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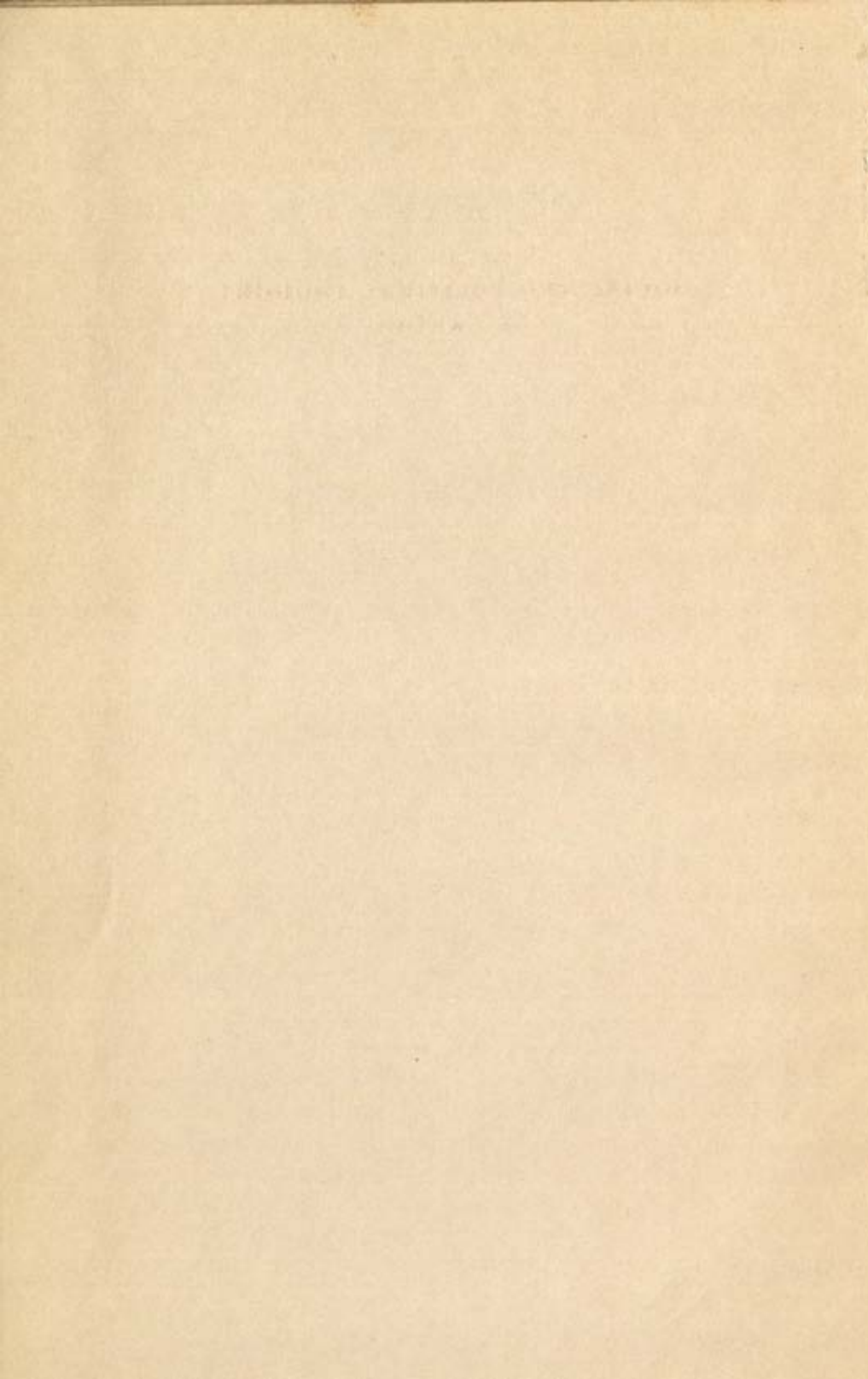
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SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL THOUGHT

**SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT
OF GANDHI**

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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF GANDHI

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JAYANTANUJA BANDYOPADHYAYA



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PREFACE

THE social and political thought of Gandhi would seem to be of great contemporary importance from at least two points of view. In the first place, Gandhi is the most important of the great thinkers of modern India who have drawn their inspiration largely from the intellectual and cultural tradition of India and tried to relate their thought to contemporary social and political realities. The further development of independent thinking in India in the context of the rapidly changing socio-political milieu, therefore, requires an investigation into the thought of Gandhi and the other great Indian thinkers as a starting point. Secondly, the power-political approach to national and international politics during the last few centuries has led to a situation which calls for profound rethinking. At the national level, the organized armed strength of the modern state has grown to such an extent as to make it extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, for the people to resist governmental tyranny through violent means. At the international level, the balance of nuclear terror is tending to make major wars increasingly obsolete. Hence, the social and political thought of Gandhi would seem to have a more universal appeal as well.

Unfortunately, however, the vast literature on Gandhi generally deals with his biography rather than his thought. Of the very few existing works on Gandhi's thought, practically all seem to me to be lacking in objectivity. Some, written by "Gandhians", are naively uncritical, while others, written by Marxists, are strongly biased. There is also, generally speaking, wild confusion in such works regarding method, concepts and tools of analysis, the proper use of which is regarded by modern Social Science as a prerequisite to objectivity.

I have, therefore, attempted in this book what I consider to be the first comprehensive and critical assessment of the social and political thought of Gandhi from the point of view of Social Science. In *Part One* I have tried to make a critical analysis of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, the instantiation or consummation of which is the goal of the Gandhian social dynamics ; in *Part Two* I have presented and discussed the two levels of

the ideal society visualized by Gandhi, which, according to him, would instantiate the ultimate values through a process of successive approximation ; and in *Part Three* I have critically examined the twin means of social control advocated by Gandhi, namely, the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha*, for transforming the existing social reality gradually into the ideal society of his conception.

I am thankful to Professor N. K. Bose, Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, for drawing my attention to a few basic points and making some unpublished source materials available to me. My thanks are also due to Dr D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Reader in Philosophy, Jadavpur University, and Professor Amlan Datta, Head of the Department of Economics, University of Calcutta, for a few valuable suggestions.

J. B.

Jadavpur University

Calcutta 32

4 April 1969

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Part One

ULTIMATE VALUES

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL SCIENCE AND GANDHIAN THOUGHT

MOHANDAS Karamchand Gandhi declared that his own life was his message. It was undoubtedly a great life intensely lived at many different levels. A mystic and religious man in personal life, Gandhi was also a great social reformer, one of the greatest political activists the world has ever seen, and a social and political thinker who was profoundly disturbed by the inadequacies of contemporary social organization and values. Millions of people have found in this many-splendoured life a "spiritual power" that has given it not only its unity and coherence, but also the majesty that has made Gandhi a *Mahatma*. This "spiritual power", however, cannot be investigated through the scientific method (consisting roughly of empirical observation and logical reasoning) on which modern Social Science is based. Nor can the scientific method be used to investigate the personal religion and mysticism of Gandhi. From the point of view of Social Science, it is only possible to inquire either into the social and political biography of Gandhi, or into his social and political thought. The purpose of this study, as the title would indicate, is to make a systematized presentation and scientific assessment of the social and political thought of Gandhi.

The term "society", as I understand it, whether viewed as a system or a process of social relations, is wider than "politics" and "economics", for example, similarly viewed. In other words, if we talk of a "social system", the "political system" and the "economic system" are sub-systems within it.¹ Then "social thought" by definition covers the broad problems of society and is inclusive, for instance, of political and economic thought. I have, however, attributed a special importance to Gandhi's political thought (although it is by definition a part of his social thought) by

¹ This view has also been taken by the American sociologist, Talcott Parsons. See Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils (eds) : *Toward A General Theory of Action*, Harvard University Press, 1951, p. 55.

mentioning it separately in the title and elsewhere, because a major part of Gandhi's thought has a direct or indirect bearing on politics.

The most important methodological problem posed by the social and political thought of Gandhi is the problem of values. Although Gandhi was not a philosopher in the accepted sense of the term, his general philosophical outlook, as will be readily seen from the subsequent chapters, is strongly idealistic, and his social and political ideas highly charged with values. If a persistent questioner like Socrates started, for example, from Gandhi's conception of the ideal society (as explained in Part II) and went on asking why and how, it would soon be evident that most of his ideas regarding the ideal social order are in fact based on certain ethical preconceptions which are reducible to a few "ultimate" or "fundamental" values. In Gandhi's personal system of thought, these ultimate values are in turn derived from a certain conception of God, although he often argued, as we shall see in the next four chapters, that it is possible to accept them as working hypotheses on purely rational grounds without any reference to God. To what extent values in general, and the Gandhian system of values in particular, can be discussed through the scientific method is thus a fundamental question, for whether the social and political thought of Gandhi can at all be discussed from the point of view of Social Science depends largely on the answer to this question.

I belong to the school of thought which believes that normative exercises, so far as they can be consistent with logic, are not repugnant to the scientific method, and that the social sciences cannot have a meaningful existence if they try to be completely neutral between ethical alternatives. Social sciences are sciences of human action, and a certain amount of value judgment is not only inherent in, but also necessary for them. If as a political scientist, for example, I am asked by a layman whether democracy is better than dictatorship, and if I merely reply, for instance, that there is greater individual freedom (defined in a certain way) under democracy than under dictatorship, and that the questioner ought to go to someone else to find out whether freedom is better than the absence of it, I am saying hardly anything of significance for human action, and Political Science is, after all, a science of human action. If as a sociologist I am asked whether the state ought to change the mores through coercion, and I merely narrate the results of such attempts made by Frederick the Great or Mao Tse-tung, and

advise the questioner to go to someone else with this information in order to find out what in fact the state ought to do, I am again saying little of practical significance for social action. Similarly, if as an economist I am asked which of two given alternative economic policies would be better, and I merely reply that one would lead to an increase and the other to a decline in the rate of economic growth, and that I do not know which policy is the better of the two, I am only making a pompous ass of myself.

The fact is that it is not possible for Social Science to function as a science of human action without assuming some goal-values, any more than it is possible to take a meaningful photograph with a camera without aiming it at some object or objects. What takes place inside the camera during the taking of the photograph is a purely scientific process, but the choice of the object photographed is extra-scientific; yet the scientific process cannot operate at all without this prior extra-scientific choice. Even the natural sciences cannot function without assuming this kind of goal-value. The bacteriologist, for example, cannot start functioning unless he accepts human life as a value, or the rocket scientist unless he regards rockets as "useful" in some value sense.

The scientific method is, of course, based on the recognition of the distinction between fact and value, of the fact that Ought cannot be inferred from Is, that what ought to be done cannot be deduced from observation of existing facts. But since it is impossible for Social Science to do away with values altogether, the solution lies in what Arnold Brecht, an authority on the scientific method, has called Scientific Value Relativism.² This methodological expression means that Social Science has to accept certain "ultimate values" as working hypotheses without questioning, and then judge relative values with reference to their logical consistency or otherwise with these ultimate values. Social scientists can then relate human action to a hierarchy of norms rising upwards to and ending with the ultimate values or "fundamental norms". Social Science is neutral only as between such ultimate values, but given such values, it is fully qualified to express value judgments on particular human actions. Thus, for instance, in order to be able to say whether a particular act is "just", a social scientist will have to assume one

² Arnold Brecht : *Political Theory — The Foundations of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, Princeton University Press, 1959. See also Everett W. Hall : *Modern Science and Human Values*, Van Nostrand, New York, 1956.

or more of such ultimate values as Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, etc., and then decide whether the act concerned is just or not in terms of its logical consistency or otherwise with Liberty, Equality or Fraternity. The only type of ethical neutralism that is necessary for the scientific method is that ultimate values are taken as no more than working hypotheses, and even those who want to eliminate value judgments from Social Science do not really insist on anything more, although they may not always be fully conscious of this fact.

Some positivistic attempts have been made to explain the relativity of values without assuming any ultimate values. There is, for instance, what may be called the school of Evolutionary Value Relativism (Hobhouse, T. H. Huxley, Julian Huxley) which argues that values are relative to the biological evolution of man. There is the school of Historical Value Relativism (Hegel, Marx) which maintains that values are relative to history as determined by the World Spirit (Hegel) or Dialectical Materialism (Marx). Then there is what may be called the school of Sociological Value Relativism (Auguste Comte, Durkheim, Westermack) which holds that values are relative to a given society only. This very brief presentation of the different positivistic viewpoints in Social Science is perhaps not very fair to the authors, nor the brief criticism which follows. But it is necessary to state here that all of these positivistic versions of the relativity of values are based on an incorrect conception of the term "relativity". If relativity means that values are wholly or primarily *determined* by the biological evolution of man, ethics actually loses all meaning and substance, for in that case human behaviour is organismically determined—men are simply driven to act as they do, and in the absence of the freedom of moral choice values have no meaning. Similarly, if it is maintained that values are relative to history in the sense that they are wholly or primarily *determined* by the World Spirit or the relations of production in a given stage of history, then history is ordained with a dominant personality which again robs men substantially of the freedom of moral choice, and values cease in fact to be values. Finally, if it is stated that values are wholly or primarily *determined* by a given social system, then the social system assumes the character of a controlling organism above and beyond the range of human freedom and creativity, which it certainly is not; the social system itself is largely the product of contemporary values. If on the other hand, by the term "relativity" no *determinism* is implied, and a

substantial freedom of choice with regard to values is conceded, then values cease to be relative to anything except whatever ultimate norms men in their freedom set for themselves. Logically, there is no other solution to the problem of values, as Brecht rightly argues, except that of Scientific Value Relativism.

To Gandhi's own mind, of course, as I have stated already, the ultimate values are derivable from God ; they are in fact attributes of God, as we shall see in the next four chapters (although they can be, and Gandhi insisted that they could be, taken as a starting point without any reference to God). He wrote and spoke extensively on God, describing God as "an indefinable mysterious Power" which "makes itself felt and yet defies all proof" and "transcends speech and reason". He even declared that "God will not be God if he allowed Himself to be an object of proof by His creatures", and that his own "faith runs so much faster than my reason" that he could challenge the whole world and say that "God is, was and ever shall be".³ But here Social Science must part company with Gandhi. God may be a purely mental construction on the part of hundreds of millions of people, the result of a variety of psychopathological factors operating within man, or of mere linguistic confusion ; or He may be the great Reality which men from time immemorial have claimed to have experienced directly. But in so far as the existence of God, as Gandhi admits, and as social scientists insist, cannot be proved or disproved by reason, and the so-called direct experience of God cannot be expressed in terms which are intersubjectively transmissible, the concept of God is irrelevant to Social Science. Indeed, Social Science emerged as science only after it discarded God as its starting point.

Similar is the case with the concept of revelation which Gandhi identifies as the "Voice of God". Gandhi's extensive observations on God show that God reveals Himself through some extra-rational process to his votary, and that revelation constitutes an important element in Gandhian thought. Indeed, Gandhi was not only fully

³ Gandhi's writings on God have been published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, in book form under his own name. Two of the important titles are : *My Religion* (1958) and *In Search of the Supreme*, 3 vols. (1962). See also M. K. Gandhi : *The Supreme Power*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1963, and *Hindu Dharma*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1950, Section Two ; N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1957, Ch. 1.

conscious of this fact, but openly declared revelation to be a more effective means of arriving at the truth than reason. He explained once that up to 1906 he "simply relied on an appeal to reason." But his experiments with *satyagraha* in South Africa and his experience of British rule in India gradually changed this view, until about 1920 the conviction grew upon him that in matters of fundamental importance the heart was more important than the head.⁴ Since then he persistently claimed to hear the "Voice of God" and to base his most important decisions on it. Some of his major fasts, as is well known, he claimed to be the result of divine directions, as well as the courses of action followed in some of the movements led by him. On numerous occasions in his life he also claimed that his "mission" of spreading the message of Non-violence was a God-given one. On the occasion of his famous fast against the Communal Award in 1932 he wrote : "My claim to hear the voice of God is no new claim . . . His voice has been increasingly audible as years have rolled by. He has never forsaken me even in my darkest hour."⁵ A social scientist would argue that once God is banished from the disciplined kingdom of Social Science, any communications which may have transpired between him and his votary must be similarly banished. What seems to be the Inner Voice may be the memory of father's or mother's voice, or reflex thinking formed by a certain type of environment through habit, or a mental reaction caused by disturbed expectations, or simply some form of auto-hypnosis. Like knowledge of God, knowledge of the Inner Voice is also intersubjectively non-transmissible and, therefore, outside the range of the scientific method.

It is sometimes argued that the Inner Voice which Gandhi identifies as the Voice of God represents intuition, which has a legitimate place in the scientific method and not revelation which has not. While I would readily admit that intuition is an accepted part of the scientific method in so far as it has been used by great scientists to arrive at important conclusions and has played an important role in the progress of science, I do not think that it is intuition Gandhi is talking about. On the occasion of his fast against the Communal Award he gave a clear description of what happened when he heard the Inner Voice or Voice of God in the following words :

"I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed

⁴ *Young India*, November 5, 1931.

⁵ *Hariljan*, May 6, 1933.

God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a Voice from afar yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast were fixed. Joy came over me."⁶

This surely is a classical account of a revelation. The difference between intuition and revelation is that while the former is not regarded as an infallible method, its results being subject to verification by the more elaborate methods of scientific investigation and apt to be rejected if found untrue through such methods, revelation is regarded as an act of grace on the part of some supra-human authority, infallible and beyond the scope of scientific investigation; and this is obviously what Gandhi is talking about.

Gandhi, of course, argues that revelation is also dependent on the strict adherence to a method. "Just as for conducting scientific experiments", he observes, "there is an indispensable scientific course of instruction, in the same way strict discipline is necessary to qualify a person to make experiments in the spiritual realm. Everyone should, therefore, recognize his limitations before he speaks of his inner voice." Therefore, says Gandhi, those who hope to find God must go through several vows, like those of truth, *brahmacharya* (purity with special emphasis on continence), non-violence, poverty and non-possession. "Unless you have imposed on yourselves the five vows," he says, "you may not embark on the experiment at all."⁷ But whatever be the value of this method for obtaining revelation, it is certainly not the scientific method of inquiry, and that is the only method on which this study is based. Nor would the omission of the Inner Voice from the scope of this study seriously detract from the value of Gandhian thought from the viewpoint of Social Science, for as we shall see in the subsequent chapters, Gandhi seldom justified his social and political ideas in terms of the Inner Voice or other private experiences; whatever his private belief and experience might be, for those to whom he

⁶ *Harijan*, July 8, 1933.

⁷ *Young India*, December 31, 1931.

transmitted his ideas, he sought to adopt, almost invariably, reason as the medium of communication.

The concept of "soul" used very often by Gandhi is also likewise outside the scope of investigation here. One of the English equivalents for *satyagraha* used by Gandhi is "soul-force". As we shall see later on, he recommended the "soul-force" (as superior to the force of arms) to both Hitler and his European victims during the Second World War. About his own work in India he said: "My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. . . Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul."⁸ One of the reasons why Gandhi justified fasting as an important form of *satyagraha* is that it purifies the soul. In his own words : "A genuine fast cleanses the body, mind and soul. It crucifies the flesh and to that extent sets the soul free."⁹ Similarly, Gandhi justifies nature-cure and opposes the medical treatment of diseases, as we shall see in Ch. X, on the ground that the soul is separate from the body and unaffected by bodily ailments. But the existence of the "soul" like that of the Voice of God and of God Himself, cannot be proved or disproved through the scientific method, and the concept has, therefore, to be excluded by Social Science from its own sphere of inquiry.

In short then, Social Science cannot discuss values exactly in the same manner as Gandhi does, all along the line. Discarding such concepts as God, the Voice of God or the "soul", a social scientist has to accept the ultimate values of Gandhi as working hypotheses, and then show through empirical analysis whether the social order and the methods of socio-political action advocated by Gandhi are consistent with these values. When the empirical implications of the ultimate values as understood by Gandhi have been analysed, the reader may want to accept or reject the Gandhian ultimate values on the basis of this analysis ; but then it will be the reader and not the social scientist who will be judging the ultimate values.

But this does not mean that I cannot analyse the manner in which the ultimate values are related, in Gandhi's own mind, to God and other similar metaphysical concepts ; indeed, it will hardly be possible to make a systematized presentation of Gandhian thought without explaining this relationship. While explaining the social and political thought of Gandhi, I shall analyse it in its totality, including

⁸ *Young India*, April 3, 1924.

⁹ *Young India*, March 24, 1920.

God and other related concepts, but while making a critical assessment of this thought, I shall treat such concepts as irrelevant to my purpose. I shall, in other words, make an "internal analysis", but an "external criticism" of Gandhi's social and political ideas.

It will be seen that Scientific Value Relativism — the methodology adopted in this study — represents a compromise, from the philosophical point of view, between pure (rationalistic) Idealism and pure Empiricism. A pure idealist would probably make a pure conceptual analysis of the Gandhian values in their absoluteness, and collect empirical facts, if at all, either for showing that they are approximations to the ideal or, in case they run counter to it, that they ought to have been otherwise. A pure empiricist, on the other hand, would argue that the ideal has, in every case, to be deduced from empirical facts through a process of averaging or following the inherent tendency of these facts. But what I have been trying to emphasize is that to admit of the *distinction* between fact and value (as I have done) is not to commit oneself to a *division* between the two. Values qua values are absolute; but we encounter values (at least so far as Social Science is concerned) as instantiated and embodied in social facts. There is a profound distinction between natural facts and social facts in that while the former is indifferent to value, the latter is always value-laden. Unless one is committed to an omnibus kind of axiological monism, one will not claim to have perceived any value in a natural fact. But so far as human actions are concerned, as I have argued before, values are *necessary*. From the methodological point of view, there is also the insurmountable difficulty for the pure empiricist that the facts collected are often biased by the unconscious acceptance of some values. Scienticism, or what Hayek has called the "counterrevolution of science", that characterizes pure Empiricism, makes nonsense of Social Science, as I have already tried to explain.

The position I have adopted is that of the critical rationalist (or philosophical gradualist) who starts from the end of values and examines the manner in which and the extent to which these are instantiated in facts. Since I am discussing values from the point of view of Social Science, however, I have omitted those Gandhian concepts which are intersubjectively non-transmissible from the scope of my study and treated the rest, unlike the pure Idealists, as mere working hypotheses. There is no *a priori* commitment to

these values. For the gradualist facts and values are graded in one and the same scale of real objects and are not antithetically related. When the empirical system (or any part of it) advocated by Gandhi is found to instantiate the Gandhian values truly, one is free to accept the values, or to reject them because he is opposed to the empirical system (or any part of it) which instantiates them. When there is an incompatibility between the empirical system and the values, one may either accept the values and reject the empirical system or accept the empirical system (and the different values which are truly instantiated by it) and reject the values.

It will also be obvious from what I have said so far that a distinction must be made between Gandhi's biography and thought, and that his biography is not strictly relevant to the purposes of this study. The fact that Gandhi firmly believed in practising his own ideas and was a great social and political activist, often leads to a confusion between his ideas and actions. For example, it is sometimes maintained that Gandhi's support to the British war effort during the First World War amounted to a violation of the principle of Non-violence ; or that the way Gandhi treated Subhas Chandra Bose, in many ways his political opponent, indicates that his attitude towards the latter was one of hatred rather than of love and, therefore, inconsistent with the principle of Non-violence. From such premises in turn the conclusion is drawn that the principle of Non-violence is not valid (I have met many educated Indians who argue precisely like this).

In what sense Gandhi regards the principle of Non-violence as valid, and to what extent he is right in doing so, I shall discuss at a later stage. I have used these two examples here only to illustrate the confusion which may result from the failure to distinguish the achievements or failures of Gandhi's personal political life from the validity or otherwise of his social and political ideas. In such cases, of course, the interpretation of the facts and the facts themselves involved in the premises from which the conclusions are drawn may be open to question. But even if it is assumed for the sake of the argument that Gandhi did in fact violate the principle of Non-violence on several occasions in his life, it is by no means proved that Non-violence is not a valid principle. It only shows that Gandhi was unable to live up to his own ideals, the validity or otherwise of which is independent of his personal performance. Hardly any great reformer has fully lived up to the ideals he has

advocated, but this fact does not detract from whatever logical and empirical validity such ideals may have had.

Since my purpose in this study is to make a logical analysis of Gandhi's social and political thought and not to make an assessment of his achievements and failures, much less of his personal character, I shall leave out, as far as practicable, all biographical details from the scope of this study, with one major exception. Many acts of Gandhi serve to illustrate a principle or a method (like many of the *satyagrahas* launched by him, for example) which has an important place in his thought and can, therefore, be fruitfully used as a tool of scientific analysis. But it should be clearly understood that Gandhi as a propounder of an idea and as the doer of an act that illustrates the idea are conceptually two different persons. The second person, namely, the doer of the act, could just as well have been anyone else, and the act would still serve as an illustration so long as it truly represented the idea of Gandhi. It is only because Gandhi performed the double function of a thinker and an activist at the same time, that many of his own acts serve to illustrate his ideas.

By the time Gandhi appeared as a mass leader on the Indian scene, what I would like to call "comprehensive system-building" had become outmoded in the social sciences. This is not because there is anything inherently irrational in such system-building, but because of the painful realization of scholars, after centuries of experience, that man's intellectual equipment and capacity for learning are limited, and the wider the area one chose for system-building, the greater would be the possibility of making elementary mistakes. Gandhi was neither a scholar nor a respecter of rigorous intellectual disciplines, as could be expected from his refusal to accept reason as the most important means of true knowledge (although he used it often to communicate his ideas to others). "I venture to think," he said once, "that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on laws of economics than many of the modern text-books."¹⁰ Yet he has spoken and written almost endlessly on many diverse branches of Social Science like sociology, psychology, economics, political science and education. He has prescribed two comprehensive means of social control in the form of *satyagraha* and the Constructive Programme, and offered a more

¹⁰ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 77.

or less comprehensive blueprint (as we shall see in Part II) for the ideal social order of the future. As could be expected, and as will be shown in the subsequent chapters, he has committed many elementary mistakes in the process of his system-building which almost any trained thinker would have avoided. I am not contending that any of the accepted findings of the social sciences can be regarded as final or sacrosanct ; what I am suggesting is that before one can challenge the major findings of any discipline, it is necessary to be conversant with the methods of that discipline and the findings themselves. The fact that Gandhi apparently failed to do so makes it necessary for one making a critical assessment of Gandhian thought to start from elementary propositions on many questions, as if such questions had never been raised or discussed before. It is like having to discuss problems of higher mathematics and to prove elementary formulae of algebra at the same time. This gives a somewhat lop-sided appearance to one's analysis which, under the circumstances, cannot be altogether avoided. Moreover, since the process of such comprehensive system-building involves statements (mostly in the nature of generalizations) cutting across the different branches of Social Science, which are dovetailed into one another, as it were, and made up into a system, it becomes necessary to keep on making cross references, as one's argument regarding Gandhian thought develops, to points made before and after. This inevitably makes the process of reasoning somewhat cumbersome.

A related difficulty is caused by the fact that Gandhi did not attach much importance to consistency in argument. "Consistency is a hobgoblin," he declared after Emerson.¹¹ "My aim," he observed, "is not to be consistent with my previous statement on a given question, but to be consistent with the truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result is that I have grown from truth to truth."¹² But the result from the point of view of the social sciences is that it is possible for different persons (or the same person, for that matter) to pick out sentences which contradict each other from the almost endless speeches and writings of Gandhi, and to offer different and even conflicting interpretations of Gandhian thought. A good deal, therefore, depends on what a particular researcher regards as the "spirit" of Gandhian thought, at the end

¹¹ Louis Fischer : *Gandhi*, Mentor Books, New York, 1960, p. 56.

¹² *Ibid.*

of his researches, as distinguished from the "letter" of any particular observation which, if found to be in conflict with the former, must be regarded as an unimportant deviation. The presentation and analysis of Gandhian thought must, therefore, inevitably have a somewhat personal touch about it, and I do not claim that this work is entirely free from it.

At this stage one can raise the objection, as a famous Indian exponent of Gandhian thought once did when faced with the type of argument used in this chapter, that I am trying to look at Gandhian thought from a "distorted angle" and presenting Gandhi as something he was not, namely, an intellectual, scholar and writer. It may be argued (as this exponent of Gandhian thought did) that Gandhi was a "moral reformer" like Christ or Buddha and that it is "absurd" to analyse his thought from the point of view of the social sciences. This type of objection cannot be regarded as valid for several reasons. In the first place, I have made it quite clear that the approach to Gandhian thought which I have adopted in this book is admittedly partial (though I think not distorted) on account of methodological limitations. Such an approach could have been regarded as "absurd" if Gandhi were indeed purely a moral reformer. But he was in fact also a great political leader and the organizer of a massive "constructive programme" throughout the country; and he published journals which he used primarily as vehicles for his socio-political ideas, general as well as particular. Fortunately for the social sciences, he has left many volumes of speeches and writings on problems pertaining to Social Science, containing fundamental ideas, many of which, I may state in advance, we shall find to be of considerable merit even when tested by the scientific method of analysis. I think, therefore, that the type of study undertaken here is very legitimate and useful.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

CRITICS and admirers of Gandhi have alike attached special significance to the fact that moving through the whole of Gandhian thought there is the fundamental idea of the inseparability of religion and politics. Critics have tended to argue that the intermingling of religion and politics has introduced a large element of irrationality in the life and thought of Gandhi and thus made Gandhian thought intellectually repulsive. So strong has been this attitude amongst a section of people in India and elsewhere that Gandhian thought often evokes reactions varying from indifference to ridicule and even contempt. Most admirers of Gandhi, on the other hand, have been greatly impressed by the fact that a man who represents the universal idea of a saint in personal life has assumed the role of one of the greatest political activists and reformers of all times. They declare Gandhi to be a "teacher of mankind", and overwhelmed by what they consider Gandhi's unquestionable moral authority, try to imitate him in matters of food and dress and other external aspects of his personal life, and what is worse, accept his thought quite uncritically, to the extent of feeling deeply satisfied if they are able to repeat parrot-like what Gandhi had said on a particular question. Between such total rejection and blind acceptance the scientific value of the social and political thought of Gandhi is largely lost. It is my purpose in this chapter to analyse the true meaning of Gandhi's contention that religion and politics are inseparable, and to examine the validity of this contention from the point of view of Social Science.

Let us first of all see what Gandhi has in fact said about the relationship between religion and politics. The *Hind Swaraj* (1909), a booklet containing the first systematized presentation of his social and political thought by Gandhi, is saturated with the religious spirit and frequently punctuated with the assertion that politics is inextricably linked with religion. In reply to W. J. Wybergh's criticism of the book on this ground, Gandhi wrote in 1910 : "Your argument tends to show that there must be complete divorce

between politics and religion or spirituality. That is what we see in everyday life under modern conditions. Passive resistance seeks to rejoin politics and religion and to test any one of our actions in the light of ethical principles."¹ One of the first things he said on his return to India in 1915, at a students' meeting in Calcutta, is that while students should participate in politics, such politics should not be divorced from religion.² In the following year he told a Missionary Conference at Madras : "I do not believe that religion has nothing to do with politics. The latter divorced from religion is like a corpse only fit to be buried."³ That his views on this question were generally well known, and also appreciated in certain quarters during the next few years, is clear from the speech of Lawrence Housman welcoming Gandhi at Folkstone on his way to London to attend the Round Table Conference. "We welcome you", said Housman, "as bringing something which is not generally understood, the unification of politics and religion. In the churches we are all sinners, but in politics everyone else is a sinner — that is a correct description of our daily life, and you have come to call upon us to search our hearts and to declare what our religion is."⁴ In 1937 he reminded the Gandhi Seva Sangh : "I am quite sure that no one would have cared for my politics, if I was not pledged to truth and non-violence . . . Truth and non-violence are synonymous with God, and whatever we do is nothing worth apart from them."⁵ In 1946 he similarly insisted that political work must be looked upon in terms of social and moral progress.⁶ In the year of India's independence he reaffirmed the inseparability of politics and religion.⁷

Nor was Gandhi at a loss to explain why he so strongly maintained a position which, on the face of it, was utterly repugnant to the rational spirit of his age. True religion and true politics, he argued, have both to concern themselves primarily with human

¹ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1963, Vol. X, p. 248. It may be noted here that soon afterwards Gandhi started using the term *satyagraha* instead of "passive resistance", because he felt that the positive element in his technique of resistance was better expressed by the former term. His reasons for doing so will be discussed in Ch. 12.

² D. G. Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1960, Vol. I, p. 161.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 114.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 155-56.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 215.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

life and action, and both must have a common basis in a common morality determined by a common set of values. A truly religious man must also be a politician and a true politician must also be a religious man. Asked by Lord Montagu why he had "found your way into this crowd", Gandhi replied :

"I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities to-day constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'." ⁸

Soon afterwards he wrote in *Young India* : "I claim that human mind or human activity is not divided into watertight compartments called social, political and religious. All act and react upon one another."⁹ In 1925 he again wrote in the same paper : "I do not believe that the spiritual law operates on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields."¹⁰ In his *Autobiography*, the first edition of which was published in 1927, he emphatically repeated the same argument in the following words :

"To see the universal and all-pervading spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics ; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."¹¹

A few years later he said that his life was an indivisible whole,

⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 318.

⁹ *Young India*, March 2, 1922.

¹⁰ *Young India*, September 3, 1925.

¹¹ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, pp. 370-71.

that all his activities ran into one another, and they all had their rise in his insatiable love of mankind.¹² In 1947, while answering the criticism that he was utilizing his prayer meetings for the propagation of his political views, Gandhi admitted that this was true, and added that he never had any feeling of guilt on this account. Human life being an undivided whole, no line could be drawn between its different compartments, nor between ethics and politics. It was impossible to separate the everyday life of man, he emphasized, from his spiritual being.¹³

I shall not attempt to analyse any of Gandhi's statements quoted above regarding the relationship between religion and politics singly. From the logical point of view, most of these statements, taken individually, will prove to be rather clumsy. It will be more fruitful for our purpose to analyse the meaning of the terms "religion" and "politics" as understood by him, and then to analyse and examine the substance of his views quoted above regarding the relationship between the two. For doing this, however, it is necessary, first of all, to separate those observations of Gandhi which are of a purely autobiographical nature from those which express his impersonal social and political ideas. It is the observations of the latter category that will be strictly relevant to our method and purpose as explained in the preceding chapter.

Let us take the term "religion" first. There can be little doubt that in his personal life Gandhi was a very "God-fearing" and religious man, and implicitly accepted the basic texts of the Hindus like the Vedas, the Upanishads and the *Bhagavadgita* (although true to the Hindu tradition, he regarded the scriptures of other religions like the Bible and the Koran also as revealed and sacred texts). He also accepted the law of *karma*, transmigration of the soul and reincarnation, and even the *varnashrama dharma* or four-fold division of society into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. He believed in idol worship and the worship of the cow (which he regarded as a symbolic expression of the respect of the Hindu for the universal principle of Life). In fact, he prided himself as a *sanatani* (orthodox) Hindu. He regarded Hinduism as the most tolerant, most non-exclusive, most non-dogmatic and free religion of the world, and the religion that offered the greatest scope

¹² *Harijan*, March 2, 1934.

¹³ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, p. 350.

for individual self-expression.¹⁴ He even went to the extent of saying once : "What of substance is contained in any other religion is always to be found in Hinduism. And what is not contained in it is insubstantial or unnecessary."¹⁵

But in order to satisfy the intellectual aspirations of his time, and for purposes of his social and political thought, Gandhi also offered an exposition of religion which he thought was entirely rational. The logical equivalent of supra-logical God, the mundane manifestation of the supra-mundane Deity, he found in Truth. Truth is God, he declared. Truth is Rama, Narayana, Ishwara, Khuda, Allah, God. And since the quest for God is the essence of religion, even the atheism of the sincere atheist is in fact a form of religion. Gandhi claimed that he had disarmed some important critics and "many a young man" with this definition of God. He frequently quoted with favour the Sanskrit proverb, *satyat nasti paro dharma*, i.e., "there is no religion higher than Truth", and regarded it as the very basis of his socio-political thought.¹⁶

Thus Truth, referred to by Gandhi as the Eternal Principle, is the first principle of religion, as explained by him, so far as his impersonal (non-autobiographical) thought is concerned. The pursuit of Truth, the attempt to realize Truth in one's thought and action, is the substance of the religion of man. "Devotion to Truth," says Gandhi, "is the sole justification for our existence."¹⁷ But in order to understand the sense in which Gandhi used the term religion for purposes of his social and political thought, it is necessary to analyse the different meanings of the word Truth as used by him.

It seems to me that there are two main senses in which Gandhi understands and uses the word Truth. In the first place, Gandhi means by this word factual truth, or truth about things as they are. The difficulty about this concept of truth is that it tells us nothing about human action, about what we ought to do in a given situation after discovering and, if necessary, stating the truth of things. We are faced with the "unbridgeable gulf" between fact and value, between Is and Ought. Yet Gandhian thought is primarily concerned,

¹⁴ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1950. ¹⁵ *Young India*, September 17, 1925.

¹⁶ For a selection from the many writings of Gandhi on the identity of Truth and God see M. K. Gandhi : *Truth Is God*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959. ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

as is generally well known, and as we shall see with the progress of our investigation, with Ought rather than with Is. Even if our action is aimed at preserving the state of affairs as they are, we are in fact assuming some ultimate value and then insisting that the existing state of affairs corresponds to (i.e., is true to) this ultimate value or some value relative to it. In other words, the factual truth has any significance for human action only when we have assumed some ultimate value and determined the consistency or otherwise of the factual truth with this value. The fact that Gandhi is primarily concerned with Ought rather than with Is shows that he really regards the existing state of affairs as inconsistent with the ultimate values assumed by him, and is primarily concerned with devising ways and means for altering the existing state of affairs (i.e., the factual truth) so as to make them more and more consistent, through a process of successive approximation, with the ultimate values.

Gandhi has created some confusion by using the word Truth to denote both factual truth and ultimate value. When he says that Truth is God or that Truth ought to be striven for and realized, or that Truth is the only justification for human existence, what he really means is that Truth is an ultimate value and that humanity ought to strive to alter the existing state of human society in such a way as to make it correspond to this ultimate value. But this ultimate value cannot be factual truth which by itself has no value content. When it denotes ultimate value Truth must have some other meaning—the really important meaning for the social and political thought of Gandhi.

What this other meaning of Truth is in the mind of Gandhi can be easily understood if we look at the Sanskrit word *satya* which also means truth. This word is derived from the root *sat* which means "that which is or exists". *Satya*, i.e., being or existence in this sense, is one of the three essential attributes of the Deity, the other two being *chit* or consciousness and *ananda* or bliss, so that the Deity is *satchidananda* or Being-Consciousness-Bliss. *Satya* thus stands for truth about the universe and, therefore, about facts in general, but since it is also an attribute of the Deity which is immanent in the universe (as well as transcendental), it also stands for *rita* or Justice. The order of the universe is a just one, being an aspectual manifestation of the Deity, and Truth in the sense of an ultimate value really means the Justice which is

immanent in the universe and operates, according to the Hindus, through the law of *karma*.

The same idea of an immanent Justice is conveyed by the word *dharma*, which is somewhat wrongly translated into English, in the absence of any other word in the English language for it, as religion. Etymologically *dharma* means that principle or law which holds anything together. Applied to the universe as a whole, *dharma* is the principle or law which makes it an order and not a chaos. Applied to natural objects or sub-human species, *dharma* is law of nature. Thus, it is the *dharma* of the planets to move round the sun, of water to flow downwards or of a poisonous snake to bite, in other words, such action as is non-volitional and more or less predetermined by the same law that makes the universe an order. Applied to human beings, *dharma* means the recognition of the law of the universal order as just and such action as is consistent with it. The law of the universal order is thus not only a factual truth but also an ultimate value, since the universal order is assumed to be a just one (there would be no reason to base our actions on it, had it not been just), and the concept of *dharma* is, therefore, essentially based on justice, supposed to be immanent in the universe, as an ultimate value.

Coming back now to the Sanskrit proverb, *satyat nasti paro dharma* (which was translated by Gandhi as "there is no religion higher than truth"), it is not difficult to see the sense in which Gandhi regarded it as the basis of his social and political thought. Truth in the value sense means immanent Justice, and *dharma* or religion means the pursuit or realization (involving understanding and achievement) of Justice through human action. Truth as Justice is the basis of religion. Factual truth can be and is a means to Justice, for although factual truth itself cannot be a value, without a knowledge of the factual truth of any situation or problem, it is not even possible to understand how Justice can be attained in a given case. But the ultimate value in each case is Justice and not factual truth.¹⁸

On one occasion Gandhi said that he had solved the problem of the meaning of Truth "for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you".¹⁹ But for Social Science the problem is far from solved in this manner. Apart from the fact that the Inner

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion on the relation between factual truth and justice see Arnold Brecht : *Political Theory*, Ch. XI.

¹⁹ *Young India*, December 31, 1933.

Voice is not scientifically verifiable, what it is supposed to tell one is obviously a course of action which would be consistent with Truth (i.e., Justice). As Truth the Inner Voice is only a fact and not a value. It can, if it exists at all, show the way to truth as an ultimate value, i.e., Justice ; it is not itself Justice. Gandhi has also occasionally defined God as the Law²⁰ and the Great Power.²¹ But it is easy to see that these terms are also in reality different names for Justice. If the Law or the Great Power is either unjust or devoid of value content, it is difficult to see how it can be regarded as an ultimate value. Only when such expressions stand for the basic idea of Hinduism, borrowed by Gandhi, that there is an immanent Justice in the universe, do they make sense as indicative of some ultimate value.

For purposes of human action, Truth (i.e., Justice), says Gandhi, has to be viewed as both ultimate and relative. It is only possible to have "faint glimpses" of Absolute Truth, he says, while in practice one must aim at achieving relative truths (i.e., relative justice).²² In other words, what is of practical significance for religion as understood by Gandhi is the striving for the achievement of relative justice in each of the vast multiplicity of occasions calling for action which present themselves to each individual. And this is where politics comes in.

Gandhi's conception of politics is as unorthodox as his conception of religion. He uses this word not in the usual sense of the art of capturing, holding and managing governmental power, but as meaning the art of transforming social relations in terms of Justice. In his own words : "A non-violent revolution is not a programme of 'seizure of power', but it is a programme of transformation of relationships."²³

Gandhi views with great suspicion the concept of power as applied to human society. In his ideal society, as we shall see subsequently, neither the state nor any part of its organizational apparatus—government, armed forces, political parties, pressure groups, etc., would exist at all. Nor would there be in the ideal society any complicated machinery or concentration of wealth which, in Gandhi's opinion, would breed economic and social

²⁰ *Harijan*, February 16, 1934 ; March 23, 1940 ; February 24, 1946.

²¹ *Harijan*, April 20, 1947.

²² M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, pp. 28-29.

²³ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, p. 29.

power. Only this completely anarchistic ideal society, devoid of any power except "spiritual power", would be consistent, he believes, with the ideal of Justice.

But Gandhi applied this conception of politics as the art of transformation of social relations also to the immediate political situation in which he found himself. The national freedom movement under his leadership was viewed by him as a moral attempt on the part of himself and the Indian people to transform the unjust relationship between the Indian and the British people into a just one, through non-violence. He insisted that the political movement he was leading did not represent a drive for the capture of political power. As he told his followers : "Ours is not a drive for power, but merely a non-violent fight for India's independence . . . A non-violent soldier of freedom will covet nothing for himself, he fights only for the freedom of his country. The Congress is unconcerned as to who will rule when freedom is established."²⁴ Shortly before the independence of India, Gandhi was distressed by the rapid growth of power politics in the country and lamented that the vicious influence of the parties was no longer confined to the cities, but had even percolated down to the remotest villages, hindering their progress.²⁵ Dismayed by the fight for power within the Congress soon after independence, he warned his followers in the organization of constructive workers, many of whom were top leaders of the Congress : "To-day everybody in the Congress is running after power. That presages grave danger. Let us not be in the same cry as the power-seekers . . . It is my firm view that we should keep altogether aloof from power politics and its contagion."²⁶ He further advised his followers : "Take all the living organizations with you. Purify yourselves of all dross. Banish the very idea of capture of power and keep it on the right path. Therein lies salvation. There is no other way."²⁷ So distressed was he by the unseemly political rivalries within the Congress and the drive for power by individuals and groups, that he exclaimed pathetically, "Thank God, the Congress is now no longer in sole possession of the field."²⁸ The day before his assassination, in one of the many unsuccessful attempts of his last days to keep the leaders of the Congress on the strait and narrow path, he advised the disbandment of the Congress

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 152.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, pp. 331-32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 229.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

and its conversion into a Lok Sevak Sangh (Servants of People Association), for which he drafted a Constitution the same evening, and finalized it, under heavy strain, actually on the day of his assassination. Only a few minutes before the shots were fired, he was engaged in a discussion with Sardar Patel regarding the latter's differences with Nehru ; Nehru and Azad had an appointment with him after the prayer meeting (to which he went straight from his talks with Patel, but which he was never able to address) regarding the same subject.²⁹ Gandhi's last fight was thus against power politics.

That Gandhi regarded politics as a moral effort on the part of the individual to establish Justice in social relations rather than as a drive for power is further borne out by the fact that he wanted every non-violent worker to take the five vows of truth, *brahmacharya*, non-violence, poverty and non-possession. "Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows," he warned his workers, "you may not embark on the experiment at all . . . truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth, you must reduce yourself to a zero."³⁰

But then the question arises, why did Gandhi make such apparently wrong use of the words "politics" and "religion"? Why, in other words, did he not use different words which would mean what he wanted them to mean? I shall try to answer this question separately for the two words involved.

As regards the word "religion", one of Gandhi's problems was undoubtedly semantic, there being no exact equivalent for the Sanskrit word *dharma* (which has been adopted by all the other Indian languages) in the English language, and the proper meaning of this word being so little known outside India. When he spoke to Indian audiences or wrote in Indian languages, he of course used the word *dharma* which was easily understood in its proper meaning as including the idea of Justice. I think it would really have been better for Gandhi to have stuck to the Indian word even when speaking or writing in English, and to explain now and then that it did not have the narrow connotation of an exclusive theology and an exclusive organized church which it had in the semitic tradition. But this would have solved only a part of the problem, for even

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

³⁰ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 69.

the Indian word *dharma*, as already stated, contains a reference to God (in so far as the Justice which it implies is derived from the conception of an immanent and transcendental God), only implicitly perhaps for certain schools of Indian philosophy, but quite explicitly for the Indian masses. Even Gandhi did not content himself with simply accepting Truth as the ultimate value, which by itself could be the basis of a logical theory of social action without any reference to God. He equated Truth with God. The reason seems to be two-fold. First, in spite of his desire to present his social and political thought in a form that would satisfy the intellectual aspirations of his time, Gandhi's private belief in a more or less personal God was so strong that his social and political thought remained anchored, by and large, to this belief all his life. Secondly, Gandhi was a "practical idealist", as he himself said sometimes, and knew that mass political action, which it was his immediate task to organize, could not be based solely on reason; it required a deeper source of inspiration within the human psyche to lead millions of men to organized political action. As he himself once observed: "I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done, you must not merely satisfy reason, you must move the heart also."²¹ In the traditionally religious society of India an appeal to the essence of religion was probably the best way of awakening the sense of justice of the masses which Gandhi wanted to be the basis of political behaviour.

Similarly, I think the use of the term "politics" was made by Gandhi due to both semantic and situational considerations. Individual and mass social action with a view to the moral improvement of society through an alteration of social relations, without any power-drive in it (which is what Gandhi thought to be inseparably related to true religion), does not seem to be connoted by any single word in English or any of the Indian languages. Moreover, the immediate objective before the Indian people was the ending of foreign rule, and mass action aimed at securing this objective was possible only if the attention of the whole nation was focussed on this one objective. This would obviously not have been possible, had Gandhi started introducing new terms meaning something vastly more general than what the given situation demanded. As

²¹ *Young India*, November 5, 1931.

a practical idealist he had to apply his abstract ideas most effectively for a practical purpose in a given situation.

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

The view that religion consists of action consistent with immanent Justice is, as we have seen, one of the fundamental tenets of Hinduism. Nowhere perhaps is it better expressed than in the doctrine of *nishkama karma* (desireless action) in the *Bhagavadgita* on which Gandhi wrote a personal commentary, and which had been, on his own admission, the main inspiration for his socio-political ideas and activities.³² But traditional Hinduism identified immanent Justice with the *existing* social order, while Gandhi insists that Justice is only *ideally* and *not really* immanent in the world. For the orthodox Hindu, immanent Justice operates through the law of *karma*. Man's desert is determined from life to life and within the same life by past *karma* or action. "A just God," says Radhakrishnan, "cannot refuse to any man that which he has earned." But "while the law of *karma* regards the past as determined, it allows that the future is only conditioned. . . . The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past Karma, but we call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play, we gain or lose, and there is freedom."³³ In practice this freedom of moral action was restricted to the acceptance or non-acceptance of the state of the world and of human society as it is and not as it Ought to be. The existing relationship between the

³² M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, Section Six.

³³ Radhakrishnan : *The Hindu View of Life*, Unwin Books, 1963, p. 54.

king and the subjects, the caste system, family relationships, in fact the whole body of existing social mores were regarded as the embodiment of immanent Justice, and acceptance of this social order was regarded as the substance of religion and the basis of moral behaviour. Non-acceptance of the world as it is constituted irreligion. The inevitable result was an overwhelming fatalism. To quote Radhakrishnan again, "Unfortunately, the theory of Karma became confused with fatality in India when man himself grew feeble and was disinclined to do his best. It was made into an excuse for inertia and timidity and was turned into a message of despair and not of hope. It said to the sinner, 'Not only are you a wreck, but that is all you ever could have been. That was your preordained being from the beginning of time.' But such a philosophy of despair is by no means the necessary outcome of the doctrine of Karma."³⁴ Indeed it can be argued that the existing social order is the result of immoral action (i.e., action inconsistent with the ideal of immanent Justice) on the part of human beings in the past and that it can be rectified by correcting such deviant behaviour and acting in accordance with Justice ideally immanent in the universe.

This is the point of view adopted by Gandhi. Although this point of view is not inconsistent with the doctrine of *karma*, it is directly opposed to the interpretation put to this doctrine by traditional Hindu society. The major contribution of Gandhi in India is that while using traditional terminology for his social and political thought, he initiated an intellectual and social revolution of far-reaching consequence by challenging the moral basis of the social order on which Hindu society has subsisted for thousands of years. The Renaissance-cum-Reformation movement which was initiated in India in the Nineteenth Century by Raja Ram Mohun Roy and more or less ended with Swami Vivekananda, a reformer and contemporary of Gandhi who died young, had done the same thing to a certain extent, but none of the earlier reformers had emphasized and demonstrated the duty of mass socio-political action, nor developed any coherent ideas regarding alternative social, political and economic institutions, their attention being mainly focussed on the rationalization of the theological aspects of Hinduism. Gandhi's idea that the "transformation of social relationships"

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

(his definition of politics) is the "religious" duty of every individual represents nothing less than an intellectual revolution, and the mass socio-political movement under his leadership aimed at demonstrating the efficacy of this idea nothing short of a social revolution, from the viewpoint of the Hindu society of Gandhi's time.

That the attack has gone home is obvious from the fact that even a sophisticated defender of Hinduism like Radhakrishnan, a trained philosopher and strong critic of the fatalistic interpretation of the doctrine of *karma*, has taken Gandhi to task for preaching the gospel of social reform in the name of religion. Says Radhakrishnan :

"In India, under the influence of thinkers like Dayananda Saraswati and Vivekananda, Gandhi and Tagore, a social gospel is becoming popular. The *Bhagavadgita*, with its insistence on work has become the most important Hindu scripture. In religion accent is the vital thing, and it is now shifted to social reform. But we cannot forget that the essence of religion is spiritual redemption and not social reform. Sanctity and holiness may imply service and fellowship, but cannot be equated with them. Religion to-day has to fight not only unbelief and secularism, but also the subtler rival in the guise of social reform."³⁵

So far as his social and political thought is concerned, Gandhi has in fact, in the name of the identity between religion and politics, undermined the foundations of both these concepts as traditionally understood not only in India, but also possibly everywhere else.

Up till now I have neither analysed nor argued about Gandhi's conception of Justice, but have merely explained that when Gandhi used the term Truth in a value sense, he really meant immanent Justice. It is, however, necessary to point out at this stage that it is not possible to verify through the scientific method whether Justice is or can be immanent in the world, since the idea of the immanence of Justice is linked with a certain conception of God. We can only note that with Gandhi as with Thomas Aquinas and many others, Justice has a religious origin, but having done that we cannot express any opinion regarding the origin of Justice (which is to be distinguished from the origin of the concept of Justice),

³⁵ Radhakrishnan : *An Idealist View of Life*, Unwin Books, 1961, pp. 56-57.

and so far as this study is concerned, we have to satisfy ourselves merely by recording the fact that Gandhi regards Justice as an ultimate value with reference to which his relative value judgments are to be understood.

Justice, however, as Ernest Barker has rightly observed, is not a meaningful ultimate value in itself. Rather, it represents "a joining or fitting between *value and value* in a general sum and synthesis of values." "We recognize," says Barker, "a number of different values as necessary to an organized system of human relations. There is the value of liberty : there is the value of equality : there is the value of fraternity, or (as it may also be called, and is perhaps better called) cooperation. All these values are present in any system of law ; but they are present in different degrees at different periods of time, and there is a constant process of adjustment and readjustment between their claims. The claims of liberty have to be adjusted to those of equality, and the claims of both have also to be adjusted to those of cooperation. From this point of view the function of Justice may be said to be that of adjusting, joining, or fitting the different political values. Justice is the reconciler and the synthesis of political values : it is their union in an adjusted and integrated whole : it is, in Aristotle's words, 'what answers to the whole of goodness . . . being the exercise of goodness as a whole . . . towards one's neighbour'."³⁶ In other words, Justice to be meaningful has to be broken up into a number of ultimate values which are relevant to the organization of any society (including its political organization, in which Barker is primarily interested), and liberty, equality and fraternity or cooperation are the most important of them.

The Gandhian concept of Justice is also a synthesis of this kind of ultimate values which I shall analyse in the next three chapters. These are Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. Non-violence is a bad translation of the Sanskrit word *ahimsa* for which there is no exact English equivalent, but which can be explained as abstinence from causing any harm to other living beings arising out of love. But since Gandhi himself used the word "non-violence" for *ahimsa*, and in view of the wide popularity of this word and the absence of a better one, I shall also be using it in this book as the equivalent

³⁶ Ernest Barker : *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, Oxford Paperbacks, 1963, p. 102.

of *ahimsa*. Non-violence, in this sense, roughly corresponds to, but is more basic than, fraternity. Moreover, since the Gandhian conception of "freedom" is somewhat different from the conception of "liberty" in modern political science, as we shall presently see, and since Gandhi himself always used the term "freedom" instead of "liberty", I have thought it proper to do the same. The ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality are, of course, closely interrelated in Gandhian thought, one often acting as a means to the others as all ultimate values do, but as will be obvious from the next three chapters, each is also an ultimate value in itself and an independent ingredient of the synthetic value of Justice.

Gandhi is fully conscious of the fact, as we have noted already, that ultimate values cannot be realized in practice, and this applies as much to the synthetic ideal of Justice as its components, viz., Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. He often likened his ideals to Euclid's straight line, which in theory does not have any breadth, but in practice always has. "One step enough for me," he said with Newman. "The virtue of an ideal," he observed, "consists in its boundlessness."³⁷ "The goal," said he, "ever recedes from us. The greater the progress, the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory."³⁸ In other words, Gandhi's acceptance of such ultimate values as Non-violence, Freedom and Equality merely means that social relations are to be transformed through a process of successive approximation so as to move progressively towards the realization of these values. What will be achieved, and can be expected to be achieved at any step, will only be relative non-violence, relative freedom and relative equality.

Marxists in India, whom Gandhi had to fight ideologically and even organizationally during the last phase of his political career, and who still pose the greatest challenge to his social and political thought, have always criticized his approach to the question of values as "unscientific" and "bourgeois". The Marxist contention, as is well known, is that values are relative to class interests historically determined by the "law" of dialectical materialism. Marxian historical relativism treats values primarily as a "superstructure" of economic factors, of the "relations of production", in a given

³⁷ *Young India*, November 22, 1928.

³⁸ *Young India*, September 3, 1922.

stage of history. They are propelled by the same dialectical power that moves history. Since all history is the history of class struggles, argue the Marxists, values would also have a dual character and reflect the class contradictions at every stage of history. Thus, in the age of slavery there was one type of values for the slave owners and another for the slaves, each opposed to the other. Under feudalism the values of the feudal lords were similarly opposed to those of the serfs. In the age of capitalism, which Marx was primarily studying, the two opposite categories of value are "bourgeois" and "proletarian". From the Marxist point of view, therefore, it would be wrong simply to ask what is a value. It would be necessary to ask, for instance, what is a value in the age of capitalism for the proletariat. "Revolution", for example, would be a value for the proletariat, whose sense of values is determined by its class position in the relations of production, whereas it would be the negation of values for the bourgeoisie, whose sense of values is similarly determined by its own class position in the relations of production. Since the Marxists regard the "law" of dialectical materialism and the class struggle as "scientific", they regard all talk of ultimate values as unscientific.

The greatest trouble with this historical-relativist "theory" of values is, of course, that science cannot prove the existence of the "law" of dialectical materialism, or for that matter, of any other "law" of history. But even if it is assumed, for the sake of the argument, that such a "law" as dialectical materialism does in fact operate in history, there is no way of proving that values are relative to anything except higher values. If values are historically predetermined for every individual by the law of dialectical materialism, then there is no moral choice left for the individual; he acts as he does because he is compelled by history to do so, and the problem of values ceases to be. If, on the other hand, it is possible for even one individual to disregard the law of history (Marxists in fact believe that large sections of the proletariat are apt to act against their class interests, and have to be shown their "real interests" by their vanguard, i.e., the Communist Party), theoretically, it is possible for every individual to do so, and the historical relativity of values ceases to have any meaning. As a matter of fact, however, although Marx and Engels regarded ultimate values as unscientific, they had in reality buttressed all their political prescriptions with the synthetic ultimate value of Justice, composed of such individual

ultimate values as equality, freedom and human brotherhood (fraternity), represented by the stateless and classless society. It is only in relation to such ultimate values in fact that they supported such relative values as are represented by revolution and the class struggle, and denounced such other values as peace or class cooperation. From the logical point of view, their quarrel with Gandhi is with regard to the selection of means for the achievement of the ultimate values, rather than the existence of the ultimate values themselves. They have merely confused the issues and got into a self-contradictory position by mixing up a lot of talk on scientifically untenable "historical relativism" with the problem of values. The Gandhian approach to values, it will be seen, is more consistent than the Marxian approach with Scientific Value Relativism which, as explained in the first chapter, is the only logical method of dealing with the problem of values.

It may be stated, in conclusion, that the Gandhian concept of Justice bears a strong resemblance to the anarchist concept of natural Justice which was expressed by Proudhon as follows :

"Justice is the central star which governs society, the pole around which the political world revolves, the principle and regulator of all transactions. Nothing takes place between men save in the name of right, nothing without the invocation of Justice."³⁹

As we shall see in the next three chapters, while all the anarchists believed in Freedom and Equality in a sense very similar to that of Gandhi, not all of them accepted Non-violence as an ultimate value (Proudhon himself was prepared to support violence, although only as a last resort) ; but those who did, expressed ideas similar to Gandhi's with regard to Non-violence as well, as will be seen in the next chapter.

³⁹ Quoted in George Woodcock : *Anarchism*, Penguin Books, 1962, p. 101.

CHAPTER III

NON-VIOLENCE

ULTIMATE values are quite often ends and means to one another, and the ultimate values in Gandhian thought are no exception. As we shall presently see, the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality are bound together in Gandhian thought in a reciprocal end-means relationship. Without Non-violence there can be neither Freedom nor Equality, without Freedom there can be neither Equality nor Non-violence, and without Equality there can be neither Non-violence nor Freedom. Moreover, as we have seen, every ultimate value is also a relative value in a praxeological sense, and each relative value is a synthesis of several values corresponding to each of which there are different types of human action. Each of the relative values is, therefore, a means to the ultimate value, and each human act is a means to some value in the given hierarchy. In other words, the analysis of the meaning and implications of an ultimate value is closely related to the problem of ends and means.

In this chapter, however, my purpose is to analyse Gandhi's concept of Non-violence and its implications as understood by him and not to discuss his ideas on the problem of ends and means which will be taken up in the last chapter. The clarification made by Gandhi himself of his concept of Non-violence and the illustrations used by him to explain its true meaning as understood by him often have a direct bearing on the end-means question ; but these are used here only to help the analysis of Non-violence. Some of the material which is presented in this chapter for this purpose, but which has a bearing on the end-means question, will again be taken up for purposes of the discussion of Gandhi's ideas on ends and means later on.

The term "non-violence", as already stated, is not an exact equivalent for the Sanskrit word *ahimsa*. While writing in the Indian languages, and sometimes even in English, Gandhi used the Sanskrit word rather than its English equivalent. He often referred to the Sanskrit maxim, *ahimsa paramo dharma* (i.e., *ahimsa* is the highest

religion), which constitutes the very core of Buddhism and Jainism and the Vaishnava or devotional branch of Hinduism (to which the Gandhi family belonged), as the basis of his ideas on the subject. It is, therefore, with an analysis of the meaning of the Sanskrit word *ahimsa* that our inquiry into the nature and significance of the ultimate value of Non-violence, as understood by Gandhi, should begin.

The term *ahimsa*, as I have already indicated, connotes the positive value of Love rather than the negative value of abstinence from harming other living beings. God, who in the Vedantic tradition is assumed to be both immanent and transcendental, has Love, it is presumed, as one of His essential attributes. Immanent Love is, therefore, an essential ingredient of immanent Justice which operates in the universe. When it manifests itself in human action in the world, Love takes the form of *ahimsa*. "In its positive form," says Gandhi, "*ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity."¹ *Ahimsa*, moreover, "binds us to one another and to God. *Ahimsa* and love are one and the same thing".² It will be recalled that in Gandhi's conception of Truth (the Sanskrit word *satya*) there is a confusion between fact and value, and that as a value Truth is really equivalent to Justice in Gandhian thought. The same confusion persists throughout Gandhi's writings on Non-violence, of which the following excerpt is a typical example :

"Scientists tell us that without the presence of the cohesive force amongst the atoms that comprise this globe of ours, it would crumble to pieces and we cease to exist ; and even as there is cohesive force in blind matter, *so must there be* in all things animate, and the name for that cohesive force among animate beings is Love. We notice it between father and son, between brother and sister, friend and friend. But *we have to learn to use* that force among all that lives, and in the use of it consists our knowledge of God."³

In the first part of the statement there is the assumption that some sort of a Law of Nature exists as a fact in the whole universe that binds everything together, that it is a "cohesive force" in the

¹ N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, p. 156.

² M. K. Gandhi : *Truth Is God*, p. 17.

³ *Young India*, May 5, 1920. Italics introduced.

case of the inanimate world, and "Love" in the case of the living beings. In other words, Love or *ahimsa* is immanent in the world as a fact. But if this is so, there would be no need for the last sentence which says that an effort on the part of human beings is necessary to "use" this "force", because if *ahimsa* in fact binds all human (as well as non-human) life together, there is nothing left for human beings to learn about either the method or the purpose of using it, and knowing that *ahimsa* exists is equivalent, under Gandhi's assumptions, to knowing that God exists. *Ahimsa* or Non-violence to be an ultimate value must obviously be a norm rather than a fact.

A similar confusion is to be found in the following observation of Gandhi on the same subject :

"Though there is enough repulsion in Nature, she lives by attraction. Mutual love enables Nature to persist. Man does not live by destruction. Self-love compels regard for others. Nations cohere because there is mutual regard among individuals composing them. Some day we must extend the national law to the universe, even as we have extended the family law to form nations—a larger family."⁴

In this statement Gandhi admits that "repulsion" or "destruction" (i.e., violence) is also a Law of Nature like Non-violence, and opens up the question of the efficacy of the latter over the former. As facts both are immanent in the world as Law of Nature. Besides, Gandhi's assertions regarding the role of Non-violence in human society are by no means beyond dispute. It is by no means certain that self-love always "compels regard for others". Had it been so, the problem of social conflict would have been solved merely by the automatic operation of this "law". Nor is it beyond controversy that nations exist as such because of the mutual regard of the individuals composing them. Moreover, if Violence and Non-Violence are mere facts of nature, there is nothing left for us to choose between them, because no choice of facts is possible without a prior choice of values. The fact that Gandhi upholds Non-violence as against Violence, which are both immanent in the world, shows that he in fact regards both of them as values rather than facts, and considers Non-violence to be a higher value than Violence. This is precisely

⁴ *Young India*, March 2, 1922.

the meaning of his statement that "we must extend the national law to the universe". If the "law" was already operative in the whole universe, there is no reason why it should require an effort on our part to extend it to the universe. It is because Gandhi in fact regards Non-violence as a norm, an ultimate value, that he talks of upholding and extending it.

Gandhi tries to justify his choice of values by arguing that Non-violence represents a "higher law" than Violence. "I have found," he says, "that life persists in the midst of destruction. Only under that law would a well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth living."⁵ Against this position several objections can be raised. In the first place, the statement "destruction persists in the midst of life" would be as valid as Gandhi's statement that "life persists in the midst of destruction" from the factual point of view, and there is nothing to tell us whether we should prefer destruction to life or vice versa. Only if we make a prior value choice in favour of Non-violence, is it possible for us to oppose destruction, the consequence of Violence. Secondly, whether a "well-ordered society" is a desired objective and whether a particular type of life is worth living, depend similarly on prior value presuppositions. Thirdly, one "law" can be "higher" or "lower" than another only if the term "law" really means a value. Even then, "higher" or "lower" may mean two different things : it may mean an ultimate value (higher) or a value relative to the same ultimate value (lower) in a hierarchical or axiological gradation of the same value, or it may mean a subjective preference for one ultimate value against another. Now, Violence and Non-violence being two opposite values, they cannot be higher or lower in the former sense ; when Gandhi regards Non-violence as "higher" than Violence, he is obviously making a subjective choice between two ultimate values.

Gandhi seeks to justify his choice between the two ultimate values of Violence and Non-violence by resorting to a teleological view of history as a movement towards the realization of Non-violence ; in other words, by denying the claim of Violence as an ultimate value. In a significant exposition of the supposedly teleological unfoldment of Non-violence Gandhi observes :

"If we turn our eyes to the time of which history has any record down to our own time, we shall find that man has been steadily

⁵ *Young India*, October 1, 1931.

progressing towards *ahimsa*. Our remote ancestors were cannibals. Then came a time when they were fed up with cannibalism and they began to live on chase. Next came a stage when man was ashamed of leading the life of a wandering hunter. He, therefore, took to agriculture and depended principally on mother earth for his food. Thus from being a nomad he settled down to civilized stable life, founded villages and towns, and from member of a family he became member of a community and a nation. All these are signs of progressive *ahimsa* and diminishing *himsa* (violence). Had it been otherwise, the human species should have been extinct by now, even as many of the lower species have disappeared . . . If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards *ahimsa*, it follows that it has to progress towards it still further. Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression, then there is inevitable retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle, unless it be God Himself."⁶

This teleological view of Non-violence is logically untenable on several grounds. In the first place, it is based on the hypothesis, totally rejected by modern Social Science due to its unverifiability, that history has so far shown any definite trend of progress or retrogression towards or from some ultimate goal. Secondly, even if it is assumed for the sake of the argument that the observation of past history does indicate a progressive trend towards *ahimsa*, there is no warrant for assuming that the trend will continue tomorrow. By saying that if there is no progress, there will be inevitable retrogression, Gandhi admits of the possibility of a reversal, although the identity sought to be established by him between the kinetic energy of matter and change of values in human society (that is what to him progress or retrogression means) is logically invalid and possibly not even truly intended by him. The crux of the problem is that, following the Hindu tradition, Gandhi believes in the existence of the "eternal cycle" organized and presumably presided over by God, while in fact there is no scientific evidence whatever either for justifying the presupposition of any such cycle or for proving or disproving the existence of God. From the logical point of view, therefore, Gandhi's attempt to prove that Non-

⁶ *Harijan*, August 11, 1940.

violence is a "higher law" than Violence falls to the ground. The analysis of the probable empirical consequence of the acceptance of either of these two values may lead us to accept one and reject the other, but Social Science cannot tell us, as explained in the first chapter, whether one ultimate value is superior or inferior to another. The fact remains that Gandhi's preference for Non-violence against Violence is based on a subjective evaluation of ultimate values made with reference to the conception of immanent Love, which in turn is an attribute of an immanent and transcendental God. What is of consequence for our discussion is that, since for purposes of his social and political thought Gandhi defines God as Truth which, as we have seen, really means immanent Justice, Non-violence, according to Gandhi, is an attribute of Justice and is immanent in the world like Justice itself. But since we cannot logically prove that either Justice or Non-violence is immanent in the world, we have to satisfy ourselves by recording the fact that Non-violence is an ultimate value in Gandhian thought, and that it is one of the ultimate values that go to constitute his synthetic ideal of Justice. "Ahimsa and truth are so intertwined," says Gandhi, "that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which is reverse?"⁷ In a similar reference to Non-violence being an aspect of Justice, Gandhi observes : "... ahimsa is my God, and Truth is my God. When I look for ahimsa, Truth says, 'Find it through me'. When I look for Truth, ahimsa says, 'Find it out through me'."⁸ In the second chapter we found that Gandhi bases his idea of Justice on the Sanskrit maxim, *satyat nasti paro dharma*, i.e., "there is no religion higher than Truth" ; and his idea of Non-violence discussed in this chapter is based on another Sanskrit maxim, *ahimsa paramo dharma*, i.e., "Non-violence is the highest religion". Since Truth in the value sense really means Justice, it is easy to see the inseparability of Justice and Non-violence in Gandhian thought from the logical point of view.

Gandhi was aware of the fact that his conception of Non-violence as an ultimate value had extra-mundane implications, and that this might detract from the rational appeal of Non-violence. Therefore, as in the case of his definition of God as Truth, so also in the case

⁷ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁸ M. K. Gandhi : *Truth Is God*, p. 4.

of Non-violence, he tried to satisfy the rational spirit of his time by declaring that the ideal of Non-violence could be upheld on purely rational grounds, without any reference to God. "It is unnecessary," he says, "to believe in an extra-mundane Power called God in order to sustain our faith in *ahimsa*."⁹ The rational justification for Non-violence rests on three main arguments. First, Gandhi argues that Non-violence satisfies the test of universal applicability, a test that, according to him, an ultimate value ought to satisfy. It is, he argues, equally applicable to all countries and all peoples, irrespective of age or sex.¹⁰ Secondly, it enhances all other values without detracting from any of them.¹¹ Of course, Gandhi obviously means that Non-violence enhances and does not detract from other values which are not in conflict with it. For it is difficult to see how Non-violence can enhance violence and other values associated with it like anger, hatred, etc. or fail to detract from them. Finally, there is no limit, says Gandhi, to the degree or extent to which Non-violence can be applied; the greater the application of Non-violence, the greater will be the realization of Justice.¹²

Like other values in Gandhian thought, Non-violence is not wholly realizable in practice. What can be realized is relative non-violence, which is nothing more than an approximation to the ultimate value of Non-violence. "Perfect non-violence," says Gandhi, "is impossible so long as we exist physically. . . . Perfect non-violence while you are inhabiting the body is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line, but we have to endeavour every moment of our lives."¹³ Non-violence as an ideal, therefore, means in practice the maximum possible relative non-violence which an individual is capable of at a given moment. But even this relative non-violence has to be defined as clearly as possible, so as to give a sense of direction to, and lay down the boundary conditions for, human action aimed at the realization of Non-violence as an ultimate value. Gandhi has, therefore, explained what he considers to be the essential characteristics of his conception of Non-violence for

⁹ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Harijan*, September 5, 1936 ; November 3, 1939 ; *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government*, 1942-44, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1945, p. 170. ¹¹ *Young India*, August 8, 1929.

¹² *Harijan*, November 4, 1939 ; *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Fourth Edition, G. Nateson & Co., Madras, p. 348.

¹³ *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.

purposes of human action. These characteristics are briefly analysed below :

(1) *Non-violence is not the same as non-killing*

Man's biological needs make it impossible to accept complete non-killing as an ideal. For, as Gandhi observes : "It is impossible to sustain one's body without the destruction of other bodies to some extent."¹⁴ But apart from man's biological needs, there may be occasions when killing one form of life or another would be, according to Gandhi, a duty. He, therefore, distinguishes three different types of killing on the part of human beings, which, in his opinion, are justified :

- "(a) for sustaining their bodies,
- (b) for protecting those under their care, or
- (c) sometimes for the sake of those whose life is taken."

Gandhi believes that (a) and (b) mean *himsa* or violence to a greater or less extent, but it is unavoidable violence and, therefore, justified; but (c) "means no *himsa* and is, therefore, *ahimsa*."¹⁵ Let us analyse these three kinds of killing which are justified by Gandhi separately.

(a) Man cannot sustain his body without killing some form of life for his food, and such destruction of life is, therefore, justified, says Gandhi.¹⁶ Health and hygiene also require the destruction of some lower forms of life. "We recognize the duty of killing microbes by the use of disinfectants. It is violence and yet a duty."¹⁷ Moreover, the destruction of animal life that causes injury to human life is also, according to Gandhi, a matter of duty. Hence he supports the killing of monkeys which destroy foodcrops and fruits, carnivorous animals, poisonous snakes and rabid dogs, etc.¹⁸ "Even man-slaughter," he says, "may be necessary in certain cases. Suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about sword in hand, and killing anyone that comes in his way, and no one dares to capture him alive. Anyone who despatches this lunatic will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded as a benevolent

¹⁴ *Young India*, November 4, 1926.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Young India*, October 21, 1926 ; November 4, 1926.

¹⁸ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, Section Seven.

man. From the point of view of *ahimsa* it is the plain duty of everyone to kill such a man."¹⁹

(b) The protection of one's ward presents a special type of problem in which one's own life is not directly involved, but only indirectly as the shield for another life that is unable to defend itself. In such a case, Gandhi believes, if the non-violent method fails to dissuade the party which threatens the life of the ward, then the guardian or protector would be justified in killing the assailant. "He who refrains from killing a murderer," says Gandhi, "who is about to kill his ward (when he cannot prevent him otherwise) earns no merit, but commits a sin ; he practices no *ahimsa* but *himsa* out of a fatuous sense of *ahimsa*."²⁰ If a man is a witness to the attempted violation of a woman by a ruffian (the man here being in the position of a protector and hence the woman, in a sense, of a ward), the first duty of the man is to lay down his life non-violently in defending the woman against the assailant. It is difficult to see, of course, how the protector can do anything at all to defend the woman unless he uses some form of force against the ruffian (like obstructing his approach with such strength that the ruffian cannot touch the woman without killing him), although he may not attack the latter. The laying down of life itself involves the use of such physical power as would make it necessary to take the life in order to achieve the objective (in this case the violation of the woman). Moreover, there is no guarantee that even if the man lays down his life, the ruffian would then spare the woman. Gandhi recognizes the possibility of such objection and observes regarding the alternative duty of the protector in this particular case : "If he does not believe in Non-violence or cannot practice it, he must try to save her by using all the force he may have." In other words, Gandhi would justify the use of force in such a case, to the extent of killing the miscreant, if it is unavoidable.²¹ He gives another hypothetical example when he says : "Suppose for instance, that I find my daughter—whose wish at the moment I have no means of ascertaining—is threatened with violation and there is no way by which I can save her, then it would be the purest form of *ahimsa* on my part to put an end to her life and surrender myself to the fury of the incensed ruffian."²² The question of killing the

¹⁹ *Young India*, November 4, 1926.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Harijan*, March 1, 1942.

²² *Young India*, October 4, 1928.

daughter will be discussed presently under (c) below, but what is of importance here are the words "there is no way by which I can save her", which presumably mean, in the light of Gandhi's general argument on the subject, that even the use of physical force cannot save the daughter.

(c) "Just as a surgeon", says Gandhi, "does not commit *himsa* but practises the purest *ahimsa* when he wields his knife on his patient's body for the latter's benefit, similarly one may find it necessary under certain imperative circumstances to go a step further and sever life from the body in the interest of the sufferer. It may be objected that whereas the surgeon performs his operation to save the life of the patient, in the other case we do just the reverse. But on a deeper analysis it will be found that the ultimate object sought to be served in both the cases is the same, viz., to relieve the suffering soul within from pain. In the one case you do it by severing the diseased portion from the body, in the other you do it by severing from the soul the body that has become an instrument of torture to it. In either case it is the relief of the soul within from pain that is aimed at, the body without the life within being incapable of feeling either pleasure or pain."²³

We cannot express any opinion regarding Gandhi's presupposition about the existence of the soul and its nature, or about a particular form of relationship between it and the body. We can only note that Gandhi regards the killing of a living being for its own sake under certain circumstances as not only consistent with, but also necessary for Non-violence. Fortunately, there are several cases in point discussed by Gandhi, actual as well as hypothetical, which would enable us to understand what exactly he means to say. Once a calf was maimed and lay in agony in Gandhi's *ashrama*.²⁴ The veterinary surgeon who was consulted declared the case to be past help and past hope. On Gandhi's request a doctor administered a poison injection to the calf and thus killed it in a couple of minutes in his presence. This was not only a case of simple killing, but a sacrilege from the viewpoint of the orthodox Hindus, who regard the cow as a sacred animal, but Gandhi stoutly defended his posi-

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ This Sanskrit term literally means a hermitage, but in common usage also any semi-monastic kind of institution in which a reformer lives with his dedicated followers.

tion against all attacks from his coreligionists.²⁵ Dr. Harold Blazer, a country doctor of Colorado, had an imbecile daughter of thirty-two who was without arms or legs, speech or thought. When at the age of 61, in 1925, Dr. Blazer felt that his own end was near, he chloroformed his daughter to death, because, as he told the court, there would be no one to look after her. Gandhi was asked by correspondents for his views on Dr. Blazer's action, and he said that although he thought that the doctor's act "betrayed want of faith in the humanity of those round him", he observed that "such killing, if it is done bonafide, will certainly not count as *himsa* as defined by me". His comments were more or less the same about the case of a Paris actress who shot and killed her lover at his own request, as he was suffering excruciating pain from an incurable disease.²⁶ He argued, however, that the wish of the victim was an unsure guide to what ought to be done. "The better thing would, in my opinion", he observed, "be boldly to put an end to a life which we may absolutely know to be past saving. Such a case would be that of a comrade on the battlefield who has received fatal wound and who has no possibility of receiving any medical aid. In this case it would not be his wish that would determine the act of killing, but the certain knowledge of a lingering death in utter helplessness and without hope even of loving nursing."²⁷ Gandhi gives another hypothetical illustration when he says : ". . . supposing that in the case of an ailing friend I am unable to render any aid whatever and recovery is out of the question and the patient is lying in an unconscious state in the throes of fearful agony, then I would not see any *himsa* in putting an end to his suffering by death."²⁸ Yet another of his startling examples is as follows : "Should my child be attacked with rabies and there was no helpful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life. Fatalism has its limits. We leave things to fate after exhausting all the remedies. One of the remedies and the final one to relieve the agony of a tortured child is to take his life."²⁹ In one of his articles, however, Gandhi introduced a limitation to such killing which is contradictory to the view, noted above, that the

²⁵ *Young India*, October 4, 1928.

²⁶ *Young India*, December 9, 1926 ; December 30, 1926.

²⁷ *Young India*, December 30, 1926.

²⁸ *Young India*, October 4, 1928.

²⁹ *Young India*, November 18, 1926.

wish of the patient regarding the killing is immaterial. In this article he added the condition that "It should be impossible for the patient in question to express his or its wish."³⁰

Gandhi's example of the violation of his hypothetical daughter raised some controversy at the time and in fact belongs to a different category from his other examples. "My reason for putting my daughter to death in circumstances mentioned by me," he says, "would not be that I feared her being polluted, but that she herself would have wished death if she could express her desire."³¹ Assuming the circumstances to be such that the daughter is unable to express her wishes, it is still difficult to see how Gandhi can kill her, unless he himself regards death as preferable to sexual dishonour. As a matter of fact, Gandhi is introducing a new value here, namely, honour, and treating it as higher than life. This can be properly understood only in the light of Gandhi's rather extreme ideas on sexual purity, which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

"The fact is that," says Gandhi, "*ahimsa* does not simply mean non-killing. *Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger, or from a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from so doing is *ahimsa*."³² Thus the motive behind the act is a basic consideration for Gandhi in deciding whether a particular act of killing amounts to violence or not. In his own words, "even though the outward act may be the case, its implications will vary according to the motive prompting it".³³ Gandhi is treading dangerous ground here, as I shall try to show later on, but he is also showing a measure of pragmatism in trying to decide each case on its merits which is often overlooked. Summing up his views on the relationship between killing and Non-violence, Gandhi observes :

"To conclude then, to cause pain or wish ill to or take the life of any living being out of anger or a selfish intent is *himsa*. On the other hand, after a calm and clear judgment to will or cause pain to a living being with a view to its spiritual or physical

³⁰ *Young India*, November 1, 1928.

³¹ *Young India*, October 25, 1928.

³² *Young India*, November 4, 1926.

³³ *Young India*, December 9, 1926.

benefit from a pure, selfless intent may be the purest form of *ahimsa*. Each such case must be judged individually and on its own merits. The final test as to its violence or non-violence is after all the intent underlying the act."³⁴

(2) *Non-violence is not non-resistance born out of cowardice*

"He who has not overcome all fear," says Gandhi, "cannot practise *ahimsa* to perfection."³⁵ For, "Non-violence presupposes ability to strike. It is a conscious, deliberate restraint upon one's desire for vengeance. . . . The desire for vengeance comes out of fear of harm, imaginary or real. A man who fears no one on earth would consider it troublesome even to summon up anger against one who is vainly trying to injure him."³⁶ *Ahimsa*, he argues, is the extreme limit of forgiveness. But since forgiveness is the quality of the brave, *ahimsa* is impossible without fearlessness.³⁷ He repeatedly argues that when the choice is between violence and cowardice, he would support the former. One who is unable to be bravely non-violent in the face of physical danger to his life, family, property, religion, etc. ought to use violence in order to defend these things.³⁸ Once the people of a village told Gandhi how they had run away when the police were looting their houses and molesting their womenfolk, because he had asked them to be non-violent. Gandhi "hung his head in shame" and advised them that for cowards it was much better to defend their families and properties by violence than to run away.³⁹ On another occasion Gandhi was asked what a woman should do when faced with the danger of molestation. Gandhi's answer was that a truly pure and fearless woman could never be molested. "However beastly the man, he will bow in shame before the flame of her dazzling purity." But the pragmatist in him observed at the same time: "But such faith or courage cannot be acquired in a day. Meantime we must try to explore other means. When a woman is assaulted she may not stop to think in terms of *himsa* or *ahimsa*. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that come

³⁴ *Young India*, October 4, 1928.

³⁵ *Harijan*, September 1, 1940.

³⁶ *Young India*, August 12, 1926.

³⁷ *Young India*, November 4, 1926.

³⁸ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 162-63.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and, if need be, die in the effort."⁴⁰

There are three ways of defence, says Gandhi. The best is defence that is based on Non-violence. The second best is violent defence. The worst form of defence is submission or running away out of fear.⁴¹ Therefore, Non-violence in Gandhian thought is positive in content and must not be confused with all types of non-resistance (this point will be developed in a subsequent chapter) ; cowardice or negative non-resistance is worse than violence.

(3) *Non-violence implies several positive values*

Since Non-violence is an expression of Love, it follows that it is far more positive than mere abstinence from physical violence. "The principle of *ahimsa*" says Gandhi, "is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody. It is also violated by our holding on to what the world needs."⁴² The various positive attributes of Non-violence mentioned by Gandhi may be briefly summarized as follows :

(i) Love, of course, is the very basis of Non-violence ; and, therefore, relative non-violence in each particular case must also be associated with relative love. Every non-violent act must be characterized by the *total absence of hatred or any other form of ill-will*. The adversary must be treated with goodwill, respect and sympathy. The suffering must be borne entirely by the believer in Non-violence without the slightest feeling of anger or hatred towards the oppressor.⁴³

(ii) Love for the wrong-doer, however, does not mean acquiescence in his act. It follows from the positive character of Non-violence that injustice in any form ought to be resisted by those who believe in it. Non-violence, therefore, involves *active resistance to injustice everywhere* (such active resistance is called *satyagraha* and will be discussed later on). As Gandhi observes : "But it [Non-violence] does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *ahimsa*, requires you to resist the wrong-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 162-63.

⁴² M. K. Gandhi : *Truth Is God*, p. 32.

⁴³ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 17, 30, 157-58 ; M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 186.

doer. . . ."⁴⁴ "No man could be actively non-violent," he says, "and not rise against social injustice no matter where it occurred."⁴⁵

(iii) *Courage in the face of violence*, as already explained, is an essential attribute of Non-violence, because cowardice, according to Gandhi, is the very antithesis of Non-violence and even worse than violence.

(iv) Exclusive possession, says Gandhi, is incompatible with Love and, therefore, with Non-violence. Besides, possession necessarily includes the seeds of exploitation, and since exploitation is the negation of Non-violence, *non-possession* is an essential attribute of Non-violence.⁴⁶

(v) *Truthfulness* is also, according to Gandhi, an inseparable ingredient of Non-violence. There is a Sanskrit proverb, *satyam bruyat, priyam bruyat, na bruyat satyamapriyam*, which is usually translated as "the truth should be spoken, pleasant words should be spoken, but the unpleasant truth should not be spoken". In Gandhi's opinion, however, the Sanskrit text means that "one should speak the truth in gentle language. One had better not speak it, if one cannot do so in a gentle way ; meaning thereby that there is no truth in a man who cannot control his tongue".⁴⁷ He maintains, therefore, that "if non-violence of thought is to be evolved in individuals or societies or nations, truth has to be told, however harsh or unpopular it may appear to be for the moment".⁴⁸ "To say or write a distasteful word," he observes, "is surely not violence when the speaker or writer believes it to be true. The essence of violence is that there must be a violent intention behind a thought, word or act, i.e., an intention to do harm to the opponent so-called."⁴⁹

Although Gandhi does not specifically say so, the fact that he has repeatedly laid so much emphasis on the intention behind the act would indicate that he would include the so-called "white lie" (spoken, for example, by a doctor to a patient for the latter's benefit, or by a passerby to a bandit in order to save a potential victim) within the ambit of Non-violence, just as he includes killing for the victim's own sake within its scope.

(vi) Implied by Non-violence is also *brahmacharya* without which freedom from the passions (necessarily involved in Non-

⁴⁴ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, 31, 90.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

violence) is inconceivable. Literally, the term *brahmacharya* means the path of God-realization (*brahma* = God + *charya* = practice), and includes, as Gandhi rightly says, "control in thought, word and action, of all the senses at all times and all places".⁵⁰ Therefore, an individual practising *brahmacharya* is absolutely free from passion. Gandhi believes that it is possible to practise such *brahmacharya* to the fullest extent, although he admits his own failure to do so.⁵¹ But this is only a broad meaning of the term. "The ordinary accepted sense of *brahmacharya*," as Gandhi correctly observes, "is the control in thought, word and action of animal passion. And it is quite proper thus to restrict its meaning. It has been thought to be very difficult to practise this *brahmacharya*."⁵² Yet this form of *brahmacharya* is of the essence, because "the control of every other sense shall be added unto" the individual "who is not swayed by carnal desire even in his sleep".⁵³

(4) *Non-violence implies bread-labour*

The principle of bread-labour, which Gandhi derives from Ruskin, Tolstoy (who in turn had got it from Bondaref), the *Bhagavadgita* and the Bible,⁵⁴ is defined by him as "the divine law that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands".⁵⁵ He calls it a *yajna* (sacrificial rite) which has been enjoined by the *Bhagavadgita* (in the Third Chapter) on all. In practice, he argues, since nine-tenths of the human race lives on manual labour anyway, the principle of bread-labour amounts to the compulsory performance of some manual labour on the part of the remaining one-tenth. In the given conditions of the India of his time, he considered spinning to be an ideal form of bread-labour.⁵⁶

Bread-labour is one of the most important prerequisites to a non-violent life, and an authority on Gandhi has described it as "the first moral law of life" in Gandhian thought.⁵⁷ The relationship between Non-violence and bread-labour has been explained by Gandhi himself in the following words: "Service is not possible unless it is rooted in Love or *ahimsa*. . . . This service is again im-

⁵⁰ *Young India*, June 5, 1924.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, pp. 48-52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50. ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-52.

