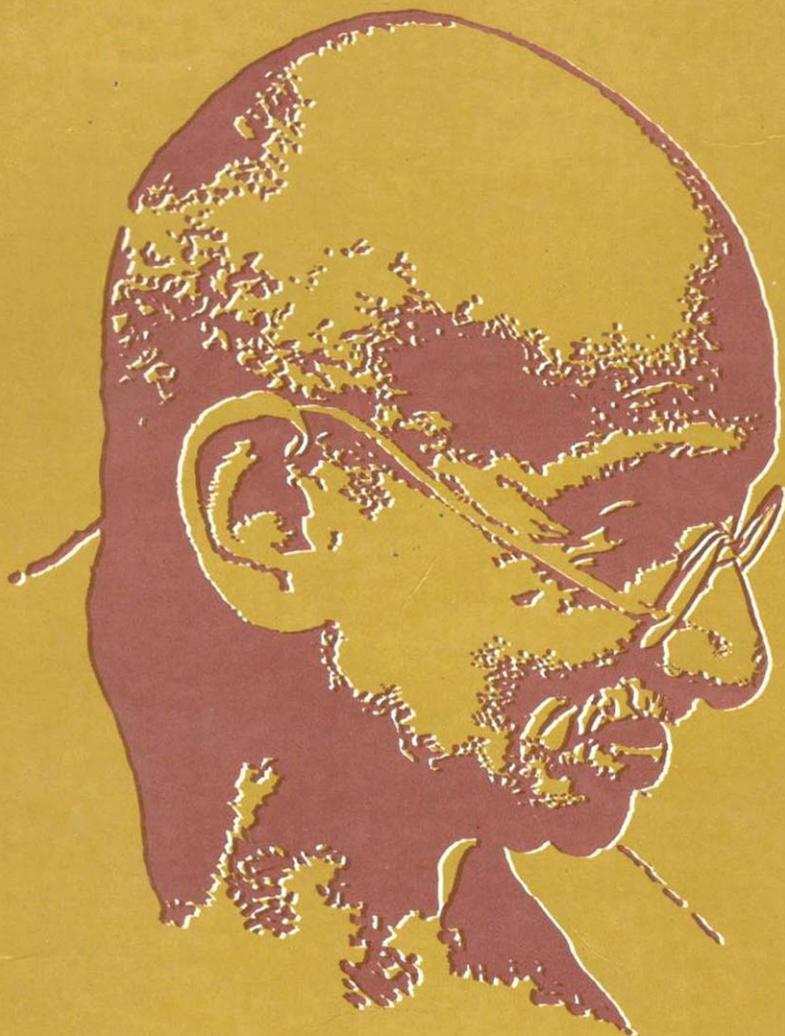


PATEL MEMORIAL LECTURES - 1968



GANDHI

THE MAN AND HIS THOUGHT

— SHRIMAN NARAYAN —



GANDHI THE MAN AND HIS THOUGHT

Shriman Narayan

Patel Memorial Lectures, 1968

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About the Author

Shriman Narayan (born 1912) was described by Gandhiji as "one of those young men who have sacrificed a prosperous, perhaps even brilliant career, for the service of the Motherland" and as "an extraordinary amalgam of scholarship, sobriety and humility." After taking his M.A. degrees in English and Economics, Shriman Narayan worked for many years at Wardha and Sevagram as a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. During the Quit India movement in 1942 he was detained for 18 months. After Gandhiji's martyrdom, he undertook a world tour to propagate Gandhian ideology. He worked as the Founder Principal of Seksaria College, Wardha, for over a decade and as Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Nagpur University, for six years. During 1952-57, he was a Member of Parliament, as also General Secretary of the Indian National Congress and Chief Editor of the A.I.C.C. Economic Review. He presided over the Jaipur session of the All India Educational Conference in 1956. He was a Member of Planning Commission from 1958 to 1964 and India's Ambassador to Nepal during 1964-67. Then he was Governor of Gujarat.

Shriman Narayan was also an author of repute. His publications include: *Gandhian Plan for Economic Development of India; Trends in Indian Planning; The Medium of Instruction; Two Worlds; Towards a Socialist Economy; Socialism in Indian Planning; and Letters from Gandhi, Nehru, Vinoba.*



Contents

The Patel Memorial Lectures

Introduction

1. Gandhi – The Man
2. Gandhian Social Philosophy
3. Gandhian Economic Thought



The Patel Memorial Lectures

All India Radio introduced, in 1955 a programme of lectures in memory of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who, apart from the great role he played in the achievement and consolidation of freedom, was free India's first Minister for Information and Broadcasting. An annual feature, these lectures are intended to contribute to the existing knowledge on a given subject and to promote awareness of contemporary problems. Each year, some eminent specialist who has devoted thought and study to any branch of knowledge or public affairs is invited to give, through All India Radio, in a popular manner, the results of his study and experience for the benefit of the public.

The first Patel Memorial Lectures, "The Good Administrator", were delivered by Shri C. Rajagopalachari in 1955. The second series was broadcast by Dr K.S. Krishnan in 1956. His theme was "The New Era of Science". The third series of lectures, "The Unity and Diversity of Life", was delivered in 1957 by Prof. J.B.S. Haldane. The fourth series, "Educational Reconstruction in India", was delivered by Dr. Zakir Husain in 1958. The fifth series, "Society and State in the Mughal Period", was delivered by Dr. Tara Chand in 1960. The sixth series, "A Philosophy of Love", was delivered by Dr. Verier Elwin in 1961. The seventh series, "The Resurgence of India: Reformation or revolution?" was delivered by Shri K.P.S. Menon in 1962.

The 1963 series, "Indian Unity – From Dream to Reality", was delivered by Shri Morarji R. Desai. The subject of the 1964 Lectures was "The Great Integrators: the Saint-Singers of India" – the broadcaster was Dr. V. Raghavan. The 1965 series, "Secularism", was delivered by Shri M.C. Setalvad. All these lectures has been published in book form by the Publications Division.



The 1966 Lectures, “Kashmir – Retrospect and Prospect”, were delivered by Shri P.B. Gajendragadkar. The 1967 Lectures, “The Physician and the Society”, delivered by Dr. Jacob Chandy, have also been published by the Publications Division.

The latest lectures in the series, “Gandhi – the Man and His Thought”, were delivered by Shri Shirman Narayan on 16th, 17th and 18th December, 1968. They form part of the Gandhian literature published by the Publications Division to mark the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi.



Introduction

It is not easy to be a Gandhian. One can only aspire and make one's best effort to be a Gandhian, but to claim to be a Gandhian would not be in consonance with truth as I see it. I also consider that Shrimanji too – while he has been a student of Gandhian philosophy and thought and Gandhiji's follower for all the time he has been working as a professor, as a politician, as an ambassador and now as Governor – cannot claim that he has become a Gandhian, a true Gandhian in every way. As a matter of fact, Mahatma Gandhi was asked this question once and he said he was the only person who followed the philosophy he believed in and propagated it thoroughly. He never did or said anything which he had not practiced and he never expected another man to do anything which that man did not believe in.

There are people who say that Mahatma Gandhi was more a politician than a man of religion; that is not correct. In my view, and as is shown by the quotations which Shrimanji has given in illustrating his different points, everything that impelled Gandhiji to do, what he did, was out of his deep faith in God and His creation, and his duty to serve humanity in order to realize himself.

Religion does not exclude politics or any other work which is necessary for any individual to do, in the course of his life as a human being. He gave a lot of his time and effort to politics because that was the need of the age in which he lived and because that was the instrument through which he could raise the society in the country in which he was born and in the country in which he had first started his work. He was, in religion, a man of action more than a man of meditation. He believed in action without attachment and, therefore, his whole philosophy of life was derived ultimately from the *Gita*, on which he relied for his strength.



As long as Rajchandraji lived, that is until 1901, he used to ask him about his religious doubts. But after that, he relied on his own experiments and on his own instinctive thought and went on perfecting himself as a servant of the human society, practically of the whole creation, in his search for Truth, that is, God – as he described Him.

He was a man with a completely integrated personality. He took life as one whole and, therefore, there was no part of life, human life, which he did not touch and on which he did not act and about which he did not speak. He said that life cannot be lived in compartments – that is, truth cannot be practiced differently on different occasions. One cannot be truthful to some and untruthful to others; that is if one wants to practice truth, one must practice it throughout, on every occasion, in every action and with respect to all people and the whole creation. It is, therefore, that he pursued truth in whatever he did. And even when he wrote his autobiography, he called it *My Experiments with Truth*. He was truthful in that, because he never claimed that he had reached the absolute Truth.

When people say that he had nothing to do with science, I consider that there can be no greater fallacy. He was one person who was completely scientific in whatever he did. And it is, therefore, that he called his pursuit of truth – Experiments with Truth. Man is both spiritual and material, but the spiritual is the basis and the material is only the instrument for man, though in actual life, for most of us, the material has far greater attraction than the spiritual. It is given only to a few to realize the spiritual, irrespective of the material. These few are not deterred by any material handicaps – only are they not deterred but also they do not want any material comforts – in order to reach the highest spiritual life. There are very few people who teach society in order that every human being gets something from it, so that it goes on progressing towards the spiritual life. For those who are seekers of God, the exclusion of everything else except the



absolute Truth gives them all the knowledge; that is, they get all the knowledge by getting the absolute Truth. But, for an ordinary person, science, that is, modern science as we know it, is the only means of leading him on to that kind of spiritual life. Science depends on experimentation. And as one goes on experimenting in science, one can also go on getting some ideas about how to pursue any particular thing by experimentation. That is why I consider Gandhiji the greatest scientist in the absolute sense.

Gandhiji depended for his thought not on his intellect but on his instinct. And his intellect was governed by his instinct and, therefore, he seldom erred. As a matter of fact, his decisions were always right; his arguments sometimes could be found faulty because the arguments followed the decision rather than the decision followed the arguments. This was so because he had reached on innocence in his life which enabled him to decide things instinctively, because he believed in God completely and surrendered himself to Him and was always wanting to be governed by His will or by His law.

