EXPLORING GANDHI

Manmohan Choudhuri

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In
fond remembrance of my uncle,
the late Nabakrushna Choudhuri,
who taught me to see Gandhi
in a global setting.

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inter-library loans facility to procure books that were not in the library.

The writing of the book was greatly facilitated and a great amount of time and labour saved by Sri Srikant Awasthi kindly lending me his personal computer to be used as a word processor. He also gave me the key of their home so that I could let myself in when the couple was away at work. I also briefly used the computer facility at the University. Arati, our daughter-in-law, ran endless errands for me in spite of her heavy workload at the University and my wife patiently suffered my irregular hours.

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And last, but not the least, I am grateful to Dr Malcolm S. Adiseshiah for having agreed to write a foreword to the book in spite of his heavy preoccupations. I am grateful for all the kindness and assistance that have helped the book to reach the public.

MANMOHAN CHOUDHURI

FOREWORD

It is, for me, trebly difficult to write this foreword.

First, because of the person who is the subject and object of this work—Gandhiji, the multifarious facets of whose person cannot be really subsumed in one volume, leave alone in the bare bones of the foreword to it.

Second, because of the author of the work—Manmohan Choudhuri—whose living faith in Gandhiji and application of his teaching and example to modern-day realities in which Choudhuri and his beloved land of India coexist shines through every page, making it difficult to distinguish sometimes between the torch-bearer and the torch.

Third, because of the fact that by profession I am an economist, rightly castigated by Choudhuri in this work, for the ills of the world and our society, an economist brought up in the classical tradition of the "economic man" intent on maximising his personal well-being, and of a resultant society guided by "the invisible hand", the absurdity of which I recognized in my first year as a young lecturer in Calcutta, when I found that what I was teaching in the classroom had nothing to do with the life of the people outside, and yet persisted for over 25 years with this absurdity.

Despite these triple handicaps, there are some ten solid and unforgettable impressions that this volume, titled *Exploring Gandhi*, leaves on me.

The first is that the volume is as complete and comprehensive as its subject—Gandhiji—is. The ten chapters of the work cover all aspects of Gandhiji's large and rich life, and, what is even more difficult, his growing and changing thought and teachings. There is not one facet of either that I can think of that is not dealt with in this volume. This encyclopaedic character of the work has been difficult of attainment because Gandhiji was constantly growing in his outlook on the growing world, continuously changing in his thought in a fast moving scenery, and ever on the move, reaching out to new and hitherto unexplored areas of life,

ranging from the simplest physical factor like washing and drying the twig from the tree after use in cleaning one's teeth so that it can be used again as firewood to the application of the doctrine of advaita to his political dealings with the British. The volume, *Exploring Gandhi,* is comprehensive in its exploration.

A second feature of the volume is its majestic sweep of all the main events which marked Gandhiji's life and thought, so that one is always conscious of their unity, integrity, growth and change. What holds together every part of this majestic sweep is the rich, inexhaustible and ever-growing doctrine of satyagraha, which, in a sense, was Gandhiji's unique contribution in its varied and varying application to the life of active politics, to the life of never-ending contemplation, and to the ineffable inter-personal relations on which all of society from the individual to the family, the village, the nation and the world rest. Every minutae of Gandhi's existence is dealt with, and so there was always the danger of getting lost in the trees and losing sight of the wood. But Gandhiji was an integrated personality in which all the minutae were synthesized and it is this grand synthesis that is brought out so clearly and convincingly in the volume.

A third feature that stands out, and that is not generally known, is the experimental character of Gandhi's thought. It is pointed out that if Gandhiji had sat down to write a comprehensive treatise on his unique doctrine—Truth and Satyagraha—the product would have been a valuable addition to our libraries and archives, but no more. Gandhiji's thought on satyagraha which was the all-inclusive, over-arching link that he developed to guide the life of individual and society, was born one step at a time, in relation to the various challenges and facets of life that he faced—race discrimination, the need for everyone to be involved in productive labour, the life of poverty and destitution in which the mass of our villagers lived, the violence which the foreign government exercised in keeping the people down, suppressing all nonviolent non-cooperation movements, the application of satyagraha to a situation where the country was facing invasion by yet another foreign power, the identification of a small and apparently harmless and ineffective element like salt as the means of nonviolent non-cooperation, the private ownership of the means of production which was at the bottom

of the massive inequality and poverty under which people lived, the position of women in the family and society and their relation to men. In each of these areas, Gandhiji used the method of experimentation to arrive at the application of the overall doctrine of truth and nonviolence, to arrive at the position of the satyagrahi with regard to each of them. This empirical step-by-step approach to face each problem as it came up and analysed, investigated and understood separately but within the over-arching doctrine of satyagraha is the method of science.

And that is the fourth feature of the volume, which brings out the scientific nature of Gandhiji's experiments and resulting conclusions. These are not only based on the methodology of experimentation and empiricism referred to earlier, they are also based on the fact that the main conclusions and resulting thinking by and teaching of Gandhiji are in line with modern scientific study and research. Here Manmohan Choudhuri is at his best and makes a special specific contribution of his own on this linkage. Whether it be the concordance between Habermas' theory of communicative actions, or Bronowski's structure of the scientific community held together by truth and Gandhiji's view of Truthfulness as expressed in the mutual dependability among persons; or that between Myrdal's exposé of the falsity of rationalism driving values out of existence or Joan Robinson's view that morality which has the widest inclusiveness is the basis for moral systems or Erich Fromm's and J.B.S. Haldane's findings about love being the harmonious link between the inner and outer world and Gandhiji's reliance on religious traditions whose goal he expressed as that of "meeting my maker face to face" (Chapter Two); similarly the evidence of scientists, biologists, ethnologists, psychologists, anthropologists that violence is not inherent in man's nature, that aggression is not basically violent and can take creative forms, referred to as "the need for transcendence" is compared to Gandhiji's concept of nonviolence which comes from the Hindu tradition, but to which Gandhiji's experiments added a new element—that of "the spirit that makes one stand up and fight for one's rights, dignity and honour". These are only instances from the entire work which is suffused with quotations and references to modern scientific thought and their experiments to show how close, in some cases identical, Gandhiji's basic doctrine on truth, nonviolence, love and

satyagraha are to these trends. From this point of view, Choudhuri has performed a unique function for the scientifically-minded intellectuals in this country and all over the world.

Fifth, in the true scientific tradition, there are errors, admitted by Gandhiji and some not admitted but still being errors. As an example of the latter, in Chapter Three there is an account of the controversy between Gandhiji and Rabindranath Tagore over Gandhiji's imputing the severe Bihar earthquake of 1934 to God as His punishment for the caste Hindus' sin of untouchability. Tagore pointed out that ethical principles cannot be ascribed to cosmic events, unless we admit "that human nature is morally superior to Providence that preaches its lessons in good behaviour in orgies of the worst behaviour possible". The poet further showed that Gandhiji's argument could be turned around by orthodox Hindus to blame Gandhiji for the earthquake because he was interfering with Hindu religion and tradition. Gandhiji's reply was that as God and his laws are one, this kind of catastrophe is connected with man's morals or his immorality. Here Choudhuri concludes: "In this controversy between giants, one is impelled to side with the poet . . . the use of terrifying events to inculcate moral behaviour in a people was uncharacteristic of Gandhiji, whose life-long struggle had been to free people from the fetters of fear and blind faith". Or to take another instance where Gandhiji was clear that the right of civil disobedience should be guarded by all conceivable restrictions to avoid an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. He admitted in the 1922 Chauri Chaura violence, his error in over-estimating the people's capacity for nonviolent civil disobedience. We are also familiar with his statement that he had committed an error of "Himalayan proportions". He was also always capable of seeing both sides of an issue—the pro and con—as in the case of taking the vow. To him, taking the vow was an expression of distrusting himself and trusting only in God. But he admitted that in the case of one of his close dear friends, this trust in God might involve sometimes self-deception or a situation which changes from day to day. This looking at both sides of an issue resembles the discussion in which Choudhuri summarises the case for and against the claim of absolute values and the use of value judgements in social analysis and theory. The conclusion

of this part of the pro and con discussion is a reaffirmation of the Gandhian belief that certain values, such as belief in supremacy of the white race, or in the hierarchy of cultures which starts with European cultures being at the top, produce the aberration of capitalism and imperialism. They are products of what social philosophers today call "instrumental reason".

Sixth, the book brings out clearly the universalism in Gandhi. Starting with the Cuttack address, in which, after quoting Kipling's (in)famous verse, Gandhiji was hailed as the champion of oriental culture and an opponent of the West, and Gandhiji's reply that for him East and West were part of one common humanity, that both will some day come together, on to his constant reiteration of the indissoluble link binding the Indian village to the Indian nation and to the community of nations, his reference to the influence of cultures of the world is a memorable one. On being asked about his reaction to the cultural influences from abroad, he compared India to a house whose windows are open through which all cultures of the world would blow freely, but against a firmly rooted Indian culture, which is the foundation of the house. In fact, he did not share the popular belief that once India becomes free, all her problems would be solved. That would only be the beginning of the fight against all forms of exploitation, oppression and inequality—local, national and international. His doctrine of swadeshi defines the relation of the individual to his society and to the larger world and is given an universalistic scope. "The India of my dreams will be willing to sacrifice herself for the benefit of the world." His doctrine of satyagraha led him to the world view which is expressed in the affirmation that all men are brothers, and which led UNESCO to commemorate him in a publication titled *All Men Are Brothers*, brought out in 1957.

Seventh, the publication brings out in brief outline Gandhiji's new order for the Indian economy where the principle of love and satyagraha would be dominant. Under that order, everyone will have enough to eat, to be adequately housed, to clothe himself or herself, to be educated and to live a normal healthy life. He kept on repeating that the country has enough of goods and services to meet everyone's needs but not to satisfy everyone's greed. The principle of love, cooperation and sharing would mean that, while preserving

and promoting individual initiative which has resulted in some people becoming rich, the riches of the rich however does not belong to them but to the community. The rich would take only as much as they needed, and the rest of their wealth would be devoted to the common good. This is his famous doctrine of trusteeship under which the present unequal capitalist society would be transformed into an equal and equitable one. This doctrine was developed fully and in terms of laws, regulations and rules by some hard-headed economists of the time (Dantwallah being one of them), who set forth the system under which "the character of product would be determined by social necessity and not by personal greed". It is a system under which the erstwhile owner of a large estate or enterprise and the workers of the concern jointly hold control over it. Within this frame the role of the state and government to regulate the economic order, and the place of machinery to augment the goods and services needed by the people, which would be essentially produced by themselves for themselves, are set forth.

Eighth, the revolutionary changes brought about in the status of women both by his personal beliefs and action and by the freedom movement that he headed seem incredible, looking back over the 80 years since his time. He held that women were the absolute equal of men and superior to them in the art of love and giving and nurturing of life. "Woman is the incarnation of ahimsa", which means infinite love and infinite capacity for suffering. He put this belief of the absolute equality of men and women into practice by himself and all the men sharing in the work of cooking, cleaning the house, making the bed, fetching water, washing the clothes—tasks which were normally described as belonging to women. For this, Gandhiji faced the taunt of being effeminate. He regarded this as a proud symbol of his manhood. He asked one of his acquaintances whether she recognized the woman in him. Based on this application of the principle of love and truth, women came out in thousands, and hundreds of thousands to participate in the Salt Satyagraha, in the boycott of establishments selling foreign cloth, and in facing police lathis and bullets. Looking back on this stage of our development, I feel that there has been no further progress in women's development since Gandhiji. We have had a women's year, a women's decade and now a perspective plan for women—but

Gandhiji's personal example and magic which transformed the status of women are missing.

Ninth, there is one element in this admirable work which I regard as a minus point. In order to explain some of the Gandhian views and ideas and their manifestation in societal forms of satyagraha, nonviolence, sharing and cooperation, there is an anti-Soviet bias running through the work. Particularly in Chapter Seven, 'An Agenda for a Revolution', there are as many as seven passages where the Soviet society is criticised and the communist ideology almost caricatured. I see the value and need for building one's case not only by emphasis on the positive aspects, but where appropriate, by reference to contrasting negatives. I think, however, the Soviet system, its government, its ideology and its relations with its people and other countries, particularly of the Third World deserve a more balanced treatment. There is no case for equating the United States of America and the USSR in regard to the neo-imperialism vis-a-vis the Third World. There is a basic difference between the two systems, which is not recognized.

Finally, I would like to end by saying that reading through this challenging, arresting, fascinating work of Choudhuri in the exploration of Gandhiji, I am left with a feeling of despair and despondency when realising how far we are in every way from what Gandhiji visualised in both precept and practice. I will end by quoting two instances of the almost unbridgable gulf between Gandhiji and us today.

Discussing independent India and its programme of economic equality, Gandhiji remarks:

> This last is the master-key to nonviolent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A nonviolent system of government is clearly an impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi [which he elsewhere calls a white elephant on which crores have been spent but not for the country's poor millions] and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in free India, in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a

certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good.

Again in a resolution that he had drafted for the Congress Working Committee that the latter did not accept, he said:

The Working Committee never had occasion to determine whether India can be defended nonviolently, nor even is it now called upon to do so, though the proven futility of violence to defend the nations of Europe is sufficient indication for the Working Committee for coming to a decision. But till the hour for taking a final decision arrives, the Working Committee must keep an open mind. But as far as the present is concerned, the Working Committee are firmly of the opinion that in pursuance of their nonviolent policy Congressmen must not have anything to do with military training or activities calculated to make India military minded. Therefore the Working Committee cannot but view with grave alarm the attempt made in an organised manner to prepare India for military defence. In the opinion of the Working Committee if India were free and independent without an army she would have no fear of external agression. The best defence that free India can put up if the people accepted the Congress policy would be to cultivate friendliness with the whole world. To invest crores of rupees in armament, fortresses and the like would be to invite foreign attack. The Working Committee believe that India is too poor to invest money in costly defence forces and modern equipment. . . . If India ever prepared herself that way (of superior violence) she will constitute the greatest menace to world peace. For if we take that path we will also have to choose the path of exploitation like the European nations.

My hope is that Manmohan Choudhuri's monumental work, *Exploring Gandhi*, might prod some of us and our consciences to turn back to some of the ways of Gandhiji. Manmohan and his colleagues are still keeping the Gandhian light alive. Can we, will we, join them?

MALCOLM S. ADISESHIAH

Madras
14 June 1989

Note on the Second Edition (Reprint)

The book 'Exploring Gandhi', written by Shri Manmohan Choudhuri was first published by Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi in 1989 in a hard-cover edition. The book has proved to be very popular among the ever-growing literature on Mahatma Gandhi. As a result, its first edition has been exhausted. In order to meet the steady demand for the book and to make it accessible to a larger readership, National Gandhi Museum has undertaken to reprint it in a low-priced paper-back edition. In the process, certain errors which were noticed in the first edition, have also been corrected.

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15 July 1999

Y. P. Anand
Director

CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORING GANDHI

GANDHI HAS PERHAPS been a subject of more heated debate and come in for a larger share of admiration and criticism than any other historic personality. Einstein remarked that "generations to come . . . will scarce believe that such a one as this, ever in flesh walked upon this earth" and Churchill felt nauseated at the thought of "that half-naked fakir striding up the steps of the viceregal palace". He is revered as the father of the Indian nation and has been reviled as a stooge of the Indian big bourgeoisie and even of British imperialism. Gunnar Myrdal has classified him as a radical liberal, while others have labelled him a conservative Hindu revivalist. He has been praised as a great modernizer and Jawaharlal Nehru poured scorn on his alleged attempt to take India back to the bullock cart age.

The difficulty stems from the fact that he cannot be neatly pigeon-holed into any one of the convenient categories into which we divide people and ideas to make them more understandable or into any of the numerous cultural traditions of thought and action which impose a quiltwork pattern on humanity. In a world in which cultures flow and intermingle and interact with each other, in a world that is faced with problems it had never faced before in history, every culture is finding itself inadequate to deal with life as it faces it. In such a situation some think in terms of imposing their way of looking at the world on the others and we have the spectre of cultural imperialism of the great powers that is a potent weapon of their imperialist ambitions. On the other hand some think that they will be able to reach a solution by fleeing their own cultures and we are regaled with the spectacle of thousands of westerners in saffron robes cavorting in the streets of Los Angeles and London to the clanging of cymbals, pulling the chariot of Lord Jagannath, and of Indian bureaucrats in prim three-piece suits mugging up the latest in wisdom from multinational technocrats.

Gandhi straddled such a world with a philosophy of thought and action that cut across the categories that both traditional and modern systems of thought had created and sought to provide a more satisfactory way of dealing with life than any of the existing systems. He was a deeply religious man, he even called himself a "Sanatani" Hindu. Yet his life and thought cannot be understood merely in terms of Hinduism or any other religious frame of reference. He was a believer in God, yet he said that he preferred to call Him Truth in order to encompass atheists also in his brotherhood of faith. The spirit of science that he had imbibed made his life a saga of experimentation and discovery.

The right and left factions of conventional politics in India were united under him in the country's struggle for freedom. He had friends among the most militant of the Indian nationalists and in the highest echelons of British society against whom he was fighting. Both found some common ground with him. He sought to revolutionize Indian society, and yet, those whose interests the revolution was going to hit felt quite comfortable with him.

It needs to be remembered that no other leader in world history but Gandhi had the opportunity to work in countries situated in three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe, and to come into contact with the widely varying cultures of those regions. He had not only delved into the treasure trove of ancient spiritual tradition, but had come into contact with the pioneers of modern thought of those times. Ruskin, Tolstoy and Thoreau, again from three different countries and three continents, were those whom he acknowledged as having deeply influenced his life and world-view. Charles Bradlaugh, the eminent atheist, Bertrand Russell and Havelock Ellis have been counted by him as among those whose ideas he appreciated.

Part of the difficulty in understanding Gandhi stems from the fact that he did not find himself in a situation to sit down and write a treatise as Marx had done in order to put his ideas systematically before the world. He might not have had the time or the inclination to do so, but there was a more compelling reason. His was not a completed blueprint that had only to be worked out in practice. Like an experimental scientist, he was engaged in making experiments and threading the discoveries he made into his world-view. Had he sat down

to write a systematic treatise setting forth his views, the world would never have had the gift it received from him or would have had a very colourless and pale version of it. He was a scientist experimenting with life and his writings in the form of papers embodied the findings he made from time to time. The task of the systematic presentation of his philosophy will have to be done by others.

Another factor that heightens the difficulty is that he spoke to the common people in their everyday language, vastly different from the language of modern scientific thought that has become common currency among intellectuals around the world. Marx was at home in that language and so he is more readily understood and considered a part of the modern world. But the seemingly quaint language that Gandhi used, drawing on religious imagery and idioms, made it appear as if he belonged to a world apart. This certainly made those who were rooted in religious traditions feel at home with Gandhi's ideas, but then they missed the modern components of his thought, and many who have tried to see him through the accepted frames of reference of modern thought have cut him to size to fit their frames and left out parts of him that are vital to an understanding of him, and more than that, the world.

An attempt at a proper understanding of Gandhi will need the stretching of both the traditional religious and the modern scientific frames of reference that are, anyway, being found to be inadequate for understanding and living in the world of today. Gandhi's was an attempt to evolve a comprehensive frame of reference that took the valid parts of both the contending world-views into account. It cannot be said that he succeeded fully, but he certainly did make a beginning of inestimable value.

When an author broached to Jawaharlal Nehru the idea of writing a biography of Gandhi the latter is reported to have remarked that to be able to do justice to such a great man the writer would have to be as great as him. There is a point in it. We cannot continue to be our little selves and yet aspire to understand a great personality that extends beyond ours in every direction. But then to accept his remark at its face value would mean that nobody should attempt the task at all till somebody of comparable stature comes along. The universe is much bigger than a human being, even one as great as Gandhi, but we have been able to piece together a fairly comprehensive

picture of it not because some great scientific genius came along and unravelled its mysteries at one go, but because of the labours of innumerable workers in the scientific field who have helped to add little bits, based on their own discoveries, to the total emerging picture. There have been giants among the scientists, no doubt, but they have been pygmies compared to the stupendousness of the task.

It is in such a spirit that the writing of this book has been undertaken. Gandhi has often been compared to great prophets like the Buddha and Jesus. This gives a glow of pleasure to everybody concerned. But then it amounts to putting him on a pedestal like the great prophets and then going about our lives as we always did, forgetting everything about him. Because that is exactly what we are doing about the great teachers of the past. We invoke them as soporifics or analgesics, rarely as cardiac stimulants. We rarely think that they have maps that may help us to go about our modern-day world effectively. We follow the maps provided by our politicians, the controllers of our mass media, by the designers of advertising campaigns, all of whom claim to have their roots in the scientific tradition and are busy reducing the latter to an opiate for the masses. And in the meantime the world is passing into the control of the advocates of overkill and megadeaths.

The world, and each one of us in it individually, is in need of a new frame of reference for our lives. Each one of us will have to evolve such a frame for himself and use it for understanding and acting in the world. This is an urgent and insistent need. The survival of human civilization demands it. We can no longer wait for somebody to come along and tell us what to do. And if we have something to learn from Gandhi in this, we have to make the effort to do it. We may be able to unravel only a small bit of the seeming mystery that is Gandhi but by that we will be stretching the limits of our little selves, of both our heads and hearts, adding to the total collective fund of understanding and helping each other to grow. I have myself experienced this personal growth in writing this book, in sitting down to systematize all that I knew about him in the course of a lifetime of association with his mission and its follow-up and by delving into his works in the last several months as I never had the time or the opportunity to do before.

I have tried here to place him in the setting of modern thought and to explore the areas where they are congruent and

where they are not. In a way this is a critique of both Gandhi and the prevalent beliefs that underlie modern thought. I was led to this approach since I felt that modern thought could contribute to the understanding of Gandhi and Gandhi to the growth of modern thought.

Many eminent persons, and all of them much more competent than I, have attempted the task of exploring Gandhi in various ways. Some have been his close associates, like Acharya Kripalani, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Kaka Kalelkar, Pyarelal, Rammanohar Lohia, N. K. Bose and R. R. Diwakar. Others have been competent and devoted scholars, like Richard B. Gregg, Joan Bondurant, Gene Sharp, Gopinath Dhawan, B. R. Nanda, Erik Erikson, B. N. Ganguli, J. D. Sethi and Paul F. Power. Biographers like Louis Fischer, Geoffrey Ashe, Otto Wolff, Vincent Sheean and others too numerous to mention have also attempted the task on much broader canvases. I shall feel fulfilled if this effort of mine succeeds in filling in a few details in the emerging picture.

CHAPTER TWO

ADVAITA, NATIONALISM AND THE WORLD

IT WAS 1934. Gandhi had arrived on the outskirts of Cuttack, a small town in the south-east of India, on his India-wide tour for the eradication of untouchability. The tour had turned into a walking one from Puri, the famous place of pilgrimage for Hindus. There the conservative priests of the Jaganath temple were reported to be planning to assault Gandhi for his stand in favour of entry of Harijans into temples. The local organizers of the tour had sought police protection which Gandhi disapproved as he did not want to be protected from his own people by the police forces of an alien Government. As a counter move he decided to continue the rest of his tour in Orissa on foot so that he would be nearer to the people and more easily approachable even to those who were inclined to harm him. This was a form of satyagraha. He sought to disarm his opponents by putting himself at their mercy.

His admirers at Cuttack had presented him with an address in which he had been praised to the skies as a champion of oriental spiritual culture and an opponent of the West. The well-known lines of Rudyard Kipling had been quoted:

> The East is East and the West is West
> And ne'er shall the twain meet

In his reply to the address Gandhi referred to the quotation and said that as a votary of advaita—non-dualism or monism—he could never accept the position that the East and the West were incompatible and could never meet. For him both were part of one humanity and so both should some day come together. India was at that time at a critical stage of her struggle for freedom and nationalist fervour was at its highest. There was a powerful trend that laid great stress on maintaining the purity of Indian culture and Gandhi's Hind Swaraj was supposed to have supported that line. But here was

Gandhi himself refusing to accept such a position. It was a sobering experience for all of us. Exactly twenty-five years earlier, in 1909, Gandhi had made the same point in a speech in London.

Advaita, one of the seminal concepts of Indian philosophy, translated into English as monism, holds that the entire universe has been created out of a single divine source. Hence there is no room for any kind of discrimination in it on any score. To a student in a classroom it is an interesting speculation to be debated, analysed and compared to other doctrines like dualism, qualified monism, pluralism and so on. But when a concept is accepted as the basis of a social or personal ideology its implications acquire great importance in the lives of its followers. The implications of advaita are far-reaching. For one, it disallows all discrimination between man and man and even between human beings and all other living things. Now, when all living beings are to be looked upon and treated as equals, a whole gamut of consequences flow from it, like social and economic equality, self-determination and democracy, civil liberties and freedom of the conscience, equality between men and women and so on. Its implications encompass the contents of the Declaration of Independence of the American Revolution, the Declaration of the Rights of Man of the French, and even the goals of the socialist revolution in Russia.

But though advaita had been accepted as the first article of faith by many religious sects in India, nothing that revolutionary had happened here in the previous one thousand years or so. Indian society had become rigidly stratified and divided into castes. Untouchability flourished and the position of women was not enviable. Social and economic inequality was rampant. Even the *Gita* justified the division of society into four *varnas* by positing that these divisions were created by God. The Manusmruti, a code of conduct believed to have been framed by the great King Manu, who is also believed to have attained spiritual enlightenment, lays down in minute detail rules enjoining discriminatory treatment for the four *varnas*, even to the extent of specifying that those belonging to the lowest *varna*, the shudras, must have names that are derogatory and contemptuous in meaning.

This reconciliation of advaita with a highly discriminatory social system was brought about by holding that the realization of the ideal was a matter of intense

spiritual effort and only possible for those who have achieved spiritual enlightenment. Only such individuals could practice it in disregard of social conventions. For the common mortal, the discriminatory rules were binding. None, except a few Vaishnava saints of the middle ages, had made any attempt to bring about any change in the social pattern. Even the great Shankara, the gifted and eloquent protagonist of advaita, had not cared to say anything explicitly against the caste system or untouchability, though he is on record as having disregarded the taboo of untouchability in his personal conduct. He was innovative enough in his philosophy to have brought upon himself the wrath of the orthodox brahmins. He was dubbed a crypto-Buddhist and was excommunicated. When his mother died, no one from his community came to help him carry her body to the cremation ground. So he cut the body into three pieces and carried one piece at a time to that place all by himself.

The *bhakti* approach that had inspired the Vaishnava saints can be said to have been the working out of the implications of advaita in practice. *Bhakti*, or devotion, as it is usually translated, is one of the three modes of attaining spiritual enlightenment or experiencing God: the path of *jnana* or knowledge, that of *karma* or action and of *bhakti* or devotion. These modes roughly correspond to the three modes of experiencing reality as spelt out by classical psychology: the cognitive, the conative and the affective. *Bhakti* corresponds to the affective mode and has to do with one's emotional relationship with God which has to be an amalgam of love, wonder and awe.

Now since God or the Brahma is conceived as immanent in the whole of creation, everything being made out of the divine source, the relation one has with God has to suffuse one's relationship with everything and everybody in the world. And these are the terms in which the attributes of the *Bhakta*—the devotee—have been spelt out. Equal regard for all is the starting point for this. The *Gita* lays down that the enlightened individual looks upon all—the learned and unassuming brahmin, the unsophisticated primitive man, the elephant and the dog—with equal regard. He does not harbour enmity towards any creature—*adweshta sarva bhutanam*—and he is also friendly and compassionate—*maitrah karuna eva cha*. He is devoid of possessiveness and egotism—

nirmamah nirahankarah. He would neither give cause for anxiety to others nor allow himself to be a victim of anxiety—*yasmanno dvijate lokah, lokannodvijate cha yah*. And as an upshot of all these he would be ceaselessly engaged in activities conducive to the welfare of all creatures.

Many other attributes have been described, but we need not touch on all of them. However it will be meaningful to note that these attributes of the *bhakta* have much in common with the characteristics of mental health as described by psychologists. A mentally healthy person is friendly in his outlook and empathetic to others. He is expected to be free from possessiveness which is considered to be an unhealthy complex. Egotism in the sense of self-centredness is also considered unhealthy. The *bhakta* is also expected to be free from fear and anxiety, irrational levels of emotion which are considered to be the symptoms of a disturbed state of mind, paranoia being an extreme form. The *bhakta* is also expected to be free from moods of jubilation and remorse—*harsha* and *amarsha*—and to be in a steady state of contented cheerfulness. *Harsha* and *amarsha* may be construed as referring to the extreme alternation of moods to be found in manic-depressives. Another expectation is that the *bhakta* should be *gatavyathah*—free from pain—that is, one who has overcome traumatic experiences. He is also to be a person of firm resolve—*dridhanishchayah*. Perennial indecisiveness is a symptom of a weak and divided personality.

As has been noted earlier, the Vaishnava saints of the middle ages had tried to put the teachings of advaita into practice and bring about social changes through popular movements. In modern times it was Gandhi who first took the philosophy of advaita and the *bhakti* approach as the basis for radical social change and sought to give the concepts a modern content. He looked upon the freedom movement of India as a step in the direction of bringing about revolutionary changes in Indian society that would rid the latter of its divisions, discriminations and inequalities. He dreamt of the Indian renaissance triggering a chain reaction in the world and of India as a member of a world family.

He made the causes of the outcastes—the Harijans—and women part of the freedom struggle. He strove to remove the barriers between religious communities, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Parsis, the Christians and others, and to weld

them into a single brotherhood. He initiated programmes for radical change in the economic system that would help bring about economic equality. He wanted a pattern of democracy that would not be a mere ritual, a mere bow to the expectations of the common people and in reality a vehicle for the interests of the elite. He wanted to make it an effective vehicle for the will of the people, in running which everyone will have equal say and effectiveness. All these followed from his outlook rooted in advaita.

Gandhi mounted a frontal attack on the practice of untouchability and made it one of the main items of the programmes for the reconstruction of Indian society which he considered essential for making freedom real to the people, down to the lowliest and the lost. He started a fast against the evil in 1932 and it contributed immensely to the granting of equal rights to the untouchables in entering temples, attending schools and drawing water from public wells. Gandhi did not stop at making the Harijans touchable. He put on the heat, so to say, in stages and at an appropriate moment called for marriages between the other castes and the Harijans. He announced his decision not to attend any marriage ceremony of which one of the parties was not a Harijan. Untouchability still survives in India and one hears of atrocities committed on the Harijans by the so-called higher castes. But there has been a sea-change in the situation since Gandhi. Enlightened opinion is wholly in favour of the Harijans and the latter have learnt to stand up for their rights. The incidents only reflect a desperate attempt by some rural classes to hang on to their privileges in the face of irresistible change.

Gandhi was able, as if by magic, to bring women to the forefront of public life in India and give them a sense of freedom and equality rarely enjoyed by them in the immediate past. As we shall discuss in detail later, he sought to free them from the shackles of age-old restrictions, superstitions and taboos, and largely succeeded. Complete equality between men and women in all spheres of life was a goal for which he strove.

Gandhi was able to achieve all these things and many more because of his burning faith in the unity of all mankind and the Brotherhood of Man. He had to shoulder the task of uniting India and giving her a national consciousness. Gandhi could not accept the conventional concept of nationhood rooted in the

arrogance of one's imagined superiority based on race or religion and a pursuit of the so-called national self-interest to the exclusion of all other considerations. India is also like no other nation on the earth except, in certain respects, the USSR. A nation as commonly defined is expected to have its basis in common racial origin, religious background and/or language. But India has a kind of diversity that defies pigeon-holing. Almost all the major religions on the earth are represented in sizeable proportions in her population in addition to a few special ones of her own. India has sixteen highly developed regional languages, all recognized as official languages, as well as nearly a couple of thousand local dialects and tribal tongues. And all the racial streams have emptied themselves into the ocean that is India.

Many, bewildered by the immense variety, have tended to look upon India as an improbability and would feel more comfortable to see it in small splinters like it is in Europe. Mr Jinnah advocated the two-nation theory and helped break India into two, but what was left as India after the exit of Pakistan still has as many races, languages and religions as before, and there are still more than seventy million Muslims in India, a little more than the Muslim population in Pakistan.

Streams of people have flowed into the USA from Europe, Africa and other parts of the world, but there all have accepted one language, and one religion has dominated. Only the USSR has a comparable situation in terms of languages and to a lesser extent, of religion. India could not have been held together except for the universal outlook of men like Gandhi and the poet Rabindranath Tagore. The unity of India was a challenging vision for them. For them, it was a half-way house to world unity.

They were able to draw upon the Indian spiritual lore inspired by the philosophy of advaita, replete with aphorisms such as this one: "It is only the shallow-minded that think in terms of mine and thine. The whole world appears like a small family to those who are broad-minded." Such visions had inspired Tagore to paint a panoramic word picture:

> Let my soul awake at this hallowed place of pilgrimage: the great ocean of Indian humanity. The Aryans, the non-Aryans, the Dravidians, the Chinese, the Scythians, the Huns, the Pathans and

the Moghuls have all come here and have merged into a single body. . . . Now the doors have been opened towards the West and the people from there have come hither with their gifts. There will be give and take and coming together with them too. They too will not go away.

When the poet started his institution for higher studies at Santiniketan, he named it Vishwabharati—the World Abode of Learning. Here he strove to bring about a synthesis of the great cultures of the world.

While Tagore was active on the cultural front, Gandhi took leadership of the nationalist movement and was grappling with political reality. The toughest test for his ideal of advaita was the relationship with the British. Britain held India in thraldom with an iron grip. Unspeakable atrocities had been committed to suppress the revolt against British rule that had broken out in 1857. The people had been disarmed and completely emasculated. India's economy had been tied to the chariot wheels of Britain and the people were being bled white.

Fifty years after this first revolt, there were again the rumblings of discontent. While there was abject surrender and sycophancy on the part of the classes that had come into being to man the administration foisted on the country and as hangers-on of the imperial economic order, men like Tilak had raised the standard of revolt and the ideal of freedom was touching a sympathetic chord in the hearts of the youth. Groups were springing up all over the country to wage war against British rule. British officials were being killed in surprise attacks and these incidents were being punished with cruel reprisals.

Hatred against the British was mounting. The large masses of people, the poor, were helpless and submerged in fear and listlessness. Yet the discontent in their hearts was rising to the surface. The stage was being set for the bloodiest clash that India had ever seen.

What was the reaction of the traditional spiritual leaders to this situation? What did advaita inspire them to do? Most of them steered clear of the issues and confined themselves to preoccupations with "the immortal soul" to the exclusion of the "ephemeral world". Some, while maintaining a facade of non-

involvement, were secretly supporting the armed efforts for freedom. Advaita for them was not a live issue.

There were a few others who interpreted the British domination as a boon from God for the spiritual upliftment of India. There was at least one who went about preaching that it was a God-given opportunity to practise *dasya-bhakti*, the master–slave relationship with God that is one of the modes of the experience of *bhakti*. In our younger days some of us planned to take some quite ungandhian actions if he ever came our way and appeared in public.

It was into such a scenario that Gandhi stepped. His advaita did not make him flinch from an all out fight. Rather, for him a fight was the way to the realization of advaita. He had come armed with a new weapon that was meant to unite hearts at the end, not to tear them asunder permanently. And he set himself to accomplish the double task of making India free and maintaining a bond of friendship with the British people.

Even at the height of his struggles he kept in view and reminded the people of this goal of ultimate friendship with the British people. In a brilliant reply to the poet Rabindranath Tagore's criticism that the non-cooperation movement was creating a spirit of narrow intolerance and chauvinism, Gandhi wrote:

> Before, therefore, I can think of sharing with the world, I must possess. Our non-cooperation is neither with the English nor with the West. Our non-cooperation is with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our non-cooperation is a retirement within ourselves. Our non-cooperation is a refusal to cooperate with the English administrators on their own terms. We say to them, "come and cooperate with us on our terms, and it will be well for us, for you and the world". We must refuse to be lifted off our feet. A drowning man cannot save others. In oorder to be fit to save others, we must try to save ourselves. Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian. India must learn to live before she can aspire to die for humanity. (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* 21, p. 291; hereafter referred to as CW)

In his letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in March 1930, announcing his resolve to start civil disobedience if the minimum demands of the nation were not fulfilled, he wrote:

For my ambition is to convert the British people through non-violence, and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India. I do not seek to harm your people. I want to serve them even as I want to serve my own. I served them up to 1919 blindly. But when my eyes were opened and I conceived non-cooperation, the object still was to serve them. I employed the same weapon that I have in all humility successfully used against the dearest members of my family. If I have equal love for your people with mine it will not long remain hidden. . . . (CW 43, p. 6)

Later on, in London in 1931, he gave expression to his dream of a partnership between India and Britain for serving mankind.

The common cause that the partnership is going to advance is to cease the exploitation of the races of the earth. If India becomes free from this curse of exploitation, under which it has groaned for so many years, it would be up to India to see that there is no further exploitation. Real partnership would be of mutual benefit. It would be a partnership between two races, the one having been known for its manliness, bravery, courage and its unrivalled power of organization, and the other an ancient race possessing a culture perhaps second to none, a continent in itself. A partnership between these two people cannot but result in mutual good and be to the benefit of mankind. (CW 48, p. 147)

To arouse a people cowed down by terror he had to use strong language that gave the impression of him being a rabid nationalist. He used the adjective "Satanic" for the British Government and started a programme of burning foreign clothes. This upset his friends like Charlie Andrews and the poet Tagore. They protested strongly at the apparent attempt of Gandhi to promote racial hatred and jingoistic nationalism. Gandhi replied by asserting that he was only trying to redirect the people's hatred into harmless channels. "India is racial today. It is with the utmost effort that I find it possible to keep under check the evil passions of the people," he wrote. "I am transferring the ill-will from men to things." (CW 21, p.43). Meanwhile he was busy trying to change the content of Indian nationalism. For this he picked up the concept of swadeshi and gave it a new meaning. The term had come into vogue during the first decade of the century to signify love for indigenous products to the exclusion of foreign, particularly British, manufactures. Gandhi had mulled over the problem even before he took charge of the Indian freedom movement. As early as 1916 he had explained his interpretation of swadeshi thus:

After much thinking I have arrived at a definition of swadeshi that perhaps best illustrates my meaning. Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion . . . . If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve these industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such swadeshi, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millenium.

I think of swadeshi not as a boycott movement undertaken by way of revenge. I conceive it as a religious principle to be followed by all . . . . (CW 13, p.219)

In further clarification of the principle he had said that there had to be a division of labour between regions and countries based on the availability of raw materials and other factors. "In my opinion, therefore, swadeshi which excludes everything foreign, no matter how beneficial it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of swadeshi. . . ." (CW 31, p.12)

In 1924 he had an attack of appendicitis while in prison, serving a sentence of six years on a charge of sedition. An emergency operation had to be performed by a British surgeon, Col. Maddock, and British nurses attended on him. One of the nurses reproached him gently for preaching non-cooperation and boycott of their goods and yet accepting the services of a British surgeon and British nurses who used surgical instruments and drugs manufactured in Britain to save his life. "Do you know? Even the umbrella I held over you when you were being shifted here was British," she concluded triumphantly. "When will you people look for the truth?" Gandhi replied. "Do you know that I do not boycott anything merely because it is British? I am boycotting only foreign cloth, because the dumping of such cloth on this country has led to the impoverishment of millions of her people".

Again, in reply to criticism by Tagore, he had said, "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about as freely as possible." He wanted India to be free not because he wanted her to isolate herself from others and live for herself alone, or to dominate and exploit other countries, but in order that she may be able to cooperate with and serve the world better. The vow of swadeshi that the inmates of his ashram at Sabarmati had to take among others, stipulated that:

> There is no place for self-interest in swadeshi, which enjoins the sacrifice of oneself for the family, of the family for the village, of the village for the country and of the country for humanity. (C W 36, p.400)

He had said that the India of his dreams should be willing to sacrifice herself for the benefit of the world.

Many people who believe in the Brotherhood of Man and in a world order hold that people will have to give up their allegiance to their nations altogether for the commitment to a world order to emerge. So too with religions. But Gandhi thought differently. He did not want to take people to higher levels of integration by making them renounce their less inclusive identities but by stretching their awareness so that they saw the country or the religion they belonged to as a part of a larger whole with many countries and many religions which also demanded their respect and friendship.

Vinoba, one of the most eminent followers of Gandhi, who led the Gandhian movement in India after the Mahatma, has put the idea very tellingly using homely imagery. "My own religion is my mother. I could not choose my mother. So also have I been born into my religion. I love my mother in a special way, but that does not mean that I shall have to hate other people's mothers." Gandhi chose to remain a Hindu because he was born into Hinduism and its culture had nurtured him. It was an identity which there was no point in discarding. It gave him his roots. He also described himself as a "sanatani" Hindu, sanatani meaning one who believes in the perennial nature of the religion. He could no more deny his religious background than he could deny his family background. But he never allowed his thought and action to be circumscribed by this. He claimed himself to be a good Christian, a good Muslim, a good Parsi, in fact to be a good follower of all the

great religions of the world. He pointed out that the fundamental tenets of all world religions were the same and that every one of them had its defects. Equal regard for all religions—*sarva dharma samabhava*—was one of the fundamental principles that guided him and that he sought to imbue the people of India with. His daily prayers included readings from the Bible, the Qoran, the Granth Sahib of the Sikhs and Zoroastrian and Japanese prayers. Yet he refused to accept religious texts as of divine origin and infallible. Thus he refused to accept differences between man and man as fundamental and permanent and bent all his energies towards bridging these. This he sought to do by taking a philosophical concept that had become static and fashioning it into the guiding concept of dynamic social change.

CHAPTER THREE

TRUTH, SCIENCE AND GOD

GANDHI HAD CHOSEN truth and nonviolence as the twin guiding principles of his life. Satyagraha, the unique system of nonviolent resistance to evil that has been his gift to the world, literally means insistence on the truth and has nonviolence as its basic norm. He considered truth and nonviolence to be virtually inseparable.

> ... without Ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must be within our reach, and so Ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. . . . (*FromYeravda Mandir*, p. 8).

Yet he had asserted again and again that his primary allegiance was to truth and he was prepared to give up nonviolence for the sake of truth. This is an intensely felt expression of his commitment to truth rather than any undervaluation of the importance of nonviolence for human conduct, but it shows that he did make a subtle difference between the two.

Ordinarily truthfulness means speaking the truth and for Gandhi that was the starting point and also one of the most important parts of one's commitment to truth. He always laid great emphasis on it.

> Truthfulness is the master key. Do not lie under any circumstances whatsoever, keep nothing secret, take your teachers and elders into confidence and make a clean breast of everything to them. Bear ill will to none. Do not say an evil thing of anyone behind his back, above all "to thine own self be true", so that you are false to no one else. Truthful dealings even in the least, little things of life is the only secret of a pure life. (*Young India*, 15 December 1925; hereafter referred to as *YI)*

There is a flavour of smug moralizing about the above piece of advice that is likely to put off some of those who are accustomed to the modern way of looking at things. This apparently the simplest and most obvious of the Ten Commandments has been challenged and refuted by many a modern thinker, not necessarily from the cynical point of view. Bertrand Russell, for instance, has argued against any insistence on absolute truthfulness from the humanist standpoint and has used the example of a person who is asked by a hunter pursuing a quarry about the way the animal had taken. Russell argues that the person questioned would be justified in giving a misleading answer to the hunter in order to save the life of the hunted animal. This would be untruth in the service of an unexceptionably moral purpose.

Gandhi never seemed to have been interested in discussing such hypothetical situations torn from the social context. For him truth and nonviolence were not taboos that imposed constraints on human behaviour, but forces that helped human beings to face life more effectively. He equated truth with God, and God to him, as to all believers, was the power that ran the universe. According to an old Indian maxim, it is *dharma* that upholds the social order and the practice of truth is the highest *dharma*. *Dharma* is usually translated as religion, but its wider connotation is the moral law that upholds the creation.

Shorn of metaphysical connotations this simply means that human society subsists on the mutual dependability of its members, on qualities like honesty, integrity, scrupulousness and so on, and it is the level of such qualities obtaining in any society that buttresses its structure. This assertion goes against the line of thinking of modern social theories, at least the dominant ones among them. Social orders consist of networks of kinship relations, property relations, masses of customs, laws, belief systems and so on. Value systems are also recognized as a factor, but the dominant tendency is to consider these as dependent variables of other factors rather than as independent variables in their own right. Marxists, in particular, will bridle at any such idealistic interpretation of social systems. Yet this is an area in which a lot of empirical research is necessary if justice is to be done to the Gandhian approach. Even Russell's use of the example mentioned earlier presupposes truthfulness as the normal norm of social

interaction and is only concerned with finding exceptions to the rule.

Juergen Habermas comes very close to Gandhi's position in his theory of communicative action. After reviewing the current theories of society, including Marxism, he comments:

> In the meantime, bourgeois consciousness has become cynical; as the social sciences—especially legal positivism, neoclassical economics, and recent political theory—show, it has been thoroughly emptied of binding normative contents. However, if (as becomes even more apparent at times of recession) the bourgeois ideals have gone into retirement, there are no norms or values to which an immanent critique might appeal with (the expectation of) agreement. On the other hand, the melodies of ethical socialism have been played through without result. A philosophical ethics not restricted to metaethical statements is possible today only if we can reconstruct general presuppositions of communication and procedures for justifying norms and values. (*Communication and the Evolution of Society*, pp. 96–7; hereafter referred to as *CES*)

To put it in a nutshell, his theory posits that human society owes its existence and evolution to people being able to communicate and come to a mutual understanding with one another and in each such act the validity basis of speech is presupposed. That is, the participants implicitly raise and recognize the claims that: (i) The speaker is making a true statement to the best of his knowledge, that is, he is being truthful and is not making a false statement to deceive the other; and that (ii) he is saying something that is right and to which the other can agree. As Habermas puts it:

> In so far as he wants to participate in a process of reaching understanding, he cannot avoid raising the following—and indeed precisely the following-validity claims. He claims to be:
> (a) Uttering something understandably;
> (b) Giving the hearer *something* to understand;
> (c) Making himself thereby understandable; and
> (d) Coming to an understanding with another person.
> The speaker must choose a comprehensible (*verstaendlich*) expression so that speaker and hearer can understand each other. The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true (*wahr*) proposition (or a propositional content, the existential presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker. The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully (*wahrhaftig*) so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker (can trust him). Finally, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right (*richtig*) so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background. Moreover, communicative action can continue undisturbed only as long as participants suppose that the validity claims they reciprocally raise are justified (*CES*, pp. 2–3).

These claims of the speaker can, of course, be controverted by the other party and the background consensus can break down. But there are means of testing validity claims and law and morality originated in the effort to reestablish this understanding that keeps human society going.

> Social systems can be viewed as networks of communicative actions; personality systems can be regarded under the aspect of the ability to speak and act. If one examines social institutions and the action competences of socialized individuals for general characteristics, one encounters the same structures of consciousness. This can be shown in connection with those arrangements and orientations that specialize in maintaining the endangered intersubjectivity of understanding in cases of action conflicts—law and morality. When the background consensus of habitual daily routine breaks down, consensual regulation of action conflicts (accomplished under the renunciation of force) provides for the continuation of communicative action with other means. To this extent, law and morality mark the core domain of interaction. One can see here the identity of the conscious structures that are, on the one hand, embodied in the institutions of law and morality and that are, on the other hand, expressed in the moral judgements and actions of the individual. (*CES*, p. 98–9).

Gandhi would have added satyagraha to the institutions of morality and law as a further means of reestablishing a consensus that has broken down. However, Gandhi considers nonviolence or love to be the other force that keeps human society together and Habermas has not touched upon it.

Bronowski makes the same point in discussing the structure of the scientific community. He writes:

> The fallacy which imprisons the positivist and the analyst is the assumption that he can test what is true and false without consulting anyone but himself. This of course prevents him from making any social judgement. Suppose then that we give up this assumption, and acknowledge that, even in the verification of facts, we need the help of others. What follows?

It follows that we must be able to rely on other people; we must be able to trust their word. That is, it follows that there is a principle which binds society together, because without it the individual would be helpless to tell the true from the false. This principle is truthfulness. If we accept truth as an individual criterion, then we have also to make it the cement to hold society together. (*Science and Human Values*, pp. 57–8; hereafter referred to as *SHV*)

In the case of Gandhi, who used truth as a lever for social change, the matter can be seen as a fundamental factor in the dynamics of satyagraha. Truth as a power for social change is manifested through individuals, in this case satyagrahis, and its efficacy depends on the degree of credibility the satyagrahi achieves for his rectitude and integrity both among his followers and adversaries. The proposition a satyagrahi puts forward may seem erroneous from the point of view of his adversary and may even be so objectively, but everybody concerned, including the adversary, should have the conviction that it was not made knowingly in order to deceive. The ideal society of Gandhi's conception would be based on such relations of mutual trust and dependability. Or rather, in Habermas' terms, satyagraha is an effort to reestablish a consensus that has broken down. A society in which attempts at mutual deception and consequent mistrust and wariness are the dominant factors in social relations is at the farthest point from the Gandhian ideal.

To take up Russell's hypothetical situation again, what has been left out of consideration is the relation between the hunter and the prospective informant. Russell takes the relation between them to be fortuitous. According to Gandhi, and in reality, it is not so. All members of a society are linked to each other by a network of relations and as Gandhi would have it, "a drop of arsenic in a pail of milk will poison the whole of it".

In the course of the struggle for freedom in India, satyagrahis were sometimes placed in situations in which disclosure of information to the British authorities might have caused harm to third parties not directly involved in the struggle. In such cases they were advised to refuse to answer questions put to them by the police on such matters. Many political activists of persuasions different from Gandhi's, particularly those engaged in violent activities, wanted by the police and on the run, came to meet Gandhi and were secure in

the belief that their whereabouts would not be disclosed by the latter to anybody. And as he told the Hunter Committee,

I have now mixed with criminals of the deadliest type for a number of years and I know that I have been instrumentai, however poorly, but still I have been instrumental in winning them over. I should forfeit their confidence if I disclosed the name of a single man. . . . (CW 16, pp. 394–95)

The commitment that Gandhi had to truthful relations with society came through in such incidents as when it was discovered that a nephew of Gandhi, an inmate of his ashram, had broken the ashram vow of non-possession and the related rules by putting aside some money as private savings, and Kasturba had also erred similarly by failing to hand over to the ashram funds four rupees that she had received from an admirer. Gandhi immediately came out with an article, "My Shame and Sorrow", in his weekly journal, *Young India*, which was given wide publicity in the national press (*Bombay Chronicle*, 8 April 1929). In it Gandhi gave the background and the details of these lapses, as also of another case of misbehaviour of a man and a woman, and went on to say:

If those who have believed in me and the Mandir desert us after these revelations it will serve two purposes at a stroke. Both they and myself will be extricated from the false position and I would welcome the relief and the lightening of my burden it will bring me. If all good men in the Mandir left it in disgust the problem would be readily solved. Equally handy would the solution be if all bad men left. . . . lastly, if I could bring myself to flee from the Mandir that too would be a solution. But life's riddles are not solved quite so easily. None of these things will happen. Nature's processes work mysteriously.

I hold the manifestation of the corruption in the Mandir to be merely the reflection of the wrong in myself. Nothing has been further from my thoughts in writing the above lines than to arrogate to myself superior virtue. On the contrary, I sincerely believe that the impurity of my associates is but the manifestation of the hidden wrong in me. I have never claimed perfection for myself. . . .

But Gandhi meant more than simply speaking the truth when he insisted on adherence to truth. He held that truth was to be "lived", that is, to be practised in body, mind and speech. Now, Gandhi's concept of truthfulness is in itself a

little hard to appreciate. One understands the need for speaking the truth most of the time as it serves one's interests. One appreciates the need for knowing the truth for the purposes of living; for instance, to exert oneself sufficiently to find out the real condition of a used car one intends to buy. As a scientist, a journalist or a teacher, one might make it a job of a lifetime to find out all that one can about the areas in which one is interested or the subject one has to teach. But one rarely comes to consider "living" the truth and may not make much sense of it. One is making use of a true fact in one's life when deciding to invest one's savings in a company having plantations in South America as it is making large profits and declaring handsome dividends. One has found out that the company is really well managed and reliable. One might have learnt by the way that the workers on the plantations live under conditions of virtual slavery. But how does it matter?

Gandhi's insistence on living the truth sprang from his belief that there is a moral law that is at the root of our relations with other people, with all living things, with nature and even with this moral law and God. As he had written in reply to a correspondent, "That law then which governs all life is God. Law and Law-giver are one." (*CW* 37, p. 349) This belief in the existence of a moral law governing the creation is common to all great religions, but in the modern age it has come into conflict with the scientific outlook and a great controversy in which Gandhi had become involved provides a good illustration of this.

