



**BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY**

# **GANDHI'S VIEW OF LIFE**

**Chandrashanker Shukla**

**GENERAL EDITORS**

**K. M. MUNSHI  
N. CHANDRASEKHARA AIYER**



**BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY**



## What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

1. Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharata and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskrit languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

7/4 (36)  
5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

- (a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and
- (b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—
  - (i) respect for the teacher,
  - (ii) a spirit of inquiry,
  - (iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharata and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha, and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.





**THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY**  
The Maharaja Sayajirao University  
of Baroda

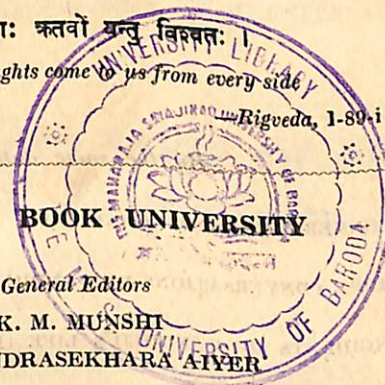
Call No. B

133

• G354

Bk-265

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।  
Let noble thoughts come to us from every side



**BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY**

General Editors

K. M. MUNSHI

N. CHANDRASEKHARA Aiyer

4

**GANDHI'S VIEW OF LIFE**

BY CHANDRASHANKER SHUKLA



*By the same author*

CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

MORE CONVERSATIONS OF GANDHIJI

INCIDENTS OF GANDHIJI'S LIFE (ED.)\*

REMINISCENCES OF GANDHIJI (ED.)

GANDHIJI AS WE KNOW HIM (ED.)

FAMOUS INTERVIEWS WITH MAHATMA GANDHI (ED.)

\* Also translated into Hindi.

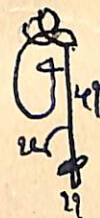
BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

# GANDHI'S VIEW OF LIFE

*An Essay in Understanding*

BY

CHANDRASHANKER SHUKLA



1951

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY



Copyright and rights of translation and reproduction  
reserved by the Publishers

Gift

Bk-265

B

133

•4354

Price Rs. 1-12-0



PRINTED IN INDIA BY DHIRUBHAI DALAL AT THE ASSOCIATED ADVERTISERS AND  
PRINTERS LTD., 505, ARTHUR ROAD, TARDEO, BOMBAY 7, AND PUBLISHED BY  
PROF. J. H. DAVE, HON. REGISTRAR AND ASST. DIRECTOR, BHARATIYA VIDYA  
BHAVAN, BOMBAY 7.

TO RAJAJI  
IN TOKEN OF  
MY AFFECTIONATE REVERENCE



It is long since the cedar tree has fallen,  
but its fragrance endures, and will forever  
seek the four corners of the earth.

*Kahlil Gibran*



You must know that it is no easy thing for a principle to become a man's own, unless each day he maintain it and hear it maintained, as well as work it out in life.

*Epictetus*

## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

IN March 1951, I organised the Book University of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Its object is to produce books in a uniform get-up and at cheap price covering the best literature in the world and in particular the literature which stands for India and the fundamentals for which Indian culture stands.

As a first step, it has been decided to publish in English 100 books selected by the General Editors, out of which 50 will be taken on hand immediately. The books will be approximately of 200 to 250 pages, priced at Re. 1/12/0.

It is also the intention to publish these and other books also in eight other Indian languages, viz. (1) Hindi, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Marathi, (5) Tamil, (6) Telugu, (7) Kannada and (8) Malayalam. This common pool of literature will enable the readers to appreciate world currents as also currents in our own Indian literature which, though differing in languages, have a common technique and urge.

This Scheme involving the publication of 900 volumes requires an all-India organisation as also ample resources. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to plan and organise it.

The Bhavan by its objective stands for the re-integration of Indian culture in the light of modern needs and a resuscitation of its fundamental values, viz. :—

(a) the dignity of Man implying the imperative-



ness of social conditions conducive to his freedom so that he may evolve on the lines of his own temperament and capabilities;

(b) harmony of individual efforts and social relations within the framework of the Moral Order;

(c) urge for the creative art of life, by which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of the Divine, and see Him in all and all in Him.

Fittingly, the Book University's first book is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by no less a person than C. Rajagopalachari, one of the greatest of living Indians; the second is on the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed that "What is not in it is no where." After twenty-five centuries we can say the same thing. Who knows it not, knows not life, its beauty, its trials, its tragedy and its grandeur.

*Mahabharata* is not a mere epic. It is also a romance, a tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine, a whole literature, a whole code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations and of speculative thought, with its core of the *Gita*, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest saga working up to the Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

The literature of India, ancient and modern, through all its languages, will also be brought into a common pool easily accessible to all. Books in

other languages which may illustrate these principles will also be included. The world, in all its sordidity, was, I felt, too much around us. Nothing will lift, inspire and uplift as beauty and aspiration learnt through books.

I thank all who have helped and worked to make this branch of Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,  
NEW DELHI.  
3rd October 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI.



## PREFACE

IT was not without considerable misgivings that I accepted the invitation of Shri Munshiji to write a book on Gandhiji's view of life, which I attributed more to his favourable predisposition towards me than any outstanding qualification of mine for the task;—especially because there are many others much more competent, if called upon, to undertake the task and execute it with a conspicuous degree of success. A certain proximity to Gandhiji over a number of years, it hardly needs to be said, by itself confers no title to a better grasp of his views or to the capacity to discuss these on a level expected in a series like the present one. Mine has been but a plodding, pedestrian effort, the quality of which it is for the reader to judge.

It is an essay in understanding and not interpretation which presupposes a thorough assimilation of Gandhiji's ideas accompanied by a constant and successful endeavour to enforce them in one's own life, to either of which I can lay no claim. Even the effort at understanding has not been easy, both because of my own limited capacity as well as the inherent complexity and difficulty of the subject. Gandhiji's life and thought underwent a continual process of evolution; and, even where the abstract principles did not change, their application to actual situations in life—both personal and public—often showed a bewildering variety. And yet through this



in writing the chapters on God and the way to Him. Gandhiji's life was a most ocular demonstration, in this age, of boundless faith in God and complete resignation to His will. Who can vividly describe this faith except one who has himself got it in an ample measure and has made his conduct a living witness of that faith? The Irish poet, A. E. (George Russell), is right when he says: "I do not believe any but the God-inspired can depict the God-inspired."<sup>4</sup> In the absence of this spiritual experience, one must rest content with an intellectual effort at understanding, which anyway is not utterly infructuous. Right understanding (*samyag-jñāna*) is an essential prelude to right conduct (*samyag-āchāra*). Faith, though transcending reason, does not rule it out altogether; on the contrary it is good for faith to submit to frequent tests by reason. That is what philosophy has been trying to do.

The choice of subjects, from among the many dealt with by Gandhiji, also presented some difficulty. I have selected a few which seem to constitute the basis of his life and thought, and a consideration of which is likely to help in understanding his grooves of thought and springs of action. The belief in the existence of spirit as apart from matter and its supremacy over matter is one; faith in God is another; the insistence on the purity of means is a third; and so on. No apology for the restricted number of topics is called for, because any

4. *The Living Torch*, p. 290.

effort of this kind has got to stop somewhere.

I have called the book *Gandhi's View of Life* instead of *The Gandhian View of Life*, in order to avoid any suggestion of a sectarian colouring. All his co-workers have drawn a line somewhere, beyond which they would not or could not travel with him in his way of life or his thought; and there are few, if any, among these who had not some intellectual difference with the Master on some point or another. How then is a "Gandhian" to be defined? It would not do to narrow down the orbit of the term "fellow-workers in the same field", which Gandhiji himself had kept very wide.<sup>5</sup> Any effort to establish a 'sect', under whatever guise, would be attended by all its evil consequences; and those who stoutly resisted any possible attempt in that direction, immediately after Gandhiji's death,<sup>6</sup> proved faithful to his spirit and rendered a distinct service to the cause of Truth. An undefined 'Brotherhood' of those who agree on fundamentals—or call it a large 'Family'—is not unwelcome; for it knows no bounds of race, religion or clime. A spiritual bond of mutual love and respect between those who have known one another for long and have worked together is a healthy thing. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.... Be of the same mind

5. See W. Q. Lash's article in RG, p. 168.

6. Shri Kishorelal Mashruwala and Shri Vinoba Bhave, I was told, led this group which pleaded for the preservation of Gandhiji's spirit of catholicity.



one toward another,"<sup>7</sup>—this was the exhortation of Paul to his fellow-workers, which it would be profitable to ponder over and act up to. But the formation of an esoteric group or organisation would be harmful. "The followers of the scientist who has formulated any theory, instead of widening it, almost invariably proceed to narrow it down,"<sup>8</sup> says Kenneth Walker, with reference to Darwin's Theory of Evolution. The same thing has happened in all other fields wherever the "following" has been rigidly defined, and wherever men, instead of being seekers and devotees of truth, have presumed to become its custodians. Indeed faith ought to be reflected not so much in the keenness of controversy as in the transformation of the lives of the 'faithful'. A Christian historian has pointed out that people in the Roman world were tremendously impressed by the dreadful earnestness of the early Christians who cheerfully threw away their lives for the sake of doctrines which they held dear.<sup>9</sup>

Whenever, therefore, a student comes across any criticism of Gandhiji, it is up to him to try to understand and appreciate the critic's point of view (as Gandhiji himself always did), and dispassionately re-examine Gandhiji's views and actions in the light of the criticism. Not 'refutation' but 'cogitation' should be the student's watchword. Sharp controversy often results in obscuring the truth. "Attack

7. *Romans* 12; 10, 16.

8. *Meaning and Purpose*, p. 54.

9. T. R. Glover: *The Jesus of History*.

the opponent's view but not the opponent," was Gandhiji's own advice to us. "If you seek Truth," says Epictetus in the same spirit, "you will not seek to gain a victory by every possible means; and when you have found Truth, you need not fear being defeated."<sup>10</sup>

The following pages do not aim at any 'defence' of Gandhiji's views and therefore contain little in the nature of arguments. Even where the conversion of others is sought to be achieved by any writer or speaker, it is not 'argument' that is helpful, according to Gandhiji's own view. "I know that ultimately one is guided not by the intellect but by the heart," said he. "The heart accepts a conclusion for which the intellect subsequently finds the reasoning. Arguments follow conviction. Man often finds reason in support of whatever he does or wants to do."<sup>11</sup> It is sincerity, sympathy and charity that touch the heart more than anything else. It is because Gandhiji had a very vast store of these that Nehru was led to say of him: "He is far greater than what he writes, and it is not quite fair to quote what he has written and criticise it."<sup>12</sup> Which one among those who have been near him does not remember with

10. *The Golden Sayings of Epictetus*, p. 128.

11. YI, 12-11-1925.

12. *An Autobiography*, p. 525. Cf. "This, then, seems to me to be the significant fact about Gandhiji. Great as he is as a politician, as an organiser, as a leader of men, as a moral reformer, he is greater than all these as a man, because none of these aspects and activities limits his humanity. This man seems greater than his



gratitude how often he tempered the wind of his doctrines out of compassion for the shorn lamb?

Throughout the book Gandhiji's views have been stated in his own words. These quotations, for the greater part, have been taken from my own books of his conversations and reminiscences of him. This has given me an opportunity to insert into the book a good deal of unpublished material including a few of his letters which are published here for the first time.

The quotations from books other than Gandhiji's hardly call for explanation or apology. There are many ways in which a subject like this can be approached, and this is but one of them. I have given the quotations because they have helped me to understand Gandhiji's life and thought better. The bulk of these have been taken from books which, with an amateurish interest in several subjects, I have read in the course of what Dean Inge calls an indiscriminate browsing in the field of literature. A few I found cited in the books read by me. How can one adequately express one's sense of gratitude for all the nourishment he has derived from innumerable authors, dead and living?

The reader will forgive me if he finds the style of the book to be 'insipid'. Gandhiji insisted on understatement, avoidance of adjectives, and what he termed 'delicacy' in writing; he believed in allowing facts to speak for themselves. In February,

virtues, great as they are."—Rabindranath Tagore, in an article written in 1938.

1934, in the house of the late Shri C. Vijayaraghavachari at Salem, he administered to me a withering rebuke for having filled with criticism of the Government instead of bare facts my weekly newsletter to Miss Agatha Harrison in London, which he called a 'declamation', and for having in that letter used the adjective 'brilliant' in respect of an article of Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, which he considered to be a 'certificate' I had given to Jawaharlalji. (The whole scene is still vivid in my memory.) With this lesson burnt into me, my love of ornate expression and eulogy has been very much subdued. To my mind this has been not a loss but a gain.<sup>13</sup>

I am thankful to the General Editors for the opportunity they have given me, through their invitation, to re-read the writings, and to revive the sacred memories, of one, in the sunshine of whose love I had the good fortune to bask along with hundreds of others, and an association with whom—in howsoever humble a capacity—made life, to quote the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "fuller and richer and more worth while".<sup>14</sup>

Bombay,  
18-10-1951.

C. S.

13. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."—*Hebrews* 12; 11.

14. In a letter to Gandhiji, May, 1933.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BG	— Bhagavadgita
BKK	— <i>Bāpu Kī Kārāvās Kahāni</i> (Hindi) by Sushila Nayyar
CG	— Conversations of Gandhiji by Chandrashanker Shukla
GWKH	— Gandhiji As We Know Him edited by Chandrashanker Shukla
H	— <i>Harijan</i>
IGL	— Incidents of Gandhiji's Life edited by Chandrashanker Shukla
MCG	— More Conversations of Gandhiji by Chandrashanker Shukla
RG	— Reminiscences of Gandhiji edited by Chandrashanker Shukla
TGC	— To a Gandhian Capitalist
YI	— <i>Young India</i>

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
1. TRUTH ... ..	1
2. WHAT IS CONSISTENCY? ... ..	9
3. SATYAGRAHA ... ..	16
4. SPIRIT AND MATTER ... ..	25
5. THE INNER VOICE ... ..	38
6. GOD ... ..	47
7. THE WAY TO HIM ... ..	57
8. 'RETURN GOOD FOR EVIL' ... ..	70
9. NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE ... ..	80
10. GANDHI AND MARX ... ..	93
11. SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY ...	112
12. "I AM A SOCIALIST" ... ..	133
13. A PLEA FOR PLAIN LIVING ... ..	142
14. RELIGION AND POLITICS ... ..	151
15. RIGHT V. DUTY ... ..	162
16. HINDUISM ... ..	170
17. THE ESSENTIAL UNITY OF RELIGIONS ...	178
18. MAN AND WOMAN ... ..	194
19. LIFE, ART AND BEAUTY ... ..	215
BIBLIOGRAPHY ... ..	239



## TRUTH

1. *Truth at any cost.* 2. *Harmony between thought, word and deed.* 3. *Some conundrums.*
4. *Secrecy tabooed.* 5. *Spirit of compromise.*

## I

TRUTH was the corner-stone of the edifice of Gandhiji's life. Every page of his Autobiography, through its "calm simple language", testifies to the love of truthfulness ingrained in him ever since his boyhood. The explanation of the 'vow of truth', as part of the Ashram ideal and practice, opened with the words: "Not simply as we ordinarily understand it, not truth which merely answers the saying, 'Honesty is the best policy,' implying that if it is not the best policy we may depart from it. Here Truth as it is conceived means that we may have to rule our life by this law of Truth at any cost."<sup>1</sup>

One of the corollaries of this law, in Gandhiji's view, is that we must say 'Yes' only when we mean 'Yes', and "we must say 'No' when we mean 'No', regardless of consequences."<sup>2</sup>

1. Quoted by C. F. Andrews in *The Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 102. Cf. "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put truth in the first place or in the second place."—Whately.

2. *Ibid*, p. 103.



## II

The next corollary, which occupies a most important place in Gandhiji's scheme of ethical values and has besides a universal application, is the uniformity or harmony—or 'co-operation', to use his own word—between thought, word and deed at any given moment. To think one thing, speak another, and do a third is untruth. To mean 'no' and say 'yes', to give word and not to keep it, to nurse ill-will in the mind and utter honied words,<sup>3</sup> to flatter a man to his face and malign him behind his back, to be fasting outwardly and think all the while of the prospective rich fare, to consider a thing to be reprehensible and yet do it, are all examples of disharmony in thought, word and deed, and therefore of untruth, and are characteristics of an evil man, as the adage goes.<sup>4</sup>

The Gita condemns this disharmony as 'hypocrisy':

"He who curbs the organs of action but allows the mind to dwell on the sense-objects—such a one, wholly deluded, is called a hypocrite."<sup>5</sup>

This disharmony sets up one part of man against another, breaks up his personality, and leaves him no peace of mind or happiness. "This disharmony in the world of consciousness," says a modern man of science, "is a phenomenon characteristic of our time.... When our activity is set toward a precise end, our mental and organic functions become completely

३. मयु तिष्ठति जिह्वाग्रे हृदये तु हलाहलम् ।

४. मनस्यन्यद् वचस्यन्यत् कर्मण्यन्यद् दुरात्मनाम् ।

5. BG 3; 6.

harmonized. The unification of the desires, the application of the mind to a single purpose, produce a sort of inner peace."<sup>6</sup> "The great thing, I suppose, is to have nothing to conceal—to make our lives all of a piece," says Dean Inge.<sup>7</sup> Radhakrishnan stresses the need for making "the unitive life, the integration of the self, an abiding possession of the soul".<sup>8</sup>

Gandhiji repeatedly asked men and women to appear as they are and never let it be said of them that they "are not what they seem". This naturalness or absence of pose, too, was, in his view, a part of truthfulness.

It is necessary to grasp this insistence of his on the unity of thought, word and deed; for it runs like a silver thread through all his writings, utterances and activities—all of which, to him, were phases or facets of the one and the same pursuit of Truth.

## III

It would be instructive to ponder over some of the conundrums arising out of the pursuit of truth to which his life was dedicated and which he invited his co-workers to join. Devotion to truth at all cost was a passion with him since his boyhood. Speaking the truth became a part of his nature, so much so that, as he often said, it had become physically impossible for his tongue to utter an untruth. The duty of speaking the truth, where one's own self was

6. Alexis Carrell: *Man, the Unknown*, pp. 135, 140.

7. *A Rustic Moralist*, p. 109.

8. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 52.



concerned, was, in his view, paramount and admitted of no exceptions or excuses. Mrs. Polak has narrated an incident where a mutual friend had lied to Gandhiji and deceived him in order to retain his good opinion of her. "So," he said, rather sadly to Mrs. Polak who pleaded for the culprit, "she preferred to lie to me than trust me with the truth. You cannot make excuses for her like that!"<sup>9</sup> As actual experience showed in many instances, the best course for the guilty one facing Gandhiji always proved to be to admit the truth at once and be prepared for the consequences—to trust him with truth, as he said. Truth here was the shortest cut with him, as it is also in life. The way of lying and deceit proves tortuous in the long run and leads to no end of trouble, as Thomas Hardy has so graphically shown. In many of his novels, the seed of tragedy lies in one little untruth on critical occasions when truth would perhaps have resulted in some opprobrium or apparent loss; but the risk was worth taking, for it would have spared the persons the tragic sufferings which followed later.

Untruth, according to Gandhiji, very often arose out of fear. In the summer of 1921, during a little talk with me, he tried to impress upon me how adherence to truth was like walking on the edge of a sword, and how it required of man to fear God and shed the fear of men.

Years later, in 1933, in the mango tree yard at the Yeravda Central Prison, he explained to me the need

9. *Mr. Gandhi the Man*, p. 119.

for telling 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth', after I had recounted to him a recent experience of mine. "You ought to have voluntarily showed the incriminating document to the police officer who questioned you," he said to me, and narrated the story of a Muslim saint who was waylaid by a gang of thieves. Failing to find anything valuable on the traveller, the thieves were going away disappointed, when the saint called them back and showed them the gold mohurs which he had successfully hidden from them during their search. This act of his, according to the story, led to a change of heart on the part of the thieves.

This, however, applies strictly to one's own doings, and not to things said to us by others in confidence which we are not entitled to divulge except with the express permission of the persons concerned. In the course of the year in which I had the privilege of working under Gandhiji during the Harijan tour, both the parties to a domestic quarrel had placed their respective sides of the case before Gandhiji as well as myself. One of the two, however, had admitted to Gandhiji a little more than what he had disclosed to me. "I have no right, however, to communicate it to you because I have not been permitted to do so by the friend," said Gandhiji to me. In order to teach the same lesson to the members of his personal staff, he often told us in those days that we were being allowed to read all his papers and to hear all his conversations on the clear understanding that we would not give out a



word of what we had read or heard, without his permission.

There was, however, in his opinion, an important proviso to this rule, inasmuch as those who plotted to do evil had no right to ask for this privilege to be extended to them. For instance, in 1935 the late Shri M. C. Rajah sent to Gandhiji a copy of the secret proposals for the so-called Moonje-Ambedkar Pact, calculated to undermine the Yeravda Pact of 1932. Gandhiji published the document without seeking the permission of the authors of the proposals, and stoutly defended the action of Shri Rajah on the ground that he had committed no breach of confidence thereby.

#### IV

As a votary of truth, he believed in acting in the open, and never approved of the secret methods adopted by Congress workers during the struggles of civil disobedience. Secrecy, according to him, meant fear.<sup>10</sup> "It does not matter whether those who work without secrecy are 3, 30 or 300 in number," said he in the course of a conversation in August, 1933. "Such an atmosphere of fearlessness should be created among the people. Only then will it be possible to offer non-violent resistance against repression. Ordinances are required only when the work goes on through secret organisations and not when people openly court imprisonment. How great has been the secrecy of some of our people! What an amount of ingenuity! The Government, in some instances,

10. CG, p. 33.

could not seize even a typewriter! What tremendous activity! I cannot possibly do it, for it presupposes faith not in God but in secrecy. The satyagraha struggle aims at making the people fearless. What can the Government do, if the people are ready for all kinds of suffering, including bullets, gallows and whippings?"<sup>11</sup>

#### V

The readiness to "agree with your adversary quickly"<sup>12</sup> is yet another corollary to the principle. Explaining this to Louis Fischer, Gandhiji said: "I am essentially a man of compromise, because I am never sure I am in the right."<sup>13</sup> Firmness on essentials and compromise in non-essentials was his guiding principle. "Indeed life is made of such compromises," he said. "Ahimsa, simply because it is purest, unselfish love, often demands such compromises. The conditions are imperative. There should be no self in one's action, no fear, no untruth, and it must be in furtherance of the cause of ahimsa. The compromise must be natural to oneself, not imposed from without."<sup>14</sup> Dwelling upon the necessity for such compromise within limits, or "the placing of the boundary", as he phrases it, John Morley has said:

"According to the current assumptions of the

11. MCG.

12. *Matthew* 5; 25.

13. *The Great Challenge*.

14. H, 17-10-1936.



writer and the preacher, the one commanding law is that men should cling to truth and right, if the very heavens fall. In principle this is universally accepted. To the partisans of authority and tradition it is as much a commonplace as to the partisans of unflinching rationalism. Yet in practice, all schools alike are forced to admit the necessity of a measure of accommodation in the very interests of truth itself. Fanatic is a name of such ill repute, exactly because one who deserves to be so called injures good causes by refusing timely and harmless concession; by irritating prejudices that a wiser way of urging his own opinion might have turned aside; by making no allowances, respecting no motives, and recognising none of those qualifying principles that are nothing less than necessary to make his own principle true and fitting in a given society."<sup>15</sup>

This also implies forbearance towards the critic and readiness for a sincere effort to understand and appreciate his point of view. "How lucky I am!" said Confucius. "Whenever I make a mistake, people are sure to discover it!" It is not given to any man, howsoever great, to see the whole even of his own self; and therefore we wish and pray to be able "to know as we are known".

## WHAT IS 'CONSISTENCY'?

1. *Consistency with truth and not with the past.* 2. *Inconsistency between ideal and actual inherent in idealism.*

### I

GANDHIJI was often charged with 'inconsistencies' and 'somersaults', but these never worried him or deterred him from following the course of conduct which appeared to him to be correct for the time being. Consistency, for him, lay not in conformity with one's past conduct but in the uniformity or harmony between thought, word and deed<sup>1</sup> at any given moment. He often quoted with approval the famous saying of Emerson: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds."<sup>2</sup> The changes he frequently made in the policies and programmes of the Congress often confused and confounded not only doctrinaire minds but some of his close associates who failed to perceive that, even while the principles remained constant, alterations had to be made in their application from time to time in view of changing circumstances. He himself once compared these changes to the orders of a general to an army on a battlefield which at times had to be altered even from

1. Cf. मनस्येकं वचस्येकं कर्मण्येकं महात्मनाम् ।

2. Essay on *Self-reliance*. Cf. "Consistency is the virtue of small minds."—Cicero.



hour to hour. On one occasion he thus explained at length his views on this subject:

"Consistency, as I have often said, is not an absolute virtue. Suppose I believe today that murdering Englishmen is good for our country, but tomorrow I come to look upon it as evil, shall I not be consistent in changing my course? I shall then be inconsistent with my past conduct, but I shall be consistent with truth. Again, supposing I took quinine yesterday, but take *sudarshan* today, and tomorrow change over to *gulkand*, would it not be consistent for me to do so? I may even take poison as medicine. It is poison for you, but for me it is nectar. Assuming, again, that tomorrow I suffer from such acute pain that it becomes unbearable for me, and I ask my doctor to give me an injection which would send me into eternal sleep, would it not be consistent for me? Consistency lies in living up to the truth as one sees it from moment to moment, even though it may be inconsistent with one's own past conduct. There can be, there ought to be, no uniformity in the actions of a man whose life undergoes a continual growth and who goes on rising in the spiritual scale."<sup>3</sup>

In the course of a talk in the Agakhan Palace he remarked: "It is part of my nature that once I see my error, I cannot conceal it. Other people believe in consistency. I have no regard for consistency as such. My only concern is with truth as I see it from moment to moment."<sup>4</sup>

3. MCG.

4. BKK, p. 315.

An unthinking adherence to consistency, in the sense of conformity with one's past actions and utterances, would render all progress impossible. A man who keeps the doors of his mind wide open for outside influences to enter, and who is prepared to respond to the changes going on in the external world as well as in his own thought processes will, as a votary of truth, never be afraid of contradicting all that he has said or done before. He will have the courage to say with Walt Whitman: "Do I contradict myself? Well, then, I contradict myself."<sup>5</sup> Gandhiji's life and thought having undergone a process of continuous evolution, his writings contain many apparent contradictions—as, I dare say, would be the case with any writer who is honest with himself. Gandhiji, therefore, said that, in cases where such contradictions were found in his writings and utterances, the later of these should be taken as more authoritative, unless in the reader's view the earlier ones were more acceptable. Indeed it is a trite criticism to charge any writer with contradiction, which is inherent in evolution and progress, and which no man in the world can possibly avoid altogether.

On deeper consideration, the apparent contradiction is often found in reality to be but a limitation of one's own former statement. Any statement of principle, as of anything else, holds good only in relation to a given context of time and place, and there is no state-

5. *Song of Myself*. Cf. "We see then that life is an extraordinary bundle of contradictions."—J. B. S. Haldane.



ment that is absolute in the sense of being true for all times and places and for all men dead, alive and unborn. When, having stated a principle, one begins to state the limits of its application, he has perforce to speak in terms of contradiction. 'One must take exercise, but not immediately after a meal;' 'We, Indians, should study English language and literature as much as possible, but English should not be the medium of instruction;'—in these instances, the like of which one comes across every moment, the seeming contradiction would, on closer analysis, be found to constitute not a negation but a limitation. "The idea of limit is different from that of negation," says Radhakrishnan.<sup>6</sup> At every step in life, as experience shows us, a number of factors have to be taken into account in deciding the proper course to follow, even where the guiding principle—stated in the abstract—seems to be quite clear. "What is action? What is inaction?—here even the wise are perplexed,"<sup>7</sup> says the Gita with this difficulty in view. "Life is not one straight road," said Gandhiji. "There are so many complexities in it. It is not like a train which, once started, keeps on running."<sup>8</sup> "The fact is that the path of duty is not always easy to discern amidst claims seeming to conflict one with the other,"<sup>9</sup> he said, and added a little later: "Life is governed by a multitude of forces. It would be

6. *Religion and Society*, p. 33.

7. BG 4; 16.

8. CG, p. 10.

9. YI, 15-3-1928.

smooth sailing, if one could determine the course of one's actions only by one general principle whose application at a given moment was too obvious to need even a moment's reflection. But I cannot recall a single act which could be so easily determined."<sup>10</sup>

## II

The charge of a graver type of inconsistency was also often brought against him—viz. inconsistency between his own precept and practice. How was it that he, having condemned civilization, railways, machines, etc., was still using railways and other products of civilization? There were also sympathetic friends who failed to reconcile the glaring contradictions in some of his writings—for instance, between (i) his avowed preference, in agreement with Thoreau, for "that Government which governs the least", and (ii) his warm advocacy of State action and State control.<sup>11</sup> Examples of this type of contradiction can easily be multiplied.

To criticisms of this nature Gandhiji replied by saying that he was not a 'visionary' but a 'practical idealist'.<sup>12</sup> In other words, he meant that, while he looked forward to the realization of the ideal or the 'vision', or call it 'Utopia' if you will, he would neither commit suicide nor in a spirit of self-righteousness turn his back on the world because it

10. YI, 13-9-1928.

11. A. R. Wadia: Presidential Address at the Indian Philosophical Congress, Dacca, 1930.

12. YI, 11-8-1929.



could not at a jump attain the highest peak of the Himalayas, i. e. the ideal state. Having been, as he put it, an "erring and struggling mortal" himself, he sympathized with the struggles of humanity, and chose patiently to work and wait for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, taking life as it is and proceeding further in the direction of the ideal.

What he said in effect to a second group of critics was that what he set up as an 'ideal', though it appeared to them to be 'moonshine' or 'castles in the air' or 'ploughing the sand', was possible of realization, albeit partly in the near and partly in the distant future; and that it was worth while, at any rate, to undertake the endeavour which would bring its own joy and satisfaction.

To the sympathetic friends' difficulty referred to above the answer is provided by Jawaharlal Nehru who says: "He (Gandhiji) is more or less of a philosophical anarchist. But as the ideal anarchist state is too far off still and cannot easily be conceived, he accepts the present order."<sup>13</sup> He was a 'philosophical anarchist' because he wished men to be self-regulated, self-controlled, self-restrained. 'Home Rule' for him meant 'self-rule'. To the extent men restrain their selfish desires and follow their altruistic instincts, the Government will be less of "organised force" which, "in the last analysis",<sup>14</sup> it is described to be, and will be more of a ministering State or a co-ordinating agency. Since, however, there will

13. *An Autobiography*, p. 515.

14. C. F. Strong: *Modern Political Constitutions*, p. 6.

always be some men who will willynilly work against the common good of society, some sort of coercive action will always be inevitable. Nevertheless, the less of it the better, for it will betoken the greater proximity to the Golden Age.

The difficulties enumerated here are, if I may say so, inherent in all idealism; for some gulf between the ideal and the actual will always remain—even in the Golden Age where, though 'good' will predominate, 'evil' will not vanish altogether. Gandhiji once explained this point thus: "Creatures like the sparrow and the ant have reached the perfection of their physical development, whereas we have not. We are imperfect even in body. Therefore we seek perfection elsewhere. We are not content to remain what we are. God has created that 'divine discontent' in us. We, therefore, go on saying 'Not this, not this', and continually try to press forward. The ant is perfect, because it has no urge to advance further in its development. We, on the other hand, have got to advance."<sup>15</sup>

15. MCG.



## SATYAGRAHA

1. *Satyagraha is soul-force; God the only support of a satyagrahi; satyagraha not 'passive resistance'.* 2. *Civil resistance one phase of satyagraha; its limits.* 3. *A satyagrahi obeys his conscience and God.* 4. *Citizens should not take the law into their own hands.*

## I

THE root meaning of 'satyagraha' is 'holding on to truth, hence Truth-force'. Gandhiji also called it 'Love-force' or 'Soul-force'.<sup>1</sup> "Soul-force is the force of the spirit that dwells in the body. Satyagraha is impossible without it. Therefore soul-force has a very vital relation to satyagraha."<sup>2</sup>

"God is the only support of a satyagrahi," said he. "His sole reliance is on the strength of the Almighty. He pursues truth under all circumstances. The Mahabharata says: 'Put Truth in one scale and all sacrifices whatever in the other; that scale which contains Truth will outweigh the one that contains all the sacrifices put together, not excluding Rajasooya and Ashvamedha Yajna.' A satyagrahi would go to jail with full faith in the justice of his

1. Written statement before the Hunter Committee, October, 1919.

2. Gurbaxani's article in RG, p. 110.

cause, whether he is alone or in the company of a few others. His satisfaction should lie in going to jail. He must have the conviction that the Empire will be able to do him no harm. There is a possibility of defeat in a trial of brute force but not in satyagraha."<sup>3</sup>

"Satyagraha differs from Passive Resistance as the North Pole from the South," he said on another occasion. "The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form."<sup>4</sup> "Only those who realise that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be passive resisters. This force is to violence, and therefore to all tyranny, all injustice, what light is to darkness. In politics, its use is based upon the immutable maxim that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be governed."<sup>5</sup>

## II

However, "civil resistance is only one phase of satyagraha."<sup>6</sup> "Satyagraha is a great bunyan

3. MCG.

4. Written statement before the Hunter Committee, October, 1919.

5. *Golden Number of 'Indian Opinion'*, 1914, p. 9.

6. CG, p. 18.



tree with innumerable branches and offshoots. It is impossible to distinguish the original trunk from the offshoots. Civil disobedience is but one of the offshoots. I want to conduct 'satyagraha' in the wider sense of the term."<sup>7</sup>

The right of civil disobedience, i. e. breaking of laws, accrues only to one who has willingly and scrupulously obeyed laws. Law-breaking cannot be made a habit. Stating the limitation of the use of civil disobedience, or for that matter of a revolt against society on social questions by breaking a pernicious custom, Gandhiji said: "If we follow the rules of society in ninety-nine cases, we can say to it that in the hundredth case it is wrong."<sup>8</sup> There are well-defined rules and limitations which Gandhiji has explained at considerable length in his speeches and writings. "It should be an article of faith with every satyagrahi," he says, "that there is no one so fallen in the world but can be converted by love. A satyagrahi will always try to overcome evil by good, anger by love, untruth by truth, himsa by ahimsa."<sup>9</sup>

He explains why satyagraha is 'constitutional': "The law-breaker breaks the law surreptitiously and tries to avoid the penalty; not so the civil resister. He ever obeys the laws of the State to which he belongs, not out of fear of the sanctions, but because he considers them to be good for the welfare of society. But

7. MCG.

8. *Navajivan*, 14-11-1921.

9. *YI*, 8-8-1929.

there come occasions, generally rare, when he considers certain laws to be so unjust as to render obedience to them a dishonour. He then openly and civilly breaks them and quietly suffers the penalty for their breach. And in order to register his protest against the action of the law-givers, it is open to him to withdraw his co-operation from the State by disobeying such other laws whose breach does not involve moral turpitude."<sup>10</sup>

### III

A satyagrahi chooses to obey the dictates of his own conscience. "I should love to satisfy all, if I possibly can," said Gandhiji. "But in trying to satisfy all, I may be able to satisfy none. I have, therefore, arrived at the conclusion that the best course is to satisfy one's own conscience and leave the world to form its own judgment, favourable or otherwise."<sup>11</sup>

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

10. Written statement before the Hunter Committee, October, 1919.

11. MCG. Cf. "The only wise and safe course is to act from day to day in accordance with what one's own conscience seems to decree."—Winston S. Churchill: *The Second World War*, Vol. I, p. 197.



satyagraha was born from a knowledge of the fundamental truth."<sup>12</sup>

A satyagrahi obeys the voice of God in preference to the voice of man, when there is a conflict between the two.

Socrates, a great satyagrahi, who paid with his life for his freedom of thought and speech, said at his trial :

"Men of Athens, I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet .... For know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the State than my service to God..... If you think that by killing men you can prevent someone from censuring your evil lives, you are mistaken .... That is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be disabling others, but to be improving yourselves."<sup>13</sup>

Jesus, another great satyagrahi, said :

"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work<sup>14</sup> .... I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me<sup>15</sup> .... I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me<sup>16</sup>

12. YI, 21-5-1931.

13. *The Apology*.

14. *John* 4; 34.

15. *Ibid* 5; 30.

16. *Ibid* 8; 16.

.... I do always those things that please him<sup>17</sup> .... If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."<sup>18</sup>

Peter and the other apostles, when challenged, boldly replied: "We ought to obey God rather than men."<sup>19</sup> The Master had shown to each of them "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."<sup>20</sup>

In the prayer-speech on the eve of his assassination (29th of January 1948), which proved to be his last one, Gandhiji meekly but firmly said :

"To a friend, a refugee from Bannu, who asked me to retire to the Himalayas, I said with a smile: Shall I retire at your behest or remain here at others'? For whereas there are some who scold and abuse me, there are others who ask me to stay on and praise me. What am I to do then? I am but dancing to the tune of God. Even if you profess to be atheists, you should at least let me follow the dictates of my own will. If, however, you claim to be God, I would say: Where then will God go? For He is one, without a second .... How can I run away at the desire of any human being? It is at God's behest that I have become a servant of India and of humanity, and it is only at His behest

17. *Ibid* 8; 20.

