Chapter IV

Gandhi: Towards Stateless Society

Gandhi was, above all, a man of action. But it would be a mistake to underestimate the intellectual sinews of his thought, not only in the sphere of ethics and religion but also in the socio-economic and political fields. His thinking was fed by many streams from the East and the West, but what resulted was peculiarly his own. Gandhi's thought, as Romain Rolland said, was in constant evolution. Like other thinkers of the Indian Renaissance Gandhi was able to integrate the temporal and the spiritual. As he himself had made the point by saying that he was seeking God in politics.

What made Gandhi what he was? His South Africa days deserve close study in order to answer the question. He left South Africa as a seasoned politician with the tool for righting the disabilities of the underdog and with an intimation of his destiny as India's national leader. The habit of careful investigation of the facts and an attempt to settle disputes peacefully remained with Gandhi throughout his life. It was there that the method of non-violent resistance was born. One of the basic tenets of non-violence was that such a resistance should not take advantage of the difficulties of the 'enemy'. It might be conjectured if Gandhi would have approved Arjuna's attacking Karna when the latter's chariot-wheels had got stuck into the earth. Gandhi suspended the struggle for civil rights on the part of the Indians in South Africa, during the Boer War, from 1809-1902.

At home, in India, in 1916, Gandhi attended a session of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow. This was a momentous event in his life. At this session of the Congress, his help on behalf of the Indigo workers in Champaran was sought. This was how Gandhi's first *Satyagraha* campaign in India came about. In 1918, he was involved in a campaign of textile workers in Ahmedabad.

This was his first encounter with the Indian industrial working class.

Early in 1919 Gandhi was associated with explicit political activity for the first time. The Great War was over, but the British Government in India had failed to withdraw the Rowlatt Bills which curtailed civil liberties, and gave the executive arbitrary powers of arrest and imprisonment without trial. A new tool was fashioned by Gandhi to deal with this situation, that of the general *hartal* or strike. When a strike was called, the government panicked; unarmed people were fired on in Jallianwala Bagh on the Hindu New year's day and martial law was declared in Punjab. The subsequent history of Gandhi's life and career runs parallel to the history of the Indian National Struggle for independence.

Being a man of action, Gandhi's ideas were constantly on the move, and each new situation found him willing to experiment, to grow. To study his ideas it is never enough to read his writings, even though he was a prolific journalist and writer. One has to take account of what he did, including his personal habits, and his conduct of political, social, and economic affairs as well. One has to note that there is a singular lack of any doctrinaire element in Gandhi's thought. His ideas grew out of situations. Gandhi was a 'homespun' thinker as Margarate Chatterjee has commented[1]. Clad is homespun cloth as he was, he thought and acted from the vantage point of what would benefit the toiling masses of India. The framework of his socio-economic thinking has them in view. To study Gandhi is to study the record of a pilgrim, someone who went on foot knowing the terrain well, not prescribing for others but improving as he went along, bearing in mind the goal of *Swaraj* for the poorest of the poor. In this sense Nandalal Bose's painting of Gandhi is remarkably true of the man.

I

Ideas for Gandhi grew out of situations and this is why the framework of his thought is not theoretical but what he had tested for himself and found to be practicable. Another way of stating this is to say that, for Gandhi, ideas must be put to work. There is, in fact, a strong pragmatic element in Gandhi's approach to men and things. A theoretical attachment to any particular idea was of value.

This is evident in Gandhi's thinking on the concepts of God, truth, and non-violence. In a real sense these concepts constitute the essence of his thought.

As for the concept of God, Gandhi belonged to a Vaisnava family of the *Vallabhācārya* tradition, that is to say he was a theist whose natural expression of religion was in the form of devotion rather than *gnosis* or enlightenment. His own favourite devotional reading was the *Gĭtā* and the *Iśopanisad*. He wrote a commentary on *Gĭtā* under the name of *Anāsaktiyoga*, and is followed by other distinguished members of Indian renaissance as Tilak and Sri Aurobindo, and even his latter day follower, Vinoba Bhabe and Jaiprakash Narayan.