⁵⁷ N. K. Bose : *Studies In Gandhism*, p. 15.

possible without bread-labour, otherwise described in the Gita as *yajna*. It is only when a man or a woman has done body labour for the sake of service that he or she has a right to live."⁵⁸ If everyone performed bread-labour, "our wants would be minimized, our food would be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relish from the productions of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took were superfluities."⁵⁹ Besides, "if all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of overpopulation, no disease and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love for the common good."⁶⁰

On the specific question of the relation between bread-labour and intellectual labour, Gandhi maintains that while there is need for intellectual labour, manual labour is also a primary responsibility of the intellectual. Asked why he should insist on a Rabin-dranath or a Raman performing manual labour, Gandhi replied that "intellectual work was important and had an undoubted place in the scheme of life, but what he insisted on was the necessity of physical labour *for all*. No man, he claimed, ought to be free from that obligation. It would serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. He ventured to say that in ancient times, Brahmins worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, such labour was a proved necessity at the present time."⁶¹ "May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour?", he asked himself on another occasion, and replied: "No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. . . . Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and for its own satisfaction.

⁵⁸ *Young India*, September 20, 1928.

⁵⁹ *Harijan*, June 29, 1935.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ This statement of Gandhi can be found in *Harijan*, February 23, 1947, without the two italicized words "for all" (my italics), but these two words are found in the original notes taken down by N. K. Bose (who was Gandhi's secretary at the time) and corrected by Gandhi himself. In view of the crucial importance of these two words, I have used the version of the original notes which Bose was kind enough to place at my disposal.

It should never demand payment. In the ideal state doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self."⁶² In other words, the intellectual must earn his daily necessities through manual labour and treat his intellectual work as a contribution to society for which he must not accept any remuneration.

Thus bread-labour, according to Gandhi, will establish the bond of Love through common voluntary labour among all members of the society. It will also reduce our wants, simplify our lives and thus promote the virtue of renunciation which, as I have explained before, is one of the essential elements of Non-violence. Naturally, therefore, Gandhi says that "Bread-labour is a veritable blessing to one who would observe Non-violence, worship Truth, and make the observance of *brahmacharya* a natural act".⁶³ He believes that "Obedience to the law of bread-labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Men's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man."⁶⁴ According to Gandhi, bread-labour will also be a potent means for the reduction of inequalities, economic as well as social, and it will be absolutely essential for the success of the Constructive Programme and of *satyagraha*. But I shall discuss the relation between bread-labour and Equality in Ch. V and its importance for the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* in Ch. XI.

(5) *Non-Violence is a higher value than Life*

We have seen that certain types of killing are regarded by Gandhi as acts of *ahimsa*. When Gandhi says this, however, what he really means is that *ahimsa* is to him a higher value than Life, and whenever a life has to be taken for the sake of *ahimsa* there would be nothing immoral in it. A lower value is being sacrificed for the sake of a higher value. This is further proved by the fact that Gandhi does not restrict such sacrifices of life only to cases where it is "necessary" for the sake of the victim. What is more important, a non-violent person must always lay down his life in the face of violence, provided he has true Non-violence within him, that is, if he is not afraid and bears no ill-will against the assailant.

⁶² *Harijan*, June 29, 1935.

⁶³ N. K. Bose: *Selections From Gandhi*, p. 51.

⁶⁴ *Harijan*, June 29, 1935.

To a large extent this line of thinking must have been the result of Gandhi's belief, drawn from the Hindu tradition, that there is a soul that is separable from the body, that it is the soul which is really real and the body unreal or only a lower form of reality. "The body itself," says Gandhi, "is a house of slaughter, and therefore *moksha* (salvation) and Eternal Bliss consist in perfect deliverance from the body, and therefore all pleasure, save the joy of *moksha* is evanescent, imperfect."⁶⁵ Since "all life in the flesh exists by some *himsa*, it follows that "a votary of *ahimsa* always prays for ultimate deliverance from the bondage of flesh."⁶⁶ This realization comes, of course, from a knowledge of the *Atman* or the Self. "He who seeks refuge in God ought to have a glimpse of the *Atman* that transcends the body ; and the moment one has a glimpse of the Imperishable *Atman* one sheds the love of the perishable body."⁶⁷

But we cannot investigate this theological aspect of death due to the limitations of our tools. What is of importance for us is to note that Non-violence demands the sacrifice of one's life, if necessary, in Gandhi's system of values. It may be argued, of course, that the soul of the assailant would also be delivered from the bondage of flesh if he should be killed instead of being allowed to kill, and that from the point of view of Non-violence it would be better to kill a violent man than the sacrifice of the life of a harmless man, but Gandhi regards killing for one's own sake as a form of *himsa* and, therefore, the negation of *ahimsa*. Therefore, one's own life must always be sacrificed in the cause of *ahimsa*.⁶⁸ "When a man is fully ready to die," says Gandhi, "he will not even desire to offer violence. Indeed, I may put it down as a self-evident proposition that the desire to kill is in inverse proportion to the desire to die."⁶⁹ In Gandhi's view, therefore, "the fear of death is thus the greatest obstacle in the way of our realizing the true nature of *ahimsa*".⁷⁰

It is time to pause and take stock of the situation. What are the meaning and implications of Non-violence as understood by Gandhi? Non-violence is an expression of Love which is an attri-

⁶⁵ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 195.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁶⁷ *Harijan*, September 1, 1940.

⁶⁸ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 15-17, 160.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁷⁰ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 225.

bute of the immanent and transcendental God ; therefore, it is an ultimate value (this explanation is beyond the scope of our investigation). Non-violence is also an ultimate value because (1) it is universally applicable, (2) it enhances all other values without detracting from any, and (3) it is unlimited in its application. As an ultimate value Non-violence is, however, only an abstract ideal ; it is always relative for praxeological purposes. On the praxeological plane, it is a synthetic value which can be broken up into the following values : (1) *love*, which is necessarily involved in Non-violence, (2) *laying down of one's own life* without violent resistance before a violent assailant, (3) *killing for the sake of a victim* in certain special circumstances, (4) *courage*, (5) *respect and absence of ill-will* in any form for the adversary, (6) *non-possession*, (7) *truthfulness*, (8) *brahmacharya*, and (9) *bread-labour*.

Gandhi was criticized by the orthodox Hindus on two grounds with regard to his views on Non-violence : first, that his views were opposed to the law of *karma*, and second, that he had introduced an artificial distinction between the life of human beings and that of animals which was not permitted by traditional Hindu religion or philosophy.

The first criticism was mainly voiced on the occasion of the killing of the agonized calf in Gandhi's *ashrama* in 1928. One of the criticisms made by a number of correspondents was summed up by Gandhi himself as follows : "If you believe in the law of *karma*, then your killing of the calf was a vain attempt to interfere with the operation of that law."⁷¹ The argument is that the agonized condition of the calf was the result of its own *karma* and by killing it Gandhi had interfered with that law (which was inherently rational and moral) and thus committed an immorality. Thus interpreted, the law of *karma* would also rule out any kind of purposive activity (as believed, for instance, by extreme Buddhists) and especially "other-regarding" activity (since everyone enjoyed the fruits of his own *karma* and must not be helped or hindered by others) and lead to a "philosophy" of complete inaction and fatalism. This is, in fact, what had happened to Hindu society for many centuries and why the idea of social service was completely alien to the Hindus, Buddhists or Jains until the Renaissance-cum-Reformation of the second half of the Nineteenth Century. The most powerful attack

⁷¹ *Young India*, October 11, 1928.

was brought about by Vivekananda on this interpretation of *karma*, and he was followed by Gandhi who, instead of deducing fatalism from the law of *karma*, in fact based his entire programme of social transformation on it. But the type of criticism being discussed here indicates that the fatalistic interpretation of *karma* had remained firmly entrenched among many sections of orthodox Hindus.

As explained in Chapter II, while we cannot investigate the so-called "law" of *karma* due to its essentially theological roots, fatalism does not necessarily follow from it, because while the present is determined, according to this "law", by past *karma*, the future depends entirely on the present acts of the subject. It might be argued, of course, that interference with the lives of others in any manner is an immoral act (since everyone enjoys the fruits of his own *karma*) and would, therefore, jeopardize the future of the doer, and this is the position that Gandhi seeks to fight against, as we have seen, with the doctrine of *nishkama karma* (selfless action) as propounded in the Gita. In the specific instance of the killing of the calf, critics also argued that Gandhi had imported his conception of Non-violence from the West. While Gandhi replied that "I have learnt much from the West and I should not be surprised to find that I had learnt something about *ahimsa* too from the West", he sought to justify his action in terms of the doctrine of *nishkama karma* of the Gita in the following words :

"I firmly believe in the law of *karma*, but I believe too in human endeavour. I regard as the *summum bonum* of life the attainment of salvation through *karma* by annihilating its effects by detachment. If it is a violation of the law of *karma* to cut short the agony of an ailing animal by putting an end to its life, it is no less so to minister to the sick or try to nurse them back to life. And yet if a man were to refuse to give medicine to a patient or to nurse him on the ground of *karma*, we would hold him to be guilty of inhumanity and *himsa*. Without, therefore, entering into a discussion about the eternal controversy regarding predestination and free will, I will simply say here that I deem it to be the highest duty of man to render what little service he can."⁷²

The second criticism, I think, is more valid from the point of

⁷² *Ibid.*

view of Vedantic Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, because none of these religious and philosophical traditions make a distinction between human and non-human life. *Isavasyamidam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat*, i.e., God pervades everything that is temporal in this world, says the *Isavasyopanishad*, and the Hindu who believes in the validity of this statement would regard human beings and animals as equally divine. Indeed the Vedantic doctrine that God is immanent as well as transcendental leads to the inevitable conclusion that human beings, lower animals, rocks and stones and trees are all equally divine and, therefore, occupy the same status in the "scheme of the universe", unless, of course, it can be shown that God manifested himself in the lower animals, plants and inanimate objects in order to be of use to the other aspect of his manifestation, namely, human beings. But this idea belongs to the semitic tradition, not to the Hindu-Buddhist tradition. Buddhism and Jainism do not consider the assumption of the existence of God as essential for religion and morality, but they also believe in the unity and sanctity of all life. The Buddhist emperor of ancient India, Asoka, not only prohibited the slaughter of animals in his empire, but when he provided medical facilities for his subjects in the form of hospitals and distribution of medical herbs, similar arrangements were made for animals also. The Jains go to the extent of not killing even mosquitoes, poisonous snakes and carnivorous animals.

It was argued by critics at the time that Gandhi's support for the killing of animals which are injurious to human beings was the result of his Western education. As one correspondent wrote: "You have been so much under the Western influence that you have learnt to think it proper to kill lower beings for the sake of man. It is better for you to confess your error and apologize to the world. You should have made up your mind in this matter after exhaustless sifting. Instead, you have passionately taken sides and discredited yourself."⁷³ Gandhi denied that his idea was derived from the West or the East.⁷⁴

I think the argument that Gandhi's support for the killing of animals injurious to men was derived from the West is true to the extent that there is no justification, in theory, for such killing in the Vedantic, Buddhist or Jain traditions. The Vedantic tradition,

⁷³ *Young India*, November 18, 1926.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

of course, justifies the slaughter of animals for the purpose of religious sacrifice, but that is very different from what Gandhi is saying. Vivekananda was Gandhi's forerunner in this respect also, but he too had come in close contact with the West. The validity of this argument becomes clear when we see Gandhi's reasoning for his stand. In his opinion, "there is a fundamental difference between the monkey nuisance and the human nuisance. Society as yet knows no means by which to effect a change of heart in the monkeys, and their killing *may*, therefore, be held as pardonable, but there is no evil-doer or tyrant who need be considered beyond reform. That is why the killing of a human being out of self-interest can never find a place in the scheme of *ahimsa*."⁷⁵ Man is responsive to moral appeal, unlike the animals, says Gandhi, because he has the faculty of reasoning which an animal lacks. Referring to the killing of animals injurious to man, he observes: "Such killing becomes a duty. The question may arise as to why this rule should not also apply to human beings. It cannot, because however bad, they are as we are. Unlike the animal, God has given man the faculty of reason."⁷⁶ But the view that animal life represents a lower value than human life because man is possessed of the faculty of reason while the animal is not, does not belong, so far as I can see, to the classical Indian tradition.

Gandhi has cautioned us against an utilitarian interpretation of his approach to the question of killing. "My fear, however, is," says he, "that proceeding on my analogy some people might actually take it into their head summarily to put to death those whom they might imagine to be their enemies on the plea that it would serve both the interests of society and the 'enemies' concerned, if the latter were killed. In fact I have often heard people advance this argument. But it is enough for my purpose to know that my interpretation of *ahimsa* affords no basis whatever for such an argument, for in the latter case there is no question of serving or anticipating the wishes of the victims concerned. Finally, even if it were admitted that it was in the interests of the animal or the enemy in question to be summarily despatched, the act would still be spelt as *himsa* because it would not be altogether disinterested."⁷⁷ Although the motive is important, says Gandhi, it is not a sufficient condition for killing. The *own interest* of the victim is

⁷⁵ *Young India*, October 18, 1928.

⁷⁶ *Harijan*, May 5, 1964.

⁷⁷ *Young India*, November 18, 1928.

of the utmost importance, and, therefore, the circumstances in which the killing is done are as important as the motive. "A reference to both intent and deed," he argues, "is thus necessary in order to finally decide whether a particular act or abstention can be classed as *ahimsa*. After all, intent has to be inferred from a bunch of correlated acts."⁷⁸

As regards the killing of animals which are injurious to men, Gandhi observes that although there is a superficial resemblance between his position and that of the utilitarian, in reality there is an unbridgeable gulf between the two. The utilitarian would readily justify the vivisection of animals or the heaping up of the most destructive armaments for the "supposed greater good of mankind", while a votary of Non-violence would never do so. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself, but the believer in Non-violence will. The destruction justified by the latter will always be restricted to the narrowest possible sphere, while there would be no necessary limit to the destruction justified by the former.⁷⁹

Such being his idea of Non-violence, it is natural that Gandhi would be opposed to the Soviet system of government, the Nazi rule in Germany, and the Second World War which was ostensibly fought for the sake of democracy.

Gandhi's views on Communism and the Soviet Union are unambiguous and uncompromising. Referring to Bolshevism and the attempt of the Indian Communists to convert him to this ideal, Gandhi wrote as early as 1924 : "I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. 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. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathise with and admire worthy motives, 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."⁸⁰ Shapurji Saklatvala, who had come on a hurricane lecture tour of India, met Gandhi, tried to convert him to Communist methods,

⁷⁸ *Young India*, October 18, 1928. ⁷⁹ *Young India*, December 9, 1926.

⁸⁰ M. K. Gandhi : *Communism and Communists*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959, p. 4.

and unable to achieve immediate success, entered into a correspondence with him. With his usual courtesy and politeness Gandhi published Saklatvala's appeal in *Young India*, and replied, inter alia : "Those who seek to destroy men rather than their manners, adopt the latter and become worse than those whom they destroy under the mistaken belief that the manners will die with the men. They do not know the root of the evil."⁸¹ In a critical reference to Communist methods as practised in Russia Gandhi observed soon afterwards : "... from what I know of Bolshevism, it not only does not preclude the use of force, but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective state ownership of the same. And if that is so, I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik Government in its present form cannot last for long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence."⁸²

About the Russian experiment in state-controlled production and distribution he told an American journalist that if it had not been based on force, he would dote on it, but was unable to accept it since it was.⁸³ Referring to the professed Communist ideal of a classless society and Equality, he observed that while accepting this ideal, he rejected the Communist methods.⁸⁴ In fact he doubted the claim of those who said that Equality had been established in Russia, for he did not believe that inequalities could be eliminated through violence.⁸⁵ And about Russian achievements in general, he said : "I would be the last man to minimize the achievements of Russia, but the whole structure is based on force and violence."⁸⁶

While dealing with the critical international situation in an article at the end of 1938 he wrote about the Soviet Union : "Russia has a dictator who *dreams of peace and thinks he will wade to it through a sea of blood*. No one can say what the Russian dictatorship will bring to the world."⁸⁷ In an interview with Louis Fischer in June 1942 he further observed that voluntary cooperation would produce real Freedom and a new order, vastly superior to the new order in Soviet Russia. Reverting again to the end-means question, Gandhi observed : "Some say there is ruthlessness in Russia but

⁸¹ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 255.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 333.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 135.

⁸⁴ M. K. Gandhi : *Communism and Communists*, p. 6.

⁸⁵ *Mahatma*, Vol. VI, p. 27.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 194.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 280. Italics introduced.

that it is exercised for the lowest and the poorest and is good for that reason. For me there is very little good in it. Some day this ruthlessness will create an anarchy, worse than ever we have seen."⁸⁸

Equally fundamental was Gandhi's rejection of the Nazi system of government on account of its being based on force. Although he had sympathy for the German people and felt that they had been unjustly treated by the Great Powers in the past and that the Treaty of Versailles had been particularly unfair to the German nation,⁸⁹ he did not by any means justify the reign of terror on which the Nazi regime was based. In his own words: "Germany is showing to the world how efficiently violence can be worked, when it is not hampered by any hypocrisy of weakness masquerading as humanitarianism. It is also showing how hideous, terrible and terrifying it looks in its nakedness."⁹⁰ So great was Gandhi's indignation at the persecution of the Jews in Germany, that he went to the extent of saying that, had he believed in the method of war, he would have regarded a war against Germany for the sake of humanity to be fully justified. As he put it: "If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war. A discussion of the pros and cons of such a war is, therefore, outside my horizon or province."⁹¹

Similarly, Gandhi opposed the Second World War because he felt that the violence of the Allies was not the real answer to the violence of the Nazis. The Allies, he argued, could win the war only by being more violent and ruthless than the Germans. The net result would be an unprecedented rise in total violence in which thousands would lose their lives. And Gandhi felt that "No cause, however just, can warrant the indiscriminate slaughter that is going on minute by minute. I suggest that *a cause that demands the inhumanities that are being perpetrated to-day, cannot be called just.*"⁹² Since violence could only breed more violence, Gandhi felt that "... the defeat of Nazism will be bought at a terrific price, namely, superior Nazism, call it by any name you like."⁹³ Gandhi himself suggested the technique of international *satyagraha* to the Allies as

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 97.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 321.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 294. Italics introduced.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

a remedy for the German menace, a subject that I shall discuss in a subsequent chapter.

It will be seen from the preceding analysis that the Gandhian concept of Non-violence, especially in its relative aspect, is considerably more complicated than is often supposed. The practical complications involved in applied Non-violence or *satyagraha*, including the problems of ends-and-means and war-and-peace, will be critically analysed and examined in Part III. My intention in this chapter was not to examine the application of the Gandhian concept of Non-violence, but only to analyse its proper meaning as an ultimate and relative value. It may be noted here, however, that the concept of Non-violence as analysed in this chapter proves Gandhi's intellectual and ethical ancestry beyond any doubt. He belongs to the long line of pacifists which is almost as old as history, and has openly recognized his debt to many of them (as we shall see with the gradual unfoldment of our study), including Buddha, Jesus Christ, Ruskin, Emerson, Thoreau and Tolstoy. In fact there is a close resemblance between the Gandhian concept of Non-violence and that of such pacifist anarchists as Godwin, Thoreau, the later Kropotkin and Tolstoy, although Godwin and Kropotkin were unwilling, even at the level of personal belief, to associate religion with Non-violence. Gandhi takes off from where the pacifist anarchists left it, and develops it into a means of individual, group and mass resistance against authority in a manner and on a scale unthought of by the latter. *Satyagraha*, as we shall see in Part III, is definitely a more advanced and articulate technique of resistance than conceived by any of Gandhi's predecessors, although, contrary to what Gandhi thought, it may not be effective under all circumstances.

By accepting Non-violence as an inalienable ultimate value Gandhi has also pitted himself against the long line of conflict theorists from Heraclitus, Polybius, Han Fei Tzu and Kautilya through Ibn Khaldun, Machiavelli and the classical economists to the Social Darwinians, their intellectual offspring, the Fascists, and the Communists, who believe not only that conflict is the "law" of life (as against Gandhi's belief that Non-violence is the "law" of life), but also that it is necessary for the progress of human society. There are also the sociological conflict theorists like Bagehot, Glumpowicz, Sumner and Oppenheimer who regard conflict as inherent in human society, a serious disregard of it

indicating an unreal attitude towards social relations. Even the Indian philosopher, Sri Aurobindo, a contemporary of Gandhi, regards violence as inevitable in the present stage of the evolution of human society. Unfortunately, Gandhi has not gone deeply into the problem of social conflict or made any attempt to repudiate the stand of this long and powerful tradition of conflict theory. This has made his approach to the ultimate and relative value of Non-violence somewhat unscientific. Although he has made occasional references to the futility of violence (which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter in connection with the problem of ends and means), his attitude towards the problem of social conflict is somewhat simplistic in so far as he tends to underestimate the reality and strength of social conflict by simply declaring his disbelief in the "Western" notion of the selfishness of man, and asserting that man can "respond to the call of the spirit in him".⁹⁴ Similarly, Gandhi has not attempted to give any reasoned answer to the argument of sociologists like McDougall and Pareto and psychoanalysts like Freud, Adler and Jung that human behaviour is often determined by some powerful instincts and biological urges rather than by reason. Indeed, while going through the social and political ideas of Gandhi, especially his ideas on Non-violence and *satyagraha*, one constantly gets the uneasy feeling that a proper foundation has not been laid, not even attempted, for these ideas, and that the divergent viewpoints of some very powerful thinkers have been too lightly brushed aside. It can, of course, be argued that Gandhi merely insists on the maximum possible striving for the realization of an ideal, which is to be achieved only through a process of successive approximation, and does not expect man to exceed his biological limitations, and in any case I am not trying to criticize Non-violence as an ultimate value ; under the methodological discipline on which this work is based, we cannot quarrel with ultimate values. I am only trying to point out that Gandhi has not approached the value of Non-violence with sufficient scientific precision, thus weakening to a certain extent the entire foundation of his social and political thought.

This relatively unscientific approach to Non-violence is only one of the many consequences of the absence of an evolutionary perspective in the social and political thought of Gandhi. In spite

⁹⁴ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 92.

of his attempt to visualize a teleological unfoldment of Non-violence through history, Gandhi's approach to values, and as a matter of fact, to most social and political questions, is largely ahistorical (as the argument in the subsequent chapters would further prove). Had Gandhi adopted a historical and evolutionary approach to social relations and organization (as would be called for from the viewpoint of Social Science), he would have first made a scientific analysis of the nature and causes of social conflict, with special reference to the biological evolution of man, and then formulated a concept of Non-violence that would have stood the test of scientific inquiry. As it is, his concept of Non-violence is largely arbitrary, and would lead to a simplistic approach to the problem of social conflict, as we shall particularly see in Part III.

CHAPTER IV

FREEDOM

THE CONCEPT of Freedom is one of the most difficult concepts that Social Science has to deal with. Historically, Freedom has been interpreted in many different ways by social scientists and philosophers, one interpretation often diverging widely from another, and a standard definition of Freedom cannot even be attempted. In fact it is generally agreed that a definition of Freedom would necessarily involve the assumption of certain other values with reference to which alone the concept of Freedom can be meaningful. To a certain extent this is true of all ultimate values (e.g., Non-violence presupposes the value of Love)—and that is why some people find the concept of God so useful (since it does not depend on any presupposition of values, and all values can be derived from it)—but perhaps more so in the case of Freedom than that of many other ultimate values.¹

Gandhi was not probably even aware of the many difficult problems besetting the attempt to define Freedom, and it would, therefore, be unreasonable to expect a systematized presentation of the concept on his part. As a matter of fact, the term Freedom has not been used very often by him except with reference to India's freedom movement, and he has made surprisingly little attempt to talk about Freedom in a systematic manner, as he has done in the case of Non-violence or Equality. Yet in a somewhat indirect way Freedom as an ultimate value plays a very important role in the social and political thought of Gandhi. And it is possible, putting his somewhat scattered writings on this and other related concepts together, to arrive at several conceptions of Freedom in Gandhian thought, each conceptually different from, but also connected and consistent with the other.

An initial difficulty about the Gandhian concept of Freedom

¹ For a historical survey and analysis of the problems involved in defining Freedom see Mortimer J. Adler : *The Idea of Freedom*, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1958 ; Harold Ofstad : *An Inquiry into the Freedom of Decision*, Norwegian Universities Press, Oslo, 1961.

is that in some of his writings, reflecting more or less his personal faith, he has referred to God as a power that more or less completely regulates the affairs of the world. Thus, for instance, in one case, although he begins by saying that God is nothing but Truth, he goes on to observe that "there is no doubt that He rules our action, and I literally believe that not a blade of grass grows or moves without His will. The free will we enjoy is less than that of a passenger on a crowded deck."² Since it is difficult to see how Truth, whether interpreted as factual truth or as Justice, can in fact be ruling our actions, we must regard this kind of statement as an unsuccessful attempt on the part of Gandhi to make a rational presentation of his private belief in a controlling Deity. Here is another statement of this kind: "Man was supposed to be the maker of his own destiny. It is partly true. He can make his destiny only in so far as he is allowed by the Great Power which overrides all our intentions, all our plans, and carries out his plans."³

This transempirical limitation on human Freedom is, however, more apparent than real, mainly for two reasons. In the first place, Gandhi himself has tried, as we have seen, to divest his social and political thought, as far as possible, of his idea of God. Although he may not always have been successful in doing so, the presumption would be justified on our part that for purposes of his social and political thought he would really like to view Freedom as an empirical rather than a transempirical problem. Secondly, there is an important school of philosophy, including, I believe, Spinoza, Hegel, Bosanquet and the Indian philosopher, Sri Aurobindo, which believes that there is no necessary conflict between the ideas of transempirical determinism and empirical Freedom. Gandhi himself believes that the "Great Power" does "allow" man to exercise some Freedom, and in any case, in the Hindu view of life accepted by Gandhi it is the "law" of *karma* that determines the extent of empirical Freedom enjoyed by man, and this law, in spite of its theological moorings, as we have seen, is in a sense the antithesis of necessity. As Ofstad has observed: "Those who maintain that man is free when he is determined by a transempirical principle of rationality or virtue manifesting itself in the empirical world, may feel forced to defend some form of indeterminism. They will defend it, not because they hold that 'free' means uncaused, but

² *Harijan*, March 23, 1940.

³ *Harijan*, April 20, 1947.

because a certain degree of indeterminism is conceived as a prerequisite for the operation of a transempirical principle."⁴

It seems to me that from the empirical point of view Gandhi can be said to have used the term Freedom in at least six different senses, which are summarized below :

(1) *Freedom as absence of necessity*

The traditional doctrine of *karma* in which, as I have already stated, Gandhi had a personal faith, states that true Freedom is possible only when, through a series of good acts extending from life to life, one is able to get out of the cycle of births and deaths. But this transempirical conception of Freedom is not the only one that the doctrine of *karma* implies. If we leave aside its transempirical aspect, it will tell us, as I have already tried to explain in Chapter II, that the individual is free to choose between alternative courses of action throughout his life on earth, and that how his "self" develops would depend very much on his own choice of actions. The interpretation given to this doctrine by Gandhi for purposes of his social and political thought, as we saw in Chapter II, is only a vigorous assertion of this view. The starting point of the Gandhian conception of Freedom is, therefore, that from the empirical point of view, the individual is not governed by any necessity in his choice of actions. And as with the individual, so with the society. Social evolution Gandhi views as a series of free experiments in alternative courses of human action. In his own words :

"Evolution is always experimental. All progress is gained through mistakes and their rectification. . . . This is the law of individual growth. The same law controls social and political evolution also. The right to err, which means the freedom to try experiments, is the universal condition of all progress."⁵

Thus if there is any necessity, it is the necessity of Freedom. Man is necessarily free in the choice of actions, including, obviously, the choice of inaction or negative action. That is why, even in terms of his own conception of Freedom, Gandhi's teleological view of history as a process of unfolding Non-violence is logically invalid.

⁴ Harold Ofstad : *op. cit.*, p. 147.

⁵ M. K. Gandhi : *Truth Is God*, p. 135.

(2) *Freedom as the exercise of personal moral responsibility*

It follows from the above that the individual alone is responsible for the decisions he takes, and by his decisions he can make or mar his own future. The different individuals thus taking individual decisions are also responsible for the progress or retrogression of society as a whole. Moral responsibility cannot be shifted by the individual to the environment or to other individuals. At every step in a given situation he has the choice between the right and the wrong action, and since which action he chooses is entirely his own responsibility, the consequences of such action are also his and no one else's responsibility. Gandhi, of course, advises us to improve our power of decision by prayer and "self-purification". But the fact remains that even after prayer and self-purification it is the individual concerned who decides what to do. A difficulty is caused by Gandhi's frequent reference to the Inner Voice as a guide to personal action. But one is free to accept or reject the Inner Voice (whatever it may be), and in any case, on Gandhi's own admission, there is no Inner Voice for the masses of men. The discharge of this personal moral responsibility is the essence of Freedom.

(3) *Freedom as striving for self-perfection*

Gandhi believes, as we have seen, that the complete realization of the ultimate values is not possible for human beings. What he considers possible is the maximum possible striving for the realization of these values. Man is thus not free to realize his ideals, but he is free to strive or not to strive for their attainment. But Gandhi believes, as I have explained in Chapter I, that man ought to strive for the attainment of his ideals, for that is his *dharma*. His Freedom consists of deciding and acting upon the best way of making the effort. From Gandhi's point of view, the Freedom not to strive is not true Freedom because he has a preconceived set of values, and the choice of not striving to attain these values robs man of his rational faculty and, therefore, of his humanity. "I am but a poor struggling soul," he says, "yearning to be wholly good—wholly truthful and wholly non-violent in thought, word and deed ; but ever failing to reach the ideal which I know to be true."⁶ Elsewhere he observes : "The goal ever recedes from us. The greater the progress the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Full

* *Young India*, April 9, 1925.

effort is full victory."⁷ It would be equally true to say, from his point of view, that full effort is full Freedom, or rather the maximum possible relative freedom that men can hope to enjoy. Mortimer J. Adler, after surveying the conception of Freedom as "acquired self-perfection", defines it in this sense as "through acquired virtue or wisdom to will or live as he ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature",⁸ and observes that in a broad sense the conception of Freedom as advanced by Plato, Spinoza, Locke, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel, Dewey and Marcel belongs to this category. We can certainly add the name of Gandhi, although he was not perhaps as complex a thinker as many of those listed by Adler.

(4) *Freedom as acquired virtue*

From another angle, the striving for self-perfection is the same as acquiring virtue, which stands for the qualities required for the attainment of the preconceived values. Depending on whether they are consistent or not with the ultimate values, there are good and bad qualities which constitute virtue and vice, and the individual has the Freedom to choose between the two. "Christianity and Islam", says Gandhi, "describe the same process as a duel between God and Satan, not outside but within ; Zoroastrianism as a duel between Ahurmazd and Ahriman ; Hinduism as a duel between the forces of good and the forces of evil. We have to make our choice whether we should ally ourselves with the forces of evil or with the forces of good."⁹ But acceptance of certain ultimate values makes the choice of the "forces of good" the only rational choice, and true Freedom, therefore, amounts to determining and acquiring the "forces of good".

The "forces of good" include in Gandhian thought, as we have seen, such virtues as non-violence, truthfulness, non-possession and *brahmacharya*, which enable the "conquest of passions", identified by Ofstad as one of the oldest definitions of Freedom.¹⁰

(5) *Freedom as moral power*

The exercise of moral power to bring about the "transformation of social relationships" is, in a sense, central to the social and poli-

⁷ *Young India*, March 9, 1922.

⁸ Mortimer J. Adler : *op. cit.*, p. 616.

⁹ M.K. Gandhi : *Truth Is God*, p. 49.

¹⁰ Harold Ofstad : *op. cit.*, p. 145.

tical thought of Gandhi. This power is the power of Love or Non-violence, acquired through the "conquest of passions". Referring to the power of Non-violence, Gandhi observes that "the only condition of a successful use of this force is a recognition of the existence of the soul as apart from the body and its permanent nature."¹¹ That is why one of the English equivalents of *satyagraha* used by Gandhi is "soul-force", which he regards as the moral equivalent of war. But since we cannot say anything about the soul or its relationship with the body, or its permanent or temporary character in a language that is intersubjectively transmissible (see Chapter I), we can only note that the moral power exercised by the individual who has conquered his passions and become non-violent is very great, according to Gandhi. "Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all," and "is infinitely greater than and superior to brute force."¹² Or again, "Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. . . . Non-violence is like radium in action. An infinitesimal quantity of it embedded in a malignant growth, acts continuously, silently and ceaselessly till it has transformed the whole mass of the diseased tissue into a healthy one. Similarly, even a little of true non-violence acts in a silent, subtle, unseen way and leavens the whole society."¹³ He says that with growing experience he sees "with more and more clearness, the immense power of *ahimsa*,"¹⁴ and that "Men of stainless character and self-purification will easily inspire confidence and automatically purify the atmosphere around them."¹⁵ Working under the "law" of Non-violence, he argues, "it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's regeneration".¹⁶ From the ruffian attempting to violate a woman to the foreign army of invasion, all will be subdued by the moral power exercised by the non-violent individual or nation. The communal disturbances in India immediately before independence, the violence associated with the partition of the country and the battle over Kashmir were attributed by Gandhi partly to his own moral imperfections as a leader.¹⁷

¹¹ N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, p. 31.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹³ *Harijan*, November 12, 1938.

¹⁴ M. K. Gandhi : *Truth is God*, p. 104.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 184.

¹⁷ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 205-7.

One of the most important definitions of Freedom is that it is power in one form or another,¹⁸ and according to Gandhi, we can conclude, Freedom consists in the exercise of moral power by individuals and groups with a view to the "transformation of social relationships" as well as their own self-perfection. Moral power is, after all, the only form of power that has any place in Gandhian thought, and it is difficult to see how Freedom can be exercised in human society except in the form of moral power in terms of this thought.

(6) *Freedom as absence of compulsion*

Complete voluntariness on the part of the doer of an act and absence of any compulsion on the person in relation to whom a non-violent act is performed are supposed to be implicit in the ideal of Non-violence (to what extent the object of *satyagraha* is free from compulsion is a subject, however, which is not altogether beyond controversy, and will be discussed in a subsequent chapter). Free choice of action in terms of given ultimate values is, as we have seen, the essence of morality in Gandhian thought, and any act performed under the slightest compulsion would be unfree and, therefore, immoral. "No action which is not voluntary", says Gandhi, "can be called moral. So long as we act like machines, there can be no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have been done conscientiously and as a matter of duty. Any action that is dictated by fear or by coercion of any kind ceases to be moral."¹⁹ Only a free act can be a good act, and an act performed under compulsion is not a free act and, therefore, not a good act. Emphasizing the close interrelationship between Non-violence and the absence of compulsion, Gandhi observes: "How can I, the champion of *ahimsa*, compel anyone to perform even a good act? Has not a well known Englishman said that to make mistakes as a free man is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them? I believe in the truth of this. The reason is obvious. The mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force."²⁰ Love and respect for the adversary, as we have seen, is the very basis of non-violent action, and the absence of compulsion is necessarily

¹⁸ Harold Ofstad : *op. cit.*, Ch. VI.

¹⁹ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 254.

²⁰ *Harijan*, September 29, 1946.

implied by these values. The freedom of decision given to the adversary is, in fact, supposed to be the whole basis of *satyagraha*. Naturally, therefore, Gandhi has repeatedly enjoined on his countrymen to have complete religious tolerance,²¹ respect for other people's opinions,²² freedom of speech for everyone including his close followers and members of political parties,²³ and in fact, the elimination of all forms of compulsion to the maximum possible extent from the social and political system.

(7) *Freedom as belonging*

In the religious tradition of India, as in all other religious traditions, the free man is supposed to be one who is completely detached from worldly pursuits. In a different way the free intellectual is sometimes expected to be non-attached to sensual and other worldly bonds. The Freedom of the individual who is thus free from the religious or intellectual point of view is, however, limited in two important ways. First, detachment from worldly pursuits in either case is associated with attachment to some other object—God in one case and cultivation of the intellect in the other. Secondly, such detachment often leads to a breakdown of communication between the supposedly free individual and his social environment, alienating him from fellow human beings and cutting him off from the stream of life. Gandhi tried to prove the existence of a new dimension of Freedom which emanates from belonging to one's social environment. In his sense of values, his food and dress habits, his socio-political idiom and activities, and in his general way of life, Gandhi belonged to his social environment in a very real sense. Yet very few individuals have done all their lives, as Gandhi has done, the very things they wanted to do, and acted as much as a free agent as he. In his life and thought he has attempted a synthesis between the traditional ideal of detachment from worldly pleasures in personal life and the biological need of man for belonging to the society which nurtures him. From the minutest personal problems of his associates and the problems of small local groups to the major problems of international politics, nothing was alien to him and nothing was beyond his reach. He belonged to his own *ashrama* as much as to humanity, and acted as a free agent in all spheres of human society. And if he has advised the masses of men to "purify"

²¹ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 257-58.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 227-28. ²³ *Ibid.*

themselves through the five vows and to adopt Non-violence as an ultimate value, it is only because he expects each individual to belong fully to his society and to become an effective agent for the eradication of injustice from every sphere of life. As a leading philosopher has observed : "Gandhi teaches us that there is no greatness except greatness within one's own kind ; no universality except the universality within one's province ; no freedom except the freedom within one's own belonging."²⁴

The preceding analysis was intended to indicate the different senses in which Freedom as an ultimate value is understood by Gandhi. When applied to the organization of human society, Freedom takes the form of *swaraj*, a Hindi and Gujarati term used by Gandhi, which is a corruption of the Sanskrit word *swarajya*, meaning self-government. Certain essential characteristics of *swaraj* inevitably follow from the concept of Freedom analysed above, and may be summarized as follows :

(i) *Swaraj is based on inward Freedom* : Since freedom of action comes through acquired virtue, it follows that *swaraj* or the external Freedom enjoyed by an individual would depend directly on the degree of his self-perfection through acquired virtue. His external *swaraj* cannot exceed his internal moral evolution. "The outward freedom that we shall attain," says Gandhi, "will only be in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment. And if this is the correct view of freedom, our chief energy must be concentrated upon achieving reform from within."²⁵

Swaraj is thus fearlessness born out of self-perfection—as in the case of Socrates or Jesus Christ—a fearlessness that defies not only all external authority, including the authority of the mightiest state or empire, but even death itself. As Gandhi observes : "If *swaraj* is delayed (in the case of India), it is because we are not prepared calmly to meet death and inconveniences less than death."²⁶ And this applies not only to the individual, but also to the nation. "That nation is great," he says, "which rests its head

²⁴ W. E. Hocking : "On Freedom and Belonging", *Mahatma Gandhi, Essays and Reflections*, ed. S. Radhakrishnan, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, pp. 87-88.

²⁵ *Young India*, November 1, 1928.

²⁶ *Young India*, October 13, 1921.

upon death as its pillow. Those who defy death are free from all fear."²⁷ An individual or a nation that has developed this inner Freedom cannot be controlled by any external authority. Tolstoy, says Gandhi, had understood the nature of such inward Freedom. What Tolstoy preached, like all world-teachers, he says, is that every man has to "obey the voice of his own conscience, and be his own master, and seek the Kingdom of God from within". For him there is no government that can control him without his sanction.²⁸

(ii) *Swaraj belongs to the individual alone* : A corollary of the inwardness of Freedom and of personal moral responsibility is that *swaraj* is essentially a matter of individual attainment. Gandhi challenges the very basis of all totalitarian political thought by his insistence that Freedom necessarily belongs only to the individual, and not to the collectivity of individuals called society or state in which the sovereignty of the individual is denied. Social or collective Freedom can, according to Gandhi, exist only as a corollary of individual Freedom, not in opposition to it. "The individual is the one supreme consideration", he declares.²⁹ Therefore, any conception of Freedom must begin with the individual. As Gandhi observes : "The first step to *swaraj* lies in the individual. The truth : 'As with the individual, so with the universe', is applicable here as elsewhere."³⁰ Hence, Freedom for a society or a nation can only be the result of the Freedom of all the individuals composing it. He insists that "*Swaraj* of a people means the sum total of the *swaraj* of individuals".³¹ Political self-government of the people, therefore, cannot be external, but can only be the result of the inward moral Freedom of all the individuals, as explained by Gandhi in the following words : "I have, therefore, endeavoured to show both in word and deed that political self-government—that is self-government for a large number of men and women,—is no better than individual self-government, and, therefore, it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule."³²

²⁷ M. K. Gandhi : *Hind Swaraj*, Collected Works, Vol. X, p. 51.

²⁸ *Letter to W. J. Wybergh*, *Ibid.*, p. 249.

²⁹ *Young India*, November 13, 1924.

³⁰ *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, G. Nateson & Co., Madras, Fourth edition, p. 409.

³¹ *Harijan*, March 25, 1939.

³² Mahadev Desai : *With Gandhiji in Ceylon*, S. Ganesan, Triplicane, Madras, 1928, p. 98.

(iii) *Swaraj means Freedom for all or sarvodaya* : An essential concomitant of such absolutist individualism is the rejection of the utilitarian view of democracy as representing the greatest good of the greatest number. Fundamental to the Gandhian social and political thought is the contention that true Freedom can be ensured in human society only by the greatest good of all. Freedom is not a numerical phenomenon and cannot be quantitatively expressed. Every individual represents an end-in-itself, and the curtailment of the Freedom of a minority of individuals leads to a qualitative deterioration of the Freedom of the whole society. To such a concept of universal Freedom Gandhi gives the name of *sarvodaya* (the equal development of all), a Sanskrit word used by Gandhi also as the title for his Gujarati translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* (done by him when he was in South Africa).

In a *sarvodaya* society, naturally, Freedom would not mean simply majority rule. "Under democracy," says Gandhi, "individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded. I, therefore, believe that the minority has a perfect right to act differently from the majority. . . ." ³³ In matters of conscience, moreover, he argues, the law of majority has no place. ³⁴

But such universal Freedom would also necessarily limit the Freedom of each individual in such a way that it does not interfere with the Freedom of others. In other words, by his own value commitments the individual is also committing the whole society, and it is, therefore, his moral responsibility to see to it that his actions do not interfere with the values of other individuals. "There is not a single virtue," says Gandhi, "which aims at, or is consistent with, the welfare of the individual alone. Conversely, there is not a single offence which does not, directly or indirectly, affect many others besides the actual offender. Hence, whether an individual is good or bad is not merely his own concern, but really the concern of the whole community, nay, of the whole world." ³⁵

(iv) *Swaraj is eternal vigilance on the part of the individual* : Freedom of this kind would naturally transcend the mere political independence of a country from foreign rule. Although Gandhi's immediate objective was the ending of British rule in India, he never regarded India's Freedom as identical with the achievement of political independence. On the other hand, he regarded inde-

³³ *Young India*, March 2, 1922.

³⁴ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 116.

³⁵ M. K. Gandhi : *Truth Is God*, pp. 123-24.

pendence from foreign rule as a mere prelude to the achievement of Freedom by the Indian people. To him there was no distinction, as he said many times in his life, between British tyranny and actual or potential Indian tyranny. Nor was there any distinction between an American Rockefeller and a potential Indian Rockefeller, as he said in *Hind Swaraj*.³⁶ Where there is no Freedom, there is no Freedom, whether the country is ruled by its own people or by foreigners. And so Gandhi declared: "I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever."³⁷

It follows that the kind of Freedom envisaged by Gandhi can exist only in a society in which the people do not depend heavily on the state for the protection of their rights. "Self-government means," he says, "... continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. *Swaraj* Government will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for the regulation of every detail of life."³⁸ As a matter of fact, fundamental to the Gandhian concept of political Freedom is the idea, as we shall see in Chapter VI, that there is a basic contradiction between the Freedom of the individual and the authority of the state. The free society visualized by Gandhi is, therefore, "an exploitation-free society in which the supreme instrument of defending just rights lay within the grasp of the unarmed individual".³⁹ Awakening a consciousness of this fact in Indian society and even outside was regarded by Gandhi as one of his primary tasks in life. "My work will be finished," he said, three-and-a-half years before his death, "if I succeed in carrying conviction to the human family, that every man or woman, however weak in body, is the guardian of his or her self-respect and liberty. This defence avails, though the whole world may be against the individual resister."⁴⁰

(v) *Swaraj involves Equality*: The Freedom of the individual cannot obviously be regarded as fundamental to the concept of Freedom unless there is a prior acceptance of the hypothesis that all men are equal (in what manner Gandhi arrives at the Equality of all human beings we shall see in the next chapter). The Gandhian conception of Freedom, therefore, necessarily includes the notion of Equality. Freedom and the equal development of all, which

³⁶ *Collected Works*, Vol. X, p. 58.

³⁷ *Young India*, June 12, 1924.

³⁸ *Young India*, August 6, 1929.

³⁹ Tendulkar: *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 216.

⁴⁰ N. K. Bose: *op. cit.*, p. 43.

Gandhi calls *sarvodaya*, are, as we have seen, interchangeable terms. Without Equality, therefore, social, political and economic, there can be no true Freedom. Inequality in any sphere vitiates ab initio the possibility of universal Freedom. Particular attention is paid by Gandhi, as we shall see in the next chapter, to the question of economic Equality. Economic Equality, he says, is the master-key to *swaraj*. Without the elimination of the disparities between the rich and the poor, between labour and capital, there can be no real Freedom for anyone in society. The contrast between the palaces of India's major cities and the hovels of the poorer classes which existed in India under British rule, would have to be eliminated overnight, he insisted, if India was ever to achieve Freedom in the real sense. He demanded that in an India that was truly free sweepers, doctors, lawyers, teachers and merchants must all get the same wages for an honest day's work (see next chapter).

(vi) *Swaraj involves Non-violence* : The *sarvodaya* society representing universal Freedom must be necessarily based on Non-violence, for Non-violence alone, Gandhi insists, can preserve and promote Freedom. The violent way would inevitably lead to dictatorship, he argues, the non-violent way to democracy. The reason is obvious to him : "True democracy or the *swaraj* of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual Freedom. Individual Freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated *ahimsa*."⁴¹ Moreover, it is necessary for the growth of this universal Freedom that every individual, including women and children, should participate actively in it, for the very participation in the process of Freedom widens the horizons of individual Freedom. Such a universal development of Freedom would not be possible, argues Gandhi, in a society where Freedom is protected by the violent power of the state ; it would emerge inevitably only in a non-violent society. As he puts it : "Granted that India produced sufficient arms and ammunition and men who know the art of war, what part or lot will those who cannot bear arms have in the attainment of *swaraj*? I want *swaraj* in the winning of which even women and children would contribute an equal share with physically the strongest. That can be under *ahimsa* only."⁴²

⁴¹ *Harijan*, May 27, 1939.

⁴² *Harijan*, March 3, 1945.

The vision of universal Freedom through Non-violence can materialize, Gandhi believes, only if every individual in society possesses an infallible means of resistance against encroachments by any external agency on his just rights. Such a weapon he claims to have found in *satyagraha*, which the individual must perpetually use not only for the preservation of his own Freedom, but also for that of the other members of society, to the point of self-annihilation for the sake of Truth and Justice. Only the willingness to die in the cause of Freedom can be the ultimate guarantee of Freedom, both for individuals and for nations, and it is in this respect, argues Gandhi, that the *sarvodaya* view of Freedom and the utilitarian view radically differ from each other. In his own words: "A votary of *ahimsa* cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula [of the greatest good of the greatest number]. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will, therefore, be willing to die, so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all invariably includes the good of the greatest number, and, therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career, but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions."⁴³

With such a conception of Freedom it was natural for Gandhi to be opposed at the same time to the traditional democracies of the West on the one hand, and the Soviet and Nazi systems of government on the other. Fundamentally, he rejected all of these systems of society and government because they are all based on the industrial civilization which he regarded as necessarily detrimental, as we shall see in Part II, to both individual and collective Freedom, generating as it does (so he believed) inevitable violence, exploitation and inequality. In addition to this fundamental similarity among all the governments of the industrial countries, including the British, American, German and Russian Governments, he found that in their external behaviour also they were all equally undemocratic, as was evident from the policy of the Western powers towards the Asian and African nations, which was no doubt a consequence of their lack of internal Freedom.

About the systems of government prevailing in the Western countries, traditionally called democratic, Gandhi observed: "Democracy

⁴³ *Young India*, December 9, 1926.

of the West is, in my opinion, only so-called. It has germs in it, certainly, of the true type. But it can only come when all violence is eschewed and malpractices disappear. The two go hand in hand. Indeed malpractice is a species of violence."⁴⁴

Among the "malpractices" of the Western Governments Gandhi listed not only direct resort to violence whenever the occasion arose, but also imperialism, suppression of the freedom struggles of the Asian and African nations, exploitation and oppression of the coloured peoples, the concentration of capital and economic inequality, etc. In answer to the questions of an American journalist in 1940 regarding true and false democracy, Gandhi observed : "Take your own case. Your land is owned by a few capitalist owners. The same is true of South Africa. These large holdings cannot be sustained except by violence, veiled if not open. The Western democracy as it functions to-day is diluted Nazism or Fascism. At best it is a mere cloak to hide the Nazi and Fascist tendencies of imperialism. . . . It was not through the democratic methods that Britain bagged India. What is the meaning of the South African democracy? Its very constitution has been drawn to protect the white man against the coloured man, the natural occupant. Your own history is perhaps blacker still, in spite of what the northern states did for the abolition of slavery. The way you have treated the Negro presents a discreditable record. And it is to save such democracies that the war is being fought ; There is something very hypocritical about it."⁴⁵

Gandhi declared that the Indian people made no distinction between Nazism and the "double autocracy" that ruled India.⁴⁶ In a written answer to one of Louis Fischer's questions he observed in 1942 : "I see no difference between the Fascist or Nazi powers and the Allies. All are exploiters, all resort to ruthlessness to the extent required to compass their end. America and Britain are very great nations, but their greatness will count as dust before the bar of dumb humanity, whether African or Asiatic. . . . They have no right to talk of human liberty and all else, unless they have washed their hands clean of the pollution. . . . Then, but not till then will they be fighting for a new order."⁴⁷ As a matter of fact, Gandhi went to the extent of expressing the opinion several times

⁴⁴ M. K. Gandhi : *Communism and Communists*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. V, p. 277.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 339. ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 103.

in *Harijan* that "the Nazi power had arisen as a nemesis to punish Britain for her sins of exploitation and enslavement of the Asiatic and African races".⁴⁸

Yet it would be wrong to say that Gandhi made no distinction between the Fascist Governments of Germany and Italy and the traditional democracies of the West. He did not fail to recognize that while the traditionally democratic countries like England and America contained many of the seeds of true democracy, the Fascist Governments represented a form of total tyranny in which democracy could never hope to grow. Thus, about Hitler's rule he remarked: "The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone. And he is doing it with religious zeal. For he is propounding a new religion of exclusive and militant nationalism in the name of which any inhumanity becomes an act of humanity to be rewarded here and hereafter. The crime of an obviously mad but intrepid youth is being visited upon his whole race with unbelievable ferocity."⁴⁹ When the Munich Pact was signed, Gandhi speculated whether temporary peace had not been purchased for honour and whether Hitler's desire for self-aggrandizement would be satisfied by the Pact. He came to the conclusion, however, that Chamberlain, being the Prime Minister of a democracy, had no other alternative. He had thrown his full weight in favour of Czechoslovakia, Gandhi believed, but had stopped just short of declaring war on Germany, because he could not easily do so as the head of a popular Government. Therefore, "That it [the Munich Pact] could not save honour was no fault of his [Chamberlain's]. It would be so every time there is a struggle with Herr Hitler or Signor Mussolini.

"It cannot be otherwise. Democracy dreads to spill blood. The philosophy for which the two dictators stand calls it a cowardice to shrink from carnage. They exhaust the resources of poetic art in order to glorify organized murder. There is no humbug about their word or deed. They are ever ready for war. There is nobody in Germany or Italy to cross their path. Their word is law.

"It is different with Mr. Chamberlain or M. Daladier. They have their Parliaments and Chambers to please. They have parties to confer with. They cannot maintain themselves on a perpetual war footing if their language is to have a democratic accent about it."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 312.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 278-80.

As regards the Soviet Union, Gandhi criticized not only the free use of violence on which its Government was based, but also the dictatorial form of the Government. He feared that the Russian dictatorship posed an unknown menace to the whole world.⁵¹ The free and full development of the individual, he thought, was impossible under the Soviet form of Government. In his own words : "As I look at Russia . . . the life there does not appeal to me. To use the language of the Bible, 'what shall it avail a man if he gained the whole world and lose his soul?' In modern times it is beneath human dignity to lose individuality and become a mere clog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of society."⁵²

Gandhi, of course, believed, as already explained, that violence was bound to lead to dictatorship in one form or another, and that only a system of Government based on the voluntary cooperation of the people could be superior to the Russian Government. He felt, however, that the renunciation and sacrifice of Lenin and the other architects of the Russian Revolution had a certain purity and moral quality which, with the passage of time, might purify the ideal itself⁵³ and presumably lead to purification of the system of Government as well.

It was on account of his conviction that the traditional democracies of the West, the Fascist and Communist Governments had all failed to ensure a socio-political system in which Freedom in the true sense could be said to exist, that Gandhi wanted India to follow a policy of ideological indifference towards these countries and to build up a new socio-political system indigenous in character and based on his own concept of *sarvodaya* or universal Freedom. In reply to the contention of the Indian Communists that the whole character of the war had been changed by Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union and the new front of the Allies, he referred to the undemocratic character of the Allied as well as the Axis powers, and observed (with great significance for the foreign policy of independent India) : "Between Scylla and Charybdis, if I sail in either direction, I suffer ship-wreck. Therefore, I have to be in the midst of the storm."⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Harijan*, October 15, 1938.

⁵² Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. V, p. 9.

⁵³ M. K. Gandhi, *Communism and Communists*, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VI, p. 266.

Although Gandhi rejects the traditional Western type of democracy because it is inconsistent with his conception of Freedom, it does not follow that this Freedom is so unique as not to have any parallel in the Western philosophical and political tradition. As already stated, the type of inward moral Freedom envisaged by Gandhi is also in substance the Freedom conceived by such Western thinkers as Plato, Spinoza, Locke, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel and Dewey. Moreover, Gandhi's conception of Freedom as the exercise of moral power not only has a similarity with the anarchist concept of Freedom (as I shall show presently), but has also been echoed by many contemporary libertarian thinkers of the West. Thus, Gilbert Murray, writing in the *Hibbert Journal* on the occasion of Gandhi's final departure from South Africa for India in 1914, observed : "Persons in power should be very careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy, because his body which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase upon his soul."⁵⁵ Gandhi would hardly have expressed his own view of Freedom as the exercise of moral power any better.

The Gandhian concept of Freedom is different from the Marxian in at least four important respects. In the first place, as explained in Chapter I, the Marxian Freedom is subject to historical necessity resulting from the "law" of dialectical materialism, and there is Freedom to act only according to one's own class interests. Secondly, Freedom in the Marxian sense manifests itself entirely in the external action of the individual and the class, and the notions of self-perfection or virtue are alien to it. Dialectical materialism does not permit an autonomous functioning of the mind, and all talk about inward or moral Freedom is, therefore, "unscientific". Thirdly, the exercise of Freedom in the Marxian sense does not involve the personal moral responsibility of the individual, since he is acting only in the interests of the class under the compulsions of history, and is not, from his own point of view, personally responsible for the revolution or whatever else his actions amount to ; the responsibility lies with history or (if at all with any human agency) with the class. Finally, the Marxian Freedom is certainly not

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 151.

Freedom for all. It is very openly claimed to be the Freedom of one class at the cost of that of another, at least in the foreseeable future, i.e., until such time as all classes disappear.

As a matter of fact, there is greater similarity between the Gandhian conception of Freedom and that of the modern atheistic Existentialists led by Jean Paul Sartre, in spite of their atheism, than between the former and Marxian Freedom. The Existentialists believe, like Gandhi, that Freedom is the exercise of personal moral responsibility by the individual. As Sartre observes : "What is at the very heart and centre of existentialism, is the absolute character of the free commitment, by which every man realizes himself in realizing a type of humanity. . . . Man makes himself ; he is not found ready-made ; he makes himself by the choice of his morality, and cannot but choose a morality, such is the pressure of circumstances upon him."⁵⁶ Moreover, the Existentialists believe, like Gandhi, that the individual has a social responsibility, in addition to a personal responsibility, with regard to his commitment to Freedom. "We will freedom," as Sartre says, "for freedom's sake, in and through particular circumstances. And in thus willing freedom, we discover that it depends entirely upon the freedom of others and that the freedom of others depends upon our own. Obviously, freedom as the definition of a man does not depend upon others, but as soon as there is a commitment, I am obliged to will the liberty of others at the same time as my own. I cannot make liberty my aim unless I make that of others equally my aim."⁵⁷

However, as in the case of Justice and Non-violence, fundamental similarity with the Gandhian concept of Freedom is to be found only in the anarchist concept. Gandhi's view of Freedom as essentially an inward moral activity is an echo of the concept of Freedom propounded by Godwin, Tolstoy, Emerson and Thoreau. His insistence that there is a basic contradiction between the Freedom of the individual and the authority of the state, and that Freedom and Equality are inseparably interrelated, is true to the entire tradition of anarchism, irrespective of shades of opinion. In fact, this view is the very foundation of both anarchism and Gandhian social and political thought. This view appears again and again

⁵⁶ Quoted from Sartre's "Existentialism Is A Humanism", reproduced in Walter Kaufmann (ed.) : *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Meridian Books, New York, 1957, pp. 304-06.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 307-08.

in basically the same form in the writings of Winstanley, Godwin, Proudhon, Max Stirner, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Emerson, Thoreau and Tolstoy. The idea that the exercise of external Freedom should take the form of moral rather than physical power is found in Godwin, the later Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Emerson and Thoreau, and in a qualified form also in Proudhon (Max Stirner and Bakunin, however, openly justified violence). This is not, of course, in the least unexpected, in view of the close resemblance between the Gandhian and the anarchist concepts of Justice.

From the point of view of the Indian tradition, the Gandhian concept of Freedom has been a revolutionary contribution. In the vast body of classical Indian literature there is practically no reference to the secular Freedom of the individual. One's station in society and the general work of life was determined at birth by caste, and the relationship between the king and the subjects was at best conceived as being analogous to that between the father and children. Nowhere is there any recorded thought on the political rights of the individual, and except in some rare and doubtful cases in ancient India, the political tradition throughout had been one of unbroken political authoritarianism on the part of the rulers and uncritical submission on the part of the subjects. The doctrine of *karma* did provide a basis for a kind of moral Freedom, but it was interpreted by the priests and believed by the masses in such a way as to lead to utter fatalism that had emasculated a whole people. Under the impact of Western education in the Nineteenth Century the upper intelligentsia had come to understand and accept the Western concept of individual Freedom, but it was a Freedom that was purely external. Petitioning the British rulers had remained practically the only method of political opposition to foreign rule (but for the brief interlude of the *swadeshi* movement in Bengal and a few other scattered areas of the country) until the arrival of Gandhi on the Indian political scene, and the masses neither understood, nor were apparently expected to do anything about their own or the country's Freedom. It was in such a situation that Gandhi started talking about *karma* in an altogether new way and about *swaraj* for the country and for the individual in such a language and such a manner that almost overnight he was able to create a socio-political movement that drew into its fold millions of hitherto demoralized, illiterate and half-starved people. It was an awakening of such intensity and magnitude as India had never witnessed or

imagined before, and I doubt if any other country in the history of the world has ever experienced. As Jawaharlal Nehru has described the initial impact of Gandhi on the Indian masses: "A demoralized, backward and broken-up people suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their heads and took part in disciplined, joint action on a countrywide scale. This action itself, we felt, would give irresistible power to the masses. . . . We became victims to the curious illusion of all peoples and all nations that in some way they were a chosen race."⁵⁸ History for the first time in India became the result of the free actions of hundreds of millions of men, as Tolstoy had always believed it was, or at any rate ought to be. It is the strength of this new concept of Freedom and other related values that, I believe, largely frustrated the sustained efforts of the Comintern and the Soviet Government for thirty years since the Russian Revolution to communize India.⁵⁹ By and large, however, the Gandhian concept of Freedom is a metaphysical one, and lacking in one important dimension, namely, creative self-expression on the material plane. One of the fundamental criticisms levelled by Marxian as well as non-Marxian socialists against the traditional concept of Freedom is that it does not attach sufficient importance to the systematic exploitation of the resources of the earth for the material betterment of human life and to the equitable distribution of economic prosperity. One of the most important Marxian criticisms of capitalism is that it thwarts the growth of technology, consequently puts a limit on potential material prosperity, and thus curbs the Freedom of man. In Gandhian thought, on the other hand, not only is technological and economic progress unnecessary for Freedom, it is, in fact, detrimental to Freedom. Freedom is impossible without Non-violence, and Non-violence can truly exist, argues Gandhi (as we shall see in Part II) only in a technologically and economically stagnant rural society. In his ideal society there will be no complicated machinery and no technological change. The metaphysical concept of Freedom also leads Gandhi to advise man to live in Nature rather than to conquer Nature (see Part II) — an advice that would probably be rejected by most modern thinkers. Whether it is for the material betterment of man through techno-

⁵⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru : *An Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, London, 1947, p. 76.

⁵⁹ This is the main conclusion of my book, *Indian Nationalism Versus International Communism*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966.

economic change and the conquest of Nature, or for the expression of the creative urge of man on the material plane for its own sake, there is no place in the Gandhian concept of Freedom for creative endeavour on the material plane and, therefore, also for the pursuit of science (this point will be further discussed in Chapter X). Gandhi believes (his arguments will be explained in detail in Chapter VIII) that if man indulges in the Freedom of science and technology and works on Nature, very soon the nature of science and technology will control man and subvert his Freedom. The only nature on which Gandhi would apparently allow human Freedom to operate is human nature.

CHAPTER V

EQUALITY

EQUALITY, to Gandhi, is a postulate of the metaphysical unity of all living beings. This unity, as we have seen in Chapter II, springs from the Vedantic conception of God as immanent as well as transcendental, and has sometimes been referred to by Gandhi as a law of Nature. Love, he believes, is the essential corollary of this unity of Life, and Non-violence the corollary of Love. The Unity of Life, Love and Non-violence would also logically imply, argues Gandhi, the "law" of Equality, and the justification for Equality he thus finds in Vedanta or what he calls the pure form of Hinduism (which to him, of course, is the same as the pure form of any other religion).¹ The Vedanta or Advaita philosophy, he claims, is the negation of all notions of superiority and inferiority, and declares that the *Bhagavadgita*, the basic scripture of the Hindus, contains the idea of the absolute Equality of all human beings.²

We have seen, however, that there is a difference between the traditional Indian concept of the unity of Life and Gandhi's view of it. Traditional Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, in theory at least, made no distinction between human and non-human life. But Gandhi, while accepting this as an absolute ideal, recognizes practical limitations to it and adopts the position that relative non-violence (which is the only practicable form of Non-violence) may include the killing of animals which are injurious to human beings. The same line of demarcation, as a practical limitation on ultimate values, is accepted by Gandhi also in the case of Equality. While declaring that he wants to achieve "brotherhood or identity" not merely with beings called human, but "even with such things as crawl upon the earth,"³ he goes on to add that "The moment we have restored real living equality between man and man, we shall be able to establish equality between man and the whole creation."⁴

¹ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, pp. 38-39.

² *Ibid.*, p. 360-61.

³ *Young India*, April 4, 1929.

⁴ *Harijan*, March 28, 1936.

Thus, human Equality, to Gandhi, is the prelude to the Equality of all that lives.

The logical difficulties posed by Gandhi's metaphysical notion of the unity of Life and of Love I have already discussed in Chapter III, and there is no need to repeat them here. It is sufficient for us to note here that in his own mind Gandhi comes to accept Equality as an ultimate value through a process of metaphysical reasoning (if such thinking can be called reasoning at all). His own formulation of the nature of Equality is as follows :

"I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All . . . have the same sort as any other. And it is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men that I fight the doctrine of superiority . . . that I delight in calling myself a scavenger, a spinner, a weaver, a farmer and a labourer. . . . I consider that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow human being . . . He who claims superiority at once forfeits his claim to be called a man. That is my opinion."⁵

As in the case of the other ultimate values, however, Gandhi tries to keep his metaphysical thinking to himself and to justify Equality in terms of logical arguments. We have already seen in Chapter III how he tries to justify Non-violence on rational grounds. Equality follows, according to him, logically from Non-violence ; for Non-violence involves non-exploitation, and non-exploitation is impossible unless there is Equality. Non-possession is, therefore, as we have seen, one of the attendant virtues (relative values) of Non-violence. Equality and Non-violence are inseparably interrelated. There cannot be any Non-violence without Equality, and there can be no Equality without Non-violence. I have also explained in Chapter IV that political Equality follows inevitably from Gandhi's accent on individual Freedom and his suspicion for all collective authority including the authority of the state. Freedom and Equality are also thus inextricably interconnected. Without social and political Equality there cannot be any Freedom, and without universal Freedom there can be no social and political Equality (we shall see in Chapter IX that Gandhi's ideas on caste are somewhat inconsistent with his views on Freedom and Equality). Thus, in the social

⁵ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 360.

and political thought of Gandhi, Non-violence, Freedom and Equality are all mutually interdependent, and together constitute Justice, which is the integral moral foundation of his conception of the good society.

Although Gandhi considers Equality, like Freedom, as all-pervasive, and an ultimate value to be applied to all problems of social organization, he primarily devotes his attention to the problem of economic Equality. Non-violence or Freedom, he believes, would be unreal without economic Equality. Referring to the question of economic Equality, he wrote in his *Constructive Programme* :

"This last is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic Equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land."⁶

It is important to note that not only does Gandhi regard Equality as inseparable from Freedom, but he regards it as an essential prerequisite to a non-violent social order. The seeds of violence, Gandhi thinks, are inherent in economic inequality, and unless it can be eradicated through non-violent means, some kind of a violent revolution would one day become inevitable in a society characterized by gross economic inequality.⁷

In the ideal society of Gandhi's conception there would be absolute Equality of incomes for all types of work and for all individuals. All work is equally necessary from the social point of view ; the same amount of work in any occupation, therefore, ought to be rewarded by the same amount of wages. While discussing the question of economic Equality with reference to India, he observed :

⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1948, pp. 20-21. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

"I have no doubt that if India is to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work."⁸

Gandhi knew, of course, that this ideal state of affairs would not be realizable in the foreseeable future, and that a lesser but more practicable ideal had to be accepted in practice.⁹ But in any case, there could be no justification, he declared, for the gross inequality that actually prevailed in contemporary human society, and all arguments purporting to show that some people needed much more wealth than others would be utterly unacceptable to him. In his own words :

"Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need the more. . . . The contrast between the rich and the poor today is a painful sight. The poor villagers . . . produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it."¹⁰

And that leads us to the actual degree of Equality which Gandhi considers feasible. "My ideal," he says, "is equal distribution, but as far as I can see, it is not to be realized. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution".¹¹ Such equitable distribution would be ensured, he feels, in a system in which not only were gross disparities of income eliminated, but every member of the society received enough goods and services to meet his basic requirements and enjoy a certain minimum standard of living. Of course, since the accumulation of wealth is in any case regarded as immoral by Gandhi, this would only mean that actually everyone had his basic requirements fulfilled and no more. The basic requirements, he feels, ought to be determined by the "natural needs" of man. This idea is simply expressed by Gandhi as follows :

"The real implication of equal distribution is that each man

⁸ *Harijan*, March 16, 1947 ; see also *Harijan*, June 9, 1946 ; August 10, 1947.

⁹ *Harijan*, August 25, 1940 ; April 14, 1946 ; June 9, 1946 ; March 16, 1947 ; August 10, 1947.

¹⁰ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

¹¹ *Young India*, March 17, 1927.

shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on Non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal.”¹²

Elsewhere he observes :

“Everyone must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one’s children and adequate medical relief.”¹³

As we shall see in Part II, Gandhi believes that absolute economic Equality (or for that matter all other types of Equality as well) would automatically prevail in what I have described as his first-order ideal society without the state, government, parliament, armed forces, police, any kind of labour-saving machinery, in which the economic relations would be harmonized under the system of Trusteeship ; and that relative equality including equitable distribution would be automatically ensured in what I have called his second-order ideal society which would be characterized by the maximum possible decentralization of the political and economic power and resources of the state, state ownership of land and the major industries, the reduction of heavy machinery to the barest minimum and their ownership by the state. But he also suggests four specific ways of ensuring equitable distribution in any existing society, which are summarized below (only an explanation of Gandhi’s suggestions is being given here ; the end-means problem involved in them will be discussed subsequently) :

(1) *Bread-labour* : The Gandhian principle of bread-labour, or of performing manual labour for earning one’s own bread, and the inalienable relationship of this principle with the ultimate value of Non-violence, have already been explained in Chapter III. It is also regarded by Gandhi as an important means for the removal of all inequalities, economic as well as social. Non-exploitation is the essence of bread-labour ; since everyone earns his minimum require-

¹² *Harijan*, August 25, 1940.

¹³ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

ments through bread-labour, and contributes the rest of his labour, whether physical or intellectual, to society, instead of using it for the accumulation of personal wealth, there is an end of all exploitation and, hence, of all disparities of wealth. Logically, anyone who takes his food without performing bodily labour for it is guilty of exploitation and is a thief, according to Gandhi. As early as 1921 he, therefore, argued that "the spinning wheel spells a more equitable distribution of the riches of the earth".¹⁴ Later on he further observed: "There is a world-wide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest."¹⁵ Apart from thus reducing economic inequality, bread-labour would also reduce, according to Gandhi, social inequality, especially in Indian society where there are four basic *varnas* or orders. Since bread-labour would be common to all the four *varnas*, it would obliterate all sense of high and low among the *varnas*.¹⁶ (Gandhi's views on *varna* and caste will be discussed in detail in Chapter IX). In brief, when the principle of bread-labour is accepted by all, "There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable".¹⁷ Following his usual distinction between the ideal and the practicable, Gandhi adds: "This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if . . . we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we would go a long way towards the ideal."¹⁸

(2) *Voluntary renunciation*: Gandhi frequently refers to the first stanza of the *Isopanishad* as the ideal of worldly life for the individual. This stanza says in effect that the Deity pervades the whole of the manifested universe and that real enjoyment of worldly life comes only through renunciation; man must not, therefore, covet the possessions of others, or what is the same thing, accumulate material possessions beyond his basic needs. The first step, says Gandhi, towards the ideal of economic Equality is for him who has accepted this ideal to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his personal wants to the barest minimum, keeping in view the poverty of his fellow human beings.

¹⁴ *Young India*, October 21, 1921.

¹⁵ N. K. Bose: *Selections From Gandhi*, p. 51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* ¹⁷ *Harijan*, June 29, 1935. ¹⁸ *Ibid.*

He should give up all desire for speculation and accumulation of riches. His habitation should be in keeping with this new mode of life. It is perfectly possible, argues Gandhi, for an individual to adopt this personal method of establishing Equality, and what an individual can do, a group can do as well.¹⁹ Needless to say, there is an inseparable connection between the Gandhian concepts of renunciation and of bread-labour. It is on this idea, as we shall see in Chapter VII, that the concept of Trusteeship is also based.

(3) *Satyagraha* : Aware of the practical difficulties involved in the general acceptance of the principle of voluntary renunciation, Gandhi observes :

"If, however, in spite of the utmost efforts the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor in society. . . . If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation."²⁰

Industrial and agricultural strikes, which are regarded by Gandhi as legitimate forms of *satyagraha*, will be discussed in Chapter VII. The subject of *satyagraha* as a whole constitutes Part III of this book, where an exhaustive discussion will be attempted.

(4) *Governmental action* : The government must ensure that every worker receives a minimum or living wage. A government which fails to guarantee a minimum wage to the workers has no right to exist, declares Gandhi. Its authority ought to be resisted peacefully. A minimum wage should be such as would guarantee a reasonably balanced diet to the worker and his family, a reasonable standard of living in general, and adequate leisure. Any industry which is unable to pay such a minimum-living wage should be closed down, he insists.²¹ Moreover, he advocates heavy taxation of the higher

¹⁹ *Harijan*, August 25, 1940.

²⁰ *Ibid.* See also *Harijan*, June 9, 1946.

²¹ *Harijan*, June 9, 1946 ; July 13, 1935 ; August 31, 1935 ; September 14,

incomes, heavy death duties, and even the nationalization of all properties inherited by adults (the last point, however, has not been developed by him).²²

That Gandhi was in general agreement with the democratic socialist approach to Equality is clear from the support he had given to Jayaprakash Narayan's programme in 1940.²³ On numerous other occasions he declared himself to be a socialist who believed in the non-violent method of securing social Justice.²⁴ Provided the non-violent method was accepted by socialists, as most democratic socialists in fact do, Gandhi would have no serious objection to democratic socialism as an ideal. In the year of India's independence he expressed himself forcefully on the subject in the following words :

"Socialism is a beautiful word and so far as I am aware, in socialism all the members of society are equal—none low, none high . . . Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism. In it the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion there is no duality in socialism. It is all unity. . . . In the unity of my conception there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs. . . . This socialism is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it. Impure means result in an impure end. Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. . . . Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world. To my knowledge there is no country in the world which is purely socialist. Without the means described above the existence of such a society is impossible."²⁵

Yet there are two important differences between the Gandhian approach and the democratic socialist approach to Equality. In Gandhi's conception of the good society the fundamental econo-

²² *Harijan*, July 31, 1947. ²³ See Ch. 6.

²⁴ See M. K. Gandhi : *My Socialism*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959 ; and *Communism and Communists*, ditto.

²⁵ M. K. Gandhi : *My Socialism*, pp. 4-6.

mic ideal would be one of voluntary poverty : even if his second-order ideals are taken as the basis of discussion (see Part II), it will be easily seen that his accent is primarily on bread-labour, self-sufficiency and simplicity of life, which alone he considers to be consistent with his ultimate values. The Equality envisaged by Gandhi, therefore, means in essence the equal sharing of poverty, an ideal which hardly any socialist would accept. In a sense the growth of socialism itself was a moral revolt against the poverty of the masses, and material prosperity through scientific and technological progress is regarded as an inalienable objective by socialists generally. A diffusion of prosperity in accordance with the fundamental moral Equality of all human beings would seem to be the substance of the socialist ideal of Equality. Gandhi's moral struggle is for Equality in the midst of poverty, while the crusade of the libertarian socialists, though non-violent, is for Equality in the midst of plenty.

Equally fundamental, if not more, is also the second difference between the Gandhian and the socialist approaches to Equality. While the Gandhian method of establishing socialism is primarily one of voluntary individual renunciation coupled with non-violent mass action on the social plane, only supplemented by governmental action, the democratic socialist method is primarily one of capturing the government through organized party activity and the subsequent reorganization of society through governmental legislation. It bears repetition that Gandhi is strongly opposed to the kind of power politics which characterizes the organized activities of modern political parties and pressure groups. The transformation of society is to him a moral problem which has to be achieved through the moral effort of individuals, groups and the masses on the social plane, without the political power of the state, which, as we shall see in Chapter VI, he regard as shighly detrimental to Freedom. On the other hand, although some leading democratic socialists, especially in India, seem to attach considerable importance to non-violent mass action for securing social and economic Justice,²⁶ there can be little doubt that the socialist movements all over the world concentrate their efforts mainly on capturing political power through organized party activity, and whatever non-violent mass action is organized by them in India or elsewhere in the form of strikes or *satyagraha*, is only an aspect of party activity aimed at

²⁶ See, for instance, Ram Manohar Lohia : *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, Navahind, Hyderabad, 1963.

strengthening the political power of the party and capturing more seats in the next elections. The task of social transformation is postponed till the capture of power ; and of course there is no individual voluntary renunciation or moral effort. And this is what Gandhi is strongly opposed to. Criticizing the socialists and Communists for this kind of approach, he writes : "The socialists and communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic Equality today. . . . They say, when they get control over the state they will enforce Equality. . . ." ²⁷ His own approach, on the other hand, is as follows :

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

"Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one. . . . If, however, the beginner is a zero, . . . multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value. Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be so much waste." ²⁸

The Communist approach to Equality is even more different from the Gandhian, for in it violence is freely sanctioned and the concentrated power of the state in the hands of a party dictatorship is utilized fully for organized violence and for the imposition of party ideals and objectives on the people by other methods which may be short of physical violence, but are, nevertheless, ruthlessly compulsive. The entire social and political thought of Gandhi is, in fact, directly opposed precisely to this method of solving the problems of social organization. The ideal of Equality advocated by the Communists, said Gandhi, would be readily acceptable in the abstract, but not in the concrete form in which it was found in the Soviet Union. Referring to Bolshevism as an egalitarian ideal, he observed :

"All I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution

²⁷ M. K. Gandhi : *My Socialism*, p. 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

of private property. This is an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics, and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion, there would be nothing like it. But from what I know of Bolshevism, it not only does not preclude the use of force, but freely sanctions it for the appropriation of private property and maintaining the collective state ownership of the same. And if that is so, I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik Government in its present form cannot last long. For it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence."²⁹

Communism of the Russian type, said Gandhi, "that is, Communism which is imposed on a people", would be repugnant to India. He felt that if Communism could be introduced without any violence, it would lead to the achievement of the ideal of Equality through a system that would be approximately the same as Trusteeship. In such a non-violent Communism, thought Gandhi, the millionaire would hold his wealth for the people, the state making use of it whenever necessary.³⁰ The ultimate objective of a classless society, as professed by the Communists, he observed, was acceptable to him, since his own ideal was one of abolition of distinction between the high and the low in society. But he did not believe in eradicating evil from the human breast at the point of the bayonet; the human breast, he insisted, did not lend itself to that means.³¹ Because Russia had adopted the violent method, he doubted the claim of those who said that inequalities had been abolished in that country.³²

Equally emphatic was Gandhi's rejection of dictatorship as a means of securing social and economic justice for the poor. For instance, referring to the Soviet dictatorship, he observed in 1942 :

"Some say that there is ruthlessness in Russia, but that it is exercised for the lowest and the poorest and is good for that reason. For me it has very little good in it. Some day this

²⁹ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. II, pp. 438-39.

³⁰ M. K. Gandhi : *Communism and Communists*, p. 6.

³¹ *Ibid.* ³² Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 38.

ruthlessness will create an anarchy, worse than we have ever seen."³³

The Communists and the democratic socialists have, however, this in common that they all want rapid technological advance and economic prosperity. Both the democratic socialist and the Communist conception of Equality is thus one of the equal sharing of prosperity, as opposed to the Gandhian conception of the equal sharing of poverty.

It seems to me that the greatest measure of agreement can be found between the Gandhian and the anarchist approaches to Equality. All the anarchists from Winstanley to Tolstoy believed, like Gandhi, in the absolute Equality of all men. The majority of them, including Godwin, Kropotkin and Tolstoy were advocates of the poor, self-sufficient and "natural" society based on agriculture and handicrafts ; indeed, they regarded the ideal of Equality as possible of attainment only in such a society. With the exception of Bakunin and Max Stirner, practically all the anarchists were staunch believers in mutual benefit and, as already stated in Chapter III, in non-violent social action. One important difference between Gandhi and the anarchists is that (as noted in Chapter II) in spite of the stray writings of some of them on passive resistance, none of the classical anarchists were able to devise a satisfactory method of social action that would ignore the state and achieve social Justice at the same time ; while in the opinion of many, the development of the technique of *satyagraha* as a means of resistance against all kinds of injustice, including inequality, is Gandhi's greatest contribution to social and political thought. The second difference lies in the fact that Gandhi assigns a subsidiary role to the state in the establishment of economic Equality (in his second-order ideal society, of course, as analysed in Part II, which permits such state action) denied to it altogether by the classical anarchists.

The fundamental weakness of the Gandhian concept of Equality is that it takes no account of the economic urge in man—the vital role played in human motivation by the economic factor. It is a concomitant of Gandhi's metaphysical view of man which regards the material aspect of human life as unimportant and inferior

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 120. See also Chapters II and III.

(something to be got rid of altogether, if possible) to the non-material or "spiritual" aspect. Not only is this view of Equality based on the denial of the reality of human nature as determined by the biological evolution of man in the contemporary stage, it is also the result of bad logic. If it is argued, as Gandhi does, that human beings are capable of making that supreme effort which would bring about a sea-change in their hearts and enable them to live in the midst of voluntary poverty equally shared, why would it be impossible for them, it may be asked, to develop the resources of the earth for their material betterment and to distribute the wealth equitably amongst themselves through a great moral effort? The argument that material prosperity by itself would undermine the non-material or "spiritual" aspect of human life in fact betrays a disbelief in the superior power of the latter and in the creative ability of man to construct and reconstruct his society in terms of his own ideals.

CHAPTER VI

STATE AND GOVERNMENT

IN PART I I have made a detailed analysis of the ultimate values on which the social and political thought of Gandhi is based. We have seen that these values are Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, synthesized into the concept of Justice. Each of these values is conceived by Gandhi as both ultimate and relative, the ultimate values in fact representing unattainable abstractions like Euclid's straight line, the relative ones, which can be further sub-divided, representing what Gandhi considers to be the practicable performance. In Part II my objective is to analyse Gandhi's ideas on social organization, to examine their consistency with the ultimate values discussed in Part I, and to discuss the empirical consequences of his scheme of social organization irrespective of their consistency or otherwise with his ultimate values.

Here again it is necessary to distinguish between Gandhi's personal beliefs and the objectives he sought to lay down on the rational plane for society as a whole. Ultimate values are, from Gandhi's personal point of view, attributes of God and unattainable in an embodied existence, rather than the hypothetical value-goals as assumed for the purposes of this study. But belief in God, and Non-violence, Freedom and Equality as attributes of God, are, as we have seen, autobiographical to Gandhi and not a part of his social and political thought. His personal goal was the attainment of *moksha*, and the realization of the Vedantic conception of *swarajya siddhi* (roughly meaning liberation from the bondage of Matter in this life) as a prelude to it. On several occasions he explained that his personal social and political work represented an attempt to realize God through man in his own immediate social environment. If he could persuade himself that he would find God in a Himalayan cave, he would not take part in politics ; but he knew that God could not be found apart from humanity.¹ An interviewer asked Gandhi in 1947 whether the desire for *moksha*

¹ N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, p. 25.

was not the "root" of all his activities, and if so, why this aspect of his thought was not sufficiently emphasized by him. Gandhi replied that "the desire for *moksha* was indeed there, but it was not meant for anyone other than the individual himself". Resorting to a simile he observed that the world was interested "in the fruits, not in the root", but "for the tree itself the chief concern should be not the fruit but the root".² Thus the goal of *swarajya siddhi* and *moksha* is also autobiographical to Gandhi, rather than an aspect of his social and political thought, and I have excluded it from the scope of this study, as explained in Chapter I.

The only social ideal which Gandhi himself had more or less clearly formulated, and from which he did not consciously deviate at any stage of his life, is the ideal of anarchism. The first systematic exposition of this ideal was given by him in *Hind Swaraj*, published in 1909. In 1939 he declared that after carefully going through the book again he was unable to "revise a single idea."³ As we shall see in the following pages, he remained firm in his belief in the anarchist idea, and continued to elucidate and develop it, till the last days of his life. It is this ultimate ideal which to Gandhi's mind represents the maximum possible consummation of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, and is characterized by him as *Ram Raj* (literally Divine Rule). But at the same time, he regards the ideal of anarchism, as we shall see, as an unattainable abstraction like Euclid's point or straight line. It represents the logical extreme of his social and political views, whose real function is that of a direction-indicator. "I can never reach it myself and hence I cannot expect the nation to do so", he declared categorically.⁴

The practical aspect of Gandhian thought developed over the years under situational compulsions, without any preconceived plan. Gandhi was working in a given national and social situation, and each of his socio-political recommendations, made from time to time, represented as close an approximation to the ultimate social ideal as defined in *Hind Swaraj* as was practicable, in his opinion, in the given social situation. These recommendations were made under the limitations set, first, by the lack of social and political organization from which the "masses" of India suffered;

² *Harijan*, September 28, 1947.

³ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. V, p. 175.

⁴ *Ibid.*

secondly, the quality and number of volunteers who were drawn from among the "classes" for the service of the "masses"; and thirdly, the difficulties created by the economic and political subjugation under which the whole of India laboured. Thus in trying to work out the practical aspect of his social ideal through the democratic organization of the Indian National Congress and other "constructive" organizations like the All India Spinners Association, which were established by resolutions of the Congress, Gandhi recommended progressive steps which rose from one point to another in accordance with his reading of the needs of the hour, and his assessment of the strength of his "army" of workers. They, therefore, had a wide range of variability, and were essentially dynamic in character, as will be seen from the illustrations given in the subsequent pages.⁵

But although Gandhi did not at any stage formulate a clear-cut and comprehensive practical social ideal, as a relative counterpart to his ultimate social ideal, there are several important reasons for treating the sum total of his practical ideas in a single category which is different from (though to Gandhi's mind an approximation to) the ideal of anarchism as defined in *Hind Swaraj*. In the first place, from the point of view of Social Science there appears to be a general pattern (as we shall presently see) in the total range of Gandhi's practical socio-political ideas, developed over a long period of time under situational compulsions. Secondly, the gap between his ultimate ideal of anarchism and the sum total of his practical ideas is so wide that they ought to be treated as separate categories, though the difference, to Gandhi's mind, is one of degree rather than of kind. Finally, although Gandhi's political ideas developed in a given social situation, there are universal elements in them, relating to the universal problem of the distinction between the ideal and the real.

Thus it is possible, and I think necessary, to distinguish between the two levels of the social and political thought of Gandhi—the ideal and the practical. The former, represented by a form of pure anarchy, called *Ram Raj* by Gandhi, embodies the maximum social consummation of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. This ultimate social ideal I shall henceforth

⁵ For a study of the progressive development of Gandhi's practical ideas under situational compulsions, see N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, Ch. 8, *Selections From Gandhi*, Chs. 5-8.

refer to as the first-order social ideal of Gandhi. The practical social ideal, derived from the sum total of Gandhi's practical ideas, resembles, as will be presently seen, a form of libertarian socialism, and embodies relative non-violence, freedom and equality. This practical ideal I shall henceforth characterize as the second-order social ideal of Gandhi. Since there is no evidence to prove that Gandhi had consciously and deliberately abandoned his ultimate social ideal for the sake of practical expediency and developed a set of practical ideas which to his own mind ran counter to this ideal, we have to assume that the second-order ideal was considered by him to be an approximation to the first-order ideal (this point will be discussed further in the Appendix).