18. *Ibid* 15; 19.

19. *The Acts* 5; 29.

20. *Ibid* 9; 16.



that I can relinquish the charge. He will do what He likes. He has the power to put an end to my life, if He so wills . . . . I do not wish to repair to the Himalayas, because I wish to find my peace in the midst of this tumult or else to die in the effort to quench the conflagration. My Himalayas are here; but, in case you are all going to the Himalayas, you can take me with you."<sup>21</sup>

## IV

During the last days of his life, when he saw men killing men for what they supposed to be the latter's crimes, he found it necessary to bring home to them the need for voluntarily obeying the law and refraining from taking the law into their own hands. He was teaching them one of the first principles of political science which interdicted private vengeance and authorized the State, and not individuals or groups of its citizens, to administer the law with all its penalties. Moreover, no State can maintain peace and order within its borders for a long time through the police and the military. A State normally depends for its smooth working solely on the willing obedience of its laws on the part of its citizens. "The civil peace within our borders is maintained by a police indeed," says George Catlin; "but this police would be powerless were it not for the law-abiding habit of mind and education of the great majority of citizens. Lasting

peace springs from a right education of the spirit in the habits of non-violence."<sup>22</sup> Gandhiji's struggle in those days was against the lawlessness of unruly mobs, which would bring about the downfall of any State in the world.

"Even presuming that all the Mussalmans in Delhi have an evil design and that they possess weapons including gunpowder, sten-guns, bren-guns and machine-guns, which they intend to use for killing others," said he at New Delhi in September, 1947, "—even then you have no right to kill them. If every citizen arrogates to himself the powers of a Government, then all government comes to an end. If, on the contrary, every citizen willingly submits himself to the authority of the Government which he himself has helped to come to power, the machinery of the State would run smoothly."<sup>23</sup> "I am not just now preaching to you non-violence, though I should very much love to do so. But I know that nobody is in a mood today to give an ear to it. I am therefore suggesting to you the adoption of the method followed by all democratic countries. In every democratic State every citizen has to obey the corporate will, i. e. the will of the State. The State conducts the government through the people and for the people. If every citizen takes the law into his own hands, there will be no State left. There will be anarchy, which means in effect that corpo-

22. Article in *Mahatma Gandhi* (ed. by S. Radhakrishnan), p. 368.

23. PP, I, p. 315.

21. PP, II, p. 352-3.



rate rule, i. e. the State, will come to an end. It is the surest way to jeopardize the freedom we have attained."<sup>24</sup>

## SPIRIT AND MATTER

1. *Spirit exists apart from matter.* 2. *Physical science denied existence of spirit.* 3. *Existence of 'self' cannot be denied.* 4. *Further scientific researches led to dissipation of 19th century 'materialism'.* 5. *Dissolution of matter.*

### I

BELIEF in the existence of the Spirit as apart from Matter is one of the axioms on which Gandhiji's view of life is based; and to an unbeliever many of his utterances would appear meaningless, if not harmful. Ever since the time of the Upanishads, the existence of matter has not been negated by the so-called 'idealists' or 'spiritualists'. Even Shankara did not deny it, for he said: "Nothing of which there is a cognition can be non-existent;"<sup>1</sup> and he insisted on the recognition of the difference between the subject and the object—or spirit and matter—which, as he put it, "are of contradictory natures like light and darkness."<sup>2</sup> "Modern absolutists do not dis-

१. न चोपलभ्यमानस्यैवाभावो भवितुमर्हति । ब्रह्मसूत्रशांकरभाष्य २; २; २८.

२. युष्मदस्मत्प्रत्ययगोचरयोर्विषयविषयिणोस्तमःप्रकाशवद् विरुद्ध-स्वभावयोरितरेतरभावानुपपत्तौ सिद्धायाम् । ब्रह्मसूत्रशांकरभाष्य-अध्यासभाष्य.



miss the world of reality as unreal and illusory. It is wrong to assume that they cancel the existence of the *Many* for the sake of the *One*. All that absolutism says is that the *One* is the pervading life and the moving soul of the world."<sup>3</sup> Reality is not "One exclusive of the *Many*."<sup>4</sup> The only thing denied is the contention that "matter can exist by itself." "It can exist only as an element in a larger whole."<sup>5</sup> "Matter, according to absolute idealism, is the lowest manifestation of spirit. Absolutism does not reduce matter to spirit, but points out that matter is there for the sake of spirit. It is there merely to pass over and return into spirit."<sup>6</sup>

## II

Physical science was within its rights so long as it confined itself to the study of natural phenomena and material objects. It was called upon to explain the 'how' and not the 'why' of things. However, flushed with its newly won triumphs and drunk with the wine of power wrested from Nature, it went ahead; it rejected the evidence of a long line of men who had, through a faculty higher than the senses or reason, seen the Spirit face to face. In the scientists' view, there could be no faculty higher than their instruments of observation; anything that could

3. S. Radhakrishnan: *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 49.

4. *Ibid*, p. 96.

5. *Ibid*, p. 99.

6. *Ibid*, p. 164.

not be seen with these was non-existent, a figment of the imagination. Anything 'supernatural' was denied existence. The universe was declared to be a 'gigantic clock' which after it was wound up by "someone or something unspecified at some time unknown", "has proceeded to function automatically through the interaction of its parts."<sup>7</sup>

Religion had of course declared that man is a mixture of spirit and matter—*Purusha* and *Prakriti*; he is the body as well as the soul—a denizen both of heaven and earth. The human being is "the son of Man" as well as "the son of God". "And as we have borne the image of the earthly," said Paul, "we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."<sup>8</sup> The end, however, was that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."<sup>9</sup> "The mortal then becomes immortal,"<sup>10</sup> said the Upanishads.

Science now declared man to be nothing more than an animal, "an organic animal, this John Doe, . . . an assembled organic machine ready to run."<sup>11</sup>

A lighter variety of this materialism, known as 'epiphenomenalism', though it "admits the existence of a mind or consciousness", considers it as a by-product of matter. On this view, "the mind is affected by, but does not affect, the body." This

7. C. E. M. Joad: *A Guide to Philosophy*, p. 526.

8. 1 Corinthians 15; 49.

9. *Ibid*, 15; 53.

१०. अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवति ।

11. W. B. Watson: *Behaviourism*, p. 216.



view, however, is, for the most part, "a concession to the amiable weakness of the plain man", and men of this school "would be only too glad to discard it and adopt a thoroughgoing materialism which denies the existence of mind altogether."<sup>12</sup>

### III

This materialism or atheism, prevalent in the older days in India under the name of the Charvaka or Lokayatika school, had been vigorously attacked from many sides. To give but one example, Shankara pointed to the impossibility of denying the reality of the Self or the Spirit, "that transcendent spirit within oneself".<sup>13</sup> "Everyone is conscious of the existence of his own self, and no one thinks 'I am not'."<sup>14</sup> If the existence of the self were not known, then everyone would think 'I am not', which however, is not true.... We cannot think away the self."<sup>15</sup> "A man, it has been said, 'may doubt of many things, of anything *else* but he can never doubt of his own being,' for that very act of doubting would affirm its existence."<sup>16</sup>

12. C. E. M. Joad: *Op Cit*, p. 513.

13. Radhakrishnan: *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 476.

१४. सर्वो ह्यात्मास्तित्वं प्रत्येति न नाहमस्मीति । ब्रह्मसूत्र-शांकरभाष्य १; १; १.

15. Radhakrishnan: *Op Cit*, p. 476.

16. M. Hiriyanna: *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, p. 162.

य एव हि निराकर्ता तदेव तस्य स्वरूपम् । ब्रह्मसूत्रशांकर-भाष्य २; ३; ७.

Similar arguments have been advanced in modern times also both in the East and the West. "The sole reality that we can directly and intimately observe is our own introspected selves," said Schopenhauer. Bergson showed that so inert a substance as matter could never explain motion, much less produce life and mind. "Matter cannot develop life or consciousness unless it had the potentialities of them in its nature," says Radhakrishnan. "No amount of shocks from the external environment can extort life out of mere matter."<sup>17</sup> The materialist could explain away many other things but not his own self.

"The physicist may think that he can succeed in resolving the Universe into an assemblage of point-events, material or mental, with relations that can be most properly expressed in quantitative equations," wrote Lord Haldane. "For some at least of his critics the question will at once arise as to how the physicist, for whose reflection such an assemblage is present, is himself to be accounted for along with this reflection. For his mind seems to lie at the very foundation of the experience with which he is concerned, actual or possible."<sup>18</sup>

"There is orderliness in the universe," said Gandhiji, "there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is no blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings; and, thanks to the marvellous re-

17. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 181.

18. *An Autobiography*, p. 345-6.



searches of Sir J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life."<sup>19</sup>

## IV

The greatest attack on materialism and mechanism came, however, from the scientists themselves. As science, especially physics, carried its researches deeper into the constitution of 'matter' and of 'the mysterious universe', "the first discovery" was "that the old matter of nineteenth-century physics is gone."<sup>20</sup> The "matter" of which materialists had spoken was indestructible; it was inert; it had dimensions; it had mass; it resisted motion. With later researches, however, physicists went on fast abandoning the older notions. Electricity was found "utterly inexplicable in terms of inertia and atoms."<sup>21</sup> "Matter lost its mass and weight and length and breadth and depth and impenetrability."<sup>22</sup>

"Ostwald describes matter as merely a form of energy; Rutherford reduces the atom to units of positive and negative electricity; Lodge believes that the electron does not contain a material nucleus in addition to its charge; and Le Bon simply says: 'Matter is a variety of energy.' 'Some of the ablest men in the world at present,' says J. B. S. Haldane, 'regard matter as merely a special type of undula-

19. YI, 11-10-1928.

20. Will Durant: *The Mansions of Philosophy*, p. 61.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

tory disturbance.' 'Matter,' says Eddington, 'is composed of protons and electrons—i. e. positive and negative charges of electricity. A plant is really empty space containing sparsely scattered electric charges.'"<sup>23</sup>

The views asserting matter to be the ultimate reality and man to be a machine were examined from various points of view and found deficient. J. S. Haldane, a well-known biologist, declared: "The idea of life is nearer to reality than the ideas of matter and energy, and therefore the presupposition of ideal biology is that inorganic can ultimately be resolved into organic phenomena, and that the physical world is thus only the appearance of a deeper reality which is yet hidden from our distinct vision, and can only be seen dimly with the eye of scientific faith."<sup>24</sup>

The mechanistic view about man, denying the existence of the spirit or consciousness, describing man as a mere machine, and boldly offering to explain all human behaviour in terms solely of physics and chemistry, was preponderant in the West for a time. It interpreted "all its processes as mechanical sequences of cause and effect; it confidently declared 'consciousness' itself to be non-existent—an illusion, a fiction." This view was combated by William McDougall who brought out "the purposive or goal-seeking nature of all human activities",<sup>25</sup> and

23. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

24. *Mechanism, Life and Personality*, p. 104.

25. *An Outline of Psychology*, p. vii.



pointed to the existence of "the process of purposive striving" (radically different from mechanical sequence) even in the smallest of animals. Scientific evidence in support of McDougall's contention came from various sources. "The formulae of physics and chemistry are inadequate for the re-description of the everyday bodily functions, or of behaviour, or of development, or of evolution," said J. Arthur Thomson.<sup>26</sup> Driesch, a German biologist, "whose conclusions are based upon experimental evidence, is fully convinced that life cannot be explained on a mechanistic basis." "Driesch, further, believes that life is due to the presence of a non-material factor.... A surprising number of biologists, zoologists, and paleontologists have adopted more or less fully the neo-vitalistic (i. e. Driesch's) position."<sup>27</sup>

Jeans and Eddington, the famous astronomers, proceeded still further in this direction. "All through the physical world," said Eddington, "runs that unknown content, which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness."<sup>28</sup> Jeans, who described himself as "a stranger in the realms of philosophical thought", remarked: "Today there is a wide measure of agreement, which on the physical side of science approaches almost to unanimity, that the stream of knowledge is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than

like a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter—not of course our individual minds, but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown exist as thoughts."<sup>29</sup>

The theory of "the struggle for existence", which had occupied the place of a scientific dogma, was contested by William Patten who declared that "the one creative process common to all phases of evolution.... is best described by the term co-operation, or mutual service.... Nature-growth is the product of the co-operative acts of many different things."<sup>30</sup> Kropotkin wrote *Mutual Aid*, showing by a wealth of scientific data how the principle of co-operation was at work, in the animal kingdom, along with those of "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest". He pointed out that the animal species "in which individual struggle has been reduced to its narrowest limits, and the practice of mutual aid has attained the greatest development, are inevitably the most numerous, the most prosperous, and the most open to further progress." About a thousand years before this, the Bhāgavata had pointed out that just as "life lives on life",<sup>31</sup> "life also sacrifices itself to save and nurture-

26. *The System of Animate Nature*, Vol. I, p. 143.

27. G. T. W. Patrick: *Introduction to Philosophy*, p. 92.

28. *Space, Time and Gravitation*, p. 200.

29. *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 137.

30. *The Grand Strategy of Evolution*, p. 137, 47.

३१. जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम् । भागवत १; १३; ४६.



life.”<sup>32</sup> “The law of co-operation is more fundamental than the law of competition.” A failure to recognize this, in the opinion of an American philosopher, led to the “threatened collapse of European civilization after the great war.” “When we can introduce into political and international relationships,” he added, “some of that co-operation which is shown in the body of a plant or an animal, or even in the structure of an atom, then we may hope for a social stability comparable with the stability which we find in nature.”<sup>33</sup>

There were others too, in the West, co-ordinating science and philosophy, and coming to conclusions similar to the foregoing. Henri Bergson expressed dissatisfaction with the neo-Darwinian theory of ‘insensible accidental variations’. C. Lloyd Morgan said:

“For better or worse, while I hold that the proper attitude of naturalism is strictly agnostic, therewith I, for one, cannot rest content. For better or worse, I acknowledge God as the Nisus through whose activity emergents emerge, and the whole course of emergent<sup>34</sup> evolution is directed. Such is my

३२. जीवो जीवमजीवयत् । भागवत

In the world there are both: mutual destruction as well as mutual aid:

मियो निघ्नन्ति भूतानि भावयन्ति च यन्मिथः । भागवत  
१; १५; २४.

33. G. T. W. Patrick: *Op Cit*, p. 139-140.

34. Physical mixtures and chemical compounds are ‘resultants’, while life arising from matter (like tiny

philosophic creed, supplementary to my scientific policy of interpretation.”<sup>35</sup>

The “mechanical concepts”, as we have already seen, were deemed, by an influential section among psychologists, to be “a wholly inadequate equipment for the interpretation of the rich content of life.”<sup>36</sup> “No single organic function,” said McDougall, “has yet been found explicable in purely mechanical terms; even such simple processes as the secretion of a tear or the exudation of a drop of sweat continue to elude all attempts at complete explanation in terms of physical and chemical science.”<sup>37</sup> A well-known biologist declared: “We can watch the division of a cell into two cells, but we do not understand either why it divides or how the daughter cell inherits all the peculiar forms of the parent cell.”<sup>38</sup>

The result of all these researches is, as Patrick says, that “at any rate, Materialism has passed away. It has no longer any interest either to the physicist or the philosopher.”<sup>39</sup>

Kenneth Walker, a living British surgeon, at the end of a long analysis of “the main scientific theories of the last hundred years”, describes the

insects in water) or mind arising from life (like intelligent animals developing from insects) are ‘emergents’. In ‘emergent evolution’ there is a jump from one terrace, or one level, to another.

35. *Emergent Evolution*, p. 35.

36. G. T. W. Patrick: *Op Cit*, p. 81.

37. William McDougall: *Psychology* (HUL), p. 35.

38. Quoted by G. T. W. Patrick: *Op Cit*, p. 83.

39. *Ibid*, p. 236.



universe not as a vast machine but as a living organism: "But however different may be the terms in which we describe our surroundings, it is difficult to look upon it without recognizing the 'purposive and designed nature of the whole'. During the last century the older view that the universe formed an intelligent harmoniously integrated whole was lost, but modern thought is now returning to it. Whitehead, for example, in insisting that the cosmos is a unity, 'a pattern-process of events' which can only be interpreted by including in our description of it those terms for which scientists have such a strong distaste, meaning and purpose. For him, as for the older philosophers, the universe is a living, intelligent, purposive and creative organism, a view of it which frees us from the inexplicable paradox that out of a dead and mindless world have been evolved life and intelligence."<sup>40</sup>

A religious man, putting these deductions of scientific research in more explicit language, said:

"Underneath all our overbeliefs rests the basic fact that God exists, that there is an *Ideal* working itself out in the historic process, a great power irresistibly drawing us to some far-off and unknown God, and demanding our entire allegiance."<sup>41</sup>

"And one far-off divine event  
To which the whole creation moves."<sup>42</sup>

40. *Meaning and Purpose*, p. 201.

41. Durant Drake: *Problems of Religion*, p. 147.

42. Tennyson: *In Memoriam*.

As the Gita has stated:

"There lives a master in the hearts of men  
Maketh their deeds, by subtle pulling strings,  
Dance to what tune He will."<sup>43</sup>

## V

While Gandhiji accepted the existence of 'matter' as a fact of the world, he also looked forward to a complete dissolution of matter to take place in the far distant future. "I consider," he said in tranquillity, "that the dissolution of matter is absolutely certain at some point. If there were any survivors of such a thing—if you can imagine survivors—they would undoubtedly say, 'What a wondrous spectacle!'"<sup>44</sup>

For, if he insisted on not wasting a single moment of his time, he thought also in terms of eternity. "For me, the present is merged in eternity," he wrote. "I may not sacrifice the latter for the present."<sup>45</sup>

43. BG 18; 66.

44. Vincent Sheean: *Op Cit*, p. 201.

45. Letter to Dr. S. Datta, 19-4-1934. Unpublished.



## THE INNER VOICE

1. *Inner voice.* 2. *Analysis—instinct, intuition and reason.* 3. *Consideration, in the light of the foregoing, of one of Gandhiji's major decisions.*

### I

CLOSELY connected with the question of the Spirit is that of the 'inner voice' or 'God's voice' which has been a puzzle to many. Once, dealing with the objection raised by the scientists, Gandhiji said: "When a man speaks of the 'inner voice', the scientist says it is auto-suggestion. It is auto-suggestion indeed, because God is within. When he says it is auto-suggestion, to him it appears a thing to be despised and suppressed. I, however, use the word 'auto-suggestion' in my own sense.... When the scientist speaks of the inner voice being auto-suggestion, he means to say it is the devil's voice. Maybe it is. There are occasions when the devil's voice speaks as God's voice. God's voice is not heard in the heart of every person. It is no matter of inherent right. You must undergo a course of training, if you want to hear the voice of God. There are some rules laid down for it. If you followed them, the result would be infallible."<sup>1</sup>

There were many occasions when he heard the

1. CG, p. 37.

inner voice, and the decisions taken at its behest were final. "Everyone who wills can hear the voice. It is within everyone. But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparation,"<sup>2</sup> he wrote. On another occasion he said: "My sixth sense is awakened whenever there is an occasion demanding its use, and then it goes to sleep."<sup>3</sup>

### II

Jawaharlal Nehru has, from his own point of view, given a detailed analysis of this process of Gandhiji's thought:

"I knew that Gandhiji usually acts on instinct (I prefer to call it that than the 'inner voice' or an answer to prayer), and very often that instinct is right. He has repeatedly shown what a wonderful knack he has of sensing the mass mind and of acting at the psychological moment. The reasons which he afterwards adduces to justify his action are usually afterthoughts and seldom carry one very far. A leader or a man of action in a crisis almost always acts subconsciously and then thinks of the reasons for his action. I felt also that Gandhiji had acted rightly in suspending civil resistance. But the reason he had given seemed to me an insult to intelligence and an amazing performance for a leader of a national movement."<sup>4</sup>

2. H, 8-7-1933.

3. BKK, p. 133.

4. *An Autobiography*, p. 505-6. H. N. Brailsford agrees with this analysis. See *Mahatma Gandhi* by Polak, Brailsford and Pethick Lawrence, p. 210.



God or the inner voice. Let us take a practical example. After the fuse in a gun is ignited, the fire slowly travels to the gun-powder, and there is a blast. Though we hear only the loud detonation, the process culminating in it had started earlier, with the lighting of the fuse. That is exactly what happened in cases belonging to this second category. Intuition,<sup>13</sup> as Radhakrishnan has pointed out, is not opposed to intellectual or discursive process of thought but is often the crowning result of that process.<sup>14</sup> Precisely the same

13. 'Instinct', used as it is in psychology ordinarily to connote a lower kind of impulse (as distinguished from 'intelligence') in living beings, would not fit in here. If, however, we wish to use it here, its connotation would have to change. "An obvious objection to the use of the term 'instinct' in describing human behaviour is that it is likely to lead to misunderstanding. In the popular use of the word 'instinct', the idea of fixity of behaviour is certainly implied. If psychologists speak of human instincts, they will generally be thought to be lending support to a view that human behaviour is more fixed and invariable than it really is....It is better that he should be understood, so it is wiser to avoid the word 'instinct' if another word can be found."—Robert H. Thouless: *General and Social Psychology*, p. 123-4. 'Intuition' is the better word and has been also used by Vincent Sheean: *Op Cit*, p. 205.

14. Cf. "What we call inspiration is the development of reason .... No genuine inspiration ever contradicts reason. Where it does it is no inspiration."—Vivekananda, quoted by Romain Rolland in *The Life of Vivekananda*, p. 234. The word 'instinct' is used by Vivekananda for that "which we have in common with the animals". *Ibid*, p. 233.

thing happened in the case of Gandhiji on occasions like the one on which Nehru has mainly based his foregoing remarks, viz. the virtual suspension of civil disobedience in April, 1934.

There was nothing mystical or mysterious about this decision. Gandhiji wrote to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, in the course of a letter written from Gauhati on 14th April (which perhaps he was never permitted to receive in prison):

"You must have seen my two decisions. That they are simultaneous is a mere coincidence. The revival of the Swaraj Party is a right step. There is no doubt that we have in the Congress a body of men who believe in council entry and who will do nothing else if they cannot have that programme. Their ambition must be satisfied.

"The other decision, about confining civil resistance to myself so far as the goal of Swaraj is concerned, is much the most important. It was inevitable. Having arrived at it, I can see the rightness of the decision for a thousand reasons. *I have given the precipitating cause. But the decision was slowly coming to me.* I do hope that you have not been upset by it. You were before my mind's eye the whole time the decision was taking shape. I concluded that, though it might produce a momentary shock, you would ultimately see the truth of it and be glad. I wonder!"<sup>15</sup> (Italics mine.)

In another letter to an intimate co-worker, Shri Satish Chandra Dasgupta, he wrote:

15. Letter hitherto unpublished.



"You are wrong in thinking that my decision on civil disobedience is in any way a reflection on any single one of you. If it is a reflection, it is on me. But I need not plead guilty. I am but a co-seeker with you all—*primus inter pares*. We have lost nothing by the past doings. We would have lost, if I had not had the courage to halt when I saw the clear necessity for it. There was no warrant for a fast. It would have been simple coercion if I had gone in for it."<sup>15</sup>

There were many intelligible reasons for this decision, which he fully disclosed in talks with co-workers that were naturally strictly confidential.<sup>16</sup> The latter did not protest against or worry about the reason given in the Saharsa<sup>17</sup> statement of April 2nd, as they knew that it was only the last straw on the camel's back, and that the decision was right from all points of view. That Gandhiji put it in religious terms was correct from his point of view, because though it was practical he had not arrived at it in that way. "This is my claim for spiritual matters that they are also practical," he said. "I put it (the

16. Fully reported in my two volumes, CG and MCG.

17. Saharsa is a village in North Bihar where the statement announcing the restriction of civil disobedience was written on 2nd April, 1934, which was released to the press on the 7th at Patna. In the interval, Gandhiji asked me to send advance copies of the statement to about thirty of his closer associates, and asked me to tell them in my covering letter that, while the decision itself was irrevocable, it was open to them to argue with Gandhiji in respect of the reasons adduced by him.

decision) to Jayaprakash, and he had no difficulty in admitting that it was most practical."<sup>18</sup>

While on this subject, I should like to note, even at the cost of a little digression, that Henry Brailsford, I think, correctly interprets Gandhiji's strategy when he says: "Gandhiji did not plan it so, but in fact the series of five struggles he led, wave after wave, with intervals for recovery in India and reflection in England, was the best strategy he could have followed."<sup>19</sup> In fact, even during the lull which preceded the virtual suspension in 1934, he predicted—in a talk with Shri K. F. Nariman—another wave of mass awakening in ten years' time which, he added, "is not a long period in the life of a nation."<sup>20</sup> In a memorable talk with Shri K. M. Munshi at Madras on 20-12-1933, he declared his indomitable faith by saying: "At the end of another ten years I visualize a rising among the people which in its dazzling brilliance will leave Dandi far behind.

18. CG, p. 91.

19. *Mahatma Gandhi* p. 210. At the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh (a body of constructive workers following Gandhiji's guidance) held at the village Hudli near Belgaum in April 1937, the President tendered his resignation as a protest against the policy of office acceptance by Congressmen tentatively agreed to by Gandhiji. The latter tried for a long time to bring home, to the President and those who shared his view, the correctness of the decision. While the arguments were going on, Shri Mahadev Desai whispered to me: "These friends do not realize the fact that Bapu is a great strategist."

20. Date: 31-10-1933, MCG.



I do not know if I shall live to see that day. But I am sure that the fire that has been lit in the country will never be put out.<sup>21</sup> After the decision of virtual suspension, he repeated the same thing to Shri Jairamdas Doulatram on 11th July in the train carrying us from Karachi to Lahore.

This discussion is useful, if it helps the readers to understand the process of Gandhiji's mind in arriving at some of his important decisions.

---

21. MCG.

## GOD

1. *Belief in God.* 2. *Truth is God.* 3. *Truth is Sat, Chit, Ānanda.* 3. *God both Law and Law-giver; cannot be described in His fullness.* 4. *Duality not in God but in the empirical world.* 5. *He worshipped Rama and Krishna as incarnations of God, synonymous with Perfection.* 6. *'Good' and 'Evil'.*

## I

"I BELIEVE in God much more than I believe in the fact that you and I are alive and I am speaking to you," said Gandhiji in 1934 to a group of Harijan sceptics. "I may give you an illustration of what I mean. In appearance, I am speaking to you and you are listening to me. In reality, your hearts and minds may be somewhere else. My heart also may be somewhere else. Then my speaking or your listening would be a deception. Therefore my speaking and your listening, though they are an appearance, may not be a reality. But my heart, word and deed are pledged to the Being called God, Allah, Rama or Krishna. You will now easily recognise that it is true when I say that my belief in God is far more a reality to me than this meeting which I am addressing."<sup>1</sup>

---

1. MCG.



## II

"God is truth," he used to say till 1931, since when he began to say: "Truth is God."<sup>2</sup> For, averred he, "Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all sparks of Truth. The sum total of those sparks is indescribable, as-yet-Unknown Truth, which is God."<sup>3</sup> Even the atheist believes in Truth; therefore Gandhiji said: "He is the atheism of the atheist."<sup>4</sup>

This definition he explained as follows: "Truth is God—nothing else, nothing less. The nearest word answering to Truth in Sanskrit is *sat*. *Sat* means being. God alone is *Sat*. He alone is, nothing and no one else is. Everything else is illusion. *Satya* means *Sat*. Truth alone is in the world, nothing else is. This is easy enough to understand. Then what is truth? For us it is a relative term. Absolute Truth is God.<sup>5</sup> Whatever we understand by God is implied in Truth."<sup>6</sup>

"Are there any other characteristics of Truth?" he was asked. "It alone really sustains us," he replied. "For a time many other things may sustain us, but this alone sustains us for all time. Truth

2. Madeleine Rolland's article in IGL, p. 296.

3. Gandhiji's article in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (ed.) by Radhakrishnan, p. 21.

4. YI, 5-3-1925.

5. Cf. सत्यं परं धीमहि । भागवत १; १; १.

6. CG, p. 35.

gives perennial joy. In Sanskrit we have the word *sat, chit, ānanda*. It is a fine combination. The three together make one word. Truth is knowledge also. It is life. You feel vitality in you when you have got truth in you. Again, it gives bliss. It is a permanent thing of which you cannot be robbed. You may be sent to the gallows, or put to torture, but if you have truth in you, you will experience an inner joy."<sup>7</sup>

## III

"Do you believe in a personal God?" he was asked. "I don't," he replied. "I don't believe God to be a personal being in the sense that we are personal beings. I understand God to be universal Law. God, however, cannot be described in His fullness. We human beings describe Him in our own vocabulary. God is the Law as well as the Law-giver. The two are one. In Buddhism God is described as the Law. Many people say that Buddhism is atheistic. I have never thought so."<sup>8</sup>

7. CG, p. 36.

8. In Gandhiji's vocabulary, truth is relative and Truth is absolute. F. H. Bradley uses<sup>9</sup> for these two the terms 'truth' and 'Reality' respectively. We have to mount to Truth through truth.

9. Cf. "This Dharma and the Brahman of the Upanishads are essentially the same."—Rabindranath Tagore. "There can be no doubt whatever of the equations Dhamma = Brahma = Buddha = Attā .... Dhamma is clearly the equivalent of Brahma, Ātmā."—Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Hinduism and Buddhism*.



Having plainly admitted that God cannot be described in His fullness and that any description of Him would fall far short of Reality, Gandhiji gave various descriptions of Him: "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 and beyond all these. God is conscience. . . . He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us."<sup>10</sup>

Not being a metaphysician, he has not used two different terms—as, for example, Shankara has, viz. *Brahman* (Absolute) and *Īshvara* (God), or, as the Upanishads have, viz. Higher (*param*) and Lower (*aparam*) Brahman. Gandhiji used the word 'God' in both the senses.<sup>11</sup>

10. YI, 5-3-1925.

11. A complete statement of God in both the senses is given in the Bhāgavata, the author of which had a matchless capacity for giving the most succinct statements of philosophical truths:

यस्मिन्निदं यतश्चेदं यैनेदं य इदं स्वयम् ।

योऽस्मात्परस्माच्च परस्तं प्रपद्ये स्वयंभुवम् ॥ ८; ३; ३.

(I seek His shelter—He who contains this universe, from whom it has originated, by whom it is sustained, who Himself has assumed this form, He who is greater than the greatest thing herein, and who is self-born.)

"Therefore from Being itself and by and in it are all things."—Eckhart.

## IV

He believed in non-dualism. "I believe in advaita," he said. "I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives."<sup>12</sup> "The inner oneness pervades all life. The forms are many, but the informing spirit is one."<sup>13</sup> In the course of the discussion referred to above, he thus explained his own position: "When we descend to the empirical level, we descend to the world of duality. In God there is no duality. But as soon as we descend to the empirical level we get two forces—God and Satan, as Christianity calls them. Other terms for the two are used in Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Islam."<sup>14</sup>

To paraphrase, then, God is not 'personal' in the sense that He has human form or limitations or likes and dislikes; but He is 'personal' in the sense that He is approachable to man, is in closest relations with him, and is the spirit dwelling in the inmost recesses of man's heart.<sup>15</sup>

Gandhiji, like Shankara, adopts the formula '*neti neti*' (not this, not this); and yet, like Ramanuja, he

The Bhāgavata, in another beautiful verse, says that He is both transcendent and immanent:

निषेधशेषो जयतादशेषः । ८; ३; २४.

12. YI, 4-12-1924. Cf. "The soul is one in all." YI.

13. MCG. Cf. "For, all is one, though we seem to be many."—Gandhiji's article in *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (ed.) by Radhakrishnan, p. 21.

14. CG, p. 37.

१५. एष त आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृतः । बृहदारण्यकोपनिषत् ३; ७; ३.



describes God as perfect truth, perfect non-violence, perfect innocence, etc.—in fact, the perfection of all the virtues known to man. And yet again he says: "That, however, is our own feeling. If man can somehow know God's way of putting things, I don't know what he would say. God is just. Rather say He is not just but merciful. He is just because He is merciful. These, however, are echoes of our own weak feeling....These are the babblings of an imperfect man."<sup>16</sup>

## V

Though he did not deny the existence of the historical personages known as Rama and Krishna, it was not these that he worshipped and prayed to. Rama and Krishna were, to him, incarnations of God, synonymous with Perfection. "I know Krishna not as a historical person but as an embodiment of Perfection," he said to a Christian audience. "This conception has revolutionized Hinduism. How it acts is more than I can say, and nobody can explain it. The spirit of Hinduism has evolved this idea. Hinduism is still in the process of evolution. In fact all religions are evolving. Hinduism, if not Zoroastrianism, is of all living religions the oldest. They are all undergoing evolution. Krishna as an incarnation of God has transformed the lives of tens of thousands of men. It is a patent, historical fact. The

16. CG, p. 27.

transformation is going on even at present....It is not Jesus of history who really rules over the lives of Christians, it is the Jesus of their own imagination who does so. The God of my imagination rules my life, and not the God of your imagination."<sup>17</sup>

"There is ample evidence in favour of the historicity of Krishna," says Radhakrishnan; but then he adds: "In the Gita Krishna is identified with the Supreme Lord....He is not a hero who once trod the earth and has now left it, having spoken to His favourite friend and disciple, but is everywhere and in every one of us, as ready to speak to us now as He ever was to anyone else. He is not a bygone personality but the indwelling spirit, an object for our spiritual consciousness."<sup>18</sup>

It was for this very reason that Gandhiji liked the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas, a great devotional book, more than Valmiki's *Ramayana*, which is the story of a great hero. "Tulsidas's *Ramayana* is an eternal source of inspiration for him and occupies the same place in his prayers as the *Bhagavadgita*,"<sup>19</sup> wrote Mahadev Desai.

## VI

The problem of 'good' and 'evil' is one of those arising from thoughts about God. "God's hand is behind good, but in God's hand it is not mere

17. *Ibid*, p. 86-7.

18. *The Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 28, 30, 31.

19. GWKH, p. 127.



good," said Gandhiji. "His hand is behind evil also, but there it is no longer evil. 'Good' and 'evil' is our own imperfect language. God is above both good and evil."<sup>20</sup>

He defined evil as follows: "Evil is good or truth misplaced. It has no separate existence at all, but it is only truth or good misplaced."<sup>21</sup> This is like saying that 'Dirt is matter misplaced.' It brings out the relative nature of both good and evil, which are often found to exchange places. What is 'good' in given times and places may be 'evil' in relation to some other climes and circumstances. This does not, however, obliterate the distinction between 'good' and 'evil'. What is 'good' at a particular time and place is good, and its reverse is evil. The ethical values are constant. The variation is only in their application with reference to particular contexts. Moreover, there are certain acts—like theft, fornication etc.—which have been considered as sins by enlightened humanity all over the world, and they can never be considered good.

In reply to the question "Is evil also made by God?" Gandhiji said: "Nothing can possibly exist without His allowing it. He makes many things inverted which must be put right. We must invert the process."<sup>22</sup> "God has given us conscience," he went on to say. "He has given us the power to do right. If I take your thing with your permission,

it is right. If I take it without your permission, it is stealing, and I must put it back in its own place."<sup>23</sup>

"The distinction between good and evil thoughts is of our creation. Why should their coming and going make us uneasy?" a questioner, a bit of a metaphysician, asked Gandhiji, who explained his position at some length.

"The distinction is not unimportant," he said. "Nor do these thoughts come haphazard. They follow some law which the scriptures have tried to enunciate. There are certain problems in mathematics, for the solution of which some workable assumptions have to be made. They help in the solution of the problem. But they are purely imaginary, and have no other practical use. Similarly, psychologists have proceeded upon the assumption that a pair of opposite forces is warring against each other in the universe, of which one is divine and the other devilish.... The distinction is made by all the scriptures of the world. I say this distinction is imaginary. God is one, without a second. He alone is. He is indefinable. In reality there is no God who is at war with Satan; but we have imagined that there is a war going on between God and Satan. The author of the Mahabharata has described the war between the opposing forces of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, and has advised men to non-cooperate with the latter."

20. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

21. CG, p. 37.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*



"It is we who entertain thoughts," he went on to say, "and again it is we ourselves who repulse them. We have thus to strive against ourselves. The scriptures have, therefore, said that there is a duel in the world. This duel is imaginary, not real. We can, however, sustain ourselves in the world only by assuming the existence of the imaginary duel to be real,"<sup>24</sup> he said, clinching the issue.<sup>25</sup>

24. MCG.

25. Cf.

"The web of our life is a mingled yarn,  
Good and ill together: our virtues would be proud,  
If our faults whipp'd them not: and our crimes  
Would despair, if they were not cherished by our own  
virtues.