Jainism was strong in Gujarat, and Gandhi liked the Jaina idea of the many-sidedness of reality, *anekānta*. His use of vows and fasts as means of self-discipline clearly shows Jaina influence. He admired the *New Testament*, the Sermon on the Mount, in particular. He found much of the *New Testament* message echoed in his own experience. For example, he wrote: "Love never claims, it ever gives, love never suffers, never resents, never revenges itself".[2] He believed that "*Ahimsā* means 'love' in the Pauline sense" and he confessed that "though I cannot claim to be a Christian in the sectarian sense, the example of Jesus' suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in non-violence which rules all my actions, worldly and temporal".[3]

Gandhi was a theist, and yet he often used Advaitin language in a very fresh sense and one foreign to the tradition of Advaita Vedãnta. For instance, he once wrote to a correspondent: "God is in every one of us and, therefore, we have to identify ourselves with every human being without exception". In other words, he saw in other words, he saw at work in the world of persons a power which is the opposite of the power which is at work in the natural world – cohesion instead of fission. And God is there in the midst of them. This belief that all life is one, Gandhi said, requires a living faith in a living God who is the ultimate arbiter of our fate.[4] But how are we to find God? He wrote: "The only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find

Him apart from the rest of humanity".[5] One should not mistake the Tagore ring in the line: *Visva sāthe yoge yethay vihāro/sei sāthe yog tomār sāthe āmāro.*[6]

Gandhi used the word 'God' interchangeably, most frequently with 'Truth'. Gandhi, we may note, used the word 'Truth' in three senses: (a) Truth is what is *Sat*. In this sense Truth is equivalent to Being and God. This is the ontological sense of Truth. (b) Again, Truth is what conforms to the facts. One could call this the scientific connotation of truth, the ascertaining of which depends on a process of verification. Gandhi's legal training had inclined him to investigate and ascertain the truth of the reports that reached him. (c) The third sense of truth is truth as authenticity, almost in the Kierkegaardian manner. In his autobiography there are passages highlighting his 'experiments' with truth in the authentic sense of the term, and it is public knowledge now.

Gandhi believed in the fractional approach to truth, that each man cannot possess more than a fraction of Truth. But each fragment is a valid fragment, and error consists in thinking that that is all there is; injustice consists in imposing our own view on others. Gandhi's insistence on the fragmentariness of our vision provides him with a unique foundation for the concept of democracy. Unless we pool our wisdom collectively, our glimpses will be but partial. Even then, the whole will be hidden from us. Our understanding of Truth, in all the three senses referred to, grows.

Gandhi spoke of 'Truth is God' as a step further than 'God is Truth'. But why? He made this famous statement, which almost looks like the immediate inference of conversion, without of course, running into a logical error. The statement 'God is Truth' is not an A proposition of the categorical sort. It is a definitional statement like 'Truth is Beauty, Beauty is Truth' which John Keats quoted, at the close of his famous Ode, from Shaftsbury. Apart from the logical propriety of the conversion, Gandhi was anxious to disarm the atheist. He was speaking to a gathering of conscientious objectors in Switzerland in December, 1931, which included both theists and atheists. And so he said, "I have come to the conclusion that the definition – Truth is God – gives me the greatest

satisfaction. And when you want to find Truth as God, the only inevitable means is Love, i.e., non-violence, and since I believe that ultimately the means and ends are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that 'God is Love'".[7]

In the ethical and even societal context Gandhi defined Truth as the Unity of all living beings, and whatever action violates the Unity is Untruth. Hence Truth as Unity entails non-violence.

Gandhi's belief and thesis concerning the convertibility of ends and means and as continuous process differentiates him from the Marxists, who accept the possibility of a good end, such as a transformed and exploitation-free society, being brought about by violent means.