In 1934, while Gandhi was in the midst of his tour campaigning against the practice of untouchability, a terrible earthquake struck Bihar in eastern India causing death and destruction on a vast scale. Reacting to this in his prayer speeches, Gandhi announced his intuitive belief that the earthquake was God's punishment for the sin committed by the caste-Hindus by practising untouchability. Rabindranath Tagore, the renowned poet, philosopher and patriot, joined issue promptly. He countered Gandhi's assertion by pointing out that such cataclysms occur according to natural laws and could have nothing to do with the failings and foibles of human beings. Imputing such causes to them only strengthened the hold of blind faith and did little good.

... it is all the more unfortunate because this kind of unscientific view of things is too readily accepted by a large section of our countrymen [the poet said]. I feel the indignity of it when I am compelled to utter a truism by asserting that physical catastrophes have their inevitable and exclusive origin in certain combination of physical facts. Unless we believe in the inexorableness of the universal law in the working of which God Himself never interferes, we find it impossible to justify His ways on occasions like the one which has sorely stricken us in an overwhelming manner and scale.

If we associate ethical principles with cosmic phenomena, we shall have to admit that human nature is morally superior to Providence that preaches its lessons in good behaviour in the orgies of worst behaviour possible. For we can never imagine any civilized ruler of men making indiscriminate examples of casual victims, including children and members of the untouchable community, in order to impress others dwelling at a safe distance who possibly deserve severer condemnation. Though we cannot point out any period of human history that is free from iniquities of the darkest kind, we still find citadels of malevolence yet remain unshaken, that the factories that cruelly thrive upon abject poverty and the ignorance of the famished cultivators, or prison houses in all parts of the world where a penal system is pursued which, most often, is a form of licensed criminality, still stand firm. It only shows that the law of gravitation does not in the least respond to the stupendous load of callousness that accumulates till the moral foundations of our society begin to show dangerous cracks and civilizations are undermined. What is truly tragic about it is the fact that the kind of argument that Mahatmaji used by exploiting an event of cosmic disturbance far better suits the psychology of his opponents than his own, and it would not have surprised me at all if they had taken this opportunity for holding him and his followers responsible for this visitation of Divine anger. As for us, we feel perfectly secure in the faith that our own sins and errors, however enormous, have not enough force to drag down the structure of creation to ruins. We, who are immensely grateful to Mahatmaji for inducing, by his wonder working inspiration, freedom from fear and feebleness in the minds of his countrymen, feel profoundly hurt when any words from his mouth may emphasize the element of unreason, which is a fundamental source of all blind power that drive us against freedom and self-respect. (*Harijan*, 16 February 1934; hereafter referred to as *H*)

In his reply, published in the same issue of *Harijan* as above, Gandhi said:

I have long believed that physical phenomena produce results physical and spiritual. The converse I hold to be equally true.

To me the earthquake was no caprice of God nor a result of a meeting of blind forces. We do not know all the laws of God nor their working. Knowledge of the tallest scientists or the greatest spiritualists is like a particle of dust. . . . I believe literally that not a leaf moves but by His will. . . .

He and his law are one. Law is God. . . . Visitations like drought, floods, earthquakes and the like, though they may seem to have only physical origins, are, for me, somehow connected with man's morals. Therefore I instinctively felt that the earthquake was a visitation for the sin of untouchability. Of course, sanatanists have a perfect right to say that it was due to my crime of preaching against untouchability. My belief is a call to repentance and self-purification. . . .

In this controversy between the two giants one is impelled to take sides with the Poet. Invocation of God's will as an explanation for any kind of phenomenon has proved to be an effective means of shutting off all curiosity and enquiry. In cases in which events were believed to have been caused by God's displeasure at human follies, the consequence of such beliefs have often been witch-hunts, human sacrifices and pogroms. Alternatively, people have done penance for their supposed sins by fasting, prayer and propitiatory rites. The point is how to know what God really meant. If God is equated with the law that governs nature, as Gandhi legitimately did, then scientific exploration has been a more effective way of finding out about it and has paid rich dividends. Intuition and hunches have also a role in the methods of science, but these have to be tested and validated before being accepted into the body of authoritative knowledge.

Human behaviour has, very obviously, an impact on human surroundings and, logically, even on the farthest reaches of the universe. Theoretically the field of even a single electron extends throughout the universe and the units of human action are certainly much larger than an elementary particle. There is nothing illogical and unscientific in holding that moral considerations, or the lack of them, the values and attitudes that are at the roots of human behaviour, do have an effect on the course of nature. A reckless, exploitative attitude towards nature has led to disastrous deforestation and the creation of vast deserts that have swallowed up civilizations. This may be, in poetic language, described as God's retribution for man's folly. An earthquake that took place a few years ago in Maharashtra in India was found on investigation to have been caused by the water from a recently constructed reservoir seeping into the deeper levels of the ground in the surrounding areas and causing complex changes in the geological strata. But the consequences of such "moral delinquencies" in the form of wilful or unwitting disregard of the laws of nature are better discovered by the search for the truth by the scientific method than by the invocation of God.

The practice of untouchability, resulting in the suppression of something like a hundred million people, has already caused unconscionable damage to the body politic of India. This far outweighs in seriousness the ravages of the earthquake in Bihar. Its effects in eating into the vitals of one of the oldest and richest civilizations and in contributing to political instability in the largest democracy in the world are almost certain to have worldwide repercussions. This again may be the real nemesis that is already overtaking the sin. In this case the consequences of an immoral act of one group of people may not discriminate between the offenders and the rest. But by any stretch of imagination one cannot visualize the practice of untouchability causing changes in the equilibrium of geological strata and precipitating an earthquake. The stresses and strains that caused the Bihar earthquake must have been gathering strength ages before Hinduism took shape and untouchability existed.

The argument used by Gandhi, as rightly pointed out by the Poet, better suited the psychology of his opponents. It turned the focus from a search for the truth to faith in the eligibility of a person to divine God's ways and might have been counterproductive since in such matters a tradition-bound people are more apt to feel secure with the views of those who uphold the tradition rather than with those of a reformer. Actually, such arguments have been used most often against change and in favour of conservatism. As ill-luck would have it, a serious earthquake rocked Italy some months later and a prelate of the Catholic Church promptly declared that it was God's punishment for the sin of women wearing short skirts!

The use of a terrifying event to inculcate moral behaviour in a people was uncharacteristic of Gandhi whose lifelong strivings had been to free people from the fetters of fear and

blind faith. Perhaps it was a measure of the intensity of his distress at the enormity of the crime of untouchability and his desire to shock the people into an awareness of it than of anything else. More characteristic and satisfying was his answer to a correspondent who had objected to relief work being undertaken to help the victims of a flood in Gujarat because those people had been punished by God for their sins. Gandhi had replied that though there was a sentient Power that pervaded this world and "alone rewards or punishes us as our actions might deserve . . . we do not . . . know whether the calamity suffered by Gujarat was the result of people's sin or goodness in this life or another." (*CW* 42, p. 367) Mercifully, the Bihar earthquake was the only occasion on which Gandhi used the controversial approach.

The above episode illustrates vividly the confrontation that has developed between modern thought with its roots in science and the religious tradition with which Gandhi had to grapple. Modern science had its origin in the Renaissance which was a revolt against the oppressive domination of organized religion that had brought the dark ages to Europe. During that period the Church sought to control the lives of the people in every detail and the worst part of it was the censorship imposed on the mind. The Bible and the ancillary scriptures were taken to be the repositories of all the truth that there was and that people needed to know, and anyone who interpreted the Bible in a way different from that of the Church was branded a heretic; thousands of such dissidents, real or imagined, were condemned to death by burning at the stakes, by starvation and in many other horrible ways. The concept of God was ceasing to be related to the everyday joys and sorrows of the people and religion was becoming more and more concerned with otherworldly considerations and political power. The reaction against this unbearably oppressive situation harked back to the philosophical and artistic achievements of Hellenic culture and drew inspiration from it for a powerful surge of creativity that swept over most of Europe.

This awakening and the creative endeavours that flowed from it came in for a great deal of opposition from organized religion and the scientific enterprise had to face a fair share of it. The pursuit of science was considered to be an expression of

man's intellectual pride and an affront to God. As St Augustine wrote:

> Nor does thou draw near but to the contrite in heart, nor will be found by the proud, no, not, though by curious skill they could number the stars and the sand, and measure the starry heavens and track the course of planets. (*Confessions*, Bk *V*, p. 3; hereafter referred to as *Conf.*)

The opposition did not stop at that. Giordano Bruno was burnt at the stake, Galileo was punished for declaring that the earth went round the sun and Darwin's theory of evolution was bitterly opposed because it discredited the story of Genesis as told in the Bible. The foundation of all religions has been the belief in a moral order prevailing in the universe. All religions have been the product of man's yearning for knowing the why and how of his existence and for an understanding of his relations to the universe surrounding him. Cosmologies, prehistories, social theories and the like were imagined or invented to explain the origin and the working of the external world and of human societies. All these were worked into coherent wholes to provide a comprehensive and cohesive picture. Since it was felt that there was a moral order in the universe, that is, everything that happened in it fulfilled a moral purpose that God had in His mind, was willed by Him, any fact that controverted any aspect of the ideology of a religion was taken as a threat to the moral order. If faith in the particulars was undermined was it far from faith being undermined all along the line, and being lost in the order itself?

And this did happen. The scientific approach has come to challenge the theological outlook and has undermined the belief in the existence of a moral order. The discoveries of physics showed that the universe ran according to impersonal laws and it was impossible to read moral considerations into them. Newtonian physics conjured up the picture of a clockwork universe that ran its predetermined course relentlessly and that course did not seem to have any moral goal. Biological evolution was found to hinge upon natural selection and that again worked upon genetic mutations occurring at random and now known to be caused by extraneous and accidental factors like nuclear radiation. This again left little room for any kind of conscious causation.

The social sciences took the cue from physics and went ahead looking for natural laws that governed the behaviour of individuals and the working of societies. Classical economics came up with the concept of the "economic man" and claimed to have discovered the "iron laws of nature" that governed the economic activities of human society and that made unemployment, famines, starvation and wars inevitable. Marx carried the argument of classical economics forward and turned the table on it by asserting that communism would be the inevitable outcome of the laws that have brought capitalism into existence. One important offshoot of his economic interpretation of history is that there was nothing absolute or perennial about morality. All morality, law, philosophy and culture are superstructures erected on the pattern and relations of production that are predominant in any society. They reflect the interests of the dominant class. Thus morality, along with the rest of the superstructure, changes with the changes in the pattern of production, say, from primitive communism to feudalism, to capitalism and finally, hopefully, to communism.

Discovery of the derivative nature of morality has not been something peculiar to Marxism. Social scientists in general are in agreement over the relation of social norms to social forms and their dependence on historical, geographical and other factors, though most of them would not agree with Marx in his economic interpretation of social development. Like the delinking of natural phenomena from divine judgement discussed earlier, this also has been a liberating experience. Property is no longer looked upon as an institution sanctified by having roots in the divine dispensation. People are also being enabled to see through the claims of divine dispensation on behalf of racial, class and male chauvinism into their real nature. Both in sociology and anthropology the comparative study of cultures has led to the emergence of the concept of the relativity of cultures, of course including their moral components. The culture and the moral code of each society are seen to have been tailored to meet the specific needs of its lifestyle and there is no universal yardstick by which they can be compared to one another and graded on a scale of inferiority-superiority. This has also helped to give the short shrift to racist claims that the way of life of the white races, and the "Aryans" in particular, had some intrinsic superiority and to the attitude that societies making use of more sophisticated technology were superior in every respect to those at a less sophisticated technological level. This has helped to promote a healthy respect for other cultures and other ways of life.

But the belief that moral codes are just pragmatic rules and there are no universal standards to measure them against has led to a strange situation that may be termed moral anarchy. We are now comfortable with a moral atmosphere in which we are shocked when a murder takes place next door, but consider it proper that bombs be dropped on far-off people, killing and maiming thousands, including women and children, as was done in Vietnam and is now being done in Nicaragua and Afghanistan, by rival civilizations, of course; a moral atmosphere that allows one to be upset over a bird with a broken wing but causes not a flicker of concern at the activities of a company in which one has invested in ravaging the economy of a third world country and reducing its citizens to penury and starvation. We find intelligent and educated men with a veneer of scientific culture justifying regimes that take men and women out of their beds in the early hours of the morning and shoot them out of hand with the argument that the cultures of those countries had allowed such things; their kings and chiefs always had such powers and the people had considered that legitimate. There are scores of such powers and the people of the democratic countries acquiesce in billions of dollars being voted for propping them up.

The effect of rigid determinism on the physical sciences has begun to wear off, thanks to the latest developments in physics that have brought to light the statistical nature of physical laws and also the principle of indeterminacy. But determinism reigns supreme still in certain schools of economics and psychology. The "iron laws" are still invoked, of course, in more sophisticated jargon, to justify every kind of iniquity and neo-colonialist goals. In psychology leading lights of the behaviourist school argue against the validity of concepts like freedom and dignity, stressing the total determinateness of human behaviour. The optimism of computer scientists has added a new dimension to this as they, or at least some of the more daring among them, claim that they can build robots that will be able to duplicate human behaviour in every respect. Minsky, a noted scientist, asserts that,

> When intelligent machines are constructed we should not be surprised to find them as confused and stubborn as men in their convictions about mind-matter, consciousness, free will, and the like. For all such questions are pointed at explaining the complicated interactions between parts of the self-model. A man's or a machine's strength of conviction about such things tells us nothing about the man or the machine except what it tells us about his model of himself. (quoted by John Holt in *How Children Learn*, p. 19)

Of course, if this philosophical position is taken at its face value and carried to its logical conclusion the philosophy itself ceases to have any relevance, because the cerebrations, the experimentations and the acts of writing that produced the theory were predetermined effects of the same category as a stone rolling down a hillside or a dandelion opening in a field, an event that has nothing valid or invalid about it. Like freedom and dignity, the two latter concepts also lose their meaning and relevance in the context of this philosophy.

Computer scientists and engineers may some day be able to design machines that will be able to think, feel and act like humans and also make love and produce children. All honour to them! But the terrifying aspect of all this is the devaluation of the ordinary human to the level of the machine, of his feelings, joys and sorrows to the equivalent of the functions of a machine. This has helped to spread a kind of utter cynicism that sees nothing terrifying or heart-rending in blotting out a million lives with the push of a button. A Hermann Kahn can discuss with absolute equanimity the acceptability of fifty million or a hundred million deaths in a nuclear war. Who sheds tears at the trashing of an obsolete computer? And anyway, human beings are much cheaper to produce and maintain. Ironically, this trend is taking mankind back to the days when human beings were believed to be mere puppets in the hands of destiny, of Divine Will, a belief, liberation from which started modern science on its march.

People have begun to react intuitively against this situation. Some are trying to tackle it by taking their moral outlook from the *Gita*, the Bible or the Qoran and their factories and armaments from modern science. Most of them have succeeded in combining the worst of both the worlds. Since the various religions have provided a coherent basis and motivation for moral behaviour people have been harking

back to them. But since the religious ideologies have emphasized static and unchanging views of the universe, truths as given once and for all and the moral codes, in all their details, as revealed by God, attempts to order societies in modern times by recourse to them have produced bizarre results like the Khomeini phenomenon in Iran, Islamic revivalism in some other Asiatic countries, the Reagan phenomenon in the USA and Hindu chauvinism in India.

It is true that much of human behaviour is automatic or predetermined by various factors. Reflex patterns are "written" into the lower brain and these come into action at appropriate moments. Impulses, desires, feelings that are repressed into the unconscious or are born in it, influence our action without our being aware of them. We follow culturally patterned forms of behaviour without thought. Phenomena, natural as well as social, overwhelm us and we do not know how to control them or have the capacity to do so. And now there are techniques of persuasion that make us do what a political leader or a seller of merchandise wants us to without our being aware of the manipulation. Man's sense of impotence in the face of such powerful forces has been born out of this condition. But man does have a potential for freedom and for developing the capacity for overcoming all these determining forces, and this has been one of the main themes of the growth of civilizations. Spiritual traditions have been concerned with the gaining of mastery over inner nature, the drives and needs that sometimes make men their playthings. Modern science enables mankind to overcome its helplessness in the face of external nature. Modern knowledge in psychology helps us to know ourselves better than ever before and the more we know about our reflexes, our conditioning and our unconscious, the more we are enabled to free ourselves from their tyranny. Psychoanalysis and some other contending schools of psychotherapy are concerned with enhancing man's control over himself. History, economics, political science, sociology and anthropology, biology and even archeology, paleontology and the allied sciences, help us to acquire a better understanding of our societies and ourselves and thus to achieve greater autonomy.

It is the freedom of choice that gives meaning to moral behaviour. Behaviour that flows along a set pattern in a predetermined manner cannot be labelled as either moral or

immoral. Thus, those who are aware of or concerned about the potential for human freedom are also the most concerned about the need for universal values. According to the theory of relativity of cultures each society has values that are adequate to its own way of life. But in a world which is continually shrinking in terms of human interaction, people of different cultures are being thrown into ever greater contact with each other. Head-hunting might have been as meaningful to the Nagas as the sharing of one's food and shelter with a chance passerby to the Vaishnava devotee. The description by the well-known anthropologist, von Fuehrer-Heimendorf, of the despondence generated in Naga communities by the forcible suppression of head-hunting by law makes one feel really sorry for them. Yet even the most dogmatic cultural relativist will feel more comfortable in the neighbourhood of a Vaishnava community than in one of unreformed Nagas.

Science, to be effective in its search for truth, has to be free from all value considerations, or so it has been held till now. A scientist concerned with establishing the validity of some value is likely to twist his observations and findings to suit his leanings. We have many examples of this in the social sciences. Ethnologists with racist views and economists with imperialist leanings have projected their prejudices and predilections onto their findings. Thus arises the importance of objectivity and of freedom from value assumptions. This avoidance of values has spilled over to everyday life as a part of the scientific-rational outlook on life. As Gunnar Myrdal has noted in his *Value in Social Theory*:

> Basic to the eagerness in trying to drive value underground is the rationalism of our Western culture. Even the man in the street, when he wants to appear enlightened, will attempt to avoid expressing primary and personal valuations. He wants to be "objective" and to avoid arbitrariness. He will, therefore, give "reasons" for his desires, and he tries to make the reasons appear purely "factual" so that they will be acceptable to any "rational" man. (p. 135)

Since life can be scarcely freed from valuations and even the most scrupulous scientist is likely to have them, Myrdal advises that such valuations be brought into the open and made explicit.

> *There is no other device for excluding biases in the social sciences than to face the valuations and introduce them as explicitly stated, specific, and sufficiently concretized, value premises.* (*Value in Social Theory*, p. 132; italics in the original)

Joan Robinson, the noted economist, has made the same point more forcefully. In her *Freedom and Necessity*, discussing the relations of science and morality, she observes:

> There has been a good deal of confused controversy about the question of "value judgements" in the social sciences. Every human being has ideological, moral and political views. To pretend to have none and to be *purely objective* must necessarily be either self-deception or a device to deceive others. A candid writer will make his preconceptions clear and allow the reader to discount them if he does not accept them. This concerns the professional honour of the scientist. But to eliminate value judgements from the subject-matter of social science is to eliminate the subject itself, for since it concerns human behaviour it must be concerned with the value judgements that people make. The social scientist (whatever he may privately believe) has no right to pretend to know any better than his neighbours what ends society should serve. His business is to show them why they believe what they purport to believe (as far as he can make it out) and what influence beliefs have on behaviour. (p. 122)

Then she goes on to discuss the existence of a core of common values in moral codes.

> But just as there are some basic elements which set limits to the possible structures of languages, so there is a core of common values in all moral codes. Our brains refuse to conceive of a language without, in some form or other, a distinction between nouns and verbs to reflect the distinction between objects and actions; equally our brains refuse to admit the possibility of a society which, for instance, admires cowardice (though it may value prudence), or that prefers cruelty to kindness within its own kind. If we add to this the principle that the morality is to be preferred that has the widest inclusiveness, we have a sufficient basis for the formulation of moral judgements of moral systems. (pp. 122–3)

Bronowsk, in his treatise, *Science and Human Values*, has argued that though the fruits of the scientific enterprise are neutral, that does not mean that the activity itself is devoid of values or can be carried on in an atmosphere bereft of all values. As he has pointed out in a quotation given earlier,

truth is the value in which science is rooted and it demands a society in which truthfulness is the norm. Moreover, science can prosper only in an atmosphere that guarantees freedom, originality and dissent, that is, in an atmosphere of democratic values. As he explains:

> . . . Truth is the drive at the centre of science; it must have the habit of truth, not as a dogma but as a process. Consider then step by step what kind of society scientists have been compelled to form in this single pursuit. . . .
>
> First of course comes independence, first in observation and then in thought . . . Science has bred the love of originality as a mark of independence. . . .
>
> Independence, originality, and therefore dissent: these words show the progress, they stamp the character of our civilization as once they did that of Athens in flower. . . .
>
> The society of scientists must be a democracy. It can keep alive and grow only by a constant tension between dissent and respect; between independence from the view of others and tolerance for them. . . . (*SHV*, pp. 60–3)

Michael Polanyi holds views that are similar to Bronowski's. In his *Science, Faith and Society*, he states:

> It would thus appear that when the premises of science are held in common by the scientific community each must subscribe to them by an act of devotion. These premises form not merely guides to intuition, but also a guide to conscience; they are not merely indicative, they are also normative. The tradition of science, it would seem, must be upheld as an unconditional demand if it is to be upheld at all. It can be made use of by scientists only if they place themselves at its service. It is a spiritual reality which stands over them and compels their allegiance. (p. 40)

In science the value of a proposition is not tested on the basis of the authority its proponent wields, the length of the experience he has, or his age, sex, race or other attributes. The proposition has to be judged solely on its merit and the most venerable professor and the young tyro have to be on the same footing on the platform of science.

Erich Fromm, the psychotherapist and sociologist, Ashley Montagu, the anthropologist, and the humanist psychologists A. H. Maslow and Gardner Murphy have tried to trace the roots of fundamental values to the depths of the human psyche. Fromm has come up with the finding that love is a basic urge and need in human beings and its cultivation would bring our inner and outer worlds into harmony. For him love is not a passive emotional experience but an active power that has to be cultivated. Ashley Montagu has tried to trace the direction of human development and has found that it coincides with the growth of love as an essential factor in human relations. Murphy and Maslow have also come to similar conclusions. We will have occasion to discuss their ideas in greater detail in later chapters.

J. B. S. Haldane, the noted biologist, had, in a personal communication to the author, pointed out that the attitude a scientist should have towards his subject is one of reverence, akin to the *bhakti* of the Indian spiritual tradition. This makes sense and explains the motivation of numerous scientists who have gone out and lived among alien tribes in far-off corners of the earth and even among wild animals like mountain gorillas, at great personal risk.

Gandhi, in his search for the meaning of life, discovered it in the religious traditions of the world and became a confirmed theist. He accepted the direct experience of the Divine Presence as the supreme goal of his life—"meeting my Maker face to face"—a goal common to almost all aspirants after spiritual enlightenment and to all great religious traditions. But as his quest progressed he came to put new interpretations on the concepts of God and truth that almost radicalized the traditional meanings of the words. Before he became a devout believer in God, Gandhi, according to his own account, passed through a stage of unbelief. It must have been during this phase of scepticism and heart-searching that he came to appreciate the case for atheism; he was, in his student days, an admirer of the noted British atheist and humanist, Charles Bradlaugh. Since then he had never displayed the kind of prickly intolerance that believers have for atheists and had, throughout his life, exercised an attraction on atheists. They tended to gravitate towards him and there were a number of them in his army of satyagrahis.

In atheists like Bradlaugh he saw fellow-seekers after truth and for Gandhi the quest for truth was the same as the quest after God. He had written in 1925;

> Charles Bradlaugh described himself as an atheist no doubt, but many a Christian declined to regard him as such. . . . Bradlaugh's

denial of God was a denial of Him as He was known to Bradlaugh to have been described. His was an eloquent and indignant protest against the then current theology and the terrible contrast between precept and practice. (*CW* 26, p. 224)

Gandhi had gained insight into the fact that the same words may have different contents and convey different meanings to different persons, and hence there was no sense in fighting over words. The content was the important thing. He did not share the traditional belief that words like God had their origin in revelations and therefore had something sacrosanct about them. Conversely, different words and conceptual frameworks could be used to describe the same reality. As he had explained in a speech before a gathering of missionaries in 1927:

I have come to feel that like us human beings words have their evolution from stage to stage in the contents they hold. For instance, the contents of the richest word—God—are not the same for every one of us. They will vary with the experience of each. They will mean one thing to the Santhal (member of a tribal community in India) and another to his next-door neighbour, Rabindranath Tagore. (*CW* 34, p. 260)

Then again on another occasion:

Come with me to Orissa in November, to Puri, a holy place . . . . Within ten miles of Puri you will see skin and bone . . . . Insult them by taking the name of God before them in vain. They will call you and me fiends if we talk about God to them. They know, if they know any God at all, a God of terror, vengeance, a pitiless tyrant. They do not know what love is. . . . (*CW* 34, pp. 453–4)

In an eloquent reply to a sceptic he had set down in some detail his concept of God:

To me God is truth and love. God is ethics and morality. God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life and yet He is above all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in his boundless love he permits the atheist to live. He cannot cease to exist because hideous immoralities are committed in His name. He is long-suffering. He is patient, but he is also terrible. He is the most exacting of personalities in the world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us that we mete out to our neighbours—men and brute. With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever forgiving because He always gives us a chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for he leaves us "unfettered" to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for he dashes the cup from our lips, and under the cover of free will, leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Him at our expense. (*CW* 26, p. 224–5)

In a recording made for the Columbia Gramophone Company whilst Gandhi was in London in 1931, he had defined his faith in God in the following terms:

There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. . . . I do feel . . . . that there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything or every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law. Because no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings and, thanks to the marvellous researches of Sir J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That Law then which governs all life is God. Law and Law-giver are one. . . .

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. . . . .

And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For I see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the supreme Good. . . .

. . . I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long-suffering and patient solely because he permits evil in the world. . .

I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil at the cost of life itself. . . . (*CW* 37, pp. 348–50)

In replying to a woman's question he had said, "we cannot see God with our eyes. God is spirit without body and therefore visible only to the eyes of faith. If there are no evil thoughts troubling our minds and no fears but constant cheerfulness in our hearts, that is an indication of God's presence in ourselves. . . ." (*The Diary of Mahadev Desai,* I, p. 114; hereafter referred to as *DMD*)

Thus Gandhi's belief in the existence of a moral order in the universe centred on his concept of God. He equated God with the law that governed the universe. The law governing the working of the universe that scientists seek to discover is

certainly subsumed under Gandhi's concept of the universal law. But the latter goes farther. To him it, more than anything else, meant the principles that should govern the relations of human beings among one another and to the rest of nature. For him these were not mere inventions made in specific social contexts, but were universal and perennial and formed a united and coherent whole. This "unified" value he equated with God. Thus, for Gandhi, the principles that should govern our relations were already there active in the creation. The laws of their working were to be discovered and made use of for making our lives more meaningful and realizing the goal of peace and harmony on earth. Above all, Gandhi's kind of faith in God did not mean blind and meek submission to fate, but an inspiration to the endeavour to mould one's destiny.

The values he has mentioned as contained in his concept of God include truth, love, fearlessness, freedom of conscience and free enquiry, freedom of choice, democracy, the right to make mistakes and cheerfulness. His whole approach is rooted in an affirmative approach to life. He equates God with life. It is evident that he rejects such concepts of God as make Him into a capricious and cruel power, that demand a total abrogation of one's autonomy of thought and feelings and submission to external authority in all matters of belief and conduct. He rejected the kind of belief in God that makes one go through life in a state of constant terror and that also validates the perpetration of cruelties and inhumanities in His name. If we construct a graded scale with the values that Gandhi cherished at one end and its opposites, like the suppression of free enquiry and the truth, denial of individual autonomy and democracy, terrorization, total submission to authority and negation of life at the other, we will find many non-believers and agnostics like Bradlaugh and Bertrand Russell at Gandhi's end of the scale and many like some medieval popes, some sanatani Hindus, and persons like Hitler and Khomeini, though professed believers, at the farthest point of the other end. Gandhi felt a kinship with those who shared his values even if they rejected God, and as we shall see later, modified his concept of God to embrace them in his fellowship.

He gave primacy to truth among the values because it signified the apex value under which all other values could be subsumed. "Truth includes nonviolence, *brahmacharya* (control of the sex urge), non-stealing, and the other rules. It is only for

convenience that the five *yamas* (spiritual disciplines) have been mentioned separately." (*DMD*, I, p. 474) And he also came to equate God with truth, since, "Truth in Sanskrit means *sat*. Sat means is. Therefore truth is implied in is. God is, nothing else is." But gradually he came round to the view that appellations for the Supreme Power like Brahma, Vishnu, Ishwara and Bhagavan (all used in Hinduism, and by implication such names used in other religions also), "Were either meaningless or at least not significant enough, whereas satya (truth) is the perfect name for God. If someone says that he will die for God's sake, he cannot make plain to others what he means, and people who hear him will hardly understand him. On the other hand, one who says that he will die for truth knows what he means and his words will be generally understood. . . ." (*DMD*, I, p. 20) So he later on came to transpose the terms of the equation: God is Truth, to give truth the primary status. He explained his position in a speech at Lausanne, Switzerland, on his way back from the Round Table Conference in London in 1931.

> . . . But two years ago I went a step further and said Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements; God is Truth and Truth is God. And that conclusion I came to after a continuous, relentless search after truth which began many years ago. I found that the nearest approach to truth is through love. But I found also that love has many meanings, in the English language at least, and human love in the sense of passion becomes a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of ahimsa or nonviolence has only a limited number of votaries in the world. And as I made progress in my search, I made no dispute with "God is Love". It is very difficult to understand "God is Love". (because of a variety of meanings of love), but I never found a double meaning in connection with Truth and even atheists have not denied the necessity or power of Truth. Not only so, in their passion of discovering truth, they have not hesitated even to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view, rightly. And it was because of their reasoning that I saw that I was not going to say "God is Truth", but "Truth is God". . . . Add to this the great difficulty that millions have taken the name of God and committed nameless atrocities in His name. Not that scientists do not very often commit cruelties in the name of truth. I know today in the name of truth and science inhuman cruelties are perpetrated on animals when men perform vivisection. To me it is

> denial of God whether you recognize Him as truth or by any other name. . . . (*CW* 48, pp. 404-5)

Gandhi made the world religions his point of departure and took his truths and values from them not because he had any faith in their infallibility or believed that everything that needed to be known in these matters was already known and written down in the religious texts. He felt that religion originated in mankind's search for the why and how of its existence and that the religious traditions were storehouses of the distilled wisdom based on the experience of thousands of years and it would be unwise to reject them out of hand. Therefore, he drew freely on all the traditions for his own enrichment and advised everyone to do so.

But he also knew that traditions have become petrified and static and he rejected the static outlook. He did not accept the infallibility of the scriptures. "Valuing my freedom and independence I equally cherish them for others. I have no desire to carry a single soul with me, if I cannot appeal to his or her reason. My unconventionality I carry to the point of rejecting the divinity of the oldest *shastras* (scriptures) if they cannot convince my reason." (*CW* 19, p. 45) He never took part in any of the traditional religious rituals and his prayers contained texts from all world religions and were bereft of all outward trappings.

He did not believe that mere faith in universal truths or values led one anywhere. For him faith in them was like the faith a scientist has in the existence of a universal law at the root of all phenomena. Really speaking, there is no logical reason why there should be one law governing the universe and not five. At the moment physics has actually four disparate forces on its hands, the unification of which into one comprehensive theory is the great challenge before the community of physicists. The belief in the possibility of the formulation of one "Unified Field Theory" can be said to be a faith derived from the experience of success in the successive integration of a multitude of bits of seemingly haphazard information and rules of thumb into larger and larger wholes. The same can be said of Gandhi's faith in the universal truths. Their contents and working are to be discovered through an experimental approach and there is to be no appeal to revealed texts and set formulas. The truths or laws handed

down from the past are not to be automatically taken as valid. Their validity has to be tested on the touchstone of experimental practice and their practical applications have to be discovered. As he pointed out to one of his followers, "Nonviolence will not come of itself. It will come by doing." Truth is to be discovered only when theory is combined with practice. For him truth was not something given but a subject of endless research and discovery.

Evidently, he imbibed this experimental approach from modern science. He had come to be saturated with it and, ever since his South African days, had been continuously engaged in scores of experiments in all kinds of things from dietetics to human relations. He named his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and the series of his experiments in human relations culminated in the discovery of the matchless weapon of satyagraha, his greatest gift to the world.

He was never tired of stressing this "verification by experiment" approach in his advice to his followers. For this he used examples from the sciences to drive his point home. For instance, in a letter to his youngest son Devadas he explained his approach thus:

> Even if we find in thousands of instances that water is made of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen, it cannot be said finally that it is its composition. If however I take two parts of hydrogen and one of oxygen and combine them to produce water, that would be definitive knowledge. It is knowledge verified by experience. (*CW* 14, p. 448)

Going back to the roots of hydrogen and oxygen, it may be seen that philosophers like Kanada in India and Democritus and Lucretius in ancient Greece had, a couple of thousand years ago, hit upon the idea that the universe is made of particles. But the hypothesis remained only an interesting speculation and a subject for academic debate till Dalton came along, picked up the idea as a hypothesis likely to be correct, and proved its validity by experimentation. It turned an almost forgotten speculation gathering dust in the libraries into "definitive" knowledge, the amplification and practical application of which have transformed our lives.

Gandhi's faith in and emphasis on continuing progress through experimentation and discovery comes through in the

letters he wrote to his followers. To one seeking formulas to guide him through life, Gandhi wrote:

> To look upon Krishna as a perfect incarnation should not mean that we can obtain from the *Gita* direct answers to all the questions that arise from day to day just as we find the meanings of words by looking up a dictionary. That would not be desirable even if it were possible, for in that case there would be nothing like progress or discovery for mankind. Human intelligence must then simply atrophy from disuse. Therefore questions that arise in each age must be solved by the people of that age by their own efforts. (*DMD,* I, p. 106)

Again, in answer to one who sought answers to hypothetical problems in nonviolence, he wrote:

> I therefore warn you against obtaining solutions to imag-inary problems .... for these will not be a help but a hindrance pure and simple when we are face to face with reality. The seeker of such solutions will become incapable of independent thought. It is therefore best to understand the fundamental principles, to digest them and commit mistakes which we are likely to make in applying the principles to actual life. That is the right way to learn. (*DMD,* I, p. 211)

Yet, to another:

> The seeker must not try to obtain abstract decisions from anyone in whom he reposes faith, nor expect him to solve imaginary difficulties. A question is certainly in order when it has something to do with a step one is going to take. If it is connected with an actual event the event must be fully described and must not be made the basis of a general question, because generalization necessitates the omission of one important detail or other. Thus there is risk in applying the answer to a general question to particular events. (*DMD,* I, p. 138)

This throws light on the exactitude with which Gandhi studied and handled problems, with attention to the minutest details. That was one of his secrets of successful handling of intricate problems in the face of which lesser men cowered.

While believing in the existence of an absolute Truth spelt with a capital T, Gandhi felt that that was beyond the reach of mere human beings who had to remain satisfied with glimpses of it. This partial view he termed relative truth.

> But I worship God as truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest.... 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. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield and my buckler. (*COV,* p. 19)

His ever recurring inconsistencies that often upset his followers and his adversaries alike sprang from his experimental and exploratory approach. His never worked with a set 'line' or a cut and dried formula so characteristic of those who are cocksure that they have grasped the truth and the whole of it. Gandhi kept himself constantly open to new discoveries. He often used to say jocularly, quoting Emerson, "consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds", and reminded his critics that he was growing from truth to truth and never stopped to recollect what he had said on a previous occasion and reconcile his latest views with it.

> People say that I have changed my views, that I say today something different from what I said years ago. The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same. . . . There has been a gradual evolution in my environment and I react to it as a satyagrahi. (*H,* 28 January 1939)

He also claimed that,

> there is, I fancy, a method in my inconsistencies. In my opinion there is a consistency running through my inconsistencies, as in nature there is a unity running through seeming diversity. (*CW* 42, p. 469)

And so, while in a speech at the plenary session of the Indian National Congress at Karachi in 1931, he had declared that Gandhism could never be killed, in 1945 he told his close disciples that there was nothing like Gandhism and they must not pore over his writings to find solutions to problems. They should use their own intelligence. He was aware that the quest for truth was not going to end with him. It also did not begin with him. It is a continuous and maybe endless process. Since only a partial view of the absolute truth can be had by any individual it is natural that different people will have different glimpses of it. This applies not only to the absolute truth as the ground of creation, but also to phenomena, situations and issues. Every culture is based on the partial or

relative perception of the truth or reality it has and this brings us to the concept of relativity of cultures. Gandhi recognized this and that gave him the outlook of respect and regard that he had for all religions and cultures. He coined the term *"sarva dharma samabhava"*—equal regard for all religion—to describe this attitude. He admits to having imbibed it from the Jaina doctrine of *anekatavad* which may be loosely translated as pluralism. According to this, people generally have a partial perception of the truth and different individuals and societies may thus have different perceptions of the reality, that are valid within their respective limits. Ways of life and cultures may thus differ from one another, but that does not invalidate any of them. Apparently this philosophy did not get through to the insight that has been basic to modern scientific exploration: that partial truths discovered by individuals can be integrated into larger wholes by making the pursuit of truth a collective enterprise.

Gandhi's acceptance of *anekatavad* also helped him in shaping the approach of satyagraha in which one, while holding firmly to his own version of the truth, also strove to keep his mind open to the point of view of his adversary and to seek a synthesis of the two view-points at a more comprehensive level of perception of the truth of a situation. Thus Gandhi, like Marx borrowing from Hegel, took over from Jaina philosophy a doctrine that had stagnated as a complacent acceptance of the world as it was and turned it into the basis of a dialectical process of the discovery of truth. Also, while accepting the equal validity of all cultures, he went beyond the cultural relativists in reconciling the demand of a universal outlook and culture for mankind with the existence of a multiplicity of cultures in the world. A universal world culture should evolve not by the undermining of weaker cultures and their replacement by the more powerful ones, but by a process of mutual contact and dialogue that would lead to a true synthesis of them.

The process of achieving synthesis of incompatible, or at any rate of unrelated, concepts at a deeper level of understanding can be seen in his flair for giving new content to old words. Swadeshi is a word that was originally used in the course of the nationalist movement in India to mean love for everything indigenous and specifically, preference for indigenous industrial products. This ideal had a great deal of validity in

the context in which it came to be used, but it had become coupled with nationalist exclusiveness and was incompatible with the outlook of Brotherhood of Man that was central to nonviolence. Gandhi took over the concept and put new content into it, taking out of it the sting of parochialism and implied violence and turning it into a universal principle of conduct for believers in nonviolence and world brotherhood. As has been discussed at length elsewhere, it involves recognition of the reality that an individual has only limited capacity and so it is both practical and modest for him to serve his immediate neighbours, considering them to be part of the human family.

> Man is not omnipotent. He therefore serves the world best by first serving his neighbour. This is swadeshi, a principle which is broken when one professes to serve those who are more remote in preference to those who are near. Observance of swadeshi makes for order in the world; the breach of it leads to chaos. . . . There is no place for self-interest in swadeshi, which enjoins the sacrifice of oneself for the family, of the family for the village, of the village for the country, and of the country for humanity. (*Ashram Observances*, *CW* 36, p. 400)

He considered it to be "an eternal principle whose neglect has brought untold grief to mankind." (*CW* 16, p. 480) This is one of his major discoveries of the working of nonviolence. He went on to define national independence, the programme of decentralized industrialization and the duty of not rejecting one's religion in its terms.

When he was faced with the problem of reconciling the private initiative of capitalism, its obvious plus point, with the values of social responsibility, sharing, economic equality, social ownership, etc., of socialism, the qualities of both the systems that he found to have "truth" in them, he had recourse to the concept of trusteeship used in British jurisprudence in a narrower context, but nevertheless capable of taking on the extended meaning that Gandhi had in mind. The principle of trusteeship is a grand attempt to synthesize the warring truths of the two rival economic ideologies by going beyond them.

Other concepts he lifted from the Hindu spiritual tradition to use, with radicalized content, for principles, or laws, as he called them, which he discovered in his efforts to synthesize ideas drawn from different contexts. *Yajna* in the Hindu tradition means a ritual sacrificial act performed for the

welfare of the community. Its validity or "truth" lies in the value it inculcates in the individual of finding fulfilment in doing something, sacrificing something, for the good of the society. The traditional forms of *yajna* had been overlaid with many superstitious ideas and had become irrelevant to the social reality. On the other hand, the revolutionary socialist ideal that had caught the imagination of idealists all over the world has adopted as its slogan "From each according to his ability and to each according to his need." This presumes an outside authority to adjudicate on abilities and needs, which is not compatible with the ideal nonviolent society in which the individual will have an adequately developed social conscience that will do away with the need for external and coercive control. So Gandhi used the ancient word for expressing his new concept that turned the Marxist formula inside out. He reinterpreted *yajna* to mean that each one was to do the best he was capable of for society and to take from it the bare necessities for his own efficient upkeep. Productive labour was to be the starting point.

> The third thing is bread labour—*yajna*. We earn the right to eat only by putting the body to hard work. *Yajna* means any work done for the service of others. It is not enough that we do physical labour; we should live only that we may serve others. . . . (*CW* 37, p. 268)

Similarly, he used the concept of *aparigraha* (non-possession), taken from traditional spiritual lore, as the starting point of his programme of abolition of private property. Originally the word had no social context. Non-possession was to be practised by seekers after spiritual realization. In conjunction with the concept of yajna Gandhi used the word to signify a social orientation in which one took and kept the least one needed for oneself and not a whit more. Thus, Gandhi made the inner value orientation of individuals the foundation of the new social order visualized by him. This is in contradistinction to the outer regimentation implied in Marxism and most other brands of socialism.

The primary concern of Gandhi throughout his life, through all his movements and lesser activities, was to evolve a unified and coherent pattern of values to guide our personal and social conduct, our feelings and attitudes towards and relations with mankind and nature and even the creation as a whole.

This is the operational part of his declared goal of meeting his "Maker face to face". He chose nonviolence or love as the means or path in this quest for truth, but love is also the overall synthesizing value. He also considered this to be a content of truth, and rightly so, because it is not a purely subjective feeling, an epiphenomenon, but a very tangible part of reality that enters into its dynamics. The harmony he sought is not pre-existent, as was visualized by many mystics and theists. For them, it is only our perception and understanding that is at fault. Spiritual enlightenment consists in just ridding oneself of illusions and strengthening one's faith. For them, it does not involve any effort to change the external reality. For Gandhi, the harmony was to be created with mankind as its architect working in the light of the truth, or God's law, as he would also call it. This law, or the laws that are its corollary, he likened to the laws of electromagnetism. This latter has been operating in the universe since it came into existence, but that does not mean that incandescent bulbs and computers have also existed since then. The laws had to be discovered and made use of for these achievements of human ingenuity to be possible.

Gandhi, like many others before him, claimed that principles or values like nonviolence and compassion were eternal. This puts the modern mind on the guard immediately. Values and words to represent them came with the dawn of civilization, a matter of ten thousand years, or a little more or less. And there could not have been any feelings, relations, etc., before the appearance of consciousness. The scepticism is justified and the critics can take eternity in this case as a hyperbole for a period coextant with human civilization. But zoologists and students of animal psychology are discovering that feelings akin to love, trust and the like exist in other mammals, and may be their rudiments may some day be discovered in reptiles that are believed to have no feelings or emotions at all. It is a moot question whether a quality that makes its appearance at a certain stage of evolution does not exist as a potentiality in the earlier stages and even in inert matter, unless we hold that life and consciousness did not evolve out of matter and entered into it at some late stage of the process of creation.

Gandhi's insistence on the existence of a moral order does make sense at least in relation to the part of the universe

within the reach of mankind, when we attribute a measure of free will and choice to human beings. Then values or moral principles enter into its working as independent variables and the quest for a coherent system of values that would make life meaningful, beautiful and worthwhile does become vitally important. In a world torn apart by alienation, terror and strife, a world in danger of being made uninhabitable by the senseless despoliation of nature or bombed out of existence by a nuclear war, with which the traditional moral codes are failing to cope, Gandhi's approach and the discoveries he claimed to have made in the domain of moral dynamics deserve serious attention.. Ashley Montagu puts it very tellingly:

> If as species we are to survive, we must learn to live together not only with our fellow human beings but with the whole of nature. Otherwise our term on this earth which we have so much abused is perilously nearing its end. The faceless figures in the crowded landscape of abandoned humanity cry out for help, as does the animal world toward which we have been so mindlessly and heartlessly destructive. . . . (*The Practice of Love*, p. 2; hereafter referred to as *PoL*.)

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CHAPTER FOUR

NONVIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

IN 1926, A well-known textile mill-owner of Ahmedabad came to Gandhi and told him that after much cogitation and after having spent sleepless nights over it, he had come to the conclusion that he would have to order the destruction of some stray dogs that were likely to go mad and become a health hazard to the citizens. He had approached the Government, the Municipality and the Mahajan (the union of textile workers of the city) and all had failed to provide a suitable solution. "So I have been driven to this course", he told Gandhi. Gandhi replied, "What else could be done?" The dogs were destroyed the next day and that let all hell loose around Gandhi. He was inundated with letters and visitors accusing him of having betrayed nonviolence and even advising him to quit public life. But Gandhi stuck to his guns and asserted that the reply that he had given to the mill-owner was quite proper. "Imperfect, erring mortals that we are, there is no course open to us but the destruction of rabid dogs. At times we may be faced with the unavoidable duty of killing a man who is found in the act of killing people", he said in defence of his position. Over the following several weeks he wrote a series of eight articles in his weekly journal, *Young India*, in which he sought to clarify his view and answer his critics.

These articles made it clear that he was no doctrinaire, nor a starry-eyed believer in nonviolence. He was keenly aware of the nature of the world and the problems in it he had to contend with. Violence seemed to be a part of the process of life and nonviolence had to cut a path through its tangle. Summarizing his argument, he wrote:

> Thus we arrive at the following result from the foregoing:
>
> 1. It is impossible to maintain one's body without the destruction of other bodies to some extent.

2. All have to destroy some life (a) for sustaining their own bodies; (b) for protecting those under their care; or (c) sometimes for the sake of those whose life is taken.
3. (a) and (b) in (2) mean himsa to a greater or less extent. (c) means no himsa and is therefore ahimsa.
4. A progressive ahimsaist will, therefore, commit the himsa contained in (a) and (b) as little as possible, and after full and mature deliberation and having exhausted all remedies to avoid it. (*CW* 31, p. 546)

It was clear that his first priority was the practice of nonviolence in the social behaviour of human beings and for the survival and the well-being of human society. He did not want to get enmeshed in the illusion, as had the traditional votaries of nonviolence in India, that he was practising nonviolence by abstaining from harming animals and insects while acquiescing in all kinds of violence in human relations. He was not insensitive towards lower animals and was full of compassion for them, but he was aware of the limitations of human beings.

> The lower animals are our brethren. I include among them the lion and the tiger. We do not know how to live with these carnivorous beasts and poisonous reptiles because of our ignorance. When man knows himself better he will learn to befriend even these. Today he does not even know how to befriend a man of a different religion or from a foreign country. (*CW* 31, p. 523)

In reply to criticism that his outlandish ideas about nonviolence were due to Western influence he said:

> I have nothing to be ashamed of if my views on ahimsa are the result of my Western education. I have never tabooed all Western ideas, nor am I prepared to anathematize everything that comes from the West as inherently evil. I have learnt much from the West and I should not be surprised to find that I had learnt something about ahimsa too from the West. I am not concerned what ideas of mine are the results of my foreign contacts. It is enough for me to know that my views on ahimsa have now become part and parcel of my being. (*CW* 37, p. 339)

Three years later, in 1929, he created another storm by deciding to have a calf that was terminally ill and in great suffering to be put out of pain by an injection. This time he had compounded his sin by killing an animal sacred to the Hindus, an animal that was not supposed to be killed in any circumstance whatsoever. Again he was deluged with angry

criticisms and abuse and again he refused to budge. He justified such mercy killing by saying that it was the the purest form of nonviolence. In answer to a question he said that he would apply the same principle to human beings also.

> Would I like it to be applied in my case? My reply is yes; the same law holds good in both cases. The law of *"yatha pinde tatha brahmande"* (as with one so with all) admits of no exception, or the killing of the calf was wrong and violent. In practice however we do not cut short the sufferings of our ailing dear ones by death because as a rule we have always means at our disposal to help them and because they have the capacity to think and decide for themselves. But supposing that in the case of an ailing friend I am unable to render any aid whatever and recovery is out of the question and the patient is lying in an unconscious state in the throes of fearful agony, then I would not see any himsa in putting an end to his suffering by death. (*CW* 37, p. 311)

At the same time as this, he also announced that he was contemplating to have monkeys that were damaging the crops destroyed unless some less harmful way of dealing with the problem was suggested by someone.

> The idea of wounding monkeys to frighten them seems to me unbearable though I am seriously considering the question of killing them in case it should become unavoidable. But this question is not so simple or easy as the previous one.
>
> I see a clear breach of ahimsa even in driving away monkeys, the breach will be proportionately greater if they have to be killed. For any act of injury done from self-interest, whether amounting to killing or not, is doubtless himsa.
>
> None, while in the flesh, can thus be entirely free from himsa because one never completely renounces the will to live. . . . Society has no doubt set down a standard and has absolved the individual of troubling himself about it to that extent. But every seeker after truth has to adjust and vary the standard according to his individual need and to make a ceaseless endeavour to reduce the circle of himsa. But the peasant is too much occupied with the burden of his hard and precarious existence to have the time or the energy to think out these problems for himself and the cultured class, instead of helping him, chooses to give him the cold shoulder. Having become a peasant myself, I have no clear-cut road to go by and must therefore chalk out a path for myself and possibly for fellow peasants. . . . (*CW* 37, p. 314)

In the above we can see an indirect reference to the class nature of nonviolence practised and preached by the Jaina upper classes who refrain from agriculture because it involves the killing of insects and worms and yet feel no compunction in engaging in trade that involves exploitation of men. In this context Gandhi had some more plainspeaking to do:

> But the trouble with our votaries of ahimsa is that they have made of ahimsa a blind fetish and put the greatest obstacle in the path of the spread of true ahimsa in our midst. The current (and in my opinion mistaken) view of ahimsa has drugged our conscience and rendered us insensible to a host of other and more insidious forms of himsa like harsh words, harsh judgements, ill-will, anger and spite and lust and cruelty; it has made us forget that there may be far more himsa in the slow torture of men and animals, the starvation and exploitation to which they are subjected out of selfish greed, the wanton humiliation and oppression of the weak and the killing of their self-respect that we witness all around us today, than in mere benevolent taking of life. Does anyone doubt for a moment that it would have been far more humane to have summarily put to death those who in the infamous lane of Amritsar were made by their torturers to crawl on their bellies like worms? It anyone desires to retort by saying that these people themselves today feel otherwise, that they are none the worse for their crawling, I shall have no hesitation in telling him that he does not know even the elements of ahimsa. There arise occasions in a man's life when it becomes his imperative duty to meet them laying down his life; not to appreciate this fundamental fact of man's estate is to betray an ignorance of the foundation of ahimsa. . . . (*CW* 37, p. 312)

Starvation, exploitation, humiliation, oppression, the infamous lane in Amritsar where Indians were made to crawl on their bellies by the martial law administrators in 1919; we are brought back with a jolt to the harsh realities of the human situation. Gandhi was concentrating on establishing human relations on the foundation of nonviolence, giving second place to the question of relations with other living beings. But how far was human nature capable of taking it? Conventional wisdom has held that violence is ingrained in human nature and it is futile to try to rid it of the evil. In modern times Freud gave a scientific aura to the belief by his observation based on clinical experience that "the tendency to aggression is an innate, independent, instinctual disposition in man. . ." and,

"the very emphasis of the Commandment: 'Thou shall not kill', makes it certain that we are descended from an endlessly long chain of generations of murderers whose love of murder was in their blood as it is perhaps in our own. . . ." He claimed to have discovered the existence of a death wish in man that was opposed to his will to live and that drove him irresistibly to aggressive or violent behaviour.