He gave up all possessions when he began to devote himself entirely to the work of removing injustices which Indians were suffering in South Africa and gave up not only his worldly possessions but also his married life. He started serving Indians much before that. But he came to the conclusion that in order to serve the people completely, efficiently and fully, it was necessary that he should do so – and that is what he did. But he did not ask everybody else to do so if he wanted to serve. He did prescribe the eleven vows to everybody who wanted to be with him in the Ashram. He considered it necessary for all those who were public workers to see that they dedicated their lives completely to service.

One thing that we have to learn from Gandhiji's life is that we should not quarrel with others about their weaknesses, but that we should rather look into ourselves and try to remove our weaknesses and have sympathy with others, if we want



them to strengthen themselves as we want to strengthen the society. Many times we are impatient because we find that we are not following in his footsteps, but none of us can afford to be impatient with others. None of us can claim that he is following fully in his footsteps. We, who believe in his philosophy, have got constantly to strive, to live as he wanted us to live and, if we do so then alone are we qualified to tell others what they should do. If he had not done this, he would never have been successful, as he was successful in strengthening his country to a point where he could achieve freedom for this country which hardly had any strength to win it. He succeeded because he worked with everybody with sympathy, not by emphasizing their faults, but by enabling them to get over their faults and to be intensely practical.

Gandhiji was an idealist – a practical idealist – who had no use of any ideas if they were not capable of being implemented and being acted upon in life. And this is what we have to learn from him.

I hope that the three lectures of Shrimanji will be useful in acquainting the younger generation and all of us with what Gandhiji was, so that we can think afresh about it again and again and try to do what Gandhiji expected us to do. This, I think, would be the greatest advantage from these lectures. I congratulate Shrimanji on these lectures.



1. Gandhi: The Man

I am very grateful to the Government of India for having invited me to deliver the Sardar Patel Memorial Lectures this year on Mahatma Gandhi. It is quite appropriate that these lectures, in the memory of one of the greatest sons of modern India-Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel-should deal with different aspects of Bapu's personality and thought during the Gandhi Centenary Year. Sardar Patel had worked shoulder to shoulder with Gandhiji during our struggle for freedom and was one of his closest followers and co-workers. Let us, therefore, remember him with deep gratitude as a distinguished architect of our country, while celebrating the Centenary of the Father of the Nation.

A PRACTICAL IDEALIST

I regard the Centenary as a God-sent opportunity for India and the world, because it affords a rare chance to all of us to recollect once again Bapu's basic ideals and philosophy with a view to solving our own existing problems in a spirit of dedication. The UNESCO has appealed to all the nations of the world to organise Gandhi Centenary programmes in a befitting manner. In our own country, the National Committee has already drawn up an ambitious programme of holding exhibitions, erecting memorial pillars, publishing Gandhian literature, intensifying various items of constructive work and issuing special stamps and coins. Even so, there prevails a general impression in India that we have been gradually forgetting Gandhiji's high ideals and his way of life and work. It is, therefore, our sacred duty to do some critical thinking and introspection during



this period with a view to reorienting our policies and programmes for national development.

Gandhiji was a practical idealist who tried his very best to solve various difficulties and problems in a rational and scientific manner, keeping in constant view certain basic principles which could not be sacrificed even for the liberation of the Motherland. Gandhian thought is not based on some fads or utopian fantasies, as is often assumed by the so-called intellectuals in India and abroad; the ideas of the Mahatma, though resting on the foundations of certain eternal truths, are eminently practical and realistic. We shall be overlooking his advice and guidance at great peril to India's vital interests and well-being.

MORAL VALUES

During the last two decades, our country has, doubtless, achieved notable results in various sectors of national development and it would be improper to underestimate, much less denounce our own achievements. Nevertheless, the fact remains that we have not been able to resolve some of our basic problems of hunger, poverty and unemployment. Further, while endeavouring to increase the rate of economic growth and augment production in agriculture and industry, we have not paid adequate attention towards strengthening the ethical standards of our people. Gandhi always stressed the imperative need for raising the moral stature of human beings, while attempting to raise their standards of material living. He repeatedly reminded us that a nation did not become great merely by erecting huge buildings, establishing giant factories and multiplying wealth for economic prosperity. While all these are important for upgrading the living standards of the people, a country becomes really great and worthy of respect only if her citizens imbibe the sterling qualities of the head and the heart



which inspire them to sacrifice gladly their individual good for the larger interests of the nation.

INSISTENCE ON TRUTH

When we study Gandhiji's early life, we are surprised to find that he was, in several ways, a very average person, and, in some respects, even below the average. As a student, he did not show any outstanding merit or brilliance. As a Barrister, he did not make any special mark in India or in South Africa. As a political leader, he trembled while trying to sponsor a resolution at one of the sessions of the Indian National Congress. Neither did he possess any special qualities of eloquence in public utterances. And yet, he was able to make a very deep impact on all those who came in contact with him. Ultimately, he proved to be our Liberator from foreign domination and we remember him with great respect as the Father of the Nation.

The secret of his wide influence essentially lies in his insistence on truth and non-violence, and his dedication to a life of sacrifice and service. He captioned his autobiography as *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Even during the freedom struggle, Gandhiji never compromised with the principles of truth and nonviolence for achieving temporary gains. He was prepared to sacrifice everything for winning India's independence, but not those fundamental ideals which to him were much more crucial than even Swaraj for India. In his cottage in Sevagram, Gandhiji always kept before him the following quotation from John Ruskin:

The essence of lying is in deception, not in words; a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence; and all those kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded.

This indicates how Bapu was very cautious to avoid untruth of the subtlest kind in his daily life and behaviour.



ENDS AND MEANS

Mahatma Gandhi never subscribed to the principle that the end justified the means. To him, the means were as important as the ends. He emphatically observed:

They say 'means are after all means'. I would say-'means are after all everything'. As the means, so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end.

He compared the means to a seed and the end to a tree, and stated:

There is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.¹

Gandhiji stuck to this golden ideal through thick and thin, without worrying about the immediate results. He was convinced that our ultimate progress towards the goal would be in exact proportion to the purity of our means. Aldous Huxley also maintains that:

...no economic reform, however intrinsically desirable, can lead to desirable changes in individuals and the society they constitute, unless it is carried through in a desirable context and by desirable methods.²

In India, we are today faced with numerous problems which demand speedy solutions. In order to secure quick gains, several sections of the population indulge in loot, arson and violence in the belief that such disruptive activities would create the required impact on the authorities concerned. It is a matter of great regret that in some cases, the authorities do succumb to violent pressure and blackmail, to the detriment of vital national interests.

Several armed conflicts in different parts of the world, including Vietnam and West Asia, have proved beyond a shadow of doubt that wars are unable to solve any problems in a lasting manner. Violence creates many more difficulties and complicates matters in a hopeless fashion. Politicians and statesmen the world over are now convinced that national and international conflicts cannot be



resolved militarily and that solutions can be found only by bringing the parties to the conference table.

All these experiences have amply vindicated Gandhiji's insistence on the employment of pure methods for the attainment of noble objectives. In my view, the best way to observe the Gandhi Centenary would be to recognise the truth of this eternal principle and to follow it with unbending will and determination in all spheres of private and public life.

FAITH IN GOD

Bapu's faith in truth and non-violence was based on his unshakable belief in God and in the efficacy of prayer. To him, God was Truth, and in the last analysis, Truth was God, the source of light and life and love. Without unflinching faith in this Supreme Power, it was not possible for a human being to adhere to truth and non-violence under the greatest provocations. That is why Gandhiji had prescribed firm belief in God as an essential requisite for a Satyagrahi.

It should, however, be borne in mind that belief in God was not an act of blind faith with Gandhiji. In his recorded message to the Americans from London in September 1931, the Mahatma had stated:

There is an indefinable mysterious thing that pervades everything, I feel it though I do not see it. ...It transcends the senses. I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and re-creates.

That is why

...in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists.

The existence of such a mysterious power and consciousness is now recognised even by the greatest scientists of the modern age. The atomic power, perhaps,



gives but a faint glimpse of the limitless power and energy of the Supreme Soul which permeates everything, from the minutest to the largest.

Gandhiji's trust in God enabled him to defy the violent might of the British Empire with utter fearlessness and remarkable confidence. It was this Soul-power which kept up his crusading spirit to fight ceaselessly and to the successful end. The Gita was his unfailing companion and source of inspiration, because it brought home to him the lasting principle that though the body may perish, the Soul lives for ever. To my mind, it is the erosion of faith in this Divine Power which has undermined ethical values in our private and public life. Without reviving these spiritual and moral values, all our efforts to pull the country out of the quagmire of despair, confusion and corruption would appear to be a futile exercise.

Morning and evening prayers had become an integral part of Gandhiji's public life. He did not miss these prayers even while he was in the midst of a life-and-death struggle for India's freedom. To Gandhiji, insistence on Truth constituted the root of his Ashram life, while prayer was "the principal feeder of that root". Bapu regarded prayer as "the bath of purification for the spirit of man" because it denoted "our cooperation with God and with one another"³. Gandhiji sincerely believed that not a blade of grass moved without the will of the Divine, and prayer was the medium of communication with the Supreme Power.

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

The present spectacle of violence and chaos in the Western countries, including America and France, amply bears testimony to the naked truth that material affluence alone could not be the basic aim of national or international progress. A recent editorial in the columns of a London weekly entitled 'Not by Bread Alone' states:



There is evidently a hunger in the world for governments which are activated by moral principles, which take decisions not because they are expedient, but because they are right.⁴

Thousands of years ago, the Upanishads declared in unambiguous language that wealth alone could not satiate man – न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यः. A few centuries back, the English poet Goldsmith had rightly complained that "wealth accumulates and men decay". In our own times, Romain Rolland feelingly observes: "The more I have, the less I am."

In the course of his Foreword to my book entitled Socialism in Indian Planning, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

In India, it is important for us to profit by modern technical processes and increase our production both in agriculture and industry. But, in doing so, we must not forget that the essential objective to be aimed at is the quality of the individual and the concept of dharma underlying it.