Shakespeare: *All's Well That Ends Well* IV, 3.

## 7

## THE WAY TO HIM

1. Individual soul not God, but a spark of the Divine. Has the soul 'free will'?
2. World lila or māyā; māyā means not 'illusion' but 'appearance'.
3. Prayer and fasting.
4. Ultimate goal: moksha; effort and grace.
5. Elimination of egoism: 'Be ciphers.'
6. No pessimism.
7. His life based on Gita.

## I

THE relation between God and the individual soul is another difficult problem demanding consideration. Gandhiji described his own view by quoting an Urdu couplet:

आदमको खुदा मत कहो, आदम खुदा नहीं ।

लेकिन खुदाके नूरसे आदम जुदा नहीं ॥

The gist of this is: "Adam is not God, but he is a spark of the Divine."<sup>1</sup> It is akin to the view of non-difference (*ananyatva*) put forth by Shankara, who "does not describe his teaching as monism, but only as 'non-dualism' (*advaita*).... As Vachaspati

1. Mahadev Desai: *The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gita according to Gandhi*, p. 124.



says,<sup>2</sup> he 'only denies the many but does not affirm the One.'<sup>3</sup>

For a long time Gandhiji found it difficult to reconcile himself to the thought underlying the last two lines of the first verse of the morning prayer of the Ashram, the meaning of which is:

"I am that immaculate Brahman which ever notes the states of dream, wakefulness and deep sleep, not this body, the compound made of the elements (earth, water, space, light and air)."<sup>4</sup>

Later, however, he wrote in a letter:

"Formerly I used to shudder to utter this verse, thinking that the claim made therein was arrogant. But when I saw the meaning more clearly, I perceived at once that it was the very best thought with which to commence the day. It is a solemn declaration that we are not the changeable bodies which require sleep etc.; but deep down we are the Being, the witness pervading the countless bodies.<sup>5</sup> The first part is recalling to mind the presence of the vital principle, and the second part is the affirmation that we are that

२. न खल्वनन्यत्वमित्यभेदं ब्रूमः किंतु भेदं व्यासेधामः। ब्रह्मसूत्र-शांकरभाष्य-भामती २; १; १४.

3. M. Hiriyanna: *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, p. 154.

४. यत्स्वप्नजागरसुषुप्तमवैति नित्यं  
तद् ब्रह्म निष्कलमहं न च भूतसंघः ।

5. Cf. "I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect."—Emerson: *Essay on The Oversoul*.

vital principle. The description of the Being, the Brahma, is also quite apposite."<sup>6</sup>

Has the soul 'free will' or 'choice' and, if so, how much? "Man has got a choice," said Gandhiji, "but as much of it as a passenger on board a ship has. It is just enough for him. If we don't use it, then we are practically dead."<sup>7</sup>

## II

With regard to the world, he accepted both the descriptions current in the Indian systems of philosophy, viz. (1) *Līla*, or His sport, and (2) *Māyā*, or illusion.<sup>8</sup> He formerly used the word 'illusion' in this sense, but later came to see its inappropriateness. In reply to Vincent Sheean's question, "Is the world an illusion?" he said: "If you are using the word illusion as a translation of *Māyā*, it is wrong. There is no correct English translation for the word *Māyā*." He accepted the word 'appearances'<sup>9</sup> out of several that were offered, and then added: "God is everything. Even in the stone. Even in the stone."<sup>10</sup>

6. Bapu's *Letters to Mira*, p. 143-4.

7. CG, p. 28.

8. YI, 5-3-1925.

9. The term 'appearances' does not connote non-existence of the objects. According to F. H. Bradley, "Reality appears in its appearances, and they are its revelations; and otherwise they also could be nothing whatever."—*Appearance and Reality*, p. 551-2.

10. Vincent Sheean: *Op Cit*, p. 210.

Cf. "He is the secret and central light that kindles up



He then quoted the first verse of the Ishopanishad in which he found "the sum of wisdom on this subject".

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

This he translated thus: "The whole world is the garment of the Lord. Renounce it, then, and receive it back as the gift of God."<sup>11</sup>

### III

Prayer is waiting upon God, a communion with Him, and it "must come from within. It can be

the sun, his dazzling representative; and he lives, enlightens, and comforts in the diffusion of his beams. His spirit inspires and actuates the air, and in it a breath of life to all his creatures. He blooms in the blossom, and unfolds in the rose. He is fragrance in flowers, and flavour in fruits. He holds the infinitude in the hollow of his hand, and opens his world of wonders in the minims of nature. He is the virtue of every heart that is softened by a sense of pity or touch of benevolence. He coos in the turtle and bleats in the lamb; and through the paps of the stern bear and implacable tigress, he yields forth the milk of loving-kindness to their little ones."—Henry Brooke.

<sup>11</sup>. *Ibid*, p. 203.

Cf. "God lives in the world. He is the World Soul. All things are but His garment, that ever changing dress, that through death is ever young. It changes, and is in itself nothing, therefore the East has called it maya or illusion, because of its want of permanence. What lives is Life, that makes this garment for itself to wear in fashions changing towards a far-off, dreamed perfection. But the Life is God, and God is Love unchangeable for ever—in this world." —H. Fielding-Hall: *Love's Legend*, p. 150.

effective only when it rises from the innermost depths of the heart."<sup>12</sup> "We must be clean both inwardly and outwardly."<sup>13</sup> Prayer is an internal wash. Victor Hugo spoke of "two ablutions of soul and body—prayers and toilet."<sup>14</sup> There can be no prayer without fasting, said Gandhiji—"fasting" being used here in the wider sense of a voluntary restraint over all the senses.

### IV

Gandhiji's ultimate spiritual goal was salvation (*moksha*) which means freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. "If I have any passionate desire, it is only to reach God, if possible, at a jump and to merge myself in Him."<sup>15</sup> "The body persists because of egoism. The utter extinction of egoism is *moksha*. He who has achieved this will be the very image of Truth, or one may call it *Brahman*."<sup>16</sup> "I once thought," he told Mrs. Polak years ago, "that I could finish the wheel of rebirth in this incarnation. I know now that I can't, and that I shall have to return to it. We cannot escape it, but I hope it will only be once more that I come back to it."<sup>17</sup>

He believed in the necessity for ceaseless effort in

12. Gurbaxani's article in RG, p. 113.

13. CG, p. 76.

14. *Les Miserables*.

15. TGC, p. 62.

16. *Ibid*, p. 52.

17. *Mr. Gandhi the Man*, p. 146.



this spiritual adventure, but he also believed in the need for grace to crown the effort with success. "Whenever an impure thought arises in the mind, it should at once be confronted with a pure one. This, again, is possible only with the grace of God. That grace can be obtained by repeating His name all the twentyfour hours and by realizing that He resides within us."<sup>18</sup> "My faith in the message of the Gita is as bright as ever," he wrote, in an article entitled 'Nothing without grace'. "Unwearied ceaseless effort is the price that must be paid for turning that faith into rich infallible experience. But the same Gita says without any equivocation that the experience is not to be had without divine grace. We should develop swelled heads if Divinity had not made that ample reservation."<sup>19</sup>

## V

The supreme state of God-realization or freedom could be reached through an elimination of egoism. He wrote to a co-worker of his:

"A public servant has no personal feelings to be considered. He must be a cipher. He can have no pride nor power nor prestige except such as service gives him. He must be *tulyanindātmāsāmstutih, mānāpamānayostulyah*.... The cause is not in your or my hands. It is in God's all-powerful hands.

18. TGC, p. 53-4.

19. H, 29-2-1936.

You and I are His instruments. You must rejoice in your humiliation and feel strong."<sup>20</sup>

"We are but specks, mere particles of dust," said he. "We are of the earth, earthy.... We are imperfect.... We should therefore be humble; we should reduce ourselves to dust; we should reduce ourselves to, and remain, ciphers."<sup>21</sup>

Progress on this path is indicated by obvious transformation of conduct. "If a man grows morally stronger day by day, and his eyes cast off all passion, this phenomenon becomes self-evident and does not require anyone to test it. It makes itself felt automatically."<sup>22</sup>

## VI

Our ignorance, according to Gandhiji, lies in our treating trivialities as realities; and he wishes us to disengage ourselves from trivialities and start on the expedition in search of God or Truth, which, as he says, is much more interesting than numberless Himalayan expeditions.<sup>23</sup> There is joyous, undefeatable hope here, treating human life as a God-given opportunity. Contrast it with the pessimism of Sophocles who cried out, "Not to have been born is best." Pessimism of this type is unknown to Hinduism. "Human birth is a rare gift of God,

20. Weekly letter by C. S. in H, 15-12-1933.

21. MCG.

22. *Ibid.*

23. H, 21-9-1934.



because it affords a chance for spiritual endeavour,"<sup>24</sup> said Shankara. "Both the Hindus and Buddhists believe," says Nehru, "that human birth is the highest stage that the Being has reached on the road to self-realization."<sup>25</sup> "Pessimism is not a philosophy but an illness,"<sup>26</sup> says Will Durant. While Buddha emphasised the activity of Death, Gandhiji emphasised the persistence of Life, and both were right from their own points of view; for "In the midst of death we are in life, just as in the midst of life we are in death."<sup>27</sup> "The mortal is burnt up like grass,"<sup>28</sup> said the Upanishads; but they also said: "Who would have striven for life, if this *ānanda* (joy) had not filled the sky?"<sup>29</sup> If there is plenty of sorrow in the world, there is plenty of joy also; otherwise the world would have

२४. दुर्लभं मनुष्यजन्म पुरुषार्थसाधनम् । गीताशांकरभाष्य ९; ३३.

25. *The Discovery of India*, p. 150.

26. *The Mansions of Philosophy*, p. 658. Even Thomas Hardy protested against the imputation of 'pessimism' in an ultimate sense to himself: "My pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs, and that Ahriman is winning all along the line. On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist."—Quoted by Edmund Blunden: *Thomas Hardy*, p. 111.

27. E. V. Lucas. Cf. "Life is a constant struggle against death, yet without death it could not progress."—J. B. S. Haldane.

२८. सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते । कठोपनिषत्

२९. को ह्येवान्यात् कः प्राण्याद् यद्येष आकाश आनन्दो न स्यात् ।  
तैत्तिरीयोपनिषत्

come to an end long ago. The phenomenon that Life has continued to exist in the world in spite of the ceaseless activity of Death inspired in Gandhiji faith in God and an irrepressible optimism.

All Indian philosophers, "including the heterodox, believe that the evil of *samsāra* carries with it the seeds of its destruction, and that it is sooner or later bound to be superseded by the good. In other words, none of the Indian systems is finally pessimistic.... If either evil or error were final, the world would be irrational."<sup>30</sup>

The beauty of nature continues to attract and delight men even in the midst of the heaviest sorrows. Said an English essayist, writing in the spring of 1940, even while the second World War was raging:

"Immediate trifles distract our attention from less immediate horrors, even in wartime.... I do not think it would be fair to call this happiness escapist. It is a refreshment of the imagination by which we are reminded of a living world that has survived ten thousand wars....

"This year the world is unquestionably a world to distract us by the detail of its loveliness. Never did a lovelier spring rise from the grave of winter.... With apple, lilac, laburnum, chestnut, and hawthorn all in bloom at the same time, it would be difficult for an ordinary man to avoid an occasional rise of his spirits. This world of sight and sound, we feel, will be here a hundred years hence, a

30. M. Hiriyanna: *Op Cit*, p. 51.



thousand years hence—perhaps, unless the ice age that we merit returns, a million years hence. Apart from the cultivated plants, it is all—so it seems to us—as old as Eden.”<sup>31</sup>

Pessimism and faith in God go ill together. “But for my faith in God I should have been a raving maniac,” was the first sentence Gandhiji uttered at the evening prayers on the day news was received at Sabarmati, in 1928, of the death of Shri Maganlal Gandhi whom he described as “my best comrade”.

It was the same faith which enabled him never to lose sight of the brighter side of life and to maintain his cheerfulness even in the midst of sorrow. His loud, hearty laughter dispelled gloom; his “twinkling smile”<sup>32</sup>—disarming opponents and at times disconcerting them—constantly lit his face; and he never lost an opportunity to cut jokes with persons young and old. He was not merely “a man of sorrow”; he was “a man of joy” too.<sup>33</sup>

“The good are always the merry,  
Save by an evil chance.”<sup>34</sup>

31. Robert Lynd (Y.Y.): *Life's Little Oddities*, p. 175-7.

32. J. F. Horrabin's article in IGL, p. 84-5.

33. Cf. “Love for the eternal and infinite feeds the mind with pure delight, and is wholly free from every taint of sorrow.”—Spinoza.

34. W. B. Yeats. Cf. “Have a good conscience, and thou shalt ever have joy.”—Thomas a Kempis: *The Imitation of Christ* 2; 6; 1.

## VII

The question will naturally be asked as to which of the three approaches to God—*Jñāna*, *Bhakti*, and *Karma*—Gandhiji preferred for himself. His was the way of *Bhakti* and *Karma*—of complete surrender to God, and unceasing selfless service of men. “We must completely surrender ourselves to Him...in a spirit of utter self-effacement,”<sup>35</sup> said he. “It is for God to take our broken barge across the stream, but it is for us to put in our best effort. It is for us to plug a hole in its bottom or, if water gets into the boat, to throw it out. In that case the barge will keep floating despite the hole. But it will float only when there is God's hand behind it. I would therefore say that man must make an endeavour and for the result depend on God's grace.”<sup>36</sup>

In the heat of controversy raging round these three terms, the fact is often lost sight of that these are, as Radhakrishnan has pointed out, ‘distincts’ and not ‘opposites’.<sup>37</sup> Explaining the difference between the two Croce says: “Two distinct concepts unite with one another, although they are distinct, but two opposite concepts seem to exclude one another.”<sup>38</sup> Life is an amalgam in which any

35. CG, p. 45.

36. PP, I, p. 351. Cf. “Let a man do his work; the fruit of it is in the care of Another than he.”—Thomas Carlyle: *Heroes and Hero-worship*.

37. *Religion and Society*, p. 70

38. *Ibid*, p. 70.



one, or possibly two, of these three elements predominate but never exclude the remaining ones. "They can exist together,"<sup>39</sup> says Radhakrishnan. Rather they *must*, because otherwise the development of man would be lop-sided. Tagore put this truth in words which correctly describe the approach of Gandhiji:

"We have to keep in mind the fact that love and action are the only intermediaries through which perfect knowledge can be obtained; for the object of knowledge is not pedantry but wisdom."<sup>40</sup>

'Wisdom through love and action'—that epitomizes the message of the Gita, which it was the constant endeavour of Gandhiji to re-live in his own life that has been described as "an embodiment and enactment of the Gita's teaching" by Vincent Sheean who remarks:

"If we are to consider the Gita under the aspect of prophecy, which should be legitimate for any religious scripture, then the selfless warrior created by its burning words, the hero of the righteous battle and fulfilment of the Lord Shri Krishna's injunctions was Mahatma Gandhi.... These (the inspired words) seem to me to refer more precisely to Gandhi than to any other figure I can discern in the long pageant of Indian history. His interpretation of it, therefore, in terms of non-violence,"<sup>41</sup>

39. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

40. *The Religion of Man*, p. 178.

41. Gandhiji's interpretation of the teaching of the Gita, as favouring non-violence, has been supported by Radha-

acquires the value of life rather than the value of literature: he lived the Gita in non-violent times. That was his interpretation and he proved it by his hero's death. Just as life transcends letters, so the Gandhi-Gita triumphs over the unanimous dissent of the scholars by the dramatic perfection of the life given to it."<sup>42</sup>

krishnan, in his translation and commentary of the Gita, published after Gandhiji's death, wherein, arguing in detail, he says: "The ideal which the *Gītā* sets before us is *ahimsā* or non-violence and this is evident from the description of the perfect state of mind, speech and body in Chapter VII, and of the mind of the devotee in Chapter XII. Krishna advises Arjuna to fight without passion or ill-will, without anger or attachment, and if we develop such frame of mind violence becomes impossible. We must fight against what is wrong but if we allow ourselves to hate, that ensures our spiritual defeat. It is not possible to kill people in a state of absolute serenity or absorption in God... The *Gītā* requires us to lay stress on human brotherhood.... If we act in the spirit of the *Gītā* with detachment and dedication and have love even for our enemy, we will help to rid the world of wars."—*The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 68-9.

42. *Lead, Kindly Light*, p. 312-3.



## “RETURN GOOD FOR EVIL”

1. *Relation between truth and non-violence.*
2. *From truth follow non-violence, love, tolerance, humility.*
3. *Non-violence means love, i. e. returning good for evil: this law is preached by all religions.*
4. *Non-violence in thought, word and deed.*
5. *Travesty of non-violence.*

### I

“It is not given to man to know the whole Truth.<sup>1</sup> His duty lies in living up to the truth as he sees it, and, in doing so, to resort to the purest means, i. e. to non-violence. Truth is not to be found in books. Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as he sees it. But no one has a right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth.”<sup>2</sup> Thus truth is the end and non-violence the means. At times Gandhiji went further and said these were like two

1. “Reality is a dome of many-coloured glass, and from his little corner each of us sees a different combination of colours in the Kaleidoscope.”—Will Durant: *The Mansions of Philosophy*, p. 31.

Cf. “Now, it is a very remarkable fact—but it is true of most things in this world—that there is hardly anything one-sided, or of one nature.”—Thomas Henry Huxley.

2. MCG.

sides of a blank coin; and on a few occasions he used ‘non-violence’ as a synonym of ‘truth’ in the sense that, to him, ends and means were convertible terms. As every man’s view of the truth is in the very nature of things fragmentary, no one can claim finality or infallibility for his own view, and must be prepared to concede the possibility of other men’s opinions being true from their own standpoints. This leads to tolerance for views other than one’s own, which is one of the salient features of non-violence. Just as no man’s view can be wholly true, no man’s view can be wholly false. “There is truth in every idea however false,” said F. H. Bradley, “there is reality in every existence however slight.”<sup>3</sup> “There will be no truth which is entirely true, just as there will be no error which is totally false.”<sup>4</sup> This should serve as a warning against both intransigence and intolerance, and should result also in patience, forbearance, humility, charity, and a readiness for compromise—all of which are covered by the wider term ‘non-violence’. “In the application of satyagraha,” said Gandhiji in 1919, “I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one’s opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be Truth to the one may appear false to the other.”<sup>5</sup> And patience means self-suffer-

3. *Appearance and Reality*.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 362.

5. Cf. “If this obvious truth were more generally recogn-



ing. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of Truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's own self."<sup>6</sup> When his attention was drawn to the fact that "people differ as to the justice or injustice of particular laws," he replied: "That is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a satyagrahi gives his opponent the same right of independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves to himself and he will fight by inflicting injuries on himself."<sup>7</sup>

## II

Explaining the connection between truth and non-violence, he wrote in a letter to a co-worker:

"As I proceed in my search for truth it grows upon me that truth comprehends everything. It is not in non-violence, but non-violence is in it. What is perceived by the pure heart and intellect is truth for that moment. Clinging to it one is enabled to reach Absolute Truth. There is no dilemma here. But often enough it is difficult to decide what is non-violence. For instance, the use of disinfectants is violence, and

---

ised, .... that while we live we all 'see through the glass darkly', and that each man must be allowed to wear the glasses which suit him, we should have much more tolerance and charitableness in religious matters."—W. R. Inge: *A Rustic Moralist*, p. 25.

"The man who claims to be infallible in his judgments is merely a half-educated person.—T. G. Masaryk.

6. Written statement before the Hunter Committee, October, 1919.

7. *Ibid.*

yet we cannot do without it. We have to live a life of non-violence in a world full of violence, and that is possible only if we cling to truth. That is how I deduce non-violence from truth. Out of truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. A votary of truth has to be as humble as dust. His humility increases with his progress in the pursuit of Truth. I see this every moment of my life. I have a much more vivid consciousness of my littleness and insignificance than I had a year ago. The wonderful implications of the great saying, *Brahma satyam jaganmithyā* (Brahman is real, all else unreal), grow on me from day to day. It teaches us patience. This will purge us of harshness and add to our tolerance. It will impel us to magnify the molehills of our errors into mountains and minimise the mountains of others' errors into molehills."<sup>8</sup>

## III

Non-violence, as Gandhiji propounded it, was synonymous with love in the purest and widest sense of the term. It was derived from the belief—preached by saints and seers in India since time immemorial—in the essential oneness of spirit in the whole creation including the animal kingdom. One of the manifest forms of this law of love, to him, was returning good

---

8. TGC, p. 51. Cf. "Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging others."—John Dewey: *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, p. 176.

Gandhiji once said: "I look only to the good qualities of men. Not being faultless myself, I won't presume to probe into the faults of others."—BKK, p. 84.



for evil, which he first learnt from a Gujarati poem in his boyhood and which he never lost sight of till the end of his days. It had been preached by Buddha who had spoken of quenching ill-will with goodwill<sup>9</sup> and overcoming anger with forbearance.<sup>10</sup> The Indian atmosphere was so full of the spirit underlying this law that it had passed into a common saying: "What merit is there in the goodness of a man who returns good for good? A good man, verily, is he who returns good for evil."<sup>11</sup>

Said Lao-tse, the Chinese philosopher: "Requite injury with kindness. To the good I would be good; to the evil I would also be good, in order to make them good. With the faithful I would keep faith; with the unfaithful I would also keep faith, in order that they may become faithful. He who has no faith in others will find no faith in them."<sup>12</sup>

Plato, after a victory, was urged by his soldiers to put to death his enemy Heraclides. "He made the occasion an opportunity for giving testimony

९. न हि वेरेन वेरानि सम्मन्तीथ कुदाचनं । धम्मपद ५.

१०. अक्कोधेन जिने कोधं । धम्मपद २२३.

११. उपकारिषु यः साधुः साधुत्वे तस्य को गुणः ।

अपकारिषु यः साधुः स साधुः सदभिहच्यते ॥

12. B. Brown: *The Wisdom of the Chinese*, p. 85. Cf. Gandhiji's saying: "Trust begets trust, and deceit begets deceit. I would ask you, therefore, to grow in trustfulness." PP, I, p. 352. "Against the obsessive Marxist suspicion he preached trust and the reward that must come to obvious and simple goodwill."—George Catlin in *Mahatma Gandhi* (ed.) by Radhakrishnan, p. 371.

to the teaching of the Academy. This, he pointed out, required not merely that one should practise goodness towards friends and those who were good, but also that one should forgive those who injured one and who did wrong. There was no evil in man, he affirmed, which could not be vanquished and changed by gratitude for repeated good deeds."<sup>13</sup> He reiterates the same principle in another place: "When injured, we must not injure in return as many imagine; for we must injure no one at all."<sup>14</sup>

The law was known to the Hebrew prophet who said: "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.... Say not, 'I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.'.... If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink."<sup>15</sup>

The same law was preached more emphatically by Jesus who said: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."<sup>16</sup>

Paul endorsed it by saying; "Recompense to no man evil for evil.... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."<sup>17</sup>

Peter asked men to be "not rendering evil

13. Eric Leon: *Plato*, p. 30

14. *Crito*.

15. *Proverbs* 24; 17, 29, 25; 21.

16. *Matthew* 5; 44.

17. *Romans* 12; 17, 21.



for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing." <sup>18</sup>

Islam also preached the same law. "If it (Islam) did not say, 'If thy brother smite thee on one cheek, turn thou the other also to him'; if it allowed the punishment of the wanton wrong-doer to the extent of the injury he had done, it also taught, in fervid words and varied strains, the practice of forgiveness and benevolence, and the return of good for evil." <sup>19</sup> "Turn away evil," says the Quran, "with that which is better." <sup>20</sup> "Paradise is for those who bridle their anger and those who forgive men; for God loveth the beneficent." <sup>21</sup>

The author of the *Kashshāf* thus sums up the essence of Islamic teachings on this point: "Seek again him who drives you away; give to him who takes away from you; pardon him who injures you." <sup>22</sup>

Epictetus, the Roman Stoic, said of one Pittacus that "wronged by one whom he had it in his power to punish, he let him go free, saying, *Forgiveness is better than revenge*. The one shows native gentleness, the other savagery." <sup>23</sup> He cited from history an example of still greater forgiveness and magnanimity of heart: "Which of us does not admire what Lyncurgus the Spartan did? A young

18. Peter 3; 9.

19. S. Ameer Ali; *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 177.

20. 41; 34.

21. 43; 37.

22. Quoted in *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 178.

23. *The Golden Sayings of Epictetus*, p. 86.

citizen had put out his eye, and had been handed over to him by the people to be punished at his own discretion. Lyncurgus abstained from all vengeance, but on the contrary instructed and made a good man of him. Producing him in public in the theatre, he said to the astonished Spartans:—'I received this young man at your hands full of violence and wanton insolence; I restore him to you in his right mind and fit to serve his country.' " <sup>24</sup>

During the last phase of his life, when ferocious passions raged among our people and the thirst for vengeance seemed to grow unquenchable, Gandhiji harped on this theme with all the earnestness he could command: "If we continue to act squarely till the end, the Muslims in Pakistan will have to retrace their steps. This is an inexorable law. These are the words of an old man who has tried to do good to one and all. I have gained sufficient experience in the 78 or 79 years of my life, for I have moved about in the world with my eyes wide open. I spent twenty years outside India. I lived in an undeveloped country like South Africa which is full of Negroes. I could live among them because I derived strength from *Ramanama*. I therefore tell you, out of my own experience, that it does not behove as to repay evil with evil. Humanity lies in repaying evil with good.... How are you going to punish an evil-doer? I have no doubt that he will automatically be punished for his evil deeds. This I find to be the essence of all the

24. *Ibid.*, p. 78-9.



religions of the world. Evil can properly be repaid by us with good. At any rate I should love to see you doing so."<sup>25</sup>

## IV

One of the aspects of Gandhiji's constant endeavour to make his life a living example of non-violence was his toleration—no, 'toleration' is not the right word—rather his large-heartedness, his catholicity, his forbearance. "I am a puritan myself," he said to me years ago at Sabarmati, "but I am catholic towards others." Everyone who has come in contact with him during his lifetime will testify to his unbounded forgiveness. Daily he put up, in a spirit of forbearance and compassion, with much in the conduct of others which was distasteful to him. As an illustration of this, he said to me one afternoon in 1926: "This morning, just while I was taking my meals here in this room, a cat brought in a dead lizard and began to maul it right in front of me. It was a revolting sight, but I steadied myself and went on eating." Then he gave another instance of the same kind: "During my tour of Assam in 1921, at one of the halts, milk was brought to me in a brand new chamberpot! I very much disliked this, but kept quiet, for the poor people who purchased the pot specially for this purpose evidently had no knowledge of the use which was ordinarily made of it."

Anger, ill-will, jealousy are all, according to him,

25. PP, I, pp. 301, 317.

subtler forms of violence. Here, as in the case of truth, he insisted on non-violence in thought, word and deed. In a press statement issued in May, 1941, he said that a Congressman would be dragged down "when there was conflict between thought and action; for the spring of non-violent action was non-violent thought. If the latter were absent, the former had subjectively little or no value."<sup>26</sup>

## V

He was well aware of, and had to contend with, the travesty of non-violence, which made people oppose the killing of rabid dogs, plague-infected rats, crop-destroying monkeys, and ravaging locusts. He said in London in 1931 to Sir Evelyn Wrench who referred to the cruel treatment of animals in India: "You have dealt with one of the problems which reformers in India hope to rectify in time. In my Ashram, we had a dying calf. He had stinking sores and was lame. I put an end to his earthly existence by painless injections. I was bitterly attacked by some of my fellow-countrymen, who in my view have yet to learn that *ahimsa* never meant that suffering which could be terminated should be permitted. I think that much of the animal suffering in India today is due to this travesty of what *ahimsa* means."<sup>26</sup>

26. Quoted by K. M. Munshi: *Akhand Hindustan*, p. 267.

27. FIMG.



## NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

1. '*Non-resistance*' is not passive submission; '*non-violent resistance*' the better phrase; braver method than violence.
2. Differences with some Western pacifists.
3. Resistance '*almost non-violent*'.
4. *Satyagraha* superior to terrorism.
5. *Empire founded on love*.

### I

"BUT I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."<sup>1</sup> It would be wholly wrong to interpret these words of Jesus to mean passive submission. For, as Gandhiji said, Jesus was "a prince among passive resisters, who uncompromisingly challenged the might of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and for the sake of truth did not hesitate to divide sons from their parents."<sup>2</sup> Tolstoy tried to elucidate the dictum by saying that '*non-resistance*' meant '*non-resistance by violence*'. As far back as 1909, Gandhiji said that "Resist not evil" meant that "evil was not be repelled by evil, but by good; in other words, physical force was to

1. *Matthew* 5; 39.

2. *YI*, 4-8-1920.

be opposed, not by its like but by soul force."<sup>3</sup> The word '*non-resistance*', in its commonly understood connotation, does not fully bring out the principle enunciated by Gandhiji. As Nehru has remarked:

"Gandhiji's non-violence, it is true, is certainly not a purely negative affair. It is not non-resistance. It is non-violent resistance, which is a very different thing, a positive and dynamic method of action. It was not meant for those who meekly accept the *status quo*. The very purpose for which it was designed was to create 'a ferment in society' and thus to change existing conditions."<sup>4</sup>

He offered non-violence not as a safer but a braver and superior method of resistance. In a letter to Shri K. M. Munshi, written on 29th May 1941, he said: "Non-violent resistance is superior to violent resistance."<sup>5</sup>

He said in the plainest of words that non-violence was no cloak for cowardice: "I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. . . . Abstinence is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish. . . . But I do

3. Quoted by P. J. Mehta in *M. K. Gandhi*, p. 15-6.

Cf. "You have been told, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you: Resist not evil, for resistance is food for evil and makes it strong. And only the weak would revenge themselves. The strong in soul forgive, and it is honour in the injured to forgive."—Kahlil Gibran: *Jesus*, p. 39.

4. *An Autobiography*, p. 540.

5. Quoted by K. M. Munshi: *Akhand Hindustan*, p. 265.



not believe India to be helpless. I do not believe myself to be a helpless creature. Only I want to use India's and my strength for a better purpose."<sup>6</sup> "Better far than cowardice," he wrote in an article on the Gita, "is killing and being killed in battle."<sup>7</sup>

In the course of a conversation with a German in November 1933, he said: "Submission is cowardice, and cowardice is not non-violence. You fought and, when defeated, offered passive resistance. That is not non-violence." "We offered non-violent resistance to France in the Rhineland, but at last we had to give in," said the German. "It means your passive resistance was exhausted," said Gandhiji. "If not, they would have killed every German in the area. It would have been humiliating to France. Take the instance of the 600 Greeks who died holding the pass of Thermopylae. Their resistance was violent, but they died to a man, and they have become heroes of the world." "If we don't become violent, we should be done with," said the German. "It is what the world has done up till now," said Gandhiji. "Now a man like me comes on the scene, and shows a different way of governing human relations. Violent men have not been known in history to die to a man. They die up to a point. The Germans died up to a point and then gave in. There was no disgrace in doing so. An event such as I speak of has not happened in history. It is my implicit

6. YI, 11-8-1920.

7. YI, 12-11-1925.

belief that, if such a race is born, no nation can lay its unholy hands on it."<sup>8</sup>

## II

Though Gandhiji was as much opposed to war as any war-resister in the world, there was a vital difference of opinion between him and some of the Western pacifists who often strongly criticised him. Let me state the issue in the words of an article contributed to a recent book of mine by the late H. Runham Brown, a well-known pacifist of Britain:

"Gandhiji was unlike other saints. He was a practical statesman of the world. Ideals in the clouds never appealed to him. He must make them work, and he did. I had the great privilege of receiving and passing on a long correspondence between Gandhiji and Vladimir Tchertkoff, Leo Tolstoy's great Secretary, and Russia's greatest pacifist and anarchist, there being no direct post between Russia and India. I was invited to read that correspondence and I did. Tchertkoff was telling Gandhiji that he was not really a pacifist at all. I think the mistaken idea of the Russian was not so much due to the fact that Gandhiji had come more slowly to his pacifist convictions than the great anarchist had, but because of certain things that the Mahatma had said or written. He had declared that it was better to fight even with carnal weapons than to cravenly submit to injustice. Sayings like this were quite incompre-

8. CG, p. 34-5.



hensible to Vladimir Tchertkoff. To him pacifism was a great religious faith—nothing could shift him.”<sup>9</sup>

To Gandhiji, in case of aggression, resistance was the supreme duty. To resist non-violently was the most manly course. But for those who did not deliberately accept non-violence as a principle of conduct, violent resistance was also a duty—the first and foremost, and those who died to a man in defending their country or their hearths and homes were also heroes deserving of the greatest respect. He, therefore, said: “Under Swaraj too I would not hesitate to advise those who would bear arms to do so and fight for the country.”<sup>10</sup> It was with the same consideration that he gave his assent to the defence measures adopted by the Government of India against aggression in Kashmir. In an interview with Vincent Sheean in January, 1948, he expressed his grief at the *violent* resistance being offered in Kashmir: “Look at what India is doing now. And with my tacit consent. I cannot deny that it is with my tacit consent.”<sup>11</sup> This grief was due to the fact that the Government of India had not been able to come up to the stage for offering the very best form of resistance, i. e. non-violent resistance, and not because they took the next best—manly and honourable—course open to them. In one of his prayer speeches at New Delhi he said:

9. RG, p. 52-3.

10. YI, 17-11-1921.

11. *Lead, Kindly Light*, p. 201.

“It is the bounden duty of the Government of India to protect those who seek their shelter, as the Maharajah of Kashmir has done. . . . Pandit Jawaharlal and his Cabinet therefore sent a force of about 1,500 armed men whose task will be to oppose aggression without turning their backs and to meet death while fighting. God alone knows what will be the outcome of this. He alone is our wealth and not the crores of rupees in our treasury or the weapons in our armoury. Though it is God who is the Dispenser of results, it is incumbent on us to make an endeavour. These 1,500 will be said to have fulfilled their duty when they all lay down their lives in the defence of Srinagar. . . . Possibly Shaikh Abdullah, along with his wife and daughter and all the women-folk in Kashmir may lose their lives. In that event, I am not going to shed a single tear out of grief. . . . If the whole population of Kashmir lays down their lives in defence of their hearths and homes, I will not only not feel sorry, I will indeed dance with joy. Though the world is the sport of God, it is for us to make an endeavour, which means we should discharge our duty.”<sup>12</sup> “All those who die in the defence of Kashmir will immortalize themselves. If ever such an occasion occurs, I will ask Dilip Kumar Roy to sing such a hymn as would inspire every one of us to dance with joy on this prayer ground.”<sup>13</sup>

To him ‘honour’ was one of the first qualities of

12. PP, II, p. 10-11.

13. *Ibid*, II, p. 21.



manhood. "Self-respect knows no considerations,"<sup>14</sup> is a saying of his well worth imprinting on our hearts. I know of cases where he backed up the humblest of co-workers who, for the sake of their self-respect, stood up to much bigger men or non-cooperated with them. "We will have to be prepared at times to surrender our possessions and under certain circumstances our lives rather than our honour,"<sup>15</sup> he said. At the time of the Munich agreement of October, 1938, he remarked: "One must feel happy that the danger of war has been averted for the time being." But he at once added: "Europe has sold her soul for the sake of a seven days' earthly existence. The peace Europe gained at Munich is a triumph of violence; it is also its defeat.... If the Czechs had known the use of non-violence as a weapon for the defence of national honour, they would have died to a man without shedding the blood of the robber. I must refuse to think that such heroism, or call it restraint, is beyond human nature. Human nature will only find itself when it fully realizes that to be human it has not to be beastly or brutal."<sup>16</sup> He wanted 'peace with honour' which the Munich agreement was not.<sup>17</sup> He characterized it as "inglorious peace".

14. YI.

15. YI, 25-5-1921.

16. H, 8-10-1938.

17. Mr. Winston Churchill, for once, happens to be in agreement with Gandhiji on this point. With reference to the Munich agreement he says: "There is however one

### III

He therefore appreciated the resistance of Poland, albeit violent, against German aggression and went the length of characterizing it as 'almost non-violent'.<sup>18</sup> This was a new phrase used by him for the first time on that occasion. Explaining its meaning he wrote: "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 non-violently. Haven't I said to our women that, if in defence of their honour they used nails and teeth and even a dagger, I should regard their conduct non-violent? She does not know the distinction between *himsa* and *ahimsa*. She acts spontaneously. 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 numbers, military equipment and strength, was almost non-violence. I should not mind repeating that statement over and over again. You

helpful guide, namely, for a nation to keep its word and to act in accordance with its treaty obligations to allies. This guide is called honour . . . . An exaggerated code of honour leading to the performance of utterly vain and unreasonable deeds could not be defended, however fine it might look. Here however the moment came when honour pointed the path of duty, and when also the right judgment of the facts at that time would have reinforced its dictates."—*The Second World War*, Vol. I, p. 288.

