

ETHICAL EXPERIENCE AND POLITICAL EXISTENCE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHICAL EXPERIENCE
AND POLITICAL EXISTENCE IN THE
WORKS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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Abstract

The most common academic interest in Mahatma Gandhi centers around the theory and practice of Satyagraha. This thesis departs, in part, from this because it focuses upon the Satyagrahi. Every Satyagraha presupposes a Satyagrahi. Mahatma Gandhi was a Satyagrahi - a being in quest of truth. This quest consisted of two major components: the experiential and the existential. Ethics formed the basis of Gandhi's experiential quest, while political existence provided the forum in which he could experiment with his beliefs and convictions. Satyagraha was, therefore, a direct consequence of this intimate relationship between experience and existence. What is significant about Gandhi is that he did not dissociate his spiritual search from the struggle for political justice. He aimed at harmonizing the two seemingly opposite but complementary aspects of life into a meaningful whole - the ideal with the practical, the rational with the emotional and the religious with the secular.

This study emphasizes the qualities of a disciplined Satyagrahi rather than the techniques of Satyagraha because the essence of the Satyagrahic struggle is rooted in the nature of the Satyagrahi. In effect, this thesis argues that all revolutions rest fundamentally on the quality of the revolutionary since the nature of any protest is bound to be determined by those who wage it. This is more acute in Satyagraha because it is the true expression of a conscious being. A Satyagrahi is a conscious entity in the highest sense. The unity of his life and thought conditions the purity of his means. Whereas most revolutionaries aim at transforming the "outer",

a Satyagrahi concentrates on the "inner" in the hope of bringing about change through "self" transformation. No such change can be possible unless the Satyagrahi himself transcends the narrow limits of cognition - the exoteric and the esoteric aspects of experience. Chapter I and II are devoted to exploring the metaphysical foundations of Gandhi's tradition. They elaborate upon those aspects of the philosophical thought of India which are relevant to a Satyagrahi's understanding. Chapter III discusses and analyses the two complementary components of Satyagraha - the experiential and the existential. Chapter IV examines the way Gandhi's contemporaries viewed him. It outlines and interprets some basic tenets of his philosophy. Finally, Chapter V summarizes the relationship between the act and the actor, Satyagraha and the Satyagrahi, and ends with an assessment.

In emphasizing the role of the Satyagrahi in the context of the ethical experience, this thesis seeks to shift the emphasis in Gandhiana scholarship from Satyagraha to Satyagrahi. It argues that there is a need for critical re-evaluation of the relationship between Satyagraha and the Satyagrahi. That need has to do with the experiential aspect of realization. It is not enough to initiate a Satyagraha. It is of crucial importance to provide a milieu which would foster the virtues of ethical living and inculcate a "wholistic" view of life, in harmony with the 'self' and 'others'.

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I sincerely dedicate this work to my parents, teachers and friends.

PREFACE

This thesis deals with the concept of Satyagraha,¹ but focuses on the Satyagrahi. Satyagraha bridges the gap between Indian ethical thought, Gandhi's experiences and the political existence of a people.

Satyagraha and the Satyagrahi are inextricably linked. The quality of one determines the other. Although Satyagraha can be a political movement, the Satyagrahi cannot be invented for a specific time and place. Being a Satyagrahi presupposes a number of things. It presupposes, above all, a conscious being who is compassionate. The quality of his life - thought, word and action - will determine the texture of a Satyagraha.

Gandhi was a Satyagrahi, consciously trying to lead a life of spiritual purity. To him Satyagraha meant living in Truth and nonviolence, which is love in the broadest sense.² His philosophy manifested itself in his diverse contacts with society as a whole.

To be true to such religion one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life. Realisation of truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in, and identification with, this limitless ocean of life. Hence, for me, there

¹Since the Sanskrit word has gained sufficient currency in the English language, Satyagraha, and derivatives and cognates thereof, will not hereafter be italicised.

²"Of late, instead of saying God is Truth I have been saying Truth is God, in order more fully to define my Religion,...nothing so completely describes my God as Truth. Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all sparks of Truth." M.K. Gandhi, in S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, eds., Contemporary Indian Philosophy (New York: Allen and Unwin, 1936), p. 21. Please note that Truth refers to Sat and truth to sat. Both these terms are explained further in the thesis.

is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it. Social service here must be taken to include every department of life. In this scheme there is nothing low, nothing high. For all is one, though we seem to be many.³

Gandhi's Satyagraha was indeed the fruit of such deep and abiding conviction. He did not suddenly acquire it. Each conscious experiment with Truth led Gandhi to a deeper experience and awareness. Gandhi's experiments were not the first or the last of their kind, for he was greatly aided by his rich native traditions. Steeped as he was in the cultural milieu of India's past, Satyagraha further strengthened his belief that Truth is invincible. Gandhi was equally convinced that those who abide by Truth can conquer all suffering. To him, abiding in Truth meant adherence to the dictates of nonviolence, of his own conscience. He acknowledged, above all else, the primacy of the spirit. This total dedication to Truth disarmed his sworn enemies, baffled his critics and intrigued many of his co-workers. Satyagraha literally means the appeal of Truth.

Satyagraha is the Gandhian means of nonviolent active resistance. It implies firmness in the cause of Truth. Underlying Satyagraha is a comprehensive philosophy which draws its support from the major foundations of ethical thought. It refers to a fundamental belief in the perfectibility of the human being and the unity of life. Such philosophy clearly identifies the real and the ideal at the metaphysical level. Physical, and indeed intellectual, action emanating from this realisation obviates the dichotomy that empirical knowledge might suggest. Satyagraha is, therefore, an instru-

³ibid.

ment of wisdom rather than knowledge.⁴

The opening chapter of this thesis comprises a brief discussion of the enduring concerns of philosophy, both Eastern and Western. The close relationship that Indian philosophy has forged with religion is pointed out. Philosophy in the East, unlike the West, has sought an identity with a way of life. The proponent's own personal commitment to his vision is taken for granted. This assumption underlies the definition of philosophy as darśana, which means perceiving or looking deeply into the mysteries of reality.⁵ For the Indian philosopher "seeing" is inseparable from "being". A Buddha or Śankara or Ramanuja could not occupy the place he does in Indian philosophy if he had not been what he "saw". Gandhi distinctly belongs to this philosophic tradition of self-realised souls (mahātmāna), who withstand the acid test of practising what they preach.⁶

Gandhi did not systematically elaborate on his own philosophy. He could hardly disengage himself from his social action to satisfy the curiosity of intellectuals. It is for others to formulate from his thoughts, words and deeds, a coherent system of philosophy.

With its implicit and explicit dedication to nonviolence, Gandhi's philosophy, in its essence, suggests an inevitable comparison with the basic

⁴Here wisdom refers to jñana and knowledge to vijñana. Both these terms have specific meaning in Indian philosophy. Chapters I and II deal with them at greater length.

⁵S. Dasgupta, Development of Moral Philosophy in India (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 5.

⁶"Though Mahatma Gandhi is not an academical philosopher, one can best understand Indian idealism by studying his life and work. Though he does not give us a system of philosophy in writing, yet...in him does the statement that Indian Philosophy is a way of life and not merely a way of thought find a worthy illustration." P.T. Raju, Idealistic Thought of India (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953), p. 292.

tenets of Buddhism, although to this writer's knowledge no such attempt at comparison has been made so as to show clearly the influence of Buddhism on Gandhi or the reasons for the lack of emphasis in that direction by Gandhi himself. Also included in Chapter I, therefore, is a brief outline of the striking resemblances and dissimilarities between Gandhian thought and Buddhism. The discussion also evaluates the training of the future Satyagrahi in the light of esoteric experience. It is suggested that a significant part of Satyagraha relies on intuitive insight. Without taking that into account the Satyagrahi would remain incomplete; without that element Satyagraha would remain a lifeless caricature of a stereotyped technique.

Chapter II deals with the ethical foundations of traditional Indian thought. In order to understand the Gandhian response of Satyagraha it is also important to familiarize oneself with the ethos of the Indian people. In this chapter some of the major Hindu concepts involving Satyagraha are traced.

To make himself acceptable to the majority of Indians Gandhi had to communicate with them in their own symbols. The fact that Gandhi grew up in the Hindu tradition facilitated that mode of interaction. He could explain, for instance, the reliance on Truth as dharma (primary obligation) and expect to be understood. The strict austerity of Gandhi's demeanour won him wide acclaim. It was partly because the sage has always been revered in Indian society that Gandhi's spiritual personality drew recognition. However, in order not to mislead the reader in an oversimplification of the above fact, there is a detailed exposition of the concept of dharma (duty)

to illustrate what Gandhi was up against.⁷

Satyagraha, as we know it today, is intimately related to the life and work of one man - Gandhi. Chapter III is divided into two parts. Part I deals with the biographical aspects of Gandhi's own experiences. Some outstanding relationships and events are selected to view Gandhi as a Satyagrahi.⁸ The chapter traces Gandhi's ethical growth from childhood through adulthood. Dealing with Gandhi the individual the discussion focuses on how individuals and happenings further strengthened the arguments in favour of nonviolence and Gandhi's search for pure means to reach pure ends.

Part II deals with the socio-political existence of the Indian people in an historical perspective. It discusses the major environmental forces that helped the emergence and development of Satyagraha as a viable means of direct political action. This part is divided into two sections: (a) Kathiawad, and (b) India. The section on India is further sub-divided into four areas of environmental milieu, namely economic, political, social, and ethical. Chapter III thus brings out the complexity of studying Gandhi in relation to his environment and the impact each had on the other.

Chapter IV is an exploration of how others view Gandhi. It is based on my recordings and recollections of some rare conversations with eminent Gandhians - scholars, journalists, writers, artists, social workers,

⁷In Chapters I and II, the similarity of concept between Reality, Truth and higher wisdom should not be overlooked. It is only intended to recapitulate and remind oneself of the inherent unity in Indian thought. Whereas the first chapter deals with these in relationship to Buddhism, the second views them more in conjunction with the Vedantic and Samkhya schools of philosophy.

⁸These are based on Gandhi's own writings such as his Collected Works and Autobiography along with major biographies of him. See Bibliography for details.

politicians, statesmen, administrators - as well as the general public, during an extended visit to India. The unbounded co-operation and enthusiasm, not to mention the hospitality of individuals, groups and institutions that I imposed myself on for those four months, resulted in immense data which it would be unrealistic to attempt to analyse in its entirety within this thesis. Nonetheless, the rare insights on Gandhi and his works by his close associates and critical, at times even hostile, opponents make this chapter a precious record for the writer.⁹

Chapter V forms the conclusion of the thesis. Satyagraha emerges as a superior means of solving the socio-political conflicts. But crucial to Satyagraha is the availability of a Satyagrahi. Unless a society cultivates the virtues of Satyagraha, it will fail to nurture the Satyagrahic spirit. Without the Satyagrahi, a Satyagraha can hardly be, let alone accomplish anything. The Satyagrahi is the indispensable ingredient of Satyagraha. The individual must first initiate it according to the dictates of one's conscience. Once that beginning has been made, the rest will follow by itself. A Satyagraha without a Satyagrahi is like an end without a means. Gandhi devoted considerable time and energy to the development of the Satyagrahic spirit. But he may have overlooked certain important aspects.

⁹The author is immensely grateful for the generosity and support received from the following. Travel to India was mainly sponsored by the School of Graduate studies and partly by a grant from the Dean of Social Science Faculty of McMaster University. Travels in India were sponsored by a special grant from the Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi and supported by the Gandhi Peace Foundation of India. Especial thanks are due to Visva-Bharati University, the Gujrat Vidhyapith, Gandhi Peace Foundations at New Delhi, Banglore, Trivendarum, Madras, Madurai, Benaras, and Calcutta, Gandhi ashrams at Sabarmati, Wardha and Gandhigram. Please refer to the appendix for details regarding the places and people visited. It would not be possible to name all those individuals without whose assistance this work could not have been accomplished, but to whom the author is indebted nonetheless.

The fifth chapter is divided into three parts. Part I deals with Satyagraha, Part II with the Satyagrahi, and Part III with an assessment of Gandhi.

Although Gandhi is popularly regarded as a mass leader, generally very little is known about the integrity of the thinker, the activist, and the man himself in relation to his environment. Ethical experience is important by itself. But it is of major significance, when it can be used as a means to transform human relationships and the very nature of socio-political activity.

Gandhi's experience moulded his existence. Gandhi's life was undoubtedly an articulate expression of his ethical beliefs and presuppositions. A stronger conviction is hard to substitute. In order to act like Gandhi, a Satyagrahi would have to think like Gandhi, speak like Gandhi and, above all, live like Gandhi. In other words, one would have to harmonize one's thoughts, words and acts, which was the secret of Gandhi's inner strength. In the political sphere that strength acquired the dimensions of political power.

The task of studying Gandhi is not easy. Even a superficial acquaintance with the Gandhiana would reveal its enormity.¹⁰ Not all of it can be taken without a grain of salt. A great deal of this literature, however, tends to eulogize the man. His contributions to the field of practical politics are mostly ignored. He is either relegated to the realm of sainthood or explained away as a charismatic leader.

¹⁰"More books and essays have already been written about Gandhi than about any other figure in world history except the founders of the great religion." R. Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 5.

Research on Gandhi is made even more complex because of the many roles played by him over a fairly long period of time. There is a lack of certain crucial documents which could have proved helpful. Some of the material evidence is either lost or destroyed. The problem is further compounded by the exclusive severity of a tradition that shies away from an open examination of topics, considered either damaging or taboo.

Gandhi himself tried to do away with a great deal of the sanctimonious hypocrisy which often surrounds a hero. But it is difficult to draw a line between that which is strictly personal and that which is public. While it is true that Gandhi made no such distinctions, the extent to which he may have succeeded is questionable. Even Gandhi's staunchest critics and detractors give him the benefit of their doubts as far as the basic premises of his arguments in favour of ethical living are concerned.

The initial intent in this study was to find a blueprint for Satyagraha. Before long that ambition had to be modified, when it became apparent that Satyagraha is much more than a technique or a system of beliefs. It extends far beyond empirical knowledge. This realization adds to the body of Gandhian thought a mystical quality and freshness.

In some ways this work challenges some of the preconceived notions and assumptions about Gandhian thought. It is certainly not a work based on preconceived ideas. The study is a result of what was found in the works of Mahatma Gandhi, and what others thought of him.

The primary source of information is the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. Secondary sources included a number of writings published both in India and abroad. As well, some unpublished records, letters and documents

were also consulted in India. Finally, interviews with those who knew Gandhi were very useful.

To an extent, Gandhi himself is responsible for creating the myths about himself. For instance, very few would regard Gandhi as a rational investigator of truth. Fewer still are aware that he simultaneously and diligently experimented in more areas than one. Above all, in practical politics, few identify Gandhi as a daring political thinker. Gandhi's personality as a symbol of a truly honest and religious man overshadows his personality as an astute, down-to-earth but critical observer of life around him. He was a politician who was genuinely spiritual at heart, not a religious man trying to be political.¹¹

Gandhi rarely wrote for pleasure. He mostly wrote when he had to, either in order to explain his actions, to elaborate on his basic concepts or to exhort others in the ways of ethical living.¹² And yet it is surprising to note that even the miscellaneous writings of Gandhi are so immense

¹¹"Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise. I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man." M.K. Gandhi, The Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi (2nd ed.; Madras: Natesan, 1978), p. xxiv.

¹²Following is the list of books written by M.K. Gandhi:
1. Hind Swaraj (a dialogue, in Gujrati), 2. Ethical Religion (trans. of Niti-Dharma, in Gujrati), 3. Plato's Apology (a paraphrase, in Gujrati, later translated as The Story of a Satyagrahi), 4. Ruskin's Unto this Last (a paraphrase), 5. Satyagraha in South Africa (a collection of talks), 6. The Story of my Experiments with Truth (an unfinished autobiography), 7. From Yeravada Mandir and 8. Ashram Observances in Action (both collection of letters to his ashramites), 9. Constructive Programme (an English pamphlet), 10. Self restraint versus Self-Indulgence, 11. Guide to Health, 12. Economics of Khadi, and 13. Cent Per Cent Swadeshi (10 to 13 are collection of articles), 14. The Gita According to Gandhi (trans. of Gandhi's Gujrati commentary edited by Mahadev Desai).

that it would take years before they are all published. Therefore, it is quite likely to come across passages from Gandhi's writings that suddenly throw a different light on the same phenomenon. What is important to remember is that Gandhi grew from perception to perception. The fact that a certain pronouncement is of a later date does not necessarily mean that it negates his earlier statement. Each is valid within its context.

Gandhi's compassion for the suffering led him into the politics of participation. Although a spokesman for the victims of injustice, Gandhi never lost sight of the human touch. His respect for the dignity of, and faith in, man seems to have survived major disappointments in life. To Gandhi, even the 'opponent' or the 'exploiter' was worthy of deep respect and compassion. Satyagraha teaches nothing if it does not instil into the Satyagrahi the desire to protect the sacred and legitimate rights of even the oppressor. The standards Gandhi set for himself and his co-workers are indeed difficult to follow. They appear at times unrealistic even absurd because they seem to demand an almost superhuman effort.

Politics, Gandhi reminds us, cannot be set apart from life. Man's reverence for life must overcome the ignorance which manifests itself as violence in our midst. Like religion, philosophy, and aesthetics, politics must also reflect our deep concern for truth, goodness, and beauty. These, Gandhi contends, can be safeguarded only through our dedication to the dharma of ahimsa (nonviolence). Such obligation presupposes compassion (karuna) for all.

It is important to remember that Gandhi was more than a thinker, more than someone who just thought, wrote or spoke his mind. He was an activist of immense stature, one who turned his individual experience into collective action for the liberation of all. Behind Gandhi's utterances lies the granite-like quality of undefeatable conviction. One can contradict Gandhi only on Gandhian terms. The basic premise of his major argument remain unsullied. Like Buddha, Gandhi invites us to 'come and see' (ehi passiko) the truth of his contentions.

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Chapter 1. Tradition and the Indian View of Philosophy

This chapter attempts first, to draw a few distinctions between the philosophy of the East and West, as seen from the point of view of the Indian tradition and second to delineate the fundamental principles in the consideration of Gandhian philosophy.

Philosophy it is said, is essentially an enquiry into the nature of life and existence.¹ It attempts to deal with the mysteries of the real, the true and the beautiful. Philosophy seeks to understand and grasp all experience, all existence and even that which lies beyond - the end of all knowledge.

A philosopher by definition is a lover of wisdom.² He attempts to reconcile experience with knowledge through systematic and critical investigation.

Theoretically, one can differentiate philosophy from religion. In practice however, it may be very difficult to draw clear lines between the two.³

¹S. Radhakrishnan, ed. History Of Philosophy Eastern And Western (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1952), Vol. I, p. 21.

²This is classic definition of a philosopher. Unfortunately in later times, we have come to associate the word even with those who merely speculate on theories of reality without any concern what so ever with their own lives as philosophers.

³"Imbued with emotion, philosophy becomes transformed into religion. Metaphysical truths arrived at by rigid reasoning change their status completely when touched by emotional conviction and belief. The rationalization of experience is philosophy: and philosophical truths kindled with emotion become religion." S. Dasgupta, Development of Moral Philosophy In India (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 4.

It is precisely the ability to comprehend rationally the noumenal as well as the phenomenal world which differentiates philosophy from religion. While religion is permeated with passion and emotion, philosophy tends to rationalize even conviction and belief. Religion may or may not be based on revelation, but, in the course of time, religion develops its own traditions and myths that help sustain it over time. It inculcates faith in its followers and aims to transform their lives by presenting to them a vision of the 'sacred'. Religion is generally intolerant of criticism and is weary of questioning. Doubt is antithetical to religion.

Philosophy includes within its purview both the sacred and the profane. Fear often plays a prominent role in religion but, fearlessness is the hallmark of philosophy. Philosophy, unlike religion, thrives on controversies, delights in differences of opinions but, nevertheless, questions the validity of truth - all truth. It insists on critical investigation of all phenomena. Doubt plays a fundamental role in the philosopher's search.

Philosophy is also an attitude of mind which takes for granted the superiority of intellect over emotion. It is therefore the business of philosophy to question even the validity of intellect, to verify all truth. Although it would be presumptuous on anyone's part to claim that philosophy has been able to establish its own limitations, nonetheless, one could claim that a perfect definition of philosophy ought not to restrict the freedom inherent in the concept itself. The scope of philosophy is infinite and its tasks are open to re-evaluation

and challenge.⁴

The problems of philosophy are many and varied. Philosophers themselves disagree with one another as to what ought to be the legitimate and foremost concerns of philosophy.⁵ It is also questionable whether reason alone can serve as the most appropriate tool of cognition. How can reason be measured by reason alone? Even logic itself has its own limitations. While philosophers seem to agree that methods of philosophy are a controversial issue, they generally agree that philosophy is interested in the search for the ultimate truth/s of existence.

The English word 'philosophy' is a derivative from the Greek word 'philosophia', which again is a compound of 'philea' and 'sophia'. Together the word is translated as love of wisdom (philea = love, and sophia = wisdom). Although Passmore⁶ does point out the etymological significance of the term, he does not deal with the questions as to how and why the term acquired a more restricted meaning. Clearly, intellectual curiosity alone cannot be equated with either the love of wisdom or the search for wisdom. Modern English usage does, however, differentiate between the two and draws sharp distinctions.

⁴Controversies regarding this and various related issues are aptly dealt with in several works by oriental philosophers. The contemporary Indian school of thought is well reflected in S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, eds., Contemporary Indian Philosophy (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1936).

⁵J. Passmore, "Philosophy", The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Reprint ed. (1972), VI, 218.

⁶ibid., 217.

'Wisdom' in the English language may mean being wise, possessing experience as well as knowledge.⁷ It presupposes the ability to apply both of the above critically or practically, in all affairs of life. Sagacity or prudence have definitely something in common with intellect, but they also go beyond the satisfaction of mere curiosity. They enlighten common experience and existence with insight. Philosophy, it is contended must take into account action, speech, opinion or thought as dictated by and in harmony with wisdom.

Philosophy is associated with logos. 'Logos', the Greek word for wisdom, implies a number of things.⁸ Wisdom connotes a certain level of intelligence no doubt, but what is crucial is that in its classic definition the word takes for granted the expression of such understanding at all three levels of human endeavour, namely thought, speech and action. The dichotomy that later sprung up between the ideal and the practical aspects of wisdom is a post Platonic development even in Western thought.⁹

⁷ It is interesting to note that according to the Oxford dictionary even the knowledge of "mysterious things" is included in the definition of wisdom. By inference then, one could safely subsume the domain of the spiritual within the grasp of the 'wise'. For, a truly wise person is alone capable of understanding ultimate reality because he/she is not bound by narrow constraints. Oxford English Dictionary, (1961), XII, p. 192.

⁸ Logos (λογος): Among them are shades of meaning crucial to our understanding. It is all these: a saying, speaking, speech, mode of speaking, eloquence, discourse, conversation, talk, word expression, assertion, principle maxim, proverb, oracle, promise, order, command proposal, condition, agreement, stipulation, decision, pretext, fable, news, story, report, legend, prose writing - history book, essay, oration, affair, incident, thought, reason, reckoning, computation, reflection, deliberation, account, consideration, opinion, cause, and, argument, demonstration, meaning, value, proportion, Christ. Greek Dictionary: Greek English (London: Hodder and Stoughton), p. 240.

⁹ But this need not detain us here.

The Sanskrit word darśana (philosophy) is derived from drś which means 'to see'. According to S. Dasgupta, it suggests looking deeply into the mysteries of the real. The act of perceiving by itself carries with it the connotation of believing fully in what one sees as truth. When one believes deeply, one can only become what one believes. 'To see', therefore, involves in the Indian tradition, 'to be'. It is for this reason that Indian philosophy has rarely dwelt apart from religion.¹⁰ The earliest Indian philosophers did not take the intellect as the ultimate. Having arrived at a perception of truth, they wholeheartedly believed in accepting the dictates of that realization. In other words, possessed by deep conviction, they, in fact, lived that truth in all sincerity. The lives of such philosophers were not at variance with their philosophies. They sought to make thought, speech, and action one. They tried to be in harmony with themselves. They wanted to become what they thought. To them, seeing was being.

The term dharma (religion) in Sanskrit is derived from the root dhr (support). It, therefore, implies that religion is that which supports or helps to endure, encourage and nourish life. The concepts of dharma and darśana are closely related in the Indian history of thought. **This** is a unique characteristic of Indian philosophy which is very closely connected with religion.

The thinkers who took delight in abstruse philosophical thinking took up their quest with all their life, which they devoted to their experiments with truth. In fact most systems of Indian philosophy had a religious basis and proceeded from the con-

¹⁰ S. Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 5.

cept of a possible betterment of human life. In this respect the development of philosophical thought in India differs from that of the West.¹¹

According to the modern Indian philosopher Radhakrishnan, the problem of philosophy can be viewed from two different, yet complementary, points of view. It can either take specific topics for investigation by separately studying each group of phenomena or seek to understand the universe as a whole. Indian philosophy belongs to the latter category

In India philosophy has been interpreted as an enquiry into the nature of man, his origin and destiny. It is not a mere putting together or an assemblage of the results obtained by the investigation of different specialized problems, not a mere logical generalization intended to satisfy the demand for all inclusiveness. Such abstract views will have formal coherence, if any, and little organic relationship with the concrete problems of life. To the Indian mind, philosophy is essentially practical, dealing as it does with the fundamental anxieties of human beings, which are more insistent than abstract speculations. We are not contemplating the world from outside but are in it.¹²

Radhakrishnan cites the classic examples of the Buddha and Sankara who, having contemplated the ultimate reality, did not neglect their obligation to society. To them, practical life was not a negation of the spiritual. Rather, the main thrust of their conviction drove them to lighten the burden of their fellow man by sharing their own enlightenment. It was believed by great souls (mahātmana) that the true freedom ought not to stop short of self illumination. It should, invariably, illuminate the path for others and, thus, make it possible for them to break the bondage of suffering and ignorance.

¹¹ibid., p. 5.

¹²S. Radhakrishnan, "The Spirit In Man", in S. Radhakrishnan and J.H. Muirhead, eds., op. cit., p. 257.

Religion and ethics, too, are closely related. To those who are spiritually awakened, liberation implies a compassionate concern for the welfare of their environment. In it is included not only the well being of all mankind but also the care and consideration for the entire life which surrounds man. Genuine saintliness, therefore, consists in a dynamic awareness of all that enhances life. True humility and love are its fundamental ingredients. But above all, it presupposes an undeniable obligation to transform and lift the society from narrow concerns to the pursuits of higher and noble causes. In order to do so, all great philosophers, all great souls in general, must, from time to time, draw our attention to the re-evaluation of our ideals, our favourite theories, or even the major preoccupations of mankind.

It follows from this discussion that the seer is one who not only sees, but sees clearly. Those who clearly see the truth can also evaluate the worth of things. If, in the light of such perception, they fail to formulate their own priorities, they in fact fail in a major way.

A philosopher in the Indian context is a seer, for he sees (paśyati). He is also a religious or spiritual being (dharmātma), for he upholds or sustains life and existence. He not only thinks but also becomes. Because he sees reality as being (sat), thought (चित) and bliss (ānandam), he experiences no contradictions between the public and the private.

Indian philosophy aims at spiritual enlightenment. Spiritual enlightenment knows no caste, colour or nationality. In this, the idealistic philosophers of both East and West are likely to share common virtues. Absolute truth has no degrees or qualities of differentiation. All truth is one, whether it is seen through American, European or Asian eyes. It is only the relative way of seeing that truth which

creates the illusions of difference. There definitely are universal qualities which can be found in the seers of India and Greece or the prophets of Islam and Israel, or in the saints of Christendom. It is the souless morality of the modern times that has come to divide wisdom from knowledge, intellect from intuition. At a higher level of understanding, these only appear to be the different aspects of the same thing.

Only the marks of truth, honesty and sincerity distinguish an inferior being from a superior one. All classical civilizations seem to have been familiar with this basic criterion of true greatness. The thinkers of Islam and Judaism, as well as Christianity, did not draw distinctions between the good and the true. The ideal being had to combine the virtue of both the good and the true in order to win the reverence of all. The common concern of all philosophers has been and still is to have an understanding of the real, the true.

The problem of dealing with the concept of real is a fundamental one. How is one to designate that which is real unless there is a common agreement as to what the real is to consist of? All definitions seem to fall short of the totality of meaning that is often desired by the one who realizes.

Philosophically, one could begin to deal with the question by distinguishing two levels of reality: one, which is finite, the other which is infinite. The finite realm of reality has to do with the relativities of space and time, limitations of perceptions and the scope of sense data. It encompasses the field of relative truth/s. The quality of relative truth may also vary with the scope of that truth or its extent. A relative truth is valid within the limited scope of its applic-

ability. Outside its restricted limit, that very truth may lose its validity and, hence, fail to be recognized as such. It can be one as well as many. The relative concept of reality is fleeting, superficial and often inconsistent with the absolute.

The infinite truth can only be ultimate and, therefore, absolute. Unlike the finite, the infinite is consistent and irreversible. Its validity is beyond considerations of time and space. It is the same inside and out. It does not depend on the credibility of sense data nor on the positive and negative attributes of perception. It is innermost reality and the essence of all that exists. As opposed to many, it is the one. It is immortal, beyond time and all speculation. Discursive thought cannot touch the real, even at its periphery. Reason can only formulate concepts of the real, it cannot understand the real. The real is beyond the grasp of intellect and transcends even reason. Thinking about it is like thinking the unthinkable. All attempts to communicate the real fail because it truly is incommunicable. Yet the real, can be realized by experience. Such experience has to be direct. Direct experience or true insight is the fruit of undivided contact with the real. This contact can be achieved through contemplation and moral excellence. It naturally accrues to those who lead genuine lives, who are noble and austere and to those who are devoid of deceptions.

The Absolute as regarded by both the systems of thought in the East and the West share certain characteristics. Both regard the real to be the highest and the only truth. Both consider worldly objects as transitory and, therefore, mere appearance. Both concepts of the real transcend time and space as well as considerations of morality and

immorality. Both view intuitive experience as a means of realizing it.¹³

One can now consider the concepts of wisdom and knowledge in the light of the above discussion. Acquaintance with the relative truth/s implies knowledge of facts. Wisdom, on the other hand has very little to do with the knowledge of facts in the conventional sense. Wisdom partakes of direct knowledge or intuition which illuminates reason through the immediate experience of the Absolute.

The highest wisdom is akin to highest good and absolute knowledge. All great teachers of mankind affirm that they are only reiterating the philosophia perennis. Wisdom, like eternal law, is revealed in the present as it was in the past. It is immutable, immanent and omnipresent. Wisdom, or knowledge of the Absolute, can only be acquired through intuition, but it need not discard intellectual understanding. Intuition is not anti-reason, but it definitely supercedes reason.

Knowledge acquired through intellect clearly distinguishes the subject and the object - the knower and the known. This initial mode of inquiry may develop further into higher stages of cognition where the subject and object merge into one. But for our purpose, we are differentiating higher forms of knowledge from the lower ones by categorizing

¹³"The Absolutism of Bradley has numerous points of contact with the Advaitism of Saṃkarachārya. Both suppose that the Absolute is the only ultimate real. With both, God is different from the Absolute. With both, God is unreal as compared to the objects that we see ... And both hold that Space and Time are only phenomenal, and are transcended in the Absolute. Such a dictum involves that the Absolute be supermoral, beyond good and bad ... More over with regard to the content of the Absolute, both Saṃkara and Bradley hold that it is of the nature of intuitive experience". R.D. Ranade, "The Evolution of My Own Thought", ibid., p. 298.

the former as wisdom or the knowledge of the Absolute.

At this lower level of understanding all knowledge is essentially abstract and symbolic. It is particular and only partial. Relative truth/s are not false because they are to be considered in their limited sphere, but they are less applicable when seen in the entire perspective of ultimate truth.

In the domain of the spiritual life of man, mind plays a vital role. Mind is associated here with the intellectual capability. However, it is not yet known to what extent mind can be disciplined or made aware to cross its own thresholds of sense perception. It is conceivable that mind can rise to higher levels of consciousness through prescribed techniques, in order to have direct perception of reality. Presumably faith plays an important role in creating such awareness.¹⁴ Yet, such consciousness is not open to intellectual analysis in the same manner as is the composition of a single molecule of water. There is something akin to the mystery of a smile or the ecstasy of love through which cold intellect cannot pierce. However, mind is capable of expressing such understanding through pure aesthetic experience. For example, Mozart's compositions cannot be grasped intellectually and yet they are not devoid of intelligence. Similarly, a verse of Kalidasa or Shakespeare may not rationally explain the supreme truth and yet give intimations of the divine without diminishing its stature in the process.

¹⁴"Faith in the ultimate values which characterizes the philosopher in Plato's Dialogues, as distinct from the pseudo-philosopher or the sceptical sophist is not a matter of dialectics or sophistry but of spiritual awareness". S. Radhakrishnan, ibid., p. 268.

Poets, musicians and lovers share with the seers the secrets of mystical knowledge without making them in anyway profane or ludicrous. They are egoless, or have stripped themselves of selfish desires and hence, they can court the infinite in their vision of beauty. In their spiritual quest they are one with the object of their apprehension. For them the subject/object dichotomy does not exist. They are united with the object of their knowledge. This awareness teaches them the innermost reality. In our common language we name this communication as intuition. It is direct knowledge. It is knowledge of the immanent.

Such truth, perceived as it is through direct knowledge is not to be commented upon but experienced. It is simple. It is as clear as broad day light and over-rides all doubts or confusion, but only for those who have had some taste of it before.

Intuition is not used as an apology for doctrines which either could not or would not be justified on intellectual grounds. It is not shadowy sentiment or pathological fancy fit for cranks and dancing dervishes. It stands to intellect as a whole to a part, as the creative source of thought to the created categories which work more or less automatically. Logical reflection is a special function within the concrete life of mind and is necessarily a fraction of the larger experience.¹⁵

What then is this larger experience of which logical reflection is only a part? How does that whole relate to the varieties of experience common to all human activity and thought? It should be pointed out that in the larger experience of mankind our spiritual dignity and our worth

¹⁵ ibid., p. 269.

as individuals play a vital role. Although man has come to regard as dichotomous the ideal and the real, thought and action, individual and society, politics and religion, these divisions are arbitrary and not final. In fact these dichotomies are closely related and each has always formed part and parcel of the other. The totality of human experience is a whole.

The "whole" which is referred to here is identical with Plato's ideal of the Good. The Brahman of the Upanisads, the Śūnyatā or Nirvāna of the Buddhists and the Tao of Lao Tse, are all expressions of that Absolute. All these are notions of a transcendent character, which cannot be communicated.

Hinduism conceives the Real as absolute, changeless and static reality, as well as that which is responsible for all change and continuity.¹⁶ The Buddhist concept of Dharma involves the following:

(1) We cannot say that Dharma is. (2) We cannot say that Dharma is not. (3) We cannot say that Dharma both is, and is not. (4) We cannot say that Dharma neither is, or is not.¹⁷ For the Buddhists, the Dharma is the real as well as the ideal. Similarly, the Brahman of the Vedanta can be equated with the Dharma of Buddhism.¹⁸

¹⁶For details see S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy (2nd ed.; London: George Allen And Unwin, 1952), I & II. Especially, the sections on the Upanisads, the Bhagavad Gītā, and on Śaṅkara, Rāmanuja and Madhava.

¹⁷Author's conversations with Ven. Mahasī Sayadaw Agga Mahāpandita U Sobhana, Berrie, Massachusetts: Summer, 1979. See also P.T. Raju, Idealistic Thought of India (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1953), pp. 278-291.

¹⁸ibid., p. 17.

The identity of the real and the ideal is a unique feature of Indian thought. This is true of both Buddhist and Hindu philosophy. For them, the difference between descriptive law and the "ought" does not exist.

Dharma literally means that which holds the object. We may represent the Buddhist as maintaining that the Dharmakāya holds the universe by being its Ought. It is that towards which the whole universe should move. Yet it is not a mere ideal; it is its true nature. That is, it is its law even in the descriptive sense of the word, for it is the svabhāva or real nature of phenomena. Nay, we may say that it is the highest universal or sāmānya, not in the Platonic sense of a form apart from matter or even distinct from matter, but as the truth of every form and matter. We find in the idea of Dharmakāya the equation of the universal to the law and that again to the Ought. This is the distinctive feature of Indian thought not to be found so definitely enunciated in Western philosophy ... And unless this identification is made the much-longed-for reconciliation between the sciences of life and those of nature cannot be accomplished. In fact, Plato's philosophy offered an instance of such identification, for his ideas are really ideals. But later the positivistic conception of science and its laws destroyed it, and introduced chaos into philosophical speculation. Philosophy, having lost connection with life, has become intellectual gymnastics; and we hear of constructions based upon this or that idea.¹⁹

Differences are bound to exist between the traditions of East and West. But it is not futile to look for parallels in philosophical trends of diverse cultures. However, we must not expect them to be treated in similar fashions. The Indian writer P.T. Raju speaks of this as an error. Different traditions treat the problems of philosophy as

¹⁹ ibid., p. 286.

and when they arise according to their own experience.²⁰

One finds a strange admixture of East and West in Gandhi's philosophical background, not unlike some of his contemporaries in India. Sensitive to the needs of his times and conscious of the demands for an appropriate means to meet the political challenge, Gandhi tried to reconcile the traditional with the modern and the native with the alien. But the rationale of Gandhian thought and action is actually built on the foundations of his own traditions. It goes far deeper than is generally assumed and is much more comprehensive than what appears at the first glance.

From the public's point of view, Gandhi appears simple and unassuming. However, from the researcher's perspective, he is one of the most complex and unknown characters of his times. One must assess Gandhi and his words very carefully. The simplicity acquired by Gandhi was not at all simple. There are, for instance, many aspects of his life that we know nothing about and there are other aspects which remain obscure. My concern in this work has been to discern how his ethical outlook related to Satyagraha, his major preoccupation. In an attempt to do so, I have also had to discuss his ethical concerns and their source.

Before one enters into a discussion of the salient features of Gandhi's thought, it is important to point out that Gandhi was not concerned with elaborating the metaphysical bases of his own philosophy.

²⁰ ibid., p. 13.

His explanations are confined to the ethical realm. Gandhian ethics may have a metaphysical basis, but as far as Gandhi was concerned, he left that to the academician. At the applied level of socio-political reality, these mattered little to him. However, one can deduce from Gandhian experience that behind his thought lay the undeniable unity of the ideal and the real. This is a major assumption and a corner-stone of Gandhian thought.

What seems so amazing about Gandhi (as is also true about Rabindranath Tagore in aesthetics, Radhakrishnan in Philosophy and to an extent of Jawaharlal Nehru in statesmanship) is that he tried to link and assimilate two diverse trends of the East and the West, without losing his own identity in the process. Thus, in Gandhi, Tagore, Radhakrishnan and in Nehru we find genuine creativity that does not in any way cause a break from the past, but enhances the progress towards the future. After the advent of the above mentioned personalities on the Indian scene neither the socio-political ethos, nor art, nor philosophy have remained the same.

One of the least commented upon and yet an easily overlooked aspect of Gandhi is the amount of reading he did on his own. Gandhi read widely, but unsystematically. He was wary of intellectuals. Gandhi also appears to have been deeply aware of a lack of academic training in his own background. Despite these drawbacks, Gandhi can easily be counted among the most original Indian thinkers of his times.²¹ Whatever he did read, he "digested" well. The impact that

²¹R.N. Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 10.

Plato, Śankara and the writings on Buddhism had on Gandhi, has been totally underestimated.²² It is astonishing how few have even looked into the inspiration Gandhi drew from these classical sources.

Partly on account of the fact that Gandhi himself underrated scholarly learning as opposed to dynamic action and partly because he was constantly warning against taking reason as the sole criterion of judgement, people have generally come to associate him with anti-reason. In later years, when Gandhi publicly started proclaiming Gītā as his constant source of inspiration it further suggested that Gītā was also his only source of inspiration.²³

It is difficult to compile a detailed bibliography of Gandhi's readings in Gujrati, Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil and other languages of India. We do know that Gandhi diligently tried to learn these languages. Even the Gandhi bibliography by Sharma²⁴ does not do justice

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Rev. J.J. Doke, M.K. Gandhi - An Indian Patriot (Madras: Natesan, 1909), p. 142, mentions of Gandhi being described as a Buddhist, among other things. Gandhi himself admitted at various times the tremendous influence Sir Edwin Arnold's Light of Asia or The Great Renunciation (Mahābhinishkarmana) had on him. Very few know that Gandhi had read a lot of Plato and was perhaps the first to translate Plato's Apology into Gujrati language. Gandhi had also read various commentaries on Bhagvadgītā including the ones by Śankara, Jñāneshwar, Tilak and Aurobindo.

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Gandhi may have chosen to do so in order to draw mass support behind his actions. Since Gītā is one of the most widely read scriptures on the subcontinent, his choice was indeed favourable to his political leadership. Next to Gītā, Gandhi often quoted from Kuran to draw Muslim support and also from Bible so as not to alienate the Christians. There indeed are very few references to his mentioning any Buddhist literature nonetheless, we know that throughout his career Gandhi was closely associated and worked with the Buddhists.

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J.S. Sharma, Mahatma Gandhi: A Descriptive Bibliography, 2nd ed.; (Delhi: S. Chand, 1968, I and II).

to the limited number of books that Gandhi read in non-Indian languages alone.

Although it would not be correct to compare two personalities like Buddha and Gandhi, it is nonetheless important to see how the former influenced the latter.²⁵ It should be of particular interest to students of comparative philosophy and religion to study if Buddhism still does or does not survive in the life of the Indian sub-continent. It definitely seems to me that Buddhism formed a major influence in shaping the philosophical outlook of Gandhi, along with the Vedanta.²⁶

Much has been already written about the influence of Vedanta on Gandhi. Practically all writers on Gandhi have a tendency to comment on the religious source of his inspiration. But few have tried to view Gandhi as an advaitin (non-dualist). Chapter II and III of this thesis deal with some of the major Hindu sources of inspiration in Gandhi's background. But it is equally revealing to find in Gandhi's

²⁵ During the author's conversations with some of the major Gandhians in India, this point was brought up several times but only extensive research in this fascinating direction can reveal further the depth and scope of their inter-relationship.

²⁶ If so, it is legitimate to inquire why was Gandhi shy of admitting it publicly. The response to that is, he was neither shy nor insistent upon it because, Gandhi was convinced Buddhism was not different from Hinduism. There could also be a major political reason for purposely avoiding to deal with that question. Gandhi's identification with Buddhists may have had disastrous consequences on his political goals. It would have ruined his campaign against untouchability.

²⁷ See M.H. Desai, With Gandhiji in Ceylone: A Journal of the Tour, Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928. Also The Way of the Buddha, ed. P.M. Lad (Bombay: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1956), pp. v-x.

writings some unmistakable Buddhist ideas.²⁸ Gandhi was convinced that Gautama Buddha was one of the greatest Hindu reformers and that contributions were a part and parcel of Hindu culture.²⁹

Gandhi's attitude towards life shows some striking resemblances with the Mahayanist tradition. In fact, Raju is among those who seriously attempt - albeit in a passing manner - to understand the metaphysical aspect of Gandhi's teachings. Unfortunately, after making the statement: "Like Buddha, he (Gandhi) was urged on to experiment with truth by the evil present in the world, the inequalities and injustices meted out by man to man...",³⁰ Raju does not go far enough to substantiate the truth of his own claim.

Satyagraha is a clear elaboration of Gandhi's fundamental beliefs. In Satyagraha one can see Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence. The truth of Satyagraha is also the Law of Buddhism. Satyagraha literally means the truth-force or insistence on truth. Gandhi comes very close to Buddha in identifying the real with the dharma. By 'truth' Gandhi does not mean the finite and ever-changing reality but just the opposite. It is the soul or the spirit, or one can call it the inner reality of matter and mind.

²⁸T.N.T. Murty, P.T. Raju and R.R. Diwakar are among those who consider Gandhi as an advaitin. Generally the tendency to regard Gandhi as a viśiṣṭadvaitin (qualified non-dualist) springs from Gandhi's emphasis on grace as an important means of self-realization. The later Mahayanist traditions also emphasize the same.

²⁹Gandhi had no hesitations in declaring that he owed a great deal to the inspiration he drew from the life of the Enlightened One. He did not consider Buddhism as a new religion. For Gandhi's teachings in relation to Khādi see M.H. Desai, op. cit., pp. 50-53.

³⁰P.T. Raju, op. cit., pp. 292-299.

Gandhi derives his concept of truth from satya (existence and being) which is the all pervading spirit behind all phenomenon.³¹ In the Upanishadic parlance, it is the Brahman. But, in the Buddhist philosophy it is the bhūta - tathatā of Aśvaghosha together with the idealism of Lankāvatāra.³² A Buddhist can clearly understand Gandhi's Satyagraha as Dharmagraha. To a Buddhist asatya, is adharma. Whereas Gandhi posites in his category of satya all that must ultimately win over apparent conflict and violence, the Buddhist affirm the same in their concept of dharma. It is to be kept in mind that Gandhi naturally imbibed these ideas from his environment. Buddhists through centuries of rigorous acumen have crystalized their ideas into precise notions. Along with Vedantins, Buddhists are also convinced that nirvāṇa can be realized by pure wisdom (bodhi or vijñāna).³³

This brings us to the concept of prajñā (knowledge). In Buddhism the word is associated with higher knowledge or wisdom. Orthodox schools connote reason or intellect by the same word, except that they mean by it pure reason or consciousness.

As reality according to Śaṅkara is of the nature of pure consciousness, he preached jñānamārga. We know that the Prajñāpāramitas, though preaching

³¹ S.N. Dasgupta, Indian Idealism (London: Cambridge University Press, 1933), pp. 20-50.

³² ibid., pp. 76-106.

³³ S. Radhakrishnan ed., Bhagavadgītā (Bombay: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), ch. III, v. 41, p. 149. He differentiates clearly between the wisdom of the Vedānta (jñāna) and the detailed knowledge of the Sāṅkhya (vijñāna). For Śaṅkara jñāna is "knowledge of the self and other things acquired from the scriptures and the teachers", and vijñāna "the personal experience, anubhāva, of the things so taught". For Rāmanuja, jñāna refers to ātmasvarūpa or the nature of the self. Vijñāna refers to ātmaviveka (discriminatory knowledge) of the self. Literally, jñāna refers to spiritual wisdom and vijñāna to logical knowledge.

that reality is void and beyond thought, emphasize knowledge or prajñā. This tendency is given a definite form and name by Asaṅga and is connected with one of the four noble truths, namely marga. Of course, like the other Mahāyānists, Asaṅga too tells us that reality cannot be known through tarka or logic, a point common to both the Mahāyāna and the Advaita. He too holds that liberation or mokṣa is only a removal of ignorance, so that it is only the recognition of one's original nature.³⁴

Gandhi understood clearly the inner significance of such convictions. He expressed that deep understanding through his own thoughts, speeches and actions. No understanding of ahimsa - the soul of Satyagraha - can be complete unless the Satyagrahi has realized the identity of self (original nature) in all that breathes. To Gandhi the use of violence as a means to solve any conflict was a mark of utter ignorance (avidyā). We are incapable of knowing the absolute truth due to our finite perception. As such we are also not justified in punishing others with the use of violence. Violence presupposes the ability to judge the 'other' and finally adjudge ourselves as totally correct. Gandhi is opposed to violence because it is a denial of the truth of our finite being as well as the denial of the truth that the unreal must eventually give way to the real. Dharmo jayati - truth always triumphs, is a dictum that Gandhi is not prepared to part with, even at the cost of suffering temporary humiliation and defeat. For Gandhi, it is noble to suffer for a noble cause.

³⁴P.T. Raju, op. cit., p. 268.

Wisdom, therefore, demands that we use noble means to arrive at noble ends. The use of ahimsa to solve conflicting issues is a mark of highest wisdom or prajñā. Prajñā, is one of the major virtues (pāramitās) in Buddhism. Some Buddhists also include jñāna (knowledge) as one of the ten virtues. Definitely, prajñā or the highest knowledge is considered as one, non-dual and identified with Tathāgatā. It is also claimed by Buddhists that the highest wisdom does not differentiate between the Samsāra and nirvana.³⁵ It is ignorance that creates the difference. Realization of truth is the removal of such ignorance.

A sūtra in Lankāvatāra quotes Buddha as saying:

That all things are in their self-nature unborn, Mahāmati, belongs to the realm of self-realization attained by noble wisdom, and does not belong essentially to the realm of dualistic discrimination cherished by the ignorant and the simple-minded.³⁶

Gandhi agrees that we indulge in violence due to ignorance of the fact that the 'other' is our own self. He is also careful in enunciating the two forms of truths - the relative and the absolute.

Similar distinction is also made in Buddhism and Vedanta regarding the two levels of truths paramārthyasatyā (ultimate truth) and saṃvṛtisatyā (lower truth). In de-emphasizing 'intellectualism' Gandhi was not underrating the jñāna or prajñā aspect of knowledge. He was only trying to demonstrate the significance and superiority of transcendental knowledge. Obviously such knowledge of the highest kind does not enter-

³⁵ Prajñāpāramitās form the first known Mahāyana literature. In it, Buddha is represented as preaching Subhūti, the doctrines of śūnyatā (emptiness) and niḥsvabhāvatā (naturelessness). To an extent śūnyatā can be compared with māyā of Śaṅkara. But, to the Mādhyamikā it is the same as paramārthasatyam or the highest truth.

³⁶ cit. The Lankāvatāra Sūtra, p. 56 by P.T. Raju, op. cit., p. 261. It is interesting to note that the Lanka also distinguishes two kinds of knowledge: viññāna (relative) and jñāna (absolute).

tain the dualism of birth and decay, nor of being and non-being. It is not limited by intellect but supercedes all limitations.³⁷ Gandhian ethics, as well, presupposes moral living as a path of purification to qualify for the attainment of wisdom. Very much like the Buddhists, it suggest ahimsa as the prime characteristic of śīla (ethical living).

Gandhi's āshram vows were really the means of acquiring prajñā (wisdom). The highest wisdom, which is eternal and imageless, need not base itself on unthinking conformity or foolish consistency once it has been acquired. But in order to be in possession of such rare virtue, one must first cultivate it through rigorous self-discipline and ethical living. This leads to the concentration on the object of one's contemplation (samādhi).

Buddhism had greatly influenced Hinduism through its insistence on the sanctity of life and austerity of monastic living.³⁸ Gandhi brought back these doctrines into the psyche to remind India of its own forgotten past.

It may be easy to suggest philosophically that the ideal and the real are identical, but it is quite difficult to convince the politically frustrated masses to give up arms in their struggle for liberation. For Gandhi, it was relatively easy for a number of factors as elaborated in the following chapters of this thesis. Primarily, it was the peculiar bent of mind that gave Indian masses ~~the~~ ^{their} ethos. This in

³⁷Laṅkāvatāra makes a distinction between jñāna and vijñāna in very much the same manner as Śankara does.

³⁸For details see Sir Charles Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism (London: E. Arnold, 1954), p. 131.

turn allowed Gandhi to wage successfully his nonviolent campaign of Satyagraha. The roots of that ethos go deeper than Gandhi.

Gandhi faced the problem of reconciling the ideal and the real through his thoughts, words and deeds. True, their inherent unity was accepted by the learned and the scholars of Indian thought. But virtually, Buddhism along with any other ideals had been long banished from the socio-political scene. The majority of people were still religious, but their religiosity had become a matter of token beliefs and false ritualism. People had lost conviction in the truth or dharma as an entity. Their thoughts and actions were based on fear, superstition and gross ignorance. In Buddhist terminology, the society at large was afflicted with kléśas (mental and moral impurities).

The suffering caused by ignorance can only be alleviated through vidya (knowledge). For Gandhi the magical formula of Satyagraha was a remedy par excellence! Through Satyagraha, he could achieve the twin purpose of self-realization as well as the realization of freedom for his fellowmen.

Although from hindsight knowledge Satyagraha appears as a logical outcome of a hopeless situation, Gandhi's insistence on nonviolent means of active resistance did not at first appear so 'logical' to many of his countrymen. It still does not seem to appear 'sensible' to a lot of people who insist on armed revolution as the only and most 'efficient' means of waging a struggle. However, it was not easy for Gandhi to inculcate in his followers the belief that the violence around them was 'unreal' and a defiance of truth. What is more, Gandhi had to convince even his opponents of the truth of his own conviction. Gandhi

had to make the mighty British Empire concede that he was right. Logically, the Empire lost to Gandhi much earlier, even before it finally gave in to the dictates of time or the exigencies of Indian demand.

What was Gandhi's logic? Simply, that the ideal is also the true. In the socio-political context of the situation, it was pertinent that the truth triumph over the untruth of subjection and injustice. If the ultimate truth is taken for granted, there was no reason to fear how long or how much the Satyagrahi suffered. Eventually, they would bring to light the fact that Britain was unjustified in ruling an alien country. Gandhi contended that Britain was abusing its powers over a helpless mass of people at the risk of its own 'vital interests'. Gandhi did not start his campaign by elaborating with facts and figures the justice or truth of his own people's claim. Rather, he began by training himself in the art of obedience to the laws. However unsalutary or unsavoury the rule may have appeared, Gandhi did not rush to claim his rights until he had proven that he had genuinely sought to fulfill his own obligations as a citizen. His demand for justice was thus based on justice itself. Gandhi maintained all along that one could not seek justice without being just.

Gandhi's critics do him an injustice when they blame him for participating in World War I and refusing to do so during World War II. They adduce this as evidence of his inconsistency and lack of sincerity. But viewed from a different perspective, there is a clear consistency in Gandhi's thought and actions, even more conspicuous than his apparent inconsistencies.

The doctrine of pratītyasamutpāda (dependent origination or causation) in Buddhism explains the casual links of phenomena. It is precisely the doctrine that explicates the second truth - of the four major presuppositions of Buddha, by elaborating on twelve links of causation.³⁹ The truth of causation simply implies that "this being so-that arises". Pain arises because there is a cause of pain. Violence too arises because there is a cause for violence. In order to end violence (internal and external) the cause has to be eliminated. Violence in society exists because there is violence in the self. To eliminate violence from society, the violence must first be challenged in the individuals comprising that society.

How is this violence of the self to be dealt with? Violence Gandhi, would argue, is due to ignorance of the self and Self.⁴⁰ What appears as 'other' at this 'moment', a Buddhist would agree, is really not the 'other'. There is a cosmic whole which links all the bhāva (becoming as well as being). The Mahāyanist, therefore, declare the concept of bodhisattva (the enlightened being).

³⁹"Conditioned by ignorance activities² come to pass; conditioned by activities consciousness, conditioned by consciousness name-and-shape, conditioned by name-and-shape sense, conditioned by sense contact, conditioned by contact feeling, conditioned by feeling craving, conditioned by craving grasping, conditioned by grasping becoming, conditioned by becoming birth, conditioned by birth old age-and-death, grief, lamenting, suffering, sorrow, despair come to pass. Such is the uprising of the entire mass of ill. This bretheren, is called (causal) happening." cit. Kindred sayings, II, p. 2, by P.T. Raju, op. cit., p. 197.

⁴⁰By self is meant the finite, empirical reality and Self implies here the infinite, indeterminate, ultimate and metaphysical reality.

The presence of violence in the individual, Gandhi claimed, was asat (falsity). He also believed that the essence of all existence (bhāva) was the same reality. Behind the phenomenal variety there was actually the one reality. If one follows Gandhi's line of argument, it becomes unnecessary to point out that violence committed to another is violence done to oneself. Likewise, in dealing virtuously with another one is being considerate to oneself. In the socio-political sphere, being 'just' to others is the surest way of gaining justice for oneself. Virtuous conduct which Gandhi identified with nonviolence in thought, word and deed, begets virtuous responses. A conscientious citizen will make justice a condition of his being. The very fact of his existence contributes towards justice.

The Buddhists understand sorrow and removal of suffering in the same manner. The Buddha taught that the idea of self was the cause of all suffering. He also taught that suffering could be eliminated through the destruction of that cause. Once self-hood is destroyed, there can be no place for 'desire' (kāma). It is self-hood - a false notion of entity - which creates the difference between 'I' and 'You', 'mine' and 'yours'. Nirvāṇa, for a Buddhist is freedom from this bondage of ignorance. It is the selflessness of the enlightened mind.

Not to know suffering, friend, not to know
the origin of suffering, not to know the
extinction of suffering, not to know the
path to the extinction of suffering: this
O friend, is the cause of ignorance.⁴¹

⁴¹H. Oldenberg, Buddha, His Life, His Doctrine, His Order (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882), p. 240. All suffering is caused due to ignorance. Violence is also a form of suffering.

Buddha went on further to elaborate on māgga or the path to the cessation of suffering. It is known as the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddha, the Tathāgata claimed that path to be the only way of calming all suffering. He did not merely point out the path of protection from worldly ills (heya), but also lighted the way to freedom from the whole mass of suffering (samsara) by indicating its cause (hetu).⁴²

Having experienced the value of ethical purity (as chapter III of this thesis shall indicate), Gandhi could also see the truth of The Dhammapada. He could see that violence could not be eliminated by more violence.⁴³ Gandhi thus became convinced that the cause of one's own suffering is self-caused. He also realized that there definitely was a way which could lead towards the destruction of all suffering. That way closely resembled the Eightfold Path of Buddha.

In the first sermon known as the 'Discourse of Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Doctrine' (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta),⁴⁴ Buddha taught the Middle Way, that is avoiding the two extremes of self indulgence and self-mortification. It is in fact the Buddhist

⁴²The Buddhist concept of suffering consists of birth and all its consequences such as old age, disease, decay and all unpleasant experiences including death. Freedom from suffering therefore involves freedom from the entire cycle of rebirths, based as it is on the concept of karma (works). H. Saddhatissa, Buddhist - Ethics: Essence of Buddhism (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1970), p. 55.

⁴³The Dhammapada: The Path of Perfection, trans. Juan Mascaro (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), "For hate is not conquered by hate: hate is conquered by love. This is a law eternal." v. 5. "By oneself is evil done, and it is oneself who suffers: by oneself the evil is not done, and by one's Self one becomes pure. The pure and the impure come from oneself: no man can purify another." v. 165.

⁴⁴H. Saddhatissa, op. cit., pp. 69-70.

philosophy of life. It consists of: (1) Right Understanding (Samma-ditthi), (2) Right Thought (Sammā-Saṅkappa), (3) Right Speech (samma-vācā), (4) Right Action (samma-kammanta), (5) Right Livelihood (samma-ājīva), (6) Right Effort (Samma-vāyāma), (7) Right Mindfulness (Samma-sati), (8) Right Concentration (Samma-samādhī).

(1) Right Understanding involves seeing life as it is. The Buddhists view life as impermanence, suffering, and no-self. It means clearly recognizing the dhamma (elements, law and nature) of conditioned existence which make up life or saṃsara. Such an understanding is bound to create a calm attitude of dispassionate detachment.

Gandhi seems to have adopted more or less this understanding in his life. Yet, from time to time his views on various issues did not stand in conformity with the above philosophy. What immediately comes to mind is his 'horror' of sex and an obsession like stance towards things related with sensual gratification. One finds it hard to believe that a person with 'right understanding' of the Buddhist kind, could feel so vulnerable and insecure or that he/she could harbour any strong feelings of 'rejection' towards a phenomenon that, after all, has no 'self'. The strict asceticism of Gandhi does not remind one in any way of calm moderation. However, it is true that Gandhi understood well the doctrine of Dependent Origination and consciously **tried** to stay clear of things that could lead to violence of any kind.

(2) Right Thought, for the Buddhists, means freedom from lust (rāga), ill-will (vyapāda), and cruelty (vihiṃsā). The purity of mind thus acquired automatically leads to the purity of speech and action. Buddhists strongly maintain that mind is to be cultivated with care.

Vigilance in thought naturally leads to vigilance in life.

The first two categories, together constitute pañña (wisdom) in Buddhism. Without the presence of right understanding and right thought it is not possible to perform rightly. Right-Thought is closely linked with the first, sixth and seventh steps.

Gandhi also stressed the importance of right thought in his own way. He, too, exhorted his followers and co-workers not to cherish ill-will, not to lust for objects of desire and to avoid consciously all cruelty to living things. It is quite possible that Gandhi had reached such a level of spiritual understanding where one is incapable of thinking ill of anybody. But it is doubtful whether he completely succeeded in achieving the same from his co-workers. It is rather unrealistic to even expect that he could have.

Some traditional schools in Indian philosophy claim that through yoga or strict discipline it is possible to acquire mystical powers and superhuman qualities. It is difficult for me to decide whether Gandhi had reached such purity of conscience or not. It is, however, claimed by some people I interviewed that Gandhi definitely was not far from such a stage of spiritual evolution.⁴⁵ Only a mind free from violence could be capable of teaching nonviolence. Gandhi taught nonviolence as the first condition of ethical living.

(3) Right Speech is only a result of right understanding, right effort, and right mindfulness as understood by the Buddhists. It implies refraining from lying, cheating, back-biting and idle gossip.

⁴⁵Conversations, Being my notes from the field research done in India: Summer, 1976. Although it is an intriguing aspect of Gandhi's personality, I did not go deeply into it.

Speech is connected with thought and action. Wise thoughts are conducive to wise speech and wise actions. Right speech is not harsh, selfish, dogmatic or hurting. It produces harmony, welfare and the noblest good. It is an expression of compassion and truth.

Gandhi understood this very well. He was very much in favour of mindful speech. His, total dedication to truth, made it imperative that he desist from all falsehood, especially false speech. All his āshramites were expected to take vows of self-discipline which included resistance to false speech. Gandhi also emphasized the importance of speech by personally observing periodic silences. Monday was always his day of silence. During silence, he kept his communications to the minimum. It is surprising how much one can imbibe by observing silently! The quality of one's speech definitely is related to the quality of one's mind. Both mind and speech influence the nature of action which issues directly or indirectly from either.

(4) ~~Right Action~~ for Buddhists means the observations of precepts in their negative and positive aspects. Generally, one is expected to observe the Five Precepts, but for the monastic order their number may vary. They are as follows: (a) to abstain from killing and to practise loving kindness; (b) to abstain from stealing and to practise generosity and charity; (c) to abstain from sexual misconduct and to practise purity and self-control; (d) to abstain from false speech and to practise honesty; (e) to abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs and to practise cautious self-restraint.

Gandhi translated the third precept very stringently but more in accordance with his Hindu up-bringing, rather than his Buddhist un-

derstanding. Bramhacharya is a concept accepted and understood widely in the Indian context. It is known that Gandhi identified it with complete chastity. What is not realized generally is that he did not equate it with absolute celibacy.⁴⁶ This does not rule out however the fact that Gandhi did not encourage perfect continence. 'Not to kill' was a precept which Gandhi would have followed even if his life depended on it. He believed very much in the positive force of love. Gandhi equated Satyagraha with the force of love. He even went so far as to declare several times that his nonviolence was nothing but pure love. One can only be nonviolent out of pure feelings of deep concern. Gandhi's concept of God is nothing but loving kindness.

Like the Buddhists, Gandhi too makes non-stealing a major principle of conduct. Gandhi's non-stealing was comprehensive enough to include an active concern for the poor and the needy. Stealing for Gandhi is all which one does not need as well as that which is more than what one needs for one's immediate use. Austerity in life, thus, becomes the guiding principle of Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhi was clearly opposed to taking intoxicating drinks and drugs. He led and supported many campaigns to prohibit the use of alcohol. Gandhi also emphasized self-restraint to such an extent that 'Gandhism' became a 'byword' for simplicity. Right actions seem to be indispensable to any aspirations for a noble life. It is inconceivable that one can

⁴⁶ Mere abstinence from sex is not celibacy. Gandhi himself was married and so were most of his co-workers. Celibacy implies the state of non-marriage. Bramhacharya is a sanskrit term which is further dealt with at later stages in this thesis. Some concepts are hard to be translated in a different language and therefore must be retained in order to grasp their correct underlying significance. In its comprehensive meaning 'Bramham charati' implies abiding in truth. Even a married couple can consciously abide in truth thereby observing Bramhacharya.

be truly nonviolent without wishing to lead a life of mindful restraint. But it would also have to include the fifth step.

(5) ~~Right Livelihood~~ Right Livelihood for the Buddhist means correct vocation. The lay people should pursue only those occupations which are conducive to welfare and justice for all beings. To cause harm and injustice is just as unworthy as to participate in them. For the Buddhist 'wrong living' involves all that a Gandhian would consider 'violent'. Traditionally, it implied non participation in dealing with arms, living beings, flesh and intoxicating drinks. Buddhism exhorts its followers to simplify life and to restrain from greediness. A life of service to humanity filled with noble obligations is very much enjoined by Buddha. He exhorted his followers to practise detachment and equanimity.

Together, the third, fourth and fifth steps constitute the sīla (moral living) in Buddhism.

Gandhi, too, confirmed that those who cause violence or injustice to be perpetuated are to be blamed just as much as those who commit that crime. Here Gandhi's ideas seem to be in perfect harmony with the Buddhist thinking. The merits or demerits accruing from an action are just as much a property of those who participate in it as those who allow it to take place. Right livelihood, in a way, ensures that one would not be obliged to participate consciously in a violence, that is not of one's seeking in the first place. A life of harmonious relationship presupposes a life of obligations happily borne. According to Gandhi, rights only accrue to those who have earned them through conscious obligations.

(6) Right Effort⁴⁷ can be of two kinds. It involves both conscious approval as well as conscious rejection. Buddhists claim that those wishing to seek perfection ought to persevere in acquiring and developing noble qualities as well as in carefully avoiding and rejecting ignoble ones.

Gandhi definitely seems to be keenly aware of the import of Buddha's teachings. But it is difficult to determine from the sources available so far, the extent to which Gandhi may have attempted to develop these perfections. It is conceivable that he may not have had direct access to the knowledge and skills involved in developing these pāramitās (virtues). This in turn, could be responsible for his own inability in explaining how an aspirant could acquire them. A satyagrahi must undoubtedly persevere to attain these virtues.

The fact that Gandhi did not emphasize adequately the tremendous significance of acquiring pāramitās is an important criticism of his satyagrahic training. It is not so much a reflection on Gandhi's own personality as on his apparent failure in teaching others to prepare for a satyagraha. Even the least acquaintance with the means of Satyagraha would convince one that the cultivation of virtues is a must for the satyagrahi.

If one were to believe in the theory of reincarnation (as the Buddhists and the Hindus do), it may be acceptable that Gandhi did not

⁴⁷Buddha subdivided Right Effort into four categories: (1) the effort to prevent the arising of evil which has not yet arisen, (2) the effort to expel that evil which is already there, (3) the effort to induce good which has not yet arisen, (4) the effort to cultivate that good which is already there. cit. from Anguttaranikāya, ed. E. Hardy (Ceylon: Pali Text Society, 1959), IV, 14. by S. Saddhatissa, op. cit., p. 72.

feel the need to acquire these skills to the same extent as others might. However, the lack of proper guidance is a deficiency and must therefore be pointed out as such. If so, Gandhi's claim that Satyagraha is a means available to all lacks logical force.

(7) Right Mindfulness in Buddhist philosophy stands for an uninter-rupted awareness of the following: (i) body, (ii) feelings, (iii) mind, and (iv) ideas. It is essential to be aware of these fourfold 'processes' in order to get an insight into the reality of things and to avoid the arising of erroneous views.

Thus, it is the culmination of the intellectual process which links up with the intuitive process, namely vipassana or direct insight into things as they truly are.⁴⁸

It is important to make a note of the above passage since it points out a crucial element in the direct perception of things. The closest English equivalent of vipassana would be intuitive understanding. It is insight. Mind has a peculiar tendency to view things incompletely. It discriminates between good and bad, right or wrong. Intellect, according to Buddhist view, is conditioned by previous karmas (actions) and Saṅkharas (aggregates). In order to realize the exact significance and relatedness of things, understanding must transcend, even the intellectual mind. To perceive purely, our understanding should go beyond all compounded things, Therefore, according to the Buddhists

⁴⁸ It is claimed that a conscientious practice of the above step would help to achieve the Ten Perfections as promised by the Perfect One. They are: (i) generosity (dāna), (ii) morality (sīla), (iii) renunciation (nekkhama), (iv) wisdom (paññā), (v) energy (virīya), (vi) patience (khānti), (vii) honesty and truthfulness (sacca), (viii) determination (adhithhāna), (ix) loving kindness (mettā) and (x) equanimity (upekkhā). ibid., p. 73.

the development of insight is the most important deed of all in the path of nibbāna.⁴⁹

It is this aspect of Gandhi's technique which remains most inexplicable. One can call it esoteric if one likes, but definitely it does not lend itself to mere rational analysis. It appears that all attempts to understand individuals like Gandhi are bound to fall short and, to an extent, must fail miserably, unless we take into account the intuitive grasp of a situation.

To a Buddhist, the interrelationship between intellectual and intuitive grasp of a phenomenon appears quite logical. He can clearly see the two spheres of understanding. A Buddhist is apt to regard the mental perception of a thing as different from the immediate apprehension of its reality. Likewise, it seems appropriate to distinguish clearly between a satyagrahi who is capable of direct perception and the one who is not. Without this element of direct perception, Satyagraha itself would lack a great deal.

These considerations give rise to another set of pertinent questions. Did Gandhi himself conceive of Satyagraha in such light? The answer is - yes, he did.* Secondly, did Gandhi caution us about this terribly crucial aspect of Satyagraha in clear cut terms? It is hard to answer the second question either in the negative or the positive. He did warn against the misuse or the abuse of satyagrahic powers. But

⁴⁹Mahasi Sayadaw, Mahasi Abroad, trans. U Nyi Nyi and U Tha Noe, Rangoon: Mahasi Sasana Yeiktha, 1979. If practised well, mindfulness develops seven factors of Enlightenment to perfection: (1) Mindfulness (sati), (2) Investigation of the Law (dhammavicāya), (3) Energy (viriya), (4) Rapture (pīti), (5) Tranquility (passaddhī), (6) Concentration (samādhi), (7) Equanimity (upekkhā).

*See M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances in Action and his Autobiography: op. cit.

neither did Gandhi enunciate clearly the manner in which one might go about starting a Satyagraha nor did he suggest ways of increasing the potential capabilities and skills of a Satyagrahi. The training imparted to the future satyagrahies in the Gandhi āshrams, therefore, appears to lack something very substantial and fundamental.

It appears that Gandhi took for granted the ability of the individual to identify and foster the virtues of the satyagrahic demeanour. It is comparatively easier to cultivate one's outward behaviour rather than inner attitude and outlook. Perhaps Gandhi considered it best to start with the simplest in order to proceed towards the more complex. Gandhi perhaps meant to justify his āshrams in the light of these exoteric requirements of the spiritual experience.

From another perspective, it is also possible that Gandhi did not wish to discourage those who initially lacked the capabilities and skills of noble living, from even trying to change themselves. Through conscious endeavour anyone could learn to cultivate śīla (moral habits). The ~~exotic~~ exoteric aspect of personality requirements deal with ethical problems. They consist of adopting new patterns and making deliberate choice. Once the direction was determined, Gandhi hoped that individuals could gradually be initiated into the mysteries of esoteric life.

We may suppose that Gandhi was trying to inculcate the will to overcome among the weak. The task of overcoming ignorance is not so great for those who are already on the path of Enlightenment. But it is those who are in total darkness that require the light most. Virtues are likewise easier to develop among those who know their worth. One who is ignorant of their worth may be the hardest to convince.

Gandhi still does not solve, however, the problem of removing the darkness through conscious mindfulness. He only hopes that, somehow, the individual shall see the light. He does not explain how one can see it. This is perhaps one of the major criticisms of Gandhi. He urges us to be nonviolent but does not tell us exactly how. Buddha did. Therefore, Buddha is known as the Wise One, the Perfect Teacher of Mankind and the Enlightened One.

(8) Right Concentration is the last stage towards the release from suffering. It requires an unwavering attention towards a worthy goal. Ekaggatā (one-pointedness), for Buddhists, denotes the mind tuned to the sublime object of desirelessness. Freedom from craving is a result of true understanding. In the light of such knowledge one clearly sees the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and substancelessness of all compounded things. It is an understanding which is the fruit of true contemplation. This includes action as well as inaction. Action undertaken to establish dharma, either in thought, word, or deed is wholesome. Similarly, passivity with regards to unwholesome thoughts, words or deeds, is also virtuous. The secret is to maintain a moderate stance and proceed step by step towards higher realization.

Gandhi must have had a glimpse of this contemplative life. He definitely practised it himself. He, too, tried to follow the middle way by avoiding the extremes. But Gandhi often failed to elaborate, in a crystal clear manner, why he acted the way he did. Perhaps it all came intuitively to him. His "still, small, voice" often told him what to do. If the Satyagrahi wishes to develop that faculty, perhaps it may help one to learn it from the Buddhist way.

Gandhi's insistence on constant watchfulness does, however, have a ring of the Dhammapada admonitions.⁵⁰ Violence that is heedlessly committed by mind, words and deeds can only be avoided by cultivating mindfulness of the four kinds mentioned above. Modifications in the habits of one's daily living can of course help, but only to an extent. Right mindfulness coupled with Right concentrations appears to be the only path towards that perfection which is the ultimate goal of Satyagraha.

One could of course argue that Satyagraha need not necessarily take into account this ultimate goal (seeking total release from suffering). As long as the satyagrahic techniques can help to alleviate socio-political problems, it does not really matter if they fall on the periphery of a satyagrahi's major concern.

In the final analysis Gandhi's Satyagrahi is a genuinely honest person. He or she cannot make a claim at one level and refute it at another. True honesty also demands that one be in harmony with oneself. This harmony demands conformity between the inner and outer, the private and public, the spiritual and mundane, as well as, the religious and political. A Satyagrahi's ethos expresses itself in the minutest affairs of life. For the sake of utility a Satyagrahi shall not forsake his conscience, nor can he be an opportunist, when it comes to choosing an option. The path of the golden 'mean' presupposes a dedication to truth,

⁵⁰Juan Mascaró, op. cit., "Watch for anger of the body: let the body be self controlled. Hurt not with the body, but use your body well." v. 231. "Watch for anger of words: let your words be self controlled. Hurt not with words, but use your words well." v. 232. "Watch for anger of the mind: let your mind be self controlled. Hurt not with the mind, but use your mind well." v. 233.

the dharma (obligation). A compromise between the practical and the ideal is possible. But, there can hardly be a compromise with the ideal itself. A Satyagrahi is, above all, a consciously committed being.

In the Gandhian parlance, thought, speech and action are the true expressions of a conscious being. Since a Satyagrahi is a conscious entity in the highest sense, the essence of his experience must inevitably translate itself into his existence. Satyagraha requires a firm commitment and dedication to the dictates of one's conscience.

A Satyagrahi is also primarily a compassionate being. He would do violence to himself and others by differentiating between the levels of his honesty. He is nonviolent first and revolutionary afterwards. Whereas most revolutions aim at transforming the 'outer', the Satyagraha concentrated on the "inner" in the hope of bringing about a change through "self" transformation.*

The secret of a Satyagrahi's ultimate success and superiority lies in transcending the narrow limits of cognition. By approaching the world from the two complimentary aspects of total experience (the exoteric and esoteric), a satyagrahi aims to elevate himself and his society. At the root of such realization lies perhaps the only hope for humanity where the individual is not alienated from his environment, or the part alienated from the whole. One who sees this can get rid of the avijjā (ignorance) and is an awakened being.⁵¹ A Satyagrahi is an awakened being.

⁵¹Karma Tensing Dorgyal Namgyal Rinpoche, Paleochora Papers, ed. C. Jones (Toronto: The Dharma Centre of Canada, 1976), pp. 1-8.

*It means a moral ordering of his own life. In that perspective a Satyagrahi is primarily a compassionate being. See bibliography for my paper on "The nonviolent revolutionary".

Chapter II. Satyagraha and the Hindu Ethos

We have come to take a great deal of pride in the human conquest of nature and man. Modern man emphasizes 'immediacy' over 'eternity' and often, 'utility' over 'virtue'. Other civilizations however, have achieved a different balance in preferring the spiritual considerations of life.

Ancient Indian civilization, as a whole, looked with indifference upon the acquisition of power and the accumulation of wealth as the primary aims of life. It even neglected military and political supremacy as worthy ends to be pursued. The life of contemplation was the one ideal which attracted the best of Indian minds. It is not surprising to note therefore that the entire Indian society paid homage to great sages (rishis). Their wisdom was considered far superior to the might of arms or the wealth of riches. The sages were venerated on account of their own virtue, wisdom and courage. They did not care much for worldly success because theirs was the life of sublime achievements. These rare individuals devoted themselves to the realization of the infinite.

They who having attained the supreme soul in knowledge were filled with wisdom, and having found him in union with the soul were in perfect harmony with the inner self; they having realised him in the heart were free from all selfish desires, and having experienced him in all the activities of the world, had attained calmness, The rishis were they who having reached the supreme God from all sides had found abiding peace, had

become united with all, had entered into the life of the Universe.¹

But such realisation did not consist in utter isolation of existence. It meant transcending the 'self' to merge in a higher 'Self'. According to these sages the secret of ultimate freedom lay in a conscious dedication to truth. They considered this the ultimate end, the highest aspiration of humanity. Once the spirit of one's being comprehended the essence of reality, then conflict had to give way to peace, and strife to quietude. By conquering the self, such a being ultimately rose above the narrow dispositions of time and space. He becomes one with the Eternal - the all pervading Spirit (yuktātmanāh) and at peace (praśāntah). Such an existence was in perfect harmony with man and nature. There the differences between the individual and the society dissolve .