To see the concepts of God, Truth, and non-violence as closely linked as Gandhi did is to understand that the spiritual law does not work on a field of its own; rather it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields. The matter is not simple, and raises the question to what extent belief in non-violence can survive minus the framework of belief in Truth and God. Gandhi's own actions were, no doubt, inspired by his religious faith. But whether there can be a genuinely secular basis for belief in non-violence is a question that contemporary man may wish to raise. The principle of the fractional view of truth would certainly provide a sanction for non-violence. In Gandhi's own life, however, there is no doubt that the ability to translate non-violent intentions into constructive words and deeds was nutrient in no small way by his life of devotion and by grace.

In Gandhi's mind there was no discontinuity between means and ends, so was there no discontinuity between ethico-religious and socio-economic ideas. Religion was not something to be kept in a water-tight compartment, and hence, the removal of injustice was a religious duty.

II

Gandhi rarely set down his ideas in the form of a systematic essay or book. He has left behind a formidable body of literature, now collected in more

than ninety volumes. But even this mountain of writings does not contain a treatise on government and politics.The little book *Hind Swarā,j* [8] therefore, is of special importance as a source book. He wrote it at a stretch on his way back to Durban after leading a deputation to England in 1909. *Hind Swarāj*, or *Indian Home Rule*, takes the form of a sort of Socratic dialogue with a patriotic young Indian who wished to justify the use of any kind of means in order to emancipate India from British Rule. To Gandhi, India's freedom could not be won by the use of wrong means.

Hind Swarāj contains in particular Gandhi's reflections on freedom, democracy and industrialization and his entire reaction to the concept of 'western civilization'. In this work, He speaks of a free India – free from imperialism. He speaks of *swarāj* to replace the rule of the sword. Political freedom is not merely freedom from foreign domination, it also signifies the end of our dependence on others for our livelihood. He will make a difference between *swarāj* and independence. He says: "Peronally,I crave not for independence, which I do not understand ... I oppose independence as my goal.I want India to come to her own and tht state cannot be defined by any single word other than 'swaraj' ..."[9] There was a great deal in western civilization that Gandhi admired, but his own firsthand knowledge of the people of India convinced him that the Western socio-economic system was not only one, and that it would not be the right one for India. He asked his readers to remember that political freedom was not enough if social and economic freedom was not attained. It was not sufficient to exchange one government for another. It was necessary to think out what kind of society we wanted to have in India and start building here and now. The canker in all societies, whether Western or Indian, was exploitation leading to the concentration of power in the hands of a few, something which always perpetuated violence, and even led to warfare. Mere political democracy, therefore, did not ensure freedom for the masses or the people.

We propose to touch briefly his views of industrialization, which meant, for him, slave labour, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and the saving of labour instead of the generation of it. The last point was particularly important in the Indian context, where the crying need was for the provision of employment for the teaming millions. The only form in which God appeared to the poor was in the form of work, he had written. Vivekananda had said that God appeared to the poor in the form of bread.[10] Gandhi agreed that there must be mass-production but in people's homes. In industrial society the towns prospered at the expense of villages. Instead of this the proper function of cities should be in the form of clearing houses for village products. Gandhi promoted hand-spinning with several ideas behind it, namely, it would provide a supplementary source of income between the harvests, it would be a symbol of self-sufficiency, and promote the ideal of simplicity. He favoured the idea of nationalization of the industries like Trotsky, but did not think that it could be an end in itself. He did not share the socialist belief that centralization of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare when the centralized industries are planned and owned by the State. Gandhi disliked industrialization because he believed that the people could take charge of their affairs, whether social, economic or political, only if the units were small. Big complexes lead to the concentration of powers in the hands of a few and to the risk of exploitation. The people, Gandhi had in mind, were the rural masses of India who maintained them through agriculture and not through industry. Industrialization in a few towns could not make much of a dent on rural poverty. But he was ready for new ideas in farming and intermediate technology which would increase productivity without displacing labour.

Gandhi gave great thought to how an egalitarian society could be brought about, and among his very practical suggestions was the concept of 'breed labour'. He shared Ruskin's insistence on the equal value of different kinds of work to society.