18. H, 23-9-1939.



must give its full value to the word 'almost'." <sup>19</sup>

This epithet he used, on a second occasion, with respect to the violence committed by our people in some places in 1942 as against the widespread terrorization on the part of the Government, which he described as 'leonine violence'. He gave voice to his thoughts on this subject more than once during his 21 days' fast in the Agakhan Palace in February, 1943. He unequivocally expressed his emphatic disapproval of the sabotage, secrecy and violence resorted to by people in the country. He said that his name must not be used in support of these activities, and that he still swore by non-violence to the same extent as he did before, and he still wished people to fight in a purely non-violent manner. "Let me warn you," said he "that India will never succeed in attaining her freedom through violence. If a vast country like ours, with a population of four hundred millions, takes to the path of violence, the world cannot escape destruction. If, on the contrary, we keep on the straight path, we may be able to show the same to the war-weary world." On the next day he dwelt further on the same theme: "Though I do not at all like what is going on outside, I am not prepared to criticise and condemn that violence while I am in jail; because I have got to criticise the Government's policy much more severely. If the Government are bent on goading people to violence, they can succeed in their design. The masses are not angels, and are likely to be

19. H, 25-8-1940.

misled in the absence of leaders capable of advising them to adhere to non-violence. Nevertheless Governmental violence has been many times greater than popular violence. It would not be right for me to criticise from here the people alone. My own faith in non-violence has grown stronger, and there has been no change in my views on the subject except in one respect. I do not now say that non-violence can work only if there is a non-violent atmosphere in the country; for I have now come to believe that the power of non-violence lies in its ability to work even in the midst of a conflagration."

"Had you been out, what would you have said about the violence of the people," Gandhiji was asked on the next day. "I would have had to say much more against the Government's violence than against that of the people. I can do so as a free man, but not while I am in prison. You should also know that I cannot express any opinion about events without a full inquiry. It is one thing to discuss whether a particular act can be considered non-violent and whether it is likely to help in the attainment of Swaraj. It is another thing to condemn the same act publicly. There ought to be a thorough inquiry prior to that. Had I been free, I would not only have criticised or condemned several things that have happened but would not have allowed them to happen and would have shown to the people a more effective method. It would have produced greater effect because it would have



been purely non-violent. My conception of a struggle was different from what is taking place in the country today. But it is insufferable that those people who have tried for years past to tread the path of non-violence should be sought to be suppressed through the fiercest violence. If the Government grow mad out of anger and perpetrate unprecedented frightfulness against weak, unarmed men and women, and if in consequence the people out of sheer desperation are seized with frenzy and thoughtlessly commit untoward acts, history will pronounce their violence to be non-violent in comparison with the violence of the Government, just as I wrote in *Harijan* (in 1939) that the violent resistance of Poland against the German aggression was almost non-violent."<sup>20</sup>

Herein lies one of the cardinal points of difference between him and some of the Western war-resisters. He stated it more explicitly as follows: "I have already said that my non-violence 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 non-violent person is bound, when the occasion arises, to say which side is just. Thus I wished success to Abyssinians, the Spaniards, the Czechs, the Chinese and the Poles, though in each case I wished that they could have offered non-violent resistance."<sup>21</sup>

## IV

He once explained how, in the struggle for Indian freedom, satyagraha i. e. non-violence was proving to be a better method than terrorism:

"I denounce terrorism in no uncertain terms. (In 1930) I said to the terrorists: 'Give me three years' time. I hope during that period your own mentality will undergo a change, you will get tangible evidence of the efficacy of satyagraha, and you will come round to the belief that India will attain its goal only through satyagraha.... If they now come to me, I would say to them: 'Wait a little longer, and you will see with your own eyes the benefits of satyagraha. You will see the phenomenal awakening brought about among the people by satyagraha.' Indeed, terrorist methods don't lead to such mass awakening, and many people are ruined. At present people are cowed down, but not to the extent that I had apprehended. They have been fatigued. If you wish to see how people are struck with terror, go to Chittagong, where even those who have nothing to do with terrorism have got to suffer against their will. In satyagraha, on the other hand, non-civil-resisters do not have to suffer. In Bengal people are not able to talk as freely as we are talking just now. If they come for a talk, they have to come surreptitiously at night. The others simply look on with terror. Why is it so? Satyagraha as a force is not going to die."<sup>22</sup>

20. BKK, pp. 215, 217, 220, 223-4.

21. H, 9-12-1939.

22. MCG.



## V

Non-violence, i. e. love, has proved and will continue to prove in the long run more potent than violence. Napoleon, in a chastened mood towards the end of his career, admitted the fact:

"Alexander, Charlemagne, and I founded great empires. We founded them on force. Where are they today? Jesus Christ founded his on love, and today millions would gladly die for him."

## GANDHI AND MARX

1. *Gandhiji liked Marx for siding with the poor; differences in the two ideologies.* 2. *Prius—'spirit' or 'matter'?* 3. *Love v. hate.* 4. *Ends and means.* 5. *Liberty and its denial.* 6. *Attitude to opponents.* 7. *Some Communists' disillusionment.* 8. *Extermination v. reform.* 9. *No meeting ground between Bolshevism and Gandhism.*

## I

WELL-MEANING friends, here as elsewhere, have at times suggested a combination of Gandhi and Marx. Though Gandhiji had not gone through the writings of Marx and Engels, with later commentaries on these by Lenin and Stalin, he had gathered sufficient knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of Marx, mostly from talks and discussions with both advocates and opponents of Marxism in India and from a few books sent by some of his Marxist friends. What he admired in Marx was the fact that he, like Ruskin before him, rose above a narrow class consciousness and not only wrote with the whole society in view but definitely sided with the poor and the downtrodden. "His diagnosis of the economic malaise may be correct or not," said Gandhiji, "but there is no denying



the fact that he thought of doing something for the exploited poor."<sup>1</sup>

Precisely for the same reason his sympathies were with Russia during the last war. "I wish that Germany and Japan should not win the war," he said during his internment at the Agakhan palace. "It is easier to deal with an opponent who is known to us. Germany and Japan have nothing new to give to the world. Even the old things they have adopted are rotten to the core, and these they have accepted as their ideal. On the other hand is Russia which has got something new, no matter whether good or bad. In spite of the fact that Russia has used a lot of brute force, the power there vests in the people who are now fighting with wonderful bravery."<sup>2</sup>

He was at the same time aware of the chasm between Russia's method and his own; and, referring to this, he said: "Maybe my method is a sign of my own stupidity; maybe I am living in a fool's paradise. I do not care if it is so. I don't want to reason about it. It would be futile to have recourse to argument in respect of a thing which has not been an outcome of reason. Not that I am unable to argue, but I do not wish to undermine my faith by indulging in a process of reasoning."<sup>3</sup>

Nor was he oblivious to the sharp differences between the two ideologies—his own and that

1. BKK, pp. 154, 167.

2. *Ibid*, p. 125.

3. *Ibid*, p. 126.

of the Marxists—in respect both of foundational beliefs and methods of reducing these to action.

## II

The existence of the spirit as distinguished from and superior to matter, which is one of the basic tenets of Gandhiji's faith, is rejected by the Marxists who, even when they do not totally deny the existence of the spirit, believe matter to be the ultimate reality and spirit to be at best a by-product of matter. "For Marx matter is the ultimate reality."<sup>4</sup> "Materialism, in full agreement with natural science, takes matter as the *prius*, regarding consciousness, reason and sensation as derivative," said Lenin, "because in a well-expressed form it is connected only with the higher forms of matter (organic matter)."<sup>5</sup>

Expressing his dissent from this disbelief, Gandhiji said: "I don't agree with the view which denies the existence of any entity transcending the physical world. Its existence, however, cannot be proved through the evidence of the senses. It is self-evident. It can be realized only through the inner experience of man.... In my view the trend of human nature is essentially upward."<sup>6</sup> "I have only one thing before me," he added, "—Truth, absolute Truth; it is, even though

4. Radhakrishnan: *Religion and Society*, p. 31.

5. *Materialism and Empiro-Criticism* (1909).

6. BKK, p. 139. "These people have concentrated their study on the depths of degradation to which human nature can descend. What use have they for the study of the



'beyond all scope of sense'. It is capable of being realized, non-violence being the only means available to us for the realization.'<sup>7</sup>

### III

The question of non-violence as a principle of conduct arises only for one who believes in the existence of the spirit. For, as Gandhiji put it, "man as animal is violent, but as Spirit is non-violent. The moment he awakes to the Spirit within, he cannot remain violent."<sup>8</sup> Non-violence, synonymous with love, was the motive actuating all his activities and was the only means available to him in his dealings with his opponents. "I believe non-violence to possess the power of solving all our problems," he said, "and I also believe that, if there is any country in the world which will be prepared to solve all its problems through non-violence, it will be India and no other."<sup>9</sup>

It was his life-mission to demonstrate the power of love, as it has fallen to the Marxists to demonstrate the power of hatred, as a motive force and a guiding principle in the cases of both individuals as well as large masses of men. Gandhiji was "incapable of malice or hate", wrote Louis Fischer.<sup>10</sup> Another

heights to which human nature could rise? That study is being made by me," said Gandhiji.—BKK, p. 152.

7. *Ibid*, p. 130.

8. H, 11-8-1940.

9. BKK, p. 132.

10. *Gandhi and Stalin*, p. 20.

American, Rufus M. Jones, a renowned scholar, wrote of him: "I asked him whether, after the agonies and difficulties that had confronted him, he still believed that the way of love would work in this difficult world. He stood up and ran his fingers down his sides and said: 'That truth has gone through my being, and there is nothing in the universe that will ever take it out of me.'"<sup>11</sup>

For the Communists, even social service is inspired not by the motive of love or compassion but by that of hatred or combat. "The idea of social service which the Russians are seeking to convert into an incentive... is stripped of altruism," said Maurice Hindus, in a book which was hailed as an unbiased study of Russian conditions, by all including Communists. "There is none of that spirit of pity for the lowly that pursues so unendingly Tolstoy's Nekhludov in the novel *Resurrection*, and that harassed Tolstoy no less poignantly. Rather would he invest it with a pugnacity if not heroism, akin to that an athlete feels when preparing for a contest."<sup>12</sup> To be convinced of the correctness of this observation, one has only to read or hear the imprecations of the Communists against their enemies, breathing as they do inveterate hatred. "You cannot conquer the enemy without learning to hate him with all the power of your soul," said Stalin, quite rightly from his own point of view. "Man must wake with this stubborn hate, fight

11. IGL, p. 93-4.

12. *Humanity Uprboted*, p. 85-6.



with this hate, fall asleep at night with the hate unslaked,"<sup>13</sup> cried Alexey Tolstoy, singing a hymn of hatred during the last war.

In Gandhiji's life there have been a number of occasions when he acted up to this law of love and non-retaliation. The lynching he was subjected to in Durban in 1896, the almost fatal assault on him by a Pathan in 1908, the assault by infuriated Sanatanists at Jassidih in April 1934, the throwing of a bomb at Poona the same year in June, the attack during evening prayers by hostile Muslim Leaguers at Rajkot in 1939, the attack by some Hindu young men at Calcutta in August 1947, and the throwing of a bomb at the prayer meeting in New Delhi on the 20th of January, 1948,—not to mention the final supreme sacrifice—are instances in point.

Contrast these with the large scale massacres of men following the establishment of the Red regime in Russia.

"The Bolsheviks in their revolution, like the French in theirs, used terror as a weapon," remarked an English author, by no means hostile to Russia. "The numbers of those who died in the Red terror can never be known and for that reason they will always be exaggerated; the least incredible estimate is that which puts the number officially executed in 1918-19, as 70,000."<sup>14</sup>

13. Both these quotations have been taken from *Mother Russia* by Maurice Hindus, pp. 108, 111.

14. J. Hampden Jackson: *The Post-War World* (1935), p.

In 1929, when the Kulaks (small landlords) opposed the collectivization of farms, no mercy was shown to them.

"Kulaks were deported *en masse* to labour camps in the frozen north, or were driven out of their villages with their families and settled on marsh land where there was every possibility that they would starve to death."<sup>15</sup>

In Russia, "there is no unemployment, but there is deliberate starvation."<sup>16</sup> Moreover a vast number, estimated sometimes at about two millions, has been sent out for forced labour (called 'correction' in Soviet terminology) in different parts of Russia under the most shocking conditions of life and labour.<sup>17</sup>

#### IV

Gandhiji insisted on the purity of means which, to him, were, "after all, everything. As the means, so the ends."<sup>18</sup> "I converted the Congress to non-

159. Winston Churchill, speaking of "the military and political purge in Soviet Russia" in 1937, says: "In all not less than five thousand officers and officials above the rank of Captain were 'liquidated'."—*The Second World War*, Vol. I, p. 259.

15. J. Hampden Jackson: *Op Cit*, p. 182.

16. Edward Crankshaw: *Russia and the Russians* (1947), p. 98.

17. For an account of this, based on personal experience, see the novel, *Prisoners of the Night*, by Andrew Corvin Romanski (Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1948).

18. *YI*, 17-7-1924.



co-operation in 1920," he explained. "I was hard put to it. Not in a single instance evil means were used....I stand for courtesy, gentleness, good manners."<sup>19</sup> To him, means and ends were like a seed and a tree.<sup>20</sup> "You may never choose wrong that good may come of it,"<sup>21</sup> he said to Mrs. Polak. years ago. Had not Jesus said: "Of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes"?<sup>22</sup>

The Marxist, on the other hand, sets no limitation to the means, for to him the end justifies the means. "It is necessary," said Lenin, "to use any ruse, cunning, unlawful method, evasion, concealment of truth."<sup>23</sup>

In 1931 Gandhiji said in England: "I am so pre-occupied with my own country that I must admit that I am rather ignorant of what concerns the Russian people. All the same I can tell you that when India is free she might well imitate what there is of good in Russia. If Russia becomes a little more spiritual, all would be perfect with her."<sup>24</sup> "Even though Russia has many achievements to her credit," he later observed in 1942, "her work will not endure unless her methods are clean."<sup>25</sup>

19. CG, p. 41.

20. *Hind Swaraj*, Ch. 16.

21. *Mr. Gandhi the Man*, p. 117.

22. Luke 6; 44.

23. *The Infantile Sickness of Leftism in Communism* (1920).

24. FIMG.

25. BKK, p. 130.

For Gandhiji life was a continuous process of self-purification, i. e. purging the heart of all impurities, which, to him, was also the inner meaning of the non-cooperation movement. Fasting and prayer came in as a part of this process. "The 21 days' fast (of May, 1933) was undertaken largely as a penance for cases of corruption among Harijan workers which had come to my notice,"<sup>26</sup> he said. "Self-purification is no doubt a general need; but this cause (viz. Harijan service) requires a larger measure of it."<sup>27</sup> Anything similar to this is unknown to the Marxists; and occasional mass purges in the party followed by dire consequences for the outcasts constitute the only process of cleansing known to them.

## V.

The evil means, however, do not fail to corrupt the ends, as Aldous Huxley has so cogently shown.<sup>28</sup> To take but one example, i. e. of liberty. Gandhiji described the right of free speech as "the foundation stone of Swaraj"—liberty of free speech not only for himself but for all—"free speech for a Communist, and free speech for a Forward Bloc-wallah." "If I give it a religious colour," he went on to say, "I can call it full religious liberty, the liberty cultural and religious that the Muslims are asking for." "This liberty," he asserted, "is the foundation of

26. CG, p. 18.

27. MCG.

28. *Ends and means*.



freedom.”<sup>29</sup> “We have never spoken of liberty,” said Lenin, on the contrary. “We shall exercise the dictatorship until the majority submit.” Democracy, based as it is on reverence for the individual soul, is acceptable to Gandhiji but not to the Marxists. “Democracy is a bourgeois conception which the revolutionary proletariat must overthrow,” said Lenin. Trotsky endorsed his Chief’s opinion by saying: “Democracy is a wretched and worthless masquerade. We repudiate it in the name of the proletariat. Three times hopeless is the idea of coming to power through Democracy.”<sup>30</sup> They only seek “an opportunity to crush, to smash to bits, to wipe off the face of the earth the bourgeois state machinery—even its republican variety.”<sup>31</sup>

## VI

Gandhiji not only tolerated differences of opinion but positively encouraged their expression. In a talk with Shri Munshi in December, 1933, he said: “I have not the slightest apprehension so far as Jawaharlal is concerned. I have the fullest confidence in him, and I am sure that all his activities will be above board. He never disregards my wishes. The letters we exchanged at Poona in September last were written not at his instance but mine. I said to him:

29. H, 22-9-1940. Cf. “I do not agree with a word that you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.”—Voltaire to Rousseau.

30. Quoted by W. R. Inge: *More Lay Thoughts of a Dean*.

31. Lenin: *The State and Revolution* (1918).

‘If there is any difference of opinion between us, let the world know of it. I don’t desire anyone to suppress his own opinions.’ I have always allowed even my wife to exercise her freedom of thought and action. I have not liked her acting at times under a feeling of constraint, but on those occasions I felt helpless.... Let me tell you, as I told Jawaharlal, that you are free to act according to your individual judgment. No one need consider himself to be under my discipline. You know my relations with Jawaharlal. My word is law to him. But I have never enforced that law. Everyone is free to follow the dictates of his own conscience. I argued this matter with Aney. The able lawyer that he is, he said: ‘I will do so much, and do it in this particular way.’ There is no question of discipline today. Discipline merely demands of everyone that he or she should be guided by his or her own judgment.”<sup>32</sup>

In the course of another talk he said: “I don’t consider my opponents to be fools. I credit them with keen intelligence. I have great respect for Kelkar, for instance.”<sup>33</sup> He admired the courage of conviction on the part of those who opposed him and even parted company with him. Which among his most valued co-workers did not have differences of opinion with him on matters of prime importance at some time or another? And yet all of them remained to him as

32. MCG.

33. Ibid.



dear as they were before—nay, became dearer still, if such a thing was possible.<sup>34</sup>

“The subordinate who declines to sacrifice his judgment to a mistaken conception of loyalty is rarely acceptable except to the really great,”<sup>35</sup> said David Lloyd George, out of his vast experience as an administrator.

What a sombre picture on the other side! “Official glorification of the infallible leader, intolerance of political opposition, frequent use of force to punish and terrorize, discouragement of independent thinking or doing, uniformity.”<sup>36</sup> “We do not want to accept tolerance,”<sup>37</sup> Vishinsky is reported to have told Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

In Russia, “there is no room for a free intelligentsia. There is no room for a leaven of minority opinion.”<sup>38</sup> “This precious new society, this paradise of Komsomols, does not make provision for the independent mind and spirit—for the mind and spirit as we understand, that is.”<sup>39</sup>

“They managed to get rid of the Tsar but not of

34. Cf. “It is to him who masters our minds by the force of truth, and not to those who enslave them by violence, that we owe our reverence.”—Voltaire. “Minds are conquered not by arms but by greatness of soul.”—Spinoza.

35. *War Memoirs*.

36. Louis Fischer: *Gandhi and Stalin*, p. 33.

37. *Ibid*, p. 36.

38. Edward Crankshaw: *Russia and the Russians*, p. 146.

39. *Ibid*, p. 215.

Tsarism,” remarked Thomas Masaryk, perhaps with a sigh. “They still wear the Tsarist uniform, albeit inside out.”<sup>40</sup>

For all the achievements—granting the reports are correct—this atrophy of the spirit is too high a price to pay.

“It is necessary to repeat that ‘the worst crime against humanity...the ruthless destruction of innumerable minds’ is practised in Soviet Russia today with a single-mindedness and an efficiency very much in excess of that attained by any Tsar who ever lived.”<sup>41</sup>

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”<sup>42</sup>

## VII

In a volume, recently published under the title *The God That Failed*, six ex-Communists, all intellectuals, have described “the journey into Communism, and the return”. These “studies in Communism” give the reader an insight into the factors which led to the conversion of the writers to Communism, followed some years later by their disillusionment and their breaking away from the Communist apparatus. One of these, Arthur Koestler, who, besides being a member of the Communist Party, stayed in the

40. *The Making of a State*.

41. Edward Crankshaw: *Op Cit*, p. 216.

42. *Matthew* 16; 26.



Soviet Union for one year, half of which he spent travelling, says:

"At no time and in no country have more revolutionaries been killed or reduced to slavery than in Soviet Russia."<sup>43</sup>

André Gide, a well-known French author, who once thought that from the Communist experiment in Russia "the only salvation for humanity would come," and who after a visit to Russia in 1936 "came back utterly disillusioned," said:

"Although the long-heralded dictatorship of the proletariat has not materialized there is nevertheless dictatorship of one kind—dictatorship of the Soviet bureaucracy. It is essential to recognize this and not to allow oneself to be bamboozled....To think for oneself is to run the risk of being accused of being counter-revolutionary, and then—if one is a Party member—one is expelled and there follows the probability of Siberia....One might perhaps have accepted the absence of personal and intellectual freedom in Russia today if at least there had been evidence that the material progress of the masses was being gradually, if slowly, achieved. But this is far from being the case and, on the contrary, it is evident that all the most reprehensible features of capitalist society are being re-established."<sup>44</sup>

Yet another, Stephen Spender, an English poet and

43. *The God That Failed*, p. 79.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 187-190.

literary critic, records his "conclusion" to be as follows:

"The Communist Parties of the world, as they are organized today, could not make a better world. They might even make a far worse one. The reason why I think this is that too much power is concentrated in the hands of too few people. These few people are so protected from criticism of their conduct on any except Party lines that neither they themselves nor anyone else is protected from their worst human qualities: savagery, vindictiveness, envy, greed and lust for power."<sup>45</sup>

Douglas Hyde, a British ex-Communist who worked on the Communist London daily, *The Daily Worker*, describes in his autobiography, just published, how he was led to renounce Communism and "to embrace the Christian faith against which he had fought so long and so bitterly". Explaining how Communism thrives on disbelief, he says:

"It is precisely the existence of that vacuum which gives communism its chance. Communism, I believe, has had its origins in precisely that spiritual vacuum which exists all over what once was Christendom.... Communism is the child of unbelief. Bad social conditions are only the things on which it feeds. And that is why communism has been able to take what is essentially a religious instinct and to use it for evil ends, take good qualities and use them for evil too...."

45. *Ibid.*, p. 269.



"I know from experience that many good people annually go into the Party. But after accepting an evil creed how can their lives fail to become evil too? The 'steel-hardened' cadre is an artificial product, he is something made and moulded by Marxism, often from some of the best materials, into something which is perhaps the most deadly thing on earth today. For the 'steel-hardened cadre' there are no spiritual values, no moral or ethical considerations. No human compassion influences his Marxist judgment, neither love nor pity nor patriotism has any room in his make-up, nor has truth nor honour, except within his immediate circle of comrades. Conscience has become something which prompts him to lie, to deceive, to betray. Communism has become an end in itself and that end will always justify the means."<sup>46</sup>

### VIII

The ultimate goal of Marxism is the bringing about of a classless society through the dictatorship of the proletariat and the "liquidation" or "extermination" of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois classes. "Loot the looters," is one of the Communist slogans.

"Working through non-violence," said Gandhiji, on the other hand, "we will not kill capitalists, big or small, though they will no longer be able to intimidate or exploit the poor." "I do not rule out legislative measures," he went on to say, "in respect

46. *I Believed*, p. 289-291.

of economic changes. The commission to be given to the capitalists will be fixed by legislation. I wish not to kill them but to make full use of their talents. Trusteeship is the ultimate ideal I have conceived for the capitalists. I wish them to accept this status voluntarily. If some of them, however, refuse to part with anything which they call their own, they will be compelled—in our scheme of things—by force of legislation to part with them. The capitalists, who are in a minority, will have to submit to the will of the majority. There are several things I wish to deprive them of—e. g. titles and class consciousness. I do not, however, wish to confiscate their property; I only want a just and right use of it."<sup>47</sup>

He did not divide the poor and the rich into two clear-cut sections—good and evil. Good and bad men are to be found in both the classes. "There are industrious rich and industrious poor," said Ruskin, "as there are idle rich and idle poor."<sup>48</sup> The rich, as individuals, are not beyond redemption. "If it has been possible for me to improve," argued Gandhiji, "how can I possibly presume the utter impossibility of other people undergoing improvement?" Ahimsa, he told a co-worker, required a double faith—faith in God and also faith in man.<sup>49</sup> To say that the rich are by birth evil and cannot improve is, according to Gandhiji, like the Sana-

47. BKK, pp. 133-135.

48. *A Crown of Wild Olive*.

49. S. Jesudason's article in RG, p. 132.



tanists' argument that untouchability attaches to a class of persons by birth and cannot be eradicated by any means whatsoever. Human nature is in Gandhiji's view essentially good, just as in the Communists' view it is essentially evil. Had it been evil in fact, there would not have been so much selfless love, service and sacrifice since the very beginning of the world.

As far back as in 1924 Gandhiji clearly stated his attitude towards Bolshevism: "I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is.... But I do know that, in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short—violent—cuts to success.... I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is therefore really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself."<sup>50</sup>

The Communists also seem to have understood him correctly as being of not much use to them, and, in their International Programme of 1928, they issued the following definite instructions:

"Gandhism is more and more becoming an ideology directed against mass revolution. It must be strongly combated by Communism."

In the course of a comparative study of Gandhi and Stalin, Louis Fischer remarks:

"Generalissimo Stalin and Mahatma Gandhi exemplify the antithesis between dictatorship and democracy. It is the greatest antithesis in the modern world.... Gandhi's life is an open book. Stalin

50. *YI*, 11-12-1924.

lives behind a thick curtain. No dictator comes close to his subjects.... The more Gandhiesque a democracy the less Stalinist and Hitlerite it is.... Gandhism does not mix with Hitlerism or Stalinism."<sup>51</sup>

51. *Gandhi and Stalin*, pp. 5, 20, 33, 46.

Cf. "He was not anti-Marxist. He was too constructive. He merely was poles apart from being a Marxist."—George Catlin's article in *Mahatma Gandhi* (ed.) by S. Radhakrishnan, p. 371.



## SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

1. *Economic interpretation of history not acceptable; all wars are not class wars.* 2. *Religion and humanism.* 3. *The power of God to undo wrongs.* 4. *Spiritual interpretation as ancient as religious consciousness.* 5. *God—The Great Master-Actor.*

### I

GANDHIJI was not in agreement with what in Marxian terminology is known as "the economic interpretation of history", which propounds the doctrine that "the driving force is not the thoughts and wills of men, but changes of climates, discoveries of raw materials, and the inventions of new technical processes which determine the course of history.... Thus even the activity of inventing or creating is not, as it appears to be, a spontaneous mental activity, but is a function or by-product of environmental circumstances."<sup>1</sup>

"I do not believe," said Gandhiji, "that it is *Prakriti* which originates and governs the thought-processes of *Purusha*."<sup>2</sup> He believed in the power of

1. C. E. M. Joad: *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics*, p. 667.

2. BKK, p. 152.

the spirit of man to shape its environment to some extent and thus affect the course of history. "I do not consider economic factors to be the source of all the evils in the world," he added. "Nor is it correct to trace the origin of all wars to economic causes. What were the causes of the last War? Insignificant ones. When the present War started, Chamberlain, who had till then bent all his energies on averting a war, changed his opinion overnight, because presumably he was afraid of losing the support of his party if at that stage he sought to keep England out of the war. A better statesman in his place, I believe, would have succeeded in averting the war even then. Was not Helen the cause of the Trojan War? But why go so far? The Rajput wars, which belong to modern history, had never their origin in economic causes."<sup>3</sup>

On this point, Gandhiji has the strong support of Radhakrishnan who, in the course of a penetrating analysis of Marxism, dealing with the Marxian theory that "the history of all societies that existed up to our time is the history of class struggles,"<sup>4</sup> remarks:

"History, however, is not a mere record of class struggles. Wars between nations have been more frequent and violent than domestic struggles, and in the earlier history of mankind tribes and towns fought with one another. The feeling of nationality is stronger than class consciousness in the present war. All

3. *Ibid*, p. 155.

4. Mark and Engels: *The Communist Manifesto*.



through history the rulers and the ruled, the rich and the poor, fought side by side against the enemies of the country. We hate foreign workers more than we do our own capitalist employers. There are wars of religion, such as the wars for and against the Reformation which went on in Europe for two centuries.... Marxists, with a few exceptions, are fighting today for the capitalist states to which they happen to belong.... The conflicts between the Hindu and the Muslim in India, or between the Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, are not manifestations of class struggles. There are class struggles and civil wars, but there are wars of religions and nations also. The latter have been more decisive for human evolution. Again, it is not historically correct to argue that war is the inevitable consequence of capitalism.... To represent history as a series of internal struggles, to ignore the forces of race, religion and patriotism, is to oversimplify the complex problem of human evolution."<sup>5</sup>

A British thinker, probing deeply into "the materialist theory of history", remarks:

"The theory, roughly, is this: that all the important things in history are rooted in an economic motive. In short, history is a science; a science for the search for food. Now I desire, in passing only, to point out that this is not merely untrue, but actually the reverse of truth. It is putting it too feebly to say that the

5. *Religion and Society*, p. 38-9.

history of man is not only economic. Man would not have any history if he were only economic. The need for food is certainly universal, so universal that it is not even human.... The economic motive is not merely inside all history; it is actually outside all history. It belongs to Biology or the science of Life; that is, it concerns things like cows that are not so very much alive. Men are far too much alive to get into the science of anything; for them we have made the art of history. To say that human actions have depended on economic support is like saying that they have depended on having two legs. It accounts for action, but not for such varied action; it is a condition, but not a motive; it is too universal to be useful.... There would be no history if there were only economic history. All the historical events have been due to the twists and turns given to the economic instinct by forces that were not economic."<sup>6</sup>

To sum up:

"The emphasis on the importance of economic conditions is correct; the suggestion that they are exclusively determinant of history is incorrect."<sup>7</sup>

Dealing with the assertion by the Marxists of the mastery of matter over spirit, the same British writer observes:

"All revolution is the mastering of matter by the spirit of man, the emergence of that human authority

6. G. K. Chesterton: *A Miscellany of Men*, p. 60-3.

7. S. Radhakrishnan: *Op Cit*, p. 35.



within us which, in the noble words of Sir Thomas Browne, 'owes no homage unto the sun'.<sup>8</sup>

If ideas have no important place in the shaping of man and his history, and if these latter in their origin and main currents are the resultants of an interplay of material forces, why need there be such prodigious efforts after propaganda aimed at the conversion of men to the Communist ideology? Indeed that propaganda, by its very nature, presupposes the power of men to shape their own conduct in conformity with their beliefs.

## II

The Marxists are sworn enemies of religion which, in the words of Marx, is "the sob of the oppressed creature", "the heart of a heartless world", "the opium of the poor". "The first word of religion is a lie," said Engels. "Religion," said Lenin, "is one of the aspects of spiritual oppression." The Russian State is noted for its hostility to religion, though during the last war, for reasons of expediency, it made a truce with the Churches, which at best was temporary. "Religion, from the communist point of view, is a gigantic deception." "Since it is the aim of a religion to promote the spiritual development of the individual it is obvious that in a communist state, in which the interests of the individual are subordinated to those of the state, all religious beliefs must be discouraged. Nothing must be allowed to compete with the individual's loyalty

8. G. K. Chesterton: *Op Cit*, p. 77.

and devotion to the state. The attitude of communists to religion is in keeping with their belief that consciousness is a derivative of matter."<sup>9</sup>

Religion, on the other hand, was, to Gandhiji, the rudder of the ship of life. "The root meaning of religion," said he, "is 'that which binds.' The root meaning of its Sanskrit equivalent, *dharma*, is 'that which holds.' It sustains a person as nothing else does. It is rock-bottom fundamental morality. When morality incarnates itself in a living man it becomes religion, because it binds, it holds, it sustains him in the hour of trial."<sup>10</sup> "My life is governed by religion. I have said that even my politics are derived from my religion. I never lost sight of the principle that governs my life when I began dabbling in politics."<sup>11</sup> He asked the sceptic "to reinstate religion in his heart". "When you take religion you take all. Religion must govern all life."<sup>12</sup>

The tirade of the Marxists is, in fact, directed against dogmatic religion which they wish to "suppress" if possible. Their preachings on social happiness, nevertheless, "are not without the spirit of religion."<sup>13</sup> Why should one person sacrifice his or her own happiness for that of others? Why

9. Kenneth Walker: *Op Cit*, p. 178-9.

10. MCG.

11. *Ibid.*

12. CG, p. 53.

13. S. Radhakrishnan: *Op Cit*, p. 69. Cf. "The real meaning of our lives can be found only by relating them to some great design or purpose which lies outside ourselves."—Kenneth Walker: *Meaning and Purpose*, p. 14.



should people stint themselves for the sake of the common good of society? Why should the present generation tighten the belts in order that the generations to come may be able to live a happier life? Herein lies the true spirit of religion, the essence of which lies in self-transcendence, self-forgetfulness, self-effacement, rising above one's own narrow egoism, spending oneself in the service of the larger group, and seeking to merge oneself in the vaster Reality—call it God or the Infinite.

Gandhiji had just this consideration in mind when, in 1934, he said about Pandit Jawaharlal: "He keeps me in his pocket. Two men do not necessarily put the same thing in identical language. Though the goal is the same, our approaches to it are different. We are aware of this difference. He tells me that he does not like my religiosity, my spirituality. Though he is a deeply religious man, and spiritual too, he uses an exaggerated language."<sup>14</sup> A man, who wears himself out in the disinterested service of humanity, rises above all considerations of the self, and employs none but the purest means for the furtherance of the cause he espouses, has undoubtedly the spirit of religion in him, whether he describes himself as religious or not.

The present reaction against 'religion'—especially among those who are earnest searchers after Truth—is due to the travesty and abuse of religion by its so-called protagonists who, in its name, set the seal of approval on inhuman customs, the differentiation

between high and low, and the exploitation of man by man. Such practices, repugnant as they are to the head and heart of enlightened humanity, can never form part of religion and are plainly irreligious. Religion, which in fact is worship of God, can never allow, much less approve, the suppression and exploitation of man whom "God has created in His own image."<sup>15</sup> "Religion," says Radhakrishnan, "should be the relentless enemy of oppression, aggression and injustice. When it condones any of these things, when it compromises with power and prestige, when it patches up peace with the forces of evil, it becomes poor, unreal and nerveless. Religion is revolution or nothing."<sup>16</sup>

However, says he, "the practical rejection of religion with which Marxism is now identified seems to be needless. Simply because our interests are social, it does not follow that we should cut ourselves off from the spiritual. Spiritual awareness and social efficiency are not only consistent but also complementary. To ignore the spiritual is to restrict one's capacity for social work."<sup>17</sup>

Humanism thus is a part of religion but not a substitute for it.

"In essence religion is spiritual redemption and not social reform. Sanctity and holiness may imply

15. *Genesis* 1; 27.

16. Introduction to *Among the Great* by Dilip Kumar Roy, p. xiv-xv.

17. *East and West in Religion*, p. 105-6.

14. MCG.



service and fellowship, but cannot be equated with them."<sup>18</sup>

Gandhiji derived his love of man from his love of God. "My trust is solely in God," he said. "And I trust men only because I trust God."<sup>19</sup>

### III

There is the same wide divergence between the two ideologies in respect of God—who is anathema to the Marxists, and a haughty denial of whose existence is the badge of their tribe. "There is no God," say the schoolchildren in Rumania as they greet their teacher in the morning. "There is no God, and there never was," replies the teacher.

To Gandhiji, on the other hand, God is "the Maker of us all". He alone is; nothing and no one else is. Everything else is illusion."<sup>21</sup> "God is all-powerful. Just as He has a purpose for the universe, He has a purpose for every particle of life too—for man as well as the ant."<sup>22</sup> "We must not be overwhelmed by difficulties, however great they may be, but trust God to solve them. We must be humble enough to know that it is He who gets His work done through men and women, who are mere instruments in the hands of that

18. S. Radhakrishnan: *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 73.

Cf. "Few people will be able to make a satisfactory religion out of the worship of humanity."—Kenneth Walker: *Op Cit*, p. 146.

19. YI, 4-12-1924.

20. YI, 20-12-1928.

21. CG, p. 35.

22. *Ibid*, p. 28.

great Actor. We must completely surrender ourselves to Him. Sudama had to give up even that handful of rice he had kept back for himself before he could please God. If we surrender our all at His feet in that spirit of utter self-effacement, He will surely lead us to our goal."<sup>23</sup> "God is the help of the helpless. The chosen of God are not the rich but the poor, the most persecuted. If we go to the Bible, it was said of poor Lazarus that in his lifetime he received evil things: but after his death he was comforted. Of the rich man it was said: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God!' The rich man could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but Lazarus could."<sup>24</sup>

Every mission in life to him was God-given. As he said during the internment in the Agakhan Palace: "It is God that impels me to do whatever I am doing. Otherwise a weak man that I am, what strength have I got to fight a large empire like this? Or what strength have the people of India who haven't got even a lathi?"<sup>25</sup> "I have no knowledge of God's will for the future," he said during the 21 days' fast taken at the same place in February, 1943. "Even my disappearance cannot be called an evil result. It only means that He wishes to get His work done through other instruments of His will. We have no right to criticise the acts of the

23. *Ibid*, p. 45.

