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THE PHILOSOPHY OF

Mahatma Gandhi

By Dhirendra Mohan Datta

Some Other Works by
DHIRENDRA MOHAN DATTA

THE SIX WAYS OF KNOWING

AN INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY
(in association with S. C. Chatterjee)

THE CHIEF CURRENTS OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

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To My Wife

and

All women around the world

who work in obscurity

to help men work

in the limelight

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Foreword

The rich treasure of Indian philosophical thought has been made available to English-speaking readers in many excellent translations. But it is a treasure of which few have availed themselves. The growing need for mutual understanding between East and West, however, emphasises the importance of study of this material. The time has come when it should find its place in the curricula of all our universities. And the best way, initially, to further this development is through the teaching of courses on our college campuses by visiting professors from India. It was considerations such as these that led to the visit of Professor D. M. Datta to America in the academic year 1951–52 to teach for the first semester at the University of Wisconsin and the balance of the year at the University of Minnesota. Two foundations helped to make this project possible. The Watamull Foundation of New York, assisted the University of Minnesota, while the participation of the University of Wisconsin was made possible through funds of the Kemper K. Knapp bequest.

Indian philosophy could have found no better apostle to the West than Professor Datta. Dressed in the native Indian homespun cloth of a disciple of Gandhi, his obvious sincerity won the hearts of his students, as his careful and lucid expositions won their intellectual appreciation. Our thanks are due to India and, in particular, to the Government of

the Province of Bihar, India, for having loaned him to us.

At home Professor Datta is head of the Department of Philosophy at Patna College, Patna University, Patna, in Bihar. He has won many distinctions in his professional career as philosopher and educator. He was a member of the East-West Philosophers' Conference held at the University of Hawaii. He is one of four scholars selected to edit a large two-volume work on the philosophy of East and West, which is being sponsored by the Government of India and will be published in England. He is the author of numerous articles and of three important books, *Six Ways of Knowing, Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy* and, in association with S. C. Chatterjee, an *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. These works reveal him as a distinguished member of that small coterie of scholars who are thoroughly at home in the history of ideas of both Europe and India.

As part of his duties as Kemper K. Knapp Visiting Professor Dr. Datta delivered several public lectures. The subject of the two most important of these was *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*. These lectures were broadcast several times on the radio and are of such value that Professor Datta was asked by the Kemper K. Knapp Committee to put them in form for publication. Gandhi himself has left us no systematic presentation of his philosophy. It has to be distilled from his autobiography, speeches and extensive writing on various subjects. For this difficult and important taṣk Professor Datta is peculiarly well fitted, having been closely associated with Gandhi's movement for many years and being thoroughly familiar with both the Indian and Western backgrounds of Gandhi's thought. In these lectures, therefore, we have presented for the first time a concise, sys-

tematic, reliable, and reasonably full account of the philosophy which inspired and directed the life of a man who is not merely one of the most significant and influential figures of our age, but one of the small company of truly great leaders in history whose personalities have moved the spirit of multitudes to act with high devotion to a great cause.

A. Campbell Garnett

The University of Wisconsin
January, 1952

Preface

During 1922–25, just after finishing my studies at the University of Calcutta I took up constructive social work in East Bengal villages in response to Mahatma Gandhi's call to the educated youth of India. For a preliminary training I joined his home and training centre (ashrama) at Sabarmati (Bombay) and enjoyed, for over six months, the unique privilege of living the life of work and worship which he initiated there. Though subsequently I came back to academic life in the cities, I have always drawn inspiration from the few years that I passed as one of the thousands of youths who tried to obey his call. Having had the advantage of reading his writings in Gujarati (his mother tongue), Hindi (the *lingua franca* of modern India) and English, and being also a student of philosophy, I had often felt an attraction for exploring the possibility of piecing together his scattered philosophical ideas and reducing them to a system, and judging also which of them could be traced back to ancient sources and which of them were his own. I am thankful to the University of Wisconsin, the Kemper Knapp Committee and especially its chairman, Professor Julian Harris, for providing me the opportunity for fulfilling the long-cherished desire.