Another idea of Gandhi which contains revolutionary economic importance is the concept of trusteeship. Gandhi's thinking on economic matters began with the undisputed fact of the unequal distribution of wealth in India. How could this situation be remedied, given that the classes and the masses, stood side by side, and we could not start with a *tabula rasa* condition, and build a just society in the manner that we might wish? The problem is how the situation can be changed non-violently, given Gandhi's belief in non-violence. How can a situation in which the bulk of wealth of the community is concentrated in the hands of a few be altered?

At this point Gandhi's mind departs very considerably from that of the Marxists. He did not believe that a class war was inevitable. We have seen that in recent decades, and since Gandhi's time, how a capitalistic economy can transform itself in the direction of a welfare state. Gandhi had a fundamental faith in the goodness of human nature and believed that selfishness and acquisitiveness – factors that have no small place in the profit motive – can be overcome by other elements in the human makeup – the capacity for self-sacrifice, the ability to respond to the call for renunciation, a sense of sympathy with our fellow human beings. Gandhi wrote: "Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature... Our socialism or communism should, therefore, be based on non-violence and on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenant."[11]

Trusteeship, as a concept, fits into the framework of thought which Gandhi called *Sarvodaya*, i.e., the welfare of all. He found himself in substantial disagreement with the utilitarian belief in the greatest happiness of the greatest number. He disagreed on the ground that in a country with substantial minorities, to look only to the welfare of the majority would be an injustice.

These ideas of Gandhi on socio-economic matters were worked out by him in course of continuous experiments. And all these involved political activity, and it is with this that we shall start.

III

Gandhi's political thinking needs to be viewed taking into account his work in South Africa, his leadership of the Indian struggle for independence from British rule in general, and his relation to the Congress Party in particular. He was closely associated with Indian political life from 1915, when he returned to India from South Africa, until he was killed by a fanatic on 30 January, 1948. From about 1919 onwards he was the central figure in the movement for national independence, and even though he ceased to be a member of the Congress Party in 1934, he virtually remained its leader.

As a politician Gandhi was initially a believer in the use of constitutional means. But when constitutional means failed, he resorted to the 'soul-force' called *satyāgraha*. This had some resemblance to passive resistance or civil disobedience in that violence was to be eschewed. What Gandhi had in mind was more positive than Thoreau's famous essay on civil disobedience. Gandhi's idea of civil disobedience was linked to his own special understanding of Truth.

Why was Gandhi against violence? The answer is that Gandhi believed that one violent action leads to another. In this he believed in what the Buddha had said in the *Dhammapada*.[12] Violence concentrates power in the hands of a few, and always leads to suffering and degradation. War uses the method of coercion. *Satyāgraha* aims at conversion through self-suffering. Victory could be won by moral strength. It should be noted that *Satyāgraha* is not pacifism. Pacifism has reservations about the use of force, and holds that it could sometimes be used as a last resort if 'pacifism' did not 'work'. The pacifist does not have constructive programme. The latter had great importance for Gandhi. He thought people should have an experience of the new society that they were looking for and the discipline that working for it involved. This would give

people the training without which no *satyāgraha* campaign could be successfully concluded. Further, only the law-abiding have the right to offer *satyāgraha*. A random strike or agitation does not qualify as *satyāgraha*. The *satyāgrahī* must be mindful of his limitations. Leadership must be decentralized so that when the leaders are in jail, the campaign can go on. The leaders should not be separate from masses. Public opinion must be enlisted at every stage. The way for negotiation should be kept open. There should be no violence in speech or action. Every effort should be made to remain on good terms with the opponent. And lastly, if violence should break out then the campaign must be stopped. This is what happened in 1919 during the agitation after the Rowlett Act, and in 1922 in Chauri Chaura when the Congress workers had been involved in an act of violence. *Satyāgraha* as a political means is ethically grounded. There was, for Gandhi, a strong link between one's personal way of life and the ability to be a fit instrument of service to others. *Satyāgraha* as a method of conflict-resolution was definitely Gandhi's major contribution to political thought.

Gandhi's conception of democracy, like that of Rousseau's, was that special stress should be laid on intermediate institutions of a voluntary nature where the ordinary man would learn self-confidence in tackling his own problems.