I have already explained in Part I that Gandhi's emphasis is on the maximum striving for the realization of values rather than their immediate realization, and that his entire thinking on values is based on the idea of successive approximation. It is, therefore, natural that his idea of social progress should also be one of successive approximation to the ultimate ideal, rather than a once-for-all change through a sudden effort. But his method is not one of telescoping long vistas of social progress into a clear-cut programmatic blueprint. The pragmatic character of his recommendations arises out of his insistence only on the quality of the means and the articulation of the immediate practical step which is consistent with the ultimate values. "One step enough for me", he often said after Newman. Naturally, therefore, he does not say in how many stages and after what length of time the first-order social ideal is to be attained. The substance of his thought on social progress is the immediate transformation of the existing socio-political organization of society into what I have called the second-order ideal, through such means as would be creative of, and, therefore, ultimately lead to the achievement of, the first-order ideal. Thus although it would seem from our analysis in Part I that Gandhi regards social progress as a continuum and not as a discrete process, we have in fact only three pictures of the social order from him : (1) the existing social order, or rather orders, representing the value-systems of traditional Western Democracy, Communism and Fascism, (2) the second-order ideal representing a form of libertarian socialism, and (3) the first-order ideal of anarchism. We are told why the different existing social orders are inconsistent with his values and how they are to be transformed into the second-order ideal, and we have

a more or less clear picture of the first-order ideal, but we are not told in what specific manner and after what length of time the second-order ideal is expected to be transformed into the first-order ideal. From this point of view, there is a theoretical similarity between Marx's idea of the supposedly transitional dictatorship of the proletariat eventually leading to the classless and stateless society, and Gandhi's idea of the second-order ideal society leading to the first-order ideal (which bears a close resemblance to the classless and stateless society visualized by Marx). This point will be further developed in Chapter XI.

Gandhi's anarchist views had been developing during his South African days. He was deeply influenced by a study of Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* in 1893. In 1904 Ruskin's *Unto This Last* made a profound impression on him. In *Hind Swaraj* (1909) he maintains that true Freedom would be possible only when modern civilization is completely destroyed and a new society created without governments, parliaments, railways and other fast means of transportation, machinery, doctors, lawyers and armed forces, in which violence is completely abjured by the people and authority is resisted by them through Passive Resistance. *Hind Swaraj* ostensibly is more of an attack on modern civilization than on state or government, but its anarchistic implications are quite clear. After his return to India in 1915 Gandhi consistently expressed his dislike for all forms of government on several occasions, but the clearest formulation was possibly made by him in 1934 in the following terms :

"The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, the state can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence . . . I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress . . . what I disapprove of, is an organization based on force, which a state is. Voluntary organization there must be."⁶

Thus Gandhi's rejection of the state is based on two classical

⁶ Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, pp. 11-13.

anarchistic arguments : the state represents an authority that poses a threat to the liberty of the individual who is above all institutions, and the state represents violence (obviously perpetrated on the people) in an organized form. But while anarchists like Proudhon,⁷ Max Stirner, Bakunin and the early Kropotkin would use revolutionary violence to put an end to the organized violence represented by the state, Gandhi insists on non-violent resistance as the only means of ending the tyranny of the state, and a purely non-violent society based on voluntary organization as the substitute for the state. As a matter of fact, he feels that true anarchy could be established only in a society which is completely non-violent, and conversely, that pure Non-violence could exist only in an anarchistic society. In 1940 he declared categorically that "the ideally non-violent state will be an ordered anarchy".⁸

As the state is ideally undesirable, so also are parliaments. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi pays special attention to the British Parliament which, on his own admission, is generally regarded as the Mother of Parliaments, and observes :

"That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman and a prostitute. Both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit the case. The Parliament has not yet, of its own accord, done a single good thing. Hence I have compared it to a sterile woman. The natural condition of that Parliament is such that, without outside pressure, it can do nothing. It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time. Today it is under Mr. Asquith, tomorrow it may be under Mr. Balfour. . . What is done today may be undone tomorrow. It is not possible to recall a single instance in which finality can be predicated for its work."⁹

These, as Gandhi says, are harsh views, and not worthy of serious consideration. His assertion that the British Parliament had not done a single good thing was obviously a youthful exaggeration. His anti-authoritarianism is inconsistent with his objection to the change of Prime Ministers and the absence of finality in the deci-

⁷ Proudhon regarded non-violent resistance as superior to violent revolution, but justified the latter if non-violent means failed to abolish the state.

⁸ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 313. Italics introduced.

⁹ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. X, pp. 16-17.

sions of the Parliament. But *Hind Swaraj* contains other objections to the parliamentary system of government which can be taken more seriously, though they are by no means original :

"But as a matter of fact, it is generally acknowledged that the members are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest. It is fear that is the guiding motive. . . . When the greatest questions are debated, its members have been seen to stretch themselves and doze. Sometimes the members talk away until the listeners are disgusted. Carlyle has called it the 'talking shop of the world'. Members vote for their party without a thought. Their so-called discipline binds them to it. If any member, by way of exception gives an independent vote, he is considered a renegade. The Prime Minister is more concerned about his power than about the welfare of Parliament. His energy is concentrated upon securing the success of his party. His care is not always that Parliament shall do right. Prime Ministers are known to have made Parliament do things merely for party advantage. . . . If they are to be considered honest because they do not take what are generally known as bribes, let them be so considered, but they are open to subtler influence. In order to gain their ends, they certainly bribe people with honour. I do not hesitate to say that they have neither real honesty nor a living conscience."¹⁰

It has already been stated that Gandhi is opposed to any form of organized government in an ideal society. His arguments against the British Parliament, though largely incidental, are primarily intended to show that even the best of parliaments are ideally unacceptable as a substitute for anarchy.

What then would be the ideal social order like in an anarchistic society? Gandhi has no clear and articulate answer to this question. He was uninterested in the preparation of concrete blueprints for the future, because he had always maintained that the future end could only follow from the means adopted at present, and that a purely mental construction about the future had no significance whatever. (Gandhi's views on ends and means will be discussed in a subsequent chapter). It seems, nevertheless, that Gandhi had

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

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

The scheme of the horizontal organization of the ideal society was offered by Gandhi in a short article in *Harijan* in 1946, which was written in order to satisfy some Congressmen who had been frequently asking him for a comprehensive picture of Indian independence. In view of the great importance of this article, and its central position in Gandhian thought, a relatively lengthy extract from it is reproduced below :

"Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat, having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. But this does not exclude dependence on the willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and every woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that the others cannot have with equal labour. . .

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

"Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and will derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by any human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. . ."¹¹

¹¹ *Harijan*, July 28, 1946.

This indeed is a picture of classical anarchism, reminiscent of Godwin and Tolstoy, which Gandhi himself admits to be unrealizable in practice. As regards the vertical or functional organization of the ideal society, Gandhi merely hints that the traditional four-fold division of society among the Hindus based on *Varna* (which, according to him, is a qualitative and functional division, quite different from caste) might provide a useful clue to the organizational pattern of an anarchistic society. Asked about his ideal social order, Gandhi said :

"I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations the law of *varna* was deduced. It established certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations, the law of *varna* admitted of no distinctions of high or low ; on the one hand, it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours, and on the other, it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbour. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to."¹²

I need hardly explain that this picture of the horizontal and vertical organization of an anarchist society is far from comprehensive or even coherent, not to speak of its unrealistic and hypothetical character, admitted by Gandhi himself. But that is as far as Gandhi would be prepared to visualize the future.

But about an important aspect of social organization, namely, the relation between labour and capital, both in the agricultural and the industrial sector, Gandhi presents a more or less clear picture. These relations will be harmonized in the ideal society of the first order, and the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality conciliated into an equilibrium, through the institution of Trusteeship. In view of its important position in Gandhian thought, however, the concept of Trusteeship will be discussed separately in Chapter VII.

¹² Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 13.

Nor would there be any need in the ideal society of the first order for the armed forces or the police. Defence from external aggression would be organized non-violently in two stages. Initially the population would offer *satyagraha* at the frontier in the form of an unarmed human wall, but if this failed to stop the aggressor, as Gandhi considers likely, occupation of the country would be resisted by complete non-cooperation. If the entire population refuses to cooperate in any manner whatsoever with the invading forces even at the risk of the utmost personal suffering, it would be impossible, he believes, for the foreign army and administrative personnel to maintain themselves in the occupied country.

The same principle applies to the problems of internal security. In the ideal society the people would, of course, resist government oppression through *satyagraha*. The voluntary action of the population, Gandhi believes, would keep the unruly elements under control in such a society. Even if a police force is needed, it would be more like a body of reformers, he says, than a coercive agency of the state (The problem of *satyagraha* in all its implications will be exhaustively discussed in Part III).

That is so far as Gandhi's first-order anti-authoritarianism goes. As already stated, in practice he surrenders these first-order ideals to such an extent that he should be classified (in so far as a classification is possible in his case) among the pluralists and libertarian socialists, rather than the anarchists.

The clearest formulation of this compromise was made by Gandhi himself in 1946, with regard to the question of government, in the following terms :

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

"It must be remembered that nowhere in the world does a state without government exist. If at all it could ever come into being, it would be in India ; for ours is the only country where the

attempt has, at any rate, been made. We have not yet been able to show that bravery to the degree which is necessary, and for the attainment of which there is only one way. Those who have faith in the latter have to demonstrate it. In order to do so, the fear of death has to be completely shed, just as we have shed the fear of prisons.”¹³

In practice, Gandhi also climbed down from his initially vigorous opposition to parliaments. In 1937 he made a typical observation on the significance of legislatures when he said :

“The legislatures are today we the representatives of the people. We have to carry our truth and Non-violence there. . . The legislatures of today are different from the old. We do not want to destroy them, we want to destroy the system which they are created to work.”¹⁴

In 1946 he wrote an article on the legislatures in *Harijan* in which he examined the “utility value” of legislatures. In this article he observes that the most important service that can be rendered to the people in the political sphere is to tell them why they become victims of the government in spite of knowing its faults, and to teach them how to stand up effectively against the government. But this the members of the legislature are unable to do, for they are merely looked up to by the people for the redress of all wrongs, without the people themselves taking any initiative. Members of the legislature can, however, perform the very limited function of exposing the defects of the government. But there are also other reasons why a legislature would be useful. Members can prevent the passage of undesirable legislation and bring in such legislation as would benefit the people. Moreover, the legislatures are expected to carry out the popular will in general. This purpose can best be served, according to Gandhi, by expert knowledge rather than by eloquence. However, he feels that in spite of these values of a legislature, if legislature-entry becomes a matter of personal ambition rather than of service, the value of legislatures is greatly minimized and constructive social work suffers.¹⁵ And he is of the opinion that power always corrupts, and that, therefore,

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, pp. 205-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 157.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, pp. 52-53.

"a man who wants to be good and do good in all circumstances must not hold power". Since, in the political sphere he regards the education of the voters in the art of non-violent resistance to government as the most important task, according to his definition, the good political worker must not go into the legislature himself, but only send his representative whom he can recall, if necessary. In his own words, "The man of Non-violence can send those to the government who represent his will. If he goes there himself, he exposes himself to the corrupting influence of power. But my representative holds power of attorney only during my pleasure. If he falls a prey to temptation, he can be recalled. I cannot recall myself. All this requires a high degree of intelligence on the part of the electorate. There are about half-a-dozen constructive work organizations. I do not send them to parliament. I want them to keep parliament under check by educating and guiding the voters".¹⁶

The compromise of Gandhi's first-order ideal is most pronounced in the economic sphere where he accepts a good deal of state control and even ownership. As early as 1924 he made it quite clear that he was not totally opposed to state control over economic activity. He was generally in favour of abolishing complicated power-driven machinery which, he felt, created unemployment and led to the exploitation of the labourers, and mentioned the Singer Sewing Machine as the type of machinery that would be consistent with his social ideal (his views on machinery will be discussed in Chapter VIII). When it was pointed out to him that large factories would be needed to produce this kind of small machines, he at once observed :

"But I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized or state-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want."¹⁷

Although he regarded the state as an ideally undesirable institution, he declared categorically in 1934 that state ownership of means of production was "better than private ownership".¹⁸ Gandhi is, of course, of the opinion that his scheme of Trusteeship (dealt

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 283.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 161.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 11.

with in Chapter VII) would be better than either private ownership or state ownership, but as between the latter two, he would be in favour of state ownership. He goes even one step further and openly justifies socialism, provided it was based on Non-violence :

"Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors. . . I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. . . Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately, the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact."¹⁹

Gandhi explains in another article that what is known as scientific socialism was born when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion. He is engaged in solving the same problem as inspired the "scientific socialists", but his method is rather different, his approach being always and only through unadulterated Non-violence.²⁰ Referring to "an economic order in which production and distribution are controlled and regulated by the state as is being done in Russia", Gandhi observes that he would accept this system if it was not based on force.²¹

In 1931 the Indian National Congress, with the full support of Gandhi, accepted the programme of nationalization of key industries at its annual session held in Karachi. Being disappointed by the moderate nature of the resolution, and subsequently dismayed by the relative failure of the Civil Disobedience Movement, some young Congress leaders with socialist convictions founded the Congress Socialist Party in 1934, which functioned as a socialist group within the Congress until 1948. When its first programme was prepared in 1934, the socialist group approached Gandhi for his views on its programme. In reply to the question of the leaders of this group Gandhi stated clearly that he regarded himself as a socialist but different from the so-called "scientific" socialists who differed from him with regard to means. In reply to the question whether he agreed with the socialist ideal of the nationalization of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange, he stated : "I believe in the nationalization of key and principal

¹⁹ *Harijan*, January 2, 1937. ²⁰ *Harijan*, February 20, 1937.

²¹ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 135.

industries as is laid down in the resolution of the Karachi Congress. More than that I cannot at present visualize. Nor do I want all the means of production to be nationalized. . ."²² Regarding public utilities, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* in June, 1935 : "The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the state and used entirely for the benefit of the people."²³

In 1940 the annual session of the Congress was held at Ramgarh in Bihar. The Congress Working Committee had framed a draft resolution at Patna, a few months before the session. Jayaprakash Narayan, one of the most prominent Congress Socialist leaders at that time, drafted another resolution along socialist lines and sent it to Gandhi with the request that the latter should place it before the Working Committee for consideration. Narayan's resolution, which accepted non-violent means as the basis of the politico-economic programme, stated, inter alia :

"All large-scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control, and in this behalf the state shall begin by nationalizing heavy transport, shipping, mining and the heavy industries. . .

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

Gandhi liked this draft and placed it before the Working Committee which, however, felt that the draft resolution framed at Patna should not be altered. Gandhi regarded the argument of the Committee as unexceptionable and informed Narayan accordingly, whereupon the latter requested Gandhi to publish his draft with full concurrence. This Gandhi did, stating clearly that in general he accepted Narayan's programme "as an ideal to be reduced to practice as soon as possible after India comes into her own".²⁴

In 1946, two years before his assassination, Gandhi spoke more

²² M. K. Gandhi : *My Socialism*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959, p. 10. ²³ *Harijan*, June 22, 1935.

²⁴ *Harijan*, April 20, 1940. Gandhi expressed qualified disapproval for Narayan's programme of expropriation of the princes of the native states, but this is purely incidental to the subject under discussion.

explicitly and radically on state ownership than ever before. After remarking that some key industries would always be necessary, but that as a practical socialist he did not want to enter into the question as to which industries were key industries, Gandhi observed:

"Hence, without having to enumerate the key industries, I would have the state ownership where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in them through the state. But as I can conceive such a state only based on Non-violence, I would not dispossess monied men by force, but I would invite their cooperation in the process of conversion to state ownership".²⁵

Subsequently he added that "the state would look after secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on,"²⁶ and even that "in the non-violent order of the future, the land would belong to the state. . ."²⁷ On several other occasions also he envisaged the possibility of cooperative farming by the peasants subject to state ownership of land, although he did not develop the idea.²⁸

To sum up : provided non-violent means are invariably adopted, Gandhi is prepared to support the state ownership of land, public utilities, and all industries where a large number of people work together (which would obviously include not only the key industries, but all large scale industries), and a good deal of state regulation and control over a wide variety of subjects. This is indeed a major compromise for a reformer whose first-order ideal is an anarchist society.

The conclusion seems to me inevitable that the part of Gandhian thought on state and government which Gandhi himself regards as practicable is very similar to the ideas of the libertarian socialists. The first-order ideal of anarchism is regarded by Gandhi as impracticable like the hypothetical straight line of Euclid which has no breadth. The second-order ideal accepted by him is by no means original, and has been propagated by libertarian socialists for many decades now. His insistence that non-violent means must

²⁵ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 188.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

²⁸ *Harijan*, March 9, 1947.

be adopted by the state obviously means that the state should eschew physical violence ; for the element of coercion that is involved in the concept of sovereignty and the rule of law is accepted by Gandhi as unavoidable. Non-violence in this sense would be readily accepted not only by libertarian socialists, but by liberal political thinkers of all denominations.

There is, however, one major difference between Gandhi and the libertarian socialists with regard to their approach to the question of state ownership and control. Gandhi starts with the ideal of anarchism, as we have seen, makes a series of compromises with regard to the authority of the state and government, and arrives at the second-order ideal society which, he thinks, would be consistent with relative non-violence, freedom and equality. The various schools of libertarian socialists, on the other hand, generally start from the premise that a large measure of state ownership and control is conducive to social welfare, and then, in order to ensure that this does not lead to a total eclipse of the Freedom of individuals and groups, insist on such measures as the devolution of power. The two journeys are quite different.

Needless to say, the idea of decentralization of power is not Gandhian in origin. The anarchists and early socialists had regarded it as axiomatic. Rousseau was one of the first modern writers who asserted that real democracy would be impossible of attainment unless the people were allowed to exercise their sovereign power directly, and therefore, insisted that true democracy would be possible only in a Greek type of small city-state, where the people would be able to meet together and directly determine the policies of the state after ascertaining their general will. Modern pluralists and libertarian socialists have also powerfully emphasized the need for a high degree of decentralization of the political and economic powers of the state. The special characteristics of the Gandhian conception of decentralization of power, as compared to other contemporary schools of thought on the subject, are mainly two. In the first place, Gandhi regards decentralization of power as an essential corollary to Non-violence. This idea was implicit in the writings of Tolstoy and the later Kropotkin, but unlike Gandhi, neither of them had explicitly emphasized the point. Secondly, Gandhi insists that such decentralization would be possible only in a predominantly non-industrial society with the self-sufficient village as the primary unit of social organization. He believes that

it would be possible to preserve the Freedom of a society, both internal and external, through the non-violent method only when the social organization is non-industrial and highly decentralized. In an article in the *Harijan* Gandhi wrote in 1939 : "I suggest that if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing ; the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well equipped with military, naval and air force".²⁹ He argues, moreover, that a rural society based on the self-sufficient village unit would be in a better position to maintain its Freedom than an urban society. The autonomous and non-violent character of the village society would itself be both a deterrent to, and a moral influence on, the potential aggressor. After the outbreak of the Second World War and the initial successes of Germany, the British Indian Government and many Indians started apprehending a German invasion of India in the near future. Referring to this possibility Gandhi wrote that "Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process."³⁰ Moreover, only Non-violence can lead to moral progress, so runs the argument, and centralization of power is inconsistent with Non-violence. Therefore, moral progress is possible only in a decentralized society. As Gandhi wrote in 1942 : "The end to be achieved is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual. This end can be achieved under decentralization. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with a non-violent structure of society".³¹

In the same year Gandhi presented a more or less clear image of the autonomous, free, non-violent, self-sufficient and simple village which he regarded as the basic unit of a feasible scheme of decentralization of power. In an article in the *Harijan* he wrote :

"My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, indepen-

²⁹ *Harijan*, December 30, 1939.

³⁰ *Harijan*, November 4, 1939.

³¹ *Harijan*, January 18, 1942.

dent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clean supply. This can be done through controlled wells and tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the cooperative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of *satyagraha* and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the *Panchayat* of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this *Panchayat* will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office".³²

Gandhi was not given to the construction of fool-proof systems and blueprints, and he did not, therefore, take the trouble to develop this idea of a decentralized, non-industrial, non-violent and self-sufficient free society into a politically tenable hierarchical system. He never entered into a discussion regarding the problems of relationship between one village and another, and the problems of political and economic adjustment and coordination from the lowest unit of organization to the highest centre of political authority in

³² *Harijan*, July 26, 1942. It may be noted here incidentally that when Gandhi spoke of the greater need for expert knowledge rather than eloquence among the legislators, he seems to have demanded special qualifications for the candidates, though not the voters. He seemed to have the same idea in mind when he observed that the members of the village *Panchayat* should have minimum prescribed qualifications. However, Gandhi did not develop the idea to such an extent as would warrant a detailed discussion.

which sovereignty resides.³³ In the article quoted above, he stated quite clearly that he was merely presenting a picture of village government in which "there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom" and the "law of non-violence", and not examining the "question of relations with neighbouring villages and the centre if any". In 1942 he admitted that the future society of India "is largely beyond my grasp",³⁴ and four years later that he did not need to "fill in my picture".³⁵ It is quite obvious from his writings, however, that whatever the detailed structure of social organization in his second-order ideal society might be like, he would insist on his scheme of village *swaraj* as the necessary basis of this structure. Village *swaraj* is, in fact, the common link between ideal societies of the first and second order in Gandhian thought.

The institution of Trusteeship, which is an integral part of Gandhi's ideal society of the first order, will be discussed in Chapter VII. The role of machinery in social organization, which touches on both

³³ In his so-called "last will and testament", drafted the day before his assassination, Gandhi suggested the dissolution of the Congress and its replacement by a Lok Sevak Sangh (Servants of People Association) whose task would be to strive for the attainment of social, moral and economic independence of the seven hundred thousand villages. In the constitution of the Lok Sevak Sangh drafted by him, he suggested the following organizational set-up :

"Every panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers, village-minded, shall form a unit. Two such contiguous panchayats shall form the working party under a leader elected from among themselves. When there are a hundred such panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect from among themselves a second grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred panchayats shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of panchayats electing a second grade leader after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups." (Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol VIII, p. 284).

It is possible to argue that the organizational hierarchy suggested by Gandhi for the Lok Sevak Sangh gives some indication of his thinking on the question of the organization of Village *Swaraaj*. But this argument is highly speculative and an unsure basis for understanding Gandhi's thinking on the subject, in the absence of any direct evidence. It seems to me that the organizational hierarchy of a cadre of workers is a very different proposition from the socio-political organization of village *Swaraaj*.

³⁴ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 97.

³⁵ *Harijan*, July 28, 1946.

the first-order and the second-order ideal societies, will be discussed in Chapter VIII. The question of the state control and ownership of the means of production, which pertains primarily to the second-order ideal, will be dealt with partly in Chapter VII and Chapter VIII and partly in Chapter XI. Gandhi's idea of *varna* or the four-fold functional division of society which is supposed to be the basis of the vertical organization of the ideal society of the first order, and will also apparently have an important place in that of the second order, will be taken up in Chapter IX. Here I shall only examine the consistency of Gandhi's conception of village *swaraj*, which is common to the ideal societies of both the orders, with the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, and the empirical consequences of such *swaraj*, irrespective of its consistency or otherwise with the ultimate values.

So far as Non-violence is concerned, I have already tried to show in Chapter III that Gandhi's approach to it is somewhat unscientific (irrespective of the merits of Non-violence as an ultimate value) because of his failure to investigate the facts and arguments of those who maintain that violence in one form or another is an inevitable characteristic of most societies. Had Gandhi done so, he could not have been so sure that a self-sufficient and technologically stagnant village would be characterized by less violence than either an urban community or a profit-making, technologically advanced and differentiated village of the modern type. Anthropological evidence indicates, on the other hand, that most primitive village communities of the type described by Gandhi are characterized by far greater violence than modern urban or rural societies. It is also more or less obvious, I believe, that there is far less application of physical force either by the state against the citizen or by one citizen against another, in the modern democratic states than in the feudal societies of the middle ages out of which they have grown. It may be argued, of course, that the village society envisaged by Gandhi would be a "morally transformed" society, and that, therefore, there can be no comparison between this kind of society and the primitive or medieval type of rural society. But it is easy to see that there is a circular reasoning involved in this argument. If men are already morally transformed before such a society is set up, it is difficult to understand why the social reorganization would be necessary at all. If on the other hand, the new society is supposed to be an aid to the moral transformation of man, as seems to be the case,

the anthropological evidence of the violence characterizing such a society would be an argument against this supposition.

As regards Freedom, there is very little dispute regarding the fact that devolution of power leads to the realization of a higher degree of this value than a centralized political system, and all modern democracies have in fact accepted it as an inalienable principle. It is a logical corollary of the pluralist idea, accepted in different degrees by all democratic states, that in a truly free society sovereignty ought to be shared by all the individuals and groups, and that, therefore, the individual ought to be connected by an immediacy of interest with autonomous units of territorial or functional self-government through which he can seek effective self-expression.

But it does not follow that the more simple, undifferentiated, self-sufficient and stagnant the basic unit of social organization is, the greater is the guarantee for individual Freedom. Anthropological evidence does not warrant the assumption that a simple and self-sufficient community is necessarily characterized by more Freedom than a complex and differentiated society. The ancient Indian institution of village *panchayat*, which Gandhi takes as his model, was undoubtedly an institution of self-government to which an individual was directly connected by immediacy of interest and through which he could solve many of the immediate problems of his life. As a matter of fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that it was the institution of village *panchayat* which had preserved the organic character and continuity of Indian society and culture in the face of the repeated onslaughts of foreign armies, civilizations and cultures. But it is equally true that the village *panchayat* was ridden with casteism and was, therefore, an institution that was essentially based on injustice, that preserved and encouraged social dogma and superstition, against whose wrongs the individual had no redress, and which worked for social stagnation and decadence in general, that made India such an easy prey to foreign armies. I think Rabindranath Tagore was substantially right when he said of these Indian village communities : "Here was an intimate world of narrow horizons, rotating on its own axis ; year to year, generation to generation, its substance was changeless, repetitive. Beyond it, in the wider world, there went on the ceaseless making of history, not deadened by sacred injunctions and rigid custom. The history changed its content perpetually by the conflict and inter-

action of one part with another, giving rise to ever-new problems. All those processes, however, were beyond the range of our mental vision".³⁶

Competition, says Tagore, enhances man's output of energy. The towns being characterized by competition, release the creative energy of man and enlarge his sphere of wisdom through the influx of diverse cultures. "And so in the town, where the pressure of the community is relaxed, the individual mind gets a chance to rise superior to the low uniformity of the mass mind—'rustic' is everywhere a synonym for the mind's narrowness".³⁷

Similarly, I think Marx, whose view of historical development in general, and of the Indian situation in particular, was faulty in many respects, was for once right in his criticism of the *panchayat*-based traditional society of India, when he said that this society was stagnant, uncreative, lacking in will power and steeped in ignorance and superstition.³⁸

Moreover, while Gandhi zealously seeks to defend the Freedom of the individual against the authority of the state, he is apparently oblivious of the threat to such Freedom which might be posed by social tyranny. Although Justice is a synthetic value, the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, which together constitute Justice in Gandhian thought, are not found in a state of equilibrium or automatic synthesis in human society. They have to be conciliated with one another, and one of the important functions of the state is to perform this task of conciliation. If a parti-

³⁶ Rabindranath Tagore : *Towards Universal Man*, p. 341.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

³⁸ "... we must not forget", says Marx, "that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetration of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of the large towns, with no other consideration bestowed upon them than on natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all . . . We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny". (Karl Marx : "British Rule in India", in Marx and Engels : *On Colonialism*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow (undated), pp. 31. 37.

cular form of government is unable or unwilling to establish an equilibrium between conflicting values, that is not an argument against the existence of the state. Gandhi and his anarchist forerunners have made the mistake of underestimating the role of the state as the conciliator of conflicting values. This in turn is the result of the relative underestimation of the element of "selfishness" and the strength of the "deeper urges" within the human psyche, discussed in Chapter III. As a matter of fact, however, the tyranny of the community may sometimes lead to an eclipse of individual Freedom no less profound than that resulting from the tyranny of the state, as for example, the old system of *sati*, i.e. the (supposedly voluntary) burning of widows, or the sub-human condition of the so-called untouchables (even now largely prevalent, in spite of the best efforts of the state) in India. As John Stuart Mill observed long ago, and as Earnest Barker has re-emphasized, the tyranny of society may be even more dangerous to Freedom than the tyranny of the state, and the state may have to appear, in the interests of Freedom, in the role of the saviour of the individual from the society (as it did in India for preventing *sati*, untouchability and other similar social practices thwarting individual Freedom). Sociological evidence indicates that a community seeks to impose its mores on each and every individual composing it, and in the absence of the regulatory function of the state, there may often be social regimentation far worse than political regimentation. Gandhi has thus overemphasized the local autonomy that village *swaraj* can represent consistently with the ideal of individual Freedom, especially in a country like India where, for a long time to come, casteism, untouchability and other similar social evils are likely to exist (the experience of *Panchayati Raj*, i.e. the programme of decentralization of power with a measure of village self-government at the base, in India has not so far proved anything to the contrary). Gandhians would, of course, argue that the individual is always free to resist the tyranny of society through *satyagraha*. From the purely logical point of view, there would be nothing wrong with this argument, provided it could be shown that *satyagraha* is in fact such a universal panacea as it is claimed to be. But as we shall see in Part III, *satyagraha* has many serious limitations and can by no means be regarded as a universal remedy against injustice under all circumstances. The Gandhian argument would, therefore, seem to be predicated on facts not in evidence.

Besides, Gandhi's neglect of a rather important aspect of Freedom, namely, creative self-expression, which I have discussed in Chapter IV, has certain important consequences for the picture of village *swaraj* presented by him. In the village society envisaged by Gandhi, there would obviously be very little scope for the expression of the inventive, exploratory or even intellectual genius of man. There will be no conquest of Nature, no exploration into the depths of the universe, no cultivation of the applied sciences and possibly also of the natural sciences (see Chapter X for a discussion of Gandhi's views on science), and practically no conflict, under Gandhi's assumptions, of alternative theories, ideologies and programmes which are characteristic of the modern differentiated societies enjoying political Freedom. Such village *swaraj* may be consistent with Gandhi's own conception of Freedom provided we make the somewhat unreal assumption that Non-violence will prevail in it (there cannot be any Freedom, according to Gandhi, as we have seen, in the absence of Non-violence), but its inevitable consequence would be the suppression of the creative urge of man which is very obviously an indispensable element of human Freedom. Very few creative individuals in any sphere except the religious have after all emerged out of simple village communities. As Rabindranath Tagore says, "A civilization which comprises mainly village life cannot advance very far. There the individual is unimportant, the community predominant. There we have, not the divine warrior, Kartikeya, on his winged steed, but King Demos—pot-bellied elephant-headed Ganesha".³⁹

It may also be asked how such a society is going to prevent the creative urge from manifesting itself, how it is going to suppress the aspirations aroused among its members by scientific and technological progress elsewhere in the world. If it is going to use methods of political compulsion, that of course would be the end of *swaraj*, and Gandhi obviously does not have that in mind. If, on the other hand, we are to depend entirely on "moral transformation", we would be making the mistake of circular reasoning discussed above. If *satyagraha* is to be used against those who seek scientific and technical progress and experimentation with new forms of social and political organization, it becomes a question of the effectiveness and desirability of *satyagraha* for such a purpose, which will be

³⁹ Rabindranath Tagore : *op. cit.*, p. 304.

discussed separately in Part III. As a matter of fact, as we shall see with the further development of the argument in this book, Gandhi, like all other social engineers who want to construct model blue-prints for a future society representing a set of ultimate values, would be compelled to argue finally that the *swaraj* of his conception will be possible only when the entire human race, or at any rate the overwhelming majority of them, have become "morally transformed". But this is only begging the question.

As regards Equality, assuming that both Non-violence and Freedom, as understood by Gandhi, would prevail in the village community visualized by him (there cannot be any Equality, in his own opinion, without either Non-violence or Freedom), such a community may indeed be expected to be equalitarian in the Gandhian sense. But the Gandhian concept of Equality, as we have seen in Chapter V, is one of the equal sharing of poverty. Gandhi, of course, emphasizes time and again the voluntary character of the poverty advocated by him. But it is easy to see that if every individual accepts voluntary poverty, the society as a whole will also be poor, for there would be no place for any wealth to go to ; the elementary law of demand and supply will make the society poor. Those who like it may accept this kind of Equality, but the overwhelming majority of mankind is obviously opposed to it, as the world-wide drive for economic prosperity would indicate. Those who try to accumulate wealth in such a society would presumably be subjected to *satyagraha* by those, if any, who do not, and this raises another type of problem which will be discussed in Part III.

Throughout history many attempts have been made to set up various types of simple and moralistic communities, regarded as ideal by the groups which have endeavoured to establish them. Even if we leave aside the large number of such cases in the ancient and middle ages, the number of such attempts in the modern period in Europe and America alone would be very large. Mention may be made, for instance, of the Ephrata, Shakers, Hutterites, Amanites and the famous Brook Farm communities of the U. S. A. They have all failed, generally because of social regimentation and the inadequacy of avenues for the versatile potentialities of the human personality. Gandhi's own experiments with the Phoenix Settlement and the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa, the subsequent attempts made by him and his followers like Jayaprakash Narayan to set up semi-monastic ideal village communities, have all ended in failure.

because of their unproductiveness, social regimentation coupled with almost sub-human simplicity both of living style and of human relations which were imposed on these artificial communities.

It does not follow, however, that decentralization of power, on which Gandhi has laid so much emphasis, is either undesirable or impossible. The rationale of decentralization of power has already been discussed. What follows from the criticisms of the Gandhian conception of decentralization offered above is that a self-sufficient, undifferentiated, technologically stagnant, communitarian village characterized by peace and contentment is inconsistent with the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. Therefore, the Gandhian *emphasis* on decentralization of power can and ought to be accepted for the sake of a better and fuller democracy than exists in most countries of the world, but not the fragmentary and unrealistic *programme* offered by him for this purpose.

It seems to me a great pity that those who are opposed to concentration of power in the hands of the state on the ground that it amounts to a negation of Justice have so far been unable to offer a concrete and workable scheme of social organization that would be a significant improvement on the better examples of Western democracy. It was on account of the failure of the revolutionary anarchists like Proudhon and Bakunin to offer a workable scheme of the social organization of the anarchist society to be established after the expected revolution, that it became possible for Marx, who offered a highly workable scheme of dictatorship after the revolution, with a promise of the never-never-land of a stateless society, to win over many of their followers and to capture the First International, thus laying the foundation of Communist totalitarianism in the name of a society without organized power. The non-violent anarchists, from Godwin to Tolstoy and Kropotkin mainly concentrated their efforts on attacking the power of the state, rather than offering suggestions for an alternative social order; what fragmentary suggestions they did offer were nebulous and based on an imperfect understanding of human nature. Similarly, the pluralists, including Laski, have definitely begun with rather high-sounding criticisms of the sovereignty of the state, but have ended up in practice with an acceptance of the state apparatus with relatively unimportant reservations. G. D. H. Cole is one of the very few pluralists who has offered concrete suggestions for the devolution

of power including the setting up of a consumers' parliament. But as another pluralist, Ernest Barker has pointed out, none of the experiments (only discussed in England, but sometimes attempted in the Continent) which bear some resemblance to Cole's ideas, have succeeded.⁴⁰ Barker himself, beginning very radically, ends up by merely suggesting that a "social parliament", in addition to the parliament of the state, should be set up, not under the authority of the state, but through voluntary social action;⁴¹ how this is to be done, and what the structural framework of the future society will be like, he does not say. The early socialists, similarly, began with great expectations of devolution of power, but the modern socialists of Europe are hardly distinguishable in this respect from their "capitalist" counterparts. Meanwhile, some measure of decentralization of power, in the form of local self-government, has developed within the fold of traditional Western democracy in many countries including the U. K. and the U. S. A.

In India some attempts have been made to formulate a workable scheme of decentralization of power. M. N. Roy, after he ceased to be a Communist, gave some thought to the problems of a free society, including the problem of the devolution of power. Not being a Gandhian, he was not against the industrial civilization, and did not accept the idea of the self-sufficient, technologically stagnant and contented village. But he suggested a four-tier system of decentralized government with the village at the bottom, the district and provincial governments in the middle, and the Central government at the top.⁴² Jayaprakash Narayan, who is a staunch Gandhian and basically accepts the Gandhian idea of village *swaraj* has adopted the outlines of Roy's scheme, and inserted an additional tier, namely, the Block or Sub-district government in between the village and district governments.⁴³ But even these schemes are far from comprehensive with regard to the division of such important items as financial and administrative powers and economic development. The Government has accepted a scheme of *Panchayati Raj* or devolution of power, based on the recommendations of the Valvan-

⁴⁰ Ernest Barker : *Principles of Social and Political Theory*, Oxford University Press, 1961, Book II, Ch. 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86. ⁴² M. N. Roy : *Politics, Parties and Power*, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1960.

⁴³ Jayaprakash Narayan : *Swaraj for the People*, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, Varanasi, 1961.

traï Mehta Committee appointed for the purpose, which is practically the same scheme organizationally as suggested by Jayaprakash Narayan. But in the Government's scheme there is no place for the self-sufficient village unit ; a programme of complete rural electrification, of rapid industrialization and technological advance necessarily accompanied by the urbanization of the rural areas, is an integral part of the Indian Five Year Plans. In addition, there is a high degree of bureaucratic control on the local bodies, none of which have any real powers below the level of the provincial government. Whether there can be a better scheme of devolution of power for India than the Government of India has been able to evolve is a different question ; the important point is that so far the Gandhian idea has not taken roots even in India. In any case, the Indian attempts compare unfavourably with the system of local self-government in England, for instance, and hence, by no means represent a remarkable advance in the direction of a juster society than exists at present.

It is not impossible for social and political thinkers to develop a better scheme of devolution of power than has so far been evolved. But Gandhi certainly has not made any major contribution to this field of study. His importance lies in the fact that he was one of the last great thinkers to remind us of the need for a wider diffusion of power than we have known, if Justice is to be ensured in the organization of society.

CHAPTER VII

TRUSTEESHIP

ONE OF THE major organizational problems of all modern societies, which is directly linked with the question of Justice, is what Marx called the "relations of production". The classical economists, believing as they did that the law of demand and supply was a "natural law", argued in favour of perfect competition and laissez faire. The early socialists, starting from the premise that what was natural was not necessarily the ideal (as the evidence of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century capitalism seemed to them to indicate), put forward a variety of schemes for the economic reorganization of society, as is well known, from a state-controlled economy run by experts (Saint Simon) to one based primarily on workers' productive associations and cooperatives (Charles Fourier, Robert Owen). The Marxists, rejecting the classical model on the ground that it inevitably led to the growth of monopolies and imperialism on the one hand, and the perpetual immiseration of the working class (Marx believed in the impossibility of the workers being able to organize a successful trade union movement or to secure any political rights) on the other, suggested the revolutionary overthrow of the entire classical politico-economic system, the statization of all means of production, and the total elimination of the "bourgeoisie" through the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the modern Western economies, where the worker has achieved a large measure of security through what Galbraith has called the "countervailing power" of the trade unions and the legislative measures of the state (thus belying both the assumptions on which Marx had built his justification for the revolution) the "relations of production" are still characterized by periodic conflicts, taking different forms from collective bargaining to the general strike.

Gandhi rejects the Marxist solution to the problem of economic relations, because, as we have seen, he believes it to be based on violence and tyranny. He also rejects the Western solution, because, as already noted, he considers the Western politico-economic system to be based on exploitation, competition and conflict. The question

of economic relations assumes a great significance for him, since in his first-order ideal society there would be no state or government, and these relations would have to be organized on a voluntary basis in such a manner that they are consistent with Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. Gandhi seeks to harmonize the economic relations and to conciliate the ultimate values into a state of equilibrium, through what he calls Trusteeship, a programmatic construction which is closely connected, as we shall presently see, with the anarchist concept of mutual benefit.

The institution of Trusteeship is regarded by Gandhi as a compromise between private enterprise and state-controlled enterprise. The ordinary type of private enterprise, Gandhi believes, leads to great and unjustified disparities of wealth. And a non-violent system of government and society is "clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists".¹ Moreover, the rich accumulate their wealth, he believes, by exploiting the masses.² He also regards the accumulation of wealth as detrimental to the moral development of the individual. Hence, he declares: "I fight capitalism. The West teaches us to avoid concentration of capital . . ."³

At the same time, as already stated, the ideal of anarchism has a great appeal for Gandhi, and he would be opposed to an increase in the power of the state which is, in his opinion, essentially based on violence, provided a third alternative could be found. This third alternative he claims to have found in the institution of Trusteeship. The basic idea is quite simple :

"The rich man will be left in the possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society".⁴

If this idea is accepted, argues Gandhi, the evils of both private enterprise and state enterprise would be eliminated. The inequality and exploitation created by private enterprise as well as the violence and loss of Freedom caused by state enterprise would at once come to an end. The institution of Trusteeship would, moreover, eliminate

¹ M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme : Its Meaning and Place*, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, 1944, p. 18.

² *Young India*, November 26, 1931.

³ *Young India*, October 7, 1926.

⁴ *Harijan*, August 25, 1940.

all possibilities of class conflict and lead to the establishment of cooperative and harmonious relations between labour and capital. He does not believe that the capitalists and landlords are exploiters by any inherent necessity, or that there is a basic and irreconcilable antagonism between the interests of the former and those of the masses. In his opinion : "What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer".⁵

The transformation in labour-capital relations, thinks Gandhi, can be brought about by the institution of Trusteeship. Fundamental to the theory of Trusteeship, however, is the principle of the non-expropriation of the owners. Gandhi, of course, seems to make a distinction between legal ownership and moral ownership. Legally wealth belongs to the owner, morally to the whole society. In this sense of moral ownership the labourers and the peasants are also owners of the wealth possessed by the millowners and the landlords. That is why he has often said that Trusteeship means the joint Trusteeship of capitalists and labourers over the wealth of society. For instance, addressing the landlords, he once observed : "I have always told millowners that they are not exclusive owners of mills and workmen are equal sharers in ownership. In the same way I would tell you that ownership of your land belongs as much to the ryots as to you. . .".⁶

Gandhi might argue that the ownership of the labourers and peasants is something more than mere moral ownership, since in fact the money held in the joint trust is to be actually utilized for their benefit. But the point remains that neither they nor the society at large including the state has any legal title to the wealth possessed by the class which Gandhi regards as the exploiting class. He declares quite emphatically that in the new set-up envisaged by him the legal ownership would vest in the trustee himself.⁷ This point is central to the entire idea of Trusteeship, especially because the means proposed by Gandhi for bringing about the state of affairs envisaged by him must be the voluntary conversion of the exploiting class to the cause of socio-economic Justice by moral appeal to their conscience. Even legislative measures Gandhi regards as a

⁵ N. K. Bose : *Selections from Gandhi*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1957, p. 93.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁷ *Harijan*, February 16, 1947.

negation of the inalienable ultimate value of Non-violence, and, therefore, he has no other means open before him as an idealist. His emphasis on moral conversion, however, includes, in addition to the moral transformation of the exploiters, the awakening of the workers and peasants into a realization of their own moral strength, the realization that exploitation could take place only with their cooperation, and that non-cooperation on their part would at once deprive the exploiter of his power to exploit. This mutual realization of the importance and needs of the conflicting interests, judged from the moral point of view, will lead to the establishment of moral equality between them.⁸ Gandhi's object is thus to eliminate not class division, but class conflict. In his own words, "Class divisions there will be, but they will then be horizontal, not vertical".⁹

Gandhi drew a detailed picture of the institution of Trusteeship as it would prevail in the agricultural and the industrial sectors. He frequently referred to what he considered to be the sacrifice of the Japanese *samurai* in the 19th century for the sake of the Japanese peasantry, and urged the Indian zaminders to emulate the example of the *samurai*.¹⁰ But in reality the picture that he held out before the Indian zaminders was far more radical than anything the Japanese landed aristocracy could have imagined. Under the system of Trusteeship, "He would reduce himself to poverty in order that the ryot may have the necessities of life".¹¹

The landlord would reduce the burden he had imposed on the peasantry by cutting down his luxuries. He would mix intimately with the farmers, know their wants, remove their despair and inject hope into their lives. He would eradicate the ignorance of the peasants regarding hygiene and sanitation. He would establish schools in which his own children must read side by side with those of the

⁸ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁰ It seems that Gandhi was not aware of the actual nature of the agrarian reforms which had taken place in Japan after the Meiji Restoration of 1867. He seems to have mistaken the *samurai*, a class of retainers with mercenaries at their command, for the *daimyo*, the landed nobility which in fact retained the *samurai*. What happened after the Meiji Restoration is that the new Government, which was dominated by the *daimyo*, enacted some relatively progressive measures of land reform which were on the whole unfavourable to the *daimyo* and favourable to the peasantry, compared to such relatively unprogressive measures as were enacted in Russia under the Ukase of 1861. Nothing had certainly happened in Japan which was in any sense comparable to the Gandhian idea of Trusteeship.

¹¹ *Young India*, December 5, 1929.

tillers of the soil. He would ensure adequate and pure water supply. He would throw open his own gardens for the unrestricted use of his tenants. He would convert all the buildings he had hitherto used for pleasure into schools, hospitals and the like.¹² Needless to say, of course, he would not need to surrender the title to the ownership of the land that had so far legally belonged to him ; he would only convert the revenues accruing therefrom (at a reduced rate) into trust funds to be used for the welfare of those who actually till the soil.

In case, however, the zaminder refused to be converted to this new way of life, the peasants would compel his adherence to Trusteeship through non-violent non-cooperation. They would first appeal to his conscience, and then to his wife and children for whom, the landlord might say, he needed all the money. If all this failed, the peasants would nevertheless refuse to submit to the exploitation of the landlord. They would quit the land if asked to do so, but make it clear to the landlord at the same time that all land really belonged to the tiller. Since it would be impossible for the zaminder to till all his land by himself, he would be compelled to submit to the conditions of Trusteeship as laid down by the farmers. Should he attempt to replace the non-cooperating tenants by others, agitation short of violence would then continue till the replacing tenants saw their error and made common cause with the evicted tenants.¹³

The same principle would apply to the industrial sector. Addressing the capitalists, Gandhi said : "What I expect of you, therefore, is that you should hold all your riches as a trust to be used solely in the interest of those who sweat for you, and to whose industry and labours you owe all your position and prosperity. I want you to make labourers co-partners of your wealth. . . If only you make it a rule to respect these mutual obligations of love, there would be an end to all labour disputes. . . "¹⁴

He urged the capitalists to give up their luxuries, to offer decent minimum wages to the labourers, to give them better food, clothing, housing and education. The capitalist was expected to take only a small commission for his services. It has already been noted in Chapter VI that Gandhi had also fully supported Jayaprakash Narayan's scheme for workers' management of industry. All this

¹² *Ibid.* ¹³ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

¹⁴ *Young India*, May 10, 1928.

is, of course, implied by Gandhi's proposal that the capitalists and the labourers ought to be regarded as co-partners of industry.

But if the capitalists failed to reform themselves, the industrial labourers, like their agrarian counterpart, should resort to combined non-violent non-cooperation. Labour, argues Gandhi, is superior to capital, because it is less dependent on capital than the latter is on labour. Capital is able to control labour because it had learnt the art of combination before labour. If all the labourers could combine in the true non-violent spirit, capital would inevitably come under their control. Capitalists would then exist only as trustees. Labour would then have sufficient food, good and sanitary housing, proper education for their children, adequate medical assistance and ample leisure for self-education.¹⁵ Needless to say, like the peasantry, labour would require strong determination and the will to sacrifice in its non-violent battle against the capitalists :

"Labour is free of capital and capital has to woo labour, and it would not matter in the slightest degree that capital has guns and even poison gas at its disposal. Capital would still be perfectly helpless if labour would assert its dignity by making good its 'No'. Labour does not need to retaliate, but labour stands defiant receiving the bullets and poison gas and still insists upon its 'No'."¹⁶

Immediately the worker realizes his own strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer of the industry with the capitalist. The possibility of other labourers taking the place of the non-cooperators can be eliminated by the slow but only sure method of educating the working class as a whole.¹⁷

In this connection it is necessary to discuss Gandhi's views on industrial strikes. Non-violent strikes are an essential concomitant of non-cooperation with the capitalists on the part of the labourers that Gandhi has in view. As a matter of fact, Gandhi himself had organized a number of successful industrial strikes, especially in the early part of his political career, both in South Africa and India. But a strike would have the approval of Gandhi only if it satisfied at least four irrevocable conditions. In the first place, the strikers must remain utterly non-violent. Labour must copy the courage of

¹⁵ *Harijan*, September 7, 1947.

¹⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *India's Case for Swaraj*, ed. W. P. Kabadi, 1932, p. 394.

¹⁷ *Young India*, March 26, 1931.

the soldier without copying his objectives and methods. In fact, says Gandhi, labour needs greater courage than soldiers in their non-violent non-cooperation. Said he to the labourers : "I suggest to you that a labourer who courts death and has the courage to die without even carrying arms, with no weapon of self-defence, shows a courage of a much higher degree than a man who is armed from top to toe".¹⁸ The principle of Non-violence must apply equally to the capitalist and the non-strikers, if any.¹⁹ Secondly, as a corollary to the principle of not imposing any hardship on others, the labourers must go on strike only when they are able to maintain themselves (whatever the hardship involved might be) through alternative work of a temporary nature, like spinning and other forms of handicrafts, without depending on public charity.²⁰ Thirdly, there should be practical unanimity among the strikers regarding the decision to go on strike.²¹ Last, but not the least, there must be a genuine and just grievance for the rectification of which a strike is resorted to, and it must not be used just as a convenient stick to beat the employers with.²²

Gandhi also advised the labourers that for the success of a strike an unalterable minimum demand should be fixed and declared before the strike is embarked upon, from which they must never retreat. He is against the policy generally adopted by labour unions, of starting with an impossible or high demand which they would be willing to compromise through negotiations with the employers. Moreover, he cautions the labourers that strikes might not be successful in cases where the supply of labour is so much greater than demand that all the strikers could be easily replaced by the management. Sometimes strikers might succeed even when these conditions were not fulfilled, but that would be due to the weakness of the employers.²³

Gandhi argues, moreover, that strikes organized for economic purposes should not be mixed up with those organized for political purposes. If this was done, the strikers would be likely to fail in achieving their objectives. Great caution should be exercised in organizing political strikes, for their success requires political educa-

¹⁸ M. K. Gandhi : *India's Case for Swaraj*, p. 394.

¹⁹ *Young India*, February 16, 1921.

²⁰ *Young India*, February 16 and September 22, 1921.

²¹ *Young India*, February 16, 1921.

²² *Young India*, February 16 and September 22, 1921.

²³ *Ibid.*

tion on the part of the workers. However, political strikes have also their assigned role, provided they are clearly understood as such and not misused for purely economic gains.²⁴ Finally, certain categories of workers, like the police and the scavengers, should never go on strike, since they are engaged in essential services ; they should adopt other honourable means for getting their grievances redressed.²⁵

If the principles, methods and exceptions mentioned by him were respected, declares Gandhi, the strike could be a very powerful instrument in the hands of the workers against exploitation by the capitalists. "I consider myself", he declared once, "to be an expert in organized strikes. My first successful attempt was made in South Africa under most adverse circumstances. I improved the technique in Ahmedabad. I do not claim to have reached perfection. I know that strikes can be made irresistible".²⁶

The employers had, of course, always been advised by Gandhi to accept the workers voluntarily as co-partners of the industry, and especially to respond to the demands of the workers when they were on a just and non-violent strike. But since the voluntary conversion of the employers is admittedly a long-term process and strikes are also not always peaceful, what should be done by such owners as are threatened by strikes of a destructive character? Gandhi's reply is as follows : "I would unhesitatingly advise such employers that they should at once offer the strikers full control of the concern which is as much the strikers' as theirs. They will vacate their premises not in a huff but because it is right and to show their goodwill. They would offer the employees the assistance of their engineers and other skilled staff. The employers will find in the end that they will lose nothing. . . It would be an intelligent use of the employees whom they would have converted into honourable partners".²⁷

But all this represents, as in the case of the state and government

²⁴ *Young India*, February 16, 1921 ; *Harijan*, August 11, 1946.

²⁵ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, p. 358.

²⁶ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

²⁷ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

Although Gandhi had supported just and non-violent strikes for over 50 years past, a few days before his assassination he made an observation on strikes which apparently goes against his earlier views on the subject. On the Independence Day in 1948 (January 26), Gandhi referred to the violent strikes which had taken place in various parts of India after independence, and squarely condemned

and other similar issues, only the first-order ideal of Gandhi. He was profoundly aware of the possibility of the frustration of his entire scheme. Neither moral appeal to the employers, nor non-violent non-cooperation by the workers might, he realized, lead even to an approximation to the institution of Trusteeship visualized by him. The realist in him, therefore, declared unhesitatingly :

"It is highly probable that my advice will not be accepted and my dream will not be realized. . . Trusteeship, as I conceive it, has yet to prove its worth."²⁸

It has already been explained that Gandhi regards state control as superior to unrestricted private enterprise, state ownership as better than the ordinary form of private ownership of the means of production.²⁹ If, therefore, Trusteeship fails, as Gandhi considers

them (most of these strikes had been organized, of course, by the Communist-dominated trade unions). But he went considerably beyond that when he said : "In a well-ordered democratic society, there is no room, no occasion, for lawlessness or for strikes. In such a society, there are ample lawful means for vindicating justice. Violence, veiled or unveiled, must be taboo. Strikes in Cawnpore, in coal mines or elsewhere, mean material loss to the whole society, not excluding the strikers themselves. I need not be reminded that this declamation does not lie well in the mouth of one like me, who has been responsible for many successful strikes. If there be such critics, they ought not to forget that then there was neither independence nor the kind of legislation we have now". (Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, pp. 279-80). But it seems quite clear that this statement has to be read in the context of the violent strikes which Gandhi was condemning, and not regarded as applicable to all strikes in general. Formal political independence had no significance for Gandhi, and it is unlikely that he had suddenly altered his views of the preceding half-century immediately after independence. Political independence by itself did not, according to Gandhi, automatically or merely through legislation, lead to the end of exploitation. Besides, it is difficult to see how Gandhi could have suddenly regarded non-cooperation (one applied aspect of which is the non-violent strike), which he had always held to be universally applicable to all societies, as inapplicable in the industrial sector in India immediately after independence from foreign rule was achieved. It seems more likely that he was actually denouncing the violent strikes which had become characteristic of the post-independence industrial relations in India. Even if it is assumed that Gandhi had in fact suddenly altered his views and regarded strikes as unjustifiable in a politically independent country, he did not develop this new point. For the purposes of this chapter, therefore, this unusual statement of Gandhi four days before his assassination has been regarded as an unimportant exception and not characteristic of his life-long views on industrial strikes. ²⁸ *Harijan*, February 20, 1937. ²⁹ See Ch. IV.

"highly probable", state control over industry would be the second best alternative. Even while putting forward the scheme of Trusteeship, Gandhi has often maintained that under this system the rate of commission of the trustees would be regulated by the state,³⁰ although he has also said, at least once, that it should be voluntarily fixed at a low level by the trustees themselves.³¹ He also insists that the state should exercise some control over the selection of heirs by trustees, whose right to nominate their heirs should not, however, be taken away entirely. "Choice should be given to the original owner who became the first trustee", he says, "but the choice must be finalized by the state. Such arrangement puts a check on the state as well as the individual."³² Ultimately, Gandhi believes, Trusteeship would have a statutory, though voluntary, basis. "When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with *gram panchayats*, will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above, it is liable to prove a dead weight."³³

And if Trusteeship fails, which Gandhi regards, let it be repeated, as "highly probable", the state should, says he, step in to confiscate the property concerned, with or without compensation, using the least possible violence. In his own words :

"I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the state with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference that every vested interest must be subject to scrutiny and confiscation ordered where necessary—with or without compensation as the case demanded".³⁴

To sum up : In an ideal society, according to Gandhi, legal ownership of the means of production would vest in the landlords and the private industrialists, but moral ownership jointly in them and the peasants and workers. The peasants and workers would first appeal to the conscience of the landlords and the industrialists

³⁰ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946 ; April 12, 1942.

³¹ *Young India*, November 26, 1931.

³² N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 55.

³³ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.

³⁴ *Young India*, November 26, 1934.

respectively, but if this failed, they would resort to non-violent non-cooperation in order to compel the owners to cut down their luxuries and accept them as co-partners of their wealth. If all this failed, the state would step in and confiscate the property of the owning classes with or without compensation. Between purely private ownership and state ownership, Gandhi would clearly prefer the latter.

Fundamental to the Gandhian theory of Trusteeship is the idea that Freedom and Equality are values which can be realized only through a moral effort on the part of individuals and groups rather than the creation of external conditions. Exploitation and inequality characteristic of a system of unregulated private enterprise are the immoralities that inspire the question of social reorganization in the economic sphere, and such a system obviously could not be accepted as it is by Gandhi. Indeed, non-acceptance of the system of more or less unregulated private enterprise which was prevalent in India and the Western countries in Gandhi's time, was the very foundation of the Trusteeship idea. At the same time, the great suspicion with which Gandhi viewed the power of the state made it impossible for him to regard collectivism as an ideal solution. The power of the state, he thought, was essentially based on force, and the use of this power for expropriating the owning classes would be undesirable for at least three reasons. First, it would lead to an increase in the power of the state, and hence, to totalitarian tendencies. Secondly, the use of state power for this purpose would not be proof of the validity of the moral cause. Thirdly, there would be no guarantee that exploitation and inequality would thus be removed permanently.

Consistently with his general scheme of values, Gandhi wanted a moral solution for what he considered to be essentially a moral problem. The moral transformation of the owning classes, taking place either spontaneously, or in response to the moral appeal of the exploited classes, or under the stimulus of the moral act of non-violent non-cooperation on their part, would solve the problems of inequality and exploitation as well as safeguard and even promote Freedom, thus leading to all round moral progress.

The difficulty with this kind of "utopian engineering", to borrow Karl Popper's terminology, is that it is based on an underestimation of the strength of man's "selfishness" and other "deeper urges" which do not easily respond to ethical stimuli, or what is the same thing, an overestimation of man's capacity for moral effort, discussed

in Chapter III. The manner in which Gandhi proposes to harmonize the relations between labour and capital through the institution of Trusteeship is obviously the outcome of his simplistic approach to the question of social conflict, already referred to in Chapter III. To build a social model round the nucleus of a hypothetical pattern of ethical response on the part of organized social interests is to ignore major and powerful variables in the social system and to build in the abstract for human societies which as yet do not exist. Such an abstract model is so irrelevant to contemporary human society that the question of its acceptance or non-acceptance is a matter of purely academic interest.

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

Gandhi's basic idea is similar to the anarchist concept of mutual aid, which runs through the writings of Winstanley, Godwin, Proudhon, Tolstoy and Kropotkin. Society is conceived as a system and a process based on the principle of voluntary reciprocity and Freedom of moral choice. The imposition of the authority of the state in any manner on society would undermine the very foundations of voluntary association which is the natural basis of social organization. At the same time the principle of immanent Justice demanded not only the Freedom of the individual, but also social and economic Equality, which, the anarchists believed, would be more or less automatically established by the people themselves only if the obstructing authority of the state should be eliminated altogether. The organization and reorganization of society could best be achieved by the exercise of the free moral choice of individuals and groups, unhindered by the artificial tentacles of the state. Some of the anarchists like Winstanley, Proudhon and Bakunin would, however, regard private property itself, however formal the ownership might be, as derogatory to the principle of immanent Justice. In so far as Gandhi wants the legal title of wealth to vest in the owning classes, his idea of Justice would seem to be somewhat different from that of some of the anarchists.

And this indeed is one of the apparent anomalies of the Gandhian idea of Trusteeship. Since he does not believe in private enterprise, in the traditionally understood sense of the term at least, what is the significance and necessity, it may be asked, of insisting on the formal ownership by private individuals? If they were just expected to perform a purely managerial function, the question of free selection would arise. If, on the other hand, their title was simply a guarantee against unnecessary encroachment by the state, would not some form of public enterprise (public corporation?), devoid of any significant amount of state control, serve the same purpose, without at the same time posing the moral question of private ownership of the means of production? Gandhi probably would have had no objection to this proposal, but he was facing a real situation in which the private ownership of the means of production already existed, and his fear that their involuntary elimination might involve the use of force in one form or another possibly led him to suggest their voluntary conversion to the idea of co-partnership as a better alternative. If the owning classes could be induced voluntarily to surrender their title and become members of a public enterprise along with the peasants and workers, Gandhi would probably have welcomed it; only it would be much more difficult than Gandhi's own scheme.

While in this respect Gandhi's views are less radical than those of the extreme anarchists, in his preparedness to accept state ownership of the means of production and the confiscation of private property even without compensation, in the event of the failure of Trusteeship, which he regarded as highly probable, he has proved himself to be more radical than some of the modern libertarian socialists. John Strachey, one of the leading recent British socialist intellectuals, has proved beyond any manner of doubt that contemporary capitalism is characterized by great concentration of wealth and economic inequality, in spite of the growth of the trade union movement and the progressive legislation of the state over half-a-century.³⁵ And yet there are many socialists in Europe, of whom C. A. R. Crosland is one, who think that on account of these very positive developments, the question of ownership of the means of production has become irrelevant.³⁶ Had Gandhi accepted Strachey's

³⁵ John Strachey: *Contemporary Capitalism*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1956.

³⁶ C. A. R. Crosland: *The Future of Socialism*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1964, Part II, Ch. IV.

factual findings, which Crosland obviously does, I think he would certainly not have accepted the latter's conclusion. What is not very clear, however, is how Gandhi expects to transform this kind of state-controlled economy eventually into one based on Trusteeship. This question will be further discussed in Chapter XI.

Marx considered the transformation of labour-capital relations either through non-violent mass action, including strikes and the exercise of political power by the masses, or through spontaneous state policies, to be impossible, because he regarded the state itself as an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the bourgeoisie, which would be used successfully by the latter to crush every move of the workers to form trade unions or to secure the right of franchise and other socio-political rights. Living mainly in the pre-democratic age, when the state in fact tended to be hostile to the trade union movement and the demand for popular franchise, Marx lost faith in the organized power of the masses, universalized the experience of the early industrial societies of his times, and argued that there could be no solution to the problem of labour-capital relations short of the armed overthrow of the state by the workers—a view which has found even more powerful contemporary expression in the "thoughts" of Mao Tse-tung. But Gandhi, not believing that all history is merely the history of class struggle, refuses to regard the state as an instrument of exploitation in the hands of one section of society for exploiting another. His opposition to the state is based on his belief, as we have seen, that it is antithetical to Non-violence and, therefore, also to Freedom. A firm believer, unlike Marx, in the organized power of the masses, and, therefore, also in the possibility of state policies being influenced by popular will, Gandhi advocates non-violent mass action in the form of strikes and other types of non-cooperation, or failing that, the use of state power within a democratic political framework and the least possible use of violence, as the solution to the problem of labour-capital relations. Since Gandhi does not regard the institution of Trusteeship as an immediately practicable proposition, his suggestions in effect amount to a combination of democratic state policy and non-violent mass action—something radically different from what Marx would have considered either desirable or feasible. The divergent approaches of the two thinkers to the labour-capital question, it is easy to see, arise out of their radically different assessment of the power of human beings and of arms respectively.

CHAPTER VIII

MACHINERY

I HAVE already explained that ideally Gandhi regards industrialization as detrimental to the growth of a non-violent society. In his first-order ideal society, as in the classical anarchist model, there would be complete decentralization of the political and economic system, and the self-sufficient, barter type of village economy would be the desired model. Yet, as on other related questions discussed already, Gandhi compromises his ideals to a considerable extent on the economic question for practical purposes. His views on machinery represent both his absolute economic ideal and its compromised form, and are, therefore, fundamental to his social and political thought.

A machine is defined by Gandhi as an appliance that tends to displace the human or animal labour instead of supplementing it or merely increasing its efficiency.¹ It has, in his judgment, three essential attributes. First, it can be duplicated or copied. Secondly, there is no limit to its growth or evolution. Thirdly, it appears to possess a will or genius of its own that operates as the inevitable law of the displacement of labour, which, once the machine is created and is allowed to operate, goes more or less out of human control.²

Ideally Gandhi regards all machinery as thoroughly undesirable. His arguments against machinery can broadly be divided into two categories : ethical and economic. The two categories are, of course, inter-related in Gandhian thought, but conceptually they are different. The arguments of the first category may be summarized as follows :

1. Labour is a value relative to Non-violence, and machinery tends to undermine it. Gandhi is against any drastic reduction of working hours which is aimed at by the advocates of technological progress, because in his opinion working with one's own hands for several hours during the day is necessary for the moral progress of

¹ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, p. 179. ² *Ibid.* pp. 179-80.

man. As a matter of fact, he used this argument against the socialists, and said : "I know that the socialists would introduce industrialization to the extent of reducing the working hours to one or two in a day, but I do not want it".³

2. Machines are repugnant in his thinking to the good life. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi argued vigorously for a simple society characterized by high thinking and high moral values which, he thought, was represented by ancient India.⁴ And less than two years before his death, while discussing the future economic organization of India, he observed :

"I don't believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that independent India can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly."⁵

3. The invention of machinery has led to the growth of the factory system which has reduced the masses of men to the condition of slaves. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi commented : "The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking . . . If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land."⁶

4. Machines tend to impart their characteristics to the men who operate them, thereby reducing them to machine-like personalities and undermining their creative and artistic faculties.⁷

5. Technological advancement has led to the growth of the monetary exchange system which is characterized by inequality and exploitation. The barter system of economy is superior to a monetized economy in this respect, and barter could prevail only in a wholly

³ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, p. 202.

⁴ M. K. Gandhi : *Hind Swaraj*, Chs. 13 & 19.

⁵ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VII, p. 188.

⁶ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1963, Vol. X, p. 58.

⁷ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, p. 195.

labour-intensive, rather than a mechanized economy. This is how Gandhi formulated this argument in 1931 :

"Under my system, it is labour which is the current coin, not metal. And any person who can use his labour has that coin, has wealth. He converts his labour into cloth, he converts his labour into grain. If he wants paraffin oil, which he cannot himself produce, he uses his surplus grain for getting the oil. It is exchange of labour on free, fair and equal terms—hence it is no robbery."⁸

6. Machines lead to the growth of economic competition which undermines the process of cooperation on which the organization of human society ought to be based.⁹

Those of Gandhi's arguments against machinery which can broadly be termed economic, may be summarized as follows :

1. In Gandhi's definition, the displacement of human labour is an essential characteristic of a machine, and this is held out by Gandhi as a great argument against it.¹⁰ "Machines will only help in making all the thirty-five crores of people unemployed", he says.¹¹ Needless to say, Gandhi is afraid not only of the unemployment that machines might generate, but also of the undesirable moral consequences of non-performance of sufficient labour.

2. Machines lead to the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and, therefore, great disparities in the distribution of income. "I want the concentration of wealth", says he, "not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions."¹²

In addition, believes Gandhi, machinery leads to the regional concentration of wealth in the cities which exploit the villages.¹³

3. Mechanized mass production leads to a complicated system of distribution characterized by fraud and speculation, which would

⁸ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 135.

⁹ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1963, Vol. X, p. 581.

¹⁰ *Hind Swaraj*, Ch. XIX ; *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 216 ; Vol. IV, p. 28.

¹¹ *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, p. 196. ¹² *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 161.

¹³ *Harijan*, March 31, 1946 ; *Mahatma*, Vol. VI, pp. 96-98.

be entirely unnecessary in the case of non-mechanized production. As Gandhi told an American journalist in 1931 :

"Granting for the moment that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go in a round-about way to regulate distribution, whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated, and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation".¹⁴

4. Machinery inevitably leads to mass production. Mass production necessarily leads to over-production, in view of the limited character of demand, and hence to economic crisis. The Great Depression of the early thirties Gandhi attributes to this evil consequence of the growth of machinery.¹⁵ Gandhi also believes that the effects of such over-production do not remain confined to the domestic market, but tend to lead to imperialism. As he explains it :

"Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less every day for England that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily."¹⁶

It is nearly certain that Gandhi had never read the Leninist theory of imperialism, at any rate before expressing the views about imperialism discussed here.¹⁷ It is, therefore, interesting to note that he is offering a Hobson-Lenin type of under-consumption theory of business cycles, and a theory of imperialism that closely resembles that of Lenin. The similarity of Gandhi's theory of imperialism with that of Lenin becomes even more marked when he prophesies the doom of imperialism owing to competition among the imperialist countries and the growth of nationalist forces in the colonies. In his own words :

"The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, France, Japan and Germany. It has

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Young India*, November 12, 1931.

¹⁷ J. Bandyopadhyaya : *Indian Nationalism Versus International Communism*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, pp. 143, 267.

competitors in the handful of mills in India . . . and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares."¹⁸

The major difference between the Hobson-Lenin theory and the Gandhian theory of imperialism is that while the former regards the profit-governed free enterprise system of economy rather than industrialization as the root cause of imperialism, Gandhi believes that business cycles and imperialism are inherent in the essential attributes of machines, which appear to him to possess a genius and a will of their own. In one sense, however, this difference is not so fundamental, because Gandhi argues that it was the profit-motive which brought machines into existence in the first instance.¹⁹ But while Lenin believes that a revolutionary reorganization of society rather than halting the process of technological change is the solution to the internal economic imbalance of capitalism, Gandhi argues that a radical reorganization of society would be impossible unless the multiplication of machines was halted.

5. Machinery is also not necessarily productive. The application of machinery in agriculture, says Gandhi, would destroy the fertility of the soil and actually lead to loss of production. Good earth, he observes, calls for the sweat of one's brow to yield the bread of life.²⁰

6. Machinery leads to the growth of congested cities, high speed of travel, etc. which result in the loss of health.²¹

All these supposedly evil characteristics of machinery led Gandhi to conclude in *Hind Swaraj* that machinery "represents a great sin"²² and that he "cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery."²³ He launched a particularly violent attack on the railways whose main function, he thought, was the proliferation of evil. And he maintained the view till the last days of his life that in an ideal society machinery should not exist at all.²⁴

But as in the case of other politico-economic questions, the ideal solution constitutes only the first half of the Gandhian system

¹⁸ *Ibid.* ¹⁹ *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 161.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, pp. 180-81. ²¹ *Collected Works*, Vol. X, p. 59.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 58. ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²⁴ *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, pp. 195-96; M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme*, 1948, p. 12.

of thought, the second half, representing a serious compromise, consisting of an acceptance of reality to a considerable extent. While regarding machines, therefore, as ideally undesirable and unnecessary, Gandhi nevertheless accepts their inevitability. Even in *Hind Swaraj*, while representing machinery as an unmitigated evil, he was arguing that it was not possible to eliminate all machines all of a sudden, and some of them would necessarily continue to exist, like the printing press which must be used for the publication of his book.²⁵ The realist in him observed : "Nature has not provided any way whereby we may reach a desired goal all of a sudden. If, instead of welcoming machinery as a boon, we should look upon it as an evil, it would ultimately go."²⁶ Years later he similarly stated : "Ideally, I would rule out all machinery, even as I would reject this very body, which is not helpful to salvation, and seek the absolute liberation of the soul. From that point of view I would reject all machinery, but machines will remain because, like the body they are inevitable."²⁷

However, as could be expected, while giving examples of the type of machinery that would inevitably have a place in the economic system, Gandhi makes a rather impressive list. Among these he includes heavy machinery for public utility works and still heavier machinery to produce these heavy machines, electricity and the machinery implied by it, ship-building, ironworks, medicine-making, also heavy machinery for producing such smaller machines as the Singer Sewing machine, printing presses, surgical instruments, etc.²⁸ He also declares that "some key industries are necessary", but refuses to enumerate them.²⁹ Since in practice he accepts railways, steamers and other similar means of transportation, obviously the heavy industries producing these would be allowed to exist as well. As has already been explained, however, Gandhi wants all such machinery, and the industries employing them, to be owned by the State.

Yet, somewhat paradoxically, Gandhi continues to argue that socialization of important industries is no remedy for the evils of

²⁵ *Collected Works*, Vol. X, p. 59. ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

²⁷ M. K. Gandhi : *Towards Non-Violent Socialism*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1951, p. 29.

²⁸ *Harijan*, June 22, 1935 ; January 27, 1940 ; Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 28 ; M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme*, p. 12.

²⁹ *Harijan*, September 1, 1946.

"industrialism", for it is the machine which is the root of the evil, and must be eliminated before the evils listed by him could be eradicated. It is with regard to this assertion that technology rather than a faulty socio-economic system is responsible for the undesirable characteristics of contemporary Western societies that Gandhi differs from all modern schools of social and political thought, except the anarchists. Referring to differences between the socialist Jawaharlal Nehru and himself in this respect, Gandhi said in 1940 : "Nehru wants industrialization, because he thinks that if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them."³⁰

As regards Gandhi's arguments against machinery which I have broadly termed ethical, I think it is unnecessary to discuss each of them separately. They all conform to the classical anarchist assertion that only a "natural" rural society, based on compulsory labour for everyone, handicrafts and a barter economy, could be conducive to the good and noble life (provided, of course, that the state was also eliminated). Winstanley, Godwin, the earlier Proudhon, Ruskin, Kropotkin and Tolstoy had all argued like Gandhi, although some of them, living in a more or less pre-mechanical age, had not attacked machinery in such detail as Gandhi did. In his first major work, *What is Property?* (1840), Proudhon did advocate, like the other anarchists, a "natural" agrarian society, but in his later works like the *System of Economic Contradictions* (1846) and *Solution of the Social Problem* (1848), he considerably modified his views and speculated on the possibilities of the proper utilization of machinery for human progress in an anarchist society.³¹ Tolstoy also did, of course, in his *The Slavery of Our Time*, occasionally admire the technological progress achieved by mankind, and even observed that given the sense of human brotherhood, "it will be possible to apply technical improvements without destroying men's lives." But this is one of the exceptional pronouncements of Tolstoy ; there can be no doubt that he was strongly in favour of the ascetic good life in a "natural" agrarian society.³² And in his views on the ideal society and machinery, Gandhi, on his own admission, had been most profoundly

³⁰ *Mahatma*, Vol. V, p. 336.

³¹ George Woodcock : *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, London, 1956.

³² George Woodcock : *Anarchism*, Penguin Books, 1962, Ch. 8.

influenced by Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*.

The general anarchist view that the good life consists of a self-sufficient, non-acquisitive, non-differentiated and "natural" peasant life, to which all of Gandhi's ethical arguments against machinery are traceable or reducible, has already been discussed and rejected in Chapter VI. It may be added here that technological progress is but one manifestation of the many-splendoured creativity of man, realization of the potentialities of which may be said to be the best index of the good life. A revolt against technology is also a denunciation of the principle of creativity which essentially distinguishes man from sub-human forms of life and is the hallmark of the evolution of human society and the ideal of human Freedom. The rejection of technology as being opposed to the good life smacks of a naturalistic determinism which deprives man of that lofty ideal of Freedom which Gandhi and his libertarian fore-runners have tried so hard to vindicate. It is by the conquest of unyielding and unthinking Nature through the power of technology, the product of human intelligence, rather than by passive surrender to her relentless forces, sometimes bewitching but often sacrilegious, that human Freedom and creativity can be vindicated. What Gandhi and the other anarchists have failed to understand, I think, is that moral progress represents only one dimension—the fourth dimension, as Julian Huxley calls it—of the inevitably multi-dimensional progress of human society. The social and moral problems created by the mechanization of production can be solved, as Proudhon had half-realized, as Tolstoy had anticipated on rare occasions, and as the Marxists, non-Marxist socialists and humanists in general subsequently insisted, by a suitable reorganization of the production and distribution systems and of social relations as a whole, rather than by a sojourn of the human race back to primitivity. In fact, as stated already, Gandhi himself holds the view that the undesirable moral consequences of technology could be mitigated by the state ownership of all industries employing lumpy machines, though not altogether eliminated.

As regards the economic case against machinery, it seems to me that most of Gandhi's arguments can be dismissed with little effort. Thus the last argument is clearly misconceived, for the fault does not lie with machinery, but with unhygienic factory conditions and absence of proper town planning, both of which have been largely

rectified in the industrial countries, the first by trade union action and progressive factory legislation, and the second by public regulation of the growth of cities. The lesser incidence of disease and the greater longevity of people in the industrialized countries than in the economically backward areas of the world should be sufficient evidence against Gandhi's argument. Similarly, the argument that machinery leads to loss of soil fertility cannot be taken seriously. If a high level of productivity is desired, soil fertility has to be replenished by artificial fertilizers, whether cultivation is manual or mechanized. Machinery does not destroy any properties of the soil which are otherwise original and indestructible, as Ricardo had thought. The fact that the U. S. A. has the most mechanized agriculture as well as the highest agricultural productivity is a standing negation of the Gandhian misconception. Nor would any economist worth his salt accept the view that business cycles and imperialism are caused by any inherent attributes of machinery. The Keynesian revolution in economic thinking and the consequent reorientation of public economics in the Western countries have made business cycles a thing of the past in spite of continuous technological progress; and in the state-controlled economy of the Soviet Union business cycles have been unknown, although none would deny the phenomenal technological progress attained by it. As regards imperialism, even the similar, but more sophisticated Leninist theory can no longer be accepted as valid in the 20th Century, as John Strachey has conclusively proved, whatever its validity might have been in the 19th Century with which Lenin had been primarily dealing.³³

The three remaining arguments, namely, that machinery unnecessarily complicates the distribution problem, that it leads to the concentration of wealth, and that it almost inevitably displaces labour, may be used to make out a case for economic decentralization and the small unit machine, but can by no means prove that machinery as such is undesirable.³⁴ If there is decentralization of industries with an accent on local development, it would indeed not only simplify the distribution problem and rectify the economic imba-

³³ For a detailed discussion of the Leninist theory of imperialism and its limitations see John Strachey: *The End of Empire*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1959, Chs. 6 and 7.

³⁴ The merits of economic decentralization have already been briefly discussed in Ch. IV.

lance between the cities and the villages and different geographical regions ; urbanization of the rural areas and the dispersal of industries from overcrowded cities would take place, leading to a new type of economy and culture. But it is an entirely different matter to argue, as Gandhi does, that the best way to solve the problem of distribution is to eliminate it by abolishing machinery. As regards concentration of wealth, it is difficult to see how this can be blamed on machinery rather than on social relations in general, the system of ownership and governmental policy ; it would seem to be rectifiable by trade union action, public ownership in one form or another, restrictive as well as redistributive fiscal and monetary policy, regional economic decentralization and the devolution of economic power through institutions of workers' self-management which Gandhi has approved.³⁵ The problem of the displacement of labour, as Gandhi admits while approving of such machines as the Singer Sewing Machine, is in fact related to the question of the size of the machine, to which it is now necessary to turn.

From the economic point of view, there is a good reason why the big machine has pushed out the small one in the course of the industrial development of the world, namely, that owing to the economies of scale generated by it, the big machine turns out larger quantities of goods at a lower cost and enables workers to earn higher wages for less work. Even if the competitive advantages of the big machine were eliminated through some legislation which made it compulsory for the economic system to have only small unit machines (and thus stultified Freedom), we would have a simple and stagnant economy with a low standard of living, and we would probably also have an elaborate system of sweated labour as can be found in the *bidi* or *charkha* industries in India, where people work long hours for a pittance—an ideal that has already been discussed and rejected.

Besides, while this new civilization based on the small unit machine is being built, how do we build railways, aeroplanes, ships, and even cement and fertilizer factories and—let us not forget this—the small industries themselves, without the big machines? Indeed, had Gandhi logically followed up the already large concessions he had made to the big machine, he would almost inevitably have

³⁵ See Gandhi's views on Jayaprakash Narayan's economic programme for India in Ch. VI.

found himself accepting most of the industries and machines possessed by a modern economic system.

There is indeed some justification for insisting on the small unit machine in a backward economy with a large population like that of India. But even here the justification is often mistakenly thought to lie in employment considerations. It has been found in many countries that while the big machine displaces some manual workers, it also creates more white collar jobs than before, at least in the urban sector. Had this not been so, the rapid progress of mechanization and automation in the Western world in the modern period would have led to an unmanageable unemployment problem, which in fact is far from the case ; indeed, some highly mechanized and automatized countries like West Germany have, on the contrary, been faced with an almost chronic problem of labour shortage. Generally speaking, that small scale industry can provide more gainful employment than large-scale industry is still a debatable proposition. All that can be said about an overpopulated and economically backward country like India, burdened with a heavy backlog of unemployment and a rapidly growing population, is that the pace of mechanization must bear a relationship to the possible degree of absorption of additional labour in the industrial sector as a whole.

The justification for small-scale industry in a country like India lies more in the scarcity of capital than in other considerations. Because capital is scarce, what is known as "intermediate technology" may be accepted for an interim period pending the production of the big machine gradually, commensurate with the country's total needs. Besides, the acceptance of the big machine does not mean the banishment of the small machine. Even in countries like the U. S. A. there is a large sector of small-scale industry which functions mainly as ancillary to the sector of heavy and large-scale industry. In every industrialized country industries using small unit machines tend to cluster round those with big unit machines, and they are thus mutually complementary.

Subject to these limitations, however, small unit machines can play a useful role. The concentration of wealth in the urban areas and the civilizational and cultural contradiction between the towns and the villages in underdeveloped countries like India are undoubtedly major defects of the lop-sided and inadequate development of the big machine technology, and these defects can be reme-

died through balanced economic growth and diversification of technology consistent with the needs of productivity. It has already been explained that small machines which are complementary to big machines can play a useful economic role. Moreover, where the marginal efficiency of the small unit machine is the same as that of the big unit machine, liberal economic and social thinkers of all denominations would in all probability accept the small unit machine in preference to the big unit machine. Technological innovations of the atomic age may as well substantially increase the productivity of the small unit machine and thus make it readily acceptable as the principal instrument of economic development. What economists and most social and political thinkers would categorically reject is the assertion that even a relatively unproductive small unit machine is to be preferred to a big unit machine on account of the supposedly employment-generating or moral qualities of the former.

It may be argued, of course, that Gandhi's practical ideas on machinery arose to a large extent out of the compulsions of the given economic situation, especially the appalling poverty and unemployment among the agricultural masses of India. The spinning wheel, he argued time and again, was the only practical answer to the abysmal poverty and enforced idleness of the millions of Indian peasants caused by the extinction of the village industries under the impact of British (and to some extent Indian) manufactures. The vast countrywide unemployment, he believed, could be converted into a cooperative productive endeavour of millions of people with the help of the spinning wheel, which required practically no capital and for which the individual himself constituted a self-sufficient productive unit. He stated clearly that if the poverty and unemployment of the Indian agricultural masses could be eradicated through more advanced technology without causing exploitation and inequality, he would have no objection to such technology.³⁶ The pragmatism characteristic of his approach to the immediate economic problem was evident in 1939 on the occasion of the controversy regarding economic planning for India. Meghnad Saha, an eminent scientist and member of the National Planning Committee set up by the Congress in 1938, made out a case for the building of a powerful base of heavy industries which would constitute the "root and stem" of the economic structure, while medium

³⁶ N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, Ch. 2 ; *Selections From Gandhi*, Ch. 5.

and cottage industries would constitute merely the "branches and leaves" of the economy ; cottage industries would have to be based on improved technology and function only as feeders to the main industries. The opposite point of view was expressed in a memorandum by two other members of the Committee, J. C. Kumarappa and Satish Chandra Das Gupta, who suggested the economic development of India mainly on the basis of cottage industries, until the time "when all available human power is employed and when all the available animal power is employed." The matter was informally referred to Jawaharlal Nehru who offered a synthesis of the two conflicting views by stating, on the one hand, that "it is possible . . . to eliminate the evil use and violence of the big machine by changing the economic structure of capitalism", and on the other, that "even a simple machine based on ancient technique, like an ordinary spinning wheel, to-day produces something out of nothing because it is worked in the spare or wasted hours of the villager." When the dispute was finally referred to Gandhi, he is reported to have advised the preparation of two separate and alternative plans by the two wings on the basis of the assumptions that there would be no dependence on foreign loans, that all the available money, whether lying with private organizations or public, would be fully utilized for national development, and that a definite standard of living would be accepted as the given objective. He is reported to have added that "if it were discovered that the Kumarappa-Das Gupta plan involved an *inordinately long time or expense* in comparison with the other plan, then, before he retired, he would love to save all the wood used for manufacturing spinning wheels, at least for use as domestic fuel."³⁷

It is undoubtedly to some extent due to such pragmatic considerations regarding the given economic situation in India that Gandhi summed up his immediate economic programme for the country in 1941 as follows (the inner consistency or otherwise of this programme will be discussed in Chapter XI) :

"*Khadi* mentality means decentralization of the production and

³⁷ For an account of the controversy (minus Nehru's views) and Gandhi's comment on it see N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, pp. 219-21. Jawaharlal Nehru's views were contained in an unpublished letter to Krishna Kripalani, editor of *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, dated September 29, 1939, a copy of which was kindly made available to the author by N. K. Bose.

distribution of the necessities of life. Therefore, the formula so far evolved is, every village to produce all the necessities and a certain percentage in addition for the requirements of the cities.

"Heavy industries will need to be centralized and nationalized. But they will occupy the least part of the vast national activity which will mainly be in the villages."³⁸

But it is evident from the picture of the first-order ideal society presented by Gandhi, as well as his ethical and economic arguments discussed above, that his basic stand is against all complicated machinery. Since the second-order ideal is to be treated as an approximation to the first-order ideal, it is easy to see that he regards the existence of such machinery merely as a temporary necessity. The long-term programme which would logically follow from his views is not one of replacing the spinning wheel gradually by more complicated machinery, but the other way about, if possible. That is why he declared categorically in 1940 : "If I can convert the country to my point of view, the social order of the future will be based predominantly on the *charkha* and all it implies."³⁹ It is the "music of the *charkha*", which he admired so often, that seems to constitute the primary inspiration for his economic thinking, although he had to make some compromise with big machines under situational compulsions. That aspect of the situational compulsions which made him prescribe the *charkha* as an economic solution did not involve any compromise of his basic thinking ; it is the other aspect, which made big machines unavoidable, that did.

It may be noted in conclusion that even amongst the metaphysical thinkers of modern India Gandhi is alone in his general opposition to machinery. Sri Aurobindo has written at length in praise of technological progress which he regards not only as consistent with, but as complementary to, "spiritual" progress. Technology, he says, has been working out something like a "terrestrial omnipotence" for humanity. Under the impact of technology space and time are contracting to the vanishing point, and "it strives in a hundred ways to make man the master of circumstance and to lighten the fetters of causality." The idea of the limit, and of the impossible, says Aurobindo, has begun to disappear, thus widening,

³⁸ M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme* (1941), p. 12.

³⁹ *Harijan*, January 27, 1940.

as never before, the frontiers of human Freedom.⁴⁰ Rabindranath Tagore has similarly emphasized the need for technological progress and the mastery of the laws of matter for the all-round development of man. To try to deny our material needs, he says, is to remain in bondage. Man's progress has been marked by the development of technology from the primitive flint to the inventions of modern science. "This material universe", observes Tagore, "obstructs us in various ways, and the people who have been so idle or foolish as to try to avoid it have ended up with deceiving themselves instead of getting round the obstructions. On the other hand, the people who have mastered the laws of matter have not only overcome the impediments of matter, but have also been helped by it."⁴¹ The responsibilities of life, says Tagore, are "part of the responsibilities of the material universe, and to rise to the spiritual universe we must go through them and sublimate them, instead of evading them."⁴² Tagore has, therefore, strongly criticized Gandhi's insistence on the spinning wheel and his idea of *swaraj* based on it. To assign such importance to the *charkha* as Gandhi does, he observes, is to insult our intelligence. A *swaraj* that can inspire men's imagination must include the idea of material well-being. "If *swaraj* comes to us in the semblance of mere home-spun yarn", he declares, it would be "intolerable". *Swaraj* must involve a "many-sided, creative endeavour."⁴³

⁴⁰ Sri Aurobindo : *Life Divine*, Vol. I, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1947, p. 18.

⁴¹ Rabindranath Tagore : *Towards Universal Man*, pp. 232-33.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 245. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 280-82.