A few years ago a controversy erupted over the publication of a book, *On Aggression*, written by Konrad Lorenz, the eminent ethologist, in which he has asserted, on the basis of his own and other studies of animal behaviour, that aggression, the motivation to violent behaviour, is innate to human nature. He has developed a "hydraulic model" of instinctive behaviour according to which the performance of fixed action patterns, as in sexual behaviour or feeding, depends upon the accumulation of energy specific to these activities in centres in the conceptual nervous system. Release of the energy occurs when appropriate stimuli are provided, but in the absence of stimulation the energy must sooner or later find an outlet in relation to an inappropriate object or even aimlessly. This means that like the sex urge or hunger, an urge to indulge in an act of aggression or violent behaviour wells up in human beings from time to time and must find an outlet. The roots of this instinct or urge are said to be in the genetic structure of man.

Two other books, *The Territorial Imperative* by Ardrey and *The Naked Ape* by Morris, also published about the same time, made the same point about the innately violent nature of man. These two latter writers are not scientists themselves, but have brought together masses of evidence from various fields of science in support of their views.

The debate was joined by a number of eminent scientists: biologists, ethnologists, psychologists, anthropologists and others, who discussed the issues raised by the above authors in the light of the latest findings of their disciplines. These views have been brought together in several publications including *Man and Aggression*, *Aggression and Evolution*, and *Learning Non-Aggression*. The contributors include Morton Hunt, Leonard Berkowitz, Leon Eisenberg, Rene Dubos, Sally Carrighar, J. P. Scott, J. H. Crook, Davis E. David, Robert E. Hinde, Nikolass Tinbergen and Ashley Montagu. Erich Fromm has written a well-researched treatise—*The Anatomy of*

Human Destructiveness. The consensus is in favour of the view that violence is not in the genes of mankind, nor is there an innate drive for violent behaviour, unlike sex and hunger, which must surface at regular intervals and seek satisfaction. The potential for violent behaviour is undoubtedly there. But it is triggered only in specific situations. They have brought together impressive evidence from the fields of neurophysiology,biology, psychology, ethnology, paleontology and anthropology.

Controverting Lorenz's view, Crook comments:

> In considering aggression Lorenz ignores, however, Craig's (1918, 1928) further and more important distinction between 'appetites' and 'aversions'. Aversive behaviour is a response to undesirable or harmful stimulation and persists until the individual flees or until the stimulation is removed. Aggression, which Craig described as an 'aversion' occurs in the social context only on the appearance of an offending individual and continues until one or the other of the mutual offenders goes away. According to this account, aggressive behaviour is non-rythmic and lacks an appetitive phase. . . . There is no theoretical requirement for aggressive behaviour to well up spontaneously without prior stimulation; and this appears to accord well with descriptive data. (*Man and Aggression,* p. 193; hereafter referred to as *M & A*)

He has the following remark to make about the theory of aggression being in the genes:

> In higher mammals and in man, as well as in more lowly creatures, the hereditary component of aggression consists in the tendency to react with attack or hostility to certain classes of stimulation. There is, however, as we have seen, no effective evidence for a genetically determined appetite for aggressive behaviour. The social organization of advanced birds and mammals is, furthermore, known to depend upon the adoption of appropriate roles by young animals subject to learning in 'socialization'. Ample work with non-primate and primate mammals testifies to the importance of learning and other non-genetic factors in the determination of individual temperament and behaviour. (*M & A*, pp. 196–7)

Hinde comments:

> Lorenz acknowledges that "many sociologists and psychologists maintain" that aggression is primarily a response to external factors, but he cites none of the evidence they have produced. He almost totally neglects the long history of support which this view has had among psychologists. . . . (*Aggression and Evolution,* p. 96; hereafter referred to as *A & E*)

Discussing the physiological basis of the emotions of fear and anger, Scott points out that:

> stimulation from the outside, such as the pain of a blow, will upset the balance and cause the emotion of anger. Thus we have a mechanism which prolongs and magnifies the effects of external stimulation but no mechanism for building up the first stimulation from within. There is no internal change corresponding to the change in blood sugar which results in hunger. In short the physiological evidence is against Lorenz's notion of the spontaneity of aggression, and indeed, it is difficult to see how such a mechanism for spontaneity could have evolved. Fighting is an emergency reaction and it is hard to imagine how natural selection would lead to the development of a mechanism of continuous internal accumulation of energy which would unnecessarily put an animal into danger. (*M & A*, p. 158)

Psychologists of the post-Freudian era have modified the content of the concept "aggression" as used by Freud. It has come to mean not merely violent behaviour, but any kind of behaviour in which a person acts forcefully in order to achieve some goal. A student who is very diligent in his studies is said to be "aggressive"; as also a businessman who exerts himself vigorously to make a success of his business. Thus, coming to recognize that the urge behind what was known as aggressive behaviour had nothing basically violent about it, psychologists have sought to rechristen it. Erich Fromm seems to have the best formulation for it and prefers to call it "the need for transcendence".

According to him, in healthy individuals this need takes creative forms. A farmer gains transcendence by using his skills for raising crops. and an engineer in overcoming the limitations of nature by his creations. Others may find satisfaction for this need by devoting themselves to science or by tackling social and political problems. But others, whose minds have undergone unhealthy twists, will find satisfaction in destructive behaviour, in harming people.

This need also takes violent forms to ward off threats to life, freedom or other valued objects. This form of behaviour is biologically programmed and is common to both animals and

human beings. It is healthy in the sense that its object is not to destroy life but to preserve it. It is biologically adaptive. Fromm calls this form of violence benign.

When it takes an unhealthy and malignant form this need manifests itself in destructiveness and cruelty that are not defence against threats. This form of behaviour is biologically non-adaptive, is not phylogenetically programmed and is characteristic only of human beings. The potentiality for developing a character prone to malignant aggression is rooted in the human condition itself. Man is an animal that has acquired self-consciousness, reason and imagination and has lost most of the instincts that guide animal behaviour. Thus man is cut off from the rootedness in nature that sustains other animals.

And so, according to Fromm,

> . . . man's nature cannot be defined in terms of a specific quality, such as love, hate, reason, good or evil, but only in terms of fundamental contradictions that characterize human existence and have their root in the biological dichotomy between missing instincts and self-awareness. This conflict produces certain psychic needs common to all men. He is forced to overcome the horror of separateness, of powerlessness, and of lostness, and find new forms of relating himself to the world to enable him to feel at home. . . . These different ways of satisfying the existential needs manifest themselves in passion, such as love, tenderness, striving for justice, independence, truth, hate, sadism, masochism, destructiveness, narcissism. . . . (*The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, p. 226; hereafter referred to as *AHD*)

Thus, according to Fromm, man feels a need to understand what the world is all about or to have a frame of reference and an object of devotion which can be the focal point of all his strivings. He needs to feel rooted, that is, to establish unity with the natural world and within himself, and needs to feel effective, that is, capable of effecting changes in the outer world. These needs can be fulfilled in ways that are life-giving and creative and benificient to other beings or in the opposite manner that is destructive. Thus man, aware of his separateness, needs to find new ties with his fellowmen. He can choose the way of love or symbiosis, or can solve the problem by becoming a narcissist, loving himself only to the exclusion of the world. This can, in extreme cases, lead to a

craving to destroy others. "If no one exists outside me, I need not fear others, nor need I to relate myself to them."

Psychotherapeutic experience shows that many kinds of violence involving cruelty, sometimes without any reasonable motive, are products of mental ill-health. Sadistic violence is a form of pathological violence often linked to forms of abnormal sexuality. Victims of other forms of psychic disorder are also prone to violence, like psychopaths, manic-depressives and paranoids. Some forms of violence are the expression of long repressed hatred and anger that bursts out uncontrollably. Another kind of violence that takes shocking forms in multiple murders is thought to have a sort of emotional atrophy at its root, caused by faulty upbringing which stunts a person's capacity to empathize with others, to perceive that they can feel pain or suffer. As Morrison, who has been studying those who have committed multiple murders, says, they look upon human beings as things. (*NYT*, 27 August 1984).

This leaves us with the potential for benign violence that is subjected to various patterns of social conditioning. Young men are expected to fight for the defence of their country and kill in doing so. Mobilizing data from anthropology and history, Fromm has convincingly shown that war was not part of the lives of our early "primitive" ancestors. It was a later phenomenon in history and its virulence has kept increasing with the progress of civilization. Violent behaviour in defence of life and property is also socially sanctioned. The cultural atmosphere may make violent solutions of problems seem more feasible and expeditious than peaceful ones. Many observers have pointed out that the incessant depiction of violent action on the television in the United States of America and other affluent countries might have the effect of making violent behaviour seem to be the only effective and commendable way of dealing with problems.

While some of the more civilized societies in the world are victims of an epidemic of violence, anthropologists have, in the course of their studies of tribal societies, come upon societies that have been able to eliminate almost all serious violent behaviour from their midst. Rene Dubos, for instance, refers to the lifestyle of the South Sea Islanders as follows:

> Some three thousand years ago, the Polynesian people began to evolve social systems in response to ecological and social problems similar to ours today. Until the time of the European explorations, these islands constituted small isolated worlds, their inhabitants had little chance to escape to new frontiers or to expand demographically and economically. Many South Pacific islanders adapted to confined places by making sociability an essential aspect of their lifestyles and by cultivating social and ecological practices that minimized deprivations and conflicts. Before the arrival of the white man, life on Tahiti, Samoa and Hawaii was sufficiently comfortable, safe and happy to generate among the Enlightenment philosophers the pleasant illusion that primitive life proved the fundamental goodness of man and gave the hope that modern societies could re-create the living conditions that had made possible the good, happy savage.
>
> There were, of course, many examples of violence among primitive societies. While Tahiti, Hawaii and Samoa appeared to the European explorers as the blessed islands, the neighbouring Marquesas Islands harboured ill-tempered cannibals and the Easter Group Islands were the sites of destructive revolutions. . . . (*M & A*, pp. 90–1)

The Eskimos of Greenland are well known as a peaceful people who cannot conceive why men need to fight wars. Margaret Mead has studied in detail the Arapesh, a primitive people in the South Pacific, while others have made detailed studies of other such societies that have been able to continue with peaceful lifestyles. Dentan has described the Semai of West Malaysia, Berndt the Australian aborigines and Turnbull the Mbuti of West Africa. Fromm has analysed anthropological studies of thirty preliterate societies and has classified them according to their proneness to violence. He has come up with three classes: class A consists of what he calls life-affirmative societies, class B of non-destructive-aggressive societies, and class C of destructive societies.

According to Fromm, the main emphasis of the ideals, customs and institutions in the societies belonging to class A is that they serve the preservation and growth of life in all its forms. There is a minimum of hostility, violence, or cruelty among the people, no harsh punishment, hardly any crime, and the institution of war is absent or plays an exceedingly small role. Children are treated with kindness, there is no severe corporal punishment; women are in general considered equal to men, or at least are not exploited or humiliated; there is a generally permissive and affirmative attitude toward sex. There is little envy, covetousness, greed and exploitativeness. There is also little competition and individualism and a great deal of cooperation; personal property exists only in things that are used. There is a general attitude of trust and confidence, not only in others but particularly in nature; a general prevalence of good humour; and a relative absence of depressive moods.

The second system, according to him, shares the basic elements of the first of not being destructive, but differs in that aggressiveness and war, although not central, are normal occurrences, and in that competition, hierarchy and individualism are present. These societies are by no means permeated by destructiveness or cruelty or by exaggerated suspiciousness but they do not have the kind of gentleness and trust which is characteristic of the societies in system A. These societies are characterized by a spirit of male aggressiveness, individualism, the desire to get things and to accomplish tasks.

The structure of system C societies, according to Fromm, is very distinct. It is characterized by interpersonal violence, destructiveness, aggression and cruelty, both within the tribe and against others, pleasure in war, maliciousness and treachery. The whole atmosphere is one of hostility, tension and fear. Usually there is a great deal of competition, great emphasis on private property (if not in material things then in symbols), strict hierarchies and a considerable amount of war-making. According to the analysis, eight of the thirty societies studied fell in class A, fourteen in class B and eight in class C.

It has to be noted that all preliterate societies that have been able to eliminate intra-social conflict have generally been helpless in the face of aggression from outside by powerful enemies. In the face of danger, most of them seem to have chosen 'flight' instead of 'fight' as their mode of coping with the situation. The urge to stand up and fight for one's rights and possessions has been looked upon as one that is disruptive of peace. As is apparent from the description of the destructive societies, the solutions such societies had chosen for the social and economic problems they faced resulted in their being saddled with forms of endemic violence. The characteristics of the members of these societies have certain twists that can be called mildly pathological. This is true of more advanced

societies also, in which group narcissism rooted in linguistic or religious identities, sentiments of racial superiority, and/or deep-rooted feelings of national insecurity give rise to mild forms of pervasive paranoia. Economic inequality and exploitation and the absence of political freedom, human rights and effective forms of democratic self-rule for peoples lead to states of chronic tension and conflict in which the classes having a vested interest in the system tend toward malignant forms of violence and the deprived and the disinherited have a proneness to violence that has to be recognized as a healthy reaction.

More advanced civilizations seem to have adopted complex solutions. In India, at least by the time Gandhi emerged on the scene, Hindu society had been brought to a state of superficial peacefulness by a rigid system of social control and a code of ethics bolstered by a philosophical outlook that extolled quietism. The human virtues had been apportioned among the *varnas*—the four original social divisions—and nonviolence was supposed to be the attribute of brahmins and of those who had renounced the world and become *sannyasins*. The task of protecting the rights and properties of the brahmins and the others was made the duty of the kshatriyas, the warrior *varna*. The *sannyasin*, having renounced the world, had no worldly goods, relations or rights for which to fight, and was thus supposed to be in the ideal situation for practising nonviolence. The other *varnas* or castes had to be obedient to those above them, a situation not different from that of the toiling masses in other great and stratified civilizations.

Thus two streams of culture had been created, one for the common man, the householder, and the other for the aspirants after spiritual enlightenment. The common man was expected to follow the ways of the world. For him nonviolence meant obeying the law and the master class, as everywhere else in the world. The ruling class had the sanction of religious authority to use violence for maintaining law and order, that is, to suppress the common people when necessary, and for waging war.

Gandhi took his concept of nonviolence from Hinduism and in his humility declared that he was only trying to work out in practice a principle that was as old as the hills. But in the course of his experiments with it he made discoveries that radically changed his perception of the doctrine. He came to

perceive that nonviolence as he understood it had another root in the spirit that makes one stand up and fight for one's rights, dignity and honour, which was believed to be opposed to the spirit of love and cooperation, so that cultures that had valued a peaceful lifestyle had sought to suppress or discourage it.

The circumstances under which this new perception of Gandhi crystallized were brought about by his decision in 1918, during World War I, to give unconditional support to the British war effort. He became, as he himself described it, "a self-appointed recruiting sergeant", and went from village to village exhorting young men to join the army. However he was unable to get a single recruit from Gujarat where he made this effort. While others tended to interpret this unwillingness to fight as the result of a nonviolent lifestyle, Gandhi took it to be otherwise. He wrote to C. F. Andrews on 29 July, 1918; "I find great difficulty in recruiting, but do you know that not one man has yet objected because he would not kill? They object because they fear to die. This unnatural fear of death is ruining the nation. . . ." (*CW* 14, p. 510)

Friends were aghast at these antics of an out-and-out believer in nonviolence and remonstrated with him. He wrote back spiritedly, defending his stand. He wrote to Andrews in June:

> Regarding those who want to fight but will not, either out of cowardice or spite against the British, what is my duty? Must I not say, "If you can follow my path, so much the better, but if you cannot, you ought to give up cowardice or spite and fight?" You cannot teach ahimsa to a man who cannot kill. You cannot make a dumb man appreciate the beauty and merit of silence. . . . I shall best spread the gospel of ahimsa by asking the himsak (believer in violence) men to work out their himsa in the least offensive manner and may succeed in the very act in making them realize the better worth of ahimsa. (*CW* 14, p. 444)

On 30 June the same year he wrote to Esther Faering:

> Indians have a double duty to perform. If they are to preach the mission of peace, they must first prove their ability in war. This is a terrible discovery, but it is true. . Must we all try to become Sandows before we can love perfectly? This seems to be unnecessary. It is enough if one can face the world without flinching. It is personal courage that is an absolute necessity. And some will acquire that courage after they are trained to fight. I am passing through new experiences. I am struggling to express

myself. Some things are still obscure to me. And I am trying to find words for others which are plain to me. (*CW* 14, p. 463)

In other letters to Andrews and Maganlal Gandhi he had sharp comments to make on the perception and place of nonviolence in the Indian tradition. In a letter to Maganlal Gandhi on 25 July he wrote:

... to be sure I have felt in all seriousness, that Swaminarayana and Vallabhacharya have robbed us of our manliness. They made people incapable of self-defence. The love taught by Swaminarayana and Vallabh is all sentimentalism. Swaminarayana and Vallabh did not simply reflect over the true nature of nonviolence. Nonviolence consists in holding in check all impulses in the *chitta*. It comes into play especially in men's relations with one another. There is not even a suggestion of this idea in their writings. Having been born in this degenerate age of ours they could not remain unaffected by its atmosphere and had in consequence quite an undesirable effect on Gujarat. Tukaram and Ramdas had no such effect. The *abhangas* of the former and the *slokas* of the latter admit ample scope for manly striving (*CW* 14, p. 504)

To Andrews 6 July:

I have not yet reached the bottom of my difficulties, much less have I solved them. The solution is not likely to affect my immediate work. But of the failure I can now say nothing. You say Indians as a race did repudiate it, blood lust, with full consciousness in days gone by and deliberately took their choice to stand on the side of humanity. Is this historically true? I see no sign of it in either the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*, not even in my favourite Tulsidas which is much superior in spirituality to Valmiki. I am not now thinking of these works in their spiritual meaning. The incarnations are described as certainly bloodthirsty, revengeful and merciless to the enemy. They have been credited with having resorted to tricks. The battles are described with no less zest than now and warriors are equipped with weapons of destruction such as could be possibly conceived by the human imagination.

The Hindus were not less eager than the Mahomedans to fight. They were simply disorganized, physically weakened and torn by dissensions. The code of Manu prescribes no such renunciation that you impute to the race. Buddhism, conceived as a doctrine of universal tolerance, signally failed, and, if the legends are true, the great Shankaracharya did not hesitate to use unspeakable cruelty in banishing Buddhism out of India, and he succeeded. (*CW* 14, pp. 475–6)

His support to the British in the war effort was an excellent political strategy, taking the circumstances of the period into consideration. There was neither an atmosphere for struggle nor had Gandhi acquired any substantial support among the people. The bargaining approach of the other leaders was leading them nowhere.

From his South African days Gandhi had consistently refused to take advantage of an adversary's difficulties. Here also he established his bonafides as a friend of the British people and sought to symbolize a generousness on the part of the Indian people that would expectedly be reciprocated by the British. He was honoured for this by the presentation of a medal, Kaiser-i-Hind II class. He made good use of all this when he set off on his campaign trial against the 'Satanic' Government in 1921.

This was all good political strategy, but how did it square with his nonviolence? Was all that he wrote to Andrews, Maganlal Gandhi and others merely sophistry, or mere rationalizations, as psychologists would say? His entire career up to this point had established his burning faith in nonviolence, as also his uttermost sincerity and guilelessness. But rationalization is a subconscious mechanism that has little to do with the conscious personality.

That he was not merely rationalizing but going through a process of rethinking is evident from other letters and writings of the period. To give one example, he wrote to K. G. Mashruwala on 29 July:

In what manner should children learn to use their strength? It is a difficult thing to teach them to defend themselves and yet not be overbearing. Till now we used to teach them not to fight back if anybody beat them. Can we go on doing so now? What will be the effect of such teaching on a child? Will he be in his youth a forgiving or a timid man? My powers of thinking fail me. This new aspect of nonviolence which had revealed itself to me has enmeshed me in no end of problems. I have not found one master key for all the riddles, but it must be found.

Shall we teach out boys to return two blows for one, or tolerate a blow from anyone weaker than themselves but to fight back, should a stronger one attack them, and take the beating that might follow? What should one do when assaulted by a Government official? Should the boy submit to the beating at the moment and then come to us for advice, or should he do what

> might seem best in the circumstances and take the consequences? These are the problems that face us if we give up the royal road of turning the other cheek. Is the first course the right one because easier to take ? Or is it that we shall come upon the right path only by treading through a dangerous one ? (CW 14, pp. 515-16)

In 1921 he was in the midst of the non-cooperation campaign and was laying the utmost stress on the observance of nonviolence in thought, word and deed. There was no need for the rationalization of a line in support of soldiering. But when he was faced with a situation in which the menfolk of a village in the province of Bihar had run away in the face of a police raid, leaving the women and children and their belongings at the mercy of the police, he was aghast at their behaviour and told them that they should have defended their womenfolk and children with violence if necessary, since violence was better than cowardice.

It is clear from his utterances that the urge to fight back, manliness and a sense of human dignity formed the basis of his concept of nonviolence, in addition to love. He discovered that both these urges were invaluable assets of human beings and both had to be nurtured and synthesized if human civilization was to progress. The conflict between the two urges is rooted in the existential dilemmas of life. Honour and peace, bread and freedom, survival and love are arrayed against one another and people are often faced with excruciating choices. The progress of human civilization or the spiritual ascent of man consists in being able to resolve these dilemmas. Gandhi set out to do that in his discovery of and action researches in satyagraha.

The strategy of making violent men work out their militancy in the least offensive manner, mentioned in his letter to Andrews quoted earlier, was made use of by him during the non-cooperation movement in 1921. At that time he pursued a programme of burning of foreign clothes with great zeal. The poet Rabindranath Tagore and Andrews objected vehemently to the apparent violence inherent in this programme. In his replies Gandhi gave many moral, political, economic and other reasons in justification of the programme. But he gave one reason in an article, "The Ethics of Destruction", that gives us an insight into his method.

> India is racial today. It is with the utmost effort that I find it possible to keep in check the evil passions of the people. The general body of the people are filled with ill-will because they are weak and hopelessly ignorant of the way to shed their weakness. I am transferring their ill-will from men to things. (CW 21, p. 43)

Gandhi's nonviolence is not mere non-injury to others, the mere observance of a taboo. It is a way of restructuring human relations that seeks to enhance the freedom, manliness and dignity of everyone involved in the interactions initiated by it. He had realized that often the knowledge and skills at one's disposal would not be enough to combine nonviolence with fearless manliness. The science of satyagraha had yet miles to go. What knowledge and skills were there had yet to reach many, and every individual had to grow into nonviolence. The mechanical following of rules would not deliver the goods. People should not be paralysed into inaction because of the fear of committing mistakes. Hence his insistence on preserving manliness, the urge for transcendence, the essence of being a human being, even at the cost of violent action.

Of course, such violence could only be defensive, in defence of oneself, others and/or values and rights. He had advised women on umpteen occasions to learn to be fearless and defend themselves nonviolently. But he knew the limitations. So he said:

> Such faith and courage cannot be acquired in a day. Meantime, we must try to explore other means. When a woman is assaulted, she may not stop to think in terms of himsa or ahimsa. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that comes to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength, and if need be, die in the effort. (*Nonviolence in Peace and War*, p. 428; hereafter referred to as *NVPW*)
>
> But what about a man who is a witness to such crime? The answer is implied in the foregoing. He must not be a passive onlooker. He must protect the woman. He must not run for police help, he must not rest satisfied by pulling the alarm chain in the train. If he is able to practice nonviolence, he will die in doing so and thus save the woman in jeopardy. If he does not believe in nonviolence or cannot practise it, he must try to save her by using all the force he may have. . . . (*NVPW*, p. 429)

The value he attached to the capacity to stand up for oneself, to the power of self-defence, is also evident from the

clause in the pledge of Independence that refers to India's spiritual ruin brought about by the British. The pledge was drafted by Gandhi, adopted by the Indian National Congress and was taken by the people at mass meetings all over India on 26 January 1930, on the eve of the Salt Satyagraha. The clause runs as follows:

> Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression, or even defend our homes and families from the attack of thieves, robbers and miscreants. (*CW* 42, p. 385)

A few years later he entered into correspondence with some European pacifists who objected to his participation in wars. In his replies he defended his actions as having been in the best interests of nonviolence and said that he "must not pretend repentance" when he did not feel it. (*CW* 40, p. 363) In one article he summarized his position as follows:

> 1. I did not offer my services because I believed in war. I offered them because I could not avoid participation in it at least indirectly.
> 2. I had no status to resist participation.
> 3. I do not believe that war can be avoided by taking part in it even as I do not believe that evil can be avoided by participation in it. This, however, needs to be distinguished from sincerely helpless participation in many things we hold to be evil or undesirable.
> 4. The anarchist's argument is irrelevant as his participation in terrorism is deliberate, voluntary and pre-conceived.
> 5. The war certainly did no good to the so-called victors.
> 6. The pacifist resisters who suffered imprisonment certainly served the cause of peace.
> 7. If another war was declared tomorrow I could not with my present views about the existing Government assist it in any shape or form; on the contrary, I should exert myself to the utmost to induce others to withhold their assistance and to do everything possible and consistent with ahimsa to bring about its defeat. (*YI*, 8 March 1928)

But at the same time he emphasized the difference between the situation of the European pacifists and his own. In reply to a communication from B. de Ligt, he wrote:

> Let the European war resisters appreciate one vital difference between them and me. They do not represent exploited nations, I represent the most exploited nation on earth. To use an unflattering comparison, they represent the cat and I represent the mouse. Has a mouse even the sense of nonviolence? Is it not a fundamental want with him to strive to offer successful violence before he can be taught to appreciate the virtue, the grandeur, the supremacy of the law of nonviolence—ahimsa—in the field of war? May it not be necessary for me as a representative of the mouse tribe to participate in my principal's desire for wreaking destruction even for the purpose of teaching him the superiority of nonviolence? (*YI*, 9 May 1929)

This motif of the cat and the mouse recurred again and again in his writings and this differentiation between the weak and the strong, the victim and the aggressor, prompted him to give his unstinted moral support to the victims of aggression in Abyssinia, China, Spain, Poland and elsewhere. His admiration for the Polish resistance to Nazi aggression stemmed from the same outlook. Responding to a Polish woman he wrote (*H*, 23 September 1939):

> So she has gone to find the Poland of her imagination fighting to the last ditch, not for merely preserving her own freedom but for the freedom of all those nations who have lost it. And in this she naturally includes her second love, India. May her dream prove true. If Poland has that measure of uttermost bravery and an equal measure of selflessness, history will forget that she defended herself with violence. Her violence will be counted almost as nonviolence. (*NVPW*, p. 253)

In explaining the above statement to a questioner who had asked if Gandhi regarded the Polish resistance as almost nonviolent, why did he object to the resolution of the Congress that had offered participation of India on the side of the Allies in the war if she was given self-rule, he said:

> Surely . . . there is no analogy between the two cases. If a man fights with his sword single-handed against a horde of dacoits armed to the teeth, I should say he is fighting almost nonviolently. Have I not said to our women that if in defence of their honour, they used their nails and teeth and even a dagger. I should regard their conduct as nonviolent? Supposing a mouse in fighting a cat tried to resist the cat with his sharp beak, would you call that mouse violent? In the same way, for the Poles to stand valiantly against the German hordes, vastly superior in number, military equipment

and strength, was almost nonviolent. I would not mind repeating that statement over and over again.

You must give full value to the word "almost". But we are 400 million here. If we were to organize a big army and prepare ourselves to fight foreign aggression, how could we, by any stretch of imagination, call ourselves almost nonviolent, let alone nonviolent? The Poles were unprepared for the way the enemy swooped down on them. When we talk of armed preparation we contemplate preparation to meet any violent combination with superior violence. If India ever prepared herself that way, she will constitute the greatest menace to world peace. For if we take that path, we will also have to choose the path of exploitation like the European nations. (*NVPW*, p. 571)

He used the imagery of the cat and the mouse to symbolize his empathy for the underdog and his commitment to the latter's emancipation. It also makes clear why he would have condoned, even welcomed, violence in self-defence by the Bihar villagers referred to earlier, but could not do so in the case of the violence in Chauri Chaura in 1922 where a crowd encircled a police station, set fire to it and killed several policemen. The latter was not in self-defence. Neither was it a display of the courage to defend a human value. The crowd in a frenzy outnumbered the policemen and chased them, forcing them to take shelter in the station house.

Violence in self-defence is also inadmissible when a number of people have gathered for a peaceful demonstration and are attacked by the police, because in this case one ought to have known beforehand that the demonstration was being planned as an act of peaceful resistance and that there was every likelihood of a police attack. One ought to have stayed out if one was not prepared to face the consequences of resistance.

The position of Gandhi, that one started not from observation of rules and taboos, but from the existential reality of human relations and social responsibility, led him to discriminate between different kinds of violence and to take sides.

When World War II broke out, Gandhi gave expression to his sympathy for the Allies again and again.

I know that I have no authority to speak for any person except myself. . . . Having, therefore, made my position vis-á-vis the Congress position quite clear, I told His Excellency (the Viceroy) that my own sympathies were with England and France from the

purely humanitarian standpoint. I told him that I could not contemplate without being stirred to the very depth the destruction of London. (*H*, 9 September 1939)

The following is Gandhi's reply to a friend who had wondered why it was necessary to express sympathy with one side when both were fighting with the same deadly weapons.

I have already said in these columns that my nonviolence does recognize different species of violence, defensive and offensive. It is true that in the long run the difference is obliterated, but the initial merit persists. A nonviolent person is bound, when the occasion arises, to say which side is just. Thus I wished success to the Abyssinians, the Spaniards, the Chinese and the Poles though in each case I wished that they could have offered nonviolent resistance. . . . (*H*, 9 December 1939)

My personal reaction towards this war is one of greater horror than before. I was not so disconsolate before as I am today. The greater horror would prevent me today from becoming the self-appointed recruiting sergeant that I had become during the last war. And yet, strange as it may appear, my sympathies are wholly with the Allies. Willynilly this war is resolving itself into one between such democracy as the West has evolved and totalitarianism as it is typified in Herr Hitler. . . . (*H*, 30 September 1939)

He would not take up recruiting as he had done in 1918. The situation had undergone a far-reaching change during the intervening years. Gandhi's own place in public life, in India and the world, was now vastly different. First of all, hundreds of thousands had responded to his call for nonviolent direct action in 1930 and the events of those days had demonstrated that there were thousands in the country capable of practising nonviolent bravery. He held the reins of a fairly well-knit and powerful nonviolent movement. By 1941 he was putting before the people of India nonviolent mass resistance to foreign aggression as a feasible proposition.

Eleven years earlier, as has been quoted elsewhere, Gandhi had said that with his then views about the Government of India he would not help a war in which the latter was involved and would work for its defeat. Yet he did not do that when World War II broke out. His views about the Government of India, run from London, had not changed, but the emergence of Nazism had changed the total perspective. So, while he declared that his sympathies were with the Allies, he

insisted that India must be freed from bondage to strengthen the claim that the latter were fighting for the preservation of freedom and democracy. He did not want to bargain for India's freedom in exchange for her support in the war effort. He did not want to embarrass the Allies in any way. He desired that free India should give her moral support to the Allies and use her nonviolent strength in their cause. As he explained in an article:

> There then remains Britain's case. The Congress has caused no embarrassment. I have declared already that I shall do nothing to embarrass Great Britain. She will be embarrassed if there is anarchy in India. That the Congress, as long as it is under my discipline, will not support.
>
> What the Congress cannot do is to lend its moral influence to Britain. Moral influence is never mechanically given. It is for Britain to take it. Perhaps the British statesmen do not think the Congress has any to lend. Perhaps they think that all they need is material aid in this warring world. If they do, they will not be far wrong. Morality is contraband in war. . . . But the moral influence of the Congress cannot avail Britain unless she washes her hands clean of India. (*CW* 72, p. 30)

But he did not visualize any recruiting for the army in India by anybody if India was given her freedom. He had given expression to his views on nonviolent defence in the face of foreign aggression and desired that the country adopt that course. He wanted India to use her nonviolent strength to help the Allied cause. He further explained his stand in the same article:

> My friend does not see the difference between my recruiting in Kheda and my attitude now. During the last war the moral issue had not been raised. The Congress was not pledged to nonviolence. It had not the moral hold on the masses that it now enjoys. I was acting on my own in all I did. I had even attended the war conference. And to be true to my declaration, I had been recruiting at the cost of my health. I told the people that if they wanted arms, military service was the surest way to get them. But if they were nonviolent like me my appeal was not to them. There was no nonviolent man among my audiences as far as I know. Their reluctance was based on ill-will towards Britain. This was gradually giving place to an enlightened determination to throw off the foreign yoke.

In a resolution that he had drafted for the Congress Working Committee which the latter did not accept, he had said:

> The Working Committee never had occasion to determine whether India can be defended nonviolently, nor even is it now called upon to do so, though the proven futility of violence to defend the nations of Europe is sufficient indication for the Working Committee for coming to a decision. But till the hour for taking a final decision arrives, the Working Committee must keep an open mind. But as far as the present is concerned, the Working Committee are firmly of the opinion that in pursuance of their nonviolent policy Congressmen must not have anything to do with military training or activities calculated to make India military-minded. Therefore the Working Committee cannot but view with grave alarm the attempt made in an organized manner to prepare India for military defence. In the opinion of the Working Committee if India were free and independent without an army she would have no fear of external aggression. The best defence that free India can put up if the people accepted the Congress policy would be to cultivate friendliness with the whole world. To invest crores of rupees in armaments, fortresses and the like would be to invite foreign attack. The Working Committee believe that India is too poor to invest money in costly defence forces and modern equipment. The Working Committee therefore warn the British Government against the feverish preparations that they are making for the professed defence of India. They are of opinion that they are intended merely to help Britain. . . . (*CW* 72, p. 241)

The draft went on to point out that though there were popularly elected assemblies in the provinces as well as one at the Centre, these had not been consulted and one man, the Viceroy, has been armed with the powers to use the resources of the country for war purposes. This was wrong and immoral and it called upon the British Government to "revise their suicidal policy and take the popular assemblies into their confidence". In that case, the draft went on to say, the "British Government may rely upon the fullest and friendliest cooperation of the Congress in the direction of peace effort in the nonviolent way commended by Gandhiji."

The Working Committee could not accept Gandhi's recommendations and took a different line of bargaining for freedom in exchange for India's participation in the war. The British Government was in no mood to listen. In the meantime the burden of the war preparations became unbearable for the

people. The poor were being crushed, both materially and morally. Gandhi felt convinced that,

> We are living today in a state of ordered anarchy. It is a misnomer to call such rule as is established in India a rule which promotes the welfare of India. Therefore, this ordered disciplined anarchy should go, and if there is complete lawlessness in India, as a result, I would risk it, though I believe, and should like to believe, that twenty-two years of continuous effort of educating India on the lines of nonviolence will not have gone in vain, and people will evolve real popular order out of the chaos. (*CW* 76, p. 115)

While he came to recommend an out and out nonviolent course of action to the people of India was there a change in his perception of the basic human urge or need in which both defensive violence and nonviolence are rooted? This had not decidedly changed. The following incident of 1947 makes the point clear. It has been described by Nirmal Kumar Bose, who acted as Gandhi's personal secretary for some time. Religious riots between the Hindus and the Muslims had broken out in Calcutta and Gandhi had gone there to try and quell them. He was staying in a predominantly Muslim area. A bomb outrage had taken place nearby and Gandhi had visited the spot.

> In the meantime, the reaction among the young men of Beleghata to this incident took a strange form. One group decided that it would atone for the sin committed by disregarding Gandhiji's political advice. A few Muslims were staying in the *bustee* (slum area). There were some women among them and a T.B. patient was lying on a cot in a damp tenement near a pond. The young men decided that these people should be protected by round the clock vigil in the night so that they would not be forced to leave. . . . They informed me that they would guard the *bustee* at night with arms and they would not hesitate to use sten guns if there was any attack on it. Their only request was that if the police found any unlicensed arms with anyone among them, he should not be arrested and locked up.
>
> I acted as their emissary in conveying this tough request to Gandhiji. He was then taking his evening walk in the garden (of the house in which he was staying). I told him everything in detail. The gist of his reply was as follows. The reader needs to be reminded that at that time the Muslim League ministry had bowed out and a Congress ministry had taken charge of the Government in West Bengal. Gandhiji remarked that if the ministers were incapable of protecting the poor Muslims, these young men would certainly deserve backing if they came forward to protect them.

> I was surprised by the decisiveness with which Gandhiji said this. Of course, I did not tell the young men what Gandhiji had said. Rather I arranged for an adequate armed force to guard the *bustee*. I had only personally requested a high police officer not to arrest anyone other than hooligans if found with unlicensed arms. However the occasion for this never arose. (*Gandhi Charita*, Oriya edition, p. 32 *et. seq.*)

The object of the discussions in this chapter is not to suggest that Gandhi's nonviolence was a camouflage or to justify the use of violence for revolutionary or other purposes by using his authority. The futility of violence in all spheres of life, from national defence to wars of liberation and revolutions, has become more obvious today than in the days of Gandhi. The need for a nonviolent way out has become more urgent than ever before. But that will require a proper appreciation of Gandhi's concept of nonviolence. As Gandhi had pointed out on one occasion, "He who would understand nonviolence must understand the meaning of the inevitable violence one sees about oneself." (*CW* 32, p. 380)

Love has been recognized as the fountainhead of nonviolence since the day of the prophets and seers. Gandhi has also equated nonviolence with love. But Gandhi's unique contribution has been in his insight that the urge to stand up for oneself, for a principle, for justice and self-respect was fundamental to life and had to be mobilized in the service of nonviolence. Only a proper synthesis of love with what Freud rather unfortunately christened "Aggression", and Fromm more appropriately called the "Need for Transcendence", can lead to the true flowering of nonviolence.

It is neither a genetically programmed hunger for violence nor the violence of those known to be mentally ill that threatens the survival of mankind today. It is the readiness of the average well-meaning person to put himself at the service of war machines. And all these men are driven by the decent and worthy impulses of protecting their loved ones. Acculturation into a frame of mind that is prepared to accept without questioning all orders that come from above makes them ready to commit the most gruesome atrocities. As the account of the Eichmann trial by Hannah Arendt shows, Eichmann and his like were not bloodthirsty monsters, as one would imagine them to be. The most infamous of all Nazi mass murderers, Eichmann was an average, good-natured civil

servant who would have retired under normal circumstances as a quiet family man loved by his family and liked by his neighbours for his decency. It was his unshakable belief that he had to carry out orders and did not require to use his mind or consult his conscience that made him order the liquidation of all those millions of Jews. Hitler was a psychotic, but one such man would not have been able to do all that he did without the cooperation of millions. One shudders to think that today there are millions of such bureaucrats and soldiers in the chancelleries and defence forces round the world. Jalianwallabagh and Mai-Lai were small-scale products of this robotization of men. Gandhi wanted to disentangle the valid urges from their cultural contexts and give them expression in an enlightened manner. His recipe of the satyagrahi mind, wedded to find out the truth at all costs and to cultivate a robust conscience, is the antidote to this "robotization". And satyagrahi action, that can shock such men out of their mechanical inhumanity.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SCIENCE OF LOVE

GANDHI CONSIDERED NONVIOLENCE to be a law of nature like gravitation or electricity and hoped that some day someone would write a scientific treatise on it. "All society is held together by nonviolence", he wrote once,

> even as the earth is held in her position by gravitation. But when the law of gravitation was discovered the discovery yielded results of which our ancestors had no knowledge. Even so when society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of nonviolence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today. But I cannot say in advance what the government based wholly on nonviolence will be like. (*CW* 68, p. 389)

For Gandhi nonviolence was not a set of rules of "dos" and "don'ts" or taboos that restricted one's choice in the field of action. It was a positive force, the knowledge of the working of which opened up new possibilities and choices before one, just as the knowledge of the laws of electricity had done in the sphere of technologies. For him, nonviolence was synonymous with love, but he preferred to use the term nonviolence because of the largely sexual connotations that the latter word has acquired in the English language.

It can be said that in the last three or four decades we have been witness to the emergence of a science of love in its widest connotation as envisioned by Gandhi. Though it is still rudimentary and chaotic, the outlines are clearly visible. Today people behave more nonviolently than they used to a century ago in many more areas of their lives than they themselves realize. To begin with the home, take the change that has taken place in our ways of dealing with children. Well-researched books have been written describing the atrocities that were committed on children by well-meaning parents for "civilizing" them. Thrashing was the least offensive among these. Children were locked up in closets without food for hours on end, made to sweat in the hot sun and

sometimes beaten to death. Today such atrocities have disappeared among the more enlightened of the human society and the need for treating children in a considerate manner is universally recognized. Love has come to be recognized as a very fundamental factor in our relations with children. Researchers have found that loving attention is even more important than food for the development and growth of children. Lack of love stunts children both emotionally and intellectually. Marasmus, a very serious ailment among small babies, rampant in Europe a century ago, was found to be due to their being deprived of affectionate attention; the disease was eradicated when the cause was discovered and remedied. The evidence in favour of the importance of love and abstention from violence in dealing with children has been spectacular and has brought about what Erich Fromm has called a "Children's Revolution"

Another area has been our attitude towards and dealings with the mentally sick. Here also the practice in earlier times was to look upon the lunatic with fear and abhorrence. They were kept in chains, beaten mercilessly to drive away the evil spirits that were supposed to have taken possession of them and maltreated in many other ways. Now this has changed radically. The mentally sick are looked upon with sympathy and consideration and attempts are made to cure them. Some of the forms of psychotherapy to which they are subjected involve concern and understanding that can be subsumed under the category of love.

The change in the attitude towards the mentally ill has spilled over to our attitude towards delinquents and criminals. The insight that anti-social behaviour is a consequence of some sort of mental ill-health has led to innumerable attempts all over the world to bring such people back to normalcy. In the process it has been discovered that not very infrequently it is society that drives them to anti-social behaviour and the society needs to be reformed if such behaviour is to be brought under control. It is to be noted that modern industrial societies are giving rise to forms of crime that are very rare and even unknown in relatively underdeveloped societies, and to increases in the incidence of these and other older types of crime. The recognition of the psychopathological origins of crime has led many countries all over the world to arrange psychotherapeutic treatment for prisoners. The abolition of

the death penalty in about two dozen countries in Europe and the demand for its abolition in many other countries, including India and the USA is symptomatic of a growing humane awareness.

All these changes have been accompanied by, or more appropriately have been results of, a growth in knowledge about human nature, about the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, which has highlighted the role of love in the developmental process and in life. Evidence has also accumulated in the realm of animal behaviour. Behaviourists might prefer to speak in terms of tactile contacts and audio-visual cues, but the evidence, translated into ordinary language, is unmistakable.

Ashley Montagu, in his treatise, *The Direction of Human Development*, has brought evidence from various sciences, from anthropology, biology and zoology, to prove his point that love plays an essential and indispensable part in the development of individuals and societies. The experiences of those who have studied animal behaviour at close range, almost in a participatory manner, show the existence of affection among them. The experiences of Joy Adamson of living with lions extending over several years have become well known all over the world through her books and a film based on them. Dian Fossey and Jane Goodall have worked for years among mountain gorillas and chimpanzees respectively and their experiences also confirm the existence of mutual affection among animals and the importance of the role it plays in their social life. They have also been able to demonstrate that a friendly and affectionate approach to these animals evokes a similar response from them. In a recent television feature on the langurs and rhesus monkeys of India the commentator quoted the opinion of scientists studying them to the effect that we have much to learn from their methods of child rearing in that it was likely to lead to a reduction in violence in human societies! Ashley Montagu has, in his book mentioned earlier, described a study of laboratory mice made some years ago that showed that mice that were given a daily dose of affectionate handling in the way of stroking and petting were able to survive the trauma of a major operation much better than those that were just left alone. There is quite an impressive mass of evidence about other mammals confirming the above findings. The evidence goes to confirm

Gandhi's belief that love is a natural force active in nature, at least among mammals and human beings.

It needs to be noted here that the changes in attitudes towards modes of dealing with children, the mentally ill and law-breakers has not been brought about by any superhuman effort of the will, or by a strong determination to put the teachings of the Buddha, Jesus or the saints into practice in daily life, but by changes in our perception due to newer knowledge about children, the mentally ill and other offenders. We have learnt to see them in a new light and rid ourselves of the mistaken notions we had about them. Thus, knowledge or truth has been the path to the practice of nonviolence. Gandhi had said that truth is the goal and nonviolence is the path. But the converse is also very evidently true. Practice of nonviolence in the larger spheres of life will become easy and seem natural when we acquire more knowledge to dispel the relative ignorance that surrounds us.

The conclusions that Ashley Montagu draws from the evidence he has marshalled in his book would have been wholeheartedly endorsed by Gandhi. Answering the question, "what is love?", Montagu states:

> From all this material it seems now clear that the main principle by which human beings must guide the future course of their development is love. It is, therefore, of the first importance that we be clear as to the meaning of love.
>
> Love is the form of behaviour that contributes to the healthy development of both the lover and the loved. By healthy development is meant the increase in the capacity to function as a totally harmonic person who confers creatively enlarging benefits upon all with whom he comes into association. Love, it would seem, is the principal developer of the potentialities for being human, it is the chief stimulus to the development of social competence, and the only quality in the world capable of producing that sense of belongingness and relatedness to the world of humanity that every healthy human being desires and develops. (*The Direction of Human Development*, p. 295; hereafter referred to as DHD)

The discovery of the law of love or nonviolence for Gandhi meant the conscious and deliberate use of it as a positive force for bringing about changes in individuals and society. In everyday life love is felt as a passive state, one feels the glow of it when in the presence of a loved one. It is thus a "reactive"

feeling. One reacts with other feelings of anger or hatred when in the presence of persons who have aggressive attitudes towards or aggressive designs on one. But for Gandhi love was a force that could change the attitudes and designs of aggressive persons and could even bring about changes of a permanent nature in their behavioural patterns. The uses of a positive loving or caring orientation in the realms of child-rearing, psychotherapy and in dealing with anti-social behaviour are of such a nature. However these uses are in respect of those who are weaker than the society as a whole, and are under some sort of superior control; those who do not individually pose any significant threat to society. In these cases one is able to put up with aggressive behaviour on the part of one's subjects. An understanding parent or a teacher does not react with anger to a child's temper tantrum. The psychoanalyst does not pay back a patient's angry outbursts when one of his unconscious motivations is touched. Gandhi sought to extend the use of nonviolence to dealings with the powerful, to those who wielded social, economic and political power, and in this context he called it a weapon.

Thus, when considered in its total range of use it can be seen that three types of situations face one who seeks to use love or nonviolence as a "weapon" or "tool": One, a situation in which the individual or the group one is dealing with is weaker than oneself or than the group one represents; two, when the individuals or groups in "confrontation" are on equal social footing; and three, a situation in which an individual or a group is facing a powerful individual or group that is already exercising power over the former or is attempting to do so. Gandhi sought to refine the use of nonviolence in all these situations.

Change of heart, which Gandhi claimed to be the goal of nonviolent action, was the object of the greatest criticism in the days of Gandhi, fifty years ago. It was argued that human nature was something fixed once for all and it is madness to think of being able to change it. But the last decades have given us plenty of data for reconsidering this view. Changing attitudes and behaviour patterns have become a major preoccupation of psychologists. The demand has come from politics, industry and the war offices. Politicians desire to find techniques for changing the attitudes of their electorates. Industries seek more sophisticated and effective methods for

marketing their products, and since World War II efforts have been on to carry on subversive propaganda in the enemy territories to weaken the morale of the populace. During the war in Vietnam the United States sent thousands of social scientists into South Vietnam in an effort to sell the American dream to the Vietnamese.

The research effort that has gone into this endeavour to find methods of persuasion has led to the amassing of a large volume of data about how the mind works, how things are perceived, opinions and attitudes formed and the ways in which these can be changed. Apparently good use is being made of this knowledge by the concerned parties: the politicians, the industries and the war offices. This has posed a dangerous threat to freedom. Aldous Huxley had written his novel, *The Brave New World*, to focus on the danger of the powerful using the techniques made available by science to subjugate and dominate the masses of the people. This was in the mid-thirties. About twenty years later he wrote another book, *Brave New World Revisited*, to describe the techniques that had been perfected during the intervening twenty years. There is now a vast mass of literature dealing with these methods and the dangers that they pose. The line that is being pursued is to persuade people to do things not by convincing them that it is the correct thing to do, by enlisting the help of their reason and conscience, but by manipulation that bypasses both these faculties. Truth is the first casualty in war and it is also so in this war for the minds of men.

However, the endeavour has demonstrated that human nature is not a simple entity. it is a complex thing consisting of many layers. The core of human nature consisting of innate needs and drives is something that may be beyond the powers of anybody to change. But these innate needs and drives manifest themselves in ways that are the product of their interaction with the social and natural environment. What is sought to be changed is this pattern of behaviour. Psychologists of the behaviourist school discount the importance of any inner motivation other than that stimulated by a system of rewards and punishments. They believe that human nature is wholly controllable from outside and seek to do so. The methods they have perfected suit well those in positions of political and economic power.

There have been other methods of changing human behaviour, notably those followed by psychoanalysis and logotherapy. Psychoanalysis seeks to make the person aware of the repressed and unconscious feelings, wishes, etc. that influence his behaviour and thus enlist his understanding, reason and values in the task of tackling his problems himself. Thus, whatever change takes place in his behaviour is willed by himself, he is not manipulated into it.

The system of logotherapy founded by Dr Viktor Frank is based on the premise that human beings need to have knowledge that gives meaning to their lives. They become confused and ill in situations in which whatever meaning they had given to their lives is lost. The therapy consists in helping them find new meanings at a more comprehensive level. Dr Franki was a prisoner in a detention camp in Nazi Germany during World War II and found that prisoners who felt that their lives were meaningful and who had a sense of purpose in their lives born out of this feeling were better able to withstand the vicissitudes of prison life. The system of logotherapy was born out of this prison experience.

Erik Erikson has noted the similarity between the methods of Freud and Gandhi. Both sought to bring latent conflicts into the open to enable them to be resolved. Freud did so with the conflicts in the psyche of the individual that had been driven into the unconscious, and Gandhi with conflicts in the society that had been pushed under the carpet. In forcing a conflict into the open Gandhi compelled the party to it which did not want the conflict and the moral issues involved in it to be exposed, to face it, to acknowledge his own responsibility in it, and thus to be brought round to a frame of mind in which he could participate in a positive manner in resolving the conflict. The parallelism with Freud does not end here. It goes farther, in that Gandhi also sought to bring out the conflict latent in the mind of the adversary, which had been forced into his unconscious, into his consciousness. Thus, as Gandhi used to say, he sought to carry the conflict into the heart of his adversary.

Giving his interpretation of the *Gita*, he has said that the battle of Kurukshetra described in it is an allegory for the battle between good and evil that goes on perennially in the heart of every human being. Thus an evil-doer also has a contrary urge for the good in his heart, which he does not want to acknowledge and tries to suppress. The task of satyagraha is

to create a situation in which he can no longer avoid facing the conflict. Gandhi does not seem to have heard of Freud till late in his life. N.K. Bose records that when he brought up Freud's name in a discussion with Gandhi in 1946, the latter asked who he was and became interested in knowing more about him. However he seems to have been aware of unconscious motivations and has pointed out that actions might be determined by such motives.

Freud had discovered that wishes and urges that are considered uncivilized or unsavoury are forced into the unconscious and that these disruptive forces dominate the unconscious. But there is evidence that feelings and urges that would be considered noble, urges to behave compassionately, to do justice, to share and to help, are also driven underground. In stratified, iniquitous and unfree societies the humane urges are disruptive and people learn to repress them from their earliest childhood. In societies that are politically free but in which pursuit of one's self-interest is considered the only normal and rational form of behaviour the altruistic urges are the casualty. While describing and interpreting the sadistic personality Fromm seems to suggest that it is of a piece in its malignacy and there is really no flicker of decent feelings in such a character. In his analysis of the character of Himmler he comes up against certain reports that suggest that he loved his family and was decent in certain other respects. Fromm discounts these as improbable. Maybe such feelings cannot form part of the conscious elements of a sadistic character, but they can be there in the unconscious and thus do influence one's behaviour. Fromm also reports that many German functionaries who had to carry out orders of mass killings became severely mentally ill. A few even committed suicide (*AHD*, p. 295-6). Anyway, according to Gandhi's understanding of human nature, its deepest layers consist of the noblest feelings and the task of nonviolent action is to tap these.