In contrast to the city states of ancient Greece, from where Western Civilization draws its own sustenance, forest hermitages became the cradle of Indian civilization. Far from the chaos of worldly pursuits and in close communion with nature's infinity, living the simple austere life of absolute freedom, Indian sages often devoted their entire lives exploring the mysteries of human experience. The whole universe was their domain. They felt least hampered by the ordinary cares of routine

¹The above is a translation of the following Sanskrit verse which defines the true nature of a rishi:

"Samprāpyainan rishyo jñānatriptāh
Kritātmanō vītarāgāh praśāntah,
te sarvagam sarvatah prāpya dhīrāh
Yuktātmanāh sarvamēvāviçanti."

(source unknown) quoted by R. Tagore, Sadhana: The Realization of Life (Tucson: Omen Press, 1972), p. 14.

existence. The natural environment had a deep impact on the knowledge which was thus acquired. Later on when cities, rivaling those of Mesopotamia and Babylon sprang up on the Indian sub-continent, even when Venician and Roman markets were being lured by the luxurious products from the East - Indians still looked to the rishis for guidance in many affairs of life.

Over the years, Indian civilization has not alienated itself from the very source of its inspiration. India has always acknowledged without hesitation the supremacy of spirit above reason or intellect, the undeniable bonds that exist between man and nature, the unity that abides between the individual and the universal. The Indian sages have always stressed the need to realize the fundamental unity in creation. That unity, according to them, is not a mere philosophical speculation, or a dogmatic assertion of the imposed faith. It is a self-evident truth, open to introspection and verification by definite means of knowledge and, above all, by direct experience.

To an Indian mind all things are essentially invested with a spiritual meaning. This view naturally lends a mystery to the Indian concept of universe. Indian thinkers claim that it is possible to fathom the mystical springs of phenomena (existence) by conscious endeavour. They assert that through strict discipline of the self and one's faculties, one can partake in the mystery of the infinite. To be able to do so is the highest one can be capable of. It is the ultimate one can dare to know. And when one knows the infinite, one becomes it. For to know is to realize. One can measure the limits of one's realization by the scope of one's consciousness. The ancient Indian sages

saw no gap or discontinuity between truth and their realization of it. For them, all forms of life were manifestation of this same truth. They believed that the truth which resided in one's own being was the same which resided in others. The potency of that all pervading truth was much greater than death, decay and our own finite perceptions. To the holders of such views, immortality was a fact of life. They identified the real with the eternal and considered all life sacred. Their reverence for life gave the Indian sages a deep conviction of unity in diversity, order in chaos, and an abiding truth in the midst of all illusion.

The truth of reality thus grasped at the empirical level made it easier to relate their oneness at the metaphysical level. Ethically, it meant realizing God or the all pervading Goodness in one's relationship with the entire universe, including the environment.

Ethics

Originally the term was derived from the Greek ethikos pertaining to ethos which means character. Its Latin equivalent is moral philosophy which refers to mores which also connotes customs or conventions regarded as essential to a society. The Sanskrit equivalent for ethics is dharma. I shall discuss shortly, the implications of this word dharma. Morals have to do with the distinctions between "right" or "wrong", "good" or "bad". The study which deals with morals is often termed as ethics. Generally there is a great deal of controversy regarding its meaning and scope. To some it may mean an inquiry into the question of the "good" and "bad" in human conduct, and to others it may signify the fundamental considerations of what the "good" is. In its most comprehensive sense ethics may include an examination of the common character and habits of mankind, taking in its sweep various cultural and traditional habits of

men at different times in particular societies. Thus, it can cover an exceptionally wide canvas involving man in his totality as far as he expresses himself in his relationship to others. Ethics is concerned with certain common principles of values. It is primarily interested in the meaning and scope of normative judgements which relate to human conduct in an ultimate or absolute sense.²

According to Professor Muirhead³ there are two kinds of sciences: natural and normative or critical. Those which describe things as they are, can be termed as natural, while others which deal with our judgements about them, are known as normative. Ethics undoubtedly fall into the latter category because of their subject matter. We do not merely take human character and conduct as a natural fact but ascribe to them certain values and standards in relation to our concepts of the "ideal" and the "good". Of course, our perceptions of that perfection may lie in a realm altogether different from that of the existent. It is in this connection that the aesthetic nature of man comes into being.

Ethics is also concerned with the problem of moral obligation. It takes within its purview all considerations of nature, conduct, duties, habits and customs of man. It is interested in the particular as well as the general. Ethics, therefore, not only asks questions about the aims and objects of specific moral pronouncements but also attempts to evaluate the principles which determine the worth of ultimate ends in

²Rev. H.H. Williams. "Ethics", Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed.; (1926), IX, 809.

³J.H. Muirhead, "Ethics", Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (1912), V, 415.

human endeavour. It lays down the framework within which "rightness" or "wrongness" of any act may be considered.⁴

While ethical values are important by themselves they must also establish their practical worth. In order to be widely acceptable, ethics must not cling to dogmas whether religious or secular. Above all it must be amenable to rational inquiry. To be universally viable, ethics must also transcend the spatial and the temporal. It must come to terms with the concept of man as man, man not merely as a conglomeration of the physical and the mental but also something more.

A materialistic conception of man cannot have much to contribute in terms of ethics. The roots of ethics lie, indeed, in the spirituality of our experience. It is the element of spirituality which ethics aims to express in the thoughts, deeds and social institutions of man. Its ultimate aim is to lift man above the narrow confines of selfishness to a wider vista of life and society. Ethics aspires to instil life with a deeper and a more significant meaning.

Ethics can also be viewed as an autonomous form of experience, a self-governing phenomenon, implying a certain freedom of will. This will has definitely something to do with personal freedom. It is for this reason that ethics cannot be imposed externally by force. At the same time, it cannot help but express itself in that which is the finest, the most sublime and the noblest aspect of human nature.

⁴It is important to bear in mind that only those actions which are of voluntary nature, involving conscious motives, desires or will under the control of human beings can really qualify to be considered ethically. The element of inward choice is an essential condition of ethics.

Source of Ethics

There are certain self-evident truths, open to observation by anyone who cares to note them. It is however reasonable to expect that one has to have the capability to grasp even the simplest of truths. Also there are various stages or levels of comprehension. The insight into truths can only deepen with experience. An individual, a people, or the whole of mankind learns by stages of comprehension, each according to their ability. However, things such as certainty of death, uncertainty of happiness, brevity of life, and an awareness of one's own ignorance, have been accepted as fundamental realities of existence. Traditionally wisdom everywhere acknowledges peace, contentment, generosity, dignity, refinement and mental-poise as desirable things. It is a common experience, although rarely admitted, that when all cares of mundane life are taken care of, we have yet to figure out the mystery of existence itself. An eastern mind is more open to such queries because it does not take for granted the limits of critical intelligence as the final goal of human aspiration. Indian thinkers have believed for a long time that mind is capable of grasping the reality behind the flux of phenomena as perceived by the senses. Empirical science is not the only and definitely not the best means of knowledge. Scientific knowledge also has its own limitations. It too is value-ridden and cannot go beyond its constraints. They asserted that some of the deepest convictions by which men live are not the results of rational thought or mathematical equations. Formulas can hardly encompass all truths. Spiritual certainty is also a form of knowledge. It is not a-logical but supra-logical. One can also call

it intuitive knowledge or insight.⁵

S. Radhakrishnan argues that having given reason the supreme position, the West is now hard pressed to acknowledge reason's limitations in answering some of the most profound questions of our existence. While scientific rationalism can help us subjugate nature and carve out tools of utility, it cannot fathom the depths of reality. It can hardly stand the challenge of mystery that is life. He maintains that life is movement, duration, change and the continuity in change. It is, in short, reality itself.⁶ The means of understanding such phenomena, therefore, will have to be equally dynamic.

Intuition is the highest kind of knowledge available when it comes to understanding that which lies beyond analytical intellect. It is insight into the truth through integral means. It is an intimation into the source of creative spirit. Through intuition all experience attains unity and continuity. It will be wrong to say that intellect is opposed to intuition, since intellect still plays a fairly significant role in intuition. Devoid of intellect, intuition would degenerate into a dogma. Intuition cannot be opposed to earnest investigation. Direct experience is its first and last condition.

All creative works of art, science, philosophy, and literature draw sustenance from intuitive experience. An intuitive mind synthesizes all experience to produce the work of a genius. Therefore an ethical life is also essentially a life of intuitive insight.

⁵S. Radhakrishnan, An Idealistic View of Life (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1932), p. 147.

⁶ibid.

Virtue, said Socrates, is knowledge; only it is not intellectual knowledge which is teachable. It is knowledge which springs from the deeper levels of man's being. It is acquired by the raising of one's mind, the growth of one's consciousness. The deeper a man is rooted in spirit, the more he knows directly. To one of ethical sensitiveness, the path of duty is as clear as any knowledge we possess. In its perception we come as near to absolute certainty as it is possible for us to do.⁷

Ethics presupposes the following: (1) the inherent worth of life, and (2) the intimacy of existence and value. The first implies that life has meaning and it is significant in and of itself. The second assumes that just as nature and spirit are closely inter-related, so too the universe exists with a purpose and has a meaning. For Plato it was the realization of the Good. For Vedantins it is the recognition of the true Self. Hindus in general give it the name of the Absolute or the Real. Different schools of Indian philosophy differ as to the means of its realization. But ultimately it is the aspiration for something more than the individual 'self'. They hold that man is naturally endowed with a propensity for the good, the beautiful, and the true. Some have even claimed that we instinctively desire happiness and abhor pain. Life is opposed to Death. Ugliness is undesirable. It is because life seeks goodness, beauty, and truth that man would have had to invent virtue if it did not exist in our primeaval consciousness. Virtue is the prerequisite of ethical existence. Ethics is only a recognition of experiential truths.

For the time being, let us suppose that all that exists is true, real and open to experience in its totality. Even the multiplicity of form

⁷ibid., p. 198.

and character, the opposite pairs of life and death, freedom and bondage, peace and chaos, as well as light and darkness can be taken to constitute only a partial manifestation of the whole. It is māyā (illusion of reality).

Now, if mind were to attempt to grasp such reality, that understanding would have to be of an extraordinary nature. It will have to be independent, non-conditional, non-relative, and direct (sat). That understanding will have to be integral to the experience of the reality itself. Nothing short of such awareness can encompass the wholeness of its content. That knowledge will also have to be pure perception rather than inferential cognition. It will have to be immediate, as opposed to mediate, non-definable, informal and incommunicable in its essence.

It is argued that permanence of thought loses the freshness of experience. All abstract thought in a way is reconstruction of a perceived fact. It has a quality of timelessness about it. It is recapitulation of the felt phenomena and as such it is devoid of the stuff out of which the living experience itself is made of.

All language has the function of communicating the perceived character of the phenomena and in doing so, it also transforms the formless into form and gives words to silence. Where there is no gap between the subject and the object, the perceiver and the perceived, the knower and the known, there is perfect harmony. It requires no laws of verification and no processes of knowing and perceiving. It is immanent.

Unlike their Western counterparts, ancient Indian thinkers have shown a greater awareness of such knowledge. They divide all knowledge into two kinds, pratyakṣa (sensuous) and aparokṣa (non-sensuous). But knowledge as

such is defined as an intense communication between the knower and the known. They also cite self-knowledge as the highest and the best form of knowledge. According to Hindu philosophers the Self is inseparably bound with Existence. A knowledge of Self is, therefore, the key to the interpretation of the Universe. Self-knowledge is the only true and direct knowledge, all else is inferential and secondary. Śāṅkara goes so far as to suggest that self-realization is the precondition of every other kind of knowledge. It is the basis of all proof.

The Self is the first and the absolute or rather the only certainty that human cognition is capable of. It is implicit in all experience. All awareness is bound to the Self in the ultimate analysis. Therefore self-consciousness becomes the first condition of true knowledge. Knowledge which points towards the absolute freedom or mokṣa is necessarily intuitive knowledge. It could not be otherwise. Sense-experience is dependent on organs or instruments of empirical perception. It can only deal with the natural phenomena.

Logic goes a little bit further in that it can analyse, synthesize and carefully employ itself in the practical affairs of life. It has the power of converting sense perceptions into thought and thoughts into inferential treatment. Logic can alter arguments to suit situations. But when it comes to understanding reality, only the creative intuition proves to be adequate. It identifies the individual self (jīva) with the Universal Self (Brahman). Intuition allows the essence of the pure being or consciousness (ċit) to establish rapport with itself in others. It is in this sense that knowledge is looked upon as a means of realization and ethics draws inspiration from such knowledge. Without the firm conviction of the former (knowledge of

reality) ethics would lose its direction and passion for virtue.

The Hindu sādhana (aspiration) looks upon ātmopāsana (worship of the Self) as the highest aim of life.⁸ It sees no difference among beings. This is technically known as abheda darśana (seeing of no difference). The Vedānta school of philosophy holds that infinity cannot possibly be realized by the finite being. The fact that it is realized by the individual self proves that the unique is universal and ātman, Brahman. The Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gītā hold that jñāna (knowledge) is the only way to salvation.⁹ Both the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta schools declare ignorance as the chief cause of misery and bondage. Freedom is the right knowledge of reality. The same message also found expression in the Buddhist and the Jaina schools of thought. The Bhagavad-Gītā goes so far as to pronounce the knowledge of reality as both the means and end of mokṣa (jñānam as well as jñānagamyā).

It is important to know that this knowledge is differentiated from other forms not only because of its character and content but also because of the experience which it brings in its wake. It is equated with aparokṣā-nubhūti (most direct, intimate, vivid and the fullest kind of experience). Such knowledge is happiness. It is infinite joy or bliss personified (ānandam). Its nature is absolute or ultimate freedom (mokṣa). It is incomparable or without a second (advitīyam). He who knows it, becomes it.*

⁸N.K. Brahma, Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1932)

⁹G.W. Kaveeshwar, The Ethics of Gita (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1971).

*Brahmevid brahmeti bhavati. cf. Taittiriya Upanishads.

In its experience the world loses its multiplicity and acquires a unity with the Self. But only those who are spiritually inclined and pure can partake of such experience. The subtle escapes the grasp of the crude and ignoble. Only the serene can dwell in its realms.

The Relationship Between Religion, Philosophy and Ethics

Religion, philosophy and ethics are inter-related and, especially, in the Hindu thought they are almost inseparable.¹⁰ Their essence is the same tapas (austere thinking or reflection). It is tapas which leads to jñāna or knowledge. All three contribute to heighten our sense of the spiritual consciousness. They aim at satyam (truth), śivam (goodness), and sundaram (beauty). They express the aesthetic in man, the poetic in his experience, and the real in all life.

By religion I do not mean here either the orthodox, dogmatic assertions or the empty rituals of an organized faith. True religion is neither a code nor a creed. It is to practise what we know. Authority of experience is its first condition. Religion does not base its findings on logical conclusions but springs from the confident assertions of the inward life. It believes in the intensity of being and the existence of a superior order, dynamic enough to invoke human aspirations in that direction. True religion aspires to harmonize two slightly contradictory and yet complementary aspects of our being. These are: one, which we find ourselves in, and the other which we envision in the stillness of our solitudes. Religion also partakes

¹⁰S. Radhakrishnan, East and West in Religion (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958).

of emotion and has the potentiality to transform life through the perception of an ideal.¹¹ S.N. Dasgupta has compared religion to art.

Religion is art in the deepest and widest sense of the term; it is the self-expression of the spirit through whole of our personality. In Religion the entire personality must be so worked upon, and transformed, that it may prove itself to be a suitable vehicle for self-expression, even as a creeper blossoms into beautiful flowers and a tree sweetens into fruits.¹²

Ethics is intimately related to religion. In the light of the latter, the former finds utterance. The laws of practical conduct are not merely based on prudence. If they were, they would lose their urgency and fall victims of every passing fancy since prudence is dependent on situations of time and place. Social values of peace and progress are insufficient to support such things as purity, love, strength, kindness, non-injury and truth. In order to be valid ethics must draw upon a higher authority and serve a greater purpose or end. Ethics is the means of human self-expression. Either it must spring from the fullness of life or suffer to be ignored as barren maxims of speculative intelligence unrelated to spiritual insight. One can force religion down the throats of an unwilling majority. But no authority however strong has been able so far to legislate virtue or declare ethical conduct as mandatory. The individual is the ultimate arbiter of what may be ethical or non-ethical because his conscience defines what is best.

¹¹Human creativity is greatly dependent on this aspect of experience although some may object to defining it as religion.

¹²S.N. Dasgupta, Philosophical Essays, p. 377 quoted by S. Dasgupta in Development of Moral Philosophy in India (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 3.

The Sanskrit term darśana (philosophy) is derived from drś (to see) implying an act of perceiving. Only when we see truly, sincerely, and with utter regard for the reality of our perceptions do we understand. Not all who see can have the capacity to perceive. A philosopher sees truly because he understands. His understanding does not derive from reason or logical thinking alone. But reason undoubtedly plays a significant role in that "seeing". In order to discover truth and find the underlying principles of mind, matter and soul, he must cultivate a special attitude of mind. A philosopher takes the concrete experience of man but transforms those facts into possibilities of what may be. Philosophy can not tell us what it is to live a life of agony, ecstasy and pain. It can only speculate as to what they may be like. In order to know what is anguish, one has to experience it. No amount of rational theorizing can help express what it is.

This is one reason why most systems of Indian philosophy take religion as their basis. Their foundation is the possible betterment of life. Great thinkers of the Indian past have also been great experimenters with truth. From Buddha to Gandhi, they all share a genuine concern for human conduct. They believed in living what they perceived and not speculating for the sake of speculation alone.

Before we consider the contents of the Hindu Ethics, one may point out the significance of karma (actions, thought and speech) and mokṣa (final or ultimate liberation). The doctrine of karma presupposes a cycle of rebirths. Karma (actions) are said to constitute the explanation for our experiences whatever they may be. Past karma result in our present encounters and situation, just as our present karma hold in them the seeds of our future condition. There is no escape from the

inevitability of karma, for we reap what we sow. However, the release or liberation from karma can only come in the form of mokṣa. It can be either quick or long and cumbersome, depending on how we have so far acted, thought, and spoken. For all Indian schools of philosophy this final release or mokṣa is the only end worthy of pursuit. Mukti, nirvāṇa or enlightenment hold out the promise of liberated life here and now. Ethical living is one of the surest ways to reach it. The Theory of karma is that rule of law which manifests itself in nature as well as mind and morals. It is a spiritual necessity from which there is no escape.

The concept of dharma¹³ (used for ethics here) is derived from dhṛ (to hold or support). Simply, it refers to that on which the entire existence bases itself. But that statement should not, in anyway belittle its complexity.

According to Dr. Kane¹⁴, an eminent scholar, the exact meaning of the term dharma is vague. There is no English equivalent of the term to express adequately the phenomena. Various attempts have been made however to define its meaning. Earlier there was a tendency among some Western scholars to equate dharma with ṛta (the eternal order). It was thus interpreted to mean a fixed order of heaven and earth. That meaning is rejected these days by even the most unsophisticated student of Indology. Later it came to be regarded as a term denoting custom, usage, law and righteous conduct, all at once. Even Indian scholars themselves are not sure of its

¹³A fair amount of interpretation in this section is based upon my unpublished MS. "Some Considerations of the Concept of Nonviolence" (A Comprehensive Paper submitted to the Department of Political Science, McMaster University, 1975).

¹⁴P.V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstrās (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1932), I, 135-158, 168-190.

definition. But dharma definitely has to do with virtue. It may sometimes be referred to mean canonical law. One may conclude that dharma is a comprehensive term. Its meaning is evolving and "never quite the same".¹⁵ The concept has to do with the principles of conduct.

The authors of the Dharma-Śāstras (texts dealing with dharma) did not confine these principles to any particular class or creed. They made dharma obligatory for all sections of society, both within and without the pale of Hindu social order of castes. With the widening of Indian cultural and political horizons all racial, social, tribal and communal groups came to accept dharma, each according to their need and capacity. The concept was flexible enough to incorporate an endless variety of interests, occupations and creeds so as to provide a harmony within conflicts and a unity in diversity.

In due course, the Dharma-Śāstras came to regulate not only one aspect of conduct, but literally all aspects of public or social life. All caste and all classes of Indian society gradually came to regard the Dharma-Śāstras as embodying a universal code of ethical conduct.¹⁶ In short they came to be the "sum of total morality" or the code of "right action". The importance of this definition becomes apparent when we find the Bhagvad-Gītā insisting that "the performer of the good - and not the believer in this or that view - can never get into an evil state".¹⁷ Religious con-

¹⁵D.R. Bhandarkar, Some Aspects of Ancient Hindu Polity (2nd ed.; Benaras: Hindu University, 1963), p. 101. By saying that the state had the obligation of preserving dharma he means all these: law, virtue, religion, duty, piety, justice, innate property, or quality.

¹⁶B.A. Saletore, Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), p. 14.

¹⁷"na hi kalyanakrt kascid durgatim tata gacchati" - Bhagvad-Gītā, trans. S. Radhakrishnan (Bombay: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), ch. VI, v. 40, p. 208.

formity has never been a goal of the Hindu way of life. But spiritual and ethical outlook have always been its prime concerns. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that in Hinduism earnest seekers after truth have also been upholders of ethical life. The end of ethics or dharma is the welfare of all creation.¹⁸

The most important sources of dharma mentioned in the Indian ancient texts are the Śrutis (comprising of Vedas and the Upanishads), Smṛtis (Dharma-Śāstra works), sadācāra (conduct of noble men and women) and ātma-tuṣṭi (self-satisfaction). Gautama mentions Veda and the understanding and conduct of those who know them as reliable sources of emmulation, while Vaśiṣṭha considers Vedas and Smṛtis alone as trustworthy ideals. However, Yājñavalkya adds a fourth category - desire born of pure intention as a dependable guide for dharma. The Mahābhārata is very critical in this respect; it trusts neither the Śrutis nor the Smṛtis in case of conflict, although it does refer to Vedas, Smṛtis and sadācāra (good conduct) as sources of ideal conduct for popular satisfaction.

On the basis of the above sources, Hindu scholars have classified dharma according to Śrauta - the Vedic dharma, and Smārta - based on Smṛti and Śistācāra or the right conduct. Some put it into three classifications of Deśa-dharma (depending on country), Jāti-dharma (depending on caste or class), and Kula-dharma (depending on family tradition). More detailed studies have also been made. Mitākṣara defines dharma into six divisions. It can vary according to the person, circumstances, time and place.

¹⁸S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1952), I, 505-506.

Generally there are two categories of dharma: (1) sāmanya or sādharaṇa or nitya dharma meaning the universal code of ethics, and (2) visiṣṭha dharma - morality suited to particular or specific cases. The latter include varṇa dharma (code for different castes), āśrama dharma (code for different stages of individual life), gṛha dharma (code for particular office), naimittikā dharma (code for occasional or expiatory rites), apaddharma (code for times of emergencies and distress), and yuga dharma (code for different ages).

The universal code of conduct or sādharaṇa dharma enjoins a number of virtues common to all humanity irrespective of caste, creed, or colour and profession. They are valid at all times and in all places. Manu, the famous law-giver lists them as following: austerity, learning, self-sacrifice, faith, sacrificial ceremony, forbearance, purity of emotion and pity, truth and self-control. Ahimsa (nonviolence) and goodwill towards all are considered by him as eternal obligations.¹⁹

The Mahābhārata stresses the quality of satya (truth) as the most fundamental of all virtues. It is the highest duty and the greatest promoter of all good. Truth not only purifies the mind but it also overcomes untruth in the gravest of all situations. There is no obligation greater than the obligation of truth. The Mahābhārata also enumerates situations

¹⁹"Neither a man who lives unrighteously, nor he who acquires wealth by telling falsehood nor he who always delights in doing injury, ever attains happiness in this world." Manu, The Laws of Manu, ed. G. Buhler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), p. 170. Gautama dharmasutra also accords great importance to the following qualities of the soul: dayā (compassion), ksanti (forbearance), anasuya (freedom from envy), śuchi (purity of body, speech and thought), and ahimsa (noninjury to sentient beings). cf. these virtues with those enumerated in the Śanti Parva, Mahābhārat. There dharma is equated with nonviolence.

where falsehood can sometimes be tolerated and preferred over the truth. Ahimsa²⁰ or nonviolence is also a virtue, like truth, which is greatly emphasized. It is defined as the avoidance of hurting or causing injury by thought, word or deed. The virtue of brahmacarya (celibacy) is considered as a discipline. According to the Mahābhārata, continence in life can overcome the greatest of difficulties. It is closely related to damā (control over the sense-organs). Kṣama (forgiveness), especially in one superior in power and strength, is a virtue but should be practised with discrimination. Śīla (rules of good conduct) include respect for one's parents, teachers and elders in general. There are other virtues equally desirable but, not as significant, such as madhūrā vacana (agreeable speech), śaranāgatā-rakṣā (protection of the suppliant), and ātithī-sevā (hospitality towards guests).

In the Śānti Parva (Mahābhārata, ch. CX) Bhiṣma expounds for Yudhiṣṭhira the qualities which can help one overcome adverse circumstances. The qualities enumerated by him form the core of Hindu ethical being. He carefully elaborates these virtues by stating that those who are self-controlled, free from indulgence in any extremes of sensual pleasures, free from pride and jealousy, lovers of hospitality, respectful towards parents, free from sin, abstainers of sex (except for the aim of procreation), performers of sacrifice, speakers of truth, avoiders of anger, sweets, meats and wine, of agreeable speech, who treat others the way they themselves

20

ahimsa parmo dharma,
ahimsa paramam tapah,
ahimsa paramam satyam,
tata dharmah pravartate.

(Ahimsa is the highest religion, the highest penance, the highest truth, and the source of all other virtues. Mahābhārata, Anuśāsan Parva, IV.25).

would like to be treated, and in whom sattva guṇa (good qualities) predominate, can win most crucial tasks and overcome any difficulty.

The term viśiṣṭa dharma is used to connote those duties which are specifically assigned for individuals and groups within particular circumstances. The Puruṣa Sūkta (Rgveda, ch. X, vv.90, 12) refers to the four categories or classes of people in the Hindu society which later came to be regarded as castes or varṇa (literally meaning colour). The Bhagavad-Gītā attributes the differences in them to prakṛti (inherent nature). The Mahābhārata clearly delineates on the specific obligations of each varṇa.²¹

A fundamental principle behind the caste-system was to respect the unique and individual characteristics of each group by allowing it to affirm its identity in the diversity of human unity. Humanity or mānavadharmā was the basis of such recognition. The amazing ease with which the early Aryan rigidity gave way to emergent innovations and modifications has been a subject of much comment, yet few realize the part which the caste-system has played in the gradual Hinduization of the entire sub-continent. It still continues to play a crucial role in the modernization of a traditional society.

The caste-system is not a matter of divine ordinance. It is a type of social stratification devised to denote exclusive social groups with their own customs and usages. All groups in a society ought to work

²¹It is claimed that although the whole system later degenerated into a means of exploitation and oppression, in fact it was a product of tolerance and mutual collaboration between races, tribes, sects and occupational groups. It provided a means of synthesis among the Dravidians, Mongols, Huns, Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Scythians, Arabs and the native aboriginal tribes of India.

for a common end although their specific tasks may differ. This, indeed, was at the root of the ideal which the caste-system endeavoured to perpetuate.

A society cannot survive on the fruits and labour of its workers (shūdras) alone. Its well being is greatly dependent on the values commonly cherished by all segments of that society. If honesty and truthfulness are important in the business transactions of its merchant community (vaiśya), so is the courage and generosity of its ruling class (kṣatriyas). Similarly, the wisdom of those entrusted with education and culture (brahmins) must also be revered if that society seeks to strive for its own fulfillment. The Hindu ethics devoutly maintains that a brahmin with his serenity, a warrior with his strength, a businessman with his honesty, and a worker with his dedication for service are all images of perfection and ought to be cherished as such.

A code of ethics for brahmins therefore demands that they should observe fasts, participate in religious discourses, exemplify the ideals of the Vedic tradition, practise self-control, be excellent students, ideal teachers and accept gifts. (Hindu Morality places the receiver of gifts higher than the giver or dispenser). They should not only practise penance but also show compassion towards others. The Bhagvad-Gītā expounds on the duties of the brahmins. Whereas, others are enjoined to practise the universal code of conduct, the brahmins are asked to follow the rules more stringently because those who claim to be superior in wisdom, must also be ethically more capable. The brahmins are considered to be above the temporal interests of narrow-minded concerns. They are

provided with ample leisure and freedom to indulge in the pursuit of perfection. The brahmins were ~~not~~ in any way obliged to follow the constraints of the ruling order. Rather the state sought their assistance in the quest ~~for~~ wisdom. The advice of the brahmins was highly cherished since they were the visionaries of the future, repositories of the past ethical experience, and adept in formulating present strategies. However, the brahmins were admonished to lead simple and modest lives of minimum requisites. Their virtuosity did not depend on wealth, but on the possession of wisdom.

The ksatriyas came next. They were considered second only to the brahmins and entrusted with the sole responsibility of the state. The ksatriyas governed in the interest of the dharma. It was their duty to be brave, brilliant, chivalrous, keen, unafraid, generous and authoritative. They were expected to study the Vedas and distribute gifts to the deserving, needy, and the poor. The ksatriyas prided themselves on the protection of their subjects, taking care of the needy and they considered death on the battlefield the highest honour. The Mahābhārata insists that strength is desirable only when it is used in harmony with virtue. The establishment of "right" and not "might" was their major aim. The ksatriya wielded weapons to uphold virtue and only to protect the "virtuous".

The state in ancient India existed as a means of securing peace and order. The government was merely an instrument intended to ensure conditions under which the political, economic, social and spiritual interests of the people could be carried out safely. The ksatriyas did not represent sovereignty.

Sovereignty was identified with the interests of the people at large and dharma. A state which did not follow the dictates of dharma was, therefore, not a state and consequently, unworthy of obedience. If a government did not secure the conditions under which its people could follow the injunctions of their dharma then it was an "unholy" alliance and a thing to be shunned, avoided and fit only for non-cooperation. Moreover, the concept of state did not include in it the totality of institutions which make life worth living. Dharma represented that phenomena, not the state. The state had nothing to do with arts, sciences, religion, marriage, trade, family life, love or the attending joys/miseries of either life affirmation/renunciation. Dharma on the other hand held every aspect of life and its aspirations in its grasp. Gandhi later reinstated the image of dharma in the psyche of Indian conscience. He radically transformed the meaning of "political obligation" in terms of the Hindu heritage.

Every society has elements which consider the pursuit of wealth as a primary goal of life. The vaiśyas or the merchants were enjoined to cultivate trade, agriculture, cattle-rearing and related occupations with honesty. The suppression of greed therefore was their greatest virtue. They took pride in helping to perform sacrifices, giving gifts, charity, and in patronizing arts and letters. In their case the possession of property was regarded as a social trust. It was hoped that this trust would manifest itself as an expression of service to society. The Anuśāsana Parva of the Mahābhārata gives an elaborate description of the duties of the merchant caste.

Although the sūdras were assigned the lowest status in the Hindu hierarchy of varṇas, they were not exempt from the obligations of truthfulness, self-control, hospitality and righteous conduct. Their most important duty consisted in attending to the needs of the other three varṇas. Both the Mahābhārata and Mānav-dharma Śāstra hold that one's own duty (dharma) even if performed imperfectly, is better than embracing another's. The Bhagvad-Gītā also believes that the caste-divisions are accorded in relation to each person's character (svabhāva) and aptitude (gūṇa). Since the two are hard to discern, heredity and training assigned each to his station in life. Exceptions always were allowed, although they were rare.

Excellence in one's occupation was not equated with aspirations for material advancements. Satisfaction of one's inner being was the major criterion. The Hindu society stressed pride and perfection in the occupation assigned to one by birth. It considered the achievement of excellence a distinct possibility in almost any field, provided it was in harmony with the cast obligations.

It is true that all are not born alike, still less do we exhibit similar qualities. Why should all be expected to express themselves in the same kind of activity? Satisfaction of soul "ought" to be the prime concern of our active participation in any field of life. It is the spiritual apathy that kills the creative genius of a people through mechanical interpretations of individual capability and worth.

Unfortunately despite all its idealism and practical insight, even the Hindu society came upon evil days. It too, suffered the fate of desolate degradation. It had earlier prided itself on flexibility. Over

the centuries the society acquired such massive rigidity that its own principles of freedom became shackles of bondage. Indians mistook privilege for authority and stagnation for peace. Someone like Gandhi was needed to shake the very roots of its existence.

In seeking to fight for the rights of the down-trodden (untouchables), the minority (Muslims) and the 'outcasts' (Britishers), Gandhi was indeed accomplishing two major goals. Firstly, by defying the caste-system he was challenging the Hindu status quo. This meant that its custodians were now hard pressed to prove that the caste-system could adept itself by internal reform. Secondly, in befriending the British rulers he was in fact inviting them to join his own struggle for Satyagraha.

Gandhi was inspired by the organic view of society which the caste-system takes for granted. He was morally obliged to serve his society in a manner which would help rid it of its impurity while not threatening it with extinction. Gandhi had to cure the patient and not "kill" the society or get "killed" himself in the process. Life without ethical consciousness was no life for a dharma oriented world view.

In a way Gandhi was a perfect 'brahmin' although born in a vaiśya caste. He believed in the virtues of self-sacrifice, self-control, devotion to service, and self-transcendence. He was a true believer in the ideal of maitri (friendliness). He was also a perfect ksatriya because courage and fearlessness became his watchwords. He was a perfect vaiśya since he cared deeply for honesty in all transactions of life. He identified with the śūdras in that welfare and service of all was his motto. He stood among their ranks by identifying with their language,

dress, culture and in the utter artlessness of his own demeanour. He fought determinedly to see that their rights were not trampled upon. Gandhi was a perfect symbol of ethical India in this respect. He reiterated the truth that ultimately it is the conduct which counts and not one's birth.²² Śankara had claimed that by the mere fact of being born as a human being one can achieve perfection through study, meditation, fasting and worship. Buddha had also undermined and repudiated all hierarchy based on the notions of birth and station in life. In fact all sages and seers of India have considered "conduct" as the true criterion of nobility.

Hinduism believes that the individual is only a manifestation of the eternal. In his finite existence, therefore, he can have glimpses of the divine, the infinite. Although one's own experience is bound by conditions imposed upon one as a result of karmas, there is a capacity inherent in each being to transcend these limits. The expressions of that experience may differ depending upon the nature of one's constitution (svābhāva). However, in essence all experience is one. In order to understand this we shall have to define what is activity or karma.

Man is a bundle of complex desires according to Hinduism. These cravings or desires constitute the framework of human activity. They may appear conflicting and unique by themselves but they are not mutually contradictory. Together, they form a complex whole. Creation is itself a harmony. It is a breath of the eternal. Life is an expression of that

²²"One becomes a Brahmin by his deeds not by his family or birth; even a Candala is a Brahmin if he is of pure character." Manu, op. cit., IX, 14, 48. cf. these with The Dhammapada: The Path of Perfection, trans. J. Mascaro (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975), vv. 383 to 423.

unity and infinity. It is one.

If life is one, then there is one master science of life which recognizes the four supreme ends of dharma or righteousness, artha or wealth, kāma or artistic and cultural life, and mokṣa or spiritual freedom. The Hindu code of practice links up the realm of desires with the perspective of the eternal. It binds together the kingdoms of earth and heaven.²³

The Hindu thinkers considered life a matter of schooling and self-discipline. Thus, the individual was considered as going through four stages of life or āśramas. This concept is unique, indeed. The four stages are in turn connected with the four ends of life or puruṣārtha. By following the path of the four-step ladder one reaches brahmaloka or the Eternal World. According to the Mahābhārata (Śānti Parva CX, 9), it is a way to overcome all grief and attain mokṣa.

The brahmacaryāśrama or the early period of study and self-discipline coincides with the youth of body and mind. During this time a child is expected to live in the house of the teacher and learn to excel in the arts and sciences. He should be respectful to his guru (teacher), devoted to his vocation, study the Vedas regularly and observe celibacy. A student is also obliged to beg alms. Manu gives a detailed account of how a student should conduct himself.

In the gṛhasthāśrama (life of the house-holder) one is expected to give his preceptor a fee for having taken care of him in the previous stage. He is expected to get married and become a worldly man. The Mahābhārata upholds the life of a householder as the foundation of the entire social system and a condition for the other three āśramas. It is in this stage

²³S. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life (New York: George Allen And Unwin, 1927), p. 78.

that the goals of dharma, artha and kāma are to be pursued keenly. These can be achieved by repaying the debts, taking full care of gods and guests and pacifying the dependents and ancestors through the performance of several duties and rites. In the Anuśasāna Parva of the Mahābhārata we are told that nonviolence, truth, self-restraint, compassion and charity are the marks of a virtuous gṛhastha. But these he should perform according to his own capacity. He should definitely beget children but should avoid theft, sweets and intoxicants. Purity of heart is considered a desirable virtue.

Hinduism discourages monastic tendencies unless and until one has had a taste of full life in all its diversity. Marriage is looked upon as a means of spiritual development. It is considered a sacred alliance, although a problem nevertheless. Presumably, chance plays a vital role in it. For a Hindu, marriage is at best a gamble. However, it is prescribed for all which an injunction which may lead to a number of related problems.

The Hindu view of women is very flattering and unreservedly genuine in its praise. Women are regarded as an equal and complementary partner in the progress of life. They have special contributions to make. Women are also considered capable of supreme sacrifices and self-control, even superior to those of men.

But life is not merely the pursuit of wealth, power or cultural rewards. The vānāprastha āśrama is the life of the forest-dweller. It means a withdrawal from the active life to the life of contemplation and retreat. During this stage a gṛhastha (family man) must do away with the filial ties and seek freedom from all responsibilities in the worldly sense. Social pursuits are good only as long as mind and body permit one to sat-

isfy immediate urges. With the growth of years, one is obliged to make way for the younger generation and give up material cravings. It is suggested that one should retire to the forest and there dwell at peace with oneself, keeping one's needs to the minimum, worshiping the gods, performing sacrifices, practising celibacy, compassion and purity. Dietary restrictions are also imposed on the forest dwellers so as to make life simple and care-free.

The sanyāsa āśrama or the life of complete renunciation is the last stage. By this time a person ought to be free from anger, delusion and ignorance. He should practise yama and niyama, speak truth, observe non-violence, not commit theft, be a celibate, non-possessor, pure and contented. He ought to be devoted to God and study. He should practise ethical living in every sphere of life. By observing these diligently he is definite to achieve mokṣa.

It is desirable for an individual to go through all the stages of life with contentment and equanimity. But it is also understandable that some can possibly achieve mokṣa by eliminating a few stages. There is no one path to liberation, therefore, tolerance of views is strongly recommended.

The Mahābhārata insists that one should not perform one's duty for the sake of, or in expectation of, rewards. Renunciation of the fruits of actions is greatly desired but not the renunciation of action itself. This draws attention to the highly realistic attitude of the Indian thinkers who wanted to ensure that they were not encouraging lack of interest or apathy among the members of the society.

Guna dharma is a special code of conduct for the person engaged in a specific task by virtue of his or her office. For example rājadharmā deals with the obligations of the king. Even a king though possessing great power is not really free to use it according to his whims. A king's significance lies in his ability to maintain dharma. He ought to be aware and cognizant of the laws of ethics.

When certain obligations are performed with a purpose such as the expiatory rites, in order to atone for one's previous behaviour, they are called naimittika dharma. These can be many and highly elaborate. Manu has given an exhaustive list of such rites. But they are not of much consequence to us here.

Although the universal code of conduct (sādhāraṇa dharma) is held in deep respect by all, the standard of behaviour may again vary from person to person, place to place, and situation to situation. In times of distress, there is a different code of ethics according to the Mahābhārata. It is referred to as the āpadharma (literally the ethics of the abnormal times). Under all social crises and moments of stress people tend to forget morality. Survival then becomes the primary aim of life, the highest law and a justification for the use of any means.

Like Socrates, Gandhi is unique in challenging this argument that any means whatsoever can be justified in "righting" a "wrong". Such a concept presupposes a duality between means and ends. For Gandhi ends are the means unfulfilled and means are the ends in the making. The two seem so logically interrelated to Gandhi that not to accept his contention is like failing to see a direct link between the clouds and the rain or the cause and the effect.

The ancient Hindu thinkers also believed in the existence of values according to the yuga or Ages. The yuga dharma presupposes four kinds of kālas (time): satya yuga, tretā-yuga, dvāpara yuga and kali yuga. Moral codes can also vary in accordance with times or the ages. The Mahābhārata says that ultimately the power patterns in a society determine the outcome of a yuga dharma (a particular age). As far as the basic concepts of dharma go, all dharma is based on the supreme aim of unifying life and attaining spiritual freedom or harmony. The end of all ethical living is the same.

For the family sacrifice the individual; for the community, the family; for the country the community, and for the soul the whole world.²⁴

The entire world of endless manifestation and myriad forms exists for the soul. The soul is the true enjoyer of all delights. Ethics, too, serves the same lord of life. (Barter the soul, and court disaster. Save the soul and serve the entire humanity!) One should not sacrifice that inner being for any end, whatsoever. In the happiness of that inner being lies, in fact, the happiness and well being of the entire humanity.

²⁴"atmārthe prthivīm tyajet", ibid.

Chapter III. An Inquiry into Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction Part I

In order to understand Satyagraha, we have to understand Gandhi. The present chapter has been divided into two parts. From the perspective of the development and origins of Satyagraha, both part I and II cover some biographical aspects of Gandhi. They differ in content due to the experiential and existential phenomena of his life. To an extent both parts are similar, in fact complimentary to each other. They stress and re-emphasize the need for cohesiveness. They illuminate the logical steps leading up to the emergence of Satyagraha.

It has been an unstated assumption of the writer that most manifestations (either in the realm of personality traits of the psychological kind, or the physical occurrences as for example in the case of events making up a history) are a strange confluence of a series of predictable and unpredictable phenomena. Nothing emerges out of nothing. For every effect there is/are some causes. It is, therefore, quite natural to find some interesting co-relations when we consider them in the light of Gandhi's emergence as a satyagrahi. Thus, both parts I and II consider Gandhi in complementary circumstances. While part I traces Gandhi's ethical growth from childhood, through adulthood, into responsible citizenship, part II traces the makings of a Gandhi in a socio-political perspective.

Part I deals with Gandhi, as an individual. It relates specifically to ideas and events which deeply influenced Gandhi's entire philosophy of life, especially with regards to Satyagraha. Part I attempts to identify from Gandhi's biographical material those individuals and groups who influenced him and his ethical convictions. This part incorporates not only the ideas and opinions that Gandhi propogated about himself, but also the views of those who claim to have studied Gandhi very closely. This part is based on Gandhi's own writings such as the autobiography The Story of My Experiments With Truth, Satyagraha in South Africa and the volumes of Gandhi's Collected Works. The Tendulkar series, on Mahatma, formed another major source along with those by Pyarelal entitled Mahatma: The Early Phase. Studies done by G. Ashe, C. Devanesen, E. Erikson, L. Fischer, B.R. Nanda, and R. Payne have also been very useful. Although their insights have been incorporated wherever desirable, there is a conscious attempt to steer clear of any one school of thought in interpreting Gandhi. Most individuals, let alone Gandhi, are a complex of currents and cross-currents. Gandhi was undoubtedly a dynamic figure. One cannot attribute any absolutist interpretations or theoretical frameworks to the life and works of a person of Gandhi's stature.

I have attempted to see if Gandhi the individual was true to his convictions or not, in relations to others who stood closest by him, or came in touch with him as he claimed to be. This part deals primarily with the influences of religion and family-ties on the inner Mahatma as well as his intellectual and emotional responses. One also wonders how Gandhi arrived at his ethical conclusions after each

'experiment with truth'. Perhaps it is possible to identify some of the factors which could safely be attributed to his acquired wisdom.

Part I however would seem to be incomplete without its subsequent section. Part II sets 'Gandhi' the particular in a setting where his uniqueness merges as it were with 'Gandhi' the general.

There exist other phenomena or laws which operate on a different plane outside of the individual. Sometimes such phenomena may lend themselves to objective or empirical observations, sometimes they do not. History deals with one kind of evaluations. In a way, all history is a matter of perception. Unfortunately, most histories are written by the victors and not the vanquished. But even among those who write history, there is often a disagreement as to what did take place and why. It is doubtful whether there can ever be a 'scientific' study of history. When dealing with ideas it is difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between what is "subjective" and what is "objective". To an extent, even the idea of 'history' is a culture-bound concept, based on specific sets of values.

For our purpose it is interesting to speculate what any other ethically 'awakened' and conscientious person would have done in the place of Gandhi, given the same circumstances. This is an interesting problem, indeed, for those who think that the environmental factors create ideas, and the ideas in turn create men. There are also those who hold that certain individuals are themselves the manifestations of certain ideas. According to this school, history does not create men, but men create history. Both are fascinating arguments but there is no need to resolve the controversy here. It is only considered proper and worthwhile

to put forth both these views and let the reader decide.

Unlike part I, part II is a search for some similarities and dissimilarities in the two scenarios of Kathiawad and India. I have selected these two areas because Gandhi's ethical growth had mostly to do with the forces that were operating there. The South African history is deliberately omitted.

The reasons for not going into the South African history were basically two. Although South Africa was very much the crucible for the Gandhian experiment, the history of that region itself had very little to do with influencing Gandhi. Besides, part I already deals with the psychological implications of Gandhi's experience in South Africa. Also it is generally agreed that it was indeed very potent. For the sake of brevity, one can afford to exclude here South African history without weakening the major argument. Moreover, the South African situation is related to the impact of what had gone on for centuries in the colonial world - namely the slave-trade and indentured-labor. These considerations only reinforced the need to go into the Indian details spanning the vast gamut of that subcontinent's history of subjection to foreign influences.

It is not a delight to recount the bitter experiences of a subjected people. However, it may be profitable to stress the impact of certain events and ideas as they shaped the Indian response. It is agreed by even the staunchest critics of the British Raj that the Indian renaissance was the result of the coming together of Eastern and Western cultures and civilizations, namely the Indian and the British-European. Both were equally vital and dominant. Part II does not dis-

pute the above claim. However it is submitted that the eventual reckoning of any sort, especially if it pertains to be inner-directed (spiritual), has ultimately to do with the people or the individuals themselves. No amount of up-liftment or reform imposed from outside can truly transform a being or a nation. Also, in a very basic sense a nation is a collectivity of individuals. Its values are reflected in the thoughts, words and actions of its people. A Gandhi is as much an expression of an ethos as a Hitler. To an extent it has very little to do with the superiority/inferiority of any people.

At certain times, in certain places some people express themselves in certain manners. If Indians feel any sense of pride in claiming Gandhi as their own, they must share equally the blame for their 'sins' from which only a Gandhi could have delivered them. Likewise for those who claim that only a morally responsible British Empire could have afforded to let Gandhi survive and challenge its own existence. Definitely, none other would have deserved a better opponent than Gandhi for an empire the size of which the world has never known.

It is important to note that part II looks at history from a perspective which helps to understand the Gandhian nonviolent response. Where possible, the sources of information and opinions have been indicated. But it is not possible to footnote each and every statement. Interpretations of history to an extent involve subjective evaluations. Opinions and judgements differ. Perhaps they ought to differ, or else there shall be only one version of an authoritarian truth. Each generation, each school, each individual perceives historical truths in its own way. Some are verifiable, others are not. Part II relies

primarily on Indian sources but, where possible, useful British sources have also been incorporated.

The task of studying Indian history is enormous. Again there is the danger of classifying some ideas as mere hypotheses and others as not. Besides, there is very little documentation available. The glaring short-comings in the study of Indian history are not entirely the creation of this author. I have tried to avoid clinging to any favourite views or famous schools of thought, without being prejudiced against them. Luckily, the task was made easier by relying on some standard sources of reliable authority. Recent works published by the new generation of scholars have also helped to support convictions by arguments. Prior to these publications, one would have had to just hope that others would also think in the like manner. Yet, thinking in like-manner is no criterion for scholarship nor for search into the reality.

From 1920 onwards Gandhi spent the rest of his life trying to perfect and develop the art he had accidentally stumbled upon. He did not end his struggle with the discovery of Satyagraha. Rather, he continued to experiment until his very last. Until his death, Gandhi remained a seeker trying his best never to make undue claims about something he had not personally experienced. The direct perception of a problem and its solution are the essential ingredients to a Satyagrahi's way of thinking. A genuine Satyagrahi will not make pretences. He will not pass premature judgements on anything without first familiarizing himself with the issue/s involved in it. Gandhi could confidently make certain claims about Satyagraha because he had experienced it. He was a Satyagrahi.

Part I. Ethical Experience of Gandhi

Man lives in a series of concentric circles - the experiential and the existential. Experience connotes familiarity acquired through past acquaintance or performance of a practical phenomenon. It is a capacity developed after repeated encounters into a substantial amount of knowledge or skill. It is also an art or technique, perfected in a variety of circumstances.¹

Although direct experience (as in the case of religion) may be so, experience in itself is not the ultimate.² Since the chances of making an error in terms of senses and their perceptions are infinitely great, the possibilities of illusion are also myriad. It is especially so when the subject and the object of perception are continually in a state of flux. Therefore, it is important to have or acquire an insight into the nature of things and their laws in order to substitute the uncertainty of knowledge.

The experiential circles extent outward, emanating from a central core within. But as they do so, they embrace in their folds various impressions and images gathered during one's growth and develop-

¹"It is in this fashion - by retention of individual memories and their gradual hardening into principle - that the craftsman acquires his skill, the scientist his knowledge, and the practical man his wisdom. But (save in the last case, perhaps) it represents at best only a stage on the way to real understanding in terms of universals and is thus by most ancient writers despised as a makeshift and uncertain form of knowledge." P.L. Heath, "Experience", Encyclopedia of Philosophy (1967), III, 156.

²M.K. Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth from now on referred to as the Autobiography (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. xi-xv.

ment. Experience as such cannot be termed as either "good" or "bad". Its moral connotation if any is relevant only in a limited sphere. Primarily, experience deals with a number of "givens" and there is little or no element of "choice" in it. Secondly, even if "choice" be present, one may lack the capacity to discern due to ignorance. The idea of ethics comes into being only when one has the "choice" and the "awareness" (of deliberate action, thought, or speech) which would or could alter a situation. Before being able to respond ethically to a situation, there has to be in one's repertoire of conscious experience, some fundamental notions or awareness of similar happenings. For example, it is not possible to expect compassion in response from someone who has no knowledge of suffering or pain. One cannot be ethical if one is not aware. Conversely, one who is truly aware cannot but be ethical.

At the same time mere accumulation of experience is no guarantee for its appropriate application. Treatises on Ethics have not made any civilization superior to the rest nor have ethically conscious individuals to rely on texts for the validity of their own experience. As far as Gandhi was concerned,

What was extraordinary was the way his adventures ended. In every case he posed for himself a problem for which he sought a solution by framing a proposition in moral algebra. 'Never again' was his promise to himself after each escapade. And he kept the promise.³

What were these "escapades" and what were the ethical outcomes of those "moral algebra"? How did Gandhi keep his promise by integrating

³B.R. Nanda, Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1958), pp. 22-23. For him basically ethics did not arise from academic treatises or from propositions. It was an outcome of actual, personal moral experiment. This always meant the testing of the ends by the means.

the lessons learnt in early childhood with the contingencies of his later youth, and manhood? Erik H. Erikson has done a superb job on the psychological origins of "militant nonviolence" in his Gandhi's Truth⁴, and there is no need to regurgitate his statement. What remains to be done is to recall or emphasize certain incidents from Gandhi's life to see how they provided a fundamental approach to similar problems in hitherto unsolved ethical problems. Such a consideration is likely to emphasize individuals and their influence in Gandhi's discovery of the Satyagraha.

Existence deals with some notions of reality or being. It relates to the idea of living or continuing to survive in a domain of reality under specific conditions or circumstances. Birth, in a spatio-temporal sense, is an existential incident. Sometimes one finds one's self in a situation irrespective of one's choice and is moulded in a particular shape by the forces and events over which one has no control.

Unlike the experiential, the existential circles converge inward. They are conditioned often by the extra-territorial phenomena. By the latter is meant all those forces (historical, political, economic and societal factors) which make the environmental milieu. An individual's contribution to society is eventually a combination of both these forces. Life itself seems to be a confluence of the inward and outward forces. What really determines the final outcome during a struggle for supremacy is difficult to predict. Who makes whom? Does the situation influence man or vice versa? Do both interact upon each other evolving them-

⁴E.H. Erikson, Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence (New York: Norton and Camp, 1969).

selves in the process? It appears to me that the situations Gandhi encountered during his growth are equally important in the development of Satyagraha and the philosophy behind it.

Gandhi had selected the ideal of mokṣa or self realization for his ultimate goal.

What I want to achieve, - what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years, - is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.⁵

Literally the term mokṣa means freedom from birth and death. Salvation is its English equivalent. But metaphorically, it can also mean freedom from or non-attachment to sorrows and joys of earthly existence. In Hinduism, Buddhism and in Jainism it is quite acceptable to live here and now in a state of total bliss, provided one has renounced the cravings for worldly success. They claim that the highest pursuit of happiness is to be found in renunciation. However, it would be incorrect to deduce from this that the ideals of dharma can only be practised by a social recluse or a hermit. The lotus flower greatly symbolizes the ideal of non-attachment. It springs from the muddy waters and yet remains above it. Gandhi, too, endeavoured to do the same.

Gandhi's family was very much influenced by the religious

⁵M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. xii.

trends in Kathiawar.⁶ The very air that child Mohandas breathed was saturated with religiosity. The games which he played had the temple courtyard as their arena. Little did anyone know that he would one day literally repeat the performance of that mischievous 'iconoclast'. Gandhi could hardly have avoided being brought up in the spiritual atmosphere of Gujrati Vaishnavism.

Thus young Moniya began his life by carrying out, although on a very small scale, the experiments which he was later to call "My Experiments with Truth". Gradually, he learnt to increase their magnitude not merely in terms of application but also their intensity. What he first saw as being applicable to his mother, father, wife or play-mate, soon convinced him of its inherent worth in terms of friends, acquaintances, community, caste-group, employers, countrymen, fellow-workers, sympathisers, kindered-spirits and finally, all the mankind. He kept on extending the circumference of his experiential circles until it included everyone in its grasp. In it were included the rulers and the ruled, the exploiters and the exploited, the victim as well as the victimiser. In order to make valid his claim Gandhi had to find out if the truths that he had consciously arrived at, were indeed any good.

I have all along believed that what is possible for one is possible for all, my experiments have not been conducted in the closet, but in the open; and I do not think that this fact detracts from

⁶Robert Payne, The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969), pp.17-19.

their spiritual value. There are some things which are known only to oneself and one's Maker. These are clearly incommunicable. The experiments I am about to relate are not such. But they are spiritual, or rather moral; for the essence of religion is morality.⁷

As far as Gandhi was concerned, all his 'experiments' were in search of the absolute truth, which included in it the innumerable definitions of God - the eternal truth, nonviolence, celibacy and many other principles of conduct.

But for me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God,⁸ because His manifestations are innumerable.

Putlibai, his mother was among the most influential characters in Gandhi's life. Being the youngest child, Moniya (Mohandas) held a special position in his family. But there existed a special bond of affection between Putlibai and him. Living in a joint-family was by itself an experiment. It involved sharing at a communal level. Pyarelal has attempted to describe it minutely in Mahatma Gandhi, The Early Phase.⁹ It obviously required a great deal of tact, diplomacy, patience, resourcefulness, tolerance, and a knowledge of human nature.

⁷ M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, pp. xii-xiii.

⁸ ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.

⁹ Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, The Early Phase (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1965), I, 193.

Putlibai appears to have been an ideal Hindu housewife. At least, that is the impressions one gets from various accounts. She was definitely very impartial, hard-working and highly conscientious of her own duties. She was the first to wake up and the last to go to bed. Life in the Gandhi household was pretty much regulated according to the ancient Hindu traditions. But it was not unusual for the people of Porbandar to see their Prime Minister Kaba Gandhi (Moniya's father) attend to the affairs of the state while peeling vegetables for his wife. Putlibai, meanwhile, took a keen interest in the political affairs herself. Her advice was greatly sought after even in the royal court. She was well known for her strong common sense. As a child, Moniya accompanied his mother and had often watched her participate in lively discussions. However, the outstanding impression that she left upon his mind was that of her saintliness.

"She was deeply religious", Gandhi informs us. He also recalls that "she would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching. Illness was no excuse for relaxing them."¹⁰ From his mother, Gandhi learned to do the same. He, too, could fast unflinchingly for days without end, either to purify himself and his followers, or his arch-enemy. Gandhi often fasted for something, against something, and for nothing. As a child he would anxiously watch his mother's self-abnegation, while she would vow on a rainy day not to eat until the sun shone. Putlibai taught Moniya the importance of a personal religion - whereby one could communicate with one's own God, in any way one person-

¹⁰M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 4.

ally desired. She inculcated in him the desire to cherish the dream of seeing the unseen and of hearing the unheard. Erikson is quick to grasp in Putlibai a sense of the denial of dogmatic assertions. She may have been strong willed, vegetarian, and obsessed with religious observances -

But it is equally important to realize that Putli Ba belonged to a small sect which prided itself on having unified the Koran with the Hindu scriptures and which abhorred any regression to the idolatry of either, to the point of allowing no images at all in its temple. His mother's religion was that pervasive and personalized kind which women convey to children; but it also prepared the boy for the refusal to take anybody's word for what anything meant, either in the Hindu scriptures which he rediscovered only in his youth with the help of Western writings, or in the Christian gospels, the essence of which he tried to resurrect in Eastern and modern terms, having as a child abhorred the missionaries about town.¹¹

In later life Gandhi claimed that he owed all his reforms in dietetics and daily living to Putlibai. He always gave Putlibai the credit for inculcating in him the desire to serve and nurse others with complete dedication. The vows he made to her before leaving for England paved the path for his future activities. Gandhi also proceeded in the direction that she had long ago determined. In his ashrams, Gandhi tried to emulate the patterns set by her ideal womanhood. Inspired by her example Gandhi also tried to obliterate the allocation of masculine and feminine roles that lead to stereotype identifications. Putlibai's gentle and yet enduring sense of quiet courage appealed to

¹¹ E.H. Erikson, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

him most. Gandhi tried therefore to foster among his ashramites the qualities that he associated with her. Although herself an illiterate or practically unlettered, Putlibai was to Gandhi a paragon of virtue.

There were nonetheless, specific differences of opinion and conflicts between the two. Moniya realized it only when he grew up to be Mohan - the rebellious youth. For instance, he realized it was no use teasing the people who belonged to Putlibai's group for their overbearing concerns for cleanliness. There seemed nothing wrong with the idea. Instead of making the "cleanliness-conscious" learn to tolerate the so called "unclean Untouchables" by force, he started to generate among the Untouchables like Uka - the family scavenger - the desire to uplift themselves. Among the higher caste Hindus, he tried to get rid of their delusion that Untouchables were unclean because their job entailed them to deal with unclean things. Experience later proved to Gandhi that, in fact, the poorer folks were far more clean in their personal surroundings than the middle class people. Just as the child Moniya had realized that he did not in anyway become "contaminated" by touching the "Untouchable" Uka, the young Mohan realized he would himself have to become an "untouchable" in order to show the hollowness of the degenerate caste-system. Thus, he resolved to expose the myths of "purity" and "impurity" concepts. The grown-up Gandhi was therefore only an extension of the child Gandhi. During his political career, Gandhi made the staunch Hindus seek to confer with him in the colony of Untouchables because he refused to live elsewhere even if the palaces were ready to receive him as an honoured guest. And the general public flocked to greet him wherever he went, irrespective of his surroundings.

It did not take long for Gandhi to realize why the Indians were divided within themselves even within the common bond of one of the most tolerant of all religions. He carried his campaign for the Untouchables to its last limit in demanding the rights for the hitherto unrecognized sections of Hindu society. If Satyagraha as a weapon was to succeed in achieving anything, its first blow was aimed at striking the very roots of Hindu disunity. One can easily see how Gandhi would have failed from the very start and in his subsequent campaigns had he avoided to fight the evils of the castism both at home and abroad. Much less could Gandhi have ignored it. One recalls distinctly how the Modh-Bania community had tried its very best to stop him from going abroad to study law. If a shy, unsure, withdrawn Mohan was unable to read his own farewell speech to his schoolmates, the determined, defiant, and out-spoken Gandhi only a few days later in Bombay, was quite a different person, altogether. The conviction seems to have grown stronger in him that the caste was a hinderance rather than an opportunity to forge ahead in any sphere of life, domestic or professional, moral or political.

Next to his mother, came Moniya's father in terms of importance. Karamchand (Kaba) Gandhi was an influential and eminent man. His career as an able administrator had won him fame and popularity, besides confidence and trust. Kaba's courage must have impressed little Moniya. Kaba was very much like Moniya's grandfather Uttamchand (Otta) Gandhi. Legends of their sense of pride and loyalty abounded in the princely states of Kathiawar. Six generations of Gandhis had ruled the Kathiawar peninsula, either as home-ministers or as prime ministers, that too,

in spite of belonging to a Bania community, which is a sub-caste of the vaiśya caste.* Obviously, the Gandhis were bestowed such honour in recognition of their skills and merits. Normally, such positions were given only to a kshatriya or a brahmin. Being a member of the Rajasthanic court, Kaba was adept at settling disputes - a trait which child Gandhi practised with a flourish among his playmates. Moniya always acted as their trustworthy umpire, whether he participated in their games or not. Gandhi was very much aware of his own heritage.

My father was a lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous, but short-tempered. To a certain extent he might have been given to carnal pleasures...But he was incorruptible and had earned a name for strict impartiality in his family as well as outside. His loyalty to the state was well known.¹²

Kaba Gandhi was not desirous of accumulating wealth and left very little property after his death.

He had no education, save that of experience. At best, he might be said to have read up to the fifth Grujrati standard. Of history and geography he was innocent. But his rich experience of practical affairs stood him in good stead in the solution of the most intricate questions and in managing hundreds of men.¹³

Unlike Putlibai, his wife, Kaba Gandhi had very little training in religions. Whatever he did acquire, was gleaned through the religious discourses and the temple visits. From other accounts, we know that people of different faiths and callings used to frequent the Prime Minister's abode from time to time. Among them were the Muslims, the Zohrastrians, the Jainas and the Buddhists besides the Hindus of various sects. From

¹²M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 4.

¹³ibid.

*The above argument is developed by Gandhi himself. ibid.

his father, Gandhi learned the importance of experience in practical affairs. Kaba Gandhi often came in contact with the British agents, both friendly and hostile, but mostly the sort, which despised the "guts" of a certain Prime Minister in their tiny "principality". They had complained that Kaba used to put on superior airs and had refused to apologize even when put under police detention for some minor offense.

Gandhi learned many lessons from his father, much more on account of his father if one were to take Erikson's verdict as final.

The greatest lesson that Mohan talks about involves the incident related to ahimsa. He was at that time fifteen years old. In collaboration with another relative Mohan had stolen a bit of gold out of his brother's ornament to pay off the latter's debt. The debt was cleared, but Mohan resolved "never to steal again". It all happened when Mohan decided to confess the crime. He wrote it down and handed it to his ailing father. He realized, there could be no "cleansing without a clean confession". In the note he had asked to be adequately punished for his offence. As a result, Mohan had expected an angry outburst and/or a painful scene. Kaba patiently read the letter and tears began to trickle down his cheeks. Nothing was said. But Mohan closely watched Kaba quietly tear the letter away.

Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart,
and washed my sin away. Only he who has
experienced such love can know what it is.

Gandhi saw in the above incident an instance of pure ahimsa. It was all-embracing and transformed everything that it touched. There was no limit to the power of ahimsa. Young Gandhi observed the reaction.

This sort of sublime forgiveness was not natural to my father. I had thought that he would be angry, say hard things, and strike his forehead. But he was so wonderfully peaceful and I believe this was due to my clean confession.¹⁴

Similarly, Mohan recalls another event which took place at the school when he was fourteen years of age. The headmaster of Alfred High school at Rajkot was a strict disciplinarian. Finding Gandhi marked absent during the compulsory games, he demanded an explanation. "I was massaging my father," Gandhi replied, "I had no watch and the clouds deceived me. When I arrived all the boys had gone." The headmaster accused Mohan of fabricating lies. The boy knew he was right but did not know how to convince the teacher of his own truth. Mohan concluded, "a man of truth must also be a man of care". He made his mind, never again would he put himself in a situation where his explanations could be dismissed as lies. The greatest thing that mattered to Gandhi was his integrity. He could not bear the thought of anyone questioning it. The least insinuation regarding any blemish to his character instantly brought tears to his eyes.

Gandhi's biographers seem to have taken Gandhi's words for granted regarding the assessment of his own intelligence. They claim that he was a mediocre student with a sluggish intellect, and a raw memory. On the contrary, Pyarelal has revealed an entirely different Gandhi. We learn from him that Gandhi did not dislike learning. But he definitely had little or no attraction for learning that was unrelated to life.¹⁵

¹⁴ibid., pp. 27-28.

¹⁵Pyarelal, op. cit.

Gandhi may have been totally uninterested in the Victorian ideals of schooling. But that can hardly be construed as a sign of either his aversion for schools or his dislike for learning itself. Young Gandhi's reckless forays into the forbidden realms of adventure, certainly, do not reflect that conclusion.

Yet, if the above be true, it is hard to concur with Gandhi when he maintains that the obedience to orders from his superiors became his second nature. Surely, such attitude was and still is inculcated among the young in certain parts of the world. But it is important to note that, Gandhi did not consciously resent either his parents or their authority. In his family, the attitude of obeying the adults was not exclusively limited to the family alone. Within its purview such obligation also included teachers, and most adults in general.

Gandhi loved his parents and he passionately learnt to care for them. He also developed a high regard for truth. Gandhi tells us that he had learned these virtues from the two well known plays that he had read and then seen performed. Both Shravaṇa and Harishchandra¹⁶, left most indelible marks on young Gandhi's mind. Mohan was so fascinated by the heroes of these plays that he literally dreamt of being like them.

A conflict arose when during the visit of the Educational Inspector, his teacher wanted Mohan to correct his spelling by copying from his neighbor. Such disregard for truth went against Gandhi's grain.

¹⁶Shravaṇa and Harishchandra are plays commonly enacted on the village stage in northern India. Both are based on Purāṇik myths. They refer to two characters who are symbols of exemplary virtue and goodness. Shravaṇa gave his life in the service of his aged and blind parents. Harishchandra was so devoted to truth that he lost his kingdom, child, wife and even his personal reputation to abide by it.

It was beyond me to see that he wanted me to copy...for I had thought that the teacher was there to supervise us against copying. The result was that all the boys, except myself, were found to have spelt every word correctly. Only I had been stupid...Yet the incident did not in the least diminish my respect for my teacher. I was by nature blind to the faults of elders.¹⁷

Definitely, the adult Gandhi grew out of this tendency, or better still kept his habit but learned to forgive easily if the "elders" made a mistake. What is important to observe is that Gandhi refused to suffer the taint of other's moral cowardice. While refusing to obey the unethical commands of his superiors, Gandhi persevered to safe-guard his own character. The question of obedience and obligation cropped up several times during the Satyagraha experiments. Each time Gandhi's verdict remained the same. He advocated, "suffer if you have to, but do not agree to compromise the principles". It was preferable to be considered "stupid", than to stoop to conquer. Victory at the cost of virtue, was most unacceptable to Gandhi.

This brings us to another important character of Gandhi's apprenticeship in the art of Satyagraha. Practically, very little or none at all has been written about Kasturbai, the woman behind the Mahatma.

The Gandhis were engaged at seven, and wedded at the age of thirteen. It is very likely that Kasturbai may have been a play-mate of Gandhi since she lived in the same neighbourhood.

¹⁷M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 5.

Even if it were so, Gandhi makes no mention of her in the autobiography until their wedding night. Kasturbai, too, belonged to the same Bania caste which is known for its enterprising, cautious, realistic, and compromising but shrewd qualities (among the positive attributes). Her father was a respectable merchant and she came from a prosperous family of well to do household. It is somewhat disappointing that Kasturba chose to remain practically "illiterate" despite Gandhi's almost neurotic preoccupations with reform in all walks of life. It is said by those who knew her that she could only understand simple Gujrati. Her "willful" character drew from Gandhi nothing but helpless surrenders. At times, Gandhi's frustrations knew no bounds. He never hesitated in publicly chiding her for the simple "accesses". But Kasturba always remained serene and calm, even in the face of Gandhi's tumultuous uproar. She was proud and young, not used to being tyrannized by someone younger than her. Sometimes she would rebel and refuse to obey her husband. But that caused her much inner suffering. Gandhi told John S. Hoyland years later what he owed to Kasturba.

I learnt the lesson of non-violence from my wife when I tried to bend her to my will. Her determined resistance to my will on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering my stupidity involved on her, ultimately made me ashamed of myself and cured me of my stupidity in thinking that I was born to rule over her; and in the end she became my teacher in non-violence.¹⁸

¹⁸B.R. Nanda, op. cit., p. 21.

Kasturbai truly deserves the credit for having taught young Gandhi some "lessons related to life". She was in many ways his true and constant rival. Kasturbai was also a long suffering and compassionate teacher as far as Mohan was concerned. She was his equal and yet a sympathetic and tolerant companion. Erikson is quick to recognize in Kasturbai Gandhi's first defeat.¹⁹

As for Gandhi, he thought differently. Her duty was easily converted into his right.²⁰ And he became watchfully tenacious of that right. But Kasturbai was made of a different metal. The more he demanded the right, the less she relented. Gandhi soon realized if he had a right to impose, she was at liberty to resist. Authority can only dictate, it cannot compel obedience. Rights carried obligations with them and there was no "one way street" between the rulers and the ruled. If he was ambitious, she was independent and the two could only meet as equals, provided both gave in. Gandhi lost many "battles" with Kasturbai and was a "total failure" in his own words. But through these encounters Gandhi learned one important fact, "I know that nothing is impossible for pure love".²¹ As Gandhi began to "experiment" more and more with this phenomena of love or ahimsa (nonviolence), he realized the same capricious instincts in the opponent of Satyagraha. Kasturbai taught Gandhi to accept his defeats

¹⁹"and defeat came to Mohandas only when he faced in all too-young years the marital encounter with another and equally stubborn child." E. H. Erikson, op. cit., p. 107.

²⁰M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 12.

²¹ibid., p. 13.

gracefully, lovingly and compassionately.²² As an ideal Hindu wife, Kasturba considered it quite acceptable that he should have precedence over her own wishes.

It is not difficult for one to understand Gandhi's eagerness and infatuation with England, when at the age of eighteen he first encountered the thought of going abroad. He jumped at the mere suggestion of it. To him England meant "the land of philosophers, and poets, the very centre of civilization". It was also the only alternative to the dull, dead routine of Bhavnagar college. Besides, the family had come to realize that in order to regain their lost status, their only hopes lay in Mohandas. Since the British influence was rising, they could only accomplish it by sending young Gandhi to England. Although he wanted to study medicine, the family insisted on law. A degree in law had better chances of winning the Premiership. When he was asked in England the purpose of his visit he frankly admitted that "ambition" had driven him there.²³

Likewise, in Gandhi's case England ~~was~~ also associated with his identity-crisis. It brought him face to face with certain unresolved conflicts. These somehow paved the way for the later Mahatma. Alone, inexperienced, nervous and extremely conscientious about his own "character", the young Gandhi was thrown on his own inner-resources to cope with the

²²"Let not the reader think...that ours was a life of unrelieved bitterness. For my severities were all based on love. I wanted to make my wife an ideal wife. My ambition was to make her live a pure life, learn what I learnt, and identify her life and thought with mine." ibid., p. 12.

²³M.K. Gandhi, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1958), I 53-63. From now on referred as Collected Works.

"traumas" of a foreign student's life in that big metropolis. His autobiography, strangely enough, has very little to say about the London of 1880's - a city which we know must have been vibrating with innumerable cross-currents of socio-cultural upheavals. Louis Fischer has compared George Santayana with Gandhi to show the differences between the artist and the reformer and how each had described their own experiences.²⁴

The greater part of Gandhi's succor in London came from his own experience in religion. To Gandhi, religion came to mean self-realization or knowledge of the self, by the time he wrote his autobiography. But, as a young boy he did not think much of it. He even admits of wondering in the 'Sahara of atheism'. The temple-worship and Vaishnava faith had failed to convince him of the divinity of God. The conduct of religious priests and preachers greatly disappointed him on account of their "immorality". That word and its implications begin to grow, when one understands how Gandhi related morality with religion.

But one thing took deep roots in me--the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all morality. Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude every day...my definitions of it also has been ever widening.²⁵

At the same time, Gandhi also notes that the precept of returning good for evil, became a guiding principle of his life. He began conducting various experiments in it. His illiterate nurse Rambha had taught Gandhi to recite the name of God, whenever he was afraid, and in trouble. Strangely

²⁴L. Fischer, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950).

²⁵M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 34.

enough, Gandhi remembered that lesson until his very last. Rather, as the father of the nation, the aged Mahatma made it a daily practice to recite Rāmdhun (prayers) in mass gatherings. It consisted of chants and readings from various sources. It became a source of strength also for the Satyagrahis to recite the names of the holy ones. It is easy to see why Gandhi lamented the lack of mass-music in India. He strongly associated music with the remembrance of God.

From Gandhi's childhood accounts we learn that he disliked to go against the wishes of the "elders" and yet, he revolted only inwardly at their lack of understanding. At one point this frustration even led to his attempt at committing suicide. The idea was soon given up. But he was left with a lesson that violence must not be met with violence: on the contrary one must react in a morally superior way.

Further, the overly obedient and undefiant child would find compensation by leading campaigns of civil disobedience and defying a mighty Empire through a relationship to God stressing obedience to the inner voice and truthfulness.²⁶

In spite of the initial hindrances, Gandhi finally arrived in London. He had very little finances and four letters of introduction, but an enormous degree of determination. Fischer has remarked that Gandhi was basically a "doer". He grew from experience to experience and acquired

²⁶C.D.S. Devanesen, The Making of the Mahatma (Madras: Orient Longmans, 1969), p. 149.

"knowledge through actions".²⁷ It seems he kept a regular account of his student days. Although the original diary got lost somewhere, it is possible to surmise about Gandhi's basic and foremost concerns. One can safely conclude that Gandhi was greatly preoccupied with thoughts about food, clothes, shyness, conduct with acquaintances, and religious attitudes.

But Gandhi's experiments did neither begin nor end with his stay in London. He continued to be and remained a vigilant observer of M.K. Gandhi's daily routine. Human conduct became an object of serious study for him.

Why was Gandhi so overly concerned with his personal inter-relationships, and the manner of resolving conflicts? Perhaps it is essential to operate "within and upon oneself" when one is conducting "experiments in Truth".²⁸ For an ethical reformer and a conscientious individual like Gandhi, it would have been next to impossible to start by reforming others. All innovations and discoveries have to begin with one's own self. Before one can convince others of an intrinsic worth one has to be convinced oneself. This seems to be definitely the case in Satyagraha. Later on, Gandhi would be able to proclaim confidently "I know it - because I have realized it". Self-realization is the keynote of all absolute knowledge. Gandhi was bent upon finding out for himself what that "certainty" involved. He may or may not have succeeded in his quest. Gandhi at least knew one of the infallible means of attaining it.

²⁷L. Fischer, op. cit., p. 28.

²⁸ibid., p. 25.

It appears that food was his worst problem. It was also his salvation during Gandhi's London days.²⁸ One is somehow tempted to consider dress, nervousness, relations with acquaintances and religion too in the same category. No amount of convincing or citing Bentham's Theory of Utility could make Gandhi break his vow of vegetarianism. Friends made Gandhi feel like a crank, warned him of all the impending doom and disaster in store for him if he did not change. But Gandhi stuck on. For a period of three months he tried to take their advice to heart by converting himself into a perfect English gentleman.

He was already enrolled in one of the most aristocratic of Law schools - the Inner Temple. Gandhi now bought himself some clothes made in Bond Street, became a student of French language, learned to dance and to play the violin. He even went so far as to take lessons in the art of elocution. It was only natural for a bashful, provincial, tongue-tied youth to react that way. However, Gandhi soon discovered that that was not his style. Prior to leaving India, he had never so much as glanced at an English newspaper. In London, he made it a habit to read the Daily Telegraph, the Daily News, and the Pall Mall Gazette. It is in London that Gandhi learned his tricks of the trade in the art of journalism. Little did he realize that soon he would find his own articles published in The Vegetarian. In South Africa too, he took the advantage of writing letters to the Editor based on his former experience. He also realized later the benefits of owning a paper and editing it to disseminate his own philosophy.

