

Gandhi's insistence on Trusteeship is an evidence of his oversimplistic approach. It fails to understand the historical and sociological development of the relationship

of labour and capital. The conflict between the two cannot be resolved merely on the basis of moral appeal.

Gandhi, however, made a lot of concessions and amendments from the practical point of view. His first ideal always remained "anarchist" but due to situational compulsions he allowed almost all the paraphernalia of modern state. He conceded that machine and big industry are necessary evils in the present order. He, of course, suggested that key industries should be kept under the control of the state. Likewise, if the capitalists, industrialists and landlords do not heed to the moral appeal of the masses, state legislation should come for rescue and all the properties of the rich should be confiscated with or without compensation. Moreover, he accepted the need for police, army, parliament, and government etc. All this indicate a type of libertarian socialistic model.

Thus, Gandhi assumed two kinds of social structure. His first-order ideal society is purely anarchistic one in which men will not need any governing body. Their lives will be self-regulated, simple and full of love and co-operation. But his second-order practical social structure admits all the factors and variables of modern state, of course, with less emphasis and with a word of caution. At the same time, Gandhi made it clear that second-order society is not the end of the journey but it

has to gradually proceed on the path of maximum approximation to the first-order ideal society. But he never clarified the way by which second order will eventually culminate into first-order.

Once the desirability of modern state is accepted, Gandhi set on to define the relationship between the citizen and the state. The basis of obedience to a particular state law depends upon whether it is in consonance with man's conscience or higher ethical laws and whether it serves the general public good or not. If yes, it deserves the active obedience and loyalty on the part of the citizen and if not, it must be resisted tooth and nail but non-violently. No government can rule over a mass without its co-operation. So whenever a state law seems repugnant to one's conscience, he must cease to obey that law and in disobeying that he must be ready to receive the penalty.

Here, Gandhi presents the most coveted weapon of his armoury - the weapon of satyagraha which means commitment or adherence to truth and non-violence. It envisages the law of suffering and love on the part of non-resister. The victim patiently and sympathetically appeals to the intrinsic goodness of the opponent, of the tyrant. Gandhi had so profound a belief in the efficacy of satayagraha that he proclaimed that it is the only panacea for the resolution of all conflicts - social, political and economic. Its force is all-prevading.

But the case-study of various satyagrahas launched by Gandhi and his followers clearly indicates that its success depends upon many conditioning factors. It requires a liberal socio-political system which allows the free expression of speech, movement, organisation and the liberty of launching a movement. In the dictatorial form of government it is very much liable to be crushed down. Again, the opponent must have more or less the same value-system as the satyagrahi has. The success of satyagraha is not always an indication of the change of heart. The opponent may succumb to the moral-coercion but the fact remains that he may not be convinced by the point of justice held by satyagrahi. Satyagraha cannot be a remedy for a crisis like communalism, Untouchability, apartheid because these have deep rooted historical, sociological origins. Satyagraha can provide a temporary emotional unision of hearts but cannot be seen as a permanent solution of such conflicts.

It, however, does not mean that satyagraha has no role to play. Various Socio-Political and economic problems are of complex nature and it demand multi-dimensional approach for its solution. In a democratic set up, satyagraha may be a supplemental instrument to the available constitutional means. But, in an authoritarian and dictatorial polity, satyagraha, has no place, here any means, constitutional or unconstitutional is just to get rid of the injustices and tyranny.

It is strange that a luminary of satyagraha like Gandhi should have supported the British side in the first world war, taken part in the Boer war and even gone to the extent of recruiting men from Gujarat and Bihar for the army of British government. How can one understand his support to the movement of Khilaphat in order to bring Hindu-Muslim unity? This violates the essence of non-violent satyagraha and the direct corelationship of means and ends. Gandhi changed his positions many a time, that violence and non-violence seem to become convertible into one another.

Here, what should be carefully kept into mind is, that Gandhi was a man - as falliable and imperfect as any other man can be. His own personality and activities must be differentiated from the noble ideas and principles that he cherished. He adopted the age-old moral and spiritual value-system from different sources and with his endeavour made a coherent comprehensive theory of man. He set on a path of experiment with those values in public life. He might have incurred irregularities, inconsistencies and might have gone astray from his noble idea, but it cannot be sufficient basis for the rejection of all his theories of man. It deserves further practical experimentation, at least, on limited scale to verify the various assumptions of Gandhi. The danger of nuclear holocaust, the utter environmental imbalance due to unrestricted growth

of science and technology, serious deterioration in the moral stature of human society make a fervent appeal, not only from the Gandhian spiritual and ethical point of view, but from practical point of view too, to the entire mankind to look into the Gandhian values and to modify and develop it further.

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