The essence of satyagrahic action based on nonviolence is the tapping of these deepest layers of human nature and action in this context has to be evaluated in the long run for its effectiveness in terms of this goal. Gandhi took over many forms of peaceful action that were already extant when he came on the scene. Industrial and general strikes, picketing, hunger strikes, protest demonstrations and non-payment of

taxes were not unknown before Gandhi, but he used them in a new conceptual setting and that made all the difference.

His strikes were not meant as a show of strength of the organization or the leader, as are many such strikes, in which, consequently, compulsion is used to bring unwilling workers or shopkeepers into line. For Gandhi a strike was for demonstrating the power and determination of the workers or the people; he was insistent that no compulsion should be used in any case against anybody. Picketing for him did not allow of forcible prevention or the interposing of one's body in the path of those who it was intended to prevent from doing something, entering a shop or a factory. His concept of swadeshi has been discussed elsewhere in detail. He used it as the ideological basis of his concept of boycott to rid the latter of all traces of a spirit of vengeance or retribution. Of course, he gave the concept of swadeshi a much broader connotation and made it a guiding principle of life in all spheres. Thus he sought to "purify" the methods, rid them of the traces of violence that were in them and give them a new shape.

Some of the guiding principles that Gandhi used in his struggles to put across its spirit were as follows. (1) Truthfulness in his relations with the adversary so that the latter gained and was progressively strengthened in the confidence that Gandhi would never mislead him by a ruse or a deceitful move even if the chasm between their respective stands on the matter at issue remained as wide as ever. (2) Respect for the personality of the opponent, the scrupulous avoidance of all personal attacks and acknowledgement of any praiseworthy traits that he saw in him or her. (3) To raise the conflict to the level of principles so that it was not given the character of a clash of mere self-interests: the issues were posed in terms of what is right, not who is right and has the might. (4) Readiness to acknowledge points that are found to be valid in the opponent's case, and to keep an open mind in this respect. (5) Not to embarrass the opponent, to abstain from taking advantage of his difficulties.

To take up the last point first, it is now well known how he suspended his movement in South Africa when a strike by railway workers created a difficult situation for the Government. In 1939, when the British Government became embroiled in World War II, there was a widespread demand that it was an opportune moment for starting a movement

against the Government, since it was already burdened with the war effort and therefore in a most vulnerable position. But Gandhi persistently refused to accede to the demand. He declared again and again that he did not want to embarrass the Government in any way. "The Congress has caused no embarrassment", he wrote in 1940. "I have declared already that I shall do nothing to embarrass Great Britain. She will be embarrassed if there is anarchy in India. That the Congress, so long as it is under my control, will not support." (CW 72, p. 30) He became prepared to start a movement in 1942 when he saw that the spirit of the people was being crushed and there was a virtual "ordered anarchy" in India caused by the way in which the Government functioned; the people could not be allowed to be reduced to abject impotence which bred in them spite for the British and a growing sympathy for the Axis powers.

In all his movements, from South Africa onwards he made special efforts to establish personal and friendly relations with his chief adversaries. He had become very friendly with General Smuts in South Africa and had even made a pair of sandals for him while in jail, which he presented to Smuts. In India he tried his best to establish personal equations with the Viceroys. This was, of course, helpful in giving Gandhi an insight into the working of their minds. It was useful both politically and from the point of view of satyagraha. He was eminently successful with Lord Irwin, though his successor, Lord Willingdon, was more circumspect and refused to become familiar with Gandhi. During the strike of the textile workers in Ahmedabad he kept in constant touch with his chief opponent, the leader of the mill-owners, and the two met almost daily for lunch.

His attitude of openness to the opponent's case also demanded that as a satyagrahi it was his duty to understand the opponent's viewpoint sympathetically. This is in direct opposition to Lenin's dictum that a revolutionist must not try to understand his opponent's point of view, as such an understanding is sure to weaken him. For Gandhi the essence of satyagraha lay in seeking the truth and in a conflict situation this involved seeking the element of truth that might be there in the opponent's stand. Besides, in order to be able to unfreeze the "frozen" attitude of the latter it was necessary to gain an insight into the working of his mind, just as a psychotherapist

has to go into the mind of his patient and establish a rapport with him.

Gandhi's advice to the satyagrahis engaged in the struggle for opening the road near a temple at Vykom to the untouchables illustrates this point.

> I am considering their condition of mind from their point of view and not my own. Had they not been Hindus they would not have talked as they did yesterday. And immediately we begin to think of things as our opponents think of them we shall be able to do them full justice. I know that this requires a detached state of mind and it is a state, very difficult to reach. Nevertheless for a satyagrahi it is absolutely essential. Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings of the world will disappear, if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint. We will then agree with our adversaries quickly or think of them charitably. In our case there is no question of agreeing with them quickly as our ideals are radically different. But we may be charitable to them and believe what they say. They do not want to open the road to the unapproachables. Now whether it is their self-interest or ignorance that tells them to say so, we really believe that it is wrong of them to say so. Our business then is to show them that they are in the wrong and we should do so by our suffering. I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long and based on supposed religious authority. . . . (CW 26, p. 271)

This object of opening a door in the adversary's heart and mind is a central concern of satyagraha. Even in the days of Gandhi, mass movements took forms in which it seemed that the sheer numbers of the participants overwhelmed the opposition and the latter almost unwillingly bowed to the popular will. Thus there was an element of coercion in such successes, though they were peaceful. In terms of democratic values such peaceful coercion also has a legitimacy. But from the point of view of unadulterated nonviolence any outcome of a movement that does not also bring about some inner change in the adversary is imperfect.

This impact of nonviolent action was most evident in Gandhi's campaign against untouchability. At the Round Table Conference held in London in 1931, the British Government had given a hint that it would create separate electorates for the untouchable castes, with the ostensible purpose of ensuring adequate representation for them in the

legislatures. At this Gandhi had been constrained to give a solemn warning that he would resist with his life this attempt to drive another wedge into the Indian people. The warning had gone unheeded and the Prime Minister of Great Britain announced an "award" providing for separate electorates for the untouchables. At this, Gandhi, who was in jail at the time for having offered civil disobedience, gave an ultimatum to the British Government and went on a fast when the Government refused to listen to him. The political effect of the fast was that those leaders of the untouchables who were in favour of separate electorates and other leaders met together and evolved a formula by which the untouchables were assured of adequate representation within the framework of a joint electorate. The more important result of the fast was that it touched the conscience of millions of caste Hindus all over the country and there was a tremendous popular upsurge against untouchability. Temples were thrown open to the Harijans, the children of God, as Gandhi had named them, to do away with the odium of derogatory apellations; they were allowed to draw water from wells that were formerly out of bounds for them; their children were allowed to sit on equal terms with other children in the schools; and there were many other ways in which the newly awakened fellow-feeling for the Harijans found expression. One cannot forget the scene of hundreds of caste Hindus going into the ghetto-like neighbourhoods of the Harijans to fraternize with them, to participate with them in the cleaning of latrines, the lowliest of jobs which even most harijans did not do, and to have food and drink with them on terms of equality. This emotional outburst died away gradually, but untouchability has never been the same again in India.

Gandhi's movements were often designed to have a "loosening up" effect, both on the opponents and his own followers. A seemingly inconsequential demand and action to achieve it opened the door to larger possibilities. Success in achieving the objective brought fluidity to a frozen situation; it made a dent in the minds of the adversaries and boosted the morale of the participants. This was so in the case of the Vykom satyagraha mentioned earlier. The immediate demand was the right of the Harijans to walk along a road near a temple that was closed to them, but Gandhi was well aware of

its larger implications. In a talk to the satyagrahis he told them:

> The prejudice we have to fight against is an age-long prejudice. The struggle for the opening of the road round the temple. . . is but a small skirmish in the big battle. If our struggle was to end with the opening of the roads in Vykom you can be sure I would not have bothered my head about it. . . . The road must be opened. It has got to be opened. But that will be only the beginning of the end. . . . (CW 26, p. 270)

The decision to break the salt law was also such a "loosening up" act. The leaders of the Congress were unable to appreciate the step when Gandhi decided to take it. But the results astonished them. The Gandhi–Irwin Pact that followed the successful conclusion of the movement conceded the right to make salt to only those living near the sea and carrying headloads of the same for sale inland, and the right to peaceful picketing of foreign cloth shops and shops selling liquor and other drugs. But the real impact was that the relations between India and Britain were never the same again. Indians had gained tremendously in self-confidence and self-respect and the grave of the Empire had been dug. The impact it had on the British people was demonstrated by the affectionate reception Gandhi got from the common men and women in Britain when he went there in 1931 to attend the Round Table Conference. An opening had been made into the hearts of Englishmen.

Reflecting on the goal of satyagraha, of mediating an inner change in the other, Vinoba, a renowned disciple of Gandhi, had defined satyagraha as a subtle process and held that if a particular form of it failed to achieve its goal one should not think in terms of steps that were more intense but of yet subtler steps that would facilitate our entry into the mind of the adversary. This effect of satyagraha that motivated those towards whom it was directed to positive action, as for instance in the case of the Harijan fast of Gandhi, Vinoba called positive. The type of satyagraha that elicited this effect was positive. In contradistinction he termed the kind of satyagraha that resisted some injustice and brought about a confrontation, at the end of which the adversary was forced to undo a wrong, negative satyagraha. He was of the view that negative satyagraha was justified against foreign domination,

but there was little need and scope for it in a free country with a democratic polity as well as in a world threatened by nuclear power.

Vinoba's analysis is correct from the psychological point of view. The defences that a person erects round his psyche cannot be brought down by a battering ram. One needs deftness, a delicacy of touch, to be able to penetrate it. Axline has given a very beautiful example of this approach in her book *Dibs* in which she describes how an autistic boy of seven years was brought back to normalcy by play therapy. As she describes it, the parents of the boy were the persons who really needed therapy. It was their mishandling of the boy, or rather the lack of any handling at all, that had created the problem. But telling them so to their faces would have only made them more defensive and hostile to the therapist. Axline gives a step-by-step account of the process by which the truth was brought home to them simultaneously with the progress in therapy of the boy. This is a perfect example of the "subtle" approach in Vinoba's sense. This method is known to work in psychotherapy in treating individuals. Gandhi seems to have had an insight into this process, but it will take a lot of experimentation to perfect its use as a technique of social change.

One of Gandhi's subtler approaches in satyagraha was what he called the technique of surrender. This he applied in situations in which a relationship of domination-submission did not exist and the other party was on equal footing or was weaker. Thus, when there was demand in the Congress in 1924 for entering the legislatures and taking up a parliamentary programme Gandhi was initially opposed to it. The Congress had called upon the country in 1921 to boycott the sham legislatures which had no real power and there was a considerable body of opinion in the Congress, a group known as the no-changers, which supported Gandhi's position. But Gandhi came to feel that it would be wiser to let the "pro-changers" have their way and so he decided to "surrender" to them and persuaded his followers in the Congress to do so. Reacting favourably to a proposal to have a conference of all political parties in India to draw up an unanimous scheme for swaraj, Gandhi commented:

> What if the proposal is not accepted and it is found difficult to bring together all parties on the Congress platform and heal the breach between the Swarajists (those in favour of entering the legislatures) and ourselves? My solution is simple. If the whole fight is for "capturing" the Congress, I must refuse to enter into it. I would advise all who think with me to do likewise. I would advise handing the Congress over to the Swarajists on their own terms and leave the Swarajists to work the Councils programme unhampered by any counter-propaganda. I would engage the No-changers purely on the constructive programme and advise them to seek such help from the other parties as they can give. (*CW* 25, p. 124)

And this is what was done. The Swarajists gradually became disillusioned with the sterility of the Council-entry programme and when the situation became ripe for a movement four years later and Gandhi became ready to take the leadership, almost all of them lined up behind him.

He wanted to take the same approach in respect of the demands of the Muslims. When the demand was raised by the Muslim League in the 1920s and 1930s for all kinds of assurances and safeguards—this was prior to the raising of the demand for Pakistan—Gandhi advised the Congress and the Hindu leaders to allay their fears by accepting their demands. But his advice was not considered practical. Again in 1946 he suggested that the Muslim League be allowed to take the lead in forming the interim Government. The fate of the Indian sub-continent might have been different if this advice had been accepted. But it was not to be.

Gandhi was sensitive to the effect of satyagraha on the adversary and became concerned when, instead of touching his humane feelings, it tended to brutalize him. he gave expression to this concern at a meeting in London in 1931.

> It may be that the seed which is being sown now may result in softening the British spirit and that it may result in the prevention of the brutalization of human beings. I have known the English nature in its hideous form in the Punjab. I have known it elsewhere also, during these fifteen years of experience and through history. I have known the same thing happening. It is my purpose by every means at my command to prevent such a catastrophe occurring again. I am more concerned in preventing the brutalization of human nature than in preventing the sufferings of my own people. (*CW* 48, p. 145)

In June 1939 he had advised suspension of a civil disobedience movement for democratic rights going on in the

princely state of Travancore, as he had explained in his statement, "in order to avoid popular violence, no matter how caused or by whom instigated, if it was instigated." "It was also advised", he had continued, "to avoid the brutalization of human nature. These two objects may be said to have been attained in a fair measure." (*CW* 69, p. 323) It may be asked if such prevention of brutalization was his objective, why did he lay so much emphasis on self-suffering and on civil disobedience that provoked brutal attacks by the forces of law and order? As has been discussed earlier, the process of satyagraha is aimed at resolving conflicts by bringing them into the open. An unjust system is based on the threat of brutal violence. It is there in the background all the time and usually great care is taken to cover it up with a veneer of civilization. Gandhi's object had been to tear off this veneer so that the true nature of the regime becomes apparent to all. Most often such regimes continue to exist because of the tacit support of people who have been deluded into believing it to be of a benign nature. A nonviolent resister does not try to provoke the police to act violently. He insists on exercising peacefully what he considers to be his right. The force that is used to prevent him from doing so is only an expression of what is latent in the system. The brutality has been there all the time. By being brought into the open it is exposed to the public gaze, the gaze of the supporters of the system as well as the world at large. This helps in withdrawal of moral support for the regime even to the extent of refusal by those who served as its instruments to go on doing so any more. There were a large number of resignations by Government officials in India from their jobs in protest against the policies of the British Government and in one case, in 1930 in Peshawar, a detachment of soldiers refused to fire on an unarmed crowd after it had already done so a few times.

Brutalization takes place when the police or the military used to suppress a movement are faced with behaviour on the part of participants in it that enrages them, such as hurling of abuse, stone throwing and the use of lethal weapons, Molotov cocktails, etc. Such actions provide them with a justification for brutal behaviour. It closes the door on the inner conflict and introspection that nonviolent action generates. The writer knows from personal experience how communists and other elements in India who did not believe in nonviolence and yet wanted to use Gandhian methods because of their demonstrated efficacy, made it a point to provoke the police to use maximum violence so that the incident could be used to inflame popular passions. This was in direct contradiction to the spirit of satyagraha.

Many have criticized Gandhi for his emphasis on self-suffering. Some have traced the "need" for it to streaks of masochism in the character of Gandhi and the satyagrahis. Others have gone to the Hindu scriptures to find its roots in Indian spirituality. But the self-suffering advocated by Gandhi had little to do with the self-mortification practised by aspirants after spiritual enlightenment. At one level it is a very simple condition for the success of a cause. In violent conflicts the fighters have to be prepared to undergo untold suffering and to lose their lives for the success of their cause. There is no reason to believe that it would be otherwise in a nonviolent struggle, that such a struggle will be successful without any kind of discomfort to the participants. yet there seems to be a widespread belief that nonviolence means exactly the latter and Gandhi had to wrestle with this misconception. At another level it is the assertion of one's freedom and the right of dissent even in the face of the heaviest of odds. The other role of self-suffering as a psychological depth-charge in the minds of the opponents has been discussed earlier. Gandhi used texts from Hindu spiritual lore to make his point, because by doing so he could make himself more easily understood.

Going back to Vinoba's characterization of the satyagraha movements conducted against British rule by Gandhi as negative, it appears that he missed a very important point. There are three parties to a satyagraha, or at least it was so in India in Gandhi's times: the leader, the people and the opponent. Sometimes the qualifications for a perfect satyagrahi are listed in such a way that one despairs of being ever able to offer correct satyagraha. One despairs of finding a populace capable of fulfilling those conditions. Gandhi knew better. He neither expected readymade material nor did he sit down to make the people imbibe perfect nonviolence first and then lead them into a movement. His was a process of what in modern industrial parlance would be called on-the-job training. He took the people as he found them and led them into a fuller understanding of the theory and practice of nonviolence. He placed nonviolence before them as a practical and effective

method of achieving their legitimate objectives. As he told the Congress leaders and the people again and again, he did not expect them to accept it as a creed but as a policy.

> Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of my life, but it is never as a creed that I placed it before India or for the matter of that before anyone except in casual, informal talks. I placed it before the Congress as a political method, to be employed for the solution of political questions. It may be it is a novel method, but does not on that account lose its political character. . . . As a political method, it can always be changed, modified, altered or given up in preference to another. . . . If I have carried the Congress with me all these years, it is in my capacity as a politician, it is hardly fair to describe my method as religious because it is new. . . . (AICC 1942, *GT* p. 22)

He wanted them to gradually come to appreciate the larger implications of ahimsa from experience in the course of the movement. He told the people that there was no place for hatred and anger in a nonviolent movement, that love and goodwill were its motive forces. But he knew that the pent-up anger and hatred in the people had to find expression, that it would be the first thing to well up as the lid is taken off. But the lid had to be taken off and the risks faced. He did precisely that in 1921. We have already seen how he sought to divert the hatred of the people into harmless channels and succeeded to an extent.

As he told some of his more inwardly oriented followers who had come together in the Gandhi Seva Sangh, in response to a question about the effectiveness of individual satyagraha against restrictions on civil liberties which he had started in 1940:

> People ask me, "what will be the outcome of this satyagraha? All types of people, good, bad and indifferent, have joined it. Even cheats and rogues are courting arrest in the name of satyagraha." I know there is not a single province where undesirable men have not courted arrest. But I also know that there is not a single province where people who measure up to my standards have not gone to jail. That is why I have not launched a mass movement. If I do so, the people will jump into it. (*CW* 75, p. 9)

He knew that the people would commit mistakes and they did. He bore patiently with them. He himself committed mistakes. He admitted to having committed a blunder of

"Himalayan" proportions in 1922; later in 1939 also he admitted having committed an error by requesting the Viceroy to intervene in Rajkot when the ruler of that native state refused to fulfil a commitment that he had made. He was also learning and growing and he was aware of that.

Thus, one of the goals of nonviolent action is to bring the people out of their passivity, their apathy and their feeling of helplessness. What Vinoba considered the negative elements in Gandhi's movements served a positive purpose. These have a role even in the nominally free and democratic countries, because in such countries, as in India, there are sections of the people that are still downtrodden and permeated by a feeling of impotence and helplessness. Their liberation will have to start with nonviolent action of the type that Vinoba characterized as negative.

The attempt to build a positive relationship with the adversary meant that the satyagrahi should always be prepared for a dialogue with him and be ready to negotiate if given a "sporting" offer. All Gandhi's movements, except for those that he withdrew or suspended, were ended through negotiated settlements. Another principle that he followed was of keeping his demands to what he called the irreducible minimum. In political life as also in trade union practice it is usual and expected that the demands are "padded up" to leave room for bargaining. But Gandhi did not believe in such paddings. This is not consistent with truth, because it creates a false image of the satyagrahi. It creates the impression that he does not mean what he says. Often he seemed to have settled for less than the irreducible minimum, but when the cases are examined carefully it will be found that he did not give in on the fundamentals or the principle underlying the demands. The salt satyagraha, for instance, did not achieve the repeal of the salt tax, but succeeded in making the British Government agree to a discussion of the Indian demand for independence. Besides, the Gandhi–Irwin Pact did not signal the end of the struggle but only a truce.

The sentiment of love is usually associated with a certain measure of wooliness or sloppyness. A person in love is seen to be infatuated. Love is said to make one blind. Gandhi was aware of these pitfalls. His kind of love was made of sterner stuff. In him it was like a bright light that shone through a clear unclouded mind. "I am quite conscious of the fact that

blind surrender to love is often more mischievous than the forced surrender to the lash of a tyrant", he had written in 1921; "there is hope of the slave of the brute, none for that of love. Love is needed to strengthen the weak, love becomes tyrannical when it exacts obedience from an unbeliever." (*CW* 21, p. 288) On another occasion he wrote, "whether one's love is pure or not can be judged only by its manifestation. The love of a mother indulging her offspring with luxuries proceeds from ignorance. That wife's love is selfish who is reluctant to stay away from her husband even in the interests of his dharma." (CW 42, pp. 184–5) "Love never claims, it ever gives", he had also said. "The test of love is *tapasya* and *tapasya* mean self-suffering." He believed that "ahimsa is the distinguishing characteristic of an untrammelled spirit. It is at the root of a number of other qualities—discrimination, detachment, penance, equability and knowledge." (*CW* 32, p. 380)

One is reminded of Ashley Montagu's definition and description of the characteristics of love.

> Love implies the possession of a feeling of deep involvement in another, and to love another is to communicate that feeling of involvement to him. . . .
> Love is unconditional, it makes no bargains and trades with no one for anything. . . .
> Love is supportive. . . .
> Love is firm. Love is characterized by a firmness and integrity which not only conveys a feeling of security to the loved one, but serves also as a discipline in that it helps the loved one to respond in kind. . . .
> Love is most needed by the human organism from the moment of birth. . . .
> Love is reciprocal in its effects, and it is beneficial to the giver as to the recipient. . . .
> Love is creative. . . .
> Love enlarges the capacities of those who are loved and of those who love. . . .
> Love continually elicits, by encouragement, the nascent capacities of the loved one. . . .
> Love is tender. . . .
> Love is joyful. . . .
> Love is fearless. . . .
> Love enables the person to treat life as an art. . . .

> Love as an attitude of mind and as a form of behaviour is adaptively the best and most efficient of all adjustive processes in enabling the human being to adapt himself to his environment. . . .
> For the person and the species love is the form of behaviour having the highest survival value. (*DHD*, pp. 296–8)

Resistive satyagraha is an expression of love as Gandhi understood it. It is an expression of the firmness that Montagu has described as one of the characteristics of love. Or more appropriately, though Gandhi equated love with nonviolence, his nonviolence was a synthesis of love and the warrior spirit. he used it as a scalpel, and not only in respect of political or social causes. Love was a principle that he believed should suffuse the whole of life, all the activities and relations of a person. So he used the satyagrahi scalpel on his near and dear ones also. Earlier we have seen how he felt it necessary to make a public confession when Kasturba did not turn over to the Ashram trustee the four rupees that she had received from an admirer. On another occasion he fasted for a day when Kasturba, along with two other companions, entered a temple that was barred to the Harijans.

When Jairamdas Daulatram, one of his valued colleagues in the freedom movement, was shot in the thigh in the course of a firing by the police on a peaceful demonstration in 1930, Gandhi wired him that "a wound in the thigh was better than prison and a wound in the heart better still." (*CW* 43, p. 297) It was his love for Jairamdas, "Of the bravest and cleanest", that prompted him to it. He wanted Jairamdas to attain the highest level of manly courage because he loved him. That was the stuff Gandhi's love, alias nonviolence, was made of.

Jesus had commanded, "Love thy enemies", and Gandhi went about putting that precept into practice. There is no doubt that he succeeded eminently. But is it possible for the average mortal to do so? Can one love Herod, or Hitler, or the serial killer? It is a difficult proposition and Gandhi was aware of it. When he sought to awaken the people of India from their stupor he knew that the froth, the suppressed anger and hatred, would rise to the surface first. But he did not flinch. He went ahead without hesitation and sought to bring the people round to the correct outlook gradually. He devised a code of discipline for the people and made them abjure expressions of hatred and anger in their overt behaviour. He

diverted the anger from men to things. He knew that a consciousness of one's own strength frees men from much of the impotent rage and sadistic impulses that a weak person is subject to.

Love can have a broad spectrum of gradations and many other feelings can be subsumed under it—consideration, understanding, fairplay, goodwill, friendliness, sympathy and charity. When considering the feeling one may have towards a seemingly monstrous person it is often knowledge about the circumstances of his life and the way his behaviour came to be determined that gives us an insight into him and though one is not impelled to love him one comes to pity him, to view him with understanding. This is the first step in the direction of cultivating an attitude of positive goodwill that after all is an expression of love. Hannah Arendt and Erich Fromm have described and analysed the characters of Eichmann and Himmler respectively. The pictures that emerge make one think of the many persons one meets every day, persons who are a mixture of the good and the bad and whom one often likes, making allowances for their foibles. One comes to realize how such ordinary mortals are driven to doing horrible things and also how one oneself is not essentially so very different in one's make-up, and that "but for the grace of Cod, there go I". Diffusion of knowledge about criminal psychology and of the idea that crime is caused by an unbalanced, disturbed or perverted state of mind generally makes one ask when one hears of a serious crime, "Why did he do it?"

When in July 1984 a man ran amok and shot twenty-one persons in a restaurant in a small town in California, USA, the papers carrying the news tried to figure out what had driven him over the brink. Gandhi's dictum was, "Hate the sin, not the sinner", and that no longer seems to be such an absurd or difficult proposition. Gandhi's starting point was his faith in the innate goodness of man, a faith derived from the philosophy of advaita, which holds that everything in this universe is a part of the same divine essence. This faith of his was fortified by a lifetime of experience. It seems it is such basic faith, fortified by experiential and scientific knowledge, that can give man the capacity to look upon even the most despicable person with understanding and pity rather than hate.

CHAPTER SIX

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Ever since my return to India I have had experiences of the dormant passions lying hidden within me. The knowledge of them has made me feel humiliated though not defeated. The experiences and the experiments have sustained me and given me great joy. But I know that I have still before me a difficult path to traverse. I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him. Ahimsa is the farthest limit of humility. (*CW* 39, p. 402)

This is the sentiment that Gandhi has expressed in the penultimate paragraph of his autobiography. The idea of ridding oneself of all passions, of reducing oneself to zero and of nonviolence being the farthest limit of humility recurs again and again in his speeches and writings, conjuring up the traditional virtues meant to subjugate the individual completely to society and suppress his individuality. Gandhi's use of traditional idiom has created difficulties both for his admirers and his critics.

Meekness, humility and self-abnegation have traditionally been considered primary virtues for the spiritual life. The practice of these have often demanded the total suspension of the seeker's critical faculties and unquestioning submission to the judgements of one's superiors in the religious order. The last shreds of a will of one's own and all likes and dislikes have to be shed. One is required to dissolve one's individuality totally to become a fit instrument of God's will, which in practice means an instrument of the institution one belongs to or of the guru or spiritual mentor one has accepted.

This has nicely meshed in with the demands of the feudalistic social order, of authoritarian patterns of society. In such societies submission to the authority of ruler is the supreme value. The relationship of domination and submission in such societies is also reflected in the family. As Erikson has brought out so lucidly (*Childhood and Society*), the family

becomes in such societies an instrument for moulding the child to its role in the society. Till recently "breaking the will" of the child was considered one of the foremost duties of parents in their efforts to discipline the child. It can safely be asserted that this practice is still prevalent in many parts of the world. It has meant that young people do not speak to their elders unless first spoken to and students do not get into arguments with their teachers. In some of its more bizarre applications it has meant standing on one foot to greet a social superior or approaching such a person with a straw between one's teeth and prostrating oneself flat on the ground in greeting. The verb "to humiliate", derived from the same root as humility and usages such as "of humble origins", "of humble birth" and the verb "to humble" testify to the mix-up of the spiritual concept with social stratification.

Gandhi's adherence to religious idioms has led some to the conclusion that he was in favour of the suppression of individuality, as demanded by some religious systems. K. P. Saxena, for instance, has some sharp comments to make in his paper in the volume *Gandhi and the Contemporary World* (1981):

> His concept of the individual is so much loaded with his gospel of God, truth, nonviolence, religion and spiritualism as to relegate the reality of the individual to the background. He sees man as what he ought to be, and this according to his own vision, rather than what he really is. (p 157)

The issue of "ought to be" and "what really is" can be disposed of rather easily. Human beings are potentialities and all civilizations and cultures are about how to actualize these potentialities. A scientist, an engineer, a poet, or for that matter a mechanic or a farm-hand, is not born that way. She or he has to learn and grow so that his innate capabilities may develop to match his own needs and those of his society. The skills that people have to learn are not merely technical or intellectual. They have to learn to handle human relations specific to their social role and control and mould the expression of their feelings. The issue is not that Gandhi wanted people to become what he believed they had the inner potential to become, but whether he was right in expecting what he did from the people and also whether he wanted to impose his pattern on all and sundry. This can also be true of a professor's expectations of his son. We will have occasion to discuss Gandhi's expectations of people in terms of truth, nonviolence, brahmacharya and so on. Here we will examine his ideas about individuality and about the relations between the individual and his society.

It is unfortunate that when discussing Gandhi's ideas many people do not look at them in the context of his practice, of the meaning he gave to the words he used. If we look at Gandhi in this context we will see a man of unbending will and a powerful personality, with very few parallels in history. His whole life was devoted to freeing people of "humble origins" from the inferiority complexes, the servility and the submissiveness that society had imposed on them and that pass muster for humility. This was the prime mission of his life. A parable he used to put across his ideas to a group of freedom fighters in 1934 gives a glimpse of his mind in this matter.

In January 1934 he had suspended the civil disobedience movement that had been going on for some time against the British Government and had advised all Congressmen to go among the people and take up the various "constructive programmes", aimed at awakening a spirit of self-help among the people and carrying out social and economic reforms that would prepare them for "swaraj". At a subsequent meeting of Congressmen a question was put to him about the relevance of such pedestrian activities to the struggle for independence.

In reply to the question he narrated a parable of an orphaned lion cub that was adopted by and grew up in a flock of sheep. He learnt to behave like the sheep and took himself to be of this kind. He used to run away from jackals and wolves. Then one day he came across a lion and later saw his own reflection in a pool. Thus he came to realize that he was also a lion. He immediately forsook the company of the sheep and went his own way. Gandhi told us, "Our people are not really sheep, but lions in their inmost beings. It is only that they have been made to believe that they are sheep. You have to go and settle among them and act like lions, so that they may come to the realization of their own true selves."

That was the real Gandhi. When one looks back at his life and the whole of human history one is scarcely able to find a person less suited to fit the stereotype of traditional self-effacement and humility. There are very few men in history who had his kind of indomitable will. He took on the biggest and the most powerful empire of those days and almost brought

it to its knees. He pitted his will against his own people to fight evils like untouchability and communal discord to the point of almost forfeiting his life. This could scarcely have been the performance of the man if reducing oneself to "zero" meant what the critics have adduced it to mean.

Evidently he used the concepts in a different sense, may be in their true spiritual sense; may be he gave the concepts a new content as he had done in the case of so many others. Here we are not concerned with tracing their meanings back to their roots in history, but in seeking to understand what they meant to Gandhi.

He had spoken at length on the need and the meaning of humility at a meeting in 1927 in the following terms:

> When I recall my school days, I have a vivid recollection of boys who put on an air, because they were considered to be clever in their class. And some of them domineered over the rest because they had athletic skill and had physical power. But I soon discovered that their pride went before destruction, for the weaker ones, realizing their haughtiness, segregated them and disregarded them as untouchables and so they really dug their own graves. . . . The first condition therefore for individual growth is utmost humility. And if we see at the present moment in our own land, some people in their insolence calling themselves superior and regarding others as below themselves in rank and yet others as untouchables and unapproachables, those who are standing aloof from this strife are able to watch and see that these in their insolence are also digging their own graves. . . . (CW 34, pp. 505-6)

For Gandhi, humility meant being free of airs, haughtiness, insolence, superciliousness and the like and a sense of essential equality with other human beings. His humility included a proper assessment of oneself, an awareness of one's limitations and yet did not allow self-deprecation or a false sense of modesty. He did not obviously feel like trespassing the limits when he claimed in 1934 that "Congressmen should leave it (civil disobedience) to me alone. It should be resumed in my lifetime only under my direction unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence. "(*CW* 57, p. 349) Or again,

> I am an irrepressible optimist, because I believe in myself. That sounds very arrogant, does'nt it? But I say it from the depth of my humility. I believe in the supreme power of God. I believe in Truth and, therefore, I have no doubt in the future of this country or the future of humanity. (*CW* 27, p. 448)

Reducing oneself to zero meant for him ridding oneself of false selves. If we look at his life we find an incessant endeavour on his part to strip himself of the false selves that history, economics, politics, social relations, caste and class impose upon one. He forsook his caste identity when he decided to go to England to study law, defying the orders of the elders of his caste. While in England he had an urge to become the replica of an English dandy and started taking lessons in violin and dancing. But he soon realized his folly and gave up the attempt. He had absorbed the attitude of male dominance from his social background. He has described in his autobiography how he sought to impose his will on an indomitable Kasturba, culminating in the confrontation over the chamber pot in South Africa. He shed that identity to become the greatest champion of women's rights and could empathize with them as few other male leaders have been able to do. He had struck it rich in South Africa, was at the top of his class and took pride in being a barrister who had studied law at a prestigious law school in London. But his encounter with the tract Unto This Last by Ruskin convinced him that a barrister was entitled to only as much wages as a barber earned and that one ought to make one's living by engaging in productive physical labour. Immediately he set about divesting himself of his upper middle class identity by deciding to live on a farm that was also a commune—the Tolstoy Farm.

Back in India he sought to identify himself with the poverty-stricken masses of the country by casting off his conventional *dhoti* and *kurta* that are the symbols of an educated middle class identity. Throughout his life, in the small changes he made in his lifestyle and his way of doing things, one can discern his constant endeavour to divest himself of identities, attitudes and complexes that put limits on one's inner growth, that deflect one from one's central mission and dissipate one's energies. He sought to cast off all images of himself that stood in the way of his consciousness of unity with the human family and even with all creation.

He did not believe that the freedom and individuality of men and women had to be curtailed or truncated in order to

make social life possible. The society and the individual had to grow together. He had explained in a speech:

> But this I do own that I am constantly, minute after minute, striving after perfection and it gives me great comfort to find myself in the assembly of imperfect men and women who are similarly striving. It consoles me to find that many of them have succeeded in their strivings and that therefore there is no reason why I should not succeed likewise. And in the course of that striving I have made certain discoveries. And I am now endeavouring to the best of my ability to share the results of those discoveries with all I meet. And one discovery I have made is that there is no distinction whatever between individual growth and corporate growth, that corporate growth is therefore entirely dependent on individual growth and hence that beautiful proverb in the English language that "a chain is no stronger than the weakest link in it." (*CW* 34, p. 505)

Again, in another context:

> I do not realize that I am "staking a whole nation for self-evolution". For self-evolution is wholly consistent with a nation's evolution. A nation cannot advance without the units of which it consists advancing, and, conversely, no individual can advance without the nation of which he is also part advancing. (*CW* 45, p. 341)

It was because he was aware of the pitfalls of imposed humility that he refused to include it among the vows he had formulated for the inmates of his ashram. He had sent a draft of the vows to some of his friends for their opinions and one of them had suggested the inclusion of humility. But Gandhi had declined to do so, because, as he has narrated in his autobiography, he felt that humility should be the product of the effective observance of the other vows and should come naturally. Any attempt to practise humility would breed hypocrisy.

He had to deal with followers who took humility in the traditional sense and thought that it was incompatible with the kind of self-respect that makes one stand up for oneself. Gandhi clarified the confusion by pointing out that both could coexist.

> I preserve my self-respect and humility if, when someone kicks me and tries to force me to salute him, I suffer the kicks and do not get angry and wish well of the person kicking me, do not utter one word in reply and still refuse to salute him. Once a person kicked me and tried to force me to sit at his feet, but I said nothing to him, never wished him ill even in a dream, and yet refused to sit at his feet. I believe I had preserved both self-respect and humility. When the incident took place, I was not at all conscious that I was being humble or anything of the sort. . . . (*CW* 44, pp. 267-8)

He was quite specific in his view that the progress of mankind came about through the achievement of individuals and that the latter should have the fullest freedom to express themselves and develop their innate capabilities. He wrote:

> If the individual ceases to count, what is a society? Individual freedom alone can make man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him he becomes an automaton and the society is ruined. No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man. Just as a man will not grow horns or a tail, so he will not exist as a man if he has no mind of his own. In reality even those who do not believe in the liberty of the individual believe in their own. (*H*, 1 February 1942)

Gandhi was quite clear about the meaning of individuality and freedom. He was against patterning after a stereotype, blind following, suspension of one's critical faculties or suppression of any part of one's nature. He made this very clear, for example, in one of his letters to Mirabehn. After advising her to shed her sensitiveness and nervousness and not to cling to him "as in this body", but to be with him in spirit, he continues:

> But you should grow along your own lines. You will therefore reject all that I have said in this that does not appeal to your heart or head. You must retain your individuality at all costs. Resist me when you must. For I may judge you wrongly in spite of all my love for you. I do not want you to impute infallibility to me. (*CW* 33, p. 180)

The model of the perfect individual for Gandhi was the satyagrahi who could stand up alone against the whole world. There is a reference in the above to the patriarchal streak in Gandhi that persisted in spite of his efforts to strip himself of all such traits. He referred to this more explicitly in a letter he wrote to Premabehn:

> I am writing this to you from my own bitter experience. I may have spoken to you vehemently in defence of Mirabehn, but I have not made any man or woman weep as bitterly as I have made her. My hardness of heart, impatience and ignorant attachment were responsible for such conduct. I have felt Mirabehn's self-sacrifice to be beyond praise and, therefore, wish to see her perfect. The

moment I see any imperfection in her, my ignorant attachment makes me impatient and I rebuke her sharply. The result is a flood of tears. These instances have opened my eyes to the presence of violence in me and, recalling them, I have been trying to reform myself. I, therefore, welcome your letters. . . . (*CW* 49, p. 157)

Thus Gandhi was clear in his mind about his fallibility and resisted all attempts by others to put him on a pedestal and attribute superhuman qualities to him. He persistently resisted the title "Mahatma"—the great soul—conferred on him by his admiring countrymen. He wrote in 1927: "The Mahatma I must leave to his fate. Though a non-cooperator I shall gladly subscribe to a bill to make it criminal for anybody to call me a Mahatma." (*YI*, 17 February 1927) And again in 1940: "I am an erring mortal like you. I have never even in my dream thought that I was a Maha-atma (great soul) and that others were Alpa-atmas (little souls). We are all equal before our Maker—Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians, all worshippers of God." (*H*, 30 March 1940)

He did not want to set himself up as an infallible authority as many spiritual and temporal leaders tend to do. To a teacher who had written to him asking for his blessings for some of his young students who plied the spinning wheel regularly, as "that was Mahatmaji's command", he wrote back:

I do not know if the mentality betrayed by this letter is hero-worship or blind worship. I can conceive of occasions when implicit obedience without waiting for reasoning out causes is a necessity. It is essentially the quality of a soldier. But occasions for such obedience must be rare in any well-ordered society. The worst thing that can happen to boys in a school is to have to render blind obedience to everything that the teacher says. On the contrary, if teachers are to stimulate the reasoning faculty of boys and girls under their care, they must continuously tax their reason and make them think for themselves. . . . (*CW* 31, p. 46)

On another occasion, writing about the non-cooperation movement, Gandhi had this to say:

There is altogether too much blind following in the country. The instances you have quoted are inapplicable to the present movement which essentially consists in everyone thinking for himself. My conception of swaraj is not of many blindly following one man. The Poet has rightly protested against that tendency and not enlightened obedience to chosen leadership. (*CW* 21, p. 392)

It should be noted that here he recognizes the need for leadership in a movement and obedience to it. But that leadership must not be one imposed from above which everyone will have to obey willynilly, but one that is freely chosen by the individuals in an enlightened manner.

Setting forth his views about education in the course of a discussion while in jail, he had said:

The guiding principle of ashram education is, in my opinion, the liberty of the child. (Even) the youngest child should feel that he is something. We should discover his special capacities and . . . provide it with the means for their full development on condition that it will use all its knowledge for the benefit of society. We will not paralyse its intellect by loading it with books. The parents in the ashram will live for their children, and learn from them as well as teach them. The whole of their life will be a liberal education. (*DMD* 1, p. 225)

Emphasis on the role of the individual and on the process of individuation emerged with the period of Enlightenment in Europe. Freedom and individuality were the central concerns of nineteenth-century liberal philosophy and it is the congruence of Gandhi's ideas with the latter that has prompted Gunnar Myrdal to consider Gandhi to be a radical liberal. As postulated in the systems of Natural Law and Utilitarianism, this philosophy has held that human interests are basically in harmony. The doctrine of laissez faire, based on this belief, was invoked to construct a social order that took freedom of the individual as its basic value. The pursuit of his own self-interest by each individual was expected to serve the best interests of the society as a whole. Classical economics produced the model of the "economic man" and capitalism was born. While Western societies have been able to preserve individual freedom and the democratic systems rooted in it, there has hardly been the kind of universal harmony that was expected to result from it. Capitalism burgeoned into imperialism and brought poverty, misery, starvation and slavery to millions round the world. At home it gave rise to acute economic inequality and spawned two world wars.

The winning of freedom by India and Pakistan at the end of World War II signalled the break-up of the old world empires, but new powers have emerged in the shape of the USA and the

USSR that are exercising a more malignant kind of domination over most of the underdeveloped countries of the world.

While freedom continues to be the popular philosophy of the liberal democracies, the lust for political power and economic control over the sources of raw material and over markets have led to the deployment of subtle methods of persuasion and mind control. Vance Packard has detailed some of these methods in his book, *The Hidden Persuaders*, and Charles Morgan, in his *Liberties of the Mind*. The alienation, loss of freedom and stultification of individuality produced by the system has been discussed by Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and others. A philosophy claiming to be scientific and tracing its roots to the findings of the behaviourist school of psychology, which pours scorn on such concepts as freedom and dignity as mere myths or illusions, is gaining ground.

Marx had much to say about the loss of freedom and the alienation of the individual in capitalist societies and by implication the communist revolution in Russia was expected to help make man free and whole again. But in practice the communist regimes seem to have gone back to the dark ages as far as freedom and the life of the mind is concerned. Individuality is denounced as a petit-bourgeois ideal. The powers-that-be in the communist states, particularly of the Soviet breed, have no need of the subtle manipulative techniques of their Western counterparts. They can rely more freely on naked force. Of course the Chinese version has invented methods of "brainwashing" involving more subtlety.

Thus the dichotomy between the freedom of the individual and the demands of society has remained unresolved and the trend to cut the individual to size to fit the society still continues. Gandhi's was another and the latest attempt on a grand scale to heal the split and build a social order that would not truncate on cripple the individual, but provide him with the maximum opportunity for self-fulfilment and growth. Many have been pessimistic about this ever being achieved. Those with "realistic" views on this matter look upon the human being as a born egotist and savage that has to be broken and disciplined for social life. It is held that his natural urges have to be curbed or suppressed altogether and that moral and physical coercion is unavoidable. Freud had arrived at a pessimistic prognosis on the basis of his clinical experiences.

There was an eminent priest who had opined that "children were little vipers".

There is a litany in the Hindu tradition that declares, "I am a sinner, I have been born out of sin, I am sinning all the time" and so on. But in the Hindu tradition there is the other viewpoint that declares. "Aham brahmasmi"—I am of the divine stuff and therefore basically pure and unsullied. Thus, according to this view all living beings and every individual is part of the divine essence and is essentially good. Gandhi held this view and his whole philosophy of life including his method of satyagraha is based on this faith in the essential goodness of man. As he had once said:

> One is able to understand as soon as one believes in man. The difference between us consists in the divergence of opinion as to man and his destiny. You say, you Europeans, that man is born without being either good or bad, and that it is the place, the institutions, and a dozen other factors which determine the road he is going to follow. I affirm, to the contrary, that man is always good and it is only bad institutions that turn him from the straight road. (*CW* 48, p. 387)

In the above statement Gandhi seems to be contradicting himself when he says that bad institutions make man bad, as he had earlier controverted the European belief that institutions make man good or bad. But here he is not merely asserting the innate goodness of man but also controverting the belief that man can be totally moulded from outside, a belief held by the behaviourist school of psychology and gaining ground in the world. Some behaviourists like B. F. Skinner have thus held that a better world can be built by the appropriate kind of conditioning. The difference between this and the Gandhian approach does not seem to be great, but if we examine both views in depth, it will be apparent that they differ in a fundamental manner. The behaviourist view looks upon people as wholly manipulable, without any sense of purpose or will of their own. Their behaviour is totally determined by external circumstances and can be controlled by the pulls and pushes of an elaborate system of rewards and punishments. And this, according to the champions of this view casts the educators, the projected moulders of society, in a superhuman role in regard to their mission, because it is not clear how people who are themselves totally conditioned

products of their circumstances acquire the sense of purpose and direction to go about remoulding society, unless they believe that "they" differ radically from the common run-of-the-mill human beings. There is one ideology in the Indian tradition that holds a very similar view. According to it those who are destined to rule are born with a spark of the Lord Vishnu in them and that sets them apart from the commoners who are made of common clay.

The power-wielders and the power-seekers of the world seem to have a similar belief in their own superiority; they use the methods of conditioning and persuasion discovered by scientists to subdue and manipulate people in their pursuit of power and glory.

Gandhi's position, in contradistinction to the above, assumes that human beings have a sense of purpose, can muster a will to do what they want to and have a predisposition to welcome the true and the good. Some of the latest research into human nature confirms Gandhi's position. Ashley Montagu has brought together a mass of impressive evidence in his work, *The Direction of Human Development*, in support of the view that human nature is essentially good and love plays a crucial role in the sustenance and evolution of life and society. After discussing the evidence, Montagu comments:

> The age-old view that the human being is born "a natural barbarian", "an animal", not naturally "good" by any standards set by civilized society, that children are naturally hostile, "little anarchists", "aggressive", "braggadocious", and "cruel", arises from the misinterpretation of the doctrine of "the Fall" or of "original sin". The reinforcement these views received from nineteenth-century evolutionary biology and psychoanalytic theory in the first half of the twentieth century almost succeeded in hardening this view of human nature into something resembling an incontrovertible fact, a Law of Nature. Happily, in recent years, as a consequence of studies influenced both by developments in evolutionary biology and psychoanalytic theory, evidence has become available which indicates that the traditional view of human nature is unsound and, what is worse, capable of being profoundly damaging to human beings and to their societies. For this evidence indicates that human beings are born good—"good" in the sense that there is no evil or hostility in them, but that at birth they are wholly prepared, equipped, to function as creatures who not only want and need to be loved by others but who also want and need to love others. The evidence for these statements has been cited at some length in these pages. Let those who know of any evidence which contradicts these statements bring it forth. I do not believe that such evidence exists.
>
> The belief is widely held by many students of human nature that human beings are neither born good nor evil but indifferent; that whether they become good or evil or both depends largely, if not entirely, upon the social conditioning they are made to undergo. This view sounds reasonable enough, but the evidence, I believe, when critically examined, proves this view to be as unsound as the traditional view. . . . (*DHD*, p. 291)

The traditional view also holds that love of and cooperation with others requires sacrifice of a measure of one's individuality and autonomy. Gandhi's dictum of reducing oneself to zero has often been interpreted that way and as we have noted earlier, traditional training for altruistic service, like that of monks and nuns, has insisted on total renunciation of all individuality. Gandhi believed that individuality and selfless altruistic service could go together, or rather, as he has said in a quotation given earlier, he believed that only a really free and autonomous man could surrender himself completely to the service of the society. There seems to be support for Gandhi's position based on empirical studies. Piaget, on the basis of his famous studies on the development of moral judgement in children, has concluded that constraints put on an inferior by a superior, far from checking childish egocentrism at its source, tends to consolidate it. On the contrary, it is cooperation between equals that "suppresses egocentrism and heteronomy steps aside to make way for a consciousness of good, of which the autonomy results from the acceptance of the norms of reciprocity." (*The Moral Judgement of the Child*, p. 411; hereafter referred to as *MJC*)

Discussing the characteristics of a healthy personality as they emerge from modern psychological researches into personality structures, A. H. Maslow points out:

> A paradox seems to be created at first by the fact that self-actualising people maintain a degree of individuality, of detachment and autonomy which seem at first glance to be incompatible with the kind of identification and love that I have been describing above. But this is only an apparent paradox. In fact the tendencies existing in the same man to detachment and to need-identification and to profound inter-relationships with another person can all coexist in healthy people. The fact is that

self-actualizing people are simultaneously the most individualistic and the most altruistic and social and loving of human beings. The fact that we have in our culture put these qualities at opposite ends of a single continuum is apparently a mistake that must be corrected. These qualities go together and the dichotomy is resolved in self-actualizing people. (*PoL*, p. 108)

Thus Gandhi's view that autonomous men will freely put themselves in the service of the society makes psychological sense. According to him the ideal society will not be one in which there is a constant tug of war between its members, each one seeking to maximize his benefits, that is, trying to take the most for himself and give to the society just as little as he can get away with, but in which everyone will try to give the best that he is capable of to the society, taking just enough for his efficient upkeep. We have discussed earlier the concept of yajna taken from the Indian tradition to express the idea. In its original sense yajna means various kinds of religious rituals performed for the welfare of the society. Gandhi used the term for activities undertaken in the modern context with the good of the society in view.

The concept also turns the sense of the well-known Marxist maxim, "From each according to his ability and to each according to his need", inside out. The above principle implies that some outside authority or agency will determine the ability and need of each person. In the Gandhian version of yajna the principle is internalized by the individual and guides his actions so that the motivation is to give the best one is capable of and take just as much as one needs.

This is not an altogether new idea. Throughout the ages philosophers, artists, social reformers, revolutionists and other creative people have given the best they were capable of to the society with no thought for the returns that they might receive. Gandhi wanted to extend this principle to the whole of society so that every individual worked for the common good to the best of his ability in a spirit of service. Even economic activities were to be carried out in that spirit. It needs to be noted here parethetically that the socialist movement in Europe in its early days attempted to work out the idea of a style of life based on mutual aid and sharing through voluntary communes. Many so-called primitive societies have been studied by anthropologists in which there is a much larger measure of work done for the society at large without any consideration of quid pro quo than would be conceivable in a modern industrial society.

Gradually the emphasis in socialist thought shifted from conscious self direction to outside control. But Gandhi was clear on this issue, as the following dialogue with N. K. Bose shows. Bose asked him:

Then shall we take that the fundamental difference between you and the socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will, that being the reason why you strive for self-correction, while they try to build up a system under which men will find it impossible to exercise their desire of exploiting others?

To this Gandhi replied:

While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold it better for him to live by the exercise of the will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. (*Studies in Gandhism*, pp. 203-4)

In the Gandhian scheme of things the individual is to put his energies at the service of the society voluntarily. He will be free to choose the shape this service should take. It may sometimes happen that the individual may have ideas about the good of the society different from that held by the majority of the people. Creative people have often pursued their own bents without caring for what society thought of them and the latter had often just tolerated them in their lifetime, discovering the worth of their work at a much later date. But it has also often happened that the pursuits of such individuals have been considered inimical to the interests of the society. They have suffered persecution and even martyrdom. This has happened again and again in history. Then the need for a satyagrahic stand becomes imperative. The individual has to stand up for what he considers to be the truth and the real interests of the society, and take the consequences. Gandhi visualised the members of the ideal society to be so enlightened as to be in a position to conduct their affairs through mutual consultation without the need for any kind of coercion. But he also recognized the practical limitations and

the need for a minimum of government, at least for a transitional period, and for democratically processed legislation.

In this context Gandhi recognized the need for the individual to submit to social control of his own free will. As he said:

> Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast, of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member. (*H*, 27 May 1939)

The satyagrahi recognizes the right of the majority to legislate and enforce such laws as they think to be necessary in the interest of the society. But the majority might hold a view and pass a law based on it that appears to be immoral to the individual. Then it becomes incumbent on him to offer satyagraha against it for changing the views of the majority. Thus, in the Gandhian scheme of things harmony between the interests of the individual and the society will not be achieved once for all, but will be continuously evolving, the product of a dialectical process involving dialogue and struggle.

Here Gandhi differed from the simplistic view of the goodness of human nature that holds that only the constraints that the society imposes on its members has to be removed for the latter to become their natural good selves. Certain schools of anarchists, inspired by this faith, had attempted to destroy the apparatus of government. But, according to Gandhi, people have to grow into freedom, to acquire the capacity to exercise freedom. They have to acquire the strength to change their societies, not to regress to an unfree stage.

The starting point of this is to be self-control. Gandhi used here the idiom of the religious tradition and gave cause for misunderstanding, for in traditional society self-control has meant submission to taboos and rigid and stereotyped patterns of behaviour. The two powerful drives, sex and self-assertion, had been singled out for special attention, because they had been perceived to be disruptive of the even tenor of social life.