I am thankful to Professor Gilbert H. Doane, the Librarian of the University of Wisconsin, his colleagues, and the Indian students of the University for cordial help and

particularly for securing for me the necessary books from other libraries outside the state. Of the books of Gandhi on which I have more frequently drawn, the *Autobiography*, *Hindu Dharma*, *Anasakti-yoga* and the *Selections from Gandhi* (by Professor Niramal Kumar Bose) are worth special mention. The Hindi collection of his letters under the title *Bapuke Ashirvad*, which was presented to me by the Principal, colleagues and students of Patna College (Patna, India) on the eve of my departure to America, was a constant source of inspiration.

I am especially grateful to Professor A. C. Garnett, Chairman of the Department of Philosophy, at the University of Wisconsin, who helped me at every stage of the work with his valuable advice and guidance, and to Professor Francis Shoemaker for many valuable suggestions. I am no less indebted to the students and teachers of the University who attended my courses during the fall semester of 1952 and helped me organize my ideas by constant discussion.

The audience of the public lectures raised, by their wonderful response to Gandhi's ideas, my drooping faith. This has greatly sustained me in this work of self-purifying literary labour.

Dhirendra Mohan Datta

University of Minnesota
March, 1952

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAHATMA GANDHI

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Background of Gandhi's Philosophy

> Children inherit the qualities of the parents, no less than their physical features. Environment does play an important part, but the original capital on which a child starts in life is inherited from its ancestors.—*Autobiography*

To understand the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi it is necessary to know certain things about the country and the family in which he was born, and his personal life which was passed in three continents—Asia, Europe, and Africa—yielding a variety of experiences which gradually shaped his ideas.

India—Its Diversity and Unity

To many distant observers India seems a single geographical peninsula neatly bounded by the high mountains and the deep seas, which must, therefore, have a homogeneous population and culture; and its philosophy must, of course, always have been the world-negating Monistic Vedanta, as

so many western scholars of all times have testified. To most foreign travelers, on the other hand, India has appeared as a hopelessly heterogeneous medley of diverse peoples, tongues and creeds that defy consistency and baffle understanding. The truth—which can be perceived only by a patient and sympathetic observer who has the time to study the country closely—lies perhaps in the middle. India is a subtle unity beneath her apparent diversity.

Let us consider the diversity first. The physical features of India present the highest mountains of the world, capped by eternal snows in the north, low coasts in the south having eternal spring, and in addition, tracts of land lying in between having all kinds of altitudes and temperatures. Again, India has Cherapunji with the heaviest rainfall in the world, the fertile Gangetic valley, as well as the desert wastes of Rajputana and Sindh. During the nearly five thousand years of traceable history, India has been inhabited by the many aboriginals as well as by the diverse immigrant races which came in successive waves from the West and the East. "Racial types still occurring in the Indian population therefore contain . . . elements from all the main divisions of mankind not found elsewhere to the same extent," namely the Negrito, the Proto-Australoid, the Mongoloid, the Mediterranean, the western Brachycephals and the Nordic.[1] Naturally enough the cultures and languages of the people who came to settle in India also came with them and were added to the common stock. All the great religions of the world have originated in or come to India. What is now known as Hinduism arose more than four thousand years ago out of

1. *Vide:* Biraja Sankar Guha, *Racial Elements of the Population* (Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs No. 22, 1944), p. 2.

the vedic faith; the Vedas being the earliest Indo-European literature, perhaps partly developed in India, partly brought from outside by the Aryans who migrated into India from somewhere in Europe. During the sixth century B.C., Mahavira revived the non-vedic faith, now known as Jainism, and Gautama, the Buddha, founded Buddhism. Though nothing is known definitely about the original pre-vedic faith, it is supposed by some that the worship of Shiva and Shakti, to be found even now intermingled with other faiths, had a non-vedic aboriginal, perhaps Dravidian, origin. In later times the followers of early Christianity, the Jewish faith, and Zoroastrianism found asylum in India and they are still flourishing there. Since the eighth century A.D. successive batches of the followers of Mohammad attacked or conquered India and led to the establishment of his faith, Islam, which now commands a large following. From the fifteenth century onwards, with the successive advents of the Dutch, the French, and the British, the many later forms of Christianity came into India and established their churches.