CHAPTER IX

CASTE AND COMMUNALISM

IN THE FORM in which Gandhi had to deal with caste and communalism, these are essentially problems of Indian society, rather than of social organization as such. Sociologists tell us, however, that in a broad sense the problem of caste appears in many different societies, ancient and modern, and is, therefore, closely related to the general problem of social organization.¹ In Gandhi's first-order ideal society, moreover, as we have seen, the pure form of anarchy would be vertically organized on the basis of *varna*, or the four-fold division of society, which, though not exactly the same as the caste system as it exists in India, is an original and more general form of it. Communalism, similarly, as a general problem of conflict between the different communities constituting a society, especially a plural society, is fundamental to social organization, although its special form as conflict between different religious communities, as for example, the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India, or the Arab-Jewish conflict in West Asia, or the Christian-Jewish conflict in Europe, has a local character. Gandhi's views on caste and communalism, are, therefore, of considerable significance for the general problem of social organization.

CASTE

Caste in India, as is well known, is a highly complex institution. At its basis is *varna* (which literally means colour, but may also mean a social stratum) or the idea of the four-fold functional division of society. The Laws of Manu and other ancient Sanskrit texts state that originally the *Brahmana* came out of the mouth of *Brahma*, the form of the deity as Creator, the *Kshatriya* from his arms, the *Vaishya* from his thighs, and the *Shudra* from his feet. These

¹ J. J. Hutton : *Caste in India*, Oxford University Press, 1961, Ch. 9 ; G. S. Ghurye : *Caste and Race in India*, Kegan Paul, London, 1932, Ch. 6 ; Arnold Toynbee : *A Study of History*, abridgement by D. C. Somervell, Vols. I-VI, pp. 301-03, 324-25.

four *varnas* were supposed to perform respectively the functions of teaching and the conduct of religious ceremonies, ruling and fighting, trade and commerce, and production and menial services involving bodily labour. Together the four functional orders were supposed to divide up all possible social functions among themselves and sustain society like the different limbs of the body. Originally this organicist and divine-origin approach to social organization appears to have emphasized functions based on *gunas* or qualities rather than heredity, but gradually hereditary rigidity set in, and *varna* became identified with a hereditary occupation rather than qualities. A wide variety of factors including the intermixing of the four *varnas*, religious sub-divisions and separatism, geography and occupational diversity led, in the course of a few centuries, to the growth of a very large number of castes, sub-castes and sub-sub-castes, until about the middle of the Nineteenth Century, when there was an estimated total of about three thousand castes in India. This system was characterized not only by great complexities and restrictions relating to various forms of endogamy and exogamy, hypergamy and hypogamy, but also by serious restrictions regarding inter-dining and various other forms of social intercourse. Last but not the least, there grew up the institution of untouchability (sometimes, especially in South India, shading into unseeability and unapproachability), which seems to have arisen originally out of restrictions pertaining to religious ceremonies, but in course of time crystallized into an almost complete social and even geographical segregation of that category of the *Shudras* which performs "dirty" works like scavenging, tanning and shoe-making, etc.² An important aspect of this segregation was the prevention of the untouchables from entering Hindu temples.

The movement against the caste system in India is almost as old as caste itself. Buddhism and Jainism were reformist movements which were partly aimed against caste. The so-called *Bhakti* or devotional movement of the middle ages was mainly directed against the caste system. Sikhism was similarly opposed to caste. The various reformist movements which developed within Hindu society in the second half of the Nineteenth Century like the Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission,

² N. K. Dutt : *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Calcutta, 1931 ; S. V. Ketkar : *History of Caste in India*, Ithaca, New York, 1909 ; G. S. Ghurye : *op. cit.* ; J. H. Hutton : *op. cit.*

Theosophical Society, etc. all believed in human brotherhood and the levelling up of Hindu society, although Vivekananda seems to have believed (like Gandhi, as we shall presently see) that the four-fold functional division of society (non-hereditary) is some kind of a natural institution.

Gandhi broadly belongs to this tradition of the levellers, but would appear to be less radical than most of his forerunners in India. He separates what he considers to be the inessentials of the caste system from its essentials, rejects the former and declares the latter to be beneficial for society. He tackles the problem on three fronts : (i) untouchability and its attendant strictures, (ii) the thousands of endogamous or semi-endogamous groups called caste, and (iii) *varna* or the four-fold functional division of society. He regards untouchability as "immoral", and, therefore, in need of complete eradication, caste as unnecessary and undesirable, though not "immoral", and *varna* as a natural institution, necessary and highly desirable, if not indispensable, for the organization of human society.

Untouchability, according to Gandhi, is opposed to the Advaita or Vedanta view of the world which regards Life as a unity. Since Hinduism is essentially based on Vedanta, untouchability, he argues, is opposed to Hinduism. In other words, this social practice, in Gandhi's opinion, represents a perversion rather than the true nature of Hinduism. Untouchability, moreover, is the negation of the humanity of man. It militates against Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. There cannot be any *swaraj* so long as untouchability and its attendant perversions like unseeability or unapproachability continue to exist in Indian society. Hindu society would inevitably disintegrate unless this social evil was completely eradicated. The removal of untouchability is the first and most essential step to the revitalization of Hindu society.³

Naturally, therefore, from the beginning of his socio-political career in India till the very end of his life, Gandhi worked for the eradication of untouchability. He says that he did not get his opposition to untouchability from the West, as some critics held, but from his own *Vaishnava* family and social environment in childhood.⁴

³ M. K. Gandhi : *The Removal of Untouchability*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959 ; *Hindu Dharma*, Section Twelve ; N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, pp. 268-69.

⁴ *Young India*, February 7, 1927.

Very often he had to face strong opposition from the caste Hindus, including physical obstruction, during his work against untouchability and for the right of the untouchables to enter the Hindu temples. In 1932 he undertook a fast against the Communal Award of Ramsay MacDonald which proposed separate electorates for the untouchables in India (on the latter's demand), with consequences which I shall discuss in Chapter XIII. In 1933 he started publishing the weekly journal *Harijan* on behalf of the Servants of Untouchables Society. The term literally means God's men. He accepted this word, as suggested by an untouchable, instead of the Sanskrit word *asprishya* (which was traditionally used and literally means untouchable) to designate the untouchables, because "All religions of the world describe God pre-eminently as the Friend of the friendless, Help of the helpless, and Protector of the weak." As regards the term *asprishya* or untouchable, "I recoil with horror from that word and all it implies," said Gandhi. Although the change of name would not bring about any change in the status of the untouchables, "one may at least be spared the use of the term which is itself one of reproach."⁵

Gandhi believes, however, that there is no inseparable connection between untouchability and the caste system ; in other words, that untouchability can be eradicated without abolishing caste altogether. As already stated, he argues in favour of the abolition of the multiplicity of castes and their reduction into the four *varnas* ; but he observes that the eradication of untouchability is not dependent even on this proposed simplification of the caste system, not to speak of its abolition altogether. Gandhi had asked for a message from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the leader of the untouchables, for the inaugural number of *Harijan*. Ambedkar refused to send any message, and instead sent a statement for publication in the inaugural issue of the journal. In this statement Ambedkar observed that untouchability was a by-product of the caste system, and that it could not be abolished until and unless the "odious and vicious dogma" of caste was altogether abolished. Gandhi published this statement in the first issue of *Harijan* with the following comment:

"As to the burden of his message, the opinion he holds about the caste system is shared by many educated Hindus. I have not,

⁵ *Harijan*, February 11, 1933.

however, been able to share that opinion. I do not believe that the caste system, even as distinguished from *varnashrama*, to be an 'odious and vicious dogma'. It has its limitations and its defects, but there is nothing sinful about it, as there is about untouchability, and if it is a by-product of the caste system it is only in the same sense that an ugly growth is of a body, or weeds of a crop. It is as wrong to destroy caste because of the outcaste, as it would be to destroy a body because of an ugly growth in it, or a crop because of the weeds."

He maintained, on the other hand, that "The moment untouchability goes, the caste system itself will be purified, that is to say, according to my dream, it will resolve itself into the true *Varna Dharma*, the four divisions of society, each complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other, each as necessary for the whole body of Hinduism as any other." How this radical change would in fact take place, however, Gandhi did not say.⁶

As regards the multiplicity of castes in contemporary India, Gandhi observes that these are trade guilds in origin.⁷ Historically, he argues, caste has played an important role in Indian society. It has prevented pauperism. It has answered the religious as well as the political needs of the community. It has acted as an institution of self-government and a bulwark against the oppression of the rulers. It has been a vast experiment in social adjustment in the laboratory of Indian society.⁸

Gandhi observes that caste is the Indian equivalent of the institution of class developed in Europe, and that in one sense it is superior to class. Caste is not based on distinctions of wealth, which always works as a disruptive force, as class is. It is only an extension of the principle of the family. Both are governed by blood and heredity. If the idea of superiority and inferiority were eliminated from the caste system (as it ought to be), it would represent the best possible adjustment of the forces of social stability and progress. "Just as the spirit of the family is inclusive of those who love each other and are wedded to each other by ties of blood and relation, caste also tries to include families of a particular way

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Young India*, January 5, 1921 ; April 13, 1921 ; October 6, 1921 ; *Harijan*, March 4, 1933.

⁸ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 264.

of purity of life (not standard of life, meaning by this term, economic standard of life). Only it does not leave the decision, whether a particular family belongs to a particular type, to the idiosyncracies or interested judgment of a few individuals. It trusts to the principle of heredity, and being only a system of culture does not hold that any injustice is done if an individual or a family has to remain in a particular group in spite of their decision to change their mode of life for the better." Social change takes place very slowly, argues Gandhi, and the institution of caste has recognized this fact in permitting new groupings to suit the changes in lives. The changes allowed by the caste system are "quiet and easy as a change in the shapes of the clouds". Hence, even if the importance of the environment as against heredity is admitted, it can be "conserved and developed more through caste than through class."⁹

There is thus nothing basically immoral in the caste system, according to Gandhi, as there is in untouchability. Yet, since in practice the caste system represents a social hierarchy based on the idea of high and low, and since, in any case, it is an unnecessary outgrowth of the four *varnas* which alone are fundamental and essential to the organization of a society, he considers the multiplicity of castes to be undesirable and superfluous. "The division, however, into innumerable castes," he says, "is an unwarranted liberty taken with the doctrine (of *varnashrama*). The four divisions are all-sufficing."¹⁰ The caste system is, therefore, "a monstrous parody" of *varna*, "undoubtedly a drag upon Hindu progress", a "travesty of *varna* that has degraded Hinduism and India", and ought to be reduced to the four-fold *varna* system without any compromise.¹¹

Varna, says Gandhi, "is not a human invention, but an immutable law of nature—the statement of a tendency that is ever present and at work like Newton's law of gravitation. Just as the law of gravitation existed even before it was discovered, so did the law of *varna*. It was given to the Hindus to discover that law."¹² And since it is a law of nature, working against *varna dharma* would be a futile and harmful effort. Just as the law of gravitation cannot be abolished

⁹ *Young India*, December 29, 1920.

¹⁰ *Young India*, October 6, 1921.

¹¹ *Young India*, September 29, 1927 ; October 20, 1927 ; November 24, 1927 ; *Harijan*, March 4, 1933.

¹² *Young India*, November 24, 1927 ; see also *Harijan*, September 28, 1934.

by trying to jump higher and higher, so also would be the effort to nullify the law of *varna* by trying "to jump over one another".¹³ "As a matter of fact", he observes, "the world has not anywhere been able to fight against this law. What has happened and what must happen in fighting against this law is to hurt ourselves and to engage in a vain effort."¹⁴ The conviction has increasingly grown upon him, he says, "that *varna* is the law of man's being and, therefore, as necessary for Christianity and Islam, as it has been necessary for Hinduism and has been its saving."¹⁵

The most important characteristic of *varna*, according to Gandhi, is that it is based on unchangeable hereditary occupations. As a matter of fact, an unchangeable hereditary occupation is the very definition of *varna*, according to Gandhi. "*Varna* means", he says, "predetermination of the choice of man's profession. The law of *varna* is that a man shall follow the profession of his ancestors for earning his livelihood . . . *Varna*, therefore, is in a way the law of heredity."¹⁶ It simply means that all of us should follow the "hereditary and traditional calling of our forefathers, in so far as the traditional calling is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics, and this only for the purpose of earning one's livelihood".¹⁷ The qualification regarding earning one's livelihood means that one may perform any other function in society in an honorary capacity, but must accept the calling of the forefathers for earning one's living. Thus a *Shudra* has every right, according to Gandhi, to acquire learning like a *Brahmana* and even to become a teacher in an honorary capacity, but he must earn his living through scavenging or whatever similar occupation his forefathers used to have. But "He may not be called a *Brahmana* in this birth. And it is a good thing for him not to arrogate a *varna* to which he is not born. It is a sign of true humility."¹⁸ Asked by an American clergyman whether Lincoln should have been a wood-chopper like his father rather than the President of the U. S. A., Gandhi replied that he should have earned his living through chopping wood and functioned as the President of the U. S. A. in a purely honorary capacity.¹⁹ A man who earns his living through any occupation other than the hereditary one becomes a *patita*, i.e. a fallen person.²⁰

¹³ *Harijan*, March 6, 1937.

¹⁴ *Young India*, September 29, 1927.

¹⁵ *Young India*, October 20, 1927.

¹⁶ *Young India*, November 24, 1927.

¹⁷ *Young India*, October 20, 1927.

¹⁸ *Young India*, November 24, 1927.

¹⁹ *Harijan*, March 6, 1937.

²⁰ *Young India*, November 24, 1927.

This view of *varna* is partly based on Gandhi's belief in the hereditary transmissibility of personality traits. "I believe", he says, "that just as everyone inherits a particular form, so does he inherit the particular characteristics and qualities of his progenitors, and to make this admission is to conserve one's energy. That frank admission, if we will act up to it, would put a legitimate curb upon our material ambitions, and thereby our energy is set free for extending the field of spiritual research and spiritual evolution. It is this doctrine of *Varnashrama Dharma* which I have always accepted."²¹ When it was pointed out to him that the *Bhagavadgita* declares *varna* to be based on *guna*, i.e. qualities, and *karma*, i.e. deeds, Gandhi admitted the validity of this claim, but maintained that *guna* and *karma* were inherited by birth.²² He admits, however, that "inherited qualities can always be strengthened and new ones cultivated", and accordingly functions which were not performed by his ancestors may be performed by an individual, but these new functions must not constitute his calling. "If my father is a trader and I exhibit the qualities of a soldier, I may without reward serve my country as a soldier, but must be content to earn my bread by trading."²³

Gandhi insists, however, that all the four *varnas* are absolutely equal, and that there can be no question of high or low with regard to occupations. A scavenger has the same status as a clergyman. He believes, as we have seen in Chapter V, that all life is one, as maintained by Vedanta, and the absolute Equality of the social status of all human beings follows from this belief. Therefore, the *varnas* are merely convenient functional or vertical divisions of society, "discovered" by the ancient Indian sages after "incessant experiment and research", and do not involve a hierarchical evaluation of status. The analogy between the limbs of the human body and the four *varnas* Gandhi regards as very useful, because the limbs of the body cannot be superior or inferior to one another, but perform equally essential functions; and similarly the four *varnas* perform equally essential functions in the body social and are devoid of any notions of superiority or inferiority. The *Brahmana*, who has been compared to the mouth of the Creator, is not in any way superior to the *Shudra* who has been compared to the feet. Gandhi

²¹ *Young India*, September 29, 1927. See also N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 263.

²² *Young India*, November 24, 1927.

²³ *Ibid.*

observes that the *Brahmana* has the opportunity of "superior service" but has no right to a "superior status". The four orders merely represent a permanent division of labour, but all labour has the same value.²⁴

Gandhi, however, separates the question of intermarriage and other forms of social intercourse like interdining among the four *varnas* from that of their inherent Equality. From the sociological point of view, interdining and intermarriage, of course, represent two rather different degrees and types of social intercourse. It is a pointer to the extreme rigidities and confusion which characterize contemporary Hindu society that even Gandhi almost invariably talks about interdining and intermarriage as if they were more or less the same question. There are bound to be restrictions regarding food and marriage, he argues, because man does not select his mate or his food (and the company in which to take it) at random. Some restrictions in such matters are, moreover, a matter of self-discipline. In his ideal society, in any case, intermarriages or interdining will, he thinks, automatically be rare, because "there would naturally be a tendency, so far as marriage is concerned, for people to restrict the marital relations to their own *varna*." But there should not be any restrictions, in his opinion, on interdining and intermarriage among the four *varnas*. There are many evidences of the prevalence of intermarriage and interdining among the different *varnas* in ancient India. The rigidities were a subsequent development, and have diverted the attention of Hindu society from the fundamentals of social organization to inessential social barriers and sapped its vitality. There should be complete freedom, but, of course, no compulsion, to intermarry and interdine in the ideal society among the four *varnas*.²⁵ Towards the end of his life Gandhi insisted that none of the inmates of his *ashrama* could get married while living in the *ashrama*, unless one of the parties to the marriage was a *harijan*.²⁶ (I think, however, that this should be taken as an example of Gandhi's specific attempt to remove untouchability rather than of his general views on intermarriage among the *varnas*.)

The benefits that *varna* can be expected to bestow on society

²⁴ *Young India*, October 6, 1921 ; September 29, 1927 ; October 20, 1927 ; November 24, 1927.

²⁵ *Young India*, October 6, 1921 ; November 24, 1927 ; *Harijan*, March 4, 1933 ; September 28, 1934 ; October 12, 1934 ; N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 266-68.

²⁶ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 268.

are many and varied, according to Gandhi. In the first place, it would facilitate spiritual progress. "When I follow my father's profession", he says, "I need not even go to school to learn it, and my mental energy is set free for spiritual pursuits, because my money or rather livelihood is ensured. *Varna* is the best form of insurance for happiness and for real religious pursuit. When I concentrate my energy on other pursuits, I sell away my powers of self-realization or sell my soul for a mess of pottage."²⁷ Secondly, *varna* would eliminate economic and occupational competition which Gandhi regards as unhealthy, since it "is to-day robbing life of all its joy and beauty",²⁸ and is opposed to peace and harmony, since "it leads to confusion of *varna* and ultimate disruption of society"—a state of affairs which Gandhi considers to be the characteristic of the Western societies.²⁹ Thirdly, since the law of *varna* emphasizes the duties rather than the rights of individuals (and since all labour is of equal value), "it ensures the fairest possible distribution of wealth, though it may not be an ideal, i.e. strictly equal, distribution."³⁰ In short, says Gandhi, "Fulfilment of the law would make life livable, would spread peace and content, end all clashes and conflicts, put an end to starvation and pauperization, solve the problem of population and even end disease and suffering."³¹

It is for these reasons that Gandhi wants *varnashrama*, as I have explained in Chapter VI, to be the basis of the functional organization of society in the ideal social order. In what manner he expects to reduce the existing caste system in India to the four basic *varnas* is not very clear. He asks his followers to enlist the support of the enlightened sections of the upper castes, to refuse to recognize the *varna* of those people, especially the upper castes, who do not live up to the hereditary qualities and the calling expected of them. He says furthermore: "You will carry on a fierce agitation to bring about reform, you will boycott the schools and temples which distinguish against any non-*brahmanas*. You will insist upon priests of pure character, of learning and without worldly ambition. You may build new temples if the old ones refuse to admit the so-called untouchables."³² Needless to say, this is far from a clear and comprehensive programme. It is worth noting, moreover, that while

²⁷ *Young India*, November 24, 1927. See also *Harijan*, March 4, 1933.

²⁸ *Harijan*, July 29, 1933.

²⁹ *Harijan*, March 4, 1933. ³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Harijan*, September 28, 1934. ³² *Young India*, November 24, 1927.

the ideal *varnashrama* in the ideal society of the first order has been more or less clearly explained, there is no picture of an approximation to this ideal in the second-order ideal society which, presumably, will be characterized simply by the attempt to reduce the number of castes, in a more or less unspecified manner, to the four *varnas* and to establish Equality of status among them.

Gandhi's views on untouchability, caste and *varna* analysed here are open to criticism on numerous grounds. Thus it is difficult to see how he proposes to abolish untouchability and raise the social status of the untouchables without abolishing the caste system including the four *varnas*. The untouchables are regarded in Hindu society as *avarnas* or outcastes, as distinguished from the *savarnas* or people with castes ; in other words, they are regarded as falling outside the castes as well as the four *varnas*. As long as there are a large number of castes, the untouchables cannot belong to any of them, so that even if, as a result of some reformist movement, the caste Hindus agree to "touch" them or, let us say, allow them to enter the temples, they are not thereby lifted from the bottom of the Hindu social hierarchy. And even if one makes the unreal assumption that the multiplicity of castes has been reduced to the four *varnas*, where will the outcastes, *avarnas* as they are, belong? Apart from the fact that all the four *varnas* are likely to oppose the entry of the outcastes into their fold, it is by no means easy, as I shall presently try to show, to classify the different occupations into clear-cut *varnas*.

Gandhi's view that the castes had all developed originally as trade guilds is contrary to historical and sociological evidence, as we have already seen. It is this oversimplified view of the caste system which in turn has enabled Gandhi to believe that the large number of existing castes can be reduced to the four *varnas* through the exercise of moral power by a band of reformers (that is what his suggestions for action amount to). Here again he has given evidence of his ahistorical approach to social problems and his basic unawareness of the complexities of social phenomena which are so much emphasized by sociologists. That the caste system has grown up in India over thousands of years through the operation of the complex forces of religion, geography, economic relations, race, culture, etc. and that its solution requires, among other things, a high degree of horizontal and vertical mobility which can be brought about only through rapid industrialization and the spread

of education, is so palpably true for any sociologist worth his salt, that no approach to the problem of caste which ignores these factors can be regarded as scientific. "Modern industry, resulting from the railways", said Karl Marx, "will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour, upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power."³³ Marx was as unscientific as Gandhi in so far as he regarded the economic factor as the sole determinant of social change and, hence, industrialization as the only solution to the problem of caste; but he emphasized a very important aspect of a necessarily complex solution—an aspect altogether neglected by Gandhi.

However, even if it is assumed for the sake of the argument that the caste system can be reduced to the four *varnas* through such reform as suggested by Gandhi, how are the different occupations in a modern society to be classified as *varnas*? Occupations in a modern society are so very complex and differentiated that they can no longer be reduced to the four simple categories of teaching and preaching, ruling and fighting, trade and commerce, and production and menial services involving bodily labour. How, for instance, is the vast army of white collar workers, which is engaged in the production process but performs no manual labour, to be classified? There are high-level technicians and bureaucrats who are by no means *Shudras* in the old sense. How is an engineer or a surgeon, who combines high learning with bodily labour, to be categorized? To what *varna* would a lawyer or a doctor belong? What is the *varna* of a professional artist, or of a professional politician who is not one of the rulers, or of an economist or scientist who works in a manufacturing firm or a defence establishment, or of an astronaut? The fact is that technological progress has not only led to an almost endless differentiation and diversification of the occupational structure, it has also reduced, and promises to reduce to the vanishing point in the foreseeable future, the distinction between intellectual and manual labour, and it is no longer possible to fit all possible occupations into the strait-jacket of *varnashrama*.

But supposing we make the further unreal assumption that a satisfactory classification of all occupations into the four *varnas* is theoretically possible, how are the millions of people, like Gandhi

³³ K. Marx and F. Engels : *On Colonialism*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, undated, p. 80.

himself, who have not accepted the calling of their forefathers for earning a living, to be compelled to do so? Will *satyagraha* be used for this purpose also? Who will perform *satyagraha* against whom? Are we to visualize a society in which millions of individuals are engaged in *satyagraha* against one another, and for this kind of reason? Such indeed are the absurdities to which Gandhi's views on caste and *varna* logically lead us (apart from the fact that *satyagraha* is by no means such a panacea for all social ills as Gandhi supposes it to be, as we shall see in Part III).

If for argument's sake we cast realism to the winds and assume that even this would be possible, it is still very doubtful whether such hereditary occupational orders would have such consequences as are expected by Gandhi and, whether the expected consequences would in any case be desirable. Gandhi argues that under the *varna* system a child will not have to go to school (since he can learn his father's craft or trade at home) and the leisure thus gained will be useful for his "spiritual progress". In the first place, the type of know-how that can be acquired at home can relate only to the kind of rudimentary handicraft or technique which constitutes the technological basis of Gandhi's ideal society, and which I have already discussed and rejected in Chapter VI and Chapter VIII, because it would stultify the creative Freedom of man and also militate against Non-violence and Equality. Secondly, mere acquisition of know-how for earning one's living is certainly not the object of education. Thirdly, mere idleness is not a condition for "spiritual" or any other kind of progress; sociological evidence indicates, on the other hand, that idleness is often associated with crime. Gandhi argues, moreover, that *varnashrama* will eliminate competition and thus prevent the disruption of society. But Gandhi has not stated how intra-*varna* economic competition and intra-*varna* (as well as inter-*varna*) social competition is to be eliminated (we have argued on the basis of sociological evidence in Chapter VI that there is likely to be considerable violence in the type of society regarded as ideal by Gandhi). The history of the system of *varna* in ancient India is one of perpetual competition between the *Brahmanas* and the *Kshatriyas*, and sometimes among all the four *varnas*, for social ascendancy. Besides, as I have argued previously, not all competition is antithetical to social order and progress, as anyone with a nodding acquaintance with sociology would readily admit. Finally, Gandhi argues that the *varna* system will lead to the

equal distribution of wealth. But apart from the fact that what will be distributed in the type of economy advocated by Gandhi is poverty rather than wealth, as I have tried to show in Chapter V and Chapter VIII, it is difficult to see how the establishment of the four orders will by itself lead to the realization of economic Equality among them and within each *varna*, except that Gandhi desires it to be so. It seems to me obvious that the problem of Equality is an independent one requiring a solution other than the mere establishment of the four *varnas*.

To sum up : it is unlikely that the social status of the outcastes (untouchables) can be raised without abolishing the caste system itself, even more unlikely that the caste system can be reduced to the four basic *varnas* (and thus abolished in its present form), that the *varnas* can be defined in terms of the differentiated and diversified occupations characteristic of a modern society, that people can be made to adhere to such *varnas* by non-violent means, and that *varnashrama* as envisaged by Gandhi can ensure Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. If class is antithetical to these ultimate values, so is *varna*. Indeed, if men are to be non-violent, free and equal, there must be no social distinctions among them, least of all hereditary.

COMMUNALISM

A month after the partition of India Gandhi wrote to a friend : "Communal unity is a vital part of my being. It was so when *khaddar* and all the village industries were not even conceived by me. At the time the communal unity possessed me, I was a lad twelve years old, just a beginner in English. It was then that I had realized that all Hindus and Muslims and Parsis were sons of the same soil and, as such, were pledged to complete brotherhood. This was before 1885, when the Congress was born."³⁴ The story that thus began ended with his assassination by a Hindu on the ground of his "undue" sympathy for the Muslims and for Pakistan on January 30, 1948. By the end of 1946 Gandhi had already admitted defeat on the communal question.³⁵ And two weeks before his assassination, while referring to his dream of communal unity, he exclaimed that he would "jump in the evening of my life like a child, to feel

³⁴ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. VIII, pp. 129-30.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 220.

that the dream has been realized in this life".³⁶ But the series of Hindu-Muslim riots that took place in India throughout Gandhi's leadership of the freedom movement, culminating in the demand for Pakistan by the Muslim League, the large-scale communal riots all over the country on the eve of independence, which in their ferocity and barbarity were almost unparalleled in the history of the world, the partition of the country and the further communal riots in both the dominions, the mass communal migrations from both the dominions with untold attendant miseries for millions of people, had put the seal on the failure of Gandhi and other Indian leaders of both the communities to solve or even to mitigate the problem of communalism in the subcontinent.³⁷

Gandhi's attempt to deal with the communal problem, especially during the last phase of his life, is a saga of heroic determination culminating, almost inexorably, in a personal martyrdom, and yet there is no denying the fact that it is a saga of failure. It is not my intention here to discuss the factual details of the long and tragic story of Gandhi's endeavour to solve the communal problem, which can be found in any of the good biographies. My only object is to analyse Gandhi's assessment of the nature of the communal problem and the solutions suggested by him, and to explain in what way his approach to the problem is inadequate. The technique of *satyagraha* as a means of dealing with actual communal violence will not, however, be discussed here, and will be taken up separately in Chapter XIII.

Two of the most important criticisms of Gandhian thought I have made so far are that it is based on an ahistorical perspective and that it takes an oversimplified view of the problem of social conflict. Nowhere perhaps are these two criticisms more valid than with regard to Gandhi's ideas on the communal problem in India. Until the last two or three years of his life he believed that the problem of communalism in India was more apparent than real, or in other words, that it did not in fact exist. Even when at last he recognized the gravity of the problem, he treated it more as a problem of religious misunderstanding and intolerance, than as a social conflict with political, economic and cultural motivations rooted

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 256.

³⁷ A useful diagram of the chain reaction of communal violence in the sub-continent immediately before and after partition can be found in K. Shridharani: *War Without Violence*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962, p. 78.

deep in history. Consequently his emphasis was almost invariably on a "change of heart" and religious tolerance rather than on the eradication of the sociological causes of the conflict.

Gandhi's approach to the communal question can be understood from the following observation made by him on the subject in 1931 :

"I am telling you God's truth when I say that the communal question does not matter and should not worry you. But if you will study history, study the bigger questions . . . Study not man in his animal nature, man following the laws of the jungle, but study man in all his glory . . ."³⁸

Not only did he regard the problem of communalism in India as a relatively unimportant one, but even considered it at times to be a healthy development. "Hindu-Muslim quarrels are, in a way unknown to us", he said, "a fight for *swaraj*. Each party is conscious of its impending coming. Each wants to be found ready and fit for *swaraj* when it comes . . . This fighting, however unfortunate it may be, is a sign of growth. It is like the War of the Roses. Out of this will rise a mighty nation."³⁹

This simplistic view of the communal problem is further exemplified in Gandhi's analysis of the factors that are supposed to have been responsible for the growth of communalism in India and the manner in which it could be eradicated. His ideas on the causes and remedies of the communal problem may be briefly summarized as follows :

1. The problem of communalism in India, believes Gandhi, is largely the creation of the British Government. Even as late as 1946, when the complexities of the communal problem should have been evident to most people, he declared that the "communal divisions in India can be demonstrably proved to be a British creation."⁴⁰ It is a deliberate creation of the British Government, an essential corollary of the British imperial policy of divide and rule, rather than something inherent in the recent historical evolution of India and its social and political situation. It would follow, therefore, as Gandhi said many times, that the communal problem would wither away on the dawn of India's independence. "The

³⁸ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 138.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 235.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 103.

moment the alien wedge is removed, the divided communities are bound to unite."⁴¹ The prime mover of social disequilibrium being removed from the scene, Indian society would be restored to its natural adjustment and harmony. The grin would disappear with the cat.

2. In so far as any other factors are, in Gandhi's opinion, at all responsible for the growth of the communal spirit, he regards urban civilization as such a factor, which, of course, is a general cause not only of communalism, but also of many other social problems like violence, political tyranny, exploitation and inequality. "The bugbear of communalism", he says, "is confined largely to the cities, which are not India, but which are the blotting-sheets of London and other Western cities . . ."⁴² He argues that the communal violence exists only "in the hearts of a handful of townspeople" and not among the forty crores of village people.⁴³ In a completely rural society (Gandhi's ideal society of the first order) or a predominantly rural society (Gandhi's ideal society of the second order), therefore, there would be an end of the communal problem, just as there would be an end, or an approximate end (depending on the extent of ruralization) of all other types of social conflict.

3. Gandhi also believes that the modern education that students receive in the schools and colleges is a factor that creates the mental condition necessary for communalism. It makes them urban-minded and promotes competition and conflict along with other social evils. The acceptance of his own scheme of basic education (which we shall discuss in the next chapter), according to him, would contribute to the disappearance of the communal spirit. "If we want to eliminate the communal strife", says he, "we must start on the education I have now adumbrated."⁴⁴

4. Another general factor which makes communalism possible is, according to Gandhi, the failure of the people to eschew violence. The mental readiness to resort to violence for settling differences leads to communal riots when there is ill-feeling between the communities and one form of provocation or another. Violence or *himsa*, moreover, as we have seen already, is something broader than mere physical violence, and even the communal feeling would,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 138.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 204.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 193.

therefore, be regarded by Gandhi as a form of violence or *himsa*. Violence and communalism thus go together. The former is the necessary precondition to the latter. Hence, as soon as people abjured violence, in thought and action, there would be an end to the communal problem. The acceptance of Non-violence would by itself make communalism impossible. Gandhi observed that the only way for the Congress to work as an anti-communal force was for Congressmen to become non-violent. If the Congress was unable to accept Non-violence as an inalienable ideal, sooner or later it would drift into communalism, since the majority of its members were Hindus.⁴⁵

In the event of an actual outbreak of communal violence, Gandhi would advise the general remedy of *satyagraha*, both individual and collective. He personally undertook a number of fasts, which is one form of *satyagraha*, during communal disturbances. The last phase of his life can, as a matter of fact, be regarded as a continuous *satyagraha*, in a broad sense, against communal violence in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent. As a Hindu he told his correlative: "But we must not cease to aspire . . . to befriend all Muslims and hold them fast as prisoners of our love. It would be a present possibility if the Hindus in their lakhs offered themselves to be cut to pieces without retaliation or anger in their hearts."⁴⁶ (Gandhi's fasts—a form of individual *satyagraha*, and different forms of collective *satyagraha* as a method of resolving social conflicts will be discussed in detail in Part III).

5. The belief in the inequality of the different religions leads to intolerance and fanaticism, says Gandhi, and creates the ground for communal violence. To his own mind the Equality of all religions is an essential concomitant of the Equality of all human beings. "Inherently", he declares, "we are all equal. The differences of race and skin, of mind and body, and of climate and nation are transitory. In the same way, essentially, all religions are equal."⁴⁷ The Equality of religions does not, of course, mean that all of them have the same doctrines, creeds, methods of worship, etc. It only means that there is a common code of morality among all the religions, which is also the essence of any particular religion. Different names and conceptions of God refer essentially to the same

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 250.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 220.

⁴⁷ *Harijan*, March 13, 1937.

Reality. Other details are matters of local variation and aptitude, and do not constitute the core of religion. Truth which is equal to God is the same everywhere, and the object of the religious quest everywhere is Truth, which, as we have seen in Chapter II, really means Justice. Thus if a man was a good Hindu, he was also a good Muslim, Christian, Sikh or Jain. No religion, for example, taught men to kill their fellow men because the latter held different opinions or belonged to different religions. The truly religious life could be lived by adhering to the highest teachings, i.e. the essence of any religion. It would follow that religious conversions are unnecessary and undesirable. As a matter of fact, they are one of the most important sources of conflict throughout the world, according to Gandhi. Forcible conversion is, of course, out of the question, and even a man who seeks voluntary conversion should, in Gandhi's opinion, be advised to seek fulfilment by living up to the true teachings of his own religion, rather than by embracing another. Conversion, according to him, is one of the greatest examples of the belief in religious inequality and intolerance. Other consequences of the same belief are disrespect for the scriptures and institutions of other religions which, in Gandhi's opinion, amounts only to a disrespect for one's own religion. "In other words, just as one's own mother is *best for oneself*, so is every one's religion the best, each for himself; just as one's own country is *best for oneself*, every one's religion is best, each for himself. The equality of all religions lies in each being adequate or best for its respective adherents."⁴⁸ A realization of this fact, according to Gandhi, would lead to the disappearance of all communal feeling and violence and the establishment of "true heart friendship" among the different communities.⁴⁹

Of the five factors responsible for communalism analysed above, Gandhi regarded, until the last phase of his life, the last four as mere conditioning factors, while the first one, namely, the policy of the British Government, as the direct cause. From 1946 onwards,

⁴⁸ *Harijan*, March 20, 1937.

⁴⁹ M. K. Gandhi : *All Religions Are True*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962.

For a collection of Gandhi's writings on the communal problem and its solution, see M. K. Gandhi : *Communal Unity*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1949 ; *The Way to Communal Harmony*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1963.

however, when the communal problem assumed alarming proportions, Gandhi laid increasing emphasis on religious tolerance and talked less and less of the alleged machinations of the British Government. It is possible that at this stage he regarded the explanation of the communal problem in India in terms of British policy as an oversimplification and felt that there was something more deep-rooted than the Machiavellian machinations of an alien Government behind this problem. This deeper source of conflict, all available evidence indicates, he believed to be the failure to appreciate the Equality of religions and the consequent religious intolerance and fanaticism. As a matter of fact, it is nearly certain that even in the early years of the freedom movement he regarded this factor as only next in importance to the policy of divide and rule followed by the British Government, as a cause of communal strife in India. His entry into mass politics in India was, in fact, marked by his championing of the *Khilafat* movement—a movement organized by the Indian Muslims in support of the Turkish Caliphate and against the proposed dismemberment of the Turkish empire at the end of the First World War—because he felt that by showing his respect as a Hindu leader to an essentially Muslim cause he would be able to win over the sympathy of the Indian Muslims and to “secure ever-lasting friendship between the two communities”.⁵⁰ And during the last phase of his life, when he made a sustained and determined effort to stem the tide of communal violence in the Noakhali district of Bengal, Calcutta, Bihar and Delhi, he talked incessantly of the need for religious understanding and tolerance.⁵¹

The question of the relationship between urban civilization and social conflict has already been discussed in Chapter VI and Chapter VIII where I have tried to show that an urban society is not necessarily characterized by greater violence than a rural society. Gandhi's views on education and its bearing on social conflict will be discussed in the next chapter. His partial explanation of communalism in terms of the failure of people to abjure violence seems to me to beg the question. Although communalism as a social problem is broader

⁵⁰ *Young India*, June 1, 1921.

⁵¹ For a detailed account of Gandhi's fight against communalism from 1946 until his death see Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vols. VII and VIII ; N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta, 1962 and *My Days with Gandhi*, Calcutta, 1953 ; Pyarelal : *The Last Phase*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, Vol. I, 1954 ; Vol. 2, 1958.

than violence mutually perpetrated by the communities on each other, such violence is a symptom and a culmination of the communal conflict rather than the cause of it. In order to explain the causes of communalism, one has to discover the cause of communal violence instead of regarding this violence itself as the cause. In so far as Gandhi says that the failure of the communities to act non-violently is a cause of communalism, he is confusing the cause with the effect. As regards *satyagraha* as a cure for communal violence, the question will be discussed in Part III, especially in Chapter XIII.

We are thus left with only two of Gandhi's explanations of the communal problem in India, namely, the British policy of divide and rule, and religious intolerance arising out of the failure of people to recognize the Equality of all religions. It is my contention that both these explanations represent a simplistic approach to the problem of communalism in particular and of social conflict in general.

Let us take the policy of the British Government first. It is true that there was practically no communal violence in India until the beginning of the present century. It is also true, as anyone familiar with the political history of India during the first half of this century knows, that the British Government actively encouraged, developed and elaborated the system of communal representation in India through the reform Acts of 1909, 1919 and 1935, and various other overt and covert manoeuvres, and that communal violence in India increased in volume and intensity *pari passu* with this constitutional evolution on a communal basis. But it is equally true that such a policy would not have been successful if the seeds of communal conflict were not already there. The British Government, it seems to me, can be accused of taking advantage of, and deliberately aggravating, a conflict situation which was already there, but not of creating the conflict through some diabolical magic out of nothing. In other words, the communal problem in India has had fundamental causes which are more deep-rooted than the British policy of divide and rule.

Similarly, the argument that communalism springs from religious intolerance is an oversimplification. Nowhere in the world have pure religious differences been responsible for communal violence, unless political, economic, social and sometimes even territorial interests have also been involved. And to try to eliminate commu-

nalism merely by teaching the Equality of religions to the masses without a resolution of the conflict of such real interests is to adopt a simplistic approach to the problem of social conflict which is bound to fail, as Gandhi's approach did. As a matter of fact, I think there is some truth in the assertion of many of Gandhi's critics that this religious approach to the communal problem aggravated instead of eradicating it.⁵² To take Gandhi himself as an example, not only did he declare himself till the last days of his life to be a *sanatani* (orthodox) Hindu, in his ideas and methods, in his daily rituals and routine, in his prayer and preachings, in his attempt to rouse the masses through Hindu religious songs like the *Ramdhun*, in his constant reference to *Ram Raj* as the ideal social order that was expected to emerge after *swaraj*; in his life-long assertion that the cause of the untouchables was a cause of Hinduism rather than a secular and humanitarian cause, in his unflinching faith in the Hindu system of *varna* or the four-fold division of society into hereditary occupations, in his campaign against cow-slaughter and in many other ways Gandhi could indeed be identified as a thoroughly orthodox Hindu even without his saying so. (Gandhi's approach to Hinduism has been briefly discussed in Chapter II). Therefore, in spite of the fact that he sincerely preached religious Equality and tolerance, and that he used the Bible and the Koran as much as the Gita in his prayer meetings in face of strong opposition from a section of Hindus, the vast majority of Indian Muslims, it seems clear to me, had in fact never accepted him as a supra-communal and non-partisan leader. Hence, the somewhat tragic struggle of his last days against communal violence culminating in his epic martyrdom, failed to eradicate the communal virus from the Indian body politic. On the contrary, it may be argued with a certain amount of justification that in a plural society such as the Indian, the heavy accent placed by Gandhi on religion, almost from the very beginning of his political career in India, was instrumental in focussing the attention of the masses on religious differences rather than on religious unity, and thus indirectly in nurturing, rather than killing, the virus of communalism. A typical example is the *Khilafat* movement which was launched in the name of Islam and ardently

⁵² See, for instance, S. K. Majumdar : *Jinnah and Gandhi*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, Introduction, Chs. 9-11; R. C. Majumdar : *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1963, Vol. III, Ch. 8.

supported by Gandhi in the hope of using it for establishing communal unity in India. But in fact what was achieved during the *Khilafat* movement is not Hindu-Muslim unity but Pan-Islamic unity ; during the country-wide mobilization of Hindu support for the Muslim cause, in the name of unity attention was constantly focussed on the points of difference between Hinduism and Islam, and soon after Kamal Pasha's secular revolution in Turkey undermined the foundations of the *Khilafat* movement, communal riots broke out all over India on an unprecedented scale.

It is not possible here to go into the genesis of the communal problem in India and the plural and highly complex causes that led to its development and explosion ; nor is it necessary to do so, since there is now a sizeable literature on the subject.⁵³ But even a casual acquaintance with the problem would convince one that its solution would require a multi-pronged offensive on the economic, social and political fronts and a completely secular approach, and that religion should perhaps be the last thing to be emphasized.

How are Gandhi's views on communalism related to what I have designated as his first-order and second-order ideal societies? In the first-order ideal society, of course, there would be absolute Equality among all human beings and "true heart friendship" among them, irrespective of religious or any other kind of distinction. This Equality will be the result of the recognition of all religions as equal and their equal development and efflorescence. The ideal society of the second order will apparently be characterized by the effort to bring about this state of affairs through the minimization of the existing communal conflict.

⁵³ See, for example, Beni Prasad : *India's Hindu-Muslim Questions*, London, 1946 ; Ram Gopal : *The Indian Muslims : A Political History*, 1959 ; A. R. Desai : *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1948 ; R. P. Dutt : *India To-day And To-morrow*, Delhi, 1955, Ch. 13 ; S. A. Latif : *The Muslim Problem of India*, Bombay, 1939 ; W. C. Smith : *Modern Islam In India*, London, 1946 ; R. Symonds : *The Making of Pakistan*, London, 1950.

CHAPTER X

EDUCATION AND OTHER SOCIAL QUESTIONS

IN THIS chapter I propose to discuss briefly Gandhi's ideas on education, science, sex and food. As stated in Chapter I, Gandhi has expressed his views on practically every aspect of social life, and these are some of the more important social questions which occupy a central position in his thought. Each of these subjects can, of course, be discussed in great detail, but I shall confine myself mainly to a brief analysis of Gandhi's views on them, making only such comments as are absolutely essential for a correct appreciation of these views from the standpoint of Social Science.

EDUCATION

Gandhi says that his educational ideas had been developing since the time of the founding of the Phoenix settlement in South Africa in 1904.¹ *Hind Swaraj* also contains his fundamental ideas on education, though not in a developed form. On his return to India he expressed his views on education occasionally and wrote on it from time to time in *Young India*. But it was not until 1937, when he called a conference of educationists at Wardha to discuss his educational ideas that a complete picture of his educational programme was available. On that occasion he gave a lengthy exposition of his views on education, and a committee appointed for the purpose of drawing up an educational programme for the country submitted a scheme with Gandhi's approval. For many years this so-called Wardha Scheme remained the basis of the Gandhian programme of education for India, and even after the independence of India Gandhi's advice to the Education Ministers of the Indian provinces remained consistent with his earlier views. There was in

¹ *Harijan*, May 8, 1937.

fact an unbroken continuity in Gandhi's fundamental educational ideas throughout his life.²

Gandhi has explained his theoretical approach to the problem of education as follows :

"I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another."³

In other words, education, according to Gandhi, is a balanced and harmonious development of the body, mind and "heart" or "soul". The development of one without the other two would not be true education, but a lop-sided and grotesque development which is something other than education. Naturally, therefore, he regards the present system of education, with its accent on intellectual development, as "in reality only intellectual dissipation". The system of physical culture that goes along with intellectual exercise in the schools and colleges he regards as "an artificial and otherwise barren system" which is "ridiculous beyond words".⁴ In his opinion, the only kind of bodily exercise which can lead to intellectual development is "useful manual labour, intelligently performed". He does not deny the fact that intellectual power can be developed even without such labour, but he denies that such intellectual growth can be called education. "One may develop", he says, "a sharp intellect otherwise too. But then it will not be a balanced growth but an

² For a chronological survey of Gandhi's educational ideas see M. S. Patel : *The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1953.

³ *Harijan*, May 8, 1937.

⁴ *Ibid*.

unbalanced, distorted abortion. It may easily make of one a rogue or a rascal."⁵

And since Gandhi has "felt an irresistible call to make good the charge that the present mode of education is radically wrong from bottom to top," he has presented a new programme of school education, called "basic" or "primary" education, which he himself has put in a nutshell as follows :

"1. Primary education, extending over a period of 7 years or longer, and covering all the subjects up to the matriculation standard, except English, plus a vocation used as the vehicle for drawing out the minds of boys and girls in all departments of knowledge, should take the place of what passes today under the name of Primary, Middle and High School Education.

"2. Such education, taken as a whole, can and must be self-supporting ; in fact, self-support is the acid test of its reality."⁶

But it is necessary to spell out Gandhi's programme of education in a little more detail so as to clarify its essential features, which may be summarized as follows⁷ :

(i) The entire syllabus of basic education is to be centred round some handicraft. For organizational convenience Gandhi prefers hand-spinning to be universally adopted for this purpose, but does not exclude other handicrafts. Knowledge of other subjects like history, geography, mathematics and science would be imparted through such handicrafts, e.g. by explaining the origin and the manufacturing process of the tools, the source, supply and processing of the raw materials, the amount of goods produced, etc. These handicrafts are to be profit-yielding and to become part of the national wealth. The state is to purchase the produce of the schools and guarantee the employment of the students in the crafts which they have learnt at school (presumably in the ideal society of the second order in which the state would still exist).

(ii) Such basic education is to be self-supporting. While land,

⁵ *Harijan*, September 8, 1946.

⁶ *Harijan*, October 2, 1937.

⁷ For a collection of Gandhi's writings on education on which this summary is based, see M. K. Gandhi : *Basic Education*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1951 ; *True Education*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1962, and *Towards New Education*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1963 ; N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, Ch. 19.

buildings, etc. need not be covered by the value of a school's produce, the recurring expenses, including the salary of the teachers, ought to be met from the earnings of the students. Although shortage of funds was an important factor at the time the Wardha Scheme was formulated, Gandhi's insistence on the self-supporting character of the new schools was not dictated by any such situational considerations. Even after independence, when relatively large funds were available at the disposal of the Congress Governments in the provinces, Gandhi insisted that the self-sufficiency of the schools must be the basis of the educational reconstruction of free India, that it was a matter of principle with him and in fact the acid test of the rationale of his idea of new education.

(iii) Religious education will be compulsory, but the instructions will consist of "fundamental ethics" which are common to all religions. Instruction pertaining to denominational religions is to be left out of the syllabus of the schools and to be imparted by the parents at home. If members of any particular religious denomination want their children to receive denominational instruction at school, such instruction should be arranged, provided that the members of that denomination paid the expenses.

(iv) The medium of instruction is to be the mother tongue, and no foreign languages must be taught in the basic schools.

(v) The children are not to begin their education by learning the alphabet. In fact they are not to be taught the alphabet till they have had an elementary knowledge of history, geography, mental arithmetic and a craft. This would go on for about six months, after which the children are to be taught how to draw rather than write the alphabet.

(vi) The schools will be co-educational as a general rule.

Such a seven-year course of basic education Gandhi wanted to be free and compulsory throughout India. While the present craftless education is only "a debauchery of the mind", the new type of craft-centred education would promote "the real, disciplined development of the mind resulting in conservation of the intellectual energy and indirectly also the spiritual".⁸ Boys and girls coming out of the basic schools at about the age of fourteen, if they have been properly instructed, should be "truthful, pure and healthy. They should be village-minded. Their brains and hands should

* *Harijan*, June 5, 1937.

have been equally developed. There would be no guile in them. Their intelligence would be keen but they would not be worried about earning money. They would be able to turn their hands to any honest task that came their way. They would not want to go into the cities. Having learnt the lessons of cooperation and service in the school, they would infect their surroundings with the same spirit. They would never be beggars or parasites."⁹

This is so far as basic education goes. After basic education a small proportion of the students go straight in for university education. Gandhi has not dealt with university education in detail, but contented himself with stating that such education should be a continuation of the same type of education as received in the basic schools, that university education should also be craft-centred and independent of Government finance, and that the mother tongue is to be the medium of instruction everywhere, the learning of foreign languages being optional.¹⁰ Gandhi, of course, wanted Hindi to be India's national language, and to be learnt as a compulsory language by all university students. On the whole, the scant and cursory writings of Gandhi on university education show that he does not attach any great importance to higher education or regard it as particularly necessary or useful. In the light of his ideas regarding the ideal society, this is only to be expected.

Gandhi believes that the new education suggested by him would play a central role in bringing about the establishment of the ideal society of his dream. In his own words :

"My plan to impart Primary Education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc. is thus conceived as the spear-head of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way toward eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom.

⁹ *Harijan*, September 8, 1946.

¹⁰ *Harijan*, October 2, 1937; August 25, 1946, and November 2, 1947.

And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of a bloody class war or a colossal capital expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands."¹¹

Gandhi's criticism of the modern system of education which is not based on bodily labour and centred round a craft is, it need hardly be argued, extreme and oversimplified. It is presumably on account of this extreme disbelief in modern education that a major aspect of the programme of non-cooperation with the Government formulated by Gandhi on the eve of the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-22 was the leaving of the schools and colleges by the students en masse—a move that was strongly opposed by Rabindranath Tagore as too negative and dangerous for the younger generation.¹²

Gandhi's view that education should be associated with bodily labour is not new. It has been advanced by a long line of thinkers from Rousseau to Dewey and Montessori, including such anarchist thinkers as Ruskin, Tolstoy and Kropotkin. But this view has been opposed by an equally powerful, perhaps more powerful, line of thinkers from Plato to Bertrand Russell who have emphasized the need for rigid intellectual discipline and the utmost intellectual progress. I would only like to state that what seems to be the original contribution of Gandhi are the suggestions that education should be centred, as far as possible, round a single universal craft, and that it should be self-financing even where very young children are involved. These views, to say the least, are highly controversial.¹³

As regards moral instruction—another controversial subject—my sympathies are with Rabindranath Tagore when he says: "Moral instruction . . . is a mechanical affair, like daily doses of sarsaparilla

¹¹ *Harijan*, October 9, 1937.

¹² See correspondence between Gandhi and Tagore, reproduced in *Gandhi Marg*, April 1961.

¹³ For a sympathetic criticism of these ideas see J. B. Kripalani: *The Latest Fad*, Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram, 1933. For a vigorous defence of these ideas see G. Ramanathan: *Education From Dewey to Gandhi*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, see also J. C. Kumarappa: *Education For Life*, Hindustan Publishing Co., Rajahmundry, 1952.

to an invalid, or prescribed diet for building up bonny babies, and it represents many difficulties. It cannot possibly be made attractive to a boy ; it either hurts him or goes over his head, and it makes him feel like a criminal in the dock. I consider moral instruction utter waste of time and effort, and I am frightened that good people should be so keen on it. It is as futile as it is disagreeable, and I cannot think of anything that does more harm to society."¹⁴

It seems to me that the educational ideas of Gandhi are vitally linked with his conception of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality and the ideal society of the first order representing these values, and stand or fall with the latter. It requires little effort to see that for the completely anarchistic ideal society, as we have discussed before, the *nayi talim* or new education advocated by Gandhi would be the most suitable and consistent with his own conception of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. If, however, one questions the desirability of Gandhi's ideal society on the ground that it is based on a simplistic conception of Non-violence (oversimplifying the problem of social conflict), a restricted conception of Freedom (negating creative self-expression) and an irrational conception of Equality (glorifying poverty), as I have done in this book, Gandhi's educational ideas would also fall to the ground.

SCIENCE

Although Gandhi includes the teaching of such elementary science as can be taught through a rudimentary craft in the syllabus of the basic schools, and says at least once that he is "not opposed to education even of the highest type attainable in the world",¹⁵ there can be little doubt that his bias is predominantly anti-scientific. One evidence of this is that in his almost endless writings he has said practically nothing on science, unlike other metaphysical thinkers of modern India like Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore, and his views on the subject have to be deduced indirectly from those on other related subjects. His concept of Freedom, as I have tried to show in Chapter IV, lacks one important dimension, namely, creative self-expression (such creative opportunities as are offered by a highly

¹⁴ Rabindranath Tagore : *Towards Universal Man*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961, p. 71.

¹⁵ *Harijan*, July 9, 1938.

decentralized economy being of an extremely limited character), and is broadly opposed to what may be called the scientific spirit. His concept of Equality, I have tried to explain in Chapter V, is based on the presupposition of voluntary poverty, and is thus opposed to technological and industrial progress which are the consequences of science. It is easy to see that in his ideal society of the first order, which is completely anarchistic, rural and handicraft-based, science would be stultified and possibly even deliberately restricted (the problem of social control in the ideal state will be discussed subsequently). Naturally, therefore, when in 1927, at the age of fifty-eight, he was taken to the Science Institute at Bangalore (by no means a breath-taking institution) and shown round some of the departments, Gandhi observed : "I was wondering where do I come in? There is no place here for a rustic like me who has to stand speechless in awe and wonderment. I am not in the mood to say much. All I can say is that all these huge laboratories and the electrical apparatus you see here are due to the labour, unwilling and forced, of millions . . . If we were to meet the villagers and to explain to them how we are utilizing their money on the buildings and plants which will never benefit them, but might perhaps benefit their posterity, they will not understand it. They will turn a cold shoulder. But we never take villagers into our confidence . . ." ¹⁶

We have seen in Chapter VIII that Gandhi is opposed to the application of chemical fertilizers on land, because in his opinion, which is contrary to all scientific theory and actual experience, this would reduce the fertility of the soil. In June, 1947, therefore, with independence only two months away, he called upon the Indian scientists to help increase the food production of the country without the use of artificial fertilizers. "What shall I say of the scientists?" he asked, "Are they giving their attention to growing more food, not again through the aid of artificial manures, but through the real scientific treatment of the soil and through a wise use of organic manure?" ¹⁷ without apparently realizing that not much scientific talent would anyway be required for the preparation of organic manure.

We have also seen in Chapter VI and Chapter VIII that in the first-order ideal society there would be no complicated machinery. Some such machinery would be retained under state control, in the

¹⁶ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 271.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. VIII, p. 2.

second-order ideal society, but only as a necessary evil, to be gradually abolished with the successive approximation of society to the first-order ideal. Hand-spinning or *khadi* would occupy the central position in the ideal society of both the orders, both as a craft and an instrument of bread-labour, and Gandhi describes it as "a science and a romance", which alone can "afford the fullest scope for satisfying the hunger of body, mind and soul".¹⁸ He observes that "scientific knowledge requires constant probing into the why and wherefore of every little process that you perform", and goes on to say that such knowledge can be fully utilized for the spinning wheel, which is thus in a position to satisfy the "scientific mind". Example: "When I first discovered the spinning wheel, it was purely through intuition. It was not backed by knowledge, so much so that I confused the *charkha* with the handloom. Later on, however, I tried to work out its possibilities . . . For instance, the question arose: why should the spindle be made of iron, and not of brass? Should it be thin or thick? What would be the proper thickness? We began with the mill spindles. Then, spindleholders used to be bamboo and wood. Later we came to leather and gut bearings. It was found that the spindles got easily bent and were difficult to straighten, so we tried to make them out of the knitting needles and ultimately of the umbrella wires. All this called for the exercise of the inventive faculty and scientific research."¹⁹ Gandhi's ahistorical approach to social questions is once more proved here by his obvious unawareness of the fact that the type of "scientific" problem discussed by him existed and used to be solved by primitive men long before what is called science ever came into existence.

But nowhere perhaps is Gandhi's anti-scientific bias more manifest than in his views on medical science. In *Hind Swaraj* he severely criticized modern medical science and observed that "doctors have almost unhinged us", and that "hospitals are institutions for propagating sin." He advised doctors who wanted to serve India that "rather than mending bodies, he should mend souls".²⁰ In a subsequent letter to a friend he declared medical science to be the "concentrated essence of black magic", quackery to be "infinitely preferable to what passes for high medical skill as such", and the hospitals to be "the instruments that the devil has been using for

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. IV, p. 119.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. VII, pp. 36-37. Italics introduced.

²⁰ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. X, pp. 35-36, 63.

his own purpose".²¹ These views, in one form or another, were reaffirmed by Gandhi periodically and held by him till the end of his life.²²

Gandhi's arguments against medical science can be briefly summarized as follows :

(i) It attaches undue importance to the body rather than the soul, which is infinitely more real than the body. Physical death is not such an important event as is supposed by medical science. The West attaches, says Gandhi, "an exaggerated importance to prolonging man's earthly existence".²³ As against this, his own opinion, expressed by him two weeks before India's independence, is this : "It is not for the dweller in the body to get the body cured anyhow—he who believes that he is nothing but body will wander to the ends of the earth in order to cure the body of its ills. But he who realizes that the soul is something apart from, though in the body, that it is imperishable in contrast to the perishable body, will not be perturbed nor mourn if the elementals fail. On the contrary, he will welcome death as a friend. He will become his own healer instead of seeking for medical men. He will live in the consciousness of the soul and look to the care, first and last, of the indweller."²⁴

(ii) It is inconsistent with Non-violence, partly on account of vivisection (which does not come under any of the categories of killing, discussed in Chapter III, regarded as justified by Gandhi), and partly because the modern medicines either contain or involve the taking of animal fat, alcohol, meat and other "forbidden" food.²⁵

(iii) It is expensive and, therefore, inaccessible to the poor. "If once we decide", Gandhi observes, "that what cannot be shared by the millions should be taboo for us, we are driven to nature as the only cure-all for the rich and the poor alike."²⁶ He was probably not aware of the elaborate system of social insurance that developed in practically all the Western countries at the end of the Second World War, under which the rich and the poor alike get free medical treatment.

²¹ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. I, p. 107.

²² *Ibid*, Vol. IV, p. 166; Vol. VII, pp. 78-83, 192.

²³ *Ibid*, p. 166.

²⁴ *Harijan*, June 29, 1947.

²⁵ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 166 ; *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. X, pp. 36, 63.

²⁶ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 78.

(iv) It is inseparably linked with machinery, industrialization and the modern civilization in general which Gandhi rejects in its entirety. In his general criticisms of modern medicine he speaks disapprovingly of "the microscope, X-rays and similar things" and of "the quinine, the emetin and the penicillin".²⁷ It should be borne in mind that he offers his criticisms of modern medicine, in *Hind Swaraj* and elsewhere, only as a part of his criticism of modern civilization.

Gandhi's own advocacy is for nature-cure as opposed to modern medicine. He not only practised nature-cure on himself, his wife and children,²⁸ but also on the inmates of every *ashrama* set up by him in South Africa and India, and on all those who would be willing to receive such treatment from him. During the last two years of his life he spent considerable time preaching and teaching nature-cure, especially to village people, a Nature Cure Clinic was set up at Poona under his patronage, and he even talked of setting up a nature cure university.²⁹

The principles of nature-cure are quite well-known, and I do not propose to discuss them here. They also lie behind Christian Science, to which Gandhi often referred approvingly. The basic idea is that the "five agencies of nature", namely, earth, water, ether, fire and wind, are to be used in various ways to cure all ailments.³⁰ In South Africa Gandhi had learnt Louis Kuhne's water treatment. *Return to Nature* by Just gave him significant ideas regarding earth treatment as well as dietetics.³¹ To all this he added his own ideas and methods evolved through a life-long process of experimentation. But his original contribution lies in prescribing *Ramanama*, or the chanting of the name of God, as the highest and best method of nature-cure. He refers to *Ramanama* as "the most effective weapon" and to the "efficacy of *Ramanama* as a cure for all disease". "The atom bomb", he declares, "is noth-

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 191.

²⁸ See M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, Part III, Ch. 22 and Part IV, Ch. 28.

²⁹ See, for example, Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, Chapter on "*Uruli Kanchan*" the name of a village near Poona where Gandhi worked and spoke extensively on nature-cure in 1946.

³⁰ For a collection of Gandhi's writings on nature-cure see M. K. Gandhi : *Nature Cure*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. 1954.

³¹ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, Part III, Ch. 22, Part IV, Ch. 7.

ing compared with it. This power is capable of removing all pain."³²

But while Gandhi would replace modern medicine by nature-cure in an ideal society, he realizes that this may not be immediately possible. He advises his nature-cure followers that instead of trying to replace all the physicians and surgeons immediately, they should try to spread the "original training" required for nature-cure and create the necessary literature.³³ Thus we again find an ideal society of the second order where modern medical science and nature-cure co-exist, and an ideal society of the first order in which the former is completely replaced by the latter.

I do not think it is necessary to argue in favour of science so late in the day. I would only like to make two comments on Gandhi's indubitably anti-scientific bias. First, Gandhi's opposition to science is consistent with the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality as understood by him, and is, as I have said before, a natural corollary of them. Gandhi would, of course, say, as he has in fact said on a few occasions, that he is not opposed to such science as is beneficial to man, but is only opposed to science that is detrimental to human welfare. There would be very little controversy about the desirability of science serving the cause of human welfare, but there would be hardly any agreement between Gandhi and most other modern thinkers regarding what constitutes human welfare. It seems quite obvious to me that those who regard science as a factor which contributes to human welfare, would be logically led to define Justice and the ultimate values constituting it in a manner rather different from Gandhi's. Secondly, Gandhi is alone among contemporary Indian thinkers in his opposition to science. Not only did the materialist M. N. Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru advocate rapid scientific progress for India, even the highly metaphysical thinkers like Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore regarded scientific and technological progress as an essential precondition to real "spiritual" progress.³⁴

³² *Harijan*, March 24, 1946 ; October 13, 1946 ; June 29, 1947 ; Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 78-83, 191-92. See also M. K. Gandhi : *Ramanama*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958.

³³ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 192.

³⁴ Sri Aurobindo : *Life Divine*, Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1947, Vol. I, pp. 18-20 ; Rabindranath Tagore : *op. cit.*, Ch. on "Unity of Education".

SEX

In many ways Gandhi's ideas on sex in its broadest sense are rather liberal compared with contemporary belief and practice in India. An advocate of the complete equality of the sexes, Gandhi allowed both male and female workers, married as well as unmarried, to join and live in all the *ashramas* founded by him in South Africa and India. "I passionately desire the utmost freedom for our women", he declared, and observed that India's degradation was due to the status of inferiority imposed on her women. He demanded that women must have equal status, political, legal and social, with men. He wanted women to "affect the deliberations of the nation" and a *harijan* woman to be India's first President. He urged women to shed their inferiority complex which, according to him, is the result of "man's interested teaching that she is inferior to him". An opponent of the purdah, child marriage and the dowry system, he was an ardent supporter of the remarriage of widows. He had an open mind on the question of co-education, supported the free choice of mates by the marriage partners (although he advised restraint and respect for social conventions on their part), and even justified divorce if it was necessary on moral grounds.³⁵ He drew hundreds of thousands of Indian women into the various movements led by him and his countrywide programme of constructive work, and more than any other factor in recent Indian history, his influence was perhaps responsible for the emancipation of women and their elevation to a position of dignity and respect in a very real sense and on a lasting basis.

With regard to intersexual behaviour, however, Gandhi's standards are rather strict. He would take a very serious view of the slightest misdemeanour on the part of his workers with regard to the opposite sex. A typical example is provided by two incidents that took place in 1914 in the Phoenix settlement founded by Gandhi. Gandhi was away at Johannesburg when he received the news that two young boys in the settlement had misbehaved towards a twenty-year-old girl. He rushed back to Phoenix and started a fast for seven days. The girl fasted with Gandhi, took off all her jewellery, put on a dress of mourning, and had her hair cropped short "as a

³⁵ M. K. Gandhi : *Women and Social Injustice*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958 ; N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, Ch. 18.

sign of guilt and remorse".³⁶ Soon afterwards there was another incident in which his own son was involved, and Gandhi undertook another fast, this time for fourteen days.³⁷

But the most important part of Gandhi's ideas on sex is that relating to sexual intercourse and continence. His views on the subject may be briefly summarized as follows³⁸:

(i) The sex act is not a necessary act like sleeping or eating. The act of generation sustains the world, and since the world represents God and his glory, the sex act should be strictly controlled in order to ensure ordered growth of life on earth. Sexual intercourse should, therefore, be resorted to strictly for the purpose of procreating, and not for the satisfaction of carnal desire. The object of marriage is not indulgence in sensuality, but spiritual union through the physical. Marital love is a stepping-stone to divine or universal love. Birth-control is necessary and desirable, but through sexual restraint and not through artificial means, the use of which amounts to immorality.

(ii) Complete continence is a necessary condition for perfect self-control. The Yogic and Tantric traditions of India believe that the conservation of the seminal fluid leads to great physical and mental powers, radiant beauty, influence, strength of character, and bliss. Gandhi accepts this traditional idea and lays great stress on *brahmacharya*, which literally means "the way of God", but in a narrow and popular sense means continence. He goes to the extent of saying that, since a *brahmachari* "never loses his vital fluid", but goes on increasing and conserving it day by day, he "will, therefore, never become old in the accepted sense and his intellect will never be dimmed". Complete continence is not, however, possible without other related disciplines, including those mentioned in Chapter III, and *brahmacharya*, therefore, involves, in addition to freedom from all passions, "control in thought, word and action, of all the senses at all times and in all places". A rigid control over the mind has also, therefore, to be established. Even when the sense-organs may be under control, the mind has a tendency

³⁶ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 150.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Many other instances of Gandhi fasting for the same reason can be found in Tendulkar : *op. cit.*

³⁸ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, Part III, Chs. 6-8 ; *Hindu Dharma*, Section Five ; *Birth-Control*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959 ; N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 242-49, 273-74.

to stray and has to be thoroughly disciplined. When the mind cannot be controlled, it is better to have the sexual desire satisfied in the normal way than to repress it, in order to avoid other complications.

For attaining such *brahmacharya* Gandhi recommends three successive steps. The first step is the realization of the necessity for *brahmacharya*. The second step involves the gradual control of the senses. For this purpose it is essential to regulate one's diet and take only such food as do not stimulate physical passions. Moreover, only "clean things" must be seen and the eyes must be closed before anything unclean. "It is thus a sign of polite breeding to walk with one's eyes towards the ground and not wandering about from object to object. A *brahmachari* will likewise hear nothing obscene or unclean, smell no strong, stimulating things. The smell of clean earth is far sweeter than the fragrance of artificial scents and essences. Let the aspirant to *brahmacharya* also keep his hands and feet engaged in all the waking hours in healthful activity. Let him also fast occasionally." The third step is to have "clean companions" in the form of "clean friends" and "clean books". And the fourth and final step is prayer and the repetition of *Ramanama* with all one's heart regularly everyday.³⁹ Only three weeks before India's independence, he described *Ramanama* as "the straight way" and the "golden means" to the attainment of *brahmacharya*, and declared that "the orthodox aids to *brahmacharya* pale into insignificance before *Ramanama*".⁴⁰

Gandhi himself adopted *brahmacharya*, after consulting his wife, at the age of thirty-seven, i.e. in 1906, when he was in South Africa and had four children. During the rest of his life he claimed to have observed *brahmacharya*, especially in its aspect of complete continence. He mixed very freely with women, and in advanced age often leaned on the shoulders of young women when he walked. But doubts crept into his mind regarding the degree of his attainment of *brahmacharya* when communal riots broke out on a massive scale in different parts of India in 1946. He regarded this as a personal failure and attributed it to his own imperfections as a leader. While touring the riot-affected Noakhali district of Bengal, he felt impelled to test the extent of his *brahmacharya* in a manner approved

³⁹ *Young India*, April 29, 1926.

⁴⁰ *Harijan*, June 22, 1947. See also M. K. Gandhi : *Ramanama*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958.

by the Tantric tradition. After openly declaring his intention to his close associates and the general public, he started sharing the same bed with his nineteen-year-old grand niece, Manu Gandhi. The idea was that if any sexual desire was awakened in Gandhi or the girl (the traditional belief is that a woman becomes desireless in the presence of a true *brahmachari*), that would be a proof of Gandhi's imperfections as a *brahmachari*, which in turn would presumably explain his failures to a certain extent. The experiment was said to have been successfully carried out until Gandhi left Noakhali; but some of his followers left him in disgust during this period.⁴¹

It is sometimes argued that Gandhi attaches an exaggerated importance to sex and that this is due to a guilt complex regarding sex developed by him early in life. Gandhi was married as a child at the age of thirteen, but confesses in his Autobiography that even at that young age he was excessively passionate. A great shock was received by him at the age of sixteen. He used to nurse his ailing father before going to bed, but his mind would be hovering round his bedroom. One night, at about 11 p.m. he was relieved from the nursing by his uncle, and was glad to be able to go. He went straight to bed and woke up his young sleeping wife. In a few minutes the servant knocked on the door and informed him that his father had expired. Now, in this incident, Gandhi sees a double shame. First, he was unable to be with his dying father on account of his lust. In his own words, "It is a blot I have never been able to efface or forget, and I have always thought that, although my devotion to my parents knew no bounds and I would have given up anything for it, yet it was weighed and found unpardonably wanting because my mind was at the same moment in the grip of lust. I have, therefore, always regarded myself as a lustful, though a faithful, husband. It took me long to get free from the shackles of lust, and I had to pass through many ordeals before I could overcome it."⁴² Secondly, Gandhi's wife at this time was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. The child that was born soon after his father's death died within three or four days, a fact which Gandhi perhaps rightly ascribes to his own lust.⁴³

The narration in such terms by the mature Gandhi of an experience in his early life has led several commentators to discover a guilt

⁴¹ Pyarelall : *op. cit.*, Vol. I ; N. K. Bose : *My Days with Gandhi*, Nishana, Calcutta, 1953.

⁴² M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, Part I, Ch. 9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

complex regarding sex in his subconscious. "So deep was his psychological scar", one sympathetic commentator has observed with reference to Gandhi's own narration of his early experience, "and below the depth of the Hindu mystique of celibacy, the scar became a well of a guilt complex. No wonder he began to regard *brahmacharya*, celibacy, an overriding virtue."⁴⁴ It seems to me, however, that this argument clearly belongs to the realm of conjecture, and while there may be an element of truth in it, it is impossible to make any categorical statement regarding the presence of a guilt complex in Gandhi's subconscious, more so to declare it to be the cause of his powerful advocacy of *brahmacharya*. In any case, such an explanation regarding the motive behind Gandhi's ideas on sex would tell us nothing about the validity or otherwise of these ideas, which stand or fall on their own merits.

It is easy to see that the central point in Gandhi's views on sex is the belief that the "conservation" of the seminal fluid does lead to the consequences described in the Yogic and Tantric traditions. The morality or otherwise of the sex act when it is not necessary for procreation would seem to depend, in Gandhi's thought, on whether the sex act by itself is conducive to or detracts from the realization of the ultimate values. The traditional theory, accepted by Gandhi, is that the sex act is necessarily a form of dissipation which leads to a weakening of body, mind and character, while continence, since it means the conservation and accumulation within the body of the "life-giving fluid", leads to an integral heightening of personality and character while purifying the body and mind at the same time, and thus facilitates the attainment of the ultimate values. If this theory is wrong, the sex act by itself cannot be shown to be immoral, at least from the point of view of the tradition on which Gandhi bases his arguments, and his entire approach to the question of sex would be greatly weakened.

Now, the evidence of physiology on the subject seems quite clear. The seminal fluid is regularly created and destroyed within the male body just as the ovum is periodically created and destroyed within the female body. Neither the male seminal fluid nor the female ova are conserved and accumulated within the human body, with such consequences as are described in the Indian tradition. The

⁴⁴ Krishnalal Shridharani : *War Without Violence*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962, p. 223.

traditional belief is obviously based on mistaken and somewhat primitive notions regarding the supposed "conservation" of the male spermatozoa, and an almost total ignorance of the process of conception, in which the female ovum is not supposed to play any "life-giving" role. On the other hand, while medical science admits that any kind of excess, whether mental or physical, weakens the body and mind, it regards the sex act not only as a normal phenomenon, but also as necessary, especially at a young age, for the physical and mental development of man. This conclusion of medical science is also borne out by the negative empirical evidence that the celebrities of the world have not turned out to be the leaders of mankind. It is for this reason that certain physician-sociologists have in recent years advocated pre-marital sexual relations between young men and women, marriage being often impossible at a young age, when the sex urge is the strongest, due to various reasons including the economic.⁴⁵ Whether the sex urge can be "sublimated" into an absorbing life-purpose or various other channels, is an entirely different question that has nothing to do with the morality or otherwise of the sex act with which Gandhi is primarily concerned. In short, Gandhi's views on sex, like those on many other social and political questions, are grossly oversimplified, as the evidence of medical science, such studies as the Kinsey Report and the works of Freud and other specialists on the subject would indicate.

FOOD

Gandhi's views on food constitute a vital link between some of his social and political ideas. The non-killing of lower forms of animal life for the satisfaction of man's appetite is, as we have seen in Chapter III, an essential principle of Non-violence. Such killing is not essential for man's existence, and is, therefore, avoidable, while the killing of plant and vegetable life is altogether unavoidable. With Gandhi and other believers in nature-cure, moreover, dietetics and health go hand in hand, as I have already explained, and a special kind of food is thus closely linked with good health and the cure of diseases. Thirdly, control over the diet is, according to Gandhi, as we have seen, necessary for *brahmacharya* which is supposed to be essential for the realization of the ultimate values.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Kenneth Walker and Peter Fletcher : *Sex and Society*, Penguin Books, 1955.

Such control involves the giving up of all stimulating food and drink, including animal food, alcohol and other drugs. Finally, since a successful *satyagraha* requires a qualified *satyagrahi*, as we shall see in Chapter XII, and a qualified *satyagrahi* must have all the disciplines mentioned in Chapter III, including Non-violence and *brahmacharya*, food assumes a vital significance for the actual or potential *satyagrahi*, and is thus fundamental to *satyagraha* itself.

In formulating his views on food Gandhi came under the influence not only of the Indian, especially the Vaishnava tradition of *ahimsa*, but such Western works on the subject as Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism*, Howard Williams' *The Ethics of Diet* and Dr. Anna Kingsford's *The Perfect Way in Diet*.⁴⁶ He made numerous experiments in dietetics himself and came to what he considered to be important conclusions.⁴⁷

Gandhi argues that from the biological point of view man is a herbivorous and not a carnivorous animal. What is perhaps more important, from the moral point of view, for the reasons explained above, only vegetarian food can be recommended for man. Not only are eggs to be excluded from such vegetarian diet, but even such animal products as milk, butter and ghee. An ideal vegetarian diet, says, Gandhi, should consist only of fruits and nuts. He himself was unable to give up milk and ghee, and this fact troubled his conscience all his life. But although Gandhi was such a strong advocate of strict vegetarianism, he advised his followers not to start a crusade against the non-vegetarians, partly because this would go against the spirit of Non-violence, but also because first priority must be given, as he insisted, to the far greater forms of violence which existed in human society than the taking of non-vegetarian food. He even permitted fish to be cooked in his *ashrama* when fish-eaters were present there, although there does not seem to be any evidence of such relaxation in the case of meat. Gandhi would, however, insist on vegetarian food being the ideal diet for man both from the biological and the moral points of view, and in the ideal society vegetarian food, if not simply fruits and nuts, would presumably constitute the human diet.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, p. 35.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, Part I, Chs. 15-17, Part IV, Chs. 6, 27.

⁴⁸ M. K. Gandhi : *Diet and Diet Reform*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1949 ; *Key To Health*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1948 ; *Hindu Dharma*, Section Seven ; N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 247, 252-53.

CHAPTER XI

CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME : THE DILEMMAS OF UTOPIAN ENGINEERING

I HAVE so far postponed the discussion of a problem which is vital to the entire social and political thought of Gandhi, namely, the problem of social transformation. In his *Thesis on Feuerbach* Marx had argued that the real task of social philosophers was to change the world, rather than to interpret it ; and yet he found it necessary to base his prescription of the class struggle and revolution on an interpretation of historical and social evolution in terms of dialectical materialism. However defective the Marxian interpretation may be, there is an evolutionary approach in it which has a powerful appeal to modern social scientists, and has enabled the Marxists to pass off their revolutionary doctrine as a "science". And it is the absence of an evolutionary perspective, regarded as a grave omission by social scientists since the Darwinian revolution, that seems to deprive Gandhian thought of much of its rational appeal. Like Marx, Gandhi is also interested primarily in the problem of future social transformation, but unlike the former, he does not make any attempt to analyse the causes and processes of social change as it actually takes place.

The transformation of society, according to Gandhi, raises two main problems, namely, the manner in which one set of social institutions and relations is to be gradually replaced by another, and the way in which contradictions and conflicts that would arise in the process are to be resolved. His answer to the first problem is the Constructive Programme, i.e. a programme for the construction of new institutions and values, which is theoretically perennial and universal, but drawn up by him in some detail with special reference to the given Indian context ; and his answer to the second is *satyagraha*, which includes, as we shall see in the next chapter, simple persuasion in the beginning and various types of non-violent resistance in the end. The Constructive Programme and *satyagraha*

are thus the two closely interrelated means of social control¹ in the social and political thought of Gandhi. In this chapter I shall confine myself to an analysis and examination of the Constructive Programme, leaving the question of *satyagraha* to be discussed in detail in the next few chapters.

The Constructive Programme, which consists of creating a set of highly decentralized socio-economic institutions, provides, to Gandhi's mind, the infra-structure of the just society of his conception. Justice is consummated to the maximum practicable extent at each step of the constructive effort involved in the Programme. It is easy to see, in the first place, the relationship between the Constructive Programme and Non-violence. The Programme is based on the bread-labour of large masses of men, and, therefore, the result of love, cooperation and non-acquisitiveness, and thus free from exploitation and other forms of violence. A highly decentralized socio-economic structure based on bread-labour is necessarily non-violent, according to Gandhi's thinking. Such a socio-economic structure, moreover, can alone make the non-violent defence of private and social property possible ; for Gandhi insisted all his life that whatever was acquired through violence could not be defended through non-violent action.² Industrial and centralized states and societies, according to Gandhi, are (as we have seen before) necessarily based on violence in one form or another ; and, therefore, neither individual nor social property can be defended in such societies through non-violent resistance. The Constructive Programme would gradually lead, through a massive but non-violent constructive endeavour, to the construction of a highly decentra-

¹ The term "social control" has been used here in the broad sense of any kind of consciously directed social change attempted by individuals or groups. It is frequently used in this sense, and would include not only economic planning by the state and revolution or war, but also their Gandhian counterparts, the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha*. Thus one authority on the subject divides social control into three broad categories, one of which is "creative or constructive, directed towards social change believed to be beneficial" ; he also includes non-violence and "non-resistance" as important means of social control (Joseph S. Roucek : *Social Control*, Van Nostrand, 1962, pp. 8, 316-17). Another authority includes "social reform" and education, as well as "non-violent coercion" (of which he used the Gandhian *satyagrahas* as an example) within the scope of social control (L. L. Bernard : *Social Control*, Macmillan, New York, 1939, Chs. 14, 21, and 22).

² N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, pp. 72, 90, 154.

lized socio-economic infra-structure which alone could be defended, both at the private and the social levels, through *satyagraha*. Freedom is also assured by the Constructive Programme, in the first place, because the individual and collective effort prescribed in it is voluntary and creative in character (I have already argued, however, that the creative Freedom provided by a preconceived scheme of highly decentralized institutions is a seriously restricted type of Freedom), secondly, because it makes the masses and their institutions free from the control of the state or any other superior authority. And since the Constructive Programme is free from either the propensity or the opportunity for private accumulation and exploitation, and is based on and conducive to love and cooperation, Equality would also necessarily follow from it, so far as Gandhi's own thinking is concerned.

Logically, the acceptance and completion of the Constructive Programme by a whole nation would lead to the achievement of *Poorna Swaraj* or complete independence. As a matter of fact, as Gandhi insists, "Its wholesale fulfilment is complete independence." But it is rather unlikely, he says, that an entire population would accept the Constructive Programme as a whole, and there is, therefore, the probability of varying degrees of opposition to it, either from the government or from sectional interests or individuals affected by the programme, leading to conflicts and contradictions within the social system, which would have to be resolved non-violently. This is where *satyagraha* comes in. It is not the main task of social and political workers to launch *satyagrahas* everywhere and to be on the look-out for the opportunity of starting one when there are none. Their main task is to build *swaraj* through a massive constructive effort, for, as Gandhi observes, "It will not drop from heaven all of a sudden one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort". But if in the course of this constructive endeavour they meet with opposition from any quarter, they will resort to *satyagraha*. Thus constructive workers are to play the double role of the builders of the ideal society and a reserve army of non-violent resisters.³

This is the broad theoretical position. In practice, however, Gandhi was working in a given concrete situation which required

³ M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1948, pp. 5-7, 21-22, 28-29.

the formulation of a concrete Constructive Programme suited to the needs of the situation and the genius of the Indian people. At the time when Gandhi was organizing a massive countrywide Constructive Programme and leading several mass *satyagrahas* and innumerable local *satyagrahas* against the British Government and various private vested interests, India was a vast overpopulated country, overwhelmingly agricultural and abysmally poor, with a huge volume of unemployment and underemployment, oppressed politically and exploited economically as a colony by the mightiest imperial power that the world has ever seen. Almost entirely illiterate, the people were dangerously divided within themselves by such social evils as casteism, communalism, untouchability and all its subsidiary manifestations, labour and peasant unrest and linguistic controversies. The Constructive Programme drawn up by Gandhi, the *satyagraha* movements organized by him, and the relationship between the two that actually developed in India under his leadership, naturally bore the mark of this given situation. But this should not blind us to the fact that the Constructive Programme is in reality an abstract and conceptual programme based on general principles, much wider in meaning and broader in application than that drawn up for the given Indian situation. In other words, the Constructive Programme has to be viewed both as a general and universal programme of social reconstruction and a concrete scheme of work dictated by situational compulsions.

The general programme of constructive work follows from what has been discussed in Part II. Gandhi's ideal society of the first order is, as we have seen, a completely rural society in a state of pure anarchy, in which there is a more or less complete absence not only of the state, government, parliament and political parties, but also of all complicated machinery, advanced science and technology, the modern type of education, labour-capital and peasant-landlord conflict, and of such social evils as casteism, untouchability and communalism. The horizontal organization of this society rests on oceanic circles of independent and interdependent villages, and the vertical organization on *varna* or the four-fold hereditary occupational division without any social, or for that matter, economic inequality involved. The economic relations in this society are harmonized and equalized through the institution of Trusteeship, and the political and social relations by love and cooperation. This society, representing as it does Gandhi's conception of the ultimate

values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, achieves *sarvodaya* (equal and full development of all) or *Poorna Swaraj* (complete independence for all) or *Ram Raj*, i.e. the Kingdom of Heaven.

Since the first-order ideal society is to be approached through the practical or second-order ideal society by a process of successive approximation based on the Constructive Programme (and *satyagraha*), it is necessary to find out, in order to understand the nature of the Constructive Programme, those elements in the second-order ideal society which are common with, and to be expanded and developed into, the ideal society of the first-order. Now, the second-order ideal society is characterized, as we have seen, not only by the existence of the state, government, parliament and political parties, but also by a considerable volume of heavy and large-scale industries under state ownership and control, and, therefore, naturally also science, technology and modern education to a considerable extent. Yet the predominant characteristic of the ideal society of the second-order is a vast rural sector (existing side by side with the small urban sector) which is characterized by village *swaraj* and handicrafts. This is the characteristic that Gandhi wants to be developed, as we have seen, into something closely approximating the ideal society of the first-order. Village reconstruction is thus the link between the two orders of ideal society. It is also the link between the second-order ideal society and the existing reality of a predominantly agricultural society with which Gandhi was primarily concerned. Hence village reconstruction is the substance of the Constructive Programme.

The Constructive Programme which Gandhi suggested for India had been developing since 1922 when, after the suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement, he retired from active politics for about eight years and devoted himself to the organization and implementation of a programme of constructive work, mainly based on *khadi*, throughout the country. Since then he wrote incessantly in *Young India* and *Harijan* on constructive work;⁴ but it was only in 1941 that he first presented his concrete programme for the benefit of the members of the Congress in the form of a booklet entitled *Constructive Programme : Its Meaning and Place*. It was revised by him in 1945, and in the following year he added one more item to it, namely, "improvement of cattle", on the suggestion of

⁴ See M. K. Gandhi : *Village Swaraj*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1963.

one of his close associates. The Constructive Programme, as suggested by Gandhi in this booklet, may be summarized as follows in the same order as followed by him⁵ :

1. Establishment of communal unity through the abolition of all distinctions between the communities, specially the Hindus and Muslims, regarding food, drink, etc. at the railway stations, schools and colleges, and the cultivation of "an unbreakable heart unity" through personal example.

2. Abolition of untouchability by influencing the orthodox Hindus through moral appeal. The question of untouchability should not be viewed as a political question, but as one of the life and death of Hinduism. Every caste Hindu should befriend them and break their isolation — "such isolation as perhaps the world has never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnesses in India".

3. Introduction of prohibition through the efforts of doctors, women and students and by the opening of "recreation-booths where the tired labourer will rest his limbs, get healthy and cheap refreshments, and find suitable games".

4. Establishment of *khadi* production centres in each of the 700,000 villages of India, covering every family and every aspect of the production and distribution process from the growing of cotton to the marketing of the finished products. This would not only bring economic Freedom to India's famished millions, but also political Freedom by making them independent of the government. Gandhi founded the All India Spinners' Association for organizing and directing this massive spinning activity throughout the country. But it is not enough to produce *khadi* ; it is more important to develop the *khadi* mentality, namely, the urge for the "decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessities of life" and complete Freedom from the control of the government, whether foreign or national. Spinning as bread-labour and a form of meditation also purifies the body and mind of the spinner and leads to his spiritual progress. It is an aid to *brahmacharya*, and, therefore, to the perfection of the worker as a potential *satyagrahi*. In addition to being the central point in the new scheme of education, *khadi* is also a great unifier and equalizer. "Imagine the unifying and educative

⁵ The revised edition of the booklet, along with the new addition, was published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, in 1948. The previous reference, and all subsequent references to it are based on this edition.

effect", says Gandhi, "of the whole nation simultaneously taking part in the processes up to spinning! Consider the levelling effect of the bond of common labour between the rich and the poor!"⁶

5. Development of other village industries like hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning and oil-pressing. "All should make it a point of honour to use only village articles whenever and wherever available. Given the demand there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages. When we have become village-minded, we will not want imitations of the West or machine-made products, but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of a new India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown".