When the psychopathological consequences of the ensuing repression came to light in modern times the trend shifted to total permissiveness. People are expected to give completely free expression to their urges and thus free themselves of all frustrations, repressions, and the consequent ill-health. But

this has led to another kind of bondage. In the developed industrial societies people are being manipulated into serving the ends of the industrial system by playing upon their sex urge and aggressiveness, their need for a self-image and a sense of achievement, by being made to buy things they might not really need. National political elites are seeking to maintain their hold on power by playing on the anxieties, fears, prejudices and self-love of their peoples. The industrial and political vested interests come together in making the people acquiesce in, and even welcome, neo-colonialism.

Gandhi's emphasis on self-control makes sense in this context. It is not to be taken in its conventional sense, but has to be understood in the context of the new meaning he gave to it, as he did to so many other traditional concepts. Full value is to be given to the idea of autonomous exercise of control over oneself that the word literally means. In its meaning it is akin to the concept of self-actualization used by Maslow and others. In the course of evolution man has lost almost all the patterns of progammed behaviour known as instincts that other simpler animals have. These instincts make their response to situations virtually automatic and tailored to the needs of the survival of the individual and the species. But man, having lost his instincts and gained self-consciousness, the power for rational thought and imagination, has to use the latter resources for guiding his unformed drives and needs. Man has to discover, invent and learn ways of using the latter appropriately and to the best advantage in his life. This he can do only when his 'senses', as Gandhi would call the latter, are not allowed to run away at a tangent on their own or are not manipulated by outside agencies to do so.

From this starting point Gandhi's recipe for the winning of autonomy by the individual has to go through all the steps that Gandhi had himself taken for freeing himself from pride and prejudices and from the false self-images or identities that one acquires in the course of life or are imposed on one by the society. But there is to be no imitation. Every individual will have to follow his own logic of inner growth. Freedom is not "given". It is a potential that has to be actualized. The behaviour of the average individual is almost wholly determined by forces operating in his inner and outer worlds. Thus far the determinists have a point. But the individual can create an ever-increasing area of freedom and choice for

himself by gaining insight into his situation and progressive mastery over his inner and outer worlds.

Vows were given a place of importance by Gandhi in this process of achievement of self-mastery. They help one to buttress one's values and decisions. As Gandhi had explained in a letter to Mirabehn:

> Not to take the vow is to trust one's little self. To take it is to distrust oneself and to trust only God. I know where I should have been if I had not taken the vows I have.
>
> But there is the other side, i.e., Andrews's. He says: "I do not know that the voice within is always the voice of God. What I may hold to be right today may be found to be wrong tomorrow. I must hold myself free to do the will of God as I discover it from moment to moment." This attitude has answered his purpose. I should be undone. I see a fallacy behind A's argument. He does not. So it sustains him. Fallacy, error and the like are relative terms. What is good for one may not be good for all even though Truth is one for all time. The difficulty lies in our hopeless ignorance of Truth. Cruel God has enabled us to see that Truth is one and nothing else is; but he has disabled us for knowing its content.
>
> If therefore you feel the call within to take the vow and if you feel it makes you feel freer, you shall take it. Nothing need be done in haste. (*CW* 33, p. 127)

The point that Gandhi makes in the letter about a vow making one feel freer has to be noted. The vows were not merely walls to save one from trangressing the limits of virtuous behaviour. They were resolves to develop one's inner resources: to seek truth, to love, to care, to be creative, to cultivate one's sense of equality and justice and to shed fear, a closed mind and a hard heart. They were reminders against lapsing into habitual patterns of behaviour learnt in the context of a society and values that one was determined to change. In his days Gandhi was faced by the problems of religious strife, race hatred, sex and caste discriminations that stultified individuals and rent society asunder. Those who aspired for freedom had to grow out of them.

Modern civilization has brought new crippling disabilities. In modern societies freedom has increasingly come to mean the minimum of involvement with others. People increasingly feel it to be burdensome to have to care for others, to give of oneself for others. Any such involvement with others is supposed to be a drag on oneself, a curtailment of one's happiness and

fulfilment. But the Gandhian approach, as summarized in the concept of service, holds that giving of oneself for others, caring for others, helping others to grow and fulfil themselves, is also essential for one's own growth and fulfilment. The drying up of this fount in modern societies is leading to atomization and one-dimensional individuals. It is also leading to a state in which individuals are becoming incapable of empathizing with others, of sharing their feelings of happiness and pain, and even of being aware of their existence persons. Being wrapped up in oneself is increasing the attachment to and the hankering after things and is also leading to other persons being perceived as things. As Erich Fromm has diagnosed:

> Our approach to life today becomes increasingly mechanical. Our main aim is to produce things, and in the process of this idolatry of things we transform ourselves into commodities. People are treated as numbers. The question here is not whether they are treated nicely and are well fed (things, too, can be treated nicely): the question is whether people are things or living beings. People love mechanical gadgets more than living beings. The approach to man is intellectual—abstract. One is interested in people as objects, in their common properties, in the statistical rules of mass behaviour, not in living individuals. All this goes together with the increasing role of bureaucratic methods. In giant centres of production, giant cities, giant countries, men are administered as if they were things; men and their administrators are transformed into things, and they obey the laws of things. . . . (*The Heart of Man*, p. 57)

It is this gradual erosion of sensibilities that induces politicians and academicians to discuss "mega-deaths" and "over-kill" as blandly as if they were discussing weeds or vermin and not the lives of human beings. Gandhi wanted to release the people from the dichotomies that societies created in their inner lives, as also from the chaotic clutter of yearnings created by manipulation. He sought to bring back wholeness and integrity to the individual and give him a sense of purpose and direction. He even sought to integrate the drives of sex and self-assertion, outlawed in traditional societies, into the personality structure to make it whole.

Traditional spiritual endeavour is almost strictly limited to the personal aspect of inner growth. The aspirants concentrate on it generally by retiring from all social intercourse. Social change is rarely an issue for them. At the most the change

achieved by the successful invidual is expected to have an impact on the society by itself. But it was not so with Gandhi. His programme for inner change in the individual had its origin in a preparation for social change. He had a fairly comprehensive vision of the kind of society he wanted. The existing order was enslaving and stultifying the people. The socialists and the communists wanted to have systems that would put the people into a strait jacket and make it impossible for them to deviate from the straight and narrow path. In the process, all creativity would be stifled, as has happened in the totalitarian regimes. Gandhi wanted to create a society that would neither be a jungle nor a straight jacket, but a home that would provide the maximum freedom for the individual's growth, not of a few but of each and every one in the human family. Individuals would have to actualize themselves in the final analysis, but the social order should not be a constant drag on them but provide a helpful climate. For him it was neither a way of the individual first perfecting himself and then setting about to change society nor of changing society first so that its members would acquire the appropriate new qualities thereafter, but a process in which individual change and social change continually react to and reinforce each other. As Vinoba had expressed it picturesquely, it was like walking on two legs: one step of individual change, to be followed by one of social change.

The changeover to a social order that would give the individual the maximum opportunity for growth demands revolutionary changes and Gandhi had on his agenda such a revolution for India to follow closely on the heels of her attainment of freedom. When on the eve of India's freedom a prominent industrialist, very close to Gandhi and a consistent supporter of the freedom movements, asked Gandhi about what he should do after independence, since the British would no longer be there to fight against, Gandhi replied, "Why! You will be still there." Gandhi's revolution was to be more radical and thorough than any other revolution has ever been. And that was why he desired to live to be one hundred and twenty years.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN AGENDA FOR A REVOLUTION

In his book, *The Constructive Programme,* Gandhi, while discussing the programme of economic equality, comments:

> This last is the master-key to nonviolent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A nonviolent system of government is clearly an impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainly one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good. (*CW* 75, p. 158)

He believed that equality in all spheres of life was an inescapable corollary of nonviolence and therefore he set economic equality as one of goals that he strove for. "The real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply his natural needs and no more. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on nonviolence cannot nurture any other ideal." (Fischer, *Life of Gandhi,* p. 5) The end of exploitation, economic freedom and equality and a world community rooted in peace are the goals twentieth century revolutions have been concerned with, not as distant dreams but as goals attainable in the not too distant future. Gandhi had begun sharing this vision early in his life when he came in contact with the views of John Ruskin, the nineteenth-century socialist thinker, through the book *Unto this Last.* He became convinced of the justness of economic equality, that a lawyer's

and a barber's wages ought to be the same, that everyone ought to engage in productive physical labour and that the life of a farmer working on the land in close contact with nature was the best. As he has described in his autobiography, he started putting these ideals into practice the very next day. The Tolstoy Farm and The Phoenix Ashram that he had started in South Africa were in a sense communes of the type that had sprung up all over Western Europe in the early days of the socialist movement. His ashrams in India were also conceived on the same pattern.

He strove to put a social and economic content into the struggle for freedom through a constructive programme which embraced a wide gamut of activities, from the revival of home production of cloth and other village industries to the eradication of untouchability, the emancipation of women and economic equality. The khadi and village industries programme brought the economic exploitation of India by Britain into focus and was conceived as an antidote to it, as well as the basis of a new egalitarian economic order. He was clear about the real role of private property in modern society.

> What is desired in the name of riches is, essentially, power over men. . . . The art of becoming rich in the common sense is not only the art of accumulating much money for ourselves, but also contriving that our neighbours have less. In accurate terms it is the art of establishing the maximum inequality in our favour. (*Sarvodaya*, p. 30)

As early as 1921 he was talking in terms of: "To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages." ('The Great Sentinel', *YI*, 13 January 1921) When the question of safeguards for British economic interests came up at the infructuous Round Table Conference convened in London in 1931 to discuss self-government for India, Gandhi expressed his views in no uncertain terms, making it clear that neither British nor Indian interests that came into conflict with the interests of the masses of the Indian people could be allowed to continue unhampered.

> Take this white elephant which is called New Delhi. Crores have been spent on it. Suppose that the future Government comes to the conclusion that this white elephant, seeing that we have got it, ought to be turned to some good use. Imagine that in Old Delhi

> there is a plaque or cholera going on, and we want hospitals for the poor people. What are we to do? Do you suppose the National Government will be able to build hospitals, and so on? Nothing of the kind. We will take charge of those buildings and put these plague-stricken people in them and use them as hospitals, because I contend that those buildings are in conflict with the best interests of the nation. They do not represent the millions of India. They may be representatives of the monied men who are sitting at the table; they may be representative of His Highness the Nawab Sahib of Bhopal or of Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas or of Sir Phiroze Sethna, or of Sir Tejbahadur Sapru, but they are not representative of those who lack even anywhere to sleep and have not even a crust of bread to eat. If the National Government comes to the conclusion that that place is necessary, no matter what interests are concerned, they will be dispossessed, and they will be dispossessed, I may tell you, without any compensation, because if you want this Government to pay compensation, it will have to rob Peter to pay Paul, and that would be impossible. (*CW* 48, p. 319)

And again,

> India free, I would love to think, would give a different kind of example to the whole world. I would not wish India to live a life of complete isolation whereby she would live in water-tight compartments and allow nobody to enter her borders or trade within her borders. But, having said that, I have in my own mind many things that I would have to do—to repeat that expression—in order to equalize conditions. I am afraid that for years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the downtrodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher castes, and then, subsequently and scientifically, by the British rulers. If we are to lift these people from the mire, then it would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India, in order to set its house in order, continually to give preference to these people and even free them from the burdens under which they are being crushed. And if the landlords, zamindars, monied men and those who are today enjoying privileges—I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians—if they find that they are discriminated against, I shall sympathize with them, but I will not be able to help them, even if I could possibly do so, because I would seek their assistance in that process, and without their assistance it would not be possible to raise these people out of the mire.

Look at the condition, if you will, of the untouchables. The law has to come to their assistance and set apart miles of territory. At the present moment they hold no land; at the present moment they are absolutely living at the mercy of the so-called higher castes, and also, let me say, at the mercy of the State. They can be removed from one quarter to another without complaint and without being able to seek the assistance of law. Well, the first act of the Legislature will then be to see that, in order somewhat to equalize conditions, these people are given grants freely.

From whose pockets are these grants to come? Not from the pockets of Heaven. Heaven is not going to drop money for the sake of the State. They will naturally come from the monied classes, including the Europeans. Will they say that this is discrimination? They will be able to see that there is no discrimination against them because they are Europeans; it will be discrimination against them because they have got money and others have got no money. It will be, therefore, a battle between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'; and if that is what is feared, I am afraid the National Government will not be able to come into being at all if those classes hold the pistol at the heads of the dumb millions and say: "You shall not have a Government of your own unless you guarantee our possessions and our rights." (*CW* 48, p. 317)

When the socialist movement gathered some strength in India, he sought to understand their viewpoint; as he wrote to Babu Sampurnanand, one of the leading socialists of the 1930s, appreciating his book on socialism and raising some questions, "the purpose behind these questions is only to ascertain how far it would be possible for me to accept the socialist principles and the means of their implementation." (*CW* 65, p. 441)

Gandhi responded to a draft programme sent to him by Jayaprakash Narayan, a leading socialist, favourably and yet critically; he had the following remarks to make.

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

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

I have always held that social justice, even unto the least and the lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed in proper training of the lowliest by nonviolent means to secure redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means is nonviolent non-cooperation. . . (*CW* 71, p. 422)

In answer to a question during a discussion at the Gandhi Seva Sangh, an association of his followers engaged in constructive work, he said the following:

Ever since the idea of socialism became popular in India, we have been confronted with the question as to what our attitude should be towards the Princes and the millionaires. The socialists say that the Princes and the millionaires should be done away with, that all must become workers. They advocate the confiscation of the properties of all those people and say that they should be given the same wages as everyone else—from rupees five to eight annas a day or rupees 15, a month. So much for what the socialists say. We too assert that the rich are not the owners of their wealth whereas the labourer is the owner of his labour. He is, therefore, from our point of view, richer than the rich. A zamindar can be recognized as the owner of one, two or ten bighas of land. That is to say, of as much as may be necessary for his livelihood. We also want his wages should not be higher than those of the labourer, that he should maintain himself on eight annas a day and use the rest of his wealth for the welfare of society. This is the most important point. We also wish that the Princes and the millionaires too should do manual work and maintain themselves on eight annas a day, considering the rest of their property as national trust.

At this point it may be asked as to how many trustees of this type one can find. As a matter of fact, such a question should not arise at all. It is not directly related to our theory. There may be just one such trustee or there may be none at all. Why should we worry about it? We should have the faith that we can, without violence or with so little violence that it can hardly be called violence, create such a feeling among the rich. We should act in that faith. . . . We should demonstrate through our endeavour that we can end economic disparity with the help of nonviolence. (*CW* 69, p. 219)

His concept of trusteeship, hinted at above, has been one of his major contributions to the ideology of the new economic order visualized by him. It seeks to achieve the goal of abolition of private property in the means of production without sacrificing the advantages of individual initiative and without being caught in the snare of a gargantuan

bureaucracy that cannot be controlled by the people. We will discuss this in detail later.

He based his rejection of private property in the means of production on an aphorism in the *Isha-Upanishad*, an important Indian spiritual text, which he interpreted as follows:

> . . . For those who wish to follow the later way the best and most effective *mantra* is: Tena *tyaktena bhunjithah* (enjoy the wealth by renouncing it.) Expanded it means: "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." (*CW* 75, p. 259)

He also took the help of other traditional concepts to explain his ideas to the common people, as for instance, in a speech in which he explained the idea of the social ownership of the means of production in these terms:

> This brings me to socialism. Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: "All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of the line and he can therefore unmake it." Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it means the State, i.e., the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it.
>
> I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the spinning wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact. . . . (*CW* 64, p. 192)

He realized that the common people all over the world were still in bondage and dreamt that the weapon of nonviolence would enable them to liberate themselves. In 1930, after the signing of the Gandhi–Irwin truce had brought the salt satyagraha to a halt, he wrote to one of his followers:

> I have no doubt that we can carry on this fight for any length of time. But the Government's capacity for brutality is so great that we should gird up our loins to face more of it. We have still to free the oppressed millions of the world, to free the entire world. It waits for a miracle from India. (*CW* 45, p. 134)

Marxism has captured the imagination of the world and has cornered the world market in revolutions. Marx was a pioneer in applying the methods of science to the study of society and was the first prophet to declare with massive self-confidence that all poverty and misery throughout the world would come to an end and a world order would put an end to all wars. Humanity would become one. All forms of inequality would be abolished. There would be an end to all coercion, exploitation and violence, and even the State, the class instrument of coercion, would wither away. The clarion call, "Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains", has resounded across the world. Marxism has gained great prestige and influence as the one and only route to a new world order by being able to bring almost a third of the people of the world under its umbrella. And so, those who accept Marxism as the only key to the understanding of the world have dismissed Gandhi as a utopian visionary, if not a stooge of the Indian bourgeoisie, whose idealistic dreams are of little consequence to mankind.

But what have been the achievements of Marxism? Very few of the goals it had set out to achieve have materialized. The French Revolution was made by the poor and the disinherited, the *sans-culottes*, but power was taken over by the bourgeoisie and the people were left out in the cold. Marx and Lenin expected that their way of making a revolution would leave power in the hands of the toiling masses. But that has not happened. In the communist countries power is wielded by a small minority that has consolidated itself into a new ruling class with all the pomp and privileges that go with it. The Russian Revolution was expected to trigger a series of revolutions in the other countries of the world that would free the masses of the world from their slavery. On the contrary, the USSR has emerged as a great imperialist power and is enslaving other countries to serve its own interests. Instead of being a force for world peace, it has emerged as one of the major threats to peace and survival.

This has started a process of rethinking even among those who accept Marxism as the basis of their own world-views. Althusser, Lukacs and habermas are among the leading thinkers who have been trying to go beyond Marx while accepting his basic contribution to social theory. Can a critique of Marxism be constructed on the basis of Gandhi's thoughts?

Can Gandhi's approach help to fill some of the lacunae in Marx's efforts to formulate a scientific theory of the evolution of human society? Can Gandhi's ideas by themselves provide an alternative to the Marxist approach? This is a task that will require an enormous amount of effort and no single person can expect to do it justice. What is being attempted here is to provide a preliminary sketch of such an effort.

Most attempts to compare Gandhi and Marx have focussed on Gandhi's emphasis on means: truth and nonviolence. Thus, while some have rejected Marxism because of its identification with violence, others have thought that the scientific analysis of Marx could be synthesized with the emphasis on truth and nonviolence of Gandhi to produce an effective revolutionary philosophy. What needs to be noted is that Gandhi's technique of dealing with the world's ills presupposes a way of looking at the world, a framework for analysing its phenomena and understanding its ills, that can be, and is, materially different from that of Marx's, latter framework can barely be accepted in toto as a basis for action conceived on Gandhian lines.

Gandhi has commented on communism on several occasions. While in detention after August 1942, he read *Capital* and is reported to have commented that if he had had the time he would have written it much better! On an earlier occasion he had commented:

> I must confess that I have not yet been able fully to understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by the means of peaceful persuasion there would be nothing like it. But from what I know of Bolshevism it not only does not preclude the use of force but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective State ownership of the same. And if that is so I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime in its present form cannot last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence. But be that as it may there is no questioning that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain: the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as the time passes. (*CW* 37, p. 380)

It is to be noted that in the above Gandhi praises the qualities of dedication and self-sacrifice in communist revolutionaries to which they themselves attach little lasting value as ideals that should animate mankind. The expectations he had of the impact of Lenin's example on the ideal of communism seems to have faded away with the advent of Stalin. He remarked in 1941, "I find a great difference between Lenin and Stalin. Lenin's Russia is no more." (*CW* 74, p. 169)

Gandhi's vision of the new social order has much in common with that of Marx. Like Marx, he was for the abolition of private property in the means of production, abolition of the difference between physical and intellectual labour, for economic equality that was not mechanical but took note of individual differences in needs, for complete equality between men and women and for a world order free from wars and exploitation. Both believed that the ultimate ideal was a society free from all traces of violence and in which the State as an apparatus of coercion would have very little part to play or even wither away completely. But their social criticisms started from different premises.

Gandhi's social criticism was based on value judgements, an approach the modern social sciences, including Marxism, have scrupulously avoided. He attributed the evils that he, and Marx as well, wanted to put an end to, to the wrong choice of values in modern civilization. This is clear from the following quotation from *Hind Swaraj*, the testament of his faith published in 1909, in which he minces no words in criticizing modern civilization.

> Men will not need the use of their hands at all. . . . Everything will be done by machinery. Formerly, when people wanted to fight with one another, they measured between them their bodily strength; now it is possible to take away a thousand lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill. This is civilization. Formerly, men worked in the open air only as much as they liked. Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at the risk of their lives, at the most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires. Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are

enslaved by the temptation of money and luxuries money can buy. . . . (*CW* 10, p. 20)

Gandhi's criticism has to be seen in the context of the clarifications that he later made. He had said:

> . . . though I have undoubtedly spoken and written openly against European civilization, I cannot recall having condemned "all science and culture". My life is a standing testimony against the libel. (*CW* 26, p. 333)
>
> I do not, however, think that the alternative to superficial Europeanization consists in a complete reversion to the ancient Aryan tradition. I hold with the great thinker, the late Justice Ranade, that there is no such thing as a literal complete revival of ancient tradition possible, even if it were desirable. . . . And I am humble enough to admit that there is much that we can profitably assimilate from the West. Wisdom is no monopoly of one continent or one race. . . . (*CW* 34, pp. 315–16)

In a speech soon after his return to India in 1915, Gandhi had said that the British Empire had certain ideals that he had fallen in love with and "one of those ideals is that every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope possible for his energies and efforts and whatever he thinks is due to his conscience. . . ." (*CW* 13, p. 59) Of course the British were very much part of the West. On later occasions he was very specific about the point of his criticism.

> Do not for one moment consider that I condemn all that is Western. For the time being I am dealing with the predominant character of modern civilization, do not call it Western civilization, and the predominant character. . . is the exploitation of the weaker races of the earth. The predominant character of modern civilization is to dethrone God and enthrone Materialism. . . ." (*CW* 28, p. 127)

It is clear from the above that his criticism of modern civilization was motivated neither by chauvinistic nationalism nor by a fixation on the past. His was a very clear-eyed appraisal of the civilization and he noted many points that have assumed graver proportions in our times and have compelled attention, like the mechanization of life and science in the service of war and consumerism. He saw the roots of capitalism and imperialism not in the unfolding of an inexorable historical process but as rooted in a way of life that

involved the wrong moral choices. He saw modern civilization as a disease that has struck the European nations and hoped that they would be cured of it. The validity of his pinpointing the predominant character of modern civilization as the exploitation of weaker races is borne out by subsequent developments. While the powers of Western Europe have been forced to shed their empires and slide into the second rank, the USA in the West and the USSR in the East have risen as champions of the two branches of modern civilization, and both have become neo-imperialist powers much more powerful than any of the previous ones and threats to the weaker peoples of the world. The old empires have disappeared, but the ethos lives on.

The belief in the capability of men to control their own destiny is crucial to the world-view of Gandhi. He fully believed in the capability of individuals to change the course of history and asserted that a single true satyagrahi could challenge a mighty empire and stand alone against the world if necessary. True morality comes into play only when men have the strength to choose and are not afraid of committing mistakes. Though a believer in God, he never claimed that the Sarvodaya society of his dreams was wished by God and that the people would have to act simply as midwives at its birth. For him it was to be a matter of free and conscious choice of values by the people. Gandhi viewed the evolution of human civilization as a steady progress towards nonviolence. This means a progressive choice of values leading towards the integration of whole mankind. This emphasis on the role of values does not exclude other factors and Gandhi would not have laid such stress on a technology appropriate to a nonviolent way of life if he had believed that the economic structure and other factors did not play any role in giving shape to society.

In rejecting a deterministic approach to the social process Gandhi is in the good company of modern scientific thought. Determinism as a way of looking at the world had held sway in the nineteenth century, but is fast losing its hold. It has lost its hold even on the physical sciences where causality and statistical laws are replacing it, while in biology chance holds sway. Evolution has been found to proceed by the process of natural selection from among mutations that take place in the genes of living things in a purely indeterminate manner.

As for Gandhi's insistence on value and choice, newer knowledge in the social sciences, particularly in anthropology and sociology, has shown that values enter as independent variables into the social process. People invent different ways of solving the same problems in social integration, access to the means of production, relations between the sexes, socialization of children and so on, so that societies at the same level of economic and cultural sophistication have widely differing patterns of social institutions and mores. Examples along one dimension are provided by the classification of preliterate societies made by Erich Fromm on the basis of the degrees of pecefulness and aggressivity in them.

Thus conscious choice has played a crucial role in the evolution of society. People, and the societies they live in, are circumscribed in their choices by their historical, geographical, social and technological circumstances. Streams of causation do create powerful surges of forces in history that overwhelm them. Ignorance, conditioning and taboos inhibit their reasoning faculties and freedom of action. But progress has consisted precisely in overcoming these impediments and widening the area of choice. Thus the freedom of choice and the autonomy of individuals are potentials to be actualized necessitating effort and struggle.

However, social scientists of all persausions are likely to join issue with Gandhi on two scores. Firstly, while recognizing the independent existence and role of values in the social process, they will demur at the claim of the existence of any absolute yardsticks by which the relative worth of values can be measured. Secondly, they will object to the use of value judgements in social analysis and theory. The social sciences have followed the physical sciences in attempting to discover purely objective laws behind social phenomena. In doing so they have tried to rigidly exclude all human judgement, valuations and decisions from the social phenomena under study and to seek purely impersonal laws.

The first objection has been discussed at length in the chapter "Truth, Science and God". There an attempt has been made to establish the need for a yardstick or an overarching value to bring coherence into the fragmentary, and often contradictory, value systems by which humanity lives today. As for the second, the issue has been raised by competent philosophers of the social sciences. Habermas, for instance, has

raised the question in the course of his exposition of the theory of communicative action. Societies are seen by him as products of human action, in turn shaped by norms and values, and it is to the development of these norms and values that we must look if we are to understand social change. He argues that social theory, to be critical would have to have some valuational yardstick to go by. Otherwise social theory will become purely descriptive. According to him, the basis of social criticism should lie in the goal towards which human social development is moving, a universal rationality in which everybody participates equally. In the context of the problem of legitimation of the modern State, he poses the following question:

> Every general theory of justification remains peculiarly abstract in relation to the historical form of legitimate domination. If one brings standards of discursive justification to bear on traditional societies, one behaves in an historically 'unjust' manner. Is there an alternative to this historical injustice of general theories on the one hand, and the standardlessness of mere historical understanding, on the other? The only promising programme I see is a theory that structurally clarifies the historically observable sequence of different levels of justification and reconstructs it as a historical-logical nexus. Cognitive developmental psychology, which is well corroborated and which has reconstructed ontogenic stages of moral consciousness in this way, can be understood at least as a historic guide and as an encouragement. (*CES*, p. 205)

The noted German historian, Meinecke, has been also of the view that "the search for causalities in history is impossible without reference to values" (quoted in *Gandhi's Social Philosophy*, p. 114; hereafter referred to as *GSP*).

The scientific study of society will have to add a new dimension to itself by recognizing society as the product of human activity guided by norms and values to be able to do justice to reality. This does not exclude the operation of external forces. Often the latter are overwhelming and decisions supposedly taken as free agents are really products of situational and historical compulsions. Often enough the tallest personalities in history have appeared as puny, helpless playthings in the hands of historical forces. As Gandhi had once written while outlining his concept of God:

> He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for he leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good. He is

the greatest tyrant ever known, for he dashes the cup from our lips, and under the cover of free will, leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Him at our expense. (*C W* 26, p. 225)

But even when all such factors are allowed for, there does remain a relatively small, yet most important from the point of view of human evolution, residue of effective human choices and decisions.

A scientific study of society will have to take this into account. It will have to take into account the level of moral consciousness and the awareness of moral issues achieved in a certain period of history; the level of moral skills and supportive knowledge that has been acquired, the lack of which has limited choice. All these limitations might make a choice that will appear inadequate to us now, at our present levels of awareness, to have been the best under the given circumstances. Yet the consequences of whatever moral error was implicit in it would not go away.

This change in the approach will help social theorists to appreciate Gandhi's view that capitalism and imperialism are products of a certain outlook on life and not the other way round. The concept of "instrumental reason" developed by the Frankfurt School of social philosophers come closest to Gandhi's view of modern civilization which he called a disease. Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse are among those who have explored this concept in depth. Instrumental reason, the shape that rationalism has taken in modern civilization, is a way of looking at the world, at things and at human beings, in which they are looked upon as instruments to some end. it is also a way of looking at theoretical knowledge as a means to gain power for the purpose of using things and people for one's end. Marx had reduced the relations between men to relations between things and that is the way "instrumental reason" operates. It does away with all feelings like love and affection from human relations. One values a man because he would be of some use in furthering one's designs, not because one has any affection or respect for him as a human being. Social theorists like Adorno and Horkheimer are close to saying that capitalism was a product of instrumental reason, not the other way round, as Marxism and other social theories that exclude

human motivation from the process of social evolution would like to have it.

For Marx the process of social evolution was the unfolding of a historical process in which choices and values played little or no part. His criticism of capitalism and imperialism is suffused with a cold moral fury, but he does not see them as products of immoral acts or as the consequences of wrong decisions. Communism would come not as the outcome of a moral effort but as the historically determined culmination of the evolutionary process.

According to the theory of historical materialism, the whole cultural edifice of a society is a superstructure erected on the foundation constituted by the system of production. As the latter changes, so also do the systems of morality, law, philosophy and so on obtaining in the society. To put it in Marx's own words:

> In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (*A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, pp. 20–1)

Hence, for Marxists, value choices do not enter into the dynamics of a revolution. Whatever new values and mores come into play in a communist society are to be the byproducts of changes in the pattern and relations of production. Hence in the Marxist approach there is little concern about the choice of means. There is no such thing as universal truth, there being bourgeois and proletarian versions of it. Nonviolence is a moral principle invented by the ruling classes to keep the masses quiet, and so on. We can see the consequences that the cynicism engendered by this credo has led to in the communist regimes.

This doctrine of a historically determined and unilinear evolution of human society that ignored the moral dimension has had another consequence that has only recently been noted, particularly by Nundy in his book, *The Intimate Enemy*.

Having posited capitalism, and by implication imperialism, as a progressive force at a certain stage of the evolution of societies, it has unintentionally legitimized European imperialism. The latter has been seen as a carrier of progress to its colonial possessions. The civilizations and cultures of the subjugated people had been seen by the white imperialists as inferior to those of their own and deserving to be so treated. The Marxist interpretation of history has tacitly accepted this position and this is where Gandhi's perception, that the predominant character of modern civilization is the exploitation of the weaker races of the earth, assumes significance as a more valid assessment of the reality. The confusion created by the Marxist view of history has stood in the way of the true liberation of peoples dominated by imperialism. It has failed to discriminate between the currents and counter-currents in civilizations; the current in European civilization that made for the dignity of the individual, freedom of thought, the scientific outlook, the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity and so on, which were precious contributions to world civilization, and the counter-current of capitalist and imperialist expansion, of racism, that squarely negated humanistic values. The relegation of non-European civilizations to an inferior status has also made many people blind to the fact that they have also made precious and lasting contributions to world civilization.

Liberation and revolution in the non-European countries could begin only with the rejection of this racist myth. It needs to be noted that the communist revolution in China could gain momentum only when Mao broke with the Soviet leadership and their version of Eurocentric communism. As all students of modern China know, Mao, even though he rejected Confucianism, relied heavily on idioms and images rooted in Chinese culture, and the Chinese revolution has given an impetus to the appreciation of achievements in traditional medicine, technology, etc. and investigations into their scientific validity.

It becomes clear in the above context that Gandhi's insistence on taking cognizance of ethical factor in the historical process can be of greater help in differentiating between the positive and negative achievements of modern civilization and facilitate the acceptance of the positive ones without having to accept the horrors of capitalist exploitation and

imperialist domination as the harbingers of a liberating process. And more importantly, it helped the Indian people to free themselves from the sense of inferiority that had been most insidiously injected into them by British imperialism and to regain self-respect and self-confidence. People are products of their cultures. While people may and do modify their cultures and that is what reform movements and revolutions are about, a people that denies or is ashamed of its roots can never attain full stature as autonomous and self-respecting members of the world community. And theory of revolutionary change has to take this fact into account to succeed.

Marx believed that changes in the mode of production, in its techniques, was the single causative factor in social development and this development was unilinear, necessary, uninterrupted and progressive. A certain pattern of social relationships and political set-up was associated with each pattern of production. A society mainly dependent on agriculture had a feudal pattern while capitalist industrialism was linked to parliamentary democracy, and secondly, a society using more sophisticated techniques of production was more advanced in all respects than those dependent on lower levels of technologies. Incidentally, it is this theory that has made the Russians ridicule Chinese endeavours to build communism as, according to this view, the latter's economic base, i.e., their technology of production, is not advanced enough.

This theory is belied by facts. Again, anthropology supplies voluminous evidence of societies at the same level of economic development having great diversity in their social systems. It is true that the mode of production does have an impact on the social system, but that is not the only factor that gives it its shape. Many other factors come into play. Cosmological myths, beliefs about life and death, theories about the role of the sexes and many other factors have been known to play a part. Though all agricultural societies have been lumped together under feudalism, there are significant variations that set one agricultural society apart from the other. Capitalism and "bourgeois" democracy entered the scene together in Britain, France and the USA, but it was the feudal ruling class in Germany, and later on in Japan, that appropriated the capitalist mode of production, bringing about the industrial development of those countries.

Marx had accepted the current conventional view of the evolution of civilizations which holds that stages of civilization correspond to levels of technological development and a society using a more developed level of technology has, necessarily, a higher level of civilization. This flowed from his unilinear view of social evolution and the fundamental role that the modes of production played in it. Toynbee has shown that this is not so.

> . . . Is there evidence of a positive correlation between the improvement in technique and a progress in social growth?
>
> This correlation is taken for granted in the classification invented by modern archaeologists, in which a supposed series of stages in the improvement of material technique is taken as indicative of a corresponding succession of chapters in the progress of civilization. In this scheme of thought, human progress is represented as a series of "Ages" distinguished by technological labels; the Paleolithic Age, the Neolithic Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, to which may be added the Machine Age in which we ourselves are privileged to live. . . .
>
> . . . From the scientific standpoint it is a mere accident that the material tools which 'pre-historic' man had made for himself should have survived while his psychic artifacts, his institutions and ideas, have perished. Actually, while the mental apparatus is in use, it plays a vastly more important part than any material apparataus can ever play in human lives; yet because a discarded material apparatus leaves, and a discarded psychic apparatus does not leave, a tangible detritus, and because it is the business of the archeologist to deal with human detritus in the hope of extracting from it a knowledge of human history, the archeological mind tends to picture *Homo Sapiens* only in his subordinate role of Homo Faber. (*A Study of History* I, pp. 192–3; hereafter referred to as *SOH*)

Then Toynbee has gone on to give a large number of examples from history in which societies with higher levels of techniques were actually at lower levels of civilization in the matter of human values, art, etc.

Marx shared the popular belief of modern times that scientific progress was automatically reflected in the kind of technological progress that has been taking place; that bigger and bigger machines and factories were the normal counterpart of the progress in science. Though Marx himself had brought together voluminous evidence in *Capital* of such motives on the part of capitalists, Marxists have never stopped to ask whether

devlopments in modern technology were not dictated by the desire to bring the control of the productive process into the hands of a tiny minority and reduce its dependence on the willing cooperation and the vagaries and moods of a large work force.

On the contrary, this development was seen as the very process that would facilitate the coming of communism. Lenin speaks of the "whole society becoming a single office and a single factory with equality of labour and equality of pay" (*State and Revolution*, p. 121; hereafter referred to as *S&R*). He has extolled "factory" discipline and has spoken of extending it to the whole of society, though he concedes that "it is by no means our ideal, or our ultimate goal. It is but a necessary step for the purpose of thoroughly purging society of the infamies and abominations of capitalist exploitation, and for further progress."

Both Marx and Lenin thought that further progress in the technology of production would abolish the diffeence between mental and physical labour. But this has not happened anywhere in the world, not even in the communist countries. The difference has become all the more acute with automation and computerization. The reason is not far to seek. The goal has been to put more effective control in the hands of the executive. The Soviet bureaucrat is no less anxious to have such power over those who work under him than the executives of American multinationals.

Some research has been done in this area and facts brought together to show how productive technology has evolved according to the demand of control over workers. Factories had come into existence even before the application of steam power made it economic for one power plant to run several machines. Artisans who earlier worked in their homes were brought together in factories so that there could be more control over them and they could be made to work for wages, thus getting more work out of them. As Lewis Mumford has discussed in his book, *The Myth of the Machine*:

> Unfortunately, the form and method of totalitarianist technics could not be confined to the magamachine; for wherever the population was concentrated in large cities, where a large-scale organization of a landless and increasingly traditionless proletariat took place, compulsive methods made their way even into the processes of handicrafts and progressively mechanized them, that

> is, in the human sense. The large-scale organization of the proletariat in specialized workshops and factories, using what now seem like modern methods, is reasonably well documented for the Hellenistic and Roman world, as Rostovsteff showed; but must have begun at a much earlier date. In this way the original practices of the megamachine began to pervade even the more humane institutions derived from an earlier economy. (pp. 236–7)

This had happened in India in the case of weavers before the modern spinning and weaving factories of England began making them superfluous. The East India Company used political power to force them to work in factories to manufacture textile goods for export to England.

As McDermott has observed in his paper, "Technology: Opiate of the Intellectual",

> Technology, in its concrete, empirical meaning, refers fundamentally to systems of rationalized control over large groups of men, events and machines by small groups of technically skilled men operating through organizational hierarchy. The latent "oportunities" provided by that control and its ability to filter out discordant "negative externalities", are, of course, best illustrated by extreme cases. Hence the most instructive and accurate example should be of a technology able to suppress the humanity of its rank-and-file and to commit genocide as a byproduct of its rationality. The Vietnam bombing programme fits technology to a "T". (*Technology and Man's Future*, pp. 189–90; hereafter referred to as *T&MF*)

David Dickson has done extensive research in this area and in *The Politics of Alternative Technology*, as also in *The New Politics of Science*, has demonstrated with a wealth of examples how technological innovations have been tailored to serve the political purpose of consolidating the control of the dominant class. He identifies four ways in which this is done. First, it is used directly to increase supervision and tighten control over the work force. As we have seen, the factory system itself was devised for this purpose. Dickson also gives the example of the factory-based building industry using prefabricated units. The second way is the use of technology for eliminating militant sections of the work force. He cites the example of the introduction of containerization in British ports to counteract the increasing militancy of the dockers. The third use is the introduction of innovations to achieve an apparent improvement in the work situation and divert the workers'

attention from more important issues. Various schemes of so-called job enrichment are examples of this ploy. And finally the threat of technological innovation is used to blackmail the work force into accepting the existing conditions of work and wages or face unemployment, as has been done by some employers to keep down the wages of women workers by threatening to introduce machinery to replace them.

Gandhi was aware of this danger of the use of the machine for the subjection of man, as is apparent from the excerpts from his writings quoted earlier, and wanted to guard against it. But he has acquired a bad reputation as an opponent of all machinery and all technological progress. His trenchant criticism of machinery in *Hind Swaraj* and his insistence on the revival of the defunct or dying small traditional industries of India has been taken as proof enough of this hostility. Yet in this context one has to remember that the above booklet was written in a mood of impassioned reaction against the horrors of capitalist exploitation and imperialist aggression to which modern civilization had given birth. In it he has used the term machinery in the popular sense, to mean large-scale machinery and factories. There is a certain measure of rawness in some of the views expressed in the booklet, including his position on machines that he sought to clarify or: modify later. "We do want machines", he said in a speech in 1934, "but do not wish to become their slaves. We should make machines our slaves. Our slaves means slave not of the rich but of the poor." The following excerpt from his discussions with G. Ramachandran in 1924 makes his position amply clear:

> Are you against all machinery Bapuji?
>
> How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning-wheel itself is a machine; a little tooth-pick is a machine. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and are thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery only helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.

> . . . The supreme consideration is man. The machine must not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer sewing machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine. . . . He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine. (*CW* 25, pp. 250–1)

Gandhi was not prepared to accept the technology developed by an exploitative system for the purposes of a revolutionary transformation of society. He wanted to revolutionize technology. As Mao had advocated at a later date, his purpose in seeking to get traditional and obviously inadequate tools and implements back into use was to dispel the feeling of helplessness and impotence of the common people and to give them a sense of power over their own lives. That was why he never tired of emphasizing the importance of the charkha in the freedom struggle and even declared that swaraj hung by a strand of handspun yarn. It needs to be noted that in 1928 he had announced a prize of one hundred thousand rupees, a large sum in those days, for the invention of a spinning-wheel that would produce six times as much yarn as the traditional wheels. The impetus given by him has led to a spate of improvements in the traditional tools used in Indian villages and triggered inventions and innovations by the villagers themselves.

However, neither Marx nor Gandhi had ever imagined the fantastic growth of technology that has overwhelmed the world and is having its impact on every sphere of life, leading to the subjugation of man by the machine in a more thoroughgoing and intensive manner that Gandhi might have imagined. A host of thinkers and social critics like Mumford, Marcuse, Jacques Ellul and Paul Goodman are deeply concerned with this problem and have been casting about for means to bring it under control. Technological "progress" seems to have acquired a life of its own and people have come to look upon it as a sort of natural phenomenon beyond their control and to which they have to adjust. As Ellul has put it:

> It has been said that modern man surrounded by techniques is in the same position as prehistoric man in the midst of nature. This is only a metaphor: it cannot be carried very far, even though it is as exact as a metaphor can be. Both represent terrifying powers, worlds in which man is a participant but which are closed against him. In the joy of conquest, he has not perceived that what he has created takes from him the possibility of being himself. He is like a rich man of many possessions who finds himself a non-entity in his own household. The State, man's last protector, has made common cause with alien powers. (*T&MF*, p. 130)

One fact that both the optimists and the pessimists sometimes overlook regarding the impact of technology is that any technological innovation is a product of human activity. Technology does not evolve in a vacuum. Specifically, the large and complex machines, characteristic of modern times, need huge amounts of funds for research and development and are totally beyond the capacity of any private individual to provide. Only governments and large corporations have the capability to do so and while paying the piper they call the tune, techniques evolve because politicians need them to manipulate the people, manufacturers to push their products and war makers to impose their will on the enemy. It is a fact that technological applications of scientific knowledge has helped to alleviate misery and suffering in the world and even enrich the spiritual life of man. The giant telescopes that peer at the rims of the universe and the cyclotrons that help to unlock the secrets at the heart of matter have certainly helped man to have a deeper understanding of the universe in which he lives. But those who seek to enslave or manipulate men are now in a position to control technological development in their own interests and are doing so. Acceptance of the instrumental rationalist outlook on life by the people in general has facilitated the continuation of the system. Thus runaway technology has certain values at its back that drive it, and as Gandhi had perceived, it can be brought under control not by creating new institutions based on the same values, but by changing the values.

Marxism has paid little attenion to the awakening of new motivations in men. It was believed that changes in the economic system would automatically evoke new motivations in the people. But that expectation failed. Systems of reward and punishment on the model of capitalism had to be instituted. The ruling elite had to be given special privileges

and it emerged as a new class. In discussing the conditions for the withering away of the State, Lenin had visualized that:

> It will become possible for the State to wither away completely when society adopted the rule: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." . . . when people have become so accustomed to observing the fundamental rules of social intercourse and when their labour becomes so productive that they will voluntarily work according to their ability. "The narrow horizon of bourgeois right", which compels one to calculate with the coldheartedness of a Shylock whether one has not worked half an hour more than somebody else—this narrow horizon will then be crossed. There then will be no need for society to regulate the quantity of products to be received by each: each will take freely "according to his needs". (*State and Revolution*, p. 115; hereafter referred to as *S&R*)

But this magnificent vision has one flaw. It presupposes a level of production at which everyone will have everything he wants--a veritable Pagoda tree of an economy. It pushes the ideal "from each according to his ability and to each according to his needs" into the never never land of the future. In actual practice, increases in production will be accompanied by newer and more expensive patterns of consumption, and with the inequality in pay and status that obtains in the USSR and other East European communist countries at the moment, a major part of the increases will be claimed by the new elite. A situation in which everyone will have everything he needs will never come or will come only at the expense of forcing the poor countries into abject and perennial poverty. This is actually happening, with the USSR having metamorphosed into what Mao called social imperialism. The natural resources of the earth will never be able to support such a never never economy.

Mao grappled with this problem. He realized that the principle of more pay for more responsibility, or supposedly more sophisticated skills, will be an impediment in the path of freeing the masses from poverty. All increases in productivity would be swallowed up by the power-wielding classes. The Cultural Revolution of the sixties was aimed at bringing about a change in the attitudes of the people in this respect, though it also had its uses in the power struggle that Mao waged against the opponents of his policies in the party.

The early socialists had realized the need for a new socialist consciousness to be accepted by people as a choice. The experiments in community living begun in Western Europe in the early days of the socialist movement were intended to achieve this change. But these soon disappeared because the prospects of changing society by the use of political power were seen to be more attractive.

Gandhi's solution was to arouse an inner motivation in the individual that will make him voluntarily and joyfully give the best of himself for the society, to participate and to share. This point has been discussed at some length in the previous chapter. To this end he virtually turned the Marxist formula about abilities and needs inside out in his formulation of the duty of *yajna*, according to which one gives to the society according to the best of one's ability and takes the minimum that one needs for one's efficient and decent upkeep. The spirit of sharing is natural to human beings and is expressed and nurtured in face-to-face situations, in social units in which people live and work in fairly close contact. The paramount importance of this spirit on the battlefield is well recognized and nurtured in all the fighting forces round the world, but economies are organized on the basis of diametrically opposite principles.

The village in India, with an average population of less than a thousand, seemed to Gandhi to be the natural unit for the practice of the above principle and also of the new social order he visualized. Mutual concern and some degree of sharing still survive in the Indian villages. Even if the ideology of rampant capitalism is making rapid inroads into them, the spirit of neighbourliness still exists. Gandhi sought to free these units from class and caste stratifications and dominations and to motivate the villagers to lead a life based on cooperation and sharing. Lenin also had the same goal, but he chose the wrong institutional setup. He also hoped to be able to condition the people from outside in proper behaviour. His whole philosophy excluded reliance on inner motivation.

Gandhi's revolution would also thus involve a change in the way people look at things. The way of looking at the world as something to be exploited for one's purpose has given rise to exploitation, capitalism, imperialism, environmental problems and the threat of a nuclear holocaust. The remedy, according to Gandhi, would be to put love as a overarching

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The early socialists had realized the need for a new socialist consciousness to be accepted by people as a choice. The experiments in community living begun in Western Europe in the early days of the socialist movement were intended to achieve this change. But these soon disappeared because the prospects of changing society by the use of political power were seen to be more attractive.

Gandhi's solution was to arouse an inner motivation in the individual that will make him voluntarily and joyfully give the best of himself for the society, to participate and to share. This point has been discussed at some length in the previous chapter. To this end he virtually turned the Marxist formula about abilities and needs inside out in his formulation of the duty of *yajna*, according to which one gives to the society according to the best of one's ability and takes the minimum that one needs for one's efficient and decent upkeep. The spirit of sharing is natural to human beings and is expressed and nurtured in face-to-face situations, in social units in which people live and work in fairly close contact. The paramount importance of this spirit on the battlefield is well recognized and nurtured in all the fighting forces round the world, but economies are organized on the basis of diametrically opposite principles.

The village in India, with an average population of less than a thousand, seemed to Gandhi to be the natural unit for the practice of the above principle and also of the new social order he visualized. Mutual concern and some degree of sharing still survive in the Indian villages. Even if the ideology of rampant capitalism is making rapid inroads into them, the spirit of neighbourliness still exists. Gandhi sought to free these units from class and caste stratifications and dominations and to motivate the villagers to lead a life based on cooperation and sharing. Lenin also had the same goal, but he chose the wrong institutional setup. He also hoped to be able to condition the people from outside in proper behaviour. His whole philosophy excluded reliance on inner motivation.

Gandhi's revolution would also thus involve a change in the way people look at things. The way of looking at the world as something to be exploited for one's purpose has given rise to exploitation, capitalism, imperialism, environmental problems and the threat of a nuclear holocaust. The remedy, according to Gandhi, would be to put love as a overarching

value into our relations with men, things and nature. He used a verse from the *Gita* (Chapter 3) to reinforce his argument. The verse says that people were created by God along with the injunction to work in the spirit of *yajna*, selfless service. The *devas*, that is nature, should be served in a spirit of reverence so that nature also blesses mankind with its bounty, and thus, in mutual cooperation, they will progress towards the supreme goal. It is to be noted that opinion in the world is now veering to a non-instrumental and affective view towards creation.

One vital difference in Gandhi's approach from that of Marx was that Gandhi did not think in terms of a single factor determining the social process as did Marx in regard to the system of production. According to Marx, every other change would follow automatically once you change the economic system. Gandhi had realized from experience that there was no single determinant of social phenomena. Whatever might be their origins, every sphere of life and society, political, social, economic, cultural, etc., acquire lives of their own and though all these aspects interlock and changes in one sphere affect the others, the effects are not always such as one would like to see. It was a widely held belief in radical circles when Gandhi was fighting against untouchability that he was wasting his energy in vain. The evil was a feudal relic and would disappear when the country was industrialized. India is now proud to be counted as the tenth largest industrial nation in the world, but that has had little impact on the problems of untouchability and casteism. There are even sociological studies to show that casteism has become stronger in the industrial areas. Political freedom has not automatically lifted the educational system of India out of the rut in which imperial rule had left it. Socialist industrialization in the USSR has not helped to rid that country of anti-Semitism and has not changed everything that needed to be changed. A new ruling class has emerged intent on keeping the common people in their place. Women in highly industrialized Japan still lack basic equality with men. Instances can be multiplied endlessly.

So Gandhi took the approach of a multi-pronged attack on all fronts and while engaged in the struggle for political freedom, set in motion programmes and processes for changes in other spheres of the country's life: for radical changes in the economic system based on a new productive technology, for a

new educational system, for changes in values in social life that would rid it of the evils of casteism, untouchability and drug addiction that helped to keep the masses stupefied, for the liberation of women, and so on. These programmes were all conceived as parts of one integral whole which he named the Constructive Programme.

All the disparate programmes, of course, had a common denominator in that they were to be instrumental in achieving political freedom in the first place and then, later, in bringing about the revolutionary transformation of Indian society that Gandhi had visualized. Earlier, the programmes have been referred to as processes, because they did not consist of cut and dried recipes; even when it was such a concrete thing as the spinning wheel, the programmes only gave a broad indication of the direction in which a change was required. The best available talents suited to a particular task were brought together and allowed to work it out in practice.

Gandhi thought in terms of concrete programmes and put concrete images before the people that they could easily grasp. Decades later Jayaprakash Narayan, who had once been a Marxist socialist and an outspoken critic of Gandhi in the latter's lifetime and who had later joined the Sarvodaya Movement and become one of the greatest champions and exponents of Gandhi's ideas, sought to give a systematic theoretical shape to this multifront approach in his concept of Total Revolution.

Gandhi did not even share in the popular belief that the achievement of freedom for India would solve all its problems and set everything right. He looked upon political freedom as an important first step, as a trigger to the spirits of fearlessness, self-confidence and initiative in the people. But he also believed that the constructive activities that he had devised for the reconstruction of every aspect of Indian national life, if carried out effectively, would lead to freedom; that is, he believed that the qualities that freedom was expected to energize could be brought into play by the constructive activities. In the introduction to his booklet "The Constructive Programe" he asserts:

> The constructive programme may otherwise and more fittingly be called construction of poorna swaraj or complete independence by truthful and nonviolent means.

Effort for construction of independence so called through violent and, therefore, necessarily untruthful means we know only too painfully. Look at the daily destruction of property, life and truth in the present war.

Complete independence through truth and nonviolence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. This independence is never exclusive. It is, therefore, wholly compatible with interdependence within or without. Practice will always fall short of theory, even as the drawn line falls short of the theoretical line of Euclid. Therefore, complete independence will be complete only to the extent of our approach to truth and nonviolence.