24. *Ibid*, p. 99.

25. BKK, p. 57.



Almighty.”<sup>26</sup> “God, the Omniscient, knows me through and through.”<sup>27</sup> He once concluded a talk with an ardent prayer: “God is my only refuge. Whatever Thou art doing and wilt do, O Lord, will be for the good. I must submit to Thy will, and not Thou to mine. This is what my inner voice tells me.”<sup>28</sup> In a crisis during the fast he tried to put heart into doctors by saying: “I am at the disposal of the Almighty. I have placed myself entirely in His hands. He will take me away, if He wills. In that case I am ready to depart. He will, however, keep me if He wants to take further work from me.”<sup>29</sup> At the end of the fast, in reply to a plea against its resumption he said: “You should address this appeal to God. I shall have to dance to His tune. It was at His behest that I undertook the fast. I am entirely at His disposal.”<sup>30</sup> He said both during and after the fast at New Delhi in January, 1948: “If God has finished with the use of this body, none can save me. If, on the other hand, He still wants to use it, nothing and no one can kill me.”<sup>31</sup>

He had implicit faith in God's judgment, before whose throne individuals as well as groups would have to answer for their deeds. “God, who wants in us a spirit of dedication and can look into the

26. *Ibid*, p. 208.

27. *Ibid*, p. 216.

28. *Ibid*, p. 221.

29. *Ibid*, p. 223.

30. *Ibid*, p. 243.

31. P. B. Chandwani's article in *RG*, p. 59.

inmost recesses of the heart, will deal with us according to our deserts.”<sup>32</sup> At his trial for sedition in March, 1922, he said out of the deepest anguish of his soul: “I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history.”<sup>33</sup> His fast of February, 1943, as he wrote to the Viceroy, was, “on my part meant to be an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice which I have failed to secure from you.”<sup>34</sup> The campaign of calumny, which the Government had started against him in India and abroad, hurt him very deeply. “It seems they have hatched a conspiracy to blacken me before the world. They won't stop short of untruth. Their work proceeds with the help of fraud, force, falsehood and flattery. But God, who is ever-present, knows the facts.”<sup>35</sup> “The Government may not listen,” he wrote after the termination of the fast, “but there is a Ruler greater than these earthly rulers, who listens to everybody. He is the help of the helpless.”<sup>36</sup>

He had an unshakable faith in the will and the capacity of God to right the wrong and undo the injustice prevalent in the world. “God is above the devil and above all of us. He will foil all the wicked

32. *TGC*, p. 58.

33. *YL*, 23-3-1922.

34. Letter to Lord Linlithgow, dated 7-2-1943.

35. *BKK*, p. 79.

36. *Ibid*, p. 245.



devices of man.”<sup>37</sup> He summed up this faith in a letter written to an English friend at a time when, as he put it, “my own power of endurance is being tested beyond my capacity.” Having poured out his own grief, he said:

“But, in spite of the blackness of the horizon, I have no sense of despair in me. I believe in the existence of a beneficent Power that overrides and upsets all human plans. It ever produces order out of chaos, and redresses wrongs in spite of the tyranny of tyrants.”<sup>38</sup>

#### IV

This may be called the “Spiritual Interpretation of History”, as opposed to the “materialist” one. It is, as a matter of fact, as ancient as the rise of religious consciousness in the heart of man. A seer of the Upanishad boldly declared: “It is Truth alone that triumphs, and never the Untruth.”<sup>39</sup> The Gita spoke of God incarnating Himself into the world “for the establishment of righteousness”.<sup>40</sup> The author of the Mahabharata described in vivid detail the eternal war going on between the forces of good and evil—“the

37. Weekly letter by C. S. in *Harijan*, 19-1-1934.

38. Letter to the late Carl Heath, October, 1934 (Hitherto unpublished).

३९. सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम् । मुण्डकोपनिषत्

Gandhiji described this saying to embody the quintessence of our religion; and he asked men to commit it to memory and imprint it on their hearts. PP, I, p. 355.

40. BG 4; 7, 8.

Pandavas and the Kauravas—and advised men to non-cooperate with the latter.”<sup>41</sup> “Save me from the ocean of misery in the shape of the Kauravas,”<sup>42</sup> was the prayer of Draupadi in the hour of her darkest gloom. On the eve of the War Arjuna, offered a choice between Krishna and the Yadava army, had no hesitation in preferring unarmed Krishna to the armed forces; for, as the author of the Mahabharata remarks: “Where there is *Dharma* (righteousness), there is Krishna; and where there is Krishna, there is victory.”<sup>43</sup>

In the same spirit of faith and humility the Hebrew prophet spoke of the self-destructive nature of Evil: “The wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.”<sup>44</sup> Almost as if paraphrasing this, the author of the Bhāgavata said: “The violent Demon was destroyed by his own wickedness.”<sup>45</sup> And he added: “God is born on this earth in order to curb the unholy pride of the wicked and to shower grace on the righteous.”<sup>46</sup> It suggests that moral laws cannot

41. MCG.

४२. कौरवार्णवमग्नां मामुद्धरस्व जनार्दन । महाभारत-सभापर्व

४३. यतो धर्मस्ततः कृष्णो यतः कृष्णस्ततो जयः ।

महाभारत-भीष्मपर्व ४३; ६०.

Cf. “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”—Psalm 20; 7.

44. Proverbs 11; 5.

४५. हिंस्रः स्वपापेन विहिंसितः खलः । भागवत १०; ७; ३१.

४६. जन्मासतां दुर्मदनिग्रहाय प्रभो विधातः सदनग्रहाय च ।

भागवत १०; १४; २०.



be broken for long with impunity, and that men should look for the causes of their downfall mainly in their own conduct.

Internal purification was, therefore, the key-note of all the activities of Gandhiji. He never missed an opportunity to emphasise "the futility of mere external activity" and the need for "intensive internal development".<sup>47</sup> He wanted the Congress to cease to be "a begging association" and to become "primarily a self-purification association designed to achieve its goal by developing internal strength".<sup>48</sup> The constructive programme fitted into his scheme because it was "the work of internal growth" and helped in "developing strength from within".<sup>49</sup> It was his ambition to make this strength irresistible. It was a sort of prophylaxis. This is another basic principle which occupies a very important place in his philosophy of life and accounts for many of his attitudes and decisions. For instance, he rarely speculated, when taking a decision, as to how the Government would react to it; his sole anxiety was to see that the decision was right from our own point of view—taking into consideration, of course, all factors—moral as well as political. In the course of an explanation of the Patna decision in 1934, he was asked how in his view the Government would react to it. "That means you will shape your policy according to what the Government will say or do.

47. YI, 18-9-1924.

48. YI, 3-7-1924.

49. Congress Presidential Address, 1924.

The idea never crossed my mind as to what the Government would say or do, as I drafted my statement. I only considered whether I am true to myself and to my country. Let us do what we want to."<sup>50</sup> Here is a key to the proper understanding of many of his decisions.

Has not the Gita declared: "The Self alone is the friend of the self and the Self alone is the enemy of the self"?<sup>51</sup> "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain I carry about with me, and never am a real sufferer but by my own fault."<sup>52</sup> Chiang Kai-shek gave expression to the same great truth when he said: "No nation can ruin us, unless we first ruin ourselves." Let us, by our straight conduct, keep God on our side. For, as St. Paul said,<sup>53</sup> "If God be for us, who can be against us?"<sup>54</sup>

## V

Coming to modern times, we have seen how, in the two World Wars fought during the present century,

50. CG, p. 117.

51. BG, 6; 5.

52. St. Bernard.

53. *Romans* 8; 31.

54. Cf.

अरिमित्रं विषं पथ्यं, अवमो धर्मतां व्रजेत् ।

सानुकूले जगन्नाथे सानुकूलं जगत्त्रयम् ॥

Pandit Malaviyaji recited this on greeting Gandhiji during his fast in September, 1932; and Panditji was never tired of repeating it.



several tall poppies were chopped off—absolute monarchs in the first, and dictators in the second—illustrating once again the truth of the saying: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”<sup>55</sup>

Gandhiji wanted us to learn humility from these world-shaking events. “Man is nothing,” said he. “Napoleon planned much and found himself a prisoner in St. Helena. The mighty Kaiser aimed at the crown of Europe and is reduced to the status of a private gentleman. God had so willed it. Let us contemplate such examples and be humble.”<sup>56</sup>

How God—that Great Master-Actor—undertakes and fulfils the task of bringing down the power and pride of potentates has been vividly described by Victor Hugo in his epic, *Les Misérables*, with special reference to the battle of Waterloo:

“Was it possible for Napoleon to win the battle? We answer in the negative. Why? On account of Wellington? On account of Blücher? No; on account of God....

“It was time for this vast man to fall.

“His excessive weight in human destiny disturbed the balance. This individual alone was of more account than the universal group. Such plethoras of human vitality concentrated in a single head,—the world mounting to one man’s brain,—would be fatal to civilization if they endured. The moment had come for

55. *Matthew* 5; 5.

56. *YI*, 9-10-1924.

the incorruptible and supreme equity to reflect; and it is probable that the principles and elements on which the regular gravitations of the moral order as well as of the material order depend, had rebelled. Steaming blood, overcrowded graveyards, mothers in tears, are formidable pleaders. When the earth suffers from an excessive burden, there are mysterious groans from the shadow, which the abyss hears.

“Napoleon had been denounced in the infinite, and his fall was decided.

“He troubled God.

“Waterloo is not a battle, but a change of front on the part of the universe.

“Destiny has such turns as this. Men expect the throne of the world, and perceive St. Helena.

“The shadow of a mighty right hand is cast over Waterloo. It is the day of destiny; and the force which is greater than man produced that day.... Waterloo is the hinge of the nineteenth century. The disappearance of the great man was necessary for the advent of the great age. He, Who is unanswerable, undertook the task. The panic of heroes admits of explanation. In the battle of Waterloo there is more than a storm-cloud,—there is a meteor. God passed by.”

## VI

The tragic fate of the two dictators, whose names within living memory reverberated through the world, provides one more example of how men’s calculations are foiled by a Power greater than man.



A news-sheet announcing the end of the Italian Duce, Mussolini, in April, 1945, said:

"Benito Mussolini is dead. Captured by Italian partisans as he attempted to escape into Switzerland from northern Italy, he was taken before a tribunal (its authority unascertained) and sentenced to death. In the village of Dongo (near Como) the sentence was executed by partisans who machine-gunned him in the back. His mistress, Clara Petacci, who was with him at the time of the attempted escape, was also captured and also killed with the ex-Duce. Their bodies were taken to Milan and subjected to public degradation. After being dragged through the streets they were hung head downward in the public square where thousands spat at and reviled the corpses."<sup>57</sup>

When Hitler read this sheet he is reported to have suddenly dropped his teacup as if it were charged with electricity. He, with his wife, committed double suicide (by poison and bullet), and their bodies were burnt with petrol outside his underground bunker. The man had aspired to surpass Atilla and Genghis Khan. On August 22, 1939, he declared: "Our strength is in our quickness and our brutality. Genghis Khan had millions of women and children killed by his own will and with a gay heart." On November 23, 1939, he proclaimed: "I shall shrink from nothing and shall destroy everyone who is opposed to me." His vanity knew no limit. In 1938, he blustered at the Austrian

57. Michael A. Musmanno: *Ten Days To Die*, p. 216-7.

Chancellor who called on him: "I am the greatest German in all history! Don't forget that, Herr Schuschnigg! I will get all that I want." At one time his sway extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea. He then met his Waterloo in Stalingrad which broke him. And he passed out of the world "unwept, unhonoured and unsung". "There was not one single person who talked about Hitler after his death. Nobody did," said Frau Traudl Junge, his secretary. "Nobody pronounced a eulogy," says the narrator of the story, "no ceremony marked the passing of Germany's supreme steward. No public speech extolled his virtues."<sup>58</sup>

"One who has become blind with the pride of power and self does not see Me, standing ever awake with a rod in His hand," says Krishna to Indra.<sup>59</sup> But "He brings down the pride of those who consider themselves to be the Lords of the world."<sup>60</sup>

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all of his thoughts.... He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity."<sup>61</sup>

"Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

58. *Ibid*, pp. 246-9, 251.

५९. मामैश्वर्यं श्रीमदान्धो दण्डपाणि न पश्यति ।

भागवत १०; २७; १६.

६०. मानं विधुन्वज्जगदीशमानिनाम् । भागवत १०; २७; ६.

61. Psalm 10; 4, 6.



"The lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

"For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low."<sup>62</sup>

\* \* \*

The hero of one of Dumas's novels writes in his last letter: "Tell the angel who will watch over your future destiny, Morel, to pray sometimes for a man who, like Satan, thought himself, for an instant, equal to God; but who now acknowledges, with Christian humility, that God alone possesses supreme power and infinite wisdom."<sup>63</sup>

\* \* \*

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."<sup>64</sup> For, here comes a voice, trumpetlike, echoing down the corridors of time:

अधर्मोऽधते तावत्ततो भद्राणि पश्यति ।

ततः सपत्ताञ्जयति समूलस्तु विनश्यति ॥

(By unrighteousness men prosper, gain what they desire, and triumph over their enemies, but at the end they are cut off at the root and suffer extinction.)<sup>65</sup>

62. *Isaiah* 2; 5, 11, 12.

63. *The Count of Monte-Cristo*.

64. *Mark* 4; 9.

65. Rabindranath Tagore's translation: *Sadhana*, p. 90-1. Cf. "He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity."—*Proverbs* 22; 8.

## "I AM A SOCIALIST"

1. *Views on the rise of the Congress Socialist Party.* 2. *How he gave up all ownership.* 3. *His views on the Socialist programme.* 4. *Response to his message in India.*

"I claim to be a socialist because of my belief and conduct."<sup>1</sup>—Gandhiji.

### I

Though 'Communism' had managed to get some foothold in India in the twenties, the advent of 'Socialism' into the Congress took place towards the end of 1933, with the publication of *Whither India* by Jawaharlal Nehru and his speeches which followed. These created a flutter in Congress circles and questions were put to Gandhiji on the subject at many places during his Harijan Tour. Some of his replies revealed his own approach to 'socialism', and a few extracts from these—from my notes of the conversations—may be of help in the effort at understanding to which this book is devoted.

He said at Raipur on 27-11-1933: "Jawaharlal is opposed to class war as much as I am. On the other hand, though I do not describe myself as a socialist, I too want State control. Only I do not want to

1. CG, p. 124.



dispossess anybody without just cause and except in accordance with the law applicable to such matters. If, as I said at the Round Table Conference in London, I am going to look into the concessions and privileges of the Europeans, shall I abstain from examining those of Indians too? If those who have amassed wealth by unjust means feel apprehensive, I cannot help it. The examination of these concessions and privileges, let me tell you, will be done not by military authorities but by judicial courts or tribunals. Jawaharlal and I are agreed on this point."<sup>2</sup>

To the editor of *The Madras Mail* he said at Madras on 21-12-1933: "The application of socialism to Indian conditions is in the melting pot. Socialism as a cult is well-known. Whether socialism of that undiluted type can govern Indian conditions for generations is a question."<sup>3</sup> Asked for his views about the agrarian movement, he replied: "The tenants, who are putting in labour, have also a right to the land. They must have a just share of the produce of their labour.... The actual holder of the land must be one who works in the sweat of his brow."<sup>4</sup>

The night before, in the course of a long talk with Shri K. M. Munshi, Gandhiji had stated at length his views on Communism in India: "Jawaharlal does not stand for Russian Communism. Those who fritter away their energy in excitement will not be able to

2. MCG.

3. CG, p. 52.

4. CG, p. 53.

do much. There is no atmosphere for it. The movement today is confined to a few educated people.... There is not much life in the Communist movement in India at present. It is my implicit belief that India will not be able to imbibe Communism, and that Lenin's cult will not take root in this soil. The Russians are fighters, whereas our people cannot even handle arms. The Communism preached by Lenin, therefore, cannot make much headway here. Whatever strength our people have got today has come through satyagraha, howsoever indifferent it has been."<sup>5</sup>

In May, 1934, the first All India Congress Socialist Conference was held at Patna; and the socialist programme, adopted in the form of a resolution, was later printed as a pamphlet. Invited to express his opinion on it, Gandhiji wrote to Shri M. R. Masani on 14th June:

"I welcome the rise of the Socialist Party in the Congress. But I can't say that I like the programme as it appears in the printed pamphlet. It seems to me to ignore Indian conditions, and I do not like the assumption underlying many of its propositions which go to show that there is necessarily antagonism between the classes and the masses or between the labourers and the capitalists, such that they can never work for mutual good. My own experience covering a fairly long period is to the contrary. What is necessary is that labourers or workers should know their rights and should also know how to assert them. And since there has never been any right without a

5. MCG.



corresponding duty, in my opinion, a manifesto is incomplete without emphasising the necessity of performance of duty and showing what that duty is."<sup>6</sup>

He met Socialist friends at Poona, Ahmedabad and Banaras and had long discussions with them. He told them with a banter: "Look here, I am a real socialist, because I have given up everything to serve the poor. You, many of you sons of well-to-do parents, want to deprive others of their properties before giving up yours. That I can't appreciate!" They retorted by saying that Gandhiji's socialism was 'sentimental' while their own was 'scientific'.

The following resolution was passed by the Congress Working Committee at Bombay on 18-6-1934 at the instance of Gandhiji:

"It is necessary, in view of loose talk about confiscation of private property and class war, to remind Congressmen that the Karachi resolution, which lays down certain principles, neither contemplates confiscation of private property without just cause or compensation nor advocacy of class war. The Working Committee is further of opinion that confiscation and class war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-violence. At the same time the Working Committee is of opinion that the Congress does contemplate wiser and juster use of private property so as to prevent exploitation of the landless poor and also contemplates a healthier relationship between capital and labour."

6. Hitherto unpublished.

At Poona, on 25-6-1934, in the course of a talk with two Socialists, he said: "I have read your programme. There are two or three things in it incapable of being achieved without violence, i. e. without usurpation. Never compromise on fundamental principles.... Your very wording shows that you can't achieve the thing without violence. Jawaharlal would have consulted me, he would have waited for my criticism, and not hurled this programme on the Congress and the country<sup>8</sup>.... There need be no class war.... If Jawaharlal were out, your programme would not have been framed as you have framed it. He would have got it altered, or there would have been a division.... I claim to have as much regard for Jawaharlal as any of you. In every step I take I think of him. I have before myself a picture of Jawaharlal, and think of what he would say. Jawaharlal is my heir and successor so far as my hold on the Congress is concerned. I am discharging his stewardship."<sup>9</sup>

Explaining the need of the Working Committee's resolution quoted above, Gandhiji said at a meeting of Congressmen at Poona on 20-6-1934: "The Karachi resolution, which was passed at the instance of Jawaharlal, contains a guarantee to private property. Jawaharlal mentioned devastation of property, which is different from the confiscation now talked about.... The Karachi resolution says that no one will be dispossessed of his property without just cause and

8. He was in jail at the time.

9. CG, p. 124-5.



without adequate compensation; whereas these people say today that the landlords should be starved and the land should be distributed among the peasants. Jawaharlal has used many qualifying adjectives in respect of class war, whereas these people now say that class war is inevitable. How can it be consistent with the creed of non-violence?"<sup>10</sup>

"Many have despaired of resisting me," he wrote in the statement of 17th September, 1934, announcing his decision to retire from the Congress. "This is a humiliating revelation to me, a born democrat. I make that claim, if complete identification with the poorest of mankind, longing to live no better than they, and a corresponding conscious effort to approach that level to the best of one's ability, can entitle one to make it."

"By God!" said Walt Whitman, "I will accept nothing which all cannot have the counterpart of on the same terms."

## II

Of this effort he once said, years ago, in a talk: "I used to think that I was practising at the bar for the good of the community. Later on the question forced itself upon me: 'Why should I not give to the community the time I spend on the practice?' I therefore gave up the practice. I had savings which I used for the service of the community. Later I was faced with the conundrum: 'When, after all, the money is to be spent for public purposes, will it not

10. MCG.

be better for me to create a trust of it?' So I created a trust, but I did not remain in it. I was a trustee neither at Phoenix nor at Sabarmati, where I had no more than moral authority, and the trustees could have any day turned me out, had they chosen to do so. Having cultivated the habit of constantly examining my own conduct, I went on removing the flaws as they came to my notice one after another. I have been trying to instil this idea into the minds of public workers ever since my return from South Africa."<sup>11</sup>

At the core of this spirit of renunciation was the unshakable faith in God and complete dependence on His mercy. "That is real independence," he said. "Why should we be dependent on money? Why should we not seek the help of God rather than that of the money kept in reserve? That is the touchstone on which I would test our conduct. Years ago I took out an insurance policy for Rs. 10,000 in Bombay, at the instance of my brother. Later, when my outlook changed, I wrote from South Africa to Revashankerbhai to allow the policy to lapse, with the result that I had to forego the premiums which I had already paid for seven years. Why, I felt, should I not rely on God rather than on money? I asked myself: 'Do you wish to serve the people or your own self? If you wish to serve the people, why should you need to possess any money?' We must produce some men who will voluntarily become and remain penniless."<sup>12</sup>

11. MCG.

12. Ibid.



"I own absolutely nothing," he told Mr. John Hoyland in 1931, after narrating how in South Africa he had decided one night to give up his ownership over all his belongings. "And from that night's decision there came into my experience four things, life, power, freedom and joy."<sup>13</sup>

"I never feel that I have lost what I gave away," he remarked on another occasion. "I have said that I am the richest man in the world. I have never felt the want of money."<sup>14</sup>

"And having nothing, he hath all."<sup>15</sup>

"How can it be that one who hath nothing, neither raiment, nor house, nor home, nor bodily tence, nor servant, nor city, should yet live tranquil and contented?" said Epictetus. "Behold God hath sent you a man to show you in act and deed that it may be so. Behold me! I have neither city nor house nor possessions nor servants: the ground is my couch; I have no wife, no children, no shelter, nothing but earth and sky, and one poor cloak. And what lack-I yet? am I not untouched by sorrow, by fear? am I not free?... When have I laid anything to the charge of God or Man? when have I accused any? hath any of you seen me with a sorrowful countenance? And in what wise treat I those of whom you stand in fear and awe? Is it

13. John Hoyland's article in IGL, p. 88.

14. MCG.

15. Sir H. Wolton. Cf.

अनन्तं वत मे वित्तं यस्य मे नास्ति किञ्चन ।

not as slaves? Who when he seeth me doth not think that he beholdeth his Master and his King?"<sup>16</sup>

### III

His message fell not on deaf ears in India. "I admit," he said, "I have been instrumental in making paupers of doctors, lawyers and merchants. I do not repent. On the contrary I rejoice that many have embraced poverty voluntarily."<sup>17</sup> "I have reasons to cherish very high hopes with regard to India," he said in the course of another talk. "Here several lawyers, doctors and landlords have in recent years embraced voluntary poverty. Their number is growing. Many of the others too are coming up by and by, and are making sacrifices according to their capacity."<sup>18</sup>

16. *The Golden Sayings of Epictetus*, p. 100-1.

17. Weekly Letter by C. S. in *Harijan*, 17-11-1933.

18. MGC.



## A PLEA FOR PLAIN LIVING

1. *Voluntary poverty.* 2. *Voluntary suffering.*
3. *Havoc wrought by the 'high standard of living'.* 4. *Does superabundance of wealth bring peace or happiness?* 5. *Gandhiji's asceticism; its benefits.*

## I

OBJECTION has been often taken to Gandhiji's so-called "love and praise of poverty and suffering and ascetic life". With reference to the 'poverty' which Gandhiji praised, it ought to be qualified by the adjective 'voluntary' which makes all the difference in the world. In the present age no one has fought more against the enforced poverty of the Indian masses; for this compulsory reduction to a sub-human level of subsistence corrodes the souls and minds of men who must, according to Gandhiji, be ensured a minimum standard of living, not as a free gift but in return for work done by them. It is, to quote his own words, "the *deliberate* and *voluntary* restriction of wants which promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service."<sup>1</sup> (Italics mine). Voluntary poverty was, in his view, essential for one wishing to serve both God and humanity; and his own ambition was to identify

1. Quoted by Nehru in *An Autobiography*, p. 510.

himself with the lowliest of the low, the poorest of the poor.

He was not alone in seeing a connection between voluntary poverty and the development of the soul. "Man cannot serve both God and Mammon,"<sup>2</sup> said Jesus. "Possessions are our limitations,"<sup>3</sup> said Tagore. One's thoughts are bound to be coloured by one's hankering for riches. "Our philosophy is where our treasure lies,"<sup>4</sup> said Will Durant. In the present age men are "demented with the mania of obtaining", to quote the caustic remark of Walt Whitman. Voluntary poverty has been embraced by all those in the world who started on the path of adventure to seek, as the Buddhists put it, "the welfare of the soul and the happiness of the mass of men".<sup>5</sup> To the Jesuits, poverty and obedience were the cardinal rules of discipline. And do not even the Communists, who discard religion, insist upon the adoption of voluntary poverty by members of their party? Voluntary poverty need not be equated with mediaeval faith or with obscurantism.

## II

As for voluntary suffering, Gandhiji deemed it essential for the same reasons. "He who does not weep does not see,"<sup>6</sup> said Victor Hugo. "He who suffers

2. *Matthew* 6; 24.

3. *Sadhana*, p. 16.

4. *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 90.

५. आत्मनो हिताय जगतः सुखाय च ।

6. *Les Misérables*.



himself," said Romain Rolland, "has a chance of awakening to the suffering of others."<sup>7</sup> Marie Antoinette, the Queen of Louis XVI of France, on being told that the people in Paris had no bread to eat, asked: "Why do they not eat cake then?"—not because she was heartless, but because she had never seen or experienced the life of the poor.

Yet Gandhiji positively asked national workers to satisfy their bare minimum needs (of particular kinds of food etc.) even if it meant a standard of life higher than that of the poorest. He did so, in order to keep himself fit for service, for his was not a doctrinaire, one-track mind. He was keen about, as he put it, "the simplicity which is still ours largely and which was ours entirely until a few years ago."<sup>8</sup> "We must cultivate a Spartan life," he told me years ago at Sabarmati. The programme of jail-going, taken by itself, required this training. "It would be absurd to expect that a person who is given to too much self-indulgence can endure much suffering or show unusual self-control or behave like the hero when the crisis comes,"<sup>9</sup> writes Nehru. The method of fasting, or 'self-mortification' as it has been called by carping critics, was reserved by Gandhiji solely for himself, and he did not present it for adoption to his political co-workers.

7. *Soul Enchanted*, Vol. II, p. 73.

8. Quoted by P. J. Mehta in *M. K. Gandhi*, p. 95.

9. *An Autobiography*, p. 511.

### III

The adoption of voluntary simplicity, if not poverty, is necessary—as we shall increasingly find with the passage of time—not merely for individual good, but for corporate good also. It will facilitate the implementation of many social and economic measures by the State, ensuring, as it will, the willing co-operation of the people. The gospel of a "high standard of living", brought to us by economic text-books from the West, has done much harm to us, both individuals and groups. Herman Finer, a well-known authority on political science, has thus described what havoc has been wrought by "the greed of man masquerading under the garb of a high standard of living":

"Men are today ruled by the ideal of the High Standard of Living, and perturbed by the knowledge that even with about eight hours' steady work for five-and-a-half days per week, under conditions of severe industrial discipline unknown to their ancestors, the standard is difficult to attain. They are enormously greedy; they meditate upon the depth of their greed; they dignify it by the name of an impersonal title like the 'High Standard of Living'. This greed is at the root of most of the major political problems, domestic and international, of the present day. The notion is current that, above all things, the acquisition and consumption of a great amount of material wealth is man's most proper good."<sup>10</sup>

"We moderns want too many things, and we often

10. *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government*, Vol. I, p. 47.



do not know what these things are,"<sup>11</sup> said Lin Yutang. "Our culture is superficial today, and our knowledge dangerous," wrote Will Durant, "because we are rich in mechanisms and poor in purposes.... We move about the earth with unprecedented speed, but we do not know, and have not thought, where we are going, or whether we shall find our happiness there for our harassed souls."<sup>12</sup> "I believe that plain living is a Christian duty, as well as a patriotic duty,"<sup>13</sup> said Dean Inge, and added: "The low-standard peoples are likely to win in the long run."<sup>14</sup>

No less an authority than the famous historian, Arnold Toynbee, spoke of the corporate benefits of a simple way of life. Speaking in London in May, 1947, he said:

"No doubt we have a far greater capacity to reconstruct as well as to destroy than the Chinese and the Romans had. On the other hand, a simpler social structure has a far greater spontaneous recuperative power than a more complicated one has. When I see our rebuilding programme in Great Britain being retarded by shortages of skilled labour and highly processed materials, and perhaps not least by the mere complication of the administrative machine, my mind goes back to a glimpse that I had in 1923 of a Turkish village reconstructing itself after it had been

11. *With Love and Irony*, p. 68.

12. *The Mansions of Philosophy*, p. x-xi.

13. *More Lay Thoughts of a Dean*, p. 42-3.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

devastated in the last phase of the Graeco-Turkish War of 1919-22. Those Turkish villagers were not dependent on materials or labour from outside, and they were not at the mercy of red tape. They were rebuilding their houses and replacing their household utensils and agricultural implements with their own hands, out of wood and clay within their reach."<sup>15</sup>

Our Prime Minister gave the same wholesome advice, some time back, to prospective but hesitant builders in Delhi not to wait for cement and other materials which were scarce but to start building houses with brick and clay, (to be had in plenty) as our forefathers did.

Leaving aside the fact that superabundance of wealth tends to cramp the soul, the question may be asked whether it leads to peace and happiness of mind or increases the capacity to extract real joy from the world and its objects. Those who have had opportunities to observe the conditions of men rolling in wealth answer the question in the negative. One of these remarks:

"While I neither desire nor expect to see the abolition of private ownership, I see nothing but evil in the hunger to possess exclusively things, the common use of which does not diminish the fund of enjoyment.... The itch to own things for the mere pride of possession is the disease of petty, vulgar minds. 'I do not know how it is,' said a very rich man in my hearing, 'but when I am in London I

15. *International Affairs*, October, 1947, p. 468.



want to be in the country and when I am in the country I want to be in London.' He was not wanting to escape from London or the country, but from himself. He had sold himself to his great possessions and was bankrupt. In the words of a great preacher, 'his hands were full but his soul was empty, and an empty soul makes an empty world.' There was wisdom as well as wit in that saying of the Yloffs that 'he who was born first has the greatest number of old clothes.' It is not a bad rule for the pilgrimage of this world to travel light and leave the luggage to those who take a pride in its abundance."<sup>16</sup>

And another observes:

"Now the structure of modern society is such as to encourage the expression of the possessive impulses to the almost complete exclusion of the creative. We in the West live under a system which, though paying lip service to the religion of Christ, who waged unceasing war upon the possessive impulses—'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for our body, what ye shall put on'—creates a scale of values which counts only in terms of the satisfaction of the possessive impulses, by making income and property the chief criteria of importance and success. The impulses that demand beauty and spaciousness and leisure, spaciousness for romance and leisure for creation, are brushed aside as incompatible with the all-important business of 'getting on', which being

16. Alpha of the Plough: *Windfalls*, p. 61-2.

interpreted means the acquisition of the means for increasing our material possessions....

"But let us grant that the machines gave man leisure. What use is he to make of it? To the working, still more to the overworking, man, leisure is undoubtedly a good; but beyond a certain point freedom from work produces a diminishing return of happiness. Those who are completely freed hasten to commit themselves to a merciless round of pleasure in order to escape from the intolerable task of providing themselves with reasonable occupation; they worship that gloomiest of deities, the god of 'a good time'. Now, servitude to the need for amusement is the most exciting of all the forms of slavery to which human beings have yet subjected themselves. It is significant that the suicide rate among the unemployed rich is the highest of any class in the community."<sup>17</sup>

#### IV

It is easy enough to ridicule Gandhiji's asceticism; but it is also necessary to bear in mind that the strict physical discipline and suffering gave him a power of endurance which left many gaping in surprise. In England, in the winter of 1931, he went about without much additional covering and without even boots or shoes when others shivered with cold in spite of their overcoats and other woollen dresses.

17. C. E. M. Joad: *Counter Attack from the East*, pp. 252, 256.



The same was the case with Socrates of whom Alicibiades said:

"His endurance was simply marvellous when, being cut off from our supplies, we were compelled to go without food—on such occasions, which often happens in times of war, he was superior not only to me but to everybody: there was no one to be compared with him.... His fortitude in enduring cold was surprising. There was a severe frost, for the winter in that region is really tremendous, and everybody else either remained indoors or if they went out had an amazing quantity of clothes, and were well shod, and had their feet swathed in felt and fleeces: in the midst of this, Socrates with his bare feet on the ice and in his ordinary dress marched better than the other soldiers who had shoes, and they looked daggers at him because he seemed to despise them."<sup>18</sup>

18. Plato: *Symposium*.

## RELIGION AND POLITICS

1. *Fundamental unity of life.* 2. *Jesus's reference to God and Caesar—its meaning; the revolutionary nature of Jesus's doctrine.* 3. *Significance of the religious spirit in politics.* 4. *Bad result of the separation of religion and politics.* 5. *Implications of the spiritualization of politics.*

### I

"If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics today encircle us like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out no matter how one tries. I wish to wrestle with the snake," said Gandhiji. "I am trying to introduce religion into politics."<sup>1</sup> To him even the struggle of Indians in South Africa was "a struggle for religious liberty". "By religion I do not mean formal religion, or customary religion," he explained, addressing a meeting of Indians, "but that religion which underlies all religions, which brings us face to face with our Maker."<sup>2</sup>

Years later, to an audience in South India he said: "The whole of my life is saturated with the religious spirit. I could not live for a single second without religion. Many of my political friends

1. Quoted in *Mahatma Gandhi* by Romain Rolland.

2. J. J. Doke: *M. K. Gandhi*.



despair of me, because they say that even my politics are derived from my religion. And they are right. My politics, and all other activities of mine, are derived from my religion. I go further and say that every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion, because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, God rules your every breath. If you recognize that truth, naturally God regulates every activity of yours."<sup>3</sup>

He firmly believed in the "fundamental unity of life", to quote his own words. He wrote to Mr. Horace Alexander in 1926:

"In my own humble opinion, we needlessly divide life into watertight compartments, religious and other; whereas if a man has true religion in him, it must show itself in the smallest details of life. To me sanitation in a community like ours is based upon common spiritual effort. The slightest irregularity in sanitary, social, and political life is a sign of spiritual poverty."<sup>4</sup>

3. MCG. Here is an Englishman's view of him: "When I first saw Mahatma Gandhi at the Round Table Conference in 1931 I asked how far he was saint and how far astute politician. Later I realized that the question was unanswerable: the two aspects were inextricably blended in a singularly complex character. In India saints can be politicians as they could in Medieval Europe."—Kingsley Martin's article in *Mahatma Gandhi* (ed. by S. Radhakrishnan), p. 414.

4. H. G. Alexander: *The Indian Ferment*, p. 227.

## II

While some critics, in the Congress and outside, took Gandhiji to task for introducing religion into the Congress politics which they wished to be confined to *realpolitik* (as the Germans put it), some others rated him, a man of religion, for having strayed into politics and consequently degraded himself. The latter group included some very sincere Christian friends who quoted in their support this saying of Jesus: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."<sup>5</sup>

As a Western author, a Christian, has observed: "All profound utterances have varied facets for diverse minds;"<sup>6</sup> and if it is not profane in a very small man and a non-Christian to put his own interpretation on the sayings of Jesus, these words seem to ask men to challenge the State, if it chooses to take away all their external possession as a penalty for disobedience of its unjust orders, but refuse to submit in spirit to it, because the soul—which, as a spark of the Divine, belongs to God—must obey Him; for, like Jesus, every one of us is "from Him" and has been sent by Him, and is here "not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me."<sup>7</sup>

5. Mark 12; 17.

6. Will Durant: *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 217.

7. John 7; 29. 6; 38. Gandhiji provided an example of such challenge: "And if I am told that all this was due to my preaching satyagraha, my answer is that I would preach satyagraha all the more forcibly for that, so long as I have breath in me, and tell the people that they would



Even taking the words in their current meaning, they only seem to indicate the unwillingness of Jesus to raise the standard of a political revolt or to launch a no-tax campaign against the Roman rulers. It seems he wished men to pay their dues to the State where they were legitimate. Moreover, his so-called injunction against politics could not have been intended for all times and for all countries. In India too there have been great religious men—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, for instance—who asked their disciples, for very good reasons, presumably, from their own point of view, to engage in humanitarian service but not in politics. And yet, as Vincent Sheean has recently remarked, “the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, . . . although it was never political, . . . had vast political effects not included in its conscious programme. . . . The call to reform, restore and revive India, to help India in every possible way for human effort, was essentially Vivekananda’s call, and of all the makers of modern

answer O’Dwyerean insolence, not by opening shops by reason of threats of forcible sales, but by allowing the tyrant to do his worst and let him sell their all but their unconquerable souls.”—YI, 16-6-1920.