6. Improvement of village sanitation which was practically non-existent in India.

7. Introduction of new or basic education in every Indian village in order to transform village children into model villagers.

"Congressmen who want to build up the structure of *Swaraj* from its very foundation dare not neglect the children."

8. Organization of adult education throughout the country, which means "true political education of the adult by word of mouth". Without such adult education there can be no *swaraj*.

9. Emancipation of women. This is a part of the Constructive Programme, because "though *satyagraha* has automatically brought India's women out of their darkness, as nothing else could have in such an incredibly short space of time", women had not yet become equal partners of men in the fight for *swaraj* and at home. The constructive effort to elevate women to their natural dignity and equality with men must begin with one's own home.

10. Education in health and hygiene, which though related with basic education and village sanitation, is a separate category of constructive work, and relates to personal care for one's body and mind. This involves a detailed programme including thinking the purest thoughts, breathing the freshest air, establishing a balance between physical and mental work, standing and sitting erect, being neat and clean, and control over the quality and quantity of food.

11. Development of the provincial languages of India and the abolition of English.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14. For a detailed picture of Gandhi's programme of *khadi* see M. K. Gandhi : *Khadi, Why and How*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959.

12. Development of Hindi mixed with Urdu, that is, Hindustani, as the national language of India.

13. Establishment of economic Equality which is the "master-key to non-violent Independence". Every Congressman, as the harbinger of the social revolution, must "ask himself what he has done towards the attainment of economic equality".

14. Organization of the peasantry for the improvement of their condition and the achievement of their rights through non-violent means. While there should be a department of the Congress to look after the specific problems of the peasants, they should not be used for power politics and, hence, there should be no competition to organize them into rival all-India organizations with a political stance.

15. Organization of labour with a non-political purpose on a local basis. Gandhi had himself organized the Ahmedabad Labour Union and regarded it as the model for constructive workers. About this union he said : "Ahmedabad Labour Union is a model for all India to copy. Its basis is non-violence, pure and simple. It has never had a set-back in its career. It has gone on from strength to strength without fuss and without show. It has its hospital, its school for the children of the mill hands, its classes for adults, its own printing press and khadi depot, and its own residential quarters. Almost all the hands are voters and decide the fate of elections. They came on the voters' list at the instance of the Provincial Congress Committee. The organization has never taken part in party politics of the Congress. It influences the municipal policy of the city. It has to its credit very successful strikes which were wholly non-violent. Millowners and labour have governed their relations largely through voluntary arbitration. If I had my way, I would regulate all the labour organizations of India after the Ahmedabad model."⁷

16. Upliftment of the *adivasis* or aboriginal tribes.

17. Service and rehabilitation of the lepers.

18. Organization of student service on a non-political basis. Students must not take part in party politics or political strikes.⁸

⁷ M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme*, p. 23.

⁸ During the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-22 Gandhi gave a call to the students to leave their schools and colleges and join the Non-cooperation Movement. It seems that this call was prompted partly by Gandhi's dislike for modern education and partly by the fact that the Non-cooperation Movement

"They must all do sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner . . . They will be khadi-users all through and use village products to the exclusion of all analogous things, foreign or machine-made . . . They will cultivate real friendship with students of other faiths and with Harijans as if they were their own kith and kin". They would also have to follow many rules of discipline laid down by Gandhi in detail.

19. Improvement of cattle. Gandhi regarded the respect of the Hindus for the cow as an expression of Non-violence with regard to sub-human forms of life, and was, therefore, in favour of "cow protection".⁹ But he was also much concerned about the cruel treatment meted out to the cattle in India and their poor quality, and regarded "cow protection" as symbolic of the need for the general improvement of Indian cattle. Although he urged the Indian Muslims to give up cow-slaughter voluntarily out of respect for Hindu sentiment, what he included in the Constructive Programme was the wider problem of the protection and improvement of cattle.

Needless to say, the entire effort of the Constructive Programme is to be voluntary and independent of the government and parliament. The whole idea behind the Constructive Programme is the anarchist conception of the gradual replacement of the state and Government by autonomous popular institutions constructed voluntarily by the people. The Constructive Programme is, therefore, an extra-legislative and purely voluntary programme.

It is easy to see that the programme summarized above has not been drafted with a great deal of thought or with proper intellectual discipline. For example, the construction of the political institutions of village self-government like the Indian *panchayat*, on which Gandhi lays so much emphasis generally,¹⁰ has been left out of this

was not party politics or a political strike in the usual sense of the term. Yet, however, Gandhi did not repeat this call afterwards at any stage of the Freedom Movement. "In the heyday of non-cooperation", he says, "... they were invited to leave their schools and colleges. Some professors and students who responded to the Congress call have remained steadfast and gained much for the country and themselves. The call has not been repeated, for there is no atmosphere for it". (*Ibid.*, p. 25). It may be noted here that the call of 1920 was strongly opposed by many Indian educationists and thinkers including Rabindranath Tagore.

⁹ M. K. Gandhi : *How to Serve the Cow*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959.

¹⁰ See, for example, M. K. Gandhi : *Village Swaraj*, Ch. 12.

programme. The Constructive Programme loses much of its significance without these vital institutions, and it could not have been Gandhi's intention to omit them from the scope of constructive work. On the other hand, such a general objective as the establishment of Equality has been included in the programme, although no specific constructive activity has been suggested (this is only natural, because Equality, like Freedom and Non-violence, is a general objective to be achieved by the whole of the Constructive Programme and by *satyagraha*, and not a specific constructive project).

Secondly, since the programme has been drawn up in the Indian context, items included in it as well as the order of priorities in many ways reflect the needs of a given situation and not the general and essential characteristics of the Constructive Programme as an instrument of social control. But since my purpose here is to examine the significance of the Constructive Programme as a general instrument of social control, rather than to examine the merits of each item on the Indian programme in relation to the specific Indian problem concerned, I shall concentrate on the essential features of the programme alone. For doing so, I shall take the Indian programme as the basis, distinguish its general and essential features from the specific and relatively inessential ones, and then concentrate on the former, making such additions and alterations as may be necessary.

The items on the programme summarized above may be divided into three different categories. Items number (2), (11), (12) and (16) refer to specific Indian questions which are not directly related to the role of the Constructive Programme in Gandhian social and political thought, and we, therefore, leave them out of our discussion. Items number (1), (3), (6), (8), (9), (10), (17), (18) and (19), though not altogether unrelated to the Constructive Programme in general, are not central to it and need not be included in the analysis that follows (the problems to which the items in these two categories refer have, however, mostly been discussed in Part II). We are thus left with items number (4), (5), (7), (13), (14) and (15). We take away from this list item number (13), namely, economic Equality and substitute construction of the political institutions of village government for it, for the reasons stated above, and we have the essential features of the Gandhian Constructive Programme as a general instrument of social control. Briefly, this programme, which we have earlier identified as one of the village reconstruction, amounts to the organization of (i) political institutions of village

swaraj like *panchayats*, (ii) *khadi* and other village industries as the economic basis of village *swaraj*, (iii) basic education as the intellectual and moral basis of village *swaraj*, and (iv) non-political peasant and labour associations as the organizational basis of village *swaraj*. Autonomous village governments, constructed after the model of the Indian *panchayats*, will ultimately replace centralized governments and parliaments, and possibly even the state, the village industries will replace the heavy and large-scale industries, basic education will replace modern education, and the local and non-political peasant and labour associations will presumably not only replace the political parties, but also bring about the institution of Trusteeship. Although Gandhi does not include any concrete measure regarding the transformation of the existing Indian caste system into the four hereditary occupations, presumably the labour and peasant unions will be merged in the first-order ideal society with the *varna* organization of the Shudras. The labour unions, moreover, will be composed of craftsmen and not industrial labour in the modern sense, since no modern industries would exist in the ideal society of the first-order. My purpose here is to examine the extent to which this essential, and to Gandhi's mind universal, Constructive Programme can in fact be expected to bring about the gradual and phased, but radical social transformation envisaged by Gandhi, or at any rate, something approximating it. I shall desist from making any value judgment of the first-order ideal society or its individual features, since I have already done so in Part II, but concentrate on the inner consistency and feasibility of the utopian engineering involved in the Constructive Programme.

One of the major difficulties about the Constructive Programme is that it would hardly have any applicability in societies which are already highly industrialized. In such societies most of the villages have already become towns, even more sophisticated village industries than *khadi* and the others mentioned by Gandhi have given place to modern industries, and modern education occupies the whole field. Some political and economic decentralization has taken place in some of these societies, and more is often advocated, but political decentralization has either taken place or is envisaged through parliamentary legislation rather than through extra-parliamentary popular effort, and economic decentralization if and only when it is economically viable and competitive. Independent peasant and labour unions have developed in many of these societies,

but they have mostly been organized on a national basis, the primary reason being that the problems involved are often of a national character, and even when they are not, local resistance is not always sufficient for the rectification of local grievances. Obviously, it would be practically impossible even to make a beginning with the Gandhian type of Constructive Programme in the highly industrialized societies.

Similarly, how will the Constructive Programme, it may be asked, function in a highly regimented society governed by a dictatorship, especially a party dictatorship which ruthlessly implements a totalitarian programme totally opposed to the Constructive Programme envisaged by Gandhi? Where there is no effective authority except the central authority, no industries except heavy and large-scale industries or such small-scale industries as the central authority may develop under its control, no agriculture which is not large-scale and highly mechanized, no education except a technology-based and politically regimented education, no peasant or labour organizations except those which exist as mere transmission belts between the party and the people, and where there is no Freedom to oppose the system at any point, how should the Constructive Programme begin? Gandhi's answer would of course be *satyagraha*. But there is no sure success for *satyagraha*, as we shall see in Chapter XVI, against a ruthless dictatorship.

The conclusion seems inevitable that the Constructive Programme can be rationally envisaged only for societies which are predominantly, if not wholly, agricultural and handicraft-based to start with, and where there is enough Freedom for such constructive effort to be possible. In other words, the ideal society of the first-order, or for that matter, also of the second-order, cannot even be rationally visualized for the major portion of the human race in the contemporary world. Only in the few economically backward and relatively free Asian societies, it would seem, is there any possibility of the emergence of the ideal society. This conclusion may seem not a little surprising, but logically there is no escape from it if one accepts the basic idea of Gandhi's Constructive Programme.

Mao Tse-tung wants to organize the Asian, African and Latin American societies — the "colonies of the world"—politically and militarily with a view to bringing the industrialized societies—the metropolis of the world — under their domination and then transforming these societies through political and military means into the ideal society of his conception. Gandhi presumably wanted

to organize the same societies through constructive work into ideal societies of his conception, and then to transform the industrial societies through the moral influence of the former. Both the programmes are unlikely to be successful, Gandhi's more so than Mao Tse-tung's.

Next, there is the question of the inner consistency of the second-order ideal society. This society comes into existence, as we have seen in Chapters VII and VIII, through an arbitrary act of the state. The state, presumably through a legislative process, takes over the ownership of all heavy and large-scale industries and public utilities, and possibly also of land. Then the Constructive Programme is expected to flourish side by side with this state sector and eventually to replace it. In effect it means that the state would not only have to prevent the large-scale industries from competing with the village industries developing (obviously on an uneconomic basis, as I have tried to show in Chapter VIII) under the Constructive Programme through legislative and administrative measures, and even to subsidize the latter. Initially, in a backward economy in which there are likely to be pockets of depression untouched by the heavy and large-scale industries, village industries may be able to flourish independently without state protection, but this can only be a very temporary phase. Similarly, in the initial phase of the construction of the political institutions of village *swaraj* like the *panchayats*, the state will have to voluntarily keep its own power restricted to a narrow sphere and allow the political aspect of the Constructive Programme to proceed independently, lest this power should grow in the rural areas before the Constructive Programme, whose object is to neutralize, and if possible, finally to replace the state through the institutions of village *swaraj*, could be sufficiently under way (when, of course, it will be possible for the workers, according to Gandhi, to protect the programme from the state through *satyagraha*). Otherwise constructive workers will find themselves in the position of having to start their programme in a society which is already regimented — a task which, as I have argued earlier, is by no means easy. Similar protection will also have to be granted by such a state to the basic education schools and the labour and peasant unions. The state really being what Gandhi suspects it to be, namely, an instrument of power, it is highly unlikely that it would undergo such voluntary self-abnegation and eventual self-extinction.

Mao Tse-tung wanted to capture the power of the state by orga-

nizing the villages militarily and isolating the cities where the power of the state was stronger. His assault was directly on the existing state apparatus, and irrespective of the merits of the means or the goal adopted by him, he was successful in achieving his immediate objective. Gandhi wanted, in effect if not in words, gradually to replace the state by organizing the villages and isolating the cities, under the protection and care of a powerful state. This programme has not succeeded anywhere so far, and is unlikely to succeed in the future, because unlike Mao Tse-tung's programme, it is self-contradictory.

And this leads us to a problem of utopian engineering which caused a powerful controversy between Marx on the one hand, and Proudhon and Bakunin on the other. Marx agreed with the anarchists regarding the ultimate objective of abolishing the state, but argued that this could not be done at one stroke. His idea, therefore, was, as is well-known, that on the morrow of the revolution a strong dictatorship of the proletariat would be established, whose task would be the complete extermination of the class enemies, so that exploitation would be ended and the way paved for the disappearance of the state, whose occupation would be gone with the end of exploitation. Proudhon and Bakunin argued, on the other hand, that the state ought to be ended and replaced by voluntary people's associations immediately after the revolution; that it would be a self-contradictory way of abolishing the state by increasing its power to start with. The Liberty for which they were fighting, they argued, would be frustrated ab initio by such an act. Kropotkin, the prince among the anarchists, who had initially welcomed the Russian Revolution, condemned it soon afterwards when it was followed by the establishment of a ruthless dictatorship.

Gandhi's problem was similar, but even more difficult, because he had no revolution to help him as a starting point. In spite of his faith in *satyagraha*, in spite of his conviction that village industries could be developed through the creation of a demand for them by the moral persuasion of the people, Gandhi was aware of the fact that the ideal state could not be brought into existence at one stroke. And since he did not want private enterprise, which he regarded as an unmitigated evil (as we have seen in Chapter VII), to develop into uncontrollable proportions and thus frustrate the possibility of the ideal state altogether, he wanted state ownership (which he regarded as preferable to private ownership) of a strategic

sector of the economy as a stepping stone to the ultimate ideal. What he did not apparently realize is the fact that the state, which thus substantially increases its power in the second-order ideal society, would be unlikely to invite its own extinction by permitting and even assisting an anti-body in the form of the Constructive Programme within the body social from which it derives the sustenance for its power. Gandhi always declared after Newman that one step was enough for him, and he did not probably pay sufficient attention to the problem of transition from the second-order ideal society to the first. But in any case it is obvious, surprising as it may seem, that there is the same inner contradiction in Gandhi's scheme of utopian engineering as in Marx's. This, however, raises the further question of ends and means, which I shall take up in Chapter XVIII.

Thus either way the Constructive Programme would seem destined to fail. If the attempt is made to implement it without increasing the power of the state, then in spite of *satyagraha*, as Gandhi feared, it would probably be defeated by private enterprise which would perpetuate exploitation and inequality and be much worse than state enterprise. If, on the other hand, private enterprise was to be replaced by state enterprise as the lesser evil and as a temporary measure, the new accretion of power to the state resulting from this step would tend to become permanent and even to grow ; except in the unlikely event that a nascent Constructive Programme can be defended against the power of such a state, it would then be killed by the state itself, directly or indirectly. This in fact is one of the major dilemmas of our time. If there is a solution to it, the utopian engineers, including Gandhi, have been unable to offer it.

Finally, there is the problem of social control in the utopian society and on the way to it. Gandhi's scheme of constructive work is reminiscent of Kropotkin's scheme of mutual aid, through which the latter expected to replace the state by voluntary people's institutions. In both the cases the constructive effort would involve the participation of large numbers of men and women throughout the country in the building up of a new and preconceived society about whose merits and feasibility they have very little doubt. They are, therefore, likely to have a closed mind with regard to any alternative ideas of social change ; in fact, this follows logically from the very nature of utopian engineering, for if the architects of the utopia have any doubts about its merits or feasibility, a constructive effort

by the masses of men on the scale visualized in the Constructive Programme can never take place, and the utopia would ever remain a mere mental construction. Thus there would be the danger, during the implementation of the Constructive Programme, that is to say, in the inconceivably long period of transition from the present society to something closely approximating the ideal society of the first-order, of social tyranny, even without physical violence, on an unprecedented scale (Rabindranath Tagore in fact saw such a tyranny in India in the early twenties when the Constructive Programme was first introduced, and strongly protested against it¹¹). The victims of such tyranny would, of course, be free to resort to *satyagraha*, but apart from the fact that successful *satyagrahas* of this type would frustrate the Constructive Programme from the beginning, they are subject to several limitations, as we shall see in the next few chapters.

Theoretically, the problem of social control would disappear, along with many other paraphernalia of the present society, in the ideal society of the first-order in which there will be the maximum practicable consummation of all the ultimate values and people will, therefore, behave as they ought to, leaving no scope for deviant behaviour. But apart from the fact that the long way to this society would itself be characterized by social tyranny and, therefore, the non-consummation of the ultimate values, the ultimate values of Gandhi, as we have seen, are themselves limited in many ways, and are, therefore, unlikely to satisfy human aspirations (even moral aspirations) as a whole. The possibility of deviant behaviour would thus remain, and, therefore, also of social tyranny; but this to Gandhi's mind would again be a matter of *satyagraha*. To the long-postponed subject of *satyagraha*, therefore, I now turn.

¹¹ Rabindranath Tagore : *Towards Universal Man*, chapter entitled "The Call Of Truth".

CHAPTER XII

THE IDEA OF SATYAGRAHA

ETYMOLOGICALLY, the term *satyagraha* means passion for, or firmness in Truth—Sanskrit *satya* (=Truth) + *agraha* (=passion or firmness). Since Truth in the value sense we have defined as Justice in Chapter II, *satyagraha* means firm adherence to Justice. The term was coined by Gandhi because he felt that the English term “passive resistance”, which is largely derived from the Christian concept of non-resistance to evil, failed to express adequately the nature of non-violent resistance in the active form developed by him. He had led the South African Indian movement for over a decade when in 1906 the need for a new name for his movement was felt by him for the first time.¹ Through *Indian Opinion*, a journal edited by him at this time, Gandhi offered a small prize for the best suggestion for a new name. One of the contestants suggested the word *sadagraha* and won the prize, but Gandhi modified it into *satyagraha*, as he thought the latter term expressed his idea better.² In *Hind Swaraj*, however, he continued to talk of “passive resistance”, and it was only after he returned to India and assumed the leadership of the national movement that he started consistently using the term *satyagraha* to denote his kind of non-violent resistance.

The fundamental difference between *satyagraha* and passive resistance is, according to Gandhi, that the former is essentially a positive

¹ In his Autobiography Gandhi has narrated the circumstances in which the term was coined as follows : “The principle called *Satyagraha* came into being before that name was invented. Indeed when it was born, I myself could not say what it was. In Gujarati also we used the English phrase “passive resistance” to describe it. When in a meeting with Europeans I found that the term “passive resistance” was too narrowly construed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterized by hatred, and that it could finally manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle”. (p. 235).

² *Sadagraha*, which stands for *satyagraha*, is more ambiguous than *satyagraha*, for while *sat* means Truth as well as a variety of other things like Existence, Reality, etc., *satya* precisely means Truth.

and active form of resistance and, therefore, qualitatively the direct antithesis of passive resistance. *Satyagraha*, he insists, is a kind of direct action. As he once categorically declared, "Never has anything been done on this earth without direct action. I reject the word 'passive resistance' because of its insufficiency".³ On another occasion he observed : "Yours . . . should be an active thing which will carry the war into the enemy's camp".⁴ This active character of *satyagraha* is evident from four of its essential characteristics : (i) *ahimsa*, the meaning and implications of which have been discussed in Chapter III, (ii) the impersonal motivation behind the act of resistance, (iii) the fearlessness or *abhaya* involved in every act of *satyagraha*, and (iv) its creative power.

A natural corollary of *ahimsa*, as we have seen in Chapter III, is the manner in which the opponent is treated. There can be no love without respect, and the opponent is, therefore, treated with utmost respect ; what is subjected to *satyagraha* is not the person of the opponent as such, but the principles, policies and actions for which he is responsible. "It is never the intention of a *satyagrahi*", says Gandhi, "to embarrass the wrong-doer. The appeal is never to his fear ; it is, must be, always to his heart. The *satyagrahi's* object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrong-doer".⁵ Therefore, "Whilst we may attack measures and systems, we may not, must not, attack men. Imperfect ourselves, we must be tender towards others and be slow to impute motives."⁶ Our motto must ever be, he insists, conversion by gentle persuasion and a constant appeal to the head and the heart. "We must, therefore, be ever courteous and patient with those who do not see eye to eye with us. We must resolutely refuse to consider our opponents as enemies of the country."⁷

But it is an essential characteristic of *ahimsa* that its appeal does not exhaust itself in persuasion alone. Indeed, the strength of *satyagraha* is supposed to lie in the fact that its appeal is at the same time more extensive and intensive than that of reason by itself. As Gandhi observes, "Reason has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding".⁸ The self-suffering of the *satyagrahi* is a manifestation of his love and respect for the opponent, and a moral force that is expected to make him realize the injustice of his actions and to humanize his entire attitude towards

³ N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, p. 159.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Harijan*, March 25, 1939.

⁶ *Young India*, May 25, 1921.

⁷ *Young India*, September 29, 1921.

⁸ *Young India*, March 19, 1925.

the *satyagrahi*. The self-suffering of the *satyagrahi* is the price of his *ahimsa*; it is a measure of the value he attaches to the soul-force as a means of achieving Justice, rather than coercion and all its manifestations. Whatever the form of a particular act of *satyagraha*, therefore, the element of self-suffering is always an integral part of it. In Gandhi's own words: "I have, therefore, ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For *satyagraha* and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. . . . Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant."⁹

That is so far as the positive meaning of *ahimsa* is concerned. The impersonal motive of the *satyagrahi* and his self-negating dedication to a cause is another indication of the active character of *satyagraha*. Says Gandhi about the ideal of a *satyagrahi*: "He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will, therefore, be willing to die so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying."¹⁰ Before death the *satyagrahi* must be prepared to lose not only his personal liberty and possessions, but also the liberty and possessions of his family, and when death comes, he "must be ready cheerfully to face bullets, bayonets, or even slow death by torture."¹¹

In order to transform himself into an impersonal force, a moral power for removing injustice and transforming relationships, a *satyagrahi* naturally has to discipline himself vigorously for a long time. He must purify himself, steel his determination, and purge himself of the last vestiges of immorality. To begin with, he must impose on himself the five vows of *satya*, *ahimsa*, *asteya*, *aparigraha* and *brahmacharya*. Such vows constitute the minimum *yama*, i.e., moral restraint, without which no one is qualified to be a *satyagrahi*. "Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows", Gandhi warns his workers, "you may not embark on the experiment at all."¹² Moreover, he must exercise self-restraint with regard to food, drinks and drugs, purify himself by regular fasting (for "the strength of the soul grows in proportion as you subdue the flesh"), put a curb on the mind and control his thought and word, and find

⁹ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 183.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 209. ¹¹ *Harifan*, October 22, 1938.

¹² M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, p. 69.

joy in renunciation and sacrifice (for "that sacrifice which causes pain loses its sacred character and will break down under stress").¹³

In the Indian tradition the dedicated pursuit of a noble and impersonal objective is called *sadhana*, and the self-restraint and voluntary suffering (joyfully accepted) associated with it *tapasya*. *Sadhana* is a term with a wider connotation than *tapasya*, and includes and presupposes it. Without *tapasya* there cannot be any *sadhana*, and without *sadhana* nothing great can be achieved, whether in the sphere of spirituality, or of art, music, literature or learning in general. Gandhi also frequently used these terms with reference to *satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* to him is a *sadhana* which aims at spiritual, moral, social and political progress at the same time, and the rules of discipline associated with it, as described above, constitute the *tapasya*.

It is not necessary, says Gandhi, that everyone will take a very long time to go through such *sadhana* successfully. As he told his followers in 1940 : "But this kind of *sadhana*, you will say, may take thousands of years. It may take some a thousand years, and it may take others only one year. Do not think that, if in spite of fifty years' practice of it I am still imperfect, it must take you many more years. No, there is no rule of three here. You may succeed quicker than I."¹⁴

Moreover, *sadhana* and *tapasya* can be performed for a moral as well as an immoral purpose. The Indian epics, *puranas* and the mythological tradition in general are full of stories of people who acquired evil powers through long *sadhana* and *tapasya*. Gandhi believed that in the modern world Nazism represented such *sadhana* for an evil purpose. About Hitler he said : "It is the faith and perseverance and single-mindedness with which Hitler has perfected his weapons of destruction that commands my admiration . . . Herr Hitler is awake all the twenty-four hours of the day in perfecting his *sadhana*. He wins, because he pays the price." The *sadhana* of *satyagraha* is the moral antipode of the *sadhana* of Nazism. "We have to live and move and have our being in *ahimsa*, even as Hitler does in *himsa*", said Gandhi.¹⁵

The impersonal objective of preserving and promoting Justice

¹³ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, Ch. 16.

¹⁴ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. V, p. 290. Gandhi's statement, it may be noted, incidentally, is consistent with the traditional theory of yoga.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

through voluntary personal suffering makes *satyagraha* an active instrument of social control, rather than a passive device for the protection and preservation of personal or group interests.

Another essential characteristic of all *sadhana*, including the *sadhana* of *satyagraha*, is *abhaya* or fearlessness on the part of the subject. As in the general Indian spiritual tradition, so in Gandhian thought, fearlessness is the prerequisite to any kind of spiritual or moral effort, for fearlessness is indispensable for the growth of other moral qualities. Cowards can never be moral, says Gandhi.¹⁶

I have explained in Chapter III that Gandhi always preferred violence to cowardice, not, of course, because violence could ever be regarded as moral, but because it was less immoral than cowardice. *Satyagraha* presupposes, and tries to foster, a courage that transcends violence. It is the positive moral courage which enables the *satyagrahi* to defy smilingly, without raising a finger, the grossest form of violence, to be exterminated physically, but to remain unsubdued morally. *Satyagraha*, therefore, unlike passive resistance, is the weapon of the brave and the strong, not of the timid and the weak. In Gandhi's own words : "It is totally untrue to say that it [*satyagraha*] is a force to be used only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence. This superstition arises from the incompleteness of the English expression [passive resistance]. It is impossible for those who consider themselves weak to apply this force."¹⁷ Therefore, "Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non-violence. Violence does not mean emancipation from fear, but discovering the means of combating the cause of fear. Non-violence, on the other hand, has no cause for fear. The votary of non-violence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear. He reckons not if he should lose his land, his wealth, his life. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practise *ahimsa* to perfection."¹⁸

Finally, *satyagraha* as an instrument of social control is eternally creative, according to Gandhi. Its creativity is inherent in its basis of *ahimsa* and moral persuasion. It alters social relationships without harming men. In Gandhian thought, every act of *satyagraha* leads to a moral improvement of society in two ways : first, the *tapasya* of the *satyagrahis* leads to their moral elevation, thus increas-

¹⁶ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 243.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

ing total social morality, though infinitesimally ; and secondly, the transformation of relationships and elimination of injustice through *satyagraha* amounts to a moral improvement all round. Whatever contribution a *satyagrahi* makes is a positive and direct contribution. Indeed, the chief merit of *satyagraha*, according to Gandhi, is that its creativity is absolute, unaccompanied as it is by any action which is even infinitesimally destructive of either men or morals.

But it is not necessary that every individual should attain perfection before he can participate in *satyagraha*. The type of *satyagraha* against the British Government which Gandhi advocated, and himself organized and led many times, was essentially a broad social movement involving thousands of men and women. It would be utterly unrealistic to expect such broad masses to pass through a period of rigorous and successful *tapasya* before they were allowed to engage in *satyagraha*. Here, as elsewhere, Gandhi laid down an absolute ideal for the perfect *satyagrahi*, and a workable ideal for the average *satyagrahi*. Those who would lead the *satyagraha* movements, thought Gandhi, ought to represent all the virtues of a *satyagrahi* in their pure form. But for the masses it was enough if they followed their leaders faithfully in the field of action, and made the maximum possible effort to inculcate in their own lives the ideals of a true *satyagrahi*. In this respect Gandhi likened the discipline of a non-violent army of *satyagrahis* to that of a violent army in the battlefield, where the general takes the basic decisions and the ordinary soldiers obey his orders under certain rules of discipline.¹⁹

It would, therefore, be quite possible, thought Gandhi, to draw the masses of men into the *satyagraha* movement, in spite of the fact that they would be unlikely to have the training and the true spirit of a *satyagrahi*. It would be enough for practical purposes if they observed the rules of *satyagraha* in action as laid down by the leaders. Even among his followers, he admitted, there were many who did not truly believe in Non-violence. But he would be satisfied as long as they adhered to the rules of non-violent action.²⁰ He only expected the masses which would participate in a *satyagraha* movement to make an honest endeavour to understand and practise the rules of *satyagraha* in their own lives. While no one should think, he wrote, that a non-violent army was open only to those who strictly enforced in their lives all the implications of Non-violence, people who joined

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

it must "accept the implications and make an ever-increasing endeavour to observe them". So he declared categorically : "There will never be an army of perfectly non-violent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavour to observe non-violence."²¹

The rules of conduct which Gandhi wanted a *satyagrahi* to observe to the best of his ability were summarized by him in the instructions which he issued in 1930 for the guidance of the prospective participants in the Civil Disobedience Movement. After directing that "A civil resister, whilst he will strain every nerve to compass the end of the existing rule, will do no intentional injury in thought, word or deed to the person of a single Englishman", Gandhi laid down the following nine-point code of conduct for every *satyagrahi* :

- "1. A *satyagrahi*, i.e. a civil resister will harbour no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate ; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.
4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by the authorities.
5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation includes swearing and cursing.
7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of *ahimsa*.
8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.
9. In the course of the struggle if any one insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life."²²

Needless to say, these rules were laid down in the context of British rule in India, and have to be suitably adapted to other situa-

²¹ *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.

²² *Young India*, February 27, 1930.

tions. Moreover, another general rule on which Gandhi always insisted, namely, that of absolute obedience to the leader, may be added to this list.

From his own knowledge and experience Gandhi had realized that even with the best of efforts these rules of mass *satyagraha* would not be fully observed, and that some of the *satyagrahis* might not make the necessary endeavour for observing them. He also knew that a mass movement in which the fundamental rules of conduct were seriously violated could go out of control and have highly undesirable consequences. He, therefore, repeatedly emphasized the need for great caution in organizing mass movements. In a general atmosphere of violence, he said, mass movements which are intended to be non-violent, should not be organized without serious thought, and even when such movements became inevitable, they should be "hedged in by adequate restrictions".²³

It should be understood, however, that Gandhi does not in fact expect untrained masses suddenly to participate in a major *satyagraha* even as ordinary soldiers bound by rules of discipline. *Satyagraha*, it will be recalled, is closely linked with the Constructive Programme and in a sense only an extension of it. The masses are expected to remain normally engaged in the Constructive Programme, the discipline for which is the same as that for a *satyagrahi*. In practice there is no distinction between the personnel engaged in the Constructive Programme and that engaged in a *satyagraha* movement, as and when it takes place. The people, in Gandhi's plan of action, are constantly perfecting themselves through spinning and other rules of discipline, including the five vows, while engaged in the Constructive Programme throughout the year, and joining a *satyagraha* movement only when a conflict situation develops in the course of the Constructive Programme, and they are called upon by their leaders to start a *satyagraha*. Just as in Mao Tse-tung's scheme of guerilla war the same people work as party organizers (and receive military training) and guerillas, depending on the needs of the situation, so also in Gandhi's plan of *satyagraha* the same people act as constructive workers (and receive moral training) or *satyagrahis*, depending on the demands of the situation. As Gandhi says, every *satyagrahi* must always be found in any one of three conditions : (i) in prison or in an analogous state, (ii) engaged in

²³ N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, pp. 230-32.

satyagraha, or (iii) under orders at the spinning wheel, or at some constructive work advancing *swaraj*.²⁴ He clearly states that the Constructive Programme "is the basis of the training for the non-violence of the brave".²⁵ It is not, therefore, with morally untrained masses that Gandhi expects to launch a *satyagraha*; the Constructive Programme is expected to be both a training ground and a recruiting base for the *satyagrahis*.

The experiments of Gandhi and his followers with *satyagraha* indicate that this concept of non-violent active resistance can be applied in practice in a wide variety of concrete forms. As a matter of fact, it follows logically from the creative nature of *satyagraha* that there is no stereotyped pattern of action applicable to alternative situations, the concrete form of action in every case being dependent on the attending circumstances, the nature of the issue and the parties involved. To attempt to describe the exact method in which an act of *satyagraha* is to be performed is indeed to misunderstand the essentially creative and dynamic nature of *satyagraha* as an instrument of social control, and that is why Gandhi himself never made such an attempt. In order to make an academic discussion of the subject possible, however, it is necessary to indicate the broad categories of action regarded by Gandhi as falling under the title of *satyagraha*, the infinite possibilities of variant action under each broad category being taken for granted.

I think it is possible to divide the various forms of action which can be characterized as *satyagraha* into five broad categories, which are as follows :

- (1) Fasting,
- (2) Defiance of violence,
- (3) Self-imposed suffering other than fasting,
- (4) Non-cooperation (including strikes),
- (5) Civil disobedience.

All the known *satyagrahas* performed by Gandhi or his followers, it seems to me, can be brought under one of these five categories or another. I shall explain the meaning and significance of each of these categories of *satyagraha* at a later stage when concrete cases of *satyagraha* will be studied in some detail. But it is

²⁴ *Young India*, February 27, 1930.

²⁵ *Harijan*, June 10, 1939.

necessary to point out here that even this classification, which may be called a vertical one, will remain too vague and intractable unless accompanied by what may be called a horizontal classification based on the number of people participating in a particular act of *satyagraha* and the area of its operation. For *satyagraha* can be performed as much by an individual as by a whole nation, or conceptually even by a group of nations, and all conceivable groups, big and small, between the individual and the nation, and no systematic and meaningful study of concrete cases is possible unless some distinction is made between, for instance, civil disobedience by a single individual and that by a whole nation. Such a horizontal categorization of *satyagraha* seems possible and desirable to me along the following lines :

- (1) Individual *satyagraha*,
- (2) Group *satyagraha*,
- (3) Mass *satyagraha*,
- (4) International *satyagraha*.

In a meaningful study of *satyagraha*, it seems to me, this horizontal classification should be taken as a starting point, and as many as possible of the vertical categories should then be discussed under each horizontal category. This will be the pattern of study followed in the subsequent chapters on *satyagraha*, but not exactly, for two reasons. First, I think there is a very special type of *satyagraha*, which, though capable of being covered by the horizontal and vertical classification suggested above, is yet of such fundamental importance to the entire study of *satyagraha*, that it deserves a separate treatment on its own right. This is *satyagraha* against a dictatorship, which will be discussed in a chapter in between those on mass *satyagraha* and international *satyagraha*, — namely, Chapter XVI. Secondly, for obvious reasons, all the vertical categories of *satyagraha* suggested above will not be discussed under each horizontal category, but only those for which useful examples are available.

Sometimes an attempt is made to enumerate the different stages of action involved in a successful *satyagraha* campaign, one step logically following another until the objective is attained. Thus K. Shridharani makes what he regards as the first attempt to establish "a type or pattern of *satyagraha*", and gives a list and a diagram of thirteen successive steps (with some further ramifications) involved

in a successful *satyagraha*.²⁶ Joan V. Bondurant, while stating that such a pattern is "applicable to a movement growing out of grievances against an established political order", summarizes the thirteen steps mentioned by Shridharani into nine.²⁷ The following is an outline presentation of these nine steps :

- (1) Negotiation and arbitration,
- (2) Preparation of the group for direct action including self-discipline,
- (3) Agitation,
- (4) Issuing of an ultimatum,
- (5) Economic boycott and forms of strike, including *dharna* (a form of sit-down strike before the opponent traditionally practised in India),
- (6) Non-cooperation, including voluntary exile,
- (7) Civil Disobedience,
- (8) Usurping of the functions of government,
- (9) Parallel government.

The whole attempt of these two authors, however, seems to me somewhat misconceived and even confused, for several reasons. In the first place, even in the summary form presented by Bondurant there is some overlapping of the steps mentioned. For instance, economic boycott and strikes are very clearly forms of non-cooperation and not separate steps in a *satyagraha* movement. Similarly, the usurpation of the functions of the government and the setting up of a parallel government are simply two different descriptions of the same act. Secondly, all these steps do not necessarily develop successively in a single *satyagraha* campaign. There has so far been no *satyagraha* campaign in which all of these steps have been followed. In fact, most of these steps represent alternative rather than consecutive forms of action in *satyagraha*. Thirdly, the basic assumption behind this enumeration is that of a mass national movement against the established government, national or foreign. But *satyagraha*, as explained earlier, is meant to be as much a weapon of the individual as of the small group and the nation. In fact, it is the

²⁶ Krishnalal Shridharani : *War Without Violence*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962, Ch. I.

²⁷ Joan V. Bondurant : *Conquest of Violence*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1959, pp. 40-41.

universality of this technique of resistance which Gandhi regarded as of paramount significance ; and in any society, free or authoritarian, self-governed or externally ruled, there are bound to be many more occasions for individual and group *satyagraha* than for a mass *satyagraha* against the government with a view to dislodging it, which is sure to be a rather extreme and rare occurrence. Yet it is impossible to apply or even adapt the "pattern" of *satyagraha* discussed above to any other conflict situation except this extreme case. Finally, in this list some of the methods of resolution of conflict short of *satyagraha*, which Gandhi wanted to be explored before *satyagraha* was resorted to, have been confused with "steps in a *satyagraha* campaign". The first three methods mentioned in the list come under this category. What Gandhi had in mind is quite clear from the following passage, which is only one typical example :

"Since *satyagraha* is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a *satyagrahi* exhausts all other means before he resorts to *satyagraha*. He will, therefore, constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to *satyagraha*. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon *satyagraha* he has burnt his boats and there is no receding."²⁸

A simple enumeration of the various steps involved in a *satyagraha* campaign, though it can never be exhaustive, may be of some use as a general indicator of the nature of concrete action involved in *satyagraha*. But to discover a definite pattern of action in *satyagraha* is to misunderstand its essentially versatile and dynamic quality to which Gandhi attached such great significance.

Bondurant has made an interesting comparison between the dialectical process involved in *satyagraha* on the one hand, and Hegelian and Marxian dialectics on the other. She starts with the assumption that there is a dialectical reasoning in a "theoretical statement" of *satyagraha*, when dialectics is defined as the destruction of a whole by the presence of conflicting factors and the subse-

²⁸ *Young India*, October 20, 1927.

quent restoration of the unity of the whole in a new form. Although she does not develop the point, Bondurant claims that had Gandhi been given to theoretical formulations, he would probably have accepted a good deal of Hegelian dialectics. But Hegelian dialectics being merely a system of logic describing inherent, natural processes, does not have any social content, whereas both the Marxian and Gandhian dialectics involve social relations and human action. But Marxian dialectics, says the author, is limited by historicism and represents merely an interpretation of a supposed law of history, whereas the Gandhian dialectic is unlimited by any deterministic philosophy of history and, therefore, more universally applicable. "Gandhian dialectic", says Bondurant, "as distinct from Hegelian logic on the one hand and the Marxist adaptation on the other, describes a process resulting from the application of a technique of action to any situation of human conflict — a process essentially creative and inherently constructive."²⁹

It seems to me that there is an element of truth in the observations of Bondurant which, however, has been marred by oversimplification and confused presentation. In the first place, Hegel, on her own admission, was concerned solely with an abstract, and (what she does not seem to realize) rather complex and abstruse system of metaphysics, and had no social philosophy, while Gandhi paid no attention whatever to logical or theoretical formulations, and did not even make a systematized presentation of his social and political thought, which has to be derived and systematized from his scattered and fragmentary speeches and writings, sometimes even from his activities. It is, therefore, a gross oversimplification to compare *satyagraha* with Hegelian dialectics merely because there is a dialectical element in the former. Hegelian dialectics, it seems to me, is utterly irrelevant to Gandhian thought. It is no use arguing that Marxian dialectics also deals with a social philosophy and is yet frequently compared to that of Hegel, because Marx had a philosophy of history which was partially and admittedly borrowed from Hegel. Moreover, Bondurant creates a good deal of confusion by bringing in the question of the creative and constructive character of *satyagraha* here, because this is an entirely different question unrelated to the logic of dialectics, and any such statement as she makes about *satyagraha* can only be experimentally and not

²⁹ Joan V. Bondurant : *op. cit.*, pp. 190-95.

logically verified. Had Gandhi ever accepted Bondurant's claim that there is a good deal of similarity between Hegelian dialectics and *satyagraha* (as she believes he would have), nothing but politeness or a serious misunderstanding of Hegel could have prompted him to do so.

All that can be said with certainty from the theoretical point of view is that the conflict situations envisaged by Gandhi and the resolution of conflict through *satyagraha* contain the essence of dialectical reasoning ; that since Gandhi did not have any philosophy of history, necessity plays no part in social change in his thought, and, therefore, there is no theoretical limit to the types of conflict situations which may develop in human society and their causes ; and that, therefore, the social manifestation of the Gandhian dialectic is inevitably more universal than the Marxian dialectic whose social manifestation is restricted by the predetermined course of social change set by the law of dialectical materialism.

But this relatively universal quality of the Gandhian social dialectic is also characterized by an unfortunate vagueness, unaccompanied as it is by any systematic study of the factors involved in different types of conflict situations, which alone can establish the impossibility of building a deterministic general theory of social conflict. Indeed, as I have argued before, the absence of a scientific study of the causes of conflict is a serious limitation of Gandhian thought in general and of *satyagraha* in particular. As the case studies presented in the subsequent chapters will show, Gandhi often failed to make a thorough study of the causes of a given conflict situation and to suggest fundamental remedies for them, with the result that an apparently successful *satyagraha* campaign in fact often meant little more than a temporary rapprochement of an emotional and even melodramatic character between the contending parties.

The idea of *satyagraha* is not an entirely original contribution of Gandhi, nor did he ever claim it to be. The Plebeian secessions of Rome were certainly in the nature of mass *satyagrahas* (involving non-cooperation and mass emigration). The life of Jesus, which influenced Gandhi profoundly, was in a sense an eternal *satyagraha*.³⁰ The early Christians, in laying down their lives both individually and collectively in defence of their faith, performed

³⁰ See M. K. Gandhi : *What Jesus Means To Me*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959.

something closely resembling *satyagraha*. There are several denominations of modern Christianity, notably the Quakers, which believe in non-resistance to evil — an attitude rather different from that of *satyagraha*, as Gandhi insisted, but nevertheless containing its germs. On his own admission Gandhi was deeply influenced by Tolstoy's works, including *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, in which the idea of soul-force and passive resistance had been considerably developed, and by Thoreau's essay on *Civil Disobedience*, although he read Thoreau only after he had already developed his technique of *satyagraha* to a considerable extent.³¹ Two of their forerunners, Godwin and Proudhon, had also advocated passive resistance against the state: Godwin had insisted on its acceptance in all circumstances as the only means of resistance, while Proudhon had a strong preference for it as against a violent revolution.

The Indian tradition of *ahimsa*, which Gandhi merely claims to have revived and rejuvenated, contains all the essentials of *satyagraha*, though perhaps in a less active form. Certain relatively inarticulate forms of *satyagraha* had developed in the Hindu social tradition long before Gandhi.³² Aurobindo Ghosh (later Sri Aurobindo) had written elaborately on passive resistance at the beginning of this century with a high degree of intellectual discipline.³³ The *Swadeshi* Movement against the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in 1905 contained many elements of *satyagraha*, especially in its aspect of non-cooperation (and even the Constructive Programme), and during the two mass *satyagraha* movements organized by him — the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-22 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-32 — as well as in his Constructive Programme, Gandhi borrowed heavily from the *Swadeshi* Movement.³⁴

It has already been explained that Gandhi regarded *satyagraha* as a universally applicable technique for the achievement of Justice. The nature of his claim becomes quite clear from the following

³¹ See N. K. Bose : *op. cit.*, p. 40n.

³² N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta, 1962, Ch. 6.

³³ Sri Aurobindo : *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1952.

³⁴ For a descriptive study of the *Swadeshi* Movement see R. C. Majumdar : *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1963, Vol. 2, Ch. 2.

statement made by him in July, 1947, three weeks before the day of India's independence :

"This I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of *satyagraha*. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force . . . *satyagraha* can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral."²⁵

The validity of this claim is the subject of our investigation in the next few chapters.

²⁵ *Harijan*, July 20, 1947.

CHAPTER XIII

INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA

INDIVIDUAL *satyagraha* is an essential concomitant of Gandhi's view that in the ultimate analysis Freedom belongs to the individual and that, therefore, the individual himself is the final guardian of his Freedom. "My work will be finished", said Gandhi, "... if I succeed in carrying conviction to the human family, that every man or woman, however weak in body, is the guardian of his or her self-respect and liberty. This defence avails, though the whole world may be against the individual resister".¹ But Freedom, according to Gandhi, as we have seen in Chapter IV, is also the exercise of moral power by the individual for the achievement of Justice even when his personal liberty may not be directly threatened. And since Freedom in any case, as we have seen in Chapter II, is only an aspect of Justice in Gandhian thought, individual *satyagraha* is essentially an attempt on the part of the individual to use his moral power for the achievement of Justice in a conflict situation in which he may or may not be involved personally.

Individual *satyagraha*, like *satyagraha* in general, belongs to the realm of applied Social Science, and it is not possible to discuss the merits of this technique of resistance to injustice scientifically without reference to concrete cases involving typical conflict situations. Innumerable individual *satyagrahas* were performed by Gandhi and his followers during his lifetime, and there is enough case material on the subject for a whole book to be written on it. In this chapter it will be possible only to examine a few important cases of such *satyagraha*, taking examples, as far as possible, of the various major categories of *satyagraha* analysed in the last chapter.

Time and again Gandhi has explained that the effectiveness of *satyagraha* depends on quality, not on the strength of numbers. Active non-violence is a powerful, universal and timeless force which, when adopted by an individual and practised in a pure form, will inevitably produce results far out of proportion to the physical

¹ *Hindusthan Standard*, August 6, 1944.

significance of the individual or the numerical value of his actions. Moral power operates on an altogether different dimension, as it were, from physical power, and is devoid of quantitative significance. Explaining the power of individual *satyagraha*, therefore, Gandhi said :

"Non-violence in its dynamic condition means . . . the pitting of one's soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration."²

History bears witness, thought Gandhi, to the great power of individual *satyagraha*. In his own words :

"In every great cause it is not the number of fighters that counts, but it is the quality of which they are made that becomes the deciding factor. The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. Take the great prophets, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed — they all stood alone like many others whom I can name."³

Therefore, declared Gandhi :

"Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant of spirit glory in fighting alone. And you are all here to cultivate that valour of the spirit. Be you one or many, this valour is the only valour, all else is false."⁴

Nor was Gandhi alone in emphasizing the power and potency of individual *satyagraha*. His own *satyagraha* in South Africa so deeply impressed Gilbert Murray, for instance, that when he left South Africa for India in July, 1914, the renowned intellectual wrote in the *Hibbert Journal* :

"Persons in power should be very careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches,

² *Young India*, August 11, 1920.

³ *Young India*, January 29, 1939.

⁴ *Young India*, June 17, 1926.

nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy, because his body which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase upon his soul."⁵

Let us now take up some case studies of individual *satyagraha* performed by Gandhi and his followers, and find out to what extent these would justify Gandhi's claim that *satyagraha* is the panacea for all social conflicts and the supreme weapon for the achievement of Justice.

FASTING

Fasting was regarded by Gandhi as the last resort of the individual *satyagrahi*, to be undertaken only when all other non-violent methods have failed or are destined to fail, and there is no other alternative left to the *satyagrahi* for the rectification of some social injustice.⁶ He also regarded it as a "science" requiring long *sadhana* for its proper use, and advised his followers not to resort to it in a lighthearted or imitative spirit. But properly used, it could be a "fiery weapon."⁷

Gandhi undertook a great many fasts in his life, but here I shall examine what seem to me the three most important ones, namely, the fast against the Communal Award in 1932, the "epic fast" of 1943 against the policy of the British Government towards the Indian National Congress, and the last fast, undertaken in 1948, against communalism.

1. At the second session of the Round Table Conference, which was held in London in 1931 to discuss constitutional reforms for India, the Depressed Classes, led by Dr. Ambedkar, along with the Muslim and Sikh minorities, had demanded separate representation for themselves in the future constitutional set-up in India, and Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald had supported this claim. Gandhi was generally opposed to the separate representation of minorities, but was more strongly opposed to the demand for the separate

⁵ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. I, p. 151.

⁶ *Harijan*, January 18, 1948 ; *Young India*, September 25, 1924 ; Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 186.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 165.

representation of the untouchables, whom he refused to regard as a minority, than to the demands of the other communities. In his speech he said :

"I can understand the claims advanced by other minorities, but the claims advanced on behalf of the untouchables is the unkindest cut of all. It means the perpetual bar sinister. I would not sell the vital interests of the untouchables for the sake of winning the freedom of India . . . Will the untouchables remain untouchables in perpetuity? I would far rather that Hinduism died than that untouchability lived. I will not bargain away their rights for the kingdom of the whole world. Those who speak of political rights of untouchables do not know India, do not know how the Indian society is to-day constructed, and, therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command, that if I was the only person to resist this thing, I would resist it with my life."⁸

The British Government postponed its decision on this question. Meanwhile, Gandhi was arrested in India on account of the Civil Disobedience Movement which had been resumed even while he was in London, and confined in the Yeravda prison. From this jail, even before the decision of the British Government was announced, Gandhi wrote a letter to the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, in which he declared that he would fast unto death if separate electorates for the Depressed Classes were created.⁹ Five months later, in August, 1932, the British Prime Minister announced the scheme of minority representation, popularly known as the Communal Award. Under the scheme, the Depressed Classes were recognized as a minority community entitled to separate electorates. But they were also given the right to contest the general seats in addition to their own reserved seats. The separate electorates, and along with them the reserved seats, were to be abolished after twenty years.

There followed a correspondence between Gandhi and the British Prime Minister, in which the former declared his determination to fast unto death from September 20, 1932, unless the Communal Award was meanwhile revoked. The substance of Gandhi's argument was as follows :

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

"I should not be against even over-representation of the Depressed Classes. What I am against is their statutory separation even in a limited form from the Hindu fold, so long as they choose to belong to it. Do you realize that if your decision stands and the constitution comes into being, you arrest the marvellous growth of the work of the Hindu reformers who have dedicated themselves to the uplift of their suppressed brethren in every walk of life?"¹⁰

The position of the British Prime Minister was that the separate electorates were demanded by the Depressed Classes themselves, and that the decision of the British Government could not be altered unless the communities concerned agreed to do so. Criticizing Gandhi for his stand, Ramsay MacDonald said :

"As I understand your attitude, you propose to adopt the extreme course of starving yourself to death, not in order to secure that the Depressed Classes have joint electorates with other Hindus, because that is already provided, nor to maintain the unity of the Hindus, which is also provided, but solely to prevent the Depressed Classes, who admittedly suffer from terrible disabilities to-day, from being able to secure a limited number of representatives of their own choosing to speak on their behalf in the legislatures, which will have a dominating influence over their future . . ."¹¹

The attitude of the British Indian Government was expressed by Mr. Haig, the Home Member, who observed that "no Government could possibly let its action be influenced by methods of this kind".¹²

On the 19th September there took place a Hindu Leaders' Conference attended by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, M. R. Jayakar, C. Rajagopalachari, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Ambedkar and many other leaders of the national movement. The Hindu leaders tried to persuade Dr. Ambedkar to withdraw the demand for separate electorates, but he refused to do so without knowing Gandhi's terms. On September 20 Gandhi started the famous fast. Informal negotiations started between Dr. Ambedkar and the Hindu leaders. When Ambedkar refused to give in, Sapru suggested a scheme of primary and secondary election for a

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 163.

limited number of seats which, while maintaining the principle of joint electorates, would enable the Depressed Classes to choose their own candidate. Ambedkar accepted this proposal, but stated that they would demand a much larger number of seats under this scheme than was granted under the Communal Award. On the 22nd September Dr. Ambedkar and Dr. Solanki, another leader of the Depressed Classes, interviewed Gandhi. A part of the protracted interview went as follows :

AMBEDKAR : Mahatmaji, you have been very unfair to us.

GANDHI : It is always my lot to appear unfair. I can't help it.

AMBEDKAR : I want my compensation.

GANDHI : I am with you in most of the things you say. But you say you are interested in my life.

AMBEDKAR : Yes, Mahatmaji, I am interested in your life.

GANDHI : Well, if you are interested in my life, you know what you have got to do to save that life . . .¹³

Ambedkar stated that he had made his concession by accepting joint electorates. Gandhi suggested that the panel system and joint electorates should be accepted for all the seats reserved for the untouchables instead of for some of these seats only, and that the panel should consist of five instead of two candidates. Ambedkar accepted these suggestions. On the following day agreement was reached in a meeting between the Hindu leaders and Ambedkar that under the panel system the Depressed Classes would be given 147 seats in the provincial legislatures as against 71 under the Communal Award, and that 18 per cent of the seats allotted to the general electorate for British India would be reserved for the Depressed Classes. Then came the question of the period after which the system of primary and secondary elections would come to an end. Ambedkar suggested a referendum at the end of fifteen years, but the others rejected it. Meanwhile Gandhi's condition had been deteriorating rapidly. In the late evening of September 23 Ambedkar met Gandhi in the prison, where he told the latter : "Mahatmaji, you must come to our rescue. Some of these friends are opposing our demand for a referendum at the end of the stated period. We are keen on having it, because we feel that it will do more to remove untouchability

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

than anything else".¹⁴ After some discussion Gandhi suggested a period of five years, but Ambedkar did not agree. Gandhi's condition deteriorated further, and on the following morning Ambedkar met Gandhi again and offered to reduce the period in question to ten years. Gandhi's reply was as follows: "Your logic is irrefutable. But let the referendum be at the end of five years. Surely, five years is a sufficient period to prove the bona fides of the caste Hindus. But if you insist on postponing the referendum further, I would begin to suspect that what you want is not to test the bona fides of the caste Hindus, but time only to organize the Depressed Classes for an adverse referendum."¹⁵ Ambedkar, however, remained adamant on the ten-year period, until Gandhi terminated the interview by saying: "There you are. Five years or my life."¹⁶ Gandhi's condition had now become quite critical. On the same evening, after the interview, Ambedkar held a prolonged discussion with his followers, at the end of which he declared that he was unable to change his position regarding the ten-year period. Nocturnal discussions with the caste Hindu leaders followed, until finally Ambedkar responded to the appeal of the latter, in the small hours of morning, to postpone the question of the period concerned until a future date when it would be decided by mutual agreement. At 3 o'clock in the morning Rajagopalachari informed Gandhi of this development and the latter expressed satisfaction over it. On September 25 a conference of leaders took place at Poona where the famous Poona Pact, which incorporated the new arrangements, was signed. A resolution against untouchability, drafted by Gandhi, was also adopted at the conference. Gandhi informed the British Government telegraphically that he would now break the fast if the latter would accept the Poona Pact in full. The British Government did so promptly, and on the evening of September 26 Gandhi broke his fast.

Now, in this particular case the conflict involved had a three-fold manifestation. First, there was the conflict between the Indian people and the British Government, represented by Gandhi and Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald respectively. Secondly, there was the conflict between the caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes, represented by Dr. Ambedkar. The crucial conflict, however, was between Gandhi and Ambedkar, for, as the facts of the case indi-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.¹⁶ *Ibid.*

cate, the caste Hindus would accept the decision of Gandhi, the untouchables would accept the decision of Ambedkar, and the British Government would accept the decision jointly arrived at by Gandhi and Ambedkar.

In order to prove that the *satyagraha* was successful it would be necessary to show (leaving aside the question of the moral effect of the fast on Gandhi himself) that Ambedkar underwent a genuine "change of heart" as a result of Gandhi's fast, and that the conflict between the caste Hindus and the untouchables was resolved, largely, if not wholly, as a consequence. It is necessary, in other words, to study Ambedkar's attitude to the case of the untouchables before and after the fast, and the relationship between the caste Hindus and the untouchables after the fast, for making a correct assessment of the success or failure of this *satyagraha*. When Gandhi declared his intention to fast unto death, Ambedkar issued a statement in which he totally rejected Gandhi's case against the Communal Award and put forth his own arguments in support of the separate representation of the untouchables. "I however, trust," said Ambedkar in conclusion, "the Mahatma will not drive me to the necessity of making a choice between his life and the rights of my people."¹⁷ The facts of the case briefly narrated above indicate that Ambedkar was most reluctant to change his position throughout the negotiations, that Gandhi very definitely placed before Ambedkar the clear alternatives of accepting his terms or the responsibility for his death, and that the former made each concession most reluctantly with the progressive deterioration of Gandhi's condition. Long afterwards, Ambedkar still maintained that he had signed the Poona Pact against his best judgment. In his own words :

"As to myself, it was no exaggeration to say that no man was placed in a greater and graver dilemma than I was then. It was a baffling situation. I had to make a choice between two different alternatives. There was before me the duty, which I owed as a part of common humanity, to save Gandhi from sure death. There was before me the problem of saving for the untouchables the political rights which the Prime Minister had given them. I responded to the call of humanity and saved the life of Mr.

¹⁷ B. R. Ambedkar : *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, Bombay, 1945, Appendix IV.

Gandhi by agreeing to alter the Communal Award in a manner satisfactory to Mr. Gandhi. This agreement is known as the Poona Pact.¹⁸

Thus, if Ambedkar's own statement about his reaction to Gandhi's fast is correct — and from the facts of the case, there is no reason to doubt it — then he remained convinced about the correctness of his original stand even after he had signed the Poona Pact, and was merely coerced by Gandhi into accepting it. It was a pact, as it were, signed under duress.

From this follows the general conclusion that the fact that the opponent has accepted the demand of the *satyagrahi* is not a sufficient proof of a "change of heart" on his part. The opponent may remain convinced of the Justice of his own cause, but yield ground to the *satyagrahi* for reasons other than Justice. Hence, it would also be difficult to say whether the cause of Justice would be served by an act of *satyagraha* such as fasting. The success of the *satyagrahi* in inducing his opponent to accept his terms would not be a sufficient proof of the Justice of his own position. If there is no guarantee that Justice can be achieved through violence on the part of an individual in a given conflict situation, there is equally no certainty that it can be achieved by individual *satyagraha*. The efficacy of *satyagraha* over violence lies in the fact that no physical harm is done to the opponent on the basis of the pre-conceived notion of Justice on the part of the reformer, and the former remains free to argue his case all over again if he feels that justice has not been done.

As regards the effect of the *satyagraha* on the conflict itself, although the attention of the Indian people was focussed on a fundamental social problem through Gandhi's fast, which perhaps thus indirectly contributed towards a long-term solution of the problem, the momentary fraternization between the leaders of the caste Hindus and the untouchables was more apparent than real. Dr. Ambedkar never ceased to attack Gandhi until his death, and the conflict between the caste Hindus and the Depressed Classes has not to this day been resolved. Untouchability prevails even today in many parts of rural India, and many of the important Hindu temples are still closed to the Depressed Classes. Whatever improvement has taken place in the social status of the untouchables has been

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

due more to constitutional processes in independent India than to *satyagraha*.

And this leads me to another fundamental criticism of Gandhian thought, already stated briefly. Problems like that of the Depressed Classes in India have deep-rooted historical causes, involving a wide range of socio-economic factors. It is not possible to resolve a conflict situation involving such problems without analysing the causes of the conflict in detail and devising concrete methods for removing them. Gandhi pays too little attention to the causes of conflict and the formulation of long-term measures for its resolution and too much attention to an emotional impact characterized as "change of heart", which can hardly be accepted by a student of the sociology of conflict as the true solution to a complicated conflict situation.

Moreover, the facts of this particular case indicate that even the successful implementation of individual *satyagraha* depends to a certain extent on the liberality and humanism of the opponent. As one of the parties against whom Gandhi had started the fast, the British Government showed remarkable consideration. Not only did they give wide publicity to the fast and treat Gandhi with great courtesy both with regard to correspondence and the provision of all reasonable facilities including visits from friends and relations and private medical attention, but also showed a democratic spirit in promptly accepting the Poona Pact. Whether all this would have been possible under a more tyrannical form of government, national or foreign, is highly doubtful. On his part Dr. Ambedkar showed at least some respect for conventional morality and humanist values in being unwilling to see Gandhi die even when he believed that the cause for which Gandhi was fasting was a wrong one. One is tempted to speculate that had the adversary been Jinnah, who was uncompromisingly critical of the Gandhian methods and rather adamant in his own views, and against whom significantly Gandhi never resorted to a fast, although he had more conflicts with this individual in his life than with any other person, the result of the fast might have been quite different.

Finally, I think the stature of the individual offering *satyagraha* is of great importance. The fact that Ambedkar and the British Government attached so much importance to Gandhi's fast was largely due to Gandhi's undisputed position as the leader of the Indian national movement. Had an unimportant individual undertaken the fast on the same issue, it would have probably attracted

very little attention, and would, therefore, have had no significant impact on the conflict situation.

2. On August 7, 1942, the All-India Congress Committee passed the famous Quit India Resolution. On the same day Gandhi submitted some draft instructions, marked "confidential", for the guidance of every participant in the struggle, should there be one, for the withdrawal of the British from India. He stated that he would start negotiations with the Government immediately regarding a settlement, which would go on for at least three weeks, and that the instructions for struggle were to be issued only if these negotiations failed. On August 8 the Governor-General-in-Council (12 out of 13 members of the Council were at this time Indians) passed a resolution regretting the Congress decision and expressing the determination to meet the "challenge" in it. Early on August 9 the Government arrested not only Gandhi and the members of the Congress Working Committee, but Congress leaders of all categories throughout the country. Beginning with the following day, widespread violence, directed against Government property including railway stations and tracks, post offices and communication lines, and symbols of British power including police stations and policemen, took place throughout the country. The Government met this upsurge of violence with repressive laws and brutal repression in which the army was freely used.

It was in this situation that Gandhi, soon after his arrival at the Aga Khan Palace in Poona where he was detained, entered into a protracted correspondence with the Government. He accused the Government of precipitating the crisis without justification before the Congress had actually launched the struggle, even before he had the opportunity to hold discussions with the Government. The widespread violence in the country, which he condemned, was attributable, according to him, to this precipitate policy of the Government, and hence, it was the Government, rather than the Congress, which was responsible for it. The Government, in its turn, stated that the policy of the Congress for some time past had been leading to this kind of situation, that the Quit India Resolution and the call to civil disobedience were the immediate causes of the countrywide violence, and that the Congress as an organization and Gandhi personally were responsible for it. Gandhi demanded that the Government should offer positive evidence of the respon-

sibility of the Congress for, and its involvement in, the acts of violence. He suggested that if he or the Congress had committed any mistakes, the Government should convince them of such mistakes. When the Government invited positive suggestions from Gandhi, he stated that if he was expected to act individually, he had to be convinced of his mistakes or those of the Congress, and if a collective decision was expected, he should be united with the other members of the Working Committee. The Government refused to accept these suggestions and stated that it would reconsider its policy only if Gandhi and the Congress openly repudiated the Quit India Resolution and the call to civil disobedience. The Government pointed out, incidentally, that the decision to suppress the Quit India movement had been taken by the Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council.¹⁹

During this correspondence with the Government, in a letter to the Viceroy dated December 31, 1942, Gandhi declared that he would start a fast after six months of detention (that is, in February, 1943) if the attitude of the Government towards himself and the Congress did not change, because as a *satyagrahi* he had no other remedy left but to "crucify the flesh by fasting".²⁰ He still did not want to do it if it could be avoided. The unproductive correspondence continued, and on January 29, 1943, Gandhi communicated his decision to fast to the Viceroy in the following words: "If then I cannot get soothing balm for my pain, I must resort to the law prescribed for the *satyagrahis*, namely, a fast according to capacity. I must commence after the early morning breakfast of the 9th February a fast for twenty-one days, ending on the morning of the 2nd March. Usually, during my fasts, I take water with the addition of salts. But now-a-days my system refuses water. This time, therefore, I propose to add juices of citrus fruits to make the water drinkable. For, my wish is not to fast unto death, but to survive the ordeal, if God so wills. The fast can be ended sooner by the Government giving the needed relief."²¹

The Government offered to release Gandhi during the period of the fast, but Gandhi refused the offer on the ground that fasting was his last resort only as a prisoner, and that if he was set free, he

¹⁹ *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government, 1942-44*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1945.

²⁰ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 186.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

would abandon his fast and adopt other suitable methods as a free agent. The Government interpreted this as a tactic on the part of Gandhi for getting released, and refused to yield any ground. The fast commenced on February 9.

Gandhi was then seventy-four years old, and there was natural anxiety throughout the country for his life. On February 17 three Indian members resigned from the Viceroy's Executive Council. On February 19 a non-party conference attended by representatives of various opinions, with the exception of the Muslim League (Jinnah was unsympathetic to the fast and refused to have anything to do with the conference) and the Communists was held in Delhi and urged the immediate release of Gandhi. But both Churchill and Linlithgo, the Viceroy, remained adamant. On February 20 Gandhi's condition became critical. On the following day the doctors persuaded him to take orange juice instead of lemon juice with water in order to prevent nausea and to make possible a larger intake of water. On February 22 his condition deteriorated further; the pulse was imperceptible and he failed to recognize visitors. But from the following day he staged a recovery and successfully completed the "epic fast" on March 3.

Before discussing the success or failure of this *satyagraha*, it may be noted that in the course of the correspondence between Gandhi and the Viceroy as well as in a speech of the Home Member in the Central Legislative Assembly, some fundamental questions regarding fasting as a political weapon were raised by both the sides, which more or less represent the two opposite points of view on this question. Thus in his letter of February 5 the Viceroy wrote to Gandhi: "... I would welcome a decision on your part to think better of it, not only because of my own reluctance to see you wilfully risk your life, but because I regard the use of a fast for political purposes as a form of political blackmail (*himsa*) for which there can be no moral justification. . . ."²² Similarly, on February 15, 1943, that is, on the seventh day of Gandhi's fast, Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, speaking on an adjournment motion on the fast in the Central Legislative Assembly, observed: "I must confess that speaking for myself it is certainly repugnant to western ideas of decency to exploit against an opponent his feelings of humanity, chivalry or mercy, or to trifle with such a sacred trust as one's own

²² *Ibid.*, p. 193.

life in order to play on the feelings of the public for the sake of some purely mundane object."²³

In his letter to the Home Member, dated May 21, 1943, Gandhi endeavoured to meet the former's arguments in the following words :

"I must tread with extreme caution upon the ground with which you are infinitely more familiar than I can be. Let me, however, remind you of the historic fast of the late MacSwiney. I know that the British Government let him die in imprisonment. But he has been acclaimed by the Irish people as a hero and a martyr. Edward Thompson in his 'You Have Lived Through All This' says that the late Mr. Asquith called the British Government's action a 'political blunder of the first magnitude'. The author adds : 'He was allowed to die by inches, while the world watched with a passion of admiration and sympathy, and innumerable British men and women begged their Government not to be such a damned fool'. And is it repugnant to western ideas of decency to exploit (if that expression must be retained) against the opponent his feelings of humanity, chivalry or mercy? Which is better, to take the opponent's life secretly or openly, or to credit him with finer feelings and evoke them by fasting or some other way of self-immolation, or to trifle with it by engaging in an attempt to compass the destruction of the opponent and his dependants?"²⁴

It seems to me that Gandhi's arguments are based on the wrong assumption that the only two alternative methods of resolving a conflict are physical violence and "change of heart" through extra-rational pressures. As a matter of fact, however, the majority of the world's disputes, from those of the smallest of human associations, the family, to those of international diplomacy, are solved by neither of these two methods, but by argument, negotiation, bargaining, etc. Gandhi, of course, does not rule out the method of negotiation, indeed he insists on it, for he says that *satyagraha* must be resorted to only when all other methods of resolving a conflict have failed. But the fact that an individual's conception of Justice has not been achieved through negotiations, does not mean that it can be vindicated by an act of *satyagraha* on his part, such as fasting.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-14.

No one would say that "destruction of the opponent and his dependants" is the ideal solution for a conflict. But it would be equally difficult to establish that the exaction of concessions from the opponent by rousing his "humanity, chivalry or mercy" through self-immolation is an ideal solution either, since in neither case is it possible to prove that Justice has been vindicated. In the case of *satyagraha* by a large group or a whole nation the situation would be somewhat different, as we shall see presently, but for an individual to seek a solution of his grievance through self-immolation is a rather doubtful way of securing Justice. Gandhi would, of course, say that no individual should resort to *satyagraha* unless he is convinced of the Justice of his cause, but then the question inevitably arises whether there can be any universal standard of Justice. As I have explained in Chapter II, Justice is a synthesis of certain ultimate values about which there can be no further argument. Depending, therefore, on an individual's sense of ultimate values, there may exist many different conceptions of Justice. Even if an agreed conception of Justice is taken for granted, there remains the further difficulty that the subjective assessment by the individual of the Justice of his cause may be grossly mistaken. Gandhi would probably reply that the moral purity of the *satyagrahi*, attained through *tapasya*, would enable him to see Justice. In other words, an extra-rational approach (Gandhians would probably call it supra-rational) to a conflict as well as an extra-rational solution to it are approved by Gandhi without any reservation. But it is difficult to see how an opponent who is convinced of the Justice of his own cause on rational grounds can serve Justice by doing anything but letting the *satyagrahi* suffer the consequences of his own action.

As regards the effect of this particular *satyagraha*, it should be borne in mind that its object was merely to change the policy of the British Indian Government towards the Congress, which Gandhi considered unjust. From this point of view, it was a total failure. Neither during nor immediately after the fast did the Government alter its policy in any way. The chapter in Tendulkar's *Mahatma* which deals with the period immediately following the fast has been appropriately entitled "Dead End". The Congress continued to remain an illegal organization during the war and the leaders of the organization continued to remain in jail. Even the death of Gandhi's wife in February 1944 did not induce the Government

to release him. It was on account of Gandhi's serious illness that the Government eventually released him in May that year.

An important conclusion following from this fast is that this form of individual *satyagraha* may not always even result in the opponent yielding any ground, whether such a gesture is justified or not. It is interesting to note that this time Gandhi, presumably knowing the mind of the Government, decided to fast, not unto death, but for a specific period only. Besides, this case also proves that even the implementation of this form of *satyagraha* requires the existence of a relatively liberal adversary such as the British Government again proved to be. After some initial obstruction, the Government gave fair publicity to the fast, the Viceroy replied to every letter of Gandhi and the correspondence was published, and all reasonable facilities regarding visits from friends and relations and private medical attention were provided, apart from the fact that the detention itself took place in the comfort of the Aga Khan Palace at Poona. It is highly doubtful whether this form of *satyagraha* can be practised in a political system where opponents of the Government can disappear at midnight never to be heard of again.

3. The last two years of Gandhi's life were dedicated almost solely to the battle against communalism. He had toured the riot-affected district of Noakhali in East Bengal and the province of Bihar in an effort to bring a semblance of sanity to a sub-continent gone mad. In January, 1948, came the last fast of his life, in protest against communal violence in India. Delhi itself had been the scene of communal killings for some time, and the Muslims of the capital felt insecure. In his prayer meeting on January 12 Gandhi announced his decision to fast from the following day, which took his close associates completely by surprise. The reasons given by him were as follows :

"I never like to feel resourceless, a *satyagrahi* never should. Fasting is the last resort in the place of the sword — his or others'. I have no answer to return to the Mussalman friends, who see me from day-to-day, as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me, and it makes me happy.

No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step. . . . It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all communities brought about without any outside pressure but from an awakened sense of duty."²⁵

When Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister, informed Gandhi that he would do anything that Gandhi might wish, the latter replied that the first priority should be given to the question of giving Pakistan her share of the cash assets of undivided India withheld by the Government of India due to the war in Kashmir. On the 15th January the Government of India decided to deliver the cash assets to the Government of Pakistan. But Gandhi made it clear that the object of his fast was nothing less than the self-purification of all the communities in the sub-continent and the union of hearts between India and Pakistan. He stated, however, that he would be satisfied for the time being if seven conditions relating to communal harmony in Delhi, which he specified, were fulfilled immediately and the leaders of the different communities sincerely assumed personal responsibility for the greater task ahead. On January 17 a Peace Committee of all communities met at the residence of Rajendra Prasad and passed a resolution guaranteeing the fulfilment of the conditions laid down by Gandhi. The leaders of different communities met Gandhi at Birla House, where he was fasting, and requested him to end the fast. The meeting was attended by the High Commissioner of Pakistan in India who conveyed to Gandhi the deep concern of the people of Pakistan about his fast and their desire that he should break it. The High Commissioner personally offered to do whatever he could for inducing Gandhi to break the fast. News also came that fraternization between the two communities had already started in the capital. Amidst emotional scenes and a speech by Gandhi that passed out his heart's anguish, the fast was broken on January 18, at 12-45 p.m., exactly twelve days before the Mahatma was assassinated by a fanatical Hindu.

This fast also, while it served to draw the attention of the nation to the most burning socio-political problem of the day, achieved very little else. Neither Hindu-Muslim relations in India nor Indo-Pakistan relations improved appreciably after the fast. Periodic

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 247.

communal riots continued to take place in both the countries and their relations continued to be as strained as ever. The obvious fact again stares us in the face that communalism in the sub-continent has deep historical roots and complex social, political and economic ramifications and that the solution to such problems must be sought in the causes of their existence and growth rather than in an emotional appeal which at best can create a purely temporary melodramatic situation.

The conclusions regarding fasting as a form of individual *satyagraha* can now be summed up. It can be practised only in a relatively liberal socio-political set-up. It can be practised only against a sympathetic adversary. It may not always lead to the opponent yielding any ground. Even when the opponent makes the necessary concessions, there is no certainty that he has done so out of conviction or of a "change of heart"; consequently there is no certainty that the opponent's action has been based on Justice, even if we make the somewhat unreal assumption that there is an agreed conception of Justice. Whatever solutions may be reached through this form of *satyagraha* are bound to be temporary, for they are unrelated to the deep-seated causes of the conflict. But this form of *satyagraha* can help draw attention to important conflict situations, and what is most important, prevent a conflict from attaining a violent climax and direct it into non-violent channels, thus keeping the possibilities of negotiation and a fundamental and permanent solution always open. But even this can be achieved only in a liberal political system, and only if the stature of the *satyagrahi* is high relative to the magnitude of the conflict. There is the danger, on the other hand, of fanatical or otherwise irresponsible individuals, motivated by political expediency or religious orthodoxy, using the technique of fasting for serving vested interests or even personal ends, causing social disharmony and political instability, and generally undermining rather than upholding any reasonable conception of Justice.

DEFIANCE OF VIOLENCE

Defiance of violence in the cause of one's own conception of Justice is a rather ancient method of individual resistance, especially in the Orient, and its greatest example can be found in the life and crucifixion of the founder of Christianity. Gandhi's special contribution to this method of resistance is that he transformed it from a

primarily religious weapon into a means of social and political transformation in the hands of the unarmed individual, group and mass. The idea is that if the *satyagrahi*, while fighting for a cause, is subjected to physical violence, and while boldly defying it non-violently, continues to work for his cause with dedication and determination, those who perpetrated the violence on him would be converted to his cause, and the cause itself would be greatly strengthened. Here I shall discuss only two cases of defiance of violence by Gandhi himself in South Africa.

(1) In 1896 Gandhi paid a short visit to India from South Africa in order to acquaint the Indian people and national leaders with the problems of Indians in South Africa. During this visit he naturally criticized the white Government of South Africa, although he maintained later that he had said nothing in India which he had not already said in South Africa. His speeches were, however, distorted and misreported to the South African whites through newspapers and other means. When Gandhi returned to South Africa, many other Indians coming to South Africa were also travelling with him in two ships. The ships were delayed in the port of Durban, ostensibly on the ground of quarantine, but presumably (as Gandhi believed) for putting pressure on Gandhi and other Indians for going back to India. Threats of physical violence in the event of his landing were communicated to Gandhi. The charges of the South African whites against Gandhi, as listed by him in his autobiography, were mainly two : (i) that while in India he had indulged in unmerited condemnation of the Natal whites ; and (ii) that with a view to swamping Natal with Indians he had specially brought the two shiploads of passengers to settle there.²⁶

Gandhi, however, defied these threats. He sent his wife and children in advance to a friend's place and then went ashore himself with an European friend. As soon as he landed some white youngsters recognized Gandhi and rushed towards him. Soon the crowd swelled, Gandhi was separated from his friend and mercilessly manhandled. The actual incident of violence is described by Gandhi in his autobiography thus :

"They first caught hold of Mr. Loughton and separated us. Then

²⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958, p. 138.

they pelted me with stones, brickbats and rotten eggs. Someone snatched away my turban, whilst others began to batter and kick me. I fainted and caught hold of the front railings of a house and stood there to get my breath. But it was impossible. They came upon me boxing and battering."²⁷

At this stage the wife of the Police Superintendent, who knew Gandhi, happened to be passing by. She stood between Gandhi and the crowd with an open parasol and thus checked the fury of the crowd. Meanwhile an Indian youth had informed the Police Superintendent of the incident, who sent a posse of policemen to the scene. Gandhi was escorted by them to the police station where the Superintendent asked him to take refuge in the station, but Gandhi declined the offer saying, "They are sure to quiet down when they realize their mistake. I have trust in their sense of fairness."²⁸ Escorted by the police Gandhi then reached the friend's place where he intended to stay. But the crowd surrounded the house and demanded that Gandhi be surrendered to them. The Police Superintendent told Gandhi: "If you would save your friend's house and property and also your family, you should escape from the house in disguise as I suggest." Gandhi accepted the suggestion for the sake of the life and property of his friend (although he raises the question in his autobiography whether it was the fear of his own life or that of the life and property of his friend which really impelled him to accept this advice) and escaped from his friend's house in the disguise of a police constable, while the Police Superintendent kept the crowd amused by singing: "Hang old Gandhi on the sour apple tree."²⁹

The then Secretary of State, Mr. Chamberlain, cabled the Natal Government asking them to prosecute Gandhi's assailants. A senior member of the Natal Cabinet, Mr. Escombe, sent for Gandhi, expressed his regrets for the injuries he had sustained, and said: "If you can identify the assailants I am prepared to arrest and prosecute them. Mr. Chamberlain also desires me to do so."³⁰ To this Gandhi gave the following reply:

"I do not want to prosecute anyone. It is possible that I may be able to identify one or two of them, but what is the use of getting

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

²⁸ *Ibid.* ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

them punished? Besides, I do not hold the assailants to blame. They were given to understand that I had made exaggerated statements in India about the whites in Natal and calumniated them. If they believed these reports, it is no wonder that they were enraged. The leaders, and, if you will permit me to say so, you are to blame. You could have guided the people properly, but you also believed Reuter and assumed that I must have indulged in exaggeration. I do not want to bring anyone to book. I am sure that, when the truth becomes known, they will be sorry for their conduct."

Mr. Escombe said: "Would you mind giving me this in writing? Because I shall have to cable to Mr. Chamberlain to that effect. I do not want you to make any statement in haste. You may, if you like, consult Mr. Laughton and your other friends, before you come to a final decision. I may confess, however, that, if you waive the right of bringing your assailants to book, you will considerably help me in restoring quiet, besides enhancing your own reputation." "Thank you", said Gandhi. "I need not consult anyone. I had made my decision in the matter before I came to you. It is my conviction that I should not prosecute the assailants, and I am prepared this moment to reduce my decision to writing."³¹ With this Gandhi gave him the necessary statement.

Gandhi writes in his autobiography that his completely non-violent attitude and especially his refusal to prosecute his assailants "produced such a profound impression that the Europeans of Durban were ashamed of their conduct". The press declared Gandhi to be innocent and condemned the mob. The lynching, says Gandhi, ultimately proved to be a blessing for the movement of South African Indians as a whole.

It is difficult to assess the exact effect of this incident on the struggle of the South African Indians, because it is impossible to establish any direct relationship between it and the subsequent development of the movement as a whole. There is, however, no denying the fact that the incident had a mellowing effect, at least locally, on the South African whites and enabled Gandhi to win new friends to his cause. The problem of South African Indians also got a lot of publicity and Gandhi's own leadership was strengthened, which was itself

³¹ *Ibid.*

a factor of great importance for the South African Indian movement. One thing, however, is certain. This incident did not in any way lead to a resolution of the conflict between the South African Government and the South African Indians, which was the basic conflict involved. Moreover, whatever indirect effect this particular *satyagraha* had on the Indians' struggle was due to the fact that a man of Gandhi's stature and leadership, and not a relatively insignificant individual, had performed the *satyagraha*. It is extremely doubtful whether such a *satyagraha* performed by one of the unknown Indians anywhere in South Africa would have produced the same effect. Finally, it is necessary to mention an important point discussed earlier, namely, the attitude of the authorities concerned to this form of *satyagraha*. In spite of the brutality of the South African Government the fact remains that the Secretary of State for India, a Senior Member of the Natal Cabinet, the Police Superintendent and his wife, all treated Gandhi with courtesy and consideration. It is conceivable that in a totally authoritarian and unsympathetic form of government, Gandhi would have been given no protection and offered no legal remedies by the authorities concerned.

(2) In 1906 the Transvaal Government promulgated a new Ordinance affecting the interests of the Indian settlers. It enjoined that every Indian of eight years and upwards entitled to reside in the Transvaal must register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a Certificate of Registration. It meant noting down important marks of identification upon the applicant's person and also fingerprints. Non-compliance with this order would disqualify an Indian to reside in Transvaal and make him liable to a fine of £100 or imprisonment for three months or even deportation. In 1907 when Transvaal was granted self-government, the new Government passed an Act which was an exact copy of the 1906 Ordinance. Gandhi organized resistance against this Registration Act and advised Indians not to comply with it. Gandhi himself was imprisoned in Johannesburg for non-compliance with this order. But from the prison he was taken to meet General Smuts in Pretoria where an agreement was reached to the effect that if the Indians voluntarily registered themselves, the Registration Act would be withdrawn. Gandhi addressed a large meeting of Indians and said: "The responsibility of the community is largely enhanced by this settlement. We must register voluntarily to show that we do not

intend to bring any single Indian into Transval surreptitiously or by fraud."³² As soon as Gandhi finished his speech, a Pathan called Mir Alam strongly criticized Gandhi for what he virtually described as betrayal and treachery on Gandhi's part and declared : "I swear with Allah as my witness, that I will kill the man who takes the lead in applying for registration". In reply Gandhi explained the difference between voluntary registration and compulsory registration and then observed :

"I do not like the threat of death which the friend has held out. I also believe that one may not swear to kill another in the name of the Most High. However, as the principal party responsible for this settlement and as a servant of the community, it is my clear duty to take the lead in giving fingerprints and I pray to God that he graciously permits me to do so. To die by the hand of a brother rather than by disease or any such other way, cannot be for me a matter for sorrow. And if even in such a case I am free from the thoughts of anger or hatred against my assailant, I know that will redound to my eternal welfare, and even the assailant will later on realize my perfect innocence."³³

A few days later Gandhi and his colleagues went to take the certificates of registration. Eight Pathans led by Mir Alam followed them. Near the entrance of the Registration Office Mir Alam asked Gandhi about his intentions. Gandhi replied : "I propose to take out a Certificate of Registration giving the ten fingerprints. If you come with me I will first get you the certificate . . ." No sooner had Gandhi finished his sentence than Mir Alam hit him with a heavy stick. Gandhi at once fainted with the words "*He Rama*" on his lips. In falling he struck his head against a jagged stone and received serious cuts and injuries. A tooth was loosened while his forehead struck another stone. Mir Alam and his friends gave him some blows and kicks, some of which were warded off by Gandhi's associates. The party of Mir Alam fled with the approach of some Europeans, who picked up and carried Gandhi into an European's private office. When Gandhi regained consciousness, a Christian missionary called Rev. Joseph Doke took him to his house and arranged for medical attention. Gandhi asked the Registration

³² Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 90-91. ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Officer to bring the necessary papers to him. The officer advised him rest instead, but Gandhi said : "I am pledged to take out the first Certificate if I am alive, and if it is acceptable to God. It is, therefore, I insist upon the papers being brought here and now."³⁴ The papers were then brought in and Gandhi put his fingerprints on them, the sight of which is said to have brought tears in the eyes of the officer. Gandhi wired the Attorney General from his sick bed that he did not hold Mir Alam and others guilty for assaulting him, and requested their immediate release. In another message to the Indian community he said : "I hope to take up my duty shortly. Those who have committed the act did not know what they were doing. They thought that what I was doing was wrong. They have had their redress in the only manner they knew. I request, therefore, that no steps be taken against them."³⁵ The Government, however, did not accept Gandhi's request and Mir Alam and one of his companions were sentenced to three months' hard labour.

Soon afterwards, however, Gandhi renewed the movement against the registration on the ground of violation of his agreement regarding the repeal of the Registration Act with Gen. Smuts, and asked the Indian community to burn the Certificates of Registration publicly. In a large gathering, among the two thousand certificates which Gandhi received for being burnt, was Mir Alam's original certificate (as he did not take a voluntary certificate) handed over to Gandhi by Mir Alam himself. Mir Alam apologized to Gandhi for what he considered to be wrong done to Gandhi earlier, and there was an emotional reunion between the two.

Now, in this case, it should be clearly understood, the conflict involved was not that between the Indian community and the Natal Government directly, but a different one between Mir Alam and his followers on the one hand, and Gandhi on the other. Mir Alam's attitude to Gandhi, of course, changed radically, and the conflict was also resolved to the apparent satisfaction of both the parties. But again we come back to the basic question which has been raised before, namely, that of the achievement of Justice. There are two separate issues involved in the case. One is the defiance of violence by Gandhi for the sake of his own conception of right action, which, as stated already, is undoubtedly of great significance as a method

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

of resistance. There is the other issue of the merits of the two viewpoints expressed by Gandhi and Mir Alam respectively regarding voluntary registration. Mir Alam's subsequent emotional reconciliation with Gandhi does not by itself prove that his original opposition to voluntary registration was wrong. Whether his original attitude was right or wrong would depend on a rational analysis of the facts of the situation rather than on his emotional reaction after beating up Gandhi. The facts of the case, it seems to me, do not warrant a hasty conclusion about the rationality or otherwise of Mir Alam's original opposition to voluntary registration, since voluntary registration at a time when the repeal of the Registration Act was nothing more than a somewhat dubious commitment for the future on the part of the Government was not truly voluntary in character, and there would seem to have existed reasonable grounds for anyone to oppose such registration.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

While the other forms of individual *satyagraha* can be practised by an individual against any other individual, group, or the government, individual civil disobedience can be practised only against the Government. It is a form of resistance against some specific order or Act of the Government which the *satyagrahi* considers to be unjust and, therefore, wilfully violates, and accepts the consequences of such violation. As Gandhi said during his *satyagraha* campaign in South Africa in 1907, "Loyalty to the King demands loyalty to the King of Kings". Civil disobedience is thus based on a moral law which to the mind of the *satyagrahi* is higher than governmental law. Civil disobedience, according to Gandhi, cannot be successfully used for the achievement of any general objective. It is meant to ventilate the grievances of the individuals concerned against some specific order or law. In Gandhi's own words: "Civil disobedience can never be in general terms, such as for independence. The issue must be definite and capable of being clearly understood and within the power of the opponent to yield."³⁶ *Satyagraha* against a particular piece of legislation can, however, be escalated into a movement for the achievement of a broader objective. Here I shall examine three cases of individual civil disobedience,

³⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *Constructive Programme*, p. 28.

two performed by Gandhi himself and the third by others under his direction.