Let the reader mentally plan out the whole of the constructive programme, and he will agree with me that, if it could be successfully worked out, the end of it would be the independence we want. . . . (*CW* 75, pp. 146–7)

He wrote in 1931:

If we were to analyse the activities of the Congress during the past twelve years, we would discover that the capacity of the Congress to take political power has increased in exact proportion to its ability to achieve success in the constructive effort. That is to me the substance of political power. Actual taking over of the Government machinery is but a shadow, an emblem. And it could easily be a burden if it came as a gift from without, the people having made no effort to deserve it. (*CW* 47, p. 92)

The activities subsumed under the constructive programmes included the following. (i) The movement for the eradication of untouchability and for unity among the religious communities that were directed at ridding society of discriminations and social inequalities. (ii) The programme of promoting small industries in the villages aimed at laying the foundation of an alternative economic system that would be egalitrian and non-exploitative. This included the manufacture of cloth and other articles of daily use, like oil, sugar, soap, ironmongery, leather goods and so on, using simple indigenous tools and machiens operated by human and/or animal power and locally available raw materials. (iii) Programmes for work among the expoited classes, the peasants and the industrial workers, for awakening their consciousness and creating in them the organized strength to fight injustice. (iv) Programmes for work among women to bring them to a status of equality with men in all spheres of life. (v) Programmes for reforming education by starting schools run according to the latest theories of education and the propagation of a national language for strengthening national unity. Gandhi did not believe that all these could be taken care of once political power was achieved. On the contrary, he believed that the achievement and proper use of political power by the toiling masses would be possible only if they were effective in carrying out the programmes.

He wanted to radically restructure all social institutions, because many or most of them have been created for using people as instruments in the hands of the powerful. They are there to dominate the people. The economic and administrative systems in the industrialized countries have acquired lives of their own and no longer seem to be there to serve the people's best interests but are intent upon using the people to serve autonomous interests that the systems have generated.

We find that there have been and are scores of voluntary and autonomous movements in the democratic countries and they have been able to achive changes that have been far more effective and wide-ranging than anything achieved by the revolutionary regimes. The labour movement, women's liberation movements, movements for educational reform, jail reform, etc. and now the environmental movement are examples. Gandhi must have been convinced about the potentiality of such movements through his contacts with British society in which there were numerous such movements in those days.

Only, in the average Western democracy, such movements are carried on independent of each other and are not related to any larger objective. Gandhi sought to weave his programmes together into a single interrelated movement linked to the goal of swaraj. The word, meaning self-rule, was sought to be given the content of a social revolution by Gandhi. To the masses he put across the idea of swaraj not as merely political independence, but as a thoroughgoing revolution in all spheres of life.

Revolutions have usually begun with spontaneous uprisings of the oppressed people and the euphoria and the release of energy brought about by the initial impact of revolutionary change have led to bursts of creative activity in various fields. This has gone on as an autonomous process independent of the

happenings in the political field. The internecine struggle for power after the French Revolution did not affect the burst of creative cultural activities that had been triggered off in various fields. The emergence of Napoleon and the establishment of a monarchy could not adversely affect these activities because at that time the State did not aspire to control every aspect of the people's lives.

The Russian Revolution also released a great burst of energy and many innovative experiments were begun in the fields of education, community living and so on and there was a great deal of creativity in literature and the arts. But the Soviet State that came into existence was not tuned to such voluntary and autonomous activities. It was wedded to the doctrine that the State, as the embodiment of the revolutionary will of the people, was to be the fountainhead of all initiative. And so, gradually, as the Soviet State became more organized and strong, it sought to control everything. Everything had to conform to the patterns approved by the State; censorship flourished and all creativity was damped by the wet blanket of dictatorship.

Lenin had visualized the advent of communism in these terms in 1917, on the eve of the October Revolution:

> Lastly, only communism makes the state absolutely unnecessary, for there is *nobody*, to be suppressed—"nobody" in the sense of a *class*, in the sense of a systematic struggle against a definite section of the population. We are not utopians, and do not in the least deny the possibility and inevitability of excesses on the part of *individual persons*, or the need to suppress *such* excesses. But, in the first place, no special machine, no special apparatus of suppression is needed for this; this will be done by the armed people itself, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted. (*S&R*, p. 108)

But this has not happened and is not likely to happen in any of the modern centralized states. On the contrary, the State has entered into every sphere of the life of the people and bureaucracies exercise total control over them. Lenin had in the same treatise made it clear that "all citizens are transformed here into hired employees of the state, which consists of the armed workers". And this bureaucratic vision did the trick of annihilating the revolutionary dream.

Since Gandhi did not believe in an all-powerful State and in fact was committed to an ideal of a State that governed the least and would ultimately disapperar, he recognized autonomous and voluntary activities as an integral part of the revolutionary process. In fact, he saw such efforts as the beginning of the process by which the people would be able to manage their affairs effectively without the intervention of the State and that would lead to the latter withering away. This was Gandhi's vision and the rationale of the constructive programme.

On the eve of independence he was dismayed by the situation in the country, by the communal strife, by the attitude of the Congress leadership that had agreed to the partition of the country behind his back, and by his own apparent loss of influence over the masses. Then he had commented that he had not been able to make the people accept the real nonviolence of the brave. What they had practised was the nonviolence of the weak and that was the cause of the debacle. He felt that he should have laid more stress on the constructive programme and seen to it that it was carried out more effectively, that he was hasty in having taken recourse to direct action. Such was his faith in the need for and effectiveness of such activities.

At the minimum he visualized the constructive activities as a means of creating effective public opinion in favour of appropriate legislation, but at the maximum he saw them as revolutionary alternatives. As has already been mentioned, there are items in the programme that call for work among women, students, peasants and industrial workers for conscientizing and organizing them. The terms conscientization has come into vogue in the last few decades for the process of creating an awareness among the people about the real nature of their problems and the resolve to tackle them effectively. Paulo Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has become a source of inspiration and guidance to those committed to peaceful social change. Gandhi did not have access to modern research in social psychology and the dynamics of change, but he was very much aware of the need for conscientization and of its process. The constructive programme was conceived as a vehicle for it.

Class struggle has been the central theme of Marxist philosophy. Marx had conceived it as the driving force of

social transformation, though the October Revolution in Russia was not a mass uprising but a virtual *coup d'état*. The existence of classes had been recognized by historians and economists before Marx. His main contribution was the role he gave to the class struggle in the revolution that would put an end to all classes. As he has himself made clear in a letter:

> . . . And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society, nor yet the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this struggle of the classes and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historic phases in the development of production: (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society. . . . (quoted in *S&R*, p. 39)

Classes do exist in all societies and the operation of class interests in the political and economic life of a society is very real. An understanding of the class structure of a society is essential for understanding its dynamics. But class interests are not the only forces operating in any society and the inability to take other forces into consideration has often made Marxist analyses most unreal, as has been the case in India. Again, the analyses made by Marx and his prognosis of the course of class conflict in modern societies has become an article of faith for believing communists and there is hardly ever any attempt by them to understand the real nature of classes, their interests and their interactions in modern society. Painful rethinking has led to the emergence of Eurocommunism in Western Europe.

Often the interests of the exploited and oppressed classes coincide with the interests of a new, just and equitable social order, but till the former is seen as based on *values* they can rarely provide the dynamics for a really revolutionary change. On the contrary, as a submerged class acquires political and economic clout, its interests can become as great impediments to the realization of social justice and equality as the interests of the existing ruling classes are. This has happened, for instance, in the case of industrial workers in the modern industrial sector in third world countries. In most such countries they have been able to achieve levels of economic well-being far higher than

the rural masses and they have become part of the ruling elite, as has been noted by Gunnar Myrdal (cf.*Asian Drama*). Rooted in their class interests, they are hardly in a position to spearhead any revolutionary movement. There is reason to believe that the position of the working class in relation to agricultural workers is almost the same in the Soviet Union and her satellites. Unless the working class comes round to understand that it has to sacrifice part of its pecuniary interests for the sake of the less fortunate, it can never be a revolutionary force.

What Marx meant by class consciousness was really an ideal to be accepted by the working class of the world. They were expected to rise above their perceived interests and act in accordance with the ideal. But this has never happened. Workers were expected to revolt against their national ruling classes during World War I. But they saw that their interests were better served by helping the war efforts of their respective countries and they did that cheerfully. The same was the case during World War II.

Gandhi was nothing if not a champion of the oppressed classes. He was acutely aware and concerned with the problem of class domination. In a way, that was his *raison d'etre*. South Africa, Champaran, Ahmedabad, Khaira, Vaikom, each and every one of his struggles was concerned with fighting oppression by classes or castes.

He recognized the existence of classes and of class war, but had a different prescription for the elimination of classes and liberation from class domination. As he had said in 1945:

> The class strugg was there always. It could only be ended if the capitalists voluntarily renounced their role and became labourers. The other way was to realize that labour was real capital, in fact, the makers of capital. What the two hands of the labourer could achieve, the capitalist would not get with all his gold and silver. But labour had to be made conscious of its strength. . . . Labour and capital, classes and masses, are as old as the hills. The whole trouble arises from the fact that neither labour nor those who are guiding the labour movement realize the dignity and strength of labour. It is like the lame leading the blind. (*GSP*, pp. 274–5)

As will be clear from the exerpts from his speeches and writings quoted earlier, Gandhi was clear in his mind and forthright about his stand in respect of exploitation and class

domination, but he was unwilling to endorse the method of class struggle because of its ideological connotations. There is no room in its thinking for any scale of universal values by which its justness may be judged. Gandhi, in contrast, took his stand based on principles. A cause was just not because it represented the interests of a certain class, but because it was right by the touchstone of universal principles like justice, equality and human dignity. Thus a satyagrahi expects support also from within the class against which he is arrayed and he does find it. His faith in human nature makes him carry the war into the heart of his opponent, because he holds, and rightly so, that there are conflicting impulses in human beings and even a rabid opponent has dormant urges contrary to his habitual mode of behaviour. For Gandhi, the crucial thing was to change the values by which a society lives, and so, the revolution he aimed at was basically a revolution in values, that would be reflected in every aspect of a society's life.

He frequently falked of ending capitalism, landlordism and the like with the cooperation of the landlords and the capitalists, as in the above quotation, and he never ceased appealing to their good sense. This has led some to conclude that his was just a pious wish based on a naive faith in the reasonableness of the ruling classes. But what the critics tend to overlook is that for him nonviolence always involved organized resistance and when he called upon the industrial workers to realize the dignity and strength of labour, he was hinting at the nonviolent strength they could exercise.

It is needless to point out that Gandhi believed in mass action and in his lifetime led some of the most spectacular mass movements in world history. Nonviolence, of course, was the keynote of such movements. A distinguishing feature of the movements was the number of people who participated in them purposefully, resolving to do so and taking the consequences calmly. Their number ran into tens of thousands. There were occasions when millions participated on the spur of the moment, but almost always there was this vanguard of committed satyagrahis who set a model and helped guide mass enthsiasm along proper channels. Thus the people participating in the struggles led by Gandhi were raised to higher levels of self-determination and awareness.

There was an occasion in 1922 when a leaderless mob lost self-control, attacked a police station, set fire to it and beat

some policemen to death. Gandhi immediately suspended the non-cooperation movement and went on a fast for five days as an act of explation. He also declared that he had committed "a Himalayan blunder" by misjudging the ability of the people to behave nonviolently. His detractors, of the Marxist persuasion in particular, have been highly critical of what they saw as Gandhi's attempts to stifle "revolutionary fervour" and have even branded him a henchman of the Indian bourgeoisie and a stooge of British imperialism. But the goal of Gandhi was not the use of the momentary fury of the masses for his own purposes but to lead them to autonomy and self-determination which involves self-control.

But he also had a historical perspective and knew that nonviolence was in the process of evolution. As we have seen in an earlier chapter (Nonviolence and Aggression), he considered the urge to stand up and fight for one's rights, dignity and values to be the essence of man's being and he always preferred action, even if violent, to inaction and cowardice. He recognized the right of an oppressed people to rise in revolt and to use even violence to achieve their deliverance. As he had said in the context of the movements of the people of the native states of India:

> The princes practised tyranny in the olden times too. But it would not go too far. The natural means of insurrection, retreat or migration were still open to the people. They were not disarmed or emasculated. Odds were even. Today the odds are heavy. It is most demoralizing. (*GSP*, p. 148)

Thus he judged people in terms of their historical circumstances and never considered nonviolence as a taboo or as a plea for inaction. One of the arguments in favour of nonviolence is that in modern times the ruling classes have become more organized and have more sophisticated means at their command for manipulating and subjugating the people. Hence the "natural" and naive methods of earlier times would not do. Revolutions will also have to become more sophisticated and the achievement of greater sophistication in harmonizing the process of a revolution with the humanist values that motivate them will be possible only by making progress in nonviolence. Trying to match the strength of the ruling classes in arms have landed liberation and revolutionary movements in the lap of one great power or the

other, because only these are in a position to supply arms in the required quantities.

Gandhi was aware of the fact that many other factors determine the course of events and he had admitted that he did not have the power to conjure up movements all by himself unless the other factors were favourable. He had realized that critical junctures arise in the course of the history of a society which are propitious for revolutionary changes. In 1942, when he felt that the British Government ws not willing to put into practice in India the principles it was defending in the war against Nazism, he demanded that the British leave India to her fate, and "anarchy". As he had explained in an interview to the press:

> I have mentioned anarchy. I am convinced that we are living today in a state of ordered anarchy. It is a misnomer to call such rule as is established in India, a rule which promotes the welfare of India. Therefore, this ordered, disciplined anarchy should go, and if there is complete lawlessness in India, I would risk it, though I believe, and should like to believe, that 22 years of continuous effort at educating India along the lines of nonviolence will not have gone in vain, and people will evolve real popular order out of chaos. . . . (*CW* 76, p. 114)

He was quite conscious that the established Government protected the interests of the "have" in the name of law and order and that the disappearance of the machinery of repression would give the people an opportunity to right the balance. In a conversation with Louis Fischer in 1942, he had visualized the prospect of an agrarian revolution when the civil disobedience movement that he had in mind was started. Answering Fischer's question about the shape the movement would take, Gandhi had said:

> In the villages, the peasants will stop paying taxes. They will make salt despite official prohibition. This seems a small matter: the salt tax yields only a paltry sum to the British Government. But refusal to pay it will give the peasants the courage to think that they are capable of independent action. Their next step will be to sieze the land.
>
> With violence?
>
> There may be violence, but then again the landlords may cooperate.
>
> You are an optimist.
>
> They might cooperate by fleeing.
>
> . . . .
>
> Or, they might organize violent resistance.
>
> There may be fifteen days of chaos, but I think we could soon bring that under control.
>
> Then you feel that it must be confiscation, without compenation?
>
> Of course. It would be financially impossible for anybody to compensate the landlords. (*CW* 76, pp. 445–6)

Thus he recognized the legitimacy of popular action in just causes, but was wary of aimless fury that spent itself fruitlessly and only weakened the people and their cause. He was for organized purposive action and of this he has given the world any number of shining examples.

> Once a Christian missionary asked Gandhi, "Seeing the influence you wield over the people, may we enquire whether it is the love of the cause or the love of the people that moves you?" Without a moment's hesitation Gandhi replied, "Love of the people. Cause without the people is a dead thing. Love of the people brought the problem of untouchability early into my life. My mother said, 'You must not touch this boy, he is an untouchable.' 'Why not?' I questioned back, and from that day my revolt began." (*CW* 69, p. 201)

It is always the love of man, indignation at the suffering one sees around him, that turns sensitive persons into reformers or revolutionists. Most of those who are moved by their love for man to devote their lives to the alleviation of suffering do not look beyond the surface reality into the causes deeply imbedded in the social structure and so never come round to the consideration of their removal. However, they inspire others with their love and spirit of service and thus help to keep the flame of love burning.

Others, who look for the root causes of sorrow and suffering and seek their eradication, often fall in love with a vision of the new society conceived primarily as a system in which the human values and the likes and dislikes of the ordinary people take a secondary place. They ignore the need for nurturing the altruistic motivation they themselves felt, of making it a part of the driving force of the new society. The new society—the new system—is then readily imagined as "a single office and factory", as was done by Lenin, in which a single central control is able to manipulate millions of lives. It is but one further step from here to the machine. People do

speak of the "bureaucratic machine" and "clockwork efficiency" and this completes the process of transforming flesh and blood human beings into cogs of the social machine. And then they become readily expendable.

Gandhi was an amalgam of Saint Francis of Assissi or Mother Teresa and Lenin or Mao. His indignation at the suffering around him knew no bounds. As he used to say, "He bottled up his rage" and converted it into the driving force of his ambition to "wipe every tear from every eye." He recognized the validity of self-interest or class interests, but sought to synthesize them with altruism and to make love the motive force of social change. The agenda he had drawn up for the nonviolent revolution included ministering to the needs of the sick and the poor as Mother Teresa is doing, as well as cataclysmic movements in the style of Lenin or Mao that moved millions and shook the foundations of an empire. And perhaps a world that is becoming sick of mindless violence, perpetrated in the name of freedom on the one hand and equality and social justice on the other, has something to take from this agenda.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POLITICS OF THE PEOPLE

Gandhi's ultimate ideal was the withering away of the State. In this respect his vision was almost identical with that of Lenin. Gandhi's views were set forth in a letter he wrote in 1931:

> To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life. Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation is necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state therefore there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that Government is best which governs the least . . . . (*CW* 47, p. 91)

This can be compared with the Marxist vision of the withering away of the State. Engels envisioned it thus:

> The first act in which the State really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole — the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society — is at the same time the last independent act as a State. The interference of State power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. (Anti-Duhring, quoted in S&R, pp. 18-19)

Lenin explicates it thus:

> Only then will there become possible and be realized a truly complete democracy, democracy without any exception whatever and only then will democracy begin to wither away, owing to the simple fact that, freed from capitalist slavery, from the untold horrors, savagery, absurdities and infamies of capitalist

exploitation, people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copybook maxims; they will become accustomed to observing them without force, without compulsion, without subordination, without the special apparatus for compulsion which is called the State. (*S&R*, p. 106)

Lenin had visualized a kind of perfect democracy as the ultimate goal, a perfection that would make even the democratic institutions superfluous, but had harshly criticized democracy as it existed in capitalist societies as "curtailed, wretched, false; only for the rich, for the minority", and advocated a dictatorship that would mean "democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy, of the exploiters and oppressors of the people". In his *Indian Home Rule* Gandhi also was no less trenchant in his criticism of the functioning of the British democratic institutions. In it he has compared the Mother of Parliaments to a sterile woman, to a prostitute who could be taken possession of by any man and used to satisfy his lust. He refers to the generally acknowledged fact that the members are hypocritical and selfish.

The Prime Minister is more concerned about his power than about the welfare of Parliament. His energy is concentrated on securing the success of his party. His care is not always that the Parliament shall do right, Prime Ministers are known to have made Parliament do things merely for party advantage.

He is also sceptical about the patriotism and honesty of Prime Ministers.

If they are to be considered honest because they do not take what are generally known as bribes, let them be so considered, but they are open to subtler influences. In order to gain their ends, they certainly bribe people with honour. I do not hesitate to say that they have neither real honesty, nor a living conscience.

The booklet was written in 1909. Those were days when adult franchise had not come. Women were still far away from the vote and "rotten boroughs" were a common feature of the political scene. Gandhi could see through the formal trappings into the reality in which powerful individuals and classes manipulated the democratic institutions for their own ends.

In that booklet Gandhi does not give any positive indication of the kind of political system he visualized for India. However, he makes it amply clear that swaraj or self-rule should be for the millions. He brings in the example of Italy, that had won independence from the Austrian Empire only a decade or so earlier, to illustrate his point.

What substantial gain did Italy obtain after the withdrawal of the Austrian troops? The gain was only nominal. The reforms for the sake of which the war was supposed to have been undertaken have not yet been granted. The condition of the people in general still remains the same. I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy, not that you want the reins of government in your hands. If that be so we have to consider only one thing: how can the millions obtain self-rule? You will admit that people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English, and if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall never agree . . . . If I have the power, I should resist the tyranny of Indian princes as much as that of the English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure that at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them. (*CW* 10, p. 41)

Today we are only too painfully aware of the nature of the governments in the Third World countries that won their freedom in the mid-decades of the century. Gandhi was no less aware than Lenin of the nature of the modern State as an apparatus of coercion in the hands of the powerful. In 1940 he made the following remark about the nature of Western democracies in the course of a discussion with an American visitor.

Because democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the weak. My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through nonviolence. No country in the world today shows any but patronizing regard for the weak. The weakest, you say, go to the wall. Take your own case. Your land is owned by a few capitalist owners. The same is true of South Africa. These large holdings cannot be sustained except by violence, veiled if not open. Western democracy, as it functions today, is diluted Nazism or Fascism. At best it is barely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the Fascist tendencies of imperialism. Why is there the war today, if it is not for the satisfaction of the desire to share the spoils? It was not through democratic methods that Britain bagged India. What is the meaning of South African demo-

cracy? Its very constitution has been drawn to protect the white man against the coloured man, the natural occupant. Your own history is perhaps blacker still, in spite of what the Northern States did for the abolition of slavery. The way you have treated the Negro presents a discreditable record. And it is to save such democracies that the war is being fought! There is something very hypocritical about it. I am thinking just now in terms of nonviolence and trying to expose violence in its nakedness. (*CW* 72, p. 60)

Yet, though he was harsh in criticizing the way in which democratic institutions functioned in the Western countries, he was unambiguous in his appreciation of the values that underlay the institutions. He was critical of the blatant misuse of the institutions for serving class and personal interests. His admiration for the values that underlay British democracy is evident in a speech he made at Madras in 1915:

. . . and I discovered that the British Empire had certain ideals with which I have fallen in love, and one of those ideals is that every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope possible for his energies and efforts and whatever he thinks is due to his conscience. I think that this is true of the British Empire as it is not true of any other Government that we see . . . I am no lover of any Government and have more than once said that that Government is the best that governs the least, and I have found that it is possible for me to be governed least under the British Empire. (*CW* 13, pp. 59-60)

However, in a letter to Andrews three years later, in January 1918, he was tentative in his attitude to democracy. "I do not believe in any Government", he wrote, "but parliamentary Government is perhaps better than capricious rule." (*CW* 13, p.444)

In 1921 he was already looking up to the Cabinet system as a model for the Congress organization. Explaining the role of the Working Committee of the Congress, he wrote in January 1921:

The Working Committee is to the Congress what a Cabinet is to Parliament. Its decisions must command respect if we are to evolve constitutional Government this year. Naturally, therefore, its members must be those who command the greatest respect of the All-India Congress Committee and of the nation. It dare not take any hasty decisions, and it must be a homogeneous body. It cannot have two policies or parties within itself. Whilst the Congress represents the whole nation, and may, therefore, have every type and all parties, the Working Committee must consist of

men representing the policy and the party that have the confidence of the majority of the delegates. (*CW* 20, p. 293)

What he wrote in reply to a correspondent a few years later, in August 1924, shows that he had come to accept parliamentary democracy as a starting point for a more perfect system that would ensure that political power went into the hands of the masses.

Parliament is indeed barren. I do not imagine that its nature would change in India. I live, however, in the hope that our Parliament will only remain barren and may not give birth to a wicked son. I cannot abandon practical considerations. The ideal is one only, namely, Ramarajya. But where can we find Rama? The journalist says, "whom the people approve". People means Parliament, and, in our view, whomsoever the Parliament approves is a virtuous man or woman. I am suggesting many ways to ensure that the voice of Parliament is really the voice of the people and not that of hired voters. With this end in view I am searching for a device which will enable us to listen to the voice of the entire people. All systems are bound to be defective. We are looking for a system that will yield maximum benefit to India. Good men can transform a bad system into a good one—like the wise housewife who transforms dust into grains. Wicked men can misuse the best of systems and make it defective, like the foolish housewife who allows bright food grains to decay into dust. I am therefore on the lookout for good men in India and employing devices to sort out such men. But what can a man do? He can make only a honest effort. The fruit lies in the hands of God. The efforts of many, and not one, are required for securing the desired fruit . . . . (*CW* 25, p. 34)

He rejected suggestions that democracy was not suited to India. He said in August 1927:

And seeing that I reject the doctrine of inequality in the sense used by the writer, I am unable to admit that the representative elective bodies are really unsuitable for India. But for the reasons I have stated in the Indian Home Rule and which in the main I have found no occasions during the past 20 years to revise, I should be extremely sorry if India entirely copies the Western model. Representative elective bodies were not unknown to India before the European advent. But the contents of the words "representation" and "election" were, so far as I can see, far different from the European. (*CW* 34, p. 315)

It will be relevant to note in this context that historical evidence has been found of the existence of democratic systems

of local government in several areas in India, including parts of modern Bihar and Tamilnadu, centuries before the country came into contact with the West.

Gandhi wanted to make democracy more real so that every individual would play an effective role in the running of the country's affairs and not just a ritualistic one as is the case today in many countries where the only role of the citizens is the casting of votes at regular intervals. Gandhi took parliamentary democracy as a starting point as it embodied a set of hard-won values. But as will be clear from the above, he was searching for means to make society accept the values to live by. It was not enough tha institutions and rules were formed on the basis of those values. Gandhi was painfully aware how the values are given the go-by and a ritualistic adherence to the rules comes to predominate, providing ample scope for sheer hypocrisy. He criticized the functioning of the democratic institutions as they obtained in the world, but cherished the values. He was aware of the importance of institutionalized values as a starting point for the practice of the values in social life.

As is to be expected, Gandhi was categorical about the importance of the fundamental rights of citizens and of an independent judiciary and a free press. He considered "healthy, well informed and balanced" criticism to be the "ozone of public life". When, towards the end of 1921, the Government of India imposed restrictions on the rights of free speech and free association, Gandhi reacted vehemently and called for action in defence of the rights.

> Swaraj, the Khilafat, the Punjab occupy a subordinate place to the issue sprung upon the country by the Government. We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make any further progress towards the goal. The Government would kill us if they could by a flank attack. To accept defeat in the matter of free speech and free association is to court disaster . . . . (*CW* 22, p. 142)

Discussing the penalty imposed on a Gujarat newspaper for publishing material considered objectionable by the Government, Gandhi called upon journalists to consider their vocation as essentially in the service of truth and to stand up fearlessly for their rights.

> We think the editors of all such newspapers, which do not run with a commercial motive but only with a view to public service, must be prepared to face extinction at any moment . . . .
>
> . . . Suppose that the Government has committed a gross injustice and robbed the poor. A progressive newspaper is being published in such a place. It writes against the repressive measure and advises the people to disregard the unjust law of the Government. The Government takes offence and threatens confiscation of property if no apology is forthcoming. Should the reformer apologize? We think the reply is again the same, he should stand the confiscation of his property and close down the newspaper but offer no apology. (*CW* 10, pp. 226-7)

During the Salt Satyagraha in 1930 and again during World War II in 1940, the Government of India came down heavily on the freedom of the presr and on both occasions Gandhi advised the newspapers to close down rather than be forced to mislead the public by publishing censored information. Many papers did accept his advice. His suggested the circulation of hand-written sheets for the dissemination of correct information, each recipient of such a sheet making a certain number of copies to be passed on to others.

He advocated separation of the Judiciary from the Executive, in British India both the functions having been combined below the High Court level in the same functionaries. He had suggested at the Round Table Conference held in London in 1931 to discuss self-government for India, that the Judiciary should have the power to frame its own rules for the execution of its orders to avoid their being ignored by the Executive.

At the same conference he had insisted on adult franchise and visualized it as a power in the hands of the poor and the downtrodden. " I would not be satisfied without adult franchise", he had insisted. "At a stroke I am arming the untouchables with tremendous power. My criterion will be that the representatives know what they are talking about and that they are incorruptible". (*CW* 48, p. 384) Thus he was laying down a prime conditions for the success of democracy.

There he had also put forward a scheme for indirect elections to the national legislature. Each village was to elect a representative and all such representatives would act as an electoral college for the national legislature. Indirect elections have been considered to be more open to corrupt influences

because it is easier to influence the handful of members of an electoral college than the entire electorate running to hundreds of thousands in number. But Gandhi visualized the system in the context of awakened and dynamic communities and not in the context of the sleeping partners that the voters are today, waking up for just one day every three, four or five years. As we shall see in a while, he wanted to make the villages powerful bases of the democratic system. Besides, as the American experience of the electoral college for the election of the President shows, the members of the college can be given a mandate by the electors that would be binding on them. He had also expressed himself strongly against an Upper House as a check on the popularly elected lower one. "I have no fear of a popular legislature running away with itself and hastily passing some laws of which afterwards it will have to repent. I do not want to give a bad name to, and then hang the popular legislature." (*CW* 48, p. 33)

Gandhi had accepted the position that in a democracy decisions should be made by a majority vote and the minority should be normally bound by the majority decision. At the session of the Indian National Congress at Lahore at the end of 1929 where the historic resolution on complete independence was passed, an amendment to a resolution was lost by one vote only. Some supporters of the amendment requested Gandhi to accept it in view of the strength of the feeling in favour of it. Gandhi refused to do so and explained his position thus:

> As regards an appeal to me to accept the amendment which has just been lost by a strength of one vote, let me remind you that we claim to work under a democratic constitution. One vote today has meant that the amendment has been lost, but one vote the other way could have easily meant the retention of the amendment. What you have to consider is whether the country would suffer by the loss of the amendment. (*CW* 42, p. 336)

But at the same time Gandhi believed that a satyagrahi had the right to go his own way in disregard of the majority and even to oppose the latter where matters of principle were involved. This he made clear when his proposal for doing away with armed defence for India was not accepted by the All-India Congress Committee in 1940. In an article titled "Is Nonviolence Impossible?" he wrote:

> This has got to be reckoned with when the question voted upon is one of principle. The Congress policy must always be decided by a majority vote, but it does not cancel the minority vote. It stands. Where there is no principle involved and there is a programme to be carried out, the minority has got to follow the majority. But where there is a principle involved, the dissent stands, and it is bound to express itself in practice when the occasion arises. (*CW* 72, p. 349)

In cases where matters of principle were involved, he preferred not to go by simple majorities but looked for a broad consensus. When it was a voluntary organization like the Congress, Gandhi preferred withdrawal from the same on matters of principle rather than continuing in it when he did not have overwhelming support. When in 1934 he found that there was a strong opposition in the Congress to his proposal for an amendment to its constitution proposed by Gandhi himself, replacing "legitimate and peaceful means" by "truthful and nonviolent means" in its creed, he resigned from its membership. However, he continued thereafter to lead the Congress from outside.

He believed that a state that governed the least should be based on nonviolence and such a state was a practical possibility. He gave expression to this belief in a letter he wrote in February 1939.

> I have purposely refrained from dealing with the nature of Government in a society based deliberately on nonviolence. All society is held together by nonviolence, even as the earth is held in her position by gravitation. But when the law of gravitation was discovered the discovery yielded results of which our ancestors had no knowledge. Even so when society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of nonviolence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today. But I cannot say in advance what the Government based wholly on nonviolence will be like. (*CW* 68, p. 389)

However, he was striving all the time to lay down the broad outlines of such a set-up and to create the conditions for its evolution. His approach to this task called for a series of changes, both institutional and behavioural. Firstly, in consonance with his view that Government was the best that governed the least, and directly in the direction of the goal of the withering away of the State, he called for the decentralization of political power to the basic units of the

polity, the villages and the urban communities, enabling them to manage most of their own affairs, with the minimum of power at the upper levels. While Lenin's method of revolutionizing society called for a massive centralization of power and the creation of an all-powerful police State, Gandhi's revolution wanted to achieve the objective of the withering away of the State by moving directly in that direction.

Secondly, he wanted to bring the people into the political scene in an effective manner so that they did not remain passive objects of manipulation by political vested interests, but became the active agents of day-to-day political decisions and actions. His movements were already creating the awareness essential for this. The decentralization of power was also not to be a mere bestowal from above, but was to be rooted in a building-up of nonviolent popular power in the communities that were to assert themselves, irrespective of the attitude of the powers-that-be at the top. In fact, such self-rule was part of his strategy of civil disobedience when people were to refuse to pay taxes, to non-cooperate with the authorities and to run their affairs in the village by themselves. This decentralization of power was to be buttressed by a decentralization of the economic set-up so that the people enjoyed a large measure of economic autonomy. The Constructive Programme provided a comprehensive spectrum of constructive and reformative tasks for these resurgent communities. Many villages did thus assert their autonomy during the civil disobedience movements, but the slow progress that the constructive activities were making prevented these communities from acquiring an enduring dynamism.

In 1942, on the eve of the Quit India movement, Gandhi gave a comprehensive picture of the kind of self-governing village republics that he had in mind. Undoubtedly he expected hundreds of thousands of villages all over India to make a bid for freedom when the movement began, and he wanted to put before them a concrete programme of action.

> My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playgrounds for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own water-works, ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final Basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the cooperative basis. There will be no castes as we have today with their graded untouchability. Nonviolence with its techniques of satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by a Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and the jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year in office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of the village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based on individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. He and his village are able to defy the might of the world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour. (*CW* 76, pp. 308-9)

The revolutions in Russia and China were also initially aimed at transferring power to the people by making the primary soviets, based on local communities, the source of such power. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republic owes its very name to this ideal. But in actual practice, the Stalinist dictatorship stifled all freshness and initiative in the soviets and turned them into the limbs of a police State. Also, we have discussed earlier the contradictions in Lenin's thought that visualized centralization of power and the subjection of workers to a mechanistic factory system as welcome developments helpful to the evolution of communism. In China the communes have been more fortunate and have played a positive and dynamic role in the life of the resurgent nation. Though the Chinese Government at the top is as rigid a dictatorship as any, the communes, especially the rural ones,

had been allowed more autonomy from the very beginning than the soviets ever enjoyed in the USSR. This has been possible because of the significant differences in the approaches of the Soviet and the Chinese leaders. Lenin and Stalin both shared in the suspicion and contempt that Marx had for the peasant, while Mao gave them a leading role in his strategy. But it is problematic whether the autonomy that the communes enjoy will survive the post-Mao reforms that have a distinct pro-urban flavour. Only time will show whether the communes have achieved enough political strength to resist centralist encroachments on their autonomy.

Local units in the Western democracies, in Great Britain, France and the USA for instance, enjoy more powers of self-government than is realized by the outside world. To all appearance they make good use of their powers and rights and play an important role in the stable polities of those countries. But here also a big government at the centre and big business overshadow them. The sense of community has been felt to be declining in these societies and some effort is afoot to revive and strengthen it. But the ruling ethos of capitalism has been the most powerful solvent of the community spirit and attempts that do not take this into account are not likely to achieve much success.

Disillusionment with the remote nature of the modern democratic states has also given rise to demands and movements for direct or participatory democracy. The revolutionary movement spearheaded by students in France in 1968 that had assumed impressive proportions was also inspired by such an objective. But here also the logic of modern industrial growth militates against this. Today the production and merchandizing of even simple things like breakfast cereals, tooth-pastes or shoes have been turned into highly technical tasks involving the use of a high degree of expertise and of sophisticated tools like computers, the television networks and so on. This leaves only matters of relatively minor importance to be decided democratically on the shop or the office floor.

In India the highly centralized administration imposed on the country by the British is being continued after independence. The powers granted to the Panchayats at the village and the intermediate levels have been hedged around and hamstrung by discretionary overriding powers in the hands

of the higher bureaucracy. The revolutionary situation, that Gandhi had envisaged, in which the villages were to come into their own and become the driving force of Indian democracy, never materialized. Gandhi did not live to try his hand at it.

The elections that were held in 1937 in India, following the granting of a measure of power to popularly elected provincial ministries, had provided an opportunity for a demonstration of the awareness and determination acquired by the people in the course of the preceding movements. Gandhi saw the elections as an opportunity to educate the masses, and so, moving forward from an earlier position of hesitancy, he decided to make the election campaign a part of his total strategy. In April 1937 he explained at length to the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, some of whose members had doubts about the programme of going into the provincial legislatures:

> In accepting the councils programme we are not getting away from nonviolence. In taking this step, I am making you advance two steps in the direction of nonviolence. If you can understand them and act accordingly you shall during this year make progress such as you have never been able to make before. The time has come when India must choose this way or that. It seems to be that at this juncture you cannot keep yourselves shut up in a room. It is yet to be shown whether as a nation we are moving towards truth and nonviolence or not. It would be cowardice for you to turn away from three crores of voters. Even if we have truth and nonviolence on our tongues and something else in our hearts, what I have said will bear fruit. If you are not hypocrites you will go to the assemblies with full faith in nonviolence and advance towards the goal. (*CW* 65, p. 125)

The election did fulfil Gandhi's expectations and took the form of a mass movement in several provinces where the voters refused to be frightened by the threats of the supporters of the British Government or to be won over by money power, and voted the Congress into power by massive majorities.

It will be instructive to examine how he sought to combine his faith in thoroughgoing democracy with the exigencies of a situation in which the Congress had to function as a fighting body. The question came up in 1938 when the Prime Minister of one of the Congress-ruled provinces was accused of some serious misdemeanour and the Working Committee of the Congress decided to ask for his resignation. This was considered to be an

undemocratic act on the part of the Working Committee, because by doing so it interfered with the working of a democratically elected body. Gandhi defended the action of the Working Committee with the following argument.

> Let us understand the functions of the Congress. For internal growth and administration, it is as good a democratic organization as any to be found in the world. But this democratic organization has been brought into being to fight the greatest imperialist power living. For this external work, therefore, it has to be likened to an army. As such it ceases to be democratic. The central authority possesses plenary powers enabling it to impose and enforce discipline on the various units working under it. Provincial organizations and Provincial Parliamentary Boards are subject to the central authority.
>
> It has been suggested that while my thesis holds good when there is active war in the shape of civil disobedience going on, it cannot while the latter remains under suspension. But the suspension of civil disobedience does not mean suspension of war. The latter can only end when India has a constitution of her own making. Till then the Congress must be in the nature of an army. Democratic Britain has set up an ingenious system in India, which when you look at it in its nakedness, is nothing but a highly organized efficient military control. It is not less so under the present Government of India Act. The Ministers are mere puppets so far as the real control is concerned. The collectors and the police, who "sir" them today, may at the mere command from the Government, their real masters, unseat the Ministers, arrest them and put them in lock-up. Hence it is that I have suggested that Congress has entered upon office not to work the Act in the manner expected by the framers but in a manner to hasten the day of substituting it by a genuine Act of India's own coining. (*CW* 67, p. 225–6)

It can be argued that the conduct of the Prime Minister could well have been put before the legislators of the party in the Provincial Assembly. But it is difficult at this distance of time to assess the compulsions of the situation at the time and the need for urgent action that precipitated such a decision on the part of the Working Committee. As Gandhi had pointed out in the same article,

> If Dr Khare was impatient of his recalcitrant colleagues he should have rushed, not to the Governor, but to the Working Committee and tendered his resignation. If he felt aggrieved by its decision, he could have gone to the AICC. But in no case could any Minister take internal quarrels to the Governor and seek relief through him without the previous consent of the Working Committee. If the Congress machinery is slow moving, it can be made to move faster. If the men at the helm are self-seekers or worthless, the AICC is there to remove them. Dr. Khare erred grievously in ignoring, or what is worse, not knowing this simple remedy and rushing to the Governor on the eve of the meeting of the Working Committee to end his agony. (*CW* 67, pp.223-4)

During the same period the Congress Governments in the provinces were faced with the problem of open incitement to violence by political workers. Gandhi advised the Ministers to use their statutory powers and "ordinary law" to curb those who, in the name of civil liberty, "preach lawlessness in the popular sense of the term". He explicitly advised them to eschew laws and provisions in the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code "which the foreign rulers have enacted for their own safety". He discussed the objection that Congress Ministers pledged to nonviolence could not resort to legal processes involving punishments and opined that they could do so.

> Such is not my view of the nonviolence accepted by the Congress. I have, personally, not found a way out of punishment and punitive restrictions in all conceivable cases. No doubt punishments have to be nonviolent, if such an expression is permissible in this connection. Just as violence has its own technique, known by the military science . . . . nonviolence has its own science and technology. Nonviolence in politics is a new weapon in the state of evolution. Its vast possibilities are yet unexplored. The exploration can take place only if it is practised on a big scale and in various fields. Congress Ministers, if they have faith in nonviolence, will undertake the explorations. But while they are doing this, they cannot ignore incitements to violence and manifestly violent speech, even though they themselves run the risk of being styled violent . . . . (*CW* 66, pp.268-9)

He advised Ministers to put what they considered to be violent behaviour on the part of any member of the public before the Provincial Congress Committee or the Working Committee of the Congress and seek instructions. He expected the latter bodies to try to use their influences to check irresponsible behaviour. Latter on a resolution was adopted by the Working Committee deploring the preaching of "murder, arson, looting and class war by violent means", and giving the

Committee's support to the Ministers for actions they might take in the defence of life and property. This resolution caused a walk-out by a section of the members from the Committee.

Lately, the concept of civil liberty has been considerably sharpened and this in the interest of the individual. Advocacy of violent means is now generally considered to be within the rights of a person. Only preparation for violence and actual participation in it is taken cognizance of and sought to be stopped. It can be surmised that the Congress Ministers were rather panicky and Gandhi considered it proper to give them moral support. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that violent encroachments on the lives and right of others, if allowed to go unchecked, can only end in eroding democracy. The roots of much of such violence are in the unjust and inegalitarian social structure itself. The role of Gandhi's type of nonviolence has been to provide alternative means of radical social change that would take the wind out of the sails of the advocates of violent revolution. The movement that Gandhi had initiated had not yet acquired the strength to achieve this and the acceptance of office by the Congress had put the latter in an unenviable predicament. It was characteristic of Gandhi that he did not flinch from facing the situation squarely and did not take refuge behind platitudes.

Moreover, Gandhi wanted to purify political life of its corruption. His efforts in this direction were directed at the education of public opinion and the creation of a cadre of activists dedicated to the cause of nonviolent revolution, who would strive to shed the lust of a good life based on the exploitation of others and identify themselves with the impoverished masses. His insistence on voluntary poverty, often assailed as a demand for a sub-standard level of life and a retrograde ideal, had this latter as its practical objective. In Marxist terminology it would be called "declassing" oneself and every good Marxist revolutionist has to achieve this state. As Gandhi had explained at a meeting of churchmen in London in September 1931:

> I have claimed—and that claim is based on extensive experience—that a man who is trying to discover and follow the will of God cannot possibly leave a single field of life untouched. I came also, in the course of my service, to the conclusion that if there was any field of life where morality, where truth, where fear of God were not essential, that field should be given up entirely.

> But I found also that the politics of the day are no longer a concern of kings, but that they affect the lowest strata of society. And I found through bitter experience that, if I wanted to do social service, I could not possibly leave politics alone.
>
> . . . I have simply given you an introduction how I came to believe in the necessity of voluntary poverty for any social worker or for any political worker who wanted to remain untouched by the hideous immorality and untruth that one smells today in ordinary politics. The stench that comes from that life has appeared to some to be so suffocating that they have come to the conclusion that politics were not for a godfearing man.
>
> Had that been really so, I feel that it would have been a disaster for mankind. Find out for yourselves, in the light of what I am now saying, whether directly or indirectly every activity of yours today in this one of the greatest cities of the world is not touched by politics. (*CW* 48, pp. 50–1)

However, his conception of voluntary poverty did not involve mortification of the flesh and a sub-standard level of living. He considered the body to be an instrument to be used in the service of humanity and it was absolutely necessary to keep it in good order. Hence his endless experiments in dietetics to find the optimum level of nutrition at the lowest cost necessary for the maintenance of the body in efficient working order. Once, in 1922, he visited Orissa in the south-east of India and found that the Congress workers there were not taking any ghee (clarified butter) with their meals. He was shocked and advised Gopabandhu Das, the leader of that province, that the workers should take at least half an ounce of ghee every day. Otherwise they would be unable to maintain their health. Das explained with a smile that it was not because of their trying to lead a simple life, but because the people of the province are so poor that very few were able to afford any milk products in their diets.

This also, incidentally, raises the important question as to whether it is correct for men who aspired to live the spiritual life to take part in politics. Some of Gandhi's eminent followers like Vinoba Bhave had taken this stand after Gandhi departed from the scene. The arguments for this stand are well known. Andrews had raised this question way back in 1918 and Gandhi had assured him that:

> Your fear about my being engrossed in the political strife and intrigues may be entirely set aside. I have no stomach for them,

> least at the present moment, and had none even in South Africa. I was in the political life because therethrough lay my own liberation. Montagu said, "I am surprised to find you taking part in the political life of the country!" Without a moment's thought I replied, "I am in it because without it I cannot do my religious and social work", and I think the reply will stand good to the end of my life. (*CW* 14, pp. 477–8)

At a meeting in February 1916, he had taken up the same theme:

> Politics are a part of our being; we ought to understand our national institutions, and we ought to understand our national growth and all those things. We may do it from our infancy. So, in our Ashram, every child is taught to understand the political institutions of our country, and to know how the country is vibrating with new emotions, with new aspirations, with a new life. (*CW* 13, pp. 234–5)

The question was again raised at the meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh in April 1937, that had discussed the wisdom of taking up the Council entry programme, Gandhi had said then:

> Jamnalalji has said that if we go into the legislatures today we cannot pursue Truth and nonviolence. He has uttered something of great import. I do not agree with it. If Truth and nonviolence cannot be pursued, then democracy also cannot be practised, for in that case it will be against truth and nonviolence. If you believe in democracy we will have to work for the good of the millions. To do good to the millions we cannot all of us assemble in one place. We will have to elect a few representatives. If they are true servants of the people, if they are true democrats, they will, with a pure heart, try to understand the wishes of the people and will voice them. When in 1920 the question arose of amending the objective of the Congress and Bipin Chandra Pal suggested democratic swaraj in place of swaraj, I opposed it because when I analyse swaraj, I find that without democracy there can be no swaraj. What Pal intended was implied in the word swaraj itself. In swaraj, too, the legislatures will retain more or less their present structure, though it is possible that there may be some change in the external form. Let us sit as we are sitting here instead of in chairs and palaces. About one-third of the people who should have the right to vote have acquired the franchise. After some time the number of voters may reach 120 million. It is no small thing that today 30 million people can vote. Thousands of our workers have approached them and this had never been done before. The

> Congress message has spread more widely. It is not a small thing. . . (*CW* 65, pp. 102–3)

Funds needed for political activities and particularly for fighting elections are a major cause of corruption. Parties have to depend on monied men for this and this leads to them soft-pedalling on issues that affect the latter's vested interests. Many rich businessmen gave monetary help to the freedom movement but the movement also drew sustenance from the people at the grassroots, and the proportion of the help received from the common people was much larger. The elections of 1937 were fought in most places on local resources and shoestring budgets. When the question of fighting the elections to the Central Legislature came up in 1946, Gandhi advised the Congress leaders to depend on the common people for their funds. But by that time the leaders had decided not to be led into the wilderness by Gandhi any more and declined to accept his suggestion. They were now preparing to rule the people instead of leading them.

In the last days of his life Gandhi was grappling with the problem of purifying politics and had come up with a plan that he had finalized the day before he was shot. In it he had advised the Congress to dissolve itself and "flower" into a Loka Sevak Sangh, an association of servants of the people, the members of which would not be interested in getting into positions of power but would be engaged in working for the new social order envisaged by Gandhi. In that document Gandhi had prophesied a struggle between "civil" and "military" powers for the control of the Government and one of the tasks of the organization, which he had given priority, was the conscientization of the voters. He intended to strengthen people's power against anti-democratic forces. His prophecy came true in 1975 when an attempt was made to end democracy and foist a dictatorship on India. The attempt came within an ace of success and failed precisely because of the spirit of Gandhi which the people of India had succeeded in imbibing a small fraction of. The Emergency was not military rule in the strict sense, but it was so in a broad sense, being an attempt to rule by naked force.

As we have seen earlier, Gandhi insisted that real democracy was possible on the basis of nonviolence. He pointed out that the preservation of the privileges and properties of

the "haves" was made possible only by the existence of the Government even in democracies and it was this that made violence a part of the task of government. In this matter his views were similar to Lenin's. A nonviolent and real democracy was possible only when there was no acute economic disparity and no class to wield economic power and to bend political power to its ends. Lenin sought to suppress the exploiting classes forcibly. Gandhi wanted to use the weapon of nonviolent action, satyagraha, to end their dominance. Economic equality, an essential aspect of nonviolence, has to be the basis of a real democracy.

A modern state has three areas in which it has to keep ready to exercise force: (i) for controlling the anti-social behaviour of individuals, the maintenance of law and order in its narrowest sense; (ii) for preserving the existing socio-economic order which involves safeguarding the property of its citizens; and (iii) for defence against foreign aggression. In many countries like India, Pakistan, Great Britain and Lebanon, serious law-and-order situations develop because of tensions and clashes between religious groups and on political issues that have taken on a religious colour.

Gandhi contemplated the abolition of the armed forces for defence and reliance on nonviolent civilian action for the purpose. During World War II, when the Allies were in a bad shape and there was the danger of a Japanese invasion of India, Gandhi contemplated the possibility of offering non-violent resistance to the Japanese if they came. He advised the people of certain coastal areas from which the British were considering withdrawal to non-cooperate with the Japanese and offer nonviolent resistance. He wrote in April 1942:

> Japan is knocking at our gates. What are we to do in a nonviolent way? If we were a free country, things could be done to prevent the Japanese from entering our country. As it is, nonviolent resistance could commence the moment they effected a landing. Thus nonviolent resisters would refuse them any help, even water. For it is no part of their duty to help anyone to steal their country. But if a Japanese had missed his way and was dying of thirst and sought help as a human being, a nonviolent resister, who may not regard anyone as his enemy, would give water to the thirsty one. Suppose the Japanese compel the resisters to give them water, the resister must die in the act of resistance. It is conceivable that they will exterminate all resisters. The underlying belief in such nonviolent resistance is that the aggressor will, in time, be mentally and even physically tired of killing nonviolent resisters. He will begin to search what this new (for him) force is which refuses cooperation without seeking to hurt, and will probably desist from further slaughter. But the resisters may find that the Japanese are utterly heartless and they do not care how many they kill. The nonviolent resister will have won the day inasmuch as they will have preferred extermination to submission. (CW 76, p. 5)

Earlier he had visualized the possibility of nonviolent defence being accepted as the policy of free India and had put the suggestion before the people and the Congress organization. In a resolution drafted for the Working Committee of the Congress, which he had worded rather cautiously, and in which he had suggested "that the Working Committee never had occasion to determine whether India can be defended nonviolently", he had said:

> In the opinion of the Working Committee if India were free and independent without an army she would have no fear of external aggression. The best defence that free India can put up if the people accepted the Congress policy would be to cultivate friendliness with the whole world. To invest crores of rupees in armaments, fortresses and the like would be to invite foreign attack. (CW 72, p. 241)

It may be noted in this context that after the October Revolution in Russia, Trotsky had seriously considered the possibility of the workers of the country going out to face the German army unarmed, in a bid to win them over.

Today there are countries like the USA and Canada with unprotected borders between them and a world agreement on disarmament can put an end to all wars. But the question of crime and other forms of aberrant behaviour in a society is different. Many such problems also have their roots in the social system and Gandhi had realized this. He had advised his followers to try to wean criminals from their anti-social ways and some of them had succeeded in doing so. Notable among them are Ravishankar Maharaj, who succeeded in reforming some communities of habitual criminals and Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, who with the help of a devoted band of workers, were able to bring about the reform and surrender of more than four hundred bandits in the fifties and the sixties. But Gandhi was aware that the time when

there would be no aberrant individuals in a society was far away, and admitted the need for the maintenance of a small police force even after the need for an army had been dispensed with. In an article he wrote in 1940 he set down his ideas on a police force for a nonviolent State.