The concept of *Swarāj* or self-rule contains Gandhi's ideas on the kind of political economy he envisaged for free India. He looked forward to a decentralized form of government with the village as the unit and functioning for the benefit of the individual. Indian independence, he said, must begin at the bottom. Every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its own affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. This way of putting in his case is remarkable in many ways. Gandhi resembled the anarchists in his preference for political and economic decentralization, but wanted anarchism to be 'enlightened'.

Gandhi resembles the Marxists in his concern for an exploitation-free society where the interests of the masses (in the Indian context this meant the peasants) would be safeguarded. Gandhi had no doubt in his mind that the problem which faces man in our times is the threat of war, and he honestly believed that a village economy based on non-violence would be able to defend itself. Unless power is generated from below, a country as large as India would not be able to defend itself. He believed that for centuries in ancient times this was how India's rural economy had survival in spite of successive waves of exploitation.

Gandhi introduced the concept of 'oceanic circle' as a counter concept to the pyramidal structure of modern industrial state. This model of concentric circles, rippling outwards, with the individual at the centre is Gandhi's alternative not only to the pyramidal structure of the modern industrial state, but provides an alternative model to the stratified structure of society in India or elsewhere.

What Gandhi meant by *Swarāj*? The concept was introduced by Dadabhai Naoroji and Tilak. It meant "the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest member of the adult population male or female, native-born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the state and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters". But he also said that *Swarāj* would involve a "continuous effort to be independent of government control whether it is foreign government or whether it is national".[13] This shows the extent to which Gandhi refused to look on politics as the game of powers, be-all and end-all of contemporary life. It was his firm view that one should keep altogether aloof from power politics and its contagion. His ideas had come full circle. In the *Hind Swarāj* he had indicated that there was an alternative to the Western industrialized state with its reliance on political cum-military powers. A decentralized village-based economy would produce a civilization of a very different kind. Such a society, he said, is

necessarily highly cultured in which every man or woman know what he or she wants, and what is more, knows that no one should want anything that the others cannot have with equal labour.[14] In an age of rising expectations Gandhi shifted the discussion from rights to duties. The minimum needs of all must be satisfied before the special needs of a few could be catered to. Expectations should be directed to ourselves, to what we could do to change reality rather than to what the government or those in authority would do for us.

IV

Gandhi was against all centrist phenomena in society. He proposed alternatives in almost all areas of human life and activity. Accordingly, he had a conception of state in keeping with his idea of the nature and structure of political institutions. Though Gandhi was an ardent supporter of the fundamental principles of democracy, e.g., freedom and equality, he was not in favour of any state, not even a democratic state. Like the anarchist he believed that the existence of the state is inseparably connected with violence. "The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, the state can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence...What I disapprove of is an organization on force, which a state is".[15] It is remarkable that both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi used the same metaphor of machine for the state. The secret of their dislike of the Western conception of state is their idea of the individual as a *living will* or *soul* as they loved to put it. Further Gandhi says, "I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress".[16] Nowhere said Gandhi, the state lived for the poor, and never develops non-violence.

Gandhi's line of argument runs somewhat as follows: True democracy, based on the principle of justice, can never be born of violence. Justice is the

synthesis of freedom, equality, and non-violence. By force and power the state can never ensure either equality or liberty. If the means are tainted with violence physical or non-physical, the resulting state cannot be good for the individual. This method of non-violence or *ahimsā* differentiates Gandhi's anarchism from that of Proudhon or Bakunin, who reiterated the need for violent techniques to put an end to the violent state. The Gandhian method is mainly influenced by Tolstoy, Thoreau and Kropotkin, who in place of revolutionary method supported the evolutionary process of decentralization, True decentralization, Gandhi thinks, is an essential corollary of non-violence. Hence, for Gandhi, *ahimsā* comes before *Swarāj*.