²⁸G. Ashe, Gandhi: A Study in Revolution (London: Heinmann, 1968), p. 29.

Walking along the Farringdon Street in London one day, Gandhi spotted a vegetarian restaurant. There he also found a small pamphlet written by Henry Stephen Salt. The whole incident was a momentous thing. Up until then, Gandhi had believed that he was the only vegetarian in England. A Plea for Vegetarianism convinced him that that was surely not the case, there were others like him. Although a practising vegetarian, Gandhi was not convinced intellectually about the rightness of his stand. In fact, during childhood he had secretly eaten meat. As a child he was lead to believe that only through eating meat could Indians drive out the British from their country. In England, Gandhi had avoided eating meat only because of a vow forced upon him by the fearful apprehensions of his concerned mother. But, the Plea made him a vegetarian by choice. It was a logical statement of the short and long term implications of being a vegetarian. The author justified vegetarianism on the simple rationale for health, economy and compassion. Salt's appeal for the ethical aspect of vegetarianism won Gandhi's heart. Gandhi realized the directness of that appeal. It was definitely more humane to be a vegetarian. There was nothing dogmatic about the assertion. It was a simple, practical and a plain truth. The pamphlet informed him that men like Pythagoras, Jesus Christ down to Shelley, Thoreau and Ruskin, were all vegetarians. Also, as an adjunct to socialism - vegetarianism had a value which, by far, exceeded any arguments he had ever heard in favour of social reform. Gandhi felt that the author was rather persuasive.

Moreover, Salt was English. Here was a member of the enlightened ruling race who was not a meat-eater - thereby refuting the school boys' verse. As a disciple, Gandhi could resolve his conflict.

He could be filial, honourable, patriotic and rational, all at once.²⁹

Soon Gandhi began to read practically all the available literature on Vegetarianism. Salt's Plea was followed in quick succession by The Perfect Way in Diet by Dr. Anna Kingsford, The Ethics of Diet by Howard Williams. Dr. T.R. Allinsen's writings on simple life in conjunction with nature, further strengthened Gandhi's belief that he was not alone in thinking that way. Rather, through Salt he found himself in the company of some of the most radical and thoughtfully-active set of Londoners. They were fashionable and a highly controversial group of men and women.

Henry Salt was himself an authority on Shelley. It was he, who first recommended Ruskin as an apostle of pure life to Gandhi. Salt had also edited Godwin's Political Justice, Thoreau's Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers, and published The Life of H.D. Thoreau. Later, when Gandhi wrote his own manifesto the Hind Swaraj he drew a great deal from Salt's ideas. Gandhi's criticism of industrialized society was basically a 'rehash' of what Gandhi had seen, heard, and contemplated during his London years.³⁰

Another important man in the group was Edward Carpenter - a denouncer of civilization as it stood, and constantly harking back to the basic values. Edward rejected the established modes of thought and fervently campaigned for revolutions in the habits of food, sex and religion. All of them reacted vehemently against the Victorian morality and church. As a group they aligned closely with such diverse figures as Kropotkin - a close friend

²⁹ ibid., p. 31.

³⁰ Definitely future research in this direction may further reveal the scope and depth of influence this circle of friends had on Gandhi's Hind Swaraj.

of Salt, Charles Bradlaugh, and Cardinal Manning. Tolstoy, too, corresponded with Salt and sent them his own writings on vegetarianism from Russia. William Morris too was a familiar name among them. The group drew tremendous inspiration from Walt Whitman.

Salt was also a Fabian, and kept in close touch with Sydney Olivier. But the former was definitely more in favour of ethical reforms. Thus started in 1889 the Humanitarian League, which was an offshoot of the Fabian Society. It boasted of members like Annie Besant, Edward Maitland, Edward Carpenter, Sydney Olivier, W.H. Hudson, Howard Williams and Anna Kingsford. It is not known whether Gandhi actively participated in it or not. He was one of its youngest and inconspicuous members. Moreover, it is unlikely that Gandhi's activities would have been noticed where Sir George Greenwood and Clarence Darrow frequented.

It was at one of such tea parties that Gandhi met Sir Edwin Arnold. He later invited Sir Arnold to be the vice-president of a vegetarian club which he had started in his own locality, at Bayswater. Dr. Josiah Oldfield (for by then Gandhi had learned that associations and clubs had their own newsletter and periodicals) was similarly invited to be the President. Gandhi himself became the secretary. But before we go into Gandhi's vegetarian activities, a mention ought to be made of a Gujrati poet, Narayan Hemchandra. Gandhi had met him casually. But both became good friends. In Hemchandra, Gandhi found the first Indian abroad who neither thought much of the outward appearances nor hesitated to express what he desired despite his inability to speak in perfect English. It was on Hemchandra's insistence that Gandhi agreed to call upon Cardinal Manning to congratulate him on his role in the termination of the great London Dock

Strike. From then on, Gandhi acquired a courage of his own. He learnt to call upon people and to speak out whenever he felt he had to.

Early in 1890 Gandhi came to know of two publications: The Vegetarian Messenger of Manchester, and The Vegetarian of London Vegetarian Society. The latter's editor, Dr. Josiah Oldfield even took Gandhi to Portsmouth to attend an international congress on vegetarianism. There Gandhi presented a paper which also appeared in The Vegetarian Messenger. This incidence also led to Gandhi's involvement in the London Vegetarian Society's Executive Committee. In many respects vegetarianism was a turning point in Gandhi's life. It not only started him on his road to simple living and dietetic experiments, but also gave Gandhi a sense of mission. It launched his career as an organizer, and a public speaker.

It also brought him into contact with a group of vegetarians, thinkers and writers, some of whom lived in 'Queer Street' but nearly all of them influenced by Ruskin and involved in some form of radical reaction to the industrial civilization of the West. They had sympathy for the working class and lived on the fringes of proletarianism though none of them were proletarians.³¹

Gandhi soon started publishing papers on various aspects of vegetarianism, foods and festivals of India. He was also invited to address meetings in Portsmouth, Bloomsbury, and Upper Norwood. In 1891, Gandhi had the honour of representing the London Vegetarian Society at the Federal Union of Vegetarian Societies. Not a bad achievement for one who had failed to make his maiden speech, only a few months ago in defence of Dr. T.R. Allinson. Although Gandhi did not share Allinson's views on

³¹C.D.S. Devanesen, op. cit., p. 180.

birth-control, he was averse to the society's right to impose its ethical views on the members.³² As a result of that controversy, Dr. Allinson was expelled but Gandhi learned to stand by his convictions. Vegetarianism also helped him to do some probing into his own cultural heritage. While preparing his papers for the meetings, Gandhi had the opportunity to read James Mill and Sir W.W. Hunter on Indian history. These readings later helped him to successfully remove the misconceptions of South African whites that Indians were uncouth and uncivilized. One wonders to what extent Miss Annie Besant, the militant women organizer, was responsible in forming Gandhi's attitude toward women's participation in the politics of agitation! Obviously, Gandhi's South African experiments in agitation drew a great deal from his London experiences. Likewise, his later experiments in Indian Satyagrahas were also based upon his experiences in the South African satyagrahas.

During his associations with the above group, Gandhi also came in close contact with the London Theosophical Society. Madame Blavatsky was its high-priestess. Her friend, Miss Besant, had lately given up her former atheism and published her confessions in a book entitled How I Became a Theosophist.³³ Gandhi was much interested in the society and its members, but he refused to join it. With great insistence on the part of his friends he agreed to become an associate member of the group. But any form of organized religion clearly ran counter to his grain. Besides,

³²M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, pp. 81, 84.

³³Gandhi seemed to have admired Miss Besant's courage in facing the critics of her newly found faith. He was especially impressed by her dedication to truth - that one loyalty which she maintained had to be kept stainless against all odds.

there were other aspects of Theosophy which did not get his complete approval. On the whole, Gandhi found a strong flavour of Hinduism in their creed and he made the most of it. In some ways, Theosophy seemed to have brought Gandhi in touch with his own religion. Gandhi owed his acquaintance with Gītā to two Theosophists. It was in their company, that Gandhi read for the first time the Bhagavad Gītā. Both Bertram Keightly and Dr. Archibald Keightley were well to do and rich enough to support the activities of the London Lodge. They had cultivated their tastes for Sanskrit and were immensely fond of the works of Edwin Arnold. Gandhi and the Keightleys naturally became good friends and shared much in common.

In his autobiography, Gandhi admits that Blavatsky's The Key to Theosophy inspired in him the desire to read more about Hinduism. Especially, he was attracted by the life of Lord Buddha as depicted in The Light of Asia by Arnold. Later he also read Carlyle's Heroes and Hero-Worship. But the deep note, struck by a desire for renunciation never really left him. Gandhi's response to religion always remained intuitive and informal, although it was greatly coloured by the ethics of non-attachment both in action as well as in life. That, indeed, is the sum total of all Indian religiosity, whether Hindu or Buddhist, and Gandhi seemed to have imbibed it well.

Would Gandhi have differed much, if he had not come across the Theosophists? Perhaps, not. Certainly, his convictions were deepened as a result of that encounter. Like vegetarianism, his religious faith too needed the approval of the mature Gandhi. Before he could learn to take pride in his own beliefs, he had to be confident that they were not merely

a matter of accident. He had to be convinced intellectually, too, that even common sense somehow made it appear right. Ironically enough, in his London phase, Gandhi found the teachings of Indian wisdom through Western minds. Therefore, London always remained associated in Gandhi's mind as, "dear London".

So much attached was I to London and its environments; for who would not be? London with its teaching institutions, public galleries, museums, theatres, vast commerce, public parks, and Vegetarian restaurants is a fit place for a student and a traveller, a trader and a 'faddist' - as a Vegetarian would be called by his opponents. Thus, it was not without deep regret that I left dear London.³⁴

Returning home in July of 1891, little did Gandhi know what lay in store for him in India. He was hopeful, ambitious and filled with the zeal of a reformer who is about to embark on a "sacred" mission. Obviously, it had something to do with the lessons he had learned through his stay in England. But, soon after Gandhi's arrival in Bombay his spirits were dampened by the shocking news of his mother's death. The same day he also met the poet Raychandra. Gandhi has claimed that he was a notable influence in his life. If anyone can claim to have come nearer to being a spiritual Guru of Gandhi, it was that fantastic genius. The Jaina poet, Raychandbhai, had a phenomenal memory. He had a mind that could perform with absolute ease several tasks at one and the same time. But, what impressed Gandhi most about him were not his feats of memory.

³⁴M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, I, 64.

I envied his gift without, however, coming under its spell. The thing that did cast its spell over me I came to know afterwards. This was his wide knowledge of the scriptures, his spotless character and his burning passion for self-realization. I saw later that this last was the only thing for which he lived.³⁵

From him, Gandhi learned the song of Muktananda, "I shall think myself blessed only when I see Him in every one of my daily acts".

Erikson has pointed out the psychological transferrance in Gandhi's case of the mother-image into Raychandbhai.³⁶ Whatever the clinical explanations, it is enough to point out here that from then on, Gandhi's passion became to "see Him face to face". Throughout his later years, Gandhi tried desperately to emulate the Jaina poet in thought, word and deed.

Like his friend Raychandra, Gandhi too, became a connoisseur of "pearls" and "diamonds" but of a different kind. If Raychandbhai was adept at solving knotty business problems, Gandhi, too, would become adept in solving knotty political transactions. For both, their lives did not revolve around their immediate vocations. As far as they were concerned, "that centre was the passion to see God face to face". About Raychandra, Gandhi has observed that he was "a real seeker after Truth...absorbed in godly pursuits in the midst of business".³⁷ Raychandra's intellect and moral earnestness compelled Gandhi's reverence. In moments of spiritual crises, he became Gandhi's refuge, a guide and a helper.

³⁵M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 88.

³⁶E.H. Erikson, op. cit.

³⁷M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 89.

But the briefless barrister was far from qualified for the Indian High Courts. Gandhi needed experience in dealing with the Indian law. It was therefore considered advisable to start a law practice in Bombay. Gandhi even succeeded in getting a case. It was his first "debut" in the small causes court. But, he cut a sorry figure. Gandhi could not even muster enough courage to ask a single question during the cross-examination. The fee had to be returned to the agent. As a result, Gandhi decided never to appear in a court unless and until he had enough courage to conduct the case. A disappointed Gandhi left Bombay for Rajkot, this time to settle down to a business of drafting memorials and applications with his brother as his partner.

Yet another shock awaited him in Rajkot, that small, princely state with its petty intrigues. It so happened that Gandhi's brother, in his capacity as an adviser and counsellor to the ruler of Porbandar, had given him a wrong advice. Consequently, the ruler had charged him with mis-conduct. A British Political Agent was appointed to act as an arbiter in the case, but he was highly prejudiced against Gandhi's brother. To smooth up the matters, therefore, Gandhi's brother requested Mohan to approach that Political Agent and explain the whole case. After much hesitation, Mohan agreed for he had personally known the agent in England. But the whole thing was somewhat contrary to Mohan's ideals and his will.

An ugly incident followed when Gandhi approached the officer. As soon as the Agent realized the chief cause of Gandhi's visit, he was promptly thrown out of that office by a servant. Gandhi was angered, not so much by the outcome, but by the manner of his eviction. The treatment immensely outraged the young barrister. Gandhi was not only insulted, but

also assaulted. Threatening to proceed legally against that Agent, Gandhi left. But it was not easy to proceed against a Britisher and dare to remain in the same environment. The act was akin to committing a political suicide. Gandhi was advised by a prominent Indian lawyer to pocket the insult calmly. He disclosed that it was a common experience among the Indian barristers. Gandhi was advised that he would only ruin himself, if he proceeded against the "Sahib", for he had "yet to know life".

"This advice was as bitter as poison to me, but I had to swallow it. I pocketed the insult, but also profited by it. Never again shall I place myself in such a false position, never again shall I try to exploit friendship in this way",³⁸ was Gandhi's determination. The atmosphere in Rajkot was rife with such incidents. He clearly saw his future in jeopardy. He could neither afford to compromise on principles, nor bear to remain silent when injustice demanded that he speak up. Moreover, the unpleasant incidence had further made his stay in Rajkot more depressing. It was only natural that Gandhi jumped at the thought of it when an offer was made to him to serve in South Africa. A Meman firm from Porbander wanted somebody to instruct their counsel of barristers better than they themselves could, for lack of knowledge in English. It was not clear what exactly was demanded of Gandhi. All expenses were paid, besides a salary was fixed to see him through the year. Gandhi easily agreed to see a new country, and to have a different experience. In May of the same year, therefore, he found himself in Durban.

³⁸ibid., p. 99.

It did not take long for Gandhi to realize that Indians were not very well treated on the African continent. It rather came as a shock to the outsider, accustomed to being treated "civilly" among civilized people. It was acceptable to Gandhi that each individual ought to be treated according to his or her worth provided such distinction was not based on racial prejudice or the colour of one's skin. But Gandhi had yet to experience the utter disregard for the fundamental dignity of man. It was therefore, quite typical of Gandhi to refuse to take off his turban when he was ordered by the Magistrate to do so. The incident took place when he entered the Court to attend a session with his employer Dada Abdulla. Gandhi was ordered out of the court. He coolly walked off. But Gandhi would not allow the first opportunity to pass by without making anything of it. Instead, he wrote to the press and explained the matter, admirably defending his own reaction. That whole incident served to provide Gandhi with unexpected publicity. It resulted in a spate of letters to the editor, both for and against "the unwelcome visitor".

Soon Gandhi realized that Indians in South Africa were terribly divided within themselves. The Muslim merchants called themselves "Arabs" and were not expected to take off their turban. They also wore a different costume which segregated them from others. Another segment consisted of the Hindus and the Parsis. Parsis preferred to call themselves "Persians". These three groups made up the so called "elites" of the Indian community. A majority of Indians was comprised of the Tamil, Telugu and the North Indian indentured and freed labourers. The latter group had come to South Africa on a five year contract and was allowed

either to go back to India or settle on the continent as freed labourers after the expiry of the terms of their contracts. Since a majority of Indians belonged to the labourer class, Englishmen called them "coolies" or "samis". Gandhi was therefore, termed a "coolie barrister" - one of its own kind. Up until then, there had been no Indian barristers in South Africa. Gandhi was the only one and perhaps the most highly qualified Indian in his community. That fact alone could have boosted the courage of a shy, introvert and by then a somewhat confident Gandhi.

The year Gandhi went to Africa, he later recalled was amongst the most creative years of his life. He also refers to one particular incident as the most "creative experience" of his life. It took place exactly a week after his arrival in Durban. Gandhi was asked to represent his firm in Pretoria in Transvaal. With a first class ticket, Gandhi boarded the train, feeling somewhat confident of his success in the forthcoming venture. About half way from Durban to Charlestown, another passenger entered the compartment at Maritzburg. Gandhi was at once asked to move into a third class, in order to let the white man enjoy his privilege. This time too, Gandhi refused and was promptly thrown out of the carriage, baggage and all. The shock was beyond Gandhi to comprehend. He was so shaken by the experience that for hours he did not even dare to utter any words. While Gandhi sat alone, shivering in the cold wintry night in that waiting room, a storm raged in his mind. He struggled violently within to decide whether or not to proceed further, or to return at once to India. What about the duty, obligation, "wrongs", "rights" and the determination to fight it to the bitter end!

I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial--only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.³⁹

Eventually, Gandhi decided to stay. He proceeded to Pretoria, not knowing what lay further in store during the same journey. Part of that distance had to be covered in a stage-coach from Charlestown to Johannesburg. Being a "coolie", Gandhi's colour again stood in the way of his being accommodated in the coach. With much arguing the "leader" of the party, a white man, allowed him to be seated on the coachbox. Gandhi did not wish to be left off; he consented. But the "leader" was not content to travel in peace. In the middle of the journey, he demanded that Gandhi should sit on the footboard. Gandhi refused to be pushed around and was seized by the arm, and dragged down. As the "leader" boxed and dragged about the frail Indian, Gandhi clung desperately to the brass rails of that coachbox. Seeing the heavy white man beat and swear mercilessly at the silent but pathetic young Indian, the passengers were moved to pity. They jointly begged the ferocious, burly man to stop bullying the helpless victim. From Gandhi's accounts, all we know is that the coach rattled away with Gandhi wondering in it whether he would ever make it alive to Pretoria. All he could do was to pray to Lord Rama for help, as his nurse Rambha had taught him.

³⁹ibid., p. 113.

From other Indians Gandhi soon learned that South Africa was not a place for men like himself. They agreed to live in such misery because they wanted to make money and did not mind pocketing the insults. By the time Gandhi reached his destination, he had also made up his mind regarding the steps he would take to alleviate the conditions of his countrymen. He intended to get in touch with every Indian in Pretoria and to study their conditions. In order to do so, Gandhi enlisted the help and collaboration of the most well-known businessman Sheth Tyeb Haji Khan Muhammed, the legal opponent of Dada Abdulla. Within a week, a public meeting was called and Gandhi made his first public speech in life. In that speech, he exhorted Indians to be honest and truthful in their business dealings. He argued that practical affairs and religious teachings were really not poles apart. He demanded of Indians to be all the more concerned about their public image because others would judge their countrymen in relation to their conduct in South Africa. He also reminded Indians to be more sanitary in their habits and learn the virtues of unity and solidarity. Finally, he told them to form an association to make representations to the authorities concerned for redressing of their grievances. Gandhi made sure to point out that he himself would be pleased to offer any services he could, to make this possible. Within a short period, there was not a single Indian in Pretoria that Gandhi did not know. "My stay in Pretoria enabled me to make a deep study of the social, economic and political conditions of the Indians in Transvaal and the Orange Free State,"⁴⁰ he later recalled with pride.

⁴⁰ibid., p. 128.

Gandhi did not however neglect his own priorities in his zeal public work. His job was to sift facts for the attorney and to brief him by marshalling proper evidences in a particular case. Gandhi had learned to depend on facts as the very basis of law. He had also realized that a fair degree of success depended on his comprehension of the true merits of the case. In order to do so, he had to study book-keeping. He also translated hoards of Gujrati correspondence into English. He recalled his old law Professor's advice "facts are three-fourths of law". Another famous barrister in South Africa had told him "Gandhi...if we take care of the facts of a case, the law will take care of itself". But Gandhi interpreted facts to mean truth. He thought, if one adhered to truth, law would naturally come to one's aid. Gandhi was highly successful in solving the problem for which he was called to South Africa. He succeeded in making both the parties agree to settle the matter out of court through arbitration. Thus he saved a great deal of expenditure in courts and also avoided bankruptcy for the losing party. Gandhi realized that by appealing to the better side of human nature, one could avoid "Himalayan tragedies". He also learnt that compromise was an honest solution in most cases. Later Gandhi claimed that in doing so he had lost nothing "not even money, certainly not my soul".⁴¹

The mission over, Gandhi prepared to leave South Africa. A picnic was arranged in his honour to wish him farewell. That very evening, Gandhi happened to pick up the Natal Mercury (a daily) and discovered to his utter surprise that the government was planning to dis-

⁴¹ibid., p. 133.

franchise the Indians. A bill had already been introduced in the Natal Legislature and was being given its second reading. He told his clients that it was indeed the first nail in their coffin. It struck at the very root of their self-respect.

Immediately, a simple picnic was turned into a working committee meeting. Before long Gandhi had outlined the whole campaign. Over night, the petition⁴² was drafted, copies made and signatures collected through door to door campaigning. Up until then, the Indians were treated like the rest of the British citizens. The law now intended to segregate them on racial grounds. Telegrams were sent to the Premier of Natal and the Speaker of the House requesting them to postpone any further discussion of the bill. Gandhi read all the available literature on the subject. Within a fortnight he sent a monster petition to Lord Ripon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. All this meant collecting funds, organizing daily meeting and recruiting volunteers. It involved preparing copies and securing signatures from all over the province. In all, ten thousand signatures were collected. Gandhi intended to agitate meaningfully and drew everybody into the struggle. The press throughout South Africa noted the event, some even published the petition. Gandhi's claim was supported by the Times in England, and in India. The results were not highly successful, but they did not go in vain.

Clearly, a more permanent organization was needed to watch over the interests of the Indians. As a result, Gandhi set up the Natal Indian Congress. It was similar to the Indian National Congress, which was in 1893

⁴²It was the first petition ever sent by Indians to a South African legislature. See M.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha In South Africa, trans. V.G. Desai (American ed.; California: Academic Reprints, 1954), p. 14.

presided over by none else than Dadabhai Naoroji, an M.P. from Central Finsbury. Gandhi had admired Naoroji during his student years at London. He himself became its secretary. Following were the aims of the organization: (i) to promote concord between Indians and Europeans, (ii) to disseminate knowledge of Indian culture, history and literature, and (iii) to do social, political and charitable work in the community.⁴³

For most part the organization was still an elitist group. The indentured labourers kept aloof because the £3 membership fee was too much for them. But events took a sharp turn when Balasundaram, a Tamil indentured labourer, staggered bleeding into Gandhi's office. Gandhi's attention was drawn to their sad plight and thus to the arena of social service. From then on, his concern included the poor, as well. News of Gandhi's support spread like wild-fire. He won immediate acclaim among the labourers. He also became their trusted friend and guide. During that period he wrote two pamphlets: (i) The Indian Franchise: An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa, and (ii) An Open Letter.⁴⁴

⁴³Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1956), I, 611. quotes the Premier of Natal: "Members might not be aware that there was in this country a body, a very powerful body in its way, a very united body, though practically a secret body...the Indian Congress... which possessed large funds...was presided over by very active and very able men...the avowed object of which was to exercise strong political power in the affairs of the colony." From an excerpt from the Natal Indian Memorial to Joseph Chamberlain dated May 22, 1896.

⁴⁴Far from being apologetic, Gandhi sought to rid the minds of his readers of anti-Asiatic clichés. He ended up quoting European writers such as Sir W.W. Hunter, Max Muller, Schopenhauer, Sir Thomas Munro, Sir George Birdwood, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Fredrick Pincott, M. Louis Jacolliot, Victor Hugo, Macaulay, Mill, Burke, Bright, Fawcett, Bradlaugh, Gladstone, Lord Ripon, Lord Reay, Lord Northbrooke and the Marquis of Dufferin. For details see M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, I, 142-165.

Gandhi's main aim for writing these pamphlets was to create a favourable public opinion. He hoped to clear the webs of misconception while seeking, at the same time, to appeal to the generous and kindlier aspects of the opponent's conscience. The opponents happened to be British, who in Gandhi's eyes were all the more amenable to British sense of justice. He noted later that in the absence of any solid grounds for apprehensions, it was impossible to convince by argument, where minds were seized by vague terrors.⁴⁵ Having waited and watched the victims of wrong for a year, Gandhi says: "I then awoke to a sense of my duty".⁴⁶ That duty was to appeal to the common sense of both the parties concerned. As one could now see Satyagraha was slowly taking shape, step by step. The germ of conscious struggle against injustice and an over-riding sense of inner obligation were its prime requisites.

Satyagraha involved first the conviction, then a detailed study of the condition based on observation, investigation and a dispassionate knowledge of all the facts. However, before taking any "actions", all the constitutional means of redressing the grievances had to be attempted. For the unorganized and uneducated masses, it was rather unthinkable to demand rights from those who even refused to recognize them. Gandhi saw the need for solidarity in the Indian community. Having achieved that goal, he proceeded to acquire a larger public support by educating the entire public opinion and informing them of the legitimacy of the Indian demands. It is interesting to note that Satyagraha was not con-

⁴⁵M.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴⁶ibid., p. 42.

ceived as an instrument of nationalist struggle in its original form. It was designed merely as a means for securing minority rights in a socially frustrating situation.

Gandhi wanted to fetch his family to Durban, so in 1896 he sailed to India. While there, he made it a point to publicize the conditions of other Indians in South Africa. His green pamphlet, entitled The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa won Gandhi instant fame among the Indian leaders.

Meanwhile, some distorted versions of a news report by Reuters fanned widespread anti-Indian feelings in Natal. Simultaneously, Gandhi became the most known and hated Indian by the time his ship Courland docked in the Durban port. Rumours were afloat that Gandhi was "invading" South Africa with waves of Indians, and that he was organizing an independent agency of immigration. Hoards of armed men and women were roaming in the streets to prevent, by sheer physical force, the landing of Indians. The government was helpless because of the public mood. To calm matters, Gandhi's landing was purposely delayed under the pretext of a quarantine. Eventually, Gandhi alighted from the ship with the whole mob following him and Dada Abdulla's attorney. As they walked, the jeering grew noisier and the crowd became more violent. Gandhi was being pelted with stones, mud, fish, and rotten eggs or anything the people could lay hands on. They grabbed at his turban, and hit him with a whip. The crowd jeered and kicked him. He bled helplessly. Just then a white lady (wife of the superintendent of Police) happened to pass by. Overcome with pity and compassion, she sheltered the poor Indian with her umbrella. Soon the police arrived, too. Gandhi was escorted safely to his destination. There, again the

mob threatened to set fire. Gandhi had to be finally sneaked out and put in the prison while the Police Chief amused the crowd by leading them to sing:

Hang old Gandhi on the Sour apple tree...

The incident is important because of what followed that ghastly affair. Learning about it in the paper, Joseph Chamberlain cabled the Natal Government to immediately prosecute Gandhi's assailants. But Gandhi refused to prosecute his own attackers. In a letter to the Attorney General, he explained the reasons for doing so. He admitted that he was wrong in venturing to come out unescorted by police. Gandhi also said that he did not mean to harm anyone. Such nobility of heart was bound to attract much attention and praise.

There was, yet, another victory for Gandhi in the October of 1899 when the Boer War broke out. It is interesting to note, as alleged by the British, that the treatment accorded to the Indians was one of the main reasons for the war.⁴⁷ But Gandhi's sympathies lay with the Boers. He admired the courage of their men and the forbearance of their women. Gandhi noted, "National independence had with the Boers all the force of a religious principle. Such a brave people would not suffer humiliation even at the hands of a world empire".⁴⁸ He also observed that among Boers the entire male population joined the war. Even the lawyers, farmers, traders as well as the menial servants gave up their respective vocations to defend their nation. One wonders if Gandhi had not picked

⁴⁷ ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁸ ibid.

the idea of the non-cooperation movement from the Boers during 1899.

Some of the British civilians were also volunteering to serve for the war effort. Gandhi thus found a golden opportunity to test the charges which were frequently laid against the Indians in South Africa. The British mainly complained that the Indians in South Africa were good for nothing. They were a dead weight on the shoulders of the empire and that they were mainly interested in the money-making. Since the Indians never seemed to fulfill their own obligations as citizens, there was no use of bestowing the rights of citizenship upon them. Gandhi was able to grasp, at the same time, the reasons which prompted the Indians to think otherwise. The Indian viewed the situation from an entirely different perspective.

The British oppress us equally with the Boers. If we are subjected to hardship in the Transvaal, we are not very much better off in Natal or the Cape Colony. The difference is only one of degree. Again we are more or less a community of slaves; knowing as we do that a small nation like the Boers is fighting for its very existence, why should we be instrumental in their destruction? Finally, from a practical point of view, no one will take it upon himself to predict a defeat for the Boers. And if they win, they will never fail to wreak vengeance upon us.⁴⁹

Gandhi debated with them in favour of supporting the British. Although he could understand the Indian fears, he could hardly agree with their stand. Gandhi reminded his fellow citizens.

⁴⁹ ibid., p. 72.

Our existence in South Africa is only in our capacity as British subjects. In every memorial we have presented, we have asserted our rights as such. We have been proud of our British citizenship, or have given our rulers and the world to believe that we are so proud. Our rulers profess to safeguard our rights because we are British subjects, and what little rights we still retain, we retain because we are British subjects. It would be unbecoming to our dignity as a nation to look on with folded hands at a time when ruin stared the British in the face as well as ourselves, simply because they ill-treat us here...such criminal inaction could only aggravate our difficulties.⁵⁰

The Indians, as British subjects, could either look upon the crisis as an unsought opportunity to falsify the charges levelled against them or be sneered at forever. In the latter case they would be fit only to be treated even worse than before. Gandhi conceded frankly that justice lay clearly on the side of the Boers, but demanded that no pains be spared to help the state in danger. He argued that a subject ought not to enforce his or her own opinion in every case upon the authority of the state.

The authorities may not always be right, but so long as the subjects own allegiance to a state, it is their clear duty generally to accommodate themselves, and to accord their support, to acts of the state.⁵¹

It was perhaps the ghost of Socrates haunting Gandhi when he wrote those lines. He had not yet faced the dilemma of obedience to the conscience or the state. Neither was Gandhi mindful then of the

⁵⁰ibid.

⁵¹ibid., pp. 72-73.

differences between government and self-government, nor was he clear in his own mind about the relationship between the obliger and the obligee. Such subtleties dawned upon him only in 1922. One can discern however, the seeds of future ethical revolt in the Gandhi of 1899 in the following statement.

Again, if any class among the subjects considers that the action of a government is immoral from a religious standpoint, before they help or hinder it, they must endeavour fully and even at the risk of their lives to dissuade the government from pursuing such a course. We have done nothing of the kind. Such a moral crisis is not present before us, and no one says that we wish to hold aloof from this war for any such universal and comprehensive reason. Our ordinary duty as subjects, therefore, is not to enter into the merits of the war, but when war has actually broken out, to render such assistance as we possibly can.⁵²

Gandhi's insistence on truth was the underlying principle in the above argument. He explained in very simple terms what that implied.

That one should appear to be as one really is and should act accordingly, is not the last, but the first step to practical religion.
The building up of a religious life is impossible without such a foundation.⁵³

In indicating that the immorality of an act could always prevent a citizen from acting in a way the State desired, Gandhi was asserting the individual's right to disobedience. During a moral crisis, every individual has the inalienable right to refuse to obey. Gandhi translated that right as the freedom "to appear to be as one really is".

⁵²ibid., p. 73 (emphases are mine).

⁵³ibid., p. 74.

As far as the ethics of a situation was concerned, Gandhi could never compromise. He was clear on that account.

But at that stage of his development with regard to Satyagraha, Gandhi seemed a little confused. He does not appear to take into account the individual right to question the authority of the state. At a more practical level, it may be almost impossible to determine the ethical content of an act without questioning the authority of the state.

This error was rectified during Gandhi's future encounters with the state. He realized that the individual should never flinch from taking every conceivable step possible within his constitutional means to dissuade the government from its decision. Being a lawyer himself, Gandhi could not disregard his respect for the laws. But he also knew that the justice of a cause does not always rely on the laws of the state. What the state could not deliver, Gandhi hoped to gain from the compassion of those who administered its laws. The individual must progress, step by step, toward the achievement of his goal (justice). Death is his last resort and the Satyagrahi, too, must declare fast unto death but only after he has failed to redress grievances through nonviolent means, in each instance.

It is true that death appears to be the only prerogative and the last privilege left, if one has failed to influence through one's life. It is worth considering if the Satyagrahi ought to take such a step in sheer desperation or only as a symbol of ethical earnestness. Unfortunately, for most 'half-baked' satyagrahies of recent times that

seems to have become the only means of threatening the authority or the opponent into quick surrender.

Gandhi could never blackmail or shame his opponent into giving him concessions. It would be a gross miscalculation to invite undue suffering and death upon oneself in an effort to alter the situation, if the authority was adamant or the opponent callous. Gandhi was not so impractical as to forgo victory as well as to forfeit life. Shrewd Bania (businessman) that he was, Gandhi would rather attempt to win his cause and save his skin.

Ideally, one ought to die for the cause, rather than have the cause suffer on account of oneself. One who is not thoroughly convinced of his cause, could never wage a struggle to the level of self-sacrifice which a Satyagraha demands.

Gandhi was deeply stirred by the agony and suffering caused by the Boer War. But, especially the role played by Boer women struck a familiar note in his heart. Through their example he tried to teach his own community the real worth of suffering.

...But when the cry of agony raised by the women in the concentration camps reached England not through themselves, not through their men - they were fighting valiantly on the battle field - but through a few high-souled Englishmen and women who were then in South Africa, the English people began to relent...Real suffering bravely borne melts even a heart of stone. Such is the potency of suffering or tapas. And there lies the key to Satyagraha...⁵⁴

⁵⁴ibid., p. 17.

Gandhi promptly established an Indian Ambulance Corps. It consisted of eleven hundred Indians, of which ironically 800 were indentured slaves. The battle at Spion Kop greatly enhanced the pride and prestige of the Indians for they served honourably, sometimes marching twenty to twenty-five miles a day under constant fire. At the end of that sordid Imperial war, Gandhi along with others was awarded War medals for his courage and leadership. The Indian community had hoped to win over the prejudices of the whites through their meritorious efforts. But the delusion did not last long. Things became even worse under the administration of ex-colonial British officers. But the participation in Boer War left an indelible imprint on Gandhi's mind. He was convinced that there was no point of remaining in South Africa any longer. Gandhi was determined to help his own motherland and so he bid good-bye to his friends and sailed for India. He was hoping to settle in Bombay and to enter the Indian politics.

Even greater disappointments awaited his return home. At first he attended the Annual All-India Congress at Calcutta. It was shocking to observe the lack of organization and apathy among its delegates. The Congress was sharply divided within itself. It was infested with caste-prejudices and consisted merely of a babble of tongues. Disenchanted with the utter chaos, Gandhi proceeded to make friends with the most outspoken and the top-most leaders of the nation. He also wanted to see for himself what went on at the grass-root level. In order to do so, Gandhi bought himself a cheap woollen coat, a canvas back-pack, and a blanket. With these bare minimums, he

travelled in a third class carriage across the length and breadth of India. He wanted to see his own countrymen, to live like the poor masses that India is mainly composed of. To his surprise, Gandhi found it easy to identify with them and to communicate in their language. In a letter to Professor Gokhale Gandhi thanked him for his suggestion. The initial plunge among the poor had made him richer and stronger in spirit. He hoped to resume the experience at the very first opportunity in future. But that very year Gandhi had to return unexpectedly to South Africa to meet Chamberlain. This time, Gandhi settled in Johannesburg, Transvaal.

The Johannesburg years turned out to be significant in many ways. Up until then, Gandhi's experiments were restricted to himself. They had involved neither the life-style of his entire household, nor his intimate friends and colleagues. Like most Indian wives, Kasturbai had of course to conform to her husband's wishes at each step. But, in Johannesburg, Gandhi's idiosyncracies reached a climax. It was quite understandable that she desired security and comfort for herself and her children. Gandhi, on the other hand, was beginning to dedicate himself fully to his ideals. He was trying to put into practice whatever convinced him as "meaningful". Within a short period their home was turned into a veritable boarding-house for all political and professional colleagues. Gandhi regarded his earnings as a public trust. He began by using his savings to subsidize a vegetarian restaurant of a German friend, and then went on to run a journal of his own.

The weekly Indian Opinion was actually not Gandhi's idea. It was suggested by a printer friend of his. But once started, it provided an excellent means of communication. Through it Gandhi not only informed and educated the public-opinion around him, but also learned to educate himself. He was its chief columnist. The paper aimed at bringing together the European and Indian subjects of King Edward. It hoped "to educate the public opinion; to remove causes for misunderstanding; to put before the Indians their own blemishes; and to show them the path of duty while they insisted on securing their rights".⁵⁵ Gandhi was convinced that the rights and duties could not be separated. Rights implied obligations. One could not insist on rights, without having first performed one's duty or obligation.

Out of his venture into restaurant business, Gandhi acquired two life-long disciples ; Mr. Albert West and Henry Polak. It was Polak, who lent Gandhi Ruskin's Unto This Last,⁵⁶ which along with Gītā and Tolstoy's Kingdom of God Is Within You, became the three most important

⁵⁵D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Bombay: V.K. Jhaveri and D.G. Tendulkar, 1951-54), I, 68-69.

⁵⁶The book consists of four articles. In it Ruskin gives a "logical definition of wealth". According to the author, true wealth consists in abundant life and not in the power which compels other people to work for the capitalist. "Richness" means nobility and happiness of the greatest number. People are not machines and that society's welfare depends upon a balanced, functional economy based on ethics and cooperation. He also stresses the importance of vocational training, just wages and full employment. Gandhi summarized the book into three maxims. But only one can be found in the book with complete satisfaction. Did Gandhi misunderstand the book which he said reflected some of his deepest convictions? See M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, pp. 297-99.

books in Mahatma's life.

After reading Ruskin, Gandhi was inspired to buy a farm. He named it Phoenix. His Phoenix experiment was an experience in self-reliance and simple life. It soon became a community settlement composed of people of all ages, from various racial, religious and professional backgrounds. Later, it also provided a fertile ground for experimenting with renunciation - Eastern and Western style. In it, Gandhi combined ideas of the Trappist Monastery at Mariann Hill and the theory of the ancient Indian āshram life. Leo Tolstoy and Edward Carpenter provided the doctrine of simple life, while Gandhi introduced the ideals of Vivekananda's Rāj Yoga and Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. Most of the time was taken by the journal. The numbers of Indian Opinion came out, while its staff gleefully sang hymns and tended to their fruit and vegetable gardens. Residents at Phoenix lived in a sort of mini-republic based on Gandhi's 'blue-prints'.

It was during that period that a Jewish-Buddhist by the name of Herman Kalenbach joined Gandhi's crusade. Kalenbach was greatly influenced by the life and teachings of the Buddha. Although Gandhi makes very little mention of the Buddhist influence on his life and thought, it appears that Gandhi was profoundly moved by the Buddha's teachings. Without being conscious of it, he often repeated verses from the Dhammapāda. Perhaps, the inspiration and insight derived from the Light of Asia had lingered long. Kalenbach, certainly, seemed to have brought him closer to the Buddha. Especially interesting in this respect, is Gandhi's address to the Johannesburg Theosophist society.

In Phoenix, Gandhi was trying to practise the ideals of aparigraha (non-possession) and sambhava (equality). He claimed that these two themes of the Bhagvadgītā had taught him the true meanings of ahimsa (nonviolence) and anāsaketi (non-attachment). Soon the concept of bramhacharya (continence) was to dominate his mind as he tended the sick and the wounded on a battlefield, of sorts. It came to be known as the Zulu Rebellion. Even as the Prince Siddhartha had renounced his wife and child, after the Zulu experience, Gandhi too sought to follow the Buddha's path.

Along with twenty-three other Indians, Gandhi volunteered again to serve in the ambulance corps. The Government did not take long to accept Gandhi's offer, especially, because the whites promptly refused to nurse or to attend the coloured Zulus. Upon reaching the scene, Gandhi realized, it was neither a battlefield nor a rebellion. It was merely a 'no-tax' campaign advised by a Zulu chief to his people. There was practically no resistance as the white infantry rolled in firing at the helpless Zulu villagers in their quiet countryside. Each day, Gandhi with his stretcherbearers had to march forty miles or more. The wounded Zulus, with their festering wounds and lacerated bodies, were enough to complete Gandhi's education in the school of violence. Devanesan may not be far from the truth in holding that Gandhi's pacifism was a product "not simply of religious sentiment, whether Eastern or Western, but also of a compassion aroused by close and personal intimacy with the cruelty of war".⁵⁷ Gandhi had witnessed

⁵⁷C.D.S. Devanesan, op. cit., p. 368.

the soldiers flogg their "enemies" and wreak havoc on an innocent, unarmed people. Under the pretext of "restoring order" many Zulu men, women, and children were unnecessarily shot at, often by mistake. All this made Gandhi an avowed opponent of violence. Somehow it did not make sense to his nonviolent mind. Violence seemed to defeat the very purpose it was fighting for.

It was while serving in the Zulu uprising that Gandhi decided to take the vow of complete bramhacharya (celebacy). He realized that he could no longer serve two causes. He wanted to replace the bonds of family attachment with a total dedication to public service.⁵⁸ Gandhi was fired with the zeal of self-sacrifice. On his return from the front, he communicated his decision to Kasturbai. She acquiesced quietly.

Gandhi claimed that up until that point, all major events in his life were culminating towards this highly significant vow of brahamacharya. To him it appeared as if they were secretly preparing him to launch the major experiment of Satyagraha.⁵⁹

On 22 August 1906, the Transvaal Government Gazette published a text of the ordinance called the Asiatic Law Amendment. It decreed that all Indians of both sexes, from the ages of eight upwards, were to report to the Registrar of their department to give a number of personal details including the fingerprints of both their hands. Failing to do this, any Indian could forfeit his or her right of residence, be subjected to fine, imprisonment or deportation. Indians were liable to a fine and/or a jail

⁵⁸"I had not realized then how indispensable it was for self-realization, but I clearly saw that one aspiring to serve humanity with his whole soul could not do without it." M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 316.

⁵⁹ibid., p. 318.

order if they failed to produce the certificate anywhere, at all times without warning. The measure was clearly intended to stop all illegal immigration into Transvaal. But it was pointedly based on racial discrimination and aimed specially at the Indians. This came rather as a shock to the loyal citizens of the Empire, especially after they had proved their readiness to even endanger their lives in the service of the colony.

Gandhi took the trouble to translate that law into Gujrati. He explained its implications to the readers of the Indian Opinion. A mass gathering was called on September the 11th, 1906, in the Old Empire Theatre of Johannesburg. On the appointed day, crowds surged from in and around the city to attend the protest rally. They even closed their shops in order to be present there. At the meeting, the ordinance was first translated into four Indian languages and then resolutions were passed. The famous fourth resolution was moved by Gandhi himself. It declared that Indians ought to refuse to obey that law and be ready to suffer the penalties. Just then, a businessman speaking in favour of the resolution, ventured to swear with God as his witness. He called upon others to join him.

Hearing him, Gandhi was suddenly awakened with the realization of a satori (instant insight). Gandhi had thought a great deal about the sacredness of vows. He had seen through his own experience what such an act implied. Passions ran high among those protesters. There was this crowd - ready to kill and be killed in order to save their respect and dignity. It was up to Gandhi to now convince that gathering of over three thousand motely crowd that real heroism did not lie in killing and being

killed. On the contrary, true courage lay in knowing "how to die without killing and to make one's death count for life - that was the question".⁶⁰ Personally, Gandhi would have preferred to die than be subjected to such an insulting law. But mere taking of the public pledges was not enough. He had seen that happen so many times in the court. It occurred to Gandhi that an oath with God as one's witness was a serious matter. He proceeded therefore to warn his audience.

Again, it is quite possible that in spite of the present warning some or many of those who pledge themselves may weaken at the very first trial. We may have to go to jail, where we may be insulted. We may have to go hungry and suffer extreme heat or cold. Hard labour may be imposed upon us. We may be flogged by rude warders. We may be fined heavily and our property may be attached and held up to auction... Opulent today we may be reduced to poverty tomorrow. We may be deported. Suffering from starvation and similar hardships in jail, some of us may fall ill and even die...wisdom lies in pledging ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse... if the entire community...stands the test, the end will be near. If many...fall back under storm and stress, the struggle will be prolonged. But I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory.⁶¹

During his speech Gandhi made it abundantly clear what his role as a leader of such a movement entailed. He said, he was fully conscious of his responsibility in the matter. Even if a majority of those who took

⁶⁰E.H. Erikson, op. cit., p. 197.

⁶¹M.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, op. cit., p. 106.

the pledge failed to stand the test, Gandhi was prepared "to die but not to submit to the law". He declared, "it is quite unlikely but even if every one else flinched leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would never violate my pledge."⁶²

After Gandhi's speech the whole audience unanimously took the oath. While they jointly took the oath, each did so independently of others. Gandhi had warned them that default on the part of one or many could not absolve the rest from their own obligation. After that meeting, several other meetings took place. Steps were taken to meet the local government. A deputation was sent to meet the Colonial Secretary. Soon the impact of the Indian agitation began to be felt thus establishing a cause and effect relationship.

Gandhi realized that a new means of political and social struggle was coming into existence. He wanted to give it a name. Passive resistance was not quite the same. There was nothing passive about this new means. It was simple, novel and dynamic. True, nobody knew, as yet, what shape the mass campaign would take. There were a number of possibilities. Gandhi deliberately kept open a number of alternatives. But the major principles of that struggle were clear. It was decided that they must strictly adhere to truth and quench hatred with love. At no cost would they indulge in violence. Finally, the word Satyagraha was coined to indicate this new means of struggle.

Satyagraha prided itself on ethical action. Ethical action is inevitably based on ethical thought, and that in turn on ethical insight. One without the other cannot be. All actions, it would appear are the

⁶²ibid., p. 107.

products of thought and thought itself emerges from mind. A mind convoluted with unsalutary thoughts can hardly conceive of correct action. Gandhi insisted on ahimsa (nonviolence) as a pre-requisite of Satyagraha. Without ahimsa in thought, word and deed, ethical insight was practically impossible. Without such insight Satyagraha could hardly claim the purity of means. The secret of Satyagraha's effectiveness lay in the purity of means.

Gandhi's argument ran somewhat like this: each situation determines, the step to be taken next. Just as a person cannot hope to run without first having the desire to run or the capacity to stand, likewise a Satyagrahi could not hope to achieve his or her aim without having the desire and the ability to practice the art in complete ethical earnestness.

What was that art, what were its pre-requisites and what were the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of the technique that differed from one situation to the next? Gandhi's life from that point onward was fully dedicated to refining and mastering that sublime art of Satyagraha. To him it seemed that an extraordinary movement was launched. But he was not sure if he could rely on his followers to accept the tremendous conditions which it imposed upon them. Would they be willing to suffer through the odds of that major experiment with him?

By fluke or fortune Gandhi won his first battle. If not all, most of the hateful clauses in the ordinance were withdrawn. The law which finally was enacted did not apply to Indians alone but to all the members of the British Empire. Indians still had to register, but they did so voluntarily upon receiving assurances from General Smuts that the law would soon be repealed. All this happened only after Gandhi had success-

fully waged his Satyagraha campaign and accomplished himself and his followers as true Satyagrahies. Gandhi's Satyagraha campaigns are well recorded in his Satyagraha in South Africa. But it is also important to look into the historical context of the whole situation in order to understand fully why and how Gandhi devised the technique of Satyagraha.

Individuals definitely appear to play a significant role in transforming trends and moulding philosophies. They also seem to be the visible instruments of active change. But it is highly debatable to speculate the actual scope and depth of the part played by other equally important factors. It is generally agreed that factors such as ideologies, politics, economics, history, and a complex of various other psycho-social phenomena also influence the way how an individual reacts to a particular situation. It is difficult to determine, however, under what circumstances would an individual choose a specific set of alternatives or responses. Our ingenuity and creativity play a large role in formulating our attitudes toward problem-solving of any sort. Depending, of course, upon the basic elements of the creative action, our skills at solving the problem at hand may find a challenge in the scarcity of material resources. Gandhi was faced with somewhat the same phenomena.

A society is basically an environment. In its totality, each society may differ in terms of qualitative and quantitative attributes. But essentially, it also provides an arena for self-expression. From a philosophical point of view nothing really endures for long. One can safely say that everything is essentially subject to the laws of change. Likewise, civilizations and cultures also undergo change and decay.

There is a constant cycle of rise and fall in the histories of most people.

When one views the contributions of individuals like Gandhi in that perspective, one cannot help wondering at that frail being of exceptional courage and human dignity. He stands out alone, in sharp contrast to the rest of his background. It is true that the ideas do not emerge from nothing. There, too, one observes a chain of dependent causation. The presence of a Gandhi or Satyagraha on the canvas of a 20th century Kathiawar, on the Indian sub-continent, must also be viewed in relation to other significant factors.

At a different level of consideration Gandhi as an individual, may or may not be important. One could perhaps forget that Gandhi belonged to India or to Asia or that he even tried to win a unique kind of independence for his own people. But one could hardly deny Gandhi the honour of establishing ahimsa (nonviolence) as an important category among all consideration of political means.

Gandhi practically embodied the concept of nonviolence. He neither invented it, nor emphasized it for the first time. He was also not the only one to reiterate the value of nonviolent ethics. Many others had done so before Gandhi in more ways than one. But Gandhi drew our attention to a significant aspect of our lives that most of us in this century are prone to ignore. However, despite its simplicity and common sense, Satyagraha has failed to draw many adherents today. Still, more find it extremely difficult to comprehend why Satyagraha achieved success in India. The part which follows, briefly outlines the major factors of the environmental milieu in which Gandhi operated.

It is up to the reader to draw his own conclusions. It is interesting to consider if being born and brought up in that particular fashion, being subjected to the same kinds of spacio-temporal trends as Gandhi, could anyone have escaped reaching the conclusions that Gandhi reached.

Many of the trends which existed in Gandhi's environment did not result from spontaneous, haphazard or accidental phenomena. As one reads through the socio-political, economic and intellectual histories of Gandhi's time certain major themes begin to emerge. Gandhi could not have helped taking note of those self-evident 'truths'. He could not have helped responding to them in any other manner. Before his advent, Indians seem to have largely been a silent and passive witness to their own socio-political degeneration. Gandhi was certainly not the only one to have enjoyed the fruits of Western education. Many Indians, before Gandhi had also travelled abroad. They had likewise inherited substantial amounts of spiritual heritage from their native culture. Yet, it was Gandhi who saw clearly the serious anomalies in the Indian environment and related it to political well being. He can be rightly counted among those who made genuine efforts to correct the situation and to unify the divergent trends of his times.

Part II is divided into two sections: a) Kathiawar and b) India. At first there is an introductory note to the existential aspect of politics. This is to draw attention to the 'ends' and 'means' approach in the achievement of goals - no matter what the mode of experience and existence. While reading the two sections, one must look for the similarities of patterns. In doing so one would also notice some basic conditions that shaped and influenced Indian attitude toward Satyagraha.

Gandhi was definitely influenced by the total Indian milieu. It was through the four environmental aspects, namely the economic, social, political and the ethical that Gandhi realized a desperate need for change. He could grasp the futility of previous attempts, as also the direction in which the Indians should have ventured. In that existential realm, whatever Gandhi attempted and experienced became a coherent whole. That experience was universal. It led to newer possibilities of application. Of course, it was useful in Gandhi's own environment. But that realization also had a quality that far transcended the immediate context.

Chapter III

Introduction Part II

There are a variety of modes in the realm of human experience.¹

Philosophy deals with them all, because all experience is valid to a philosopher. Viewing an experience in relationship to the existent conditions may enhance our understanding, but as far as its philosophical character is concerned such a task would hardly accomplish anything. Time and place are both irrelevant to philosophy. What Gandhi experienced and realized in one part of the world, therefore, does not necessarily rob it of its meaning in a different context. "What we must ask about a philosophy is, Can it maintain what it asserts? Its setting will certainly not help us to answer this question."² Gandhi's argument must be accepted or rejected in the light of its own validity.

Keeping in mind the above observation, it is hoped that the following part will only help to clarify further the nature of Satyagraha. It amplifies those aspects of the environment which helped to nurture the spirit of Satyagraha. My intention is not merely to recount history from either the Indian or the British perspective. The notion of historical 'evidence' seems rather incongruous and absurd where ideas are

¹"What is satisfactory in experience is not a great quantity nor a great variety of experience, but a unity of valid, absolute, irreducible experience. And because what is satisfactory in experience is a single, coherent and complete world, philosophy is a unitary whole." Michael Oakshott, Experience And Its Modes (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 348.

²ibid., p. 349.

concerned. I have attempted to see Indian political malaise from the Indian eyes.

Perhaps I could have given a greater emphasis to the intellectual and political ferment for which the colonial advent (however unintentionally) was responsible. But that would have only amounted to the restatement of a fact that is already recognized and well accepted. Hence, with due reverence to all historians (to whichever 'school' they wish to belong), let me state I have only pointed out that which I considered relevant to the development of the Satyagraha philosophy. Gandhi, too, is given very little importance in this part. This is so, because Gandhi as an individual is only seen in reference to the evolving pattern of events and ideas. Here, Gandhi is significant only to the extent that he is an instrument of change. But there the significance ends. From this perspective, any one else in his place, conditioned by the environments of Kathiawar and India may as well have responded the way Gandhi does. Here, Gandhi is one with the whole stream of events as it unfolds slowly. He is seen as an abstraction or an idea that is shaped and helps to shape other abstractions and other ideas. Gandhi appears to be like most beings, a link in the chain of ideas, going through a dialectic of its own. But his superiority consists in that the strength of his convictions mature faster. Also, he attempts never to commit the same error twice, and learns from the past.

It is argued that an individual can exist primarily in two ways. One way is to be conscious of one's own freedom and the other is to merely exist like an inanimate object - irrespective of both the consciousness and the choices that it can bestow. The mode of political existence presupposes sensitivity and sensibility. A lack or insufficiency in the

political mode may lead to an ineffective, inert and a totally meaningless existence. It is not ignorance so much as the bondage arising from that ignorance which makes the individual a slave of his own circumstances. It stunts his capacity to think and to be conscious of other available alternatives.

Political existence is distinctly a matter of ends and means. It is related to the problems of purpose and choice. One cannot conceive of it without raising the important questions of "how" and "what for". The ways in which one approaches and comprehends a political problem depend on a number of variables. These variables take into account the skills acquired during the process of growing up or the political socialization. To an extent, we are all conditioned by the availability of "means" considered "appropriate" in our given social and political systems. But the total environment within which we find ourselves also plays an important role. It appears that the values of love, tolerance and a sense of fair-play generally help to evolve a society of concerned, responsible and law-abiding citizens. But hostility, ridicule and intolerance give rise to an equally violent, distrusting and meaningless existence. The respect for laws can only develop among those who benefit by their worth. In a society pervaded by fear, repression and political dominance, it is easy to find reasons for distrust, violence and oppression.

People and their environments constantly interact with each other. The qualities of economic, social, political and ethical existence do seem to influence those who depend upon them. It is reasonable to expect that the attitudes of those who constitute an entity such as a nation-state will be reflected in their total environment. The postulates of the above

argument are now so well accepted that for us to even conceive of a politically mature and healthy society raised in the shadows of constant fear sounds absurd. We generally assume that the anxiety, injustice and apathy in society can cause irreparable damage. It can cause the death of the conscience. A society characterized by such malaise can neither bear conscientious citizens nor sustain a meaningful "conversation" in terms of its civilization.³ Such a society has lost the ability to think coherently and to act truly. In short, it leads an enslaved existence.

Conversation is the reflection, the crystalization, the articulate characterization of the varied human activities engaged in by persons in societies - it is the art of giving shape, dimension, and quality of providing the voice for that which persons 'do' when they act. Activity without the parallel quality of conversation is merely a mime, a set of soundless movements. It is only when activity seeks its voice through conversation that we can acknowledge and recognize the human element in activity.⁴

The activities of an enslaved existence become a welter of meaningless sounds and gestures, mere exercises in futility. When frustrations in such an environment reach their thresholds of tolerance and hopelessness, the society which is a victim of such incongruencies either explodes with a 'bang' or dies the death of a tragic 'whimper'.

It was after a series of such comico-tragic 'whimpers', that the Indian sub-continent eventually exploded in the 'bang' of 1857 revolt.

³H. Aster, "A Philosophical Commentary on the Canadianization of Political Education", Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue Canadienne de la théorie politique et sociale, I, No. 1, (Winter, 1977).

⁴ibid., p. 123.

The British trained historians persisted for a long time in denying it the prestige of an organized protest. They even refused to see it as an expression of the political indignation simply and primarily, because it did not speak in the grammar and metaphor the British were conversant with. The politics of dissatisfaction, until then, had had only one language for most people - that of violence. Clearly, the 'meek' Indians failed to put their point across. The eloquence of their actions appeared poor. The Indian threat proved to be ineffectual and singularly pathetic in the eyes of their adversaries. Until 1857, the British garrisons in India had prided in Her Majesty's able administrators and clever strategists. None could hope to challenge the British Empire as long as India was disunited and its people divided within themselves. For the ruling British, their actual fear lay in a strongly united India. The British Raj had learnt to fear instinctively the organized force of a citizenship, conscious of its own political power. But Indians were far from such accomplishment. They were considered most unskilled in the finer arts of self-government and thus deemed unfit for respect.

It is not uncommon in the histories of many people that when the alien rule fails to convince itself of the moral and ethical 'rightness' of its own position, it tries to convince the 'ruled' that the subjection is for the latter's own good. This has been the repeated theme of all benevolent dictatorships, tyrannies and political injustices. The process goes on in the union of all unequals until the 'ruled' begin to acquiesce in the myth themselves. In India, too, the same occurred.

All genuine revolutions, however, begin with the breaking of that disillusionment. They entail a reconciliation of the myth with the reality. The starting point of such a decisive step lies in breaking up the encrustations of 'alter-images'. It is not as though, a hitherto dormant mass of people suddenly arise and are endowed with an energy that simply was never there. It is more like the sheltered plant, which when moved into a congenial and healthy habitat suddenly blossoms forth spontaneously. Human ingenuity, too, grows in abundance when given equal opportunity for growth and nourishment. So it is with individuals, groups, communities, civilizations and cultures. They also require the spark of imagination to come alive and shoot-forth in all directions like the branches of a flowering, fruitful tree.

It is only a hypothesis, that too, one, which is difficult to prove either right or wrong. Simply, because history does not seem to repeat itself. However, it is worth speculating if individuals really can ignore the currents and cross-currents of their own times. To what extent and degree is one shaped by one's political, social, economic, and psychological environment? How, in fact, do ideas get conditioned by what one sees, hears, speaks or believes? Each individual may or may not be unique in his or her mental and psychological 'make-up', but they somehow do appear unique in relation to where and how they stand in terms of time and place configurations.

It is important to see where Mohandas Gandhi and his Satyagraha stood in relation to the environmental setting. For the sake of brevity, Gandhi's British and South African milieu have not been included in part II. Hopefully, part I has made that amply clear.

One can neither underrate or over-estimate the significance of Gandhi's experience in South Africa. That period roughly covered the time between 1893 to 1909 (although Gandhi did not return to India until 1915). It would be important to recall, however, that it was precisely during his stay in South Africa that Gandhi reached a spiritual crisis. Satyagraha very much owes its existence to the two major factors: the disillusionment on account of racial discrimination, and the loss of faith in the ideals of the British Empire. These subsequently led Gandhi to turn inward, to his own community and cultural heritage.

This should not in any way prejudice the reader. Gandhi's inner response was far from ethnocentric in its content. Although Gandhi sought and found abundant solace in his own search, it came mostly from the teachings of the perennial philosophers. Those sources contained a universality of appeal. At no time did Gandhi confine his "community" to mean only the Kathiawaries, the Indians or the Asians. His domain always consisted of people from all over the world. Although Gandhi's contacts with the European culture were limited, Gandhi always counted men like Hermann Kallenbach, Henry Polak, Rev. Joseph Doke, C.F. Andrews, Romain Rolland, Madeleine Slade and many more among his closest of friends. 'Racism' seemed to have turned Gandhi into a crusading humanist, and his 'loyalty to the Empire' into a conscientious objector to all forms of tyrannical authority. Yet, it would be wrong to assess Gandhi and Satyagraha as mere products of ethnocentricity.

In order to view critically both the Satyagraha and Gandhi, one would have to see them also as products of certain environmental forces. To an appreciable extent, Gandhi is also a product of his times. Satyagraha,

too, should be viewed similarly. In part II, one would also notice a tendency towards generalizations. It is a conscious effort, and not at all accidental. I have deliberately attempted to formulate here some cohesion out of the chaos of events. As one reads through these pages one ought to find certain facts re-emerging, and reinforcing as they probably did on the minds of those who joined Gandhi. His struggle grew out of certain serious convictions. The complexity of those forces and issues led eventually to the formulation of the ethics of Satyagraha.

Part II. Political Existence of a People

(a) Kathiawar

Very few writers and scholars on Gandhi have studied the historical, cultural, political, and socio-economic forces that went into the makings of the Mahatma. To date, there is only one solitary work worth mentioning in this regard.⁵ Mostly the Gandhian literature (with few notable exceptions) tends to look at the Mahatma with either a hagiographic interest or an intention to denounce almost everything that he stood for. Most people take Gandhi's ethnocentricity for granted. It is easily forgotten that although rooted deeply in the Indian tradition, Gandhi came in contact with and reacted considerably to several major trends and traditions of his times. Devanesen rightly bemoans the fact that Gandhi's being a Kathiawari has been unfortunately missed out by many.⁶ To a large extent, Gandhi's vision of India was coloured by his existence ('conditioning') as a Kathiawari. A careful reading of the autobiography indicates that 'regionalism' played a decisive role in shaping his character and personality.⁷ It is, therefore, not unlikely to assume that Gandhi wanted India to be what Kathiawar had been in its

⁵C.D.S. Devanesen, op. cit. Besides this book, based on his Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Department of History of Harvard University (1961), one more work can be pointed out, namely, Pyarelal's, Mahatma Gandhi: The Early Phase, op. cit. But Pyarelal's close association with Gandhi somewhat hinders him from an uncritical admiration.

⁶C.D.S. Devanesen, op. cit., p. 2.

⁷M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 478.

prestine glory. Kathiawar⁸ is often referred to as the 'holy land' of Western India.⁹ The rich diversity of the peninsula makes it politically, culturally and socially a miniature India. The region is literally strewn with ancient ruins and legends of its heroic past. Its native Bhāts and Chāraṇs (bards) have kept alive the chivalrous deed of its heroes through their songs and plays. Living in such romantic surroundings, it was natural for Gandhi to idealize the concept of Rām-Rājya¹⁰ as his political goal.

A variety of races and cultures have frequented the area since ancient times. Arabs, Greeks, Hūns, Persians, Scythians and Turks have all mingled with the population of Kathiawar to weave a rich tapestry of linguistic, religious and racial heterogeneity. Kathiawar has also enjoyed a dominant Maritime tradition due to its location on the famous trade route on the Arabian sea.¹¹

⁸Historians have often used three different names to indicate the same region: Kathiawar (Kathiawad), Saurashtra and Gujarat. Saurashtra is an ancient name of the peninsula, also known as Kuśvrata prior to that. The Marathas gave it the name of Kathiawad on account of the brave Kathis, who resided in one of its regions. The modern state of Gujrat derives its name from the linguistic connotations. I have preferred to use Kathiawar in this thesis, because Gandhi identified himself as a Kathiawari.

⁹The Vaishnavites consider it sacred because of the shrines at Dwāraka, Sudamapuri and Sommath; the Jainas on account of Satrunjaya, Palitana, and Vallabhi; and the Buddhists, due to the Rock Edicts of Girnar.

¹⁰The word has come to symbolize the ideal Hindu state. Literally, it means the kingdom of Lord Rama - the famed Hindu hero and an ideal king.

¹¹Devanesen quotes historical sources to assert his claim that the region was known to Westerners from early times. Ptolemy had described it as Syrastrane. Hsuen-Tsang mentioned it as a famous port during trade with Persia, Africa and China. Vasco da Gama, Albuquerque and Marco Polo also frequently mention Gujrat in their descriptions. op. cit., p. 16.

The earliest Indian records of Saurashtra can be found on the Rock of Girnar ¹² (A.D. 150). Ashoka had inscribed on it the famous fourteen edicts of ethical living according to Buddhism. It appears, both Buddhism and Jainism made their advent in Gujrat during the Mauryan period (c. 319-197 B.C.). For some time the region was ruled by Greeks until in second century A.D. the Partho-Scythians took it over. Following that, the Guptas ruled over Kathiawar. But Maitrikas during their reign of over 300 years made Kathiawar famous. From 500-800 A.D., Vallabhi was their capital.¹³ Various religions flourished under the royal patronage of Maitrikas. Traces of that tolerance were still evident at the time young Moniya was growing. It was therefore natural for anyone growing in that area to come in close contacts with a variety of religious experience.

Even Islam and Christianity were given a warm welcome when they first arrived into Kathiawar. The founder of Gujrat Sultanate - Jafar Khan had originated from a Rajput family and therefore encouraged easy relationship between his Hindu and Muslim ryots. Following the traditions of Kabir and Nanak, Shamal Bhat, Mira Bai, and Narsimha Mehta gave the people of Gujrat a universality of outlook. Brotherhood of man, and a desire for spiritual well-being were, therefore, quite ingrained in its culture. People had learnt to tolerate differences, as part of their existence. In London, therefore, Gandhi found it quite natural to be associated with Anjuman Islamia (the Muslim Student Organization)

¹²D.D. Kosambi, The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 167.

¹³Vallabhi rivalled with the university of Nalanda as a centre for Buddhist learning. In 526 A.D. it hosted the famous Jaina Council.

although he did not agree with them on many scores. Later, failing to procure a living as a lawyer in India, Gandhi could easily accept the invitation of a Meman Muslim firm in South Africa. One must note that Gandhi made religious tolerance and unity the cornerstones of his Satyagraha campaigns. In his āshram it was mandatory to give equal reverence to Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity. Gandhi always sought new friends to come and tell his followers about their own faiths and to enlighten the āshram audience. Prayers formed a significant ritual of his daily practice.

The reign of Chalukyas (1200-1300 A.D.) is associated with the advent of the Golden Age in Kathiawar. The Bania community (vaiśyas) appear to have played an important role in the accomplishments of that period. Through sheer industry, versatility and business accumen, they became closely allied with the ruling caste (kshatriyas) of Kathiawar. Historians proudly recount the case of a Jaina mendicant of exceptional merit, by the name of Hemchandra. With the help of Udayana, a local merchant, he was instrumental in staging a revolt which put Kumarpala in power. Ever since then, the vaiśyas of Gujrat have prided themselves in wielding weapons for a righteous cause. Unlike their counterparts elsewhere in India, the Gujrati Bania community did not shy away from the martial tradition. Like the kshatriyas, they, too, considered it cowardice to run away from a challenge. The Bania community of Gujrat learnt to combine courage with practical common-sense.

The fact that the Gandhis came to be associated with politics and administration in Gujrat was not an unusual phenomenon, although it was rare outside of Gujrat. Personally, Gandhi was quite conscious of

his Bania background. He never shied away either from calculating like a businessman or devising strategies like a politician. Like Hemchandra, Gandhi considered politics very much a part of his religion. For him, both politics and religion were pre-requisites of the good life. Satyagraha, therefore, took shape in his quest for a means of righteous struggle. Gandhi consciously chose to do away with the use of weapons, but insisted nonetheless, that every challenge in a fight for justice was a sacred obligation. He advised that the Satyagrahi must clearly understand this obligation.

With the beginning of Muslim invasions in India, the fall of Gujrat seemed imminent. But it came in various stages. The Marathas first tried to overcome the Moghuls, but failed miserably. Maratha power began to collapse considerably with the third battle of Panipat (1761). The British were already beginning to find in-roads in the Western India by then. Partly the Marathas were responsible for that. Their raids had made them unpopular. Whenever the recalcitrant Rajput chiefs failed to pay their revenues, the Marathas ruthlessly pillaged and plundered the countryside. Kathiawaries thus learnt to cherish a deep hatred for violence. At the same time they also evinced a high regard for the British sense of justice. The British first entered Gujrat in 1804. Soon after their arrival, they began to consolidate power by putting down all opposition and fortifying the area from outside invasions. Under the able command of Colonel Walker, the ferocious system of tribute-collection was brought to an end. Thus, it is very likely that in his early childhood Gandhi must have heard both kinds of stories: of terrify-

ing violence, and the able administration of justice.¹⁴ Under such circumstances, it is quite natural to expect that Gandhi would develop a healthy respect for law and authority, as well as show his immense distaste for violence as a means. Gandhi thought that the Satyagrahi, too, must never show disrespect for law and authority; even his demands for justice and legitimacy must follow an established code of ethics. He admonished to avoid violence in every shape or form. A Satyagrahi must suffer if needs be, but must never retaliate an injury with injury.

Until recently, the corporate-life structure in India had been a very unique phenomenon. It greatly influenced the life of the Indian people through the caste system.¹⁵ In the name of stability the British unwittingly introduced two dangerous concepts, hitherto unknown to the Indian masses. The concepts of land ownership and private property thus resulted in creating a new class. It would always be afraid of disturbing the status quo. It made the rich grow richer and the poor to get poorer. For their own existence, the feudal lords depended on the mercy of the British arms. The British, too, depended on the feudal lords to provide a strong bulwark for their own imperialistic aims.¹⁶

¹⁴"Kathiawar in the 19th century was a colourful mosaic of feudal patterns in which the constant proliferation of states had been ended by knitting them together with British law and authority. Its geographical compactness made it the most unique area in the whole of princely India." C.D.S. Devanesen, op. cit., p. 43.

¹⁵R.C. Majumdar, Corporate Life in Ancient India (3rd ed.; Calcutta: K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969). The ethics of good life depended upon what was obligatory according to one's place in society. For details see ch. II of this thesis.

¹⁶Ironically, the very class which the British imperialism had given rise to fought bitterly to remove the last traces of British imperialism from India. Both Patel and Gandhi were products of the new middle class that the British had laboured hard to foster. Both came from Gujrat.

Both the above concepts found tough criticisms in the pages of the Hindswaraj. In it, with one stroke Gandhi denounced the system, its impact as well as the products of that impact. He viewed them in terms of social violence. Accordingly, his preparatory rules for Satyagrahies included the vow of non-possession and voluntary poverty. A true Satyagrahi must not own anything, not even his own body nor should he cherish any desire for selfish ends. Gandhi regarded bramhacharya (celibacy) in the same light. To him, it appeared sex too, was associated with the human urge to possess. If one could do away with the very thought of extending one's own life through others (children and family) there could hardly exist the bondage of material wealth!

The Gandhian ideal views the entire existence as a corporate experience; an individual is a link in the chain of evolution. All property is a trust. It ought to be used for the welfare of all (sarvodaya). Satyagraha or the hold on truth can only be possible provided one lets go of one's hold on the other attachments. It is a matter of clearly distinguishing between the salutary and non-salutary things in life. Satyagraha and non-attachment go hand in hand. Attachment to material wealth is considered as a hinderance to the development of the Satyagrahic spirit.

Religion had played a large part in the political bargainings of Gujrat.¹⁷ In fact, Gandhi's community had found in Jainism a close ally to off-set the arbitrary powers of the ruling sovereign. The Jaina Guru

¹⁷ Kumarpala, the most popular king in the history of Gujrat, was indebted to Saint Hemchandra, a Jaina mendicant for helping him capture power (C.1143-1175 A.D.). The Chalukyas often built great Jaina shrines as a mark of their respect. For details see works by A.K. Forbes, George Böhler, Bhagvanlal Indraji, H.C. Roy and A.K. Majumdar on Gujrat history.

often served as a liaison between the 'rulers' and the 'ruled'. More often than not, he used to succeed in subtle manipulation of his power. Unlike the rich middle-class in Europe, the vaiśyas of Gujrat had wealth but not the power. Over the years, however, they devised ways of influencing political power by various techniques of nonviolent coercion.¹⁸

Vaishnavism has also had a long history in Gujrat. Especially well known are the followers of Vallabhacharya, a 15th century Telgu Brahmin. But by mid 18th century, some protestant sects also took root in reaction to Brahminism. Not only did they oppose the excessive Epicurianism and eroticism of Vallabhacharies, but they also preached against the practice of untouchability, aristocracy and sexual impurity. The Bania community proudly spearheaded that revolt.¹⁹ It was, therefore, no coincidence that Gandhi also stressed the same old themes of universal brotherhood, simplicity and sexual abstinence like his Kathiawari predecessors for his Satyagrahies.²⁰

¹⁸It is difficult to distinguish clearly what constitutes coercion. I found the following definition very useful: "the use of either physical or intangible force to compel action contrary to the will or reasoned judgment of the individual or group subjected to such force." Theodore Paullin, Introduction to Non-Violence (Philadelphia: The Pacifish Research Bureau, 1944), p. 6 quoted by Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence (rev. ed.; Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press: 1965), p. 9. Banias, in general, are notorious for cunning and clever ways of serving their own interests. Gandhi tried to purge his caste of the blame not by denying these charges but by appealing to their positive attributes.

¹⁹Kathiawaries still recall the names of Ranchodji, Nihal Daji, Lala Bhagat, Sadhu Shantidas, Madhavgar who lead those mass movements.

²⁰Gandhi's concept of unity implied a negation of caste (communal or religious) and racial differences. By simplicity he meant the vow of non-possession and the vow of voluntary poverty. It is difficult to understand why Gandhi feared sex to such an extent. See Ved Mehta, Mahatma Gandhi and his Apostles (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976).

By the time the Christian missionaries reached Gujrat, its natives were well versed in the lessons of universal brotherhood. They certainly did not appreciate therefore the church telling them that their souls were invincible and under no obligation to obey however mighty the Sovereign. They were already convinced of the supremacy of their inner strength. They took it for granted. One recalls the protest led by one Jaina religious teacher, Hiravijaya Suri (1853 A.D.). He walked the entire distance bare-foot, bare-headed in company of his white-clad monks, to meet the Emperor of India, despite Akbar's offer to supply the conveyance. During the famous salt Satyagraha, Gandhi, too, walked in the opposite direction with his own band of chosen disciples to defy the orders of the British Empire.

Gandhi has been wrongly accused of fostering Christianity in a manner more diligent than even the pioneer missionaries of Gujrat. None would have denied or resented the charge more than Gandhi himself. He admired Christ, but protested against the organized form of Christianity. It took quite some time before Gandhi could develop a mature outlook toward the mission-activities in India. Despite their tolerant attitude toward all religions, Kathiawaries came to associate Christianity with the British imperialism. The reason was not far to seek. The Raj gave full protection to the missions, especially when they incurred popular wrath due to their conversion campaigns. The missionaries entered Gujrat on the pretext of abolishing the horrors of infanticide - a genuinely humanitarian cause. But the natives failed to understand the ambivalence of their words and acts. While they loudly preached the love of God for all

creatures, they also shot and killed soon after the service was over.²¹ Gandhi's insistence on vegetarianism, his constant arguments with the Christians in South Africa, and his anti-abortionist attitude perhaps owes a great deal to the experience of his people and the way they had to come to terms with their own problems of existence.

The stray-conversions of the low-caste Hindus or Muslims did not, at first, attract much attention.²² The records of the Irish Presbyterian Church at Belfast indicate that the British troops had to be called in to protect the mission at Porbandar. In 1875, the mission was forced to close down because of the non-cooperation and boycott tactics of the native residents of Kathiawar.²³

Ironically, the Hindu revivalism was a by-product of English education. It drew its inspiration from a rich harvest of the Western scholars. While the 19th century reformers of Hinduism were liberal idealists, the 20th century brought forth a militant breed of Hindu 'messiahs'. In the popular mind, rightly or wrongly, Christianity became associated with the Western culture and values and Hinduism with the Indian revivalism. It was practically obvious that any political leader would have to contend with these two forces in order to win the public support. The reason why the conservative 'Right' and the militant but radical 'Left', both lost grounds in the first quarter of the 20th century in India is precisely this

²¹In 1841, Kathiawar got its first mission and a few months later its first mission school in Rajkot. Among other things, children were taught to copy sentences from the Sermon on the Mount, which in due course of time became Gandhi's favourite piece from the Bible.

²²But the conversions of the high-caste Hindus and Jainas created an uproar. In Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay they also caused mob-violence.

²³C.D.S. Devanesen, op. cit., p. 52.

- they were unable to convince their followers where their sympathies lay. Consequently, it was clear that a moderate Indian leadership would have to reject the West, but not the western ethics, it would have to accept Hinduism but not in its decadent form. Gandhi was able to achieve those goals.²⁴ A Satyagrahi, too, must be able to make such fine distinctions. He must draw followers and their sympathies from various religions and creed, without offending or seeming to offend any.