> Nevertheless I have conceded that even in a nonviolent State a police force may be necessary. This, I admit, is a sign of my imperfect ahimsa. I have not the courage to declare that we can carry on without a police force as I have in respect of an army. Of course I can and do envisage a state where the police will not be necessary; but whether we shall succeed in realizing it, the future alone will show.
>
> The police of my conception will, however, be of a wholly different pattern from the present-day force. Its ranks will be composed of believers in nonviolence. They will be servants, not masters, of the people. The people will instinctively render them every help, and through mutual cooperation they will easily deal with the ever-decreasing disturbances. The police force will have some kind of arms, but they will be rarely used, if at all. In fact the policemen will be reformers. Their police work will be confined primarily to robbers and dacoits. Quarrels between labour and capital and strikes will be few and far between in a nonviolent state, because the influence of the nonviolent majority will be so great as to command the respect of the principal elements in society. Similarly there will be no room for communal disturbances. Then we must remember that when such a Congress Government comes into power the large majority of men and women of 21 years and over will have been enfranchised. The rigid and cramped constitution of today has of course no place in this picture. (*CW* 72, pp. 403–4)

At a meeting of the Congress Working Committee he pointed out the difference between his and the other Congress leaders' vision of the shape of things to come. And in retrospect this difference becomes very crucial, because it betrays an attitude on the part of the leaders that considered the army to be necessary to deal with their own people. Gandhi had said:

> If you cannot come to a decision about external aggression, you cannot come to a decision about internal dissension. My mind does not make vital distinction between the two. I have deliberately put in the resolution the expression "open mind." You have said that we can mount to power by nonviolent means but you doubt the ability to retain and consolidate it except through an army. The little police force that I have in mind will not be sufficient to cope with big disorders unless we have, as a nation, sufficient nonviolence in us, or in other words we apply nonviolence to politics. The technique of nonviolence is different from that of violence. We shut our eyes to the fact that our control on the masses, over even our registered Congressmen is ineffective. . . . It is not our fault exactly. Millions are concerned. Even a military programme could not have been completed in 20 years. We must therefore be patient. If the masses have won independence by nonviolence, they can also retain it by nonviolence. (*CW* 72, pp. 243–4)

Gandhi did not want clashes between major groups of the population to be handled by the police force. He wanted nonviolent power to be developed and deployed for meeting such situations. A society can never be nonviolent and the State cannot wither away or "govern the least" in a situation in which major elements of the people are ready to go at each other's throats.

A few months after the Congress assumed office in several provinces in India following the elections of 1937, there was an eruption of violent clashes between Hindus and Muslims in the city of Allahabad in the United Provinces. Gandhi became deeply disturbed and called upon the Ministers, the Congress organization and his more devoted followers to evolve means of tackling such disturbances in a nonviolent manner and abjure the use of the police. In an article titled "Our Failure" he gave the call for a nonviolent peace-keeping force.

> By this time, i.e., after seventeen years' practice of nonviolence, the Congress should be able to put forth a nonviolent army of volunteers numbering not a few thousand but lacs who would be equal to every occasion where the police and the military are required. Thus, instead of one Pashupatinath Gupta who died (later reports said he was alive though seriously wounded—mmc) in the attempt to secure peace, we should be able to produce hundreds. And a nonviolent army acts, unlike armed men, as well in times of peace as of disturbances. They would be constantly engaged in constructive activities that make riots impossible. Theirs will be the duty of seeking occasions to bring the warring communities together, carrying on peace propaganda, engaging in activities that would bring and keep them in touch with every single person, male, female, adult and child, in their parish or division. Such an army should be ready to cope with any emergency, and in order to still the frenzy of mobs, should risk their lives in numbers sufficient for the purpose. A few hundred,

maybe a few thousand, such spotless deaths will once for all put an end to the riots. Surely a few hundred young men and women giving themselves deliberately to mob fury will be any day a cheap and braver method of dealing with such madness than the display and the use of the police and the military. (*CW* 66, pp. 406–7)

Later he gave the call for the formation of the Shanti Sena, the Peace Brigade, for tackling violent clashes, particularly between religious communities, nonviolently. Members of the brigade were to work among the people along the lines of the advice given to Congressmen in the above quotation, and be ready to lay down their lives in the effort to stop a violent disturbance. Gandhi held up the example of Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi who had died in an attempt to stop a violent clash in Kanpur, U.P. in 1931, and exhorted others to be inspired by his example.

The police had been organized in India by the British primarily for the purpose of suppressing the people and preserving British dominance. They adopted a haughty and offensive manner towards the common people, and almost always were on the side of the rich and the powerful in conflicts between landlords and tenants or factory owners and workers. They had become the masters rather than the servants of the people.

There occurred a strike of the lower ranks of policemen in Bihar in 1947, one of the provinces in which the Congress had assumed political power in 1946. These men were ill-paid and ill-treated by their superiors and many of them, moved by the spirit of rebellion, had joined the freedom movement in 1942 and been jailed. There they had come in contact with the socialists and had been influenced by them. The coming of the Congress into power aroused their expectations and they went on a lightning strike.

The Government dealt with the strike in the pattern set by the British. The section of the policemen that had remained loyal to the British during the uprising in 1942 was regarded as the backbone of the administration by the Congress Government also. The leaders of the strikers were arrested and the army was called out to deal with the strikers. British troops fired on the latter and some of them were killed. When some leaders of the strikers met Gandhi he advised them to withdraw the strike and also to surrender to the authorities

instead of absconding. They accepted his advice. Gandhi also told the Ministers that he was ready to take the responsibility of reorganizing and retraining the police force to make it a fit instrument for serving a free and democratic people. But the Ministers declined to accept his advice and a golden opportunity for a novel experiment was lost.

Gandhi conceived of nonviolence as a lever for revolutionary social change and we have seen how he also visualized it as an organized force for stabilizing and defending a nonviolent polity. But for him stability did not mean inertia and stagnation. He visualized individuals and societies in a state of constant growth, a dialectical process involving dialogue, debate, confrontation, struggle and reconciliation. For him, parliamentary democracy was a stage in the growth towards a nonviolent polity. Dissent, criticism, debate and opposition were accepted as necessary and essential processes for the survival and functioning of a democratic society. These were also considered to be essential for the refinement and evolution of democratic norms and practices.

Gandhi looked upon satyagraha as an extension of this democratic process and flowing from the fundamental rights of the citizens underlying it. He did not conceive of dissent as stopping at mere verbal debate and conventional efforts at persuasion, but as going ahead to offer active satyagraha to drive one's point home. He claimed that it was the birthright of every man to offer civil disobedience in the face of unjust laws. As he wrote in 1920:

> I wish I could persuade everybody that civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man. . . . Civil disobedience, therefore, becomes a sacred duty when the State has become lawless, or which is the same thing, corrupt. And a citizen that barters with such a State shares in corruption or lawlessness. (*CW* 22, p. 143)

But this right is to be exercised with care and circumspection.

> At the same time that the right of civil disobedience is insisted upon, its use must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. Its area as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case. . . . (*CW* 22, p. 143)

In his evidence before the Hunter Committee appointed by the Government of India to enquire into the disturbances that had taken place in India in 1919, Gandhi argued that civil disobedience would be called for and be legitimate even in a democracy and hinted at its being a constitutional method. In reply to a question from the Committee as to what he would have done about a movement for breaking laws had he been a Governor himself, Gandhi replied,

> If I were in charge of government and brought face to face with a body who, entirely in search of truth, were determined to seek redress from unjust laws without inflicting violence, I would welcome it and would consider that they were the best constitutionalists, and as a Governor I would take them by my side as advisers who would keep me on the right path. (*CW* 16, p. 379)

In response to another question about the uses of civil disobedience, he said:

> I have known in most democratic countries Ministers who have made themselves irremovable somehow or other. In that event what is a poor respectable minority to do? That minority will certainly bring down the tallest Minister by offering stubborn civil disobedience, and such a position I do anticipate happening in India also.

> Then he was asked,

> Supposing your own minister, your own representative Government passes a law, that it is a guarantee that it is a good law, and do you mean to say that under your satyagraha principle it is open to any body of men to preach the breaking of those laws and to break those laws? The remedy is to turn out those Ministers.

> Gandhi replied:

> A satyagrahi would exhaust all means possible, but I simply gave you a concrete instance of a Minister under a democracy having made himself practically irremovable because he would not listen to those who have got the voice of conscience in them. What are those people who have got that voice within them, then, to do; although it is their own domestic affair of their Government, even so it would be not only open, but it would be the duty of a body of satyagrahis to offer civil disobedience, but when they can turn out the Minister, naturally let them do so. . . . (CW 16, p. 442)

On a later occasion he was more forthright in his assertion of the constitutionality of civil disobedience. Writing on the

outcome of the no-tax campaign in Bardoli in 1928, he had said:

> It is now too late in the day to call satyagraha unconstitutional. It will be unconstitutional when truth and its fellow—self-sacrifice—become unlawful. Lord Hardinge blessed the South African satyagraha and even the all-powerful Union Government gracefully bent before it. Both Lord Chelmsford, the then Viceroy, and Sir Edward Gait, the then Governor of Bihar, recognized its legitimacy and efficacy and an independent committee was appointed resulting in adding to the prestige of the Government and resulting in the ending of a century-old wrong. . . . (*YI*, 21 June 1928)

Then he went on to cite the instances of the Kheda satyagraha, the Nagpur flag satyagraha and the satyagraha in Borsad where the authorities had recognized the legitimacy of satyagrahic action and taken steps to remove the grievances. In this same context he even asserted that the Bardoli no-tax campaign was not civil disobedience in the strict sense, because,

> The civil resistance does not mean even civil disobedience of the laws and rules promulgated by constituted authority. It simply means non-payment of a portion of a tax which the former, the aggrieved ryots, contend has been improperly and unjustly imposed on them. This is tantamount to the repudiation by a private debtor of a part of the debt claimed by his creditor as due to him. If it is the right of a private person to refuse payment of a debt he does not admit, it is equally the right of the ryot to refuse to pay an imposition which he believes to be unjust. (CW 37 p.73)

He was unambiguously of the view that a satyagrahi, by offering civil disobedience, not only did not weaken a legitimate Government, but as he told the Hunter Committee, "he helps the authorities and the police by making the public more law abiding and more respectful of authority." (*CW* 16, p. 394) He had said on another occasion: "The right to civil disobedience accrues only to those who perform the duty of voluntarily obeying the laws of the State. More so the laws of their own making . . ." (*CW* 71, p. 124) By making people accept the satyagraha outlook on life he aimed at making them self-disciplined and motivated by an inner constellation of values rather than being controlled by the fear of law. Gandhi also never tired of emphasizing that a satyagrahi was to think of

direct action only after he had exhausted all other conventional means of redress for a wrong.

A satyagrahi recognizes the right of the majority to legislate and in general obeys those laws though he may not agree with them in every detail. When he disobeys a law that he finds morally repugnant, he does so publicly and does not try to escape the punishment meted out by the due process of law. Thus, even while breaking the law he does not indulge in or encourage indiscriminate contempt for democracy, law and authority.

The anti-Vietnam war, civil rights, draft resistance, anti-nuclear weapons movements, as also a host of other smaller movements in Western Europe and the USA have given rise to a lively debate about the propriety of civil disobedience in a democratic state. A large number of social scientists, jurists, philosophers and, of course, activists in various causes, have joined in the debate and the issue has been exhaustively discussed from various angles. While, predictably, there is a volume of conservative opinion that would not tolerate any violation of laws that have been democratically passed, a considerab'e body of well-reasoned op'nion has grown up in favour of civil disobedience, that goes to vindicate Gandhi's position. John Rawls, in discussing the process of law-making in a democracy, gives examples of decision-making processes in which the observance of the right procedure is all that is necessary to ensure justice to all concerned. In gambling or in a lottery the rules have only to be strictly followed to ensure that all concerned have a fair chance. But as he goes on to point out:

> These situations are of pure procedural justice. The constitutional process, like a criminal trial, resembles neither of these; the result matters and we have a standard for it. The difficulty is that we cannot frame a procedure that guarantees that only just and effective legislation is enacted. Thus, even under a just constitution unjust laws may be passed and unjust policies enforced. Some form of the majority principle is necessary but the majority may be mistaken, more or less wilfully, in what it legislates. In agreeing to a democratic constitution (as an instance of imperfect procedural justice) one accepts at the same time the principle of majority rule. In this way we become bound to follow unjust laws, not always of course, but provided the injustice does not exceed certain limits. . .
>
> It should be observed that the majority principle has a secondary place as a rule of procedure which is the most efficient one under usual circumstances for working a democratic constitution. The basis of it rests essentially on the principle of justice and therefore we may, when conditions allow, appeal to those principles against unjust legislation. The justice of the constitution does not ensure the justice of the law enacted under it. . . . The right to make laws does not guarantee that the decision is rightly made; and while the citizen submits his conduct to the judgement of democratic authority, he does not submit his judgement to it. And if in his judgement the enactments of a majority exceed a certain bound of injustice, the citizen may consider civil disobedience. . . .
>
> . . . I shall understand it (civil disobedience) to be a public, nonviolent and conscientious act contrary to law, usually done with the intent to bring about a change in the policies or laws of the Government. Civil disobedience is a political act in the sense that it is an act justified by moral principles which define a conception of civil society and the public good. It rests, then, on political convictions as opposed to a search for self or group interest; and in the case of a constitutional democracy, we may assume that this conviction involves the conception of justice (say that expressed by the contract doctrine) that involves the constitution itself. . . .
>
> The nonviolent nature of civil disobedience refers to the fact that it is intended to address the sense of justice of the majority and as such is a form of speech, an expression of conviction. . . . Civil disobedience is nonviolent in the further sense that the legal penalty for one's action is accepted and resistance is not (at least for the moment) contemplated. (*R&RL*, p. 35–6)

Burton Zwiebach makes the same point from a slightly different angle.

> One of the things which complicates the discussion of democracy and disobedience is the fact that democracy is not often defined as a set of moral values related to common life. Rather, it is seen as a set of procedures and protocols regulating the concept of public business. In other words, democracy—as it is commonly understood—defines only the manner in which social ends are to be achieved and not the ends themselves. Nevertheless, these procedures certainly include moral ideals necessary to the functioning of democratic Government such as equal liberty, equality of opportunity, and so forth. But of necessity, they cannot specify the whole content of justice and right, or reflect the opinions concerning these of all members of society. What they must include is an agreement to respect differences of opinion concerning justice and right. Now if we agree that such a system is the best practicable one, it is reasonable to expect that we should

be bound to obey laws made under it and consistent with the principles that define it. Even if a law violates our sense of justice, we should obey it provided it is consistent with those principles. (*Civility and Disobedience*, p. 163; hereafter referred to as *CD*)

Then he goes on to consider the circumstances that may demand recourse to civil disobedience and comments by concluding that:

> Disobedience need not only apologize to democracy. There are times when it is not merely consistent with democracy but the very condition of its growth and development. When traditional political channels are closed or unfairly limited, or are incapable of fulfilling legitimate demands, disobedience becomes a strategy for the attainment of goals and rights. . . . (*CD*, p. 168)

Carl Cohen, after discussing the criticism that the civil resister subverts the entire game by deliberately breaking its rules, by applying a form of pressure illegitimate in the political arena thus violating the principle of majority rule, by creating in effect a state of war between himself and the community and thus forcing the community to respond similarly, comments:

> It is probably impossible to prove that if democracy does presuppose some set of ground rules, civil disobedience does not necessarily violate them. But it is not hard to see the main reason why many are led to think that it must violate them. That reason is simply the general conviction that, whatever else a healthy polity may be, it must be law-governed, and that therefore no conduct that is deliberately unlawful can be within the rules. There is a *non sequitur* here however. A healthy polity must indeed be governed by laws, but that requirement does not prove that deliberate disobedience of some of these laws must, under any circumstances, subvert the system of government. At least in some cases the disobedience may be of such a nature, be undertaken under such carefully controlled circumstances, and be met with such clear and immediate punishment, that its upshot is more the reinforcement than the weakening of the law-governed character of the polity. (*CD*, p. 169)

Robert Hall and Sidney Gendin have considered the response to civil disobedience that would be appropriate for a democratic government and have come to the common conclusion that it would not be proper to treat common evasion or breach of law and a principled and public disobedience of the law on the

same footing. Hall has cited the judgement of Justice Johnson who, in 1965, upheld the right of Black citizens to demonstrate peacefully. Having established that the efforts of these Black citizens to secure the right to register to vote in some of these counties have accomplished very little, the judge went on to describe the court's task as one of drawing a boundary line "between the competing interests of society." The judge declared that:

> In doing so, it seems basic to our constitutional principles that the extent of the right to assemble, demonstrate and march peacably along the highways and streets in an orderly manner should be commensurate with the enormity of the wrongs that are being protested and petitioned against. In this case, the wrongs are enormous. The extent of the right to demonstrate against these wrongs should be determined accordingly. (*Morality of CD*, p. 138)

Hall also cites the case of President Reagan using his discretionary power to commute the one year prison sentence on Dr Thomas W. Matthew, a New York neurosurgeon who had refused to file income tax returns and had instead given the money to a Negro economic development organization. He has argued for the use of discretionary power by officials and courts in dealing with civil resisters.

Gendin also holds a similar view but has recommended changes in laws rather than the use of discretionary powers to accommodate civil resisters.

> I am not saying that once a person announces that he cannot in good conscience pay his taxes, the Government should allow it. I am pointing out that his announcement gives it a ground for considering him and his case in a different light, so that the way is open for handling him differently from ordinary tax-dodgers. (*The Phil. of Pol. Action* , p. 171)

Politics has always been the playground of two contrary quests, one that seeks to use political power for dominating other people and using them as means to serve one's own ends, be that of an ethnic, religious or linguistic group or a socio-economic class, and another that yearns after the creation of a climate in which every individual would have the maximum possible freedom to actualize his potential, to grow to the fullest stature. Democracy based on a guarantee of full human rights has been the achievement of the second quest of mankind. But politics has been dominated by the first one so

completely for so long that even democracy has not been able to shake off the institutions and methods created by it for its own ends and people have come to look upon it as being inseparable from the political process and even as the very essence of it. Most kinds of revolutionary politics accept this position and seek to achieve their ends by merely reversing the power relations while keeping the old patterns and means intact.

Gandhi sought to carry the quest for freedom and democracy forward to its revolutionary consummation by making satyagraha an integral part of the democratic process so that conflict and struggle did not undermine democracy but helped enrich it and led it towards perfection. He was suspicious of Big Government and apprehensive about its stultifying effect on the citizens and society. Developments over the last few decades, with technological innovations vastly augmenting the power of Big Government as against the citizens, have borne out his apprehensions. Decentralization of political power involving dismantling of Big Government to the maximum extent, with its total disappearance as the ideal, was his prescription for the malady. This and satyagraha were the goal and the means he had put before mankind in order that they would transform politics from the game of the powerful into the vehicle of the common people's will and welfare. The intervening years have seen increasing appreciation worldwide of those contributions of the Mahatma.

CHAPTER NINE

ECONOMICS WITH A HUMAN FACE

To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. God created man to work for his food, and said that those who ate without work were thieves. Eighty per cent of India are compulsorily thieves half the year. Is it any wonder that India has become one vast prison? . . . (*CW* 21, p. 289/October 1921)

This statement is a measure of the anguished indignation that Gandhi felt at the crushing poverty of the people of India, and it was the removal of this burden that he equated with his search for God. He wanted to bring God, as he conceived him, face to face with the people of India in the shape of guarantee of work and bread.

The advent of imperialism and the growth of capitalism had ravaged the indigenous economy of India and had reduced the bulk of her people to virtual destitution. Gandhi realized that the values that governed and the goals that guided economic activities in the modern world would have to be drastically revised if the crushing poverty of the masses of India was to be eradicated. Conventional economics is premised on the concept of the Economic Man, the individual as intent on serving his own best interests, in buying cheap and selling dear to maximize his profits. Economists know this to be an abstraction. In real life people are motivated by many other needs and desires that do not make sense from a strictly economic point of view as implicit in the concept mentioned here. Writers on economic issues always clarify in their opening remarks that the overall situation is influenced by other factors as well, but this is forgotten when it comes to application of economic principles. From being an abstraction, this concept has been raised to the status of an ideal in capitalist societies and, in fact, it is this ideal more than the unfolding of a historical process that has given rise to capitalism.

Joan Robinson has commented on this ideological role of traditional economics in no uncertain terms:

> Consider the case of a man today who has an honest intelligence, a strong social conscience and an independent income.
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> His intelligence tells him that he has no particular right to enjoy a privileged position. "Right" is a vague phrase. A doctor has, in a sense, a right to a motor car because it makes him do his work better than he could do without it. . . . But our man is too honest to try to persuade himself that his own comfort really makes very much difference to the amount of benefit that he does to other people. His conscience tells him that he would be doing a good act if he endowed a hospital with his wealth and worked for his living. But his independent income is not easy to give up.
>
> He cannot keep all three—integrity of mind, quiet conscience and the privileges of wealth. One must be sacrificed. If he is a saint he sacrifices his wealth—but we will suppose that he is not. If he is a man of no definite religious creed, he can keep his mental honesty and income by sacrificing his conscience. . . .
>
> But if he belongs to a definite religion this line of escape is impossible for him. Conscience is more precious than anything else. Without its approval he can have no peace. He will have to sacrifice his honesty of mind instead, and make up arguments to show that it is right for him to be better off than the majority of his neighbours.
>
> Now, it is here that the economist is a godsend to him. The economist is self-appointed expert. It is his business to know about these things. A man may have an honest and independent mind and yet take on trust the opinion of experts on a subject that he has not the time to master for himself. If the economist tells him it is all right, then he can keep his integrity, his income and his conscience all intact.
>
> One of the main effects (I will not say purposes) of orthodox traditional economics was to fill this want. It was a plan for explaining to the privileged class that their position was morally right and was necessary for the welfare of society. Even the poor were better off under the existing system than they would be under any other. (*ETE*, pp. 236-7)

There is enough evidence to show that in pre-capitalist societies people did not and do not behave in the terms of the Economic Man. In pre-capitalist Europe there were norms that regulated the pursuit of private profit. Shopkeepers were not allowed to put up signs and embellish their establishments in such manners as to overshadow neighbouring shops. The guilds

regulated competition between artisans and craftsmen belonging to a trade and so on. As Marx had noted:

> The rules of the guilds. . . . by limiting most strictly the number of apprentices and journeymen that a single master could employ, prevented him from becoming a capitalist. Moreover, he could not employ his journeymen in other handicrafts than the one in which he was master. The guilds absolutely repelled every encroachment by capital with which they came in contact. A merchant could buy every kind of commodity, but labour as a commodity he could not buy. . . (*Capital*, Vol 1, p. 339)

In India one function of the caste system was to regulate competition. Anthropological studies show that there are numerous pre-literate societies in the world in which the motive to amass wealth plays a comparatively minor role in the lives of the people and sharing has a distinctively important function in their economic lives besides co-operation. Certain tribes in North America are reported to give great importance to sharing their foodstuff with others even though their economic level is very low. There is a Canadian Indian tribe in which the custom of potlatch compels those who have accumulated surplus wealth to distribute it among their neighbours and kinsfolk at social functions at stipulated intervals. There are also tribes in which avarice and constant accounting of who owes whom what play a very important role.

These only go to show that the outlook regarding economic activities is rooted in the values a people have accepted, and behaviour directed both by internalized values and social institutions and pressures help maintain their observance in social life. A society institutionalizes values or ideals by structuring its institutions in such a way that they encourage the practice of one set of values and discourage its opposite. Capitalism has accepted private property in the means of production, unfettered competition, individual initiative and single-minded devotion to one's own economic interests to the exclusion of all other considerations as its guiding values.

The goals that Gandhi set for a restructured economy were the end of exploitation, economic equality and a world order free from war. The principles according to which the restructuring was to take place were cooperation and sharing, universal participation in physical labour, voluntary

limitation of wants, decentralization of economic activities, a new technology in consonance with the new goals, swadeshi, and the transformation of private ownership of means of production into trusteeships.

Economic equality has been the goal of all leftist movements and sharing, cooperation and the abolition of private property have been accepted as the means to the desired end. Marx had also put productive labour at the centre of his social philosophy. In all these Gandhi was part of the modern radical scene. He concurred with socialists on the need for state ownership of key industries. But he struck out on an entirely new path for the attainment of the goals he had visualized and, as discussed in an earlier chapter, used a different conceptual framework for analysing the social process.

Economic equality has ben a fundamental tenet of Gandhi's approach to economic reconstruction. He held that there could be no nonviolence without economic equality. Conventional economic wisdom has considered this to be an empty dream and even undesirable, and has, at best, asserted that equality or any near approach to it would come only when production is increased to the extent at which it would be possible to fulfil every need of every one. Even his colleagues such as Nehru argued that production came first, only then could the question of equitable distribution be considered. Soviet communism has also become a victim of this conventional wisdom--it holds that "to each according to his needs" will be reduced to practice only when production is raised to make a high level of the affluence possible.

Economic thinking has undergone vast changes since the days of Gandhi and of the giants of classical economics with whose views he had to wrestle. The poor and the unemployed are no longer the inevitable products of "iron laws" about which mere humans can do little. The welfare state has emerged in the capitalist world and many western democracies have gone socialist. There has emerged a vast array of programmes for helping the underprivileged and to make their lives more bearable.

This concern has spilled over to the rest of the world and there is now a great interest in helping poor countries come up. Much of this concern is due to the fear that if the West does not do anything about it, communism will overtake these countries. This has also got mixed up with the desire to exercise control

over the economies of such countries and to use them to further one's own interests. Neo-colonialism has been masquerading in the garb of an altruistic concern. Yet it has become amply clear that economic equality or a continued approximation to it is not a distant goal to be realized by the kind of growth the world has become accustomed to, but is a precondition for the removal of world poverty. Billions have been poured into poor countries and graphs on production charts have risen dramatically upwards, yet the poor is desperately poor as ever and have even sunk to lower levels in many cases. Gunnar Myrdal has discussed it at length in his *Asian Drama*, and the results of three decades of economic development in India and the other third world countries confirm his prognosis. The highly skewed distribution of income and the prevalence of a high level of overt and hidden unemployment and underemployment has resulted in the majority of the people not having the purchasing power to fulfil even their basic needs, while the upper well-to-do ten per cent have enough to spare for conspicuous and inessential consumption. Hence industrial development has also become skewed and a greater volume of capital and other resources go into producing goods to meet the requirements of the prosperous than the basic needs of the majority. India and other countries at a similar level of development are seeking foreign markets for their industrial goods and priding themselves on their level of exports even though the majority of their people have less milk, less oil, less pulses and less clothing per head today than they did three decades ago.

The obligation for each and everyone to engage in productive physical labour is one of the fundamental principles of Gandhi's approach to economics. In this he was at one with Marx who had given labour a most valued place in the life of human society. For Gandhi this was the starting point of the new economic order. He believed that a nonviolent revolution had to begin by the individual practising in his own life the values he believed in. He himself started in South Africa doing physical labour on farms and making an attempt at handicrafts. He made physical productive labour one of the eleven vows that the inmates of his Ashram had to take. He also tried to make spinning obligatory for the primary members of the Indian National Congress as a token of their acceptance of the principle. He toyed with the idea of providing for

labour franchise in India, so that those who did not engage in any kind of productive work would have no right to vote. He set out his views on the importance of productive physical labour thus :

> If all laboured for their bread and no more then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. . . Such labour would be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things through their bodies or their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and untouchable. If we did so, our wants would be minimized. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread; he will derive the greatest relish from the product of his own labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took were superfluities. May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No, the needs of the body must be supplied by the body.... Mere mental or intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of the society, not for self. Obedience to the law of bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by a struggle for mutual service. Return to the village means a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. But the critic says: "Millions living in the villages are living a life of semi-starvation." Theirs is not a voluntary obedience (to the law of bread labour). They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could and. even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it. . . . Compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease, and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. (*GSP*, pp. 152-3)

He would have agreed with Marx in the latter's views on the alienation of the worker from himself and the products of his labour in a capitalist society in which he has to sell his labour and cease to be a human being and become an object, a source of labour and come to consider himself as such. He is also unable to identify with the product of his labour which belongs to another and is entitled only to a wage. Gandhi's reference in this extract to the relish one would derive from the products of his own labour is a reference to this, though he did not think in

terms of alienation and might not have been familiar with the word.

His reference to the people in the villages shirking body labour and rushing to the cities is a reminder of the painful situation that exists in India and in most Third World countries. An exploitative feudal culture had equated the good life with total freedom from every form of productive labour. Only those who subsisted on the exploitation of the labour of others were able to afford a comfortable standard of living. Imperialist exploitation had further ground down the masses, so that those who had to labour to earn their livelihood had to subsist at a substandard level. Thus, escape from poverty was thought to be possible only by escaping from the necessity of productive physical labour. The elimination of feudalism and advent of so-called socialism has not made any significant change in the situation. Even the Marxists have failed to assimilate their mentor's emphasis on the social significance of labour, and escape into the leisured class is the greatest ruling ambition in these societies.

In the industrial economies, the craze for labour-saving machineries and rationalization and automation of work in factories has taken the element of physical exertion out of production and has, at the same time, reduced it to drudgery. All creativity has been taken out of production. So, there is a rising demand for "do it yourself" things and, a revival of interest in hobbies involving handicraft production. The body needs physical exercise for the maintenance of its health. Affluent classes have recourse to costly gadgets like stationary bicycles and rowing equipment to meet this demand for adequate exercise. It is arguable whether it would not be better to replace this complicated arrangement by one in which basic needs like food, clothing, etc. are produced by simple machineries involving a modicum of physical labour and everyone participates in this as a form of recreation rather than as unavoidable drudgery.

Gandhi's emphasis on the voluntary limitation of wants, which he also sometimes referred to as voluntary poverty, has put him at loggerheads with almost all of his followers who considered themselves progressive minded and wanted to lead the people of India into affluence. Gandhi was criticized in strong terms for wanting to keep the people in perpetual poverty and demanding ascetic austerity from them. But

Gandhi never demanded ascetic mortification of the flesh from the people and neither did he practice it himself. His own life was a model of supernormal intellectual and physical stamina maintained by an optimum amount of material inputs. When somebody questioned him about the concessions enjoyed by him in jail which "had an adverse effect on others", Gandhi replied :

> I continue to enjoy such special facilities even at the risk of being thus misunderstood with a view to the public interest. But it should not be necessary to defend my action. Its propriety must be clear on the face of it. But even if it is not, I must go my way so long as I am sure that I am right. (*DMD* I, p. 163)

He was of the view that the standard of material comforts available to a middle class family in the city of Bombay ought to be available to every family in India. In 1941 he had delineated in some detail to some inmates of his Ashram the kind of life he visualized for the villagers of India:

> As regards diet, I am quite convinced that the food cooked in our Ashram kitchen would, with slight adjustments, be suitable for the people in Sevagram also. The food served at the Khadi Vidyalaya or to C class prisoners would not do. . . .
>
> Everyone must get two lbs of milk, two tolas (4/5 ounce) of ghee (clarified butter) and two and a half tolas of butter daily. Vegetables such as we have here are also essential for everybody. Perhaps in the case of those who do physical labour it may be necessary to increase the quantity of grain; they may need dal (pulses) too, though we do not use it in our kitchen. But the quantity of milk and butter we take can be reduced to some extent. Skimmed milk can and ought to be used in our kitchen. . . . It has everything except ghee and is cheaper too. They must have some fruit too. . . . (*CW* 75, pp. 40-1)

Then he goes on to discuss clothing, housing, etc., and on to cooperation among the villagers in managing their affairs. He rules out the loin-cloth he wears as unsuitable for others and advises dhoti, kurta and cap. For women he prefers the Punjabi style consisting of kurta, dupatta and salwar. He goes on to discuss winter clothing and settles upon one blanket and one thick cotton sheet as the minimum. He remarks that people sleep huddled together both for lack of space and for warmth in winter. It must not be so. The area of living space absolutely necessary for each person should be found out and he should

have that. Brick houses would be too costly. Mud huts could be quite sanitary, cozy and comfortable. Though the Ashram houses "are poor dwellings even the rich can live comfortably in them". There should be enough space for children, which village houses lacked at the moment. There should be plenty of ventilation and cattle should be housed separately, and so on and on.

As is evident, Gandhi took interest in the minutest details of the people's lives and was not satisfied by talking in general terms or in terms of levels of money income. The relevance of his emphasis on the concrete is highlighted by the present situation in India where per capita income has risen in monetary terms, but the per capita production of such basic necessities of life like milk, pulses, vegetable oils and cotton textiles has declined in the years since independence and anything between 50 to 60 per cent of the people are below the poverty line, at least a third of them being on the verge of starvation.

Gandhi's preoccupation with such makeshift solutions as the use of skimmed milk and quilts made of newspapers stuffed into quilt covers were questioned by the leftists and were considered ploys to make acute poverty bearable and thus to perpetuate it. In reality, his preoccupation was with providing means of survival here and now and not a promise of the cornucopia in AD 2100 as the planners in India are now promising. His economic policy was a part of the struggle, not something to be promulgated after political power was captured. The people, particularly in the villages, were to organize their economy under the circumstances and use the strength thus generated in the political struggle. Mao experimented with his pattern of economy in the liberated areas in north-west China before his party came to power in the whole of the country. Gandhi was bent upon turning every village into an enclave, which, while still inside the overall set-up, would free itself in the essential needs of life from the tentacles of the latter in order to be able to fight it all the more effectively. It is this dialectical approach that is the key to his economic thought.

His prescription of limitation of wants makes sense in the present awareness about the dangers of the exhaustion of natural resources and pollution. Gandhi seemed to have been aware of the problem in the context of general principles when

he warned again and again that "God has provided enough for everybody's need but not for everybody's greed". His concern with recycling materials was almost an obsession. He saved the blank papers at the end of letters for further use and used the reverse of documents written on one side, turned used envelopes inside out for re-use and even insisted that twigs used for brushing teeth should be washed, dried and used as fuel. J. C. Kumarappa, an eminent economist and Gandhi's co-worker, is the author of the first treatise ever written in the world on conservation, *The Economy of Permanence*. It was written in the early forties and is a cogent and lucid exposition of the Gandhian approach to the issue.

Limitation of wants will not seem to be such an absurd proposition if we consider the fact that the pursuit of more and more material goods is a culturally induced pattern of behaviour, whatever the Buddha might have said about the insatiability of the "thirst for enjoyment". Societies considered economically backward have much fewer material needs, and not simply because of the lack of the means or the techniques of procuring them. They take much more time than civilized people to enjoy the companionship of their kinsfolk and friends, to dance and sing and engage in many other activities that do not concern the consumption of material things but involve the enjoyment of nature and the company of other people. When white men occupied South Africa and wanted labour to work their mines and plantations, they were unable to induce the original black inhabitants to work for them. They then forced them to "need" money by imposing a poll tax to be paid in cash and by insisting they wear clothes in excess of their natural needs. Keynes, in an article titled "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren", visualizes a stage of economic development at which man will be free from the cares of economic worries and will face the problem of utilizing his leisure time. He believes that man has been evolved by nature, with all its impulses and deep instincts, for solving the economic problem. But this is a wrong assessment of human nature. Mankind does not need to wait till the age of the Cornucopia to be free of its obsession with money making. There are already people who are not so obsessed. What is needed is a change in the values and the goals that modern civilization has set for itself.

In the developed and socially stratified societies, wealth and consumer goods have been associated with socio-economic status, sexual potency, one-upmanship, cultural perspicacity and many other things that have little to do with real physical and cultural needs. The built-in compulsion in modern industrial societies for continuous growth in production and the need for long term planning makes it imperative that the people be induced to buy more and more goods. As Galbraith has said:

> As so often, change in the industrial system has made possible what change requires. The need to control consumer behaviour is a requirement of planning. Planning, in turn, is made necessary by the extensive use of advanced technology and capital and by the related scale and complexity of organization. These produce goods efficiently: the result is a very large volume of production. As a further consequence, goods that are related only to elementary physical sensations—that merely prevent hunger, protect against cold, provide shelter, suppress pain—have come to comprise a small and diminishing part of all production. Most goods serve needs that are discovered to the individual not by the palpable discomfort that accompanies deprivation, but by some psychic response to their possession. They give him a sense of personal achievement, accord him a feeling of equality with his neighbours, divert his mind from thought, serve sexual aspiration, promise social acceptability, enhance his subjective feeling of health, well-being or orderly peristalsis, contribute by conventional canons to personal beauty, or are otherwise psychologically rewarding.
>
> Thus it comes about that, as the industrial system develops to the point where it has need for planning and the management of the consumer that this requires, it is also serving wants which are psychological in origin and hence admirably subject to management by appeal to the psyche. (*NIS*, p. 201)

Thus the consumer society has been created with its threats to the environment, the ecology and the minimal well-being of the deprived two-thirds of the world. With a sixth of the people of the world living in the affluent countries consuming a major part of the non-renewable resources and energy available on the earth, enough will not be left to fulfil even the basic needs of the other five-sixth of the world's population. The Club of Rome has given a call for "zero growth", but what is really needed to redress the balance is a reduction of the level of consumption in the developed countries, as considerable

growth in production is necessary to meet the basic needs of the rest.

The principle of Swadeshi is a fundamental concept in Gandhi's economic thought. It defines the relation of the individual to his society and the larger world in terms of socially responsible economic behaviour. In a way the principles of sharing, decentralization and trusteeship can be directly derived from it. In an earlier chapter (Advaita, Nationalism and the World) we have already discussed the genesis of the concept during the early stages of the freedom movement in India before Gandhi arrived on the scene and how he gave it a new universalistic interpretation. He had explained his views in the following words at some length at a missionary conference in 1915.

> . . . Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. . . . In that (the domain) of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve these industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such swadeshi, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millennium. . .
>
> . . . Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would today be a land flowing with milk and honey. But that was not to be. We were greedy and so was England. . . I think of swadeshi not as a boycott movement undertaken by way of revenge. I conceive it as a religious principle to be followed by all. (CW 13, pp. 219-20)

It is to be noted that he defines economic activity in terms of "service" to one's neighbours far and near, to one's fellowmen. It is not to be carried on simply for maximizing one's own benefits, but the interests of society as a whole of which one forms a part. Gandhi made it clear again and again that swadeshi did not mean exclusiveness, isolation and non-involvement with the rest of the world. On the contrary he considered it to be the proper and firm starting point of global co-operation. He visualized co-operation between the primary units leading up to an integrated national economy and the establishment of a global economy based on mutual co-operation on terms of equality between nations. He even pointed out that it was against the swadeshi spirit to try to produce goods that could

not be produced in one's own area or country without extraordinary effort. But this global economy would be equitable and just only when it had its roots in communities where the human values that were to animate it were nurtured.

Most modern states have become welfare states and social justice has become an almost universally accepted objective. Governments spend considerable amounts on help to the needy, unemployment benefits, old age pensions, and so on. But the average tax-payer, though usually a decent and compassionate person, resents the pressure that this puts on his resources. He opposes the raising of taxes and feels that it is the concern of the Government to find the resources for these. Concern for the well-being of others is fast losing hold among individuals and it is becoming an impersonal task to be carried out by an impersonal bureaucracy. One feels no compunction in behaving in ways that might harm the interests of others; it is for someone else to apply correctives. It is symptomatic of the situation that there has been a rising tide against socialists in Europe on the matter of increases in welfare spending and consequent increase in taxation.

Another important failing from the Gandhian point of view is that social welfare and economic justice have been taken out of the purview of economics and made a *political* concern. The economy is to go on breeding inequality, unemployment, ill-health and so on while the State is expected to right the wrongs by *administrative* measures. For Gandhi, the values of social justice and welfare were to be built into the economy.

Gandhi found readymade primary units for the economic order of his conception in the villages of India where a measure of fellow-feeling and mutual concern exist despite class and caste divisions. Gandhi's recipe calls for the decentralization of what might be called the basic sector of the economy so that the production of the basic necessities of the people can be carried out in a decentralized manner. He expected this also to ensure the defence of the freedom of the individual, an over-riding goal of Gandhi. Lenin conceived of the USSR as a single office and factory and the consequence has been that any person who criticizes the Soviet State can be denied employment completely and even deprived of housing and other amenities and thus quickly brought to his knees. This is not speculation; this is what happens in communist societies of the Soviet type.

In recent years there has been a growth of interest in community and face-to-face primary groups. The erosion in the spirit of social responsibility has been noted and a lot of research has been done on group dynamics highlighting the advantages of group functioning. In his *Small Communities* Redfield has discussed the rootedness and strength that people derive from such communities. Attempts have been made to strengthen and activize small communities in developing countries. There has been an effort towards community building in developed countries also as such communities are expected to contribute to the stabilization and enrichment of social life. A.E. Morgan had been an enthusiastic advocate of such a communitarian society. But almost none of these movements have thought in terms of restructuring the economy to provide a solid infrastructure for the communities. They can be scarcely expected to be effective without an economic base.

Gandhi's preoccupation with the villages had another important reason. In the colonial economy under the British the urban centres had evolved as limbs of the exploitative economy that fed on the villages. The lopsided industrialization that had followed British rule had destroyed the industries in the villages and agricultural economy had been made subservient to industrial economy. As Gandhi pointed out in 1921:

> Our cities are not India. The city people are the brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan. The cities, have cooperated with the bleeding process that has gone on for 200 years.

And again,

> Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for the exploitation of the masses. . . . I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. (*GSP*, pp. 184-5)

Thus Gandhi had realized the real nature of the prosperity of the cities based on what has come to be known as *compradore*

capitalism. Gandhi knew that this unequal and exploitative relation would continue even after India gained freedom and the economy would continue to serve the interests of a small minority unless it was drastically restructured. The economy had to be reconstructed so that the toiling masses, who constitute the vast majority of the people, acquired requisite control over it and their own destinies. And this is exactly what has not happened in a free India that has rejected Gandhi. The urban industrial economy has taken the place of the British colonial system and the villagers continue to be sucked dry as before in a variety of ways including an unjust ratio between the prices of agricultural and industrial products, development expenditures skewed in favour of urban areas, discrimination in the availability of credit for agriculture, and many others. Indian planners had naively believed that industrial development would somehow reach the villages and buoy them up. But as B. N. Ganguli noted:

> It is now too late in the day to argue that industrial development in the urban areas and the growth of urban–rural trade stimulated thereby will *necessarily* ensure that people in the rural areas will be better off relatively, irrespective of the change in the functional distribution of national income (*GSP*, p. 201)

In this context it may be noted that in the Soviet Union also, relations between the urban industries and agriculture stand on a similar unequal footing. Massive exploitation of the villages for urban industrialization was resorted to at the beginning of the five-year plans and the imbalance caused at that time has not yet been righted. This was one of the reasons for Mao's break with and rejection of the Soviet model.

Khadi, handwoven cloth made out of handspun yarn, was made by Gandhi into the symbol of the new economic order visualized by him. It embodies decentralization and sharing. Such cloth produced by a comparatively primitive technology is bound to be costlier than products of similar quality produced in factories, and conventional economic wisdom says that it is rational for the consumers to buy the cheaper cloth. And that was how the people also saw it. But Gandhi sought to overturn this wisdom. It was the right of everyone to have work by which he would be able to maintain himself and his family with self-respect and it was the duty and the responsibility of the society to provide him with the same. Since other

employment was not available for the millions of the unemployed and underemployed, he argued, it was the duty of every patriotic and responsible citizen to use khadi even if it was dearer.

> There are millions who can work at the spinning wheel for eight hours a day and it is impossible for them to use all the khadi woven therefrom. It is the bounden duty of all good citizens to take off the surplus product. . . . If it is man's privilege to be independent, it is equally his duty to be inter-dependent. . . It will be possible to reconstruct our villages so that the villages collectively, not the villagers individually, wil become self-contained so far as their clothing requirements are concerned. (Quoted in *GSP*, p. 303–4)

He explained his rationale thus at a meeting of workers engaged in working out the khadi programme:

> In recognizing your khadi production, you should not forget that the science of khadi, in some respects, works on diametrically opposite lines to that of ordinary business. You know how Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations*, after laying down certain principles according to which economic phenomena are governed, went on to describe certain other things which constituted "disturbing factors" and prevented economic laws from having free play. Chief among these was the "human element". Now, it is this "human element" on which the entire economics of khadi rests; and human selfishness, Adam Smith's pure economic motive, constitutes the disturbing factor that has to be overcome. (*CW* 58, p. 353)

Gandhi had harped on khadi since about 1920 after his return to India. A decade later he had come to realize the need for a more comprehensive plan of industrial development for the villages and came to add the programme of development of other village industries to his constructive programmes. He visualized a future in which the villages would become self-reliant and self-sufficient in respect of their most vital needs through an economy based on a balanced mixture of agriculture, animal husbandry and village industries including khadi. He advised the villagers to work in cooperation in conducting their economic activities.

Early socialists like Annie Besant had visualized the possibility of groups of the unemployed banding together to produce the needs of the community. If they thus helped each other to meet their needs they could very well create

employment for themselves. At a later date Joan Robinson had discussed the self-help scheme of a group of unemployed at Upholland who worked at various trades for their own benefit. They continued to draw the doles to which they were entitled and paid for the things they bought from it. Thus whatever they produced was a net addition to the total production of the nation. Robinson has taken a favourable view of the experiment and has discussed the kind of difficulties it might run into including opposition from existing industries (*ETE*, p. 94 *et seq.*) The problem with this approach is that the group needs to have land to produce its food to be able to be really self-contained. Apart from this, the main difficulty seems to have been the mental block that has made the average socialist averse to such "voluntary" efforts.

The communes of Maoist China seem to have worked out the idea as Gandhi would have liked to see it. This has been reported by several observers including R. H. S. Crossman, R. K. Patil, Tibor Mende, Jan Myrdal and a team sent by *The Economist*, London. According to these reports, the communes have been remarkably dynamic agents of economic development and have been able to find quite ingenious solutions for their problems. According to the report of Norman Macrae of the *Economist* team,

> The communes achieve full rural employment giving every able-bodied member—plus most of the feeble-bodied grandmas—a job even during the crop off season, either in the quite sizable enterprises run by the communes (including factories making agricultural machinery, paper mills, major local construction projects, etc) or the smaller enterprises run by the communes' subdivisions called the brigades (which run repair workshops, battery chicken farms, furniture workshops, etc)
>
> The creation of full employment by village Keynesianism becomes possible only when the small community concerned can (a) practise village infant industry protectionism so as to provide a local market for the product of each uneconomic brigade workshop job; and (b), even more spectacularly, can create its own additional money supply to pay these uneconomic workers with.
>
> The communes and the brigades do this by (a) protecting the infant industries (one commune we visited was restricting the import of new electric light bulbs, because four elderly ladies sat in a brigade workshop mending the filaments on broken ones); and (b) paying for work done within the commune in "work points" with each work point being worth the worker's "team"—or

entrepreneurial group of about 15–30 households—a share in the communes eventual income. (*The Economist*, 31 December 1977)

The report then goes on to describe in detail how communes have managed to turn their surplus manpower into an asset and build irrigation works, paper mills, etc out of their own resources with little or no help from outside. In one instance, the report points out the reservoir and the paper mill thus constructed by a commune would have cost over a million dollars in other poor countries. The sum would have had to be voted by Parliament, construction would have been undertaken by a city contractor who (even if not corrupt) would have installed mysterious city machinery that the local peasants could not operate or maintain.

It has to be noted that J. C. Kumarappa had hit upon the idea of a labour bank for putting to use for productive purposes the unutilized manpower of Indian villages. His scheme is similar to the Chinese method. As far as the reasons for the success of the communes can be fathomed, a sense of collective responsibility for all members of the community seems to have been a principal one. The commune had to take responsibility for meeting the basic needs: food, clothing, shelter etc., of every member of the community and so had to devise means of taking as much work from each one of them as he or she was capable of. To quote from a report by Crossman:

> In a corner I spotted five old ladies sitting in a circle and asked what they were doing. "That," I was told, "is the ball-bearing section." Sure enough, a thin iron rod had been cut into slices a centimetre thick and each old lady was rounding a slice with a pestle and mortar, while a couple of boys were polishing the finished article. "They aren't up to much yet and they don't last very long in our cartwheels," I was told.
>
> "But why not buy really modern agricultural machinery from the new tractor factory less than a hundred miles away?" I asked.
>
> "What they make in the towns is far too complicated and expensive for us," I was told, "Anyway we cannot wait." (*NS*, 10 January 1959)

The rationale was that since the old ladies had to be taken care of in any case they were given work suited to their capacities and whatever they produced was a net addition to the total production of the community and in this particular case facilitated increase in productivity.

This is exactly the logic of Gandhi behind his programme of khadi and village industries. The people had to free themselves from the illusion of a power larger and beyond themselves, the State, taking care of their problems and had to become aware of their inter-dependence and solidarity. Mao's Government encouraged this sense of self-reliance, the Government in post-Gandhi India has been indifferent to such ideas and its general policies have tended to discourage such efforts. In 1946, when Congress ministries came into power in several provinces, Gandhi had a plan for them for awakening this sense of self-reliance in the people and giving a large push to the khadi movement. He advised the provincial Governments to announce that it would not be possible to go on supplying millmade cloth to the villages any longer and that villagers should make arrangements for producing their own cloth. One year's time was to be given for this after which the supply of mill cloth, which was anyway in short supply in the country at the end of the second world war, was to be stopped altogether. In the meantime the Governments were to arrange to provide the villages with assistance in training, raw materials where necessary, and capital. The suggestion was not taken into consideration by the ministries. But that time the Congress was in the process of cutting itself loose from Gandhi.

The Chinese achievement has been made possible because the communes had been granted a large measure of autonomy in their internal affairs, though the regime at the top is a dictatorship. One has yet to see whether autonomy will survive the post-Mao reforms in the economy taking place at a rapid pace, and whether the new kind of an industrial revolution and the new decentralized technology they are evolving will be swept away by the spate of industrialization planned from the top or will be able to hold their own and give a new enduring shape to the Chinese economy. In this respect they are likely to fall short of Gandhi's expectations, but the relevance of the achievements from the Gandhian point of view has to be acknowledged.

The controversial views of Gandhi on the place of machinery in economy have been discussed at length in the chapter "An Agenda for a Revolution". He was not opposed to all technological innovations, but wanted them to make their benefits available to all and, most importantly, would not help concentration of power in the hands of a few. Accordingly,

he believed that the means of production of at least the daily necessities of life should be on a scale that would facilitate community control over them. Only such a set-up would be conducive to the maximum freedom of the individual.

He made it clear that he visualized the need for certain centralized industries. In responding to a letter from Rammanohar Lohia, he said:

> I do visualize electricity, ship-building, iron works, machine making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto the industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the State of the future it will subserve the villages and their crafts. I do not share the socialist belief that centralization of the necessaries of life will conduce to the common welfare when the centralized industries are planned and owned by the State. The socialistic conception of the West was born in an environment reeking with violence. The motive lying behind the Western type and the Eastern is the same—the greatest welfare of the whole society and the abolition of the hideous inequalities resulting from the existence of millions of have-nots and a handful of haves. I believe that this end can be achieved only when nonviolence is accepted by the best minds of the world as the basis on which a just social order is to be constructed. (*CW* 71, p. 131)

The reference to the "Eastern" type of industrialization is obviously to his own pattern.

His insistence on the use of human and animal power was due to his realization that poverty in India and other countries in a similar situation could be got rid of only by providing full employment to all able-bodied adults and by making full productive use of available animal power. Then, as even now, there was a fascination with electrical and other forms of power and it was thought that their use signified progress irrespective of the way in which those were used. In the mid-forties a khadi worker asked Gandhi if he could join in a demand for the electrification of a certain small town. Gandhi advised him not to do so. He was not sure whether electricity could be made available to every household and he did not want something that would be provided to the better-off classes thus increasing economic disparity. A resurgent community, organized on the basis of village swaraj, could make use of whatever energy was available for the common weal and so, as he made clear in a letter to Jhaverbhai Patel in

1944 (*CW* 78, p. 45), he was in favour of villagers being in a position to produce energy from sources in the village itself so that they could use it for increasing their productive efficiency.

Some months later he wrote to Amiya Nath Bose:

> Have you worked out the problem of electricity for every home? What is the cost? My remark quoted by you is a poser for the time being. It will cease to be one, if it is a possibility. It has not penetrated every home in the villages even in Mysore. Since you believe in it I want you to work it out and demonstrate the physical and economic possibility of electrifying every home of the seven hundred thousand villages of India. (*CW* 80, p. 41)

Production of enough electricity to reach every home in India has become a feasible proposition and the Indian economy has the capability for it, but such electricity that has reached the villages has only accentuated the economic disparity in them and a large proportion of the power generated in the country is used for purposes that have little to do with the well-being of the common man. Hence Gandhi's emphasis on changing power relations in the society as a precondition to economic development has acquired added significance. His entire programme of economic reconstruction was directed at creating bases for a struggle to that end.

The ownership of the means of production at the community level present no serious difficulties. Their scale is not so large as to pose any threat to the interests of any except those in the community or in the immediate neighbourhood and such problems can be sorted out easily. Besides, Gandhi advocated cooperation in the conduct of the economic activities of the village and Vinoba, his illustrious follower, demonstrated later that it was a feasible proposition to bring all land in a village under communal ownership by intensive persuasion. At that level any problems of injustice, exploitation and encroachment on the rights of others are immediate and concrete as also the spirit of sharing and mutual aid. But larger units posed a problem. How were they to be owned, managed and controlled? Industrial and commercial concerns of the capitalist pattern were already there. Capitalism could never be allowed to continue, but what was to take its place? How were the existing capitalist concerns going to be transformed?