1. The indigo cultivators of the Champaran District of Bihar were in acute distress in 1916-17. They were desperately poor and were brutally oppressed by the British planters. Some local leaders approached Gandhi with the request that the latter should personally visit Champaran, investigate and try to redress the grievances of the indigo cultivators. Gandhi accepted this request in early 1917 and went to Champaran. With the help of some local leaders including J. B. Kripalani and Rajendra Prasad, he made some enquiries about the condition of the indigo cultivators and did some preliminary organizational work regarding a possible movement. The government immediately served on him a notice to leave Champaran. When Gandhi was asked to acknowledge service of the notice he wrote to the effect that he did not propose to comply with it and leave Champaran until his enquiry was finished. Thereupon he received summons to appear in court next day for trial for disobeying the order. Gandhi spent the whole night writing letters and issuing necessary instructions to his close associates regarding the course of action to be adopted in the event of his imprisonment. News of the summons spread quickly, and on the next day there was a big crowd both inside and in front of the court house. Gandhi and his associates cooperated with the Collector, the Magistrate and the Police Superintendent regarding the control of the crowd, and a kind of friendship developed between him and the officials on this account. The officials were impressed by the fact that Gandhi did not refer to any legal technicalities regarding the notice and the summons and that he treated them with courtesy and consideration. When the trial began the Government pleader pressed the Magistrate to postpone the case as he felt that he was dealing with an unprecedented situation. But Gandhi intervened and requested the Magistrate not to postpone the case as he wanted to plead guilty. He read out a statement in court which incorporated the rationale of civil disobedience and ran partly as follows :

“As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their

midst. I could not, therefore, voluntarily retire. Amid this conflict of duties I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the Administration. I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding, in the public life of India, a position such as I do, has to be most careful in setting an example. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.

"I venture to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."³⁷

The Magistrate and the Government Pleader were somewhat bewildered by what was an unprecedented case in their experience, and the case was postponed. Gandhi cabled full details of the case to the Viceroy and to his friends. The Lt.-Governor ordered the case against Gandhi to be withdrawn and the Collector of Champaran wrote to him saying that he was at liberty to conduct the proposed enquiry and would receive every help from the official circles. A government Commission was appointed to enquire into the complaints of the farmers and the Lt.-Governor insisted that Gandhi be on the Commission as a representative of the peasants. The Commission unanimously upheld the case of the farmers and recommended the immediate rectification of their grievances.

This case would seem at first sight to be an example of the complete success of individual civil disobedience. But it should be realized, in the first place, that the only direct result of the *satyagraha* was the appointment of a Commission of enquiry by the Government. There was no *prima facie* certainty that the findings of the Commission would be favourable to the peasants. Secondly, the treatment meted out to Gandhi and the appointment of the Commission were indicative of the fact that Gandhi was dealing with a sympathetic adversary who was unwilling to resort to totalitarian methods of

³⁷ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, p. 305.

repression. As a matter of fact, Gandhi himself realized that it was the British sense of Justice which was largely responsible for the success of the *satyagraha*. In his letter to the Viceroy of April 30, 1918, he observed : "In Champaran by resisting an age-long tyranny, I have shown the ultimate sovereignty of British justice."³⁸ Thirdly, it so happened in this case that Gandhi's idea of Justice coincided with that of the Government, and the former's assessment of the actual condition of the indigo cultivators also happened to tally with that of the Commission of enquiry. There is no *prima facie* warrant for assuming that such would always be the case. Finally, the fact that the Champaran *satyagraha* took place at a time when the cooperation of the Indian people was most essential for the successful prosecution of the First World War, and that Gandhi was alone among the top Indian leaders to support the British war effort and to urge the Indian people to do so, must have contributed, perhaps decisively, to the amicable settlement of the conflict. Such favourable circumstances may not always be present. In particular, it would be a relatively easy matter for a ruthless government to crush this kind of individual civil disobedience, especially if the individual concerned does not occupy as important a position as did Gandhi. There would also be the permanent danger of this form of *satyagraha* being misused as much by irresponsible individuals for political expediency as by sincere individuals through wrong judgment or fanaticism.

2. At its Lahore session in 1930, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution demanding complete independence, and Gandhi was authorized to devise suitable methods for giving effect to a civil disobedience movement for the realization of this demand. It was decided that in case of Gandhi's arrest Jawaharlal Nehru was to assume the leadership of the movement. A further list of probable successors was drawn up and kept secret. The nature of the struggle was, however, left undefined and Gandhi was given full authority to decide upon the actual steps to be taken. Gandhi sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy which contained the immediate demands of the Congress that were to be fulfilled by the Government within a certain time limit. As no satisfactory reply was received, the Congress became ready for civil disobedience. After some delay Gandhi

³⁸ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 228.

decided on a plan which was initially looked upon with considerable scepticism by his immediate followers. The plan was that of a march of 241 miles from the Sabarmati Ashram to the Dandi beach with a view to violating the Salt Act under which the manufacture of salt was a government monopoly.

Although the Salt March represented a *satyagraha* in itself, its main object was to draw the attention of the Indian masses to the injustice of British rule in India and to trigger off a broader mass movement against the British Government. Accordingly, the Indian National Congress made elaborate preparations for the coming struggle at all levels of organization, and waited for Gandhi to begin the march. Gandhi himself geared the organization of the Sabarmati Ashram to the preparation for the march, and selected and assigned specific responsibilities to several batches of volunteers.

On March 12, 1930 Gandhi started the march at 6-30 A.M. with seventy-eight followers. Elaborate preparations had been made in advance all along the route to be followed by Gandhi and his party. Crowds greeted and followed Gandhi from the beginning of the march, and Gandhi addressed numerous meetings on the roadside and in the villages where he halted according to plan. Newspapers published headline reports of the march from the very first day, and the day-to-day progress of the march and Gandhi's statements were given wide publicity not only by newspapers, but also by the radio and other mass media of communication in India and abroad. Although Gandhi had expected to be arrested either before the march began or at any time during the march, the British Government neither arrested him nor obstructed the march in any way. Emotions were roused all over the country with the progress of the march, and the masses were eagerly waiting for a country-wide Civil Disobedience Movement.

The 241 miles from Sabarmati to Dandi were covered in 24 days, and Gandhi reached Dandi with his followers on April 5, 1930. April 6 was the first day of the National Week which used to be celebrated in memory of the happenings of 1919, from the *Satyagraha* Day to the Jalianwallabagh massacres. On that day, after the morning prayers, Gandhi went to the beach with some of his followers and picked up some natural salt, thus technically violating the Salt Act. There was not a single policeman in sight. Immediately after thus breaking the salt law, Gandhi issued a statement for the Indian people (which was published by all newspapers), in which he urged

everyone to manufacture salt or to collect natural salt and to trade in salt "whenever he wishes and wherever it is convenient."³⁹

When Gandhi first explained the idea of the Salt March and the violation of the Salt Act to his associates, many of them were openly sceptical about the proposal. "We were bewildered", says Jawaharlal Nehru, "and could not quite fit in a national struggle with common salt."⁴⁰ But the effect of the march and the violation of the Salt Act at Dandi on the whole nation was electric and took Gandhi's associates by complete surprise. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru : "It seemed as though a spring had been suddenly released ; and all over the country, in town and village, salt manufacture was the topic of the day . . . As we saw the abounding enthusiasm of the people and the way salt-making was spreading like a prairie fire, we felt a little abashed and ashamed for having questioned the efficacy of this method when it was first proposed by Gandhiji. And we marvelled at the amazing knack of the man to impress the multitude and make it act in an organized way."⁴¹ The Civil Disobedience Movement had begun.

In spite of the fact that Gandhi was accompanied by 78 followers in his march to Dandi, I have treated the Salt March as a case of individual civil disobedience, because the entire plan was conceived, organized and primarily executed by one man, while even the Indian National Congress merely looked on in a mood of expectancy. By 1930 Gandhi had developed a charisma of a high order, and the Congress Working Committee was content to leave the decision regarding the manner in which the Civil Disobedience Movement was to be ushered in entirely to Gandhi. During the actual march also, it was Gandhi on whom the attention of the whole world was focussed, and his 78 followers hardly did anything other than keeping him company. When the march began, Motilal Nehru observed that "Like the historic march of Ramachandra to Lanka the march of Gandhi will be memorable."⁴² Acharya P. C. Ray likened the march to that of Moses with his followers from Egypt.⁴³ Jawaharlal Nehru said : "To-day the pilgrim marches onward on his long trek. Staff

³⁹ For a detailed account of the Salt March see Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 20-38.

⁴⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru : *An Autobiography*, The Bodley Head, London, 1947, p. 210.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁴² Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 24.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

in hand he goes along the dusty roads of Gujarat, clear-eyed and firm of step, with his faithful band trudging along behind him. . . It is a long journey, for the goal is the independence of India and the ending of the exploitation of her millions."⁴⁴ There can thus be little doubt that Gandhi was regarded as a charismatic leader who was given the responsibility, at a time when the Indian National Congress did not know what exactly was to be done, of setting a personal example of civil disobedience for the rest of the country to follow. What followed the Salt March was definitely a mass Civil Disobedience Movement, but the march itself was very much a case of individual civil disobedience on the part of Gandhi.

From the point of view of its immediate objective, namely, the triggering off of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Salt March was an eminent success. But this should not lead one to the general conclusion that an act of individual civil disobedience can always be expected to inspire a broader mass movement. The Salt March was a very special event conditioned by very special circumstances. In the first place, the whole country was in a rebellious mood and the entire organization of the Indian National Congress had been geared to the expected mass Civil Disobedience Movement. The Salt March merely provided the necessary spark. The movement could possibly have been ushered in by alternative methods as well. Secondly, the personal charisma of Gandhi had a lot to do with the success of the Salt March. As a charismatic leader Gandhi was expected by the masses to work miracles, and they were willing to respond eagerly to the tune called by him. The attention and publicity that the march received was due in no small measure to the personal importance of Gandhi. Had a person of a smaller stature ventured on the plan, it would probably have gone largely unnoticed and caused no particular reaction among the masses. Thirdly, the relatively liberal attitude taken by the British Government towards the march was an important condition for its success. The Government did not arrest Gandhi when the elaborate preparations for the march were being made, or during the march, or even after the latter had violated the Salt Act on April 6. The arrest of Gandhi took place on May 4, nearly a month after the violation of the Salt Act had begun, and when the Civil Disobedience Movement had assumed far wider proportions than the violation of the Salt Act.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25

Nor did the Government impose any restrictions on the publicity and propaganda connected with the march, including the publication of Gandhi's own numerous statements. Gandhi ascribed this liberal attitude on the part of the Government at the time to the latter's inexperience and perplexity with regard to non-violent civil disobedience.⁴⁵ But apart from the fact that by 1930 the British Government had a good deal of experience of various types of *satyagraha*, including the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-22, it would be naive to assume that they could not prevent the Salt March from taking place by adopting relatively ruthless measures at the outset. As a matter of fact, the Civil Disobedience Movement which was ushered in by the Salt March failed subsequently to achieve any of its objectives and had to be abandoned due to the ruthless repression of the Government. The movement proved to be a decided failure owing to the intolerance of the Government (the Civil Disobedience Movement will be discussed in detail in Chapter XV). Surely, it would have been easier for the Government to crush the Salt March than to crush the Civil Disobedience Movement after it had gathered considerable momentum. In a totally tyrannical form of Government drastic action would possibly have been taken against Gandhi at the very initial stages, and any repercussions to such action ruthlessly suppressed. The relatively liberal character of the British Government, the personal charisma of Gandhi, and the rebellious mood and organizational preparedness of the people, all combined to make the Salt March a success from the point of view of sparking off the Civil Disobedience Movement. It is extremely doubtful whether the march would have proved to be an example of successful individual civil disobedience if any one of these important conditioning factors was absent.

3. When the Second World War broke out, the Congress ministries resigned in protest against the involvement of India in the War without the consent of the Indian people. Subsequently the Congress leadership became divided within itself regarding the attitude to be adopted towards the British war effort. Gandhi refused to cooperate in any manner with the war effort of the British Government as he was strongly opposed to the violent method of solving international conflicts. The other leaders of the Congress, including

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Jawaharlal Nehru, wanted the Congress to cooperate with the British war effort on condition that India was immediately declared independent. In September 1940, however, a compromise was reached. A *satyagraha* resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Vallabhbhai Patel, and Gandhi was authorized to organize and lead a movement for civil disobedience. About a month later Gandhi initiated the famous Individual Civil Disobedience Movement. The movement was undertaken ostensibly for the vindication of freedom of speech, which had been restricted by the Government during the war, but in practice it amounted to nothing less than propaganda against the war. Individuals selected by Gandhi himself were instructed to go on foot from place to place and repeat and explain to the people the following formula: "It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance."

On October 17, 1940, Vinoba Bhave inaugurated the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement by delivering an anti-war speech in a village near Wardha. During the next three days he walked from village to village making similar speeches and was arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment on October 21. Jawaharlal Nehru was to follow Vinoba Bhave on November 7 after giving due notice to the authorities, but was unable to do so as he was arrested on October 31. A *satyagrahi* called Brahm Dutt took his place on November 7 and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. In quick succession all the top leaders of the Congress were arrested. By the mid-summer of 1941 over twenty thousand people had been convicted and there were fourteen thousand people in jail.

The Movement continued for fifteen months when it was suspended by Gandhi on the ground that the Congress leaders had not in reality accepted the non-violent method.⁴⁶

The Individual Civil Disobedience Movement was decidedly a failure, whether from the viewpoint of establishing the right of carrying on propaganda against the war or of having any appreciable effect on the progress towards independence. The support given to the movement by the Congress organization was lukewarm, because

⁴⁶ For a detailed account of the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement see Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 1-32 ; R. C. Majumdar : *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1963, Vol. 3, pp. 600-09.

the large majority of the Congress leaders did not share Gandhi's view that the Germans or the Japanese could be resisted non-violently. Gandhi himself stated that in view of the British Government's ability to get men and money from India in spite of the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement, the movement must be regarded as "a moral effort and moral demonstration."⁴⁷ In other words, the political situation and the organizational background were not suitable for the success of such a movement. Secondly, in the war-time situation the Government were naturally determined to suppress such an anti-war movement, and the movement fizzled out due to the relatively repressive measures adopted by them.

⁴⁷ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 14.

CHAPTER XIV

GROUP SATYAGRAHA

SINCE the attainment of Justice is, according to Gandhi, as much the duty of individuals as of groups, *satyagraha* logically becomes a technique of resistance against injustice in the hands of all kinds of social groups. A study of the large number of group *satyagrahas* organized by Gandhi or his followers shows that this technique of group resistance is generally organized for a relatively local cause which can be of a general or specific nature. It may also be symbolic of a bigger movement relating to a broader issue. It may be organized either against another group responsible for some specific injustice or against governmental authority for the attainment of Justice relating to either a specific or a general issue. In the actual application of group *satyagraha* the various methods like defiance of violence, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, fasting, etc. can be used either successively or in combination.

DEFIANCE OF VIOLENCE

In the history of *satyagraha* in India there have been many cases in which determined groups of *satyagrahis* have defied police violence without themselves indulging in any acts of violence. Here I shall briefly discuss only one such case of *satyagraha* which took place in the semi-independent princely state of Rajkot in the year 1938.

Rajkot was a native state in which Gandhi's father acted as Prime Minister for many years, and Gandhi himself received his schooling. When the Prince of Rajkot got married, it was Gandhi's wife who placed the *kumkum* on his forehead at the time of betrothal. This intimate contact of Gandhi with the state may have been one of the reasons why the Congress decided to take up the cause of the people of Rajkot which consisted of a demand for constitutional reform. Another reason was that although Rajkot was not one of the larger princely states of India, it was the headquarters of the British Agent-General for the western Indian princely

states, and thus symbolic of the double movement of the people of these states against British paramountcy and the suppression of fundamental rights by the rulers. Discontent was brewing in this state for a number of years, and it was chosen in 1938 by the Congress as a test case for redressing the grievances of the people of the princely states who suffered from a number of political, social and economic disabilities.

The ruling chief of the state was called Thakur Saheb and the conflict was between him and his recalcitrant subjects. The struggle was long-drawn-out and there were many cases of physical violence by the Thakur Saheb's police on peaceful batches of *satyagrahis* all over the state. But the most classic case of defiance of violence by a large group took place on November 8, 1938 when a large procession of *satyagrahis* was stopped by the police on its way to the palace of Thakur Saheb and ordered to disperse. This order was defied by the *satyagrahis*, who squatted on the road and expressed their determination to continue to do so. The police started beating them up with lathis, and since women were leading the procession, they were the first victims of the fierce lathi-charge. When the women were being beaten up, the men from behind advanced and encircled them in a human wall. Thereupon the attack of the police was mounted on these men and when they were mowed down, another group of men came forward and took the place of the men who had been injured. After a period of such merciless beating of completely non-violent men and women, who refused to move from their places in spite of the severe beating, the police stopped the action and withdrew from the place.

The defiance of violence by groups of *satyagrahis*, of which the incident of November 8 was the greatest example, began to have some effect. The Inspector who was in charge of the police party which beat up the *satyagrahis* on November 8 resigned subsequently. Soon afterwards Thakur Saheb invited Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the principal organizer of the popular movements in the princely states, for discussions regarding the grievances of his subjects. An agreement between the two was announced on December 28, 1938, as a result of which Thakur Saheb made the following declaration :

"We have decided to appoint a Committee of ten gentlemen who should be subjects or servants of our State, three of whom will be State Officers and seven subjects of our State, whose names will be

declared hereafter. . . . The Committee shall draw up, by the end of January, 1939, after proper investigations, a report to us recommending a scheme of reforms so as to give the widest possible powers to our people consistently with our obligations to the Paramount Power and with our prerogative as a Ruling Chief."¹

Neither the Committee nor the reforms, however, materialized. Thakur Saheb had agreed to accept any seven persons nominated by Sardar Patel as the non-official members of the Committee. But when Patel submitted the seven names, Thakur Saheb rejected three of them on the ground that Muslims and other minorities had not been properly accommodated on the Committee. The latter was reported to have violated his agreement with Sardar Patel in this manner under pressure from the rulers of other princely states and the British Agent-General for the states of Western India resident at Rajkot. Be that as it may, the struggle was resumed on account of this alleged violation of the agreement by Thakur Saheb, and centred largely on the composition of the proposed Committee. A fast by Gandhi at Rajkot, the threat of some Congress Ministries to resign, the intervention of the Viceroy and an arbitration by the Chief Justice of India, all failed to resolve the dispute regarding the composition of the Committee. Gandhi left Rajkot in the middle of March, 1929, "empty-handed, with body shattered, hope cremated", as he admitted afterwards. "I am defeated", he had told the Prime Minister of Rajkot, "May you win. Placate the people by giving as much as possible and wire to me so as to revive the hope which I seem to have lost for the moment".²

The experience of group *satyagraha* at Rajkot in the form of defiance of violence thus shows that although this method of non-violent group resistance can highlight local injustices, can give a fillip to popular movements, and can even lead to a temporary understanding between the contending parties, it cannot hope to resolve permanently a basic conflict caused by deep-rooted historical, political

¹ Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, 1947, p. 108.

² Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. V, p. 84.

For a detailed account of the *satyagraha* movement in Rajkot see Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *op. cit.*, pp. 107-09 ; Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, pp. 34-62, 81-84 ; K. Shridharani : *War Without Violence*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962, pp. 103-08.

and social factors. In other words, group *satyagraha* in the form of defiance of violence can act as a palliative rather than a cure for a fundamental social conflict.

SELF-IMPOSED SUFFERING

A group *satyagraha* took place in 1924 in Vaikom, a small town in the State of Travancore, which was important not from the viewpoint of its magnitude, but from that of the issue involved, namely, the problem of caste distinctions and untouchability. A main road passed through the whole length of the town and there was a famous Hindu temple at one place on the road. The untouchables of the area were allowed neither to enter the temple nor even to pass along the main road. Social reformers were aware of this serious disability of the lower castes in this area, but it was only in the first quarter of 1924 that a *satyagraha* movement was launched. The objective of the movement was not to secure temple-entry for the untouchables and to remove their other social disabilities, but only to open the road to them. Gandhi was approached by the local leaders, but he refused to accept direct leadership of the movement due to ill health, and agreed to guide it from a distance. *Satyagrahis* notified their intention to march along the road in a procession of both caste Hindus and untouchables in defiance of the established custom. Anticipating breach of peace the Travancore Government issued a prohibitory order and the *satyagrahis* defied it and courted imprisonment. A procession of *satyagrahis*, led by caste Hindus, moved along the road and came to a stop near the temple. The orthodox Brahmins attacked the procession in strength and beat up a number of processionists and handed over others to the police. All of them were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The *satyagrahis*, when attacked, made no attempt to retaliate and when taken to court they pleaded guilty and accepted the punishment in the true spirit of *satyagraha*.

The news of this incident spread throughout the country and volunteers from different places came to Vaikom to strengthen the movement and to replace the volunteers who had been beaten up and arrested. The Maharaja of Travancore ordered the suspension of arrest and directed that the reformers and the untouchables should be prevented from using the road. The method that the *satyagrahis* now adopted was to approach four barricades which had

been set up around the temple and to sit down and stay there indefinitely, all the time arguing with the Brahmins and the police there. They operated on a shift basis so that there was never any suspension of the struggle, and the police and the Brahmins were kept under constant moral pressure and persuasion. Gandhi paid a hurried visit to Vaikom and advised the *satyagrahis* to be prepared for a patient and long-drawn-out struggle involving great suffering on their part. Explaining his fundamental approach to this *satyagraha*, he said :

"They [Brahmins] do not want to open the road to the unapproachables. Now whether it is their self-respect or ignorance that tells them to say so, we really believe that it is wrong of them to say so. Our object, therefore, is to show them that they are in the wrong ; and we should do so by our suffering. I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where the prejudices are age-long and based on the supposed religious authority. The reason is to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding. . . . I know that it is a difficult and slow process, but if you believe in the efficacy of *satyagraha* you will rejoice in this slow torture and suffering and you will not feel the discomfort of your position as you go and sit in the boiling sun from day to day. . . . If you have faith in the cause and the means and in God, the hot sun will be cool for you. You must not be tired and say 'how long' and never get irritated. This is only a portion of your penance for the sin for which Hinduism is responsible."³

The movement continued for several months. On occasions the *satyagrahis* continued to squat in heavy rain and remained relentless even when the water was shoulder-high. Gradually the patience and orthodoxy of the Brahmins tended to wear out. Their first move was to argue with the *satyagrahis* regarding the rationale of the traditional point of view. They also started bringing food and clothing for the *satyagrahis*. But when the latter refused to yield until the Brahmins recognized the right of the untouchables to use the road, the Brahmins eventually conceded their demand.⁴

³ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. II, pp. 181-82.

⁴ The most systematized account of this *satyagraha* is available in Joan V.

The Vaikom temple *satyagraha* was thus one of the most successful *satyagrahas* organized in India. The rules of *satyagraha* were strictly observed by the *satyagrahis* and there was a genuine "change of heart" on the part of the Brahmins. As a result the immediate objective of the untouchables, namely, the opening of the road to their use, was achieved. It is also true that the success of the Vaikom *satyagraha* focussed the attention of the whole country on the evils of untouchability as a social phenomenon and the serious disabilities of the untouchables throughout the country. This *satyagraha* thus helped the cause of the untouchables elsewhere in the country, as subsequent developments proved, and can truly be regarded as a turning point in the movement against untouchability in India.

The fact must not, however, be overlooked that the demand of the untouchables was a very modest one, namely, the use of the road passing by the temple, which did not seriously challenge the more deep-rooted prejudices of the caste Hindus, beginning from the question of temple-entry by the untouchables to that of inter-marriage between them and the caste Hindus. It may not be wrong to say that the relatively modest objective of the untouchables was an important cause of the success of this *satyagraha*. It is extremely doubtful whether this type of *satyagraha* would have been successful if some of the deeper social prejudices of Hindu society had been involved. Even a relatively minor objective like the right of the untouchables to temple-entry had not been achieved during Gandhi's lifetime, and the movement in this respect was relatively ineffective and short-lived. As Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the undisputed leader of the untouchables at the time observed in 1945 : "To put it briefly, after a short spurt of activity in the direction of removing untouchability by throwing open temples and wells the Hindu mind returned to its original state. The reports appearing in the 'Week to Week' columns of the *Harijan* subsided, became few and far between and ultimately vanished. . . . Few temples if any were really opened and those that were reported to have been opened most of them (sic) were dilapidated and deserted temples which were used by none but dogs and donkeys. . . . Thus, ended the part which the Hindu public played or was made to appear to play in this Temple-Entry

Bondurant : *Conquest Of Violence*, pp. 46-52. See also Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, pp. 180-82 ; K. Shridharani : *War Without Violence*, pp. 93-95 ; N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, pp. 91-94.

movement".⁵ In spite of Gandhi's life-long work for the emancipation of the untouchables, the egalitarian provisions of the Indian Constitution, and the social welfare legislation of the post-independence period, the social ban on temple-entry and the other more serious disabilities of the untouchables still remain almost as widely prevalent in India as ever before. *Satyagraha* of the type discussed here cannot possibly hope to transform social relations radically by itself where deep historical, economic, religious and psychological forces are in operation.

NON-COOPERATION

It has already been stated that non-cooperation was regarded by Gandhi as one of the most potent weapons of the *satyagrahi*. The basic idea is that all social relations, whether political or otherwise, rest on the mutual cooperation of the parties involved, and if one party withdraws its cooperation the entire relationship ceases to exist. On this logic no injustice or oppression can continue for any length of time if the subject of the oppression refuses to cooperate with its author. This applies to an individual, a group, or a whole nation in its relations with internal or external political authorities. Here I shall examine only one case of group non-cooperation, namely, the Ahmedabad labour strike led by Gandhi himself in the year 1918.

I have already explained that Gandhi regarded industrial strikes as an acceptable and important form of non-cooperation (see Chapter VII). An industrialist, he argued, was merely a trustee for the wealth of the nation and the labourer had as much a share in his profits as the trustee himself. The industrialist, according to Gandhi, should not lead a life of luxury, but should enjoy the same standard of living as the labourers employed by him and devote himself to the welfare of the labourers and the country as a whole. If, however, he refused to see reason and accept this idea of trustee-

⁵ B. R. Ambedkar : *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, Thacker and Co., Bombay, 1945, pp. 114-15.

Incidentally, Ambedkar insists that Gandhi's advocacy of hereditary occupations is itself a denial of any fundamental solution to the problem of untouchability, since "under Gandhism the Untouchables are to be eternal scavengers" and "Gandhism which compels an educated untouchable to do scavenging is nothing short of cruelty" (*Ibid.*, p. 295).

ship, a non-violent strike would be the labourers' weapon. A strike, however, in order to be truly non-violent, must conform to certain rules of action prescribed by Gandhi, which have been discussed in Chapter VIII.

When Gandhi was busy with the Kheda *satyagraha* in 1918, he received a letter from Shrimati Anasuyabai, a labour leader of Ahmedabad, regarding the distress of the industrial workers of the city. The main problem was that of low wages and the labourers had for some time been demanding a rise in wages. Anasuyabai's own brother, Ambalal Sarabhai, was a mill magnate of Ahmedabad and he represented to Gandhi, when the latter arrived there, the case of the mill-owners. Gandhi's relations with the mill-owners were friendly and he states in his autobiography that this fact made it difficult for him to fight with them. He discussed the problem with the mill-owners first and advised them to refer the dispute to arbitration. The latter refused to accept the principle of arbitration, whereupon Gandhi advised the labourers to go on strike. Before actually advising a strike, however, Gandhi mixed intimately with the labourers and explained to them what he considered to be four essential conditions of a successful strike, namely, (1) never to resort to violence, (2) never to molest blacklegs, (3) never to depend upon alms, and (4) to remain firm, no matter how long the strike continued, and to earn bread, during the strike, by any other honest labour. These conditions were apparently accepted by the labourers and their leaders, who pledged themselves to continue their strike until their demands were conceded or at least the dispute was referred to arbitration.

As the strike continued Gandhi held daily meetings of the thousands of labourers under a tree and reminded them of their pledge to maintain non-violence and self-respect. The strikers took out peaceful processions in the city everyday, a banner which they carried bearing the inscription 'Ek Tek' (keep the pledge).

For the first two weeks the strike went on successfully, but then some of the labourers began to waver. Attendance at the daily meetings and processions became thinner. One of the labourers was reported to have made sarcastic remarks about Gandhi and Anasuyabai moving about in a car and eating sumptuous food while the labourers were starving. On hearing this and realizing that the strike might fail due to lack of determination on the part of the labourers, Gandhi went on a fast. The idea of the labourers going

back upon their commitment at this stage was to him inconceivable. He asks himself in his autobiography : "Was it pride or was it my love for the labourers and my passionate regard for truth that was at the back of this feeling—who can say ?"⁶

The result of the fast was that the labourers were deeply moved and reaffirmed their determination not to end the strike until their demands were fulfilled. Mill-owners were also deeply disturbed, and finally agreed to arbitration. So the strike came to an end. The arbitrator upheld the demand of the labourers which was given effect to, and thus the struggle of the labourers reached a happy conclusion.⁷

This particular instance of the industrial strike as a form of group non-cooperation was thus successful from the point of view of the workers' immediate objective, although the strike became somewhat complicated on account of Gandhi's fast (which was apparently aimed against the labourers but affected the mill-owners also). But the success of this form of group non-cooperation is evident from the fact that the industrial strike as a technique of non-violent resistance by the workers has come to stay and is practised widely all over the world, although the rules of *satyagraha* as laid down by Gandhi may not always be observed everywhere. But a strike organized by a localized group of labourers, however non-violent, may not always be successful. Gandhi himself has cautioned the workers that a strike is unlikely to be successful where all the strikers can be replaced by new recruits (see Chapter VII). For this and other reasons, including the organized power of capital, labourers have found the necessity of organizing powerful national unions which put pressure on the employers even in a local dispute, and of organizing "sympathetic strikes" elsewhere in support of a local group of workers. This leads to the fundamental question whether an industrial dispute is settled to the satisfaction of the labourers in a particular case because the employers have been convinced of the Justice of the workers' cause, or because they have been pressurized and harassed, and left with no other alternative but to accept the labourers' demands (however unreasonable these may appear to them) if they want to continue in business. In other words, the success of this form of *satyagraha*, as indeed of *satyagraha* in general,

⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, pp. 317-18.

⁷ For a full account of this *satyagraha* see M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, Chs. 20-23.

as I have stated before, is not a sufficient proof of the vindication of Justice.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Group civil disobedience, like individual civil disobedience, can be launched only against governmental authority, because of its aim of violating laws or governmental orders either individually or collectively in a locality or region. The objective usually is not only the rectification of local injustices, but also a protest against some broader injustice like racial segregation or foreign rule.

Gandhi had begun his political career with civil disobedience in South Africa, where he led the struggle of the Indians for civil rights for twenty years from 1894 to 1914. Subsequently in India many group civil disobedience movements were organized under his leadership against the Government. Here I shall examine three cases of group civil disobedience led by Gandhi, namely, what is called the Epic March in the third or last phase of Gandhi's South African struggle, the Kheda *satyagraha* of 1918 led by Gandhi, and the Bardoli *satyagraha* of 1928 led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

1. When Gandhi reached South Africa in 1893 he found the Indian community there suffering from a large number of serious social and political disabilities. The particular laws against which he organized the *satyagraha* movement in South Africa related to racial segregation, lack of franchise, taxation for residence in and migration from one province to another, the highly restrictive immigration laws and the like. A primary form of *satyagraha* adopted by the South African Indians under the leadership of Gandhi was individual and collective civil disobedience which continued for many years until the climax was reached in 1913.⁸ In that year the South African Supreme Court delivered a judgment which was highly detrimental to the interests of the Indians. An Indian called Hassan Esop, usually resident of Port Elizabeth, had visited India in 1908 and married an Indian woman named Bai Mariam. He returned to South Africa in 1909 without her, but went back to India in 1912 and this time returned with her. The immigration authorities refus-

⁸ A detailed account of the *satyagraha* movement of the South African Indians during this period is available in M. K. Gandhi : *Satyagraha In South Africa*, S. Ganesan, Madras, 1948.

ed to let her land and ordered her to go back to India. Hassan's application for an order of the Supreme Court restraining the Government from deporting his wife was rejected by the court. Gandhi entered into a fruitless correspondence with the Government and then told a mass meeting of Indians in Johannesburg in March 1930 : "It will become the bounden duty of the Indian community for the protection of the womanhood and its honour to adopt passive resistance."⁹ Soon afterwards a new Immigrants Regulation Act was passed which was even more restrictive and repressive than the earlier laws on the subject. The Indian community under the leadership of Gandhi then decided to launch a major struggle. Before the movement was actually started Gandhi informed the Government that the resistance would continue as long as the "racial bar disfigures the Immigration Act ; the rights existing prior to the passing of the Act are not restored and maintained ; the status of women married in South Africa is not secured ; and generally so long as the spirit of generosity and justice does not pervade the administration of the existing laws".¹⁰

The struggle was centred on a long march of *satyagrahis* from Durban in Natal into Transvaal in defiance of the ban on such movement. A batch of women volunteers led by Gandhi's wife also joined the movement in addition to the large number of volunteers available from the Phoenix Settlement which Gandhi had set up.

The party of men and women volunteers left Durban on September 15, 1913 by train for Volksrust. On being stopped by the immigration authorities at Volksrust the party refused to give any information on the ground that it was a part of their campaign not to disclose any means of identification. On the following day a spokesman of the party made the following statement : "I on behalf of the party travelling with me make this declaration that I am travelling with a party of twelve men and four women and we are entering the Transvaal now without any documentary reasons or other test required by the present law, being practically passive resisters, against the said law, further that we, being passive resisters, refuse to recognize any of the provisions of the existing law."¹¹ A few days later the *satyagrahis* were pushed across the border back into Natal. They promptly recrossed the border, were arrested and sentenced to

⁹ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 133.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

various terms of imprisonment. Four women including Gandhi's wife were sentenced to one month's imprisonment with hard labour.

Some new women *satyagrahis* now joined the movement, one of whom was pregnant while six others had young babies in arms. They all came from the Tolstoy Farm which Gandhi had set up in Transvaal. Since entering Natal from Transvaal was as much an offence as entering the former province from the latter, it was decided that this time the women *satyagrahis* would attempt to enter Natal. If they were not arrested they would proceed to Newcastle, the gold mining centre of Natal, where they would work among the Indian miners and ask them to go on strike. Since they were not arrested, they proceeded to Newcastle according to plan, where as a result the gold-miners struck work on October 17. Four days later the women *satyagrahis* were imprisoned for three months.

The women's imprisonment had an emotional effect on the labourers of Newcastle who left work and entered the city in batches. Gandhi arrived on the scene and listened to the large number of complaints regarding official oppression of the labourers. He met the gold mine owners, but the discussions proved fruitless. The stage for the "Epic March" was now set. On October 28, 1913, 6,000 labourers started the march under Gandhi's leadership and reached Charlestown, a small border town about 36 miles from Newcastle, where the whole procession camped for the night in the open, except for women and children. From this camp Gandhi telegraphed to the Government that if the latter so desired they could arrest the *satyagrahis* at Charlestown itself. He also informed the Government that if the unjust £3 tax was repealed, the strike would be called off and the labourers would rejoin their work, as he did not intend to involve them in the other general grievances of Indians. As there was no reply to this message, Gandhi made further preparations for the march for about a week and then telephoned to General Smuts in Pretoria in an attempt to reach a settlement. General Smuts' Secretary told Gandhi: "General Smuts will have nothing to do with you. You may do just as you please." So on November 6, 1913, at 6-30 a.m. the march started again. There were some mounted policemen on duty at the border. Gandhi asked his followers to await a signal from him before the marchers crossed the border, and went to speak to the policemen. The crowd, however, cheering and shouting, did not wait for Gandhi's signal and made a rush for the border. The policemen were unable to control them until they were

pacified and rearranged by Gandhi. In a few minutes the great march into Transvaal began. When the long procession passed through the streets of Volksrust, the European community offered no violent opposition. Even those who had threatened to shoot the Indians if they entered Transvaal did not show any signs of activity. About this procession the *Sunday Post* wrote : "The pilgrims whom Mr. Gandhi is guiding are an exceedingly picturesque crew. To the eye they appear most meagre, indeed, emaciated ; their legs are mere sticks, but the way they are marching on the starvation rations provided shows them to be particularly hardy. Of the two thousand, some 1,500 walk together in a fairly compact body, the rest following in little groups of stragglers within two or three miles. Mr. Gandhi is looked upon with absolute veneration and is habitually addressed as Bapu."¹²

The marchers halted for the night at a place called Palmford, about eight miles beyond Volksrust. Next morning the march started again, but Gandhi was arrested on that day. In the court Gandhi applied for remand and bail and was released on a personal cognizance of £50. The marchers had by the time come near Johannesburg. On November 9 Gandhi was arrested for the third time in four days. Two days later he told the court : "I feel that I have only done my duty in advising my countrymen, and it is my duty to advise them again, until the tax is removed, to leave work and subsist upon rations earned by charity. I am certain that without suffering it is not possible for them to get their grievances remedied."¹³ Gandhi pleaded guilty and the Magistrate gave him the option of a fine of £50 or nine months' rigorous imprisonment. Gandhi elected to go to jail with the parting word to the strikers that there was to be no cessation of the strike until the repeal of the £3 tax.

The imprisonment of Gandhi created a stir among the Indian community in South Africa and 20,000 labourers in Natal went on strike. More strikes followed and discontent grew quickly. The Government met the situation with brutal repression, including the free use of military policemen and firing. The strikers faced this repression non-violently and with great courage which evoked the sympathy of even some sections of the white community.¹⁴

Meanwhile, on November 10, the marchers had reached Balfour where three special trains had been drawn up for deporting them to

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Natal. They refused to board the train without Gandhi's advice, but were persuaded to do so by two of Gandhi's close associates who had led them in Gandhi's absence. The 2,000 marchers, suffering from great hardships, without homes, jobs or a leader, boarded the train and after passing through some further hardships on the way eventually reached Natal where they were prosecuted and imprisoned.

The Epic March and the incidents associated with it aroused the sympathy of some sections of the British Press, the white community and even of the British Government. The Secretary of State for India intervened, and the Union Government appointed on December 11 a Commission to enquire into the causes of the Natal Indian strike. Gandhi, on being released on December 18, objected to the composition of the Inquiry Commission on which there was no representative of the Indian community. He decided to boycott the Commission and planned a second march; but as a general strike of the European employees of the Union Railways took place at this time, Gandhi dropped the idea of the second march as he did not wish to embarrass the Government in a difficult situation. This decision created a favourable impression on General Smuts and on the British Government. Gandhi went to Pretoria to meet General Smuts. During the short interview the General told Gandhi: "We have decided to grant your demand, but for this we must have a recommendation from the Commission." He requested Gandhi not to boycott the Commission and to suspend any further *satyagraha*. Some further correspondence took place between Smuts and Gandhi and on January 21, 1914, a provisional agreement was reached by the two leaders as a result of which *satyagraha* was suspended for the last time. On the recommendations of the Inquiry Commission, the Union Government passed the Indians' Relief Bill on June 26, 1914, which abolished the £3 tax, legalized in South Africa all marriages which would be deemed legal in India, and made a domicile certificate bearing the thumb-print of the holder sufficient to entitle him to enter the Union. In a letter to Gandhi, General Smuts wrote: "With regard to the administration of existing laws, it has been and will continue to be the desire of the Government to see that they are administered in a just manner and with due regard to vested rights." In reply Gandhi stated: "Passing of the Indians' Relief Bill and this correspondence have finally closed the *satyagraha* struggle which commenced in September 1906, and

which to the Indian community caused much physical suffering and pecuniary loss, and to the Government much anxious thoughts and consideration."¹⁵

The Epic March would thus seem to be an example of a highly successful group civil disobedience, in so far as practically all the immediate demands of the South African Indians were satisfied, and Justice was thus achieved, through this *satyagraha*. Several conditioning factors, however, have to be taken into account. In the first place, the Indians in South Africa were a highly localized community and powerfully united by common national bonds in a foreign country. The same degree of unity and cohesion may not be available in normal circumstances, except in the case of similar immigrant communities. Secondly, the *satyagrahis* had the special advantage of having a leader of Gandhi's stature and organizational ability ; such towering leadership may also not be normally available. Thirdly, in spite of its antidemocratic attitude to the problems of Indians, the South African Government was at least human in its way of dealing with the *satyagrahis*. A Government which believed in methods of concentration camp or of the mass extermination of its opponents may have dealt with this kind of *satyagraha* in a radically different manner and with radically different consequences (this question will be discussed in detail in Chapter XVI).

Moreover, it must be remembered that neither the Epic March nor, in fact, the whole struggle of the South African Indians under the leadership of Gandhi, was able to resolve the conflict between the white and the Indian population of South Africa permanently. Gandhi's work in South Africa had very little lasting impact, and no sooner had he finally returned to India after the Epic March than the conflict reappeared in full force all over again. Like so many other *satyagrahas*, the Epic March acted as a palliative rather than a cure for a fundamental social conflict.

2. In 1916-17 there was deep distress among the farmers of the Kheda district of Bombay Presidency due to widespread drought in the area. Under the Land Revenue Rules of the Government of India, if the crop was less than one-fourth of the normal production, the cultivators were entitled to claim full remission of the reve-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

For a detailed account of the Epic March and the factors leading to it see Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 132-51.

nue for the year. The Government maintained that according to its own figures the crop yield was over one-fourth of the normal yield. The cultivators maintained that it was less. The local leaders, unable to make the authorities agree with them, approached Gandhi, who entered into a lengthy correspondence with the Government without any effect. He received on the contrary threats and insults from the Commissioner of the Province. Thereupon he advised the farmers, in March, 1918, to start a *satyagraha* movement. Before the movement started a pledge was signed by the *satyagrahis* which ran as follows :

"Knowing that the crops of our villages are less than four annas, we requested the Government to suspend the collection of revenue assessment till the ensuing year, but the Government has not acceded to our prayer. Therefore, we, the undersigned, hereby solemnly declare that we shall not, of our own accord, pay to the Government the full or the remaining revenue for the year. We shall let the Government take whatever legal steps it may think fit and gladly suffer the consequences of our non-payment. We shall rather let our lands be forfeited than that by voluntary payment we should allow our case to be considered false or should compromise our self-respect. Should the Government, however, agree to suspend collection of the second instalment of the assessment throughout the district, such amongst us as are in a position to pay will pay up the whole or the balance of the revenue that may be due. The reason why those who are able to pay still withhold payment is that, if they pay up, the poorer ryots may in a panic sell their chattels or incur debts to pay their dues, and thereby bring suffering upon themselves. In these circumstances we feel that, for the sake of the poor, it is the duty even of those who can afford to pay to withhold payment of their assessment."¹⁶

The actual programme of *satyagraha* consisted of general refusal to pay the taxes and to suffer willingly whatever consequences might follow from this violation of the law. As the tax boycott campaign gathered momentum the Government responded with repression including confiscation and sale of property and cattle belonging to

¹⁶ M. K. Gandhi : *An Autobiography*, p. 321.

the farmers for realizing the tax. Some *satyagrahis* were beaten up and cases of subtler but more inhuman forms of torture were also reported. But the *satyagrahis* remained unmoved in the face of this official violence. The movement received wide publicity and farmers from neighbouring areas poured into the district with a view to strengthening the campaign. The no-tax campaign clearly threatened to spread to other areas. Finally, after five months of struggle, in July 1918 the Government agreed to waive the land revenue of only the poor section of the farmers for the year.¹⁷ In practice, however, since the collector decided who were poor, hardly any farmer got any benefit. Gandhi records in his autobiography that he was unhappy about the result of the *satyagraha*, but the people were exhausted, and he "hesitated to let the unbending be driven to utter ruin."¹⁸

The Kheda *satyagraha* had certain special advantages. In the first place, it had the benefit of the guidance and direct supervision of Gandhi, whose achievements in South Africa and Champaran had made him almost a legendary figure. Secondly, Gandhi at this time enjoyed the sympathies of the British Government on account of the services rendered by him during World War I with regard to the recruitment of Indian soldiers. It is important to note that in June, 1918, that is, shortly before the Government accepted the demand of the Kheda farmers, Gandhi had carried out an intensive, though largely unsuccessful, campaign for the recruitment of 12,000 soldiers from the Kheda district, at the rate of 20 soldiers from each village.¹⁹ Thirdly, Gandhi was ably assisted by Vallabhbhai Patel, about whose contribution to the success of the campaign he said: "I will say that without the help of Vallabhbhai Patel, we should not have won the campaign."²⁰ Fourthly, as already stated, the movement received considerable external assistance from volunteers who came from outside. And finally, the relatively tolerant attitude of the British Government which permitted the free expression of popular discontent and non-violent organization, propaganda and campaigning for that purpose, was also a specially favourable factor for the success of the Kheda *satyagraha*. Gandhi himself wrote to the Viceroy in a letter on April 30, 1918, i.e. even before the *satya-*

¹⁷ For a detailed account of this *satyagraha* see Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 122-24 ; M. K. Gandhi : *op. cit.*, Chs. 23, 25.

¹⁸ M. K. Gandhi : *op. cit.*, p. 324.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30. ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

graha was over : "In Kheda a population that was cursing the Government . . . is saying to itself that the Government must be a government for the people, for it tolerates orderly and respectful disobedience where injustice is felt."²¹ And yet the success of the *satyagraha* was strictly limited, thus proving that even in relatively favourable circumstances, a group *satyagraha* may not always be successful.

3. In the year 1928 there took place in the Bardoli *taluka* (sub-district) of the erstwhile province of Bombay Presidency a no-tax movement led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel which belongs to the category of civil disobedience by a large group of people. One of the periodic resettlements of land took place in that year, as a result of which land tax in Bardoli was raised by an average of about 25 per cent. When applied in practice, the rise in tax amounted in certain cases to as much as 60 per cent. The peasants of Bardoli protested against the Government's decision on two grounds. In the first place, they argued that any larger or better produce they had from their land was due to additional investments made by them in capital and labour ; and secondly, the rate of increase of land tax was in any case far out of proportion to whatever rise might have taken place in their incomes. The peasants did not refuse to accept any rise in the land tax, but they demanded the institution of an impartial enquiry into their real conditions and paying capacity, and the refixation of the rate of land tax on the basis of the findings of the enquiry. The Government refused to accept this demand, whereupon preparations began for a no-tax movement under the leadership of Sardar Patel who had been invited by the Bardoli peasants to guide their movement.

Patel entered into a correspondence with the Government which proved fruitless, and on February 12, 1928 a resolution was adopted at a conference of the farmers which enjoined on all the farmers of the *taluka* not to pay the enhanced taxes until the enquiry demanded by them was instituted. The total number of peasants involved was about 86,000. Most of them either refused to meet the officials who came to collect the taxes, or read out to them extracts from Patel's speeches and argued with them about the Justice of their demand. The Government responded with large-scale attachment

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

of land and movable property in lieu of the taxes, mass arrests, violence on the peaceful peasants (perpetrated not only by the police, but also by Pathans, i.e. rough Muslim tribesmen belonging to the North-West Frontier Province, who had been brought to Bardoli by the Government for terrorizing the local people and helping the police), counter-propaganda involving gross distortion of facts, and the attempt to create divisions and disunity among the different religious communities and social groups. The *satyagrahis*, however, remained firm and completely non-violent in the face of the Governmental repression. They did not physically resist the attachment of their carts and other equipment and simplified life to the maximum possible extent so that the Government would find very little to take away. Large numbers of them submitted themselves peacefully to arrest. Women volunteers often built huts on attached lands and men sowed these lands in defiance of the attachment orders. Petty officials of the *taluka* were persuaded to resign their offices, the non-conformist farmers were socially boycotted, though otherwise treated with courtesy and consideration, and most important of all, no official could receive any cooperation or service from the local people without the express sanction of the *Satyagraha* Committee. It was this last factor which angered the Government most. As the Governor of Bombay Presidency put it, the issue for the Government was "whether the writ of His Majesty the King-Emperor is to run in a portion of His Majesty's dominions, or whether the edict of some unofficial body of individuals is to be obeyed". He declared that it was an issue "which the Government was prepared to meet with all the power which Government possesses".²²

After six months of protracted struggle, however, Patel was invited for discussions with the Governor in July, 1928, and in the following month an agreement was reached to the satisfaction of both the parties. The farmers agreed to pay the excess revenue through an intermediary on condition of the appointment of a judicial enquiry committee and pending the decision of this committee. All prisoners were released, all forfeited lands and property were restored to the owners, the petty officials who had resigned were reinstated. The District Collector was replaced by a new one. The Enquiry Committee which was set up received the full cooperation of the farmers and reported that an enhancement of the land

²² Quoted in Joan V. Bondurant : *op. cit.*, p. 55.

by only 6.75 per cent would be justified. The Government accepted this finding, and in some cases, on further representation by the farmers, did not increase the rate of tax at all.²³

The Bardoli *satyagraha* was thus highly successful in so far as the eighty-six thousand peasants of the *taluka* successfully resisted the enhancement of the land tax by the Government through non-violent civil disobedience. The fact that the new rates were based on the findings of an impartial enquiry committee would also go to show that what was achieved was in fact Justice and not merely the peasants' conception of it, which is a very basic point in favour of this *satyagraha*. Indeed, very few *satyagrahas* would seem to have been as successful and logically consistent with the theory of *satyagraha* (as explained in Chapter XII) as the Bardoli *satyagraha*. And yet it is necessary to emphasize some special factors which facilitated its success, and which may not be present in every case of group civil disobedience. First, Bardoli had a powerful and pre-existing organizational base in the form of four Gandhian centres of constructive work which acted as the nucleus of the civil disobedience movement and supplied the second-rank leadership. With the help of these four centres sixteen *satyagraha* camps were set up in the *taluka* (each camp looking after about 5,000 peasants), thus providing a solid organizational base for the movement. Secondly, the *satyagrahis* were able to requisition the services of an outside leader of exceptional organizational ability like Sardar Patel. Thirdly, the peasants of Bardoli received a great deal of external assistance. A large number of volunteers came to Bardoli from other parts of India to organize and sustain the movement. The whole weight of the Indian National Congress and the national movement as a whole was thrown on the side of the Bardoli peasants. Although Gandhi did not directly lead the movement, he supported, inspired and guided it through the columns of *Young India*. At one stage he also came to Bardoli and campaigned among the peasants for the non-payment of taxes. Vithalbhai Patel, the President of the Central Legislative Assembly, whose constitutional position and personal ability were highly respected by the British Government, wrote a letter to the Viceroy in which he strongly supported the demands of the Bardoli farmers and threatened to resign if the Government

²³ For a complete account of the Bardoli *satyagraha* see Mahadev Desai : *The Story of Bardoli*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1929.

did not relent. The fact that the decision of the Government came soon afterwards indicated that this action of the President of the Central Legislative Assembly may have been of decisive significance for the success of the campaign. Fourthly, enhancement of the land tax was so radical that the peasants found themselves in a desperate position and most of them had no alternative but to resist it. Had the tax increase been relatively small, it is doubtful whether a no-tax campaign would have been successful even if Justice demanded the non-payment of the tax. Finally, it must not be forgotten that the British Government, in spite of all its brutalities, was a Government that permitted the free and organized expression of popular discontent, and instituted commissions of enquiry, however reluctantly, instead of resorting to the forcible suppression of all anti-Government opinions, concentration camps and massive transfers of population. A totalitarian Government which did not attach any importance to the means used could possibly have crushed the Bardoli *satyagraha* without any great difficulty.

CHAPTER XV

MASS SATYAGRAHA

BOTH GANDHI and Mao Tse-tung, it seems to me, were faced with the same kind of strategic problem, so far as resisting the authority of the Government is concerned : how can an unarmed and predominantly agrarian population successfully resist the authority of a Government which has organized and powerful armed forces at its command and is backed by the industrial and military potential of the West ? Mao found the answer in guerilla war. It was a technique which made the superior armed power of the Government largely ineffective, and at the same time undermined the foundations of its authority through mass action. An essential feature of this technique of resistance was the dovetailing of the guerilla forces into a powerfully organized and monolithic political party which provided the ideological and organizational base to, and was often indistinguishable from, the latter. Faced with a comparable strategic problem, Gandhi offered mass *satyagraha* as the solution (at about the same time as Mao offered his). The conceptual similarity between mass *satyagraha* and guerilla war lies in the fact that the former also seeks to neutralize the armed power of the Government, while undermining the foundations of its authority at the same time through organized mass action. And like Mao's guerillas, Gandhi's *satyagrahis* are also inseparably linked, as explained in Chapter XI, with a powerful ideological and organizational base, namely, the Constructive Programme.

But there, needless to say, the similarity ends. Mao's choice of means is very different from that of Gandhi. Non-violence is certainly not one of Mao's accepted means ; as a matter of fact, violence, as is well known, is openly justified and non-violence rejected by Mao and his followers. The world can be remoulded, they say, only with the gun, and a people which does not learn the use of arms deserves to be treated as slaves.¹ Moreover, partly on account of the fact

¹ For these and other statements of Mao Tse-tung in praise of violence see *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1954, Vol. II.

that Non-violence has no place in Mao's immediate system of values, and partly due to his acceptance of the Marxian theory of class conflict, the Maoist concepts of Freedom and Equality have a very different and much narrower connotation than the Gandhian. Therefore, in spite of a limited conceptual similarity between guerilla war and mass *satyagraha* as techniques of mass resistance against governmental authority, in practice the techniques are in most ways diametrically opposed to each other.

But the point I am trying to emphasize is that there is an element of policy consideration involved in the technique of mass *satyagraha*, and that it is something more than a creed. Gandhi believed that armed resistance against the British Government by the Indian people, even if it could be organized, would be of no avail against the power of the mightiest empire of the world. As he wrote to the Viceroy on August 1, 1920, the first day of the Non-cooperation Movement: "In European countries, condonation of such grievous wrongs as the Khilafat and the Punjab would have resulted in a bloody revolution by the people. They would have resisted at all costs national emasculation such as the said wrongs imply. But half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance and the other half is unwilling to do so. I have, therefore, ventured to suggest the remedy of non-cooperation which enables those who wish to dissociate themselves from the Government and which, if it is unattended by violence and undertaken in an orderly manner, must compel it to retrace its steps and undo the wrongs committed."² To the Congressmen he explained a few days later: "There is another remedy before the country—drawing of the sword. If that was possible, India would not have listened to the gospel of non-cooperation."³ As regards those who would resort to violence, Gandhi observed: "So far as I know, they must perish without delivering themselves or their country from the wrong."⁴ He explained that personally he believed in "the conquest of physical might by spiritual strength", and would prefer the Indian people to fight the British empire with spiritual power. "However, being a practical man", he said, "I do not wait till India recognizes the practicability of the spiritual life in the political world. India considers herself to be powerless and paralysed before the machine-guns, the tanks and the aeroplanes of the English. And she takes up non-cooperation out of her weakness.

² Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. II, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

It must still serve the same purpose, namely, bring her delivery from the crushing weight of British injustice, if a sufficient number of people practise it."⁵ Explaining his position further, Gandhi observed: "I have not put before India the final form of non-violence. The non-violence that I have preached from Congress platforms is non-violence as a policy. . . . Non-violence being a policy means that it can upon due notice be given up when it proves unsuccessful or ineffective."⁶ He reiterated the same view during the Civil Disobedience Movement, and added: "A policy may be changed, a creed cannot. But either is as good as the other whilst it is held."⁷

It is easy to see that mass *satyagraha* is necessarily a relatively inferior form of *satyagraha*, not only because, in terms of the inner logic of Gandhian thought, it is vitiated by the element of expediency involved in it, but also because the actions of large masses of men cannot be made to conform to the strict rules of *satyagraha* (which I have explained in Chapter XII). That is why, as explained in Chapter XII, in the case of *satyagrahas* involving large numbers of people, Gandhi merely insisted that the *satyagrahis* must observe the discipline imposed on them by their leaders. But even this relatively inferior form of *satyagraha*, as already explained, Gandhi considered to be as effective as the purer forms, so long as the minimum necessary discipline was observed by the *satyagrahis*.

Only two mass *satyagrahas*, namely, the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920-22 and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-33, were organized and led by Gandhi, both from the political platform of the Indian National Congress. Both the movements were based (on Gandhi's own admission, and according to the logic of mass *satyagraha*) upon the policy rather than the creed of Non-violence, and a certain discipline of action rather than the observance of the strict rules of *satyagraha* on the part of the masses. It is in this context that the success or failure of these two movements and other related issues will be examined in this chapter.

THE NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

Explaining the rationale of mass non-cooperation against the Government, Gandhi observed, two months before the Non-cooperation Movement was started: "If a father does an injustice, it is the

⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶ *Young India*, March 2, 1922.

⁷ *Young India*, July 30, 1931.

duty of his children to leave the parental roof. If the headmaster of a school conducts his institution on an immoral basis, the pupils must leave the school. If the chairman of a corporation is corrupt, the member thereof must wash their hands clean of his corruption by withdrawing from it ; even so if a government does a grave injustice the subject must withdraw cooperation wholly or partially, sufficient to wean the ruler from his wickedness. In each case conceived by me there is an element of suffering whether mental or physical. Without such suffering it is not possible to attain freedom."⁸ But how does such non-cooperation affect the Government ? Six weeks later he explained further : "Most people do not understand the complicated machinery of the Government. They do not realize that every citizen silently but nonetheless certainly sustains the government of the day in ways of which he has no knowledge. Every citizen, therefore, renders himself responsible for every act of his government." If the citizens withdraw their participation in the governance of the country, the Government automatically ceases to govern.⁹ Carried to the extreme, said Gandhi, non-cooperation could paralyse the Government and bring it to a standstill.¹⁰

Applying this general theory of non-cooperation to the concrete situation before him in India, Gandhi observed : "It is as amazing as it is humiliating that less than one hundred thousand white men should be able to rule three hundred and fifty million Indians. They do so somewhat undoubtedly by force, but more by securing our cooperation in a thousand ways and making us more and more helpless and dependent on them as time goes forward. Let us not mistake reformed councils, more law courts and even governorships for real freedom or power. They are but subtler methods of emasculation. The British cannot rule us by force. And so they resort to all means, honourable and dishonourable, in order to retain their hold on India. They want India's billions and they want India's man-power for their imperialistic greed. If we refuse to supply them with men and money, we achieve our goal, namely, swaraj, equality, manliness."¹¹

The occasion for the Non-cooperation Movement was provided by the major political events in India in 1919-20. During the First

⁸ *Young India*, June 16, 1920.

⁹ *Young India*, July 28, 1920.

¹⁰ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 300.

¹¹ *Young India*, September 22, 1920.

World War expectations had arisen about self-government at the end of the War, and the Home Rule Movement had gathered momentum under the leadership of Mrs. Annie Besant. In August, 1917, the British Government had announced that their policy was one of "the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire". But the expectations thus aroused were belied at the end of the War. The Rowlatt Bills of 1919 sought to curtail individual liberty rather seriously. This evoked strong protest from different sections of the Indian people, and Gandhi earnestly pleaded with the Viceroy to withdraw them. On February 24, 1919, a pledge was signed by Gandhi and twenty of his close associates including Vallabhbhai Patel and Sarojini Naidu, which ran as follows : "Being conscientiously of opinion that the Bills known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. I of 1919 and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. II of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such other laws as a Committee, to be hereafter appointed, may think fit, and we further affirm that in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, persons or property."¹² A *Satyagraha* Committee was formed with Gandhi as the President, which issued bulletins, organized public meetings and collected more signatures to the pledge. One of the two bills was passed on March 18, 1919, whereupon an all-India *hartal* (general closure of business) was observed successfully on April 6 at Gandhi's call. But there were some cases of violence at Ahmedabad and other places as a result of which Gandhi suspended the agitation, went on a fast for three days, and declared that he would not resume *satyagraha* until he had trained up a band of workers. These events were followed within a few days by the Jalianwallabagh massacres, the promulgation of martial law in the Punjab, and general repression let loose on the people of that province, which inflamed popular sentiment throughout the country. The pro-Government report of the Hunter Commission, which was

¹² Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 241.

set up to enquire into the Punjab events, caused further indignation among the Indian people. Moreover, the Reform Bill based on the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, which was made public in June, 1919, was generally regarded as too conservative and inadequate, and failed to satisfy the pent-up expectations of large sections of people. Finally, the attempted dismemberment of the Turkish empire by the Western powers at the end of the War infuriated the Muslims throughout the world, and led to the famous *Khilafat* agitation in India, which was wholeheartedly supported by Gandhi and provided the immediate occasion for the Non-cooperation Movement.¹³

In March, 1922, before the court which tried him after the suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement, Gandhi gave the reasons why non-cooperation had become inevitable in the given situation in India. After referring to his previous loyalty to the British Empire, his earlier belief that India would attain self-government within the empire, and the services rendered by him during the Boer War, the Zulu revolt and the First World War, he went on to explain how his hopes were shattered by the Rowlatt Bills, the Punjab wrongs and the Government's attitude towards them, and the inadequacy of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms which, in his opinion, were only designed to prolong India's servitude. "I came reluctantly to the conclusion", he continued, "that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically . . . that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, so jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. . . . Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to his disaffection, so long as he does not contemplate, promote, or incite to violence. . . . I have no personal ill will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the king's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. Holding

¹³ For a detailed account of the events leading up to the Non-cooperation Movement see R. C. Majumdar : *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, Ch. 9, Vol. III, Chs. 1-3 ; Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. I, Part II ; Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 240 ff, Vol. II, pp. 1ff.

such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-cooperation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion, non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. But in the past, non-cooperation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil, and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. . . ."¹⁴

In June, 1920, the Central Khilafat Committee appointed a Non-cooperation Committee with Gandhi and six Muslim leaders as its members. Gandhi referred the proposal for non-cooperation to an All-parties Conference which was held at Allahabad in the same month, and the proposal was accepted by the Conference. The Non-cooperation Committee thereupon called in July for the inauguration of the Non-cooperation Movement on August 1 with a countrywide *hartal* and the return of titles and governmental awards. On that day Gandhi returned his titles and decorations to the Viceroy with a covering letter in which he said : "It is not without a pang that I return the Kaisar-i-Hind gold medal granted to me by your predecessor for my humanitarian work in South Africa, the Zulu War medal granted in South Africa for my services as officer-in-charge of the Indian Volunteer Ambulance Corps in 1906 and the Boer War medal for my services as Assistant Superintendent of the Indian Volunteer Stretcher Bearer Corps during the Boer War of 1899-1900. I venture to return these medals in pursuance of the scheme of non-cooperation inaugurated to-day in connection with the Khilafat Movement." He further explained that the injustice done to the Muslims and the Punjab wrongs had made it impossible for him to "retain neither respect nor affection for such a Government", but added that while pursuing the policy of non-cooperation he still hoped that the Viceroy would see his way to do justice.¹⁵ Although this was the signal for the Non-cooperation Movement to begin, Gandhi sought further approval for it from the special session of the Congress held in Calcutta in September, 1920, and the Nagpur Congress held in December the same year. In both the sessions the Congress approved the policy

¹⁴ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 98-100.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

of non-cooperation. The main resolution, in fact, was passed in Calcutta. After referring to the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs, the resolution continued : "This Congress is further of opinion that there can be no contentment in India without redress of these two wrongs, and that the only effectual means to vindicate national honour and to prevent a repetition of similar wrongs in future is the establishment of swaraj." In laying down the programme of the Non-cooperation Movement the resolution stated :

"This Congress is further of opinion that there is no course left open for the people of India but to approve of and adopt the policy of progressive non-violent non-cooperation until the said wrongs are righted and swaraj is established.

"And inasmuch as a beginning should be made by the classes who have hitherto moulded and represented public opinion ; and inasmuch as the Government consolidates its powers through titles and honours bestowed on the people, through schools controlled by it, through its law courts and its legislative councils, and inasmuch as it is desirable, in the present state of the movement, to take the minimum risk and to call for the least sacrifice compatible with the attainment of the desired object, this Congress earnestly advises :

- (a) "Surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation of nominated posts in local bodies ;
- (b) Refusal to attend government levies, durbars, other official and semi-official functions held by government officials, or in their honour ;
- (c) Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges ;
- (d) Gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants and establishment of private arbitration courts by them for the settlement of private disputes ;
- (e) Refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia ;
- (f) Withdrawal by candidates from election to the reformed councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for election ;
- (g) Boycott of foreign goods."

The resolution further emphasized the need for the development of a constructive programme based on khadi as an integral part of the Non-cooperation Movement.¹⁶ In the Nagpur Congress such other items of constructive work as Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability were added to the programme. While moving the Calcutta resolution Gandhi claimed that if his programme of non-cooperation was fully implemented, *swaraj* would be gained in one year.¹⁷ During the last quarter of 1920 he particularly emphasized the boycott of the Government-controlled schools and colleges, boycott of the law-courts and legislative councils, and boycott of foreign goods or *swadeshi*. "If we can but free ourselves from the three-fold *maya* of the Government-controlled schools, Government law courts and the legislative councils", he said, "and truly control our own education, regulate our disputes and be indifferent to their legislation, we are ready to govern ourselves. . . . The last though not the least important part of the *maya* is *swadeshi* . . . if we would get rid of the economic slavery, we must manufacture our own cloth and at the present moment only by hand-spinning and hand-weaving. . . . If we show this in one year among the classes that to-day count, and make public opinion, we certainly gain *swaraj* within one year."¹⁸ Although the resolution of the Congress and Gandhi personally referred to the fact that the programme could be initiated by only the upper and middle classes, the latter at the same time emphatically declared: "I do not rely merely upon the lawyer class or highly educated men to carry out all the stages of non-cooperation. My hope is more with the masses, so far as the later stages of non-cooperation are concerned."¹⁹

For about one year the movement received a fair measure of response and remained on the whole non-violent. A force of National Volunteers was raised, which was mainly responsible for the organizational work of the movement. As regards the boycott of councils, the results of the movement were mixed. All the Congress candidates withdrew from the election, but this did not prevent other Indians, especially the so-called Moderates, from filling up all the seats. The call of the Congress for abstention from voting in such cases also received a fair response, and not more than 25 per cent of the voters cast their votes on an average. The Governor of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

the Central Province admitted that the Non-cooperation Movement had made the elections unreal and "members were returned to the Legislative Council who could not claim to be really representative of public opinion, and some of whom were unfit to exercise the responsibilities of their position."²⁰ The response to the call for the boycott of courts was also mixed. Two leading members of the bar, Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das, gave up their practice, and they were followed by a large number of lawyers. The total number of lawyers who thus boycotted the courts was about one thousand, but this number was too small to paralyse the courts which continued to function more or less normally. The boards of arbitration set up by the Congress as a substitute for the law courts functioned in certain localities with partial success, but did not seriously challenge the British judicial system.²¹ The boycott of government-controlled schools and colleges met with only partial success. The movement gathered some momentum in Bengal, Punjab, Bombay Presidency and U. P., and to a lesser degree in Delhi and Andhra. A large number of National schools and colleges, and a few National Universities were set up within a short time. But only a few of them survived the Non-cooperation Movement. Many of the students returned to the schools and colleges after the initial flush of enthusiasm, and most of the National schools and colleges soon went out of existence due mainly to lack of sustained interest in them on the part of the people.²² The surrender of titles and honours and the resignation of Government offices were even less successful. Only a small proportion of the holders of titles and honours renounced them. The resignation of Government offices was almost negligible. There were a few notable examples like that of Subhas Chandra Bose, who resigned from the I. C. S., and of Dr. P. C. Ghosh, who also gave up a lucrative job, but on the whole the response was rather poor.²³ The boycott of foreign cloth evoked a great deal of enthusiasm all over India. A special feature of the boycott was the burning of foreign cloth at public places to which Gandhi gave his wholehearted support. The popularization of the *charkha* and the countrywide programme of *khadi* production made substantial progress, although the growth of production was slow and far below the target.²⁴

²⁰ R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 106-07.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-08.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 108-10 ; Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 211.

²³ R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 112. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-04.

In the first phase of the Non-cooperation Movement the policy of the Government was relatively mild and tolerant. As early as April, 1920 instructions were issued by the Government that only such persons as tamper with the loyalty of the troops or the police or incite violence were to be prosecuted. One of the main instruments of the Government's policy was to be counter-propaganda, which partly consisted of subsidizing newspapers and partly of convincing the Indian people through the newly-formed councils that the reforms were real and great. According to the Viceroy, this relatively tolerant attitude of the Government was prompted by (1) reluctance to interfere with individual freedom at a time when India was about to make a great advance towards self-government, (2) the knowledge that prosecution of non-violent non-cooperators would swell their ranks, and (3) the belief that non-cooperation in any case would not be successful.²⁵

But from the middle of 1921 certain events gradually led to a toughening of the policy of the Government and turned the course of the Non-cooperation Movement at the same time. Several cases of violence had taken place on a small scale at different places in the first half of June.²⁶ But the first major incident took place in Malabar in August, 1921, and is generally known as the Moplah rebellion. The Moplahs were a fanatically religious Muslim community of Malabar and active participants in the *Khilafat* Movement. They attempted to establish *Khilafat Raj*, which they identified with the re-establishment of Muslim rule in India, destroyed the lives and properties of a large number of Hindus and perpetrated untold atrocities on them. Martial Law had to be promulgated in the area and a large number of troops deployed in order to suppress the rebellion which continued till the end of February, 1922.²⁷

The second incident took place in Bombay in connection with the visit of the Prince of Wales in November, 1921. Earlier, when the Duke of Connaught had come to India in June, 1921, to initiate the Montford Reforms, there were successful and peaceful *hartals* throughout the country wherever he went. When the Prince of Wales came to India in November on a kind of conciliatory visit, similar *hartals* were again organized. On November 17, 1921, the day the Prince landed in Bombay, serious disturbances broke out when those in favour of *hartal* tried to force loyalist elements

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-79.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 190-99.

who had come to receive the Prince to observe it also. Many people were killed and injured, and Gandhi, who was a witness to some part of the violence, went on a fast in order to bring the violence under control. He also suspended a proposed civil disobedience movement which was to be launched at Bardoli on November 23.²⁸

The Government reacted to these developments by declaring the Congress and *Khilafat* volunteer organizations illegal and adopting a series of repressive measures. Instructions were issued to the Local Governments to apply the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, Part II for suppressing meetings and other unlawful activities of the non-cooperators, and to use troops freely if necessary. According to the Viceroy's own account, "Action was promptly taken by practically all local Governments in Northern India, in accordance with these instructions. The Seditious Meetings Act was introduced in most of the seriously affected districts in the Punjab, Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Burma. In some provinces the various associations had been declared as unlawful, under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, a few days before the receipt of our instructions, and certain other provinces have now issued similar proclamations. A large number of persons have also been arrested and convicted under that Act and other enactments for preservation of law and order. At the same time prosecutions were more freely instituted against newspapers, leaders and speakers who had incited to violence."²⁹

The repressive measures of the Government created some concern even among the Moderates, who were opposed to the Non-cooperation Movement, and some of them, headed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, met the Viceroy in December with the request that a Round Table Conference be held to find a way out of the critical situation. The Viceroy stated that such a conference could not be held until and unless the Non-cooperation Movement was suspended. Gandhi, on his part, declared that the movement could not be suspended until and unless the volunteer organizations were declared legal, all prisoners, especially the Ali brothers, who had been his close associates in the *Khilafat* agitation, were released, and the date and composition of the Round Table Conference were announced. To this the Viceroy would not agree and the negotiations broke down.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-30.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-33.

A few days later the annual session of the Congress was held at Ahmedabad where the progress of the movement was discussed. It was decided to strengthen the volunteer forces and to continue the movement. But the fact that an element of caution had crept into the minds of Gandhi and other Congress leaders is evident from the advice of the Congress to all Congress workers and others "to organize individual civil disobedience and mass civil disobedience when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence and otherwise. . . ."³⁰ Requests came from several districts for the starting of no-tax campaigns, but permission was withheld. In the district of Guntur a no-tax campaign was started without the permission of the Congress Working Committee. Gandhi took strong exception to it and directed that all the taxes must be paid forthwith.³¹

Finally, Gandhi selected the Bardoli *taluka* for a localized civil disobedience campaign. He went there personally and on February 1, 1922 sent a kind of ultimatum to the Viceroy. In the letter he recounted how civil disobedience in this sub-district had been planned earlier but was postponed due to the disturbances in connection with the visit of the Prince of Wales. He also outlined the official repression which had been let loose on the non-cooperators, and said in conclusion : "But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as head of the Government of India, finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-cooperating prisoners who are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities, and to declare in clear terms a policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country, whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs or swaraj or any other purpose and even though they fall under the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the press from all administrative control and to restore all the fines and the forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging I am asking your excellency to do what is being done to-day in every country which is deemed to be under civilized government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

³¹ Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 231.

to advise postponement of civil disobedience of an aggressive character, till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered the position *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration I shall, therefore, regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion and shall have no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strict neutrality or refuses to yield to the clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India."³²

On February 6 the Government announced the rejection of all of Gandhi's demands, whereupon Gandhi sent a rejoinder on the following day to the Viceroy in which he gave a catalogue of specific incidents of official repression throughout the country. Before any further action could be taken, however, news reached Gandhi of a major incident of violence at Chauri Chaura, a village in the Gorakhpur district of U. P., which had taken place on February 5. The police had opened fire on a procession, but when their ammunition was exhausted, they had shut themselves up inside a nearby building, to which the mob then set fire. When the policemen were thus forced to come out, all of them, numbering twenty-two, were hacked to death.³³ Gandhi's shock was profound, and he decided to abandon the Bardoli campaign and also to suspend the mass Non-cooperation Movement. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya urged him to call a meeting of the Congress Working Committee, which he did. On his way to Bardoli, where the Working Committee meeting was scheduled to be held, Gandhi came to Bombay where Malaviya, Jayakar, Jinnah and other Moderates advised him to suspend the Non-cooperation Movement. This advice is said to have influenced Gandhi in making up his mind.³⁴ The Congress Working Committee met at Bardoli on February 11-12, and although the members of the Committee did not agree with Gandhi, at the latter's request they agreed to suspend the Non-cooperation Movement and to put forward a programme of constructive work as its substitute. Gandhi went on a fast for five days from February 12. At the end of it he

³² Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 79-81.

³³ For a detailed account of this incident see R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, pp. 180-82. ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

wrote a lengthy personal explanation for the suspension of the movement in *Young India*, in the course of which he said :

"God has ... warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India that non-violent and truthful atmosphere which alone can justify mass disobedience ... He warned me in 1919 when the Rowlatt agitation was started ... I retraced my steps, called it a Himalayan miscalculation. ... The next time it was through the events of Bombay that God gave a terrific warning. ... But God spoke clearly enough through Chauri Chaura. ... No provocation can possibly justify the brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and who had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob. And when India claims to be non-violent and hopes to mount the throne of liberty through non-violent means, mob violence even in answer to grave provocation is a bad augury. ... Chauri Chaura is after all an aggravated symptom.... The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index finger. It shows the way India may easily go, if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, re-arrange our programme and not think of starting mass civil disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained in spite of mass civil disobedience being started and in spite of the Government provocation. ... Suspension of mass civil disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for further progress, indeed, indispensable to prevent further retrogression. ... I would like them to know too that this movement is not a cloak or a preparation for violence. I would, at any rate, suffer every humiliation, every torture, absolute ostracism and death itself to prevent the movement from becoming violent or a precursor of violence. ... Chauri Chaura must stiffen the Government, must still further corrupt the police, and the reprisals that will follow must further demoralize the people. The suspension and the penance will take us back to the position we occupied before the tragedy.... By becoming truthful and non-violent, both in spirit and deed, and by making the swadeshi, that is, the khaddar programme complete, we can establish full swaraj and redress the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs without a single person having to offer civil disobedience."³⁵

³⁵ *Young India*, February 16, 1922.

A few years later Gandhi explained that the mere occurrence of violence at Chauri Chaura or any other place would not by itself have led to the suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement. The Moplah rebellion, for instance, was not, and would not have been, a cause for the suspension of the movement. It is only because Congressmen, who had committed themselves to the policy of non-violence, had been involved in the Chauri Chaura incident that it had become necessary to call off the movement.³⁶

Since mass *satyagraha* (like other forms of *satyagraha*) is a technique of social control, and the Non-cooperation Movement one of the most important examples of it, in order to be able to make a scientific assessment of the success or failure of this movement it is necessary, first of all, to be clear about the actual character of the movement from the sociological point of view. Before discussing the achievements and failures of the movement as a mass *satyagraha*, therefore, I propose to deal with two major characterizations of the movement: the Marxist characterization of it as an embodiment of the "bourgeois" view of social control, and the characterization of it by some contemporary Indian thinkers as a negative approach to social control. In the following discussion I shall, therefore, ask myself three questions, namely, (1) did the movement represent the "bourgeois" view of social control, (2) did it represent a negative view of social control, and (3) was it successful in achieving its objectives?

(1) *Did the Movement Represent the "Bourgeois" View of Social Control?*

The Marxist view of the Gandhian approach to social control in general, and the Non-cooperation Movement in particular, was first expressed by M. N. Roy in his book *India in Transition*, written in 1922. In this book, after analysing the Non-cooperation Movement in particular and Gandhian thought in general from the Marxian point of view, Roy described Gandhism as "the acutest and most desperate manifestation of the forces of reaction".³⁷ From 1922 onwards the Executive Committee of the Communist

³⁶ *Young India*, June 19, 1924; October 29, 1925.

³⁷ M. N. Roy: *India in Transition*, J. B. Target, Geneva, 1922, p. 205. Roy claims in his Memoirs that he wrote this book under instructions from Lenin and in collaboration with Abani Mukherjee, another Communist leader, who stayed and worked in Germany and Russia (see M. N. Roy: "Memoirs", *Radical*

International, important leaders of the Soviet Union, and well known Communist theoreticians from many countries including the Soviet Union, continued to comment on Gandhi and the movements organized by him in the light of the economic interpretation of history.³⁸ R. P. Dutt, an Indian domiciled in Britain and a top leader and theoretician of the British Communist Party, and two Indian Communist leaders, E. M. S. Namboodiripad and Hiren Mukherjee, have also in their books expressed the typically Marxist view of Gandhi and his movements as it has developed in international Communist circles since the suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement.³⁹

The general Marxist view of Gandhi and his approach to social control which emerges from the large volume of literature on the subject, accumulating since 1922, is rather simple. Briefly, it is that Gandhi was a stooge of the bourgeoisie which was growing in India during his lifetime, and that his social and political thought in general, and his technique of social control in particular, represented the class interests of the Indian bourgeoisie. The economic interests of this growing class in India came in dynamic conflict with those of the British imperialists since the end of the First World War, and it was interested in obtaining as many concessions from the latter as possible without upsetting the existing class relations in India which were characterized by its own hegemony and exploiting power. The Indian bourgeoisie, therefore, so the argument runs, engineered mass movements against the British imperialists up to a point in order to be in a bargaining position vis-a-vis the latter, but called off the movements as soon as these tended to go out of its own control and to threaten the existing class relations. Gandhi acted as a tool of the Indian bourgeoisie in starting and stopping the mass movements according to the situational class needs of the former, propounded social and political ideas, and invented a techni-

Humanist, August 22, 1954, p. 398). The name of the publisher and the place of publication are said to be fictitious. (See Overstreet and Windmiller : *Communism in India*, University of California Press, 1959, p. 39.)

³⁸ For details see J. Bandyopadhyaya : *Indian Nationalism Versus International Communism*, Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, Chs. 6 and 8.

³⁹ See R. P. Dutt : *India To-day and To-morrow*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1955, Ch. 11; E. M. S. Namboodiripad : *The Mahatma and the Ism*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1959; Hiren Mukherjee : *Gandhiji—A Study*, National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1958.

que of pseudo-struggle against the foreign rulers, which all reflected the class interests of the bourgeoisie. The Non-cooperation Movement, so the Marxist theoreticians argue, was no exception to this general evaluation of Gandhi's thought and action-pattern.

A typical Marxian analysis of the Non-cooperation Movement along these lines was offered by A. M. Dyakov, a top Soviet Indologist, at a seminar on India held at the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R. in June, 1947. In his own words :

"In spite of the fact that in the second half of the 19th century India was firmly set on the road to capitalistic development and that the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie had become sharp, the bourgeoisie was displeased with the existing form of British rule in India.... But the powerful industrial bourgeoisie which was against British rule was at the same time afraid of the mass anti-imperialist and anti-feudal movements. The bourgeoisie was utilizing the mass movements only for transferring political and economic power from the hands of the British into its own hands. These movements were sometimes of an aggressive nature and even the bourgeoisie began to be frightened of their dimensions ; therefore, it always betrayed these movements.... Gandhism appeared as the strongest weapon in the hands of the bourgeois elements in the National Congress. It made it possible for the bourgeoisie to keep the masses in submission and turn the movement in its favour.

"Gandhi's doctrine was based on class peace, untouchability of private property and the existing social relations. Therefore, he was obviously working in the interest of the powerful Indian bourgeoisie and the liberal zamindars. Playing skilfully on the anti-imperialistic feeling of the masses and taking advantage of their lack of political consciousness, their religious and social superstitions, their primitive patriarchal belief in the possibility of getting rid of foreign invaders, he devised ways and means, profitable to the bourgeoisie, by which the masses could take part in the political movement. That is why as soon as the movement began to get critical for it, the bourgeoisie utilized Gandhism. In this manner, while retaining its own hegemony, the bourgeoisie was able to suppress the movement. At the time of the enthusiastic mass upsurge (1919-1933) ... the bourgeoisie betrayed the movement

... [and] suddenly started negotiations with British imperialism."⁴⁰

This view of Gandhi and his social and political thought has been expressed by international as well as Indian Marxist circles with a remarkable degree of unanimity since 1922 largely as a concomitant of their belief in the economic interpretation of history and its application to the Indian situation during the period under study. Whether the economic interpretation of history is valid and all history is in fact the history of class struggles is, however, a question which I shall not discuss here. One reason for this is that I have already briefly discussed and rejected the deterministic approach to history and society on methodological grounds in Chapter 1, and another is that there is a large volume of standard literature dealing with the logical inadequacies and methodological limitations of historical and dialectical materialism. But the most important reason is that the validity of the Marxist assertion regarding the role of Gandhi and his thought is contingent not upon any preconceived notions about history and class conflict, but upon the empirical evidence of the given situation. It would indeed be more correct to say that the validity of the economic interpretation of history and the theory of class struggle would be contingent, in this particular case, on the empirical evidence regarding the actual role played by Gandhi and his thought in the objective Indian situation. It is, therefore, the empirical evidence which we have to study in order to test the validity of the Marxist contention regarding Gandhi and his role in the Non-cooperation Movement and indirectly also of the economic interpretation of history.

Let us first of all be clear about the exact nature of the link which the Marxists believe to have existed between Gandhi and the bourgeoisie. Nobody has claimed, so far as I know, that in starting the Non-cooperation Movement and calling it off when he did Gandhi was acting under the direct instructions of a section of the bourgeoisie. All that seems to be maintained is that as a member of the petit-bourgeoisie Gandhi acted independently (but being guided by his petit-bourgeois class-consciousness) in a manner, and propounded a body of social and political thought as the basis of his actions, which objectively helped the interests of the bour-

⁴⁰ A. M. Dyakov : "Krizis Angliiskogo Gospodstva V Indii i Novii Etap Osvo-boditelnoi ee Narodov," in *Krizis Kolonialnoi Sistemi*, Akademia Nauk U. S. S. R., Moscow, 1949.

geoisie during the Non-cooperation Movement (as indeed the petit-bourgeoisie is apt to do, according to Marxist theory, in critical times). It is, therefore, necessary to examine the reaction of the big bourgeoisie when the movement was started, the progress of the movement and how it affected the bourgeoisie, the circumstances in which the movement was called off, and whether the bourgeoisie benefited from the suspension of the movement.

It should be realized that through such *satyagrahas* as the Non-cooperation Movement, and the programme of constructive work which was invariably and inseparably linked with them, Gandhi expected not only to bring political independence to India, but also to establish the second-order ideal society in which all heavy and large-scale industries would be state-owned, and eventually the first-order ideal society in which all complicated machinery and the state itself would cease to exist and everyone will have the same income. This can hardly be said to be a programme of action which was aimed at safeguarding and promoting the interests of the bourgeoisie. At this point it may be argued by relatively liberal Marxists that subjectively Gandhi might have wanted such a change, but objectively his movements did serve the vested interests. We are, therefore, back to the issues raised in the preceding paragraph.

It would be reasonable to argue that at the time when the Non-cooperation Movement was launched, it would have been more in the interests of the bourgeoisie to enjoy the benefits of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and to consolidate their political and economic position through these Reforms, instead of starting a country-wide movement, one of whose main objectives was to oppose the Reforms. In other words, Gandhi's actions would have contributed to the interests of the bourgeoisie if he had supported the Government on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and encouraged the Congress to work these out, instead of organizing the Non-cooperation Movement precisely when the benefits of the Reforms were going to be enjoyed for the first time by the Indian bourgeoisie. Yet we find that it was Gandhi who insisted on the movement in the teeth of powerful opposition from the relatively conservative and Moderate leaders. B. G. Tilak, though militant in his attitude towards the British, was indifferent if not directly opposed to the Non-cooperation Movement, while such Moderate leaders as Annie Besant, Bipin Chandra Pal, C. R. Das, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, M. A. Jinnah, all of whom were certainly in favour of the status

quo so far as class relations were concerned, strongly opposed the proposal for the movement at the Calcutta session of the Congress in September, 1920, and were in favour of working out the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms through the reformed councils. Although Das became reconciled to Gandhi's view at the Nagpur Congress, the others remained irreconcilable.⁴¹

As regards the supposedly beneficial effects of the Non-cooperation Movement on the Indian bourgeoisie, the most that can be said is that the boycott of foreign goods, which mainly amounted to the boycott of foreign cloth, enabled a few textile manufacturers to increase their production and profits. But even here it should be realized that Gandhi's programme was one of replacing the foreign cloth by the production of *khadi*, which can hardly be said to be calculated to help the mill-owners. If the production of *khadi* did not reach the target and the mill-owners were able to reap some profits, this was due to the inadequate response to Gandhi's programme and not anything inherent in the programme itself.

But more important is the fact that the Non-cooperation Movement led to a great socio-political awakening among the Indian masses which could hardly be in the long-term interests of the bourgeoisie. In a telegram to the Secretary of State, dated February 9, 1920, the Viceroy said : "The lower classes in the towns have been seriously affected by the non-cooperation movement.... And although (its) influence ... has been much smaller in the rural tracts generally, in certain areas the peasantry have been affected, particularly in parts of the Assam Valley, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa and Bengal.... The Government of India are prepared for disorder of a more formidable nature than has in the past occurred, and do not seek to minimize in anyway the fact that great anxiety is caused by the situation."⁴² In a statement submitted to the Parliament on the general results of the Non-cooperation Movement the Government of India similarly observed that "Mr. Gandhi's intensive movement during the years 1921 and 1922 has diffused far and wide, among classes previously oblivious to political considerations.... The less prosperous classes both in the town and the countryside have become aroused.... On the whole, this must be

⁴¹ R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 78-97.