A discussion of religious influences in Kathiawar should not overlook the existence of a little-known Pranami Sect. This sect uniquely combined the teachings of both Islam and Hinduism. Pranami stress the creation of intimate bonds with God, denounce the trappings of rituals, and do not believe in images and idols. Both the Koran and the Purapas receive equal reverence from their followers. The Pranami recommend simplicity, chastity, charity and peace as the highest virtues. They strictly prohibit the use of wine, meat, tobacco and drugs. Although the sect originated in the 18th century, it found a fertile climate in Kathiawar because of its multi-racial and multi-ethnic composition. A child brought up in that sect is most likely to resent all idol worship, and rituals. He is also likely to stress the need for equal reverence for all faiths. A Satyagrahi, too, emphasizes a close relationship with God or the inner being. He cherishes the values of simplicity, chastity and charity and peace. An ideal Satyagrahi must abstain from alcohol. He must learn to

²⁴Gandhi claimed that his reading of Ruskin's Unto This Last provided him with the clarity of vision which he was looking for. Human worth and dignity became the central motifs of that ethical theme. In rejecting untouchability, he dealt the heaviest blow to the Hindu caste-rigidity. In rejecting industrialism, he renounced the impact of materialism and its greed. By separating the message of Christ from church, he took away the stigma attached to Christianity, thus rescuing both the Hindus and the Christians from the dogmatic assertions of moral, ethical and spiritual superiority.

control his palate, and not crave for the satisfaction of his sensual needs. The vow of asvād (control over palate) is concomitant to bramhacharya (chastity).

After the death of Aurangzeb, the Moghul Empire began to crumble. Meanwhile the Marathas were desparately trying to assert their own power. Kathiawar, along with the rest of the entire sub-continent, was thrown into utter confusion and chaos. Internecine strife prevailed at the political and social levels. In times of such uncertainty, history usually produces its own crop of adventurers and opportunists, each vieing with another to grab power and to hold the reigns of sovereignty. Overnight the states passed from one hand to another. Hiring mercenaries to fight for and defend one's honour became a common phenomenon. Since Kathiawar was by now, already a mixture of Greeks, Arabs, Persians, Makranis and Indians - the population no longer cared as to who ruled or how long. But all craved for some relief or a semblance of peace. At such times the noble concepts of varnāshrama dharma (caste duty and obligation) had become mere myths. All castes began to wield weapons and to dabble in the fair arts of administration. Territorially, it was no longer feasible, either to declare or to maintain for long one's loyalty to one sovereign. Coup d'etat became the order of the day.²⁵

Such reckless state of affairs lasted for nearly a century. Meanwhile, having consolidated their powers outside the Princely states of India, the British wished to exert influence inside those very states. The

²⁵The poignant humour of that situation is clearly reflected in the morally inclined behaviour of a Prime Minister, who while seeking political asylum saluted the Ruler with his left hand for the right hand was still pledged to his former master. The man just happened to be the grandfather of Gandhi.

Raj could either avert or speed up a political crisis by simply backing an administration with the British financial and military might. When any two states fought, one or both tried to enlist the support of their British allies. At the conclusion of such wars, they either found themselves bankrupt or in deep debt. Perhaps the anti-war streak in Gandhi can be traced to Kathiawar's own experience. The story of how the Gandhi came to be associated with Porbandar's administration belongs to the same class of events. Through his diplomatic skills, financial accumen and sheer sincerity, Uttamchand Gandhi helped to increase the fortunes and status of his sovereign. But by that time the Hindu states were already deteriorating and the British Empire was well on its ascendancy. Like his grandfather, Mohan also tried to change the destiny of his people by the skilful use of personal qualities. Over the years, he learnt that a Satyagrahi must aim for three things: (1) reconcilliation through mutual understanding and enlightened self-interest, (2) self-reliance through austerity, simplicity and voluntary renunciation of material possession, (the use of swadeshi or self-made produce also forms a part of the same endeavour), (3) sincere efforts to avoid violent confrontation through ahimsa or non violent means of persuasion.

The writings of a British Resident Major Alexander Walker form an important source of information on Kathiawar. His associations date back to 1804. But they do throw considerable light on the manner in which the British established themselves in that area.²⁶ Major Walker was keenly intelligent and tactful in his demeanour. He quickly advanced British interests in the province while managing to maintain equally close ties

²⁶C.D.S. Devanesen, op. cit., p. 48.

with the feudal lords. On account of the British connections, the situation in Kathiawar began to 'stabilize' considerably. The state was thus able to collect revenues in time. It eliminated 'unlawful' resurgents and restored all petty kingdoms to their rightful owners. Under Walker's supervision a series of treaty-negotiations were signed which obligated their signatories to render help to the Empire, against one another. In return, the British promised to collect revenues for them.

In all honesty one must concede that the British involvement did, in fact, totally wipe out infanticide from the Princely states of India. But along with it, they also deliberately crushed all nuclei of potential violent protests. The means, which the British employed to accomplish their ends, were British law and authority. They also established the new landlords as the upholders of the status quo. In retrospect, one can see why that particular class was the only section of the Indian masses who withheld their support and participation in Satyagraha. Gandhi failed to influence them despite his charisma. Although some exceptions were always there, as a rule the princes and the Western educated 'elites' kept aloof.

Even though the revolt of 1857 had little to do with Kathiawar, its aftermath greatly altered the state of affairs there. Until then, the British had followed a policy of non-interference in the politics of the native states. The British made no bones about it. For instance, Lord Canning openly proclaimed that it was the loyalty of the Indian Princes which largely averted the feared crisis. The Queen in her Proclamation of 1858 made due reference to it. Thus came into being an ingenious system of government through which corrupt, irresponsible and highly incompetent puppet regimes began to flourish unhampered. Such arrangements came to

be known as the 'subsidiary alliances'. The system worked through an exchange of treaties between the imperial power and the ruling authority. It made it possible for the Raj to exercise power without appearing to do so. Ironically, both the 'rulers' and the 'ruled' in the Princely States depended on the British agent to guarantee their rights. While the Princes exercised the authority to levy taxes, the peasants were allowed to use and sell their land only as long as they paid the taxes.

During Colonel Walker's administration in Kathiawar, several land owners were arbitrarily given authority to exercise power over their tenants. The discontent resulting from this turned many of the victims of the Walker settlement into outlaws. Unable to vent their grievances, the helpless ryots took to forests and lived there through plunder and violence. Therefore, it became quite common to draw attention to one's plight or injustice by performing dharna (sit-in). The practice continued until the accused finally gave in or agreed to reach a compromise. Kathiawaries also evolved another interesting tradition of chāraṇ bhandāri (singing bards). The concept involved hiring of a singer to go and deliberately inflict wounds on his own person in the presence of the offender, until the latter simply yielded out of compassion. Sometimes, these courageous bards even courted death to make their point. The person who employed the bard had to serve as a surity. A third kind of practice involved bhūkh hartāl (the refusal to accept food or drink) unless an acceptable solution was reached.²⁷

All this is only to illustrate that the future Mahatma, in his formative years was quite aware of the popular 'means' of public pressure and

²⁷In 1878 when the Prime Minister of Wankaner failed to convince his sovereign of the rightness of his decision, he simply went on a hunger strike. In this case, too, it was Gandhi's own father.

their draw-backs. But as techniques of coercion, they all seemed somehow insufficient. Especially, for those who believed in nonviolence and did not wish to blackmail the opponent into unconditional surrender, they were an anathema. Also by now Gandhi realized that the real source of action was the mind and heart of the actor. Unless and until one were able to appeal to the very source, conflicts could not be resolved. 'Sit-ins', 'self-immolations' and 'hunger-strikes' were all inadequate, as long as they resorted to unethical means. Violence in action, speech and thought had to be gotten rid of.

It is a well known technique to threaten an evil-doer with personal harm or damage to his property. To an extent, the Kathiawaries had also believed in the ultimate resort to force of arms. Prior notice of jhāñsa (public warning of violence and threats of punishment) to the accused was a well known technique in Kathiawar. This was often accomplished by publicly taking an oath to take revenge. The public oath made it more or less obligatory for both the parties to recognize that there indeed was a genuine grievance which demanded immediate attention. Gandhi made use of this traditional technique to create mass consciousness and to give strength of conviction to the aggressed. He started inviting the victims of an aggression to take public oaths and to openly swear allegiance to fight for their rights until the very end. Satyagraha reversed the technique of jhāñsa by threatening to inflict suffering on one's own self, in the hope of moving the opponent to reconsider. Again, this too must be distinguished clearly from self-torture which would definitely be unethical according to the Gandhian thought.

When the British came to India, they at first made use of the existing system of justice. But soon they were forced to replace it with

their own. But dealing out British law verdicts to innocent offenders in another country definitely created many problems.

In 1825 Kathiawar got its first British courts (adālat). The event clearly altered the de facto into de jure. The "Mutiny" of 1857 further enabled the British to abrogate all the residuary powers of the weaker native states into their own hands. As a result the Raj administration was divided, re-divided and sub-divided into neat little compartments of authority. The fines levied from this system were utilized for local reforms. By 1870, Kathiawar was beginning to show some semblance of peace and quiet. Gandhi's father was among those chosen to serve as assessors in one of such courts. It seems the Rajasthanic court was a happy medium of the British and the traditional system of justice. The inducements for such reform came from many and unsuspected sources. It is clear, however, that they were not entirely the concerns of a benevolent dictatorship. In Kathiawar's case, the geographic proximity and the socio-economic forces operating in Western India played a large part in helping the progressive forces.

The Bombay Presidency definitely lead the way in early 19th century by establishing many firsts. As a result many girls' schools, libraries, literary societies, debating clubs, political associations, women's reform organizations, law association, religious and social reforms, educational periodicals and Gujrati journals came into existence. At that time, the Young Bombay Party with its organ Rast Goftar (a Gujrati daily), was trying desperately to draw public attention to social issues of utmost concern. Gandhi raised these very issues later on.²⁸

²⁸The year Gandhi married his child bride in 1883, the Hitechhu published an article on the "Horrors of child-marriage". He himself was only 13 years old then.

At the vanguard of all these reform movements were the educated elites of Bombay's Parasee community.²⁹ It was one such Parasee, who, in 1865, founded the East India Association in London, and got elected to the British Parliament in 1892 from the London constituency of Finsbury. Dadabhai Naoroji was the first Indian to be thus honoured. All Indian youths looked up to him as a hero.³⁰ As a student in London, Gandhi, too, fell under the spell of that grand old man of India.

Perhaps the young Gandhi imbibed his zeal for social reform and women's issues from the same Parasee community. It is also likely that having heard of all kinds of associations in Bombay, Gandhi too, was determined to make the best of every opportunity when he got a chance to visit England. His own teachers were Parasee. He must have hoped someday to be like them. Besides, the conditions in Kathiawar were such that they encouraged youths like Gandhi to dabble into reforms. He was able to utilize his skills by providing the much needed leadership. But that role did not come easily to Gandhi, nor did Gandhi go out of his way to seek it.

In 1871, there were practically no English schools in Kathiawar. At first the Bombay Board of Education seemed reluctant to take the responsibilities of spreading itself into the princely states. But soon after the storm of 1857, the board got transformed into a full-fledged department. By the end of that century there were already over six hundred schools

²⁹Parasees are a community who long ago immigrated from Iran to avoid persecution there. In India they mostly settled in Gujrat and established themselves as great businessmen, lawyers, educationists and administrators.

³⁰When Gandhi went to England, he carried with him a precious letter of introduction to Dadabhai, but could hardly muster enough courage to go and speak to him.

operating in Kathiawar. Gandhi studied in one of such schools. He also realized how difficult it was to master a foreign language. In later years, Gandhi fought tooth and nail to establish the need to recognize a child's mother-tongue and a common national language as the essential medium of instruction. In many cases Satyagraha and the campaigns for language became allied. Through his concepts of swadeshi (use of native and local products) and Nai-Talim (Basic Education) Gandhi tried to counter-act what he had found lacking in the educational system of his own times.³¹

Side by side, there had been an upsurge of the Industrial Revolution. Its sudden impact had caught Kathiawar unaware. Until 1802, Bhavnagar was the main centre for cotton export. Then, cotton was not grown as a cash crop, but it formed one of Kathiawar's several cottage industries. Little did Kathiawari merchants and peasants dream then that within a few decades they would be competing with the cotton growers and exporters of South Carolina and New Orleans. They had not the slightest idea that the mills of Manchester and Birmingham would soon threaten their survival in India and be indirectly responsible for the violent agrarian riots and famines in Kathiawar. It was no mere coincidence that Gandhi chose the spinning wheel as his symbol for Satyagraha. It was a sign of self-sufficiency, self-reliance and economic independence. Home-spun, hand-woven khadi became a mark of respect. If the emphasis on khadi and cottage industry on one hand denoted self-help, on the other it rekindled a desire

³¹While talking to Sugata Dassgupta one gets an impression that Gandhi failed miserably in his task to evolve a well-balanced, coherent education system. Part of the problem lay in the fact that his own institutions could not produce good teachers. Every time he ran out of teachers he went to Rabindranath Tagore. So much so that the latter amusingly remarked - "what you need is me - not my students". Conversations, New Delhi: June, 1976.

for creativity and a pride in the native products. It is strange how life and everything that one does with it influences and affects one's surroundings. A peasant or a merchant in Kathiawar could never hope to gain much by exporting cotton, without exploiting his own friends and neighbours. His own happiness and contentment depended in part on the happiness and contentment of his fellowmen, and his environment in general. The only way out of that vicious cycle was to break it by establishing new and healthy patterns of inter-dependence, mutual trust, and good-will. Non-cooperation with the 'evil' in society equally demanded a just cooperation with the 'good' and the 'virtuous'.

During the 1857 revolt, the British authorities recognized the need for closer cooperation and quicker communications between the important nerve-centres of the sub-continent. The advent of the steam-age also added much to that conviction. It was finally decided to 'unite' India by means of roads, railways, post and telegraph services. The native states were mostly left untouched, unless they bore 'strategic' importance. How Kathiawar got its first roads, railways, and post offices is a history in itself. But it should suffice here to note that after the impact of the American civil war in England, things started to happen in Kathiawar.

Curiously enough, 1863 marks an era of economic 'boom' in Kathiawar's history. The industrial development of that region is linked with the British need for cotton. Although the ensuing prosperity from the 'boom' did not last long, its after effects did. Industrialization brought steam presses and ginning factories into Kathiawar which soon replaced the hand ginners, spinners and weavers. At first the employees association in the factories tried hard to compete with the machines but soon had to give in. As a result, the handlooms collapsed, cottage industries died, and the

villages were left with nothing to grow, nothing to eat and nothing to work for. Social and economic discontent led to still further deterioration of the rural communities. For example, the establishment of post offices (1863) put the Dāk runners out of business, roads (1866) made horse and buggy industry irrelevant, the railways (1887-89) rendered bullock cart drivers and boatmen destitute. Banks made the small businessmen and money-lenders seek refuge elsewhere. After the construction of the railway stations, trade moved inland from the century old ports. Fierce competition thus made life in placid Kathiawar unstable and uncertain. As the prices increased in the market, so did the pressure of population on the land. Famine seemed inevitable.

Some Kathiawaries immigrated out of the region, out of Gujrat, out of India itself and sought shelter on the continent of Africa. This is how the Meman merchants of Gujrat came to be associated with the South African fortunes. But these were also the years when the middle class intelligentsia was seeking avenues for change. They took to professions which were more rewarding, stable and prestigious than the roles acquired through the hereditary privileges. They disliked the nouveau riche as also the traditions of a dead past. Politics to them, meant voicing of present discontent and seeking active solution to problems here and now. They believed in rationally calculated but fairly efficient means. In Gandhi, the 'dispossessed' and the politically deprived would find an exponent of their own dreams and aspirations. He could articulate with sensitivity the pain and suffering caused by the machine age and their subjection to a foreign apathetic rule.

It is hard to determine exactly how the social environment and objective conditions can either help or hinder the subjective perceptions

of a people. One can perhaps draw co-relations. Kathiawar's first 'boom' and the ensuing 'depression' left their scars on the minds of its people. One thing led to another. Of the two, the memory of the depression was more lasting. Its impact was wide-spread. The lack of self-respect, self-reliance and resources resulted into psychological gloom, economic poverty and eventually to poverty of the spirit. Dharma (ethical obligation) and its concepts were lost in the mutual recriminations and self-doubt. Kathiawar's hatred for the enemies got transformed into the hatred for their own selves. Their violence of anger gave rise to further conflicts and led to the loss of calm reflection. Thus, it is not difficult to understand how greed and the concerns for material sustenance became the highest preoccupation of a majority of people not only in Kathiawar, but also in the rest of the sub-continent.

It seems when religion deteriorates into mere ritual and mime, humanity loses something of its essence. Kathiawar's golden past too became a myth and a memory, something which was to inspire a Jinnah, a Gandhi and a Dayananda Saraswati to contemplate a rejuvenation of the people and their lives.

(b) India

What is history? How can one best study it, especially when it concerns a civilization and culture like that of India? Much of Indian history is shrouded in myths and legends. To make sense out of it, or to impose one's own favourite views on it is at best ludicrous. Equally exasperating is the attempt of those who have to make generalizations on India's past (or for that matter its present). It is exasperating because nothing can be stated categorically about either Indian history or its culture without in some way distorting the truth. Yet, from time to time, one must emphasize certain aspects of a complex situation in order to bring home a point. Here, I only wish to elucidate the origins of the Satyagrahic ethics in the socio-cultural context of the Indian history.³²

There are virtually no records worth mentioning, at least not the ones which the historians for a long time have been accustomed to accepting. This fact has led some scholars to conclude that India has no history, that the Indian culture and civilization are only the bi-products of alien conquests. While some have vigorously argued that India is not, nor has ever been a nation, others have claimed that Indians have failed so far to cultivate the arts and sciences of civil government. All

³²I am very much conscious of the inadequacies involved in studying sensitive issues. Firstly, there is the problem of definitions. Secondly, the use of methodology may raise unsurmountable controversy. Thirdly, the political and 'racial' biases run very deep. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to distinguish 'values' from 'facts'. Often the judgement may depend entirely upon who is making it.

these are controversial issues. They have been dealt adequately elsewhere.³³

If by history is meant the chronological lists of the names of dynastic rulers and megalomaniacs, who fought imposing battles and caused tremendous suffering to their own selves and others, India definitely has very little to be proud of. Such history, even if it does exist in the annals of Indian memory rightly belongs to the foreign invaders.

If this were so, the only Indian history worth writing would be the history of and by the conquerors. The textbooks that the foreigner has left behind him naturally heighten this impression. But when Alexander of Macedon was drawn to the East by the fabulous wealth and magic name of India, England and France were barely coming into the Iron Age. The discovery of America was due to the search for new trade routes to India...The Arabs, when they were intellectually the most progressive and active people in the world, took their treatises on medicine and a good deal of their mathematics from Indian sources.³⁴

History is an evolving, dynamic process. The Indian historian Kosambi has defined it as "the presentation in chronological order of

³³See U.N. Ghoshal, Studies In Indian History And Culture (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1965). Also by the same author, A History of Indian Political Ideas (London: Oxford University Press, 1959). He divides Indian historiography into three major schools. The representatives of the adverse criticism are Dr. Vincent Smith, the author of The Oxford History of India and Prof. H. Dodwell, the author of the Cambridge History of India. The second school is represented by an equally pro-Indian bias in Dr. K.P. Jayaswal's work on Hindu Polity and Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee's work Chandragupta Maurya and his Times. The third school is perhaps to be trusted most, on account of their moderate attitude towards both polarities. It consists of works by Dr. A.S. Altekar State and Government in Ancient India, Estimate of Ancient Indian Polity and Dr. R.C. Majumdar's work Ancient India.

³⁴D.D. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 9.

successive changes in the means and relations of production".³⁵ Historical considerations take into account the essential ways of living of an entire people without reducing them to a series of recorded episodes. History ought to indicate how and what for a people lived, or against what and why they struggled. The historian's task is to inter-relate past with the present. He must constantly illuminate the one with the light of the other.

Sometimes the gap between the past and the present is rather wide. For instance, the Indian urban centres bear little or no resemblance to their ancient or medieval counter-parts, even if some traces may somehow have survived. But the major evidences of that civilization can be found in the village India. It is, in fact, in the villages that the Indian history can still be witnessed.³⁶ It can perhaps be argued whether or not Gandhi was a pioneer in drawing the attention of the Indian intelligentsia to the importance of the village. But this much is certain that for the first time Gandhi applied that knowledge to the field of practical politics.³⁷ Until Gandhi's advent, none would have even dreamt of considering the villages as viable source of public participation.

The basic Indian historic ideal across the centuries, particularly stressed in those epochs when the country encountered invasion and aggression from outside, is that the land is Dharma and Dharma is the land. This has been the precious gift of the Rig-Vedic Aryans to the sub-continent. The fundamental

³⁵ibid., p. 10.

³⁶ibid., p. 22.

³⁷Anonymous, Conversations (Banglore, June 1976).

conceptions that Bhārata and Dharma are identical and that neither Dharma nor its favoured homeland can perish, in spite of the vicissitudes of history, have kept alive the faith of the people in political crises and defeats through the millenniums. The invasions of India were never like avalanches sweeping away every state, institution and culture before them...On the whole conquests and shiftings of races are in fact much less evident in the march of history in India than in Europe.³⁸

Mukerjee contends that the Indian history evinces a deep sense of dedication to the ideal of Dharma (absolute righteousness or justice). It is conceived as harmony, bliss or truth. Rules and regulations in society are merely the transient forms of the Dharma, which is eternal and immortal. Neither the individual nor the society which ignores Dharma can really flourish. Through her cultural and spiritual heritage India contributed much toward the unity of Asia, from Syria to Cambodia and from Korea to Ceylon. India was able to do so because the fundamental unity of her own sub-continent was based on that concept of spiritual universalism.³⁹

To a great extent India owes its stability and continuity to the stratification of the Indian society. In spite of being a source of degeneration and decay, the caste system has helped to preserve and foster the extraordinary sense of inner differentiations. This continuity was achieved through selective but slow upward and downward mobility. The process of assimilation and synthesis allowed the caste system to keep

³⁸ Radha kamal Mukerjee, The Culture and Art of India (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), p. 377.

³⁹ ibid., pp. 380-384.

in check the elements foreign to Indian culture. The caste system is a distinctive feature of the Indian society and can be seen mostly in rural India. No study of India can be complete without taking into account the villages and the tribal communities.

From the Gandhian point of view, the villages are important because therein he discovered the source of India's strength and weakness. The spiritual aspect of India is closely linked with its social aspect. Indian villages have been and still are largely responsible for maintaining the continuity of the Indian history. They are the repositories of the Indian heritage and culture of its people. Upon the survival of the village and its well-being depends the survival and well-being of India.

It is amazing how the Indian villages have survived unchanged through centuries of foreign invasions. Self-containment was one of the major factors responsible for their resilience.⁴⁰ They were independent of outside incursions and often survived critical environmental odds. But these little republics have been much more than mere agrarian units with sufficient local industry of arts and crafts. Until the advent of the British, the villages thrived mainly on account of the traditional skills and patient creativity of its local inhabitants.⁴¹ The 'abysmal poverty' of Indian Villages, which later became almost proverbial, is a relatively new phenomenon. Sure, there were occasional spells of disaster, armies of invading hords or an overbearing king. But soon after

⁴⁰R. Dutt, The Economic History of India (2nd ed.; London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1906), I, xviii.

⁴¹ibid. Also see R.C. Majumdar, Corporate Life In Ancient India (Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1969).

the initial conflicts, the aliens also settled down, the natural disaster got balanced, and the regime of a tyrant eventually came to an end. In rural India nothing really seemed to last long enough to disrupt life's continuity and flow.

Life in the cities fared differently. Their prosperity and well-being depended on the material wealth. Then again, trade and commerce, conquests or administrative skills could bring about changes in their fortunes. Sometimes even the geographical location decided their fate. There was a time when the cities of Harappa and Mohanjodaro rivalled the cities of Babylonia and Egypt.⁴² But in due time they, too, lost their lustre. Even then, the stability of the essential Indian way of living did not change. The culture which flourished in the Indus Valley civilization could still be traced down through the times of the Buddha and the Mahavira, to Ashoka and Akbar. Somehow India was able to preserve the sanity and wisdom of her past,⁴³ although it suffered heavy losses in terms of the material wealth.

Until 17th and 18th centuries, India had kept well abreast of Europe, Africa and Asia in the fields of trade, commerce, industry and culture. Right from Herodutus, the 5th century B.C. Greek historian to Hage1 (1770-1831), India had been considered the land of riches and desire.* Milton used the phrase "the wealth of Ormus and Ind" to indicate the fabulous riches in his Paradise Lost. India had excelled in the various

⁴²Will Durant, The Story of Civilization: Our Oriental Heritage (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 395.

⁴³R.K. Mukherjee, op. cit., A.L. Basham, The Wonder That Was India (New York: Grove Press, 1959), and U.N. Ghoshal, op. cit.

*ibid.; S.N. Gupta, British: The Magnificent Exploiters of India. Unpublished MSS; R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., I.

branches of learning and attained a high level in metaphysics.

The state, politics, and conquest are far less significant in India than metaphysics, religion, myth and art as factors in social integration. There are hardly any people in the world who have been ruled so little by political occurrences - a reign, an invasion, or a war - and so much by metaphysical and religious movements: by scholastic formulations of common myths, norms and social traditions. It is these that have welded Middle, East, and South-East Asia for several centuries into one spiritual community.⁴⁴

India's best minds were always attracted to the things of the spirit, but not to the point of neglecting the life, here and now. Contrary to the wide-spread misconception, Indians did not wholly believe in the passive submission to either fate or fatalism. To do so, was regarded as a mark of avidya (ignorance). The Hindu philosophy of disinterested action (niṣkāma karma) does not imply a belief in in-action or non-action.⁴⁵ Somehow, it appears the popular belief in the philosophy of karmayoga (liberation through action) got lost. It may be interesting to speculate as to why and how this came about but to us these questions are not crucial. It is essential to point out, however, that this loss of faith in the power of positive action led to severe social anomie. It weakened the belief in the 'self' to overcome the socio-political odds and to fight for justice.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁵ S. Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgītā (Bombay: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), pp. 119, 175, 176. For a comparative analysis with the Buddhist concepts see K.N. Upadhyaya, Early Buddhism And The Bhagavadgītā (Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1971), pp. 460-472.

⁴⁶ R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, New Delhi: August 1976.

It is an assumption, but nonetheless a valid one that India's own ruling classes and later the foreign invaders also used the doctrine to justify the status quo in their own favour. Such a tactic helped them to forestall attempts which challenged their own interests. It is true that no deliberate attempts were made to discourage the study of true native culture and heritage. But neither did the rulers actively encourage or support attempts in that direction.⁴⁷ The 'slave mentality' which one associates with the colonial regimes and the alien-rule may not necessarily have been the stated policy of an administration, but it did inculcate in the minds of the 'ruled' a subservience, far worse than the economic and political deprivation. Gandhi's emergence and the shaping of Satyagraha with its ethical connotations must be viewed in this light for a clearer understanding. Satyagraha would state nothing new, had there not been this 'subservience' of the 'self' and a deliberate neglect of the human dignity.

The India of Gandhi's childhood was an India on the verge of a total collapse. Spiritual atrophy was the root cause of its degradation. Gandhi was not the only one to have diagnosed the disease. There were many fore-runners to Gandhi without whom and devoid of whose endeavours Gandhi may not have accomplished what he did. Pyarelal is of the opinion that Gandhi's contributions were the logical outcomes of trends already

⁴⁷Professor F. Thakurdas, Conversations, New Delhi: July, 1976. Although it is difficult to prove who used the doctrine of nişkama karma to subdue the masses, it is nonetheless plausible to suggest that whoever exercised power, did so for their own benefit. Sometimes they exercised their prerogatives to the general detriment. The British were not the only ones to be blamed. Indian misery was the product of repeated errors on the part of Indians as well.

taking shape in the Indian environment.⁴⁸

During his defence in the famous trial of 1922, Gandhi spoke of the "fourfold ruin" that the British Raj had brought to India.⁴⁹ He explained how the domination had resulted in the unabashed exploitation of India's economic, political, social and moral (ethical) conditions.⁵⁰ Gandhi's allegations were based on direct observations and cannot be brushed aside lightly. Even a cursory glance at the trend of events beginning from the time, when Queen Elizabeth I became the Empress of India down to 1947, when India regained its freedom, would indicate the steady decline in the affairs of India. From another perspective, it may be argued that neither were the British the sole instigators of India's downfall, nor could they be held responsible for all the evils of colonialism. One could hardly blame the British for looking after their own immediate interests. In reality, however, the British were claiming to look after India's interests.

From the Gandhian position when interests are conceived narrowly they lead to economic, political, social and ethical 'short-sightedness'. History does not furnish very many instances when the victims of a 'wrong' have gone out of their way to assist the 'wrong-doer'. But it is not entirely inconceivable that they may do so. To an extent, even the slave who

⁴⁸Pyarelal Nair, Conversations, New Delhi: June, 1976. Also see his Mahatma Gandhi: The Early Phase, op. cit., I, chs. 2, 3 and 4. Karan Singh and B.R. Nanda are also in agreement with this position. Conversations, New Delhi: August, 1976.

⁴⁹D.G. Tendulkar, op. cit., II, 93-102. Also F. Watson, The Trial of Mr. Gandhi (London: McMillan, 1969).

⁵⁰Helen B. Lamb, Studies On India And Vietnam (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976). Most British officials and pro-British writers take a diametrically opposite viewpoint.

accepts to be enslaved is assisting the enslaver. The situation does alter radically if through voluntary suffering, the slave consciously decides to change the heart of his own master. When the slave realizes his own potential, that is the beginning of wisdom. Gandhi later insisted that we ourselves are responsible for our own enslavement.

Although Gandhi was blaming the British Raj, he was also beginning to see why and how they had succeeded in enslaving India. The apparent contradiction of Gandhi's behaviour can be explained. For a long time Gandhi was a loyalist. He used to consider himself a British citizen and as such expected Britain to look after India's interests. The realization that the British administration was in fact deluding Indians into believing that the Raj was in India's favour came to him as a rude shock. But Gandhi's response to that awakening was one of compassion. Such compassion embraced the victims of the wrong, as well as the wrong-doer. The trial itself contained in it the seeds of that regeneration. To someone who can clearly see the problem its solution too, becomes visible. Satyagraha was Gandhi's solution. In due course of time that was to aid the British, as well as the Indian interests. The truth of one individual's realization thus freed the exploiters as well as the exploited.

Being aware of the crucial importance of the village in Indian existence, Gandhi set about inquiring what had preserved them. If famines, draughts, floods and political upheavals could not touch them - what could and how? To Gandhi, the seclusion and independence of the villages appeared as a blessing in disguise. He realized that if anything could transform the Indian villages, it would have to do with religion in a predominant way.

Religion, as Gandhi saw it, had deep roots and a vast impact on the life of the sub-continent. It both united and divided the people. Religion

united India, because it was one major thread which ran across regional, linguistic, caste, class and racial barriers.⁵¹ Religion also divided for it segregated individuals and groups into ascriptive and caste determined roles. Sectarian shades and communal heterogeneity were widely accepted features of the Indian society.⁵² In a society, where a medley of religious incongruities persisted and had vied with each other so long, how could one convince all of one and the same truth? Gandhi could clearly see the problem. He solved it by redefining the concept of dharma (ethical obligation).

It is important to note that although Gandhi used a Sanskrit term, he did not wish to connote by it a specifically Hindu meaning.⁵³ He chose to equate 'dharma' with 'religion'. Gandhi was not so much concerned with the peripheral constituents of the religion, he was concerned with its core. The heart of all religious endeavour seeks to unify rather than divide humanity. Gandhi's understanding of religion may appear rather simplistic and naive at first. But it contained, perhaps the only possibilities of conflict - resolutions across various levels of human inter-action. Gandhi's idea of stressing upon religion was perhaps motivated by two considerations: (a) to emphasize the ethical dimensions of daily life, (b) to take into account spiritual aspects of human personality. One was exoteric and the other esoteric.

⁵¹K.M. Munshi and N.C. Aiyer, eds., Indian Inheritance (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1955-56), II, 85-227.

⁵²R. Kothari, Conversations, New Delhi: May, 1976.

⁵³R.R. Diwakar, ibid., New Delhi: August, 1976.

In challenging the British Raj, Indians were really fighting for the dignity, self-reliance and trust which seemed to have virtually disappeared from the Indian scene. A spiritually, impoverished people with a large apathetic and self-divided population could not have possibly brought about a political regeneration. If change had to come, it had to come from within the Indians themselves. They had first to be sensitized to their own miserable plight. Instead of blaming the British for all the calamity, Gandhi demanded that the Indians first look inwards. Objective conditions, too, were bound to change, once the spiritual awakening arose. But the outward change did not precede the inner transformation. Rather the inner realization was a pre-condition to the outward manifestation.

It would be unrealistic, however, to ignore the environmental forces which contributed towards the realization of Satyagraha. Step by step, Indians were themselves concluding from their own experience. Conditions were shaping the course of events to an extraordinary degree. Various forces were simultaneously at work. At first, Gandhi may or may not have been consciously aware of them. The more he realized the harmony of life and the unity of experience, he became progressively convinced that life and the unity of experience could not be segregated into watertight compartments. Action in one sphere had its own inevitable reaction/s in other spheres. This wholistic concept of experience and existence gave him the insight of Satyagraha and Sarvodaya, the two major contributions of Gandhi.

(i) Economic Aspect

One of the direct consequences of any alien rule in a country is its economic exploitation. It is a generally accepted truth that the conquerors tend to exploit the conquered. England, too, was no exception. And it ought not to be especially condemned.⁵⁴ The sole reason for recounting the evils of the British imperialism here is to establish a direct relationship between Satyagraha on the one hand, and the then prevailing economic conditions in India which gave rise to its philosophy.⁵⁵

The government of a people by itself, has a meaning and a reality; but such a thing as government of one people by another does not, and cannot exist. One people may keep another for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle-farm to be worked for the profits of its own inhabitants.⁵⁶

It was from statements like this that the nascent nationalism and the Indian patriotic fervour drew their inspirations. To a large extent, the Indian intellectual elites were being influenced by the outlooks and morals of their own conquerors. In order to bring home a point they often relied upon the concepts of justice borrowed from the West and taught by the Britishers themselves. Gandhi was no exception. He was simply practising what others had taught in theory. There were no new facts to

⁵⁴ R.C. Majumdar, ed., British Paramountcy And Indian Renaissance: Part I (London: Allen And Unwin, 1952), IX, 1156.

⁵⁵ ibid., X, 1077-1162. Majumdar gives a detailed authoritative account of India's economic history.

⁵⁶ James Stuart Mill quoted by R. Dutt, op. cit., I, xviii.

be brought to light, no new theories to be propounded. It seemed all a matter of applying the existing knowledge to solve the existent problems. If the 'alien' government existed solely for the purpose of their own interests, the Indians had to either replace it by 'self-rule' (swarāj) or legitimize it through conscious struggle.

Commenting over the state of affairs in 1834, Lord Bentinck, the Governor General, wrote to the British House of Commons: "the misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India".⁵⁷ It was no coincidence that in 1922 Gandhi echoed Bentinck to draw attention to the plight of the rural India. During his defence, he blamed the citizens of Britain and India for their smugness. According to Gandhi those who shared in the profits of the injustice were equally to be censured as those who caused it in the first place. Thus, Satyagraha makes no distinction between the perpetrators of a crime and the criminals themselves. Non-cooperation with a political wrong is as much an obligation as the cooperation with 'justice' or a good cause. Gandhi's spinning-wheel was also a symbol of his silent protest against the economic system. With one stroke Gandhi not only emphasized the dignity of labour and self-sufficiency, but also virtually crippled the entire British monopoly on raw cotton-trade. He taught that a Satyagrahi must necessarily rely on his own strength for the financial support of his cause. It is easy to see that if a revolution depends on others for its financial survival, it can hardly withstand the pressures exerted on it. The fact that Gandhi was strengthening the Indian self-

⁵⁷A quotation from Karl Marx's Das Capital, I, ch. 15, 462. in D.G. Tendulkar, op. cit., VIII.

respect, and at the same time, voicing the discontent of the millions, tremendously helped Satyagraha. Under the British Raj, agriculture and Indian textile industry were the most fatally wounded aspects of the economy.⁵⁸ Especially hard hit were the weavers who formed a large portion of the Indian peasantry. Through his Charkhā campaign, Gandhi emphasized their plight and made it a nation-wide issue.

Barely a century ago, Lord Clive had returned to England as one of the wealthiest of King's subjects. His victory at Plassey (1757) had won for Britain "an empire more extensive than any kingdom in Europe..." Clive reminded his audience that it was due to his efforts that the British had "acquired a revenue of four million sterling, and a trade in proportion there of".⁵⁹ But over the years, the officials of the company became ruthless traders. The land of inexhaustible riches got transformed into a ruinous monopoly of the Company's merchants. Faced with impeachment in the House of Commons, Clive defended himself saying: "When I think of the marvellous riches of that country, and comparatively small part which I took away, I am astonished at my own moderation".⁶⁰

Fair-minded British administrators and historians have openly admitted the evils of the East India Company's rule. Clearly, the early years of Company's rule were a definite disgrace.⁶¹ Those years were marked

⁵⁸ As per talks with Professor Ahmed, Department of Economics, McMaster University, Summer, 1978.

⁵⁹ Thompson & Garratt, Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule In India (England: McMillan & Co., 1934), p. 107. The quotation is from Clive's defence.

⁶⁰ Vincent Smith, Oxford History of India (Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 505.

⁶¹ For comments by the directors of the East India Company see William Digby, Prosperous British India (London: Fisher Unwin, 1901), pp.27-28.

by deliberate violations of treaties, forgery, corruption and oppression of every conceivable kind.⁶² The Company's accounts even put their British countrymen to shame.⁶³

Besides meeting the local expenditures in the presidencies of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, the Company was also having to provide for the investments in Europe and China out of the surplus revenues collected in Bengal. As traders, the Company monopolized all goods; as sovereigns, it appropriated all the taxes. History would be found lacking in evidences where shiploads of commodities were being bought by the taxes of a people and sent out of the country without any hopes of return. Financially, India gained nothing by that transaction, whereas politically, socially and ethically, it lost much. Jobbery, became the order of the day.

Directors and Director's relatives, peers, even the Royal Family, saw no reason why they should not push a young friend or dependent into a service which within an incredibly brief period would bring him back enormously enriched. English politics and morals became corrupted. English ideas of India vulgarized, to an extent and permanency which we do not yet realize.⁶⁴

The situation got worse. Even the directors of the Company admitted in the British Parliament that the fortunes of its servants were being acquired in the most tyrannical and oppressive manner known in any age or country. Forcible extortion, profit sharing, and exploitation in

⁶² U.N. Ghoshal, op. cit., p. 189 bases his judgement upon the work of British historian Sir Percival Griffith. For views sympathetic to India see comments by Munro, Malcolm, Bishop Heber and Mr. Brecher in Thompson and Garratt, op. cit., Appendix B.

⁶³ "The conduct of the Company's servants upon this occasion furnishes one of the most remarkable instance upon record of the power of interest to extinguish all sense of justice, and even shame." James Mill quoted by R.C. Dutt, op. cit., I, 30.

⁶⁴ ibid., p. 108.

the private in-land trade began to flourish. Natives were being compelled to buy and sell at whatever prices the traders pleased.⁶⁵

A drain such as that would have impoverished even the wealthiest of nations today. Its impact was found to be ruinous in a country like India, where the wage of a common labourer was very little to begin with.⁶⁶ It caused widespread poverty, destruction and destitution. One of the direct consequence of the company's plunder was the famine of 1769-70. It engulfed one-half to one-third of Bengal's total population.⁶⁷ The development of railways and roads further accentuated the problems caused by the man-made famines in India.⁶⁸ It is a sad comment on the administration of the country that while there was enough food grown in India, the Indian peasants were starving by the millions, unable to buy that grain. They were being forced to pay revenues before they could even feed their own bellies. The Indian ports continued to export grain while famines ravaged village after village.

⁶⁵Thompson & Garratt, op. cit., ch. III.

⁶⁶"The Indian tribute, whether weighed in the scales of justice or viewed in the light of our interest, will be found to be at variance with humanity, with common sense and with the received maxims of economic science." Sir George Wingate, quoted by D. Naoroji, The Poverty And Un-British Rule In India (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1962), pp. iv-v.

⁶⁷Thompson & Garratt, op. cit., R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., Pyarelal, op. cit., and R.C. Dutt, op. cit.

⁶⁸B.M. Bhatia, Famines in India (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963). Despite the creation of better means of communications, the number of deaths caused due to famines rose sharply. Below are the figures quoted from W.S. Lilley's India And Its Problems by Pyarelal, op. cit., p. 60. (1800-1825 - 1,000,000; 1825-1850 - 400,000; 1850-1875 - 5,000,000; 1875-1900 - 15,000,000).

Gandhi's Hindswaraj (Indian Home-Rule) would seem to reiterate the same theme. During his Satyagraha campaigns Gandhi laid special emphasis on the need to use the swadeshi (native products).⁶⁹ Behind the logic of swadeshi lay the commitment to care for one's own immediate neighbourhood. The idea was to help the local population and industry prior to satisfying the far off market-demands. Thus, the struggle for individual rights and justice became inalienably linked with the struggle for local self-sufficiency, moral support and economic efficiency.

It is understandable why Gandhi became so averse to industrialization. To him the misery of rural India was inextricably linked with the prosperity of the urban industrialized few. Satyagraha stresses simplicity and austerity because these in turn promise the non-exploitation of the poor. They also help to foster a greater willingness to share the material wealth of the community. Without the zeal for renunciation of wealth, Satyagraha would seem to deteriorate into hypocrisy. Besides, it is only reasonable to expect that those who wish to speak for the masses should at least identify themselves with their material conditions. If a movement failed to support itself, and relied on the sympathy of the propertied classes, it would soon cease to bargain adequately with any adversary.⁷⁰ Satyagraha cannot afford to be tempted away by wealth. Satyagrahi must therefore limit his needs to the minimum. Moreover, in a poverty stricken environment, poverty itself was a major weakness. It had to be first overcome in order to subdue the adversary. By making voluntary poverty a condition, Gandhi turned poverty into a powerful means

⁶⁹ B.R. Nanda, Conversations, op. cit., K. Santhanam, ibid., Madras: June, 1976, T.M.P. Mahadevan, ibid., New Delhi: July, 1976.

⁷⁰ S. Dasgupta, ibid., New Delhi: May, 1976.

of self assertion. Arms and weapons are available to those who can buy them at exorbitant prices. Success begins with the first step towards turning one's own drawbacks into strong points. A Satyagrahi takes a great deal of pride in austerity. By limiting his personal needs, he can devote greater attention to his cause. As a result of his simplicity, greater number of people will identify with him. Also there is a lesser chance for being lured by the temptations of material gains.

The conquest of Bengal was itself a unique phenomenon in history. Never before had the merchants of a trading corporation accomplished greater triumphs with minimal skills in the art of warfare.⁷¹ The British did not take India by storm. The eventual subjugation of India was accomplished by a series of small steps. At first the puppet regimes were set up. Later alliances were formed and liquidated to engulf the allies themselves. As the gains from the Indian resources multiplied, the parliament in Britain started taking greater interest in Indian affairs. By 1784 Pitts' India Act was passed to control Indian affairs through British sovereignty.⁷²

As if the financial drain were not enough, even the wars of the British Empire were fought mainly with Indian blood and money. Britain spent nothing - not even a farthing. Out of its plunder in India, Britain succeeded in establishing an empire unmatched in modern history. The charter of 1813 is a landmark in the history of Indian economy.⁷³

⁷¹K. Santhanam, British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, 1972), p. 8.

⁷²ibid., ch. II. Through a system of subsidiary alliances the Indian rulers not only maintained the British army in their territories but also supported the British Residents, who told them how to run their own affairs.

⁷³R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 1039-1075.

It abolished the East India Company's monopoly of India trade which had controlled the extent and moulded the character of Indo-British commerce for two hundred years. It opened India to the British free traders and exposed her to the full blast of the Industrial Revolution. It precipitated the destruction of her age-old cotton industry, clinched her dependence on raw material production, and subjected her primary producers to the vagaries of industrial economy of Great Britain.⁷⁴

Even until 1813, India was known for the richness of her agricultural and manufacturing products of exquisite craftsmanship. One has only to read the accounts of dazed travellers like Orme and Pyrad to imagine what must have fired the fancy of markets in Venice, Tashkent, Herat and Lisbon. In return for their iron, tin and woollen for the hot climate of the Indian sub-continent, the European merchants took away the silks, spices, perfumes, metal works of gold and silver, priceless diamonds, jewels and marvellous cotton textiles.⁷⁵ The demand for the Indian goods became so high that the Europeans found it hard to procure enough bullion from home. Finally, someone hit upon the idea of investing resources to employ slaves in their business. Weavers, thus, became bought slaves. They were forced to produce the demanded commodity at the pain of death or flogging. By 1813 the British Parliament was forced to impose 70 to 80 per cent prohibitory duties on Indian goods in order to save its own cotton industries at home.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ ibid., p. 1077.

⁷⁵ In 1800 Governor-General Lord Wellesley of India directed Dr. Francis Buchanan, a medical officer of East India Company, to travel and inquire into the economic conditions of the Indian people especially with regards to agriculture and manufacturing. His accounts are most valuable R.C. Dutt, op. cit., I, 195-255.

⁷⁶ ibid., I, 263.

While the British products were sold duty-free in India, the administration did everything in its power to exact higher and more oppressive revenues from the peasants and craftsmen to strangle and demolish competition.⁷⁷ All instruments and means of indigenous livelihood were heavily taxed. No finished products could either enter foreign markets or be sold at home.⁷⁸ Local smiths, artisans, craftsmen, weavers and peasants were thus forced to fall upon the production of raw material as the only source of income. As a result, the population in the villages suffered immensely, Indian arts and crafts became a myth and the local industries died. With that loss, died the ageless viability and vitality of the Indian village life. In spite of somewhat conflicting evidence (there being exceptional cases), it is generally thus conceded that the Indian villages were organic self-sufficient units before the arrival of the British. During British Raj they suffered a heavy blow.⁷⁹

The traditional concept of land and its transition in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century also had a great deal to do with the Indian poverty. In India land was not generally considered a commodity to be bought or sold.⁸⁰ "It could not be mortgaged, distrained or auctioned for non-payment of dues or a debt incurred. A cultivator unable to meet

⁷⁷ ibid. and H. Lamb, op. cit.

⁷⁸ R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 1077-1162.

⁷⁹ S. Ahmed, op. cit. Also see S. Chandra "Some Aspects of the Growth of a Money Economy in India during the Seventeenth Century", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, ser. 4, III (1966), 322-331.

⁸⁰ B.R. Grover, "Nature of Land-Rights in Mughal India", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, ser. 1, I (1963), 1-23.
B.M. Baden-Powell, "Is the state the owner of all Land in India?", Asiatic Quarterly Review, sers. 15, 16, VIII (1894), 5-6.

his obligation might be imprisoned, tortured or otherwise oppressed by an arbitrary ruler, but he and his children could not be dispossessed of their source of living..."⁸¹ We do not know for sure how the land-tax was payed before the British arrived in India. It is not certain whether it was through rents or taxes, as also whether it was payed in cash or kind.⁸² The wide ranging controversy surrounding this topic has brought to light at least one factor. We know for sure that the character of land-tenure remained unchanged, although, the institution of land-tenure had modified considerably over the centuries. One of the secrets of village autonomy had been the traditional division of labour allied with the harmonious balance between the agriculture and industrial out-puts of the community. With the change in the system of land-ownership, the whole vitality of the corporate village life was threatened.⁸³

Since the British administrators represented the English land-owning class, they introduced in India a system similar to their own.

⁸¹Pyarelal Nair, op. cit., p. 37. S. Ahmed, op. cit., is of the opinion that although the rights to sell or buy the land may have existed in ancient or medieval India, it is questionable whether they were exercised or not. "His [a peasant-proprietor] holding was hereditary and he had full rights in land for the purpose of its transfer, mortgage and sale, though such transactions were, of course, extremely rare." B.R. Grover, op. cit., p. 4. It is true that during the classical times even kingdoms could be lost due to debt, but here we are mainly concerned with the land-tenure as it affected the Riaya (the common man).

⁸²P. N. Chopra, B.N. Puri, M.N. Das, A Social, Cultural & Economic History of India (India: MacMillan, 1974), pp. 175-181.

⁸³"A more direct blow came from the introduction of the landlord system, changing the whole conception of ownership of land. This conception had been one of communal ownership, not so much of the land as the produce of the land." J. Nehru, The Discovery of India (New York: John Day Company, 1945), p. 303.

They appointed revenue-farmers who later became the new landlords.

These landlords had neither the sympathies for the village community nor any concerns for its corporate character.

The village community was deprived of all control over the land and its produce; what had always been considered as the chief interest and concern of that community now became the private property of the newly created landowner. This led to the breakdown of the joint life and corporate character of the community, and the cooperative system of services and functions began to disappear gradually.⁸⁴

The new class owed its existence to the British. In terms of interests and obligations, it identified with its creators and despised its own. The new landlords remained alien to the land and its people, whom they harassed persistently for the collection of revenues. Life in villages became miserable.⁸⁵ Actually, the system of Permanent Settlement, (as it was called) had its own pros and cons. Unfortunately, it favoured the rulers more than the ruled. Under it, the old landed gentry and the general ryots got totally ruined. The system also gave rise to a new monied class which showed utmost vigour when it came to business transactions and very little consideration. What is worse, in regions which were predominated by either the Muslims or the Hindus and had revenue-collectors of a different religious calling, the system brought communal hatred.⁸⁶ From then on, communal problems and poverty

⁸⁴ibid.

⁸⁵That misery and agony of rural India found touching expressions in the works of writers like Munshi Premchand and Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay.

⁸⁶Although Nehru, op. cit., relates the problem of Hindu Muslim disunity to the change in the laws of land ownership, it appears there were more reasons than one which contributed to the communal hatred. But it is an interesting postulate and deserves careful study.

became the two predominant characteristics of Indian life. Any leader hoping to solve India's problems would have to grapple with these two problems. Communal harmony and village reconstruction were bound to become important issues for Gandhi.⁸⁷

Devoid of local industries, agriculture became the chief source of sustenance in India. Earlier the economy had also employed those not working on land. As unemployment figures increased, so did the population pressure on land. Elsewhere, too, the transition from pre-industrial to the post-industrial economy had not been easy. But in India the Industrial Revolution coincided with foreign Imperialism precipitating a series of crises. Whereas elsewhere the population was drawn out of the rural sectors into the urban areas during industrialization, in India the process was notably reversed. As people flocked to the villages, land became more and more fragmented. The British administration saw to it that there was a complete ban on the import of machinery. They wanted to keep India industrially behind and therefore its economy was geared to provide only the raw materials and markets for the finished goods.⁸⁸ For the British, it was convenient to turn India into an agricultural colony. With the liquidation of the indigenous industry and export-trade, the artisans, shipbuilders and craftsmen began to perish like flies. Thus India was deliberately ruralized. With the spread of the British control over the sub-continent, India's industrial economy

⁸⁷Gandhi was able to grasp these problems clearly. Vinobha Bhave's unique campaign was aimed at procuring land for the landless peasants. As a disciple of Gandhi, he could also understand the basic need of the cultivator to possess the land which he cultivates.

⁸⁸R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 1095-1127. R.C. Dutt, op. cit., I and II.

came to a complete halt.⁸⁹

In 1857, the East India company handed over the administration of the country to the Crown. But, that transaction was concluded with the money paid by the Indian people.⁹⁰ The end of the Company's rule did not in any way usher a period of economic prosperity. In many ways the situation got worse. An Indian political scientist has called that transition a "formal change". But even in 1883, Lord Salisbury had denounced it as an act of "political hypocrisy". In practical terms, it meant achieving three things for the British imperialism: 1. legalization of the political autocracy over India, 2. monopoly over all higher offices in the civil service and the army, 3. expansion of the market for the British goods and capital investment in raw materials.⁹¹

The British succeeded in accomplishing the above mentioned goals. But in that process the economic condition of the country declined considerably.⁹² Given such attitude and approach to the government of a colony, in time the situation had to become worse. Dr. Ahmed charges that the British pursued a policy of active disinterest in the development of the Indian economy.⁹³

⁸⁹P.N. Chopra, B.N. Puri, & M.N. Das, op. cit., pp. 182-195.

⁹⁰R.C. Majumdar quotes P. Griffiths: op. cit., p. 1153.

⁹¹K. Santhanam, op. cit., ch. 5, and p. 26.

⁹²Between 1800 to 1825 there were only four famines but between 1875 and 1900 there were twenty-two famines. W. Digby, op. cit.

⁹³Dr. Ahmed, op. cit. Detailed accounts are available in the works by William Digby, op. cit.; Dadabhai Naomji, op. cit.; and R.C. Dutt, op. cit.

In 1930, a committee was appointed by the Indian National Congress⁹⁴ to look into the financial situation of public debt.⁹⁵ The committee's findings indicated two things. Firstly, the Company had enlarged its territory by every internal war and used Indian revenue to maintain its own forces.⁹⁶ Secondly, several external wars were fought (amounting to ~~6~~90 million) by the Indian troops and finances without accruing any benefit whatsoever to the people of India.⁹⁷ To all these annexations and adventures was added the construction of the railway.⁹⁸ When the railway stocks fell, the surplus revenue was utilized to pay dividends to the Company's stockholders. By "Public-debt" the British

⁹⁴Although Britain claimed a sum of Rs. 893.30 crores, the committee's findings showed no validity of that claim. Rather they computed a considerable balance in favour of India amounting to ~~4~~100 million (not taking into account the ~~4~~70 million that the Company had incurred as 'debt'). For details see R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 795-875.

⁹⁵Pyarelal claims that no such institution existed in India before the British rule, op. cit., p. 54.

⁹⁶During the 19th century alone 111 wars were fought, mostly with Indian army.

⁹⁷Abyssinian War (1867) Perak Expedition (1873) Second Afghan War (1878), Egypt Expedition (1882) Frontier Wars (1882), Burmese War (1886) and Soukim Expedition (1896) R.C. Majumdar, op. cit. For details see Will Durant's, The Case For India and Sir George Wingate's, Our Financial Relations With India.

⁹⁸"Often held up as a show-piece of British beneficent achievements...the Indian Railway system provides in fact an instance of one of the biggest financial swindles perpetrated on a dependency by its imperialist rulers. Unwarranted by India's pressing needs...far beyond her resources, over 22,000 miles in length of India's railways - built at a cost of 300 million pounds - were meant to serve not the interests of India, but those of British army...trade and the commercial exploitation of India's natural resources...They openly discriminated against Indian manufacturers, drained the country of its raw materials, and helped to dump shoddy British manufacturers on the Indian consumer. They lost money year after year. The losses were borne by the people, the gains were fathered by the traders." Pyarelal, op. cit., p. 56.

were implying all the interest on the loans which totalled 70 million pounds at the time the Crown took over. In addition, 40 million pounds were charged to India to defray the cost of subduing the 1857 rebellion.⁹⁹ Thus every profit turned into a loss, and every loss further impoverished the already drained economy of India. Over and above all these was the pay earned by the British officers in India. The British monopolized almost every high office. Under "Home Charges" Indians were charged for the pensions, interests, dividends and remittances of British nationals in India. According to the Indian historians these were the principal causes of India's misery and poverty.¹⁰⁰ The economy deteriorated further due also to the farmer's indebtedness. Indian farmers were forced to grow only that which their creditors desired.

When the rulers reside in the country and consider it their own, it is natural for the administration to feel responsive to the needs of the people. Tensions grow and also get relieved when claims are readjusted. But in the British Raj, the peasants lived under the arbitrary whims of the tax-collectors. They were reduced to mere serfs. While the government agents arbitrarily fixed the prices of the cash-crops, the price of essential commodities kept on multiplying. Consequently, famines were bound to occur. There were areas rich in grain, but the villagers could not afford to buy them. While a handful of cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras flourished under the Raj, the poor Indian villages collapsed

⁹⁹ ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "(The) annual remittance of 17 millions for Home Charges, added to the remittances made by European officers employed in India, represented nearly one-half of her net revenues, and this amount was annually sent out of India without any visible return...such a huge drain is sure to ruin the prosperity of any country. For, in every country the taxes collected from the people are circulated among them; they are not lost, but merely redistributed among the people." R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., p. 1151.

under the system. True, there were some compassionate Britishers, but their voices got lost in the politics of colonialism. The situation needed someone like Gandhi to speak out on behalf of village India.

The constructive approach of Gandhi's Satyagraha tackled an important aspect of the village economy. Through his persistent encouragement the small-scale and cottage industries of India got revived. Gandhi made it mandatory to spin daily. He also sent his followers and coworkers to the remote corners of India to live and work with the villagers.¹⁰¹

"He did not teach us through any text books on socialism. He merely opened our eyes to the Indian village."¹⁰² The symbol of the spinning wheel on the ~~Congress~~ flag is Gandhi's contribution. Spinning automatically gave rise to a number of other occupations. It also assisted in external identification with the commonest of the common lot.¹⁰³

Gandhi also tackled the problems of Hindu-Muslim unity and the problem of untouchability. Gandhi's efforts, perhaps, only made a dent in the communal disharmony of India. Nonetheless, those efforts cannot be ignored. It was no mean achievement to have made the Congress seek reconciliation with the Muslim League and Dr. Ambedkar - the leader of the Untouchables.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Conversations, op. cit. I got this impression from a number of sources and therefore do not feel the need to identify them individually.

¹⁰² Anonymous, ibid., Bangalore: Summer, 1976.

¹⁰³ Even to-day a congress worker must wear Khādi (hand-spun cloth) in order to gain mass support. Along with Khādi, other native handi-crafts and arts got a boost. Today it is a thriving industry, one which earns a great deal of export attention.

¹⁰⁴ Conversations, op. cit. On these topics, my talks with Sheikh Abdulla, Sushila Nair and Abid Hussain were especially useful.

Through Satyagraha Gandhi was insisting on obligations of the ruled as well as the ruler. He realized that the failure of the Indian economy was primarily dependent upon the cooperation of those who were being exploited with those who were exploiting. Therefore, the first step towards breaking that chain of casual effect was to demand from the slave his will not to be enslaved anymore. Thus, non-cooperation with the Raj became inevitable.

The Indian army could not be trusted because they were the paid employees of the Raj. Also weapons could not be procured on a massive scale, because it was not financially feasible. The only means possible was to fight without the weapons. Gandhi knew the reasons why the previous revolutions had failed. He also realized that it was of utmost importance to organize the next movement on a mass scale.

(ii) Political Aspect

A revolution in most cases is understood as a catalyst. It hastens the process of events in a particular direction. For a revolution to take place, there must exist some fundamental pre-requisites. Such elements were not wanting in the case of the mid 19th century India. Only a spark was needed to ignite the general discontent.

The readers of the British period of Indian history are familiar with the phrase Pax Britannica - a new era of peace, prosperity and contentment, introduced by the British rule...This claim is, however, only partially true...There was, no doubt, an end to the state of anarchy, chaos, and confusion which set in after the decline of the Mughal empire ...There were frequent sporadic outbursts, often leading to serious armed resistance against the British authority throughout India, and these culminated in the great upsurge of 1857, which shook the British empire in India to its very foundations. This was partly a legacy of the period that had

just been ended; but was also largely due to grave discontent which was a direct consequence of the establishment of British rule in India. This fact has not, so far, been adequately recognized by historians of British India...¹⁰⁵

Gandhi was aware of the latent Indian hostility towards the British. He also feared its consequences. It was Gandhi's contention that the public discontent ought to be aired rather than suppressed. He firmly believed that the airing of grievances did not have to be violent. If the protests did not threaten those against whom they were expressed, there was practically no danger involved. But a genuine acknowledgement of the problem was the first step towards its solution. Majumdar's observation recognizes the problem which was causing frustration in the minds of the Indian leadership. Despite the frequent out-bursts of violence, the Indians were unable to register their protests. They had failed to draw attention to their plight.

Upon their arrival, the British East India company had found the country in a really disorganized state of affairs. Territorially, it was torn with internecine feuds. Socially, it was decaying due to stagnation and apathy. Militarily, Indian forces were untrained, ill-equipped and disunited. Politically, the Mughal Empire was beginning to disintegrate.¹⁰⁶

During the entire seventeenth century the British merchants confined themselves mainly to commercial activities. But rivalries among the European traders were not totally unknown. Yet, in time they were able to subdue all obstacles. Through diplomatic intrigues and secret treaties,

¹⁰⁵ R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., IX, Bk. 1, 406.

¹⁰⁶ R.C. Majumdar, H.C. Raychaudhuri, and K. Dutta, An Advanced History of India (3rd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1967), ch. V, pp. 527-553.

they vied with one another to curry favour with the Indian rulers. Gandhian strategies were different. Unlike the secret manoeuvrings of his opponents the Satyagrahi insisted upon open discussions. He prided in relinquishing his personal gains for the sake of the common good. Gandhi said that if a Satyagrahi renounced selfish motives and worked for a noble cause, he was bound to draw massive public support. Public opinion was a major tool in redressing wrongs.

After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, a number of independent principalities mushroomed under the leadership of the Marathas, Sikhs, Rajputs, Rohilas, Jats, Bundelas and other Moghul viceroys. But, internal dissensions prevented them from gaining supremacy for long. The situation deteriorated further due to the fragmented loyalties of the armies. While Indians exhausted their strength in competing against each other, their downfall was hastened by the foreign traders. India's misfortune in this sense proved to be Europe's opportunity. The British, French, Portugues and the Dutch flourished at the cost of Indian disunity.

Satyagraha was very clear on the subject of unity. It stressed loyalty to the cause and not to the isolated fragments of one's own community or interests. It believed in being obedient to one's own conscience and ethical experience. As far as the common goals were concerned, they were to be formulated in the knowledge that all humanity was one. Therefore, violence done in one sector was likely to cause repercussions in another. Satyagraha denounced opportunism, selfish motives and segregated views of reality. It laid stress on unity and harmony as the core values of conscious struggle. A Satyagrahi did not believe in taking advantage of a unhappy situation.

By the mid 18th century, the British had transformed themselves from traders into political adventurers. The battle of Plassey (1757) marked the genesis of British Raj in India. It, however, took the next hundred years for the British to formally declare India as their colony. Most triumphs can be viewed from two different points: one from that of the victors, and the other from that of the vanquished. For the Indians, the entire period beginning from Plassey was a chapter full of misery, deceit, conspiracy, forgery, engineering of revolts, and violation of treaties with occasional benefits as bi-products of the change. From the British point of view, it was a saga of courageous conquests, calculated risks, deliberate caution and a civilizing zeal.¹⁰⁷

In contrast to the above mentioned tactics, Satyagraha renounced deceit, conspiracy, forgery, violation of agreements and other unsalutary practices. A Satyagrahi stressed humility, accommodation, compromise, persuasion and willingness to admit one's error. Generally a conquest is viewed in terms of winning an issue, but Satyagraha looked at it differently. Of course, the issue had to be won but the Satyagrahi also believed in winning his opponents through love and self-suffering. If there was a choice between winning an issue and the good will, a Satyagrahi preferred the latter. To Gandhi, failure of achieving a goal was more acceptable if the conflicting parties come together in the process. Satyagraha aimed at winning both the cause and the opponent and rarely lost any but never did he lose the good will and respect of the adversary.

¹⁰⁷R.C. Majumdar, British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, op. cit., Bk. I. It is useful for a comprehensive and critical review of literature regarding History of British India. See the Preface, ibid., pp. xxi-xxxv.

While Majumdar refers to the shady transactions, selfish and ignoble motives of the imperial power in describing the iniquities, injustices and oppression of the British towards India, he makes little reference to the evangelical fervour of the British.¹⁰⁸ It was to this latter element that Pyarelal attributes the religious revival of the mid 19th century India.¹⁰⁹ Pyarelal sees in it the seeds of Gandhian Satyagraha. By making religion a stepping stone for political regeneration, Gandhi made honesty the criteria of judging all political thought, word and deed.

The battle of Plassey was a history in itself. No empire was ever fought and won at such a negligible cost. Clive only lost twenty-three soldiers and retired with forty-nine of them wounded. It was no surprise, therefore, that the Company desired his service again in 1765, when Shah Alam was defeated. Clive, too, returned to India. But his forces did not even enter the besieged capital. Instead, he bargained with the Emperor to legalize some important transactions. In England, the British House of Commons was accusing Clive of committing Machiavellian practices,¹¹⁰ but in India Clive's Dyarchy or Dual System was causing immense hardships due to the injustice of maladministration and mismanagement.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "Providence has entrusted the extensive empire of Hindustan to England, in order that the banner of Christ should wave triumphant from one end of India to the other. Everyone must exert all his strength that there be no dilatoriness on any account in completing the grand work of making all India Christian." I. Yajnik, Shyamaji Krishnavarma. quoted by Pyarelal, op. cit., p. 49.

¹¹⁰ Thompson & Garratt, op. cit., p. 95.

¹¹¹ "Why this fine Country, which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary Government, is verging towards its Ruin while the English have really so great a share in the Administration...When the English received the Grant of the Dewanee their first consideration seems to have been the raising of as large Sums from the country as could be collected..." ibid., p. 109.

The British Parliament finally appointed a select Committee in 1772 to look into the "promiscuous tumult and confusion" of the East India Company. Yet another secret committee was asked to look into the confidential matters of the Company. Consequently, the Bill of 1773 introduced a number of changes: 1. the number of voters in the Company's Court of Proprietors was greatly reduced, 2. the directors of the Company were made responsible to the Secretary of State for the civil and military administration in India, 3. a Governor-General was appointed and a Supreme Court of Justice was instituted to help in the judicial matters. But the cabinet had failed to provide any definite lines of demarcation in their authority.¹¹² Consequently, within a decade Charles James Fox was forced to introduce a new bill (1783). It suggested sweeping changes in the administration. Fox had condemned the existing situation in India as a "system of despotism unmatched in all histories of the world". Edmund Burke, too, supported Fox. But nothing came of it until the 1784 Pitts' India Act, which further curtailed the company's authority.

It is true that the Indian miseries were not relieved as a result of all these changes. But their total impact was great. They instilled into the minds of the elites in India a genuine respect for the British Parliament and its system of government. They began to believe (rather naively) that if approached in the right manner, the British sovereign and the British public opinion would always 'right' a wrong. Indians failed to see that in case of a conflict, their interests would unquestionably be sacrificed. Also, they had failed to realize that a common citizenship

¹¹²ibid.

in the Empire was no guarantee to equal justice. It was up to Gandhi to raise all these questions. He demanded equal rights in conjunction with the obligations of citizenship. His was a creative response to the negative treatment suffered by his countrymen.

Following Pitts' India Act, Cornwallis also introduced some major changes in India. But we are only concerned with the system of Permanent Settlement. Although a controversial subject, nonetheless, it brought ruin to the Indian countryside wherever it was instituted.¹¹³ Without getting into the details of the system, I would like to point out some of its demerits. It was irresponsible on the part of the government to entrust the landlords with the collection of the rent. Since the landlords had no say in the administration they could not be blamed for their excesses. The peasantry was thus arbitrarily subjected to the whims and fancies of the oppressive landlords. Most of the peasants were so poor and ignorant that they could not fight for their own rights. Land assessment was arbitrary and high. The Government did nothing to improve either the agriculture or the public welfare. It gave importance to the few at the expense of the many. Politically, the Raj relied on the landlords. They were the props of the imperial superstructure. Gandhi challenged these very aspects of the Raj during his first Satyagraha campaign in India.¹¹⁴

¹¹³"(The) main difficulties were about the regular collection of the stipulated dues. These fell heavily in arrears...the lands were frequently sold...Another defect...was the insufficient protection it gave to the tenants against the oppression of the zamindars. The establishment of the law courts was expected to give the tenants the needed relief, but in practice it proved futile." R.C. Majumdar, et al., An Advanced History of India, op. cit., p. 799.

¹¹⁴P.N. Chopra, et al., op. cit., III, 178-79; R.C. Majumdar, British Paramountcy & Indian Renaissance, op. cit., IX, Bk. I, 819, 881, 926; P.C. Ray Chaudhury, Gandhi's First Struggle in India (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1963).

During the administration of Lord Wellesley, yet another doctrine of Subsidiary Alliance was introduced in India. It was calculated to bring most of the Indian territories into the British Empire.¹¹⁵ Combined with the imperialistic wars, the Alliance System further deteriorated the situation. Referring to it Thomas Munro has said:

It has a natural tendency to render the government of every country in which it exists weak and oppressive; to extinguish all honourable spirit among the higher classes of society, and to degrade and impoverish the whole people...The presence of a British force cuts off every chance of remedy, by supporting the prince on the throne against every foreign and domestic enemy. It renders him indolent, by teaching him to trust to strangers for his security; and cruel and avaricious, by showing him that he has nothing to fear from the hatred of his subjects. Wherever the subsidiary system is introduced, unless the reigning prince be a man of great abilities, the country will soon bear the marks of it in decaying villages and decreasing population.¹¹⁶

The system tended to destroy, what it undertook to protect. Soon the British expansions and conquests reached their peaks. Lord Dalhousie's doctrine of 'lapse' was designed to further annex the territory of ruler who died without a direct heir. In the subsidiary territories, rulers who failed to pay the subsidy lost their rights to govern. The annexed territories could not provide an honest employment. Aliens held all the lucrative and high administrative posts. Disbanded from the state armies the soldiers were forced to plunder by night and rove like nomades by day. The society was in a total mess. Social life, too, deteriorated. Culturally, racially and linguistically the British were strangers to the land. By mid 19th cen-

¹¹⁵P.N. Chopra, et al., op. cit., III, 26.

¹¹⁶Quoted from The Life of Sir Thomas Munro by Pyarelal, op. cit., p. 29.

ture the whole of India was more or less conquered.¹¹⁷ But a quiet discontent was brewing among the princes and the peasants alike. Soldiers who mutined in the British Cantonment were not the leaders of that revolt. They only demonstrated the primary symptoms of a deep seated social malaise.¹¹⁸

The revolt of 1857 is one of the most controversial issues in the modern Indian history.¹¹⁹ Since it was the first national war of independence against the British and served to inspire a great deal of patriotic fervour, its importance cannot be minimized. But there is also the danger of exaggeration and emotional involvement in attributing to it more than what it deserves. Very little systematic work has been done on the subject. One would, therefore, have to be very cautious in pronouncing any final verdict. However, from the available accounts, one can gather enough evidence which is directly related to Satyagraha.

The causes of the 1857 revolt were political, social, religious and economic. Dalhousie's policy of annexation and lapse had caused a great deal of uneasiness in the minds of some Indian princes. It created great insecurity among their dependents. Those who lost their thrones and lands were bound to be bitter. In fact they spear-headed the revolt. In many cases, they failed to rally enough support, except on the basis of region or religion, from a section of their subjects. In the annexed territories, many

¹¹⁷Mysore lost in 1799, Carnatic and parts of Oudh in 1801, Marathas in 1817, Sindh in 1843, Punjab in 1849, Burma in 1852, whole of Oudh in 1856. R.C. Majumdar, British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance, op. cit., IX, Bk. 1.

¹¹⁸ibid., chs. 13 and 17.

¹¹⁹ibid., Majumdar deals critically and at length with the topic. cf. V. Savarkar's, The History of the War of Indian Independence; Kaye and Malleon, History of the Mutiny; Tara Chand, History of the Freedom Movement in India, II; J. Nehru, op. cit.; Pyarelal, op. cit.

of the unemployed consisted of landless-peasants and disbanded soldiers. They could not identify either with the landlord or the state. The small class of English educated 'elites' were also bitter, because they could never compete for higher ranks with their European counterparts. These 'elites' also realized the futility of any efforts to bring about changes. In reality, they were alienated from their native land and its people. The public disparagement of Hindu religion and mythology by some British officials was also a common cause of resentment. After the 1813 India Act, the Christian missions were legally allowed to enter India. The administration granted them special protection. Missionary attack on the Hindu and Muslim sentiments added further insults to the injuries. Although some of the reforming policies of the government were really aimed at bringing relief to the afflicted sections of the society. But these incurred much disfavour from the conservative quarters. Often the people failed to see the genuinely good intentions of the administration and blamed it for all their misfortunes. It would be misleading to suggest that no benefits accrued from the advent of the British. As is generally the case, in politics, people tend to forget the successes and capitalize on the failures especially when they are aggrieved. The blessings of Western education and uniform administration were soon forgotten. All blame was deposited on the foreigner. Both the Hindus and the Muslims feared their religion was in imminent danger. When the Indian soldiers in the British army, too, felt dissatisfied, it added fuel to the fire which was already smouldering.¹²⁰

¹²⁰R.C. Majumdar, et al., op. cit.

The reasons for the dissatisfaction of the soldiers were many. Their discontent turned into desperation. Only a spark was needed to kindle the fire of mutiny. Having captured Delhi the mutineers proclaimed Bahadur Shah II their Emperor and proceeded to overtake Oudh, Rohilkhand and other centres. Rajputana, Gwalior, United Provinces and areas West of Delhi were slowly reclaimed from the British, at least for a while. But the mutineers were actually aimless. Their goals if they had any were divided. They lacked definite leadership and planning. Rather they had no strategy. Men, women and children of European origin were ruthlessly murdered in cold-blood. One has only to read the accounts of the mutiny to realize what the soldiers in mutiny can be capable of, what violence in revenge can be capable of.

Geographical isolation was among the major defects of the mutiny.¹²¹ The mutineers were ill-organized. There was no central leadership. With the sole exception of the extraordinarily brave queen, Laxmi Bai of Jhansi, hardly any important prince threw in his lot with the rebels. On the contrary, many princes helped the British to contain the storm. Even the number of Muslims who actually helped the mutineers was less than half of the total. Of the total number of soldiers, only a quarter were in arms against the government.¹²² It must be remembered, however, that the revolt of 1857 was not the first armed mutiny in the company's forces.¹²³

¹²¹They were confined in the South up to Nerbada, in the East up to Bengal, in the North up to Oudh, and up to Punjab in the West.

¹²²Since the Sikhs were bitter about their previous defeat at the hands of the Indian British army, they naturally fought against them. The British not only regained the lost cities but with the help of the Gorkhas and the hastily recruited levies reinforced their own strength. R.C. Majumdar, op. cit.

¹²³Bengal army rebelled in 1766; Southern in 1806; Bengal again in 1824, 1843, 1844. Various mutinees had to be crushed during 1849, 1850, and in 1852. Thompson and Garratt, op. cit., p. 438.

The revolt brought different lessons for the parties concerned. It definitely established the fact that there was a great deal of discontent and resentment against the British rule, among all classes of Indians. Generally, the masses had born their grievances with characteristic patience and apathy.

They murmured and grumbled; sometimes their complaints became more vociferous; occasionally they grew restive; but very rarely they thought of taking to violent means to remedy their grievances. So far as the masses were concerned, the expression of the public sentiment was restricted to partial and desultory manifestations and to petty acts of violence. The discontent among the intellectuals grew in volume, but they knew...the might of the British...the weakness of their own people, rendering hopeless any attempt to gain reform by force. Their opposition...never found any expression except through writings and speeches...prayers and petitions. Their faith in British justice, though shaken...never vanished.¹²⁴

As opposed to the passive bloc of public resistance, there was yet another small segment of courageous but ill-organized group, who believed in the violent means as the last resort.

But between these two extreme classes of passive sufferers, there were groups of people led by brave individuals, who cast aside all prudence and moderation and responded to the primitive human instinct of violent reaction against injuries and insults without any thought of its consequences. Weak and isolated though they were, they never feared to rise in armed revolt against the all-powerful British authority in order to defend their rights and religion, or take vengeance or insults and injuries, true or imaginary.¹²⁵

The British could now see that their position was rather precarious. Their troops were insignificant in number and difficult to mobilize.

¹²⁴R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., IX, 435.

¹²⁵ibid., 436.

The existing system of transportation and communications was poor and primitive. They were lucky in that no serious contender had really emerged out of the chaos. To their relief, the regional and religious disunity had prevented coordination among various groups. To a degree the general disorder and confusion may have actually frightened the princes and the propertied classes. Firstly, the soldiers soon became aware of their own inferiority. Secondly, they were disliked and unwelcome in the villages. The British discovered to their delight that their best safeguards were the Indian Princes.¹²⁶ They also noticed that the rebels did not even attempt to consolidate their gains. The civilian population was absolutely unorganized. Public support was either absent or passive.

The British reprisals that came in the wake of the 1857 rebellion puts to shame even the deeds of horror committed in Hitler's Germany.¹²⁷ In England it raised such a storm of revengeful hatred against the Indian "nigger" that it gave "a welcome and almost religious sanction to any act of savagery which the Government troops might perpetrate."¹²⁸ The British also understood the mutiny to be a reaction against the too quick a westernization of the Indian traditional life style. Hence forth, all reforms were to be viewed with suspicion and fear.

Thompson and Garratt suggest that in the Indian minds the mutiny became identified with a bitter memory. It was their first lesson of

¹²⁶Thompson & Garratt, op. cit., p. 454.