This Foreword was written by Panditji only two days before his passing away, in May 1964. It clearly indicates his great concern for moral and spiritual values in life in this age of science and technology.

Bapu's personal life was a shining example of 'simple living and high thinking'. He used to exercise the utmost economy in the use of food, cloth, housing and stationery and did not allow even a pencil to be misplaced or lost without being utilised to the fullest extent. He desired us to develop an integrated personality by promoting our physical, emotional, mental as well as ethical qualities. When asked to give a message during his 'lonely pilgrimage' in Bengal in 1947, Bapu wrote: "My life is my message."

SARVA-DHARMA SAMABHAVA

Mahatma Gandhi entertained equal respect for all religions and stressed the need for developing Sarva-dharma Samabhava in national life with a view to establishing a secular democracy in India. According to him, secularism did not



imply that there was no place for religion in our lives; it only indicated that the State did not patronise a particular religion, but allowed freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practise and propagate all religions freely. These fundamental rights have been enshrined in our Constitution, and it is our bounden duty to promote inter-religious harmony in India in the right spirit.

THE WORLD IS MY FAMILY

The Mahatma could no longer be regarded as only an illustrious Indian leader who won political freedom for his country and raised her stature in the comity of nations; he is now hailed as a world personality and is respected universally for his lofty ideals of peace and international brotherhood. Gandhiji regarded the world as his family and all men as brothers. He worked for India's freedom because he sincerely believed that the liberation of India would benefit the whole world. His patriotism was "all embracing" and was "consistent with the broadest good of humanity at large"⁵. He further observed:

Our nationalism can be no peril to other nations, inasmuch as we will exploit none, just as we will allow none to exploit us.⁶

It is this broad-minded and large-hearted nationalism which Gandhiji preached and practised throughout his life. To him no person was a stranger or a foreigner, because in his view, God was the common bond that united all human beings, without any distinction of race, creed, colour or language. The ancient Indian ideal of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* had become an integral part of Bapu's rich and noble personality.

Although Gandhiji was, in the best sense of the term, a 'citizen of the world', his feet were firm on the soil of his own country. According to him, it was impossible for a person to be an internationalist without being a nationalist. "Internationalism", observed Gandhiji, "is possible only when nationalism



becomes a fact" ... It is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness and exclusiveness, which is the bane of modern nations, which is evil."7

Bapu was always willing to learn from other countries and imbibe their good qualities. But he was against losing one's own personality in the process.

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed,

wrote Gandhiji,

I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible; but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any8

The Rigveda also enjoins:

आनो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

It is this synthesis of broad-mindedness with respect for one's own culture which we require today for developing the country along sound lines.

SENSE OF HUMOUR

When I met Bapu for the first time in Wardha, in 1936, I had expected that he would be very serious and reserved by temperament. I was, however, surprised to find that, notwithstanding his religious and spiritual outlook, he was very genial and affectionate by nature. His unfailing sense of humour kept his environment lively and cheerful.

I remember several instances of Gandhiji's sense of humour which always cheered others without hurting their feelings. In March 1937, Gandhiji was on his way to Madras for attending the session of the All India Hindi Sahitya Sammelan over which the late Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was to preside. Gandhiji always drew enormous crowds at every station. At that time the question whether the Congress would accept office in the provinces was agitating the minds of the people in the country. The Grand Trunk Express by which Gandhiji was traveling reached



Bezwada in the morning. There was great rush at the station for Mahatma's darshan. One Press correspondent somehow managed to push his way through the surging crowd, and perspiring, asked Gandhiji abruptly: "Bapuji, will the Congress accept office?" It is evident that any remark from Gandhiji on that important question would have found wide publicity. Even his silence would have been interpreted significantly by the Press. But Gandhiji was very clever at dodging Press correspondents. "Why are you so anxious about this matter?" asked Gandhiji. "Do you want to become a Minister?" was Bapu's prompt query, with a chuckle of genial humour. The whole crowd laughed, and the poor correspondent had no other option but to quietly and quickly recede into the background.

In June 1942, Louis Fischer, the well-known American journalist and writer, came to Sevagram to meet Gandhiji. He travelled from Wardha railway station in a rickety tonga, in sweltering heat. He was naturally ill at ease and his discomfort was quite visible on his face. As soon as he entered Bapu Kutir, Gandhiji realised his sense of uneasiness and smilingly remarked: "Well, you must have travelled from the railway station in an air-conditioned coach!" Fischer was immediately able to laugh away his discomfort and regain his normal self.

One day, an Italian Bishop came to Sevagram to pay his respects. Gandhiji was sitting in a corner of his cottage with mud-pack on his shaven head owing to intense summer heat. When the Bishop wanted to take a photograph, Bapu smilingly said: "Why waste your film, Father? People will ask you whether Gandhiji had broken his skull!" The Bishop smiled, but could not resist the temptation of 'shooting' the Mahatma.

I would not like to multiply such instances of Gandhiji's ever-flowing fountain of sparkling wit and humour. It was, indeed, a tragedy that Gandhiji's sense of humour was dried up after the vivisection of the country. Bapu, throughout his



life, had worked ceaselessly for maintaining the unity of India. The shock of partition was, therefore, too deep for him to bear.

CONCEPT OF SATYAGRAHA

While Gandhiji had a very kind and compassionate heart, he did not hesitate to carry on tireless crusades against injustice, both in South Africa and in India. According to him, it was a sin to suffer unjust behaviour at the hands of another person or organisation. Gandhiji could "combine the greatest love with the greatest opposition to wrong". "Non-violence of my conception", observed Bapu, "is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness."⁹

The term Satyagraha was coined by Gandhiji in South Africa in order to distinguish it from 'Passive Resistance'. While the latter is conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, Satyagraha of Gandhiji's conception is a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form. It implies vindication of Truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but on one's self. Satyagraha, literally, means holding on to Truth. Gandhiji, therefore, called it the 'Soul force'. He used it as his last weapon against injustice, after having exhausted all other possibilities of persuasion and conciliation. It is, however, unfortunate that this noble method which was handled by Gandhiji with rare skill and statesmanship, is now being misused by various sections in India for achieving narrow and selfish ends.

Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha is now being regarded by some Western thinkers as "a moral equivalent of war."¹⁰ Recent events in Czechoslovakia, where the people organised unarmed resistance and complete non-cooperation against the invading forces of the Soviet Union, have also high-



lighted the crucial role which non-violence could play even in facing external aggression.

Nonetheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that Gandhiji was not a 'pacifist'. While he was all for peace and avoidance of wars, he preferred armed defence to cowardly surrender. We should not, therefore, try to create any confusion in the minds of the people in India about violence and non-violence so far as national defence against foreign aggression is concerned. We must develop our economic and military strength for meeting external danger from some of our unscrupulous neighbours whose sole purpose is to weaken and disintegrate India. Of course, we should try to organise 'peace brigades' or Shanti Sena in an effective manner in order to curb violence and social conflicts inside the country. If we succeed in maintaining internal peace without the help of the police and the military, we may be in a position to counteract violence from hostile neighbours sometime in the not too distant future.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

There was always 'a human touch' in Bapu's dealings with thousands of social and political workers in different parts of India. It is amazing to find that even ordinary constructive workers had received hundreds of letters from him, written in his own hand.

Once I requested Bapu in Sevagram to dictate letters to Kanu Gandhi or some other inmate of the Ashram in order to save his precious time. He hesitated, but later agreed to try this experiment. There was no question at all of his signing typed letters, except those which were very formal. For a few weeks, Gandhiji did dictate some letters to Kanu who wrote them down in legible hand and Bapu signed them at the end. After some time, I found that Gandhiji had reverted to the practice of writing letters in his own hand. I, naturally, wanted to know why



he had stopped dictating letters. He quietly replied: "I do not feel like signing letters written by somebody else. My personal touch is lost, and a worker will not feel satisfied unless he receives the letter in my own handwriting!" It was, thus, through his correspondence in this manner that Bapu could win the hearts of a large number of workers who regarded him as their own father, in the real sense of the word.

METICULOUS CARE OF DETAILS

There is one more aspect of Gandhi's life of which I would like to make a special mention. Bapu took meticulous care of details in his daily work. He would leave nothing to chance and give elaborate instructions to his friends and colleagues even in comparatively minor matters. I vividly remember his writing down a detailed note for me on the occasion of the visit of Lord Lothian to Sevagram, sometime in 1938. He instructed me how I should receive the distinguished guest at the main gate of the Ashram and first take him to the Guest House. I was asked to explain to Lord Lothian that Bapu was observing 'silence' that day, but he would break it for discussing various important matters with him. After a 'wash' and some light refreshment, I was to accompany him to Gandhiji's cottage. A chair was to be kept ready for Lord Lothian; it could, however, be removed if he preferred to squat on the ground while talking to Gandhiji. I was, indeed, astonished that Bapu could find time to work out all these details in advance and reduce them to writing.

Even when important Congress Working Committee meetings were in progress, Gandhiji would not forget to issue careful instructions, often in writing, regarding the Nature Cure treatment to be given to various patients in the Ashram. Thoroughness in these matters was a very notable trait of Bapu's character. He did not tolerate slipshod or indifferent work on the part of his coworkers. The



grammar and the idiom used in his own writings were invariably correct, and he did not relish a single printing error in the Harijan. Whenever he wrote on a particular subject, he would study all the facets of the problem before expressing his views on it. It was this capacity for thoroughness which enabled Gandhiji to face various complexities with remarkable self-confidence.

SENSE OF ECONOMY

Gandhiji exercised notable economy in his personal life. He would always use the backside of the letters received by him for writing statements and articles for the Harijan. His small cottage in Sevagram was a drawing-room, an office, a lounge, and a conference room, all rolled into one. Everybody sat on the floor which was furnished with ordinary village mats. There was hardly any furniture in his room, except a hurricane lantern, a low desk and a small rack for books. During the summer heat, there was no question of a cooler or air-conditioner; he would rarely use even a khas curtain made by a local artisan. His normal practice was to place a mud-pack on his head for keeping the body cool.