⁴² Quoted in Michael Brecher : *Nehru—A Political Biography*, Oxford University Press, London, 1959, pp. 78-79.

pronounced, up to the present, the most formidable achievement of the non-cooperation movement."⁴³

Finally, as regards the suspension of the movement which seems to be the most crucial point in the minds of the Marxists, there is no evidence whatever to suggest that at the time of the Chauri Chaura incident the movement had assumed the character of a class struggle and threatened the position of the bourgeoisie. The attack was made by some villagers on a police party which to them represented British authority in India and not the Indian bourgeoisie. The movement was suspended by Gandhi because the policy of non-violence had failed in so far as Congressmen themselves had been involved in the Chauri Chaura incident. Gandhi believed, rightly, as it would seem to everyone who is not completely blind to the realities of the situation, that an armed uprising would have been unsuccessful in the given situation in India, and that the official repression which would inevitably follow the suppression of a violent uprising would seriously retard the progress of the freedom movement. Jawaharlal Nehru has also observed: "There is little doubt that if the movement had continued there would have been growing sporadic violence in many places. This would have been crushed by the Government in a bloody manner and a reign of terror established which would have thoroughly demoralized the people."⁴⁴ But even if one makes the highly unreal assumption that a violent revolution against the British Government would have been successful soon after the Chauri Chaura incident, how would it have, it may be asked, undermined the position of the Indian bourgeoisie, since there was in fact no class struggle in India at the time? As the experience of the French Revolution and the American War of Independence shows, to take only two of many such examples, a successful revolution either against a national government or against a foreign government does not necessarily undermine the vested interests of the bourgeoisie, let alone establish a dictatorship of the proletariat (as the Marxists would be only too ready to admit). It may also be noted in this connection that there is no factual basis whatever for Dyakov's assertion that during the movement the bourgeoisie "suddenly started negotiations with British imperialism". It would clearly seem to be a statement dictated by a pre-

⁴³ Quoted in R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 188.

⁴⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru : *An Autobiography*, Bodley Head, London, 1947, p. 86.

conceived theoretical necessity, namely, that the bourgeoisie uses such movements for obtaining more concessions for themselves from the imperialists, rather than the facts of the given situation.

In the face of such indisputable facts the Marxist contention finally boils down to the assertion that Gandhi served the interests of the bourgeoisie because he believed in a policy of non-violence rather than in violent class conflict. But this certainly is begging the question. We are faced with the circular reasoning that Gandhi believed in a non-violent movement because he was a stooge of the bourgeoisie, and he was a stooge of the bourgeoisie because he believed in a non-violent movement. Apart from the elementary logical fallacy involved in this argument, it may be noted that even the Soviet theoreticians no longer believe in the inevitability of violent class conflict in the process of the transformation of a capitalist society into a socialist one.

As a matter of fact, the Marxist contention regarding the role of Gandhi and his thought during the Non-cooperation Movement is a typical example of the ability of Marxists to invent facts to fit their pre-conceived theories. It is this refusal to modify theories in the light of facts which disprove them that the Soviet Government and the Comintern were never able to decide about the "class character" of the Indian National Congress and the national movement led by it, and rhythmically oscillated every few years between an attitude of cooperation and of opposition towards the Indian National Congress. And the reason why Marxist theory has failed to explain the real facts in this and many other cases is that dialectical materialism (and the economic interpretation of history) is too crude and inadequate a tool for analysing so complex a social phenomenon as the Indian national movement and a highly creative individual like Gandhi and his thought.⁴⁵

(2) *Did it Represent a Negative View of Social Control?*

In the year 1921 there took place a great debate between Rabindranath Tagore who, while expressing his respect and admiration for the leadership of Gandhi and recognizing the contribution made by the Non-cooperation Movement to the cause of India's Freedom, expressed serious reservations regarding what he considered to be the negative character of the movement, and Gandhi who maintained

⁴⁵ For a fuller discussion see J. Bandyopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, Ch. 10.

that the movement was not basically a negative one. Tagore characterized the movement as a negative one in general as well as with regard to specific issues like spinning, the boycott of schools and the burning of foreign cloth. Gandhi's reply came in the same manner point by point.⁴⁶ Tagore was certainly not the only person to hold the view that the Non-cooperation Movement was negative in character; the Moderates generally held the same view. But his were the most sympathetic and most closely reasoned arguments, and a discussion of these arguments and Gandhi's replies to them, it seems to me, are sufficient to enable us to come to a definite conclusion regarding the nature of the movement in this respect.

As regards the general character of the Non-cooperation Movement, Tagore observed: "The idea of Non-cooperation is political asceticism. . . . It has at its back a fiery joy of annihilation, which at its best is asceticism and at its worst is that orgy of frightfulness in which human nature, losing faith in the basic reality of normal life, finds a disinterested delight in an uncanny devastation, as has been shown in the late war and on other occasions which came nearer to us. 'No', in its passive moral form, is asceticism and in its active moral form is violence. The desert is as much a form of *himsa* (malignance) as is the raging sea in storm; they both are against life."⁴⁷ Man became great, said Tagore, only when he discovered the law of cooperation, which is the law of all creation. So far this law had prevailed within individual communities more than in the relations among communities, but men were discovering that no one people of the earth could work out its salvation by detaching itself from the others. "The spirit of rejection finds its support in the consciousness of separateness, the spirit of acceptance in the consciousness of unity. India has ever declared that Unity is

⁴⁶ Tagore's views were expressed through three letters published in the May, 1921 issue of *Modern Review*, a monthly journal published from Calcutta, and an article entitled "The Call of Truth" in the October, 1921 issue of the same journal. The first three letters were written by Tagore from abroad, while the fourth was written immediately after his return to India. Gandhi's replies took the form of two articles in *Young India*, dated June 1 and October 31 respectively. The entire debate was published, with minor omissions, by the *Gandhi Marg*, a quarterly journal of Gandhian thought published from Delhi in its April, 1961 number. For the sake of convenience, references will be made to this last source only, except where otherwise stated.

⁴⁷ *Gandhi Marg*, April, 1961, p. 148.

Truth and separateness is *maya*. This unity is not a zero, it is that which comprehends all and, therefore, can never be reached through the path of negation. Our present struggle to alienate our heart and mind from those of the West is an attempt at spiritual suicide. If in the spirit of national vaingloriousness we shout from our house-top that the West has produced nothing that has an infinite value for man, then we but create a serious cause of doubt about the worth of any product of the Eastern mind."⁴⁸

In his reply Gandhi maintained that the existing situation was characterized by "compulsory cooperation" between India and Britain, and Non-cooperation was intended "to pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary cooperation based on mutual respect and trust". It was not intended to erect a Chinese wall between India and the West. Rejection, Gandhi asserted, was as much an ideal as the acceptance of a thing. The acceptance of truth was as important as the rejection of untruth, non-cooperation with evil as much a duty as cooperation with good. The negative character of the Non-cooperation Movement was thus more apparent than real. "The nation's Non-cooperation is an invitation to the Government to cooperate with it on its own terms as it is every nation's right and every Government's duty. Non-cooperation is the nation's notice that it is no longer satisfied to be in tutelage."⁴⁹ India's Non-cooperation, Gandhi explained further, was neither with the British nation nor with the West ; it was "Non-cooperation with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak."⁵⁰

It seems to me, for two reasons, that Tagore was exaggerating the apparently negative character of the Non-cooperation Movement and, at any rate, attaching an undue importance to it. In the first place, the negative aspect of the Non-cooperation Movement was paralleled by a massive programme of constructive effort : the boycott of Government-controlled schools and colleges was to be paralleled by the establishment of "national" schools and colleges, the boycott of law courts by the establishment of non-Governmental community courts, and the boycott of foreign goods, notably foreign cloth, by the rapid development of spinning and village industries. Gandhi of course, did not want the boycotts to await and be in proportion to the success of the constructive effort ; but the construc-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-51.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-54.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

tive aspect of the Non-cooperation Movement was, in its conception, nothing short of an attempt on the part of the Indian masses to get rid of the existing state apparatus through the anarchistic (especially Kropotkinian) principle of mutual benefit which, as we have seen before, plays such a fundamental role in the entire social and political thought of Gandhi. Secondly, it is difficult to see how a subject nation ruled by an oppressive colonial regime could hope to attain *swaraj* not only in the sense of political independence, but in the much wider sense of the term as understood by Gandhi (see Chapter IV) through cooperation with the colonial system of Government.

Tagore also criticized what he considered to be a negative view of *swaraj* as represented by Gandhi's accent on spinning. Gandhi had awakened the desire for *swaraj* in the minds of the Indian masses, but had offered them a rather unsatisfactory picture of it. He gave the analogy of a student of *vina* (Indian violin) who, having found a Master after a long search, is told by the latter, in view of the difficulties of manufacturing a *vina*: "Never mind, my son, do not go to the expense in workmanship and time which a *vina* will require. Take rather this simple string tightened across a piece of wood and practise on it. In a short time you will find it to be as good as a *vina*.' The science and art of building up *swaraj*, said Tagore, is a vast subject. "Its pathways are difficult to traverse and take time. For this task, aspiration and emotion must be there, but no less must study and thought be there likewise. For it the economist must think, the mechanic must labour, the educationist and statesman must teach and contrive. In a word, the mind of the country must exert itself in all directions. . . . But his call came to one narrow field alone. To one and all he simply says : spin and weave, spin and weave. . . . Is this the call of the New Age of Creation? When nature called to the bee to take refuge in the narrow life of the hive, millions of bees responded to it for the sake of efficiency, and accepted the loss of sex in consequence. But this sacrifice by way of self-atrophy led to the opposite of freedom. Any country, the people of which can agree to become neuters for the sake of some temptation, or command, carries within itself its own prison house. To spin is easy, therefore, for all men it is an imposition hard to bear. The call to the ease of mere efficiency is well enough for the bee. The wealth of power, that is man's, can only become manifest when his utmost is claimed."⁸¹

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-60.

Gandhi's reply indicates that he regarded the poverty and idleness of the Indian masses as the greatest obstacle to *swaraj*, and the spinning wheel as the only practicable remedy for it. "To a people famished and idle", he said, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. . . . Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning wheel. . . . The spinning wheel is the reviving draught for the millions of our dying countrymen and countrywomen. . . . Swaraj has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness. The attainment of this swaraj is possible within a short time, and it is possible only by the revival of the spinning wheel."⁵² Tagore was obviously not convinced, for a few years later he wrote again : "... if we want the country to take up in earnest the striving for swaraj, we must hold before it the complete visage of swaraj and not a small limb of it. . . . The infant does not begin life as a mere toe, developing slowly to a leg and attaining the full human form only after fifteen or twenty years. The full-grown man is visible in the infant and that is why it is such an object of joy. . . . If swaraj comes to us in the semblance of mere home-spun yarn, it would be . . . intolerable."⁵³

It seems to me that in his argument against Tagore on this particular question Gandhi made a rather partial presentation of his views on the subject. It may be quite true that the programme of spinning was dictated by the compulsions of a given economic situation, and thus became an integral part of the Non-cooperation Movement, but this is certainly not the entire significance of spinning as a constructive effort as understood by Gandhi. As we have seen in Part II, spinning and other similar handicrafts occupy a central position in Gandhi's ideal society of both the first and the second orders, and since the Constructive Programme is expected gradually to lead to the replacement of the old society by the new, as I have explained in Chapter XI, spinning becomes an integral part of the perennial Constructive Programme, and not a particular constructive programme dictated by situational considerations. In other words, spinning constitutes an integral element in Gandhi's conception of Freedom (and Equality). The spinning programme connected with the Non-cooperation Movement was certainly very useful for

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵³ Rabindranath Tagore : *Towards Universal Man*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961, pp. 281-82.

mobilizing the support and ensuring the active participation of the masses in the movement, thus awakening their political consciousness and promoting Freedom ; it may also have made some economic contribution, especially during the boycott of foreign cloth. But above all these situational advantages of spinning remains the fact that it is in many ways central to Gandhi's idea of Freedom ; and Tagore rightly drew our attention, on the occasion of the Non-cooperation Movement, to the simplistic (rather than negative) character of the Gandhian concept of Freedom (and Equality) which I have emphasized in several preceding chapters.

As regards the boycott of educational institutions, Tagore contended that the withdrawal of the students from the Government-controlled institutions before alternative provisions could be made for their education led "not to a fuller education, but to no-education", which was highly detrimental to the nation's growth.⁵⁴ But Gandhi maintained that literary education had very little value, that it was moral education which really had any worth, that the education imparted through the Government-controlled schools was completely demoralizing the Indian youth, that the educational institutions were one of the most important levers of Governmental control which had to be neutralized, and that in any case when a country was at war or a house on fire, people had to give up their normal routine and mobilize themselves for meeting the emergency.⁵⁵ So far as the burning of foreign cloth is concerned, Tagore called it a "magical formula" which had no relation to economic consideration, and questioned its morality when large sections of the people, especially the women, were practically naked.⁵⁶ Gandhi's reply was that foreign cloth had deprived the Indian spinners and weavers of their jobs, and that it was also a sign of India's national humiliation. "In burning my foreign clothes" he said, "I burn my shame".⁵⁷

Irrespective of Gandhi's contention that literary education has very little worth (his views on education have been discussed in Chapter X), it is possible to argue that the withdrawal of the students from the educational institutions was a positive rather than a negative act in so far as the students thus released from these institutions organized themselves into volunteer bands and constituted the back-

⁵⁴ *Gandhi Marg*, April, 1961, pp. 148-49.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 153-54, 163.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-62.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

bone of the Non-cooperation Movement.⁵⁸ If we assume that the Non-cooperation Movement was necessary and desirable, and had many positive aspects to it, the withdrawal of students from the educational institutions and their conversion into volunteer bands would be an essential corollary of this assumption, and a positive act, at least in so far as such withdrawal was entirely voluntary. It would seem to be more difficult, however, to justify the burning of foreign cloth, especially since there may be a question as to whether such acts are consistent with Non-violence.⁵⁹

(3) *Was it Successful in Achieving its Objectives ?*

Before discussing the success or failure of the Non-cooperation Movement it is necessary to remember that except for a relatively short period of time in its early phase, the movement did not truly conform to the policy of non-violence, the strict adherence to which Gandhi had laid down as the minimum condition for its success. From the beginning of 1921, as noted earlier, sporadic acts of violence had started taking place throughout the country, and the ghastly spectacle of twenty-two policemen being hacked to death at Chauri Chaura by a furious mob which included Congressmen was not an isolated incident. The movement had practically shed its purely non-violent character long before Chauri Chaura. As Jawaharlal Nehru has observed : "As a matter of fact, even the suspension of civil resistance in February 1922 was certainly not due to Chauri Chaura alone, although most people imagined so. That was only the last straw.... At that time our movement, in spite of its apparent power and the widespread enthusiasm, was going to pieces. All organization and discipline was disappearing. ..."⁶⁰ Nehru maintains, as noted earlier, that there would have been increasing violence if the movement had been allowed to continue, and attributes this weakening of discipline to the absence

⁵⁸ R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 111.

⁵⁹ It may be noted here that the boycott of Government-controlled educational institutions, the establishment of "national" schools and colleges, the boycott of foreign goods and their burning had been a part of the *Swadeshi* Movement of 1905 also and were not invented by Gandhi. The *Swadeshi* Movement was not, of course, based on the theory of non-violent non-cooperation. For details regarding the *Swadeshi* Movement see R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, Vol. II, Ch. 2.

⁶⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 85.

of a proper organization and adequate training on the part of the masses.⁶¹ The point I am trying to make, however, is that the success or failure of the Non-cooperation Movement cannot sufficiently prove or disprove the efficacy of the technique of mass *satyagraha*, since the movement did not strictly adhere to the minimum condition laid down by Gandhi for its success, namely, a policy of complete non-violence. With this understanding, it is possible to turn to an analysis of the objectives of the movement and see to what extent, if at all, these were achieved.

What the specific objectives of the movement were, and whether it had any specific objectives at all, is not easy to determine. It is typical of the social and political thought of Gandhi that the end is never as clearly defined as the means (the problem of ends and means, which in many ways is the central theme of Gandhian thought, will be discussed in the last chapter). In the Calcutta resolution of the Congress quoted earlier we are told, on the one hand, that the Non-cooperation Movement was the result of the realization on the part of the Indian masses that the Punjab and *Khilafat* wrongs could not be righted, and the recurrence of similar wrongs in future prevented, unless *swaraj* is established. On the other hand, the resolution states that the movement would continue "until the said wrongs are righted and *swaraj* is established". The word "and" indicates that the two objectives were not alternatives, but were to be pursued at the same time. What would have happened, it may be asked, if the British Government had accepted the demands of the Indian Muslims (to make a highly unreal assumption) regarding the disposition of the Turkish empire, and punished the guilty officers who were responsible for the Punjab wrongs (to make a less unrealistic assumption) and expressed regret for the said wrongs? Would this have amounted to *swaraj* and would the movement have been suspended? It may be argued that in a sense *swaraj* would have then been established, for the Government would have acted according to the will of the people. But that would be a rather narrow and un-Gandhian interpretation of *swaraj* (see Chapter IV), and the facts of the case, including the language of the resolution, indicate that something more than this was certainly aimed at. In any case, the *Khilafat* and Punjab wrongs were not righted by the British Government (the former ceased to be a problem after

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

Kamal Pasha's secular revolution in Turkey), and this specific objective of the Non-cooperation Movement was wholly unrealized. We are thus left with a somewhat undefined *swaraj* which constituted the broad objective of the movement and which Gandhi at one stage declared to be realizable within a year.

And yet it would seem, in the light of the discussion in Chapter IV and several chapters of Part II, that the *swaraj* Gandhi was talking about is not as difficult to understand as may appear at first sight. *Swaraj* is not merely the transference of political power from British to Indian hands (although that is also involved incidentally), but basically it is (i) the "self-realization" or an awakening of the people to a sense of their own moral power, and (ii) the establishment of a certain type of society, through a process of successive approximation, which would represent the consummation of a certain set of ultimate values. In other words, it is the maximum possible effort on the part of the people to exercise moral power through non-violent resistance or *satyagraha* and to implement the Constructive Programme, rather than the mere transference of political power, which is the substance of *swaraj*. There is every reason to believe that is the sense in which Gandhi had used the word during the Non-cooperation Movement (as indeed on all other occasions), whatever other meaning the other Congress leaders might have attributed to it. In December 1921, for instance, when the Non-cooperation Movement was still in full swing, Gandhi explained the meaning of *swaraj* as follows :

"Swaraj does consist in the change of Government and its real control by the people, but that would be merely the form. The substance that I am hankering after is a definite acceptance of the means. . . . I am certain that it does not require ages for Hindus do discard the error of untouchability, for Hindus and Muslims to shed enmity and accept heart friendship as an eternal factor of national life, for all to adopt the charkha as the only universal means of attaining India's economic salvation, and finally for all to believe that India's freedom lies through non-violence and no other method. Definite, intelligent and free adoption by the nation of this programme, I hold, as the attainment of the substance. The symbol, the transfer of power, is sure to follow, even as the seed truly laid must develop into a tree."⁶²

⁶² Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 73-74.

There was nothing illogical in Gandhi's view that if the boycott of educational institutions, the law courts, the councils and foreign goods, plus the Constructive Programme consisting of national educational institutions, national community courts, countrywide spinning in every house and by every individual, Hindu-Muslim friendship and the removal of untouchability, etc. were effectively implemented, *swaraj* would be attained in a year (or even in a day, as he said) ; for the total implementation of this programme would be *swaraj* itself in substance, and would incidentally also make it impossible for the British Government (deprived of its functions and its apparatus) to continue to function in India. But Gandhi was realist enough to know that the programme laid down by him could not be implemented by the Indian people in the given situation within one year, and that is why he made his statement intentionally hypothetical with a big "if" in it. In making this statement, it seems, he was guided more by organizational considerations than by a belief in the advent of *swaraj* within a year. As he explained at the end of 1921 :

"The time-limit was . . . fixed in order to rivet the attention of Congressmen and Congresswomen on their sense of immediate duty and on the grand consequence of its fulfilment. Without the time-limit we would not have collected the crore, nor would we have introduced so many charkhas, nor manufactured thousands of rupees worth of hand-spun khadi and distributed lakhs among the poorest workers in the country. It is not a sign of bad soldiery to find Bengal, the United Provinces and the Punjab supplying prisoners as fast as the Government can take them. And when the word is passed round the other provinces for repression of a violent type, I doubt not that they will shine as brilliantly as the three fortunate ones I have mentioned."⁶³

It would thus seem that the minimum objective aimed at by Gandhi was the awakening of the masses, especially of Congressmen, to political consciousness and a sense of their moral power, and the realization by them of the importance of the Constructive Programme. This minimum objective seems to have been attained by the Non-cooperation Movement. It is impossible to follow the vast

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

awakening of the Indian masses during the movement, and the countrywide developments from day to day, without experiencing a thrill and a sense of wonder. Jawaharlal Nehru has described the impact of the movement on the Indian masses thus in his picturesque language : "It was this extraordinary stiffening-up of the masses that filled us with confidence. A demoralized, backward and broken-up people suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their heads and took part in disciplined, joint action on a country-wide scale. . . . We became victims to the curious illusion of all peoples and all nations that in some way they are a chosen race."⁶⁴ Even the Governor of Bombay Presidency admitted that "Gandhi's was the most colossal experiment in world history, and it came within an inch of succeeding".⁶⁵ In spite of his sympathetic criticism of certain aspects of the Non-cooperation Movement, discussed earlier, Rabindranath Tagore also realized that the movement had contributed substantially to the Freedom of the Indian people. Referring to the movement, he said : "Previously the vision of our political leaders had never reached beyond the English-knowing classes, because the country meant for them only that bookish aspect of it which is to be found in the pages of the Englishman's history. Such a country was merely a mirage born of vapourings in the English language, in which flitted about thin shades of Burke and Gladstone, Mazzini and Garibaldi. Nothing resembling self-sacrifice or true feeling for their countrymen was visible. At this juncture Mahatma Gandhi came. . . . The thing that has happened is nothing less than the birth of freedom. It is the gain by the country of itself."⁶⁶

But the inevitable question which arises in this connection is whether even this minimum objective could have been achieved by the Non-cooperation Movement under a dictatorial regime more oppressive than the British Government in India. It has been noted that in the first phase of the movement, that is, up to the visit of the Prince of Wales in November, 1921, the policy of the Government was a relatively tolerant one. During this phase the Government granted complete freedom to the non-cooperators with regard to speech, publicity and organization, although the object of the movement admittedly was to bring about the downfall of British

⁶⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Michael Brecher : *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁶⁶ *Gandhi Marg*, April, 1961, pp. 155-56.

rule in India. The Government took some action, which was mild during this phase of the movement, only when there were cases of violence or of incitement to violence. And it was during this first phase that the movement achieved a large measure of success. During the second phase the Government adopted relatively repressive measures, as noted earlier, and the movement started "going to pieces", as Jawaharlal Nehru has observed. It cannot be denied, therefore, that the relatively liberal policy of the Government contributed to a considerable extent to the success of the movement in the first phase, and that their repressive policy contributed to its failure in the second phase. It is, therefore, a moot question whether the movement would have succeeded or even gathered any momentum at all if the policy of the Government were repressive from the beginning. It would also appear that a dictatorial regime which paid less attention to constitutional proprieties than the British Government would probably have found it even easier to crush the movement at its inception. A detailed discussion of the problem of *satyagraha* against a dictatorship will, however, be taken up only in the next chapter.

Another fundamental question which has to be answered before bringing this study of the Non-cooperation Movement to a close is whether such a mass *satyagraha* movement can ever be expected to remain completely non-violent over a period of time, or in other words, whether non-violence, even as a policy, can be practised by large masses of men during a relatively protracted movement. When the Non-cooperation Movement was suspended after the Chauri Chaura incident, it caused great disappointment in the country, and especially among the Congress leaders. "The sudden suspension of our movement after the Chauri Chaura incident", as Jawaharlal Nehru has recorded, "was resented, I think, by almost all the prominent Congress leaders — other than Gandhiji of course. My father (who was in gaol at the time) was much upset by it. The younger people were even more agitated. Our mounting hopes tumbled to the ground, and this mental reaction was to be expected."⁶⁷ The sudden suspension of the movement certainly led to some undesirable consequences, the most important of which was probably the schism within the Congress. Nehru has also argued, perhaps rightly, that the sudden "bottling up" of such a

⁶⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 82.

great movement led to the communal riots in many parts of the country afterwards, because the pent-up energies of the people had to find some outlet. Some adverse repercussions could indeed be expected, for as Romain Rolland observed at the time, "It is dangerous to assemble all the forces of a nation, and to hold the nation, panting, before a prescribed movement, to lift one's arm to give the final command, and then, at the last moment, let one's arm drop, and thrice call a halt just as the formidable machinery has been set in motion. One risks ruining the brakes and paralysing the impetus."⁶⁸ There thus arose the fundamental question, raised pointedly by Nehru : "Chauri Chaura may have been and was a deplorable occurrence and wholly opposed to the spirit of the non-violent movement ; but were a remote village and a mob of excited peasants in an out-of-the-way place going to put an end, for some time at least, to our national struggle for freedom? If this was the inevitable consequence of a sporadic act of violence, then surely there is something lacking in the philosophy and technique of a non-violent struggle. For it seemed to us to be impossible to guarantee against the occurrence of some such untoward incident. Must we train the three hundred and odd millions of India in the theory and practice of non-violent action before we could go forward? And even so, how many of us could say that under extreme provocation from the police we would be able to remain perfectly peaceful? But even if we succeeded, what of the numerous *agents provocateurs*, stool pigeons, and the like who crept into our movement and indulged in violence themselves or induced others to do so? If this was the sole condition of its function, then the non-violent method of resistance would always fail."⁶⁹

As regards the question whether a non-violent mass movement is at all possible, we have seen that under certain circumstances, especially if the policy of the Government is relatively liberal, such a movement can continue successfully for a reasonably long time. It may be argued that with greater training and experience such a movement, under similar favourable circumstances, may be even better organized and prolonged further. The other question whether such a movement may not be allowed to continue and even succeed in spite of its taking a violent turn is of a different category.

⁶⁸ Romain Rolland : *Mahatma Gandhi*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1968, pp. 105-07.

⁶⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 82.

Many armed revolutions in history have been successful in removing established Governments, whether national or foreign, from power, and in this limited sense an armed mass movement can certainly be successful under certain circumstances. But if Non-violence is accepted as an ultimate value, or if at least the non-violent method is accepted as a policy, it is desirable to keep the movement entirely free from violence, since the boundary between "sporadic acts of violence" and mass violence is rather thin and undefined, and since the difference between a violent policy and a non-violent policy is not one of degree, but of kind. Whether it is always and in all circumstances possible and desirable to adopt such a policy, as is insisted by Gandhi, is however, a question which is much more difficult to answer, and will be discussed in detail only in the last chapter.

THE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

I have discussed the Non-cooperation Movement in some detail in order to explain, as fully as possible, within the limits of a study of this nature, the mechanics, characteristics and limitations of mass *satyagraha* as advocated by Gandhi. The Civil Disobedience Movement was also essentially the same type of mass *satyagraha*, with the only difference that while the accent of non-cooperation is on non-participation in the apparatus and administrative processes of the state, that of civil disobedience is on defiance of the authority of the state through the deliberate and organized violation of laws, which is intended to make the functioning of the Government impossible. In a broad sense, however, civil disobedience is also a basic form of non-cooperation, for the observance of the laws is the most fundamental form of cooperation that the citizens of an organized state offer to the Government. Indeed, that is the logic on which civil disobedience is conceived. In the words of Gandhi: "A little reflection will show that civil disobedience is a necessary part of non-cooperation. You assist an administration most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil administration never deserves such allegiance.... Disobedience of the laws of an evil state is, therefore, a duty."⁷⁰ Moreover, as explained in Chapter XII, a major *satyagraha* often involves the combination of several

⁷⁰ *Young India*, March 27, 1930.

different techniques, and the two mass *satyagrahas* discussed in this chapter are no exception. Thus, during the Non-cooperation Movement there were some no-tax campaigns, especially in the later stages, and during the Civil Disobedience Movement, as we shall presently see, there were certain aspects of non-cooperation like the boycott of British goods and British banks, insurance and other similar institutions, although this time there was less emphasis on the boycott of educational institutions.

Gandhi realized, before starting the Civil Disobedience Movement, that civil disobedience was "still only a partially tried remedy", and that there was an element of risk involved in it, because "when tyranny is rampant, much rage is generated among the victims. It remains latent because of their weakness and bursts in all its fury on the slightest pretext". Civil disobedience, he argued, "is a sovereign method of transmuting this undisciplined and life-destroying latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy, whose use ensures absolute success". The element of risk involved was, moreover, felt Gandhi, more due to lack of experience on the part of the masses in applying this technique of resistance, rather than any inherent limitation of it. "When the world has become familiar with its use", he observed, "and when it has had a series of demonstrations of its successful working, there will be less risk in civil disobedience than there is in aviation, in spite of that science having reached a high stage of development."⁷¹

I have said before that Gandhi had not read Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* when he started the *satyagraha* campaign in South Africa, and in any case, *satyagraha* is much broader in conception than Thoreau's idea of civil disobedience. But it is interesting to note that there is a good deal of similarity between the views of Gandhi and Thoreau on civil disobedience. Both of them started with the assumption that the individual is an end-in-itself, governed by a "higher law" than the law of the state. Both regarded the state as inherently evil (Gandhi often quoted Thoreau's observation that "that government is best which governs least"), although Thoreau had apparently nothing in mind like Gandhi's stateless ideal society of the first order. Both felt that the best way to resist the authority of an unjust Government was for just men to violate its laws and court imprisonment. If a sufficiently large number of just men

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

thus courted imprisonment, Thoreau argued, like Gandhi, the Government would be compelled to change its ways. Government servants, Gandhi and Thoreau argued alike, ought to resign the offices of an unjust Government. In three respects, however, there seems to be some difference between the approaches of the two thinkers to the question of civil disobedience. The idea of "changing the heart" of the opponent through suffering, which is a fundamental postulate of the Gandhian theory of *satyagraha* (including civil disobedience), seems to be absent from the mind of Thoreau, who apparently regarded civil disobedience as a method of non-violent coercion. That is probably why Thoreau, who visualized a primarily non-violent movement, did not, nevertheless, regard a certain amount of violence as altogether undesirable. This is the second difference. In Thoreau's own words: "If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure. . . . But even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of bloodshed when the conscience is wounded?"⁷² Thirdly, Thoreau's conception of civil disobedience was like Gandhi's idea of individual civil disobedience, rather than the organized movement of mass civil disobedience discussed in this chapter.

The immediate factors leading to the Civil Disobedience Movement, and Gandhi's Salt March which triggered off the movement, have been briefly discussed in Chapter XIII. I shall, therefore, confine myself here to only a brief analysis of the Civil Disobedience Movement, an examination of its character, and an assesment of its success or failure.⁷³

The Salt March, as stated in Chapter XIII, was followed by the violation of the Salt Act throughout the country and a mass upsurge which the Government tried to suppress ruthlessly. There were police firings in many places and military firing at Peshawar. Several ordinances were promulgated, including one which imposed severe restrictions on the press, as a result of which Gandhi discontinued the publication of *Young India*. Gandhi was arrested on May 5 (he had first violated the Salt Act on April 6 on Dandi beach), after

⁷² Henry David Thoreau: "Civil Disobedience", in *The Political Philosophers*, ed. Saxe Commins and Robert N. Linscott, Modern Pocket Library, New York, 1953, p. 313.

⁷³ For a detailed study of the *Civil Disobedience Movement* and the factors leading to it see R. C. Majumdar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, Ch. 6 ; Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 369ff., Vol. III, p. 1ff. ; Pattabhi Sitaramayya : *op. cit.*, Vol I, Part IV.

he gave notice to the Viceroy that he and his followers were going to "take possession" of the salt works at Dharsana. This only led to the further intensification and widening of the movement. The Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad after Gandhi's arrest and passed a resolution which sought to transform the movement from one of the violation of the Salt Act to a multi-dimensional mass movement. The movement was now to include the complete boycott of foreign cloth and the promotion of *khadi*, a no-tax campaign almost throughout the country, beginning with the non-payment of the land tax, more extensive violations of the Salt Act and the countrywide manufacture of contraband salt, breach of the Forest Laws, boycott of British goods in general, boycott of British banking, insurance, shipping and similar other institutions, and total prohibition. There were some spectacular raids on Government salt depots in the western coast, in which the non-violent resistance of the raiders was only matched by excessive violence on the part of the police.

Gandhi gave the impression to his close associates, before the movement started, that "there was a slightly different orientation to his thinking, and that Civil Disobedience, when it came, need not be stopped because of a sporadic act of violence. If, however, the violence became in any way part of the movement itself, then it ceased to be a peaceful civil disobedience movement, and its activities had to be curtailed or varied".⁷⁴ He also stated that civil disobedience might lead to violence ; but it would not be the cause of violence. Violence was corroding the entire body politic. "Civil disobedience will be but a purifying process and may bring to the surface what is burrowing under and into the whole body". He added that with the evidence he had of the condition of the country and his faith in civil disobedience, he could not be deterred from launching the movement because of the possibility of violence.⁷⁵

On the whole, however, the movement in 1930 remained remarkably non-violent. There was a raid on the police armoury at Chittagong, but it was organized by a non-Congress revolutionary group which was not a party to the Civil Disobedience Movement. The only mentionable incident of violence took place at Sholapur town in Bombay Presidency. The *satyagrahis* were in effective control

⁷⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 210.

⁷⁵ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 7-8.

of the city for about a week in May and the police force was virtually replaced by them for such duties as traffic control and the maintenance of law and order. One day there was a clash between the the volunteers and the police, in which four or five policemen and twelve demonstrators were killed. Thereupon martial law was imposed on the town, four persons were hanged and many sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. This incident, however, did not lead Gandhi to suspend the movement. The Sholapur incident was, however, overshadowed by the heroic non-violent resistance offered to the army by the Pathan tribesmen (usually noted for their violent temperament) of the North-West Frontier Province where the army resorted to firing on unarmed processionists on several occasions in April and May. One notable feature of the events in this province was that on one occasion two platoons of the Indian army refused to open fire on an unarmed crowd.

By the end of 1930 between sixty thousand and ninety thousand people, including all the leaders of the Congress, were in prison. The arrested also included large numbers of women who had come out of their homes and joined the movement in their thousands. Governmental repression was ruthless, varied and widespread, an important item in it being a drastic censorship imposed on all news about the campaign. Between April and December, 1930 as many as ten ordinances were promulgated. The wide dimensions of the movement and the seriousness with which the Government viewed it was evident from a telegram sent by the Viceroy to the Secretary of State early in June, 1930. In this telegram the Viceroy stated : "All thinking Indians deeply resent racial inferiority with which they consider we regard them, and they passionately want substantial advance which will give them power to manage their own affairs.... I think every European and Indian would tell you that he was surprised at the dimensions the movement had assumed. I certainly am myself — and we should delude ourselves if we sought to underrate it.... [The] broad appreciation therefore is that the movement is serious and has permeated many strata of Hindu society. It has caught their imagination and swept them off their feet and obviously has dangerous potentialities. Among these must be reckoned [the] question whether [the] Police and [the] Indian Army will stand indefinitely the strain of intrigue, abuse and persuasion to which they are necessarily subjected". After proposing certain measures for alleviating the situation, he concluded that

"measures of repression . . . are not likely to provide [an] ultimate remedy for what undoubtedly under much froth and unreality is a national movement".⁷⁶

Before starting the Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhi had stated, at the end of January, 1930, that although the demand of the Congress was for *Poorna Swaraj* or complete independence, he was prepared to put off civil disobedience if the British Government agreed to implement immediately an eleven-point programme, which according to him, constituted "the substance, if not the outward form, of self-government". This programme consisted of the following eleven points : total prohibition ; restoration of the exchange rate to 1 sh. 6d. ; fifty per cent reduction of land revenue ; abolition of the Salt Tax ; reduction of military expenditure by at least fifty per cent to begin with ; reduction of civil service salaries by half ; a protective tariff against foreign cloth ; enactment of a coastal reservation bill ; discharge of all political prisoners save those condemned for murder ; abolition of the CID ; and issue of licences for fire-arms for self-defence, subject to popular control.⁷⁷ At that time the Government had not paid any attention to these demands. In July, 1930, when Gandhi was in the Yeravda prison, two Liberal Indian leaders, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar, made an attempt at mediation, with the blessings of the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. The object was to persuade Gandhi to trust the good intentions of Lord Irwin and to participate in the Round Table Conference to be held in London on the basis of the Report of the Simon Commission. Gandhi remained adamant on his eleven points, and no agreement could be reached for the time being. In January, 1931, the Round Table Conference opened in London without Congress participation and by the end of the month a proposal for responsible self-government in India under a federal system was accepted. The problem of communal representation could not be solved, but the proceedings were adjourned in the hope that the Congress might call off the Civil Disobedience Movement. On January 26, 1931, the first anniversary of the Independence Pledge, the Government released Gandhi and most of the other prominent Congress leaders. On their return from the Round Table Conference Sapru, Jayakar and Shastri persuaded Gandhi to meet

⁷⁶ Quoted in Michael Breacher : *op. cit.*, pp. 153-54.

⁷⁷ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol III, p. 10.

the Viceroy, for a "heart-to-heart" talk without an agenda. The discussions started on February 17 and after six meetings an agreement was reached on March 5 commonly known as the Delhi Pact. The agreement, which was resented by most members of the Working Committee, but nevertheless ratified by the Committee, was an unmitigated defeat for the Congress and Gandhi. None of the eleven points were accepted by the Viceroy. Gandhi's demand for an enquiry into police atrocities, particularly the reported assault on women in Borsad town, was rejected outright. The Congress agreed to "discontinue" civil disobedience and to participate in the second Round Table Conference. In return it obtained certain minor concessions from the Government. The special ordinances were withdrawn. Ordinary political prisoners arrested in connection with the movement were released, but not those who had been convicted of violent acts or the soldiers who had refused to obey orders to open fire in Peshawar. Fines imposed on certain villages, but not actually collected, were remitted, but fines already collected were not refunded. The Salt Tax was not abolished, but certain villages were permitted to manufacture salt for their own use. Boycott of British goods was to stop and picketing was not to be allowed except "within limits permitted by the ordinary law". There was also a provision regarding the return of the lands and other property of the Bardoli peasants which had been seized by the Government in 1928, except those which had been sold to third parties. But the most important provision was contained in Clause 2, which stated that in the future constitutional set-up of India "Federation is an essential part ; so also are Indian responsibility and reservations or safeguards in the interests of India, for such matters as, for instance, defence, external affairs, the position of minorities ; the financial credit of India, and the discharge of obligations".

Gandhi attended the second Round Table Conference in London in the autumn of 1931, but it foundered on the question of communal representation and was adjourned on December 1, 1931. Meanwhile, individual terrorism was growing in Bengal, the Red-shirt movement was gathering momentum in the North-West Frontier Province, and there was widespread agrarian unrest all over India. In November, 1931, when Gandhi was still in London, the Congress started a no-tax campaign in the United Provinces signalling the resumption of the Civil Disobedience Movement, technically on the ground of the non-fulfilment of the terms of the

Delhi Pact by the Government. The Government replied with a large number of ordinances and mass arrests which seriously crippled the movement. On his return from the Round Table Conference Gandhi was arrested and sent to Yeravda prison. He started a fast in protest against the Communal Award of Ramsay MacDonald which has already been discussed in Chapter XIII. In May, 1933, when the Civil Disobedience Movement had touched the low-water-mark, Gandhi started another fast for "self-purification". The Government released him on the ground that this was not a political act. After two temporary suspensions the movement was formally abandoned in July, 1933, at a conference of Congress leaders. It was declared that "All those who are able and are willing to offer individual civil disobedience on their own responsibilities, without expectation of any help from the Congress organizations, are expected to do so".⁷⁸ Under instructions from the Congress President, M. S. Aney, all Congress organizations and war councils were dissolved and Congressmen were advised to carry on such constructive activities as they were capable of.

The Sabarmati Ashram, which had been founded by Gandhi twentyfive years back, and had in many ways been his headquarters for some years, had become involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement, and some of its assets had been confiscated by the Government for the non-payment of taxes. Gandhi felt that the involvement of the Ashram in the movement would make it impossible now for it to continue its constructive activities.⁷⁹ He, therefore, decided to break up the Ashram and declared that on the 1st August he would march out of the Ashram with thirty-nine inmates and go from village to village in order "to carry the message of fearlessness to every village home". Gandhi and the inmates of the Ashram, including his wife and secretary, Mahadev Desai, were arrested on July 31 and taken to the local jail. Gandhi was removed again to Yeravda prison from where he was released on August 4, after being served with a restraint order which required him to reside within the limits of Poona city. He indicated his intention to disobey this order, whereupon he was re-arrested, tried in the Yeravda prison, and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. After some controversy with the Government regarding facilities for *harijan* work, Gandhi went on a fast, whereupon he was released unconditionally. As after the suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement,

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 209. ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

Gandhi retired temporarily from active politics in order to dedicate himself to the Constructive Programme.

Regarding the discontinuation of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhi said: "The masses have acted bravely and have suffered much, wherever they have responded to the national call, but ample evidence is forthcoming to show that they are not any longer able to suffer the prolonged torture of the ordinance rule, now crystallized into statute by the so-called legislatures. The Congress, as an organization, finds it increasingly difficult, day by day, to render them effective aid, the stoppage of which would prevent even the little relief that it was possible to give them. The masses have not yet learnt to act as one man without direction. They need more experience and training, through the example of individuals". He further added, in support of the Congress President's instructions to dissolve the organizations and war councils of the Congress, that the secrecy which had crept into the movement was "repugnant to *satyagraha*", and attributed the demoralization of the people to this secrecy.⁸⁰ In any case, he said, "The movement would have collapsed through the growing internal weakness but for those instructions, for the Congressmen were deluding themselves into the belief that there were organizations effectively functioning to which they could look for guidance".⁸¹

An assessment of the Civil Disobedience Movement has naturally to proceed along the same lines as that of the Non-cooperation Movement, with one exception. The Civil Disobedience Movement, being concerned with a deliberate defiance of British authority, has not been characterized by anyone as a negative movement, although it also had certain negative features including the boycott of British goods and institutions. In any case, as I have already explained, that aspect of the Non-cooperation Movement which has been characterized as negative (and which was present to some extent in the Civil Disobedience Movement as well) is only apparently so, for the programme of boycott of foreign goods and institutions is paralleled by a massive programme of constructive work to which the available manpower and resources are supposed to be channelized. It is, therefore, not necessary to discuss this aspect of the Civil Disobedience Movement any further. The Marxian characterization of such movements as a tool of the bourgeoisie

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

will, however, have to be discussed, because the Civil Disobedience Movement has been specifically characterized by the Marxists as such, and because, as I have stated earlier, the validity of this characterization is contingent on the empirical evidence offered by the movement rather than on the theoretical presuppositions of the Marxists. Besides, there is the all-important question of the success or failure of the movement in achieving its objectives. The assessment of the Civil Disobedience Movement will, therefore, be based on two questions, namely, (1) did it represent the "bourgeois" view of social control, and (2) was it successful in achieving its objectives?

(1) *Did the Movement Represent the "Bourgeois" View of Social Control?*

Soviet and Comintern theoreticians, British and Indian Communist leaders, have all unanimously declared the Civil Disobedience Movement, like the Non-cooperation Movement, to be a movement that essentially represented the machinations of the bourgeoisie for protecting and promoting its own vested interests. The theory, in brief, is that the Great Depression, and joint exploitation by the Indian bourgeoisie and the British imperialists, had created a revolutionary fervour among the industrial working class and the peasantry in India. This was against the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie which was only interested in obtaining more and more political and economic concessions for itself from the British imperialists. Gandhi acted as the tool of the bourgeoisie by organizing the Civil Disobedience Movement which served the double purpose of diverting the unrest of the masses into non-revolutionary channels and increasing the bargaining power of the Indian bourgeoisie vis-a-vis the British imperialists.⁸²

The typical Marxist opinion on the Civil Disobedience Movement was expressed by O. W. Kuusinen, a famous Comintern expert on India, in an article entitled "The Indian Revolution and Gandhi's Maneuvre", published in the Comintern journal *International Press Correspondence*, in 1930. "The great revolutionary upsurge

⁸² For the Comintern and Soviet view of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Gandhi and the Congress during the 30's see J. Bandyopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, Ch. 8. For an echo of this view in the U. K. and India see R. P. Dutt : *op. cit.*, Ch. 11 ; Hiren Mukherjee : *op. cit.*, Ch. 8 ; E. M. S. Namboodiripad : *op. cit.*, Chs. 5-7.

in India", observed Kuusinen", is proceeding at a tempestuous pace. And in this situation Gandhi comes forward in order, in the name of the slavish principle of "non-violence", to summon the people to boycott the salt monopoly of the British Indian Government". Having thus explained, to his own satisfaction, what he apparently considered to be the absurdity of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Kuusinen sought to explain it in terms of the economic interpretation of history. "Hundreds of millions of Indians are still groaning under the terrible yoke of the real party of violence, British imperialism", said he, "but Gandhi does not fear these predatory, bestial suppressors of India as much as he fears the Indian revolutionaries. What does he, therefore, do? He undertakes a national-reformist manoeuvre. He submits an ultimatum to the Viceroy. He organizes an anti-imperialist sham fight. . . . For what purposes? In order not to lose influence over the great national mass movement : in order to secure hegemony in this movement for the bourgeoisie. . . . He wishes to do everything possible to avoid the risk of a revolution. The revolutionary mass movement of the workers and peasants of India . . . is to be diverted into suitable channels, and in any case held up half-way The Gandhist boycott is, at bottom, boycott of the Indian revolution" ⁸³

Kuusinen's statement is based on at least two major factual inaccuracies. In the first place, it is utterly incorrect to say that there existed any organized mass movement, not to speak of a revolution, in India before the Salt March. The Civil Disobedience Movement, which was the only organized mass movement of the period, was inspired, planned and organized by Gandhi almost single-handed. It is, therefore, nonsense to talk about Gandhi betraying the "revolution" or of trying to establish the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over it, or of diverting it into "suitable" channels. Secondly, it is not true to say that the "revolution" was held up half-way, as Kuusinen does, or that the "movement was suddenly and mysteriously called off when it was reaching its height", as R. P. Dutt observes. ⁸⁴ There was not even any major incident of violence, as in the case of the Non-cooperation Movement, when the Civil Disobedience Movement was called off. The movement had on the whole remained non-violent, but had lost its momen-

⁸³ *International Press Correspondence*, No. 10, Vol XIV, 1930, p. 241.

⁸⁴ R. P. Dutt : *op. cit.*, pp. 170-71.

tum after the first fifteen months and was practically crushed by official repression, as Gandhi openly admitted. This assessment of the situation was also shared by Jawaharlal Nehru, who said : "To stop massive civil disobedience was to recognize and stabilize existing conditions, for in reality there was no mass movement then. Secret work was merely a pretence that we were carrying on, and often it demoralized, having regard to the character of our movement".⁸⁵ The only fault of Gandhi, according to this Marxian interpretation of the Civil Disobedience Movement, seems to be, in the face of such obvious facts, that he did not deliberately give a violent turn to the movement when it had failed for all practical purposes. We are thus back to the circular reasoning that Gandhi was a tool of the bourgeoisie because he believed in a non-violent mass movement, and he believed in a non-violent mass movement because he was a tool of the bourgeoisie. The main reason why the Marxists regard the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Non-cooperation Movement as ingenious manipulations of the Indian bourgeoisie with the help of Gandhi is, it is thus easy to see, that on account of their belief in dialectical materialism and its essential concomitants, namely, the economic interpretation of history and the theory of class struggle, the Marxists reject non-violence both as a policy and as an ultimate value, as stated at the beginning of this chapter (the recent rethinking on the subject by the Soviet theoreticians being a possible reorientation of this approach).

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had considerable sympathy for the Marxist interpretation of history and the Soviet Union,⁸⁶ deplored the Marxist interpretation of the mass *satyagrahas* and attributed the failure of the Communists to make any significant headway in India to their habit of distorting facts in order to fit these to their theoretical pre-suppositions. In his own words : "According to the Communists, the objective of the Congress leaders has been to bring mass pressure on the Government in order to obtain industrial and commercial concessions in the interests of Indian capitalists and zamindars. The task of the Congress is 'to harness the economic and political discontent of the peasantry, the lower middle-class and the industrial working class to the chariot of the mill-owners.

⁸⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 385. See also p. 399.

⁸⁶ For a detailed analysis of Nehru's attitude towards Marxism, Communism and the Soviet Union see J. Bandyopadhyaya : *op. cit.*, pp. 142-43, 166-76, 179-87, 275-82, 335.

and financiers of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Calcutta'. The Indian capitalists are supposed to sit behind the scenes and issue orders to the Congress Working Committee first to organize a mass movement and, when it becomes too vast and dangerous, to suspend it or side-track it. Further, that the Congress leaders really do not want the British to go away, as they are required to control and exploit a starving population.... It is surprising that able Communists should believe this fantastic analysis, but believing this as they apparently do, it is not surprising that they should fail so remarkably in India.... The idea that Gandhiji was forced to launch seemingly aggressive movements in 1921 and 1930 because of mass pressure, is also absolutely wrong. Mass stirrings there were, of course, but on both occasions it was Gandhiji who forced the pace. In 1921 he carried the Congress almost single-handed, and plunged it into non-cooperation. In 1930 it would have been quite impossible to have any aggressive and effective direct action movement if he had resisted it in any way".⁸⁷

(2) *Was It Successful In Achieving Its Objectives ?*

By and large, the Civil Disobedience Movement had remained non-violent until it was abandoned, such marginal violence (like the Sholapur incident) as characterized it from time to time being regarded by Gandhi himself as relatively unimportant. It can, therefore, be said that this movement approximately fulfilled the basic condition of mass *satyagraha* as laid down by Gandhi, namely, that the masses must adhere to a policy of non-violent resistance even if they do not accept it as an ultimate value (as Gandhi himself does). The success or failure of the movement can, therefore, be roughly regarded as that of the Gandhian technique of mass *satyagraha* (unlike in the case of the Non-cooperation Movement).

A major difficulty, however, is caused by the fact that the objectives of the movement were not very clearly defined. It is possible to distinguish at least three different objectives, or rather three different levels of the same objective, which the movement aimed at one time or another. In the first place, there was the resolution of the Lahore Congress demanding *Poorna Swaraj* or complete independence which presumably meant the total withdrawal of the British

⁸⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, pp. 366-68.

from India. This was the demand on the basis of which the Civil Disobedience Movement was started. Secondly, as we have seen, Gandhi later on reduced the "substance" of independence to eleven points, some of which were quite drastic and were sure to be rejected by the British Government ; but these eleven points certainly did not represent anything like the complete withdrawal of the British from India. They were merely in the nature of a programme for a radical reform of the British administration in India. Gandhi was prepared to abandon the movement if these eleven points were conceded by the Government. Thirdly, there is Freedom in the sense of the awakening of the moral power of the masses, with or without the transfer of political power. "The nation wants to feel its power more even than to have independence", said Gandhi, and "Possession of such power is independence."⁸⁸

The first objective, namely, the complete withdrawal of the British, was, of course, not achieved ; indeed, it is quite obvious that Gandhi personally never took this objective very seriously. But there is some evidence to indicate that Gandhi had expected to win a total victory over the Government, so far as his eleven points were concerned. Before starting the movement he had declared, as in the case of the Non-cooperation Movement : "Granted a perfectly non-violent atmosphere and a fulfilled constructive programme, I would undertake to lead the mass civil disobedience struggle to a successful issue in the space of a few months."⁸⁹ The term "successful issue" may, of course, be interpreted in a broad sense, but the nature of Gandhi's aim becomes clearer from another policy declaration made by him about a month after his formulation of the eleven points, in which he said that "civil disobedience once begun this time cannot be stopped and must not be stopped, so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive."⁹⁰ Another month later, while he was on his way to the Dandi beach, Gandhi said : "I must put forth all my effort or retire altogether and for all time from public life. I feel now is the time or it will be never. And so I am out for battle."⁹¹ Finally, a few days after violating the Salt Act on the Dandi beach Gandhi told his followers : "Let me distinguish between the call of 1920 and the present call. The call of 1920

⁸⁸ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 7.

⁸⁹ *Young India*, January 9, 1930.

⁹⁰ *Young India*, February 27, 1930.

⁹¹ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 28.

was a call for preparation, to-day it is a call for engaging in a final conflict."⁹²

Yet even this second objective was far from realized. As a matter of fact, not a single point out of the eleven-point programme was accepted by the Government. Nor can the Government of India Act, 1935, be said to be an indirect result of the Civil Disobedience Movement, for this Act was based on the Report of the Simon Commission which had been submitted two years before the movement was started. So far as the Act is concerned, therefore, the Civil Disobedience Movement might never have taken place.

Finally, as regards the third objective, namely, the awakening of the political consciousness and the moral power of the masses, such awakening as did take place was relatively short-lived, and was lost again at least temporarily, even before (and certainly after) the discontinuation of the movement. As Jawaharlal Nehru has correctly noted, the Indian political scene after the abandonment of the Civil Disobedience Movement was characterized by a reign of terror on the part of the Government and widespread fear and demoralization on the part of the people.⁹³

Considered from every point of view, therefore, the Civil Disobedience Movement was practically a complete failure, although it had approximately fulfilled the Gandhian condition of a policy of non-violence on the part of the masses. As Gandhi and Nehru both agreed, the movement had failed not due to any unexpected inner weakness or organizational deficiency but primarily due to the repressive policy of the Government. This would seem to indicate that it would be extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, for a *satyagraha* movement to succeed against a hostile adversary, especially a dictatorial form of Government.⁹⁴

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 32. ⁹³ Jawaharlal Nehru : *op. cit.*, p. 399.

⁹⁴ In selecting the cases of group and mass *satyagraha* in the previous chapters, I have confined myself to the *satyagrahas* led by Gandhi himself or his close associates, and not gone into the numerous examples of non-violent resistance from the Plebeian secessions of Rome to the efforts of the American negroes under the leadership Dr. Martin Luther King, because (1) many of them, though mainly non-violent, have been associated with a good deal of sporadic violence; (2) only a few of them have been consciously based on the express policy of non-violence, not to speak of the other subtle nuances of the theory of *satyagraha*; and (3) the available data pertaining to many of them are grossly inadequate. My purpose has been specifically to illustrate and examine the Gandhian idea of *satyagraha* as an important aspect of his social and political thought, and the *satyagrahas*

We are thus led to one of the most important questions of our times, namely, whether *satyagraha* would be an effective means for resisting the authority of various forms of dictatorial governments or foreign imperialistic occupations. Non-violent resistance is naturally of much greater significance as an instrument in the hands of the common people for resisting a tyranny, whether indigenous or foreign, than in a democracy where peaceful means for influencing or changing governments are normally available to the people. The efficacy of *satyagraha* over armed resistance, therefore, would depend heavily in the contemporary world on whether it can be regarded as an effective means of active resistance against tyranny. To this profoundly important question, therefore, I now turn.

led by Gandhi and his close associates in South Africa and India have been considered to be sufficient and the most suitable for this purpose. For a useful study of other historical and contemporary cases of non-violent resistance see Mulford Q. Sibley (ed.): *The Quiet Battle : Writings on the Theory and Practice of Non-violent Resistance*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965, Part II and Part III. See also C. M. Case : *Non-violent Coercion*, Century, New York, 1923 ; Ted Dunn (ed.) : *Alternatives To War and Violence*, James Clarke, London, 1963.

SATYAGRAHA AGAINST DICTATORSHIP

MY ARGUMENT regarding the feasibility or otherwise of *satyagraha* against a dictatorial form of government has been developing through the last few chapters. In Chapter XIII three cases of fasting by Gandhi, two cases of defiance of violence by him, and three cases of individual civil disobedience — two involving Gandhi and the third involving his followers, i.e. altogether eight cases of individual *satyagraha* have been studied. In the first case of fasting discussed, namely, Gandhi's fast against the Communal Award, I have argued that even the limited success achieved by this fast would have been difficult, if not impossible to achieve, but for the relatively liberal character of the British Government and Dr. Ambedkar's respect for human life and conventional morality. The second fast, undertaken by Gandhi in March 1943 in protest against the oppressive policy of the Government towards the Indian National Congress, ended in failure owing to the adamant attitude of the Government. I have tried to show that even the publicity that the fast received was possible only because of the relatively liberal attitude of the Government, and in a truly dictatorial form of Government it may be difficult even to practise this form of *satyagraha*. The third fast, namely, Gandhi's last fast undertaken in January, 1948, in order to control communalism, was not directed against the Government (India was independent then), and the question of the character of the Government does not, therefore, arise in such a case, except perhaps in so far as the cause must be sympathetic to the Government which must not be strongly opposed to the fast on policy grounds. As regards the defiance of violence, the first case discussed in Chapter XIII is the lynching of Gandhi by the mob in Durban in 1896. I have tried to show that even the limited result of this *satyagraha* ought to be partly attributed to the fact that the South African Government was not a completely authoritarian one, and had some respect for the rule of law and individual liberty. The other case in the same category, in which Gandhi was beaten up by Mir Alam and his associates in South Africa in 1906, again, did not involve the Govern-

ment directly, except in so far as the Government took prompt steps to punish Gandhi's assailants according to the law of the land. This case shows, however, that even an unsympathetic adversary may "change his heart" in the face of the defiance of violence by the *satyagrahi*. But this does not necessarily prove that an unsympathetic Government, which is not subject to personal emotional strains, would also react similarly. As regards the last category of individual *satyagraha* discussed in Chapter XIII, namely, civil disobedience, our findings are unambiguous. In the case of the Champaran *satyagraha*, I have tried to show that the relatively sympathetic attitude of the Government was an important cause of its success, and Gandhi himself declared that the success of this *satyagraha* was a vindication of the British sense of Justice. The Salt March was similarly successful in achieving its immediate objective, I have argued, largely on account of the policy of non-interference followed by the Government and the complete freedom of publicity and propaganda permitted by it. The Individual Civil Disobedience Movement of 1940-41, on the other hand, was a complete failure, as we have seen, largely on account of the repressive policy adopted by the Government in a war-time situation.

In Chapter XIV, dealing with group *satyagraha*, one case of defiance of violence, one case of self-imposed suffering, one case of non-cooperation in the form of an industrial strike, and three cases of civil disobedience have been studied. The defiance of violence by a group at Rajkot in 1938, we have seen, led to no permanent results owing to the unyielding attitude of the ruler, although it did highlight the problems of the subjects of the princely states. The Vaikom temple *satyagraha*, involving self-imposed suffering, did not directly involve the Government; but it showed that on relatively minor social questions, an unsympathetic group of adversaries can be made to undergo a "change of heart" through this form of *satyagraha*. Whether an authoritarian form of Government, which is literally heartless, can be made to undergo a similar "change of heart" even on minor issues is, however, a question that cannot be answered on the basis of the experience of the Vaikom *satyagraha*. The Ahmedabad industrial strike, like industrial strikes in general, was not directly concerned with the Government. But such strikes can be organized, irrespective of their success or failure, only in a political system in which they are regarded as a legal form of protest, unlike the Fascist and Communist political systems in which

they are illegal and those who at all attempt to organize them are treated with extreme lack of sympathy. The first case of group civil disobedience discussed in Chapter XIV, namely, the Epic March of the South African Indians from Natal to Transvaal in 1913, was successful from the short-term point of view, I have argued, partly on account of the relatively sympathetic attitude of the South African Government. As regards the Kheda *satyagraha*, Gandhi himself admitted, as I have noted earlier, that the liberal attitude of the Government was partly responsible for its success. Lastly, in the case of the Bardoli *satyagraha* also I have argued that the success of this *satyagraha* was partly due to the fact that the British Indian Government, in spite of all its faults, permitted the free expression of popular discontent, and believed in the rectification of grievances through commissions of enquiry, etc., rather than the suppression of grievances through purely authoritarian methods.

The Non-cooperation Movement, as we have seen in Chapter XV, achieved a measure of success in its first phase, when the policy of the Government was relatively liberal, and failed in the second phase when the Government adopted a relatively repressive policy. The Civil Disobedience Movement, as the leaders of the movement like Gandhi and Nehru themselves admitted, was almost a total failure mainly on account of the repressive policy of the Government.

Thus the sixteen *satyagrahas* discussed in the last three chapters offer us an impressive, though perhaps not conclusive, body of evidence which goes to indicate that one of the essential conditions for the success of *satyagraha* as a technique of resistance is a relatively liberal political system, and that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to organize a successful *satyagraha* against a dictatorial form of government or in a dictatorial political system even when the Government may not be directly involved. Even in South Africa, where the racial policies of the Government were undoubtedly undemocratic, unconstitutional methods or organized governmental violence were never used against Gandhi or any other member of the Indian community. A certain form of rule of law and fair judicial trial did exist, and methods of negotiation rather than police methods were generally used by the Government for dealing with the Indian community which fought against the unjust racial laws. In India also, while the British Government sometimes used repressive methods for dealing with the *satyagraha* movements, by and large it respected, as I have tried to show, the

constitutional and democratic approach to political opposition, even when it did not yield any ground. The fact that the adoption of repressive methods by the Government often led to the failure of a *satyagraha* to achieve its immediate objective (although it might have certain indirect consequences), as in the case of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-32, the Individual Civil Disobedience of 1940-41, and Gandhi's "epic fast" of 1943, only proves that under a truly dictatorial form of government it would be even more difficult to make effective use of this form of resistance.

In other words, Gandhi never had occasion to organize any *satyagraha* against a dictatorship in its true form ; and the conclusions of the foregoing chapters indicate that *satyagraha* would be unlikely to yield whatever results it did in South Africa or India if launched against a dictatorship ; indeed, it is doubtful whether *satyagraha* could even be properly organized against a truly dictatorial form of government.

It is interesting, therefore, to examine the advice given by Gandhi to the Jews of Germany in 1938. Shocked by the news of the atrocities committed by the German Government on the Jews, Gandhi went to the extent of saying, as noted in Chapter III, that if there could ever be a just war waged in the name of humanity, it would be against Germany for preventing the wanton persecution of the Jews. Since, however, he fundamentally rejected war as a solution to any problem, national or international, he advised the Jews to start a *satyagraha* campaign against Hitler. "Can the Jews resist this organized and shameless persecution? Is there a way to preserve their self-respect and not to feel helpless, neglected and forlorn?"—he asked himself, and answered : "I submit there is". The way he suggested was as follows : "If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home, even as the tallest gentile German might, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon ; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance, but would have confidence that in the end the rest were bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy, which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the world outside Germany can. Indeed, even if Britain,

France and America were to declare hostilities against Germany, they can bring no inner joy, no inner strength. The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant. For to the God-fearing, death has no terror. It is a joyful sleep to be followed by a waking that would be all the more refreshing for the long sleep".¹

Gandhi argued that the condition of the Jew in Germany was exactly like that of the Indians in South Africa. The persecution in both the cases, he said, had a religious tinge, and quoted President Kruger as saying that the white Christians were the chosen of God and the Indians were inferior people created merely to serve the former. There was constitutional inequality between the whites and the Indians in South Africa. The Indians were consigned to ghettos, called locations. The other disabilities suffered by the South African Indians were also, according to Gandhi, similar to those of the German Jews. But it would be easier, he thought, for the Jews in Germany to organize a successful *satyagraha* than it was for the Indians in South Africa. The Indians were numerically small and had no backing from the outside world. The British Indian Government actually worked against them. It was only after many years of struggle that the Indian Government and world opinion came to their support, which was also merely in the form of diplomatic pressure. The German Jews, on the other hand, were a compact and homogeneous community. They were far more gifted than the South African Indians. They had organized world public opinion behind them. Therefore, argued Gandhi :

"I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them to non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has to-day become a degrading man-hunt, can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by the unarmed men and women, possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resis-

¹ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, pp. 312-13.

tance offered against the godless fury of dehumanized man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to the fellow Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans as against those who are to-day dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire."²

I think the comparison between the condition of the German Jews and that of the South African Indians drawn by Gandhi is quite wrong. There were no concentration camps or indiscriminate massacre of the Indian community in South Africa. Although the South African racial laws were unjust, the rule of law, a reasonably independent judiciary, freedom of expression, and methods of negotiation and conciliation were still prevalent there, while these minimum characteristics of constitutional government were absent in Germany, at least so far as the Jews were concerned. Gandhi was unaware of the realities of the German political system, and even regarded the details of this system as unimportant. This is borne out by the fact that when someone in Germany criticized Gandhi for ignoring the realities of German politics, he replied: "I have myself admitted my ignorance of European politics. But in order to commend my prescription to the Jews for the removal of their many ills, I did not need to have an accurate knowledge of European politics. The main facts about the atrocities are beyond dispute."³

The statement that it was all right for him to make the prescription of *satyagraha* for the Jews, without an accurate knowledge of the German political situation, and merely on the basis of the "main facts about the atrocities", seems to me to indicate an approach to social relations which is fundamental to Gandhian thought. I have argued throughout this study that in Gandhian thought too little attention is paid to an analysis of the causes and characteristics of a conflict situation, and nowhere perhaps is this limitation of Gandhian thought as pronounced as in the statement regarding the German Jews quoted above.

When it was pointed out to him that the Jews had in fact remained non-violent in the face of ruthless persecution by the Hitler regime,

² *Ibid.*, pp. 313-14.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

Gandhi replied that there was a difference between his own conception of Non-violence and what the German Jews had been practising. It was true, he said, that the Jews had not been actively violent in their persons. But unlike true *satyagrahis*, they harboured hatred against the other Germans and had called down the curses of mankind upon their opponents. Unlike the true *satyagrahis*, moreover, they were not self-reliant and wanted England and America to fight Germany on their behalf. Even if one Jew acted like a true *satyagrahi*, argued Gandhi, "he would save his self-respect and leave an example which, if it became infectious, would save the whole Jewry and leave a rich heritage to mankind besides."⁴

Gandhi felt that a larger measure of suffering and sacrifice on the part of the *satyagrahis* might be necessary in order to "melt the heart of a dictator, but eventually true *satyagraha* was bound to succeed against any dictator. In reply to the argument that some of the German Jews had indeed died in the manner of true *satyagrahis* but that this did not put an end to the persecution of the rest of the Jews, Gandhi merely replied: "I do not think that the sufferings of Pastor Niemoeller and others have been in vain. They have preserved their self-respect intact. They have proved that their faith was equal to any suffering. That they have not proved sufficient for melting Hitler's heart merely shows that it is made of a harder material than stone. But the hardest material yields to sufficient heat. Even so must the hardest heart melt before the sufficiency of the heat of non-violence. And there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat.... I plead for more suffering and still more, till the melting has become visible to the naked eye. And even as the Pastor has covered himself with glory, a single Jew bravely standing up and refusing to bow to Hitler's decrees will cover himself with glory and lead the way to the deliverance of the fellow Jews."⁵

Gandhi's criticism that the Jews of Germany as a body did not attempt *satyagraha* as understood by him, that they depended on external assistance, bore ill-will towards Hitler and the non-Jewish German population, and did not inculcate the true principles of Non-violence, is probably true. But his statement that if a single Jew performed true *satyagraha*, he would save the other Jews, is also a gross exaggeration, as was pointed out to him. This statement

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 319. ⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 17-18.

is perhaps not to be taken literally, but the spirit behind it represents the essence of Gandhian thought on *satyagraha*, and the question is whether *satyagraha* by even a large number of Jews in the true Gandhian spirit would have met with any success in the Nazi regime. Hitler was obviously a ruthless dictator who had no respect for human life or the traditional canons of morality. But what is even more important is that most modern dictators, from Napoleon to Hitler and Stalin, have been able, through the planned utilization of some or all such authoritarian levers of social control as personal charisma, a monolithic one-party apparatus, obliteration of the distinction between the party and the army, controlled press and publicity media, massive propaganda and the secret police, to win the support of a large section of the population. Therefore, even a relatively large group of people, faced with a tyranny practised not by a single individual, but by the bulk of the population as well, would find it exceedingly difficult to protect their rights through *satyagraha*. Whatever success was achieved by the group *satyagrahas* in India was due in no small measure to the fact that in the background of most of these *satyagrahas* was the national struggle of the Indian people against foreign rule, and that the whole country gave its moral and material support to each *satyagraha*. In the case of the South African *satyagrahas* also, not only was the Government much more liberal than the Nazi Government of Germany, but a section of the white population, the people of India (where reaction to the happenings in South Africa must have been an important consideration with the British Government), and a large section of the international press and public opinion were sympathetic to the cause of the Indians. On the other hand, Hitler's Germany during the war in many ways represented an extreme form of tyranny, at least so far as the Jewish minority was concerned. On top of the personal ruthlessness of a tyrant and the gigantic oppressive machinery of his "corporate" state was superimposed an almost unlimited racial hatred of the Jews on the part of the bulk of the population, assiduously inculcated in it by highly sophisticated techniques of indoctrination. The war-time situation, moreover, enabled Hitler to operate his engine of oppression with relative ease and to ignore international public opinion, especially the opinions of the countries and Governments with which he was at war. It is rather doubtful whether in such an extreme situation *satyagraha* in one form or another by a large number of Jews, or even by the entire Jewish

population of Germany, would have yielded any results. The Jews, after all, had on the whole remained remarkably non-violent, though perhaps more due to their feeling of helplessness than any express principle. But in spite of their practical non-violence, they were massacred in thousands in the concentration camps and elsewhere.

Gandhi's statement that a possible massacre of all the Jews of Germany in the process of *satyagraha* against Hitler should have been regarded as their deliverance by Jehovah and as an occasion for thanks-giving is due to his belief, as pointed out in Chapter III, that Non-violence is a higher value than life, and can be taken seriously only by a religious man, and not by a social scientist. From the religious point of view, especially the Hindu point of view, death may be just a long sleep or a portal to a new life, as Gandhi argues, but deliverance in this sense would certainly not be the attainment of Justice (even according to its Gandhian definition as explained in Chapter II) from the viewpoint of Social Science. Social Science can regard a *satyagraha* as successful only when at least the majority of the *satyagrahis* live after the event and are able to get their grievances redressed, temporarily if not permanently.

There is indeed a large body of opinion to the effect that the *satyagraha* movements organized by Gandhi and his followers could be even partially successful only in the given context of British rule in India, the Indian freedom movement and the Indian social milieu in general, and that such *satyagrahas* would not have any chance of success against a dictatorship. Jacques Maritain, for example, observes : "Gandhi's successes were possible only against the background of the relative freedom granted to colonials by the British administration, both by virtue of an old liberal aristocratic tradition and a mistaken cynical belief . . . in a possible utilization of Gandhi. The facts to which the inner logic of a totalitarian state tends is not a revolution which finally gives control to the people, but an ultimate disintegration by a slow rotting of human conscience within it."⁶ Essentially the same argument has been offered rather forcefully by Karl Jaspers. In his own words :

"His example, however great in its suprapolitical seriousness, is impossible as a signpost for our political action. We cannot follow

⁶ Jacques Maritain : *Man and The State*, University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 69.

the concrete method of a kind of politics that could succeed only in the atmosphere of British rule and for the limited purpose of Indian liberation. For the extremity of the present world-wide realities Gandhi gives no answer.

"In the struggles against totalitarianism, Gandhi's procedure would not be a political way, but a way to certain doom. Every sacrifice would be secret, rendered without publicity, untouchable in its metaphysical substance to be sure, but unknown to men. Because no echoes would reach the public, no political consequences would result. Against a terror that knows no restriction by legal or conscientious qualms, sacrifice is futile in so far as it remains outside the communication of human activities.

"Against total violence there is no help in less violence, nor in non-violence. Only one limit is conceivable : the destructive engine would cease to obey if the human beings in it were touched by the power of conscience. This is a hope and not an impossibility, but it is contingent upon the unfolding of suprapolitical reason in every individual. Gandhi demonstrated the power of the suprapolitical in the situation in which he was active, but the contents and methods are neither transferable nor exemplary."⁷

Although our empirical research indicates the great difficulty of organizing a successful *satyagraha* against a dictatorship, I have not so far made, it will be noticed, a categorical statement to the effect that *satyagraha* would be totally impossible in a dictatorial political system, as Jaspers has done. The reason is very simple. None of the *satyagrahas* investigated in this study have been conducted in a truly dictatorial political set-up. In most cases my argument has been that the existence of a relatively liberal political set-up was an important factor contributing to whatever success was achieved by the *satyagrahas* concerned. Only in three cases I have argued that these *satyagrahas* failed largely on account of the repressive policy of the Government. But these at best constitute indirect evidence regarding the feasibility or otherwise of *satyagraha* against a dictatorship.

Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence available for *satyagraha*

⁷ Karl Jaspers : *The Future of Mankind*, tr. E. B. Ashton, University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 39-40. See also W. K. Hancock : *Four Studies of War and Peace in this Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1961, pp. 81-84 ; Philip Spratt : *Gandhism—An Analysis*, Huxley Press, Madras, 1939, p. 514 ; L. L. Bernard : *Social Control*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1939, p. 404.

against a dictatorship. The early Christians adopted a policy of non-resistance in the face of persecution by the Roman emperors ; but this policy was probably the result of a feeling of helplessness, and at any rate more passive and negative in character than *satyagraha* as understood by Gandhi. There is also the story recorded by the Jewish historian Josephus of an organized non-violent resistance by the Jews against the attempted erection of his statue by the Roman emperor Caligula at the Temple at Jerusalem, which seems to be nearer to the conception of *satyagraha* than the non-resistance of the early Christians. It seems that "many ten thousands" of Jews approached Petronius, the commander sent by Caligula with a large force for erecting the statue, and told him that while they "will not by any means make war" with the Caesar, they would die before they saw their laws transgressed. "So they threw themselves down upon their faces", as Josephus records, "and stretched out their throats, and said they were ready to be slain ; and this they did for forty days together, and in the meantime left off the tilling of their ground, and that while the season of the year required them to sow it. Thus they continued firm in their resolution, and proposed to themselves to die willingly, rather than to see the dedication of the statue." The attitude of the Jews had some effect on Petronius, but the erection of the statue was actually abandoned due to purely extraneous factors and the death of Caligula, so that it is impossible to determine what the effect of this resistance would have been on the Roman emperor.⁸ Three major cases of organized non-violent resistance in the modern period which deserve some attention are : the Hungarian resistance movement against Austria from 1849 to 1867, the German non-violent resistance against the Franco-Belgian invasion of the Ruhr in 1923, and the Norwegian resistance against the German occupation during the Second World War. All these three cases, however, seem to me to be examples of non-violent resistance against foreign military invasion rather than of *satyagraha* against national dictatorships, and will, therefore, be discussed in the next chapter.

In the absence of the necessary data it is unscientific to make the categorical assertion, as Karl Jaspers and others do, that it will be impossible for a *satyagraha* to succeed against a dictatorship.

⁸ For an excerpt from Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* describing this incident see Mulford Q. Sibley : *The Quiet Battle*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965, pp. 107-11.

From the purely logical point of view, as I have argued before, no Government, dictatorial or otherwise, can function if the people as a whole, or even the majority of them, refuse to cooperate with it in an organized manner and are prepared to undergo all the hardships involved in such non-cooperation. The question is to what extent the organization of non-violent resistance is possible, and the oppression of the Government can be borne by the people, in a dictatorial political system. Besides, there are different types of dictatorship like personal dictatorship, military dictatorship, totalitarian party dictatorship or different combinations of these, just as there are different dimensions and forms of *satyagraha* discussed in the three preceding chapters. Every type of dictatorship may not respond in the same way to a particular form of *satyagraha*, or the same dictatorship to different forms of *satyagraha*. An individual civil disobedience will probably be easily crushed by a totalitarian dictatorship, while a mass non-cooperation or civil disobedience movement may even topple a personal dictatorship. Moreover, dictatorships may be mellowed by time and relatively stable conditions at home, and tough when they are new or in adverse circumstances. Hitler might have treated the Jews a little more leniently if there was no war on, and a general strike in the Soviet Union (which is an illegal act) may in the foreseeable future be treated with a measure of liberality which would have been impossible in the Stalin era. All these are matters of empirical verification rather than of theoretical speculation. But such empirical verification is as yet not possible due to the absence of data. For the same reason the other extreme contention that *satyagraha* is the only practicable means for fighting a dictatorship, made by a minority of writers,⁹ cannot be regarded as scientific; the indirect empirical evidence furnished in the last three chapters would in fact indicate that such a contention is even more unscientific than the one discussed above.

⁹ See Mulford Q. Sibley : *op. cit.*, p. 11 ; Joan V. Bondurant : *The Conquest of Violence*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1959, pp. 225-27.

CHAPTER XVII

NATIONAL DEFENCE THROUGH SATYAGRAHA

ALTHOUGH Gandhi regarded *satyagraha* as a universal means of conflict resolution, applicable equally to individual, group, national and international conflicts, he did not articulate his views on *satyagraha* as a means of national defence against foreign aggression until he was moved to do so by the events preceding the Second World War and the war itself. When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, Gandhi wrote :

"The Czechs could not have done anything else, when they found themselves deserted by their two powerful allies. And yet I have the hardihood to say that if they had known the use of non-violence as a weapon for the defence of national honour, they would have faced the whole might of Germany with that of Italy thrown in. They would have spared England and France the humiliation of suing for a peace which was no peace ; and to save their honour they would have died to a man without shedding the blood of the robber. I must refuse to believe that such heroism, or call it restraint, is beyond human nature."¹

In answer to the argument that a pitiless tyrant like Hitler would not respond to such *satyagraha* by the invaded nation, Gandhi replied : "History has no record of a nation having adopted non-violent resistance. If Hitler is unaffected by any suffering, it does not matter. For I shall have lost nothing worth. My honour is the only thing worth preserving. That is independent of Hitler's pity. But as a believer in non-violence, I may not limit its possibilities. Hitherto he and his likes have built upon the invariable experience that men yield to force. Unarmed men, women and children offering non-violent resistance without any bitterness in them will be a novel experience for them. Who can dare say that it is not in their nature

¹ *Harijan*, October 8, 1938.

to respond to the higher and finer forces? They have the same soul that I have."²

It was possible, Gandhi conceded, that in the face of non-violent resistance by the whole Czech nation, the invading armies would refrain from violence, but would nevertheless occupy the whole country and take possession of what they wanted. But even this situation, he said, would be preferable to violent resistance. Analysing the implications of such a situation, he observed :

"Suppose they come and occupy mines, factories and all sources of national wealth belonging to the Czechs, then the following results can take place : (1) The Czechs may be annihilated for disobedience to orders. That would be a glorious victory for the Czechs and the beginning of the fall of Germany, (2) The Czechs might become demoralized in the presence of overwhelming force. This is a result common in all struggles, but if demoralization does take place, it would not be on account of non-violence, but it would be due to the absence or inadequacy of non-violence, (3) And the third thing that can take place is that Germany might use her new possessions for occupation by her surplus population. This, again, could not be avoided by offering violent resistance, for we have assumed that violent resistance is out of the question. Thus non-violent resistance is the best method under all conceivable circumstances."³

Similarly, he advised the Chinese people to resist the Japanese forces non-violently. It was unbecoming, he said, for a nation of 400 millions, a nation as cultured as China, to try to repel the Japanese invasion by using Japan's own violent method. If the Chinese resisted the Japanese non-violently, "there would be no use left" for the latter's modern machines of destruction. The Chinese would simply say to Japan : "Bring all your machinery. We present half of our population to you. But the remaining two hundred millions will not bend their knee to you." Gandhi did not develop the point, but added that if the Chinese did this, "Japan would become China's slave." He referred in this connection to the last line of Shelley's

² *Ibid.* ; see also Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. IV, pp. 320-21.

³ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 321.

famous poem, *The Masque of Anarchy* : "Ye are many — they are few."⁴

In reply to the argument that whatever value national *satyagraha* might have as a means of resistance against foreign aggression, it presupposed a face-to-face confrontation between the invading armies and the people of the invaded country, and that such confrontation would not be possible in the case of aerial bombing (as in the case of the Japanese attack on China and other similar forms of long-distance warfare), Gandhi argued that behind the weapons were the human hands, and behind the hands were the human hearts which would yield to the pressure of *satyagraha*. If the victims of long-distance attack suffered the consequences of the attack without retaliation and without submission to the aggressor for a length of time, "the tyrant will not find it worth his while to go on with his terrorism".⁵ He stated, moreover, that the aggressor planes had to land somewhere for occupation sooner or later, and the people would then resist them non-violently at the airports.⁶

Immediately before the beginning of the Second World War, Gandhi made a personal attempt to persuade Hitler to accept the way of non-violence. In a letter dated 23 July 1939 he wrote to Hitler :

"Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request because of the feeling that any letter from me would be impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate and that I must make an appeal for whatever it may be worth. It is quite clear that you are to-day

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-20.

"Shelley, as is well known, was profoundly influenced by the ideas of his anarchist father-in-law and friend, Charles Godwin. *The Masque of Anarchy* extols and gives a vivid imagery of passive resistance by the masses of oppressed men against armed tyranny. The immediate occasion for writing the poem was the famous massacre at Manchester in 1819, but the ideas of passive resistance contained in it were almost entirely derived from Godwin's *Political Justice* and Shelley's personal knowledge of Godwin's views on the subject. Gandhi's reference to *The Masque of Anarchy* thus shows the indirect influence of Godwin on Gandhi. The poem can be conveniently found in Carlos Baker (ed.) : *Selected Poetry and Prose of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, Modern Library, New York, pp. 200-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

⁶ See Krishnalal Shridharani : *War Without Violence*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962, p. 46.

the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object, however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success? Anyway I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you.”⁷

In June 1940 he wrote on “How to Combat Hitlerism”. “I have written these lines,” he explained, “for the European powers.” The unprecedented violence of the war, argued Gandhi, was not only immoral, but utterly futile. Even if Hitler was able to build a vast empire through the force of arms he would not be able to digest so much power. He would go eventually as empty-handed as Alexander. The German nation would in future have the “burden of sustaining its crushing weight”. His own people would denounce Hitler, though they might regard him as a genius in military organization. Besides, “all the blood that has been spilled by Hitler has added not a millionth part of an inch to the world’s moral stature”. As regards the vanquished nations, their military efforts had merely led to the loss of their life and property, but had not saved their national honour. “Hitlerism”, said Gandhi, “can never be defeated by counter-Hitlerism. It can only breed superior Hitlerism raised to the nth degree”. The situation would have been quite different, argued Gandhi, if the nations invaded by Hitler had resorted to *satyagraha* instead. In his own words: “As against this, imagine the state of Europe to-day if the Czechs and the Poles, the Norwegians, the French and the English had all said to Hitler: You need not make your scientific preparation for destruction. We will meet your violence with non-violence. You will, therefore, be able to destroy our non-violent army without the tanks, battleships and airships.” It may be retorted that the only difference would be that Hitler would have got without fighting what he has gained after a bloody fight. Exactly, the history of Europe would then have been written differently. Possession might — but only might — have been taken under non-violent resistance, as it has been taken after perpetration of untold barbarities. Under non-violence, only those would have been killed who had trained themselves to be killed if need be, but without killing anyone and without bearing malice

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 160.

towards anybody. I dare say, that in that case, Europe would have added several inches to its moral stature. And in the end, I expect it is the moral worth that will count. All else is dross."⁸

On July 3, 1940 Gandhi published a lengthy appeal "To Every Briton", which read in part as follows: "I appeal to every Briton, whenever he may be now, to accept the method of non-violence instead of that of war for the adjustment of relations between nations and other matters.... I appeal for the cessation of hostilities, not because you are too exhausted to fight, but because war is bad in essence. You want to kill Nazism.... I hope you do not wish to enter into such an undignified competition with the Nazis. I venture to present you with a nobler and braver way, worthy of the bravest soldier. I want you to fight Nazism without arms, or, if I am to retain the military terminology, with non-violent arms. I would like you to lay down the arms you have, as being useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these, but neither your souls, nor your minds. If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourself, man, woman, and child to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them."⁹

The appeal was transmitted to the British Government by the Viceroy at Gandhi's personal request. "With every appreciation of your motives", the Viceroy replied, "they do not feel that the policy which you advocate is one which it is possible for them to consider, since, in common with the whole empire, they are firmly resolved to prosecute the war to a victorious conclusion."¹⁰ On this unfavourable reaction to his appeal Gandhi commented: "...Herr Hitler can only be confounded by the adoption by Britain of this novel method of fighting. At one single stroke, he will find that all his tremendous armament has been put out of action."¹¹

When the Second World War broke out, a sharp split developed between Gandhi and the rest of the Congress leadership on the

⁸ *Harijan*, June 18, 1940.

⁹ *Harijan*, July 3, 1940.

¹⁰ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 295.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

question of India's participation in the war. The Congress wanted to support the war effort of the British Government both materially and morally, provided the latter granted complete independence to India immediately. Gandhi, on the other hand, maintained that the Indian people should offer unconditional moral support to the British war effort, but must not support or take part in violent warfare. He suggested that in the event of a German or Japanese invasion of India, the people of India should not depend on British military power for their defence, but should resort to *satyagraha* against the invading armies. As regards a possible attack on India by Hitler, Gandhi observed : "... I have no doubt in my mind that even a patched-up non-violent army would take the wind out of Hitler's sails. I need not have his aeroplanes, his tanks, etc. He need not destroy our houses. Our non-violent army would welcome him, and it may be that he would not dare to come. I know that this may be a day-dream. But I cannot belie the principle of a lifetime or wipe out my day-dreams of the past twenty years."¹²

Gandhi further believed that it would be impossible for an invader to devastate a large country indefinitely if there was no violent resistance at all from the population. "Even if Herr Hitler was so minded", he said, "he could not devastate 700,000 non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process."¹³

By March 1942 Rangoon had fallen and the Japanese threat had become very real to India. Gandhi, therefore, suggested the following method of offering non-violent resistance to a possible Japanese invasion of India : "... As it is, non-violent resistance could commence the moment the Japanese effected a landing. Thus, non-violent resisters would refuse them any help, even water. For it is no part of their duty to help anyone to steal their country. But if a Japanese had missed his way and was dying of thirst and sought help as a human being, a non-violent resister, who may not regard anyone as his enemy, would give water to the thirsty one. Suppose the Japanese compel resisters to give them water, the resisters must die in the act of resistance. It is conceivable that they will exterminate all resisters. The underlying belief in such non-violent resistance is that the aggressor will in time be mentally and even physically tired of killing non-violent resisters. He will begin to search what this new (for him) force is which refuses co-

¹² *Harijan*, June 17, 1940.

¹³ *Harijan*, November 4, 1939.

operation without seeking to hurt, and will probably desist from further slaughter. But the resisters may find that the Japanese are utterly heartless and that they do not care how many they kill. The non-violent resisters will have won the day, inasmuch as they will have preferred extermination to submission."¹⁴

A few months later Gandhi addressed an appeal "To Every Japanese". In this appeal, after blaming Japan for her "unprovoked attack" against China and the "merciless devastation" of that country by the Japanese forces, he warned the Japanese: "I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India. The end and aim of the movement for British withdrawal is to prepare India, by making her free for resisting all militarist and imperialist ambition, whether it is called the British imperialism, German Nazism, or your pattern. If we do not, we shall have been ignoble spectators of the militarization of the world in spite of our belief that in non-violence we have the only solvent of the militarist spirit and ambition."¹⁵

In the preceding month Gandhi wrote an article on the method of resisting an invading army with special reference to the problem of a neutral country like Switzerland. In this article he observed: "It would be cowardly of a neutral country to allow an army to devastate a neighbouring country. But there are two ways, in common between soldiers of war and soldiers of non-violence, and if I had been a citizen of Switzerland and a President of the Federal State, what I would have done would be to refuse passage to the invading army by refusing all supplies. Secondly, by re-enacting Thermopylae in Switzerland, you would have presented a living wall of men and women and children and invited the invaders to walk over your corpses. You may say that such a thing is beyond human experience and endurance. I say it is not so. . . . The army would be brutal enough to walk over them, you might say. I would then say you will still have done your duty by allowing yourselves to be annihilated. An army that dares to pass over the corpses of innocent men and women would not be able to repeat that experiment."¹⁶

Mirabeau, a close follower of Gandhi, asked him some specific questions regarding the method of resisting the Japanese forces,

¹⁴ *Harijan*, March 16, 1942.