Socrates put forth the same challenge when he said: “Anytus and Melitus [his accusers] may put me to death: to injure me is beyond their power . . . . If such be the will of God, so let it be.”

And so did Epictetus: “Kings and tyrants have armed guards wherewith to chastise certain persons, though they be themselves evil. But to the Cynic conscience gives this power—not arms and guards.”—*The Golden Sayings of Epictetus*, p. 104-5.

India, his was the most classless and purely patriotic voice.”<sup>8</sup>

Thus political activity could be avoided, but not the political results of an activity which, though studiously religious and social, brought about great purity, co-operation and solidarity among the people and thereby added to their corporate strength. As Gandhiji explained, “There has been no really religious movement in the world without its social, economic and political consequences.”<sup>9</sup>

Nor would it be correct to assume that Jesus dealt only with religion and left other phases of life untouched. As a Christian writer has observed, “Christ was the centre and beginning of a new world of man.”<sup>10</sup> H. G. Wells, speaking of “his resolve to revolutionize the world”,<sup>11</sup> draws pointed attention to “its tremendous challenges to the established habits and institutions”.<sup>12</sup> He explains how “the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seems to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and cleansing of the life of our struggling race, an utter cleansing, without and within.”<sup>13</sup> It was to embrace all spheres of life.

8. Vincent A. Sheean: *Lead, Kindly Light*, p. 372-3.

9. CG, p. 53.

10. F. Warburton Lewis: *Saul of Tarsus*, p. 8.

11. H. G. Wells: *A Short History of the World* (Pelican), p. 157.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 154.



"It was not merely a moral and social revolution that Jesus proclaimed; it is clear from a score of indications that his teaching had a political bent of the plainest sort. It is true that he said his kingdom was not of this world, that it was in the hearts of men and not upon a throne; but it is equally clear that wherever and in what measure his kingdom was set up in the hearts of men, the outer world would be in that measure revolutionized and made new."<sup>14</sup>

### III

Gandhiji's life and thought had shaped under the impact of special circumstances which could not but influence his outlook and determine his line of action. His public life began in South Africa with events which challenged his spirit of manhood, his fellow-feeling for his countrymen, and his sense of justice, as also his religious susceptibilities. If politics are unclean, it is partly because religious men—i. e. God-fearing, truthful, selfless men—have generally kept away from politics; and it is this very consideration that demands of them that they should participate in political affairs and purify these from inside. It was the aim of Gandhiji's political *guru*, Gopal Krishna Gokhale; and the disciple was 'a saint, statesman and patriot' of whom the *guru* said as far back as in 1909:

"I can tell you that a purer, a nobler and a more exalted spirit has never moved on this earth.... He

14. *Ibid*, p. 156.

is a man who may be well described as a man among men, a hero among heroes, a patriot among patriots, and we may well say that in him Indian humanity at the present time has reached its high water mark."<sup>15</sup>

What did this religious spirit of his lead to, in action?

"With him the spirit of religion is everything, the world and its opinion nothing," observed Henry Polak, one of his earliest co-workers in South Africa. "He does not know how to distinguish Hindu from Muslim, Christian from infidel. To him all alike are brothers, fragments of the Divine, fellow-spirits struggling for expression. All he has, he gives. With him self-surrender and absolute sacrifice are demands of his very nature. His deep spirituality influences all round so that no man dares to commit evil in his presence."<sup>16</sup>

Years later George Slocombe, an English journalist, wrote of him:

"I have never met any man more utterly honest, more transparently sincere, less given to egotism, self-conscious pride, opportunism, and ambition which are found in greater or less degree in all the other great political figures of the world."<sup>17</sup>

No arguments from any quarters could possibly move Gandhiji to eschew politics; for it was, to his

15. G. K. Gokhale's speech at the I. N. Congress, 1909—GWKH, p. 14.

16. GWKH, p. 43.

17. *Ibid*, p. 118.



mind, a God-given mission to work for the liberation of subject India and for the propagation of non-violence in the world through India. He was somewhat suspicious of the encomiums from a section of British statesmen and administrators who praised him as a saint but cast aspersions on his political methods and actions. A few days before the Dandi March in 1930 I heard him say, in the course of a discussion at Sabarmati: "If I gave up politics, the Britishers would canonize me!" This was one of the most incisive single sentences uttered by him which it was my privilege ever to hear.

## IV

"Religion," in the opinion of Radhakrishnan, "has weakened man's social conscience and moral sensitivity by separating the things of God from those of Caesar."<sup>18</sup> As a result, the State has been declared to be above all moral obligations, and the most heinous acts—untruth, fraud, deceit, chicanery, tyranny, crime, oppression have been and are being committed in the name of the State. "What scoundrels we should be if we did for ourselves the things we are doing for Italy!" said Cavour. Gandhiji, believing as he did in the supremacy of the moral law, declared "loyalty to the country" to be "always subordinate to loyalty to God".<sup>19</sup> Contrast with this the saying

18. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 46.

19. *YI*, 21-10-1921.

of Machiavelli: "I prefer my country to the salvation of my soul." This has given rise to the pernicious doctrine of "my country, right or wrong", which tries to justify all actions done in the name of the country. Gandhiji, on the other hand, entertained high regard for a man like W. T. Stead who had the moral courage to pray for the defeat of his country in the Boer War because it appeared to him unjust on the part of England to have waged it.

Explaining his own attitude to politics Gandhiji wrote: "I have no secret methods. I know no diplomacy save that of truth. I have no weapon but non-violence."<sup>20</sup> Before Gandhiji came to India, people went about in constant fear of the C. I. D. police. Gandhiji, with his open diplomacy, very much reduced the work of this department as also the fear it excited in the popular mind—both of which partly revived with the re-adoption later of secret methods in the national movement since 1930, in disregard of Gandhiji's own will and instructions.

## V

The following are some of the main implications, according to Gandhiji, of the introduction of religion into politics: (i) Cling to truth at all costs; (ii) 'Do or Die,' but never 'do or kill;' invite suffering on yourselves, but never impose it on the opponent; (iii) Give the opponent due notice in advance of your intention to adopt a certain course of action

20. *YI*, 11-12-1924.



against him; (iv) Criticise the opponent's thoughts and policies but not the opponent himself; under no circumstances revile him; (v) Don't take unfair advantage of his difficulties; (vi) Hunker after a chance to make peace with him at the earliest moment possible, so that you can again co-operate with him on honourable terms; (vii) Try to appeal to and awaken the better part of his nature, and never wish his intransigence to be prolonged so that you may win the glory of martyrdom at his hands and he may be condemned in the public eye; rather pray to God constantly to grant him the capacity to see the Right; (viii) Own up your errors and evil deeds—big and small; (xi) Don't assume an air of self-righteousness; (x) Adopt none but the cleanest methods in elections and don't scramble for the loaves and fishes of office; remember the sayings: "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great;"<sup>21</sup> "Whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all;"<sup>22</sup> "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted;"<sup>23</sup> (xi) Walk in the fear of God and be afraid of no man; (xii) Have the unshakable faith that, in the end, the Right alone will triumph and never the Wrong; (xiii) In the midst of an encircling gloom, pray to the Kindly Light to lead you on; (xiv) Let "one step be enough" for you; don't long to see into the distant

21. *Luke* 9; 48.

22. *Mark* 10; 44.

23. *Matthew* 23; 12.

future; (xv) Let you and your country have the moral courage to stand for the Right against the whole world, if necessary; (xvi) Let your effort be mainly directed to the increase of your own internal cleanliness and strength.



## RIGHT v. DUTY

1. *Right and duty.* 2. *Democracy and parliamentary methods.* 3. *Future India of Gandhiji's conception.*

## I

ONE of the principles which Gandhiji always emphasized, and particularly after the advent of freedom, was the need to think of one's duties first and foremost and leave the rights to take care of themselves, for rights follow upon the fulfilment of one's duties and not *vice versa*. "The true source of rights is duty," said he. "If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they will escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther will they fly."<sup>1</sup> As has been said earlier, Gandhiji believed that the highest religion was also the highest politics. When, therefore, he spoke in terms of religion, he was very often expounding the basic principles of politics—for instance, in the case of right v. duty, as we shall see from the following quotations not from any religious books but from standard books on political science.

"The claim which makes a place for itself in the

1. *YI*, 8-1-1925.

State is 'legitimized' by that acceptance (whether by way of persuasion or forcible imposition) and only by that; and by that fact it becomes a right," says Herman Finer. "When that right, however, is to be validated by actually being administered....a duty is somewhere created....Energy cannot be produced by Governments any more than by any other machine. The State can only transform energy from the less to the more useful form....It cannot guarantee a minimum wage without imposing duties upon employers, or universal education without compelling attendance and raising revenue....As a channel, as the conductor, or, in Stammer's phrase, the 'social manager', the State can but liberate that energy in one direction which it taps in another.... For the demand for rights from the State has ever been a demand for duties by other citizens....In the State whose nature is management or instrumentality, in the Ministrant State of today, the energizing factor of our rights is duty, an inescapable price.... The State cannot give more than it takes: what it gives in Rights, it must take in Duties."<sup>2</sup>

"I ought to have what I enjoy only as the result of the services I perform,"<sup>3</sup> said Harold Laski. "The first term in a definition of rights is the limitation of desires."<sup>4</sup> "I do not exist solely for the State; but neither does the State exist solely for me....The

2. *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government*, Vol. I, p. 22-4.

3. *Grammar of Politics*, p. 87.

4. *Ibid*, p. 90.



rights I have are given to me because I am performing some given duties."<sup>5</sup> "Men must learn to subordinate their self-interest to the common welfare."<sup>6</sup>

"Human society," said Lammenais, "is based upon the sacrifice of man for man, or of each man for all other men; and sacrifice is the very essence of all true society."<sup>7</sup>

"Liberalism has infected the Western mind with the disease of Right-without-Duties,"<sup>8</sup> says Ernest Hocking. It is only children, according to him, who have all rights and no duties. "For the mature persons," he adds, "*there are no unconditional rights.*"<sup>9</sup> "To claim a right is at the same moment to attribute it to others, and their duty to my right is reciprocated in my duties to their rights. For every right receivable, then, there are innumerable duties payable.... Hence the cry of 'my right' should never have been uttered except with the undertone of a vast humility."<sup>10</sup> "Costless rights" he condemns as a "moral toxin".

All rights or liberties, moreover, carry with them the imposition of a certain restraint and are limited by non-violence. For, as Laski says, "Violence and

5. *Ibid*, p. 94.

6. *Ibid*, p. 100.

7. Quoted by Lafcadio Hearn in *Kokoro*, p. 39. Cf. Gandhiji's saying: "The State is the sum total of the sacrifice on its behalf of its members." *YI*, 11-12-1924.

8. *The Lasting Elements of Individualism*, p. 51.

9. *Ibid*, p. 53.

10. *Ibid*, p. 54-5.

freedom are, *a priori*, contradictory terms."<sup>11</sup> "Liberty and violence are antithetic terms."<sup>12</sup> In the phrase 'civil liberty', the term 'civil' means the opposite of 'criminal', i. e. 'violent'.

A State, in which the mass of men is bent on taking the maximum available from the State, i. e. from one's own countrymen, and giving the minimum possible in return, is bound to go to pieces. These men, in the phraseology of the Gita, are 'thieves'.<sup>13</sup> "The wicked who cook for themselves eat sin."<sup>14</sup> "He who does not follow the wheel thus set in motion here below, living in sin, sating his sense, lives, O Partha, in vain."<sup>15</sup> Though stated in terms of religion, this is a law most essential for the political health of a people.

## II

In the present state of society, Gandhiji accepted the parliamentary method and majority rule as the best available consistently with the principle of democracy to which he subscribed whole-heartedly. He worked on this principle within the Congress ever since he joined it after his return from South Africa. Its defects, which can and must be removed, do not vitiate the principle of democracy itself, based as it is on non-violence; for, in democracy we do not chop

11. *Liberty in the Modern State*, p. 114.

12. *Ibid*, p. 120.

13. BG 3; 12.

14. BG 3; 13.

15. BG 3; 16.



off heads but count them. Gandhiji deduced non-violence from truth, and democracy from non-violence. "Today," said he, "my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India."<sup>16</sup> Dealing with the relations between satyagraha and parliamentary methods, Richard Gregg says:

"Mass satyagraha does not abolish legislatures, committees, investigating bodies and conferences. But it controls them, puts them in their proper place, and renders them less capable of doing harm."<sup>17</sup>

Thus the majority rule, in parliamentary government, for example, must not degenerate into tyranny over any group or individual in the minority. In Swaraj, "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together,"<sup>18</sup> said Gandhiji in an interview at the Nagpur session of the Congress in December 1920. "The vision of an armed government bending a minority to its will by a clatter of arms," he wrote, "is a negation of the democratic spirit and progress."<sup>19</sup> It is open to an oppressed minority to have recourse to civil resistance, i. e. self-suffering, *after* its case has been declared to be just by impartial men and all constitu-

16. YI, 26-1-1921. Mrs. Besant, in an article in *Young India* (18-9-1924), said: "I asked him if I was right in thinking that he had said that in the political field he meant by Swaraj Parliamentary Self-government, and he said 'yes'."

17. *Gandhism versus Socialism*, p. 18.

18. *Isaiah*, 65; 25.

19. YI, 19-12-1929.

tional means have been exhausted, in no case *before* this. In a free democracy such cases of flagrant injustice, demanding resort to direct action, are or ought to be very rare. It is incumbent on a minority, on the other hand, as a general rule, to abide by the majority decisions made by parliamentary methods, and to wait and work for the education of public opinion in its own favour. Not every decision of a majority can be decried as coercion.

In this connection it is worth while considering the question of conversion v. coercion which has been so much debated upon and Gandhiji's views in regard to which have been subjected to some adverse criticism. Without going into the intricacies of the problem, I only wish to state here that the 'coercion' ruled out by Gandhiji was only such as involved the employment or threat of force or violence on the part of individuals or groups against one another. If majority decisions of Parliament made up of duly elected popular representatives appear 'coercive' to those who wish to maintain their ill-gotten gains, Gandhiji was prepared to allow such alleged 'coercion' which, in reality, it was not.

Gandhiji dissented from Marx who believed that the State would wither away on the establishment of complete Communism. "The State," he said, "will remain; but it will be a government, so to say, by sages. In the ancient days people respected the sage. In modern times, a 'sage' is a person who has education, a spirit of service, and the qualifications for rendering service



in the largest measure. A man of this type will not seek power; but the people of their own desire will elect him and invest him with power, because they will realise that he is indispensable."<sup>20</sup> Will Durant has emphasised another aspect of the same fact which reformers cannot afford to overlook except at their peril: "After all, when one tries to change institutions without having changed the nature of men, that unchanged nature will soon resurrect those institutions."<sup>21</sup> All legislation presupposes the preparation of the ground by intense popular education which includes sufferings voluntarily invited by reformers for the breach of such social usages as they hold to be wrong and harmful. Society cannot be blamed for its refusal to adopt any new-fangled idea or plan unless its author has given sufficient earnest of his own seriousness by undergoing a good deal of suffering and sacrifice for its sake. How is it otherwise to distinguish between genuine reformers and charlatans? Every reform, Ernest Hocking has cogently argued, is "an uphill fight in the face of public disapproval". "The acceptance of that disapproval and its consequences is the occasion for moral courage and a token of sincerity, further a certain insurance to society that the speaker has soberly weighed his thought."<sup>22</sup> Here comes in the use of satyagraha and patient suffering aimed at the conversion of men to one's views.

20. BKK, p. 162.

21. *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 272.

22. *The Lasting Elements of Individualism*, p. 77.

### III

Though Gandhiji was not generally in the habit of thinking hypothetically and refused to look into the far distant future, he gave enough indications of what he would like the future India to be:

"I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony.... There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs.... Women will enjoy the same rights as men.... This is the India of my dreams."<sup>23</sup>

23. Quoted by Jawaharlal Nehru in *Discovery of India*, p. 303.



## HINDUISM

1. *Essentials of Hinduism.* 2. *His love for Hinduism.* 3. *Removal of untouchability.* 4. *Myriad names of God.* 5. *Tolerant spirit of Hinduism.*

"I came not to destroy but to fulfil."—Jesus : *Matthew*, 5; 17.

"I have no desire to found a sect. I am really too ambitious to be satisfied with a sect for a following, for I represent no new Truths. I endeavour to follow and represent Truth as I know it. I do claim to throw a new light on many an old Truth."—Gandhiji : *YI*, 25-8-1921.

## I

ACCORDING to Gandhiji the essentials of Hinduism are: (1) Belief in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures; (2) Avatars or incarnations of God; (3) Rebirth; (4) Varna and Ashrama; (5) Protection of the cow; (6) No disbelief in idol-worship.<sup>1</sup>

On one occasion he wrote: "It is the good fortune or the misfortune of Hinduism that it has no official creed. . . . If I were asked to define the Hindu creed, I should simply say: search after Truth through non-

1. *YI*, 6-10-1921.

violent means. A man may not believe even in God and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after Truth."<sup>2</sup>

## II

Explaining why he was a Hindu, he said later that he had found Hinduism "to be the most tolerant of all religions known to me. Its freedom from dogma makes a forcible appeal to one. . . . Not being an exclusive religion, it enables the followers of that faith not merely to respect all other religions, but it also enables them to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in the other faiths. Non-violence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism. (I do not regard Jainism or Buddhism as separate from Hinduism)."<sup>3</sup>

Gandhiji has been described by a Hindu scholar of the present day as "a true incarnation of Hindu spirituality and in the direct line of descent from the ancient Rishis."<sup>4</sup> "I can no more describe my feeling for Hinduism than for my own life," said he. "Nothing elates me so much as the music of the Gita or the Ramayana by Tulsidas, the only two books in Hinduism I may be said to know. When I fancied I was taking my last breath, the Gita was my solace."<sup>5</sup>

2. *YI*, 24-4-1924.

3. *YI*, 20-10-1927.

4. D. S. Sarma's article in *Mahatma Gandhi* ed. by Radhakrishnan, p. 271.

5. *YI*, 6-10-1921.



He loved the great Hindu shrines "in spite of their unspeakable failings".<sup>6</sup> "I have no other wish in this world," he wrote, "but to find light and joy and peace through Hinduism."<sup>7</sup>

### III

His fight against the curse of untouchability and the success he achieved, resulting in the burial of the monster, will go down in history as one of the greatest efforts ever made for the purification of Hinduism and for the elevation of suppressed humanity. Henry Brailsford has paid a glowing tribute to this achievement :

"The campaign of this mystic, who cleaned latrines one day and opened temples the next, is one of the strangest chapters in history and one of the noblest. Has any saint in human memory done more to lighten the misery of the oppressed and restore their self-respect? He had broken a cruel institution that dated from the night of time, based on superstition, buttressed by religion, sanctioned by many conquests and maintained not merely by prejudice, but by physical shrinking. India honours Gandhiji today chiefly because he led the fight for independence. Humanity owes him an even heavier debt because he opened the road of the Untouchables to freedom."<sup>8</sup>

6. *Ibid.*

7. *My Soul's Agony*, p. 144.

8. *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 208.

### IV

The relation of God to man has not only been variously described in different religions, but different designations have been given to God in the same religion. In reality, He fills the heaven and earth and transcends them; and yet He is the dweller of the inmost recesses of the heart of every being. He is not bound by any human limitations; He therefore transcends speech and thought; He is in the heart of everything and yet above and beyond it. In spite of this knowledge man has tried to describe Him in many ways—as Son, Father, Mother, Lover, Beloved, Master, King. These are, after all, similes; and different men have given different similes, in accordance with their own outlook, temperament and inner urge. These—like all similes—have a partial application and are partially true; and every simile in respect of God is—empirically—true for one who uses it. Quarrels over these, therefore, are futile and needlessly add to misunderstandings and bitterness. Tulsidas, in one of his hymns, has in a catholic spirit said that God stands in many relations with man, and the latter is free to adopt any one or more of these that he finds suitable for himself—the object being somehow to reach the feet of the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

The Bhagavata says:

"To God in reality none is dear and none repugnant, because He is above all attachments; to Him

९. तोही मोही नाते अनेक मानिये जो भावे ।

ज्यों त्यों तुलसी कृपालु चरणशरण जावे ॥—विनयपत्रिका.



none is high or low or unequal, because He cares equally for all. He has neither father nor mother, neither wife nor sons nor daughters, neither kinsman nor stranger, neither body nor birth.<sup>10</sup> And yet—since men, for their own sake, imagine themselves to be in certain relations with God—He is the Son, the Inner Spirit, the Father, and the Mother to every one of them.”<sup>11</sup>

He is similarly worshipped under myriad different names. Gandhiji once reminded his hearers of a Hindu hymn book which enumerates a thousand names of Vishnu. “We are all worshippers of one God, whom we worship under different names,”<sup>12</sup> he added. In Mahabharata it is said that Rudra and Narayana are one Entity divided into two,<sup>13</sup> and Harivamsha says that the respective names of Shiva and Vishnu are interchangeable.<sup>14</sup> The Bhagavata says: “God has

१०. न ह्यस्यास्ति प्रियः कश्चिन्नाप्रियो वास्त्यमानिनः ।

नोत्तमो नाधमो नापि समानस्यासमोऽपि वा ॥

न माता न पिता तस्य न भार्या न सुतादयः ।

नात्मीयो न परश्चापि न देहो जन्म एव च ॥

x x x x x

११. सर्वेषामात्मजो ह्यात्मा पिता माता स ईश्वरः ॥

भागवत १०; ४६; ३७, ३८, ४२.

12. Weekly letter by C. S. in *Harijan*, 22-12-1933.

१३. रुद्रो नारायणश्चैव सत्त्वमेकं द्विधा कृतम् ।

महाभारत—शान्तिपर्व ३४१; ३६-७.

१४. नामानि तव गोविन्द यानि लोके महान्ति च ।

तान्येव मम नामानि नात्र कार्या विचारणा ॥

हरिवंश—भविष्यपर्व ८८; ६०-१.

many names and forms.”<sup>15</sup> “The Being, which is Intelligence and is One without a second, is variously known as *Brahma*, *Paramātmā* and *Bhagavān*.”<sup>16</sup>

Emerson rightly observes:

“All symbols are fluxional....Mysticism consists in the mistake of an accidental and individual symbol for an universal one....Either of these, or of a myriad more, are equally good to the person to whom they are significant. Only they must be held lightly, and be very willingly translated into the equivalent terms which others use. And the mystic must be steadily told—All that you say is just as true without the tedious use of the symbol as with it.”<sup>17</sup>

## V

Hinduism has adopted a liberal attitude towards all forms of worship ever since its hoary beginnings when the sage of the Rigveda said: “Truth is one; only the wise describe it in many different ways.”<sup>18</sup>

“Hinduism developed from the first a wide tolerance,” says C. E. M. Joad. “Hindus do not proselytize; they do not lay *exclusive* claims to salva-

१५. बहूनि सन्ति नामानि रूपाणि च सुतस्य ते ।

भागवत १०; २६; १८.

१६. वदन्ति तत्तत्त्वविदस्तत्त्वं यज्ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।

ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्दते ॥

भागवत १; २; ११.

17. Essay on *The Poet*.

१८. एकं सद् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति । ऋग्वेद.



tion, and they do not believe that God will be pleased by the wholesome slaughter of those of His creatures whose beliefs are mistaken. As a result Hinduism has been less degraded than most religions by the anomaly of creed wars. Buddha's followers have not shown their respect for their master's injunction to love their neighbours by roasting, racking and disembowelling them in His name, and the history of Hinduism holds no parallel to the horrors of the Inquisition or the Thirty Years' War."<sup>19</sup>

Buddhism continued the tradition. In one of his edicts Asoka has said:

"He who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own sect, in reality, by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own sect."

"The attitude of the cultivated Hindu and the Buddhist to other forms of worship," says Radhakrishnan, "is one of sympathy and respect, and not criticism and contempt for their own sake. This friendly understanding is not inconsistent with deep feeling and thought. Faith for the Hindu does not mean dogmatism. He does not smell heresy in those who are not entirely of his mind. It is not devotion that leads to the assertive temper, but limitation of outlook, hardness, and uncharity. While full of unquestioning belief, the Hindu is at the same time devoid of harsh judgment. It is not historically

19. *Counter Attack from the East*, p. 217-8.

true that in the knowledge of truth there is of necessity great intolerance."<sup>20</sup>

The prayer at Gandhiji's Ashram at Phoenix in South Africa contained recitations from all religions; and so also in the latter years in India. His Ashram, wherever it was, was a world in miniature. Followers of many religions saw the best in their own religions personified in him. He had learnt this liberality towards all religions from his parents, as he avows in his Autobiography.<sup>21</sup> "You have a knack of pleasing all gods," said Sardar Patel, laughing, to him on one occasion. "Oh, yes," said Gandhiji, "that was what my mother taught me. She would ask me to go to the Haveli, and also to the Shiva Temple; and you may be interested to hear that when we were married we were taken to worship not only to all the Hindu shrines but to a fakir's shrine as well!"<sup>22</sup>

20. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 314.

21. Part I, Chapter 10.

22. GWKH, p. 128.



## THE ESSENTIAL UNITY OF RELIGIONS

1. *All religions true, equal and imperfect.* 2. *Tolerance in Christianity.* 3. *Tolerance in Islam.* 4. *No exclusive claims acceptable.* 5. *Agreement in essentials; conversions not needed.* 6. *Gandhiji's regard for Jesus and attitude to orthodox Christianity.* 7. *The beauty of Islam; regard for the Prophet.* 8. *Recitations from different religious books.*

### I

EXPLAINING how he believed all religions to be true and equal, Gandhiji put in a nutshell his fundamental belief on the subject as follows:

"That has been my fundamental position for years. Underlying it is the idea that you don't become judges of the world. Differences in the world there have been, and will be. God is all-powerful. He appears with many shapes and faces. If we search, we may find as many religions as there are men. Hundreds of men are merely striving to know the Truth. They will put the Truth in their own way. No two men will put it in identical terms. Men would not put the Truth in identical terms with me. Though I know that God, the All-powerful, resides in every one of us, we

are imperfect media. We are all different. No two bodies are identically the same. No two leaves of a tree are identically the same; there is bound to be some difference. Each one prays to God according to his own light. Who am I to judge and say that I pray better than you do? I don't judge the Muslims, Parsis, Christians and Jews. If I am a seeker of truth, it is quite sufficient for me. I cannot say that, because I have seen God in this way, the whole world must see Him in that way. All religions are true and equal. That, however, is not to say that they are equally true in religious terms or are absolutely true. Another man's religion is true for him as mine is for me. I can't be a judge of his religion. That is my fundamental position."<sup>1</sup>

"I believe Hinduism to be a religion of truth," said he. "But Islam and Christianity also are religions of truth. From your standpoint Christianity is true; Hinduism from my standpoint."<sup>2</sup>

"I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another."<sup>3</sup>

1. CG, p. 85.

2. CG, p. 30.

3. MCG.



"There is no religion that is absolutely perfect," he explained. "All are equally imperfect or more or less perfect."<sup>4</sup>

In his foreword to a book on this subject by Sophia Wadia he said:

"These essays of Sophia Wadia show at a glance how much similarity there is between the principal faiths of the earth in the fundamentals of life. All our mutual quarrels centre round non-essentials. Sophia Wadia's labours will be amply rewarded if people belonging to different faiths will study faiths other than their own, with the same reverence that she has exhibited in her essays. An understanding of and respect for the great faiths of the world is the foundation of true Theosophy—Wisdom about God."<sup>5</sup>

"How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity? For that is a fact meeting you at every step in daily life. The final goal of all religions is to realize this essential oneness."<sup>6</sup>

"The essence of all religions is one; only their approaches are different."<sup>7</sup>

## II

This spirit of toleration is not unknown to Christianity and Islam. Jesus considered doers of good

4. H., 14-5-1938.

5. *The Brotherhood of Religions*, p. xi.

6. MCG.

7. CG, p. 30.

to be with him even though they were not among his followers. "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us."<sup>8</sup> "The doctrine of the immanence of God in life and history is inconsistent with the theory of unique revelations at particular epochs,"<sup>9</sup> says Radhakrishnan. Jesus at best is "the first born among many brethren."<sup>10</sup> The living embodiment of meekness that he was, he said: "Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God."<sup>11</sup> "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," said Peter, the Apostle, "but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."<sup>12</sup> "There is no respect of persons with God,"<sup>13</sup> said Paul, and added: "We are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.... Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God."<sup>14</sup>

8. Luke 9; 49, 50.

9. *The Heart of Hindusthan*, p. 100.

10. Romans 8; 29.

11. Luke 18; 19.

12. The Acts 10; 34-35.

13. Romans 2; 11.

14. Romans 8; 16, 17. 3; 29, 30. Imagine the grand scene at Athens where Paul, standing on Mars' hill, proclaimed the unity of mankind and the brotherhood of men: "God that made the world and all things therein....hath made of



## III

There are many sayings of the Prophet of Islam besides his acts which breathe the spirit of religious tolerance and large-heartedness. "Let there be no compulsion in religion,"<sup>15</sup> he said. "Verily," said the Quran, "those who believe (the Moslems), and those who are Jews, Christians, whoever hath faith in God and the last day (future existence), and worketh that which is right and good,—for them shall be the reward with their Lord; there will come no fear on them; neither shall they be grieved."<sup>16</sup> "The same sentiment is repeated," says Ameer Ali, "in the fifth sura; and a hundred other passages prove that Islam does not confine 'salvation' to the followers of Mohammed alone."<sup>17</sup> "To every one have we given a law and a way.... And if God had pleased, He would have made you all (all mankind) one people (people of one religion). But He hath done otherwise, that He might try you in that which He hath severally given unto you: wherefore press forward in good works." "Wilt thou then force men to believe when belief can come only from God?"<sup>18</sup>

---

one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.... For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."—*The Acts* 17; 24-8.

15. *The Quran* 2; 261.

16. *Ibid* 5; 69.

17. *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 175.

18. *The Quran* 5; 48.

"Mohammed did not merely preach toleration," says Ameer Ali, "he embodied it into a law. To all conquered nations he offered liberty of worship.... Proselytism by the sword was wholly contrary to the instincts of Mohammed and wrangling over creeds his abhorrence."<sup>19</sup>

His guarantee to the Christians is a remarkable document and deserves to be read with admiration by men of all faiths:

"To (the Christians of) Najrān and the neighbouring territories, the security of God and the pledge of His prophet are extended for their lives, their religion and their property—to the present, as well as the absent and other besides; there shall be no interference with (the practice of) their faith or their observances; nor any change in their rights or privileges; no bishop shall be removed from his bishopric; nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his priesthood, and they shall continue to enjoy every thing great and small as heretofore; no image or cross shall be destroyed; they shall not oppress or be oppressed; they shall not practise the rites of blood-vengeance as in the Days of Ignorance; no tithes shall be levied from them nor shall they be required to furnish provisions for the troops."<sup>20</sup>

Muhammad Ali, in his translation of the Quran says: "It (Islam) requires them (men) to preach their own religion, but not by abusing the religion of others.... The religious freedom was established

---

19. *The Spirit of Islam*, p. 213.

20. Quoted by Ameer Ali: *Op Cit*, p. 273.



by Islam in a country like Arabia thirteen hundred years ago.... It deserves to be noted that the lives of the Muslims are to be sacrificed not only to stop their own persecution by their opponents and to have their own mosques, but to save churches, synagogues, and cloisters as well—in fact, to establish perfect religious freedom.”<sup>21</sup>

## IV

An enlightened Hindu has no difficulty in accepting Jesus—or, for that matter, any religious figure in whom the light of God has shone brightly—as an avatar or incarnation of God, as he is taught to believe that “there are innumerable incarnations of God whose splendour is inexhaustible.”<sup>22</sup> No exclusive claim in this respect, however, is acceptable.

“Hinduism believes,” says Radhakrishnan, “that every guru is a Saviour, inasmuch as he quickens in his disciples the life of God and develops the seed of the spirit of fructifying in them. Anyone who helps us to a complete harmonisation of the finite will of man with the perfect will of God has the power to save us.”<sup>23</sup>

Sri Aurobindo says:

“There is undoubtedly a Truth one and eternal which we are seeking, from which all other truth

21. *The Holy Quran* (translated into English), pp. XV, 672.

२२. अवतारा ह्यसंख्येया हरेः सत्त्वनिर्घट्टिजाः ।

भागवत १; ३; २६.

23. *The Heart of Hindusthan*, p. 103-4.

derives, by the light of which all other truth finds its right place, explanation and relation to the scheme of knowledge. But precisely for that reason it cannot be shut up in a single trenchant formula, it is not likely to be found in its entirety or in all its bearings in any single philosophy or scripture or uttered altogether and for ever by any one teacher, thinker, prophet or Avatar. Nor has it been wholly found by us if our view of it necessitates the intolerant exclusion of the truth underlying other systems; for when we reject passionately, we mean that we cannot appreciate and explain.”<sup>24</sup>

And thus writes Radhakrishnan:

“God meets every aspirant with favour and grants to each his heart’s desire. He does not extinguish the hope of any but helps all hopes to grow according to their nature.... Name and form are used to reach the Formless. Meditation on any favourite form may be adopted.... The same God is worshipped by all. The differences of conception and approach are determined by local colouring and social adaptations. All manifestations belong to the same Supreme.”<sup>25</sup>

## V

“We may have our private opinions,” said Gandhiji, “but why should they be a bar to the meeting of hearts?”<sup>26</sup> “In non-essentials we differ;

24. *Essays on the Gita* (American edition), p. 4.

25. *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 158-9.

26. MCG.



in essentials we agree.”<sup>27</sup> “I have to follow truth as it appears to me, because I cannot live without it. The truth as it appears to you may be truth for you, but not for others.”<sup>28</sup>

The realization of the need for both unity and diversity—for ‘unity in diversity’ is the law of life—must teach us not to tolerate (for ‘toleration’ implies a sense of superiority and patronage) but to respect other faiths as our own. The world cannot be refashioned into one country with one religion, one race, one language, one culture; the world will at best be a Federation of countries, religions, races, languages, cultures—all anxious not only to live and let live, but to imbibe all that is best in their compeers.

This, to Gandhiji’s mind, obviated the necessity of conversion in the sense of a change of religious labels. Cases of voluntary conversion there might be, but they would be very rare. “The Hindu mass mind,” said he, “won’t take kindly to conversion. If I am able to wean the Muslims or Hindus from the error of conversion, they may give it up. Otherwise they may preach their own religion, but must not convert people by force of arms.”<sup>29</sup> Forceful conversions he categorically refused to recognise. He objected to the mass conversions of Harijans and other poorer classes carried on by Christian missionaries in India for similar reasons, and he minced no words in

27. CG, p. 36.

28. *Ibid.*

29. CG, p. 29.

conveying this view to the missionaries whenever they showed their willingness to hear him, as in fact they often did. He definitely disallowed some of his non-Hindu co-workers to give up their ancestral religion and embrace Hinduism. For instance, to one of them, he wrote on 5th March, 1934 :

“You don’t need to be a Hindu but a true Jewess. If Judaism does not satisfy you, no other faith will give you satisfaction for any length of time. I would advise you to remain a Jewess and appropriate the good of other faiths.”<sup>30</sup>

## VI

“What part did Jesus play in your life?” This was the stock question put to him by many Christian friends. “Jesus played a great part in my life,” said he to one such audience, “—unconsciously how much. I do not know; consciously how much, I do know. When I began to read the Sermon on the Mount, I felt the beauty of it, though I am not able to say that it is singular or is not to be found in other religions. But the presentation is unique and not to be found in any other faith. In South Africa, at the instance of friends, I had to read a lot of Christian books. I saw the beauties of Christianity. So many of my words are chosen from the Bible. In my talks I can’t avoid reference to the Bible. I won’t be able to speak without referring to it.”<sup>31</sup>

30. Margarete Spiegel’s article in RG, p. 216.

31. CG, p. 85-6



... "How does the person of Jesus affect your life?" was another question in reply to which he said: "Not in any special sense. I don't look upon Jesus as the only son of God. Taken in a literal sense, the idea offends me. In a literal sense God begets no son; or, if He begets at all, He begets not one son. In a spiritual sense you can say so. But in that sense we are all sons of God,<sup>32</sup> if we want to make that claim. Jesus was one of the prophets mankind has seen. He is one of the teachers of the world. I don't put him outside or above the other teachers. I don't consider him a special favourite of God. The person of Jesus is a living reality in this sense. But if Jesus lives in this sense, so do other great souls in the world. They affect us because they are still living. Jesus thus is not living in a special sense of the word, distinguished from others."<sup>33</sup>

Gandhiji thus definitely stated his position *vis a vis* Christianity: "Today my position is that, though I admire much in Christianity, I am unable to identify myself with orthodox Christianity. I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism as I know it entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being, and I find a solace in the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. Not that

32. Men have been called "sons of the Immortal" अमृतस्य पुत्राः—in Rigveda. Paul said: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God . . . . The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."—*Romans* 8; 14, 16.