¹²⁷For details see Col. Malleon, ed., Kaye's and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny 1857-1858 (West Port Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1971).

¹²⁸Thompson & Garratt, op. cit., p. 454.

political agitation.¹²⁹ The punishment meted out to both the Hindu and the Muslim rebels humiliated their co-religionists. The educated elites as well as the general masses were horrified by the atrocities committed on each side. As a result of that failure, or due to a number of complex other reasons, suddenly there was a renewed interest in religion.

Anger, hatred, contempt and ill-will are the serious outcomes of a violent revolution. Both sides suffered negative reactions as a result of the 1857 revolt. As is bound to happen the 'ruled' suffered more than the 'rulers'. The racial cleavages became more pronounced. The Europeans formed themselves into a caste of their own. The "White Brahmins" superimposed themselves on the already existing caste-hierarchy. From the point of administration three changes took place: (1) the Crown assumed total responsibility of governance; (2) the army was reorganized; and (3) a new attitude was adopted towards the princely states. In affect, it meant curtailment of all future possibilities of armed revolts.

From then on, transport and communications were to be improved in order to serve the express needs of the administration. The Governor-General was asked to consult the Secretary of State and the India Office before taking any important decision. The policy of division and counterpoise was to be applied more vigorously in all aspects of administration. The strength of the European troops was to be substantially increased. Indians were to be deliberately barred from all stations of responsibility and, especially, weapons and ammunitions were never to be trusted in their

¹²⁹ "The two facts most firmly printed on the Indian mind were the failure of the rebel leaders to take advantage of their early successes and the ferocity with which martial law was administered and the rebels hunted down." ibid., p. 461.

hands. The Indian princes were assured of their due privileges and rights. For the time being all annexations were stopped. But the government retained full rights of interference in the internal and external matters of the State through the agency of the British Resident.

As can be clearly seen, any future revolution in the post 1857 era had to take into account three major factors.

1. It would have to seek an all India-wide support based on geographic, cultural, communal and economic unity.
2. There had to be a uniformity of goals and efforts with a clear vision of common good and reliable leadership.
3. The strategy of achieving those aims would have to be basically nonviolent but equally effective.

In the light of these factors, Satyagraha seems to make a great deal of sense. It was politically viable, legitimate and practical. It sought to unite India in a spiritual harmony without destroying the religiosity of the individuals concerned. It was self-sufficient and had the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. His goals were clear but the means were even clearer.

(iii) Social Aspect

Most societies go through varying phases of change. In the long history of a people there are bound to be periods of creativity, progress and reform as well as those of dissolution, retrogression and decay. The eighteenth century India is identified with the latter tendencies. While Europe saw the age of enlightenment, India was going through one of the darkest periods in her history.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ P.N. Chopra, et. al., op. cit., III, 76. R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., VII and VIII.

The fall of Mughul empire inaugurated a period of grave instability. With the death of Aurangazeb in 1707, the disintegration of its political fabric became imminent. His death was followed by a loss of authority and administrative breakdown over a vast region. Within that time period small powers struggled with each other to gain prominence but failed miserably. Social life was in utter chaos. In the absence of law and security, the strong oppressed the weak and the poor suffered greatly.

It is rather paradoxical that while the Mughuls gave India a very stable government with an efficient system of administration, "a very high development of architecture and painting and above all, wealth and splendour such as no other Islamic State in any part of the world may boast of,"¹³¹ they failed in a very significant aspect. With the notable exceptions of Akbar and Dara Shikoh, most Mughul emperors were notorious for their religious bigotry.¹³²

The initial seeds of religious intolerance were laid by their religious bigotry. That bigotry was practised at the highest level. It does not necessarily mean that the Hindus and Muslims refused to cooperate at other levels of existence. The general public, of course, learned to

¹³¹R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., VII, xi.

¹³²"The Muslim law which imposed many disabilities and indignities upon the Hindus...definitely gave them an inferior social and political status...was followed by these Mughul Emperors (and other Muslim rulers) with as much zeal as was displayed by their predecessors, the Sultāns of Delhi. The climax was reached during the reign of Aurangazeb, who deliberately pursued the policy of destroying and desecrating Hindu temples and idols with a thoroughness unknown before or since. Such disclosures may not be liked by the high officials and a section of the politicians, but it is the solemn duty of a historian to state the truth, however unpleasant or discreditable it might be to any particular class or community." ibid.

live with their mutual differences. The situation demanded it. Often the ruler was of a minority religion and the majority had to concede. It was not until the British began to exploit these differences, that communalism seriously became a political issue. Gandhi's Satyagraha had first to deal with Hindu-Muslim unity before it could even hope to wage a nation-wide battle against the British rule.

In 1739, while the chief protagonists for power fought with each other to gain control, Nadir Shah of Persia swept across the north-west to capture Delhi and to steal the famous Peacock throne. His bloody raids left villages raised to the ground. While the Marathas, Rajputs, Sikhs and the Moghul rulers fought each other, a fifth column rose in their respective states. The native rulers had remained mostly ignorant of affairs outside their own kingdoms. But the foreigners kept good record of activities in their adversary's courts. That way the British were able to win many battles even before they were fought. It is to be recalled that the chief cause of the Moghul decline was the bigotry of the rulers. It led to three major events: (1) the withdrawal of the Rajput support. (2) and (3) the rise of the Maratha and the Sikh power and their eventual rebellions. Thus any observant student of Indian history would note that unity was its basic issue.

Many of the Gandhian practices seem to stress one important factor, unity. The language, dress, food habits and even the religious practices of the Satyagrahis were streamlined by Gandhi. He made every attempt to learn a new language and encouraged others to do the same. Gandhi likewise insisted on dressing simply and frugally so that the differences in the status and appearance would be minimized. Gandhian āshrams shared one kitchen for

all in order to obliterate differences in food preferences and caste. Gandhi's morning and evening prayers became a forum of inter-religious practices. He realized the stigma attached to religious differences, and tried to save his own movement from bigotry and intolerance.

At this point something needs to be said about Shivaji.¹³³ In Shivaji's death (1680) the resurgent Hindu nationalism suffered a heavy blow. Shivaji was courageous and able to lead the Marathas to many triumphs. His catholicity attracted even Muslim soldiers to his army. But the Marathas, who at one time seemed sure to capture the Indian empire, lost their decisive battle in Panipat (1761) at the hands of Ahmad Shah of Afghan. Clive had already defeated the Moghuls at Plassey in 1757. The stage was now set for the two major contenders of powers.

Shivaji* must be mentioned here because in him and Gandhi, one finds some interesting similarities and contrasts. It is not necessary to go into details here, but both cherished a love of freedom and human dignity. Both were prominent revolutionaries, greatly influenced by their respective mothers. Both were also intensely spiritual in outlook. Both stood out for the rights of the oppressed and eventually for the elimination of the foreign rule. In the long history of Hindu servitude during the Muslim rule, Shivaji is one of whom the whole of India can justly be proud. Shivaji's bravery and sacrifice for his people fired the imagination of many generations of nationalists even until this century.¹³⁴ The radical wing of the Congress

¹³³G.S. Sardesai in R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., VII, 247-274.

¹³⁴"Many writers, particularly the western, represent Shivaji as a plunderer and a rebel, conveying thereby that he was no steady or confirmed ruler, but a pest to the society. This is entirely a wrong view. Every patriot striving to free his land from foreign domination is bound to be a rebel until his position becomes stabilized. Shivaji never committed wanton atrocities during his raids (nor) harassed innocent population. He subjected Muslim lands to plunder and devastation only when he was at war with those powers." ibid., 277. * Both were moved by the religious spirit, while one became a military leader, the other applied nonviolence.

Party very much saw a Shivaji in Balgandadhar Tilak; Indian revolutionaries for a long time would consider him a hero. But Gandhi was far from Shivaji in appearance as well as demeanour. A revolutionary of his own kind, Gandhi, too, could boast of similar spirituality, political astuteness and concern for the people. But the strongest contrast between the two was their choice of means. Regardless of justifications, Shivaji chose the violent means and Gandhi, the noble path of nonviolence. In some ways, Gandhi took off where Shivaji had left. But in doing so Gandhi very much enhanced the message of Hindu spirituality. He showed that in order to be a revolutionary, one need not necessarily shed any blood, least of all the blood of one's opponent.

India has always had an indigenous system of education. The Indian society throughout the ages cherished a special reverence for the learned. Even until the British arrived, there were village schools that imparted knowledge to the society. It is claimed by Indian historians that these schools formed a part of the system and were strong enough to withstand the shock of political upheavals. No matter how poor their economic status or humble their origin, the learned were always honoured. It is true that the caste prejudices denied the privilege of learning to all on an equal basis, nonetheless, it was available to those who were at the top of the hierarchy or were exceptionally gifted. Despite these drawbacks, the educational institutions were generally considered benevolent and humanitarian. Both the Hindus and Muslims alike perpetuated their existence through a system of patronage. It was the state's duty to look after pāthshālas, moktabas, tōls and madrassas. During bad times, along with other institutions, education, too, suffered due to lack of attention and care.

Such was the case in the eighteenth century. The educational system progressively deteriorated. It became confined to narrow grooves of thought. Action came to be slowly divorced from philosophy. Later, even thought became confined to mere words of scriptures. Scholarship lost rationality, curiosity, innovation and research. It was sad. For, India had drawn its earlier magnificence and splendour from these very sources of learning and inspiration. India's own survival had indirectly depended on the survival of her social institutions. But over the years, that responsibility came to be neglected.¹³⁵ The foreigner cannot be blamed for not preserving the native vitality. One must also admit that but for the exceptional services of the few of those very aliens, India may have lost much more and regained even less.¹³⁶

Pyarelal is of the opinion that the British Court of Directors in England were averse to introducing Western style schools and colleges in India because they feared it would lead to losing India just as they had lost America. Diffusion of knowledge in India was looked upon as contrary to the British interests.¹³⁷ During the mid nineteenth century, the

¹³⁵"It can be justly alleged that the Indian government had dried up the fountains of native talent, and that from the nature of our conquest, not only all encouragement to the advancement of knowledge is withdrawn, but even the actual learning of the nation is likely to be lost and the productions of former genius to be forgotten." quoted from Hon. Mountsuart Elphinstone's Selections from the Minutes and other official Writings. Pyarelal, op. cit., p. 44.

¹³⁶Indians could never forget their cultural debt to Englishmen like Sir William Jones founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784), Sir Charles Wilkins and M.T. Colebrooke, Francis Impey, W. Hastings and many others who devoted themselves to discovering Indian art and history.

¹³⁷"It was our policy in those days to keep the natives of India in the profoundest possible state of barbarism and darkness, and every attempt to diffuse the light of knowledge among the people either of our own or the independent states, was vehemently opposed." quoted from J.W. Kaye's Life of Metcalfe, II. Pyarelal, op. cit., p. 754.

"Orientalists" and the "Anglicists" waged an interesting battle over the subject of the medium of instruction. There was a need to educate some Indians to serve the demands of the growing bureaucracy. It was in the best interest of the rulers to introduce English as the medium of instruction.¹³⁸ It produced a breed of "black sahibs", who thought, dressed, and spoke like the foreigners but were Indian in blood and colour. Among the general masses unfortunately, English education became a symbol of foreign servitude. The common people found it difficult to trust someone who did not speak their language, or dress like themselves. The "Westernized elites" not only appeared alienated from Indian culture, but in reality were what they seemed.¹³⁹ In their eyes, religion was suspect and brahmins were to be blamed for all the evils in Hindu society. To these elites, everything native smacked of decay.

To a certain extent, the above charges were not altogether unfounded. The social rigidities and irrational practices had indeed reached intolerable proportions during the eighteenth century. The malaise was more aggravated by the existing state of economy and political power. It can be called the darkest period of India's religious history. It is often compared to the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, when India produced a rich harvest of saints and seers who preached the simplicity of devotion to personal god. The brahmins were being blamed because as the priestly class they monopolized religious practice. Their undue stress on formalism

¹³⁸ Lord Macauley's famous minute on education delivered on 2nd Feb. 1835 is an apt document of what the British policy of education in India meant in the long run. R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., X.

¹³⁹ They looked down upon the classic languages of India as "uncivilized". Their dislike for everything native led to their scepticism in religion. In this they were aided by missionary propaganda. Thompson & Garratt, op. cit., p. 247.

and rituals had led to many social evils.

Since religion exercised a great deal of influence in the lives of the Indian people, it also determined the condition of their society. The Indian society reflected more or less the attitude religion took toward life. It must be conceded, however, that an idealized state of religious tolerance has hardly existed anywhere in the world. But the eighteenth century India was rife with religious intolerance and excessive irrational practices. When extreme dependence on religious formalism becomes the sole criterion of thought, action, and speech a culture loses its vitality. The strength of conviction and experience that nurture a living faith no longer exist in such a stagnant society. The structure of that religion may remain the same, but the content is no longer valid. From the hindsight wisdom, it appears that the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century very much needed the doubt and scepticism of its preceding age. It is doubtful if a Gandhi would have accomplished what he did, had there been no Renaissance in the first place.¹⁴⁰ In an environmental sense, these developments appear as comprehensive and logical steps leading to the evolution and development of the Satyagraha.

The impact of Western education did create a great deal of difference in the intellectual climate of the country. It had far reaching and powerful effects. How does one even begin to deal with the history of ideas as they emerge, evolve and influence a people, a civilization? It is a very difficult and a complex task. One cannot put a definite date for the development of an idea, much less draw up a chart of chronological evolution.

¹⁴⁰ See R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., X, chs. I to VII. for a detailed account of the change in religious and social ideas, the growth of the new literature and the Press.

One does not even know, for sure, how a person's thoughts and ideas affect the atmosphere around one or how they are affected by the environment and to what extent.

Had there been no Raja Ram Mohan Roy, could there have been an insistence on learning English language on the part of the Indians? Besides had there been no sympathetic Britishers, could Indians have learnt to trust the foreign ruler? It was precisely on account of the initial good-will gained by the British administration that the Indians slowly learnt to rely on their sense of justice and fair play. With the impact of Western ideas and the rise of several reform movements in the subsequent century, India began to change rapidly.

The greatest challenge to Hinduism did not come from either the alien traders or the administrators. It came from the missionary activities. The Christian missionaries directly confronted Hinduism where it was at its weakest. The Europeans in India forgot for the time being what Christianity itself was not free from irrational dogmas and abominable practices. Their vehement criticism of certain Hindu practices exposed those to common consciousness. They challenged the thinking minds of India to rediscover themselves and the heart of their own religious endeavour.¹⁴¹

It was the impact of the Christian ideas rather than the Christian religion that was most influential in forcing the traditional Hindu thought to re-evaluate itself. The conduct and character of their rulers did not in any way convince the native Indians of European superiority in ethics. Along with the goodwill, the alien rulers had also gained a considerable

¹⁴¹ As a result several major and minor religious reform movements arose. Prominent among them were Bramho Samāj, Ārya Samāj, Ramkrishna Mission, Theosophical Society, etc. R.C. Majumdar, op. cit.

notoriety for violence, rapacity, greed and corruption.

To the Indians it appeared natural to expect that their superiority over the British, had to be demonstrated in terms of ethics. It was natural because initially the Indians were denigrated by the British for their barbarism and lack of morality. It was up to Indians in future to falsify those charges and to establish new records. Gandhi appears to have accomplished exactly that. In adopting the ethical means to overcome the adversary Satyagraha does not go out of its way to downgrade the opponent. The idea is never to underrate the virtues of the opposing party. Rather, the strategy is to honour the other party with full trust and confidence in their ability to perceive justice and truth. All this is not done with a condescending attitude of pity and self-righteousness, but with the utmost humility and willingness to change oneself, as well. Satyagraha aims to win through nonviolence and compassion.

As pointed out already, the brahmins were the butt of all ridicule and criticism during the second half of the eighteenth century. By the first half of the nineteenth century, they also became the spear-head of the Indian Renaissance. Raja Rammohan Roy was the leader of that movement. In 1815, his society of friends (Ātmīya Sabhā) was busy discussing and propagating through books, tracts, articles and organized agitation ideas on religion, social reform, theology and ethics. He was a great friend of John Digby and Jeremy Bentham. He was also, the first Indian to visit Europe that too, in an official capacity representing the Indian grievances before the British government on behalf of the Moghul Emperor Akbar II. In 1870, another of his friends Keshabchandra Sen visited England to confer with Max Müller, John Stuart Mill and Gladstone. The East and the West seemed

to be approaching each other on more friendly terms. Definitely, the Brahma Samaj movement was influenced by the western rationalism and intellectual impetus from abroad.

India also witnessed a spontaneous urge for the spiritual regeneration during the nineteenth century. That movement was symbolized in the personality of Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansa. It was truer to the Indian mass traditions of spirituality. It seemed closer to the common masses who understood little or nothing of the western ideas, but were deeply wedded to the native spirit and thought. Ramkrishna claimed to have attained a mystical union with God through Yoga (devotion), and had acquired wisdom of experience. To him, the devotion to God was the supreme goal and religion was just a path leading to it. He preached the universality of truth, oneness of God, and the real value of virtue as the central core of all religions. But it was left up to his disciple Narendra Nath Dutta (Swami Vivekananda) to carry that message across to the people.

After the advent of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda, Hinduism seemed to have acquired a new image both at home and abroad. They generated a new kind of confidence and hope. That message was exactly what the Indian national awakening needed to boost up their spirits. Gandhi seems to have taken a great deal from their teachings. Like them he too, emphasized that religion was a realization. It ought to bring spiritual vitality in the daily lives of the people. Satyagraha went a step further in claiming to unite religion with politics, something which only a century ago would have appeared a naive assertion.

(iv) Ethical Aspect

The society itself was not devoid of ethics, although the Indian economy religion and politics suffered a great collapse under the colonial influence. True, the traditional code of ethics may have lost its hold in some quarters, but on the whole, most people respected the higher values of life and conduct. The basic precepts of 'right' and 'wrong', 'virtue' and 'vice', as also the inherited notions of karma, mokṣa, and rebirth remained intact. From the most learned to the most ignorant, there was a fairly consistent agreement as to the meaning these concepts carried. However, the important concept of dharma (obligation) began to be discussed more and more as Hinduism progressed from reform to revival to reinterpretation. It is always the task of the spiritually refined and the wise to redefine and illustrate through their own conduct the truth of certain vital beliefs. It was Gandhi's task to do the same in the political sphere.

In the realm of ethics, it was just as paramount for a Hindu to remain virtuous, pious and pure as it was for a Muslim or a Christian. But in their day to day existence, both the Hindus and the Muslims had at times relied more on the prescriptions of the priests rather than ethics. Both had also committed unethical deeds in the name of religion. Most Christian critics of the Indian society were highly prejudiced in their views. However, not all Europeans thought in dispeakable manner about the native Indians. Warren Hastings for instance has left glowing accounts of the Indian people.

Great pains have been taken to inculcate into the public mind (in England) an opinion, that the native Indians are in a state of complete moral turpitude, and live in the constant and unrestrained commission of every vice and crime that can disgrace human

nature. I affirm, by the oath that I have taken, that this description of the people...is untrue, and wholly unfounded...the Hindoos...are gentle benevolent, more susceptible of gratitude for kindness shown them than prompted to vengeance for wrongs inflicted...the precepts of their religion are wonderfully fitted to promote the best ends of society, its peace and good order.¹⁴²

Another distinguished administrator John Malcolm wrote of the Indians: "They are brave, generous, humane and their truth is as remarkable as their courage." According to Captain Sydenham, Hindus were loyal, intelligent, active and honest, as long as their religious sensitivities were not hurt. All these qualities were attributed to the Indians at a time when according to both the British and the Indian historians, Indian society was at its lowest of ebbs.¹⁴³

On account of such praise, the Indians acquired an image of mild disposition, polished manners and loyalty to their masters, in good faith. Indian kindness and generosity had won them wide acclaim, but only among the fair minded Europeans. The rest still looked down upon the natives with mixed feelings of superiority and repugnance. Unfortunately, the conduct of the East India Company's servants was an absolute disgrace to the Europeans. To the Indians, the Europeans appeared afflicted with violence and debauchery, alcoholism and crime.¹⁴⁴ The natives at the Indian ports viewed the aliens with fear. They identified Europeans with their religion: "Christian religion, devil religion; Christian much drunk;

¹⁴²Chopra, et. al., op. cit., III, 93 quotes Warren Hastings' evidence before Committees of both Houses of Parliament in 1813.

¹⁴³ibid.; R.C. Majumdar, op. cit.; Thompson and Garratt, op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ibid.

Christian much do wrong, much beat, much abuse."¹⁴⁵

The subsequent years of British rule did much to alter both the above mentioned images. As was likely to happen to any people under subjection, loss of Indian independence led to the loss of national character. Indians became stereotyped as weak, irresponsible, untrustworthy and indolent. They felt broken in spirit, impoverished and degraded. Fear became the predominant characteristic of the Indians. At the social and economic level, the decay of the village system meant the destruction of village prosperity and social stability. The lack of self-respect further impoverished the inner sources of strength. Freebooters and decoits began to flourish in the countryside. Princes became estranged from their own subjects as they began to rely more and more on the aid of the British residents.¹⁴⁶

Viewed in this light, the ethical dimensions of Gandhi's Satyagraha appear even more striking. It is far easier to exhort a healthy and strong society to renounce violence and to practice peaceful persuasion. But it is much more difficult to convince the weak and the dispossessed to give up violence. More so because violence is often viewed as the last resort. To ask the oppressed to set an example of good-will by being compassionate to their oppressors, is even harder. Cynical as it may appear, Gandhi was, in fact, trying to tell the starving millions of India, not to be desperate. He was pleading with them to practice infinite compassion in dealing with one of the mightiest empires the world has known. It was not an easy task by any stretch of the imagination. Especially so, because movements were al-

¹⁴⁵Chopra, et. al., op. cit., III, 96.

¹⁴⁶Indian literature of that period captures vividly the mood of the times. One whose works strike immediately to mind is Munshi Prem Chand - the famous novalist and short story writer of Hindi.

ready afoot to bring freedom to India through violent means and bloody revolution. There were attempts made to discredit Gandhi, both at home and abroad.¹⁴⁷

Perhaps there is an inherent relationship between the oppression of others and of oneself. The two seem to be inter-dependent and inter-related. Foreign rule is essentially debasing, and dehumanizing. It aims at exploitation of others. In the very process, it contradicts the higher dictates of the conscience. It debases those who practice as well as those against whom it is practised. Foreign rule is unnatural, because the subjection is not based on the free consent of the people concerned. A state that does not base itself on the genuine affections and loyalty of its citizens, is a degenerate state. It contains within itself the seeds of its own demise. It is also a weak state because, it cannot face any challenge of the conscientious objection. Simple objection to a rule is not enough. Objection can easily be repressed through threats of punishments and violent overpowering. But when objection is combined with awareness of the conscience; no power is qualified enough to match that strength. In Satyagraha, the idea is to offer conscientious objection to a wrong.

Initially, India was blessed with men like the Munroes, Elphinstones, Malcolms and Todds. They gave to India (although with a patronizing attitude) what they considered were the ideals of the British public service. But the breed of men who followed, came with the arrogance and superior notions of the conquerors. They were scornful of everything Indian. They considered docile obedience as the highest of all virtues to be fostered among the natives. As a result flogging was restored in the Indian army. Awe, fear

¹⁴⁷ R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., XI.

and inferiority took the place of trust, affection and good-will. European novices finding themselves in positions of power and authority, practiced "oriental despotism" with a vengeance. Macaulay's dream was to infuse English taste, opinions and morals in the Indian mind through English education. To a large extent he succeeded in his aim of de-Indianizing those Indian subjects of the Empire. But the influence of the Western ideas went even further than he had foreseen.

By the late nineteenth century, there were Indians who had drunk deep of Mill, Bentham, Comte, Herbert Spencer and Burke. Indians had begun to study law, edit newspapers and journals. They could now compete successfully with Europeans in almost any branch of learning and endeavour. Also, there was a growing evidence of political consciousness. Indians not only demanded their own rights but were progressively reminding the rulers of their obligations to govern justly. Indian discontent with unfairness mounted in proportion to their exclusion from a fair share of participation in Indian affairs. Instead of suffering their lot silently, Indians began to demand with greater urgency and eloquence, their right to govern themselves. The Queen's proclamation of 1858 had to recognize and guarantee her Indian subjects the equal rights and privileges common to all. However, the promises of the Crown were observed more in breach than in practice. As a result, instead of becoming her majesty's loyal servants, the educated Indian elites became sworn opponents of the British rule. They considered 'subjection' India's main curse. When the problem was fully grasped, Indians naturally wished to solve it. But the pertinent question facing the Indians was about the question of means.

As discussed already in the previous pages, the failure of the 1857 revolution had taught the Indian leaders some important lessons. Consequently,

the search was directed inwards. They preferred to gain their ends through legitimate and constitutional agitation, at first. But later, the revolutionaries and the radical wing of the Congress party began to disagree with the slow pace of the moderates. Organization on a broad and comprehensive scale was considered imperative to India's goals. But there were some practical problems. For example, the gap between the masses and the elite was very wide. A great deal of disagreement still existed regarding the form of public opposition to the British rule. Violence was not entirely ruled out, but the voices in favour of the constitutional agitation were still strong. Besides, nobody knew exactly how to enlist the support of the general masses. Ever since its inception in 1855 until 1919, the Indian National Congress floundered, from year to year, trying to reconcile the differences between the moderates and the extremists. But they refused to agree on the definition of commonly acceptable means.¹⁴⁸

The establishment of the Congress itself is a long story.¹⁴⁹ It had its beginnings in the Society for the Propagation of Nationalism. The visionaries of the Indian political liberation could not view their goal as alienated from India's social and spiritual regeneration. They wanted to restrain the autocratic spirit of the Raj but only through the constitutional means. For a long time their efforts proved futile. Had it not been for the unselfish and valuable services of some of the most generous British men and women¹⁵⁰ it would have been quite difficult to conceive of such a com-

¹⁴⁸G.N. Sarma and Moin Shakir, Politics and Society (Aurangabad: Parimal Prakashan, 1976).

¹⁴⁹R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., X and XI.

¹⁵⁰Among them are Cobden, John Bright, Charles Bradlaugh, Henry Fawcett, Gladstone, Sir W.W. Hunter, Sir Henry Cotton, Sir W. Wedderburn, Mrs. Annie Basant and A.O. Hume.

prehensive organization as the Indian National Congress.

The outspoken utterances of these large-hearted Englishmen, and their exertions on India's behalf kept alive the spark of hope in the Indian breast when the horizon was the darkest, and prevented the spirit of her nascent nationalism from drooping, or frustration leading to bitterness and despair. They made possible the final reconciliation between India and England.¹⁵¹

Gandhi's task was twofold. Firstly, he had to Indianize the leadership so that it would not appear alienated from the native India. Secondly, he had to seek out an effective means of constitutional agitation. The first was intended to narrow the gap between the educated elites and the illiterate masses of India. It was also aimed to unite the varying shades of opinions and views into a coherent whole so that their voice would carry the weight of the numbers. As long as the elites remained alienated, they would have also remained a miniscule minority only to be ignored in the processes of constitutional agitation for a democratic government. Gandhi was quick to grasp the general nature of the Indian reality. He realized that the rural India had to be approached on its own terms, in a language and manner, which its people could understand and appreciate.

Gandhi's second requirement, initially appeared doubtful to the Indian national leaders. Personally, Gandhi was convinced of its importance through his South African experience. In the light of India's past history, he completely ruled out violence as a means, let alone even consider its practicability. Ethically, Gandhi regarded violence unacceptable to the Indian sense of aesthetic and experience. Satyagraha definitely appeared

¹⁵¹pyarelal, op. cit., p. 121.

more profitable and sagacious. It was honourable even in defeat and had greater chances of success. Rarely have people chosen to deliberately retard the achievement of their own freedom from an alien rule on grounds more noble than nonviolence. Seldom have the means of resolving a conflict been so worthy of praise. Few are the battles where the victor and the vanquished shared equally the outcome of their struggles. Satyagraha was such a means. Both Britain and India had to prove themselves worthy of recognizing its ethical potency. It would be a tribute to their restraint and sense of true nobility in conduct.

Chapter IV. Gandhi Through Others' Eyes

Satyagraha is Gandhi's most significant and potent gift to the art and science of political action. It is much more than "a mode of action and a method of enquiry."¹ To my understanding, it is an entirely novel and penetratingly dynamic perspective on the thought and practice of Politics which is an essential aspect of human endeavour. It is an infinitely superior means of redressing social and political wrongs. Through Satyagraha, Gandhi has emphasized an entirely unique and hitherto disregarded phenomenon of ethical religion.²

By ethical religion is meant that aspect of ethical experience which transcends the narrow confines of specific ethno-centric views and makes no distinction between the sacred and the secular. It rises above the profanity of the commonplace. It accords reverence to that which is the noblest and the best in all living experience.

My contention is precisely this - it is not possible to understand certain aspects of human affairs without coming to grips with the metaphysical aspect of one's being. Much less can one hope to understand Gandhi or his Satyagraha - the key concept of his political philosophy - without taking the spiritual aspect of life into definite consideration. Spirituality is the basic premise of Gandhi's entire argument in favour of the

¹Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest Of Violence (rev. ed.; Berkeley: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. v.

²Ethical Religion also happens to be the title of a collection of articles translated by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It was first published in Gujrati under the title of Niti Dharma, in a serial form.

Politics of Compassion. Why must one be nonviolent? To this Gandhi would have replied "Because nonviolence is the Law of Life." He equated love and compassion with nonviolence and that subsequently with life itself. Consequently, politics which incorporates all affairs of life has also to be in a harmonious relationship with the rest. Nonviolence is the basis of that harmony. Such was the ethics of Gandhian thought. But when conviction is infused with fervour, it becomes religion.

Ethics presupposes practicability. If for some reason or other it fails to appear practical in a given situation, human ingenuity is not lacking to provide reasonable grounds for their non-application. But religion and its injunctions fall into an altogether different category. One's religiosity largely determines the extent of one's behaviour. One often performs religious acts or fails to, depending upon one's religious upbringing. Yet in the name of religion men have committed serious crimes sometimes even against their own conscience. Everything religious, need not be ethical. Similarly everything ethical also need not necessarily be religious.

In assigning an ethico-religious property to a particular mode of living or thinking, one is neither talking purely of ethics, or for that matter of religion. It is a combination of both. It is ethical, because it partakes of ethical notions based on the grounds of reasonable justice. It is religious, because it goes beyond reason to affirm the reality of metaphysics. One need not necessarily contradict the other. It is possible to be rational without being ethical, just as it is possible to be fanatic without being religious. To be ethically-religious, is to be reasonable without being fanatic, to be practical without

being utterly selfish and to be religious without being dogmatic. Through ethical religion there is very little possibility of forsaking one's conscience in search of one's liberation. At the same time, there seems no valid reason why one ought to disregard practical aspects of one's endeavour in the ethical pursuit of one's goals. The two go side by side. Here the means become ends and medium, the message.

Satyagraha is a means and an end. It is at once a philosophy of action and thought (and speech) as well as action and thought (and speech) itself. The two are not and cannot be distinct and if differentiated will contaminate the whole Satyagraha endeavour. The confusion which one observes is not due to "the failure either to delineate the method, in terms, of practical rules of procedure or to formulate the philosophy of action which informs and conditions the technique," as suggested by Bondurant.³ It is primarily and basically because of our tendency to differentiate and distinguish the two inseparably linked phenomena. Thought and action are not and cannot be so isolated. Especially in the Gandhian technique, they condition the very premise of the quiet but persuasive argument in favour of truth as seen and sought after by the Satyagrahi.

In this chapter, I wish to relate to the reader the various views and opinions I collected from the informed and some of the closest associates of Mahatma Gandhi. My research was conducted throughout the length and breadth of India, in various cities, towns and villages. I also had the privilege of consulting many Gandhi Museums and archives, scattered all over the country. I also went to the āshrams set up by Gandhi himself. During the short period of four months in the Summer of 1976, I was able to

³J.V. Bondurant, op. cit., p. 4.

interview a fair number of individuals, all of whom in some way or the other have had the opportunity either to work with Gandhi in very close proximity, or who have dedicated their lives and careers to the Gandhian experiment. Some of my interviewees never did see Gandhi, except from a distance. But they were very much cognizant of the Gandhian impact on the various walks of Indian life due to an intimate association with their own field of activity. I was particularly curious about the reactions of those who could not appreciate or ever see eye to eye with Gandhi. And I was equally amazed at what I found. However, my discussions here are only limited to the specific issues addressed in this thesis.

This chapter, intends to restate, explicate and where possible, to point out the contradictory views held by those whom I interviewed. Except where it was significant, if a majority of my subjects held a particular opinion, I did not feel the need to identify them individually. Some, did not wish to be quoted and, therefore, I have respected their confidence. At other times, if I do mention the propounder of an idea, it is because I consider it irrelevant as to who said it. The significant thing was that it was expressed.

The interviews were unstructured. There were no definite set of questions asked. Sometimes the subjects performed the amazing feats of circumventing the chief issue. The nature of my questions were such that unless they themselves had understood Gandhian philosophy in its bare essentials, they could not have answered them meaningfully. For example to ask Mr. X (being the spearhead of invectives against a controversial figure in the

⁴Appendix at the end of this thesis contains the lists of all the important places and people I visited along with the brief annotations about them.

contemporary Indian politics) what he understood by truth and nonviolence in thoughts, words and actions, implied my directly challenging his movement of its ideological purity, especially, when that purity happened to be his chief assertion. And yet, ironically enough Mr. X was among the few surviving close associates of Gandhi. It was equally futile to expect Mr. Y to be like the Mahatma because Mr. Y neither thought nor lived like Gandhi. Frankly, it would be unreasonable to expect Gandhian co-workers to be absolutely devoid of human frailties. My aim is to illustrate by example how ethics and conduct are intimately related in Gandhian philosophy. In order to gain an understanding of these, one had not just to read and listen but also to observe and note what was there to be aware of.

A prepared questionnaire was not required. I realized my questions had to be spontaneous, multi-faceted, flexible and suited to the person I was interviewing. I could not ask the same questions to a shrewd cabinet minister, a simple peasant, an evasive diplomate, a pensive judge, an erudite scholar or an overly enthusiastic youth worker. Much less could I inquire from a Prima-dona what inspired her to sing for Gandhi and then turn to one of the accused collaborators of his assassination to question their motives in the same diction. I had hoped to get a deeper understanding of Satyagraha, I found myself inextricably involved in a whole philosophy of life and living. Perhaps that is what research is all about. I had devised theoretical classifications in my mind which made a great deal of intellectual sense. But having arrived in India and talked to a multitude of people I realized they simply would not serve the purpose. As a result, I ended up with a voluminous amount of written and/or taped and often confidential conversations. These contain some of the answers to my wandering search through India and my research into Gandhi.

Part I

One of the most complex yet fundamental task before me was to define the meaning and connotations of the word 'ethics'. I received several answers to my query. Following is the account of my findings.

Ethics represents basically two notions: one deals with it as a discipline, the other as a system of values.⁵ As a discipline it refers to a field of moral perfection which involves training, learning, study (in terms of contemplation) and active pursuit of that, which is good as opposed to bad. In a sense it is an awareness of moral consciousness. It has to do with the self-imposed obligation or moral duty of that which 'ought' to be done. As a set of values or moral principles it connotes certain highly noteworthy, universal aspirations. Ethics definitely relates to those principles of conduct or system of beliefs which govern the mode or manner of personal/public behaviour for an individual or group.

Ethics does not base itself on any specific school or system of metaphysics. It is not a property of a single nation, creed or a civilization. But it emerges from the religious experience of mankind. It finds expression in a language which is universal, timeless and affirms the essential unity of mankind. Ethics synthesizes from the crudest to the most creative genius of human thought and endeavour.

According to R.R. Diwakar, it is possible to distinguish between morality and ethics, although the two are sometimes inextricably linked. Morality, he suggests, is of the person, of doing things, understanding things,

⁵Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (rev. ed.; U.S.A.: Merriam Company, 1971), p. 285.

and following certain principles in terms of inanimate objects; whereas ethics is always a social inter-relationship.⁶ He regards morality as an integral part of ethics. To him, ethics implies a more comprehensive phenomenon. An individual is not a society, he explained. But as soon as one comes into contact with the existence of another (whether it be a human being, an animal, a plant or a thing) the two together constitute a society. In that co-existence ethics and morality are both inter-twined. If one were to misuse or abuse a table for any purpose, other than what it was meant for, one would be acting immorally not unethically, since the table has no perceivable reaction. "Ethics comes into being when there is a reaction of life, whether it is a person or an animal, whether it is a pet dog or a mad dog."⁷

Being a social animal, man cannot think in terms of isolation. He cannot exist without ethics. Ethics is the core of social order. Without it there would be anarchy. Politics involves dealing with others. One cannot deal with others without invoking ethical values. Therefore, politics is only an extension of ethics. That is exactly what Gandhi meant by using the term "spiritualization of politics". He could as well have called it "ethicalization", maintains Diwakar.

An eminent Gandhian Judge perceived ethics as the result of man thinking about himself and about the way in which he could best subserve his own interests, both spiritual and material. He asserted: "except it be by the process of thinking what is 'wrong' and what is 'right', there

⁶R.R. Diwakar, conversations, New Delhi: August 1976.

⁷ibid.

cannot be any code of ethics." What if there appeared a conflict between the individual and him as a member of the society? "As a matter of fact - the whole human effort is directed towards the resolution of this conflict," the Judge remarked. The individual's concern is with the freedom to act, while the society is entrusted with guarding the welfare of all. The society has the task of making sure that the individual freedom does not in any way hamper the welfare of the entire society.

The judge reminded me that in law there is a constant attempt to reconcile both the opposite ends of that polarity. To me the problem of providing for the welfare of the whole society, while ensuring a worthwhile life for the individual, and seeing that his personality blossomed to its fullest was very real. But the judge failed to see any possible existence of a genuine conflict between the individual and the society. "There need not be, and there should not be a conflict between them," was his final verdict. A good part of man's life and activities are associated with his inter-relationship with others in the environment. And that relationship is governed by the age old principles of ethical conduct, which to the Hon. Srinivasan's mind were based on the concepts of truth and nonviolence.⁸

T.M.P. Mahadevan⁹ goes so far as to equate Hindu ethics with the universal norms of ethical conduct. He, too, thinks that the universal ethics is based on ahimsa (nonviolence) and satya (truth). He summed up the message of all religious experience in the golden rule: "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." If there were any sutra

⁸Natoor Srinivasan, Conversations, Bangalore: July, 1976.

⁹T.M.P. Mahadevan, Conversations, Madras: July, 1976.

(aphorism), which summarized Gandhi's entire philosophy, he said it could be thus expressed: "acknowledge others as yourself." Mahadevan stoutly maintains that Gandhi was an Advaitin (a non-dualist).¹⁰

J.B. Kripalani¹¹ was deeply aware of the metaphysical anchorage of ethics in the Indian philosophy, while he lamented its absence in the contemporary Western thought. Comparing the two, he explained:

They had more or less given up their metaphysical moorings and tried to make ethics, empirical as much as possible. Whereas with Gandhi, ethics is nothing if it is not drawn from an ultimate metaphysical source of reality.¹²

Another interviewee, who shall remain anonymous, said "As an Indian, Gandhi would put metaphysics, higher than ethics." He was of the opinion that Indians were more prone to metaphysics than ethics, whereas Greeks were more devoted to ethics than metaphysics. "Ethics," he said, "is concerned more with life in this world...Even Socrates gave up his life for a moral purpose. He did not invoke the soul - it comes naturally to a Greek. He gave up his life to answer the call of an ethical notion."¹³

C.N. Patil¹⁴ holds that to the West ethics is a system of thought which clarifies principles of conduct in relationship to their fundamental

¹⁰"Gandhi suffered from a most tragic sin complex. A Christian believes in Sin, whereas an Indian - a sophisticated Indian looks upon Sin as the expression of ignorance (avidyā). There is the philosophy of Viśitādvaita (qualified non-dualism) in which you will find the entire repetition of Christian ethics...But Gandhi did not get it from Ramanuja. He got it from the Bible...from his Christian exposure and orientation." Anonymous, Conversations, Bangalore: July, 1976.

¹¹J.B. Kripalani, Conversations, Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

¹²ibid.

¹³Anonymous, Conversations, Bangalore: July, 1976. I disagree with such an interpretation. The said person equated Gandhian means with ethics and end with metaphysics.

¹⁴C.N. Patil, ibid., Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

assumptions about God, nature of man, and life. In the West ethics is always expected to be logically coherent. Western concept of ethics is very rationalist in its approach, derived as it is from the deductions of the fundamental Christian and the Socratic assumptions. Although the medieval Christian ethics is not rationalistic because it takes for granted certain assumptions about God, Heaven and Hell, as compared to dharma (obligation), it is clearly intellectual in its formulations.¹⁵

I was interested in finding out the contents of ethics as understood by my subjects. There was no unanimity among them. Some were of the opinion that there are no absolute, eternal, autonomous values, applicable to all ages, in all cultures. They concluded, therefore, that there was no universal ethics. Others were equally convinced that there were, in fact, some everlasting, non-controversial values which were bound to remain so irrespective of time and place. Among them, they cited, were values of truth, beauty, and goodness.

Truth and Goodness definitely - yes. Or Truth and Moral or Ethical excellence. If you ask me 'what is moral excellence!' I would say - ultimately it is truth. It is the congruity between thought and action.¹⁶

Diwakar also pointed out to me a letter addressed to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur,¹⁷ in which Gandhi had divulged: "It is all a matter of feelings whether this is good or that is bad." Diwakar quoted from the Bhagavadgītā

¹⁵"To the West, ethics is only one of the interests of life. Self-development, self-expression, individual rights...are all competing claims in which ethics is a kind of framework. For us the primary aim of life is Dharma." ibid.

¹⁶Dr. Usha Mehta, Conversations, Bombay: June, 1976.

¹⁷R.R. Diwakar, op. cit., date of the letter unspecified.

to make his point clear. "It means that one must rise above the concepts of the 'good' and 'evil' and be dvandhatita, which is a state of consciousness beyond the duality of conflicts. One must rise above the dual perceptions of reality and be absorbed in Yoga (union with the Eternal)."¹⁸ This interpretation seemed to elucidate the Gandhian stand. Definitely, there must be a subjective side to ethics since it is dictated by the individual conscience.

It may seem somewhat contradictory for Gandhi to contend that, although in an ultimate sense there was neither 'good' nor 'bad' and that that these qualities were both as irrelevant as the sensations of the 'heat' or 'cold', a Satyagrahi must be true to his conscience and must meticulously practice his virtues. But Gandhi was being consistent if one views his words in the context of his philosophy. "Ethics is not the final word, if one wants to understand Gandhi," asserts Diwakar, "it is Gandhi's innate belief."

Belief in the immortality of the Soul and of some power, call it God, or Cosmic Law, which is the Ultimate in which Gandhi believed and that is why he could say "There is a greater power than the sword."¹⁹

Diwakar explained that most of us have a tendency to think that man is a combination of śarīra (physical body), prāna (life breath), and mānas (mind); that he is a complete being. But Gandhi did not think so. He believed that these are merely the instruments for the realization of truth, which is eternal, unchanging and full of the joy of existence. It is from such depth of perception that Gandhi said there was no defeat for a

¹⁸ibid.

¹⁹ibid.

Satyagrahi. Were it not so, his words would carry no meaning.²⁰ By the same token then neither would a Satyagrahi know any personal triumph. If his movement succeeded, it would be the triumph of truth. "Yes," Diwakar concurred with me, but went on to say that Gandhi's own Satyagrahas had 'defeats'. By that he meant shortcomings, personal drawbacks. That was why Gandhi had to repeat Satyagraha in different ways and forms, during the struggle for independence.²¹

Different forms of Satyagraha were devised because the earlier ones were either withdrawn or they simply 'fizzled out'. Therefore, to claim that 'a Satyagrahi knows no defeat' is to mean that truth will ultimately prevail, although the individuals may come and go or may even die in the attempt. It means that a Satyagrahi does not take either the defeat or the triumph personally. Diwakar thinks that all the strength which Gandhi could muster came from his fundamental faith in satya (truth) as one sees it. He linked truth with the 'Cosmic Law' (ṛta).²² In asserting that truth never fails, Gandhi implied that truth always had the

²⁰ibid.

²¹ibid. First Satyagraha in 1919 was in the form of land tax, then in 1921 it appeared as the nonviolent, non-cooperation campaign. In 1930 he gave it the shape of civil-disobedience in defence of the Salt Law, in 1940, as an individual Satyagraha. Often he deliberately postponed a mass movement so as not to embarrass the government and to prepare the nation, psychologically. Then the final call of Quit India movement came in 1942.

²²Both these terms appear frequently in the Vedas. Diwakar quoted "Satyāṅg nāsti parō dharmāḥ" (there is no higher law than truth). Satyā (truth) is something abstract unless, it manifests itself. Ṛta means the Cosmic Law which operates in the manifestation of Truth. Since the manifestation has to be according to law-Satyam and ṛtam are often linked with one another. Therefore "Satyant vratēn parishanchhyāmi" (I am sprinkling the truth with ṛta). ibid.

backing and support of the Cosmic Law.²³ I asked Diwakar if the Cosmic Law took into account both the violent and nonviolent aspects of evolution. The question did not seem relevant to him.

The question is, with what forces is one to align oneself - violence or nonviolence? I consider Gandhi a constructive genius. He will never support anything which is destructive.²⁴

Dr. Gopala Ramachandran²⁵ answered the same query in a slightly different way: "when we are faced with the good and the evil, I must stand by the good, though my idea of good may change tomorrow." One may tend to conclude from the above that Gandhi very much believed in the intuitive insight of the moment. Professor Frank Thakurdas disagreed strongly.

T.H. Green - the idealist has justified war for morally worthwhile causes. This type of thinking is called ethical relativism. Mahatma Gandhi was a die-hard absolutist. He could not make any justification of this kind.²⁶

Both Ramachandran and Thakurdas would however agree with Badruddin Tyabjee²⁷ that Gandhian ethics does definitely possess universal appeal and that it cannot be narrowly confined to any particular religion, although

²³This has been beautifully brought out by Heinrich Zimmer in his Philosophies of India while speaking of Satyagraha, he says Gandhi believed in India's freedom because according to Cosmic Law, no nation can be dominated by others. ibid.

²⁴ibid.

²⁵Dr. Gopala Ramachandran, Conversations, Gandhi Gram: July, 1976.

²⁶Professor F. Thakurdas, Conversations, New Delhi: August, 1976.

²⁷B. Tayabjee, Conversations, New Delhi: May, 1976.

Gandhi often used religious symbols to get his message across. What Gandhi was really doing was to reiterate, re-state and re-emphasize certain age-old principles of conduct.²⁸ As Mrs Laxmi Menon so aptly said Gandhi was "putting ethics into action."²⁹

Both in his perspective and conduct, Gandhi was guided by the dharma nīti (ethical attitude). That attitude did not permit any discrepancies between the sacred and the profane, the public and the private. It did not differentiate between the ethical and the political realms.³⁰

The well known contemporary Indian poet and a writer, Jainendra kumar Jain,³¹ saw in Gandhi's attitude a vision of complete life.

In the realm of spiritual existence or the unity of life, nothing can be discarded, thrown away or neglected. It is all a part of the whole.

To Gandhi, ethics meant the practical side of his efforts. He knew that truth could not be realized through mere contemplation. In order to experience truth, one had to live it out through the service of mankind. That according to Professor Abid Hussain is the 'soul of religion'.³² Professor Thakurdas also agreed that Gandhi very much lived what he believed in, and sincerely practiced his philosophy.

²⁸Professor B. Bhattacharya, Conversations, Calcutta: August, 1976.

²⁹"Ideals are all there, always flying into the air so to speak. Idealism is not in fixing the goals but...in the sense of sacrifice that produces the action for those goals." Laxmi Menon, Conversations, Trivendrum: July, 1976.

³⁰J.B. Kripalani, Conversations, Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

³¹J.K. Jain, Conversations, Delhi: August, 1976.

³²Professor A. Hussain, Conversations, Jamia Miliya University, August, 1976.

Dr. Mehta³³ told me Gandhi came to grips with ethical notions early in his life. He learnt to imbibe these into daily living with the growth of his own convictions. His later years were devoted to synthesizing, refining, and trying to understand those values. By aiding his people to educate themselves and to improve the ethical aspects of their lives, Gandhi laid the foundations of a stable political and social reconstruction. He believed that the right actions could only emerge from right values, - hence the importance of ethics for Gandhi. Marjorie Sykes, who had worked closely with C.F. Andrews and Rabindranath Tagore asserts that Gandhi not only insisted but also tried to put *into practice* what he preached. He showed how ethical means could best achieve the desired goals.³⁴

But the pursuit of higher principles in life is not easy. They require conscious efforts and sacrifices, which can sometimes be very cruel. Gandhi was aware of the suffering his pursuits entailed. Yet, he never gave up the effort. His life was a conscious effort.³⁵

Kaka Kalelkar³⁶ views Gandhi's success as mainly due to his devotion to ethics. Kalelkar maintains that Gandhi would never accept or do anything which went against his ethical principles. "To Gandhi," he said "ethics was the centre of his life and politics, his main field of life and work." As Kaka sees it, absolute devotion to truth, nonviolence, selflessness and

³³U. Mehta, Conversations, op. cit.

³⁴M. Sykes, Conversations, New Delhi: May, 1976.

³⁵R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, op. cit.

³⁶Kaka Kalelkar, Conversations, New Delhi: May, 1976.

service are the foundations of Gandhian ethics.³⁷

It was pleasantly amusing to hear the words of appraisal from a professor with Marxist leanings who claimed in one breath that to Gandhi, ethics meant the well-being of the people and welfare of the masses while insisting in the next, that his was the ethics of the insurgent bourgeoisie against the age-old values of feudal life. During the same interview he put forth:

I view Mahatma Gandhi as a Mahatma (great soul) not only because of the ethical principles that he propounded, although, these were noble and correct by themselves (but) that Gandhi also fulfilled the historical needs of the country, in a particular period of our history. Gandhi fulfilled the yearnings of the dumb millions of India.³⁸

C.N. Patil also believes that Gandhi thought his contemporary elite-society was economically, socially and ideologically a parasite on the masses (the term he used is 'idealistically' I think by that he meant 'ideology'). Gandhi was anxious that such a state of affairs ought to end and the common masses ought to be permitted to come into their own, since it was their labour which sustained the society, their "surplus values" which created the property of the rich. Patil says, even the ethical values emanate from their common experience. "The elites only give expressions to it. They define it through poetry and intellect. It is the masses who create them and live by them in their lives."³⁹ On insisting that they be recognized Gandhi was voicing their aspirations. Viewed in this light, Gandhi is really the image of peasant India. He is India become

³⁷ ibid. also Acharloo, Conversations, Bangalore: July, 1976.

³⁸ B. Bhattacharya, Conversations, op. cit.

³⁹ C.N. Patil, Conversations, op. cit.

visible and articulate.

Diwakar consistently argues that ethical life is a difficult all consuming effort. He calls it a sādhanā (discipline). Though that is the direction of human evolution, we have not grasped it as such. To us it appears difficult because we fail to realize the greater joy of being ethical. Experience of that greater joy (ānandam) is essential before man can understand to appreciate its effulgence. Diwakar asks: "by what is a state going to be judged?" Then answers: "by being able to produce such people." Meaning thereby, people like Gandhi and Socrates who would be aware of the other faculties of existence and experience. He refers to the spiritual aspect of man as the most important aspect of his being.⁴⁰

Gandhi's way of living was not confined merely to a movement, an act or an objective. It was a life involved in transformation of life in and around itself. His techniques would be lifeless without the philosophy which informed his entire thinking, willing and being. Gandhi wanted to emphasize the harmonious growth of man. In order to do so, he consistently reminded his fellowmen of the superiority of conscience over all other matters of life.⁴¹ In politics, he applied the same phenomenon to make the individual more powerful than the combined power of the entire government.⁴²

⁴⁰R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, op. cit.

⁴¹"What is repugnant to one's conscience, he has a right to refuse." M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, XVI, 407.

⁴²"When Gandhi fasted the British throne trembled. Such was the greatness of one individual...Gandhi wanted to build such individuals in every country and nation. A man sitting far away in Wardha could have his effects felt in England...that is the type of people Gandhi wanted." Anonymous, Conversations, op. cit.

Rajni Kothari does not think Gandhi was very much interested in the ontological or etymological concepts of ethics. His primary concern lay in the working out of the ethical idea. Gandhi's concept of ethics was closely related to his idea of truth. Gandhi preferred to call it "ethical religion". Central to it, was the individual without the debilitating individualism of the West. To Gandhi, dignity of man came first. "For Aristotle, Ethics was a prolegomena to Politics. For Gandhi, Politics is only the working out of Ethics."

Gandhi applied the same principles of right and wrong to politics which he applied to his private relationships. Ramachandran says Gandhi always insisted.

My politics is a part of my ethics and my ethics is a part of my politics. And both politics and ethics are dominated by my spiritual approach to life.

Asked if there were occasions when Gandhi may have been confused about the values of ethical principles and political expediency, most of my respondents emphatically denied being aware of any. Gandhi would "never" deliberately or knowingly as much as even condone a "wrong", let alone commit one. Of course, they said, there may have been a number of occasions when he was torn between choices of seemingly equal importance and there were times when he doubted whether a particular course of action was the best or not. But that was only human. They also agreed that Gandhi was not super-human. At times, he made tremendous mistakes, like most other leaders. But Gandhi was also quick to accept them. In the case

⁴³R. Kothari, Conversations, New Delhi: May, 1976.

⁴⁴G. Ramchandran, Conversations, op. cit.

of an error it was not uncommon for Gandhi to at once withdraw and retrace his steps. Gandhi often apologized to the adversary for having acted wrongly. He was not shy of admitting he had committed a "Himalayan blunder". Even in the middle of a mass movement, Gandhi would often call off or withdraw a campaign if he felt it was not in accordance with the agreed principles. Gandhi's sense of justice and fair play in dealing with his opponents had won him many friends, even among his sworn enemies.

I wondered if these qualities were unique attributes of Gandhi. I asked how stringently was Gandhian ethics followed down the rank and file of his movement. B.R. Nanda, the biographer of Gandhi and the Nehrus frankly admitted:

They were not always stringently followed. There must have been people who embezzled...both in the middle and lower echelons of the congress...As far as the higher levels were concerned they were all men and women of great morals and lived up to high standards. That was so even before Gandhi came on the scene. A.O. Hume paid money from his own pocket to run the Congress. Ten years before Gandhi, Gokhale formed the Servants of India Society and...these men were respected for it.

"There was nothing novel about it," Nanda calmly observed. "All those who gave up wordly things...offered to devote their lives for the service of the people have been respected and honoured. Even today, no political leader has a chance of success until his or her personal integrity is accepted."⁴⁵ Gandhi, too, was respected for the same quality. And there were also some others who shared similar reverence. But all were not of the same calibre.

⁴⁵B.R. Nanda, Conversations, New Delhi: August, 1976.

How did that affect Satyagraha? In order to find that out, I was told, I would have to understand what Satyagraha is or is not all about. Ethical purity was the corner stone of the whole edifice of Satyagraha. It was the very foundation on which a Satyagrahi could claim his sincerity of attempt. Truth could only be generated by a trust-worthy individual. A fraud and a brigand could hardly claim to offer Satyagraha. This was precisely the reason which prompted Gandhi, in 1934, to withdraw the movement. He declared "I confine Satyagraha to myself. It means that I would not allow anyone to do anything in the name of Satyagraha."⁴⁶ Gandhi was apprehensive that people might misuse or abuse the technique to perform Duragraha (conceptually the opposite aspect of Satyagraha). Only those who could suffer without inflicting any pain on anybody else could rightfully offer Satyagraha.

There were a number of conditions which the Satyagrahi had to follow meticulously. We shall discuss them later in this thesis. Just as in the military recruitment, there are certain tests that screen the acceptable from the non-acceptable candidates, Gandhi, too, applied his own criteria of judging the right candidates for his movement. These were based primarily on the code of conduct that one followed. Gandhi was realistic enough to assume that a total satisfaction was impossible to achieve, therefore, he insisted on the minimum standards to be followed. Vows were administered to his co-workers to remind them in times of crises of their supreme obligations.⁴⁷

⁴⁶R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, op. cit.

⁴⁷B.R. Nanda, Conversations, op. cit.

I thought one could possibly detect some points of conflict between the Satyagrahi and the leader of a Satyagraha movement. What if a Satyagrahi felt that the leader was not taking a right stand on an issue of grave importance. What if irrespective of the issue - orientations, he perceived that it went against his conscience to go along with a particular decision? Would one have to be a blind follower of the leader in order to participate in a Satyagraha? If so, it defeated the very premise on which Satyagraha claimed its ethical purity. It was not an easy set of questions and my interviewees had the hardest time grappling with these.

Those who had worked very closely with Gandhi did not hesitate to point out instances when such occasions did arise and how Gandhi had reacted to them. They assured me Gandhi would be the last person to inflict his own views on any person, be it a co-worker or his own wife. Tolerance for all shades of opinions, all kinds of differences, was the essential keynote of Gandhian concept of truth. They told me Gandhi went to a great deal of trouble to accommodate differences. That was precisely the reason why one could find among Gandhi's cohorts from the most sophisticated people to the least, from the crudest to the most sensitive, from the die-hard orthodox to the fire-brand revolutionists. Gandhi attracted all, could also tolerate all. But that did not mean he compromised on the principles of ethics. For instance, nonviolence could not be traded with any other value and that in itself was closely aligned with truth. At times, a few did still disobey the accepted norms, but they did so being fully conscious of their transgressions. They were under no delusion about their stand.

I bluntly asked my interviewees if they had knowingly committed a wrong during their Satyagraha campaigns. It was not easy to talk about

those acts, which others thought "ought" not to have been performed. But I noticed my subjects did not in any way cringe from talking about them. There was hardly any trace of obsequiousness about those acts. They were not 'guilty' of having committed irreparable harms and I wondered why. It was perhaps because they were not acting under the false pretexts of taking for granted the correctness of their attitudes. These men and women were acting in full consciousness of the responsibility that an act bestowed upon the actor. Acknowledgement of one's own act either 'right' or 'wrong' may also sometimes relieve a person of the burden of guilt. If such acknowledgement was accompanied with due sincerity, I thought it was a pure act.

It seems appropriate here to recall what Gandhi himself had to say about Satyagraha and Satyagrahies. Questioned by Sir C.H. Setalvad, Gandhi agreed that Satyagraha involved a pursuit of truth and in doing so it invited suffering on oneself and did not cause violence to anybody else. That was the main principle. The individual himself must determine the truth to be pursued. But Setalvad argued, if different individuals held different views regarding the truth that would definitely lead to confusion. Gandhi still maintained:

I won't accept that. It need not lead to any confusion if you accept the position that a man is honestly in search after truth and that he will never inflict violence upon him who holds the truth. Then there is no possibility of confusion.⁴⁸

Gandhi continued to insist that nonviolence was the essential corollary to the acceptance of the doctrine. Setalvad was equally adamant

⁴⁸M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, XVI, 408-411. passim.

in reminding him:

You recognize I suppose, Mr. Gandhi, that in order properly to follow in the right spirit in which you conceive the doctrine of Satyagraha, pursuit after the truth, in the manner you describe, the person must be equipped with high moral and intellectual equipment?⁴⁹

Gandhi could not possibly have disagreed that an independent pursuit of truth demanded a person endowed with high moral and intellectual abilities. But Satyagraha did not necessarily entail such independent pursuit for all concerned. Gandhi also pointed out that one could not possibly expect the same standards from all who accepted Satyagraha as long as they agreed to abide by the rules of the nonviolent conduct set for them. It also did not necessarily mean blind-obedience. "If a man conceives a plan of life, it is not necessary for all the others, before they can follow that, to have the same intellectual and moral equipment," he contended.

Gandhi could not subscribe to the view that a Satyagrahi has not to exercise his own judgement, but he held that in order to do so one need not necessarily possess the same mental and moral poise as the leadership. The success of Satyagraha does neither depend on the number of people endowed with high moral and intellectual qualification, nor on a large body of people not so endowed.

In Satyagraha the success of the movement depends upon the existence of one full Satyagrahi. One Satyagrahi can achieve success in the manner and in the sense that in the plan of violence numbers of people cannot do.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ ibid.

⁵⁰ ibid.

Then came the final question in which Setalvad pointedly asked:

"I understand you to say, Mr. Gandhi, you do not consider yourself a perfect Satyagrahi yet?" To which, Gandhi replied in negative. "If that is so, it is almost impossible for ordinary people to ever hope to be that?" Setalvad remarked:

You may not consider yourself, but looking to your life and your habits the people know that you are an extraordinary man and can pursue a doctrine such as Satyagraha perfectly. But are there not many people for whom it is almost impossible to hope to pursue it correctly?⁵¹

Gandhi then reminded the court that in the streets of South Africa their countrymen had, in fact, demonstrated such a capability precisely because they were not blind followers of Gandhi. To think otherwise, would be to misunderstand Satyagraha.

They perhaps in that case would not have understood the scope of Satyagraha at all. It would mean that they had felt quite disgusted. Now, take for instance, the 40,000 Indians in South Africa who are totally uncultured and illiterate, and these people never came to that conclusion.⁵²

To me it appears that for Gandhi Satyagraha was both an individual and a collective endeavour. Those who initiate and control it must necessarily be men of great integrity, understanding, and purity of conscience. Ethical purity is the soul of Satyagraha, without it there can be no Satyagrahi nor any Satyagraha. Satyagraha combines action with knowledge and devotion. Through this reconciliation dharma (obligation, means, path) becomes mokṣa (perfection, the highest good and final destination).

51
ibid.

52
ibid.

Part II

The Dharma of Satyagraha

What I want to achieve...what I have been striving and pining to achieve...is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end. But as I have all along believed that what is possible for one is possible for all, my experiments have not been conducted in the closet, but in the open; and I do not think that this fact detracts from their spiritual value. There are some things which are known only to oneself and one's Maker. These are clearly incommunicable. The experiments I am about to relate are not such. But they are spiritual, or rather moral; for the essence of religion is morality.⁵³

Gandhi was primarily a spiritual being, in search of spiritual truth/s. He did not dissociate that quest from the fundamental struggle for justice. It was a matter of deep significance for him to relate the spiritual aspect of personal experience with the socio-political problems of human existence. Gandhi aimed at harmonizing the two opposite but complementary aspects of life in a meaningful whole - the ideal with the practical, the rational with the emotional, and the religious with the secular.

It is this experiential element which distinguishes Satyagraha from any other form of protest. There cannot be a Satyagraha without the dharma of Satyagraha.⁵⁴ The search of a Satyagrahi is identical to the quest

⁵³M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. xii-xiii.

⁵⁴It is not possible to convey the exact meaning of certain words through translations. Dharma here refers to the ethos of all that which Satyagraha connotes. It stands for the sacred obligation.

of a spiritual seeker. It cannot be judged only on account of its outer trappings. Mere expressions of nonviolent resistance are not enough. Satyagraha transcends and far exceeds the nominal or token manifestations of goodwill. Above all, it must be an experience which is vital and genuine. It must emanate from the inner most core of the Satyagrahic endeavour. Gandhi consistently warned against the use of Duragraha, which is the obverse of Satyagraha.⁵⁵

Before we discuss Satyagraha, its implications or the philosophy underlying the concept, it is appropriate to consider briefly Gandhi's pre-occupation with mokṣa.⁵⁶ To him it literally meant, "freedom from birth and death. The nearest English equivalent is salvation."⁵⁷ He considered his entire life as a series of experiments in the science of Satyagraha.⁵⁸ He was very much aware of the fact that ultimately it meant getting rid of every desire, even the desire for mokṣa. Therefore, it was a constant striving. It was a progress towards freedom. It implied freedom from everything: all concepts, all ideas, and all forms.

Gandhi's concern with mokṣa was closely linked with his search for truth. In fact, he identified that search with God, as the sovereign

⁵⁵ J.V. Bondurant, "Satyagraha Verses Duragraha," G. Ramachandran and T.K. Mahadevan (eds.), Gandhi: His Relevance For Our Times (first ed. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964), pp. 67-81. Also cf. M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., xix, 313.

⁵⁶ One of the four major aims of life according to Hindu ethics, other three being Dharma, Artha and Kāma. ibid.

⁵⁷ ibid., p. xv.

⁵⁸ ibid., p. xiii.

principle.⁵⁹

But for me, truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God.

The confusion which often arises from Gandhi's concept of truth/s springs from the fact that he did not confine himself to any one definition of truth/God. Gandhi admitted that both can be defined in innumerable ways and yet they are beyond definitions. Speaking of God, Gandhi wrote:

His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest... But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler.⁶⁰

Gandhi maintained that in spite of committing many "Himalayan blunders", he had strictly adhered to his spiritual quest. The conviction grew in him that God/Truth alone was 'real' and all else was 'unreal'. Therefore, it was natural for Gandhi to consecrate his entire efforts in the pursuit of that which was 'real' (sat), 'consciousness' (ćit), and 'bliss' (ānandam).

Mokṣa is the supreme and final aspiration of man, according to Hindu ethics. However righteous and pure one's pursuit, none can compare with the goal of mokṣa. The Hindus view it as the ultimate yearning of the soul. Although the Buddhist school of thought does not believe in soul

⁵⁹ ibid., p. xiii.

⁶⁰ ibid., p. xiv.

or its transmigration, the idea of nirvāna closely approximates that of mokṣa.

All schools of Indian philosophy believe in some concept of mokṣa. They also believe in the doctrine of karma (action) and its corollary of cause and effect. Consequently, the knowledge of truth is suggested as an essential vehicle of deliverance from the conditioned existence. Ever-lasting good (niḥśreyasa) can be attained through the realization of the self according to the Upanishadic or the Vedāntic school. Both the Nyāya and Buddhist schools of thought, link ignorance (avidya) with the cause of sorrow and misery. The Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools regard knowledge of truth concerning the self and the material universe, as essential to happiness, here and in heaven. Patanjali's Yoga school elaborates on the means of discipline by which one could attain isolation (kaivalya) even while surrounded by matter. Although not all schools of Indian philosophy believe in prescribing the same forms of knowledge, nevertheless, they do insist on some kind of knowledge as an aid to the deliverance from Samsāra (mundane existence).

Indian thinkers postulate a deep and abiding relationship between knowledge and action. Right action can lead one to mokṣa .

Action, of course, could not be eliminated so long as a man lived; the most philosophy could do was to take the sting out of action. The monistic philosophers, recognizing the disciplinary value of acts and duties, as indeed of ethics, accordingly assigned them a place under sādhanas or preparatory disciplines. Acts could function in this way as ancillary to knowledge providing they were not done with the expectation of personal gain, or from the theistic view, as an expression of devotion, provided they were dedicated to the Lord. Either way, the doer abandoned not the act, but the desire for its fruits. Thus when action was adjusted to Vedanta and qualified by knowledge or devotion, it too became a means of liberation.

This reconciliation of action with knowledge and devotion, which also removed the contradiction between dharma and moksha, was the great contribution of the Bhagavad Gītā.⁶¹

Gandhi can only be understood in the context of this philosophy. He made karma (action) his means of liberation. He, too, attempted to reconcile actions with the knowledge and awareness of the truth with devotion. Referring to this relationship Gandhi wrote:

My experiments in the political field are now known, not only to India, but to a certain extent to the 'civilized' world. For me, they have not much value; and the title of 'Mahatma' that they have won for me has, therefore, even less. Often the title has deeply pained me; and there is not a moment I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me. But I should certainly like to narrate my experiments in the spiritual field which are known only to myself, and from which I have derived such power as I possess for working in the political field.⁶²

Gandhi relied greatly on his ethical experience and the knowledge he gained through direct perception. It was a unique kind of knowledge, which in Indian philosophy is often referred to as jñāna (as distinct from vijñāna). It convinced Gandhi that there was no other God than Truth, and that nonviolence was the only means for its realization. On the basis of his experiments, Gandhi could earnestly claim that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of Ahimsa.⁶³ It was that ideal, which led him toward the politics of compassion, to Satyagraha.⁶⁴

⁶¹Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., Sources of Indian Tradition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), I, 273.

⁶²M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. xii.

⁶³ibid., p. 503.

⁶⁴ibid., p. 504.

Part III

It is easier to deny altogether the presence of a phenomenon than to grapple with it, especially if it escapes the grasp of common understanding. The same is true of those Gandhian scholars and writers who all but too readily accept the conclusions of their predecessors in claiming that Gandhi was not a systematic philosopher. They conclude that to look for a systematic theory (or theories) behind his actions or thoughts would lead one nowhere. In their view such a task is a futile project. Certainly, it would be easy to repeat their opinions in order to avoid controversies. But I wish to contradict the above assumption.

Contrary to a generally accepted notion that Gandhi was only an activist, I found him also to be a philosopher, par excellence. There is nothing in the definition of a philosopher which denies one the right to act out one's philosophies. Rather the one who arrives at his theories, independent of preconceived notions and apriori assumptions, is in the truest sense a philosopher. A philosopher is bound to think and act truly. He is really a pilgrim in quest of truth. Having deduced or extracted certain principles from experience, it is the inferior mind which lies buried in the rut of habit and refuses to change in the light of his knowledge. Only those who are enlightened recognize the inevitability of action to follow thought. The readiness to act ethically presupposes the ethical imperatives. Action in conformity with thought is a necessity for the awakened being. To know is to be obliged to do or to act in a particular manner. A philosopher knows that and lives accordingly. In the context of the Indian philosophy,

one could assert that such a person lives in awareness of the sva-dharma (one's own obligation).

I have already discussed what such a realization implied for Gandhi. His sva-dharma was that of ahimsa (nonviolence) and Satyagraha. But, a systematic tracing of the development of Gandhi's concept of obligation (dharma) would require going through all his writings and utterances (which have not, yet, been fully documented). Also, one would have to infer from Gandhi's actions the principles which guided him.⁶⁵ Though this is a subject worth studying, it need not detain us from appreciating some of the salient features of Gandhian ethics. I need not expound here the concept of obligation as understood by Gandhi. Ram Rattan has already done so and the interested scholar can always refer to it.⁶⁶ But even a lay student of Indology is familiar with the common trap one is likely to fall into, if one extricates the concept of political obligation (rāj-dharma) from the main body of obligation (dharma) per se.⁶⁷ It is practically impossible.

⁶⁵J. Bandhopadhyay, conversations, op. cit., Calcutta: August 1976.

⁶⁶R. Rattan, Gandhi's Concept of Political Obligation (Calcutta: Minerva Asso. 1972). Also based on my series of informal talks with the author. Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: May to August 1976. See V.P. Varma, Studies in Hindu Political Thought and Its Metaphysical Foundations (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1954), pp. 112-180.

⁶⁷"It was a marked feature of the Indian mind that it sought to attach a spiritual meaning and a religious sanction to all, even to the most external social and political circumstances of its life, imposing on all classes and functions an ideal, not except incidentally, of rights and powers but of duties, a rule of their action and an ideal way and temperament, character, spirit in action, a dharma with a spiritual significance." A. Ghosh, The Spirit And Form of Indian Polity (India: Arya, 1947), p. 8. and

"Can dharma be preserved if we cut off one of its limbs? All the limbs of dharma are inseparable from one another. Just as, if one brick is removed from an arch, the whole of it will collapse, so also if one limb of dharma perishes..." M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., LVIII, 135.

Further, to dissociate dharma (obligation) from mokṣa (ultimate release), is to separate means from its end. Gandhi had realized this. He, too, considered every step towards the goal as an achievement of the goal itself. He was keenly aware of the fact, that if one took care of the moment at hand life would eventually lead one to the state of 'supreme bliss'. His disregard for the differentiation that one often makes between things political and apolitical was based on such convictions. To Gandhi, everything was an aspiration towards the precognizant state of mokṣa. Therefore, he instinctively divorced all that which appeared to him as deviating from that goal.⁶⁸ It is precisely for that reason that he sometimes failed to explain his actions logically to others.⁶⁹

The fact that he could not do so, sometimes pained him. It pained him because he prided in being rational and considered reason as an aid in the perception of truth. At times he argued with his friends and co-workers that the intellect alone was not capable of solving the intricate problems of existence - much less of grasping them in their entirety. For Gandhi the intuitive insight played a vital role in illuminating reason, especially, where intellect failed.

⁶⁸"Our highest duty is to attain moksha...as quickly as we may, then we must certainly give up everything which may serve as an obstacle in our path - that is the only true spiritual attitude." M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., XXXII, 10.

⁶⁹"Ahimsa is a matter not of the intellect but of the heart." Young India (September, 1928). Gandhi cannot be called a rationalist in the strictest sense of the term. He distrusted reason as compared to conviction. "Logic is a matter clear as crystal to the heart. But on the other hand the intellect often believes in certain things, but if they do not appeal to the heart they must be rejected." V.G. Desai, The Diary of Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Nanajivan, 1953), I, 109.

From an observation of Gandhi's daily acts and his manner of dealing with situations one can conclude that he was a very creative and a resourceful person. His acts were innovative and innocuous. There was a definite quality of innocence about them. They were genuine and sincere. But they were also impromptu. It seems that Gandhi was aware of the limitations of the human intellect to comprehend things rationally. One wonders even if we attempted to classify all Gandhi's acts and words chronologically, would we be able to understand Gandhi, much less emulate his dharma! How far can one go in search of causal links in any individual's experience? Besides, would such a search be useful to our understanding of Satyagraha and how a Satyagrahi ought to live?

Gandhi firmly believed that no one can, and therefore, no one ought to dictate one's dharma to another. The true perception of dharma has to come from within. In this matter, the best one could do was to be externally vigilant. What was important to Gandhi, was this awareness not to commit 'violence' knowingly. It also implied the openness to accept self-criticism. One could perhaps justifiably claim that one did not realize the incongruity of one's acts because of lack of awareness. But where there is humility, there is also the will to accept criticism when proven wrong. Self-righteousness does not allow some to accept their own faults. But, with Gandhi it was different. He diligently sought friends who were genuinely critical in their assessments.⁷⁰

Since Gandhi considered nonviolence or Satyagraha his dharma, he tried to live that obligation in his daily life. He wanted to elaborate its

⁷⁰"I seem to feel that I know my dharma, but I am always liable to err in my reasoning. I, therefore, cling to any person who points out my error. This has saved me from many errors." ibid., 44.

meaning through his own life. He wanted to experience Satyagraha. Gandhi never advised others without first experimenting himself. On the basis of such personal experience he claimed that anything which went counter to his conscience, was as good as no obligation at all. For Gandhi a life of dharma implied "a way of life which could lead him to moksha." That yearning guided every aspect of his conscious life. He could sincerely claim that every act, speech and thought in his life was motivated with that conscious urge. This a very Buddhist attitude from a Zen philosopher's understanding of Prajñā Pāramitā.⁷¹

To Gandhi dharma literally meant "a choice between good and evil that a man has to make every moment."⁷² Clearly, the concept of dharma could not be static or else it would lose its dynamism. If so, how could the same choice be held good under all circumstances? Gandhi could never give up being nonviolent. That was a principle, on which there could be no compromise. But within the context of truth and nonviolence there were other choices which could perhaps be not so discreet.

It is quite possible that the steps I take or advocate may in future prove disastrous instead of being beneficial. Of course my own conviction is that each and every step of mine will turn out to be beneficial in the end. If I do not have this

⁷¹"Our life can be seen as crossing of a river. The goal of our life's effort is to reach the other shore, Nirvana. "Prajna paramita," the true wisdom of life, is that in each step of the way, the other shore is actually reached. To search the other shore with each step of the crossing is the way of true living." S. Suzuki, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), p. 65.

⁷²M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., LVIII, 101. Gandhi also found Manu's definition of sanatan dharma (eternal obligation) very satisfying. "That dharma is eternal which is always observed by saintly men of learning, free from ill will and passion, and which appeals to one's hridaya (heart) or sense of right and justice." ibid., 240.

faith I shall be doing offence to my truth and I should as well end my life.⁷³

Only that which he himself experienced as such Gandhi regarded as truth. It did not matter if the whole world refused to accept it. Truth was the only dharma which Gandhi understood. He said that nonviolence helped him to attain it. Even so, Gandhi's concept of dharma was not dogmatic or absolute. It did not rely on the śāstras (religious texts). He did not claim that it was especially revealed to him. Gandhi thought of it more as a process, rather than the end result of self-discovery. For a seeker after truth, that which is already 'sought' and found to be true can serve as a useful 'guide', but nothing more than that. The conscious act of choice and discretion must follow each step just as a shadow follows the object. Even when not visible, it is there.

Dharma is a quality of the soul and is present visibly or invisibly, in every human being. Through it we know our duty in human life and our true relation with other souls. It is evident that we cannot do so till we have known the self in us. Hence dharma is the means by which we can know ourselves.⁷⁴

A mumukshu (aspirant after liberation), ought to take full cognizance of his immediate activity, although he may be inwardly meditating on the self. A man of yoga (complete harmony) is a man "wholly devoted to dharma and completely free from attachments." Non-attachment and full concentration of attention to the least significant activity, at any particular moment, whether it be śreyas (that which is morally imperative) or

⁷³ibid., XXXI, 123.