Gandhi had accepted the need for state ownership of key industries like steel, coal, power production, railways, ship building, etc. as adumbrated in the resolution on economic policy adopted at the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931. But as he made clear in an interview with N. K. Bose in 1934, he was against large increases in the power of the state that state ownership of industries would bring. Discussing the merits of state ownership, he said:

> It is better than private ownership. But that too is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppresses capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself, and will fail to develop nonviolence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. . . (*CW* 59, p. 318)

And thence he went on to say that he preferred the doctrine of trusteeship. This was the solution he had thought up to save society from the Scylla and Charybdis of rampant capitalism and bureaucratic socialism. Gandhi appreciated the merits of private initiative and did not want to destroy it while bringing economic activities under social control. The doctrine of trusteeship seeks to combine the advantage of both private enterprise and social ownership. It involves changes in the values that govern economic activity as well as in the institutional pattern. In the early stages he elaborated the new values and attitudes involved in the doctrine. He told the rich that they were not the owners of their property which in reality belonged to society. They were to look upon themselves as the trustees of their property and use it accordingly, taking just that much that they needed for their own upkeep and use the rest for the good of the society. As has been quoted elsewhere, he was of the view that those who were rich today should not be entitled to a higher wage than the average.

All these views of his were taken as mere pious wish at the best, and at the worst, as an attempt to perpetuate economic inequality by providing the rich with a spiritualized pretext for their existence. They could go about with impunity, with all the prestige of Gandhi behind them, saying that they were trustees. Who was to check how they were using their wealth and dealing with their employees? But gradually Gandhi

made it clear that this was not a unilateral business. The people and the State, insofar as the latter existed, were also to be involved. About 1945, he drew up a formula that gave concrete shape to the doctrine. The formula published in *The Last Phase* (Pyarelal) is as follows:

> (1) Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarters to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
>
> (2) It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property, except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
>
> (3) It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.
>
> (4) Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.
>
> (5) Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.
>
> (6) Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production would be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed. (*LP* II, pp. 633–4)

In this formulation it was made clear that legislation was also to play a role in institutionalizing the system. But the dynamic force of nonviolent action was present in the background. When he told the Gandhi Seva Sangh in 1938 that "We should have the faith that we can, without violence or with so little violence that it can hardly be called violence, create such a feeling among the rich," he was referring to such organized action. In 1947 he made it clear in the following terms:

> If the *raja*, the *zamindar* or the capitalist do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel reform, unless they court utter destruction. When *panchayat raj* is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the *zamindars*, the capitalists and the *rajas* can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their strength. If

the people non-cooperate with the evil of zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In *panchayati raj* only the *panchayat* will be obeyed and the *panchayats* can only work through laws of their own making. (*GSP*, p. 277)

It has to be kept in mind that in the Gandhian scheme of things there is a place for legislation. But Gandhi held that legislation could be effective only when there was strong public opinion in its favour and most of the people concerned had accepted the new value as the basis of their conduct so that the law is meant to deal only with the recalcitrant few. This is also common experience. A law that tries to bring about any fundamental change without the backing of public opinion either remains a dead letter or has to be enforced with massive coercion that ultimately destroys democracy and freedom. So, change in the views of the majority following upon nonviolent direct action by those directly concerned with the system like the industrial workers or the tenants is to be followed by appropriate legislation. Some commentators perceive a lack of clarity in whether the vested interests are "to die of inanition" because of non-cooperation or due to the laws passed by the panchayats. There is no room for such confusion when the Gandhian strategy is understood.

Gandhi was of the view originally that the legal ownership of the trusteeship concern should rest with the erstwhile owner. He should have the right to propose the name of his successor but the choice must be finalized by the State. "It is to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship comes into pay," he said, "retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right." He wanted to make use of the talents of the individual entrepreneur while making him work in the greater interest of the society. But at a later stage he visualized the workers of a trusteeship concern as partners in it and sharing in its profits. He had already declared that:

if we are not narrow minded, we shall immediately realize that the labourers have a greater right to ownership than shareholders. All that the shareholders do is to pay money whereas a labourer contributes the sweat of his brow every day, and if he is a loyal worker, he will not desert his work at all. A mill can be run without shareholders but it is impossible to run it without labourers." (*CW* 42, p. 275)

Thus trusteeship is to be a system in which the erstwhile owner and the workers of a concern jointly hold control over it. The erstwhile owner has the right to propose the name of his successor, but that has to be finalized by the State. The enterprise is to be run in the interest of the society as a whole and the latter has the right to legislate guidelines for its working. There is to be a limit on the ratio between the maximum and minimum incomes to be allowed in the concern, and in the society as a whole when the doctrine is accepted by the society, and this difference will be continuously decreasing.

Gandhi also visualized workers banding together to set up a concern on trusteeship lines.

A true and nonviolent combination of labour would act as a magnet attracting to it all the needed capital. The capitalist would then only exist as trustees. When that happy day dawned, there would be no difference between capital and labour. (Quoted in *GSP*, p. 278)

The important point in all this is that he wanted to establish values in society that would be internalized by the vast majority of the people and guide their action without the need for external control except in marginal cases. But how far are the values he desired to establish in consonance with normal, healthy human needs? Any ideals or values that are contrary to the latter are in danger of being rejected totally or remaining mere copy book maxims. Gandhi wanted to displace the profit motive from its cardinal role in economics. But how far is it possible for people to engage in economic activity without wanting to make more money?

Max Weber was perhaps the first to show the role of Protestant ethics in the rise of capitalism. It was not merely the lure of greater wealth that drove the early pioneers of capitalism in Europe but the urge to achieve a difficult task. Talcott Parsons, after a discussion of the supposedly altruistic behaviour of professionals and the selfish behaviour of businessmen, has the following comments to make.

The situation does not appear to be so simple. It is seldom, even in business, that the immediate financial advantage to be derived from a particular transaction is the decisive motivation. Orientation is rather to a total comprehensive situation extending over a considerable period of time. Seen in these terms the

difference may lie rather in the definition of the situation than in the typical motives of the actors as such.

Perhaps the best single approach to the distinction of these two elements is in the question, in what do the goals of ambition consist? There is sense in which, in both cases, the dominant goal may be said to be the same, "success". To these there would appear to be two main aspects, a satisfactory modicum of attainment of the technical goals of the respective activities, such as on the one hand increasing the size and improving the business portion of the firm for which the individual is in whole or part responsible, or attaining a good proportion of cures or substantial improvement in the condition of patients. The other aspect is the attainment of high standing in one's occupational group, recognition in Thomas' term. (*Studies in Motivation, ed. McClellland*, 1955, p. 249)

Parsons then goes on to argue that the difference in behaviour lies in the institutional patterns in which the two groups operate. This is a very important insight. One pattern, namely, that of a business organized on capitalist principles, encourages a certain egotistic outlook, while another pattern encourages behaviour that looks altruistic. But both the institutional patterns make use of one common motive, success. Only the criteria of success in both patterns are different.

In a cross-cultural study of motivation (*The Achieving Society*, 1961), McClelland et al. have shown that the achievement motive is a predominant factor in successful economic activity. It is more important than the desire for financial gains. There are lots of people who do not engage in any entrepreneurial activities, even though they may not be averse to having more money, for lack of the achievement motive, while others are driven by the motive to such activity, though their personal gains in terms of money might be comparatively small. Several factors govern the level of the motive aroused in any person or group. Theological beliefs, child-rearing practices, cultural settings, all play a part.

The hypothesis is borne out by the fact that in modern large-scale enterprises, joint stock companies and corporations, owners have gone almost totally out of the picture as entrepreneurs who took the leading role in building up and running businesses. The days of Jamshedji Tata and Henry Ford have passed. Now businesses are run by executives who are employees and are not strictly driven by the profit motive. The

achievement motive very obviously plays a predominant role in their activities. Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship makes sense in this context. It is designed to give full play to the achievement motive of the erstwhile capitalist in a setting that discourages egotism and sets a different set of norms for success.

There have been a number of experiments in the realm of business management based on such principles as social responsibility of business, industrial democracy and workers' management that are broadly in the direction envisaged by Gandhi. In Yugoslavia, workers' management of industrial and other concerns has been more or less successful for more than three decades within the framework of socialistic nationalization, but as an alternative to the centralized bureaucratism of the Soviet pattern.

In Spain, the Mondragon Movement started by an enthusiastic and committed priest some decades ago that focussed on setting up industries run and managed jointly by the workers with a commitment to social concerns has achieved a measure of success. The Scott Bader concerns in Britain have poineered a movement in making workers participate in the ownership and management of industrial and commercial concerns—this has signalled the begining of a movement in Western capitalist democracies and there are a large number of medium-sized and small concerns in Britain, France and the USA run on trusteeship lines. There is an incipient trusteeship movement in India and some workers' enterprises run on trusteeship lines have been set up. Trusteeship, from being a impractical far-out idea, seems to be well on the way of emerging as a viable alternative to the dominant systems of the day.

Some argue that the controls and norms set by Governments on business enterprises in India and elsewhere have brought about a kind of virtual trusteeship. The Government sets limits for the prices of industrial products, limits on the profits, fixes minimum wages, takes a considerable chunk of the earnings for public purposes by corporate and income taxes and so on. And now there is even talk of instituting workers' participation in management. But all this is deceptive, because there is no change in the values that govern economic activities and no strong popular movement in that direction. The Government is more concerned with strengthening its hold on the economy than on strengthening the awareness and power of the people

in this respect and the capitalist class is more busy trying to get around restrictions and demands than in fulfilling them honestly. The maturing of a trusteeship economy depends on radical changes in the relations between holders of political and economic power and the masses—this has yet to come about in these countries.

In conclusion, it needs to be pointed out that the basic change in outlook that constitutes the basis of a change over to trusteeship is needed not only for the capitalists but for the workers and all others in a society. It demands mutual respect and consideration and a willingness to accommodate one's own self-interests with the larger interests of all. An interpretation of individual freedom, rights and justice has become dominant that does not accept any such considerations and Gandhi had occasion to comment on it. In a leaflet issued during the textile workers strike in Ahmedabad in 1918, he had the following comment to make :

> Pure justice is that which is inspired by fellow feeling and compassion. We, in India, call it the Eastern or the ancient way of justice. The way of justice, which has no place in it for fellow feeling or compassion, is known as Satanic, Western or modern. (*GSP*, p. 252)

He also points out that under the latter system "the worker can make his own demands, irrespective of the employer's financial condition, and this is considered just." Ganguli has commented that Gandhi was harking back to medieval values, to paternalism, that was prized as much in the West as in the East and was replaced by the cash nexus. Leaving aside the reference to the East and the West and acknowledging that both the systems of values or conceptions of justice are common to the whole world, it needs to be pointed out that Gandhi's criticism of modern industrial civilization and of conventional economics lies in just this that it is based not merely on scientific and technological progress but on an outlook on life that reduced human considerations to nullity. A shallow and superficial approach to social evolution has succeeded in giving a scientific validity to the retrogression by labelling values like mutual regard, propriety, decorum, etc, "medieval" and "feudal" and the single-minded pursuit of self-interest as "modern". The essence of Gandhi's approach lay in his effort to correct this aberration.

CHAPTER TEN

WOMEN, FREEDOM AND THE FAMILY

Gandhi, as if by magic, had brought women to the forefront of public life in India. One cannot forget the dramatic scene of thousands of village women, unlettered and poor, who had till then hidden their faces behind veils at the approach of an unacquainted male, suddenly emerging from their seclusion to defy the might of the British empire by breaking the salt law. The law prohibited the manufacture of salt from sea water except by those who had obtained a license for it from the Government of India. A tax was levied on salt that was several times its cost price and it hurt the poor badly. As is well known, Gandhi chose the salt law as the target for the civil disobedience movement in 1930. He called upon the people to disobey the law after an initial stage during which chosen bands of satyagrahis disobeyed it. On that seashore in Orissa, the village women carried home from the coast baskets full of soil from which they extracted salt by a simple, indigenous process. They were led by women who had given up affluent life-styles and cast their lot with the poor. These included the wife of a big landlord whose husband had been given the title "rajah" by the British Government. High officials of the Government and a posse of policemen were on duty to prevent any breach of the law. They stood by watching the scene helplessly, too stunned by the incredible happenings to do anything.

And thus other thousands of women across the country stepped into the sun out of purdah to picket liquor and opium shops and stores selling fabrics of foreign manufacture which were being boycotted at Gandhi's call. Then the police had not been so flabbergasted. There had been arrests, beatings, blood was shed and jails filled up with a new breed of women with nerves of steel and fire in their eyes. And when the struggle ended a year later with an honourable truce, Gandhi declared with unconcealed pride in India's womanhood:

In my opinion when the history of the last decade comes to be written the palm will be given to the women of India. They have brought swaraj nearer. They have added several inches to their own height and to that of the nation. (*CW* 45, p. 129)

Many of these women had to revolt against their families, parents and husbands to participate in this revolt against British rule. The struggle for the emancipation of the women of India had become very much a part of the struggle for the freedom of the country. Gandhi had been working for this since his return to India. His ideas about the status and role of women in society were forthright. As he had explained in simple terms to a woman inmate of his ashram:

Indulgence lies at the root of family life. Hinduism as well as other religions have tried to bring in self-restraint.

If the husband is a god, the wife is also a goddess. She is not a slave, but a friend and companion with equal rights. Each is a guru (teacher) for the other.

A daughter's share must be equal to that of a son.

The husband's earnings are the joint property of the husband and the wife, as he makes money by her assistance if only as a cook.

If a husband is unjust to his wife, she has the right to live separately.

Both have equal rights to the children. Each would forfeit these rights after they have grown up, and even before that if he or she is unfit for them.

In short, I admit no distinction between man and woman except such as has been made by nature and can be seen with human eyes. (*DMD* I, p. 189)

India has a bewildering variety of cultural patterns in the matter of the status and role of women in society depending upon race and religions. Patterns also vary from region to region and from caste to caste. While the purdah was strictly enforced in parts of northern India, it has always been totally absent in the south. Kerala in the south has a matriarchal society, while in Assam in the north-east, women have greater freedom and equality and are in some ways more dynamic than men. But in most of the country, women were relegated to second class status. They were treated as though they were the property of the men. They had few rights and their condition bordered on slavery, particularly among the upper castes. The condition of Muslim women was no better. It was only among

many communities of the tribals, the pre-literate societies, that relatively greater freedom and equality was enjoyed by women.

Though in the earlier millennia of Hindu civilization women enjoyed a much higher status and greater equality, Hindu spiritual tradition has been heavily loaded in favour of men. The right to engage in spiritual practices, to take *sannyasa* to observe *brahmacharya* or celibacy etc. are almost solely formulated in terms of the male. Woman has been considered an obstacle in the path of spiritual endeavours and has even been described as the door to hell. Strict segregation had been imposed between men and women in social life. Women were not supposed to speak to strangers or even allow a stranger to look at their faces. In some regions, a man, even a father or a brother, was not allowed to be alone in the same room with a woman. Western influence had started a ripple of change, but this was restricted to the upper strata of society. Reformers before Gandhi had also started movements to free women from their shackles. Gandhi was undoubtedly helped by their efforts and succeeded as none before ever had.

His deeply felt concern at the pitiable condition of women in India comes through in the talk reported by his grandniece, Manu Gandhi, in her book, *Eklo Jane Re* (Gujarati, Ahmedabad, pp. 159–60)

The physique of our girls is ruined through false modesty. We forget that the girls of today are the mothers of tomorrow. At a tender and critical stage in her development when she needs a mother's understanding, love and guidance most, she is given a step-motherly treatment as if she has sinned against society in growing up and must be suppressed. She is made a victim of hide-bound social rules and conventions. She cannot stir out, play, take outdoor exercise. The same about dress. She is made to follow the mode, put in tight laces, which deform the body and stunt her growth. She is kept in ignorance of the basic facts of life and in consequence suffers from various ailments through false modesty. The psychological harm it does is even worse than the physical. She looks grey and old when she should be carefree and happy as a bird. It is a heart-rending spectacle. If in respect of their food, dress and conduct, conversation and reading, study and recreation, our girls could be brought up in nature's healthy simplicity and allowed to grow in freedom, untrammelled by anything but the limits of natural modesty, they would rise to the full height of their stature and once more present us with a galaxy

of heroes and saints as India had boasted of in the past. I have dreamt of such a race of ideal women who will be India's pride and the guarantee of her future.

Already, while in South/Africa he made a beginning by introducing co-education for the boys and girls in his settlements and by allowing them to mix freely. He was encouraged by the experiment and when he came back to India he made a start with the women who joined his Ashram. He tried to prepare them for a society in which they would have won their birthright of freedom and equality. He took an interest in the minutest details of their lives and helped them get out of their traditional habits and attitudes. We find him advising them not to demur at being examined by male physicians and there was a long exchange of letters with Mirabehn over the practice of menstruating women having to go into seclusion and being treated for the period almost as untouchables. He reminds her that "seclusion is not compulsory at the Ashram. But I am not sure as to what should be exactly done," and advises her to continue her search and read some literature about it if any. (*CW* 34, p. 234) A month later he assures Mirabehn that "In the theory of it I am wholly at one with you," and tells her that he had never respected the rule even with reference to Kasturba. But at the same time he advises her in effect not to be in a hurry and to respect the wishes of those who wanted to follow the rule. In his regular talks to the Ashram women he touched on a broad gamut of subjects concerning women. He advised them to shed fear, to be conscious of their strength and to shed their helplessness. In one talk he raised the question, "Can women be self-supporting?" and answered it thus:

My heart says that she can. If she learns satyagraha she can be perfectly independent and self-supporting. She will not have to feel dependent on any one. This does not mean that she shall not take any help from others. She will certainly, but if such help be not forthcoming she will not feel destitute. . . . One should give up the idea that one is helpless. . . ." (*CW* 32, p. 488)

On another occasion he encouraged those who were yet to be married to think in terms of choosing their own husbands.

The marriage of Shiva and Parvati is regarded as an ideal one. One who wants to wed like Parvati should think in terms of a man like Shiva who is free from all passions. It was not Parvati alone that was

destined to get such a husband. Every woman holds that fate in her own hands.

In choosing a husband, one must not go by the kind of clothes he puts on, or the turban he wears. One must see how educated he is, and how good he is in character . . . . One should not think of marrying anyone who comes along. Parvati had resolved that she would marry one who was free from all passions like Shiva, otherwise she would remain unmarried. Every girl should cherish the ideal of Parvati. . ." (*CW* 32, p. 494)

He recognized the need for sex education of children quite early, long before the subject had assumed any importance in the eyes of other educationists. He broached the subject to his colleagues in the Ashram:

To a girl who has reached the age of puberty I would tell everything about it. If a younger girl asks about it, I would explain it to her according to her mental capacity.

Boys and girls cannot remain innocent for all time, no matter how hard we try. Therefore it is advisable to tell them the facts of life at a certain age. If this knowledge leads any of them to misbehave themselves, we must not mind. As a matter of fact such knowledge ought to strengthen one's will to chastity.

Some acquire this knowledge to feed the animal passion; others come to know in the natural course of things; still others equip themselves with knowledge in order to control passion and help others to do so.

This knowledge may be imparted by only those fit to do it. You should aspire after such fitness. . . (*DMD* I, p. 188)

One of the first books in any Indian language on sex education for girls, perhaps the very first one, was written in Gujarati at Gandhi's instance and published in the thirties by the Navajivan Publishing Trust, founded by Gandhi.

He sought to break the current stereotype of women being delicate and timid. He encouraged them to be courageous in various ways. Once there was a problem at the Ashram of raids in the night by gangs of thieves. Gandhi encouraged women to oin in patrolling the campus at night. In a communication to the Ashram women be praised their progress in this direction.

Last week I raised the problem of protecting yourselves against thieves. Do not lightly brush it aside. I wish you to falsify the epithets "weak", "timid" and so on that are specially used about women. They do not apply to all women of course. Who would say the women of Raniparaj (a tribal community) are timid? How can

you call them weak? The women of the West, of course, take part these days in everything. I do not mean to say that they should be imitated; but at least they have been falsifying many of the assumptions of men. The Negro women of Africa are not at all "timid". Perhaps there is no such epithet in their language to be applied to them. In Burma it is the men who appear timid and as it were the weaker sex. . . (*CW* 33, p. 284)

He also expressed the hope that some day one of them would acquire the capacity to win over the thieves by love.

He deprecated the traditional religious belief that women were "the door of hell" and said that "the very thought of our obeying in modern times some of the injunctions of the shastras (scriptures) makes me shudder. As it was thought to be a sin even to look at a woman, the fear has taken possession of us that we cannot look at women without evil thoughts." (*CW* 2, p. 153) To those who cavilled at his encouraging women to come out into the public he responded by defending the women's right to do so.

We have kept women very much suppressed. They have lost their womanhood. A woman has a right to go out of her home in order to serve, it is her duty to do so. As day by day women come to take greater part in our movement, we shall see more and more men and women coming together in meetings. This seems to me, quite a normal situation. (*CW* 27, p. 151)

He advocated economic independence of women and had some sharp things to say to one who questioned the desirabilty of such independence as it was sure to lead to the spread of immorality among women.

I would answer the question by a counter question: has not independence of man and his holding property led to the spread of immorality among men? If you answer 'yes', then let it be so also with women. And when women have rights of ownership and the rest like men, it will be found that the enjoyment of such rights is not responsible for their vices or their virtues. Morality which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of our hearts. (*CW* 72, p. 137)

He was categorical about the freedom that women should enjoy. Discussing the problem of a woman inmate of the Ashram in a letter to the secretary from his prison ward he commented:

My immediate reaction is that, if . . . Behn's mind has become ready and recovered its purity, we can condone her violation of the pledge to go away and live outside the Ashram. The chief thing to consider now is how to help her to overcome her passion and, on the other hand, to safeguard her freedom. Women have been so completely suppressed that in their helplessness they cannot even think. The Ashram, therefore, should adopt a very liberal attitude towards them. This involves many risks. We must take them if we wish to serve women. . ." (*CW* 44, pp. 91–2)

And again in another letter from jail:

You or Gangabehn should keep in correspondence with women who have settled down for work in different places outside the Ashram. . . Lapses will occur in some of them, but we need not be afraid about them. We should remain, and see that others, too, remain, sufficiently vigilant and leave the result to God. What indeed is our tapascharya in comparison to the degree of self-control we expect from and wish to see in others? Whatever that is, we wish to follow no other path. We wish to uphold the fullest freedom for women. It does not matter if we miss the path on our way, if we stumble, are pricked by thorns or fall down. . . (*CW* 44, p.147)

When his second son Manilal was to be married, Gandhi wrote seeking his approval of the match that had been made and giving him some fatherly advice. Among other things he sought from Manilal a solemn assurance to the effect that he should honour his wife's freedom, treat her as his companion and not as a slave, take as much care of her person as of his own and should not force her to surrender to his passion, but take his pleasure only with her consent. He also advised him to set certain limits to his enjoyment. (*CW* 33, p. 55)

He sought to free Hindu widows from the taboos that surrounded them. To a woman who asked why a widow should not be allowed to have the red mark on her forehead that married Hindu women wear, Gandhi replied:

I am inclined to think that just as a widower does not bear upon his body any indication of the fact that he has lost his wife, so also a widow need not have any external marks indicating her condition. This opinion is grounded only in natural justice and not in the immortality of the soul. . . . (*DMD* I, p. 107)

When he was reminded that he was asking even married women not to have the mark and not to wear bangles, he answered:

> I will tell her this if you like. But we must take our stand on the ground of justice only. So long as all married women have the forehead mark and wear bangles, how can I ask widows to discard these things? I argued and argued with Ba but failed to convince her. Formerly I held firmly to the view that widows should not remarry, and said that widowers too may not contract a second marriage. But then I noticed that widowers could not be prevailed upon to accept my advice. Therefore in justice perpetual widowhood cannot be enforced on widows.

However, Gandhi laid great emphasis on brahmacharya or celibacy and lost no opportunity to expound on the theme. Some have interpreted this as an abhorrence for sex, a sort of prudish attitude to it, since brahmacharya has been linked by tradition with segregation of women rooted in the belief of their degrading effect on men. And so, there has been apprehension that though he advocated and worked for the equality and freedom of women, his puritanical attitude towards sex coloured his attitude towards women. This alleged prejudice against sex on the part of Gandhi has been traced by some analysts of his character to the trauma he suffered as a youth at the time of his father's death. Gandhi had been nursing his father who was critically ill till late in the night. When he was relieved, he went straight to the bedroom to be with his wife. As he has described in his autobiography, he had been with her only a few minutes when he was interrupted by a knock on the door announcing that his father had passed away. He was deeply affected by this incident and felt that he missed being with his father during his last moments because of his lust and never forgave himself for this.

This, and some other experiences, created a block in his mind regarding sex, but he seems to have got over that and could look at the matter quite objectively. It is a belief in many cultures that a great deal of energy can be released and directed to creative purposes if the sex urge is sublimated. Almost all religious traditions have enjoined total celibacy for aspirants after spiritual enlightenment and partial celibacy or self-control for believers. Freud, by tracing the main fund of psychic energy to the Libido and admitting the possibility of

sublimation, has reinforced the belief to some extent. Yet, according to him, this sublimation was brought about mainly by repression and this had other effects that were deleterious. Most modern psychologists pooh pooh the idea of sexual energy being sublimated and used for other purposes. Yet there is evidence that persons deeply engrossed in creative pursuits have forgotten sex and all their psychic energies seem to have been directed to the task in which they were engaged. Michael Angelo was a case in point. He had no thought to spare for sex when absorbed in creating his masterpieces. Dalton, the father of the atomic theory, is said to have been so absorbed in his scientific experiments that he had forgotten about the need to marry. Other examples can be cited from among men and women with spiritual orientations in life.

However it has been made very clear by modern clinical experience in psychopathology that repression of the sex urge does create problems and leads to pathological consequences of varying natures. Brahmacharya has become traditionally associated with a repressive code of sexual conduct and taboos and there has been a reaction against it in modern times. Gandhi dissociated his precept and practice of brahmacharya from traditional repressive ethics. His emphasis was on purely voluntary acceptance and practice of the vow and he never thought of forcing it on anybody and never looked down upon those who did not want or failed to practise it. Gandhi seems to have been well aware of the dangers of repression from experience and was careful about not leading those who he advised to practise self-control into such predicaments. In his booklet on nature cure, *The Key to Health*, he has wondered at the irritability and impatience that is often seen in those who are practising brahmacharya. He regarded unruffled serenity and cheerfulness as the natural state of one who practises real brahmacharya and was in tune with infinity. "When the observance of Brahmacharya becomes natural to one. . . a person should be free from anger and kindred passions. The so-called *Brahmacharis* that one generally comes across behave as if their sole occupation in life was the display of bad temper." (*LP* 1-2, p. 234) He has speculated that it might be due to suppression rather than sublimation of the sex urge. He advised a friend who had lost his wife and was thinking of remaining a celibate to get married again, saying:

That is how you will some day achieve conquest of animal passion, which is impossible for you at present. Your anger arises from the same root. I am not surprised to find that you are a lover of delicate fare, for all these things go together. You say you are absorbed in your work. I doubt it. That is not to say that you are careless, but a man who is devoted to the performance of his duties can never be subject to the sexual urge. . . (*DMD* I, p. 257)

While he sermonized all and sundry on the need for brahmacharya, he was careful to warn them not to attempt something beyond their capacities. To a girl who wrote that she contemplated remaining a virgin all her life, Gandhi gave the following advice:

I like the idea, but I have known many young men and women practising self-deception. One who would observe chastity in its fullness must be truthful and conceal nothing. She should know the meaning of brahmacharya with all its implications. It is no small thing to subdue animal passion. For this one has to give up all sensual enjoyments. That is to say, she does what she has to do not with a view to enjoyment but as a necessity. She will therefore eschew all that is unnecessary. She observes this rule in food and drink, in dress and everything else. If you think you are capable of all this, well and good. Otherwise you should humbly admit your inability and act just as most other girls do. You will have then done the right thing. Attempt nothing beyond your capacity. (*DMD* I, p. 313)

His unconventional ideas about brahmacharya led to a serious clash of views with some of his senior disciples in 1946. While he was walking in the villages of Noakhali district in undivided Bengal in an effort to heal the rift created by attacks on Hindus by Muslims, his grandniece Manu was with him. Often Manu used to slip into the same bed as Gandhi. This practice raised eyebrows among some of his followers. There were criticisms from them that this was wrong from the point of view of brahmacharya. Gandhi defended himself by saying that he did not believe in the conventional interpretation of brahmacharya which prohibited all contact with women and also argued that this gave him an opportunity to test his success in achieving total freedom from sexual feelings. There was an animated debate. N. K. Bose, Gandhi's private secretary at the time, discussed Fraud with him and pointed out that it was wrong to use another person as a guinea pig in such an experiment. Bose's criticism seems to have been valid,

but the main point at issue was the taboo on any kind of contact with a woman by one who was practising brahmacharya. This did not allow even the most innocent contact between close relatives.

Later, some of the disciples had an opportunity to meet Gandhi and a long discussion ensued at which neither side seems to have been able to convince the other. However, Gandhi's remarks at these discussions help one understand his unconventional views. Responding to the criticism that this sort of behaviour on his part would undermine the foundations of the moral order, Gandhi said:

No moral progress or reform is possible if one is not prepared to get out of the rut of orthodox tradition. By allowing ourselves to be cribbed by cast-iron social conventions, we have lost. The orthodox conception of the ninefold wall of protection in regard to brahmacharya is in my opinion inadequate and defective. I have never accepted it for myself. In my opinion even striving after true Brahmacharya is not possible by keeping behind it. For 20 years I was in the closest touch with the West in South Africa. I have known the writings on sex by eminent writers like Havelock Ellis and Bertrand Russell and their theories. They are all thinkers of eminence, integrity and experience. They have suffered for their convictions and for giving expression to the same. While totally repudiating institutions like marriage, etc. and the current code of morals—and there I disagree with them—they are firm believers in the possibility and desirability of purity in life independently of those institutions and usages. I have come across men and women in the West who lead a pure life although they do not accept or observe the current usages and social conventions. My research runs somewhat in that directions. If you admit the necessity and desirability of reform, of discarding the old, wherever necessary, and building a new system of ethics and morals suited to the present age, then the question of seeking the permission of others or convincing others does not arise. A reformer cannot afford to wait till others are converted; he must take the lead and venture forth alone even in the teeth of universal opposition. I want to test, enlarge and revise the current definition of Brahmacharya, by which you swear, in the light of my observations, study and experience. Therefore whenever an opportunity presents itself I do not evade it or run away from it. On the contrary, I deem it my duty—dharma—to meet it squarely in the face and to find out where it leads to and where I stand. To avoid the contact of a woman, or to run away from it out of fear, I regard as unbecoming of an aspirant after true Brahmacharya. I have never tried to

cultivate or seek contact for carnal satisfaction. I do not claim to have completely eradicated the sex feeling in me. But it is my claim that I can keep it under control. (*LP* 1–2, p. 228)

In response to a question as to why, he had not put these unorthodox ideas of his before them earlier, he replied:

> Even today, as far as the people are in general concerned, I am putting before them for practice what you call my old ideas. At the same time, for myself, as I have said, I have been deeply influenced by modern thought. Even amongst us there is the Tantra school that has deeply influenced Western savants like Justice Sir John Woodroffe. I read his works in Yervada prison. You have all been brought up in the orthodox tradition. According to my definition, you cannot be called Brahmacharis. You are off and on falling ill; you suffer from all sorts of bodily ailments. I claim that I represent true Brahmacharya better than any of you. You do not seem to regard a lapse in regard to truth, nonviolence, non-stealing etc., to be a serious matter. But a fancied breach in respect of Brahmacharya, i.e., relation between man and woman, seems to upset you completely. I regard this conception of Brahmacharya as narrow, hidebound and retrograde. To me, Truth, Ahimsa and Brahmacharya are ideals of equal importance. . . . (*LP* 1–2, p. 228)

This makes clear the kind of odds he had to contend with in this matter. It is clear that he looked at the ideal of Brahmacharya in a new context totally detached from the traditional pattern of segregation of the sexes and taboo-bound patterns of behaviour. He sought to set relations between men and women on the terms of openness and equality. As he has narrated in his *The History of the Satyagraha Ashram,* "its arrangements involve to a certain extent a deliberate imitation of life in the West."

> My experience of the Ashram so far has taught me that there is no ground for disappointment as regards the results of this pursuit of Brahmacharya under difficulties. Men as well as women have on the whole derived benefit from it, but the greatest benefit has, in my opinion, accrued to women. Some of us have fallen, some have risen after sustaining a fall. The possibility of stumbling is implicit in all such experimentation. Where there is cent per cent success, it is not an experiment but a characteristic of omniscience. (*C W* 50, p. 211)

He was no prude in the matter of sex and did not consider it an unclean and degrading thing in itself. It has already been

mentioned that the first book in any Indian language on sex education was written at his suggestion. Even when urging the practise of Brahmaeharya, he declared that "the sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity." (*LP* 1–2, p. 219) He did not wish to curtail the freedom of men or women and force any one to do anything against his or her will. And also, he was sensitive to the needs of the average person. So, when a certain K. S. Nagarajan wrote him expressing his desire to practise brahmacharya and seeking his advice in respect of his wife, Gandhi advised him to help her get married again.

> If you are really free from any animal passion, you have a right to retain that freedom. You should share your opinion and your condition with your wife. If she on her part cannot restrain her animal appetites, seeing that there has been no consummation of marriage, she should be free to regard the present marriage as no marriage at all and to marry where she likes. If she is afraid of public opinion you should offer to help her to defy public opinion and in every way make her way smooth and easy. . . (*CW* 46, p. 115)

It is not known whether Mr. Nagarajan was able to put Gandhi's advice into practice, but there was another similar case in which Vallabhbhai Patel, a relatively junior follower of Gandhi and a namesake of the renowned leader, decided to take the vow of Brahmacharya. As his wife was not willing to follow her husband in taking the vow, Gandhi helped her get married again. In 1932 he had blessed the second marriage of a married Hindu woman who had been separated from her first husband who was alive. It is usual for a man to marry again after being separated from his wife, but Hindu custom has never allowed an upper caste woman to marry for a second time in the lifetime of her first husband.

Hindu social custom has looked upon a woman who has been raped as a fallen woman and such women were usually rejected by their families. Gandhi was strongly against this practice and advised that such women be pitied rather than shunned and should be taken back into their families.

Gandhi's compassion and understanding of their human needs is illustrated by an experience that has been related by N. K. Bose in his *Gandhi Charita.* He was serving as Gandhi's secretary during the latter's sojourn in Noakhali and had to

deal with a very large volume of mail every day. He classified the correspondence according to their importance into four categories. Some were very important. Gandhi had to read them himself and write or dictate the answers also himself. The substance of some others were read to him and he indicated the nature of the answers that should be given which were drafted by the secretary. A third category never went to Gandhi at all and was dealt with by the secretary. The fourth went into the wastepaper basket.

One day a letter was received from a young man addressed to Gandhi in which he had taken several pages to narrate the anguish he was passing through. He had fallen in love with a girl and wanted to marry her, but his parents were opposed to the marriage. So he was in a fix and was greatly perturbed and had sought Gandhi's advice. Bose was tickled by the letter. He felt that Gandhi's valuable time should not be wasted for such a trivial matter, an adolescent infatuation, and was at the point of consigning it to the wastepaper basket when he had second thoughts. He thought it would provide Gandhi some amusement and relaxation in the midst of his burdensome preoccupations. So he took the letter along to Gandhi and gave him the gist. As he was about to throw it away Gandhi stretched out his hand for it. The same day he wrote an answer to the young man in his own hand, the gist of which was that he should become independent of his parents by taking a job and then he would be free to marry the girl of his choice.

Bose was surprised at the interest and the care that Gandhi had bestowed on the letter in the midst of his preoccupations with matters of great national importance and asked Gandhi for the reason. Gandhi replied, "Do you not see the great strain that he is under so that he is driven to seek my help? How can I refuse to help him in any away I can?"

That was the essential Gandhi, and this love and concern he felt for people made him advise the use of contraceptives in exceptional cases though he was strongly opposed to birth control by artificial means. Mahadev Desai relates in his diary an occasion in 1932, when Gandhi and Desai were together in jail, when Gandhi suggested in a letter to Narandas Gandhi that in view of the excessive sexual demands that a certain person made on his wife, either the man should be sterilized or the wife taught effective methods of birth control. This was an exception to Gandhi's opposition to birth

control in general. He opposed birth control on the ground that the sex act should be performed only when a couple wanted to have a child. Engagement in it for mere physical enjoyment was a misuse of the faculty and a waste of vital energy. He was also of the view that the widespread practice of contraception would lead to moral laxity and irresponsibility. There is no doubt that a kind of casualness about sex and lack of a sense of social responsibility is spreading in all societies and resulting in broken homes, neglected children and increased psychic disorders. But it is arguable whether it is due to the easy accessibility of birth control methods or because of a distortion of the attitude to life engendered by other causes.

While giving his blessings to a newly married couple Gandhi advised them to cultivate a "bond of friendship between husband and wife instead of one of sensual enjoyment." (*CW* 43, p. 9) On several occasions he gave expression to his belief that the authoritarian way in which he used to treat Kasturba was due to his lust. He was eager to free women from being the object of man's lust. Did he ever come to realize that relationships between husbands and wives are also determined by cultural patterns and husbands do not lord it over wives in every culture? There are societies where it is the other way round. Gandhi had himself remarked on the status of the sexes in Burmese culture as quoted earlier. Is male domination rooted only in the demands of the male sex urge? Is complete freedom from the latter essential for equality between men and women or can the sex urge be separated from the pattern of male authoritarianism and even made the basis of equality between the sexes? Sexual exploitation of women is a fact and in modern capitalist societies has reached almost the limits of vulgarity. Advocates of women's liberation are also acutely aware of this and the likes of Beauvoir and Greer talk of freeing woman from being primarily a sex object of men. But they also visualize sexual relations between men and women on terms of complete equality.

Gandhi had at least realized the cultural roots of male domination in Indian society and was determined to uproot them. He opposed the marriage vow that made a wife accept her husband as God and guru. He did have a revised formula prepared that omitted this vow and replaced it by one of mutual fidelity. But did he realize that this cultural pattern that had penetrated into the sexual relations between man and

wife on terms of equality and mutuality could be and should be an expression of love and could help deepen the bond? And that for the establishment of mutual respect and equality between the sexes, the attitude to sex must be changed?

Maybe he had achieved that insight as his reference to the system of Tantra and to Ellis and Russell in the dialogue reported earlier shows. He was evidently using the ideal of Brahmacharya as a frame of reference, as an overall objective, in reference to which relations between men and women were to be determined. His insistence on complete freedom for women and his firm stand against the use of coercion in any form made him one of the greatest champions of women's liberty over. But he would not have countenanced some of the objectives that have been set before the women's lib movements. Freedom from being tied to a family, freedom from bearing and rearing children, and freedom to have sex whenever and wherever one liked, are some forms of behaviour he would have deprecated as license rather than freedom, for both men and women. Social responsibility and commitment to the well-being of society on the part of the individual was at the core of his social philosophy. For Gandhi these were the implications of a life-style rooted in nonviolence or love. He had no use for the kinds of radicalism that seek to make men and women deny their social roots and responsibilities and to live for themselves alone.

He visualized the role of women, as well as men, in the social biological context as agents responsible for the continuity of the human race and its continued spiritual and cultural evolution. They were fundamentally equal and yet had specialized roles set by nature.

> My own opinion is that, just as fundamentally man and woman are one, their problem must be one in essence. The two live the same life, have the same feelings. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's active help.
>
> But somehow or other man has dominated woman from ages past, and so woman has developed an inferiority complex. She has believed in the truth of man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him. But the seers among men have recognized her equal status.
>
> Nevertheless there is no doubt that at some point there is bifurcation. Whilst both are fundamentally one, it is also equally true that in the form there is a vital difference between the two. Hence the vocations of the two also must be different. The duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake, requires qualities which man need not possess. She is passive, he is active. She is essentially mistress of the house. He is the breadwinner, she is the keeper and distributor of the bread. She is the caretaker in every sense of the term. The art of bringing up the infants of the race is her special and sole prerogative. Without her care the race must become extinct.
>
> The division of the spheres of work being recognized, the general qualities and culture required are practically the same for both the sexes.
>
> My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex. If she is able to do so successfully, she will resolutely refuse to believe in the modern teaching that everything is determined and regulated by the sex impulse. I fear I have put the proposition rather clumsily. But I hope my meaning is clear. I do not know that the millions of men who are taking an active part in the war are obsessed by the sex spectre. Nor are the peasants working together in the fields. This is not to say or suggest that they are free from the instinct implanted in man and woman. But it most certainly does not dominate their lives as it seems to dominate those who are saturated with the modern sex literature. . .
>
> I have suggested in these columns that woman is the incarnation of ahimsa. Ahimsa means infinite love, which again means infinite capacity for suffering. Who but woman, the mother of man, shows this capacity in the largest measure? She shows it as she carries the infant and feeds it during nine months and derives joy in the suffering involved. What can beat the suffering caused by the pangs of labour? But she forgets them in the joy of creation Who again suffers daily so that her babe may wax from day to day? Let her transfer that love to the whole of humanity, let her forget that she ever was or can be the object of man's lust. And she will occupy her proud position by the side of man as his mother, maker and silent leader. It is given to her to teach the art of peace to the warring world thirsting for that nectar. . . (CW 71, pp. 208–9)

Gandhi's emphasis on the domestic role of women may lead some radical feminists to feel that he was after all a traditionalist in these matters and wanted women in the role that reduced them to virtual slavery. The family has been seen as the root cause of woman's subjugation and dependence, and

its disappearance as almost the first condition for their liberation. Engels has discussed the issue at length in his *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. He has traced the origin of the overthrow of women from the supremacy they enjoyed in the earliest forms of human society that were of a matriarchal nature to the invention of the institution of private property. Originally husbands went to live with the wife's gen. If they separated, the husband took the instruments of production. When cattle were domesticated and surplus wealth increased the husband acquired greater importance as the producer of the wealth and owner of the means, the herds of animals. According to the prevailing custom his wealth was to be shared by his brothers and sisters and his sister's children. His own children were members of his wife's gen and so could not get any share of his property. Then the male "revolution" occurred that overthrew the traditional custom and displaced women from their supremacy. Now the children became the prime inheritors of their father's property. The latter's sisters were disinherited. The abolition of private property leading to the disappearance of the family was supposed to signal the true emancipation of women.

It would not be possible here to go into a critical analysis of Engel's thesis. It is quite likely that women were subjugated at a certain point of time in the course of the evolution of human society as suggested by Engels, though Simone de Beauvoir has a different theory to offer in her *The Second Sex*. She holds that there was no golden age of woman. According to her the whole mystery of woman's subordination lies in the fact that while man realizes himself in projects towards a different future through which he transcends his situation and moves towards freedom, woman is through, her biological destiny, directed towards the repetition of life. Thus even in the earliest stages of mankind man has been an inventor and woman burdened with repetitive tasks like cooking and cleaning.

According to her, when man started agriculture, woman was elevated symbolically as the fecund one, the Earth Mother. This was so because the early tillers of soil depended on and respected the fecundity of the soil and woman was a symbol of this fecundity. Yet as particular woman she remains the other, dominated by man. In these societies woman may be worshipped as an Idol. However she is not thereby recognized

as a subject, but as the absolute other. it is beyond the human realm that woman's power is affirmed, not in it. Power remains in the hands of the male. However Beauvoir believes that the institution of private property and the advent of the patriarchal family did intensify the oppression and submergence of women and its abolition would help their liberation. In this she seems to be in agreement with Engels.

But there is sufficient reason to be sceptical about the expectation of Engels that the family existed because of private property and would disappear when the latter disappeared and only the abolition of the family would lead to the true liberation of women. Almost seven decades of communism in the USSR has not affected the family. It continues to exist as solidly as ever. However its complexion, the pattern of relations in it has changed in Soviet society as also in the democratic societies. The patriarchal family is on its way out. The economic dependence of women is no longer the major force that holds the family together. The upbringing of children is being discovered as a very important, rewarding and delightful function of the parents and a wholesome family life as very necessary for the former's healthy development. Public facilities for child care and education have freed the parents from a considerable portion of their responsibilities in this respect, but the dream of some feminists, such as of Eva Figes in her *Patriarchal Attitudes*, that mothers would be totally freed from such responsibilities by the state seems to be completely off the mark. Even the best possible public facilities cannot free the parents or their surrogates from their responsibilities, and modern theories of child development insist that such freeing would be undesirable even if possible. The love and warmth needed for a child's proper growth can only be supplied by the kind of atmosphere of personal contact, love and concern that obtains in a family. These can be hardly supplied by impersonal institutions run by bureaucracies. The importance of the extended family on this score is now being recognized by psychologists. In a situation in which aunts, uncles, grandparents and other relatives are around and have established warm relationships with the child, rigidities and tensions that might develop between the parents and the child are dissipated by their relations with the others which have a kind of cushioning effect. Researchers have found that the incidence of mental disorders is less in the large joint families

as are common in India than in modern nuclear families. This makes out a case for the absorption of the nuclear family into a larger community based on close warm relations between its members. Gandhi's Ashrams were experiments in this direction. Gandhi was also clear about the role of the family. As quoted earlier, he was of the view that parents should live for their children. They should teach the latter and also learn from them at the same time. Here he might have had in mind the role of children in a dynamic society in which children often know many more things than their parents and are in greater touch with the changing world.

The demand that women would be totally free only when they are freed of their domestic duties has its origin in the feudal and leisure class attitude to all forms of productive labour. There is also a concept of absolute freedom and individualism that refuses to look at the interconnected nature of human existence and at the fact that the individual is able to grow from the helplessness of infancy to freedom and autonomy only with the help and care of others. The error seems to have its roots in the utilitarian philosophers' formulation that the existence of others in society is a constraint on the freedom of the individual. Thus the others become limiting factors on one's freedom and their impact has to be minimized. But according to Gandhi the existence of others is an opportunity for one's self-expression and growth. That is the meaning of his principle of yajna. The idea of liberation has been taken to extreme by some in the utilitarian context, with some persons seriously proposing homosexuality as an alternative to heterosexuality.

Another development that has helped free women is the participation of men in household chores and child rearing. In the last quotation given above Gandhi has expressed the view that motherhood calls for qualities that the male need not possess. Here he seems to underrate the role of the male in bringing up children. Here also modern developmental psychology has shown the role of the father to be as important in the healthy upbringing of children as the mother and this new insight is already being accepted and acted upon by more and more fathers.

Though Gandhi has emphasized the special qualities of women and used the terms "active" and "passive" to characterize men and women, it is obvious that he did not

believe in the traditional stereotypes about the natures of men and women when we look at what he expected to do and helped them to do. As we have seen earlier, he did his best to break down stereotypes about the nature and the consequent roles of men and women in society. It is now a well-known fact that every society has stereotypes about the nature of men and women that it imposes on its members and the character of the sexes is shaped by the suppression of some of his or her innate traits. Thus in some cultures, gentleness, modesty, timidity, compassion, etc. are believed to be the innate nature of women while men are expected to be tough, courageous, aggressive, unemotional, calculating and so on. These differences in expectations extend to almost every aspect of their behaviour including such activities as singing and drawing, laughing and crying. Yet such stereotypes differ from society to society and to quote Margaret Mead:

> Upon the contrast in bodily form and function, men have built analogies between sun and moon, night and day, goodness and evil, strength and tenderness, steadfastness and fickleness, endurance and vulnerability. Sometimes one quality has been assigned to one sex, sometimes to the other. Now it is boys who are thought of as infinitely vulnerable and in need of special cherishing care, now it is girls. In some societies it is the girls for whom the parents must collect dowry or make husband-catching magic, in others the parental worry is over the difficulty of marrying off of boys. Some peoples think of women as too weak to work out of doors, others regard women as the appropriate bearers of heavy burdens, "because their heads are stronger than men's." The periodicities of female reproductive functions have appealed to some people as making women the natural sources of magical or religious power, to others as directly antithetical to those powers; some religions, including our European traditional religions, have assigned to women an inferior role in the religious hierarchy, others have built their whole symbolic relationship with the supernatural world upon male imitations of natural functions of women. In some cultures women are regarded as sieves through whom the best guarded secrets would sift; in others it is the men who are the gossips. Whether we deal with small matters or large, with the frivolities of ornaments and cosmetics or the sanctities of men's place in the universe, we find this great variety of ways, often flatly contradictory one to the other, by which the roles of the two sexes have been patterned.

> . . . We find no culture in which it has been thought that all identified traits—stupidity and brilliance, beauty and ugliness, friendliness and hostility, initiative and responsiveness, courage and patience and industry are merely human traits. However differently such traits have been assigned, some to one sex, some to the other, and some to both, however arbitrary assignment must seem to be (for it cannot be true that women's heads are both absolutely weaker—for carrying loads—and absolutely stronger—for carrying loads—than men's), although the division has been arbitrary it has always been there in every society of which we have any knowledge. (*M & F*, pp. 7–8)

These stereotypes have resulted in the perpetuation of inequalities between the sexes in almost all cultures. In his efforts to demolish the stereotypes in India, Gandhi helped women cultivate the qualities of courage, self-assertion and self-determination while the creed of nonviolence demanded that men cultivate qualities that were considered to be feminine. They had to combine gentleness with courage, tough common sense with compassion and to give more free-play to their tender feelings. He also sought to break down the traditional division of roles between men and women by requiring the menfolk of his Ashrams to take part in cooking, serving food, cleaning, etc., so long considered to be the duties of women and beneath male dignity.

Men and women who fail to conform to the traditional stereotypes of their culture are usually considered effeminate or tomboyish. But a person who has shed the limitations imposed by the cultural stereotype and has actualized his human potentialities to the full will have positive qualities of both the sexes, qualities that have been traditionally apportioned between men and women. And so, Gandhi, in the process of his growth came to acquire a certain "womanliness". "I hope you have not missed the woman in me," once he wrote to Sarojini Naidu, one of his women colleagues in the freedom struggle. His concern for those who came into close contact with him was almost motherly and he told Manu Gandhi, his grandniece whose mother had died, that he was Bapu or father to many, but he was a mother to her and actually looked after her with the care and concern of a mother. Mrs. Polak, closely associated with Gandhi in his South African days, wrote of him,

> Most women love men for such attributes as are usually considered masculine, yet Mahatma Gandhi has been given the love of many women because of his womanliness, for all those qualities that are associated with women. . . Women would sense that in him they have found a fellow traveller, one who had passed ahead along the road they were travelling, and could give him an affection deep, pure and untouched by any play of sex-emotion. Women of all kinds have turned to him in perplexity and trouble, and no problem of their lives but could be discussed with absolute frankness; if they desired to do so. They could be sure that some light would be thrown upon their difficulties and the path made to look not too arduous to travel. (*LP* 1–2, p. 234)

The cultural stereotypes of the natures of men and women have not only overshadowed their natural roles that ought to be complementary, but created barriers between them that obstruct them from understanding and empathizing with each other. Gandhi's overcoming of this barrier brought him close to the hearts of women and made the women in India respond so magnificently to his call.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A&E	*Aggression and Evolution*, (ed.) Charlotte M. Otten.
AHD	*The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, Erich Fromm.
CD	*Civil Disobedience*, Carl Cohen.
C&D	*Civility and Disobedience*, Burton Zwiebach.
CES	*Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Jürgen Habermas.
Conf	*Confessions*, Saint Augustine.
CW	*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*.
DHD	*The Direction of Human Development*, Ashley Montagu.
DMD	*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, Mahadev Desai.
ETE	*Essays on the Theory of Unemployment*, Joan Robinson.
GSP	*Gandhi's Social Philosophy*, B.N. Ganguli.
GT	*Gandhi Today*, J.D. Sethi.
H	*Harijan*.
LP I–2	*The Last Phase, Vol. I, Part 2*, Pyarelal.
M&A	*Man and Aggression*, (ed.) Ashley Montagu.
M&F	*Male and Female*, Margaret Mead.
MJC	*The Moral Judgement of the Child*, Jean Piaget.
NIS	*The New Industrial State*, J.K. Galbraith.
NVPW	*Nonviolence in Peace and War*, M.K. Gandhi.
PoL	*The Practice of Love*, (ed.) Ashley Montagu.
PPA	*The Philosophy of Political Action*, (ed.) V. Held.
R&RL	*Revolution and the Rule of Law*, (ed.) E. Kent.
S&R	*The State and Revolution*, V.I. Lenin.
SHV	*Science and Human Values*, J. Bronowski.
SoH	*A Study of History*, A.J. Toynbee.
T&MF	*Technology and Man's Future*, (ed.) A.H. Teich.
YI	*Young India*, (ed.) M.K. Gandhi.

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