We may now put Gandhi in the map of political thought. The Greeks believed that the State contributed in greater degree than any other social institution, to the realization of the finer and nobler capacities of man. Plato has argued extensively that education to be the true function of the State and that the State, in its ideal form makes the man. Socrates, in the *Crito*, even though a protagonist of individual reason, said that the State was like one's parent. In the West, we find two conceptions of State. One view is that the State is an organism, and the individuals are its parts. The State is real, and the individual is an abstraction. There is the other view that the State is a machine, a device, designed by men for their own purposes. This view was developed in the seventeenth century, and came to be challenged in the eighteenth. However, both these views still persist. Rousseau considers the State as a collective person, and embodiment of the General Will, but he, too, is inclined to view that the State as an association formed by men for their own purposes. But whether the State is looked upon as a machine, or as the General Will, obedience to State becomes imperative. Hegel regarded the State as omnipotent, infallible absolute, the perfected rationality and the crystallization of morality.

Till the end of the middle ages, the State had played only a limited role, there were several constraints on the operation of the dynamics of power.

Industrial revolution changed the face of the world. The system of Capitalism arose, and it led to the atomization of the society. The rural social structure, developed around the nucleus of agriculture, gave away under the grinding force of industrialization. The community was destroyed and the society was converted into an amorphous mass. The historical situation transformed the State qualitatively, and the modern State was born.

Now the State stands alienated from society. As Eric Fromm has remarked, man submits to the State as to the embodiment of his own social feelings which he worships as powers alienated from himself. In his private life as an individual he suffers from the isolation and aloneness which are the necessary result of this separation. The worship of the State can only disappear if man takes back the social powers into himself builds a community in which his private and social existence are one and the same. Gandhi thought along the way Fromm has been formulating. The State weakens and displaces all other social associations, and industrial growth not only acted as a catalyst for the rise of the modern State, putting immense power at its hands, and thereby gave rise to imperialism and colonialism. Gandhi had a clear understanding of the role of capitalism in the emergence of the modern State. It is Capitalism, he saw, which makes State intervention necessary in economic affairs. He said, Capitalism contributed to the emergence of all-powerful State which makes individual freedom impossible.

Marxism projects the idea of the withering away of the State. The Marxian view regarding the State may be had from Engel's classic work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In Engel's words, "The State is a product of society at a certain stage of development, it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel. But in order that these antagonisms, these classes with conflicting economic interests might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it

became necessary to have a power, seemingly standing above society, that would alleviate the conflict and keep it within bounds of order; and this power arising out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the State".[17] This account rejects Engel's idea of the State as the image and reality of reason. The point is that the State has existed from all eternity, and that there have been societies that did without it, that had no idea of the State and state power. On the Marxian premises, it is hoped that if and when production is reorganized on the basis of a free and equal association of the producers, the whole machinery of the state will become obsolete.

According to Marxist conception a State is essentially a 'class State'. A State is ultimately governed by those elements and interests in society that are economically the most powerful. Those who control the economic power ultimately decide the character of the State, whatever be the outward form. The Marxist believes in the withering away of the State, not its abolition. The seizure of the means of production would be the last act in founding the proletarian State, as a State.

Tolstoy's doctrine goes by the name of Christian anarchism. To him, the State, private property and organized churches were incompatible with Christianity. For him the State and the class hierarchy are evil, the disciple of Jesus be a rebel, a conscientious objector. But Tolstoy did speculate on the future organizations of society. He advocated non-violence, bread labour, simplicity and passive resistance to all evils.

For Gandhi since state is deeply rooted in violence and perpetuates exploitation, so he stands for its abolition. It has no place in a non-violent society. He condemns the State not so much that it is an agency of domination but more due to the fact that it hinders the ethical development of man. It corrupts the man, demoralizes him and leaves him into a state of abject surrender. The State contradicts the nature of man. We should bear in mind that Gandhi defined man in certain moral and spiritual terms. Man, for Gandhi, is a

master of himself, of his thoughts, intentions, deeds and passions. He is answerable to none but to himself. When society is composed of such individuals, there would be no place for the mechanism of the State. The State thus retards the growth of individual's personality, and is destructive of his freedom. So Gandhi views every increase of the powers of the State with fear.