33. CG, p. 86.

I do not prize the ideal presented therein, not that some of the precious teachings in the Sermon on the Mount have not left a deep impression upon me, but I must confess to you that when doubt haunts me, when disappointment stares me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavadgita and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies; and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the Bhagavadgita."<sup>34</sup> "Jesus in the East," said he on another occasion, "brought a breath from the spirit of God and gave it to the world. But the West took hold of it and turned it into a system which I think is not a good one. That is why I do not call myself a Christian."<sup>35</sup>

## VII

"Wherein lies the beauty of Islam in your view?" In reply to this question Gandhiji said: "The spirit of brotherhood is manifested in no other religion as in Islam. It is no doubt confined to Muslims. But Islam has been a downright leveller as no other religion has been. It would be much better if the followers of Islam say the whole world is a brotherhood."<sup>36</sup> As he read the Quran, he said to a Muslim audience, he had felt that this spirit had been extended to the whole human

34. YI, 6-8-1925.

35. Quoted in Muriel Lester's article in IGL, p. 148.

36. CG, p. 30-1.



race. Through the anti-untouchability campaign he was seeking to realise such universal brotherhood. Vital unity between Hindus and Muslims was to be reached by right conduct in the widest sense of the term. He was praying all the twentyfour hours for the heart-unity of all the communities for whom India was their home.<sup>37</sup>

In the Agakhan Palace at Poona, in 1942, on the eve of the Ramzan Id, Gandhiji declared his intention to take only dates and milk on the next day. Kasturba, when she came to know of this, asked him: "Why are you going to reduce your diet tomorrow?" Gandhiji, who was observing silence, wrote: "Because of the Id. Don't you remember that I once kept the *rozah* in South Africa for the whole month? This time I have not kept even one *rozah*. I should therefore deny myself something at least on the Id day. I will take dates and milk which were the Prophet's favourite articles of food, and will give up bread and vegetables which are my favourite articles." That evening Gandhiji saw the crescent moon first of all, and showed it to others. On the Id day he took only uncooked food except boiled milk; and during the evening prayer passages from the Quran were read.<sup>38</sup>

### VIII

The days since 1946 were of the greatest trial for Gandhiji, and his faith was put to the severest

37. Weekly Letter by C. S. in *Harijan*, 24-11-1933.

38. BKK, p. 104.

test. "I wish to tell you all that I can be a good Hindu only if I am a good Parsi and a good Mussalman. Can it be a religious act to revile religions other than one's own? I believe all religions to be essentially one."<sup>39</sup> He gave up the entire prayer at the Valmiki Mandir, Bhangi Colony, New Delhi, when even one voice raised a protest against a passage from the Quran being recited. "I do not give up the prayer out of fear of anybody," he said. "After the prayers once commence, I will not stop it even if I am cut to pieces, and you will then see that till my last breath I will chant the words 'Rama-Rahim', 'Krishna-Karim'.<sup>40</sup> Later on, he had the full prayer including the recitation from the Quran, notwithstanding the protests from a few among the congregation. Both the stoppage and the resumption were actuated by the purest spirit of non-violence. He did not wish to hurt the feeling of the protesters, and yet he would not for ever hurt the sentiment of the bulk of the people present for the sake of a few. He once explained the reason at some length: "If you (the majority) co-operate with me and observe non-violence, I can tell you with confidence that the non-violence will be invincible. The condition, however, is that you must follow my instructions implicitly. You must assure me that you will exercise restraint and will refrain not only from any overt action but from harbouring anger even in your minds. The protest against the recitation

39. PP, I, p. 6.

40. *Ibid*, p. 8-9.



from the Quran is an outcome of gross ignorance. . . . If anyone expresses his unwillingness to hear the prayer, I would still have the prayer and also the post-prayer speech. Nevertheless, I stop the prayer because I cannot put up with any of you handling the protesters roughly. If I am alone, on this spot, and five persons come and threaten to kill me, I would hold my head before them ready to be chopped off. Why five, even one person would be able to cut my throat. But I would even then continue to pray till my last breath. If your hearts are purified to this extent, you will neither beat anyone nor get angry with him or her."<sup>41</sup> He resumed the prayer when the majority gave him the promise and scrupulously kept it.

"The essence of the Shastras and the Vedas is that God is and He is one without a second. This is the essence of the Quran and the Bible as well. Let no one say that there are three Gods in the Bible. There too God is one."<sup>42</sup> "Just as God is one though His names are different, Religion also is one in spite of its different names; because all the religions have been derived from God."<sup>43</sup>

"It is because I am a *Sanatani* Hindu," he said, "that I claim to be a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim. There are some Muslim friends who question my right to recite verses from the Quran. They seem to think that I am misleading people by reciting the

41. PP, II, p. 15-6.

42. PP, I, p. 20.

43. *Ibid*, p. 21.

*Kalma*. These friends do not know that religion transcends the bounds of language and script. I see no reason why I am not entitled to recite the *Kalma* and to consider the Prophet as a messenger of God. I have reverence for the prophets and saints of all religions. I shall pray to God to give me the strength not only to refrain from being angry with those who revile me but to be prepared to meet death at their hands. I believe that, if I am able to adhere to this faith, I shall serve not only Hinduism but Islam also."<sup>44</sup> "I hanker after *Ramanama*, and will recite it under a thousand variations. But if somebody tries to coerce me to take a particular name, I will not take even one."<sup>45</sup>

Later he explained this converse proposition at some length: "Those who out of their own free will read the Gita are welcome to do so, just as I read the Quran and derive spiritual joy from it. If, however, someone orders me to read the Quran under pain of death, I will defy the order and refuse to read the Quran, notwithstanding any jewels of thought with which it may be filled."<sup>46</sup>

44. *Ibid*, p. 30.

45. *Ibid*, p. 36.

46. PP. II, p. 20.



## MAN AND WOMAN

1. *Gandhiji's indebtedness to mother, nurse and wife.* 2. *Power—Shakti—of Woman.* 3. *Women loved Gandhiji for his 'womanliness'.* 4. *Man's deprecation of woman wrong.* 5. *Woman and beauty of the soul; she should not give up home life.* 6. *Celibacy and self-restraint.* 7. *Marriage a sacrament; marriage and love; Gandhiji's love for, and tribute to, Kasturba.* 8. *Men and women should not ape the opposite sex.* 9. *Children, and grandeur of motherhood.* 10. *Arrival of children to be welcomed.*

## I

GANDHIJI'S views on the regeneration of woman, the removal of the many disabilities she is labouring under in India, and the relations between the sexes, are set forth at length in the collections of his writings and may be gleaned from these. I wish to advert here to some of the less discussed points and the issues arising therefrom.

No man in India has done more than Gandhiji in recent times for the elevation of women and the occupation by them of their rightful place in domestic and public life. "I have worshipped woman as the living embodiment of the spirit of service and sacrifice," said

he. "Man can never be her equal in the spirit of selfless service with which Nature has endowed her. Woman has a compassionate heart which melts at the sight of suffering."<sup>1</sup> Like all great men who owed much to their mothers, he acknowledged his debt to his mother till the last days of his life—the mother who, by her silent example, had instilled into the son a love for austere life and who had administered to him three vows—to abstain from meat, wine and women—on the eve of his departure for England, which proved a sheet-anchor to him and saved him from many a pitfall in that strange land. He has also immortalized his nurse, Rambha, who asked him—a shy, timid boy—to take *Ramanama* which would drive away all ghosts. The seed of faith thus sown by that simple, unsophisticated woman grew later into a large oak tree.

He acknowledged in no less handsome a manner the debt he owed to Kasturba, his partner in life, whom he not only described as "one of the bravest women I have ever met",<sup>2</sup> but admitted that he had learnt the technique of satyagraha from her. She followed him like a shadow, and participated in his public activities, at first out of a sense of duty but with growing conviction as time went on. She was the first Indian woman to court imprisonment as a civil resister in South Africa, and she underwent incarceration on several occasions during the struggle for freedom in India. She was the first and the only

1. Weekly Letter by C. S. in *Harijan*, 8-12-1933.

2. CG, p. 128.



woman satyagrahi to lay down her life in prison—leaning on Gandhiji's shoulders, in conditions which any Hindu married woman would covet most. "If perchance you die in prison, I will worship you as a goddess," Gandhiji said to Ba in South Africa in 1913; and, as God would have it, the words in this case proved to be a prophecy.

While on a visit to England in 1909, Gandhiji took the opportunity to meet many leaders of the Women's Franchise Campaign and to study their movement. "In afterdays he often said that he learned much of the value and methods of passive resistance from some of the British women, and applied some of those methods himself in his own political struggles in South Africa."<sup>3</sup>

## II

Ever since he returned to India in 1915, he championed the cause of women's freedom, and invited them to participate in the struggle for freedom. The response which the sisters all over the country gave to the call of the Motherland constitutes one of the most brilliant chapters in our national history. They realised the power—the *shakti*—which had revealed itself gloriously in the past but had been lying dormant in modern times. Gandhiji told women in Paris in 1931 that he wished them to forget that they belonged to the *weaker* sex, for they had thrown up many heroines from among themselves.

3. Millie Graham Polak: *Mr. Gandhi The Man*, p. 94.

"There is a poem called *Ānanda-laharī* (*The Stream of Delight*), attributed to Shankaracharya. She who is glorified therein is the *shakti* in the heart of the Universe, the Giver of Joy, the Inspirer of Activity.... In the view of the poet, this universal *shakti* is manifest in human society in the nature of woman," said Tagore. "Let no one confuse this *shakti* with mere 'sweetness', for in this charm there is a combination of several qualities—patience, self-abnegation, sensitive intelligence, grace in thought, word, and behaviour—the reticent expression of rhythmic life, the tenderness and terribleness of love; at its core, moreover, is that self-radiant spirit of delight which ever gives itself up."<sup>4</sup>

Another Indian poet said:

"All sciences (*Vidyās*) and all women in the world are forms of the goddess<sup>5</sup> who is Soul-Force (*Ātma-shakti*) personified and who has created this universe."<sup>6</sup>

## III

Gandhiji often remarked that he had in him the heart of a woman also. Mrs. Polak, who for many

4. "The Indian Ideal of Marriage", in *The Book of Marriage* (edited by Hermann Keyserling), p. 120-1.

५. विद्याः समस्तास्तव देवि भेदाः ।

स्त्रियः समस्ताः सकला जगत्सु ॥

दुर्गासप्तशती ११; ६.

६. देव्या यया ततमिदं जगदात्मशक्त्या ।

दुर्गासप्तशती ४; ७.



years observed his life and work at close quarters, has aptly described his relations with women as a class, among whom there were many he had adopted as sisters and daughters, and to most of whom he had been "a cup of strength in some great agony".<sup>7</sup>

"Most women love men for such attributes as are usually considered masculine. Yet Mahatma Gandhi has been given the love of many women for his womanliness; for all those qualities that are associated with women—great faith, great fortitude, great devotion, great patience, great tenderness, and great sympathy. Women could sense that in him they found a fellow-traveller, one who had passed ahead along the road they too 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. He seemed to understand how easy it might be for a woman to do what appeared to be evil for love's sake, to sympathise with the soul-surrender which prompted the action, and yet to condemn it unflinchingly and point out that the way of love's service could not be through ministering to anything but the highest. I have known many occasions when a woman has gone to him deeply troubled because she had to acquiesce in some seriously dishonourable action of her husband. Mahatmaji has

7. George Eliot.

sympathised with her difficulty, never suggested that she should betray her knowledge of her husband's action, but advised her to use all her love and woman's power to get the man to amend his ways. For himself, he chose the path of the ascetic, yet I have always known him to make allowances for those who could not tread the cold, austere path of denial. If comforts and objects of beauty seemed essential to the woman who discussed such a question with him, he would, had it been in his power, have given them to her; but, at the same time, he would try and persuade her to seek beauty in the things of the spirit and not to identify herself with the things of the world."<sup>8</sup>

A respectable lady in Gujarat, whom none would accuse of blind worship, said to me in the course of a conversation four years back: "There are some things relating to our lives which we, women, can speak of to, or discuss with, no man. But while speaking to Gandhiji we somehow forgot the fact that he was a *man*." That was the acme of his identification with the spirit in women.

#### IV

As a man, one feels like hanging the head in shame at the many deprecatory epithets used in some of the so-called scriptures of Hinduism with reference to woman, who—as mother, sister and spouse—has worn herself out in the selfless service<sup>9</sup> of man and

8. GWKH, p. 47-8.

9. With this spirit of hers in view, Romain Rolland has said: "A woman, no matter how accustomed she is to the



his progeny. Most of her failings she shares with man.<sup>10</sup> In the palmy days of Hinduism woman was respected in all these capacities. But then followed in our national life a long, dark night of about a thousand years during which, with the loss of our political freedom, we also accepted mental and spiritual bondage; mere outward observances were raised to the position of religion, and we mistook the empty shell for the very spirit of culture. Indeed we ceased to live, we merely existed. Woman, who was addressed in the ancient days respectfully as goddess (*Devī*), friend (*Sakhī*), auspicious (*Mangalā* or *Sumangalī*), and who was joyfully welcomed as the 'empress'<sup>11</sup> (*Samrājī*)—the new ruler of the husband's household—came to be looked upon in those degenerate days as an instrument of man's lustful pleasure

healthy odour of cleanliness, adapts herself more easily than a man to the most repulsive necessities. One often sees this in cases of sickness; her eyes, her fingers show no disgust." *Soul Enchanted*, Vol. III, p. 58.

10. The astronomer, Varahamihir, in his *Brihatsamhitā* in the 7th century, delivered a most spirited attack against maligners of women, in the course of which he said:

प्रब्रूत यूयं कतरोऽङ्गनानां  
दोषोऽस्ति यो नाचरितो मनुष्यैः ।

(Tell me what misdeed is done by women which has not also been done by men?)

11. See the following verse from the Rigveda:

सम्राज्ञी इवशुरे भव सम्राज्ञी इवश्रवां भव ।  
ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव सम्राज्ञी अधि देवेषु ॥  
ऋग्वेद १०; ८५; ४६.

(*Bhogyā*), and epithets were used to describe her which may better be left unmentioned. Sanskrit poetry reached the depth of degradation; for, whereas the Vedic poet sang of the glory of God,<sup>12</sup> we see a mediaeval Sanskrit poet singing the glory of lustful pleasure.<sup>13</sup> It would not be too much to say that our greatness as a people has risen or fallen with the rise and decline of our respect for womankind. Gandhiji made the greatest effort possible for a man to elevate woman to her due place in society as the peer of man. In his effort to enslave her, man had reduced himself to the position of her slave, thus degrading both.

"Man, by dint of his efforts to bind woman, has made her the strongest of fetters," said Tagore. "Her liberation can only be effected in a society where her true *Shakti*, her *ānanda*, is given the widest and highest scope for its activity."<sup>14</sup>

## V

"The real ornament of woman is her character, her purity," Gandhiji often told his female audiences. "Metal and stones can never be real ornaments. The names of women like Sita and Damayanti have become sacred to us for their unsullied virtue, never

१२. एतावानस्य महिमा अतो ज्यायांश्च पुरुषः ।

ऋग्वेद १०; ९०; ३.

(Such is the extent of His glory; the Purusha himself is greater still.)

13. See the *Nāndī* of *Prasannarāghava* by Jayadeva.

14. Tagore: *Op Cit*, pp. 122, 121.



for their jewellery, if they wore any. My asking from you your jewellery has also a wider significance. Several sisters have told me that they feel all the better for getting rid of their jewels.... I also wish to bring home to the women of India that real ornamentation lies, not in loading the body with metal and stones, but in purifying the heart and developing the beauty of the soul."<sup>15</sup>

He warned women against competing with men in their vices and thus degrading themselves, as is today happening in the West where, as Alexis Carrel remarks, "women voluntarily deteriorate through alcohol and tobacco"<sup>16</sup> from which they had hitherto kept away. Gandhiji asked the "enlightened daughters of *Bharata Mata*" not to "ape the manner of the West, which may be suited to its environment. They must apply methods suited to the Indian genius and Indian environment. Theirs must be the strong, controlling, purifying, steadying hand, conserving what is best in our culture and unhesitatingly rejecting what is base and degrading. This is the work of Sitas, Draupadis, Savitris and Damayantis, not of amazons and prudes."<sup>17</sup>

"Women should develop their aptitudes in accordance with their own nature, without trying to imitate the males," says Carrel. "Their part in the progress

15. Weekly Letter by C. S. in *Harijan*, 12-1-1934.

16. *Man, the Unknown*, p. 274.

17. *YI*, 17-10-1929.

of civilization is higher than that of men. They should not abandon their specific functions."<sup>18</sup>

Woman, in Gandhiji's view, is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. Though he encouraged women to take part in public life to an extent that was never known before, he wished them in the new order of his imagination to be part-time workers, their primary function, in his opinion, being to look after the home.

"Man," said Tagore, "has already achieved the means of self-expression in public activity without giving up his individual concerns. When, likewise, any society shall be able to offer a larger field for the creative work of woman's special faculty, without detracting from her creative work in the home, then in such society will the true union of man and woman become possible."<sup>19</sup>

## VI

Though celibacy among males was not uncommon in India, spinsters have been rare outside the folds of Buddhism and Jainism. Gandhiji encouraged celibacy among such persons of both the sexes as would feel the call for the sake of God or of social service in any of its various forms. As in truth and non-violence, in *brahmacharya* too there must be harmony between thought, speech and action, without which the mere outward restraint would be 'repression' in the language of psychoanalysis, and 'hypocrisy' in

18. *Op Cit*, p. 92.

19. *The Book of Marriage*, p. 121.



the language of the Gita. It is not because of *brahmacharya* but owing to this disharmony that some of the so-called celibates, in Gandhiji's opinion, are found to be breaking down in body and mind, though it would be nothing short of a travesty of this view to infer that every impurity of thought must lead to corresponding action. Gandhiji's reference is to the person who mentally relishes lustful pleasure and only refrains from physical action, and not to one who constantly makes an endeavour to fight and overcome the mental weakness.

Gandhiji did not believe in cotton-wool morality and refused to set up inhibitions (such as are found in some religious sects) against men or women celibates seeing, or speaking to, or having any contact with, persons of the opposite sex. The celibacy which breaks down so easily is a brittle commodity of not much value. Gandhiji aimed at the 'sublimation' of the sex urge and the transfusion of the vital fluid into creative power of a higher kind. "We have to rein in the animal passion," said he, "and change it into celestial passion."<sup>20</sup> Such genuine restraint in all persons—married or celibate—conduces to none but good results.

20. *Bapu's Letters to Mira*, p. 258.

Louis Fischer has reported a talk he had with Shri Mahadev Desai at Sevagram in June, 1942. "All these days," I said to Desai, "I have been . . . trying to fathom the source of Gandhi's great influence. I have come to the conclusion, tentatively, that the chief reason for that influence is Gandhi's passion." "That is right," Desai said. "What is the root of his passion?" I asked. "This passion,"

"It is well known that sexual excesses impede intellectual activity," says Alexis Carrel. "In order to reach its full power, intelligence seems to require both the presence of well-developed sexual glands and the temporary repression of the sexual appetite. . . . While the weak, the nervous, and the unbalanced become more abnormal when their sexual appetites are repressed, the strong are rendered still stronger by practising such a form of asceticism."<sup>21</sup>

"All great mystics and the majority of great idealists, the giants among the creators of the spirit have clearly and instinctively realised what formidable power of concentrated soul, of accumulated creative energy, is generated by a renunciation of the organic and psychic expenditure of sexuality. Even such free thinkers in matters of faith, and such sensualists as Beethoven, Balzac and Flaubert, have felt this. 'Let me keep it for a higher purpose!' (for God and creative art), Beethoven cried one day when he had repulsed the appeal of carnal passion."<sup>22</sup>

Self-restraint is good not only for celibates but for married men also. Leo Tolstoy has said:

Desai explained, "is the sublimation of all the passions that flesh is heir to." "Sex?" "Sex and anger and personal ambition. Gandhi can admit that he is wrong. He can chastise himself and take the blame for the mistakes of others, as when he called off a civil disobedience movement because it became violent. Gandhi is under his own complete control. That generates tremendous energy and passion within him."—*A Week with Gandhi*, p. 75.

21. *Man, the Unknown*, p. 138.

22. Romain Rolland: *The Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 216.



"Animals have sexual intercourse only when offspring may be born of it. Unenlightened man (such as we all are) is always ready for it and has even declared it to be a necessity. And this pretended necessity destroys woman, demanding of her when she is with child or nursing, the unnatural activity of a mistress, which overtakes her strength. We ourselves have by these demands destroyed the reasonable nature in woman, and then we complain of her unreasonableness, or we develop her with books and lectures. Yes! In all that relates to his animal nature, man has deliberately to attain the level of the beasts!"<sup>23</sup>

## VII

"It is better to marry than to burn,"<sup>24</sup> said Paul. Gandhiji's advice was practically the same. He said: "It is no doubt an excellent thing for girls to remain unmarried for the sake of service, but the fact is that only one in a million is able to do so. Marriage is a natural thing in life, and to consider it derogatory in any sense is wholly wrong. When one imagines any act a fall it is difficult, however hard one tries, to raise oneself. The ideal is to look upon marriage as a sacrament and, therefore, to lead a life of self-restraint in the married estate. Marriage in Hinduism is one of the four *Ashramas*. In fact the other three are based on it."<sup>25</sup>

23. *From a letter to Gay.*

24. 1 Corinthians 7; 9.

25. H, 22-3-1942.

He asked women "not to look down upon marriage but to give it its due place and make of it the sacrament it is."<sup>26</sup> As is well known, he participated in many marriages and blessed many others. "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments," said Shakespeare. Gandhiji considered true love as a most potent force conducive to marital happiness, and helped in bringing about several matches where such love was present, in spite of social barriers. The world does not know what an exquisite 'lover' he was, in spite of his asceticism—or rather because of the asceticism, as he would have chosen to put it; because in his case the love was 'selfless' in the fullest sense of the term.

That he and Ba were an ideal couple is a fact known to the world. "There is such love between us, husband and wife, even today that we should prefer to die together, if death were a matter of one's own choice," said Gandhiji in December 1933. In the Agakhan Palace, Ba studied a good deal from Dr. Sushila Nayyar and also from Gandhiji. Once while he was teaching her the tune of a hymn, Sarojinidevi began to laugh and said to Dr. Nayyar: "These two, 74 years of age, are behaving like a newly married couple, and are deriving their joy out of it."<sup>28</sup> After Ba's death Gandhiji wrote, in reply to condolences from Lord Wavell, how Ba was "precious to me

26. *Ibid.*

27. MCG.

28. BKK, p. 104.



beyond measure", and paid her a most touching tribute which bears reproduction:

"Though for her sake I have welcomed her death as bringing freedom from living agony, I feel the loss more than I had thought I should. We were a couple outside the ordinary. It was in 1906 that, by mutual consent and after unconscious trials, we definitely adopted self-restraint as a rule of life. To my great joy this knit us together as never before. We ceased to be two different entities. Without my wishing it, she chose to lose herself in me. The result was she became truly my *better* half. She was a woman always of very strong will which, in our early days, I used to mistake for obstinacy. But that strong will enabled her to become, quite unwittingly, my teacher in the art and practice of non-violent non-cooperation."<sup>29</sup>

He was genuinely delighted whenever he saw true love among young men and women. Once, while he was in Yeravda Jail in 1933, it fell to my lot to carry to him a set of six love letters given to me by a guardian to be read and handed over to Gandhiji. When I went to him the next day, he said with the usual twinkle in his eyes: "Oh, these really are letters from a lover to his beloved; haven't you read them?" I replied I had read only three of the six! About a year later, during the Harijan tour, a young man (well known to me) expressed his desire to give up a very good job and join Gandhiji because the girl of his choice had refused to return his love. Gandhiji

29. Gandhiji's *Correspondence with the Government*, p. 317.

immediately wrote back permitting the young man to come over; but I tried to expostulate with him, on the ground that the man might later on repent for his throwing away a good job out of momentary despair. "I don't agree with you," he replied, in all seriousness. "The decision is likely to be a deliberate one. Such is the power of love! Don't you know for how many years Farhad undertook to break stones for the sake of Shirin?"

That was Gandhiji!

### VIII

There has been a marked tendency in the West in recent times on the part of both men and women to ape the opposite sex, which has been regretted both by scientists and psychologists; for it results in the shattering of one's personality. Alexis Carrel says:

"The differences existing between man and woman do not come from the particular form of the sexual organs, the presence of the uterus, from gestation, or from the mode of education. They are of a more fundamental nature. They are caused by the very structure of the tissues and by the impregnation of the entire organism with specific chemical substances secreted by the ovary. Ignorance of these fundamental facts has led promoters of Feminism to believe that both sexes should have the same education, the same powers and the same responsibilities. In reality woman differs profoundly from man. Every one of the cells of her body bears the mark of her sex. The same is



true of her organs and, above all, of her nervous system."<sup>30</sup>

With similar considerations at the back of his mind, Gandhiji wrote: "Let not women, who can count many such heroines among them, ever despise their sex or deplore that they were not born men. The contemplation of that heroine often makes me envy woman the status that is hers, if she only knew. There is as much reason for man to wish that he was born a woman as for woman to do otherwise. But the wish is fruitless. Let us be happy in the state to which we are born and do the duty for which Nature has destined us."<sup>31</sup>

Carrel remarks with equal emphasis:

"Sexes have again to be clearly defined. Each individual should be either male or female, and never manifest the sexual tendencies, mental characteristics, and ambitions of the opposite sex."<sup>32</sup>

## IX

Gandhiji was as much a friend of children as of older people. They instinctively saw the love-light in his eyes and were attracted to him. In the South

30. *Man, the Unknown*, p. 91-2.

31. H, 24-2-1940.

32. *Op Cit*, p. 287.

Cf. "Two eyes are necessary. Did one eye renounce its function then were all perspective lost. Each has a point of view quite different from the other, and each is true. Were either to renounce his sex, then were all balance gone.... A man who sees as a woman sees, a woman who sees as a man, what are they fit for? Not for

African days, as Mrs. Polak tells us, he undertook—in order to help to wean her eight-month old boy—to take the child from her for a few nights; and "it was arranged," she adds, "that, on his return from a meeting, whatever the time was—it would certainly be after eleven o'clock—he would take the child from me."<sup>33</sup>

Children are nearer to God than the grown-ups, he believed. His love for children was consistent with his other views. "If married life is a religious duty," he said, "motherhood must be so too.... The procreation of children has to be undertaken with a full sense of responsibility.... She who gives intelligent, healthy and well-brought-up children to the country is surely rendering a service."<sup>34</sup>

And yet 'modernism' teaches women to discard motherhood! Says Alexis Carrel:

"Females, at any rate among mammals, seem only to attain their full development after one or more pregnancies.... Women who have no children are not

love. We love each other because we are man and woman. .... Each is necessary to the other. We are not enemies but friends; the closer that we complement each other, and the truer each is to his own sex, the better is each to the other.... We have learned this, that for either to renounce his sex would be to ruin both, for Man and Woman are not two, but one, and what hurts either hurts both. So out of mutual difference grows our love."—H. Fielding Hall: *Love's Legend*, p. 322-3.

33. *Mr. Gandhi the Man*, p. 76.

34. H, 22-3-1942.



so well balanced and become more nervous than the others....The importance to her of the generative function has not been sufficiently recognised. Such function is indispensable to her optimum development."<sup>35</sup>

"The basic reality in life," says Will Durant, "is not politics, not industry, but human relationships—the associations of a man with a woman, and of parents with a child. About these two foci of love—mate-love and mother-love—all life revolves."<sup>36</sup>

In Kalidasa's works, Parvati, Sudakshina, Sita, Shakuntala, all reach their self-fulfilment with the attainment of motherhood.

"There is a delightful simplicity in the pride with which a peasant mother, so lately shy, will publicly nurse her babe," writes Durant. "And she is right: of all the sights and pictures in the world of life and art, that one is loveliest."<sup>37</sup>

Kahlil Gibran has put these words in the mouth of Mary, the mother of Jesus:

"Woman shall be forever the womb and the cradle but never the tomb. We die that we may give life unto life even as our fingers spin the thread for the raiment that we shall never wear. And we cast the net for the fish that we shall never taste. And for this we sorrow, yet in all this is our joy."<sup>38</sup>

35. *Op Cit*, p. 93.

36. *The Mansions of Philosophy*, p. 211.

37. *Ibid*, p. 175.

38. *Jesus*, p. 167.

And Walt Whitman sang:

"I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother  
of men."<sup>39</sup>

## X

Let me give a few examples, within my personal knowledge, of Gandhiji's catholicity in the application of his principles on this subject. If he could be as hard as flint, he was also as soft as a petal.<sup>40</sup> To a young married co-worker at the Sabarmati Ashram who expressed a desire to take the vow of *brahmacharya*, Gandhiji said: "No vow is necessary for you. You may go on living the ordinary life of a householder. If you are a couple with normal instincts, satiation will come to you after the birth of two or three children. I am telling you this out of my own experience in married life." To an intimate co-worker who fidgeted on the arrival of a third child, he wrote: "Why should the birth of the third child perplex you so much? I at any rate am not in the least disturbed over the event. Mrs. — had eleven children, did she not?" In 1937, in an article

39. *Leaves of Grass*.

40. Cf. the following said about Jesus: "He was a mountain burning in the night, yet he was a soft glow beyond the hills. He was a tempest in the sky, yet he was a murmur in the mist of a daybreak. He was a torrent pouring from the heights to the plains to destroy all things in its path. And he was like the laughter of children."—Kahlil Gibran: *Jesus*, p. 67.



entitled 'For the students', he tendered similar advice to a young correspondent. He wrote this article in Poona, and handed over the copy to me for *Harijan*. On going through it I found in it the following sentence: "He must manfully face the prospect of a large family and discover the best means of supporting them." I asked Gandhiji why he had used the plural 'them' for the 'family', a noun in the singular. He merely replied with a characteristic twinkle of the eye, the significance of which I immediately understood, for he had meant to say "a fairly large number of children". Shri Mahadevbhai, who was sitting by and following the conversation, jocularly remarked: "Chandra-shanker's THEM are here," referring to my wife and two little daughters who were waiting outside the room. "Oh, then let them come in," replied Gandhiji with a smile.

## 19

## LIFE, ART AND BEAUTY

1. Gandhiji's values different; art must be universal in its appeal; inspiration from Nature.
2. Appeal of music greatest to him.
3. Two pieces of sculpture which moved him.
4. Form and substance.
5. Art and poverty.
6. "Art for art's sake".
7. Art and beautifying of immorality.
8. Purity of character essential in an artist.
9. Ugliness of face and artistic talent; 'charm' not a synonym of goodness.
10. Truth and beauty.
11. The aim of art.
12. Moral beauty.
13. The art of life.
14. Gandhiji, "the perfect artist".

## I

"I WAS under the impression that art had no place in the dictionary of your austere life," said Dilip Kumar Roy to Gandhiji. "Many intelligent and eminent men, who love and admire you, hold that you consciously or unconsciously have ruled out of the scheme of national regeneration all considerations of art," said another friend to him. "Why do people believe that you must be unkindly disposed towards art?" asked the questioner.

"There are some plausible reasons, I suppose," Gandhiji replied. "One is that I fail to see anything



in much that poses for art these days. In other words, my values are different."<sup>1</sup>

What were those values?

"For instance," said he, "I don't call that a great art which demands an intimate knowledge of technique for its appreciation. To me art in order to be truly great must, like the beauty of nature, be universal in its appeal.... It must be simple in its presentation and direct in its expression like the language of Nature."<sup>2</sup>

He had a few portraits in his collection in South Africa—including those of Jesus, Tolstoy and Annie Besant; but no pictures 'adorned' the walls in his rooms either at Sabarmati or Sevagram. This, to some, was "another index" to his "native aversion to art". As for other people? "If it pleases them, let them adorn their walls with as many pictures as they like," he said. "Only I do not need them for *my* inspiration, that is all. Nature suffices indeed for me."<sup>3</sup>

1. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Among the Great*, p. 76.

2. *Ibid*, p. 76.

3. *Ibid*, p. 76.

Cf. "The brilliancy of an unclouded night, and the contrast of the deep shades of the woods.—Fanny spoke her feelings. 'Here's, harmony,' said she; 'here's repose! Here's what may leave all painting and all music behind, and what poetry can only attempt to describe! Here's what may tranquillise every care, and lift the heart to rapture! When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world; and there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried

"Have I not gazed at the marvellous mystery of the starry vault," he went on to say, "hardly ever tiring of that great panorama?... Could one conceive of any painting comparable in inspiration to that of the star-studded sky, the majestic sea, the noble mountains?... I need no inspiration other than Nature's. She has never failed me yet. She mystifies me, bewilders me, sends me into ecstasies.... Beside God's handiwork does not man's fade into insignificance?"<sup>4</sup>

"This, however, does not mean that I refuse to accept the value of productions of art," he explained, "but only that I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature."<sup>5</sup> These beauties, to him, were truthful, inasmuch as they served to remind him of their Creator.<sup>6</sup> They were beautiful only because they were images or reflections of "the Truth that is in the centre of creation."

more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene."—Jane Austen: *Mansfield Park*, Ch. 11.

Cf. also: "Surely nature is a book, and every page rich with sacred hints. To an attentive mind the garden turns preacher, and its blooming tenants are so many lively sermons. What an engaging pattern, and what an excellent lesson have we here!.... Let us all be heliotropes (if I may use the expression) to the Sun of Righteousness."—James Hervey.

4. *Ibid*, p. 76-7.

5. *VI*, 13-11-1924.

6. Cf. The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,



"When I admire the wonder of a sunset or the beauty of the moon my soul expands in worship of the Creator. I try to see Him and His mercies in all these creations. But even the sunsets and sunrises would be mere hindrances, if they did not help me to think of Him. Anything which is a hindrance to the flight of the soul is a delusion and a snare; even like the body, which often does hinder you in the path of salvation."<sup>7</sup> If the body to him was an instrument, it was also a prison. "The body is a prison. Only a prison,"<sup>8</sup> said he."

## II

Of all the arts, music had the greatest appeal for him. "I have loved music—particularly devotional songs,"<sup>9</sup> he said. He had no knowledge of technique to boast of, but he had a good ear for music and could not put up with any discordant notes even in congregational prayers. "Good music always moves me," he said. "To me music is something to receive joy and inspiration from, and I am quite content so long as I

Their great Original proclaim.  
The unwearied sun, from day to day,  
Does his Creator's power display;  
And publish to every land,  
The work of an almighty hand.  
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn, . . .  
For ever singing, as they shine,  
'The hand that made us is divine.'

Joseph Addison

7. YI, 13-11-1924.

8. Vincent Sheean: *Lead, Kindly Light*, p. 207.

9. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Op Cit*, p. 71.

get that."<sup>10</sup> The famous hymn, *Lead, Kindly Light*, "acted like a healing balm—invariably." "Mira's songs are always beautiful," he added. "Her lovely songs—so touching in their sincerity and poetic appeal! They are so moving because they are so genuine. Mira sang because she could not help singing."<sup>11</sup> Her songs well forth straight from the heart—like a spray. They were not composed for the love of fame or popular applause as so many's are. There lies the secret of her lasting appeal. . . . It would be a tragedy if our beautiful music were to die from sheer popular neglect and indifference. . . . I cannot even conceive of an evolution of India's religious life without her music."<sup>12</sup>

It is relevant to add here that, even when he appreciated songs, their contents, apart from their sounds, counted more with him;<sup>13</sup> and the contents, in his opinion, had to be good, i. e. elevating. Songs with good, musical sounds, but sensuous in their contents, were repugnant to him.

He needed no pictures on his walls. Nor could he afford these, having voluntarily become a penniless man. But there was a greater reason behind it: "But then, you see, I am opposed to the walls even. . . . How could one possibly care for trappings on one's walls, if one wanted all the time to get away from

10. *Ibid*, p. 71.

11. Cf. "I sing because I must."—Tennyson: *In Memoriam*.

12. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Op Cit*, p. 74.

13. *Gandhijinā Samāgamān* (Gujarati) edited by Chandrashanker Shukla.



them? The walls seem to confine me, to restrict me, to restrict my liberty, to wean me from Nature."<sup>14</sup>

### III

Not that he did not thrill to really great products of other arts, e. g. painting or sculpture. The Vishnu temple at Belur in the Mysore State has a remarkable collection of sculptures of a fine, delicate and exquisite type. In 1927, during his visit to the place, when I had the good fortune to be a member of his entourage, he saw a beautifully sculptured statuette of a woman who had thrown off the sari—her only garment—presumably because of a scorpion having got into it; the scorpion was shown as lying beside the sari on the ground. Gandhiji was moved to the depths to see this and was for some moments engrossed in wonder, and he praised the unknown artist (who had lived a few centuries before) on the spot. Gandhiji's thrill was due to his having read into the sculpture a grand ethical meaning. "This scorpion represents Lust (*Kāma*)," said he, "and this young lady, having been stung by lust, has, out of aversion for it, thrown off even her only garment in order to free herself from the scorpion, i. e. lust." This piece of sculpture made a lasting impression on him, and he even wrote an article in praise of it.