⁷⁴ibid., XXXII, 11.

preyas (that which is merely desirable) are the marks of a virtuous man. To such a man, dharma comes as easily as breathing. Spontaneously, he or she performs the tasks which 'ought' to be performed. Gandhi went so far as to equate the "spontaneous action" with "non-attachment". His concept of anāśaktiyoga (the yoga of non-attachment) had at its basis the same desirelessness which pervaded the acts of the "fully awakened" one, or that of the sthitaprajñā (one of steadfast intellect).⁷⁵ It seems Gandhi must have understood the spirit and the nature of right action perfectly. To him it implied the expression of true knowledge through acts of selfless service.⁷⁶ As prescribed in the Gītā, freedom from action could only be possible where there was freedom from the bondage of action. The idea was to save oneself from the hypocrisy of having curbed the "wrong act" while still allowing the mind to dwell upon the "wrong thought". Consequently, both the mind and body ought to be restrained and kept in check. But, for Gandhi, action was far more superior to inaction. Especially, the action aimed at the welfare of all living things or performed in aid to relieving the suffering was exemplary and ennobling. In this regard, Gandhi came very close to the Buddhist concept of a Bodhisatva.⁷⁷

There appears to be a deep connection between the service rendered to the suffering humanity and the process of self-purification, as taught

⁷⁵ibid., 9. For Gandhi's discourses on the Gita ibid., 94-376. Also see "Anāśaktiyoga" in ibid., XLI, 90-133.

⁷⁶ibid., 105.

⁷⁷"Gandhi was a modern Bodhisatva." Y.S. Tan, Conversations, op. cit., Shantiniketan: August 1976.

by the Buddha and so aptly followed by Gandhi.⁷⁸ In doing so, Gandhi drew attention to the message of karma yoga as proclaimed in the Bhagavadgītā. Unfortunately, it had been neglected for a long time. As far as the principles were concerned, Gandhi was not doing anything new. He was just putting into practice what had been put aside due to ignorance.⁷⁹

People see only the effects. We shall see the causes. The way I have been practising non-violence appears to be a novel thing. The Jainas and the Buddhists also experimented in non-violence. But that non-violence has become restricted to diet. Political and social activities also are inspired by both violent and non-violent forces. On the surface they do not appear to be different. But the difference lies in their motivation. There would be no trouble if we remember this point in everything we do.⁸⁰

Gandhi consistently remarked about the essential unity of life. In a letter to his friend Horace Alexander, he pointed out that life cannot be divided into separate water-tight compartments, religious or other. "Whereas if a man has true religion in him, it must show itself in the smallest detail of life."⁸¹

It is important to note that Gandhi did not consider anything outside the scope of spiritual endeavour. His emphasis was always on the dharma. But that included in it almost everything related to life. Politics formed an inalienable aspect of life. In order to test the validity of his own principles, Gandhi felt obliged to apply his dharma even to that sphere

⁷⁸R.N. Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (London: Oxford Press, 1973), p. 49.

⁷⁹F. Thakurdas, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: July, 1976.

⁸⁰M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., VI, 242-243.

⁸¹ibid., XXXVI, 448-49.

of activity. Especially, because in modern times (both in the post-Machiavellian Europe and in the post-Kautilyan India), politics had acquired unsavoury and unethical attributes. But the religious approach as understood by Gandhi was different. By 'religion' he meant that aspect of spirituality which underlay all religions. In essence, it was the ethical experience of mankind.

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 activity today constitutes an indivisible whole...I do not know of any religion apart from activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities without which life would be a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing.⁸²

Yes, life was one great unity for Gandhi. But his vision of life included in it even those beyond humanity. It embraced the whole kingdom of living things. He was at pains to remind his fellowmen that even the inanimate objects contained in them - the dormant life. Gandhi often illustrated his belief by giving an example of the seed. He said that the seed contained life both before and after germination.

Leave aside everything, take this body of yours and mine. You and I do not know yet what a completely integrated machine this body is. You pluck a little hair from your toe and the whole body trembles in pain, you look at something which is beautiful and your whole body throbs with ecstasy. The entire body is materially and physically in complete unity...But this unity is not complete without our putting the mind and the soul into the picture. And then you realize the unity of life. There is the unity of life, inside the mind and the body of the individual and there is the tremendous unity of life in the external world.⁸³

⁸²ibid., IV, 387-388.

⁸³G. Ramachandran, Conversations, op. cit., Gandhigram: July, 1976.

The realization that all creation is one, is the basis of any spiritual awakening in man. It must eventually lead to the identification of the "self" with the greater or the universal "self". When that happens, one automatically begins to act and conform in harmony with one's obligation (dharma). That, alone is true conduct, and no further amplification, definition or generalization is likely to clarify its meaning. Gandhi, too, seemed rather evasive in expressing its true nature.

Dharma is not an absolute thing which does not change even when circumstances have changed. If people living on the Equator follow what is dharma for people near the North Pole, they would probably be guilty of adharma (opposite of dharma). There is only one absolute dharma, and that is contained in God, otherwise known as truth. The dharma of beings, who are governed by their circumstances and whose strength is limited, changes from hour to hour. The ground on which their dharma rests is unchanging, and that is truth or, if one prefers, non-violence; but as one stands firm on this ground, there will necessarily be many changes in what dharma requires in actual practice.⁸⁴

It does seem important to come to terms with what each regards as true. Philosophically, there can be no definite agreement on the concept or concepts of truth. Truth, Gandhi insisted must eventually reside in the mind and heart of the perceiver.

I aim at self-purification even through my political activities; I wish to follow dharma through them, and everyone's dharma is but what he can see for himself. No one has yet discovered absolute dharma which everyone will recognize to be so. Such dharma is beyond our power to understand and explain. Each one of us has but a glimpse of it, and describes it in his own way. Our power is limited to the choice of means and I, therefore believe that our success lies

⁸⁴M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., XXXI, 400.

in preserving the purity of our means.⁸⁵

Viyogi Hari gives a very Buddhist and yet equally Gandhian interpretation to the meaning of dharma. "What we see, as it is, and in perceiving which we do not deceive ourselves, cheat ourselves, that is truth, that was the meaning of Gandhi's ethics.⁸⁶

By seeing clearly and conducting ourselves in the light of such truth perception, the chances of making mistakes can be greatly reduced. This applies not only to politics but also to other aspects of life. For an individual like Gandhi such conduct was more in accordance with the ideal of Gītā. It simply proclaimed, the following: a conduct which does not give sorrow, pain or hurt to others, and which at the same time does not get hurt by others, is 'true conduct'.⁸⁷

It is a very positive and concrete view of life. It boldly invites all suffering and yet refuses to be overcome by it. It is worth considering what it was which gave Gandhi this indomitable perspective. He claimed that whatever power he did possess in his political life, was derived and based on his experiments in the spiritual field.⁸⁸

It is significant that Gandhi did not claim any monopoly or exclusive knowledge of the principles involved in Satyagraha. He was meticulously careful to point out their nature, his limitations, and the inconclusiveness of his findings.

⁸⁵ibid., 126.

⁸⁶Viyogi Hari, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: August 1976.

⁸⁷ibid.

⁸⁸M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. xii.

Part IV

This section will explore the Gandhian response to the vital question of how one 'ought' to live.

An ideal life according to Gandhi is that which inspires and ennobles. It is a life engaged in the deliverance of the self (soul) through karma yoga (path of action) from the bondage of body.⁸⁹ Gandhi described the characteristics of an ideal man as the following:

· He is a devotee who is jealous of none, who is a fount of mercy, who is without egotism, who is selfless, who treats alike cold and heat, happiness and misery, who is ever forgiving, who is always contended, whose resolutions are firm, who has dedicated mind and soul to God, who causes no dread, who is not afraid of others, who is free from exultation, sorrow and fear, who is pure, who is versed in action yet remains unaffected by it, who renounces all fruit, good or bad, who treats friend and foe alike, who is untouched by respect or disrespect, who is not puffed up by praise, who does not go under when people speak ill of him, who loves silence and solitude, who has a disciplined reason. Such devotion is inconsistent with the existence at the same time of strong attachments.⁹⁰

Gandhi was very careful in drawing his image of the perfect man. But could a man with the above descriptions ever exist? Some critics of Gandhi considered him very naive. For their benefit he pointed out

I am prepared to recognize the limitations of human nature for the very simple reason that I recognize my own...But...I do not deceive myself by refusing to distinguish between what I ought to do and what

⁸⁹Young India (September 1, 1921).

⁹⁰M. Desai, The Gospel of Selfless Action, The Gītā According to Gandhi (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1946) quoted by L. Fischer, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 32-35.

I fail to do...Many things are impossible and yet are the only things right.⁹¹

As a reformer, Gandhi recognized the obligation of demonstrating through his own conduct the "impossible possibilities" of human nature. Gandhi compared ideals to the Euclid's points in Geometry. They exist only in imagination, but provide insight into the calculus of human endeavour. We may not accomplish in life what we hold out to be true in theory. But the mere fact that we have some ideals of human perfection is enough to provide a saner perspective. Ideals give a sense of direction to our attempts. It is true that ideals recede further into the horizon when we try to achieve them, but that makes ideals worth their salt.⁹² By their very nature, ideals ought to be hard to approach and yet be attainable.⁹³

Gandhi's ideal man was the sthitaprajñā of Gītā. He must be a ~~Buddha~~, a Krishna, a Socrates, a Mohamed and a Christ, all rolled into one. Gandhi expected the common man to ascend to the uncommon heights of heroic endeavour and yet claimed that he was not asking for anything extraordinary. He only wished that every individual would comply with the simple obligations of responsible citizenship. But Gandhi was really asking man to transcend himself, to discover the truer 'self' and to become an agent of ethical awakening. Perhaps, Gandhi did not have any delusions regarding the difficulties involved in the process.

⁹¹Young India (February 5, 1925). (Emphasis my own.)

⁹²Acharya Kripalani, Conversations, op. cit., Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

⁹³"Let us be sure of our ideal. We shall ever fail to realize it, but shall never cease to strive for it." M.K. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi (2nd ed.; Madras: Natesan, 1934), p. 363.

[The] path of self-purification is hard and steep. [One] has to become absolutely passion-free in thought, speech and action, to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion. I know that I have not in me as yet that triple purity in spite of constant ceaseless striving for it. That is why the world's praise fails to move me, indeed it very often stings me. To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be harder far than the physical conquest of the world by the force of arms.⁹⁴

Gandhi was confident that our lives speak more eloquently than our words. He wrote: "Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating."⁹⁵ Therefore, every moment of life assumed a special significance for Gandhi. He was constantly striving towards the goal he had set for himself. For a believer in the doctrine of karma, human endeavour acquired a great significance. Gandhi literally viewed it as the prime cause of liberation from the bondage.⁹⁶ To be free one must overcome the effects of one's past actions and live in such a way, as not to accumulate further karma. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism enjoin non-attachment or detachment from desire, as the only way to its annihilation. Gandhi's convictions were very much based on this religious understanding.⁹⁷ A perfect man ought not to get lost in the conflict arising from the actions and reactions resulting from

⁹⁴M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 420.

⁹⁵Young India (August 11, 1927).

⁹⁶As already pointed out the law of karma presupposes, ethical causation and moral retribution as a consequence of one's mental and physical acts.

⁹⁷"I regard as the summum bonum of life the attainment of salvation through karma by annihilating its effects by detachment." Young India (October, 1928).

kāma (desire). Kāma, according to the traditional Indian understanding, is the result of ignorance (avidya). It deludes one through the partial or total misrepresentation of truth, as it really is. It takes for granted that seeing things as they really are is the beginning of wisdom. It recommends, therefore, that which obstructs or causes undue hinderances in the process of true perception ought to be guarded against or consciously avoided. It considers non-attachment as the key-note of spiritual perfection and ethical living.⁹⁸

Ideally, Gandhi would have us all spend our lives in a way which would immediately lead to enlightenment or nirvāṇa. For the sake of an argument one could argue with Gandhi's assumption. Gandhi took for granted that not only the fact that everyone desired spiritual release, but also that everyone sought it in the shortest possible way. Gandhi insisted that we do not disregard the welfare of the entire ecology (animal, plant and inanimate environment) in our serious pursuits of nirvāṇa. He suggested that the ethical perfection was not a selfish 'ego-trip'. It was an evolution, a progress toward a higher plane of existence.

Looking at the vast scope of Gandhi's correspondence and the nature of their contents, it is not hard to believe that he evidently put his own maximums to good use. Gandhi did not hesitate to react to any event, howsoever insignificant, nor did he get weary of answering questions.

⁹⁸It is interesting to draw a parallel in this respect between Gandhi's insistence on brahmacharya and Buddhist emphasis on the acknowledgement of reality, as it is. Both observe the same phenomenon, but respond to it in different ways. However, their conclusions do not seem to vary much. I am indebted to my friend, Dr. Stan Eaman, for this significant insight. Eric Erickson and his school view it as a kind of 'repression' where as the Indian schools tend to see it as a matter of discipline (sādhana).

He evidently expressed his views upon everything and everybody under the sun.

The comprehensiveness of Gandhi's concern was reflected in his deep respect for life. It touched as many individuals, groups, and institutions or organizations as came in his contact or cared to keep in touch with him. During my research in India, I came across many who had corresponded with Gandhi, from various walks of life, for incredibly different sets of reasons, on an unbelievable complex array of subjects. Gandhi's enthusiasm for learning from them as well as imparting to them the benefits of his own experience was noteworthy. One could perhaps devote an entire life time studying Gandhi's correspondence. And it should lead to important insights.

It is significant to point out that along with politics, Gandhi was conducting equally meaningful experiments in the areas of economics, sociology, dietetics. Since it is not possible to deal with all these aspects, I have only selected the ones which appeared most pertinent to me. They are the following: man, environment, and action.

My divisions are arbitrary and ought not to be taken as water-tight compartments. They are merely used as devices to aid our understanding of Gandhi and Satyagraha. The concept of Gandhian obligation (dharma) appears here in its conglomerate form. It is made more comprehensible, because I explore the basis on which that concept rests.

The reader must keep in mind that there is none and there cannot be a definite concept of an ideal dharma (obligation). In each case, it has to be evolved and perceived anew by the individual. This does not mean that the basic postulates are absent or vague: What it does mean,

however, is that provided one's actions are based on the solid foundations of ethical understanding, right knowledge and right response are bound to follow as spontaneously as the water running down-hill.

(i) Man

When I asked one of my interviewees⁹⁹ regarding the concept of man and the meaning of his existence in the Gandhian perspective, he impatiently responded:

Gandhi's concept of the individual is irrelevant for discovering, what is the meaning of human existence...(it is) the central question, which must at least once, come to light...become a live issue. You are born with a total futility, unless, sometime or the other, you have wanted an answer to this question, more than food, more than sex, more than life itself. Now, what does it mean to be born a man and in this country?¹⁰⁰

Being thus provoked, he did not wait for me to answer and himself replied:

There is an ancient tradition according to which the word swāmi is not used for either the noble worrier, or for the learned pandit, or the rich seth (businessman). It is used for one, who is not a slave to his ego, but one who is earnestly seeking to know the meaning of human existence.¹⁰¹

Man, according to some schools of Indian thought is described as a 'contraption of self-deception'. It is a source of continual wonder to some why man, being so marvellously gifted, is yet capable of such an abysmal self-deception. That man is primarily a 'contraption of self-

⁹⁹Anonymous, Conversations, op. cit., Bangalore: July, 1976.

¹⁰⁰ibid.

¹⁰¹ibid.

deception', is a discovery which the Western scientists are resisting with all their scientific knowledge and technological expertise. Gandhi was among those who felt that the state is obliged to make it possible for every individual, at anytime he/she chooses, whether man or woman, rich or poor, to ask the question of all questions regarding the meaning of existence.¹⁰²

Blessed is the man who asks himself this question. To such a man, food is assured in this country, even today, when this has been prostituted by the fake, professional beggars in the name of religion...this had nothing to do with religion, temples, priests etc. Gandhi had a feeling for it...not the 'religion' of the communism...but 'the religion of man'...It is a question equally relevant in Africa, Russia or China, or other parts of the globe...this is the quintessence of being man. If you don't have that quest, what are you reducing human life to?¹⁰³

Did Gandhi raise that question for the first time, or was he in any way unique in pointing it out to others?

Forget Gandhi. He was after all only a sign post, only a word...But the questions he asked his generation, are the questions which we can still ask in a new context. And these questions are invested by a meaning not by Gandhi, not because he had seen it, but because the questions, intrinsically are meaningful.¹⁰⁴

Although this venerable, old associate of Gandhi refused to classify himself as a Gandhian, he assured me that he lacked nothing which those who claim themselves to be Gandhians have. He kept answering my questions with yet another question of his own. But I was equally interested in investigating the intrinsic worth of those questions. He eventually gave in.

¹⁰²ibid.

¹⁰³ibid.

¹⁰⁴ibid.

The truth of satyagraha is symbolized in a drop of water. And a drop of water is an emotive image in the Indian psyche. In the sub-conscious mind of an Indian...I cannot communicate to you the potency that is born by the repetition of "om mani padme hum".¹⁰⁵

It all made sense, and yet it did not seem to be related at all with my question. As I still groped to understand the true import of his words, my interviewee explained that the Indian tradition had unfortunately brought about its self-improvement by totally divorcing itself from the Buddhist stream of thought.

"Om mani padme hum", means that on the leaf of a lotus there is a dew-drop...and that is a shining pearl of great beauty...it has its passing moment of existence, but it meets total fulfillment when it loses itself in the stream. In the stream, it finds itself...(it finds itself) because it is not a separate entity in the stream.¹⁰⁶

If one replaces the symbol of 'dew drop' with 'man' in the above explanation, one can see how Gandhi viewed the polarity between the individual (finite) and the all (infinite). "All", said my insightful interviewee, "is a creation of the mind. It is possible for the mind to give it away... for the fist to be unfisted. And, then there is only the All (Infinity). And in that All, there is no sense of anything being less."¹⁰⁷ Just as the dew-drop does not feel robbed of its identity when one with the ocean, man, too, regains his own identity in relation to the all of infinity. The

¹⁰⁵ibid., cf. this statement with M.K. Gandhi's, Collected Works, op. cit., XLIV, 131, 206. Gandhi literally used the same symbol.

¹⁰⁶ibid.

¹⁰⁷ibid. All and Infinity spelt with capital A and I, stand for SAT (absolute archetypal Reality; Eternal Truth). But sat means that which is abiding, actual, right; self-existent essence; as anything really is or ought to be.

discovery of self in the larger Self, is what Gandhi was trying to re-iterate. Through the concepts of satyagraha, swadeshi (Self-reliance) and sarvodaya (welfare of all), it was the underlying theme of Gandhi's entire life's endeavour. There was no doubt in the mind of my informant that Gandhi was involved in giving a collective expression to the unself-conscious (prārārtha) in man. He considered that as a proof of Gandhi's faith in man, and in the destiny of man. "That is where...the entire tradition... gives meaning to the concept of taming of 'power' by man." Man's existence could only be meaningful to the extent that it was not subordinate to the vagaries of arbitrary power. Man's superiority was indicative of the superiority of spiritual over physical strength.¹⁰⁸

T.M.P. Mahadevan also echoed the same sentiments. He said, "by virtue of his discrimination, man has a position in the universe, which is unique. That is the Vedantic conception of man. That is also the concept, Gandhi had of man."¹⁰⁹

It is legitimate to inquire what was Gandhi's concept of man. He was not very explicit about it. He did not answer that question directly. However, one could surmise that from the available evidence and interpretations, Gandhi considered man as the outward expression of an inward experience. To him, man was a manifestation of satya (truth). He could be true only to the extent that he was conscious of such experience. But all mankind is potentially capable of truth-experience. Truth is the very essence of our being. "A man without even a particle of it would be dead, and life without a modicum of integrity would be not only worthless

¹⁰⁸ibid.

¹⁰⁹T.M.P. Mahadevan, Conversations, op. cit., Madras: July, 1976.

but also meaningless."¹¹⁰

Did Gandhi, in any way, imply the possibilities of a "living-death" or a "dead-life"? Surely, the futility of existence, or its meaningfulness ought not to have anything to do with the inherent worth of man. The fact, that man is, ought to be enough.¹¹¹

Gandhi thought that man is a pilgrim and life is a sojourn.¹¹² By that he meant that all life is a search, or a quest for certainty. To some, the urge to seek such indubitable knowledge may not appear as a worthwhile project. But Gandhi seemed quite convinced: "we may never attain to truth in its fullness, but it will suffice if we never turn our backs on it. All our activities must be truth-centered, for we are really alive only to the extent that we are truthful."¹¹³

Man is a product of his thought, Gandhi said, "what he thinks, he becomes."¹¹⁴ Accordingly, to brood over a crime was just as bad, if not worse, as committing it.¹¹⁵ Ethical values are products of man's contemplation. Man is not fully a man in the truest sense, if he is not prepared to die for his convictions.¹¹⁶ One who is prepared to sacrifice for

¹¹⁰M.K. Gandhi, From Yeravada Mandir, trans. V.G. Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1932), p. 2.

¹¹¹"Listen, oh brother man, the truth of man is the highest of truths, there is no other truth above it." Chandidas, trans. from a Bengali folk song.

¹¹²M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., III, 415.

¹¹³M.K. Gandhi, From Yeravada Mandir, op. cit., p. 2.

¹¹⁴Harijan (September, 1940).

¹¹⁵Young India (January 24, 1921). (I have here interpreted Gandhi's word 'evil' as 'crime'.)

¹¹⁶M.K. Gandhi, Ethical Religion, trans. Rama Iyer (Madras: Ganesan, 1922), p. 36.

the sake of convictions, even when put to extreme torture, if there is any truth in him, he will experience ineffable joy. Even in death, such an individual would steal a march over the untruth or injustice that he is struggling against. Gandhi asked, how else could we distinguish a human being from an animal, if it were not for man's ability and will to determine and die for a truth. Man is not unique in this respect.

According to the Indian schools of thought, all sentient beings are endowed with consciousness. Gandhi, was in agreement with this traditional view. He strongly asserted that human needs are not limited to the material paraphernalia. Spiritual needs have to do with man's craving for a better life in terms of the spiritual evolution. Gandhi felt deeply that the modern civilization had failed miserably in its attempts to satisfy that urge.¹¹⁷ Rather than acknowledging that aspect of human personality, it had blatantly neglected the issue by drowning it in the noise of outward chaos. We all know that Gandhi was not alone in this respect. Few others have also shared his belief. Undoubtedly, he was one of the most vociferous advocates of that stand.

The modern man finds it hard to accept that contemplation is a need; that faith, irrespective of its source, is a consolation for the mind, as well as the heart.¹¹⁸ Some may find these truths unpalatable to grasp in their nakedness. To be able to understand them requires a certain kind of openness. Very often a gentle humility is a necessary consequence of such recognition.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., I, 247-248, 279-280.

¹¹⁸ibid.

¹¹⁹ibid., XLIV, 206.

Contemplation is also an aid to immediate apprehension. Reason alone is no guide to truth.¹²⁰ Because of the complex nature of absolute truth and the finite nature of man's ability to perceive, there are degrees of apprehensions. Unless the human awareness is transformed into a continuous dynamic and a direct process, man would be incapable of having even a glimpse of the total reality. It is possible to do so briefly, in a fleeting moment of complete receptivity. But such experiences are rare. Gandhi truly believed that to find truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny. It meant achieving total perfection.¹²¹

Faith is the virtue which can best be described as "confidence based on knowledge."¹²² Without the confidence in his own self, and the ability to distinguish the 'profitable' from the 'non-profitable', man would be incapable of trusting others. When one can see clearly, without the preconceived notions, free from one's own 'cynicism' and 'sentimentality',¹²³ one acquires the wisdom to act in consonance with one's own obligation (svadharma). None can really claim monopoly over such confidence. It is a rare quality but also a privilege for all. Gandhi believed that every man must honestly follow 'truth' according to his own light. Such an attitude was desirable because of the relative nature of human perception. Before

¹²⁰Young India (December, 1921).

¹²¹ibid.

¹²²"Confidence is the companion to the person, and wisdom issues commands to him." Samyuttanikaya, Vol. 1, pp. 25, 38. A saying of Buddha quoted by H. Saddhatissa, The Buddha's Way (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 24.

¹²³ibid., p. 65.

one can ever claim to have had the glimpses of truth, one must humble or reduce oneself to a zero. Gandhi insisted that man could only perceive such truth, if he chose to live according to his dharma (ethical obligation).

Śraddhā (faith) does not necessarily mean the acceptance of a belief or an ideology. But it does have to do with a relentless quest for self-realization, through the acceptance of some specific ideal or ideals.¹²⁴

Gandhi had once told an interviewer that faith in God was an indispensable pre-requisite for the satyagrahi.¹²⁵ Perhaps, Gandhi would have easily modified that statement in later years. He would have replaced the word 'God' with 'truth'. He believed that to an atheist 'atheism' was his 'God'.¹²⁶ According to the Buddhists faith is the step in the right direction. It is "the sum total of...religious aspirations."¹²⁷ Gandhi could not have agreed more. He, too, thought that faith is the prime requisite of ethical living.

In order to comprehend truth, man must, of necessity, rely on the knowledge born of insight and reasoning. Such knowledge comes from the practice of moral virtues. In fact, Radhakrishnan considers that alone as

¹²⁴"Faith of every individual, O Bharata, is in accordance with his nature. Man is of the nature of his faith: what his faith is that, verily, he is." S. Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgītā, op. cit., XVII, v. 3, p. 303.

¹²⁵"A mere mechanical adherence to truth and non-violence is likely to break down at the critical moment. Hence I have said that Truth is God." Harijan (July, 1947). In this light one can also comprehend Gandhi's use of the individual or collective vows and prayers.

¹²⁶Gora, An Atheist with Gandhi (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1951), p. 48.

¹²⁷E. Conze, Buddhism: Its essence and development (New York: Harper and Row, 1951), p. 78.

true knowledge. "All that is different from it is non-knowledge," or mere technique.¹²⁸

To Gandhi, truth is both intellectual and ethical. Human conduct (behaviour and attitude) is not merely the outcome of reason. Emotions also have an equal and sometimes greater say in how one acts and reacts. Actions express the thoughts which have already been accepted by the heart as valid. There need not necessarily be a logical explanation behind them. The fact that they satisfy the inner urge, is reason enough to prompt one to act. This explains why Gandhi failed to satisfy the curiosity of his co-workers as to what exactly prompted him to react in a particular manner in certain instances. This failure often angered those who were astute observers of Gandhi's actions and philosophy. They were looking for some sort of consistency in the Gandhian mode of expression.¹²⁹ To such of his colleagues and critics Gandhi replied:

I have never made a fetish of consistency. I am a votary of Truth and I must say what I feel and think at a given moment on the question without regard to what I may have said before on it...As my vision gets clearer my views must grow clearer with daily practice...¹³⁰

We live in a world of relative truths. Although each of us embodies some degree of truth, according to the Gandhian notion of existence we are

¹²⁸"nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo, na medhayā, na bahunā śrutena." Katha Upanishad. II. 22; Muṇḍaka Upanishad, III, 2-3. quoted by S. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 305.

¹²⁹Such instances abound. Although Gandhi recruited soldiers for World War I, he refused having anything to do with the war efforts during World War II. He seemed to have preferred being over-run by the Japanese during World War II and gladly gave his blessings to the Indian Army departing to save Kashmir from Pakistani incursions in 1948.

¹³⁰Harijan (September, 1934).

all capable of investigating the absolute truth. It is true that our ability to do so may differ, considerably. However, by definition man is a seeker after truth. This fact is the fundamental assumption on which Gandhi bases his concept of Satyagraha. If it were not so his insistence on nonviolence would lose its meaning. It is because everybody has a right to consider his or her truth as sacred, that each society and every individual must be obliged to pursue the search for truth, nonviolently. By arrogating to oneself or an institution the right to exercise violence, we deprive humanity of its true dignity.

For Gandhi, God was an absolute truth (SAT). In comparison to that man was only a partial embodiment of truth (sat). He argued that although the 'soul force' (sat) made each of us capable of perceiving truth, it also deprived us of the authority to judge others on the basis of such perception. Ultimately, we are incapable of passing judgements on others. The possibilities of error in our judgement are immense. Violence seemed to multiply them. Gandhi insisted, therefore, that one must rely on nonviolence as the safest way of treating ourselves and others. He was of the opinion that even the State, which to him was the highest embodiment of man's political aspirations, ought to govern nonviolently. If the State resorts to violence, the citizens have a right and an obligation to resist nonviolently.¹³¹

By implication Gandhi was suggesting that the devotion to truth is the sole reason for human existence as well as the raison d'etre for the state. Because he considered politics vital to human survival he deduced that the state was an expression of man's desire for truth (justice). Gandhi

¹³¹D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, op. cit., I, 340-343.

was convinced that truth alone did or could assist human 'survival'.¹³²

Gandhi found it hard to define truth. It was not enough to consider it as the mere absence from lies. Neither was it a utilitarian concept which is often prescribed as the best policy because it does least harm,¹³³ nor was it a pious hope for a distant future. Ethical experience in its relationship with political existence had to do with preference for truth, at any cost, at all times. In that, Gandhi included the possibilities of martyrdom. For Gandhi a society which was incapable of tolerating and inculcating an honest respect for truth was unfit for survival. He thought truth was the hallmark of civilization. It was the very condition for human dignity, freedom, and justice.

The adherence to truth implies speaking and standing for truth, irrespective of all consequences. The potency which such devotion to truth generates in its votary, is remarkable. It was Gandhi's experience that one man's truth is greater than an army of untruth.¹³⁴ What is the source of this strength? For Gandhi, it was his conviction. He firmly believed that although the physical frame could deteriorate or crumble, that which inspired it with life, was greater than life itself. Similarly, Gandhi thought that man was supremely gifted to influence others on the basis of such conviction. Armed with such force of conviction, man could win against all odds, provided he was ready to sacrifice everything for his cause, non-

¹³²By 'survival' Gandhi did not mean biological sustenance. By it he meant ethical existence. To him man is an ethical being only to the extent that he can portray or seek to portray truth - the essence of all morality.

¹³³M.K. Gandhi, Speeches And Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, op. cit., p. 379.

¹³⁴Young India (May 18, 1925).

violently.¹³⁵

According to Gandhi death is only a physical illusion.¹³⁶ Torture or pain, born in the suffering for a just cause, is nothing compared to the quality and extent of joy which one experiences in the struggle to achieve one's goal. The abstract ideal is bound to survive longer than the corporal existence of those who fight for it. That ideal (truth) is definitely more eloquent than the words. A life devoted to such pursuit is perhaps the finest expression of human endeavour. But does that mean that the welfare of the physical entity must be neglected or sacrificed at the altar of some abstract concept/s, howsoever desirable they may be! Gandhi was not necessarily dividing the human existence into two separable parts.¹³⁷ The dichotomies which we seem to identify between the physical and the metaphysical, spiritual and the mundane, body and the soul, seemed erroneous to Gandhi. Neither of the parts could be taken to represent the whole, much less could they be emphasized without causing a serious concern for the welfare of the totality. Gandhi regarded all dogmatism as the 'closed' perceptions of truth. Since they were only partial, when applied indiscriminately they caused deep cleavages. Greater the misapprehension, stronger was bound to be the equal and opposite reaction from the adversaries of a

¹³⁵Kaka Kalelkar, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: July, 1976.

¹³⁶M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., XLI, 90-133.

¹³⁷It was a common practice for Gandhi to exhort his cohorts to submit themselves to the equally rigorous concern for the welfare of their physical beings as he was insisting for the mental and the spiritual. His articles in Harijan and Young India, constantly drew attention to this recognition.

so called 'proclaimed' idea or truth. To be tolerant, 'open', and patient were the best guards against intellectual and emotional hostilities.¹³⁸

Here, one is invariably reminded of the Buddhist logic in Gandhi's argument. Gandhi, too, talks of the cycle of untruths or the round of errors.¹³⁹ His insistence on Satyagraha is an attempt to break that cycle. The ideal of ahimsa is a protection from heedlessness.

There can be no relief from the 'suffering', according to Gandhi, unless the root cause 'himsa' (violence) is dealt with at all levels of life. In Gandhian perspective, as also in Buddhist, all life is an integrated whole. To view it differently is to disregard an essential truth. That, which oppresses at one level, is likely to affect other aspects of existence, sooner or later. To be 'enlightened' is to practice compassion with oneself and others in dealing with their respective truths. Gandhi presupposed the supremacy of truth as a value, above all values. With regard to that assumption, Gandhi was certain. But he did doubt the efficacy of any singular version of truth to be held as the ultimate or absolute truth. His concept of (dharma) incorporated that skepticism. It took into account the transcendental and dynamic nature of truth-perception.

By nature, man is both violent and nonviolent. As an animal, he is violent, but as a spiritual-being, he is nonviolent. Man may be inclined toward violence for it appears 'easy' to solve conflicts with the help of physical force. But man is equally amenable to reason and appeal.

¹³⁸Young India (September 5, 1926).

¹³⁹The doctrines of Paticcasamuppāda and Kamma Vipāka both presuppose the cause and effect relationship. See M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., XLI, 90-133.

Therefore, it is possible to wean him away from violence if we choose to. Gandhi said, actually there is no need to teach man to be nonviolent. As long as we can awaken the spirit in him (which is the most influential factor in human behaviour), we can also move him in favour of Satyagraha. "The moment he (man) awakens to the spirit within he cannot remain violent."¹⁴⁰ True dignity of a human being lies in being aware of this latent potential and being awakened to that knowledge. Gandhi went so far as to claim that if man were to even consider nonviolence more desirable and preferable to violence, that in itself would lead to a major victory. It would lead to a further realization. Not to realize this is to invite our own destruction. It is to inevitably destroy our hopes for a saner world.

But can man recognize truth, if every perception of truth is relative and equally liable to error? Gandhi said that the search ought to be conducted in the least harmful manner without jeopardizing others' chances of similar discovery. If there is some agreement regarding the values to be cherished and if each is honest and humble in one's own pursuit, there is no reason why all could not survive in a relatively peaceful and just society. Neither the ancient reverence nor the authoritarian interpretations are needed to maintain the sanctity of truth. It can be eternal and evolving. But one must have the courage and conviction to accept and believe that, which appears as truth at any given moment in any given situation.¹⁴¹ To such an individual and society, criticism, hearsay, and open-

¹⁴⁰M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., V, 390-93.

¹⁴¹"What is perceived by a pure heart and intellect is truth for that moment. Cling to it, and it enables me to reach pure Truth...Out of Truth emanate love, tenderness, humility. A votary of truth has to be humble as the dust. His humility increases with his observance of truth." K. Kalelkar, (ed.) To A Gandhian Capitalist (Bombay: Hind Kitab, 1951), p. 49.

confrontations would appear to be the essential safeguards of freedom in thought, speech, and action. Such a society would not restrict, censor or prove illegitimate and irrelevant any pursuits or concerns for perfection. A tall-order indeed! Critics of Gandhi point out that although Gandhi implied limitless freedom, in fact, he was avidly suspicious of granting it thoughtlessly to all. His letters to Miraben (Miss Slade) bear evidence to this. Many of the āshramites whom I met in India told me that Gandhi had different sets of criteria for dealing with different people. In doing so, he did not sacrifice or compromise his ethical principles. But, in each situation, Gandhi carefully weighed his values on a scale of hierarchy. His priorities often changed their order, but they remained priorities, nonetheless.

Gandhi learnt from experience that a man of truth must also be a man of care.¹⁴² Perhaps it was possible to expect such devotion to truth from some individuals, but it seemed practically impossible to expect it from a society. Its practice implied truly noble virtues of self-restraint and constant introspection. Was Gandhi naive then in his assumptions? My interview with J.B. Kripalani¹⁴³ convinced me of the need for such individuals in every society. Every society needs those who can fearlessly uphold these values as a beacon of progress. They instill and inspire reverence among the rest.

Gandhi believed that nothing whatsoever which exists on the physical plane is static. It was yet another concept where Buddhistic notion of

¹⁴²M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁴³J.B. Kripalani, Conversations, op. cit., Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

samsāra (constant cycle of rebirth) impinges upon the Gandhian view of existence and man's place in the cosmic evolution. According to that view man could either go backward or forward depending on the laws of dharma. He must either progress to subtler and more noble realms of meta-physical reality, or retrogress toward the cause of total misery. It was Gandhi's contention that man is capable of choosing his own future. Despite the two World Wars, Gandhi remained unshaken in his belief. To him history seemed to indicate a steady progress towards nonviolence and the affirmation of its truth. Gandhi believed that the awareness of the futility of violence was growing each day. Many governments and nations were beginning to recognize the practicability and preference for ahimsa. But he was also acutely aware of the fact that it would still take a long time, before we would lay down our weapons in preference and in favour of nonviolence as the law of life.¹⁴⁴

Meanwhile, through his thoughts, speeches, and actions Gandhi kept on emphasizing the practical utility and the ethical necessity for non violence. Greater compassion (karuṇā) in dealing with others was the only remedy left for avoiding graver consequences. To Gandhi, nonviolence was compassion, in its broadest and most comprehensive sense. In its totality, nonviolence transcended the spatio-temporal differences by appealing to the purity of the adversary's heart, by first purifying one's own.¹⁴⁵ Gandhi did not hesitate to declare that the intensity of a man's truth was directly related to the degree and the extent of the compassion which one

¹⁴⁴Young India (June 11, 1919) and Harijan (September, 1946).

¹⁴⁵Young India (January 30, 1925).

practiced with others. His logic was simple, but convincing. Bitterness is often the cause and consequence of bitterness. So is violence, conflict, intolerance and distrust. Love is also the cause and consequence of love. So is nonviolence, harmony, tolerance, and trust. That is how Gandhi explained his chain of causal determinents.

Of course, Gandhi can be challenged. But he spoke from the depth of personal experience. His arguments and assumptions cannot be taken lightly, much less can they be dismissed by those who do not speak from the validity of their own experience. The possibilities which Gandhi speaks of, are of vital significance. In the Gandhian parlance truth is experienced knowledge. To most of us, unfortunately, knowledge may have very little or practically nothing to do with experience. Gandhi believed that tolerance is a product of our own experiential scope and the depth of our perception. If we are unable to grasp the significance of his non-violent experiment, it is because of the limited extent of our own ability. And since those who persist in ignorance must suffer, Gandhi said that we, too, must suffer the tyranny of our own dogmatic assertions.

The problem would not seem of such grave importance if we chose to persist in our dependence on violence. Unfortunately, we do not lead independent, solitary lives of absolute freedom. It does acquire serious dimensions in the light of meaning and urgency which human existence imposes jointly on us. Our destinies, in some way, are tied to one another. At one time, whatever happened to a child-laborer in England was of no concern to people outside of England. Things are different today. For instance, whatever happens to the apartheid in South Africa soon rouses everybody's concern. These inter-relationships have always existed. But they were not so 'visible'.

They did not command much international attention. Gandhi raised the 'pre-political' or 'meta-political' issue by reminding us that it is of grave importance to realize the content and nature of man's obligation (svadharma) to the society. He insisted that truth and nonviolence are the twin structures on which we can build a healthier and a happier society.

ii) Environment

To recapture the argument ¹⁴⁶ as it was posed in the beginning of the previous section, one realizes that indeed the concept of the individual is very much relevant and a central issue of the whole Gandhian 'meta-politics'. It is rather misleading, vague, and confusing not to make this point with as much emphasis and clarity as one possibly can. Most Gandhian scholars and writers tend to repeat what Gandhi uttered without taking the pains to clearly separate Gandhi's concept of truth as enshrined in man and his concept of truth as experienced in man's relationship with his environment. By the term 'environment' I wish to indicate not only the immediate community of mankind which surrounds a being, but all that which surrounds him whether it be animate or inanimate. As Gandhi saw it, human existence makes sense only when it is seen in the concentric circles of growing awareness.

The second assumption of responsive and responsible human interaction arose from the first assumption which assigned to man the entity of a conscious being. The prime source of Gandhi's argument was his faith

¹⁴⁶ Supra, p.276 where it was stated by an interviewee that "Gandhi's concept of the individual is irrelevant for discovering what is the meaning of human existence (although)...the central question..."

in the meaning of human existence.¹⁴⁷ Speaking of 1920's, Miss Sykes told me:

On my arrival to India, I was introduced to the (British) group. I heard of Gandhi's attitude towards all the British people, not just those with whom he was most congenial e.g., Lord Erwin but all others, too. Gandhi would always approach them with human friendliness even though he disagreed with them politically. This disarmed them completely and the British began to have faith in Gandhi - an essential ingredient you would agree in all reconciliations... [It is the ability] of being able to see the other's truth...It is an important aspect. I think this is an essential element in any kind of Satyagraha...I wholeheartedly agree with Gandhijee's teaching: You have got to believe that the opponent has in him, just as you have, something capable of recognizing and responding to truth.¹⁴⁸

Miss Sykes frankly admitted that she did not know if faith was the most important thing in a Satyagraha. But he definitely felt that it was "extremely important" that one regard another human being of value by himself or herself.¹⁴⁹ Viewed from this perspective, political disagreements or conflicts, even of bitterly hostile nature, appear less significant in comparison to a higher realization. The essence of human personality seems to transcend not only the political, but even other kinds of limitations which a society may impose upon human freedom.

What is the 'meaning' of human existence, I asked Diwakar. To which he responded:

Most of us think that man is body, life and mind, that he is an individual, isolated thing. For Gandhi all these were instruments of realization of that which is

¹⁴⁷N. Satpathi, Conversations, op. cit., Buwaneshwar: July, 1976; Kaka Kalelkar, ibid., New Delhi: May-Aug. 1976; R.R. Diwakar, ibid.; F. Thakurdas, ibid.; M. Sykes, ibid.; V. Hari, ibid.; J. Jain, ibid.

¹⁴⁸M. Sykes, ibid.

¹⁴⁹ibid.

'eternal', 'unchanging', and 'full of the joy of existence'. That, is the essence of individual life.¹⁵⁰

Gandhi considered the knowledge of such recognition as an essential condition of Satyagraha. It is from the above knowledge, that the confidence to fight for a worthy cause originates and is sustained irrespective of personal loss, torture, or sacrifice. The individual realizes in the very core of his being that although, men may come or go, he may himself die a thousand 'deaths', but his satya (truth, or 'essence') will prevail. Therefore, a satyagrahi knows no defeat. Even in death, he is a winner.¹⁵¹

Diwakar thinks that so far as the humanity or human existence are concerned, our death is born with us. Diseases are also born with us. Our life is such that it attracts suffering. 'Evil' is part of our existence (in Gandhian terminology 'violence' would be more appropriate). Human mind has its weaknesses and strengths. The major question before humanity is "what forces are you going to align yourself with?" And Gandhi's answer was irrevocably, the same - nonviolence.¹⁵²

Jain agrees with Diwakar's interpretation, when he says that in the Gandhian perspective life is seen as a complete integrated whole. In that unity - all life is sacred. Nothing in it or of it can be discarded, sacrific-

¹⁵⁰ "Belief in the immortality of the soul, and some power - call it God or Cosmic Law - or the Ultimate are essential to Satyagraha." R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, op. cit.

¹⁵¹ ibid.

¹⁵² "I will align myself always with the constructive forces. I'll try to see that I fight death...I fight hatred and cast my vote with love and good...Because ultimately I must see...that is the meaning...And that is also the meaning of ends and means." ibid.

iced or neglected. Seen in that totality of vision, all who wish to 'survive' in the truest sense must inevitably be engrossed and immersed in the service of the all. To do so, it is essential to free oneself from the bondage of corporal existence or the attachments to the false-consciousness of 'self' as an isolated being. In the spiritual sense it is mukti from āvagaman (freedom from rebirth).¹⁵³ Hence, the vow of non-possession or poverty. Gandhi looked upon 'greed' as a hindrance to the spiritual growth. It was a definite liability in the pursuit of higher ideals. A public-servant must, of necessity, renounce luxuries and ought to lead an austere life, if he/she wishes to cultivate 'influence'. But did Gandhi insist on the renunciation of all those pursuits, which did not 'directly' sustain life, such as art, music, literature and all other ornaments of life in a 'civilized' society.¹⁵⁴ Did Gandhi mean to 'repress' the urge to possess and to enjoy the material 'bliss'. I asked that question to a number of people and heard interesting replies. All of which, although terribly pertinent and interesting, need not detain us here. Diwakar's reply was insightful.

When a child is born, a potentiality is born. It is not the same as a pup being born to a dog. It does not have the same significance, because we know their life is a routine...eat, drink, be petted or not...When a child is born, a human potentiality is born. If that potentiality is not given adequate opportunities, physical, vital, mental, moral, aesthetic and other, you are wasting it. ¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ J. Jain, ibid.

¹⁵⁴ "If each retained possession of only what he needed, no one would in want and all would live in contentment." M.K. Gandhi, From Yeravda Mandir, op. cit., p. 37. Reference is here made to the eleven vows of Gandhi.

¹⁵⁵ R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, op. cit.

Gandhi was definitely concerned about the aesthetic aspect of man and his environment, but not in the same sense as is commonly understood. Gandhi's perspective was more comprehensive. He included in that man's urge for survival and sustenance, both emotional and intellectual. The not so secret arguments and differences of opinion which existed between Gandhi and Tagore (Rabindranath), C.F. Andrews, and J. Nehru indicate where Gandhi failed to see eye to eye with them. But they do not substantiate clearly the charges leveled against Gandhi. My interview with M.S. Subalakshmi, the famed karnatic musician, gave me a glimpse into Gandhi's mind.¹⁵⁶ It also taught me what the true function of art or music could be in an ideal society. From her I learned that according to Gandhi, the role of an artist or a musician is to inspire confidence and faith in the soul of man. 'Truth' and 'Beauty', as perceived by the artist, are the intimations of the Eternal. But for them, the common masses would not know the 'joy' (ānandam), which the moments of living encounters with the infinite can inspire. A poet, a musician, and an artist are therefore not a luxury but a bare necessity. Without art, music or literature man would not know how to proceed further. Life would be incomplete without them. But in the heat of his freedom struggle, Gandhi could hardly afford to expound his ideas on beauty to the general public. He was more concerned with the priorities that needed his immediate attention.

I was tempted to ask my respondents, if they knew how Gandhi chose his priorities. There were various replies, some more interesting than others.

¹⁵⁶"Gandhiji often asked for me during his moments of bleak despair. Once I questioned him why that was so. He said, he derived some sort of courage from my songs. They rejuvenated him. He said the truth which I had glimpsed in my songs was enough to inspire him to proceed undaunted..." (trans. by me) M.S. Subalakshmi, Personal Conversations, (unrecorded), Madras: July, 1976.

It appeared to one that in a country like India, where a majority of people were held under alien subjection and led miserable lives under the most appalling conditions of poverty and self-degradation, the important thing to concentrate on ~~was not~~ music and art, but freedom and survival. Gandhi had an uncanny understanding of the human mind. There was no set formula. It was more of a professional instinct, which came naturally to Gandhi.

Gandhi was aware of and did something about the problem of alienation, though he spoke the least about it...It was a problem infinitely more painful, than the problem of hunger and not so (damned) unrelated to the problem of hunger. Because it is a problem of integration and Gandhi had an instinct for understanding this...he had some intuitive glimpses ...insight. No. He was not a theoretician. He had a feeling. But I bow to him.¹⁵⁷

Kaka Kalelkar was helpful in throwing some light on Gandhi's concept of man in relation to the universe. He said, according to Gandhi, man as an individual is only a "fraction"; and "fractionally" he is nothing.¹⁵⁸ Man is an inhabitant of the universe. He thinks he can utilize the whole universe for his own ends. Perhaps he can, but man has to understand the universe and serve it, only then, can he ever succeed.¹⁵⁹ In brief, man is his own solution and salvation. He is the centre for himself and mankind. He felt that man was at the pivot of the whole wheel of existence.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous, Conversations, op. cit., Bangalore: July, 1976.

¹⁵⁸ K. Kalekar, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: May, 1976.

¹⁵⁹ ibid.

¹⁶⁰ "I exist as a drop; you know that, O Lord of my being. I am the pivot of the axis of the universe." S.K. Ghosh, (ed.) Tagore For You (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1966), p. 139.

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 would cease to exist, and even as there is cohesive force in blind matter, so much must there be in all things animate, and the name for that cohesive force among animate beings is Love.¹⁶¹

Man is at the core of existence, because Gandhi believed that man is capable of the greatest sacrifice and the greatest renunciation for love. When I asked Kripalani if it was not quite human to possess and to desire to possess, he answered me with yet another question: "Do you think to renounce and sacrifice is inhuman?"¹⁶² Both the positive and the negative aspects of man have to be acknowledged. But Gandhi went a step further by suggesting the ways and means to strengthen the positive nature of human interaction. He wished to delimit the chances of violent conflict in every walk of life, at all levels of existence. That, as Gandhi saw it, was the problem of all problems. Everything else was dross.

The problem of all problems dictated Gandhi's need for ethical obligation. It demanded the purity of conscience, the nonviolent cohesiveness of social order, and an inward and outward recognition of the cosmic unity. He was convinced that such unity inheres in human existence and yet transcends it to some higher levels of being. Had Gandhi ignored the 'here and now' limitations of the bodily existence, the down to earth suffering of the common people, at the cost of stressing the elements of individual and social experience, we would be quite justified in calling him

¹⁶¹ Young India (October 6, 1921). (Emphasis is mine.) Gandhi equates love with ahimsa.

¹⁶² J.B. Kripalani, Conversations, op. cit., Ahmedabad: June, 1976. He thinks that although, the high level of ethical honesty which Gandhi maintained are impossibilities for the ordinary people, that does not in any way detract from their validity.

a 'saint'. But Gandhi relates the two in a meaningful whole. The fact that Gandhi is equally, if not more, concerned with justice and freedom of the fundamental kind, makes him a heroic statesman of the twentieth century's ethical experience and political existence. He was very much aware of the essentials of human dignity, (psychological, intellectual, social, and environmental). He made a special plea for extending that dignity to all which lives and breathes. His plea for ahimsa in politics is a plea for compassion in life.

Gandhi insisted that 'untouchability' (social discrimination) and 'poverty' (economic inequality) are the greatest social evils. By 'untouchability', he did not mean merely the havoc wrought upon the Indian society by the Hindu caste-system.¹⁶³ The 'untouchability' which Gandhi was fighting against still exists in every society in various forms. It is a symbol of man's inhumanity to man, and a sign of human callousness and greed. What Gandhi experienced as an Indian 'Cooli-barrister' in South Africa is still operative in the apartheid policies of the South African government. It is very much a reality in the ghettos of Harlem and the native Indian Reserves in North America. But it was crucial for Gandhi to attack the 'untouchability' of caste-system in India before he could even make a gesture of accusing the British for doing the same thing.

Gandhi could not have closed his eyes to the indignities and distress of the 'untouchables'. That would have been most unGandhian. It was urgently

¹⁶³Gandhi described untouchability as the "greatest blot on Hinduism". In giving sanction to it, Hinduism had "sinned" and degraded itself. "What crimes, for which we condemn the (British) Government as Satanic, have not we been guilty of toward our untouchable brethren?" Young India (September 13, 14, 1921).

required that he let his own countrymen know of the injustice they were cruelly imposing upon their fellow Indians. He felt that an acknowledgement was the first step towards solving a problem. Gandhi could only achieve this by turning himself into an 'untouchable'. He also invited the rest of his coworkers to follow his example.¹⁶⁴ He shaped his own actions, words, and thoughts in such a way that they reflected the essential unity of human experience. The agony and anguish of all those who suffered due to 'untouchability' became Gandhi's own.¹⁶⁵ It seemed that Gandhi's own 'self' was 'hurt'. It pained him to note that violence was in the environment. The 'violence' which was inflicted on one section of the society, Gandhi pointed out, was bound to cause 'reaction' in some other, sooner or later. Newton's law here got transformed from physics to meta-physics, and into meta-politics. Although the fundamentals are the same, the significance varies immensely.

By trying to shake the very roots of untouchability, Gandhi was challenging the age old myths of false reverence. The fact that his Satyagraha Āshram at Sabarmati was financially dependent on the generosity and goodwill of some real orthodox Hindus gave Gandhi's appeal greater strength. Gandhi was not against varṇāshram vyavastha (caste distinctions). Rather, he believed in just the opposite. Gandhi claimed that the caste-system was responsible for saving the Indian civilization from the "life corroding

¹⁶⁴M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 329-333.

¹⁶⁵"I do want to attain Moksha. I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts...endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition..." Young India (September 13, 14, 1921).

competition".¹⁶⁶ Regarding Untouchability, Gandhi said that it is the greatest 'sin' to consider anyone inferior or superior to ourselves. He said that untouchability was a product of ignorance. In truth, one can never be 'polluted' by touch. It is violence which pollutes. One who would devote his or her life to service must consider the equality of all beings as a fundamental reality.¹⁶⁷ Gandhi wished to obliterate all distinctions based on prejudice. He saw equality of inter-personal relations as a basic ethical obligation. We may choose to call that 'spirituality', or 'humanism'. But the content is the same. Gandhi only insisted that our ethical insight purify reason. He wished to illuminate the true and the beautiful with the experience of nonviolence.

Economic equality is also closely related to political equality. As Gandhi saw it, the former is the "master key to nonviolent Independence."¹⁶⁸ Every man and woman, along with the birds and the beasts, have an equal right to the necessities of life.¹⁶⁹ Gandhi realized that all need not have the same capacity, nor the intelligence to perform a task, at the same level of proficiency. But he wanted the equalization of status and opportunity for all. He thought it is unrealistic to expect everyone to be able to renounce

¹⁶⁶M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1938), pp. 43-46.

¹⁶⁷M.K. Gandhi, From Yeravda Mandir, op. cit. Also M.H. Desai, The Diary of Mahadev Desai, trans. and ed. V.G. Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1953), I, 286-287.

¹⁶⁸"Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labor. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth...and the levelling up of the semi-starved millions...A nonviolent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists." M.K. Gandhi, Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1945), pp. 20-22.

¹⁶⁹Harijan (November 1934).

wealth to the same extent. But it is legitimate to expect the wealth of the society to be used for the good of all. It ought to serve the interests of the entire society. Gandhi was not for the abolishment of either the capital or the capitalists. He definitely was, however, in favour of establishing the right kind of relationship between the capital and labor. He took a very realistic attitude toward class distinctions. "I do not wish for the supremacy of the one over the other. I do not think there is any natural antagonism between them. The rich and the poor will always be with us."¹⁷⁰ But he also pleaded for the re-evaluation and re-definition of our value system. He wished to place human relationships above all else. He wanted to establish the ethics of nonviolence at the core of that interaction.

It is easy to see why Gandhi did not perceive any irreconcilable antagonism between the interests of the wealthy and those of the poor. He thought it impossible to conceive of a time when none shall be 'richer' than another. He believed that the inequalities could not be avoided, even in the most perfect world. "But one can and must avoid strife and bitterness."¹⁷¹ He was quick to point out that bitterness and hatred could not be destroyed by the destruction of the capitalist. He argued that a violent destruction of the enemy (capitalist) must eventually lead to the destruction of the self (worker) in that process.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰Young India (January 8, 1925).

¹⁷¹Young India (October 7, 1926).

¹⁷²"...no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption, no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him, whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil." Young India (March 5, 1931).

The root cause of social violence is exploitation. All exploitation, according to Gandhi, is based on the willing or forced cooperation of the exploited. Once the exploited become aware of this simple truth, they can resist further misery. To resist exploitation, one must learn to say "No". Everyone has a choice to say either 'yes' and 'no'. Gandhi said that the secret is to be aware of that choice and mean it in dead earnest. Denial of cooperation is a weapon that even a child can possess. But it requires the strength of true conviction.

...How can one be compelled to accept slavery? I simply refuse to do the master's bidding. He may torture me, break my bones to atoms, and even kill me. He will then have my dead body, not my obedience. Ultimately, therefore, it is I who am the victor... for he has failed in getting me to do what he wanted done.¹⁷³

Gandhi felt humiliated to see the poverty which stalked his own native land.¹⁷⁴ He could see that the monopoly over the basic necessities of life like food, water, clothing, shelter, labor (employment), and health-care was causing undue and widespread misery. Justice demanded their free availability for all.¹⁷⁵ But the quickest way to win justice for oneself was to render it to the other party.¹⁷⁶

The task of winning that justice from a mighty empire was not easy. India was a subcontinent full of subservient people. Gandhi began by first

¹⁷³Harijan (June 1942).

¹⁷⁴R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, op. cit.

¹⁷⁵Young India (November 15, 1928).

¹⁷⁶M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 151.

being just to the oppressor. He pointed out their oppression. It was easy for Gandhi to view the British as his very own. He could not bear any ill will against them as a people. He could differentiate easily between the actors and their actions. If the British appeared to exploit the weak Indians, he could also blame those Indians who assisted the British in accomplishing that goal.¹⁷⁷ But one could not, rather, ought not blame the 'ignorant' for their ignorance. Therefore, Gandhi wished to point out the 'ignorance' which afflicted both the victimizer and the victim. He thought that in assisting to remove violence from the midst of those who practised it, and against whom it was being practised, he was pointing a way toward their mutual 'liberation'. But such a task involved tremendous patience. It meant gaining the respect and the trust of both the parties. It was a process by which he hoped to replace violence by nonviolence, exploitation by self-suffering, hatred by love, 'untruth' by 'truth', greed by generosity, and delusion by reason which was illuminated by faith. In short, it was re-educating the masses in the art of ethical living.

Higher education stands for unity, for catholicity, for toleration and wide outlook... it should make you find the points of contact, and avoid those of conflict. If you could see the inner springs of actions and not the outward manifestations thereof, you would find a wonderful unity...Leave the outward expression, the doctrine, the dogma and the form and behold the unity and oneness of spirit...Then there will be no need to divide this universe of ours between heaven and hell, no need to divide fellow-beings into virtuous and vicious, the eternally saved and the eternally damned. Love shall inform your actions

¹⁷⁷A verbatim report of the proceedings of Gandhi's trial in 1922 can be found in M.K. Gandhi, Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi. op. cit.

and pervade your life.¹⁷⁸

iii) Action

Just as a poet lives through his poems, an artist through his art, and a peasant through his labour, in a sense we all live through our lives. Ethically speaking, there is no virtue apart from work and actions. "It is better to allow our lives to speak for us than our words...Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating."¹⁷⁹

The above remarks were addressed to a group of Christian missionaries. Gandhi reminded them: it was not what they professed which counted most; they would be judged by their actions, irrespective of everything else. To identify human existence with anything else other than activity would be an error. According to Gandhi, activity is experience become articulate. With regard to existence, it is expression par excellant. Service to humanity is not an isolated phenomenon. It is the highest or the noblest expression of existence. For Gandhi, religion is best exemplified in giving active help to the helpless, the suffering, and the unjustly deprived.¹⁸⁰ He easily

¹⁷⁸He went on to add: " Please do not look to my life, but take me even as a fingerpost on the road that indicates the way but cannot walk the way itself. I cannot present my life as an example...Whomsoever you follow, howsoever great...see to it that you follow the spirit of the master and not imitate him mechanically." Young India (February 11, 1928).

¹⁷⁹Young India (August 11, 1927).

¹⁸⁰"If I have to make the choice between counting beads or turning the wheel, I would certainly decide in favour of the wheel, making it my rosary, so long as I found poverty and starvation stalking the land...Young India (August 14, 1924).

equated the aims of politics with religion.

Gandhi claimed that the Bhagavadgītā had taught him to work diligently for his own sustenance. Labor was therefore a condition of survival. But Gandhi equated the concept of labour with manual exertion. He preferred to work as a communal scavenger, weaver, spinner and a farmer. It pleased him immensely to identify himself with the above occupations, especially, because Hindus looked down upon those who engaged in the menial tasks. By elevating those at the lowest level of existence, Gandhi was trying to accord dignity to a class, which for centuries had been mistreated by the high caste Hindus. Gandhi wished to point out the sacredness of each 'action', howsoever small or insignificant it was. According to Gandhi, it was immaterial who performed an act. But he did care about the quality of that action.¹⁸¹

As far as Gandhi was concerned, the medium was the message. He insisted that it be so for all those who cared to revolutionize their environment with their actions. For Gandhi the 'actor' and the 'action', as well as, the 'goal' of achievement were one. They may appear isolated but they are inter-related by a common thread of continuity. For an action to be effective, the onus was on the initiator of the action. Gandhi believed that the purity of action depended upon the purity of the actor (tapas).¹⁸²

Self-purification or tapas should not be equated with self-effacement. Every right, according to Gandhi, carries with it an equal and insistent obligation. Self-purification is the first ethical obligation for one who

¹⁸¹Very many had lifted salt from the seashore before. But when Gandhi did so, it became a symbol of something extraordinarily brave. That gesture of Gandhi became a history during the famous Dandi March of 1930.

¹⁸²During his entire stay in South Africa, Gandhi had earned a name for ventilating the grievances of his community and for insisting upon their rights. But he was nonetheless keen and devoted to the cause of self-devoted purification. M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 182.

desires to purify the other. Gandhi believed that the progress of an individual group or a state ought to be judged in relationship to its capacity for self-sacrifice. The measure of self-sacrifice is also the measure of the ethical growth.¹⁸³ It is certainly easier to sacrifice others for the sake of one's own interest, than to sacrifice one's ego. But the critical test of an ethical act lies in the extent of self-sacrifice for the sake of one's cause or truth. Purity of self (tapas) provides the strength for self-sacrifice.¹⁸⁴

Gandhi taught that self-purification can be acquired through constant striving towards simplification of one's life and thought. True simplicity seeks unity with everything. It transforms every aspect of life which it touches. From experience, Gandhi knew that he had to rely on others in order to seek his own happiness. His happiness was connected with the environment in which he resided.¹⁸⁵ It is only a matter of degrees in identification that one can see the dichotomy between the unity of one's own community and the unity of all that exists.

In Hind Swaraj (the Gandhian manifesto), Gandhi discussed the true meaning of civilization. He defined it as that which has been tested and found true "on the anvil of experience". He equated civilization with a "mode

¹⁸³Indian Opinion (March 17, 1906).

¹⁸⁴M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 420.

¹⁸⁵"Happiness, the goal to which we all are striving is reached by endeavouring to make the lives of others happy, and if by renouncing the luxuries of life we can lighten the burdens of others...surely the simplification of our wants is a thing greatly to be desired! And so, if instead of supposing that we must become hermits and dwellers in caves in order to practice simplicity, we set about simplifying our affairs, each according to his own convictions and opportunity, much good will result and the simple life will at once be established." Indian Opinion (August 26, 1905).

of conduct", which prescribes to man the path of duty (obligation). As already discussed earlier in this thesis, Buddhists and Hindus also equate it with dharma. In Gandhi's mother-tongue, Gujrati, civilization literally means "good conduct". In an interesting argument Gandhi pointed out the relationship of happiness with luxuries of life and the admonishings of a spiritual culture.

(The) mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor...Millions will always remain poor. Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures.¹⁸⁶

The Indian civilization always praised the ethical being. Gandhi thought that from a slave's perspective it is natural to perceive the entire universe as enslaved. If the 'self' is haunted with fear and subjected to abject poverty, the whole world appears likewise. But if one were to free oneself from the above delusion, the entire world could also appear to be equally free. He gave the true definition of swaraj as self-rule. "It is Swaraj, when we learn to rule ourselves. It is therefore, in the palms of our hands." But Gandhi was quick to remind that such a swaraj could not be brought about unless each experienced it for oneself. He emphasized that existence was conditioned by ethical experience.

The logic which Gandhi developed in his book is this. Only the individuals with free minds can ever hope to bring about a free society and be able to retain its freedom. One, who is oneself in chains, cannot hope

¹⁸⁶M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, op. cit., pp. 43-46.

or pretend to even think of freeing another. To challenge slavery, one has to first get rid of the slave-mentality. Freedom is bound to come once the desire to be free is there. Although one may not achieve that freedom immediately, or prove to be an utter misfit when granted that freedom on a silver platter, yet, in time, the desire, itself, shall make possible the seemingly impossible dream. Before one realizes the truth in reality, the desire for its realization has to precede. Gandhi was in fact reiterating the age old doctrine of mind influencing the acts. By preaching the doctrine of ahimsa (nonviolence) Gandhi was making the same appeal Buddha had made regarding suffering and the way to its dissolution. He was also stressing the need for devotion to the object of concentration. That devotion practiced by a collectivity, conscious of its political aspiration was bound to bear fruit.

In my opinion, it is a book which can be put into the hands of a child. It teaches the gospel of love in place of hate. It replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits soul-force against brute-force...If India adopted the doctrine of love as an active part of her religion and introduced it in her politics, Swaraj (Home-Rule or Self-Rule) would descend upon India from heaven...¹⁸⁷

Then, Gandhi had pleaded that violence was not a remedy for India's ills. Later on, he began to urge that it could not be a remedy for anybody's ills.¹⁸⁸ But he clung to his faith that ahimsa was the only path towards peace.

While commenting on Gandhi's concept of freedom, Kripalani pointed out that there were basically two interpretations: (1) the concept of inward or moral freedom, and (ii) the outward or external freedom.

¹⁸⁷ ibid., Intro. to 1921 edition. pp. 11-12. Beginning remarks were made because the Bombay Government had banned the book from circulation.

¹⁸⁸ Anonymous, Conversations, op. cit., Bangalore: July, 1976.

The contemporary, western concept of freedom is more or less centred around the idea of external freedom. Earlier, like in most other cases (also found in the medieval Western thought), even Kant had this idea of Inner Freedom. But today in the West, I think that for all empirical purposes, it is divorced from metaphysics. Freedom stands for 'the absence of restraint on one's external behaviour'. To Gandhi, this was undoubtedly true, but he thought freedom to be of a higher reality. It had to be born inside one's being.¹⁸⁹

The external behaviour is often a kind of projection of that inwardness. While elaborating this point, Professor Bandhopadhyaya suggested the five Vows which Gandhi administered to his chosen Satyagrahis (of truth, nonviolence, celibacy, non-possession, and control of palate).¹⁹⁰ He said that they were intended to make them non-attached, and free from the physical passions. If one could be disciplined to master the inner self, through the practice of austerities, one could also acquire the inner freedom to master almost anything else. Such a practice could make one invincible. A Satyagrahi, trained in this manner, may be put in a prison, tortured, or deprived of all his possessions, but he would still be free within himself. On account of such tremendous inner power, one could still move mountains, (metaphorically speaking), and cause social, political or economic revolutions. Gandhi's concept of freedom is basically more inward and in that sense very different from the contemporary Western notions of freedom confined as they are to the social and political realms.

The problems which Gandhi faced were not unique. Racism, injustice, communalism, castism, emancipation of women, prejudice, and exploitation, still exist. They are very much a part of the global reality, even today. What

¹⁸⁹J.B. Kripalani, Conversations, op. cit., Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

¹⁹⁰J. Bandhopadhyaya, Conversations, op. cit., Calcutta: August, 1976.

was new, was Gandhi's redefinition of these age old problems."¹⁹¹ Gandhi articulated what was failing to find a coherent expression through collective action. Countrywide reaction and disapproval of the British rule was not new. It was not alien to India. It had taken the form of sporadic outbursts ever since 1857. During the famines of 1897, peasants and farmers had arisen in massive protests against the money-lenders. But Gandhi was aware of their failures. He talked of the futility of bloodshed. He was confident that no matter how sacred the cause, it was impossible to replace violence through more violence. He reminded Indians: the British ruled them only because of their tacit consent; the moment they withdrew their personal and moral support to the British authority, they would be set free.

Gandhi said to our countrymen, "Let the British rule sans your moral sanction." And the Indian people were persuaded over a period of fifteen years from passive acceptance of British rule to passive connivance at tyranny, to moral dissociation from tyranny, to the rejection of their sovereignty as necessary for their own good.¹⁹²

Gandhi provided a much saner perspective to the eternally demanding problems of social injustice. He was pleading for charity toward the uncharitable, for compassion toward those, who, for the time being, seemed least to deserve it. As a spokesman and a leader of those, whom he represented, who were clearly the 'wronged', and the victims of the aggressor's 'violence', Gandhi appeared to be asking for the impossible. Those who suffered seemed least predisposed for tolerance, goodwill, and sympathy, let alone compassion. They charged that their enemies were directly responsible

¹⁹¹S. Dasgupta, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: May, 1976.

¹⁹²Anonymous, Conversations, op. cit.

for their plight. Gandhi tried to point out that violence was the real enemy. Those who espoused violence did so on account of their ignorance. Through the force of love, they could be weaned away from violence.

Several of those whom I interviewed told me that although the Gandhian values are not very easy to practice, they are, nonetheless, possible. They agreed, however, that the superiority of Gandhian means was based precisely on account of those values. It was a powerful means. They said that 'power' was a mysterious phenomenon. It could be defined in various ways. It could be classified in many categories. But the most valuable and effective kind of power is that which draws upon the commonest resource. If that power has tremendous potentials, if it can accomplish much with least harm, it is worth striving for. It ought to be cultivated even if it requires extreme caution and rigour, and is time consuming.

Kaka Kalelkar¹⁹³ also agrees that Gandhi's Satyagraha is such a powerful means. It should not be equated with a mere technique. The Gandhian means goes beyond the mere application of certain principles to an existing situation. It is also an art, a philosophy, and a way of life. I asked Diwakar,¹⁹⁴ when and how must a Satyagrahi proceed during his campaign, when 'ought' one to stop short of the goal, under what specific circumstances, and when must one forge ahead, at all costs, disregarding one's own life. Diwakar smiled mystically at my queries. I knew how Gandhi would have answered those questions. He would have said, "Listen. Listen to your own conscience. Ultimately, that must guide all your actions." But Diwakar replied, "Each situation will dictate a conscientious satyagrahi what step

¹⁹³Kaka Kalelkar, Conversations, op. cit.

¹⁹⁴R.R. Diwakar, Conversations, op. cit.

to take next, and what to consider pertinent, when to stop, and when to proceed. There could be no hard and fast rules."

Diwakar seemed to convey that a true understanding of Satyagraha and its dharma is only possible for an enlightened being or at least one, who has purified his or her conscience through selfless service and simplicity of living. Viyogi Hari¹⁹⁵ went a step further. He directly pronounced a Satyagrahi as one who is true to oneself, who does not deceive either oneself or the others, who sees things clearly, as they really are. In Hari's statements, one detects the core values of Buddhist ethos. One also begins to wonder if Kalenbach's¹⁹⁶ influence on Gandhi was not greater than it is generally believed to be. Perhaps Gandhi himself was not conscious who was teaching whom. Hari maintains that what Gandhi perceived as the unity of mind, action and speech is the truth of the 'self'. Since it may differ from moment to moment, place to place, person to person, it is very difficult to make Satyagraha dharma a "straight-jacket". Therefore, there can be no hard and fast rules.

Hari compares a Satyagrahi with an artist, dedicated to the perfection of his pursuit (sādhana). A true artist is not one who creates according to the demands of the market. He is one who sees Satyam (true), Śivam (Good), and Sundarm (beautiful). The same applies to a Satyagrahi. One could not be a self-seeking opportunist, and yet expect to remain pure in one's conscience. In order to be a Satyagrahi, one would first have to attempt to see for oneself. Only then could one ever hope to show others the 'justice'

¹⁹⁵Viyogi Hari, Conversations, op. cit.

¹⁹⁶See M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit. He was Gandhi's Buddhist friend.

of a cause.¹⁹⁷

Many of those who had come in direct and close contact with Gandhi, told me that Gandhi insisted on the cultivation of one's inner strength through the performance of svadharma (one's duty). Realization of truth, can be achieved in many ways. But it becomes easier with the cultivation of inner strength. We realize ourselves truly, when we seek to create, by our thoughts, actions and words, the unity which is inherent in all. Although it exists, that unity needs to be discovered constantly. Through service to all, we are able to approach it in more ways than one.

The well known Hindi author, Jain¹⁹⁸ differentiates between the truth and beauty as is commonly conceived. He thinks that Gandhi's concept of truth was very comprehensive. It went beyond the general notions of beauty. Generally, if we wish to perceive truth only through beauty, any form which is other than beautiful, becomes unacceptable to us. He says that the path toward the perception of truth may be quite hazardous for the 'intellectual weaklings' or the 'ethically immature'. One has to completely rid oneself of the stereotyped notions of beauty in order to perceive the beauty of the Satyagrahi's truth.

To experience Beauty, distance is essential. To experience and achieve Truth (Sat), all intervening 'distances' have to be eliminated. One cannot grasp beauty with hands, but one can touch Truth with bare perception. Beauty is the relationship between the seer and the seen. Truth, like knowledge, unites the knower and the known. Jain argues that in the Gandhi's experience of Truth, Beautiful does not exist as a separate entity. There the Beautiful and the Ugly are one. Gandhi's truth or his

¹⁹⁸J. Jain, Conversations, op. cit.

experience can only be described as Sat (Truth). In order to experience that truth, one has to be truthful. Truth if beautiful, is only a form of the manifold or the dynamic. But the Ultimate is indescribable, non-qualifiable and beyond achievement. Therefore, a Satyagrahi has to constantly endeavour. He has to keep on trying to understand, comprehend, compromise, and be willing to sacrifice his 'gains', even if they appear as 'losses', for the time being. He has to be open. That is a Satyagrahi's dharma and all which hinders that goal is adharma.

Jain maintains that tapas (sacrifice), too, is essential for a Satyagrahi because one has to learn to 'burn' in the pursuit of the knowledge of one's truth and be annihilated in that realization. Only then can a Satyagrahi melt the heart of his adversary. A true Satyagrahi has to learn to consecrate his ego in the perception of truth. Even an atom of ego-tistical desire can mar his/her attainment of truth. Therefore, Gandhi's advice to any future Satyagrahi is to reduce oneself to a zero.

T.K. Mahadevan¹⁹⁹ voiced the same sentiments when he referred to the famous interview between Gandhi and G. Ramachandran in Santiniketan. The questions put forth to Gandhi were very probing. Equally convincing were Gandhi's answers. Gandhi seemed to have said the last word on art when he replied "The best art must be truthful." He seemed to have gone to the very root of the matter in proclaiming that an artist must be truthful, in order to be aesthetic. Gandhi's basic understanding of the ethics when applied to politics, society, economics of life itself, was influenced by the same attitude. To Gandhi, aesthetics is a reflection of truth. He

¹⁹⁹T.K, Mahadevan, Conversations, op. cit. In that interview G. Ramachandran asked Gandhi to define beauty and art in relationship to truth.

did not wish to catagorize it in metaphysical, political, economic or social terms. Gandhi felt that truth cannot be confined so narrowly. Gandhi's aesthetic approach to politics included in it an ethical approach to life. Those who do not see it that way miss the whole point.

I had intended to find an array of well devised, but a classified step by step 'blue-print' for a Satyagrahic campaign. I had wished to make a list of 'does' and 'don'ts' for an aspirant in Satyagraha, but instead I ended up with a deeper and more simplified philosophy of life, which informs the thoughts, words and acts of a Satyagrahi.

Chapter V. Satyagraha and Satyagrahis: An Assessment

Part I

Satyagraha

It is rather paradoxical that although man himself is a truth, yet he may sometimes spend his entire existence in search of that which is true. That the realization of such truth is only possible by true means, and that no other substitute would do this, Gandhi seems to have realized deeply.

Gandhi's concept of man implied satyam (truth). Man, according to Gandhi is only an expression of satya. For Gandhi existence and experience have meaning only to the extent that we realize truth in our own lives. We must not only think true thoughts and speak true words, but we must also engage in true actions. Definitely, the perception of truth is important for its own sake, but, it is morally binding upon those who objectively discover truth to participate subjectively in its propagation. Truth when realized has to be acted upon. The highest dharma (obligation) of man is to let his truth be known. The best expression of one's belief is one's activity. Satyagraha is the ethical obligation of a conscientious citizen. A politically enlightened society is bound to respect Satyagraha.

To recapitulate the argument as put forth in the beginning of this thesis, it is not enough to have an intellectual knowledge of the abiding virtues. It is equally important to utilize such knowledge to transcend the suffering involved in the routine existence of mankind. Elimination of suffering involves creative action. But the creative action presupposes an awareness of wisdom (panna), a quality which is closely related to compassion

(karuṇa). Nonviolence is inconceivable without the presence of this higher or noble cognition of universal oneness. In the realm of existence, a creative action can only be meaningful if it is true. Satyagraha is true action.

But true action, true speech, and true thoughts also require the purity of conduct (śīla). A perfect 'actor' is one who can combine ethical conduct with serene contemplation. Satyagraha is the 'perfect' action which one undertakes to correct "imperfection" in society. It requires a Satyagrahī.

To devote one's life to the search of truth is certainly a virtue. But it is not enough to have discovered truth. It is praiseworthy to try and live up to one's convictions or beliefs. Whereas most of us neither bother to look for truth nor harmonize our thoughts and actions, some of us do so for the sake of our own immediate interests. Rare are those individuals who spend their lives for the betterment of mankind or work for the common good. Gandhi belonged to the last category. His politics of compassion embraced all. Gandhi rose above the petty concerns of this or that party and ideology to speak for all of humanity. He sought dignity for all and pleaded for a genuine understanding of 'suffering' and its elimination in the socio-political sphere.