I recollect one more instance. When Bapu was to go on the Bengal tour in 1945, two third class compartments were reserved for him and his party from Wardha. He found that two compartments were not necessary; his party could be easily accommodated in only one of them. So he called Shri Pyarelal and asked him to vacate one of the two compartments.

"But both have been reserved for us, Bapuji. The railway authorities have been already paid", said Pyarelalji.

"That does not matter at all! We are going to Bengal for the service of the poor and starving millions. It does not behove us to enjoy comforts on the train. Moreover, don't you observe the suffocating rush in other third class compartments?"



No further arguments were necessary. The whole party moved out of one compartment, vacating it for other passengers. And only then could Gandhiji relax himself into sound sleep.

Gandhiji was frugal even in his words. He used to observe every Monday as the 'silence day'. This gave him some respite from meeting visitors and time to write his weekly notes and articles for the Harijan. He believed that it was helpful to observe Truth in one's life if unnecessary speech was avoided. He once wrote in his diary: "A needless word is also a violation of Truth. That is why the practice of Truth becomes easier by observing silence!"¹¹

TURN THE SEARCHLIGHT INWARDS

Lastly, Gandhiji, instead of finding fault with others for various shortcomings, was constantly looking within himself for the reasons of failure. "We do not wish to see our own faults", wrote Bapu, "but take delight in perceiving the fault of others."¹²

Whenever he detected a shortcoming in any of the inmates of the Ashram, instead of rebuking the person, he would inflict upon himself a fast of self-purification. The best way, therefore to remember Gandhiji during the Centenary period would be not to collect more funds for his physical memorials, but to 'turn the searchlight inwards', and try to make our life pure, noble and sincere. I need hardly say that our public life today is far removed from ethics and spirituality. Till we revive the old values of simplicity, integrity and transparent sincerity in our individual and public life, we shall be taking Gandhiji's name in vain.

I have always been an optimist. Gandhiji regarded pessimism as a morbid attitude towards life. We have to be always forward-looking, and march ahead with faith and determination. In the midst of darkness, even a lone candle can bring about some light to the people around. A few such candles can shed more light and



hope and cheer. Instead of criticising others, let us try to kindle our own candle with humility; let us try to discharge our own responsibilities with sincerity and honesty. We shall, then, see more light on our path and the surrounding mist would gradually fade away.

1. Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, by M.K. Gandhi (Navajivan, 1938), p.71
2. Ends and Means, by Aldous Huxley, p.70
3. Selected Letters-Series I, (Navajivan, 1949), p.5
4. New Statesman, London, 31-5-1968
5. Young India, 4-4-1929
6. India of My Dreams (Navajivan, 1947), p. 15
7. All men Brothers (Navajivan, 1960). p. 156
8. Young India, 1-6-1921
9. The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi. Vol. VI (Navajivan, 1968). p. 178
10. Non-violence and Aggression by Prof. H.J.N. Horsburgh (Oxford University Press, 1968)
11. A Thought for the Day by M.K. Gandhi (Publications Division 1968), p. 183
12. Ibid. p. 156



2. Gandhian Social Philosophy

There was hardly any aspect of individual, social or national life which Gandhiji did not touch or to which he did not contribute a new approach and outlook. I would deal with Bapu's economic ideas tomorrow in the third and concluding lecture. Today, I would like to mention some aspects of his social philosophy.

THE WEAKER SECTIONS

In the reconstruction of our social structure, Bapu attached great importance to the welfare of the weakest, the poorest and the lowliest sections of the society, more especially the Harijans, the Adivasis and the lepers. As we are all aware, Gandhiji staked his own life on several occasions, through fasts, for arousing the conscience of the community against the harassment; ill-treatment and inhuman behaviour towards the scheduled castes. He regarded untouchability as the greatest blot on the Hindu religion.

It is incumbent on all of us to pay special attention to this problem, more so during the Centenary Year. We may recollect how Gandhiji had adopted a Harijan girl in the Ahmedabad Kochrab Ashram in 1915-16, and how he, his family and his Ashram suffered at the hands of the orthodox people on this account. Gandhiji did not even hesitate to ask his elder sister to leave the Ashram because she could not reconcile herself to the absorption of 'untouchables' in the family. In the Sabarmati and Sevagram Ashrams also, Bapu endeavoured to advance the cause of the Harijans in every manner possible.

I vividly remember how, during the first few days of his shifting to Sevagram village from Wardha, Gandhiji refused to accept the services of the local barber because the latter would not agree to shave the Harijan inmates of the Ashram.



In subsequent years, Bapu had made it a rule that marriages could be celebrated in his presence in the Ashram only when one of the parties belonged to the Harijan community. We know how Gandhiji undertook a fast unto death for protesting against the British proposal of introducing separate electorates for the Harijans. It was as a result of his threat of self-immolation that the alien Government was forced to drop the idea of segregating the scheduled castes from the Hindu community in elections to the legislatures.

As against this illustrious and inspiring background, it is, indeed, most shocking to read quite frequently even these days about harassments, and even murders of Harijans at the hands of the privileged classes in different parts of the country. I need hardly say that we should bend our energies to recapture the old spirit and befriend and assimilate the Harijan communities in the Indian social fabric with a sense of dedication, in the sacred memory of the great Master whose Centenary is being observed throughout the world this year.

Mahatma Gandhi had repeatedly stated that a Sarvodaya society of his conception could not be established without paying first attention to the last man on the ladder. Unless we level up the poorest, and the richer sections of the community voluntarily level themselves down, for bringing about a harmonious and homogeneous society, it would not be feasible to establish a socialist and democratic society according to Gandhiji's ideals. Bapu had worked for winning *Swaraj* "for those toiling and unemployed millions who do not get even a square meal a day and have to scratch along with a piece of stale bread and a pinch of salt".¹ He often remarked that even God could not dare to appear before the poor and the hungry, except in the form of a "bowl of rice". The *Swaraj* of his dreams was a "poor man's *Swaraj*" in which the necessaries of life were to be enjoyed by



the weakest segments of the society. In this context, Gandhiji had given us a wonderful 'talisman':

Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen; and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and self melting away?²

To the Mahatma, a socialist society could be brought about only through non-violent means and by training the lowliest in the science of *Satyagraha* for securing redress of the wrongs. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust must be established without creating a violent conflict between the classes and the masses. "Socialism", said Gandhiji, "is as pure as crystal. It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it."³ Gandhiji wanted to begin each reform with himself: "Socialism begins with the first convert", said he, "If there is one such, you can add zero to the one and the first zero will count for ten and the additional will count for ten times to the previous number. If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value."⁴

As regards the Adivasis, Bapu had started several organisations to ameliorate their social and economic conditions. It is a matter for satisfaction that Thakkar Bapa and his band of workers, guided by Gandhiji's ideals, have been able to achieve striking results in this direction. It is, however, essential to continue this constructive work with even greater zeal and devotion. A large number of young men have to be trained and sent to the tribal areas for intensive work. Gandhiji himself had remarked: "Truly, the harvest is rich but the labourers are few." He



regarded the service of the tribal population as "not merely humanitarian, but solidly national which brings us nearer to true independence".⁵

It is well known that Bapu evinced unusual interest in the service of the lepers. At Wardha, a leper colony in Dattapur was started under Gandhiji's direct guidance. It has been doing excellent work since then, especially by trying to make the lepers self-reliant through a variety of productive activities. At the instance of Gandhiji, many other institutions of a similar nature were established in different parts of India. We do expect that this important social work would now receive greater care and attention from both the official and non-official agencies. The image of Gandhiji cleaning the wounds of the renowned Sanskrit scholar Parchure Shastri with his own hands in the Sevagram Ashram would always remain a source of light and inspiration to countless leprosy workers in India and abroad.

SOCIAL COHESION

Bapu ardently desired that all communities in India, including the religious and linguistic minorities, should be made to feel at home by the majority community in order to promote a sense of national integration and social cohesion. He commenced his morning prayers in the Ashram with chantings from the Holy Scriptures of different religions, the essential principles of which are common and universal. Gandhiji worked ceaselessly for achieving this 'unity in the midst of diversity'. The *Swaraj* of his dreams recognised no communal or religious distinctions. He emphatically declared:

It has been said that Indian Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e., the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight with all the strength



at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all people, is the rule of justice.⁶

Gandhiji further asserted:

Our independence would be complete only if it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much for the rich land-owner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Muslims, as much for the Parsis and Christians as for the Jains, Jews and Sikhs, irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life.⁷

SECULAR DEMOCRACY

While we remember with respect and affection this noble leader of humanity during the current year, let us, at least in our own country, strain every nerve to bring about real and lasting social cohesion by adopting a correct attitude towards the minorities. India is a secular State in which there should be equal regard for all religions and faiths in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance. While the majority community has every right to follow its own religion in the background of its ancient heritage, it is also its bounden duty to make the other communities feel at ease. Any talk of 'Hindu-Rashtra' in this context is wrong and unfair; it cuts at the very roots of Indian democracy.

I would, however, like to add that the minority communities, in turn should not do or say anything which would raise the slightest suspicion about their basic loyalty to the Indian nation. For instance, I look with deep pain at the reported attempts to carve out a Muslim religion in the southern parts of the country. Such fissiparous and disruptive tendencies on the part of both the majority and the minority communities have to be nipped in the bud and should not be allowed to corrode the basic structure of India's unity.



BASIC EDUCATION

Gandhiji was very much exercised about another social tension, namely, the widening cleavage between the educated and the uneducated classes. The system of education drawn up by the British rulers had made Indian young men alien to their own soil and cut them adrift from the masses. Bapu had, therefore, enunciated the principle of Basic education in which academic subjects were to be taught through the medium of productive activity like agriculture, gardening, animal husbandry, cottage industries and the like. He was very particular that the students should learn the principles of self-help, self-reliance and dignity of manual labour along with their academic pursuits.