¹⁵ Tendulkar : *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 135.

¹⁶ *Harijan*, June 22, 1940.

should they land on the coast of Orissa, and as was likely, move into Bihar without facing any insurmountable opposition. Gandhi gave one broad answer covering several questions, and dealt with the others specifically. As regards the general strategy to be followed by the coastal people in such an eventuality, Gandhi said : "Remember that our attitude is that of complete non-cooperation with the Japanese army, therefore, we may not help them in any way, nor may we profit by any dealings with them. Therefore, we cannot sell anything to them. If the people are not able to face the Japanese army, they will do as armed soldiers do, i.e. retire when they are overwhelmed. And if they do so, the question of having any dealings with the Japanese does not and should not arise. If, however, the people have not the courage to resist the Japanese unto death and the courage and capacity to evacuate the portion invaded by the Japanese, they will do the best they can in the light of instructions. One thing they should never do — to yield willing submission to the Japanese. That would be a cowardly act, and unworthy of a freedom-loving people." Indians must not cooperate with the Japanese, said Gandhi, even with regard to the construction of bridges, etc. and must not accept Japanese currency. They must primarily depend on barter for dealings among themselves, or "make use of such British currency as they may have, in the hope that the National Government that may take the place of the British Government will take up from the people all the British currency in accordance with its capacity." If the occasion arose, Indians could cooperate with the invading Japanese regarding the removal and burial of dead bodies. Arms and ammunition found on the wayside were to be stored in a safe place, out of the reach of mischievous people, or if that was not possible, sunk.¹⁷

That is so far as the war-time situation in India and the world was concerned. Krishnalal Shridharani asked him some questions regarding the method free India would adopt for resisting a possible foreign invasion. Gandhi gave the following reply in an article :

"My answers can only be speculative. There is a very big 'if' involved — that India would adopt civil disobedience and non-violence as her national policy. But let us suppose that such is the case. Let us

¹⁷ Pyarelal : *Towards New Horizons*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1959, Appendix A.

suppose that there is no Indian army, no defensive fortifications, no rifles, cannons, shells, airplanes, tanks. And let us suppose that India stands entirely by herself and that the vast and powerful armies of a modern edition of Nero descend upon her. What would happen?

"India would defend herself in this way.

"The representatives of the free Indian State would let the invader in without opposition. But they would tell the invader and all his forces at the frontier that the Indian people would refuse to cooperate in any work, in any undertaking. They would refuse to obey orders despite all threats and despite all punishments inflicted upon them.

"That is civil disobedience. That is India's defence.

"You may fancy that the hardened and ruthless invader would laugh at such measures. If he had conquered armies who opposed him with steel and cannons and warplanes, surely it would be ridiculously easy for him to conquer this unarmed army. But India is a land of millions, and if they stand idle the whole country stands idle. Nothing can be done with it; it is worthless. Civil disobedience, the invader would soon find, is a very powerful weapon indeed.

"And there is another measure of defence that India could adopt. Trained in the art of non-violent resistance, the Indian people would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannons. They would tell the invader that they preferred death to submission. These brave words have been spoken in other lands; in India they would be spoken with all their true meaning, and spoken in one great overwhelming voice of the masses. By the million, India's people would offer their breasts to the invader's bullets. And this would be a terrifying spectacle — and one of the highest moral stature, ennobling those who took part in it.

"The underlying belief in this philosophy of defence is that even a modern Nero is not devoid of a heart. The spectacle — never seen before by him or his soldiers — of endless rows of men and women simply dying, without violent protest, must ultimately affect him. If it does not affect Nero himself, it will affect his soldiers. Men can slaughter one another for years in the heat of battle, for then it seems to be a case of kill or be killed. But if there is no danger of being killed yourself by those you slay, you cannot go on killing defenceless and unprotesting people endlessly. You must put down your gun in self-disgust.

"Thus in the end the invader must be beaten by new weapons,

peaceful weapons, the weapons of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance.

"Practically speaking, there would probably be no greater loss in life than if forcible resistance were offered to the invader. How many men have been killed in Holland, Belgium and France? Hundreds of thousands? Would the invading armies have shot down hundreds of thousands of men in cold blood if they had simply stood passively before him? I do not think so."¹⁸

It is important to realize that, logically, non-violent national defence would be possible, according to Gandhi, only in a society which is itself non-violent in its socio-economic and political structure. For, as we have seen before, Gandhi insists that whatever has been gained through violence cannot be defended through Non-violence. A society which possesses a state apparatus and a socio-economic structure characterized by violence defined in the Gandhian sense cannot, therefore, be defended through *satyagraha*. In other words, only such hypothetical societies as have built up a highly decentralized political and socio-economic structure through the Constructive Programme can hope to defend themselves through *satyagraha*. As N. K. Bose has observed: "The preparation for non-violent defence consists in setting one's own house in order. Inequalities and injustices in one's domestic as well as community relationship have to be progressively removed by means of non-violence. This is a necessary step in the preparation for defence against foreign aggression by *satyagraha* The *satyagrahi's* endeavour is to build up such a classless society by means of a 'constructive programme'. Its details will naturally vary from one country to another; but its essence lies in an endeavour to bring about decentralization of both economic and political authority."¹⁹ It does not follow, however, that a country must wait until a wholly non-violent society has been established through the Constructive Programme, in order to be able to organize a national *satyagraha* against foreign aggression. In a crisis preparation can proceed simultaneously with non-violent resistance; Gandhi would only insist on the maximum possible effort on the part of the people concerned for both the purposes. When he advocated non-violent resistance by the Indian people against a possible German or

¹⁸ Quoted in Krishnalal Shridharani : *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁹ N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 117-18.

Japanese invasion during the Second World War, India was not a non-violent country in the Gandhian sense : Gandhi considered the effort in any case necessary and worthwhile ; the large number of *satyagrahas*, big and small, organized by the Indian people for a period of nearly twentyfive years, and their considerable experience in constructive work under his leadership probably made him feel that a reasonably effective experiment could be made with the help of a sufficient number of trained workers.

Although Gandhi talked both of "inviting" the aggressor and of the population offering itself to be slaughtered at the frontier, it seems that he actually visualized two stages of non-violent resistance to a foreign invasion. In the first stage large masses of unarmed men assemble at the frontier and try to dissuade the foreign armies from invading their country, failing which they defy the armed might of the invading armies and offer themselves as cannon fodder.²⁰ If, in spite of this, the foreign armies occupy the country, after killing the people at the border or without using any physical violence on them, the entire population would launch a mass *satyagraha* against the occupation forces in the form of non-cooperation and civil disobedience and thus make it impossible for them to stay on in the occupied country. This is the second stage of national defence through *satyagraha*. Since the *satyagraha* in the first stage is of a basically different type than that in the second, I think it is desirable to examine their practicability and usefulness separately.

SATYAGRAHA AT THE FRONTIER

One of the major difficulties regarding *satyagraha* at the frontier as suggested by Gandhi is that modern warfare is increasingly becoming long-distance warfare in which there may be no occasion to meet the enemy (who, of course, must be looked upon and even loved as a friend, according to Gandhi) at the border, at least not until after large-scale destruction has already taken place. During the Second World War, of course, Gandhi had argued that this was not much of a problem, because there was always a human heart operating behind the machines of war which could be influenced by suffering from a long distance, and because the aggressors

²⁰ This is also the view of two of Gandhi's closest associates, Krishnalal Shridharani and N. K. Bose. See K. Shridharani : *op. cit.*, pp. 45-6 ; N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 119.

had to move in sooner or later for occupying the land. Even at that time, when the science of ballistic missiles was as yet undeveloped and the performance of military aircraft and submarines was relatively backward, such reasoning was probably grossly over-optimistic ; but in any case the sophisticated rocketry of the nuclear age, which will probably lead to the destruction of the world in a few minutes in the event of a major war, has certainly run away with whatever realism such a view had at the time it was expressed by Gandhi. Here, I think, we have a very concrete example of Ogburn's "cultural lag", i.e. the inability of human ideas on the cultural plane often to catch up with rapid advances in technology.

Secondly, even if we take the hypothetical case of an invasion in which the invading power either does not possess the sophisticated long-range weapons of destruction or would not use them, and assume further that the invading forces are susceptible to such moral influence as a *satyagraha* on the border may exert on them, the practical difficulties in launching such *satyagrahas* would seem to be insurmountable. *Satyagraha* of this type would obviously require elaborate planning and organization, if it is expected to have any noticeable effect on the invading army. But the invaders are unlikely to communicate the times, places and directions of their attack to the Government and people of the invaded country well in advance in order to enable them to organize a massive non-violent resistance at the vital points on the border. Particularly in the case of a guerilla war, which is the type of war that probably poses the greatest danger to India and other non-Communist countries of South and South-east Asia, and can be expected by its advocates not to escalate quickly into a major war involving total destruction by means of the sophisticated long-range weapons, surprise attack and surreptitious movement are considered to be of fundamental importance. From the purely theoretical point of view, it is not impossible to visualize the existence of a "standing army" of non-violent resisters, with its own system of intelligence and in a state of constant training and preparedness (even such an "army" would, of course, be considerably handicapped by the fact that it will not be able, and presumably would not want, to enter into the territory of the aggressor country), but this does not seem to be within the range of practical possibility in the foreseeable future.

Thirdly, there is the important question whether the Government in a modern state can take the initiative in the dubious task of

defending the country non-violently at the frontier, or even remain militarily inactive during an invasion. Even if it is willing to do so, the morality of such action can be seriously questioned. Unlike private individuals, the Government is under a contract with the people, as it were, to defend the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state. In the absence of any proved results of non-violent resistance at the border, it would normally be expected to take such military measures as are within its power in order to defend the territorial integrity of the state. Only in cases where the aggressor state is so much more powerful, from the military point of view, than the state aggressed upon that the defeat of the latter in a military combat and the large-scale destruction of life and property are inevitable, can there be some justification for the organization of *satyagraha* at the frontier at the initiative of the state. But no such experiments have so far taken place anywhere in the world.

Fourthly, Gandhi's suggestion regarding non-violent defence through *satyagraha* at the frontier is based on the assumption that the invading forces accept the same ultimate values as the invaded people, particularly, that they have some respect for human life and compassion for the adversary, which are essential postulates of the ultimate value of Non-violence. This assumption would often prove to be very unreal, especially in the case of a state like China whose leaders regard violence as the only practicable means for resolving all social conflicts, national as well as international, and have openly declared that if a large majority of the human race were exterminated in a global war waged for establishing Communism all over the world, it would not be regarded as a tragedy by them.²¹ Gandhi's argument that it is preferable for the entire population to allow itself to be massacred non-violently rather than to offer violent resistance to an invading army, cannot be taken seriously by a social scientist (although it might be so taken by a religious man) for reasons I have stated in Chapter XVI.

Finally, the Gandhian theory of national defence through *satyagraha* at the frontier belongs to the field of praxeology, in which, so far as Social Science is concerned, no theory is valid until and

²¹ Mao-Tse-tung's speech at the Moscow Meeting of Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties, November 18, 1957, quoted in *News and Views from the Soviet Union*, U. S. S. R. Embassy, New Delhi, Vol. XXIII; No. 54, 1964, p. 12.

unless it is proved to be so in the light of empirical evidence. But no empirical evidence on the subject is so far available.²²

MASS SATYAGRAHA AGAINST FOREIGN OCCUPATION

It is necessary to realize, first of all, that the question of mass *satyagraha* against foreign occupation would not arise at all in the case of a nuclear attack, because the overwhelming majority of the population, if not the whole of it, would be destroyed by such an attack. A country which has been subjected to a nuclear attack will, moreover, be of very little use to the attacking country for a number of years, because most of its resources would have been destroyed. If at all an occupation does finally take place, there would be very few people left in the occupied country, and those who may be left would be far too demoralized, to put up any resistance.

Secondly, even if a non-nuclear attack is assumed, non-cooperation with the occupying power can be considered practicable only in those cases where the entire employed population, or at any rate that portion of it which is employed in the essential services, cannot be entirely replaced by a portion of the population of the invading country. An important reason why the British Government was seriously inconvenienced by the mass *satyagrahas* in India is that it was impossible for it to run the Indian administration entirely or even mainly by Englishmen. But if the U. S. A. invades Mexico, India invades Ceylon, China invades Nepal or the Soviet Union invades Albania, it would be quite possible for the invading country to replace the entire employed population or at least that part of it which runs the essential services. It is only when the population of the invading country is comparable to, or considerably less than that of the invaded country, that mass *satyagraha* by the people of the invaded country would be practicable. Thus if Hungary invades Poland, or Germany invades France, or India invades China, or Ceylon, Nepal, Mexico or Albania invades India, China, the U. S. A. and the Soviet Union respectively, can *satyagraha* against the foreign occupation be considered a feasible

²² For some interesting speculations on non-violent defence see James E. Bristol: "The Nature and Limitations of Civilian Defence", *Gandhi Marg*, January, 1965; Adam Roberts: "Alternative Strategies in Civilian Defence", *Gandhi Marg*, October, 1965.

proposition, assuming that there is a total and not a mere partial confrontation of the two states concerned.

Subject to these important limitations, if and when one country resorting to armed invasion occupies another (which it is more or less sure to do, as I have argued before, if the attempted defence consists merely of non-violent resistance at the border), mass *satyagraha* against the occupying power need not necessarily be impracticable, although what results it would yield we cannot as yet definitely say. As a matter of fact, even the Indian mass *satyagrahas* were launched against foreign occupation; only the occupation was a very old one. A newly imperialist power may be more ruthless than an old one, but this difficulty is likely to be offset by the fact that the occupation, when new, would also be necessarily unstable.

Fortunately, as noted in the previous chapter, a few historical instances of non-violent resistance against foreign occupation are available, and an examination of these, coupled with the lessons of the Indian experience, may give us some indication of the feasibility or otherwise of ending foreign occupation through mass *satyagraha*. In all the three instances briefly discussed below, it will be noticed, non-violent resistance was caused by military incapacity rather than the acceptance of Non-violence as an ultimate value in the Gandhian sense, and these cases cannot, therefore, be treated as examples of *satyagraha*. But non-violence as a policy would also be expected to produce the same results, as Gandhi stated at the time of the Non-cooperation Movement, if the participants in the resistance movement never deviated from this policy, and the data provided by these cases of non-violent resistance would, therefore, be quite useful for judging the efficiency of mass *satyagraha* as a weapon for frustrating a foreign occupation.

The revolutionary fervour in Hungary in 1848 compelled the Austrian emperor to grant a measure of self-rule to Hungary. But in the following year large sections of the Hungarian people rose in revolt against Austrian authority and proclaimed the Hungarian Republic. The Hungarian national army then proceeded to conduct a campaign against Austria, whereupon the latter appealed to Russia for help. Russian troops entered Hungary and defeated the Hungarian army, and Austrian occupation was firmly re-established. Kossuth, the chief military leader of the Hungarians, fled the country, while many other Hungarian leaders were executed by the Austrians,

who now firmly established a reign of terror. It was in this situation that under the leadership of Francis Deak, the Hungarians started a non-violent resistance. They refused to accept any office under the Austrians, refused to pay taxes, declined several Austrian compromise proposals, and insisted on the restoration of the Hungarian constitution. After several triumphs and tragedies, they were at last able in 1867, to obtain self-government in substance under the famous Austro-Hungarian Compromise, which provided for the participation by Hungary in a joint parliament with the Austrians for the control of defence and general matters. Even this partial victory of the Hungarians, however, was not achieved through the non-violent resistance alone. An important extraneous factor responsible for the relatively favourable outcome of the resistance was Austria's troubles with Prussia and Denmark, which made it imperative for her to seek the cooperation of the Hungarians.²³

The Franco-Belgian invasion of the Ruhr in 1923 also led to a non-cooperation movement by the German population of the district with the active encouragement and assistance of the German Government which was completely powerless from the military point of view at the time. The German resistance mainly took the form of the refusal of German workers to work in the mines and factories of the occupied area and the stoppage of practically all supplies of goods and services to the occupation forces. A certain amount of military coercion was used, but without much success, for "one cannot mine coal with bayonets". With the industrial heartland of Germany thus coming to a standstill, the entire German economy came to a grinding halt. Faced with the desperate task of maintaining an economy without production and at the same time keeping the unemployed labour force alive, the German Government resorted to printing currency which led to a run-away hyperinflation in a few months. This impossible situation continued for nine months, from January to September, 1923, and by the end of September the resistance was called off by the new Chancellor, Dr. Gustav Stresemann, and a new currency was introduced, one unit of which was equivalent to one trillion units of the old currency. Although Germany thus suffered extreme hardships and the country's

²³ For a detailed account of Hungary's non-violent resistance against Austria from 1849 to 1867 see Arthur Griffith: *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland*, Whelan and Sons, Dublin, 1918, pp. 1-68. An excerpt from this book is available in Mulford Q. Sibley: *op. cit.*, pp. 133-50.

economy was thrown out of gear during the resistance, it does not seem to have had any serious effect on the Franco-Belgian occupation. The Franc dropped by about 25 per cent, but there was no sign of the occupation being ended on account of the resistance. The occupation was withdrawn only in November 1924, after Britain had categorically declared it to be illegal and the famous Dawes Plan, formulated at Anglo-American initiative, was accepted by the parties concerned at the London Conference in July, 1924. It is, therefore, difficult to see what was directly achieved by the resistance, except that the economic dislocation caused by it facilitated the rise of Hitler. The failure of the resistance was apparently due to the fact that the relatively small territory under occupation could be indefinitely retained by the occupying powers without the cooperation of the local population.²⁴

The third case is that of the non-violent resistance put up by the Norwegians against the German occupation of the country during the Second World War. This movement was also caused by military incapacity rather than the acceptance by the leaders or the people even of the express policy of non-violence, not to speak of the principle. Although the resistance remained primarily non-violent between 1940 and 1943, it was paralleled by a good deal of violent resistance of a sporadic character, and from 1944 onwards it became almost entirely violent. During the first phase the movement seems to have remained non-violent only because other methods were not available for the time being. However, in so far as the resistance did remain largely non-violent for about three years, it deserves some attention in connection with the point I have been discussing.

The non-violent resistance of the Norwegians involved practically the whole population which adopted a policy of non-violent non-cooperation in individual dealings with the Germans. There was no organized mass movement to put an end to the occupation, but the Church and the teachers did put up a good deal of organized resistance including civil disobedience. The Church plainly refused to take any notice of the occupation from the religious point of view. When the Germans established a new ecclesiastical leadership, the bulk of the old Church simply ignored its orders. The Supreme Court of Norway resigned as a body when the Norwegian judiciary was tampered with at the top. Even more spectacular was the resis-

²⁴ For a detailed account of this resistance see G. E. R. Gedyé : *The Revolver Republic*, 1930.

tance by the teachers against the German attempt to organize them in support of the occupation. The resistance, as noted already, became violent by 1944, and it is difficult to see what specific objectives were gained through it except that the morale of the population was kept high (which in itself is, of course, a great contribution to the cause of Freedom) and the Germans kept uneasy. Initially the Germans were relatively liberal towards the Norwegians, because according to the Fascist belief, the Norwegians were also a Nordic race like the Germans ; but in the later stages of the resistance a good deal of repression was let loose, and by the end of 1942 some 100 Norwegians had been executed, 7,000 were in concentration camps, and 1,000 had been deported to Poland. Yet no permanent hatred for the Germans is said to have developed among the Norwegians, although how much of it was due to racial affinity and how much to the non-violent character of the early phase of the movement it is difficult to say.²⁵

The three preceding case studies of non-violent resistance against foreign occupation, and the Indian experience of a somewhat different character, together go to show that a foreign occupation cannot quickly be brought to an end through non-violent resistance ; but the morale of the population can be kept high through such resistance and the occupying power seriously inconvenienced. Keeping the aspiration for freedom alive is, of course, an important task in all circumstances, and in certain special cases of foreign occupation in the nuclear age, this may be the only practicable task before the state and the people.

The universal destructive power of nuclear weapons and the alance of nuclear deterrence have impelled the big powers to seek an avoidance not only of direct nuclear war, but also of such military confrontations as might conceivably escalate into a nuclear war. The unwillingness of the Soviet Union to interfere in Cuba beyond a certain limit and the non-intervention of the U. S. A. in Eastern Europe, especially in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, are two instances in point. The result is that the big powers have been able to develop and maintain mutually recognized spheres of influence within which they can dominate and even subjugate weaker states with relative impunity. In the absence of external military assistance, it would

²⁵ For a detailed account of the Norwegian resistance see A. K. Jameson and Gene Sharp : "Non-violent Resistance and the Nazis : The Case of Norway", in Mulford Q. Sibley : *op. cit.*, pp. 150-81.

be impossible for such weaker states to defend their frontiers militarily against the infinitely stronger big powers ; for example, armed resistance against the Soviet Union by Hungary in 1956 or by Czechoslovakia in 1968 would have only resulted in a huge destruction of national property and the massacre of a large proportion of the population without making any significant difference to the power of the Soviet Union. Non-violent resistance at the frontier would also have been, in all probability, impracticable or ineffective due to reasons already discussed. The only course left open to the occupied nation would then be to offer *satyagraha* against the occupying forces, principally in the form of non-cooperation. There are many difficulties in the way of organizing mass non-cooperation on the part of an occupied nation, as we have seen, especially if the big power concerned has a much larger population and is determined to use all its power to keep the weaker nation in subjugation, and in any case, such *satyagraha* is unlikely to lead, by itself, to the withdrawal of the occupying forces. But the occupying power would be seriously inconvenienced in maintaining its position in the midst of a reluctant population for a long period of time, and international public opinion as well as the activities of the United Nations may eventually prove to be effective external aids to the freedom struggle of the occupied nation. In such cases, *satyagraha* would clearly seem to have a limited but necessary function, although it cannot serve as a sufficient weapon against foreign aggression or occupation, as Gandhi expected it to be, or enable states to abjure the use of force in their international relations, as Gandhi believed.

In recent years several writers have suggested that non-violent resistance can be an effective substitute for war in the contemporary world. Thus as early as 1942, one author suggested that no victories could in fact be won by war, and wanted the U. S. A. to disarm unilaterally and prepare for non-violent defence. She also offered a highly speculative programme of non-violent defence for the U. S. A. in the event of an armed attack by another major power.²⁷ More recently, Commander Stephen King-Hall suggested that Britain should think in terms of a "revolution" of her defence policy, and that this revolution should consist of substitution of armaments by an Idea, namely, non-violent resistance, and political

²⁶ Jessie Wallace Hagan : *Pacifism and Invasion*, War Resisters League (pamphlet), New York, 1942.

warfare. His broad proposal is that Britain should impose on herself a unilateral nuclear disarmament, reduce her conventional armaments to a "token size", train her people in the art of non-violent resistance, and thus prepare for defence against a potential invasion from the Soviet Union. The past attempts at non-violent resistance against foreign invasion failed, argues King-Hall, because such attempts were not purely non-violent. If Britain adopted a policy of unadulterated non-violent resistance against a potential Soviet invasion, it would not only guarantee British security, but also destroy Communism.²⁷ At about the same time two other writers discussed the futility of war in an age when war means total destruction on both sides, and argued that non-violent resistance can be and ought to be an effective substitute for war in the nuclear age.²⁸

It seems to me that the views of Gandhi, and of the recent writers who have directly or indirectly supported him,²⁹ regarding national defence through a pure or diluted form of *satyagraha*, suffer from at least three major shortcomings. In the first place, they represent a simplistic approach to the problem of international conflict, caused by an inadequate appreciation of its nature and causes. Armaments are not so much the cause of international conflict as a symptom of it. The causes of war and other forms of international conflict lie much deeper, in the complex phenomenon of nationalism, political rivalries and economic competition, religion and race, divergent social and political institutions which in turn reflect the divergence of the ultimate values accepted by different nations and communities. Force as an instrument for controlling and regulating international conflict cannot suddenly be abolished altogether so long as the deep-rooted causes of conflict are not

²⁷ Stephen King-Hall : *Defence in the Nuclear Age*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1958.

²⁸ Cecil Hinshaw : *Toward A Non-violent National Defence* (pamphlet), Pendle Hill, Wallingford, 1956 ; Richard Gregg : *The Power of Non-violence*, Nyack, New York, 1959 (this is the second revised edition of the book which was originally published in 1934).

²⁹ Richard Gregg and Cecil Hinshaw have referred to Gandhi's contribution to the subject ; while King-Hall and Hagan have not referred directly to Gandhi in their works, it is quite obvious that the programme of non-violent defence suggested by them is essentially Gandhian in conception, although King-Hall seems to be obsessed by a bi-polar thinking and a crusading zeal for destroying Communism which Gandhi would have disapproved.

sufficiently mellowed and tempered by education, enlightenment and the general growth of fraternity within the human race.

Secondly, Gandhi and his followers fail to distinguish between the moral responsibility of a Government from that of a private individual. An individual is, and ought to be, free to act according to his personal convictions and to engage in experimental or even speculative and wild ventures, because these are unlikely to affect the social order and harmony as a whole to any appreciable extent. A Government cannot act in the same manner, especially with regard to such a fundamental matter as the defence of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state, because such actions may do serious injury to the society as a whole, and the Government is under a contract with the society not to do such injury. In other words, when there is a reasonable possibility of defending the state against foreign aggression through armed resistance, a responsible Government cannot resort to the dubious method — dubious because it has nowhere been proved so far that a country can be defended non-violently — of non-violent resistance, unless, of course, the will of the people is manifestly expressed to that effect. The advocates of non-violent defence apparently fail to realize that unilateral disarmament does not take place anywhere not because those who run the Governments are diabolical by nature, but because Governments simply cannot assume the moral responsibility of allowing a foreign power to occupy the country without armed resistance. And the fact that the Governments of the democratic countries are also unwilling to disarm unilaterally shows that non-violent defence is not as yet approved by the people anywhere. The task of those who believe in non-violent resistance should, therefore, be to educate public opinion rather than to urge Governments to disarm unilaterally.

Thirdly, the schemes put forward by Gandhi and his followers regarding non-violent defence are highly speculative in nature, and in the absence of adequate empirical data to test their practicability, they are of very little value to Social Science. *Satyagraha* for national defence, according to Gandhi, will have to be paralleled, if not preceded by a massive constructive effort by the whole nation for building up the highly decentralized and non-violent social order—a point missed or ignored by the other advocates of non-violent defence. This in itself would involve a gigantic and unprecedented national endeavour, which, as we have seen in Chapter XI, would be

largely impracticable. Even if this Gandhian link between non-violent defence and the non-violent social order is ignored, the organizational difficulties will be tremendous. As Liddell Hart has said with regard to King-Hall's scheme of non-violent defence, "To offer any good chance of success here, it not only requires a higher collective discipline and fortitude than any army has attained, but requires this level to be attained by the nation as a whole. . . . In sum, an examination of the course that King-Hall has espoused leaves two main doubts about its practicability as a national policy. The first is whether the nation as a whole, or any likely Government, could be persuaded to embark on such a revolutionary experiment. The second is whether the policy could be effectively practised and fulfilled by a nation — since human instincts such as fear, anger, and selfishness could all too easily wreck its prospects". He rightly observes that in an age when nuclear weapons have made war a lunacy, proposals for non-violent defence "claim the respect of all decent men", but that as yet no workable alternative to nuclear deterrence has been found.³⁰

I think here, as in many other matters, Aurobindo was more scientific than Gandhi when he said that the first step towards international harmony, in the world as it is today, ought to be to concentrate military power in the hands of a world organization rather than to rely entirely on peaceful methods for resolving all international conflicts. "To rely upon the common consent of conflicting national egoisms for the preservation of peace between the nation.", observes Aurobindo, "is to rely upon a logical contradiction. A practical improbability which, if we can judge by reason and experience amounts to an impossibility, can hardly be a sound foundation for the building of the future. A League of Peace can only prevent armed strife for a time. . . . The creation of a real, efficient and powerful authority which would stand for the general sense and the general power of mankind in its collective life and spirit and would be something more than a bundle of vigorously separate States loosely tied together by the frail bond of a violable moral agreement is the only effective step possible on this path. Whether such an authority can really be created by agreement, whether it must not rather create itself partly by the growth of ideas,

³⁰ B. H. Liddell Hart : *Deterrent Or Defence*, Stevens and Sons, London, 1960, Ch. 20.

but still more by the shock of forces, is a question to which the future alone can answer".³¹

The growing moral consciousness of mankind as manifested in the progressive development of international law and organization (corresponding to Aurobindo's "growth of ideas"), the threat of total nuclear annihilation of the human race and the risks and dangers inherent in the "balance of terror" in the form of nuclear deterrence, which seems to be giving the international system a momentary, though highly uncertain, stability (corresponding to Aurobindo's "shock of forces"), have led to a growing demand in recent years for the internationalization of nuclear power. The disarmament negotiations during the last decade-and-a-half seem to have been proceeding in the direction suggested by Aurobindo. With increasing concentration of military power in an international organization like the U. N. O., non-violent resistance can gradually play a subsidiary role in national defence, but it cannot be a substitute for military power at present or in the immediate future.

³¹ Sri Aurobindo : *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1950, pp. 256-57.

CHAPTER XVIII

ENDS AND MEANS

THE TERM "end" has two different meanings, failure to discriminate between which, it seems to me, causes most of the controversy and confusion regarding the relationship between ends and means. It means, first, a subjective purpose or blueprint which exists only in the mind of the subject before and during the performance of an act. It means, in the second place, the objective consequence of an act or a series of acts performed by the subject irrespective of the subjective purpose he may have in mind. For the sake of clarity, I think, it is desirable to use two different terms for these two separate meanings of the word "end". I would prefer to use the term "goal" to denote the subjective purpose for which an action is performed, and the term "result" to denote the objective consequence of the act. It is clear that there is a necessary causal connection only between the means and the result, which is ascertainable through inductive logic, but none between the means and the goal. Whether the goal and the result coincide or not would depend on whether the means selected are causally connected with the goal, and not on the subject's own value judgment regarding the goal itself. In other words, given a certain well-defined goal, the selection of the means is not a question of moral choice, but of efficiency. The value judgment is involved in the selection of the goal, not of the means. The means can be justified only in terms of the result, and not of the goal. The goal cannot justify the means any more than my intention of going to Delhi can justify my boarding a train for Madras (due to ignorance or inefficiency). Only my going to Madras, i.e. the result of my act, can justify my boarding the train for Madras. Whether I have boarded the right train or not depends not on my preference for Delhi, but on the efficiency with which I have ascertained, on the basis of empirical evidence and inductive reasoning, which train will end up in Delhi.

With this understanding, we can now pass on to an analysis of Gandhi's views on the relationship between ends and means and

an examination of these views in the light of the findings of this entire study so far.

In *Hind Swaraj* the Editor tells the Reader (who argues in favour of the forcible overthrow of British rule in India) : "Your belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake. Through that mistake even men who have been considered religious have committed grievous crimes. Your reasoning is the same as saying that we can get a rose through planting a noxious weed. If I want to cross the ocean, I can do so only by means of a vessel ; if I were to use a cart for that purpose, both the cart and I would soon find the bottom.... The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree ; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree. I am not likely to obtain the result flowing from the worship of God by laying myself prostrate before Satan.... We reap exactly as we sow".¹ Years later he put the matter in a nutshell when he said : "Means and end are convertible terms in my philosophy of life".²

The acceptance of a broad goal, e.g. the ideal society or *swaraj*, was not altogether ruled out by Gandhi, as we have seen. But he regarded the preparation of a detailed and foolproof blueprint of the goal as a relatively fruitless job, because however perfect the blueprint might be, it would not be realized unless the right means were adopted. It was, therefore, mainly necessary, he argued, to concentrate on the selection of the means, keeping in view only a broad image and a sense of direction regarding the goal. Like Newman, whom he frequently quoted, Gandhi often said, as we have noted before, that one step was enough for him. He insisted that the goal could have no reality except as the actual result of the means, on which, therefore, our attention should be primarily focussed. Thus in September, 1933, he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru that although he agreed with the latter regarding the goal of complete independence, he was interested not so much in elucidating and repeating this objective, as in the means necessary for its attainment. "I have concerned myself more", he wrote, "... with the conservation of the means and their progressive use. If we can take care of them, the attainment of the goal is assured. I feel that our

¹ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. X, p. 43.

² *Young India*, December 26, 1924.

progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means".³

As I explained in Chapter II, in his views on social and political action, Gandhi was profoundly influenced by the Hindu theory of *karma*. The same is true of his views on ends and means. The *karma* theory states, quite rightly it would seem from the logical point of view, that every act has its own independent result which affects both the subject and the object of the act. It further states, of course, that the acts of an individual thus determine the character of the subject's "self" in this and after life — a metaphysical proposition which we have to ignore for our present purpose. The *Bhagavadgita* also states that man has control only over his act, but none over the goal of it ; an act should, therefore, be performed in a spirit of detachment, and not with a passionate attachment to a specific goal.⁴ This idea Gandhi considered to be "the centre round which the Gita is woven".⁵ "But renunciation of fruit", he observed, "in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means thereto and the capacity for it. He, who, being thus equipped, is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfilment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of his action".⁶ That Gandhi was influenced by his own understanding of the theory of detached action as expounded in the *Gita*, with regard to his formulation of the relationship between ends and means, is borne out by the fact that sometimes he spoke or wrote on the subject practically in the language of the *Gita*. Thus he once observed : "As the means, so the end. There is no veil of separation between means and end. Indeed, the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception."⁷

If we leave aside Gandhi's references to God, and interpret what he calls the "purity" of the means as its consistency with one's own ultimate values, i.e. the goal, his analysis of the end-

³ Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, Vol. III, p. 216.

⁴ *Bhagavadgita*, Canto II, *shlokas* 47-48.

⁵ M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1950, p. 160.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁷ *Young India*, July 17, 1924.

means relationship would seem to be the correct formulation of this relationship as explained at the beginning of this chapter. But this is only so far as the theoretical presentation of the end-means relationship goes. The truth about whether the result of a particular means will coincide with a particular goal in a given situation can be discovered only through empirical investigation and inductive reasoning, and not from theoretical formulations on the subject. And since the whole of Gandhian thought and Gandhi's numerous experiments in social control are in a sense a long study in the end-means relationship, my purpose here is to examine the extent to which the social goal which Gandhi set for himself can be expected to be achieved through the means suggested by him, in the light of the findings of this study so far.

In any long-term programme of social engineering, there is not just one goal and one means, but a hierarchy of goals and means. Thus in the Marxian programme of the socio-political reconstruction of the world, the ultimate goal is represented by a conception of Justice, reducible to certain ultimate values, which seem to be Liberty, Equality and Fraternity — the same value-goals as were associated with the French Revolution (and which do not seem to be very different, as explained in Chapter II, from the value-goals of the Gandhian programme of reconstruction). These value-goals in turn are supposed to be consummated in an ideal society which is stateless and classless, and, therefore, such a society is also the ultimate Marxian goal — the concrete counterpart of the abstract value-goal (it is not a means to the value-goal, because once it is reached, the ultimate values are immediately consummated, and the value-goal is also thus simultaneously reached). This ultimate goal is to be brought about by means of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, which in turn is to be brought into existence by means of the Revolution, and the Revolution is to be generated by means of the class struggle. The class struggle, the Revolution, and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, are all means through which the stateless and classless society representing Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is to be brought into existence. But from another point of view, the Revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat are goals subsidiary to the ultimate goal of the stateless and classless society. The class struggle is the common means, running from the existing capitalist society through the Revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat to the classless and stateless society. In the

same way, in the Gandhian programme of the socio-political reconstruction of human society, there is the ultimate value-goal of Justice, reducible to the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality and the anarchistic and rural, first-order ideal society described in Part II which represents the consummation of these ultimate values. The second-order ideal society, also described in Part II, can be regarded either as a means to the first-order ideal society or a goal subsidiary to it. The Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* are the common means running from the given social reality through the second-order ideal society to the ideal society of the first order, in a process of successive approximation. The major differences between the Marxian and the Gandhian schemes of social engineering are that (i) there is in Gandhian thought an insistence on the inculcation of the ultimate values in the personal lives of the social worker through self-control as a prerequisite to social control, while in Marxian thought not only is there a total absence of any reference to self-control, but there is positive encouragement of group or class aggrandizement at the cost of the other sections of society ; (ii) there is no sudden point of departure in the Gandhian scheme like the Marxian Revolution ; the Gandhian programme of social control is a perennial and gradual one, without any sudden twists or turns in it ; (iii) the Gandhian programme is based on two separate but interrelated means of social control, one for building new social institutions and the other for the resolution of conflicts—the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha*—while the Marxian emphasis is on only one means of social control, namely, the class struggle, and there is no reference to a simultaneous constructive effort for the establishment of new social institutions, and (iv) the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* are uncompromisingly non-violent means of social control, while the class struggle is unreservedly violent.

As regards the use of force as a means of social control, those who argue in its favour do not in fact, as explained in Chapter II, denounce Non-violence, Freedom and Equality as value-goals. They only maintain that these value-goals cannot be achieved without the use of force, because the cause of the non-realization of these goals is itself force in one form or another, and that force can be defeated only with greater force. In other words, they argue that if the force which is allegedly used to suppress Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is eliminated or controlled through the use of greater

force, then the social equilibrium will be restored and the social goal realized. The Marxists, for example, argue that the root cause of social "contradictions" is the exploitation of one class by another in all stages of historical development, with the exception of "primitive communism", which they believe to be the earliest phase of the development of human society, and the stateless and classless Communist society of the future, which they believe to be more or less the end of social evolution. In the contemporary phase of human history, they maintain, the exploiting class is the bourgeoisie, and the exploited class, which is in an overwhelming majority, the proletariat. The exploitation by the bourgeoisie, which is thus the cause of the "class contradiction", cannot be ended or mended without the use of force, argue the Marxists, not only because the bourgeoisie has the power of money, but also because the state itself is merely an instrument of exploitation in the hands of the bourgeoisie; that in fact, is the *raison d'être* of the state, which, therefore, uses its law, the police and the armed forces to protect the vested interests of the bourgeoisie and to suppress the proletariat. A violent class struggle and armed revolution are, therefore, necessary to defeat the force used by the bourgeoisie through the state in order to remove the "class contradiction" and to establish Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

It may be argued that violence is the opposite of Non-violence (Peace, Fraternity), and that, therefore, the use of force as a means of social control is in itself a negation of Non-violence. On the same logic a series of violent acts would simply result in greater violence, although Non-violence may be the goal of such acts. But it will be readily seen that this is a tautological argument. We are simply defining violence as inversely related to Non-violence, identifying the use of force with violence, and then, through this purely linguistic formulation of the relation between force and Non-violence, making out a logical contradiction between force as a means and Non-violence as a goal. As a matter of fact, however, Gandhi himself did not regard use of force as such as a violent act. We have seen in Chapter III that he regarded even killing as consistent with Non-violence in certain circumstances. For example, killing for sustaining one's own body (not for satisfying the palate) and for protecting those under one's care he regarded as unavoidable violence and, therefore, consistent with Non-violence, while killing for the sake of those who are killed is a purely non-violent act,

according to him. In other words, although Gandhi regarded violence as inversely related to Non-violence, he did not regard the use of force as necessarily equivalent to violence. Moreover, he regarded a violent act, as explained in Chapter III, as preferable to a non-violent act born of cowardice which he considered to be negative violence. Thus in the first case he justifies the use of force in terms of some specific goals, which he regards as consistent with Non-violence, while in the second he regards the abstinence from force as inconsistent with Non-violence on account of the mental condition which has resulted in such abstinence.

Looked at from this point of view, the argument of the Marxists is not really different from that of Gandhi in kind ; they only carry the argument further and state (in terms of dialectical materialism) that violence and Non-violence (Peace) are in fact only two sides of the same coin, and not really qualitatively different from each other. They would argue, in the first place, that force used against the bourgeoisie is not truly violence, because its goal is the establishment of Communism which stands for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, while the abstinence from force which is prompted by the desire to maintain "class peace", i.e. the lack of class-consciousness, or fear of the bourgeoisie, is tantamount to violence. Or to take the example of the international class conflict, a war waged by a Communist state against "international imperialism" is not an act of violence, because its goal is the establishment of international Peace and the other values Communism stands for, while the abstinence from waging such a war due to fear of "international imperialism", or a desire to maintain peaceful coexistence with it (as in the case of the Soviet Union, according to Mao Tse-tung), would be tantamount to violence. In the second place, the Marxists extend the argument further and say that according to the law of the identity of opposites, which is an essential postulate of dialectical materialism, Peace and violence or war are in fact identical phenomena, one often shading into the other. Mao Tse-tung, for example, says : "As everybody knows, war and peace transform themselves into each other. War is transformed into peace ; for example, the First World War was transformed into the post-war peace ; the civil war in China has now also ceased and peace has come about. Peace is transformed into war ; for example, the Kuomintang-Communist co-operation of 1927 was transformed into war, and the peaceful world situation of today may also be transformed into a Second World

War. Why? Because in a class society such contradictory things as war and peace are characterized by identity under certain conditions".⁸

In other words, the relationship between force as a means of social control and the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality is not a matter of definition ; it is a relationship which has to be discovered through empirical investigation. Any distinction which one may like to draw between the rather exceptional and individual cases in which Gandhi regarded the use of force as consistent with Non-violence, and the large-scale use of force for bringing about a total social transformation with a view to the realization of a particular socio-political goal envisaged by a particular section of the society, however large, must also similarly rest on an empirical foundation rather than on purely deductive reasoning. Gandhi's argument is, of course, that the empirical result of the use of force as a means of social control is the negation of such values as Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. In Chapter III, IV, and V we have seen that he was severely critical of the traditional Western democracies, German and Italian Fascism and Soviet Communism, because he believed that the ultimate values cherished by him were non-existent in any of these systems, and he attributed this fact to the readiness with which violence (both in the form of physical force and in other forms like exploitation, suppression of minorities, etc.) was resorted to by the countries concerned, internally as well as externally. The use of force, he argued from such empirical evidence, always leads to a violent socio-political system, war and imperialism, dictatorship and inequality.

It is not possible for me here to go exhaustively into the empirical evidence regarding the result of the use of force by individuals, groups and masses of men. But it would seem from all available data that Gandhi is on very strong grounds on this question. The history of the last two thousand years tells us that very few revolutions have resulted in the realization of Freedom, very few wars in the establishment of Peace (Non-violence), very few class conflicts in the establishment of Equality. In fact, the use of force has seldom resulted in the realization of the goal for which force was used. As an authority on social control has observed : "Violence is answered by violence, and the result is a physical struggle. A physi-

⁸ *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1954, Vol. II, p. 45.

cal struggle inevitably arouses in the minds of those directly and even indirectly concerned in it emotions of hatred, fear, rage and resentment. In the heat of conflict all scruples are thrown to the winds, all the habits of forbearance and humaneness, slowly and laboriously formed during generations of civilized living, are forgotten. Nothing matters any more, after a while, except victory. And when at last victory comes to one or other of the parties, this final outcome of struggle bears no necessary relation to the rights and wrongs of the case ; nor, in most cases, does it provide any lasting settlement to the dispute. In particular, the prophets of violence fail to understand that the average person — and, therefore, most of mankind — is averse to the continued terrorization and eventually violence which is always replaced by the comparative stability of social relations in which the prophets of violence and terror have no place".⁹ (The differences between war and *satyagraha* will be discussed presently.) Many years ago Aldous Huxley had amassed a large body of empirical evidence to show that the use of force as a means of social control almost invariably leads to a result which is very different from, and in many ways opposed to, the goal ostensibly visualized originally by those who perpetrated the violence.¹⁰ With the added evidence of another war and the post-war cold war, Communist China and Eastern Europe, the large number of dictatorships of various descriptions which have come into existence in many parts of the world following revolutions whose avowed goal was to end all forms of injustice, and the threat of a third world war, there would seem to be a strong case for Gandhi's contention that the use of force can never result in the achievement of Non-violence, Freedom, Equality or similar ultimate values.

It seems to me also that Gandhi's insistence on self-control as an essential prerequisite to social control is logically unexceptionable, and gives the Gandhian approach to social control a greater rationality than claimed by those who advocate violent social control mainly at the cost of those who are considered by the reformers as their opponents. If those who want to bring about a certain social change act out of narrow sectional (and hence indirectly personal) interests, there is no guarantee that the change, if and when it comes about, will not be used in order to further these

⁹ Roucek : *Social Control*, Van Nostrand, 1962, p. 344.

¹⁰ Aldous Huxley : *op. cit.*

interests at the cost of others ; indeed, reason and experience both tell us that social change brought about by sectional interests through revolutionary or other violent means of social control would almost inevitably lead to oppression, exploitation and tyranny in one form or another. It is only when the "rational will" of the individual or the group, as distinguished from self-interest, the desire to bring about social transformation in the common interests of all rather than the sectional interests of some, governs the nature and process of social control, that general welfare can logically be expected to follow from it. Hence it is necessary for social workers to train themselves in self-control involved in the inculcation of the universal goal-values in personal life, so that they are transformed into impersonal agents of society, before they can hope to bring about social transformation in terms of these values. The necessary self-control would probably be only partially realized, as Gandhi readily admits ; but logically there is no escape from the need for self-control if social control is to be purged of self-interest.

But it is necessary, in order to be able to make an objective assessment of Gandhi's ideas on ends and means, not only to examine the merits of non-violent social control in general, but also those of the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* in particular. The particular conclusions regarding the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* can alone enable us to come to any general conclusions regarding the non-violent means of social control which Gandhi has in mind.

In Chapter XI we have seen that the Constructive Programme is fraught with grave inner contradictions and practical difficulties. It cannot have any effect at all on societies which are already highly industrialized or in the process of rapid industrialization. It cannot hope to make any headway in a dictatorial political system in which the Government is opposed to such a programme. It can exist only through the sufferance and protection of the state, and cannot thus be the long-term instrument for replacing the state with decentralized and voluntary socio-political associations. Particularly, in the second-order ideal society, where the power of the state, as we have seen in Part II, is considerably increased, the Constructive Programme will find it extremely difficult to make any progress in transforming the socio-political relations and paving the way for the ideal society of the first order.

The chief merit of the Constructive Programme lies in the fact

that it tends to awaken the spirit of self-rule among the people, and thus promotes Freedom in a very real sense. The constructive effort involved in the programme being entirely voluntary, and thus free, promotes Freedom in the sense of absence of compulsion. It also leads to the growth of Freedom in the sense that the discipline involved in the programme helps the acquirement of virtue and self-perfection on the part of the constructive workers. Finally, since the constructive effort enables the people to be independent of state control, at least to some extent, it fosters *swaraj* or Freedom as applied to the social organization (the different meanings of Freedom in Gandhian thought have been analysed in Chapter IV). But while the idea of the Constructive Programme is basically sound, the actual programme undertaken at any given time must be adapted to the requirements of the given situation. The specific programme laid down by Gandhi could not be the powerful means of social control he had expected it to be, as we have seen in Chapter XI, and although the central role assigned in it to *khadi* and village industries is fundamentally consistent with Gandhi's own long-term programme of social engineering, it has to be viewed, so far as Social Science is concerned, in the given context of the Indian freedom movement and the economic conditions of the time. To seek to implement a given specific programme at all times, irrespective of social, political and economic changes, is to adopt an unscientific attitude towards social control and progress. That has been the great mistake of the Gandhian organizations in present-day India like the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and the Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh. If instead of wasting valuable national resources on a highly unproductive and inefficient programme of spinning throughout the country, and depending in the process on heavy governmental subsidies and protection, these organizations had engaged themselves in organizing modern small and medium scale industries on a cooperative basis, including handloom and powerloom cooperatives, cooperative consumers', marketing and housing societies, adult education schools, etc. and identified themselves with the Community Development Programme launched by the Government of India under the Five-Year Plans (which is based on the principle of constructive self-help by the people with a maximum of 50 per cent assistance by the Government), they would probably have been truer to the ideals of Gandhi and rendered greater service to the country at the same time.

As regards *satyagraha*, it is definitely superior to war in theory in a number of ways, if war is defined in the broad sense of armed combat between individuals, groups, communities or nations for resolving a conflict of interests : (i) While war leads to the victory of one side and the defeat and subjugation, or even extermination of the other through the application of armed force, *satyagraha* is expected to lead to an agreed settlement between the contending parties, which in a sense may be termed as a victory for both. (ii) In war victory depends on superior armed might, while in *satyagraha* even physically the weakest person may achieve success. (iii) In the course of a *satyagraha* there is the opportunity and duty for either side to see and accept whatever justice may be there in the case of the other side ; but in war the rights and wrongs of the enemy's case are not examined sympathetically. Victory becomes the sole objective in a war and "my country right or wrong" the usual slogan. (iv) Apart from the physical violence used, war necessarily involves a great deal of falsehood, deception, trickery, etc. all of which amount to violence in the Gandhian sense, whereas in *satyagraha* the ultimate values are expected to be adhered to at every step. (v) In war hatred for the enemy is deliberately inculcated at the individual, group or national level, while love and respect for the opponent is a minimum precondition of *satyagraha*. (vi) Since physical power is necessary for participation in war, such participation is necessarily limited ; but since in *satyagraha* even the physically weakest can participate, logically it may involve universal participation by the masses. (vii) In *satyagraha*, since the opponent is physically unharmed, he is left free to fight for his cause again if he is unconvinced about the claim of the other side, while after a war the vanquished is seldom in a position to resume the struggle immediately. (viii) In *satyagraha* the suffering is borne entirely by the *satyagrahi* himself, while in war it is invariably inflicted on the opponent. The voluntary suffering bravely borne by the *satyagrahi* is a testimony to the fundamental and impersonal principles as distinguished from self-interest, which moves him to seek a change of the status quo ; but war provides the opportunity both for pure self-aggrandizement and for irresponsible behaviour by individuals and nations alike. (ix) Not only war, but even preparation for war involves the decline of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, while preparation for *satyagraha* involves self-control and a constructive effort which promote these values. (x) Even in theory war is

not expected to lead to a permanent resolution of the conflict ; the conflict is merely aggravated or "escalated" and the enemy incapacitated. But theoretically, a *satyagraha* is expected to resolve a conflict more or less permanently through mutual agreement.¹¹

But in practice, as we have seen, *satyagraha* cannot be the universal panacea for all social conflicts, as Gandhi expected it to be. The large body of empirical evidence, collected from a case study of sixteen major *satyagrahas* of different categories, presented in Chapter XIII, XIV and XV, and the analysis of the problems and prospects of *satyagraha* against national dictatorships and foreign invasions, shows that this technique of social control, though of considerable merit in many ways, is subject to several serious limitations, which may be summed up as follows : (i) It has a reasonable chance of success only in a relatively liberal socio-political system, in which minimum democratic freedoms like those of expression, organization, publicity, propaganda and agitation are guaranteed ; on the same logic its chances of success in a totalitarian socio-political system would be rather meagre. (ii) It has greater chances of success against an individual, a group or a Government which is sympathetic to the cause, than against a "heartless" adversary. (iii) It can succeed only when there is general support for it among the people, (iv) it has greater chances of success when well known national leaders are associated with it, especially in the case of an individual *satyagraha*, than when relatively unimportant and unknown individuals are involved. (v) Its success is often facilitated by external assistance or extraneous factors. (vi) Since there are no universally accepted criteria of Justice, even when the direct action involved in *satyagraha* results in the opponent accepting the demands of the *satyagrahi*, it is by no means certain whether the opponent has agreed with the *satyagrahi's* conception of Justice or merely yielded to what he may consider to be undue pressure. (vii) Even when it achieves apparent success, its impact often turns out to be purely emotional and temporary. (viii) It cannot hope to be a general instrument of national defence against foreign invasion in the foreseeable future, in spite of the nuclear menace.

The main reason for the relative failure of *satyagraha* is that it is based on a relatively simplistic, and, therefore, unscientific approach

¹¹ For other comparisons between war and *satyagraha* see N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, Ch. 7 ; K. Shridharani : *War Without Violence*, Ch. 10 ; Richard B. Gregg : *The Power of Non-violence*, Philadelphia, 1934.

to social conflict and its resolution. Gandhi's approach to social and political questions, as I have argued throughout this study, ignores the realities of social evolution and the deep-rooted historical, political, economic, social and cultural causes of social conflict—the given data on the basis of which alone a scientific understanding of a conflict situation and a scientific attempt to find a solution for it can be possible. But as Aldous Huxley has rightly observed, "Good intentions and personal devotion are not enough to save the world. . . . If the world is to be saved, scientific methods must be combined with good intentions and devotion. By themselves, neither goodness nor intelligence are equal to the task of changing society and individuals for the better".¹² Kenneth E. Boulding, a renowned economist and authority on conflict theory, has, I think, drawn our attention to the basic limitation of the theory of *satyagraha*, namely, its simplistic character, when he has observed: "Thus the failure of Gandhism is not a failure of Ahimsa, but a failure of *Satyagraha*. The modern world is so complex that the truth about it cannot be perceived by common sense or by mystical insight, important as these things are. We must have more delicate and quantitative sampling and processing of information provided by the methods of the social sciences if we are really to test the truth of our images of social and political systems".¹³

As we have noted in Chapter XII, Gandhi claims that *satyagraha* as a means of social control is superior to, and an effective substitute for, not only the violent methods, but also the legal and constitutional methods of social control. In the light of the findings of this study it is now obvious that this claim is exaggerated. This gives rise to two fundamental questions regarding social control in a modern state: (1) what role, if any, can *satyagraha* play as an instrument of social control, and (2) can force be altogether ruled out, as Gandhi does, as an instrument of social control? Since we have discovered that *satyagraha* is not such an efficient and exclusive means of social control as Gandhi claims it to be, the question is of the extent to which it can be used for the realization of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality as understood by Gandhi, and whether other means including force cannot be used for the same purpose.

¹² Aldous Huxley: *Ends and Means*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1940, p. 159.

¹³ Kenneth E. Boulding: "Why did Gandhi Fail?", *Gandhi Marg*, October, 1964.

I think that the answers to these questions have to be attempted separately from the point of view of individuals and groups and that of the state, for as I have explained earlier, the moral responsibilities of the former are of a different order from those of the latter.

Let us first take the use of *satyagraha* by individuals, groups and masses of people, in which Gandhi was primarily interested. It seems to me in the light of the findings of this study, that in spite of its many serious limitations, *satyagraha* in this sphere has three irreducible minimum merits. In the first place, it leads to an awakening of the socio-political consciousness and moral power of the people participating in it. The discipline involved in *satyagraha* helps the acquirement of virtue and self-perfection. A *satyagraha* is also a purely voluntary act aimed at the transformation of social relations, and it involves the free exercise of moral power. All these are different connotations of Freedom in the Gandhian sense, as explained in Chapter IV. Therefore, each *satyagraha*, truly performed (in terms of the principles explained in Chapter III and Chapter XII), is in itself a partial achievement of Freedom. As Gandhi observed during the Bardoli *satyagraha*, "Whatever awakens peoples to a sense of their wrongs, and whatever gives them strength for disciplined and peaceful resistance and habituates them to corporate suffering brings us nearer swaraj".¹⁴ Similarly, Non-violence is inherent in every act of *satyagraha*, which is, therefore, in itself a partial realization of this ultimate value. Moreover, since complete fearlessness and non-submission to any kind of authority is the keynote of *satyagraha*, even an unsuccessful *satyagraha* logically promotes Equality in a broad but fundamental sense. In other words, the logical result of every *satyagraha* is a partial achievement of the value-goal represented by Non-violence, Freedom and Equality in their Gandhian connotation, although due to the numerous limitations of this means of social control, such achievement is limited in extent, and may not lead to the resolution of the conflict concerned, or to a radical alteration of social relations. The greater the dimensions of a *satyagraha*, however, and the larger the number of people participating in it, the wider if not deeper would be the realization of the value-goal. But in so far as the desired change in social relations often remains unattained through this means, the value-realization possible through *satyagraha* would seem to be only

¹⁴ *Young India*, March 8, 1928.

infinitesimal and temporary, because values cannot be sustained by human beings (as no one was more aware than Gandhi) except in a social structure which instantiates them. Secondly, even a *satyagraha* which fails to achieve its objective generally succeeds (i.e. in a relatively liberal society) in ventilating popular grievances and focussing the attention of the community and the Government on serious disequilibria in social relations and maladjustments within the social structure. Finally, although *satyagraha* cannot always resolve a conflict, it can prevent the conflict from getting aggravated, and create a relatively peaceful atmosphere in which other non-violent means of conflict resolution can come into operation; in other words, it can often act as a palliative, though not a cure, for social conflict.

It is, therefore, not my contention that *satyagraha* has no role to play in a modern state. What I want to emphasize is that it cannot be the substitute for all other means of social control. In a modern democratic state social control is exercised by the people through the normal institutions of democracy, that is, adult franchise through secret ballot, the party system, the free press, platform and communication media, strike (which, of course, is a form of *satyagraha*, under certain conditions, according to Gandhi), parliamentary debates, various forms of peaceful agitation, etc. *Satyagraha*, it seems to me, can be regarded as one of the important means of social control in a democracy, and nothing more than that. Its special role would seem to lie in the interregnum between general elections, when direct action may be necessary on the part of the people to keep the Government under control with regard to its day-to-day administration. *Satyagraha* may also be a useful supplement to the legal and constitutional processes of social control. The Government may initiate legislation affecting special vested interests which may defy the Governmental policy directly or indirectly. In a democracy with a proper system of rule of law, the Government in such cases has to start legal proceedings against such interests — a process which is often considerably time-consuming and frustrating. *Satyagraha* by the people against the vested interests in such cases can be a very useful supplement to Governmental policies. Or it can be used to draw the attention of the parliament and the Government, which may be otherwise callous in a given situation, to specific regional or sectional grievances. Moreover, even in a democratic political system minorities of various

types may suffer from the tyranny of the majority, and can, therefore, fruitfully resort to *satyagraha* to register their protest and arouse public opinion, although such *satyagrahas* may not always be directly successful in rectifying the particular grievances concerned. One major difficulty would, of course, be that in a parliamentary democracy which is usually based on the two-party or multi-party system, party loyalties may divide the population on many occasions on the question of *satyagraha*. Members of the ruling party would tend to oppose all moves for *satyagraha* against the Government, while members of the opposition party or parties may find too many injustices, and occasions for launching *satyagraha* campaigns against the Government ostensibly for rectifying them. Similarly, a party may represent particular sectional interests, in which case it will oppose all *satyagrahas* against such interests, and may even start *satyagrahas* against the Government in defence of these interests. In terms of Gandhian thought, of course, such *satyagrahas* would not be *satyagrahas* proper, since according to Gandhi, a *satyagraha* may be launched only when there is near unanimity of opinion among the people affected and the grievance is a genuine one. But it is difficult to see how such perversion of *satyagraha* can be prevented in a democracy. Only in exceptional cases of grave discontent can public opinion be expected to cut across party loyalties and rally round a particular cause. That is indeed what a *satyagraha* ought to be like, but how the perverted forms of *satyagraha*, which are all too frequent in India, for example, and should in fact be called *durāgraha* (passionate adherence to evil), as one observer has pointed out,¹⁵ can be prevented from taking place without converting a democracy into a dictatorship, it is difficult to say.

As regards the use of force, an important distinction must be made, I think, between the use of force by the people in a democracy, either against the Government or against individuals and groups, and that against a dictatorial form of Government. In a democracy the Government can be removed through the instrumentality of adult franchise, conflicts between individuals and groups can be resolved through the rule of law, any other desired change can be brought about by influencing public opinion, the parliament and the Government through free publicity and propaganda which characterize a democratic political system. *Satyagraha* as a supple-

¹⁵ Joan V. Bondurant : *The Conquest of Violence*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1959, pp. 41-45.

mentary means of social control may also be fruitfully used for various purposes, as I have already explained, in the interregnum between elections. There would, therefore, seem to be no justification for relying on force as a means of social control by the people in a democracy. As a matter of fact, so long as the basic institutions of a democracy are in operation, the use of force by the people against the Government or by individuals and groups against one another can only undermine the foundations of democracy and lead to dictatorship by an armed minority in one form or another. The rather exceptional and individual cases in which Gandhi would regard the use of force as consistent with his ultimate values can certainly not be treated as equivalent to the deliberate and organized use of force by minority groups for their own sectional or class interests.

The use of force against a dictatorship, it seems to me, belongs to an altogether different category. A dictatorship by definition offers no scope for free elections or a peaceful change of Government by another means. It does not allow the free expression of opinion through the press, platform and other means of publicity and propaganda. In it there is no freedom of organization or of peaceful opposition to the Government. Non-violent resistance against such tyranny, as we have seen in Chapter XVI, will be extremely difficult, though not altogether impossible in every case. How, then, are the people to put an end to such tyranny and injustice without the use of arms? An armed uprising against a dictatorship may not, of course, succeed ; but that is a matter of calculation rather than of principle, and in any case, nothing else seems to have a greater chance of success. It may also be rightly contended that an armed revolution against a dictatorship will in all probability lead only to a new and different form of dictatorship. But there are many degrees and types of dictatorship, and a change of the status quo may sometimes result in progress towards the realization of goal-values in certain respects. In any case, when the choice is between cowardly submission to the oppression of a tyrannical Government and an armed uprising against it, the latter would be justified even according to Gandhian principles.

Moreover, even in a democracy an important distinction must be made between the use of force by the people and the use of force by the state, as I have argued before. The state is the guardian of the ultimate values cherished by a society, as embodied in the Constitu-

tion and the social and political conventions of that society, in a way in which no individual or group is. It is under a contract with the people, as it were, to defend these values against both internal and external attack, and to foster and promote them through all means of social control at its disposal. It has to supervise and coordinate the conflicting interests of different individuals and groups composing the society, and to conciliate the claim of one value against that of another. Gandhi wants the state to defend itself non-violently against external aggression and thus safeguard Freedom consistently with Non-violence. The people so far have not given the mandate to any state to sacrifice Freedom for the sake of Non-violence, and since there is so far no proof that the state can be defended against external attack through non-violent means, the state, as I have argued in Chapter XVII, cannot rule out armed resistance as a means of repelling an external aggression. As regards the internal means of social control, it is not very clear what Gandhi wants the state to do, so long as it exists. We have seen in Chapter VI that he wants people to control anti-social elements through voluntary effort rather than with the help of the authority of the state, and the police to be "a body of reformers". But he nowhere states, so far as I can see, that the members of the Government should start *satyagrahas* against elements of the population which have violated the social discipline representing the ultimate values. Indeed, social control by the state is a subject which he has not discussed at all (except expressing his disapproval of the army, the police, and ideally of the state itself), and this constitutes, it seems to me, a major gap in the theory of social control propounded by him. In any case, *satyagraha*, as we have seen, is not always successful even when organized by private individuals, groups and masses ; it will in all probability be much less successful if organized by the Government against the people.

The state cannot abjure the use of force as a means of social control if it is to fulfil its obligation as the guardian of social solidarity and of the ultimate values. If one group uses force against another, the state has to intervene with greater force to curb such violence and infringement of Freedom. If a minority seeks to overthrow the Government through unconstitutional means, the state must suppress it through force. If a few corrupt businessmen adulterate medicine or food, thus endangering the lives of millions of people, the state, in order to fulfil its responsibility, must not hesitate to

use force against such people, if necessary. All judicial punishments, even those other than capital punishment, involve the use of force either directly or indirectly. Violation of "law and order", which is maintained by every democratic state for preserving and promoting the ultimate values cherished by the society, has to be punished by the state through the enforcement of law, including the use of armed force, whenever necessary. After all, the fact that there were 2,073 cases of police firing in India between August 15, 1947, and March 31, 1967, in which 1,875 people were killed and 4,984 injured,¹⁶ and that during the same period India was involved in three major wars — two with Pakistan and one with China (apart from several border clashes with both the countries) — is not evidence of the ability of the state to abjure the use of force, especially because the Government of India has been run during this period by some of the closest associates of Gandhi who were supposed to have been trained by the latter in the theory and practice of *satyagraha* for several decades.

The fact is that the state is, as Gandhi suspected, a political association whose ultimate authority rests on force. In a democratic system the use of this force is regulated by the will of the society ; but even a democratic state would have no *raison d'être* as the common administrative authority if it abandoned the use of force as a means of social control. As Sri Aurobindo has rightly observed : "If a common administrative authority is essential in order to bind together the constituent parts of a nation in the forming, the first need and claim of that central authority is to have in its hands the means to prevent mortal dissidence and violent strife that would weaken or break up the organic formation. The monarchy or any other central body must effect this and partly by moral force and psychological suggestion. For it stands as the symbol of union and imposes respect for their visible and consecrated unity on the constituent parts, however strong may be their local, racial, clan or class instincts of separatism. It embodies the united authority of the nation entitled to impose its moral force as greater than the moral right of the separate parts, even if they be something like sub-nations, and to command their obedience. But in the last resort, since the motives may at any moment fail when revolting interests or sentiments are strong and passions run high, the governing body must

¹⁶ UNI report based on figures supplied by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Calcutta, April 17, 1967, p. 5.

have always the greatest military force at its command so as to overawe the constituent elements and prevent the outbreak of a disruptive civil war. Or if the civil war or rebellion comes about, as can always happen when the monarchy or the government is identified closely with one of the parties in a quarrel or itself the subject of dissatisfaction and attack, then it must have so great a predominance of force behind it as to be morally sure of victory in the conflict".¹⁷

It may be argued, of course, that even in terms of Gandhian thought, *satyagraha* would be a universal means of conflict resolution only in the ideal society in which the interests to be defended through *satyagraha* have been acquired through non-violent methods, and where the people have attained perfect self-control through a wholly successful *sadhana* for the inculcation of the ultimate values in their personal lives. But there are two major difficulties about this reasoning. In the first place, it begs the question ; for *satyagraha* itself is supposed to be a necessary aid to the constructive effort for building a non-violent society as well as for the *sadhana* of self-control in the process of social transformation. Secondly, it involves a hypothesis which is so unrelated to the condition of any existing state as to be almost transcendental from the viewpoint of Social Science.

There is no escape from the conclusion that in practice social conflict in a contemporary state would have to be resolved through a plural and complex process involving the use of the constitutional method, *satyagraha* and force. The state cannot in any case abjure the use of force altogether. Constitutional processes, wherever these exist, must also be made use of by both the government and the people. The use of force by the people for the resolution of conflicts among themselves can and should be replaced by *satyagraha*, wherever the constitutional processes are inadequate for the purpose. *Satyagraha* should also be the only extra-constitutional means to be used by the people against the state, with the possible exception of certain types of dictatorships. From the practical point of view, Gandhi himself would perhaps have no basic objection to this line of reasoning. The state and government exist in what I have called his second-order ideal society, in which it would be impossible to have only those means of social control which are truly consistent

¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo : *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1950, pp. 248-49.

with the ultimate values. A superb constitutionalist himself, he would in all probability approve of the use of the constitutional process by both the government and the people so long as something closely approximating the first-order ideal society is not reached. For practical purposes, therefore, the difference between the Gandhian view and that of modern social scientists regarding the use of *satyagraha* would be one of degree rather than of kind.

To sum up Gandhi's contribution to the problem of ends and means, including his contribution regarding the formulation of specific ends and specific means, is to sum up the strength and weakness of his entire social and political thought. The end, as we have seen, consists of a value-goal, explained and examined in Part I, and a concrete social goal which can be classified into two orders, from the viewpoint of Social Science, representing a process of successive approximation, which has been discussed in Part II. The means consist of the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha*, the merits of which have been logically and empirically tested in Part III.

The value-goal, as we have seen, is Justice, which is a synthesis of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality. As regards Non-violence, Gandhi's contribution lies in treating it as an end rather than a means. Non-violence, it is not always realized, is an abstract noun and not a verb. He insists on non-violent means, because he believes that the use of force is inconsistent with this end. Purely religious leaders apart, no other social and political thinker has, I believe, posed Non-violence (an attribute of Love for Gandhi) as an end of social action in this manner. The ultimate value of Peace or Fraternity, accepted by various schools of social and political thought, is at a much lower level of abstraction and relatively "adulterated" with various types of violence short of force, and probably also with a certain amount of force. This high level of abstraction and "purity" involved in the concept of Non-violence is also its basic limitation. It is a goal which has been formulated by Gandhi in disregard of the biological evolution of man and the limits of human capability as evidenced from history, and is almost amoral on the ground of the impossibility of its attainment. Gandhi, of course, admits that the goal of Non-violence as defined by him is unrealizable in practice, and compares it to Euclid's point or straight line. But the type of abstraction which has some utility for a pure and abstract science like geometry has

very little utility for Social Science which is essentially applied and practical in nature, especially that branch of it with which Gandhi is primarily concerned, namely, the theory of action. This unreality explains the non-acceptance of Non-violence as an ultimate value by societies and states in the contemporary world. As regards Freedom, Gandhi's contribution lies in emphasizing the fact that it is not simply a question of environmental reorganization, but also an "inner" quality or orientation of the mind which has to be acquired through *sadhana*. His insistence that Freedom belongs to the individual alone, who is an end-in-itself, and not to any larger entity like society or state, is also of profound significance for contemporary social and political thought. But a serious inadequacy of the Gandhian concept of Freedom is that it provides very little scope for the creative self-expression of man in any but the moral sphere, especially as manifested in the conquest of matter in particular and nature in general, in scientific and technological progress. This has given an unreality to Freedom as understood by Gandhi and led to its apparent non-acceptance by modern thinkers, societies and states. So far as Equality is concerned, Gandhi's contribution lies in pointing out that it is something much broader than mere economic equality, and in particular that there can be no Equality in the absence of Freedom. But partly on account of his anti-scientific and anti-technological bias, and partly due to his under-estimation of the vital importance of the economic urge in man, he presents a picture of economic equality which amounts to the equal distribution of poverty and thus runs counter to one of the most powerful aspirations of our time.

As regards the first-order ideal society, which represents the maximum practicable consummation of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality and is thus also *Ram Raj* or the divine society according to Gandhi, its characteristics naturally reflect the deficiencies (and the unreality resulting from them) of the ultimate values. It is an abstraction, on Gandhi's own admission, like Euclid's point or straight line, and has very little significance for Social Science. Even in this hypothetical ideal society, however, as I have tried to show, there are features which would be inconsistent with some of the ultimate values ; for example, its completely agrarian, non-technological and communitarian character would be inconsistent with Gandhi's own conceptions of Non-violence and Freedom, as I have argued in Chapters VI and VIII, and the

hereditary *varnas* would militate against both Freedom and Equality (see Chapter IX). The outline picture of the first-order ideal society presented by Gandhi is very similar to the classical anarchist blueprint of a certain type as put forward by Godwin and Tolstoy — without state, without government and without machinery — and there is practically nothing original in it, with the exception of the institution of Trusteeship and Gandhi's suggestion that the vertical organization of this society might be based on the four-fold *varna* system of the Hindus. These anarchist ideas, needless to say, are as unrelated to contemporary social realities (and, therefore, as unimportant from the point of view of Social Science), as were those of Godwin and Tolstoy. The second-order ideal society, which represents relative non-violence, freedom and equality, resembles democratic socialism in many ways, although there are important differences between the democratic socialist approach and the Gandhian approach to social organization. There are important contradictions between the different aspects of this social structure, especially between the restricted sector of large-scale industry and public utilities under state ownership or control on the one hand, and the vast sector of *khadi* and other handicrafts on the other ; and in any case it is difficult to see how this second-order ideal society can be expected to lead to the first-order ideal society, any more than the Dictatorship of the Proletariat can be expected to lead to the stateless and classless society (see Chapter XI). Even this society is, however, fundamentally anti-scientific and anti-technological in character. Even here Gandhi's tendency to eliminate science and technology as far as practicable, rather than to control their undesirable consequences through social reorganization, is marked, and to that extent it is still unrelated to the realities of contemporary human society. But in spite of its many serious limitations, the second-order ideal society is still infinitely more realistic than the abstract ideal of the first order, and has to be taken far more seriously by Social Science than the former as a social goal. The chief merit of this social structure is its attempted reconciliation of the ultimate values of Freedom and Equality, which are in conflict in Capitalism, Communism and Fascism alike, through state ownership and control of a strategic sector combined with drastic decentralization of power at all levels.

As regards the two means of social control advocated by Gandhi, namely, the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha*, I have already

summarized their strength and weakness in this chapter, and there is, therefore, no need to recapitulate them here. It may only be noted in conclusion that they represent a fundamental contribution to the problems and methods of social control, but they are not sufficient unto themselves and cannot be expected to replace altogether all other means of social control including legal and constitutional means. In particular, the use of force cannot be abjured by the state so long as it exists, either internally or externally, nor can it be totally abandoned by the people in a dictatorship. Social conflict, like social change in general, is caused by a plurality of factors, and the resolution of social conflict also requires a plurality of solutions.

The relative unreality characteristic of some major aspects of the social and political thought of Gandhi discussed in this study is the result of Gandhi's non-evolutionary, ahistorical and simplistic approach to social phenomena, which are all rightly frowned upon by modern Social Science. Nevertheless, the fundamental contributions made by Gandhi to social and political thought, especially, those regarding the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* as means of social control, deserve serious further research and experimentation all over the world.



APPENDIX

A POLEMICAL NOTE ON THE DYNAMICS OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT

I HAVE argued in this study that, so far as the social and political thought of Gandhi is concerned (as distinguished from his private metaphysical beliefs), it is possible to divide his views on the social structure into two levels or orders, one of which can be regarded as an ultimate ideal and the other as an approximation (to Gandhi's own mind) to it — the first representing the maximum practicable consummation of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, and the second representing only a relative consummation of these values. The ultimate social ideal which I have called the first-order ideal, is characterized by a form of pure anarchy, and the relative ideal, which I have termed as the second-order ideal, by something resembling (though in many ways different from) a form of democratic socialism. One of the most important characteristics of the social and political thought of Gandhi, which is evident from this study, but which I want to emphasize here further, is its remarkable dynamism. This dynamism is found in different degrees in the detailed development of what I have called the ideal societies of the first and the second orders, as well as in the interconnection between the two.

I have argued that while Gandhi had a more or less clear picture of the first-order social ideal from the time of *Hind Swaraj*, he did not start with any clear picture of the second-order ideal ; that this ideal gradually developed under situational compulsions over a long period of time, representing in each case what Gandhi considered to be the maximum practicable approximation to the ultimate ideal at the given moment ; and that it appears as the second-order ideal only in retrospect and from the point of view of Social Science. Even the first-order ideal, however, did not exist in a fully developed form in *Hind Swaraj* ; it was developed subsequently by Gandhi with regard to a few details. For example, although the idea of non-violent resistance in all spheres of society was there in *Hind Swaraj*, it was only during the Second World War that he advocated

non-violent defence against foreign aggression and tried to work out a rough scheme for it. Similarly, although the terms "trustee" and "trusteeship" occur in *Hind Swaraj*, and in 1916 Gandhi also delivered a speech at the Benares Hindu University in which he appealed to the "richly bedecked noblemen" seated on the dais to strip themselves of their jewellery and "hold it in trust" for the common people, it was not until 1930 that he first presented his scheme of Trusteeship in detail, and, in fact, he continued to develop the scheme further subsequently.¹ The idea of the functional organization of the ideal society on the basis of the four-fold *varna* also does not seem to have originated before the end of 1934. Again, the conception of village *swaraj*, though inherent in *Hind Swaraj*, was developed by Gandhi continuously almost till the last days of his life. The same is true of his idea of basic education, which was there in *Hind Swaraj* in a rudimentary form, but was not fully developed by him until 1937.

The development of the second-order ideal, however, shows a much wider range of variability and dynamism. Even in *Hind Swaraj*, of course, the rational basis of the second-order ideal, as well as some of its essential features, are clearly laid down by Gandhi. Thus although ideally he regards all complicated machinery as undesirable, he argues that these can be abolished only through a gradual process. With reference to his plea for the rejection of machine-made articles, he observes: "It is not to be conceived that all men will do all these things at one time or that some men will give up all machine-made things at once. But, if the thought is sound, we shall always find out what we can give up and gradually cease to use it. What a few may do, others will copy, and the movement will grow like the coconut of the mathematical problem."² In other words, the immediate first step will not be a declaration of war on all machinery, but a moratorium on the growth of all new and complex machinery. This is obviously to be followed by the gradual abolition of all complex machinery. The same reasoning is obvious from his views on the existing mills of India at the time he wrote *Hind Swaraj*. "It is no easy task", he says, "to do away with a thing that is established. We cannot condemn millowners; we can but pity them. It is too much to expect them to give up

¹ See N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, Chs. 4 and 5.

² *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, The Publications Division, Government of India, Vol. X, 1963, p. 59.

their mills, but we may implore them not to increase them. If they would be good they would gradually contract their business".³ He admits that a printing press, which is a relatively complex machine, would be necessary even for printing *Hind Swaraj*, but this, he argues, is unavoidable in the given situation. "This is one of those instances," he observes, "... which demonstrate that sometimes poison is used to kill poison.... Do not, therefore, forget the main thing. It is necessary to realize that machinery is bad. We shall then be able gradually to do away with it. Nature has not provided any way whereby we may reach a desired goal all of a sudden. If, instead of welcoming machinery as a boon, we should look upon it as an evil, it would ultimately go."⁴

But although *Hind Swaraj* thus contains Gandhi's own exposition of what I have called the second-order social ideal, and substantiates my contention that the Gandhian method of social transformation is one of successive approximation, it only gives us the point of departure rather than the culmination of the second-order ideal. As we have seen in Part II, the practical form, or the second order, of Gandhi's social ideal involves not only the acceptance of the state and most of its political apparatus including governments, parliaments, armed forces, police, etc., but also of a large number of basic, key and large-scale industries using complicated machinery, state ownership or control not only of all such industries, but even of land. These practical ideas, growing out of Gandhi's method of successive approximation as explained by him in *Hind Swaraj*, developed over a wide range and rather radically, due to the situational compulsions explained in Chapter VI, especially the ideological thinking within the Congress over time.

This essential dynamism of Gandhian thought, I have tried to argue, is to be found also in his own view regarding the interconnection between the remote, or first-order, social ideal and the practical, or second-order, social ideal. It bears repetition that the development of Gandhi's practical ideas, piece-meal and under situational necessities, over a large number of years, does not in any way represent the abandonment of the first-order ideal of anarchism; rather, it represents a step in the direction of the ultimate ideal. We have seen that Gandhi continued to adhere to, and even develop, his anarchist ideal till the last days of his life. In October, 1938,

³ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

after going through *Hind Swaraj* all over again, he observed that he "could not revise a single idea".⁵ He vigorously expressed his ideal of a completely non-violent and stateless rural society as late as 1946 and 1947, as we have seen in Chapter VI. At the same time, his practical ideas, which are apparently different from his absolute ideal, underwent a radical development over the space of his political life. How are these two phenomena to be reconciled? My answer that the second-order ideal is to be regarded as an approximation to, or a step towards, the first-order ideal, that the two orders of Gandhi's social ideal, as I have analysed it, are, to Gandhi's mind, only temporally and not logically separate, seems to me to be the only correct explanation, for the following reasons. In the first place, it is consistent with Gandhi's view that ultimate values cannot be realized in personal or social life through a sudden effort ; they have to be gradually approximated through the *sadhana* of full effort at each step. Secondly, it is consistent with the idea of social transformation through a process of successive approximation, as expressed by Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj* and on many subsequent occasions. He explained time and again, as we have seen, that the absolute social ideal is like Euclid's point or straight line which is never entirely realizable in practice ; but that we have to keep this ideal in view in order to make progress in the work of social transformation as we have done in geometry. I have already quoted his views regarding the basic manner in which machinery is to be gradually replaced. Let me take two other examples. In 1940 Gandhi sought to resolve the dilemma between his acceptance of the state and his belief that the state is based on violence thus : "A Government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent.... But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it."⁶ Thus the state is to be made increasingly non-violent, until probably it can be replaced, largely if not wholly, by the voluntary associations of the people built up through the Constructive Programme. Similarly, he attempted to resolve the dilemma between his acceptance of the state and his view that the existence of the state is detrimental to real *swaraj* in these words : "Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of government control, whether it is foreign government

⁵ *Harijan*, October 14, 1938.

⁶ *Harijan*, March 9, 1940.

or whether it is national".⁷ That is to say, the state exists as a necessity in the given stage of social evolution, but it is to be gradually replaced by the autonomous and voluntary associations of the people, to be brought into existence through their own corporate and constructive endeavour independently of the state. Thirdly, my interpretation is consistent with the means through which Gandhi expects the social transformation to be gradually brought about, namely, the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha*. The Constructive Programme is expected to lead to the growth of autonomous and voluntary socio-political institutions which would ensure, in ever increasing degrees, the consummation of the ultimate values of Non-violence, Freedom and Equality, or in one word, Justice, while *satyagraha* is meant to be the universal instrument for resolving all conflicts between opposing interests which would develop in the process of the Constructive Programme. It would appear from our analysis of the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* in Part III, moreover, that these two instruments of social control are not supposed to be temporary expedients, but perennial means of social transformation which would operate ceaselessly until the first-order social ideal, or something closely approximating it, is reached, and renders the application of these means wholly or largely unnecessary.

For these reasons certain other interpretations of the dynamics of Gandhian thought seem to me to be rather unsatisfactory. Thus one of the existing schools of thought believes that there are two Gandhis—one private and personal, and the other social and public. The first Gandhi is against the state and against machinery, the second advocates a relatively powerful state and heavy and large-scale industries. Haridas T. Majumdar, for example, has distinguished between "Gandhi, the individual with his private utopia, and Gandhi, the citizen-leader, whose utopia must conform to social realities".⁸ But this view seems to me to be quite mistaken, for several reasons. Apart from the fact that there is no warrant whatsoever for assuming that Gandhi's views regarding what I have called the first-order ideal society, expressed by him continuously from *Hind Swaraj* until his death, were somehow merely his private views which he did not want the people to take seriously, this kind of interpretation makes nonsense of the Constructive Programme

⁷ *Young India*, August 6, 1925.

⁸ Haridas T. Majumdar : *Mahatma Gandhi, A Prophetic Voice*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1963, pp. 83-86.

and *satyagraha*. The society in which Gandhi lived did not certainly represent what I have called the second-order ideal society, and which Majumdar regards as the goal of the public and social Gandhi. Are we to believe then that Gandhi wanted the Constructive Programme and *satyagraha* to be used only for the purpose of transforming the existing social reality into the second-order ideal society (as I have called it) and then to stop? Did he, in fact, abandon the first-order ideal for the sake of expediency? Apart from the arguments advanced above against this kind of assumption, we have Gandhi's own statement on the subject: "I am not aware of having done a single thing in my life as a matter of expedience. I have ever held that the highest morality is also the highest expedience. . . There are eternal principles which admit of no compromise, and one must be prepared to lay down one's life in the practice of them."⁹ Or was Gandhi a hypocrite who preached something quite different from what he privately believed in? The factual material and analytical reasoning presented in this study would make it impossible, it seems to me, to answer these questions in the affirmative.

A second view is that there was a radical evolution of the social and political thought of Gandhi during his long political career in South Africa and India, that he started with the goal of an anarchist society without machinery and without state and government but ended up by accepting the state, a good deal of machinery and the other paraphernalia of modern civilization, and even a large measure of state ownership and control. "Just as Gandhi's ideas about machinery became modified between 1909 and 1931 and later", says N. K. Bose, it is interesting that from about 1942 he began also advocate the idea of collective ownership".¹⁰ But this view also seems to me to be quite untenable. As I have already explained, the anarchistic first-order ideal, and the second-order ideal which Gandhi considered to be more practicable in the short run, coexisted in his mind even when he wrote *Hind Swaraj*. He continually developed both the social ideals all his life, although the second-order ideal, being the result of situational compulsions, was more variable and dynamic than the first. Contrary to what Bose says, Gandhi accepted machinery as a practical necessity, as I have shown, even in *Hind Swaraj*. Similarly, his advocacy of

⁹ *Gandhi, His Life and Work*, Karnatak Publishing House, Bombay, 1944, p. 363.

¹⁰ N. K. Bose : *Studies in Gandhism*, Calcutta, 1962, p. 24,

state or collective ownership of certain important sectors of the economy can be clearly traced back to at least 1924, as I have shown in Chapter VI ; they did not develop after 1942, as Bose would have us believe. If Bose's view is correct, it is difficult to see why Gandhi should constantly say that the ideal society without the state and without complicated machinery is like Euclid's point or straight line, keeping which in view we have to make progress with regard to social transformation as we have done in geometry. Indeed, the factual material presented in Chapters VI, VII and VIII would seem to prove beyond any doubt that Gandhi did not historically move from one social ideal to another ; he only visualized two orders of his social ideal simultaneously. And unless we are to believe that Gandhi was knowingly and wilfully contradicting himself all his life, there can be no other conclusion except that he was all the time visualizing one order of his social ideal as an approximation, however remote, to the other.

Yet another view has been expressed by Joan V. Bondurant, who says that there is no system whatever in Gandhian thought. "Gandhi's political philosophy is, indeed, elusive", she says.¹¹ She goes on to add : "It would, of course, be incorrect to suppose that Gandhi thought of retaining the state as some intermediate step in a determined progress towards anarchical society, in the manner of Marxist thought".¹² The reason, she says, is that while in the Marxist system social reorganization begins only after the existing state has been overthrown, in *satyagraha* there is a weapon which enables a non-violent citizen to attack and alter the character of the state all the time. Now, I have argued myself earlier in this study that a major conceptual difference between the Gandhian and Marxian schemes of social engineering is that the former is a continuous one, while the latter is a "kinky" or discrete process, the revolution marking a major turning point. But I do not see how this fact can prove that there is no "intermediate step" in the Gandhian view of social development. Two rather important distinctions between the dynamics of Marxian and Gandhian thought must be understood in this connection. First, Gandhi, like Marx, was interested in creating a new type of society that would be vastly different

¹¹ Joan V. Bondurant : *Conquest of Violence*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1959, p. 147.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 183.

from the existing ones. In fact, he often likened his basic objective in this respect to that of the socialists. For example, he told a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in September 1939 : "In the socialists' language, there will be a new structure of society, a new order of things. I also am aspiring after a new order of things that will astonish the world".¹³ I have also argued before that the ultimate values which Marx expected to be consummated in his ideal society were not basically different from those of Gandhi. But Gandhi contended, unlike Marx, that the ultimate values could not be realized through means which were laden with opposite values, namely, the armed revolution and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. Secondly, while Marx believed that the ideal society could be brought into existence quite quickly in these two successive steps, Gandhi, who unlike Marx was not in a hurry, believed that the ideal society could be brought into existence only through an infinite series of steps, each based on end-creating means, over a vast period of time. "A few thousand years", he said, "are but a speck in the vast time circle. Someone has to make a beginning with a faith that will not flinch."¹⁴ But Gandhi considered it a fruitless effort to prescribe, or even to speculate on, all the steps in the series. One step was enough for him, as he often said after Newman. So he recommended one immediate and practical step on each issue he was faced with during his long career as the socio-political leader of the Indian people — a step that he regarded as the only practicable approximation, in the given situation, to his ultimate social ideal. It is the total range of these practical first steps which shows a more or less clear pattern from the point of view of Social Science, and which I have called the second-order social ideal of Gandhi. There is, to Gandhi's own mind, a vast temporal interregnum between this ideal and the absolute or first-order ideal — an interregnum which is logically bridgeable through successive approximation, but which Gandhi has deliberately chosen not to fill up with practical details.

¹³ *Gandhi, His Life and Work*, Karnatak Publishing House, Bombay, 1944, p. 105. See also N. K. Bose : *Selections From Gandhi*, p. 95.

¹⁴ *Young India*, September 3, 1925.

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