Gandhi's uniqueness lay in his awareness of the political responsibility of a citizen and an individual. To him, Satyagraha was an obligation common to all. Gandhi viewed everything as an unified expression of the sat (true). For Gandhi, truth was also the sole reason for the entire existence. Outside of truth, nothing existed. If it did, it was illusory. It is important to recall that in sanskrit, sat literally means being, abiding,

actual, wise, in essence, anything which really is, or ought to be.¹ Although a distinction is sometimes made between the knowledge and being, on the whole, Indian tradition accords to sat an absolute, archetypal reality.²

Satyagraha or the "appeal of truth" seems more meaningful when one considers it as a mode of communication. In order to establish any contact we require a language. Language gives birth to dialogue. But a dialogue can only come into existence provided there is an agreement on the use of symbols. Gandhi claimed that the possibilities for such dialogues are minimum in an hostile atmosphere. Therefore, his Satyagraha resorted to nonviolence as ethically the most sublime expression of human interaction. Nonviolence, based as it is on true knowledge (prajñā), sets the tone for true action which must, ultimately lead to social and political harmony. It also provides the non-conflicting symbols of good will among adversaries. Gandhi equated absolute truth with God or mokṣa. It is important to re-emphasize the close similarities between Gandhi and ~~the~~ Buddha. While the Buddha did not believe in God he, nonetheless, had a definite concept of the ultimate truth, as already pointed out in chapter I.

For Gandhi the metaphysical and transcendental concept of truth signified his idea of man and society. Truth, as the highest virtue and the ultimate end has a universal sanctity. It is considered all powerful, overwhelmingly superior, and eternal. Every falsehood, must eventually crumble in the presence of truth. Every society is bound to acknowledge the claims of truth, provided such claims are genuine. Since a society is composed of

¹M. Monier-Williams Sanskrit - English Dictionary, Etymologically and Philologically arranged with Special reference to Cognate Indo-European Languages (New ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960).

²See chapter I of this thesis.

individuals, the quality of their experience determines the character and texture of its socio-political existence. Gandhi also maintained that the integrity of individual endeavour in a society is dependent on the degree of that society's total self-realization.

It was Gandhi's belief that no amount of coercion can surmount the potency of inner truth. The knowledge of such perception is equally invigorating. The possessor of such strength is in many ways invincible. Enslavement only bespeaks of violent conquest. Violence has a limited capacity to overpower conscientious objection. The truth of one who is willing to suffer can hardly be threatened by any violent means. This is the secret of Satyagraha and the Satyagrahi's invincibility.

Satyagraha, it must be remembered, is not for faint-hearted individuals. A Satyagrahi has got to be a courageous person. Courage offers faith in the cause of one's endeavour. In the final analysis, it does not really matter if one believes in a God or not. One is invincible as long as one believes in something which is greater than the 'self', and does not equate that self with the ego or identifies it as 'I'. Gandhi claimed that the plural manifestations are merely the reflections of the same Reality, which is one and nondivisible. What does appear as differentiated is only due to our ignorance. Knowledge when realized has no problem in affirming that the 'other', in truth, is one's own self. The validity of such experience makes Satyagraha charitable towards all.

On the basis of the above understanding, Gandhi insisted upon the essential individual and social obligation of ahimsa, in all affairs of life. Perhaps no other person in our age has done as much to clarify, analyse, and refine the concept of nonviolence, as Gandhi. With the possible

exception of Tolstoy, prior to Gandhi, the term was not even identified with politics.³ Today, Gandhi's name has almost become synonymous with the politics of nonviolence. He gave to politics an aura of spirituality. Gandhi rightly deserves to be called an exponent of the politics of enlightenment. He combines in Satyagraha the longing for absolute freedom with an equally urgent demand to be just. But Gandhi's stress is definitely on obligation rather than the right.

To Gandhi, nonviolence is the only legitimate means of political action. He pleaded for its application, as the supreme mode of inquiry. In practice, that would imply the complete renunciation of violence in one's deeds, as well as in all other modes of communication. Violence - of either an overt or covert kind - is essentially a state of mind. One can deal with violence by consciously rejecting all negative emotions such as distrust, fear and envy. As Gandhi understood it, violence is rooted in the individual. The individual alone can consciously opt for a more ethical alternative. Even institutional violence can be eliminated through individual choice. But non-killing or an abstention from injury is the least expression of nonviolence. In its positive aspect, ahimsa can best be equated with karuna (compassion) which the Buddhists consider to be the essence of their religion.

Gandhi conceded that one cannot observe absolute ahimsa in one's daily routine. Survival itself is bound to involve some sort of violence. However, it is possible to minimize violence by accepting ahimsa as an ideal. By undertaking to transform the human condition through nonviolent means, man takes upon himself the challenge to consciously defy his social condition-

³E. Thompson, "Gandhi a character study", in S. Radhakrishnan, ed., Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections (London: Allen And Unwin, 1949), p. 298.

ing.

Gandhi believed in the superiority of nonviolent means but he did think it possible to have recourse to violence in exceptional cases. Gandhi did approve of mercy-killing under certain circumstances. He would not, however, use violence even in self defense.

It is easy to dismiss men like Gandhi and Tolstoy by suggesting that they were unrealistic and short-sighted. One could assert that the so-called "law of ahimsa" has never been and is not a reality. Human nature, as we know it, is incapable of eschewing violence in favour of a nonviolent society. But these arguments do not really answer the questions posed by the advocate of nonviolence. If violence is ethically and practically unacceptable, the escape from violence does not lie in and through more violence. Nonviolence can only be espoused through the nonviolent means. The denial of that truth is in itself a violence. It is a violence committed to our ourselves.

History, according to Gandhi, is only a vindication of the law of nonviolence. Like Marx, Gandhi, too, saw the divisions between the 'rulers' and the 'ruled. He also conceded that mutual fear, distrust and resentment are the causes of human alienation. It was Gandhi's contention that in a society which is primarily dedicated to the virtues of truth and nonviolence, suffering shall be happily borne by those who demand justice. Such individuals shall either triumph in their struggle or die as martyrs for their cause. But in Gandhi's ideal society, men and women would refuse to be the

passive spectators to injustice, of any kind, at any level.

A society is only a mirror. It simply reflects the collective conscience of the individuals who compose it. Gandhi's aim was clearly to restore the dignity of the individual. He did so by endowing our acts with an aura of sanctity. If the individual is aware of one's own truth, and is aware of the ethical commitment towards it, one is also bound to respect that virtue in others. In this way one heroic act will lead to another. A society which is composed of heroic actors and heroic activity is likely to be the best guarantee against any injustice. In it, there would be little or no room for intimidation, hypocrisy, paranoia and organized crime. It would be a society devoid of exploitation, of any sort. The spirit of Satyagraha would seem natural to such a people. Such a society would happily foster many Satyagrahis.

Gandhi believed that tapsyā (self-suffering) is the real test of compassion.⁴ It involves self-restraint and self-discipline. Therefore, Satyagraha also includes in it an ingredient of penance. Without the tapas of the truly dedicated individuals there can be no lasting solution. Just as the positive aspect of nonviolence is love, the positive aspect of self-sacrifice is courage. A true or an heroic action cannot be performed without tapas.

According to Gandhi all injustice is evil. It causes suffering. Suffering is primarily of two kinds. Suffering of the first kind has its roots in violence and is the result of ignorance. It is painful for the one who practices it, and the one to whom it is directed. One could relate the

⁴Young India (June 12, 1922).

agony of violence-based suffering to all unjust, uncharitable and unsalutary modes of expression in society.

There is also another kind of suffering, which is diametrically opposed to the one mentioned above. The second kind of suffering is rooted in nonviolence and is a product of self knowledge. One could only relate tapas with the second kind of suffering. Tapas adequately refers to the idea of suffering that is self-imposed, highly edifying and noble in its intent. It enriches the one who practices it, as well as the one against whom it is practiced. As opposed to the first kind, the suffering borne out of compassion for the good of one's enemy ennobles the whole society. The world itself is enriched by such sacrifice. Since it is willingly accepted by the Satyagrahi in it there is not the least trace of coercion. It is possible that by witnessing such a self-less sacrifice, the opponent may be compelled morally to do something he/she was initially unwilling to do; but such compulsion is not in the least punitive or harassing. Tapas does not injure the object of tapasyā. On the contrary, it saves and protects the opponent from every undue stress, of the minutest violence. Self-suffering also has an element of positivism in it. It is self-imposed, and not other-directed. When one invites suffering on oneself, one is, indeed, providing the highest proof of one's truth, sincerity, and the freedom to act.

Perhaps Gandhi was right in claiming that the art of nonviolence requires patient apprenticeship. Only those who are devoted to the ideals of ahimsa can worship at the shrine of self-suffering. It is an art, which must be cultivated. Bondurant may be right in suggesting that of the three fundamentals of Satyagraha, tapas is perhaps the least acceptable to the Western mind. According to her, self-suffering (tapas) is the ultimate proof

of human dignity.⁵

Through a combination of truth, nonviolence, and self-suffering Gandhi provided in Satyagraha a means to transcend the socio-political suffering. The dynamics of truth and the creativity inherent in Satyagraha inter-relate action with aesthetics. They make politics a meaningful task and preoccupation. Since politics is concerned with freedom, in its highest sense, only the action which seeks to secure and establish such freedom appeared as meaningful to Gandhi. Satyagraha symbolizes the human will to transform and transcend all seeming limitations of violent pursuits to a highly praiseworthy goal of true liberation. In an abstract sense, Satyagraha is the means and an end of the highest human aspiration, for man truly wishes to liberate himself and his existence to higher levels of experience.

Was Gandhi primarily interested in the means of transformation, rather than of continuity or stability? Some argue that it is one thing to challenge a system, but quite another to administer it. One wonders whether Satyagraha is only relevant to a society or a people who wish to overthrow a government but is detrimental to a government or a system struggling to achieve its goals. Gandhi, however, never made that distinction. It may have appeared irrelevant to him, whether one used the politics of compassion to establish a thing or to destroy it, through conscious awareness. One could and ought to make use of Satyagraha for both the ends. R.R. Diwakar once asked Gandhi, why he was not interested in sharing the burden of the state with others. "My avatāra (reincarnation) is only to emphasize the dharma of nonviolence,"

⁵J.V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 29.

Gandhi responded humorously. Gandhi saw in Satyagraha, the means through which the dharma of nonviolence could adequately establish itself in our contemporary society. Perhaps, Gandhi was too ahead of his times. One cannot yet contemplate a society where nonviolence would be the predominant way of life. Nonetheless, it is possible to allow for nonviolence as a strategy for change, especially if it promises effective "returns" with relatively "low investments". Satyagraha definitely seems more desirable when one compares it with the horrors of violent wars. Yet, it is not an easy task to challenge the entire value systems that have, for so long, cherished the myths of violence.

It is also crucial to understand and make an analytical distinction between Satyagrahic means and ends. Through my research I realized that although "means" are a significant aspect of Satyagraha, they are definitely not the alpha and omega of Gandhi's politics of compassion. Underlying Gandhi's whole philosophy of 'means justifying ends', lies a whole complex of inter-related phenomena. In that context, although the means are important, it is equally significant that they be motivated by the purity of thought, speech, and action. A Satyagrahi must not only be earnest, nonviolent, and compromising in spirit, but also must appear to be so.⁶ The dichotomy which exists between the one who is genuine, but does not appear to be so, can be overcome by conscious efforts. It is when the ego, anger, and hatred intervene between one's stated goals and the actualized efforts, that even the harmless 'sit-ins', peace-marches, and the written appeals are mistaken for symbols of self-righteousness. Tapas involves taking definite and conscious

⁶Young India (February 20, 1930). Text of Gandhi's speech to the Satyagrahis on the eve of the Salt-March.

steps to eliminate any misunderstandings which the adversary might have. The dharma of nonviolence advocates utter self-lessness, and a complete surrender of ego. Tapas serves to develop the rigorous discipline of self-sacrifice involved in Satyagraha. Only when that happens, can the ends pursued by Satyagraha appear legitimate and just to others.

It is reasonable to inquire about the function of ethics and spirituality in Satyagraha. As already pointed out in chapter I, these provide a unity and a well ordered format to the life of the Satyagrahi and his endeavours. Without the foundations of ethical precognition, a Satyagraha is most likely to go helter-skelter. Ethics furnishes both the Satyagrahi and his movement with the basic guide-lines, and a sense of direction. It aids to organize the Satyagrahic responses. Just as in violent combats, militant ideologies, skills of weaponry, logistics and physical prowess play crucial roles, in Satyagraha ethical conduct and peerless wisdom play similar roles.

Especially, the stress on spirituality is a Satyagrahi's most potent resource. It is an asset which most resistors in history have eventually relied upon. According to Gandhi, spirituality has little to do with one's belief in God/Truth. Even an idea may be a "God", if it can sustain the hope of one who strives. It is a superior resource, because no physical power is stronger in comparison. According to Gandhi spirituality is the inner strength of one's total conviction. It is easy to deprive an individual of his rights, to impose severe restrictions on his freedoms, and to threaten him with various punishments, but one cannot coerce anyone into willing obedience. Gandhi thought that the triumph over the beliefs of another is impossible to achieve, except through the gentle art of nonviolent persuasions.

On the one hand, the wars of violence may and do achieve something in the short-run, but only in a very limited sense. They do not have a lasting effect. Peace, on the other hand, cannot flourish under an atmosphere of ill-will and hatred. Nonviolence takes long to practice, but what it achieves lasts longer. Whether it be at the spiritual or secular level, in the national or international arena, according to Gandhi, Satyagraha has better chances of success in the art of problem solving.

The process of Satyagraha, in one sense, is a gentle but a persistent search for acceptable solutions. How one arrives at such a meaningful compromise is significant. Gandhi insisted that, first of all, the attachment to ego must be relinquished by those, who claim to offer the Satyagraha. Non-attachment generates clear thinking, a dispassionate application of reason, and a deep intuition. Gandhi was not one who would rationalize every act of mind and heart. But he did, however, insist upon the concentration of one's entire faculties to a heightened sense of awareness. This awareness he claimed, can only be achieved through the purity of mind and heart. In the spiritual parlance, one may term it as "insight". It is a subtle grasp of the situation at hand. It is more like the skilled physician's glance at a patient. In the socio-political realms, too, what is often needed is a quick grasp of the total problem. It is not always possible to explain the logical steps of a Satyagraha movement. It appears that the movement is highly dependent on the Satyagrahi. Gandhi was often at pains to explain why he took a specific action, in a particular instance. His intuitive intellect played a major role in some of those decisions. One could not understand them rationally. Like Socrates, Gandhi, too, heard 'voices'. But this element does not necessarily detract from the rationality of Satyagraha. It certainly adds a new dimension to the Satyagrahic persuasion. Thereby, making it all the more dependent on the personality of the Satyagrahi rather than a lifeless technique.

A Satyagrahi's genuine concern for the "other" is clearly responsible for creating the amicable atmosphere. Without such overwhelming feelings of compassion, it would be difficult to seek a Satyagrahic resolution. Between the two conflicting parties, it does not really matter where these feelings originate. The thought itself should be powerful enough to propagate in widening circles of greater understanding.⁷ Satyagraha emphasizes the initial conciliatory moves toward an acceptable compromise. But a Satyagrahi must not depend on the quick expectations of similar responses from the opponent. Satyagraha relies heavily on the virtues of patience and faith. A Satyagrahi must never despair easily. The central principle of Satyagraha calls for the recognition of the 'other' as also Sat (True). It demands that the Satyagrahi perceive vividly the relationship that exists between his own 'self' and the 'self' of his adversary. The 'other' exists only because one allows it to. Human compassion must transcend the narrow limits of egotistical experience to comprehend the totality of the entire experience. In one sense Satyagraha does nothing except to plead for that transfiguration where the 'other' - however obnoxious they may momentarily appear - merges and becomes one with one's own 'being' (ātma).

Satyagraha removes the element of fear and threat involved in a conflict by eliminating the concept of enemy. In the absence of an 'enemy' the emotions of fear and threat disappear. Note that Gandhi did not eliminate the possibilities of conflict, that would, indeed, be an unrealistic and highly over simplified notion of Satyagraha. Gandhi simply transformed the 'aggression'

⁷"Perfectly controlled thought is itself power of the highest potency and can become self-acting" in "Bramhacharya for Satyagrahi". Harijan (7.38).

involved into a creative process of 'self-discovery'. When the 'enemy' is no longer considered an enemy, but a 'loved one', whose welfare is equally dear to us, we cannot fail to respond to his/her vital interests. By the infusion of compassionate concern, Gandhi converted the hostility of conflicts into conflict-management games. The idea is to slowly proceed towards conflict resolution rather than suppression. Satyagraha is a quiet and a relentless search, patient from the start to the finish, but highly rewarding in the process. Satyagraha aims at creating a climate of mutual trust, where the two parties to a conflict can at least begin to see the problem. It is this 'seeing' of the problem, which also contains in it the seeds of its resolution.

In a nutshell, Satyagraha is a time-consuming, but a creative and a peaceful means of solving socio-political conflicts. It is the art and science of peaceful resistance to a given wrong or a series of wrongs. In no way can it be termed passive.⁸ It may or may not include non-cooperation. This clearly ought to dispell misnomers such as 'nonviolent passive resistance', 'non-cooperation', 'civil disobedience', etc. It is also wrong to classify it as a 'nonviolent coercion'.⁹ At best, Satyagraha is a mode of direct action. Its proponents claim that it is among the most civilized forms of protest. But Satyagraha should not be equated with mere noncooperation or civil disobedience. Often the prerequisite of a Satyagrahi is his ability

⁸M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., VIII, 131. ibid., XVIII, 132. M.K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa tran. V.G. Desai, (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928), pp. 177-180. Also Simone Panter-Brick, Gandhi Against Machiavellism tran. P. Leon, (London: Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp. 8, 225-26.

⁹K. Shridharani, War Without Violence (New York: G.P. Garland Pub., 1972), pp. 291-294.

to cooperate with various segments of society. He must have a reputation for obedience of law and respect toward authority. He must actively cooperate in the peaceful resolution of the conflict for mutually satisfying and just ends. Satyagraha seeks to establish the positive aspects of human interaction by relying on the ethical and rational qualities of the 'opponent'. It blatantly asserts that man is capable of holding his own against the greatest of physical might. Satyagraha rests on the assumption of the common 'divinity' in man. It believes that man can always be moved by a genuine appeal to the conscience. It has faith in the ability to convert the heart of the opponent, no matter how hopeless the task seems. According to Gandhian philosophy even a hardened 'criminal' is not immune to nonviolent appeals of Satyagraha. It suggests that even the most brutal, impenetrable and irresponsive authority is not necessarily deprived of human goodness.¹⁰ It was Gandhi's conviction that even the mightiest power can be made to bow down to the demands of human justice.

Criticism of Satyagraha

Gandhi described Satyagraha as the firmness in a good cause.¹¹ It is an ethical means to counter untruth with truth, and violence with non-violence. In short, it is the means to challenge ignorance with wisdom. At times, he also said that it is merely a new name for the dharma of self-

¹⁰Gandhi was severely criticized for the answers he gave to the victims of Nazi regime. He fervently believed that Hitler, too, could be dealt with successfully through Satyagraha, since he was also a human being, however cruel and demented. "It is often forgotten that it is never the intention of a Satyagrahi 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." Harijan (3.39).

¹¹M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., VIII, 131.

suffering.¹² It is a noble art of righting wrongs, because "the sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others."¹³ The self-sufferer does not make others suffer for his own errors. According to Gandhi, one can be sure of Satyagraha's efficiency and effectiveness. It promises greater relief and better results than the infliction of suffering on the opponent.¹⁴ It emphatically claims to be far superior to the violent means of redressing wrongs.

Satyagraha appears to have the power to affect change through active and positive interaction. The nature of the change induced by it seems not only long lasting, but also fundamental. Satyagraha does aim to look at violence in society from an entirely novel perspective.

One finds it very difficult to argue with Gandhi on his basic premise. There seems hardly anything in Gandhi with which one could disagree or point out as 'wrong'. The task of criticizing Satyagraha is equally frustrating.

There is hardly anything in the definition of Satyagraha which could be open to attack. Perhaps one could possibly find faults with the manner in which some Satyagrahas were or were not carried out. One could, for instance, charge Gandhi that although the Satyagrahas are supposed to be ethical, they sometimes are not. Gandhi would have simply dismissed these accusations by submitting that if they infringed or transgressed the basic premise they were not Satyagrahas but duragrahas (opposite of Satyagraha - firmness in bad causes or adherence to untruth). Gandhi would also point out that a Satyagrahi is not a perfect being.

¹²ibid., IV, 112; XVIII, 133; and XXVIII, 305.

¹³M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj (3rd ed.; Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1958), p. 79.

¹⁴M.K. Gandhi, Collected Works, op. cit., X, 184.

The fact that Gandhi laid more emphasis on obligations as compared to rights, differentiates him from those who demand their rights at any cost. Their position is that one can only be human toward those who are worthy of such recognition. Gandhi starts with such recognition as an already established fact. If the 'evil' does still persist in treating his victim as inferior or unequal, the Satyagrahi does not avow to take revenge. To retaliate evil with evil would be a clear repudiation of ethical experience.

In the perfect tradition of compassionate response, Gandhi implored the Satyagrahi to cleanse his/her own heart before accusing the opponent. One could blame Gandhi for his utter disregard for the emotional and physical state of the victims of aggression. But it is Gandhi's compassionate concern which initially offered the possible way out. Escape from suffering cannot be attempted through resort to more suffering and pain. Gandhi's remedy only appears more painful than the ailment; but his recommended cure also acts as a prevention for further suffering from violence. Unless we make serious efforts in eliminating such violence not only political existence, but existence per se is in peril.

Gandhi is correct in calling Satyagraha the "dharma of self-suffering". Usually, one expects something in return for something. The 'nirvāṇa' from socio-political 'samsāra' (realm of existence) is only possible, provided one deserves to win it. Sometimes, our concerns with the concept of rights may mislead us into being oblivious of our obligations. Gandhi suggested we re-examine ourselves before we accuse the other of unethical conduct. One can hardly argue with Gandhi that justice demands justice and trust begets trust. He argued that justice, too, could be enjoyed, by giving it to others first. Since noble ends require noble means, Gandhi concluded that even our demands

for justice must be just, and our plea for compassion must also be compassionate. It is a reasonable position, ethically sound and perfectly pure, although it may be extremely difficult to live like a Satyagrahi.

Perhaps Gandhi went a little too far in claiming that Satyagraha is also a 'practical' proposition. If indeed Satyagraha is so practical why was it not resorted to by victims of so many suffering generations? Gandhi would not have hesitated to admit that sometimes the easiest solutions are the hardest to apply. If so, clearly, Satyagraha has lost its validity as a 'practical' solution to most of the problems afflicting our society. But before judging Gandhi wrong, let us reconsider our hasty verdict. Like Socrates, Gandhi too answered one question with yet another. If we do not consider nonviolence or Satyagraha a practical solution, do we have any other solutions or better alternatives? We would find it hard to respond to Gandhi's query.

By 'practical' response, Gandhi meant a workable solution. Immense amounts of energy, resources and time are being spent in the production, perfection and proliferation of destructive weapons. Evidence is not wanting to suggest various other directions and uses to which the same efforts could be employed to create greater harmony and peace for a better environment. Neither material prosperity nor spiritual well-being is an isolated phenomenon. Neither can they be pursued in total disregard of universal considerations. Only that which relates to all, is good for all, and is harmless in its short and long term implications, appeared as a 'practical' alternative to Gandhi. Satyagraha, Gandhi assured, is such an alternative.

Gandhi also claimed the superiority of his nonviolent means over the violent ones. He affirmed that while violent means do not necessarily solve

the issue they also create fresh problems in the process of doing so.

Like the Buddha, Gandhi was confident that hatred cannot be eliminated through hatred; violence can only be overcome by nonviolence. Satyagraha through its pure and true means does not give rise to more problems. On the contrary, it generates good will and virtuous response. The superiority of the Gandhian solution lies mainly in this, that it is a more humane and intelligent manner of treating wrongs and those responsible for it. Satyagraha does not treat the problems in society at a superficial level, it insists on looking at the root cause of those problems. Elimination of violence in oneself is bound to lead to a higher level of awareness and cognition, thereby effecting changes at other levels in community as a whole. However, it is not sure if a Satyagraha campaign can be successfully carried out by the one who either materially or even directly hopes to gain by its outcomes. In Satyagraha all personal and private interests must strictly be disregarded. The end for which a Satyagraha is undertaken must be 'pure' and beyond all possible doubts of reproach. Satyagraha can only wage its battle against the humanistic, unsullied, rational and clearly perceived goals. These must be ethically sound and preferably serve the good of the entire community.

It is doubtful, although it has never been tried yet, if one could successfully carry out Satyagraha campaigns in the international arena. Gandhi, of course, claimed that they can be used to resolve any conflict serious enough to draw a genuine response. It appears that only those who are directly affected by the 'oppression' can rightfully claim to offer Satyagraha.

During the war in Vietnam, a few conscientious Buddhist monks calmly set fire to their own bodies. It was an effort to register their moving pro-

tests against the atrocities committed there. Their self-immolation, too, was a symbol of suffering. It was undertaken to melt the hearts of the oppressors. It was a silent, solitary, yet serenely eloquent manner of registering their ultimate protest in the face of senseless violence. Spiritually and psychologically perhaps that, too, must have had its own repercussions - invisible, yet sure. However, a Satyagrahi does not, at once, go to the extreme of sacrificing one's life in self-immolation. Although the conviction to go that far may always be there, the restraint to stop and reconsider each motive, each action, speech or thought in terms of public response is a big deterrent. Not that these were missing from the above mentioned gesture of the monks, but a Satyagrahi is hindered by his socio-political commitments. A Satyagrahi is not a complete ascetic and his responses are geared more to the seeking of the workable. He must seek immediate solutions, here and now. He must carry his convictions to the masses and act as their emissary. A Satyagrahi advances and retreats at will, without the fear of losing face, because there is no ego involvement. So does the monk. However, the two cannot really be equated. While the monks' self-immolation is purely a religious act, the Satyagrahi's self-suffering is a religio-political means.

As we now understand, means as means are important. They ought not to be and cannot be confused with the ends. The means certainly influence, affect and condition ends, far more intimately than is commonly assumed. But it would imply gross over simplification to think that Gandhi made no distinction between ends and means.¹⁵ What he did stress very much was that means justify ends and that noble ends definitely require noble means.¹⁶

¹⁵Anonymous, Conversations, op. cit., Bangalore: July, 1976.

¹⁶M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 260.

In considering the inseparability of ends and means Gandhi is unique among other political thinkers and actors. His philosophy of Satyagraha, in this sense, does transcend and supercede the substantial limitations of earlier concepts regarding social and political change. Primarily, because it is "at once a mode of action and a method of inquiry", and secondly, because it seeks a genuine redress and solution to the problems facing the Satyagrahi.¹⁷

It appears misleading to suggest that Satyagraha is a mere strategy or a technique. It is not. At best it is a search for truth. It is an appeal, which must be made in all honesty and earnestness. Gandhi cannot be legitimately blamed for hypocrisy since he himself lived his message and experienced what he preached.

Satyagraha, in its essence, is an attitude of mind and a way of living. It is pre-eminently concerned with defending the rights of the wronged. It aims at securing the socio-political justice. It hopes to achieve these virtuous ends by changing the heart of the wrong-doer. What is significant to Gandhi is the voluntary self-suffering, patiently borne, through active use of nonviolent but peaceful and intrinsically ethical means.¹⁸

Gandhi presupposed four basic conditions¹⁹ for Satyagraha. Most of the criticism levelled against the Gandhian means arise from the non-recognition of these basic requirements, which are as follows: (i) the acceptance of the sacred in man; (ii) the acceptance of the concept that

¹⁷J. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence, op. cit., pp. v-xii.

¹⁸M.K. Gandhi, The Collected Works, op. cit., II, 85; III, 355; IV, 160; VIII, 22-23, 92, 131, 151; IX, 28, 96-97, 4 to 2; X, 248; XI, 40-41.

¹⁹Paul F. Power, in T.K. Mahadevan, Truth and Nonviolence: A UNESCO Symposium on Gandhi (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1969), pp. 187-189.

rights have to be won, before they are demanded; (iii) the acceptance of the consequences of conscientious objection or protest; and (iv) the acceptance of responsibility of avoiding harm to the adversary.

Gandhi was extremely zealous on stressing the purity of means. He reminded over and over again that a Satyagraha should never be violent or secretive; nor should it be undertaken for less than salutary ends. Only matters affecting the deepest concerns of human existence deserve the attentions of a Satyagrahic challenge. Also, it is mandatory to adopt Satyagraha only as a last resort, after every other means of legitimate efforts have failed to secure justice. Satyagraha is a serious means and therefore it ought not to be tampered with. It is also a very potent weapon, perhaps too powerful to be wielded for petty and not so serious causes. Gandhi claimed that even a child can be capable of using Satyagraha. To prove his point Gandhi also cited instances from the Indian mythology. But it may cause undue suffering for those who are not mature enough for the discipline or are irresolute in their fervour. Satyagraha is grounded in firm conviction and it is a fruit of immense dedication.

A Satyagrahi takes up Satyagraha with the deliberate intent to suffer and joyfully accept the consequences of his own actions. It seems unwise and impractical for the Satyagrahi to wage mighty struggles for hollow and meaningless causes. Provided the cause is just and the campaign well organized by a skillful leader, there is little room for its failure. A Satyagrahi must be constantly mindful of his inner voice. Since he reposes trust in an authority higher than what the law presupposes, he is not afraid of even transgressing the law in exceptional cases, but he must never transgress the dictates of his own conscience. This requirement clearly separates the Satyagrahi from the ordinary people.

An essential thread of mindfulness runs through the entire Gandhian effort of redressing wrongs. The whole process of Satyagraha has a central unity. It is a leitmotief which keeps emerging in parts to integrate the whole. Seen in this light, the Buddha's chain of 'cause' and 'effect' becomes clearly visible. Satyagraha acts so as to transform and translate the quality of violent existence to nonviolent and meaningful experience.

But, some of the above considerations give rise to a set of highly meaningful, yet dangerously explosive implications. Since such implications do not fall within the preview of this work one may not even attempt to answer them. However, they are vital and some attention needs to be drawn to that aspect. Is Satyagraha, considering its major strengths and weaknesses, then, a workable alternative? Can it be applied universally, without the traditional backdrop of Hindu, Buddhist or Jaina conditioning? Does it stand in direct opposition to the spirit of democracy? Since Satyagraha so readily scoffs at the idea of the political authority and physical force (irrespective of its being legitimate or not), does it challenge the sovereignty of the state itself? Will not an ordinary citizen, not well-versed in the art of conscientious and meticulous tapas (suffering), unskilled in the means of nonviolent protest, and lacking the absolute faith of a Gandhi, fall easy prey to the whims of a 'phony' Satyagrahi? Was Gandhi making a plea against the state and its laws? Was he, therefore, guilty of seditious intent? Can one call Gandhi a responsible citizen, worthy of emulation in the light of all these consideration? Fortunately for us, Plato had answered these very queries long before the advent of Gandhi.²⁰ Gandhi, too, faced these very

²⁰See author's Comprehensive Paper on Some Considerations on the Concept of Nonviolence. Dept. of Political Science, McMaster University, 1975. Also see K. Shridharani, War Without Violence, op. cit. for some of the issues touching Gandhian protest and democratic concerns.

uestions before the court of law. Gandhi's trial of 1922 had very distinct echoes of the Socratic defence.

In retrospect, it is important to realize that Gandhi's Satyagraha is nothing more than a re-assertion of the most pertinent questions of human experience and existence. Gandhi's assertions force us to reflect and ask ourselves: who we are, for what we exist, what does our experience indicate and how do we hope to relate all these concerns with the problem of meaning in life.

The paradox that man appears to be can only be resolved if we choose to look at the alternatives presented to us by wisdom throughout the ages. That wisdom is nobody's monopoly. It is open to all, available to all. Gandhi is only one of the many individuals who have persistently, but nonetheless persuasively drawn our attention to the path of infinite goodness. As mankind grows more efficient in the production of destructive weapons, more and more the truth of nonviolence will appear to be imperative. Satyagraha is a pointer in that direction. It is basically a search that each individual must eventually undertake for himself.

Part II

Satyagrahi

A Satyagrahi is one who offers the Satyagraha. Although the occasions for Satyagrahic struggle may never arise - a Satyagrahi must nonetheless strive constantly toward the ideals of ethical living. One can do so only by living ethically. Therefore, a Satyagrahi is also one who lives and believes in ethical living.

Self-respect is the first prerequisite for ethical living. Gandhi equated this virtue with honourable existence. For a Satyagrahi no price is greater than the value of existence in consonance with one's truth. Self-respect implies living in accordance with the truth of one's being. A recognition of the inherent worth of the Self (not the egotistical 'self') gives meaning to human existence. An existence devoid of such meaning was unacceptable to Gandhi. Therefore, a Satyagrahi finds it irresistible to protest when conditions demand that he stake his all for his major beliefs.²¹ This implies consciously determining to consecrate one's entire efforts in one direction - that of living in truth. Gandhi formulates two basic requirements for such life: a) inward transformation, b) outward transformation.²²

By 'inward transformation' Gandhi referred to those acts and attitudes which help to acquire a greater degree of self-control. Inward transformation demands rigorous self-discipline. It means consciously attempting to prepare

²¹Young India (February 18, 1926).

²²Young India (March 23, 1921). These terms are used by Gandhi.

an atmosphere of "perfect" calm and good will around oneself. It is difficult to postulate what Gandhi really meant by that. It seems highly improbable that a situation tense enough to call forth a Satyagraha could be described as calm, at the initial stages. Yet Gandhi insisted it should be imbued with good will. Perhaps Gandhi was merely pointing out the basic requirements for a Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi must, at all times, attempt to create an atmosphere of calm around him. Unless he strives to do so always, he cannot suddenly hope to calm people around him. The very presence of a Satyagrahi ought to act as a soothing agent. As the first step toward accomplishing this goal, Gandhi admonished the Satyagrahi to seek "forgiveness for every unkind word thoughtlessly uttered or unkind deed done to anyone." As the second step, Gandhi suggested that the Satyagrahi cleanse his own heart by ceasing to suspect the adversary's motives. One begets trust by trusting. Likewise, good-will directed towards the adversary is also likely to generate similar response. Gandhi seemed to be certain and beyond doubt that a genuine gesture of sincerity is likely to be recognized as such always. He thought that no amount of hoping to cleanse one's heart can really help, unless there is also a deep seated belief in some ideal. For Gandhi, that ideal was the will to be absolutely incapable of harming the 'other'. Such a person cannot even conceive of denigrating anyone by either name-calling or public/private character-assasination, a practice which is so commonly resorted to by some politicians these days. A Satyagrahi must truly consider himself to be the humblest of all, in his thoughts, words and deeds. To do so, a Satyagrahi must reduce his ego to "zero". It is Gandhi's claim that such a philosophy of life is bound to result in transforming one's daily routine and inter-relationships.

The qualities enumerated above require utter unselfishness. Such self-abnegation may lead to surprisingly refreshing and effective results. But Gandhi definitely thought that the renunciation of 'self' (ego) is a major prerequisite of all ethical living. A Satyagrahi must place his own personal interests last.

It is rather unclear from Gandhi's writings and even more so from his own acts, what exactly he meant by 'outward transformation'. His position appeared to shift from time to time. At times, Gandhi seemed most consistently inconsistent. However, there were certain things, in general, that Gandhi basically believed in. His āshram vows, for instance, were designed to inculcate in the Satyagrahi some of the fundamental teachings of ethical living. The term 'outward transformation' applied specifically to the harmony experienced in one's day to day life style. Since Gandhi's āshrams were self contained total units, life within them could be closely watched and regulated. Gandhi gave personal attention to everybody's food habits, manner of dress, livelihood and self-introspection. In his philosophy Gandhi incorporated one's entire relationship with the total environment. That included both nature and man. He always emphasized the ability to learn and teach oneself from such encounters, as a special asset of the Satyagrahi. Above all, a Satyagrahi must be sincere, keep an open mind, and be receptive to others.

Contrary to some interpretations, Gandhi was deeply concerned with appearances. It is not enough for a Satyagrahi to believe inwardly in all the postulates of ethical living. It is equally, if not more, important to appear to others what one is inside. This aspect of Gandhi's personality won him the leadership of millions in India, because they trusted Gandhi.

They were convinced that he was what he appeared to be.

Through 'inward transformation' one can only transform the inner or the psychological self. In coming to terms with the outward expression of such transformation, one is forced to articulate the beliefs which one claims to hold as true. There ought not to be any divergence in the 'inner' and the 'outer' personality of the Satyagrahi. It is only natural to expect this unity from a highly integrated being. One's inner beliefs and commitments may appear sincere to oneself, but if they fail to impress one's strongest critic or opponent they can accomplish little or nothing in Satyagraha.

Gandhi's Satyagrahi is a man of action. He is a karma yogi.²³ His life must be a life of ceaseless activity, but he must acquaint himself with the complex nature of action (karma). He must know, for example, the action which lies in inaction, as well as the inaction which abides in action. Gandhi had learnt from the Bhagavadgītā that the secret of being a perfect karma yogi resided in one's ability to detach oneself from the fruits of the action. He said, a karma yogi is one who aspires to liberate himself through ethical action. Therefore, a Satyagrahi must undertake only those actions which deliver the self from the bondage of the body.²⁴

²³A karma-yogi is one who believes in the Yoga of action. He believes in the efficacy of action to win salvation (mokṣa). He manifests perfection through wholesome activity. "This was the practice of Mahatma Gandhi...it is not something you hold inside and smile at within your being. It is a sharing of merit, it goes out to others from you." Ven. Namgyal Rinpoche Paleochora Papers, ed. C. Jones (Toronto: The Dharma Centre, 1976), pp. 10-11.

²⁴M.K. Gandhi quoted by L. Fischer, Life of Mahatma Gandhi (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), pp. 32-35.

By reintroducing the concept of karma-yoga into politics, Gandhi was trying to revive the heroic ideal with whom Indians were bound to be familiar. Gandhi thought that a Satyagrahi ought to be no less than a Rama, or a Krishna or a Jesus, who throughout their lives were dedicated to the pursuit of the supreme ideals. Behind a Satyagrahi's conviction must lie the belief that the upholder of pure action is bound to win despite all odds.

Gandhi equated action (karma) with obligation (dharma). Selfless action is desirable because it leads to success and is worthy of the Satyagrahi. Selfish action, on the other hand, only prolongs the outcome and is unworthy of the ethically pure. Gandhi assumed that the final goal of all action, irrespective of its quality of aim, is total deliverance (mokṣa). Gandhi literally believed that the purity of action brings peace and prosperity to the entire community. Only through such activity can one transform the world. The degree of success in any action is related to the degree of ahimsa (nonviolence) in it. Pure action is a nonviolent action. Satyagraha is nonviolent, therefore, it is pure and bound to succeed.

Satyagraha is a path of pure action. But Gandhi was certainly not the first person to stress that path. His major contribution lay in uniting the heroic ideal of the Satyagrahi with a deep concern for and a deeper belief in the moral power or the heroic response of the people.²⁵ Politics has always dealt with power and ethics. But making ethics an issue in the power-play was indeed rare. Even more astonishing was Gandhi's hope to generate a world wide public sympathy. A Satyagrahi must similarly count upon the public opinion to be in favour of his appeal. Although initially

²⁵R.N. Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 135.

alone, a Satyagrahi must eventually succeed in attracting genuine and wholehearted public support for his cause.

But Gandhi was quick to warn that a Satyagrahi must never hold a public office or accept a formal position of influence. However, a Satyagrahi's credentials as a leader must be accepted by the people he leads. It is very easy to excite public sympathy by appealing to their collective negative emotions. But a Satyagrahi must seek to stress the positive. He must earn public respect on account of his personal sacrifice and services for a higher cause. A Satyagrahi must learn to identify himself with the hopes and aspirations of the masses. In other words, a Satyagrahi is a moral educator, a martyr and a monk, who is out to revolutionize the society in a nonviolent manner, instead of confining himself to a cloister. His compassion goes far beyond the need to seek his own personal salvation. Better still, a Satyagrahi is a bodhisattva (enlightened being), avowed to the socio-political well-being of his people, and of the environment around him. He is ethically and politically conscious of the existing conflict and aspires to bring about a transformation through noble means. A Satyagrahi would be incapable of exercising his power, if he were not noble himself.

The qualifications of a Satyagrahi are simple to enumerate. Any self-respecting person can be a Satyagrahi. Self-respect is at the very centre of his being. Only ethical experience would tell a person when to protest and when not to disobey an authority. But a Satyagrahi must be firm in his intent. He must be sincere in his pronouncements. He must also be willing to suffer all consequences of his declared position with regard to an issue. He must not expect any charity or compassion from his adversaries on account of it. Even his enemies must be convinced of a Satyagrahi's serious resolve and honesty. He must be willing to suffer

ndlessly, even if there is no relief in sight.

A Satyagrahi regards tapas (suffering) as a process of self-purification. Satyagraha is aimed at purification of the self and others of the conflicting parties in a situation. But every such process takes place only if granted, first and foremost, the ability of the Satyagrahi to purify himself.²⁶ Suffering purifies because it appeals directly to the heart.

It is this element of suffering which distinguishes a Satyagrahi from a violent revolutionary. It is also a major ingredient in a Satyagrahi's ability to win over the harshest of opponents to his side. Reason alone is not sufficient in convincing an unreasonable adversary. But even a stubborn enemy is bound to break down at some point through an appeal to his heart. Gandhi was confident that through his tapas a Satyagrahi can create a favourable public opinion.

The individual conscience according to Gandhi is only the starting point in search of a just society. It is true that on his own an individual can perhaps achieve precious little, but when that feeble demand for justice is united with the awakened conscience of a whole collectivity, the 'force' of such a demand gains momentum. The purpose of all such endeavour is not to let the adversary down. It is to invite him/them to join the noble 'cause', in a noble 'manner'. That process is a tribute to both, for the one who seeks as well as the one from whom the justice is sought. A Satyagrahi tries to achieve his objectives through silent, but consistent and patient suffering. Appeals to reason are only made through the head, but suffering tries to convince the heart of the wrong doer. Heart is perhaps more amenable to suffering than the head. A Satyagrahi, in a way, refutes the

²⁶Young India (5.4.1926).

rench Encyclopaedists and the English utilitarians.²⁷ A Satyagrahi will
 o undergo voluntary suffering for the sake of self-purification, for the
 urification of the adversary and the environment surrounding them. Such
 uffering, Gandhi held brings joy to the sufferer. While it may embitter
 lesser being, it only establishes the heroic character of a Satyagrahi.

Whilst we must try always to avoid occasions for
 needless suffering, we must ever be ready for them.
 Somehow or other, those who will walk among the
 right path cannot avoid suffering notwithstanding
 the attempt to avoid it. It is the privilege of
 the patriot, the reformer and, still greater, of
 the Satyagrahi.²⁸

It is a purely subjective question for a Satyagrahi to judge when
 o suffer and when not to. There are no definite answers to such a query.
 seasoned Satyagrahi develops these capabilities through experience. He
 lone is the judge of his acts and motivations. One's constant self-awareness,
 indfulness, and self-examination are most likely to serve as guides. Above
 ll, he must be open to criticism. Yet he must not rely on other's evalua-
 ions, alone. A Satyagrahi must be sensitive and intelligent enough to know
 he difference between an honest criticism and a deterrent tactic. Although
 ractical results alone are not his criteria, a Satyagrahi is not entirely
 blivious of their significance. If carelessly regarded, even honest and
 air criticism may throw a Satyagrahi's claim into disrepute. Such instances
 ould most likely disgrace the Satyagrahi, as well as his movement. Wisdom
 yanna) alone can guide a Satyagrahi in measuring his own strength and the
 rength of his convictions. It is on the basis of such virtues that he can
 ar to suffer and deny himself the privileges that he would otherwise be

²⁷R.N. Iyer, op. cit., p. 287.

²⁸Young India (11.3.1931).

entitled to.

A Satyagrahi is an ideal citizen. He earns the right to disobey by his habitual compliance to the laws of the state. He is well versed in the art of obedience and performs his obligations well. He is also a disciplined crusader for the legitimate rights of other citizens. A Satyagrahi's acts spring from his inner convictions. His conduct is pure and motivated by a strong desire for the universal well-being.

In the final analysis, Gandhi believed that a Satyagrahi is bound to accept the immortality of the soul, or whatever it is that transcends material existence. It is this element of faith which helps a Satyagrahi to survive through his struggle. If this transcendentalism were not there, a Satyagrahi would find it difficult to justify many of his acts. It may be very difficult to understand Satyagraha and the Satyagrahi if one fails to grasp the underlying import of the term 'soul-force', and the concept of rita (moral order of the cosmos).

Gandhi almost romanticized the concepts of Satyagraha and Satyagrahi. He truly believed that a perfect Satyagrahi is bound to achieve perfect results.²⁹ But is a perfect Satyagrahi a possible reality? To Gandhi it was an ideal to be proximated by gradual evolution. One would have to start with the imperfections and slowly build up one's potential strengths. Since self-purification itself is so difficult, the purification of the adversary, too, is likely to be a long drawn-out process. If the training

²⁹"The exercise of the purest soul-force, in its perfect form, brings about instantaneous relief. For this exercise, prolonged training of the individual soul is an absolute necessity, so that a perfect Satyagrahi is to be almost, if not entirely, a perfect man. We cannot all suddenly become such men, but if my proposition is correct - as I know it to be correct - the greater the spirit of Satyagraha in us the better men will we become." Young India (14.11. 1927).

r physical combat alone takes a considerable time and effort, it would be
 ther unrealistic to assume that spiritual discipline should take less.
 e quantity and numbers, however, do not count in a Satyagrahic struggle.
 e quality of Satyagrahi's virtue is its only saving grace. Satyagrahies
 ly on the ethical superiority of nonviolence as their means. It was with
 e aim of inculcating the ethics of nonviolence that Gandhi established
 veral Āshrams for his co-workers.

The Role of the Āshrams

In order to live an ethically pure life a Satyagrahi must begin with
 mself. The only true revolution, in the last analysis, is the self-
 volution. No Satyagrahi dare point out the inadequacies and short-comings
 the adversary, without taking into account his own. A Satyagrahi must
 ve every inch his claim, if he hopes to gain power through his virtues.
 ndhi's prescription for an ethically impoverished situation was to instill
 me ethical vigor into it. He hoped to counter-act violence with nonviolence,
 tred with love, and the lack of trust with goodwill. In the ethical impoverish-
 nt, Gandhi saw the cause of India's humility. For both South Africa and India
 prescribed the same remedy. The moment a people decide to refuse to en-
 ave and be enslaved they shall be set free.

Gandhi was of the opinion that most virtues like the good habits can
 acquired through constant practice. Just as the physical powers can be
 ltivated through the discipline of the body, ethical poise, too, can be
 ined by self discipline. The Gandhian āshrams aimed at providing an at-
 sphere for cultivating a nonviolent way of life.

The knowledge which Gandhi acquired during his visits abroad and
 rough his vast but scattered and unsystematic readings, helped him tre-
 idously. In addition, his voluntary work with the community both in India

and in South Africa gave him some first-hand experiences. Based on these experiments, Gandhi later established several āshrams (religious communities). Unconsciously or unconsciously, all his āshrams were conducted on more or less similar principles.³⁰ They aimed at reviving the ancient ideal of 'quest after truth'. They also attempted to resuscitate the fourfold scheme of āshramas (division of life into four stages of human development). But the Gandhian āshrams differed considerably in that they introduced a number of new ideas. In this respect, Gandhi's greatest contribution lay in sensitizing the ethically awakened conscience to the socio-political issues of the country. Unlike their ancient counterparts, Gandhian āshrams were intensely committed to total participation in the life of the community.³¹

In fact, Gandhi's concept of search after truth was very closely related to his concept of service. True service, according to Gandhi could only be rendered when one is devoted to truth. That is also the highest kind of service because through it one can exist for a noble cause. Often we are content to look for truth but never really bother to realize it in our own lives. Gandhi, however, was different. He did not disparage those who retired to seclusion in search of intellectual or spiritual salvation. But he avidly maintained that truth did not necessarily reside in seclusion.

³⁰ M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances in Action, trans. V.G. Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 12.

³¹ Symbolically, Sabarmati ashram was situated half-way between the cremation grounds and the local Police station. Gandhi used to jest about it and say that it was a convenient location since a Satyagrahi never knows from which direction the call may come first. Conversations with a Gandhian Resident, op. cit., Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

One could live in the world (samsāra) and yet pursue the path of enlightenment, by serving one's fellow beings.

A Satyagrahi is not and cannot be a social recluse, but he is very much a monk and a mystic. He leads a highly contemplative life. His contemplation finds expression through his daily creativity. Gandhi's āshrams claimed to provide that essential environment which is needed for the contemplative spirit to express itself through service to humanity. Since they were more or less secure from outside interferences, the āshramites could freely indulge in various experiments for self-development. It was Gandhi's contention that alone a solitary individual can accomplish very little. Many difficult tasks become easy when they are performed in a collectivity of similarly oriented people.

Gandhi strongly believed that his reintroduction of the āshram ideal would generate a great deal of "social sanity" into the Indian situation. As already discussed in chapter II of this thesis, it was an institution unique to India. In his opinion, it could claim a great deal of merit for having provided a considerable amount of stability to the Indian communal life. Over the centuries the practice had all but disappeared. Gandhi thought that bramhacharya (the life of celibacy) was intended to be the foundation of all other subsequent states of individual development. Since bramhacharya was no longer a valid concept, the entire system had degenerated. He claimed that the disappearance of āshram ideal was among the major causes of India's spiritual stagnancy. He seemed to correlate the absence of the bramhacharya with the lack of virtue in thought, speech and action.

By bramhacharya, Gandhi implied a more comprehensive and broader meaning to the term than is generally understood. He viewed life as a whole. A self-centred life loses its prime concern which is the realization of the

greater self through service and love. To him, a life caught solely in the gratification of one's immediate needs was a meaningless existence. Through the re-introduction of the āshram ideal and the emphasis on non-violence Gandhi hoped to draw attention to the dharma of Satyagraha. His dharma of Satyagraha was based on the concept of bramhacharya and Sat (the obligation to truth as Gandhi understood it). Ethically, Gandhi was convinced that a Satyagrahi could not possibly adhere to his vows unless he was also a bramhachāri (one who adheres to the philosophy of bramhacharya). It meant the reintegration of the ideals of selfless-service and dedication to truth.

In the traditional concept of an āshram, Gandhi incorporated the ideas gleaned from Tagore and Tolstoy. Ruskin, Plato, Carlyle, and Mazzini inspired him to investigate even further in that direction. Their ideas of simple living, inner tranquility, non-possession, bread-labour, self-reliance, and universal love fired Gandhi's imagination. The āshrams served as the experimental laboratories for the visionary ideal. There Gandhi could do as he pleased in community with his fellow-workers. Perhaps a Satyagrahi also needs a community of like-minded individuals, at least to begin with. Gandhi was perhaps very fortunate in that he could draw close to himself such individuals, who wholeheartedly consented to do his bidding.

In his Introduction to Ashram Observances In Action, we learn that upon his arrival from South Africa, Gandhi had, in fact, openly expressed the wish to establish an āshram, somewhere in India. Along with Gandhi came all those men and women who had lived and worked with him in South Africa. Besides, Gandhi also felt a need to accommodate all those new workers and colleagues who wished to join his pilgrimage for truth. Since he wanted to continue his

experiments on the Indian soil, he invited all those daring enough to join in his nonviolent adventure.³²

The āshrams were meant to remedy what Gandhi thought were the defects in India's national life. He viewed these short-comings from the religious, economic, social and the political perspectives. Yet within the stated objectives, Gandhi wanted to let the new āshrams develop in a variety of ways. His efforts in those directions were, however, hampered by two major considerations: 1. lack of resources and funds; 2. limitation of scope with regards to pursuing only those activities that suggested themselves, naturally. (Gandhi referred to the second as "self-restraint", because it was self-willed.) Sometimes, the āshram embarked on activities, regardless of their cost-implications. He did admit openly that the disregard for financial problems mainly arose from his deep religious faith. Gandhi believed that since the āshrams were a genuine activity they were also manifestations of Truth/God. Consequently, God alone was responsible for providing the men and materials needed to run them. Besides, ever since the Zulu Rebellion, Gandhi claimed that he was hearing voices. Unlike Socrates, who heard voices that told him what not to do, Gandhi's inner voice seemed to have told Gandhi what to do. The āshram life hoped to provide a kind of environment, where one could possibly be receptive to such inner voice. The simplicity of life which Gandhi prescribed for his co-workers was conducive to inner harmony. In a way, hearing the 'inner voice' had to do with being 'open' to the intuitive aspect of one's inner being.

³²"My life is devoted to the quest of truth. I would live and if need be, die in prosecuting it, and of course I would take with me as many fellow pilgrims as I could get." M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances In Action, op. cit. p. vi. Phoenix Ashram was established in 1904, Tolstoy in 1911-12, Kochrab in 1915 and later moved to a new site and renamed as Satyagraha ashram. Sevagram was the last ashram established by Gandhi.

In the āshram everybody lived to serve. Service of the poor, the suffering, and the lowly, was considered a blessing. Gandhi used to tell his followers that God manifests itself as the poor (daridra-nārāyaṇa). In serving the poor, therefore, one is, in fact, serving God. But Gandhi's zeal for moral development and 'bread-labour' often resulted in the neglect of other important interests. Some, who were genuinely attracted to the intellectual pursuits often complained. To those who complained for the lack of opportunity to study, Gandhi retorted: "where there is will, there also appears a way". He firmly believed that the true desire for knowledge could never be stunted by a lack of opportunity. But it is not difficult to explain why the Gandhian āshrams failed to produce their own crop of skilled teachers. As a result, Gandhi often felt constrained to import teachers from elsewhere. As was bound to follow, these policies later gave rise to the serious problems of āshram vows and their observations. In despair, Gandhi observed that the intellectual elites of the āshram often failed to correlate their intellectual achievements with the concept of bread-labour.

Gandhi's sons were themselves highly critical of their father's lack of consideration in letting them enjoy the benefits of a normal academic education. Gandhi, on the contrary, believed that the only education worth having was in the sphere of virtue. It is interesting to consider whether Gandhi would have been the same if he were deprived of his own formal education? Perhaps not. But a Gandhi deprived of his ethos could never even hope to accomplish what he did. Clearly, the Gandhian āshrams were meant to inculcate that ethos of Satyagraha dharma. Somehow, Gandhi also expected his āshrams to satisfy the intellectual urge of the āshramites. The āshrams in ancient India had always served those goals. It would be interesting to do a comparative study of the two kinds of āshrams. But it is doubtful if Gandhi could have succeeded in

his twin goals. Gandhi's aim was to turn a sage into a revolutionary and to educate the revolutionary in the virtues of sainthood. That was the intended goal of the Satyagraha training. The Gandhian āshrams, in fact, set out to accomplish that goal. Whether they succeeded in it or not is a different question. Also, one would have to measure Gandhi's success and failure in terms of the scope and degrees at various levels of Indian existence.

B. The Role of the Āshram Vows

Even among those who are fairly convinced of an attitude or a course of action, to be consistent in their approach is a serious problem. It is a theoretical as well as a practical problem. One may be theoretically convinced and yet fail to translate that conviction into practice. Conversely, one may practically be consistent, and yet theoretically fail to prove one's point. Theory and practice do not always coincide.

It is very difficult to remain consistent and committed to one's ethical values, especially, under crucial circumstances. Difficult situations and dilemmas in fact test the ethical fiber of a being. A Satyagrahi, too, is sometimes tempted to tell a lie, to take a less than salutary means in order to avoid few annoying moments. Gandhi, on the contrary, insisted that the Satyagrahi refuse to budge from his ethical moorings, no matter how crucial the issue.

With regard to his objectives, Gandhi was more than willing to compromise and accept a few drawbacks, as part of the mutual negotiations. But he was as adamant as a rock as far as the fundamental means and ethical obligations were concerned. He also advised the Satyagrahis to follow his precepts and never to give up their principles in the process of bargaining. He gave secondary importance to goals in relation to means. Strategically translated it meant more like losing a battle to win a war.

A Satyagrahi must never consciously commit an ethical error. During a crisis, he must be careful so as not to give in to the constraints of the immediate. One wrong step, and the Satyagrahi may tarnish forever his claims to ethical purity. In his āshrams, Gandhi instituted the custom of taking vows/oaths. A vow/oath is a solemn declaration made with an express intention to execute the promise. Gandhi introduced them to help a Satyagrahi overcome indecision in the moments of doubt.

Gandhi made subtle distinctions between a vow and an oath. An oath can be taken publicly. Basically, it is a solemn attestation of the truth or the inviolability of one's words. An oath is a sincere declaration of one's intention to do what one says either individually or jointly. Usually, it is a formal affair. Vow, on the other hand, is akin to a prayer. It is a solemn assertion or promise made by one, to oneself. It binds one to an act, service, or condition. It, too, is a sacred declaration. Neither an oath, nor a vow can be administered forcefully. One can only promise, what one wishes to cherish freely. Both involve an element of free-choice. A Satyagrahi chooses to take any vow or oath. He cannot be compelled to take either. Gandhi had personally experienced the power of public oath-taking and was aware of the strength generated through individual vows.

Traditionally, the concept of ṛta (as already pointed out in chapter II) as it appears in Rigveda meant to convey an order of observable phenomena in nature. Ṛta emanated from the vrata (pledge) of the gods. It was equated with the "divine will", which found expression in the careful and meticulous performance of one's duty (dharma). Ṛta was unalterable and eminent. Those who seek mokṣa must mindfully follow the dictates of the dharma. Any deviation from the path of dharma must be expiated quickly through voluntary imposition of vrata. Vrata (vow or pledge) purifies the self through self-

denial. It is considered a spiritual antidote to human weakness. Gandhi readily adopted the concept to serve as an "aid" to Satyagrahis. Some of his followers violently disagreed with Gandhi on the administering of vows, for a number of reasons.³³ Nonetheless, Gandhi persisted in his own beliefs.

Regarding the utility of taking vows, Gandhi was absolutely convinced. He later claimed to have adopted the concept from Patanjalis' Yoga Sūtra. But we know from his autobiography that his mother was highly responsible for imprinting that need on his mind. She made vows a condition of his studies abroad. His later experiences in life may have helped Gandhi to reinforce his earlier impressions. But during the course of his struggle in South Africa, Gandhi suddenly realized the practical efficiency of taking a public oath.

Since it is a controversial issue, it may not be possible to pass any judgements on the concept of vows and their need in a Satyagrahi's life. Perhaps, it ought to be left to the personal discretion of the individual. But it cannot be denied that both the vows and the oaths have a utility. In their proper perspectives they are meaningful for the advancement of a Satyagraha. Vows can play an important role in the life of a Satyagrahi. The experience of being a Satyagrahi does not seem to be limited by their absence. But, only a Satyagrahi could rightfully assert the validity of such a statement. Personally, Gandhi would have wholeheartedly endorsed the claim that vows are an essential ingredient of a Satyagrahic life. In Gandhi's own experience, vows were a definite aid to preserving one's ethical obligations.

But Gandhi warned that only those who are strong enough to take vows should take them. A vow is an act of consecration. It deserves the due sincerity and honesty of purpose. Taking vows can be a part and parcel of

³³M. Sykes, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: July, 1976.

ethical living. Through vows one can reinforce one's belief in the selected ideal. Gandhi was confident that one's capacity to keep vows depends on the purity of one's life. Since vows arise out of the freedom of will, and an intensity of commitment, they are also the symbols of self-abnegation and self-determination. Gandhi may have taken an extreme stand in suggesting that if need be one should die in order to preserve one's vow. To him vows appeared indispensable to ethical growth. They provided certainty, where there was none. Besides, Gandhi regarded doubts and vacillations dangerous to ethical imperatives. Unless one takes a firm stand on ethical obligations, even the sincerest of all Satyagrahis may feel psychologically incapable of performing his duty. By taking a vow, a Satyagrahi relies heavily on a higher authority to help him carry out his noble resolve. It is, however, essential that one be very confident about taking a vow. A vow, more or less, binds a Satyagrahi to do a thing, regardless of all consequences. It is a Satyagrahi "only crutch" in the hour of crisis. While most are likely to bend backward in order to accommodate the "death" of their conscience, a Satyagrahi must stake his all to save it.

Superficially, the vows may seem like the self constructed traps to avoid escape. On closer examination, one finds that they really hold the key to a Satyagrahi's invincibility. Weakness, fear, or lack of required courage are common to all mankind. A Satyagrahi is after all a human being and is likely to act like one. But Gandhi felt that the vows remind him of his own commitment. They supply the needed strength of conviction when the going gets rough. They are a considerable help in the process of self-discipline.

In his assessment of vows for ethical living Gandhi came very close

to the teachings of another of his contemporaries - Swami Vivekananda.³⁴ There is a great deal of similarity between Vivekananda's six categories and Gandhi's eleven vows.³⁵ Gandhi went a step further. He combined the idea of devotion with self-reliance and political awareness.³⁶

Gandhi clearly saw what Indians had failed to perceive for a long time. While they were blaming others for causing a great deal of misery, Indians had neglected to look at their own selves. Gandhi pointed his finger at the very root of the socio-political 'suffering'. He declared that none could subjugate a people without their tacit or implicit consent. Indians were victims of their own fears. They lacked heroic response. Gandhi hoped that his āshrams would prepare the kind of men and women who can take the challenge and act accordingly to free themselves.

The vows which were administered to the āshramites were not all applicable to the participants of a movement. The āshram vows were designed to provide self-confidence. They served as moral reminders and helped to build the "Gandhian character".³⁷ Gandhi knew that some of those vows implied the

³⁴Swami Vivekananda, Religion of Love: Collection of discourses on Bhakti Yoga (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1960).

³⁵ibid. Vivekananda mentions six essentials that lead to God or Truth. 1. Viveka (discriminations), especially related to food, 2. Vimoka (freedom) from desire, 3. Abhyasa (practice) of meditation, concentration, and prayer, 4. Kriya (work) meaning study, worship, performance of social obligations, 5. Kalyana (purity) in truthfulness, rectitude, compassion, nonviolence in thought, word, deed and charity. 6. Anavasada (non-despondency) cheerfulness, fearlessness and courage with calm.

³⁶"Gandhi is very clever. He takes the concept of vows from the ancient tradition: mahāvratas, yamas and yajnas, but adds three more such as the Swadeshi (native or home made), untouchability and bread-labour... Among these eleven vows seven are completely ancient." B. Bhattacharya, Conversations, op. cit., Calcutta: August, 1976.

³⁷B.R. Nanda, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: July, 1976.

presence of specific conditions which are difficult to enforce to their fullest extent. But he was also convinced that every little effort in that direction was bound to prove fruitful. They served more as ideals to be striven for. It should be noted that these vows applied only to those who had consciously opted for living in the monastic fashion. Not everyone who lived in the āshram followed the monastic ideal. There were also those who thought differently and made no secret of acting as they thought. By and by, as new families arrived the strict observance of āshram vows became virtually impossible. In keeping with such changes, Gandhi, too, insisted on renaming his institutions.

These āshrams evolved with time. But during Gandhi's time, there used to be a constant flow of people going in and out of them. "Often our āshram resembled a zoo. People from different parts of the world, of all races, occupations and interests came to visit Gandhiji. Among them I saw statesmen, businessmen, scholars, poets, artists, kings and cardinals. But Gandhiji treated them all alike, with the same generosity and care."³⁸ After three days of initial stay, most guests behaved automatically like the āshramites. He or she had to carry out the same duties as the rest. Everyone in the ashram joined in the common prayer, ate the common food and performed the common task. Similarly, all kept meticulous logs of their own activities and emotions in their diaries. Gandhi regularly surveyed them. Often he talked publicly about various personal problems. He emphasized non-secrecy. To Gandhi, it was an important virtue. He insisted that nothing ought to be regarded as private if the Satyagrahi chooses to dedicate one's life for

³⁸Chhaganlal Gandhi, conversations, op. cit., Rajkot: June, 1976.

public service. His life should become an open book for anyone to see.³⁹

Gandhi changed constantly, and so did the āshram vows. They, evolved with the situations. Each time one asks a Gandhian about the kind of vows he/she had taken, one gets a different answer. A few make a distinction between the āshram vows and the vows of a participant in a Satyagraha, while others do not. Those who do not make this distinction, look at the āshrams as the perennial source of future Satyagrahis. Those who do make that distinction consider the āshrams as only the possible centres for Satyagraha training. They also strongly urge for a different set of criteria for determining who is a "good" Satyagrahi and who is not. The latter group claim that it is one thing to demand that an incumbent Satyagrahi ought to be truthful, brahmachāri (celibate) and nonviolent, but quite another to assume that a Satyagrahi also be an āshramite. Some of my respondents were highly critical of those who were disciplined in the Gandhian āshrams, who should have known better but failed miserably to give a good account of their training during the 1970's Emergency Crisis in India.⁴⁰

It is possible, however, to put down some basic requirements or pre-conditions of a Satyagrahi. These vows were not all mandatory at any time. But Gandhi claimed that their observance is most likely to produce great and significant results.

³⁹In the Mahayana Buddhism, too, once a person decides to walk the path for the service of others, one must renounce all private concerns and be open at all times to aid others. Gandhi's insistence on merging the private and public concerns for the benefit of all is reminiscent of the vows of a bodhisattva.

⁴⁰It was and still is rather a politically sensitive issue. I had to exercise deep restraint with regard to the personalities involved.

1. The Vow of Truth.⁴¹ To Gandhi truth and God appeared as one. Initially, he claimed that "God is Truth". Later, he reversed his position to the belief that "Truth is God". His later definition allowed Gandhi to accommodate even the atheists or the communists into his following. For him, any sacred belief, idea, faith or ideology to which one subscribed wholeheartedly, was God. Since a common concept of God is difficult to formulate, Gandhi preferred to let it remain a matter of personal choice. Because his later concept of truth was more comprehensive, non-specific and universal, it appeared more acceptable to all. It is a Gandhian belief that each ought to worship according to one's conscience.

Fundamentally, Gandhi believed that the concept of God is indescribable. It cannot be expressed in words. The qualities one ascribes to God are all conceptual. Concepts may appear true to oneself and yet be unacceptable to others. All intellectual attempts to comprehend a direct and immediate experience are futile. Mind cannot understand, much less can it communicate to others either the quality or the intensity of personal experience. Intellectually, one can perhaps empathise. But emotionally, even the thought, seems absurd. To Gandhi's spiritual understanding, truth is an all pervading, omniscient, omnipotent, and immanent phenomenon. It is inherent in everything, yet not confined to that thing alone. Gandhi cherished an irresistible desire to experience that truth, face to face. He wanted to realize truth, and become one with it. Such a wish he said could only be fulfilled through creative contemplation and prayer. Gandhi believed that the service of the

⁴¹"In 'God is Truth' it certainly does not mean 'equal to', nor does it merely mean 'is truthful'. Truth is not a mere attribute of God, but He is That. He is nothing if He is not That. Truth in Sanskrit means Sat. Sat means Is. Therefore the more truthful we are, the nearer we are to God. We are only to the extent that we are truthful." Harijan (March, 1947).

community was a form of communion with God. One could experience truth/God by becoming fully aware of one's being. That awareness Gandhi referred to as a direct experience. When one realizes truth/God in one's daily routine one's existence became meaningful. Man is or exists only to the extent, that he lives every thought, word or act. In insisting upon 'truth is God', Gandhi was stressing the need for an active reflection upon that dictum. The vow of truthfulness makes it obligatory for one to live with such awareness.

Gandhi made a clear distinction between absolute truth and truthfulness in inter-personal relationships. Truthfulness in speech belonged to the latter category. Gandhi defined absolute truth as "That, which alone is". The absolute truth is neither dependent on others nor separate from anything that exists. It abides in the heart of all phenomena. Gandhi understood it as the eternal and pure bliss. Everything else is momentary, fleeting, and changeable. But absolute truth is beyond flux. It is pure intelligence. Gandhi suggest that it was the law which governed the entire universe. Ethically, he equated the law of love to the law of nonviolence. Through that law (dharma) Gandhi hoped to evolve the human consciousness to a higher level of existence, which would revolutionize the politics of change.

By taking the vow of truth, a Satyagrahi pledges that his conduct would be a reflection of his beliefs. Gandhi advised the Satyagrahies to make their life pure. He compared such life to a continuously sustained prayer. But he stressed that the true identification of the worshipped with the worshipper comes only through constant striving, self-discipline, and self-suffering (tapas). A Satyagrahi must, therefore, undergo great tapas to purify his conduct.

Gandhi was not ashamed of admitting that the understanding of the absolute truth required faith. Faith is an essential ingredient of truth. He often told his co-workers "faith is the only 'capital' I have, and all I have to begin with." If a Satyagrahi has faith in his cause, all else comes easily to him. In order to succeed, a Satyagrahi must have faith and essential knowledge. In Gandhi's opinion the intellect is barren unless it is enlightened by faith. Faith provides the tolerance for hardship and industry in the pursuit of a cause. He often said, "I have hundreds of workers, but perhaps they lack faith and knowledge requisites." An atheist can also be a Satyagrahi. But, according to Gandhi, he would have a long way to go. Gandhi's own movement did, however, boast of some atheists. In accordance with this belief, Gandhi began and ended his ashram routines with prayers, each day. It had become more or less customary for Gandhi, to start every political campaign with the inner dedication to God. Gandhi's co-workers sought the divine guidance in the spirit of total self-surrender. Unlike the primitive man, they did not wish victory for themselves and defeat to their enemies. Together with Gandhi, they prayed for the triumph of truth and nonviolence. Even the secret harbouring of evil thought runs counter to the spirit and the purpose of a Satyagraha. A Satyagrahi cannot wage his struggle with the idea of personal gain. He is and ought to be always motivated by the nobility of his purpose.

Truthfulness in one's inter-personal relationship depends on the sincerity and goodness of heart. A Satyagrahi does not and cannot willfully harm another. The 'truth' that is arrived at through violent means, has something inherently wrong with it. Gandhi claimed that the Satyagrahi has the power to convert the heart of the wrong-doer only by means of loving compassion. Once this claim loses luster, the movement can no longer remain a Satyagraha.

Yet, in the very process of conversion, the Satyagrahi must himself remain open to change. Each emerging moment in Satyagraha dictates the next step. Therefore, only a constant and careful re-examination of one's own position can make a Satyagrahi truly effective. As long as a Satyagrahi's appeal is grounded in sound judgment and the consideration of mutual interests, the conflict is most likely to be resolved. He must attempt to win his adversary's trust. That may not always be easy. The Satyagrahi definitely has an advantage in that he would have been cultivating the required ethical values prior to the occurrence of such conflicts. A Satyagrahi's esteem among his fellow workers does not rely on artificial appraisals. What a Satyagrahi acquires through his blameless conduct is an accepted fact. There can be no superficialities about his conduct. A Satyagrahi lives his convictions in every thought, word or deed. He simply is what he is. He does not pretend to be what he is not.

In the case of a conflict, Gandhi admonished that a Satyagrahi's goal is not merely to win the battle of conflicting claims, but to arrive at the accepted solution through the most amicable means. In the process, he should persevere to win the opponent with the sincerity of his purpose. A Satyagrahi may lose the goal but should not lose the good-will of the adversary. Whether he wins or loses, ought not to concern the Satyagrahi. His main aim should be to do his duty, regardless of its results. A Satyagrahi's dharma is to act in a non-attached fashion with compassion toward both the parties in a conflict.

To totally disregard the 'benefit' aspect of a Satyagraha seems somewhat incorrect. Why would a Satyagrahi bother to engage in a dialogue with the adversary, if he does not care about the outcome of such an event? It is unrealistic to ignore the interests involved. However, it must be clarified that the interest of the Satyagrahi need not initially coincide with those of

the adversary, at the very initial stages. Holding on to truth implies adhering to truth inspite of the pain involved.

A Satyagrahi must be convinced of two things. He must either suffer for his beliefs or give them up, if they no longer seem worthwhile. It is possible that he may be persuaded to give a little, take a little, and compromise his own position. But if he cannot, it is just as good that he gives his own life for the conviction he holds. At least that Satyagrahi's conviction shall survive his Satyagraha. But he must do so nonviolently. Gandhi was convinced that truth and violence could ill-afford each other. Violence destroys truth. It diminishes the one who propagates it. Gandhi realized that the absolute truth can only be reached through a series of relative truths. The best test for determining truth is through action based on nonviolence. No amount of learning nor any power of authority can dictate truth's perception. The quest after truth is a solitary, individual search.

It appears that those who think that Gandhi's idea of the absolute truth has nothing or very little to do with Satyagraha, could be misleading.⁴² The relative nature of truth as applied in Satyagraha became clearer to Gandhi only after his own repeated experiences with the concept of absolute truth. His faith in the conviction that 'Truth and God are one' grew with time, and so did his concept of nonviolence. Precisely for that reason Gandhi considered honesty the hall-mark of Satyagrahic efforts. The supreme virtue of ahimsa can only be practised by someone who is willing to rely on his heart in addition to his mind, and is sincere.

It is difficult to see how one can ever determine the objectivity of truth, especially, when one is taking into account the subjective evaluation

⁴²"The 'truth' concept which enters into the technique of Satyagraha is clearly not that of the absolute." J.V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence, op. cit., p. 17.

of the Satyagrahi. Gandhi did consider the impact of social criterion of judging the truth in a given situation. But the task may be rendered extremely difficult during an emotional crisis. How is one to determine when to stress the public opinion and when to disregard it? Gandhi's solution was prompt: "rely on your heart".⁴³ Gandhi hoped that the Satyagrahi would be honest and sincere enough to publicly claim his own inability when he cannot do so.

2. Ahimsa or Nonviolence: Satyagraha implies a nonviolent pursuit of truth. The refusal to hurt the adversary is its first concern. In that process, a Satyagrahi may go to the extent of inviting self-suffering. The nature of Satyagraha is such that the responsibility for determining the truth falls eventually on the individual. Nonviolence is "a necessary corollary of Satyagraha".⁴⁴ Were it not so, even an honestly striving individual is liable to be confused. The principle of ahimsa acts as a check for the Satyagrahi.

Ahimsa is a common ethical precept in Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. But Gandhi's concept of ahimsa went further.⁴⁵ Literally, it means the refusal to do harm. But a Satyagrahi must understand the concept in a very deep and

⁴³"The wrong act must be patent, accepted as such by all as spiritually harmful, and the doer must be aware of it. There should be no penance for inferential guilt. To do so might at times result in dangerous consequences. There should be no room for doubt in regard to the fault. Moreover, one should not do penance for an act, which one regards as wrong, as his personal faith or opinion. It is possible that what one holds to be wrong today he might regard as innocent tomorrow. So the wrong must be such as is accepted by the society to be so." M.K. Gandhi quoted from a Hindi trans. of History of Satyagraha-Ashram, ibid., p. 21.

⁴⁴D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2nd ed.; New Delhi: Publications Division, 1960-1963), I, 342.

⁴⁵Louis Renou, "Gandhi and Indian Civilization", Kshitis Roy ed., Visva-Bharati Quarterly: Gandhi memorial. Peace number (October 2, 1949), 230-238.

comprehensive manner. A mere abstention from harm is not enough. Even the thought or the will to harm has to be renounced. Gandhi equated ahimsa with the universal love (agape or charitas). To him it indicated a deep reverence for life and the dignity of conscience.

Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression. The principle of ahimsa is hurt by every evil thought, by undue haste, by lying, by hatred, by wishing ill to anybody.⁴⁶

Hinsa (violence) can be of both internal and external kinds. How can a Satyagrahi guard against internal violence even if he succeeds in disciplining his outward conduct? Gandhi unfortunately is not very clear about that. He devoted a great deal of energy and time in refining his own conduct and of those around him. He even succeeded in artificially shaping his own environment to suit his needs. But it appears that the core issue in a Satyagrahi's attitude towards life may go unattended. Gandhi's strict and austere attitude in a way implied a rejection and escape from the manifold attractions of life. He viewed the necessity for withdrawal in relation to his own inner urge to liberate the ego-ridden self. A Satyagrahi who is equally motivated may be willing to live like Gandhi and may have to sacrifice a great deal. But Gandhi did not argue as to how one reaches the final stages, as long as the means are pure. But he was absolutely convinced that such purity is dependent on nonviolence. Therefore, Gandhi suggested turning away from the attractions of life to get rid of the desire (kāma). A Satyagrahi must also probe his own mind to see the source of his desires, to know where

⁴⁶M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances in Action, op. cit., p. 7. There is clearly a great deal of similarity between Gandhi's recommendations and that of the Buddha in the Dhammapada.

they really arise from, how they are sustained, and how they disappear into nothingness. Unfortunately, no specific attempts were made by Gandhi in his āshrams to draw one's attention to the techniques of mindful awareness.⁴⁷ Gandhi may have himself acquired that capacity, but he was somehow unable to teach it to his co-workers.