It is regrettable that this system of *Nai Talim* advocated by Mahatma Gandhi has never been given a fair trial in this country either by the administration or the educationists. The craft oriented education has been derided as an indirect attempt to introduce khadi and village industries in educational institutions. This is, surely, a very uncharitable attitude towards Gandhiji's progressive and rational views on education. Bapu had made it abundantly clear, from the very beginning, that the aim of Basic education was to teach a craft not merely "*mechanically*, as is generally done today, but *scientifically*",⁸ in order to develop the physical as well as intellectual potentialities of the child. In short, Gandhiji's basic objective was to impart an all round and integrated type of education to children. "The new education scheme", stated Gandhiji, "is not a little of literary education and a little of craft. It is full education through the medium of a craft."⁹

Furthermore, the aim of new education was not to make schools self-supporting for saving financial expenditure of the State. The main objective was to impart good education to children through productive work and in the process, make it self-reliant also. "The emphasis", said Bapu, "laid on the principle of spending



every minute of one's life usefully is the best education for citizenship, and incidentally makes education self-sufficient."¹⁰

During my educational tour round the world in 1949, I had the privilege of meeting for about an hour the distinguished educationist Prof. John Dewey in New York and discussing with him Gandhiji's scheme of education. The Professor was deeply impressed and feelingly observed: "Gandhiji's system of education is, I am sure, one step ahead of all the other systems. It is full of immense potentialities and we all hope to learn much from India in this revolutionary educational effort."

It is heartening to find that the renowned Swedish economist Prof. Gunnar Myrdal, in his recent monumental publication entitled the *Asian Drama* has come to a similar conclusion. He is of the definite opinion that "basic-oriented primary education could be the ideal solution to the much-needed reform of the curriculum and teaching methods in Indian primary schools". He continues:

Such a school would have roots and its isolation from the community at large would be lessened; it would encourage the teacher to participate in the life of the community and exert his influence towards changing attitudes; and, most important for effective teaching, it would give all children the experience of performing purposeful work with their hands, which would also help to counteract prejudices against manual work....Undoubtedly, Gandhiji's philosophy of Basic education and similar movements in other South Asian countries represent a much needed revolt against the wasteful treadmill of the inherited Primary Schools.¹¹

The Education Commission has recently recommended a system of 'work-experience' which, to my mind, is only an apology for Basic education. I do not really understand why we have become so allergic to the term 'Basic'. In any event, I will not like to go into semantics, provided the underlying principles of



Basic education, as enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi, are incorporated even now in the educational system at the Primary and Secondary stages. Unless we reorient our educational institutions towards productive activities, in the villages as well as in the cities, and combine academic teaching with creative work, we shall be generating complex and even explosive conditions of educated unemployment and low productivity which are bound to imperil the very existence of our socialist democracy.

I would, however, like to mention that it is not necessary to attach separate farms or workshops to Basic or Post-basic schools. We should prepare a well-considered scheme to link up these institutions with a variety of development projects under the Five Year Plans, including land reclamation, soil conservation, compost-manuring, improved methods of agriculture, dairying, village forestry, *khadi*, village and cottage industries. In fact, the whole of the Community Development movement could be properly dovetailed into Basic schools, without much additional expenditure. At any rate, there may be a few farms and workshops attached to a selected number of Basic and Post-basic schools for purposes of orientation and intensive training.

WELFARE OF STUDENTS

Gandhiji showed great concern for the welfare of students and tried to cultivate close contacts with them. To him "they were the hope of the future". Bapu was much dissatisfied with the use of a foreign language as the medium of instruction in educational institutions. He also desired radical changes in the existing curricula which were too 'bookish' and out of tune with the realities of life.



Nonetheless, he showered plentiful love and affection on students, from amongst whom the future leaders of the nation would rise.

Gandhiji was of the definite view that "students must not take part in party politics, because they are students, searchers, not politicians."¹² He did not like students resorting to political strikes. Gandhiji said: "On no account may they use coercion against the authorities. They must have the confidence that if they are united and dignified in their conduct, they are sure to win."

Bapu had prescribed a constructive programme for students, including *Swadeshi*, through the use of *khadi* and village industries, learning the national language, promotion of national unity, first-aid to the injured, and sanitation work in the neighbouring villages. He also wanted students to be scrupulously correct and chivalrous in their behaviour towards their women fellow-students. I do wish and hope that the student community in India and abroad would heed even today the precious advice given to them by the Mahatma.

CAUSE OF WOMEN

Gandhiji had also paid special attention to the emancipation of women in India by drawing them into the freedom movement and trying to remove various social and economic obstacles which stood in the way of their progress. Although women occupied a high social status in ancient India, we must concede that in course of the past centuries, they have suffered gross social and economic injustice at the hands of the community. Gandhiji, therefore, espoused the cause of women with great concern. It is mainly due to his untiring efforts in this direction that women in free India occupy high positions in national life. It is, indeed, a glorious tribute to Bapu that a distinguished daughter of India occupies



today the pivotal position of the Prime Minister and happens to be the only woman Prime Minister in the world.

Gandhiji had advocated the abolition of all economic and legal disabilities from which women in India and elsewhere suffer today. "Man", observed Bapu, "has always desired power, and ownership of property gives that power." Gandhiji, therefore, desired that "the daughters and sons should be treated on a footing of perfect equality."¹³

He, however, did not like the tendency in women to imitate men. He believed that a woman could not make her contribution to the world "by mimicking or running a race with man". "She can run the race", remarked Gandhiji, "but, she will not rise to the great heights she is capable of by mimicking man; she has to be the complement of man." And Bapu added: "Woman who knows and fulfils her duty realises her dignified status. She is the queen, not the slave, of the household, over which she presides."¹⁴

ATTITUDE TOWARDS BIRTH CONTROL

A word about Gandhiji's attitude towards birth control or, to use the modern term, 'family planning'. While he yielded to none in recognising the need for having smaller families for controlling the fast growing population, Bapu underlined the value of self control. He was convinced that the ancient Indian tradition of self-restraint or brahmacharya was "an invaluable sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it". "Artificial methods are like putting a premium on vice; they make man and woman reckless; the remedy will be found to be worse than the disease."¹⁵



Our Five Year Plans have been according a very high priority to the family planning programme for checking the 'population explosion'. As I have already stated, Gandhiji was fully alive to the urgent need for birth control. Even so, he viewed with distress the tendency of the people and the State to resort to artificial methods, without emphasizing the supreme importance of self-restraint and trying to create a healthy atmosphere for it. The Third Five Year Plan did underscore the need for placing "the greatest emphasis on moral and psychological elements, on restraint and on such social policies as education of women, opening up of new employment opportunities for them, and raising of the age of marriage."¹⁶

While the use of modern birth-control methods under specified conditions could not be ruled out, it is imperative to highlight the primary importance of self-restraint in the nationwide campaign for family planning. If we succeed in creating a strong public opinion in favour of having smaller families through educative propaganda and by raising the age of marriage, the impact of family planning programmes would be much greater and more lasting. We must also take particular care to ensure that the propagation of artificial devices is not misused by the younger generation for self-indulgence, leading to the erosion of fundamental values of social morality.

KEY TO HEALTH

In regard to health, Gandhiji had emphasised the value of simple life and the use of nature cure methods. He had popularised the use of pure air, water, simple food, and self-control for maintaining a sound mind in a sound body. For specific maladies, sun-bath and the use of earth and water were prescribed by him as



effective remedies. It is, indeed, significant that during his long detention in the Aga Khan Palace during the August 'rebellion', Gandhiji should have written a booklet entitled Key to Health, instead of writing a treatise on politics or economics. In the course of his preface to the brochure, Gandhiji wrote: "Anyone who observes the rules of health mentioned in this book will find that he has got a real key to unlock the gates leading him to health. He will not need to knock at the doors of doctors or vaidyas from day-to-day." It would be very much worth our while placing millions of copies of this valuable booklet in the hands of the new generation during the Centenary Year.

PROHIBITION

Mahatma Gandhi was very anxious to introduce total prohibition throughout India as an essential part of national development. He had gone to the extent of saying: "If I were appointed the dictator of India for one hour only, the first thing I would do will be to close without compensation all the liquor shops." Even at the time of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Gandhiji did not forgo his rights to organise picketing of wine shops. The Congress has also been including prohibition as an important item of its election manifestoes ever since the first general elections. It is, therefore, disquieting that several State Governments have now scrapped prohibition and repudiated this national policy under the pretext of raising additional resources for the next Five Year Plan.

I give here a brief history of this subject for your information. In 1963, when some State Governments had indicated their intention of going back on prohibition, I had taken the initiative of convening a conference of all the Chief Ministers together with the Members of the Planning Commission. Pandit Nehru was good



enough to be present throughout the discussions for two days. After a threadbare analysis of the problem, Panditji had remarked: "I will, indeed, be very sorry if the evil of drinking spreads in India. Any argument against prohibition on financial grounds is meaningless. Nevertheless, we should try to plug various loopholes in order to implement the prohibition programme more effectively." The Conference unanimously requested the Planning Commission to appoint a high-level committee for going into this question thoroughly and suggesting concrete steps to enable the States to implement the prohibition policy efficiently. Since I was in-charge of prohibition in the Planning Commission at that time, I consulted Shri Gulzarilal Nanda, the then Deputy Chairman, and decided to request the Chief justice of India to recommend the name of an eminent Judge for functioning as the Chairman of the Prohibition Enquiry Committee. We were keen that the report of this Committee should be objective and scientific. The Chief Justice, after a careful selection, suggested the name of Justice Tek Chand, a person in no way connected with the prohibition campaign.

The Enquiry Committee was given the fullest scope for studying the whole problem *de novo*, without any prejudice for or against the policy. The Report of the Committee, therefore, should have been regarded by the State Governments as some kind of an 'award' and they ought to have implemented its recommendations without further questioning. It is, thus, a matter of dismay that almost all the States, with the exception of Gujarat and Madras, have either given up prohibition or diluted it beyond recognition.