In 1931, during his visit to Sistine Chapel at St. Peter's in Rome, on his way back home from Britain, he saw the statue of Christ on the great crucifix and

14. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Op Cit*, p. 92.

said to Shri Mahadev Desai after some minutes: "One can't help being moved to tears."<sup>15</sup>

### IV

In literature or any other art, he could not relish beautiful form as distinguished from its substance. For instance, the *Gita Govinda* of Jayadeva, heavily loaded as it is with amorous descriptions, produced a feeling of revulsion in him. Let there be no misunderstanding. This was not the objection of a prude to the use of the symbol of the lover and the beloved. He had no difficulty in realizing the fact that "religious mysticism often falls into the language of passionate love."<sup>16</sup> In fact he himself adopted it on one occasion, when he wrote: "I seem to have lost my love too and feel distracted. I feel the abiding presence of my Lover and He yet seems to be away from me. For He refuses to guide me and give clear-cut injunctions. On the contrary like Krishna, the arch-mischief-maker to the Gopis, He exasperates me by appearing, disappearing and reappearing."<sup>17</sup>

While it cannot be gainsaid that "much of the rationalistic criticism of the sacred scriptures is due to a confusion between symbolic statements and literal truths,"<sup>18</sup> it is also pertinent to remark that in these portraiture of the relations between the soul and God

15. Quoted by George Catlin in *The Path of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 206.

16. S. Radhakrishnan: *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 93.

17. *YL*, 4-9-1924.

18. S. Radhakrishnan: *Op Cit*, p. 97-8.



— a super-sensuous one—amorous descriptions are out of place, and those who have drawn such highly sensuous word-pictures have done not a little to invite criticism and to discredit the Bhakti school which they professed to serve.

Gandhiji did not want art to be made "the hand-maid of a privileged few". "Let the artist be always alive to his duty towards the masses," said he. To the extent that his art benefits the masses, it is to be approved of. To the extent that it doesn't, it is to be discouraged."<sup>19</sup>

## V

In 1921 Gandhiji had written, in reply to an article by Tagore: "The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has to be experienced to be realized. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food."<sup>20</sup>

Had not Gandhiji herein decried all Art?

But so had some of those who had to live amidst scenes of human suffering with 'poverty, hunger and dirt' all around. "What right had I to these joys," said Kropotkin, "when all around me was nothing but misery and struggle for a mouldy bit of bread?" "I do not want happiness even as a gift," said

19. Dilip Kumar Roy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 92.

20. *YI*, 13-10-1921.

Byelinsky, "if I do not have peace of mind about each of my blood-brothers, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." With the iron having gone deep into his soul Leo Tolstoy cried out in agony: "A pair of boots is more important than all your Madonnas and all your refined talk about Shakespeare." Even Alexandre Dumas, "the world's greatest master of the art of narrative", had said exactly the same thing in still more trenchant words:

"A little frost on the windows seems but the luxury of nature added to that of man. Winter has its diamonds, its powder and its silvery embroidery for the rich man wrapped in his furs, and packed in his carriage, or snug among the wadding and velvet of a well-warmed room.... But he who is hungry sees none of these beauties of nature; he who is cold hates the sky without a sun, and consequently without a smile for such unfortunates."<sup>21</sup>

However one-sided these utterances may appear, an effort ought to be made to realize, in imagination at least, the circumstances which provoked these. A certain freedom from chill penury and gnawing anxiety about the bare necessities of life is essential for the pursuit or appreciation of art in any of its forms. Extremes of poverty as well as of riches are uncongenial, if not inimical, to it.

## VI

Gandhiji was often criticised for his refusal to agree to the formula "art for art's sake" which has been

21. *The Queen's Necklace*, Ch. I.



variously interpreted, and which it is impossible to accept or reject without reference to the meaning attributed to it in a particular context. It is, however, well worth considering here a point or two in connection with it.

Adapting the phraseology of Christ,<sup>22</sup> one of the followers of this school said: "Love art for its own sake and then all things that you need will be added to you."<sup>23</sup> This is too tall a claim to make for art, setting it up as the *summum bonum* of life. Gandhiji unequivocally disapproved of it. The formula "art for art's sake" (in the sense suggested above) has failed to satisfy many even among those who are competent to speak with authority on art and literature.

"Perfection of culture, art for art's sake, has no deep root in the heart of man, and flowers but to fade rapidly; it strikes a deep root only when it gives a moral representation of life."<sup>24</sup>

"Nothing sublimely artistic has ever arisen out of mere art, any more than anything essentially reasonable has ever arisen out of pure reason. There must always be a rich moral soil for any great aesthetic growth. The principle of *art for art's sake* is a very good principle if it means that there is a vital distinction between the earth and the tree that has its root

22. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."—*Matthew* 6; 3.

23. Oscar Wilde: *Essays and Lectures*, p. 143.

24. Alfred Lyall: *Tennyson*, p. 22.

in the earth; but it is a very bad principle if it means that the tree could grow just as well with its roots in the air."<sup>25</sup>

"The offensive consequences often drawn from the formula 'Art for Art' will be found to attach not to the doctrine that art is an end in itself, but to the doctrine that art is the whole or supreme end of human life. And this latter doctrine, which seems to me absurd, is in any case quite different from the former."<sup>26</sup>

There is also a danger in an exclusive devotion to either art or literature as the highest end of life, to which one of the master-artists of modern times, Romain Rolland, has drawn pointed attention:

"Estheticism is not enough to enable one to endure for long the isolation of thought. One has to have a character for that, but this commodity isn't found at the bottom of an inkwell. Fine words invite you to carry yourself well. But if you carry yourself badly, fine words invite you to lie."<sup>27</sup>

## VII

There is also a school of literature and art—the Formalist—which holds the view that "it is of no consequence what a poet says, so long as he says the thing well. The *what* is poetically indifferent; it is the *how* that counts."<sup>28</sup> This is true up to a limit.

25. G. K. Chesterton.

26. A. C. Bradley: *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, p. 5.

27. *Soul Enchanted*, Vol. III, p. 42.

28. A. C. Bradley, *Op Cit*, p. 10.



"But he goes too far, if he maintains that the subject is indifferent and that all subjects are the same to poetry.... That truth shows that the subject *settles* nothing, but not that it counts for nothing."<sup>29</sup> "To produce a mighty book," said Melville, "you must choose a mighty theme. No great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea, though many there be that have tried it."<sup>30</sup>

Oscar Wilde, however, went further and said: "There is nothing in life that art cannot sanctify."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps he meant to suggest that art could beautify even immorality. Citing his example Gandhiji said: "Wilde saw the highest art simply in outward forms and therefore succeeded in beautifying immorality."<sup>32</sup> There was enough in the writings of Wilde to support this impression about him; for he had, in a flamboyant manner, declared: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all."<sup>33</sup> Though this view may possibly have some following in the present-day world of art and literature, it is palpably untenable. Even Byron had rejected it out of hand:

Nor all that heralds rake from coffin'd clay,  
Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme,  
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime.<sup>34</sup>

29. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

30. Herman Melville: *Moby Dick*.

31. Oscar Wilde: *Op Cit*, p. 154.

32. *YL*, 13-11-1924.

33. Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

34. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto I, 3.

## VIII

Gandhiji expected an artist to possess, in the first instance, purity of character without which he would be like "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal". No one who has divorced his soul can ever be a great artist. "For what is this hot-house art-plant of yours without the life-soul and background of a steady worthy life? It may be all very edifying to flaunt it; but what, after all, does this fussing with art amount to if it all the time stultifies life instead of elevating it? Is it not grotesque to claim—as so many artists do—that art is the crown of existence?"<sup>35</sup>

Gandhiji had the highest regard for Rabindranath Tagore primarily because, along with his matchless gifts of poetic genius and artistic expression, he exemplified in his own life in the highest degree a sagelike purity of character.

"He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things," said Milton, "ought himself to be a true poem; that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourable things, not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy."

## IX

The fact that artistic talent does in no way depend on the beauty of the facial expression, nor need the latter be an accompaniment of the former, has been

35. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Op Cit*, p. 77.



pointed out by Lafcadio Hearn in the very touching episode of a Japanese woman:

"A woman carrying a samisen, and accompanied by a little boy seven or eight years old, came to my house to sing. She wore the dress of peasant, and a blue towel tied round her head. She was ugly, and her natural ugliness had been increased by a cruel attack of smallpox. The child carried a bundle of printed ballads....

"The woman sat down on my doorstep, tuned her samisen, played a bar of accompaniment,—and a spell descended upon the people; and they stared at each other in smiling amazement.

"For out of those ugly disfigured lips there gushed and rippled a miracle of a voice—young, deep, unutterably touching in its penetrating sweetness. 'Woman or wood-fairy?' queried a bystander. Woman only,—but a very, very great artist. The way she handed her instrument might have astounded the most skillful geisha; but no such voice had ever been heard from any geisha, and no such song....

"And as she sang, those who listened began to weep silently. I did not distinguish the words; but I felt the sorrow and the sweetness and the patience of the life of Japan pass with her voice into my heart,—plaintively seeking for something never there. A tenderness invisible seemed to gather and quiver about us; and sensations of places and of times forgotten came softly back, mingled with feelings ghostlier,—feelings not of any place or time in living memory.

"Then I saw that the singer was blind.

"When the song was finished, we coaxed the woman into the house, and questioned her. Once she had been fairly well to do, and had learned the samisen when a girl. The little boy was her son. Her husband was paralyzed. Her eyes had been destroyed by smallpox. But she was strong, and able to walk great distances. When the child became tired, she would carry him on her back. She could support the little one, as well as the bed-ridden husband, because whenever she sang the people cried and gave her coppers and food.... Such was her story. We gave her some money and a meal; and she went away, guided by her boy."<sup>36</sup>

External beauty, or what goes by the name of 'charm', on the other hand, is no guarantee for, or indication of, virtue or goodness. Says an English essayist:

"Surely there is nothing contradictory in saying that a man is charming and, at the same time, that he is a villain. Charm is unfortunately not necessarily a moral quality. Some very bad men have possessed it in superabundance; some very good men have been deficient in it. Charm is often the rogue's advertisement. The financial crook, I have been told, is at the height of his genius a charming fellow. Milton's Satan had a certain sombre charm; or, perhaps, it would be more correct to describe him as a fascinating creature.... I have a notion that a considerable proportion of the male and female rascals of the world are to be found among the charming people.... If only the good were charming, how easy it would be to

36. *Kokoro*, p. 40-42.



build up a virtuous commonwealth free from crime and self-seeking! All we should have to do would be to choose the most charming men as our leaders and follow them into the Golden Age. But charm is no more a mark of virtue than being six feet high."<sup>37</sup>

## X

In Gandhiji's view, there was "no beauty apart from truth". He would whole-heartedly subscribe to the first half of the formula: 'Truth is beauty,' but not to the other half: 'Beauty is truth.' "I see and find Beauty in Truth or through Truth. All Truths.... are highly beautiful.... Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true art will arise."<sup>38</sup> "Mere outward form may not make a thing beautiful."<sup>39</sup>

In saying this, Gandhiji did not put forth any 'fad' of his own, but only reiterated the time-honoured ideal accepted by Indian art which "we seem to have lost a while." Referring to this ideal, Jawaharlal Nehru has written:

"In art, as in music, there is a gulf which separates Eastern from Western conceptions.... In Indian art there is always a religious urge, a looking beyond, such as probably inspired the builders of the great cathedrals of Europe. Beauty is conceived as subjective, not objective; it is a thing of the spirit; though it may also take lovely shape in form or matter. The Greeks loved beauty for its own sake and found not

37. Robert Lynd: *Life's Little Oddities*, p. 215-7.

38. YI, 13-11-1924.

39. *Ibid.*

only joy but truth in it; the ancient Indians loved beauty also but always they sought to put some deeper significance in their work, some vision of the inner truth as they saw it."<sup>40</sup>

Even a living Western writer, Will Durant, has independently expressed the same view as Gandhiji's: "Perhaps we shall some day be strong enough and clear enough in soul to see the shining beauty of even the darkest truth."<sup>41</sup>

Outward beauty in man or woman is a flower that would wither before long. Combined with immorality, it is loathsome. Men, who are "demons in act, though gods at least in face",<sup>42</sup> have neither been, nor can be, objects of worship or affection to their fellow-beings. A heart, that is at "war with nature and its better will",<sup>42</sup> can have no beauty in it, because with its different elements being in constant conflict it is like

40. *The Discovery of India*, p. 169.

Cf. "In India, the greater part of our literature is religious, because God with us is not a distant God; He belongs to our homes, as well as to our temples. We feel His nearness to us in all the human relationship of love and affection, and in our festivities He is the chief guest whom we honour. In seasons of flowers and fruits, in the coming of the rain, in the fulness of the autumn, we see the hem of His mantle and hear His footsteps. We worship Him in all the true objects of our worship and love Him wherever our love is true. In the woman who is good we feel Him, in the man who is true we know Him, in our children He is born again and again, the Eternal Child."—Rabindranath Tagore: *Personality*, p. 27-8.

41. *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 517.

42. Byron.



a house divided against itself and lacks harmony which is one of the most important constituents of a product of art.

Real beauty, therefore, being inward, is beauty of the soul. "Socrates," said Gandhiji, "was the most truthful man of his time, and yet his features are said to have been the ugliest in Greece. To my mind he was beautiful, because all his life was a striving after Truth, and you may remember that his outward form did not prevent Phidias from appreciating the beauty of Truth in him, though as an artist he was accustomed to see the beauty in outward forms also."<sup>43</sup> In India, in the form of Shiva, the compassionate (*Karunābdhi*), we have outward ugliness (with matted hair, body besmeared with ashes from the funeral pyre and covered with elephant skin, serpents dangling from the neck which is blue) coupled with the finest beauty of the soul, which has been worshipped for ages past. "The outward," said Gandhiji, "has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward. All true art is thus the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are the expression of the inner spirit of man."<sup>44</sup>

## XI

It follows from this that the art which merely pleases or tickles the senses is a lower species of art, if not a negation of it. "To equate the love of art

43. YI, 13-11-1924.

44. *Ibid.*

with a love of fine sensations is to make of works of art a kind of aphrodisiac,"<sup>45</sup> remarked one of the best art critics that India has produced. The pleasure of the senses is not altogether denied, but it is not the end of art. In all artistic experience, the senses are only the vehicles through which the appeal of art reaches the inmost depths of the soul. Even an exponent of "art for art's sake" like Oscar Wilde felt constrained to remark: "The object of art is to stir the most divine and remote of the chords which make music in our soul."<sup>46</sup> Then, however, art is no longer "for art's sake" but offers itself for the service of divinity, as in the fitness of things it ought to do. For, like all things in the universe, art can find its self-fulfilment only when it enlarges and transcends itself, and reaches out to something higher and nobler than itself for which it lives and works, and ultimately loses itself in that other. That indeed is, or ought to be, the justification and goal of all existence. The aim of art, therefore, is not 'enjoyment' so much as 'elevation' (including what Plato termed 'Katharsis',<sup>47</sup> an 'emotional cleansing', i. e. cleansing the self of all impurities).

Says Radhakrishnan:

"The greatest gifts of art are peace and reconciliation."<sup>48</sup> "Its essential aim is not so much to entertain

45. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*, p. 10. Cf. "But small the bliss that sense alone bestows."—Oliver Goldsmith: *The Traveller*.

46. *Essays and Lectures*, p. 211.

47. *Sophist* 266, 227.

48. *An Idealist View of Life*, p. 194.



or instruct as to kindle the spirit in us."<sup>49</sup> "A thing of beauty refines and purifies us even without our knowing it."<sup>50</sup> "Great literature is not the criticism of life but the transforming of it."<sup>51</sup>

While it is true that art (including creative literature) should neither "provide us with lessons",<sup>52</sup> nor should have any "palpable design upon us",<sup>53</sup> nor should it lose its way in "deserts of preaching",<sup>54</sup> it is also true that "all art that deals with life seriously must be ethical in some way,"<sup>55</sup>—in a higher way, as shown above. "There is higher work for Art than the arts."<sup>56</sup> "Great literature is the bond that connects man with man."<sup>57</sup> It is the voice of the Deep calling unto the Deep. In this sense art is both human and divine.

## XII

It is possible for no man, however titanic his energy, to be a saint, a political leader, a speaker, a thinker, a writer, a jail-goer, and at the same time a connoisseur of art. "I am not an art student," said Gandhiji. "My functions are different from the artist's."<sup>58</sup> His

49. Address on 'Moral Values in Literature'—*Indian Writers in Council*, p. 90.

50. *Ibid*, p. 97.

51. *Ibid*, p. 90.

52. *Ibid*, p. 96.

53. Keats.

54. John Morley on Wordsworth.

55. Arthur McDowall: *Thomas Hardy*, p. 32.

56. R. W. Emerson: *Essay on Art*.

57. S. Radhakrishnan: *Op Cit*, p. 97.

58. *YI*, 20-11-1924.

dominant interest lay in the pursuit of Truth, and his ceaseless striving after the Good which followed as a corollary to Truth. "Truth," he said, "is the first thing to be sought for, and Beauty and Goodness will then be added unto you."<sup>59</sup> In his order of valuation, Goodness came next to Truth. He never tired of repeating, to girls whom he induced to give up their ornaments, the adage: 'Handsome is that handsome does.' This is the beauty of character—'moral beauty', which, in the opinion of some thinkers, is preferable to beauty of the form:

"In modern civilization individuals whose conduct is inspired by a moral ideal are very seldom encountered. However, such individuals still exist. We cannot help noticing their aspect when we meet them. Moral beauty is an exceptional and very striking phenomenon. He who has contemplated it but once never forgets its aspect. This form of beauty is far more impressive than the beauty of nature and of science. It gives to those who possess its divine gifts, a strange, an inexplicable power. It increases the strength of intellect. It establishes peace among men. Much more than science, art, and religious rites, moral beauty is the basis of civilization."<sup>60</sup>

## XIII

"Even higher than the life of art is the art of life," says Will Durant.<sup>61</sup> Gandhiji would have heartily

59. *Ibid*.

60. Alexis Carrel: *Man, the Unknown*, p. 127.

61. *The Mansions of Philosophy*, p. 20.



endorsed the proposition. "There is truly sufficient art in my life, though you may not see what you call works of art about me," said he.<sup>62</sup> He claimed to be an artist himself.<sup>63</sup> "Life must immensely exceed all the arts put together.... To me the greatest artist is surely he who lives the finest life."<sup>64</sup> 'The finest', that is the most truthful, the cleanest, overflowing with love and a spirit of service. All elements in it—thought, word, and deed harmonise and create a poise, an equilibrium, *samatva*<sup>65</sup>, which make it veritably a piece of art.

"That mind and soul according well  
May make one music as before  
But vaster."<sup>66</sup>

"Jesus was, to my mind, a supreme artist," said Gandhiji, "because he saw and expressed Truth; and so was Muhammad, the Koran being the most perfect composition in all Arabic literature—at any rate, that is what scholars say. It is because both of them strove first for Truth that the grace of expression came in; and yet neither Jesus nor Muhammad wrote on art. That is the Truth and Beauty I crave for, live for and would die for."<sup>67</sup>

62. YI, 13-11-1924.

63. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Op Cit*, p. 75.

64. *Ibid*, p. 77.

65. BG 2; 48. Mahadev Desai suggested 'art of life' as the synonym for 'Yoga'.—*The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gita according to Gandhi*, p. 19.

66. Tennyson: *In Memoriam*.

67. YI, 20-11-1924.

Asceticism naturally fitted into such a life and enriched it. "I do maintain that asceticism is the greatest art in life," said Gandhiji. "For what is art but beauty in simplicity, and what is asceticism but the loftiest manifestation of simple beauty in daily life shorn of artificialities and make-believes? That is why I always say that a true ascetic not only practises art but lives it."<sup>68</sup>

#### XIV

In India, we had little difficulty in understanding this view. His own life was before us as a living example of it. Munshi gives him a place in the galaxy of supreme artists of life produced by India.<sup>69</sup> Nehru, describing him as "the perfect artist", explains the title as follows:

"During his long life, full of hard work and activity and novel adventure out of the common rut, there is hardly any jarring note anywhere. All his manifold activities became progressively a symphony, and every word he spoke and every gesture that he made fitted into this, and so unconsciously he became the perfect artist, for he learnt the art of living, though the way of life he had adopted was very different from the world's way. It became apparent that the pursuit of truth and goodness leads among other things to

68. Dilip Kumar Roy: *Op Cit*, p. 75.

69. K. M. Munshi: *The Creative Art of Life*, p. 77.



this artistry in life....Even in his death there was a magnificence and complete artistry. It was from every point of view a fitting climax to the man and to the life he had lived."<sup>70</sup>

70. Article in *Mahatma Gandhi* (Ed.) by S. Radhakrishnan, p. 434-5.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(A list of books quoted or referred to in this volume)

- A. E.: The Living Torch.  
 Horace G. Alexander: The Indian Ferment.  
 Syed Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam.  
 Alpha of the Plough: Windfalls.  
 C. F. Andrews: Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas.  
 Sri Aurobindo: Essays on the Gita.  
 Jane Austen: Mansfield Park.  
*The Bhagavadgītā.*  
*The Bhāgavata.*  
 The Bible.  
 Edmund Blunden: Thomas Hardy.  
 A. C. Bradley: Oxford Lectures on Poetry.  
 F. H. Bradley: Appearance and Reality.  
 B. Brown: The Wisdom of the Chinese.  
 Thomas Carlyle: Heroes and Hero-Worship.  
 Alexis Carrel: Man, the Unknown.  
 George Catlin: In the Path of Mahatma Gandhi.  
 G. K. Chesterton: A Miscellany of Men.  
 " : Come to Think of It.  
 Winston S. Churchill: The 2nd World War 4 Vols.  
 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: Figures of Speech or  
 Figures of Thought.  
 " : Hinduism and  
 Buddhism.  
 Edward Crankshaw: Russia and the Russians.  
 Charles Darwin: The Descent of Man.



Mahadev Desai: The Gospel of Selfless Action or the Gita according to Gandhi.

John Dewey: Reconstruction in Philosophy.  
*The Dhammapada.*

Joseph J. Doke: M. K. Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa.

Durant Drake: Problems of Religion.

Henry Drummond: The Ascent of Man.

Alexandre Dumas: The Count of Monte Cristo.

" : The Queen's Necklace.

Will Durant: The Mansions of Philosophy.

" : The Story of Philosophy.

*Durgāsaptashatī.*

Arthur Eddington: Space, Time and Gravitation.

R.W. Emerson: Essays.

Epictetus: The Golden Sayings.

H. Fielding-Hall: Love's Legend.

Herman Finer: The Theory and Practice of  
" : Modern Government, 2 Vols.

Louis Fischer: A Week with Gandhi.

" : Gandhi and Stalin.

" : The Great Challenge.

M.K. Gandhi: Autobiography.

" : Correspondence with the Government, 1942-1944.

" : *Harijan*.

" : *Hind Swaraj*.

" : Letters to Mira.

" : My Soul's Agony.

" : *Navajivan*.

" : *Prārthanā-Pravachan*, 2 vols, (Hindi)

M. K. Gandhi: To a Gandhian Capitalist.

" : Written Statement and Oral Evidence before the Hunter Committee.

" : *Young India*.

Kahlil Gibran: Jesus.

T. R. Glover: The Jesus of History.

Oliver Goldsmith: The Traveller.

Richard B. Gregg: Gandhism Versus Socialism.

J. S. Haldane: Mechanism, Life and Personality.

Robert Burdon Haldane: An Autobiography.

*Harivamsha.*

Lafcadio Hearn: Kokoro.

Maurice Hindus: Humanity Uprooted.

" : Mother Russia.

M. Hiriyanna: The Essentials of Indian Philosophy.

William Ernest Hocking: The Lasting Elements of Individualism.

Victor Hugo: Les Misérables.

Aldous Huxley: Ends and Means.

*Indian Opinion, Golden Number*, 1914.

W. R. Inge: A Rustic Moralist.

" : More Lay Thoughts of a Dean.

*International Affairs* (Quarterly).

*Īshopanishad.*

J. Hampden Jackson: The Post-war World.

Jayadeva: *Prasannarāghava*.

Sir James Jeans: The Mysterious Universe.

C. E. M. Joad: A Counter Attack from the East.

" : A Guide to Philosophy.

" : Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics.



*Kathopanishad.*

- Thomas A. Kempis: The Imitation of Christ.  
 Hermann Keyserling (ed.): The Book of Marriage.  
 Arthur Koestler and Others: The God That Failed.  
 Peter Kropotkin: Mutual Aid.  
 Harold J. Laski: Grammar of Politics.  
 " : Liberty in the Modern State.  
 Lenin: Materialism and Empiro-criticism.  
 " : The Infantile Sickness of Leftism and Communism.  
 " : The State and Revolution.  
 Eric Leon: Plato.  
 David Lloyd George: War Memoirs, 6 Volumes.  
 C. Lloyd Morgan: Emergent Evolution.  
 Alfred Lyall: Tennyson.  
 Robert Lynd (Y.Y.): Life's Little Oddities.  
*The Mahabharata.*  
 Karl Marx and Frederic Engels: The Communist Manifesto.  
 T. G. Masaryk: The Making of a State.  
 William McDougall: An Outline of Psychology.  
 " : Psychology (HUL).  
 P. J. Mehta: M. K. Gandhi.  
 Herman Melville: Moby Dick.  
 John Morley: On Compromise.  
 Muhammad Ali: The Quran (English Translation).  
*Mundakopanishad.*  
 K. M. Munshi: Akhand Hindustan.  
 " : The Creative Art of Life.  
 Michael A. Musmanno: Ten Days to Die.

- Sushila Nayyar: *Bāpu kī kārāvās kahāni* (Hindi).  
 Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography.  
 " : Discovery of India.  
 " : Whither India?  
 G. T. W. Patrick: Introduction to Philosophy.  
 William Patten: The Grand Strategy of Evolution.  
 Plato: Dialogues.  
 H. S. L. Polak, H. N. Brailsford and Lord Pethick Lawrence: Mahatma Gandhi.  
 Millie Graham Polak: Mr. Gandhi the Man.  
 S. Radhakrishnan: An Idealist View of Life.  
 " : East and West in Religion.  
 " : Eastern Religions and Western Thought.  
 " : Indian Philosophy 2 Volumes.  
 " (ed.): Mahatma Gandhi.  
 " : Religion and Society.  
 " : The Bhagavadgītā.  
 " : The Heart of Hindustan.  
 " : The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy.  
*The Rigveda.*  
 Romain Rolland: Mahatma Gandhi.  
 " : Soul Enchanted.  
 " : The Life of Ramakrishna.  
 " : The Life of Vivekananda.  
 Andrew Corvin Romanski: Prisoners of the Night.  
 Dilip Kumar Roy: Among the Great.  
 William Shakespeare: All's Well That Ends Well.  
 Shankara: *Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya*.  
 " : *Gītā-Bhāṣya*.



- Vincent A. Sheean: Lead, Kindly Light.  
 Chandrashanker Shukla: Conversations of Gandhiji.  
 " (ed.) : Famous Interviews with Mahatma Gandhi.  
 " (ed.) : Gandhiji As We Know Him.  
 " (ed.) : Gāndhījīnā Samāgammān (Gujarati).  
 " (ed.) : Incidents of Gandhiji's Life.  
 " : More Conversations of Gandhiji.  
 " (ed.) : Reminiscences of Gandhiji.  
 " : Weekly Letters in *Harijan*.  
 C. F. Strong: Modern Political Constitutions.  
 Rabindranath Tagore: Nationalism.  
 " : Personality.  
 " : Sadhana.  
 " : The Religion of Man.  
 " : *Visvabharati*.  
*Taittiriyaopanishad*.  
 Alfred Tennyson: In Memoriam.  
 J. Arthur Thomson: The System of Animate Nature.  
 Robert H. Thouless: General and Social Psychology.  
 Leo Tolstoy: Letter to Gay.  
 Tulsidas: *Vinayapatrikā*.  
 Varahamihir: *Brihatsamhitā*.  
 A. R. Wadia: Presidential Address at the Indian Philosophical Congress, Dacca, 1930.

- Sophia Wadia (ed): Indian Writers in Council, 1945.  
 " : The Brotherhood of Religions.  
 Kenneth Walker: Meaning and Purpose.  
 F. Warburton Lewis: Saul of Tarsus.  
 W. B. Watson: Behaviourism.  
 H. G. Wells: A Short History of the World.  
 Walt Whitman: Leaves of Grass.  
 Oscar Wilde: Essays and Lectures.  
 " : The Picture of Dorian Gray.  
 Lin Yutang: With Love and Irony.



# THE HISTORY & CULTURE OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE

(In Ten Volumes)



*Planned, organised and directed by:* The Hon'ble Dr. K. M. Munshi, President, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

*General Editor:* R. C. Majumdar, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.A.S.B., Principal, College of Indology, Banaras Hindu University; Ex-Vice-Chancellor and Professor of History, Dacca University; Hon. Head of the Department of History, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

*Assistant Editor:* A. D. Pusalker, M.A., LL.B., Ph.D., Assistant Director and Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

This is the first history of India, written exclusively by her own people and brings to bear on the problems a detached and critical appreciation. A team of over sixty scholars of repute present herein a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the political, socio-economic and cultural history of the Indian People.

Hitherto, the usual practice has been to assign equal space to the Hindu, Muslim and British periods of Indian History, in spite of the 4,000 years of the first, 400 or 500 of the second, and less than 200 of the last. The present undertaking strikes a truer balance, and in spite of the paucity of materials for the political history of ancient India, full use has been made of the corresponding abundance on the cultural side. The work is planned in three main divisions—Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern and divided into ten volumes. The periods covered by the ten volumes are given overleaf.



# THE HISTORY & CULTURE OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE

(In Ten Volumes)

Volume I

THE VEDIC AGE

Volume II

THE AGE OF IMPERIAL UNITY  
(600 B.C. to 320 A.D.)

Volume III

THE CLASSICAL AGE.  
(320-750 A.D.)

Volume IV

THE AGE OF IMPERIAL KANAUJ  
(750-1000 A.D.)

Volume V

THE STRUGGLE FOR EMPIRE  
(1000-1300 A.D.)

Volume VI

THE DELHI SULTANATE  
(1300-1526 A.D.)

Volume VII

THE MUGHAL EMPIRE  
(1526-1707 A.D.)

Volume VIII

THE MARATHA SUPREMACY  
(1707-1818 A.D.)

Volume IX

THE BRITISH DOMINATION  
(1818-1918)

Volume X

INDIA SINCE 1918

The work is fully illustrated with plates, maps and plans. Volume I—"THE VEDIC AGE"—and Volume II—"THE AGE OF IMPERIAL UNITY"—are already out and each of the subsequent volumes will follow at an interval of six to eight months.

SOME

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

PUBLICATIONS

★

## BHARATIYA VIDYA SERIES

Critical editions of rare and important texts, treatises and translations on Indological subjects. 13 volumes published.

## SINGHI JAIN SERIES

Critical editions of important Jain Canonical, Philosophical, Historical, Literary, Narrative and other works and allied literature as well as new studies by competent research scholars—28 vols. published, 12 under print.

General Editor: Acharya Muni Jinavijayaji.

## THE GLORY THAT WAS GURJARADESHA

(History of Greater Gujarat) Parts I and III published.

General Editor: The Hon. Dr. K. M. Munshi.

## MUNSHI SAHITYA

The works of Shri and Shrimati Munshi in Gujarati and English—novels, dramas, literary, historical, political and miscellaneous works, numbering in all 57 as well as their translations.

## BHARATIYA VIDYA

The quarterly indological research journal in English. 11 volumes published.



## BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

The books under this Scheme range over subjects of fundamental importance, covering the best in Indian and world literature. Some of the recent titles are listed here :

- \*1. MAHABHARATA  
Hon. Shri Rajagopalachari.
- \*2. THE ART OF LIFE IN THE BHAGAVAD-GITA  
Sir H. V. Divatia.
- \*3. SPARKS FROM THE ANVIL  
Hon. Dr. K. M. Munshi.
- \*4. GANDHI'S VIEW OF LIFE  
Shri Chandrashanker Shukla.
5. ASPIRATIONS FROM A FRESH WORLD  
Shri Shakuntala Rao Shastri.
6. OCEAN OF STORIES—KATHASARITSAGAR  
Dr. Moti Chandra.
7. INDIAN SCULPTURE  
Shri Karl J. Khandalawala.
8. FUNDAMENTALS OF INDIAN CULTURE  
Hon. Dr. K. M. Munshi.
9. THINGS OF BEAUTY (in three volumes)  
Principal V. N. Bhushan.†
10. WOMEN IN VEDIC INDIA  
Shri Shakuntala Rao Shastri.
11. WOMEN IN SACRED LAWS  
Shri Shakuntala Rao Shastri.
12. OUR SOCIAL LAWS  
Prof. J. H. Dave.
13. THE EPIC OF THE ANCIENTS  
Hon. Dr. K. M. Munshi.
14. SOMNATH—THE SHRINE IMMORTAL  
Hon. Dr. K. M. Munshi.

\* Already published.



Vedanta, Jyotish.

#### Facilities

Free tuition to all and free boarding and lodging or scholarships to all deserving students.

#### 2. GITA VIDYALAYA:

An Academy for the study of Indian Culture with special reference to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Classes conducted at the Bhavan and 19 centres. Examinations for the Gita Vid and Gita Visharad Diplomas are conducted and scholarships, medals and prizes are given to successful candidates.

#### 3. MUNGALAL GOENKA SAMSHODHAN MANDIR:

A Post-graduate & Research Institute recognized by the University of Bombay for research for Ph.D. & M.A.

#### Departments

(a) Sanskrit Shikshapith; (b) Singhi Jain Sahitya Shikshapith; (c) Narmad Gujarati Shikshapith; (d) Bhagavad Dharma Shikshapith and (e) Bharatiya Itihasa Vibhag.

#### Facilities

Scholarships and free guidance to deserving scholars.

#### 4. MUNSHI SARASVATI MANDIR (An Institute of Culture):

#### Departments

(a) Library with about 40,000 printed volumes, including rare indological volumes and a Children's section; (b) Museum consisting of ancient and valuable manuscripts, paintings, bronzes etc.; (c) All-India Cultural Essay Competition; (d) Bharatiya Sangit Shikshapith—An Academy of Music for teaching and conducting research in Music—affiliated to the National Academy of Hindustani Music, Lucknow, teaching for Intermediate and Graduate courses; (e) Bharatiya Kala Kendra—An Academy of Arts and Dramatics, including a School of Dancing.

B  
133  
•G354

Shukla, C.  
Gandhi's view  
of Life

#### 5. PRAKASHA

(a) This c  
of the Bhavan,  
(b) *The Book*  
modern—are pu  
a view to mak  
world available

Signature

Issue D

#### 6. M. M. COLI

This Colleg  
Bombay for cou  
The College has

#### 7. ACADEMY

As a first  
Bhavan has acqu  
Advertisers & Pr

#### 8. BHARATIYA

Under the a  
politics, economic

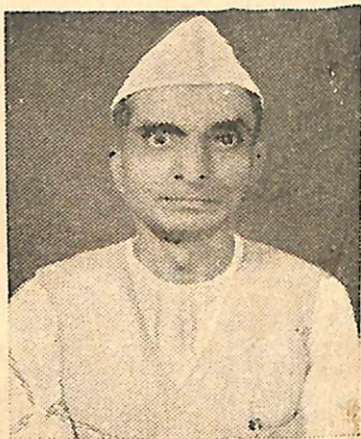
(1) Th  
The Bom'

B  
133  
•G354

BK-265

285





### THE AUTHOR

CHANDRASHANKER SHUKLA (born 1901) non-cooperated as a college student in 1920, and then studied at the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad. Member, editorial staff, *Young India* and *Navajivan*, 1921-23. Member, teaching staff, Sabarmati Ashram, 1924-27, and Gujarat Vidyapith, 1928-32. Gandhiji's Secretary for one year, 1933-34. Editor, *Harijanbandhu* (Gujarati), 1933-40. Asst. Editor, *Harijan*, 1935-40. Registrar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1943. Editor, *Hindustan* (Gujarati daily), 1948-49. He is at present the Secretary of the Gandhi Film Committee appointed by the Gandhi National Memorial Trust to prepare a documentary film of Gandhiji's life. Works (in English): *Conversations of Gandhiji*; *More Conversations of Gandhiji*; *Gandhiji As We Know Him* (ed.); *Incidents of Gandhiji's Life* (ed.); *Reminiscences of Gandhiji* (ed.); *Famous Interviews with Mahatma Gandhi* (ed.). A careful translator of writings from English into Gujarati and *vice versa*. Having had the opportunity to be in proximity with Gandhiji over a long period he has made good use of it, and is known to friends as a close student of Gandhiji's life, work and thought. He has also compiled several collections of Gandhiji's writings in English and Gujarati. He has written about forty books in Gujarati (the bulk of them being translations).