The vow of nonviolence admonishes doing good even to one's enemy. But it does not, however, mean letting the evil-doer have his own way. If it did, it would clearly be a breach of virtue. According to Gandhi courage is synonymous with nonviolence. Ahimsa means neither toleration nor passive acquiescence.

On the contrary, love, the active state of Ahimsa requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically.⁴⁸

Ahimsa implies generosity and loving acts of kindness. Like elsewhere, promptness and forthrightness are considered virtues in Satyagraha. Provided his acts are motivated by love, a Satyagrahi should not hesitate to act in any situation. Again, only the individual himself can determine whether his acts are motivated by nonviolence or not. A good criterion of judging one's own acts is to see whether they involve self-esteem, selfishness, fear, or personal gain.

Ahimsa manifests itself as service to others. A Satyagrahi does not and cannot rely upon the generosity and charity of others. He must make an

⁴⁷cf. with the exercises taught to Buddhist monks and nuns. See Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa, The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga), trans. Bhikkhu Nyanamoli (2nd ed.; Colombo: Semage, 1964).

⁴⁸Young India (January 19, 1921).

honest living for his own survival and for the survival of his movement. Gandhi's efforts in the field of 'constructive programme' were directed primarily for this purpose. His attempt to balance evenly the strategic impulses of destruction and creativity can be related to the idea of self-reliant existence. Gandhi knew from his own past experiences how the coal-mine workers in South Africa had suffered when he asked them to stop working during a strike. The basic needs of survival must somehow be met. No political movement can survive for long, if it does not plan a strategy for its own survival. To Gandhi survival did not mean mere physical existence. He associated it with both emotional and intellectual well-being. Above all, he aimed at ethical survival as a pre-condition for political survival.

It was a daily practice in the āshrams to spin and weave. Gandhi believed that through it he was, in fact, stressing the importance of right living. Right living is intimately related to nonviolence. Gandhi thought that every form of exploitation is a result of violence either to oneself or to one's community. Therefore, to eliminate inner and outer exploitation, one must first attempt to get rid of inner violence. One must begin by exerting manually to earn one's living. It was Gandhi's experience that through physical labour it is easier to identify one's self with the lowest of the common people. Often due to alienation the 'elites' of a movement tend to cut themselves away from the general public. Gandhi's āshrams inculcated the virtues of simple and austere living so as to bridge the gap between the two.

Gandhi contended that nonviolence is the best means. He did not believe that the ends justified the means. He said that in order to achieve noble ends, the means should be equally noble. If the means are contaminated, the ends are bound to be likewise. If we take care of means the ends would automatically take care of themselves. But that for Gandhi did not necessarily

mean that the ends are of a secondary importance. What he demanded was, that ethics should be a criterion of selecting both the ends and the means. Gandhi would give equal priority to both. But in a conflict involving 'ends' and 'means', Gandhi was prone to emphasize the purity of means. Where possible, he even ventured to sacrifice the ends in order to preserve such purity.

Gandhi did not doubt the fact that both violence and nonviolence are sometimes capable of achieving the same goal. But he was certain that nonviolence alone could secure the guaranty which a Satyagrahi desired namely : the preservation of good-will. At times, Gandhi gave the impression that non-violence was his first obligation. But he was not always sure if truth and nonviolence were inseparable. He seemed to evade deliberately the issue of making a final distinction.

Gandhi was very much a realist. Perfect ahimsa is only an ideal. Perhaps it can never be reached. All one can do is to make sincere efforts in that direction. One could criticize Gandhi for being totally unwilling to accept violence. He sometimes carried his convictions to a point of absurdity. But for Gandhi nonviolence continued to remain as a creed rather than a policy of convenience. He thought that a Satyagrahi should not take anything for granted. Deliberate ignorance or indifference to an existing issue is also a denial of truth. Ready-made answers are not for the Satyagrahis. Ahimsa at all costs, in all circumstances, is a ready-made answer. It, too, cannot be accepted without qualifications, even by Gandhi.

Although Gandhi discussed ahimsa at a greater length than any other concept, he still found it very hard to judge whether a particular act is violent or not. As Gandhi saw it, eating more food, wearing more clothes, or occupying more space are all different forms of violence. Similarly, he

opined that those with hatred, anger, and fear in their hearts, can hardly practise nonviolence. In order to practice compassion, he said one must be pure and be free of defilements which are caused by ill-will. It is a Satyagrahi's duty to suffer for his own beliefs. But he must also save others on account of such suffering. Gandhi's nonviolence is also somewhat strange. Although he could easily admit of mercy-killing, he would neither resist nor agree to kill a snake, even if it tried to bite him.⁴⁹

Gandhi was convinced that in order to practice nonviolence one must live nonviolently. Among other things it involves reducing one's wants and limiting one's possessions. The best way to live nonviolently or compassionately is to start by caring for the one whom one loves most. Then one could slowly proceed to enlarge the arena of one's active concern. Also, Gandhi learnt that it is easier to share one's possessions when one is poor. The rich find it harder to share their belongings. Gandhi thought that nonviolence is harder to observe for one who has immense possessions. Renunciation, therefore, is the first step towards detaching the mind from himsa (violence).⁵⁰ Likewise, a society which emphasizes the non-possession of material goods and the possession of spiritual assets, is a nonviolent society. Such a society will naturally extol the value of self-control. A materialistic society, on the other hand, stresses the material possessions, their security, and defence through weapons and punishment. Gandhi thought that a society based on violence also perishes by it. The philosophy of nonviolence does not permit such pessimism.⁵¹

⁴⁹This was related to me by several of my respondents. Personally, I found it difficult to believe. But I can appreciate the degree of confidence such conviction can bestow.

⁵⁰M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances In Action, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵¹ibid.

The question naturally arises can a Satyagrahi prepare himself for such ahimsa? According to Gandhi, there is no theoretical formula. But by practising it daily, one can acquire perfection in it. It is an understanding based on the meaning of religious life. Success in the skill comes naturally and unasked for.

A man who believes in the efficacy of this doctrine finds, in the ultimate stage when he is about to reach the goal, the whole world at his feet. Not that he wants the whole world at his feet, but it must be so.⁵²

3. Tapas or self-suffering: Suffering incurred in the pursuit of one's search after truth, even if painful, is welcome to a Satyagrahi. "Love never claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, never revenges itself."⁵³ It is a sādhanā (spiritual discipline). The path of ahimsa, too, is painful and difficult. But each step taken towards such perfection ennobles the individual and gives immense joy. But only the suffering which is willingly undertaken can be classed as a tapasyā (a discipline). There can be no compulsion in it. Such suffering purifies the satyagrahic endeavour. A Satyagrahi avows to suffer consciously for the cause he espouses.

The fact that a Satyagrahi may lose his life in his pursuit is not half as significant as the possibility for which he works. Ultimately, a Satyagrahi's tapas not only brings merit to himself but to the entire society. Gandhi claimed that even the presence of a Satyagrahi improves the quality of existence, in general. His self-sacrifice enriches the ethical content of

⁵²Young India (July 9, 1925).

⁵³M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances In Action, op. cit., p. 76.

the universal experience. His existence makes the condition of millions affected by it a worthwhile phenomenon. Religious ascetics also lose their lives in penance through self-mortification. They perhaps do so for their own salvations. A Satyagrahi is consciously aware of his own impact upon others. Although his Satyagraha is undertaken for a specific socio-political malaise, his life and conduct are an expression of an on going process. There is a continuity in the purity of his conduct, which is not subject to socio-political impulses. He is not an opportunist, who would shift his position to suit his own interests. This heroic streak in his character sets him apart from the common men and women. A Satyagrahi is like most of the common men and women, and yet different from them. Unlike the passive-resister, a Satyagrahi's self-suffering is the result of a conscious choice. While the former is driven to his mode out of compulsion, the latter is free. Also the passivity of the resister is not an outcome of conviction, rather it is a sign of helplessness and convenience. A Satyagrahi, on the other hand, does not lack the capacity to use violence. In fact, Gandhi considered the violence of the courageous far more superior to the nonviolence of the weak and the cowardly.

The vow of tapas implies the willingness to refrain from using violence although one may be in a position to use it to one's advantage. It is a conscious rejection of violence even at the cost of personal loss. The passive-resisters would not hesitate to use arms, if they could find them. Also, they would not hesitate to be violent, if violence appears to be their last resort. The passive-resisters also do not hesitate to harass their opponent into submission. Satyagraha steers clear of even such insinuations. A Satyagrahi may even go out of his way to help his adversary, in need. Through tapas a Satyagrahi aims at winning the adversary's heart, not merely to beg the issue.

Tapas relies for its triumph on ethical persuasions. It cannot forgo moral victory. To a Satyagrahi unethical conduct is definitely demoralizing. Self-suffering, therefore, has to eschew cowardice and the fear of death. Only the fearless can truly hope to resist nonviolently. Self-suffering cannot be practised without courage. The art of tapas can only be cultivated through constant but diligent striving. It gives dignity to one who practices it as well as the one against whom it is practised.

The attitude of tapas is difficult to inculcate. According to Gandhi, it can only be acquired through austerity and self-discipline. There is no short-cut to self-mastery. It is a hard discipline and sometimes a very slow process. A Satyagrahi is like a consummate artist or a musician. He must work with a total dedication. Gandhi did not expect overnight changes in the lives of his followers. For him it was a constant "battle" that he waged from morning until night, sometimes also during his sleep. A disciple of self-suffering (tapasvī) has to be constantly vigilant of his own thoughts, words, and deeds. Gandhi never got tired of self-improvement and reform. From personal hygiene to public image, from the private washrooms to municipal, and national sanitation, whatever engaged his attention, Gandhi diligently applied himself to it. It is difficult to even catalogue Gandhi's interests.⁵⁴ He dabbled freely in a variety of realms. A vow of tapsayā obliges the Satyagrahi to be meticulously aware of life around him and leave no room for apathy or laziness.

It is essential for one who practices tapas to live very modestly. He must renounce all luxuries. It is true that choosing to live simply, dress

⁵⁴C.N. Patil, Conversations, op. cit., Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

simply, and to eat simply, may at first cause personal discomforts. But Gandhi was convinced that ultimately all such endeavours lead to a higher level of thinking and maturity. Each step taken in this direction is likely to bring more peace and harmony to the aspirant and his environment. Gandhi believed that politics ought to be practised only by those who excel in the art of self-suffering. Changing the society through nonviolence is the greatest of tapasyās (spiritual disciplines). A nonviolent revolutionary is, therefore, a hero of the highest order. Since such heroic endeavour is not easily acquired the vow of self-suffering is an essential aid for a Satyagrahi.

4. Bramhacharya or celibacy: As explained earlier, bramhacharya is a Hindu concept. It is also one of the most controversial and the least understood issues about Gandhi. For a Satyagrahi, it does not really matter, whether he or she is a celibate or not. Most of Gandhi's co-workers and followers were not single individuals. As the years progressed, Gandhi's own convictions grew stronger in this respect, so did the controversy surrounding the issue.

To Gandhi, selfless service is the best kind of action; selfless speech, the best speech; and selfless thought, the most potent thought. Likewise, bramhacharya is the best and the highest kind of existence. But in order to be capable of bramhacharya, one has to observe chastity or purity in its strictest sense.

Gandhi advocated celibacy for the Satyagrahis. His advice to them was to observe perfect continence with regards to sex. Although Gandhi himself performed marriages in his āshram, even blessed the newlyweds, he also asked them to live like brothers and sisters. According to his belief, sex ought to be restricted only for the sake of procreation. Since a Satyagrahi leads a selfless life, his life should be devoted, specifically, to the upliftment of the community.

For a Satyagrahi, it is not enough to merely abstain from sex in one's actions. Gandhi went to the extent of demanding that sex be entirely eliminated even from one's speech and thought. Gandhi's obvious hostility towards sex may appear highly objectionable to those who are unfamiliar with the doctrine. But the Gandhian attitude does seem in harmony with the beliefs of his own tradition. The bramhacharya (celibacy) vow is considered a powerful influence in the restoration of one's energy. There is a Hindu belief that any act performed by the bramhachāri (celibate) leads to an exceptional success. Gandhi's faith was grounded in the above belief. He, therefore, readily consented to the idea when it presented itself to him.

There does not appear to be a great correlation between those who did and those who did not observe the bramhacharya and their capacity to participate in the Satyagraha. It only seems plausible to believe that there are certain psychological advantages to be achieved by the practitioners of celibacy. Definitely, acquiring some self-control or mastery over any aspect of human personality can be an asset. Since certain natural instincts are considered overwhelmingly powerful, the ability to overcome them can perhaps bring a great deal of exhilaration and self-confidence. Often there is a tendency to confuse self-discipline in bramhacharya with repression. The two, according to Gandhi, could be poles apart. While one signifies positivity, the other smacks of negativism. Discipline is not the same thing as forced compulsion.

It appears likely that those with filial obligations may feel slightly deterred in renouncing their own happiness for the sake of the common good. But evidences could be marshalled to the contrary.⁵⁵ It is true that a Satyagrahi, who is free from the obligations to his family is more likely to succeed,

⁵⁵B.R. Nanda, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: July, 1976; C.N. Patil, ibid., Ahmedabad: June, 1976.

but it is not absolutely necessary that he be a social recluse. Gandhi himself followed what he preached and expected many of his co-workers to follow his lead. Many did. But he was also cognizant of serious differences of opinion on this subject, among his own colleagues.

Although Gandhi proudly placed the concept of marriage without sex before the inmates of his āshram, his own ideas continued to change till the very end. He candidly admitted that he had himself realized the meaning and significance of the concept, only after repeated failures. Since his own concept of bramhacharya was so rigorous, in all fairness, Gandhi never claimed to be a perfect celibate. Nevertheless, he advised the future Satyagrahis to acquire this precious self-discipline through gradual sādhana. The control over the sense organs is considered by many as a great aid in overcoming instinctual behaviour. In this respect, Gandhi could easily be classed with some of the eminent religious teachers of any age.⁵⁶

Regarding bramhacharya, Gandhi claimed he arrived at certain conclusions from his own experience. Among these he ranked the control of palate as the highest. All luxuries should be avoided by a Satyagrahi. The desire for luxury creates a whole realm of associated thoughts - pleasant and unpleasant. Craving is the cause of all suffering the Buddha had declared. Gandhi seemed to reiterate the same truth, but in a very crude way. He suggested that one can get rid of desire through avoidance and withdrawal. The Buddhists view the same phenomenon in an entirely different light. For those who are eager to renounce worldly attachments, bramhacharya can be practised easily. Gandhi also suggested another technique of self-purification. One can also acquire

⁵⁶ibid.

self-control through keeping fasts. It was Gandhi's belief that if the objects of sense-desire are compelled to disappear, in due course of time, the yearning for them also goes away. Gandhi seemed to suggest that one can be free of desire by ignoring it and by not indulging in it.

Gandhi did not seem to consider the possibility of other perspectives. For example, according to the Buddhists, the desire for sense-object arises from the inter-relationship between the sense-bases and the objects of sense gratification. Mere removal of such objects may or may not get rid of the craving. Neither is it possible to get rid of the sense-bases. The Buddhists suggest that rationally one can get rid of the craving by simply seeing it for what it is worth. They view craving as a result of the chain of dependent cause and effect. The logic is merely to point out that although Gandhi found the need to change one's attitude towards the cravings, he perhaps failed to see it completely. The several rules and regulations prescribed in his āshrams, therefore, seemed to fall short of accomplishing much.⁵⁷ It was Gandhi's belief that brahmacharya is one of the best means of perceiving truth. That belief persisted to the very end.

5. Asvād or control of the palate: Gandhi came to the conclusion that the control over the palate definitely helps to control the sexual urge. According to the Hindu ancient beliefs, foods play a vital role in shaping human tendencies and inclinations. The Bhagavadgītā⁵⁸ also refers to the three basic types of food, with three different kinds of tendencies. Sāttvik foods are good. They are bound to create wholesome and healthy tendencies leading to-

⁵⁷M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances In Action, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵⁸S. Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgītā (Bombay: George Allen And Unwin, 1970).

ward sublimes states of consciousness. Foods which are rajasic (spicy, pungent, and rich) should be avoided by the Satyagrahi. They are non-conducive to auster life. Rājasic foods are more likely to give rise to excitement and restlessness. Likewise, a Satyagrahi should also avoid eating tāmasic (dull, insipid, and rotten foods), because they make the body languid, slothful and deluded. The vow of asvād helps to control one's urge for satisfying the tastebuds. By not indulging in the pursuit of worldly pleasures, a Satyagrahi protects himself from dissipating energy.

Gandhi strictly prohibited the use of alcohol and meat-eating in his āshrams. Vegetarianism was encouraged, primarily, as a symbol of one's reverence for life. It also helped to create a simple and healthy environment. Financially, it was good for the āshram to sustain itself on its own resources. Ethically, it boosted the morale of the inmates by helping them to limit their wants.

As an advocate of simple life, Gandhi drew a great deal of support from his belief in vegetarianism. Likewise, he could also impress those who cherished an innate respect for the animal world, as well as those who believed in healthy eating. The idea of eating sāttvik food pleased all, except those who differed with Gandhi. Even they could see the virtue of the vow of asvād. But they found it difficult to practice what they believed to be a fact.

It is indeed true that excessive indulgence in food and dress habits only betrays the lack of higher values. To Gandhi a life devoted to selfless service seemed far more desirable. But he could only relate such life style with simplicity in taste, austerity, and self-control. He often said that food is only a means of sustenance. He advocated its use like the medicine, only to be taken under proper restraint. How far one can maintain the vow of asvād is difficult to predict. But it is also not easy to discipline one-

self as a Satyagrahi. Gandhi never claimed it was easy.

6. Asteya or non-stealing: It is not enough merely to possess little.

Ideally, a Satyagrahi should possess only that which he needs. Gandhi believed in the progressive simplification of wants. But simplification does not imply 'de-aestheticalization' of life. Seeing a flowering plant that had shortly sprung up where Gandhi daily washed his hands, he once mused aloud: "would it not have been better if this plant bore vegetables?"⁵⁹ However, one could let Gandhi judge for himself the relative significance of needs and their fulfillment. Although a Satyagrahi must of necessity lead an austere life, there appears to be no logical ground for assuming that an auster life should also be a life devoid of beauty. Flowering plants have their equal share of significance, just as a thorn-bush. Why must all plants be made to bear vegetables? Was Gandhi overly concerned with the principles of utility?

Viewed from a different perspective, the vow of non-stealing does make a great deal of sense. Taking anything which one does not need for one's immediate use, or keeping it from someone else, are also forms of stealing. Gandhi assumed that there would be no paupers, if everybody took just "enough" for themselves, and nothing more. It is similar to thinking that if the world were full of saints - we would not need any policemen! Unfortunately, it is not so. But a Satyagrahi is very saintly and he must live and act like one. For Gandhi, the world could easily be rid of starvation, because there is abundant food supply, provided we live like 'trustees' and share the common wealth. But as long as the economic inequalities remain, social injustices, too, will thrive. A single Satyagrahi may not overnight change the sad state

⁵⁹J. Jain, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: August, 1976.

of affairs in which we find ourselves. But if we start with the belief that such equality is the first condition of universal survival and prosperity, then, perhaps the first step will have been taken. Gandhi pointed out that people steal, because they are made to by those who commit the violence of hoarding wealth. He constantly asserted that he was not a socialist. Gandhi said that he believed in the concept of private property. He viewed forceful dispossession as a breach of ahimsa. Yet, Gandhi also failed to see that the vow of non-possession would be among the hardest to follow.

Gandhi hoped that the Satyagrahi would at least set an example by following this precept. A Satyagrahi must identify himself with the poorest, the loneliest, and the most miserable. He must consider millions of the dispossessed as his own. Gandhi's own reasons for austerity were simple:

You and I have no right to anything more until these millions are clothed and fed better. You and I ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation, so that they may be fed and clothed.⁶⁰

Gandhi interpreted asteya in a very different sense than the literal meaning of the word. One can be guilty of theft even by using a thing differently than how it was intended to be used. One must always assume that one receives a thing in trust for use. If one keeps it longer than the period initially agreed upon, that, too, is theft. To receive anything which one does not really need is also theft. Who is to define the term 'need', and on what basis? Gandhi did not seem to say much on that score. He assumed that an ethically awakened being would not even need to raise those questions. Gandhi presupposed the knowledge of the good in a Satyagrahi.

⁶⁰M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances In Action, op. cit., p. 137.

Both non-stealing and non-possession are attitudes of the mind. No one can really keep these observations to perfection. In one sense even our physical body is a possession. As long as we continue to exist, we require to possess. But a Satyagrahi must cultivate the spirit of detachment. He must attempt to give up all possessions and not even desire what others possess. Greed, like hatred and envy, is also violence. It, too, must be overcome. Moreover, there are no objective standards of judging 'wants'. An elephant and an ant do not require the same things and they know it, too.⁶¹

Does this imply that a Satyagrahi ought to renounce the worldly life? According to Gandhi, "the world would be ruined if everyone became a cave-dweller."⁶² Ordinary men and women only need to cultivate the detachment of the mind. Whosoever lives in the world, and lives in it only for serving it, is according to Gandhi, a monk. Gandhi hoped that all his āshramites would be monks in that sense. They may enjoy the bare essentials of life but never must they seek to possess much. If the time comes, the Satyagrahis ought to be ready to shed everything, including their lives, for the welfare of all. It was Gandhi's fond hope that his āshramites would give a good account of themselves if and when such a situation did arise. The vow of asteya was meant to inculcate in them that spirit of detachment and selflessness.

7. Yajña or sacrificial action or physical labour.⁶³ Gandhi believed that the ideal of asteya cannot be achieved unless everyone earns his/her own bread. Sustaining one's own physical existence by manual labour is one way of saving

⁶¹ibid., p. 58.

⁶²ibid.

⁶³Originally Yajña meant a sacrificial ritual involving feeding the fire at an altar. Gandhi interpreted it to mean any kind of manual labour undertaken to earn one's living or to serve the community.

the society from undue economic strain and social exploitation. All must actively engage in work, and refuse to be served either by the slaves or the machines, except in special circumstances. At the same time, service of the sick, the disabled, the young and the aged is an obligation which is incumbent on each and every individual. Gandhi claimed he learnt that principle from the Russian writer Bondaref through Tolstoy.⁶⁴ He also believed that one's intellectual faculties must be exercised for the service of mankind and not to obtain a living or to amass wealth. Gandhi concluded that if everyone observed the wisdom of Tolstoy and such sages, there would be no room for mutual exploitation. A Satyagrahi should observe this rule by devoting certain number of hours each day physical labour or activity which will directly benefit the society.

Gandhi considered the concept of bread-labour a sacrifice (yajña). To him sacrifice involved the idea of serving others. He insisted that at least for one hour, per day, one should work for the betterment of the poverty stricken masses. Hence, he made spinning a compulsory task in the āshram. Gandhi called it a mahāyajña (supreme sacrifice). Any selfless activity, dedicated for the betterment of one's fellow being, is a supreme sacrifice.

Yajña also implies skill in action (karmasukaushalam). Gandhi claimed he derived this concept from Gītā.⁶⁵ But Ruskin, too, had influenced Gandhi with regards to manual labour. From Ruskin Gandhi borrowed the idea that all work is of equal significance and equal worth. But Gandhi reminded that one's capacity to serve has obvious limitations. One can serve even one's own neighbour with difficulty. However, in serving one's neighbour, one does,

⁶⁴M.K. Gandhi, Ashram Observances In Action, op. cit., p. 60.

⁶⁵S. Radhakrishnan, Bhagavadgīta, op. cit., chap. III.

indeed, serve the world. To a Satyagrahi the whole world is his family.

The vow of yajña is a reminder that each day, a bit of one's activity should take into account the good of the suffering humanity. None should be allowed to exploit either the society or any individual for one's own survival or profit. A nonviolent society is also a just society.

8. Abhaya or Fearlessness: As long as there is fear, there cannot be truth or love. Especially, in order to challenge injustice, whether it be through violence or nonviolence, one would have to cultivate fearlessness. It is much more so for a nonviolent resister who does not rely on the superficial strength of either the arms or the numbers. A Satyagrahi must give up the fear of everything, be it a person, an idea or an institution. He or she must not be overwhelmed by the fear of personal gain or loss, life or death.

Abhaya implies freedom from fear itself.

Gandhi maintained that all exploitation and injustice, in one sense, is ultimately based upon an irrational fear of the unknown. Fear is often instigated through terror and repression. But once the victims realize that they need not fear the unknown, the tables can easily be turned. Even in the case of a terrorist regime or a totalitarian state, Gandhi claimed that nothing can be accomplished without the tacit or the implicit cooperation and consent of the ruled. Even those who use violence, fear it. Those who trust weapons, also mistrust the efficacy of their own means. The security of arms is based similarly on the falseness of violence. A Satyagrahi believes in the invincibility of truth and the ultimate triumph of ahimsa. The vow of abhaya was instituted to instil into a Satyagrahi the faith that truth would eventually win, despite everything else.

For a Satyagrahi courage and fearlessness are his armour. During his wanderings in India, Gandhi discovered that the greatest enemy of Indians

was not the British Raj. It was the paralyzing fear of repression. Indians feared to speak in public, to hold opinions, to talk freely and to exchange views. He saw that Indians were living superficial lives. They were full of suspicion, distrust, and ill-will toward the aliens. That lack of trust gave rise to further evils in the society. Therefore, Gandhi's message to a Satyagrahi is to conquer the inner enemy before he even ventures to challenge the outer foe. A Satyagrahi ought to fear only his conscience or God. Even then, there is nothing to be afraid of. Being mindful of one's inner self does not imply being fearful of its promptings. Gandhi often pointed out that fearlessness is the pre-requisite of all virtue.

9. Sahisnuta or tolerance: Tolerance comes from the ability to have a genuine interest. Although Gandhi believed in all the religious faiths of the world, and considered them equally worthy of reverence, he also believed that they were all essentially imperfect. All religions more or less contain some revelations of truth. In as much as they are the products of human intelligence and will, according to Gandhi, they are all only partially true.

It is obligatory for a Satyagrahi to entertain the same respect for all religions. Above all he must have a genuine interest for all. Tolerance practised with such open-mindedness, discourages conflicts. It also eliminates the frantic efforts to convert others to one's own system of beliefs or favourite views. Gandhi thought that it is possible for one to try and remove the defects from one's own religion rather than blame others for their beliefs and try to reform them. However, if each made such noble attempts, the world would certainly be a better place to live in. All could then travel, side by side, toward the path of perfection. The vow of sahisnuta is an attempt to remind the Satyagrahi of his obligation to be tolerant toward differences of opinion.

In his own āshrams, Gandhi tried to create an atmosphere of great tolerance and spiritual harmony. But it is hard to judge how well he may have succeeded. One who appreciates the value of learning is a student all one's life. Gandhi, too, believed that the knowledge of an ethical being must also increase from day to day, throughout his daily encounters. While one discharges one's obligations in a conscientious manner, ethical maturity is bound to grow. The desire for knowledge and an aptitude for learning are not bound by space or time. A diligent Satyagrahi, whether inside an āshram or out of it, would easily acquire knowledge about many things. His skills would naturally grow and his virtues multiply. Equipped with such knowledge tolerance arises in the heart and mind of the learner. Assistance is received in mysterious ways when the desire of the learner is ardent.

The question then arises, should there be some provisions or incentives for the one desirous of such learning? Gandhi thought that the idea of reward might corrupt the end. In his opinion the absence of incentives is most beneficial for the morally inclined. In a limited sense, true knowledge is in fact intended for one's own salvation. In a broader meaning, true knowledge is also a service to the mankind. It is for the salvation of all. Virtues like tolerance, humility, and faith help to enhance a Satyagrahi's view of life in general.

In Gandhian philosophy tolerance and knowledge are both closely linked. One without the other is not possible. A Satyagrahi must endeavour to develop a spirit of charity toward all. His compassion must reach out to all, for the benefit of all. Whosoever desires such knowledge and generosity, will eventually try to equip himself/herself with the requisite skills and disciplines.

The knowledge of Satyagraha is undoubtedly a virtue, an ornament for oneself, as well as the society in which such fortunate beings reside. That knowledge will naturally lead to the well-being of all and the good of all - sarvam mangalam.

Part III

Assessment of Gandhi

Albert Einstein had once remarked of Gandhi: "Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon the earth."⁶⁶ Perhaps, the death of no other world leader has been mourned so deeply and widely as that of Gandhi. He exemplified in his daily living the simple but fundamental values of universal acceptance. Gandhi aspired for perfect purity and virtues which became a saint, in any age or time. The greatest compliment came from Jinnah the founder of Pakistan, a staunch critic, and a determined political opponent of Gandhi: "Even in death, Gandhi stole a march over me!"⁶⁷

Musicians and artists spend a lifetime perfecting their own skills. Likewise, a Satyagrahi does and ought to work consummately at perfecting his own life. The death of the mahātma,⁶⁸ had it been any other way, could not have been more symbolic of his own ethical beliefs. Gandhi's last words and gestures eloquently expressed his philosophy of compassion and dharma.

As Gandhi sank to the ground to the bullets of the assassin, he lifted both hands in the final gesture of greetings. That gesture signified the virtue of forgiveness and compassion. There was neither any trace of fear nor hatred

⁶⁶S. Radhakrishnan, ed., Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and reflections (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1939), pp. 79-80.

⁶⁷F. Thakurdas, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: July, 1976.

⁶⁸It literally means the Great Soul. Gandhi came to be identified by that name probably through the poet, Rabindranath Tagore, who was in age older than him and sometimes held diametrically opposite views.

in Gandhi's expressions. He seemed to have fulfilled perfectly the dharma of ahimsa, to his very last. Perhaps it is easier to be mindful in moments of calm and contemplation. Cool courage is to be expected from a spiritually disciplined individual. But the mental poise and serenity which permeates the moment to moment existence and experience of a truly enlightened being, is indeed very rare. It appears that Gandhi was "a supreme artist at the moment of his death".⁶⁹

Throughout one's life, a Satyagrahi trains himself in the discipline of Satyagraha. Often his practice and statements may seem to be affected by a necessity, which he consciously chooses to impose upon himself. But there comes a time in the lives of such great beings, when they do not even have to attempt to be ethical. Their acts fall naturally from them. They spontaneously are, what they truly believe themselves to be. The true Satyagrahi like Gandhi, does not manufacture his thoughts, words and actions so as to impress others around him. He simply is what his philosophy of life suggests. Perhaps in Gandhi one finds that quality of innocence. It is the hallmark of all virtuous living. Such beings are not conscious of being virtuous. They simply are - what they are.

Yet, in assessing Gandhi's contributions to our understanding of Satyagraha, one cannot summarily dismiss the task by stating that Gandhi was - what he was.

Gandhi's major contribution to our understanding of politics and religion lies precisely in the fact that they are deeply inter-related. Being conscious of this intimate relationship between experience and existence

⁶⁹P. Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1977), p. 519.

is all that Gandhi insisted upon. All the rest follows from this his basic premise. At a certain point and time of his life, Gandhi himself became aware of a deep affinity between them. Once he realized that relationship, Gandhi endeavoured to follow and represent that truth as he had himself known it. Gandhi did not claim to put forth any new proposition, or theory.

Gandhi did claim, however, that if new discoveries can be made in the realm of the phenomenal world, why must man declare his bankruptcy in the experiential or spiritual kingdom. On the basis of his own experience Gandhi boldly asserted that man must not rely on violence. According to him violence is ignorance. It cannot be dealt effectively by using more ignorance. We must resort to the obligation of love and compassion in order to solve ~~our~~ mutual conflicts.

What is so strikingly fascinating about Gandhi is his undefeatable faith in the humanity of mankind. The principles he utilized were not new discoveries. For ages man had known the virtues of goodness. But its application was limited to the individual experiences or spiritual salvation. Gandhi stands out as one of the very few, perhaps, the lone individual in our century who emphatically denounced violence and pleaded for the recognition of virtue as a political power which can influence the destiny of millions. His stress on virtue as a means of the socio-political change is, indeed, a novel phenomenon and Gandhi's major contribution must be viewed in terms of its massive impact. Until Gandhi's arrival on the socio-political scene, we seem to have been pre-occupied with the theories of violence. One would have literally scoffed at his idea of politics of compassion or nonviolence as a mere fantasy. Even if the philosophers were to evolve theories of nonviolent resistance, they would have been lightly brushed aside as ineffectual and unrealistic. With Gandhi, it is different. He not only presented an alternative based on serious con-

victions, but also demonstrated its worth by empirical evidence.

Especially, in an age which has twice been the witness to the scourge of wars fought on a hitherto inconveivable scale, when weapons of destruction have surpassed all previous calculations for destruction, and when man has shown himself to be capable of intolerable cruelty and indignity to man, Gandhi's message of nonviolence and peace comes across as a balm to the suffering humanity.

Gandhi may appear nationalistic to some of his critics, but his nationalism is really an internationalism of the highest order. Gandhi would settle for nothing less than the universal application of ahimsa. The non-violence of a Satyagrahi does not evolve on the ashes of this or that nation, creed or a people. It includes in its purview the entire world of the living and the non-living. In it there is no room for exploitation of one by the other. Rather, an unrealistic hope as it may appear to some. But that is what Gandhi dreamed of.

It is true that the Utopians have never really succeeded in bringing their dreams to light. But to call Gandhi a Utopian would be misleading. Yet, there is something naggingly disturbing about Gandhi. He challenged our imaginations and capabilities, but not merely as the artists, artisans or statesmen, but as human beings, first and last. Gandhi's challenge is posed before each and every conscientious individual. Gandhi hoped that we would demonstrate through our activity, the truth of our own being. Mere intellect is not enough to grasp the message of Gandhi. The millicns who followed Gandhi were mostly illiterate. But among them were also India's foremost statesmen, intellects, poets, and some of the best minds that this century has known. The uniqueness of Gandhi's message lies precisely in this

that the experience of being a human being is enough to allow for the message of ahimsa to seep through one's being. Gandhi was himself far from being a pandit or a scholar. But his own ethical experience had convinced him of the possibilities of communication with one's adversary, on a dynamic level. Gandhi contended that through compassion one can reach out and touch the heart of the other; that such reconcilliation can also be practised with success at various levels of socio-political existence.

Gandhi was aware of man's uniqueness. He was also hopeful that the possibilities of his awakening shall not lie dormant, forever. His plea is to incorporate more of the ethical aspect of our nature (ahimsa dharma) in our mundane affairs. Politics, of necessity, must aspire for higher considerations of human worth. Man alone is capable of making intricate patterns of music. He can envisage a society based on the demands of justice and compassion. Gandhi dreamed of such a nonviolent society based on the obligations of ethics. These very ideas enabled him to seek their application in Satyagraha. But the human capabilities which Gandhi talked about are not his own inventions. He merely pointed out their potential worth, by making use of their practical relevance.

It is considered quite natural to experience moments of understanding, compassion, forgiveness, generosity and tolerance in our private lives. Yet, when it comes to politics, we tend to be indifferent. We take it for granted that our existence as the "rulers" or the "ruled", has nothing or very little to do with our experience as individuals. Gandhi's efforts indicate on the contrary, the essential unity of man's existence in all spheres of human activity. They emphasize this harmony of experience and existence, of ethics and its conscious application to solving our everyday problems.

A citizen is very much a part of the state in the same manner as he/she is part of his/her family, community, or society. We cannot divide human existence or experience into water-tight compartments. Justice or injustice, harmony or lack of it, are bound to have their "spill-over" effects on the rest of our lives. We must reorganize and recreate with imaginative insight our inter-dependencies and inter-actions, so as to reflect our love and respect of nonviolence. It is a serious obligation, because the quality of our actions, words and thoughts will invariably determine the political life and texture of our community and, therefore, of human existence.

Gandhi offered some definite criteria of judging the quality of our political existence. His fundamental concern was for the propriety of ethical means. But in stressing the need for ethical means, Gandhi was really pressing for a compassionate reconsideration. Gandhi's politics of compassion sought to foster a healthy and meaningful life not only for our own selfish goals and their achievements, but also for the well-being of those with whom we may be forced to differ on account of our convictions. It is that kind of understanding which the wise men throughout our history have, in essence, tried to propound. In this respect, Socrates was no different from the Buddha, or Confucius. Neither did Mohammed differ in his basic teachings, in this regard, from the Judaic and the Christian traditions.⁷⁰

Gandhi reiterated the same teachings in a new light. Politics bereft of religion (in this sense ethical values) is, according to Gandhi, lifeless and a meaningless morass of conditioned existence. Such politics only creates alienation and alienated beings. Likewise, Gandhi argued that if a religion

⁷⁰T.K. Unnithan and Yogendra Singh, Traditions of Non-violence (India: Arnold-Heinman, 1973).

does not in any manner seek to enhance the quality of existence for the individual and his environment, that too, is not worth its salt.

Just as the thoughts, words and the actions of the individual reflect the convictions of his inner being, the policies, pronouncements, and acts of the state are likewise the manifestations of the ideas which the individuals in that state adhere to. External violence only reflects the deeper source of inner violence. Violence does not in any way help to mitigate the conflict. Counter-violence only increases the scope and depth of ill-will. Ahimsa, if given a chance to flourish, is bound to affect the quality of our existence in a strikingly dynamic way. It will, Gandhi maintained, obviate the chances of arms race and global warfare. It will delimit the scope of mutual exploitation.

Since the individual alone can dare to challenge the violent status quo, he alone can initiate the Satyagraha and Sarvodaya struggles. The pure nonviolence of even a single individual is bound to bring about unbelievable triumphs. Gandhi claimed that ahimsa is bound to be victorious always provided it is performed with utter sincerity. Satyagraha based on true ahimsa, therefore, can never fail. This appears to be a tautology. This argument presupposes that if a Satyagraha fails, the fault must lie with the purity of means employed. Since, there are no hard and fast standards of judgement for the purity of ahimsa, one can never really challenge Gandhi's assumption to his fullest satisfaction.

Gandhi is criticized by many for being consistently inconsistent. One may look at this charge in two ways. Firstly, there is the structural and formal inconsistency in Gandhi, of which he can be rightly accused, and for good reasons. Secondly, there is the non-structural and informal inconsistency,

for which Gandhi cannot be justly blamed. For instance, Gandhi cannot be expected to stick rigidly to the format of his pre-planned political campaigns, if in the light of his immediate perception he viewed the "truth" differently from what it may have appeared to him earlier. Gandhi could be and ought to be blamed for creating the seeming confusions in the mind of even his close-associates and followers, let alone among his astute critics. Sometimes he confounded both his admirers and detractors alike on vital matters of considerations.⁷¹

One has to understand Gandhi from two perspectives, simultaneously. Gandhi was primarily, in the deepest core of his being, a spiritualist. He was an individual in search of his own goals, however imperfectly visualized and poorly articulated they may have been in the light of empirical evidence and 'scientific understanding'. The spiritual Gandhi was just as unsure of himself as he was sure of certain beliefs that he held dear to his heart. One perceives almost a child-like innocence in the "unsure Gandhi". He toyed with ideas, fancies and concepts often forgetting that the whole nation, or perhaps the world, was taking note of his idiosyncrasies. Contrary to this, was the "sure Gandhi". The sure Gandhi showed the almost naive, if rare qualities of a siddha (person accomplished in the path of spiritual enlightenment). As a siddha, Gandhi was capable of taking dangerous risks, without the ill-effects of his undertaking and made light of even some serious blunders.

It is rather difficult to either explain or understand why and how some individuals perceive the way they do, in their quest for spiritual liber-

⁷¹See Arthur Koestler, "Mahatma Gandhi -Yogi and Commissar - a Re-evaluation", in his The Heel of Achilles Essays 1968-1973 (London: Hutchenson, 1974), pp. 221-252; Ved Mehta, Mahatma Gandhi and his Apostles (New York: Penguin Books, 1976); Conversations, op. cit., India: May-August 1976.

ation. This author is least qualified to comment on that aspect of Gandhi. However, I did interview some individuals who could understand Gandhi better than I did on this score, and they seemed to share this belief.⁷² Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi perhaps had an equally close understanding of each other's involvements. They mutually appeared to agree in this respect to the unfolding of events on the national scene.⁷³

The other equally significant aspect of Gandhi is his ethical approach to all problems of life and living. In considering the Satyagraha one cannot under-emphasize, much less ignore, the spiritual aspect of Gandhi. Undoubtedly, the ethical side is predominant. One may or may not be a spiritualist in order to initiate a Satyagraha, but one has got to be ethical. Gandhi seemed to maintain that if one is ethical, one cannot help being a spiritualist. This may at first appear paradoxical. But it is not necessarily so. Gandhi's underlying assumption was that pure ethics is equivalent to pure metaphysics. In the ultimate analysis, this may perhaps be true.

When one views Gandhi as a Satyagrahi, one is struck with a significant discovery. There appeared to be a constantly compromising and complementary aspect to Gandhi. He was an aethical being (like an amoralist) and an ethical being. The "aethical Gandhi" was the spiritualist who did and often wanted to transcend the prescribed norms, no matter how universal, absolute or highly praiseworthy they might have been. In that realm, the Satyagrahi Gandhi could and did denounce everything he had ever thought, said or done, if he later became convinced of an equally overwhelming and opposite discovery

⁷²B.R. Nanda, Conversations, op. cit., New Delhi: June, 1976; R.R. Diwakar, ibid.; J. Jain, ibid.; V. Hari, ibid.; Y.S. Tan, ibid.; op. cit.

⁷³K. Singh, ibid., New Delhi: August 1976.

of the moment. It could be intuitive, rational, irrational or anti-rational. These ranged from the most unique to the most mundane.

The ethical Gandhi, on the other hand, was bound hand and foot by the experience/s that he revered in others, as well as in himself. He was convinced of his truth/s through his own repeated self-experiments and re-discoveries. The ethical Gandhi was also a die-hard moralist, at times appearing as an 'anachronism', a 'Victorian', a 'guilt-ridden' individual, a 'masochist', a 'sadist', a 'tyrant', a 'hypocrite' and a 'hard-hearted' husband and father, and an 'unrealist' depending upon the perception of the observer.

Contrary to the popularly accepted notion among the Gandhian elites, one finds that although Gandhi provides a means whereby the socio-political conflicts may be successfully 'tackled', it is far from definite.⁷⁴ Problems cannot be solved by Satyagraha. Solution, in a way, implies a foreclosure on the part of the Satyagrahi. It suggests that the Satyagrahi's contention, alone, is the God-given truth, whereas the opponent is doomed to defeat. A Satyagraha is a call for justice, in a genuinely grievous state of affairs. It cannot and must not be mistaken for pretensions of self righteousness.

Sometimes, there appear to be major discrepancies between Satyagraha as designed and practised by Gandhi, and 'Satyagraha' as practised by some who claim to follow him. Because the nature of Satyagraha is so ill-defined, open-ended, and overly dependent on the Satyagrahi (rather the quality of his ethical being), it becomes very difficult to practise. It is no doubt a very dynamic and challenging means of righting 'wrongs'. But the fact that it is

⁷⁴R. Rattan, "The anatomy of Gandhi's Satyagraha", Gandhi Marg, XVII (1973), 84-106.

much more than a technique and so strenuous and exacting a measure makes Satyagraha a less likely choice for those who are desperate to achieve their ends. Also, the highly innovative character of Satyagraha makes it difficult to be practiced by mediocre leadership. Granted that it is a noble and a harmless means, but the element of time involved in Satyagraha is in itself a trial of patience.⁷⁵ It requires the sustained efforts of a highly organized and sophisticated public opinion, prepared to endure delay.

Satyagraha may dramatically emphasize and bring to light the most crucial elements in a conflict but it does not guarantee any easy or quick answers to the pressing problems. Perhaps it would be unrealistic to expect in Satyagraha a panacea for all evils. Even violence, although it seems to offer easy solutions, does not really accomplish much. Rather, in the long run violence only succeeds in making the matters worse, by ignoring the fundamental issues or refusing to see them as such.

There can hardly be any arguments with Gandhi's position on the means justifying the ends. It is true that the noble ends demand noble means. What Gandhi perceived clearly decades ago can also be observed today and bears credibility. One can hardly hope to generate understanding and good-will through anger and hatred. Violence definitely cannot be overcome with more violence.⁷⁶ Conflicts can perhaps be temporarily repressed or 'shelved' away. But repression is not a solution. The solution must eventually come from a positive source. It must deal with the roots of the problem itself. Violence only seems to shrug away the responsibility. It does not have the

⁷⁵M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 148.

⁷⁶ibid., p. xiii.

patience required for understanding the root cause. Compassion, on the other hand, insists on patient reconsiderations.

Far from claiming any finalities, Gandhi was very realistic and modest about his endeavours. He kept an open mind, regarding his own conclusions, but continued firmly in his experiments. Gandhi was cautious but not infallible. His willingness to admit errors and to retrace his own steps won him many friends. He, nonetheless, claimed that what he accepted as truth appeared absolutely correct to him, for the time being. He religiously believed in basing his actions on what appeared to him as true. It did not mean momentary satisfaction with whatever appeared to be correct in a given situation. He differentiated between opportunism and conscious acceptance or rejection. For him being fully aware of the implications of his search was important. The knowledge, thus acquired, helped Gandhi to keep away from rigidly clinging to his own concepts. It was easy for Gandhi to discard those thoughts, words, and actions which did not satisfy his mind and heart. The same may not be easy for most of us.

The question that naturally arises is should the 'technique' be still called a Satyagraha even if it retains the form, but sacrifices the inner essence? Gandhi had a different name for it. He called it durāgraha (opposite of Satyagraha). It appears to me that rather than on anything else, a Satyagrahi ought to pay serious attention to self-awareness and possibilities of error.

It is also misleading to designate Satyagraha as a mere technique of change. One cannot particularize it. It is both an art and an aspiration. Specifically, it is the 'doings' of a Satyagrahi. The chief element which makes the Satyagraha throb with the pulsating influence of one who directs

it - is crucial. No amount of training in Gandhian āshrams can really substitute for that missing link which holds the world of Gandhian perspective in harmony. Fortunately or not, that "link" is not to be imported from anywhere else. It is the existent reality in the heart of each and every living thing. One has only to look inward to recognize and reactivate that centre of being. It is to such an universal core of being that an Abdul Gaffar Khan, a Martin Luther King or an Albert Lathuli owes his emergence. We require a great deal of study in that direction. Comparative studies may also tell us, for instance, what each of the above may have learnt from the other, or what one could learn from them in order to avoid similar errors.⁷⁷ Each Satyagraha does, of course, vary in terms of its goal orientation, the quality of organization, and its leadership. What we do not know is exactly how or to what extent these may effect a Satyagrahic struggle.

A great deal has been written already about Gandhian philosophy and Satyagraha. What these findings further elucidate and bring to light is the fact that over and ~~above~~ all the questions of objectives, procedures and the manner of actions (using pressure-tactics of varying kinds such as peace marches, strikes, sit-ins, fasts, etc.) lies yet another domain. This is the domain of a Satyagrahi's personal integrity and purity of conscience and motives. What Gandhi did not point out himself, and what most Gandhian scholars have neglected to consider so far, is whether or not an ordinary citizen, of ordinary capacities, and limited 'ethical' discipline, is capable of offering Satyagraha. Anyone can offer Satyagraha, as far as the right to offer it is concerned. But what about its effectiveness as claimed by Gandhi? Could an ordinary individual hope to generate similar response in case of socio-

⁷⁷There is a serious dearth of scholars who would study, for example, the importance and efficacy in terms of Satyagraha training and co-relate it with the number of events where they were or were not successful in achieving their stated goals.

political 'wrong', anywhere, against any arbitrary authority whether national or international? The answers to these questions, in the light of this study, consist of both a yes and a no. Yes, one can hope to generate massive response through Satyagraha. But no, not everyone is capable of such a deep and earnest appeal. Satyagrahis like Gandhi are rare individuals.

Bondurant has done excellent work in expounding the philosophy of conflict and analysing the techniques of nonviolent action.⁷⁸ But, when it comes to putting those actions into practice, one finds that Gandhi's expectations are, a bit, too high. His aspirations are far beyond the common ken and despite all the reverence to the 'sage in revolt', Gandhi does seem to be, by far, one of the most anachronistic figures of his age. His Satyagraha begs many questions and furnishes few straight-forward answers. Perhaps, Gandhi did not mean to furnish all the answers. That may as well be impossible. Perhaps a Satyagrahi ought to go on his own quest. He ought to find his own 'truths' in the welter of relative and partial answers. That seems to be quite understandable and acceptable to any rational mind. What appears most dubious and questionable is at what point, in life, does one decide to become a Satyagrahi?

If one waits for the appropriate 'crisis' to evoke a feeling of 'injustice', which would, in turn, trigger off the 'right' responses of a Satyagraha, it is already too late. It is late, because until that precise moment one may not have realized the crucial significance of leading an ethically 'pure' or even tolerably 'acceptable' life. One need not even get into the controversial subject of what is ethically 'acceptable' and what is not. It is late, also, because when and if one does realize the need for a Satya-

⁷⁸J. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence, op. cit.

graha, by the time a Satyagrahi 'matures' into accepting the responsibilities of either a nation-wide or a local mass-movement, it may indeed be too late. Does it then imply that a Satyagrahi is not made, but born as one

According to the theory of rebirth (punarjanma) one may assume it takes several rounds of birth before one can evolve into a worthy and effectual Satyagrahi. If so, clearly all efforts at attempting to be a Satyagrahi may seem futile. Implications of this argument are serious and may not appear as flimsy as they sound. They seem to hit hard at the very basis of Satyagrahic potential. However, it may come as a relief to recall that the best of Satyagrahis along with the worst share a great deal in common. Gandhi can be given an honest appraisal on account of being sincere in his own efforts. Gandhi did not claim that the sādhanā (discipline) for Satyagraha is easy, nor did he claim it is absolutely impossible. Gandhi did, however, reiterate that it is a Himalayan effort, a serious undertaking. One cannot opt in or out of being a Satyagrahi, like one does for an electoral campaign or membership in the political parties. Either one is or is not.

Perhaps one need not blame Gandhi for failing to point out that one could not have a Satyagraha unless one were a Gandhi - a true Satyagrahi. What Gandhi thought, said, and did is definitely more articulate than a thousand words. He learnt to live earnestly. What he silently but resolutely propounded was that very message of intelligent, earnest, and compassionate living. If any future Satyagrahis wish to take 'tips' for a Satyagraha, they would do well to start being wide awake, here and now, or else they might find themselves unqualified for the moment and its challenge.

Ethically, Gandhian thought presupposes two supreme obligations. One is the obligation to eradicate injustice (untruth), wherever and whenever one encounters it. The other obligation, concomittant and parallel to the one

already mentioned, is the obligation to serve the community. In accepting one, a citizen would indirectly perform the other. If one is arrogant enough to presume that his particular society is, more or less, free of glaring "injustices", the obligation to serve that community still remains. With awareness, the concept of community can also keep on growing. Both these obligations require the true citizen to lead an ethically pure, economically austere, politically 'just', spiritually vigilant, and socially amicable and harmonious life. In short it implies abiding in truth and wisdom with compassion for all.

The assumption that we can divide human personality into partial segments of ethics, economics, politics, and religion seem erroneous. To ignore a holistic vision of life is to ignore a significant aspect of reality. In truth, life is integrated in all its essential relationships. Both the inner and outer, as well as the various levels and kinds of experience, and existence have an inherent unity. Gandhi's major contribution lay in drawing our attention to the central core of that unity.

Through Satyagraha and Sarvodaya Gandhi endeavoured to emphasize that very unity. If science can show and verify with arrogance the empirical unity of life and nature, so can religion. It has already asserted the validity of such experience, sans arrogance. Humility is its chief character. A Satyagrahi must, above all, "reduce himself to zero" Gandhi had reminded. He must give up all delusions of separate identity and ego-awareness. An awareness freed of, and liberated from the confines of isolated existence is practically a liberated being. Such being exists and experiences for the welfare of the whole community. As the individual progresses in his spirituality, his influence and power over others also increases. It reaches far and wide. For such a universal being, there is neither friend nor foe. He

rises above the narrow categorizations of race, country, creed or even their own species in the biological sense. In Sanskrit they are termed as muktātmā (freed soul). Such individuals lead the lives of comparative or total detachments. They neither desire this nor detest that. The superior beings of such capabilities lose their life-instinct and do not fear death. It is not easy to reach such evolved state of consciousness. Whether Gandhi had reached that state, or was very close to it, is hard to say, and not very crucial for our purpose here. But it certainly does refer to the ability of a Satyagrahi who must be equally non-attached to the things which ordinarily most of us crave for. Comforts that cannot be denied easily appear of no consequence to a Satyagrahi. His aspirations are different. A Satyagrahi seeks solace in an entirely different realm of priorities.

Gandhi's politics of compassion belong to that realm of considerations. It takes into account human beings as human beings. He claims ahimsa to be the only means of reaching it. Satyagraha is a name given to that pilgrimage. It is a stringent but a noble quest. Perhaps the highest life of perfection is that where mind and life are both integrated and united in a common search. That search is an eternal one. Like Plato, Gandhi, too, invites us to think deeper about the problems of ethical experience and political existence. His quest is also for the welfare of all (sabbe sukhī bhavantu).

APPENDIX

A. List of people interviewed during the period of May to September 1976 in India.

Abdullah, Sheikh Mohammad - Politician; Muslim leader; Head, Emergency Administration, Kashmir; Prime Minister, Jammu and Kashmir; President, All India States Peoples' Conference; M.P. for Kashmir; Indian Delegate to U.N.O. Address; at present Chief Minister, Jammu and Kashmir.

Abid, Husain Saiyyad - Scholar, Arabic and Persian; professor, Jamia Millia University, New Delhi; author of several books, articles and papers on Gandhi and Nehru.

Acharloo - Social worker; educationist; active in Gandhi Village Reconstruction Programme; participant in Satyagraha movements; an ashramite of Gandhi ashram.

Arunachalam, K. - Head, Tamilnadu Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Madurai; participant in Satyagraha movements.

Bandhopadhyay, Jayantanuja - Professor, Political Science, Jadavpur University, Calcutta; author, several books and articles; specializes in political thought and international relations.

Bandhopadhyay, Somendranath - Professor, Bengali, Visva-Bharati University; author, books and articles; specializes in aesthetics, works of Tagore and history of Bengal.

Banker, Shankarlal - Publisher; social worker; active in Labour Movement in Gujrat; close associate of Gandhi; was charged with seditious intent in 1922 sent to prison with Gandhi.

Begum, Amtus Salam - Social worker; close associate of Gandhi; an ashramite; participant in Satyagraha movements.

Bhattacharya, Buddhadeva - Professor, Political Science, Calcutta University; author and commentator; researcher, Gandhian Studies; specializes in political thought; wrote a Ph.D. thesis on Gandhi under Dr. Nirmal Kumar Bose, Gandhi's secretary.

Bhave, Acharya Vinoba - Long time associate and a major disciple of Gandhi; social worker; scholar; met Gandhi in 1916; a linguist; originator of the Bhoodan Yajna (gift of land) Movement for the landless peasants; travelled on foot over 40,000 miles since 1951 to promote his cause; author of many books; recipient of Family of Man Award (1966) and Ramon Magsaysay Award.

Chaudhari, Malati - Social worker; political activist; artist; co-worker with Nabokrishna Chaudhari, the former Chief Minister of Orissa and a major participant in Satyagraha movements.

Chandiwala, Brijkrisha - Personal secretary to Gandhi; close associate; editor of several volumes of Gandhi's Delhi Diary; author of books and articles on Gandhi.

Das, S. - Curator, Gandhi Museum, Madurai; artist; social worker.

Dasgupta, Sugata - Economist; former Director, Rajghat Institute of Gandhian Studies, Benaras; active participant in Social Reconstruction and Youth Education Programmes; author of books and articles; at present teaching in Australia.

Desai, Dhirubhai Manibhai - Vice Chancellor, Gujarat Vidhyapeeth University, Ahmedabad; scholar; social worker; active participant in Satyagraha movements.

Desai, Narayan - Journalist; active social worker; son of Mahadev Desai, secretary and close associate of Gandhi; author.

Deshmukh, Durgabai - Advocate, Supreme Court of India; fellow, Hony. Doctor of Laws, Andhra University (1963); Member, Constituent Assembly and Provincial Parliament of India (1946 to 1952), Planning Commission (1952 to 1953); Chairperson, Central Social Welfare Board; editorial committee member, Social Welfare in India and Social Legislation Encyclopedia of Social Work in India; Hony. Director, Council for Social Development; organizer and promoter of Womens' cause.

Dharmadhikari, S.P. - (Rtd.) Air Force Officer; social worker; active participant in Satyagraha movements.

Diwakar, Ranganath Ramachandra - Chairman Gandhi Peace Foundation, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi; editor, Gandhi Marg; politician; participant in Non-Cooperation Movement (1921); Union Minister of State, Minister of Information and Broadcasting (1948 to 1952); Governor of Bihar (1952 to 1957); author of many books and translations; co-worker and a close associate of Gandhi; social worker; an active participant in Satyagraha movements.

Dixit, Ratanmai Devi - Scholar, Sanskrit; principal, Mahila Ashram, Wardha; co-worker of Gandhi; social worker.

Gandhi, Purushottam Das - Social worker; chairman, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Rajkot; nephew of Gandhi; active in Village Reconstruction Association (Saurashtra Rachanatmak Samiti).

Gandhi, Rajmohan - Social worker; member, Moral Rearmament Movement; grandson of Gandhi; author of books and articles.

Ganguli, Reena - Professor, Chinese Language, Visva-Bharati University; social-worker; actively involved in Human Rights and Womens' issues.

Ganga Prasad - Politician; M.P.; social worker.

Godse, Gopal - Brother of Nathuram Godse; and accused conspirator in the Gandhi Murder trial; was recently released from the prison, when I met him.

Gopalaswami - Social worker; active participant in Satyagraha movements.

Gundappa, V.P. - Social worker; participant in Satyagraha movements.

Hari, Viyogi - Poet; author of several books in Hindi; editor, quarterly on Gandhian Social Reconstruction; active participant in several Satyagraha movements; co-worker of Gandhi, especially, in the campaigns against untouchability.

Jhaveri, Vithalbai K. - Researcher, Gandhi Museum (Mani Bhavan), Bombay; director, script-writer, narrator of the documentary film on Gandhi's life and works - the first complete biographical film on Gandhi.

Jain, Jainendra Kumar - Author; poet; scholar; man of letters, Hindi literature; winner of several literary awards; critic and commentator.

Joshi, Chhaganlal - Social worker; close associate of Gandhi; served as manager at Sabarmati Ashram; participant several Satyagraha movements; participant Dandi March; accompanied Gandhi to Yeravada Jail.

Kalelkar, Padma Vibhushan Dattatreya Balkrishna - Educationist; close-associate of Gandhi; professor, Visva-Bharati university; Vice-Chancellor, Gujrat Vidhyapeeth University (1928 to 1934); member, Hindustani Talimi Sangh (Basic Education; President (till 1957), Hindustani Prachar Sabha; Chairman (1953 to 1955), Backward Classes Commission; President, Gujrat Sahitya Parishad (1959), Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha; M.P. Rajya Sabha, Govt. of India (1964); Recipient, Sahitya Vachaspati and National awards (1966); widely travelled; author of 50 or more books in Gujrati, Marathi, Hindi and English.

Karan, A.K. - Social worker; participant Satyagraha movements; actively involved in Village Reconstruction Programme in U.P.

Kothari, Rajni - Professor, Political Science, Delhi University; Director, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi; author of several books and articles.

Kriplani, Acharya Jiwatram Bhagawandas - Politician; social worker; professor, History; gave up teaching to join Gandhi in Champaran Indigo Satyagraha (1917); professor, Benaras Hindu University (1918 to 1920); participant Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement (1930); founder of Gandhi Ashram for Khadi and Village work (1920); Director, Shri Gandhi Ashram, Village and Khadi Organization (U.P.); member, Congress Working Committee; Gen. Sec., Congress Party of India (1934 to 1946); President, Congress Party of India (1946 to 1947); member, Constituent Assembly (1946 to 1951); organized K.M.P. Party which merged (1951) with the Socialist Party (P.S.P.); Chairman, P.S.P. (1954); M.P. (1957 to 1962, 1963 to 1970); author several books on Gandhi.

Kulkarni, V.B. - Professor; economist; member, Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan; researcher, Gandhian Studies; author of several books including the volumes of The Economic History of India.

Mahadevan, T.K. - Former editor, Gandhi Marg, Gandhi Peace Foundation; participant, co-ordinator of major seminars on Gandhi; author of books and articles on Gandhi.

Mahadevan, T.M.P. - Director, Centre for Advance Studies, Madras University; professor, philosophy; scholar of Sanskrit; author of several books and articles.

Majumdar, Dhirendranath - Dedicated social worker; works incessantly in the interior, rural areas of U.P. and Bihar for Village Reconstruction Programme. I corresponded with him since it was not possible to visit him.

Mehta, Krishnaraj - Social worker; member, Gandhi Serva Seva Sangh, Rajghat, Beneras; participant local Satyagraha Movements.

Mehta, Usha - Professor, Political Science, Bombay University; Director, Gandhi Museum, Bombay; wrote a Ph.D. thesis on Gandhi; freedom-fighter; was arrested several times for her participation in Satyagraha Movements; author several books and articles on Gandhi and political philosophy.

Menon, Padma Bhushan Lakshmi N. - Politician; lawyer; professor (1922 to 1933); Parliamentary Sec. to Prime Minister Nehru (1952 to 1957); Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Govt. of India (1962 to 1966); member, All India Women's Conference (President, 1955 to 1959); Chief of Sect. on The Status of Women, Human Rights Division, U.N. Secretariat at Lake Success (1949 to 1950); M.P. Rajya Sabha (1952 to 1966); delegate, various international conferences social worker; author of several articles; Recipient, national award (1957).

Mishra, Bhavani Prasad - Editor, Hindi Publication of Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi; poet; author of books and articles on Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.

Nair, Pyarelal - Close associate, private secretary and biographer of Gandhi; participant in Non-Cooperation Movement; accompanied Gandhi to the Round Table Conference in London (1930), to Burma and Sri Lanka; visited Kabul to meet Abdul Gaffar Khan, (the Frontier Gandhi (1965)); journalist; editor of Harijan; contributor for Young India; was with Gandhi in Bengal during his March to Noakhali (1946); author of several books and articles on Gandhi.

Nair, Sushila - Physician; close companion of Gandhi for many years; social worker; participant in several Satyagraha Movements; accompanied Gandhi on several major missions; sister of Pyarelal Nair; Minister of Health, Govt. of India; Director, School of Medicine, Wardha.

Nanavati, Saroj - Social worker; daughter of Justice Nanavati, a close friend of Gandhi; constant companion of Kaka Kalekar.

Nanda, B.R. - Director, Nehru Museum, Library, and Archives at New Delhi; biographer of Gandhi and the Nehrues; author of several books and articles.

Narayanswami, K.S. - Sec., Gandhi Peace Foundation, Bangalore; social worker; participant in local Satyagraha Movements.

Narasimhan, C.R. - Social worker; politician; freedom-fighter.

Natesan, G.N. - Educationist; social worker.

Parikh, Ramlal - Politician; M.P. (Gujrat); social worker; freedom fighter; participant in Satyagraha movements.

Patil, C.N. - Co-editor, Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (see bibliography for details); professor, English; Gujrati writer; author and translator of several articles on Gandhi.

Pillai, C. - Industrialist; philanthropist (Trivendrum); freedom-fighter; social worker.

Pillai, Janardana - Social worker; secretary, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Trivendrum.

Radhakrishna - Secretary, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi; social worker; organizer and co-ordinator of various programmes and activities connected with Gandhi.

Rajan, A.N. - Journalist; educationist; social worker; participant in Satyagraha Movements.

Ramachandran, Gopala - (Former) Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation; (former) editor, Gandhi Marg; Director, Gandhigram Institute of Village Reconstruction, Tamilnadu; close-associate of Gandhi; social worker; editor and author of several books and articles.

Rao, Narayan V.S. - Social worker; freedom-fighter; participant in several Satyagraha Movements.

Rao, Nittoor Srinivas - Justice, Supreme Court of India; jurist; scholar; social worker; author; participant several Satyagraha Movements.

Rao, V.K.R.V. - Politician; educationist; Director of Statistics; Planning Advisor, Food Dept. Govt. of India (1944 to 1946); professor and Founder, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University (1942 to 1957); Vice-Chancellor, Delhi University (1957 to 1960); Founder and Director, Institute of Economic Growth (1960 to 1963); member, Planning Commission of India (1963 to 1966); Minister, Transport and Shipping (1967 to 1969); Minister, Education (1969 to 1971); member, U.N. Sub-Commission on Economic Development (Chairman, 1947 to 1950); author of many books and articles.

Rattan, Ram - Professor, Political Science; wrote a Ph.D. thesis on Gandhi; specializes in comparative research on Martin Luther King and Gandhi.

Ray, Padma Bhushan Satyajit - Producer of films; Director; writer; artist; winner of several national and international awards, including President's Gold Medal several times, Cannes Film Festival Award (1955), Padma Shri Award (1958) Golden Lion Prize, Venice (1959), Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1959), Padma Bhushan Award (1965), Best Film Award, Berlin (1965), Magsaysay Award

for Journalism and Literature (1967), Best Director (1968); Golden Bear (1973).

Roy, Reena - Researcher, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi; social worker.

Sadashivam - Philanthropist (Madras); journalist; editor and publisher; author of several books and articles; social worker.

Sahastrabuddhe, Annasahib - Social worker; close associate of Gandhi; participant in several Satyagraha Movements.

Santharam, K. - Professor, Political Science, historian; author of several books and articles; specializes in Indian history and Gandhi.

Satpathy, Nandini - Politician; social worker; poetess; activist; Secretary Orissa Girl Students Association (1948 to 1949), Women's Relief Committee, Orissa (1955), Association for Moral and Social Hygiene, Orissa Branch (1958 to 1960); member, State Council for Education of Women (1961); Chairman, Children's Film Society; M.P. Rajya Sabha (1962); Minister for Information and Broadcasting (1969 to 1972); (former) Chief Minister of Orissa; Oriya writer.

Shankar, Uday (late) - Wellknown dancer, musician and choreographer; modern artist of India; did pioneer work in bringing Classical Indian Music to the West and to the Indian masses in general.

Sharma, Ravishankar - Physician; dedicated social worker; Head, Gandhi Lappers' Asylum, Wardha.

Shrimali, K.L. - Educationist; professor; Parliamentary Secretary, Union Ministry, Education; Deputy Minister, Education (1955 to 1957); Minister, Education and Scientific Research (1957 to 1958, 1958 to 1963); Vice-Chancellor, Mysore University (1964 to 1969); Vice-Chancellor, Benares Hindu University (since 1969); member, Secondary Education Commission, Govt. of India (1953), Administrative Board of the International Association of Universities (1970 to 1974); author of several books and articles.

Singh, Karan - Politician; administrator; Regent, Jammu and Kashmir (1949 to 1952); Chancellor, Jammu and Kashmir University (since 1949); Pro-Chancellor, Benares University (1960 to 1963); Sadar-e-Riyasat, Jammu and Kashmir (1952 to 1965); Governor, Jammu and Kashmir (1965 to 1967); Minister, Tourism and Civil Aviation (1967 to 1972); Minister, Health and Family Planning (1972 to 1977); wrote a Ph.D. thesis on Aurobindo Ghosh.

Singh, Himmat - Politician; M.P. Rajya Sabha; social worker; freedom-fighter; formerly a Prince in a state in Gujrat prior to 1947.

Shirshikar A. - Professor, Political Science, Poona University; author.

Subbalakshmi, Padma Bhushan Madurai S. - Famed classical Karnatic Musician; favourite musician and a close associate of Gandhi; recipient of Padma Bhushan award (1954), President's Award (1956); represented Indian Music in Edinburgh International Festival of Arts (1963); gave a special concert before the U.N. Assembly (1966); performs very often in aid of national, social and religious causes.

Subbaraman, M.N.R. - Social worker; participant in Satyagraha Movements.

Suresh Ram - Politician; M.P. (Uttar Pradesh); social worker.

Sykes Marjorie - Social worker; teacher; close associate and biographer of Deshbandhu C.F. Andrews - a very close friend of Gandhi and Tagore.

Tan, Yun-Shen - Learned scholar; professor; philosopher; Chairman, Chinese Studies, Visva-Bharati University; close associate of Rabindranath Tagore; corresponded and spent some time with Gandhi in his Sabarmati ashram; author; editor.

Thakurdas, Frank - Professor, Political Science, Karorimal College, New Delhi; specializes in Political philosophy; author of books and articles on Rousseau.

Trivedi, Krishan - Director, Gandhi Museum, Sabarmati; social worker.

Tayabji, Badruddin - Diplomat; (former) ambassador to Japan, Govt. of India; son of a very close friend of Gandhi; author of several articles on Gandhi.

Vajpayiji, Mohan - (Former) curator, Rabindra Bhavan (museum), Visva-Bharati University.

Yishvanattan, K. - Social worker; participant in several Satyagraha Movements.

Vajuji, Shilbhadra - Politician; M.P. (Bihar); at one time a close associate of Subhash Chandra Bose; member of the Indian National Army formed by Bose.

B. List of places visited during May to August 1976, in India.

Learned Societies

Indian Council of World Affairs: Sapru House, Barakhamba Rd., New Delhi; non-governmental institution for the study of Indian and international questions; library (84,473 vols., 1,075 periodicals, 135,000 documents and all UN publications); publishes two journals.

India International Centre: 40 Lodi Estate, New Delhi; international cultural organization for promotion of amity and understanding in the world; library houses the India Collection of 3,500 rare documents on British India; publishes a quarterly and a Bulletin in English; has an attached institute of Council for cultural studies.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations: Azad Bhavan, Indraprastha Estate, New Delhi; works to establish and strengthen cultural relations between India and other countries; promotes exchange of cultural activities and welfare of visiting overseas scholars and students; library (25,000 vols.), publishes interpretations of Indian Art and Culture and translations of Indian works into foreign languages.

Academies

Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages: Srinagar, Kashmir; to promote arts and languages of the state and the country.

National Academy of Letters (Sahitya Akademi): Rabindra Bhawan, 35 Ferozeshah Rd., New Delhi; for the development of Indian literature, the co-ordination of literary activities and research in languages and literature; also arranges cultural exchanges with other countries; has a library (50,000 vols.); publishes journals in English and Sanskrit, books and translations.

Research Institute

Indian Council of Social Science Research: 11 PA Hostel, Indraprastha Estate, Ring Rd., New Delhi; has regional centres in Bombay, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Delhi and Shillong; sponsors research in social science, provides technical assistance, awards fellowships and grants; has a documentation centre; publishes the Newsletter, ICSSR Research Abstracts, Indian Dissertation Abstracts, Indian Psychological Abstracts and ICSSR Journal of Abstracts and Reviews (Economics, Geography, Sociology and Social Anthropology).

Libraries and Archives

British Council Library: Aifacs Bldg. Rafi Marg, New Delhi; has 66,602 vols. and 271 periodicals.

Gujrat Vidyapith Granthalaya: Ahmedabad; is a combination of the university, state, central and public libraries; a depository collection of 229,272 vols; has documentation services.

Indian Council of World Affairs Library: Sapru House, Barakhamba Rd., New Delhi; research collections on social sciences with special reference to international relations, international law and international economics; has 84,473 vols., 1,075 periodicals and 135,000 documents.

National Archives of India: Janpath, New Delhi.

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library: Teen Murti House, New Delhi; research collections on modern Indian history with emphasis on Indian nationalism, has 68,801 vols.; large collection of newspapers, microfilms, private papers, photographs and oral history recordings of Jawaharlal Nehru and others.

Museums and Art Galleries

Central Museum of Jaipur: Albert Hall, Ramniwas Gardens, Jaipur; collection of archeology, sculpture, painting, miniatures, ethnology, anthropology and education.

Delhi Fort Museum: Mumtaz Mahal, Red Fort, Delhi; historical collection of the Mughal period; old arms, seals and signets, coins, miniatures, Mughal dresses and relics of India's war of Independence.

Gandhi National Museum and Library: Rajghat, New Delhi; f. 1948 by the Gandhi Memorial Museum Society to collect and display Gandhi's records and mementoes and to promote the study of his life and works; library of 30,000 vols., 50,000 documents and 100 periodicals; 130 films and recordings; large picture gallery.

Government Museum: Kasturba Rd., Banglore; art, archeology, industrial art and natural history; library of 2,000 vols.

Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum: City Palace, Jaipur; local history, art, miniatures of Mughal and Rajasthani school, Persian and Mughal carpets, antiques, arms and weapons, textiles, costumes, lacquer, Raznama and Ramayana illus. made for Emperor Akbar, regalia and jewelry; library of 28,000 manuscripts and 2,500 early printed books.

Mysore Government Museum; Kasturba Rd., Banglore; General Museum; art, archeology, industrial art and natural history.

Nandan, Kala Bhawan: Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketon; decorative arts and crafts from all over India; fine arts, handicrafts, sculptures; Bengali terracottas; South Indian bronzes and paintings; library of 5,700 vols.

National Museum of India: Janpath, New Delhi; departments of Art, Archeology, Anthropology, Modelling, Presentation, Preservation, Publications, Library and Photography; Indian prehistoric tools, protohistoric remains from Harappa, Mohenjodaro etc., representative collections of sculptures, terracottas, stuccos and bronzes from second century B.C. to eighteenth century A.D.; illus. MSS. and miniatures; Stein collection of Central Asian murals and other antiquities; decorative arts; textiles, coins and illuminated epigraphical charts; armour; copperplate etchings; woodwork; library of 25,000 vols.

Prince of Wales Museum of Western India: Fort, Bombay; general museum; archeology, arts, paintings, costumes, bronzes, miniatures ivories, porcelain, oriental ceramics, jade, natural history; library of 8,000 vols.

Rabindra Bhavan Art Gallery: 35 Ferozshah Rd., New Delhi; permanent gallery of the Lalit Kala Academi (National Academy of Art) and venue of the National Exhibition and Triennale - India (international art).

Rabindra Bhavan (Tagore Museum): Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan; collection of MSS., letters, newspaper clippings, gramophone recordings, photographs, cine-films, books, paintings by Tagore and tape recordings of his voice etc.; publishes Rabindra Jijnasa (two vols. in Bengali).

Salarjung Museum: Hydrabath; paintings, textiles, porcelain, jade, carpets, MSS., antiques, ivory, glass, silver and bronze ware; children's section; library of 50,000 vols.

Sarnath Museum: Sarnath, Benares; archeological site, situated four miles north of Benares; Buddhist collection from third century B.C. to twelfth century A.D.

Victoria and Albert Museum: Veermata Jijabai Bhonsle udyan, Byculla, Bombay; general museum; Indian art, wood carving, lacquered ware, silver, arms, agricultural models, religious sects, old Bombay.

Victoria Memorial Hall: 1 Queens Way, Calcutta; modern Indian historical Museum; wide collection of art and historical pieces, mainly illustrating Indian history of the last three centuries; publishes Bulletin of the Victoria Memorial; houses selected documents.

Gandhi Collections and Museums

Gandhi National Museum and Library: Rajghat, New Delhi; largest collection of photographs, records, mementoes, documents, films and an attached library of 30,000 volumes.

Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya: Sabarmati, Ahmedabad; history museum; memorabilia on Gandhi; manuscripts, replicas, and photographs.

Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya: Sevagram, Wardha; history museum; memorabilia on Gandhi.

Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya: Tamukkam, Madurai; history museum, photographs, relics and manuscripts.

Mani Bhavan Sangrahalaya: 19 Laburnum Rd., Gamdevi, Bombay; history museum, personal relics on Gandhi and documentary film collection.

Rabindra Bhavan: Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan; among its Tagore archives it also houses Tagore's correspondence with M.K. Gandhi, J. Nehru, S.C. Bose, W.B. Yeats, A. Einstein, G.B. Shaw, R. Rolland and B. Russell.

Institutes and Ashrams

Brahma Vidya Mandir Ashram: Paunar, Wardha; established by acharya Vinobha Bhave, a disciple of Gandhi.

Gandhi-Peace Foundation: 221/3 Deendayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi; has branch offices all over India.

Gandhi Peace Foundation Centre: Gandhi Bhavan, Kumara Park, Bangalore.

Gandhi Smarak Nidhi: Gandhi Bhavan, Trivendrum; a branch of the Gandhi Memorial Trust.

Gandhigram: Gandhigram, Dist. Madurai; an institute for rural development in Gandhian techniques.

Gujarat Vidyapith University: Ahmedabad; specializes in research and studies in rural development; founded by M.K. Gandhi.

Institute of Gandhian Studies: Rajghat, Benares; also affiliated with Gandhi Sarva Seva Sangha.

Sabarmati Ashram: Jail Road, Ahmedabad; founded by M.K. Gandhi for the training of his followers and friends.

Sevagram Ashram: Sevagram, Wardha; also has a lepper's ashram founded by M.K. Gandhi. I stayed for two days in that ashram as a guest of the resident doctor, Dr. Sharma.

Saurashtra Rachnatmak Samiti: Rajkot; home town of M.K. Gandhi; the society encourages and helps the development of creative talents in the local cottage industry.

Tamilnadu Gandhi Smarak Nidhi: Madurai; a branch of the Gandhi Memorial Trust in Tamilnadu for the promotion of Gandhian ideals.

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