I do not view prohibition merely as a moral or social policy. Our main anxiety has been the economic betterment of the poorer and more vulnerable segments of the population. During my extensive tours as a Member of the Planning Commission, I visited a steel plant sometime in 1962. I was shocked to hear from the



General Manager that about 40 per cent of the weekly wages disbursed to the workers of this public enterprise were being drunk away on the pay day itself. Similar conditions prevail in almost all the big projects of the country, both in public and private sectors. When I toured Kerala some years ago, I was, astonished to learn that, despite a variety of beneficial schemes under the Third Five Year Plan, the economic condition of the fishermen had remained stagnant and deplorable because of the drink evil. In the absence of prohibition, our planning process is like filling a vessel with milk and honey, with a number of 'leaking points' at the bottom. We should, surely, try our best to improve the implementation of the prohibition programme with a view to checking illicit practices effectively. But to scrap prohibition altogether would be like throwing the baby away with the bath-water. It is common knowledge that illicit distillation exists on a wide scale even in the 'wet' areas.

Gandhiji was, however, of the definite view that the prohibition policy could not be enforced successfully without the fullest cooperation of a large number of devoted social workers in the field. With the proper coordination of official as well as non-official agencies, it should be feasible to introduce complete prohibition throughout India within the next few years.

THE DEMOCRATIC WAY

Bapu was a staunch supporter of a democratic form of government based on adult franchise. He was in favour of direct democracy at the base and indirectly elected democratic institutions upwards, under the Panchayat system. He had an unwavering faith in the intrinsic goodness of the people and their sound commonsense. It would, therefore, be wrong on our part to cast doubts on the



democratic structure of our Constitution, under the stresses and strains of the current political situation, particularly after the Fourth General Elections. Instead of thinking in terms of a new type of Constitution, Presidential or otherwise, it would be much better for us to develop certain healthy democratic conventions in accordance with our own conditions. If we promptly forge certain checks and counter-checks within the Constitution and the existing laws, we shall be able to sustain and develop our democratic framework on sure foundations. In addition, these new conventions built into our political system will be a source of inspiration to other developing countries of Asia and Africa which are struggling to preserve democratic institutions and avoid a drift towards totalitarianism.

PANCHAYAT RAJ

Gandhiji had strongly advocated the decentralisation of political and economic power in favour of more or less self-sufficient and self-governing village Panchayats. He regarded these local institutions as the models of non-violent organisation. It would be erroneous to think that Bapu wished to revive the ancient Indian village republics exactly in the old form; necessary changes will have to be introduced in accordance with altered circumstances and requirements. It must, however, be conceded that since the dawn of civilisation, these village Panchayats contained within them the potentialities of an ideal socio-political organisation based on direct democracy, social cohesion and mutual cooperation. Gandhiji was, therefore, anxious to incorporate the Panchayat system in the Indian Constitution. In reply to a letter of mine on the subject, he had expressed his categorical views in the columns of the Harijan:

I am informed that there is no mention or direction about village Panchayats and decentralisation in the fore-shadowed Constitution. It is certainly an



omission calling for immediate attention if our independence is to reflect the people's voice. The greater the power of the Panchayats, the better for the people. However, Panchayats to be effective and efficient, the level of people's education has to be considerably raised.¹⁷

It was as a result of this plea by Gandhiji that the Constituent Assembly of India added Article 40 in the 'Directive Principles' to the effect that "the State shall take steps to organise village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

The imperative need for the devolution and decentralisation of political power should not be considered as one more Gandhian 'fad'; it is now being recognised as a very desirable objective by many progressive political thinkers of the West. "If men's faith in social action is to be revived", observes Prof. Joad, "the State must be cut up and its functions distributed."¹⁸ According to Aldous Huxley, "the political road to 'a better society is the road of decentralisation and responsible self-government."¹⁹ Dr. Adams, after analysing the shortcomings of modern governments, wants us "to go to the root of the trouble and pursue a bold policy of devolution, of decentralisation."²⁰ Lewis Mumford recommends the building up of "small balanced communities in the open country". Prof. Harold Laski favours decentralisation, because "centralization makes for uniformity; it lacks the genius of time and place."²¹ "It was in small communities", declares Lord Bryce, "that democracy first arose; it is in them that the way in which the real will of the people tells upon the working of government can best be studied, because most of the questions that come before the people are within their own knowledge."²²



After Independence, almost all the State governments have introduced the Panchayat Raj in their areas for implementing the 'Directive Principles' of our Constitution in relation to the organisation of village Panchayats. We often hear that the devolution of political power on the Panchayat institutions has led to casteism, inefficiency and corruption. In my view, such criticisms are unjustified and reveal a lack of trust in our people. Trust begets trust, and if we repose confidence in the wisdom and sound common sense of the rural masses and provide them with the requisite guidance, training and resources, I do not have a shadow of doubt that the Panchayats would, in due course, prove to be firm and sound foundations for our democratic structure in the years to come. "In this structure composed of innumerable villages", declared Gandhiji, "there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles; life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom."²³ We are bound to face a number of difficulties in the implementation of this goal. All of us have, therefore, to address ourselves to this vital task with devotion and a sense of mission.

THE SARVODAYA SOCIETY

In the last analysis, Gandhiji cherished the ultimate objective of *Sarvodaya*, or the welfare of all, irrespective of any distinctions. He did not believe in the doctrine of 'the greatest good of the greatest number', because under it the interests of a substantial minority could be sacrificed for the good of

the majority. Bapu described this philosophy as "a heartless doctrine which has done harm to humanity." According to him, "the only real dignified human doctrine is the greatest good of all."²⁴



The Sarvodaya society of Gandhiji's conception has to be based on the ideal of non-violence in every sphere. There must not be any social or economic exploitation of the poorer segments of the society. Said Bapu: "Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love... Everybody would know how to earn an honest living by the sweat of one's brow and make no distinction between intellectual and physical labour." He continued: "If we would see our dream of a Sarvodaya society, we would regard the humblest and the lowest Indian as being equal to the tallest in the land."²⁵ In such a society "the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and the poor, the employer and the employee, are all on the same level."

Gandhiji's concept of *Sarvodaya* was diametrically opposed to Marxism which gives exclusive importance to material advancement, even through impure methods. Marxism repelled Bapu, because "it was based on violence and denial of God." Although Gandhiji believed in a classless society, he did not believe "in eradicating evil from the human breast at the point of the bayonet".²⁶ He regarded Marx as 'a great man', but did not accept his economic theories. He had an abiding faith in non-violence and the essential goodness of human nature. Bapu did not believe in 'short-violent-cuts to success'.²⁷ He was convinced that the road to a non-violent or Sarvodaya society may "appear to be long, perhaps too long, but it was, ultimately, the shortest".²⁸

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3. Gandhian Economic Thought

It is quite obvious that Mahatma Gandhi was not an economist in the technical sense of the term. He had not studied economics as a subject in the curriculum, nor had he the opportunity of reading standard books on modern economics. As is well-known, Gandhiji had the occasion to read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in South Africa, and this book exercised a very powerful influence on his life and work. The Bible also shaped his thoughts on social and economic matters. While in detention during the 'Quit India' movement, Bapu found some time to read Marx's *Das Capital*. He, however, wrote extensively on different economic problems facing India, especially about unemployment and under-employment and the urgent need for organising khadi and village industries to provide gainful work to idle hands. Although Gandhiji was not very familiar with modern economic terminology, his ideas revealed a pragmatic and rational approach to various economic problems confronting developing countries. Unhappily, there are a number of misconceptions about Gandhian economic thought which still prevail in our country, specially among the educated classes. In the course of this lecture, I would make an earnest attempt to deal with some of these misunderstandings and try to project Gandhian economic ideas in a rational and scientific manner.

SIMPLE LIVING AND HIGH THINKING

The first basic principle of Gandhiji's economic thought is special emphasis on 'simple living and high thinking'. Gandhiji was not against raising the existing low living standard of the masses in under-developed countries like India. When I showed him the typescript of my book the Gandhian Plan in Sevagram in 1944 and asked him about the minimum standard regarding food, cloth and housing



which should be incorporated in an economic plan of his conception, as compared with the targets mentioned in the Bombay Plan drawn up by some prominent industrialists, Gandhiji at once replied:

I would not like the minimum standard to be a whit less than that envisaged by the Bombay planners. I would, however, like the same standard to be ensured for all citizens, and not merely for a limited number. It would be better to give at least half a loaf to everybody, rather than allow the privileged sections to eat away whole loaves, leaving nothing for the poorer sections!

It was this concern for the weakest sections of the people which characterised Gandhiji's approach to planning and economic development.

Furthermore, Gandhiji maintained that mere economic affluence would not be able to secure a balanced life for the people. While every attempt must be made to secure a minimum standard of living for all citizens, we should not imitate the highly developed and mechanised countries. Side by side with economic development and progress, proper emphasis should be laid on promoting ethical and spiritual values in both private and public life. "I do not believe", observed Gandhiji, "that multiplication of wants and machinery contributed to supply them is taking the world a single step nearer its goal... I whole-heartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction."¹ In one of his earliest brochures, *Hind Swaraj*, Bapu gave expression to similar ideas:

We notice that 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. It was not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that if we set our mind after such needs, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre.²



Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore expressed similar thoughts in his inimitable language:

Of what avail is it to add and add and add? By going on increasing the volume or pitch of sound. We can get nothing but a shriek. We can get music only by restraining the sound and giving it the melody of the rhythm of perfection.³

Even Kautilya, the distinguished Indian thinker of the third century B.C. who is renowned for his worldly commonsense, wrote in his *Arthashastra*:

The aim of all the sciences is nothing but restraint of the organs of sense. Whosoever is of reverse character, whoever has not his organs of sense under his control, will soon perish, though possessed of the whole earth bounded by the four quarters.

He further stressed, सुखस्य मूलं धर्मः "True happiness could be found only in *Dharma*."

To an oriental mind, these ideas appear to be rational and convincing. But, in the developed countries, these notions are taken to be visionary and based on philosophical sentimentalism. Gandhiji did not entertain a shadow of doubt that India must progress according to her own genius and ancient culture and plan for progressive economic system which would lead to greater prosperity without eroding the qualities of simplicity and higher values of life.