By political power Gandhi means "The power to control national life through national representatives". In his opinion political power should not be a negation of individual's freedom and autonomy. National representatives, according to him, "... will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect as to be self-controlled. It will then be a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler... In an ideal state there will be no political institution and therefore no political power".[1]

Gandhi's objection to the existence of the State is based on three grounds: (a) that it is an embodiment of violence; (b) that it is soulless; and (c) that it destroys individuality and retards man's progress.

It has often argued that Gandhi's views as regards the State are both a form of anarchism and of utopianism, at least in its present form. Gandhi, like Marx, thought that the existence of the State is due to incompatibility of different group interests. Class interest, of course, was not his idiom. But the imports of the idioms are kindred. Gandhi appreciated Thoreau's adage that that government is best which governs the least. In other words, the minimal state which governs the least needs self-governing people as its citizens. He disproves of any organization based on force that the State is. The force which Gandhi abhorred is replaceable only by voluntary organizations. And the Gandhian sort of voluntary organization presupposes successful self-governing citizens. The ideal of self-governing people is antithetical to the Gandhian concept of the State which reminds one of the Marxist concept of the State. Gandhi said that the State represents violence in concentrated and organized form. The Marxist speaks of violence in terms of class conflict and exploitation, patent or latent, and Gandhi

also does the same. Both Marx and Gandhi wanted to dismantle the State machinery because it was soulless (as Gandhi said) or dehumanizing (as Marx put it). But since the machinery has a strong foundation in the form of class or group conflict, it is not easy to do so. While Marx thought that it could not be dismantled except through armed revolution, according to Gandhi, revolution involves violence and hatred, and he was convinced that whatever is gained through violence has to be retained by reinforced violence. This is known as the paradox of violence. Marx had given the constraints of situations, no perception of a non-violent way out of the paradox. But Marx was perceptive enough to say that violence-based dictatorship was transitory, purely temporary, and the socialist state should be based on authentic consciousness of the proletariat. This diluted role of violence, of course, would not be acceptable to Gandhi. No institutional mechanism can ever succeed in putting violence in check. Gandhi, therefore, relied more on native love in man, i.e., the non-violent nature of individual human beings.

Both Marx and Gandhi were committed, though in different ways, to the utopias of anarchism. But neither would agree that the ideal state of society they envisaged was really utopian. When Marx spoke of the stateless communist society of the future, he did believe that it was a historical necessity and did not therefore depend on the ethical goodness of this individual or that, of this class or that. Somewhat similarly, when Gandhi speaks of *Rāma Rājya*, a social order free from political bindings and consisting of self-governing individuals, he was really convinced that this is a destiny which mankind in its quest for perfection has been aiming at all the time. Historicists of the empiricist persuasion, do appreciate the Gandhian or the Marxist utopia, yet point to the existing state of political and economic affairs as involving unimplementability of the ideologies. This unimplementability is ascribed to its anti-empirical and anti-historical character. Both Gandhi and Marx might try to meet the objection by highlighting their respective views of human nature. Marx used to say that man is a self-

exceeding animal, and that he exceeds himself by his labour, which makes him a part of a definite class, and from which he continues to draw sustenance for further self-exceeding labour. Similarly, Gandhi affirmed in a Vedantic vein that human nature is like a spark of fire, a part of a boundless whole to which man always feels inwardly or spiritually drawn. This spiritual affiliation of the individual man to the total reality makes him a self-transcending creature. His love for others and all creatures is expressive of his transcendental origin and orientation.

To understand the basic difference between Marx's utopia and Gandhi's, one has to group their views regarding the ultimate reality and its relation with human nature. For Gandhi, reality is consciousness, or God, properly so-called. The relation obtaining between God and man is like that between the sun and its rays. As an Advaitin, Gandhi believes in the essential unity of men. According to him, man is essentially divine, whatever is undivine in him is alien to him, imposed upon him from without. This approach to human nature is based on the primacy of freedom, said to be native to human nature itself. Given this view, the role of institution in human life becomes secondary. In this respect Gandhi's difference from Marx is marked.