I was astonished to read in a recent issue of the American journal, *Life*⁴ that a number of boys and girls from the United States and Europe are now living in the caves of Matala in the Crete Island. When interviewed by a journalist, some of them remarked that they had come to the caves "to clean out their minds". Some of them further declared:

We are going back to America. We are going to find a piece of land somewhere, may be Northern California, and set up a commune with some other kids and



farm it, and have an outhouse, and a goat, but no TV. The children won't miss it. We're not rebelling against affluence; we're rebelling against how people handle affluence.

The cold-blooded murders in America, more especially of President Kennedy and his brother Robert, and of the distinguished Negro leader Dr. Martin Luther King, have shaken the Western world to its very foundations. Recent researches and investigations have indicated that the culprits themselves do not know why they committed these heinous crimes. The new science of 'psycho-biology' has revealed that these criminals, due to excessive indulgence in sensual activities, have lost control over their minds and nerves. These experiences confirm the basic thought behind Indian philosophy that human beings could never derive true happiness out of material prosperity alone.

A distinguished Indian economist, Prof. J.K. Mehta, of the University of Allahabad, has also come to the definite conclusion that "the conflicting urges in man find their peaceful solutions in the state of wantlessness"⁵ He adds:

Let us not pamper our wants. Let us subjugate them, let us conquer them....Man's ultimate objective is to be, and to remain, wantless. ...That is the truth about our economic life.⁶

I also recall a talk we had in the Planning Commission with the eminent American economist Professor Galbraith some years ago. He had returned from an extensive tour of Latin American countries. In the course of our discussions, the learned Professor remarked: "I was deeply pained to see the appalling poverty of the masses in these countries. In India, I have always found some kind of a lustre in the eyes of the poor peasantry, but poverty in the Latin American countries is, indeed, dismal and uninspiring." When I questioned him about his statement on India's poverty, Professor Galbraith explained: "I have seen in the faces of the



poor people in Indian villages a spirit of self-reliance and moral fortitude which, in a sense, enriches their poverty!" We must not do anything to dilute this spirit of self-help and cultural stamina of our rural masses.

THE RIGHT TO WORK

In addition to this stress on simple but meaningful living, Gandhiji underscored the inherent right of every able-bodied citizen to secure gainful work for his livelihood. The basic problem which India must tackle with a sense of emergency is the question of unemployment and under-employment. Our Constitution has also guaranteed the fundamental 'right to work'. All the world over, full employment is regarded as the primary aim of economic planning. Gandhiji had strongly pleaded for *khadi* and village industries even in the pre-Independence period, mainly for providing productive work to millions of our people who suffer from enforced idleness. While formulating the *Gandhian Plan*, which was published in 1944, I, one day in Sevagram, requested Gandhiji to specify his ideas about the use of machinery. He emphatically declared;

I entertain no fads in this regard. All that I desire is that every citizen of India who is willing to work should be provided with employment to earn his livelihood. If electricity or even atomic energy could be used without ousting human labour and creating unemployment I will not raise my little finger against it. I am, however, still to be convinced that this would be possible in a country like ours where population is large and capital scarce.

I do not think any modern economist would find fault with this clear enunciation of Gandhiji's views in regard to the policy of mechanisation in developing countries like India. Bapu further remarked: "If the Government can provide full employment to our people without the help of *khadi* and village industries, I am



prepared to wind up my constructive work in this sphere." While discussing this problem with the members of the Planning Commission, as far back as 1951, Acharya Vinoba Bhave went to the extent of saying that if the State could find other avenues of employment for all able-bodied persons, he would have "no hesitation in burning his wooden charkha to cook one day's meal." It is, therefore, highly unfair to dub Gandhiji's ideas about khadi and village industries as 'faddist and Utopian'.

The crucial point is: "Are we in a position to ensure full employment to our people even at the end of the proposed Fourth Five Year Plan?" According to the latest calculations of the Planning Commission, despite all the schemes to be incorporated in the Fourth Plan, the number of unemployed at the end of the period is likely to be of the order of 15 million. From all accounts this is not an over-estimate; it is, in fact, a conservative figure. I think the time has come when we must face this question squarely; we cannot afford to play with it any longer. We should either be in a position to offer productive work to any citizen who is unemployed and asks for it, or we should be willing to grant him a 'dole' or a monthly 'unemployment allowance'. Gandhiji always said that it was much better to give work rather than doles. Pandit Nehru also emphasised the same view.

As far as I can see, without the fullest development of *khadi*, village and cottage industries in the country, we will not be in a position to guarantee full employment to our people. It is indisputable that we should make concerted efforts to improve the existing technology by utilising modern science and research. We should strain every nerve to make the village and rural crafts more productive and efficient. It would, however, be unreasonable to expect these smaller industries to compete successfully with the large-scale sector, which,



curiously enough, receives sizable financial assistance from the State. The examples of textile and sugar factories in India are quite revealing in this respect. The State should go all out to help the small, village and cottage industries to the maximum possible extent by reserving certain spheres of production to them and extending credit, marketing and technical facilities.

If we are not prepared to undertake a big programme for these decentralised industries, are we in a position to grant 'doles' to the registered unemployed? Even if we provide such doles to

10 million unemployed persons during the Fourth Plan period and pay each of them a meagre amount of Re. 1 per day, the annual expenditure would total up to Rs. 365 crores, or over Rs. 1800 crores in five years. Can we afford this luxury? On the other hand, if we earmark Rs. 500 crores in the form of a revolving fund for the organisation of cottage and village industries during the next few years and take some concrete policy decisions to reserve spheres of production and evolve 'common production programmes', I am confident that we will make a visible dent on the problem of unemployment and under-employment in our country. I am happy to know that, at present, the *Khadi* and Village Industries Commission, with a total rotating capital of about Rs. 565 crores, is able to provide gainful employment to 24 lakhs of workers.

Significantly enough, a recent Gallup survey in the United States of America disclosed that 78 per cent of the people favoured 'a guaranteed work plan' and not doles. In India, a system of providing work rather than monetary grants is all the more desirable because our cultural tradition from time immemorial has been based on the dictum: 'he who eats without labour is a thief'.



I vividly remember several scenes which I witnessed in the flood-affected areas of Orissa and Bihar, some years ago. The people had lost their valuable crops, and the mud huts had been washed away, together with their belongings. They stood before us almost naked, in extremely difficult circumstances. And yet their human spirit was not broken. They did not ask for rations and cloth. Instead, they demanded work in the form of some rural industries. I was, indeed, deeply touched by this hardy and courageous attitude of the people. We do hope and pray that these golden traits of character of the Indian masses will not be gradually liquidated by our acts of omission and commission.

Evidently, the Government will have to take up the responsibility of using up the products of *khadi* and other village industries, partly by direct consumption in various State departments and partly by encouraging the people to patronise these goods as a matter of national duty. The extra money spent on the purchase of *khadi* should, in fact, be regarded as some kind of 'a voluntary unemployment tax' to be gladly paid by the people for the people. Even prominent British economists like Prof. G.D.H. Cole have conceded in unambiguous terms that "Gandhi's campaign for the development of the home-made cloth industry-*khaddar*-is no more a fad of a romantic eager to revive the past, but a practical attempt to relieve the poverty and uplift the standard of the Indian villager."⁷

In his latest publication entitled the *Asian Drama*, Professor Gunnar Myrdal has strongly defended Gandhiji's programme for the protection and promotion of cottage industries in the villages. He observes:

The development of industries in direct competition with existing cottage industries would take work and bread away from millions with no immediate alternative source of employment or income; this would not be rational from a planning point of view.



The eminent Professor continues:

It is tempting to look upon these policies as temporary measures, needed only until the time when industrialisation will pay dividends in the form of a large-scale increase in the demand for labour....As for the workers in South Asian cottage industry, there is no prospect of any large-scale adjustment for decades to come, particularly as the labour force will increase rapidly until the end of the century."⁸

I do hope that our planners and economists would try to revise their ideas about Gandhian economics in the light of Prof. Myrdal's significant observations.

FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY

It is painful to find that despite the three Five Year Plans after the achievement of political independence, India has not yet been able to solve the problem of hunger and food shortage. We have still to import millions of tonnes of food-grains from foreign countries. This is not only undesirable from the economic standpoint, but also risky from the angle of national defence and security. There is no denying that the Union and the State Governments have already taken a number of steps to augment agricultural production in the country. Even so, we will have to import Gandhiji's sense of urgency in achieving food self-sufficiency within the next few years.

Whatever programmes were undertaken by him, Bapu injected down-to-earth seriousness in them. I very well remember how, in 1945, when the nation was faced with acute food shortage, Gandhiji made a number of suggestions in the columns of the Harijan for increasing farm production. He had indicated that all available land in the country, including the spacious lawns of the then Viceregal Lodge, should be utilised for growing food crops. One day, as usual Kasturba was



washing Gandhiji's feet after his return from the evening walk in Sevagram. The bucket of water after this wash was daily thrown into a bed of roses nearby. Bapu looked at me and remarked: "These roses in the context of our food problem are, indeed a luxury for the Ashram. Why should we not replace them with a strip for growing wheat?" And I found the very next day that this had actually been done.

RISING PRICES

The country is also confronted today with the very complex question of rising prices, especially of essential consumer goods. A series of actions have been initiated by the Union and State Governments to control these prices within reasonable limits; but the results so far have been unequal to expectations. It is obvious that the prices of consumer goods could be maintained at desirable levels only if we are able to increase their production at a fast rate. In addition, we have to organise a network of cooperative consumers' stores for eliminating the profits of middlemen in the vital interests of the consumers as well as producers. Gandhiji was not in favour of excessive controls in our economic system. He wanted to retain only those restrictions which were absolutely necessary for safeguarding the economic interests of the common man. In other words, he favoured a policy of selective or strategic controls. The Government of India has been pursuing such a policy in an increasing measure and had already de-controlled, wholly or partially, the distribution of several commodities including cement, steel and sugar. It would, however, be useful to review the remaining controls from time to time and abolish those which are found to be no longer necessary.



RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF LABOUR

During his stay in Ahmedabad for a number of years, Gandhiji had evolved a sound labour policy for the country. The Textile Labour Association has been working hard to implement these Gandhian ideals in the sphere of labour during the last two decades or so. Bapu laid stress on both rights and duties of the working classes. The wages of workers must necessarily be linked with increased productivity. If they go on demanding higher wages, and dearness allowances without working harder for raising industrial production, the price-level of consumer goods is bound to show an upward trend and follow a vicious circle.

FARM-YARD MANURES

Gandhiji had emphasised on many occasions that the country should promote greater use of farm-yard and green manures for enriching the poor soil. While there could be no objection to using chemical fertilisers for increasing farm production, the fact remains that these artificial manures must be properly mixed with compost manure in order to achieve a proper balance.

Some years ago Panditji had sent me to Japan to study the techniques of agriculture there and find out how that country was able to grow about three times the produce per acre as compared with the Indian yields. I toured the Japanese villages extensively and was surprised to find that the farmers were using compost and farm-yard manures in a big way along with chemical fertilisers. In fact, there was a saying prevalent in the Japanese countryside that excessive use of artificial manures was 'good for parents, but bad for sons'. On seeking an explanation, I was informed that heavy doses of chemical fertilisers resulted in a



few bumper crops in the beginning, but depleted the fertility of the soil sharply in the following years.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Gandhiji had assigned a prominent place to the improvement of cattle for strengthening agriculture. He had drawn up a detailed programme for *Goseva*. But, we did not follow this programme in a systematic manner. In consequence, certain elements are making a political capital out of people's sentiment for cow-protection. In Japan, I was astonished that even in areas where tractors and power-tillers were being widely used the farmers were gradually turning towards the cow. When I asked them the reason for this switch-over, the peasants promptly replied: "Sir, the tractors give us neither milk nor manure." The Japanese farmer uses the cow for ploughing the fields as well. Every ounce of compost manure is fully utilised for enriching the soil and milk is increasingly used for organising dairies and the manufacture of a variety of milk products through small scale industries.

About six years ago, a team of German experts had been invited by the Government of India to suggest a rational scheme for the introduction of improved agricultural implements. After an extensive tour, the team had a brief discussion with us in the Planning Commission. The leader of the team curtly told us:

"We are not in a position to recommend any improved farm implements for India. Your cattle are so weak and infirm that they will not be able to draw these heavier implements at all. India should, therefore, launch a scientific programme of animal husbandry before thinking in terms of improved farm appliances."



These instances lend an edge to the plea that the cow should be developed as the basic unit of our rural economy and prevailing sentiments in her favour should be harnessed for enlisting the active cooperation of the people in this sphere.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MACHINERY

It is often assumed that Gandhiji was against the use of machinery as such, in agriculture as well as in industry. This is an erroneous notion and has caused unnecessary misgivings about Gandhian economic thought. Bapu had categorically declared that he would "prize every invention made for the benefit of all" and that he would "welcome the machine that lightens the burden of crores of men living in cottages." What he was really against was "the craze for machinery" and "its indiscriminate multiplication". He explained:

Mechanisation is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India.⁹

It is significant that even in highly prosperous America, forty million people are poor and "unemployment afflicts one out of every twenty workers, its incidence being cruel in urban Negro ghettos and rural backwaters".¹⁰ The prospect of automation threatens to make the economic situation much worse. Prof. Galbraith terms poverty in the United States not only "annoying, but a disgrace".¹¹ In the Soviet Union, the problem of unemployment, owing to specialisation and automation, has assumed significant proportions, and systematic efforts are now being made "to further develop subsidiary enterprises and industries in agriculture."¹² Prof. Arthur Lewis has also deprecated the "high capital intensity of the modern sector" and has condemned "irrational



preferences for spending lavishly on structures for using the latest techniques, and for large rather than small units of operation".¹³

It is generally claimed that modern mechanisation would ultimately provide larger volume of employment through its 'spread effects'. This assumption also has been repudiated by Prof. Myrdal. He has definitely asserted that the 'spread effects' of large-scale industries are more than neutralised and negated by the 'backwash effects' : "There is a real risk that the slight increase in demand for labour on new modern enterprises will be more than offset by reductions in labour demands in traditional manufacturing."¹⁴ The learned economist concludes:

There was an essential element of rationality in Gandhiji's social and economic gospel, and the programmes for promoting cottage industry as they have been evolved in the post-war era, have come more to represent purposeful and realistic planning for development.¹⁵

Each country has to solve her problems in her own way, and not imitate in a blind fashion the economic planning techniques of the highly developed nations. While we should always be willing to learn from the experiences of others and improve our existing techniques of production, we should not remain under the delusion that the machine alone could work miracles. Machine has to subserve the interests of man; it should not be permitted to make man merely a cog in its wheel. Efforts are being made to develop 'middle' or 'intermediate'¹⁶ technology for under-developed regions for adapting the machine to special requirements. Besides, by organising the physical labour of millions of our people into a vast constructive force, in cities as well as in villages we can press into service under democratic conditions what the renowned American sociologist, Lewis Mumford, terms in a different context, a 'megamachine' or 'labour machine'.¹⁷ The scope of



organised voluntary labour in developing countries like India is, to be sure, enormous.

Several modern thinkers in Western countries have termed the existing economic situation in developed countries as 'the tragedy of mere affluence'. The modern industrial structure, with large-scale mechanisation, has given birth to a few giant business corporations which tend to reduce even the State to a subservient position and bind the Establishment to, what Prof. Galbraith calls, a "Technostructure", consisting of specialists, planners and technicians. In order to avoid the perils of such an industrial system, the Professor recommends the strong assertion of "other goals" so that the new Industrial State would become "responsive to the larger purposes of the society."¹⁸ These "goals" must necessarily be cultural and spiritual in accordance with Gandhiji's ideals and programmes.

SPIRIT OF SWADESHI

Above all, Gandhiji instilled in us the spirit of Swadeshi, which was basically a sense of self-respect and self-reliance. He desired us to stand on our own feet without too much dependence on others. Unfortunately, we very much lack this Swadeshi spirit in our national life today. As a result of planned economic development, the people expect the State to help them in every way and their own initiative is gradually withering away. Although there is no harm in seeking limited foreign assistance for our economic plans, especially the technical know-how, excessive reliance on external aid would ultimately sap our energies and undermine the essential spirit of self-help. I am, therefore, delighted to note that the Planning Commission has now strongly recommended that "a major objective



of the Fourth Plan should be to move towards self-reliance as speedily as possible."¹⁹

CONCEPT OF TRUSTEESHIP

My observations on Gandhian economic thought would not be complete without dealing briefly with the concept of 'trusteeship'. It is often alleged that Gandhiji, by advancing his trusteeship theory, had retarded the forces of revolution in the economic sphere because the capitalists could not be expected to function as real trustees of their own free will without legislative compulsion. Bapu had discussed this matter at great length with his secretary, Shri Pyarelal, during his detention in the Aga Khan Palace. He had also approved of a draft on trusteeship which "does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth". Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, "an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of the society". Gandhiji only wished to give one more chance to the owning class to reform itself in the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption. Bapu did not recognise "any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own weifare."²⁰

After the dawn of freedom, a significant step in the direction of 'trusteeship' is Acharya Vinoba Bhave's *Gramdan* movement which has made considerable headway during the last few years. Under this movement, at least 75 per cent of the land-holders of a village surrender their proprietary rights to the community and donate one-twentieth of the land for redistribution among the landless. The remaining land is cultivated by them on behalf of the *Gram Sabha*; it cannot be sold or mortgaged without the specific permission of the Sabha. The people also



earmark one-thirtieth of their annual income for the 'village development fund'. So far, about 60,000 villages, including a number of compact blocks and districts, have adopted this mode of community life on the basis of self-help, a sense of trusteeship and cooperative endeavour.

This *Gramdan* movement, according to Professor D.R. Gadgil, "is an unprecedented movement with many and complex implications and very great potentialities."²¹ Louis Fischer has described it as "the most creative thought coming out of the East."²² Acharya Vinoba has often called *Gramdan* a "defence measure", in so far as it tends to strengthen democracy at the grass-roots and makes people self-reliant and conscious of their obligations to the community.

It is unfortunate that this great movement has not yet been able to create a visible impact on our national life, despite its immense potentialities in several spheres. Instead of diffusing this non-violent revolution rather thinly over a wide area, it would, perhaps be better if a few compact blocks of districts could be selected for intensive work of re-construction. Even now, governmental agencies and voluntary organisations could pool their resources in a proper manner and evolve a new pattern of socio-economic order in our countryside along Gandhian lines.

And finally, I would like to repeat that, to Gandhiji, man was the highest consideration and anything which ran counter to the moral values of life was an anathema to him. He had often asserted that "politics without religion was mere dirt." Similarly, Bapu believed that "true economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics, to be worth its name, must at the same time be also good economics." "True economics", said he, "stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life."²³



THE ATOMIC MAN

Although Gandhiji was not an economist in the professional sense of the word, we must candidly recognise that his economic ideas, instead of being old-fashioned and utopian, are very much relevant to our times, and, in a sense, even far ahead of us. Romain Rolland regarded Gandhiji's spirit as "the perfect manifestation of the principle of life which will lead a new humanity on to a new path."²⁴ Vincent Sheean calls him "the wisest and the best-a man who had no equal in our time."²⁵ U Thant reiterates that "Gandhiji's philosophy has a meaning and a significance far beyond the confines of his country or of his time."²⁶ And Prof. Einstein recognised the Mahatma as "the miracle of a man". According to him, "generations to come would scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth". I have often felt that Gandhiji was, in more senses than one, a truly atomic man in an atomic age, a glorious triumph of moral and spiritual powers over all the material forces that the world can boast of! May we be worthy of this great Master who was born on the Indian soil, but soon became one with the human family and was, ultimately, attuned to the Infinite!

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