By 'freedom' Marx meant recognition of necessity, historical and economic. Gandhi defined it in terms of self-realisation, which is a sort of God-realisation. Gandhi attached primary importance to individual *Swarāj* or self-rule. One could be free or truly self-ruled whatever might be one's socio-economic, i.e., external-institutional conditions. This unconditional nature of freedom is unacceptable to Marx. For him, freedom is socially situated, and the ideal social order can only be a gift of history, to be achieved by the exploited in and through struggle against the exploiter. Gandhi did not rule out the necessity of struggle for freedom. His main emphasis was on internal freedom. Unless one could first be internally free and fearless *satyāgrahī*, one could not effectively fight for a great cause. Institutional support or class-affiliation is never enough

for Gandhi to ensure success. This difference between Marx and Gandhi needs to be appreciated.

Gandhi's notion of *sarvodaya* and *Swāraj* have often accused of being historically frozen, admitting of no possible change thereafter. In points of fact all utopians are so criticized. A word on this issue will be in order.

All utopias are not alike. An utopia such as Plato's *Republic* or Kant's *Kingdom of Ends* are intrinsically different from Gandhi's *Swāraj* and Marx's vision of the communist society. As for Gandhi, once the means-value is said to be negotiable or can be compromised on this or that 'practical' ground, a sort of moral skepticism, a departure from high political idealism, becomes almost incapable. This is the basic point of his paradox of violence. The importance of means to Gandhi is as great as that of end itself. He is not prepared to compromise it even for the highest cause of freedom, personal or national. On Marx's premises, for the sake of social transformation in revolutionary situations, the relation between ends and means is not immutable but flexible. What is taken to be just in an ordinary situation need not be so in a revolutionary one. There is such a thing as revolutionary justice. To this Gandhi would never agree.

The anti-utopian argument often takes the following form. If the utopia is perfect, it should not be changed; if it is not perfect, it is not a utopia in the highest or idealistic sense. Either it is perfect, or it is not. Therefore, either it should not be changed, or it is not yet to be achieved or established. Given this argument one has to believe that Gandhi's utopia to *Rāma Rājya* will know no change. There will be left no scope for conflict or violence, necessitating any institution to deal with it, and providing any impetus for further historical change. Such has been the argument offered by Dahrendorf against all utopians, be it Plato's *Republic* or Marx's Communist Society.[17] Dahrendorf does not take into account the reason why utopias are offered at all. The answer to the question may be found in man's perpetual dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs

and his efforts to change them and build a better social order. Popper too (in his *Open Society and its Enemies*) has argued against utopias or products of utopic imagination, and Dahrendorf quotes him approvingly. Both of them are opposed to historical transcendence. But whether a particular mode of creative imagination such as that of Aurobindo's or of Gandhi cannot be decided *apriori*. Too much insistence on remaining close to experience results in a sort of positivism, both epistemological and sociological. Moreover, all utopias are products of their time. And, in the present case, Gandhi was not necessarily a self-deluding person or unfamiliar with the history of his time. But at the same time, he was aware of the discrepancy between what he saw around him and what he wanted to see beyond him. Transcendence is the essence of both ideology and utopia, in Gandhi's *Rāma Rājya* or Aurobindo's spiritual anarchy, in Marx's communist society, and Kant's Kingdom of Ends. From his metaphysical standpoint Gandhi can defend his utopia. According to his view of human nature, even in *Rāma Rājya* there will be unevenness between man and man, as all people cannot simultaneously reach the highest level of self-realisation. Even if the difference between personal life, aggressive social life, and the best possible life is narrowed down to the minimum, there will still be justification left for the existence of distinct individuals and the necessity for their continuous and creative cooperation. Given this element of imperfection, *Rāma Rājya*, if ever established, will never be static. Unequal beings would continue to derive inspiration from one another to grow steadily. Dahrendorf's argument against the frozen character of utopias may be more meaningfully directed against Plato and Kant rather than Gandhi.

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