The cultures and faiths during the last four thousand years inspired different types of philosophical systems, of which the principal ones would number about a dozen, and which present almost all the types of philosophy the world knows of. Atheism, polytheism, theism, and super-theism; scepticism, agnosticism, relativism, empiricism, and rationalism; subjectivism, indirect realism, and direct realism; materialism, dualism, and idealism; pluralism, monism, and indeterminism—have all had their votaries in different ages and parts of the country during these millenniums, and even the extant treatises—a fraction of the original total, most having been lost—amount to thousands. And the noteworthy thing

about these systems and schools is that many of them have flourished side by side claiming allegiance from different temperaments.

But underlying these great diversities there have been many unifying influences which have been at work through the millenniums. Migration of communities to the less populated areas at different periods has conduced to some amount of mobility of the population. Intermarriage, where possible or favored, has led to the fusion of the many races and evolved a few general types of Indian features. Even where fusion has not been possible, the general tendency has been, not the elimination of one group by the other, but the formation of different classes as the limbs of one social organism. The idea of this organic social whole is even found in a hymn (the *Purusha-sukta*) of the *Rig Veda*. In different periods the conquest of the country or its major parts has brought the peoples under one rule. The spread of some strong religious movements in all parts and the establishment of places of pilgrimage in all quarters, have fostered the growth of cultural unity. As religions and religious sects went on multiplying, attempts were made at successive stages to synthesize the diverse currents or to regard them as different alternative spiritual paths, any of which could be chosen according to one's aptitude. The *Brahma Sutra* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* in ancient times, the saints like Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya in medieval times and those like Ramakrishna in modern times have repeatedly attempted synthesis and taught toleration.

Even in the sphere of philosophy, where the conflict of views regarding metaphysical questions became irreconcilable, scholars like Vijnana Bhikshu, Madhavacharya, and the

Jainas tried to systematize them either as a series of truths arrangeable in an ascending order of depth and subtlety or as different possible views of Reality. Moreover almost all the schools had a wonderful unity of moral outlook—the world being regarded as a moral stage, subject to moral laws that favor the conservation of moral values, human destiny being shaped by man's own action, and the highest good being attainable by knowledge, self-discipline, and selfless action.

Early Life of Gandhi

In 1869 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in this land of complex traditions, in the small northwestern peninsula called Kathiawad, which forms one of the outlying parts of the Guzarati-speaking area of the province of Bombay. His forebears belonged to the *Vaishya* (trading) class—the third of the four castes of Hinduism. But his father and grandfather preferred service as ministers in the native states of that province. They were both reputed as much for honest and loyal service as for their uncompromising sense of honor. His family followed the traditional theistic faith, called Vaishnavism, which inculcates the worship of God as the Supreme Person endowed with all auspicious qualities, and which rejects the belief in God as the Indeterminate Absolute transcending all assignable attributes. Devotion and self-surrender are the keynotes of this faith. Offering worship in the temples, taking sacred vows, and observing fasts on different holy days round the year, are the usual practices of the devout Vaishnavas. Gandhi was born and raised in such an atmosphere. His mother and his nurse were particu-

larly devout, and Gandhi imbibed their faith and learned the many current sacred names of God, particularly Rama, which he was taught to recite whenever in difficulty.

But the locality had members of other faiths as well, such as the Jainas, Muslims, and Zoroastrians. Gandhi's father had friends among them, and when they visited, there were friendly discussions about those other faiths. Gandhi listened to them. He also read, as the *Autobiography* tells us, religious books in Guzarati from his father's library, such as the *Ramayana* (the life and story of Rama, the ideal and truthful Hindu King, adored also as an incarnation of God), the *Bhagavata* (a semi-historical and semi-allegorical devotional treatise which has been the chief source of inspiration to all theists in ancient and modern India), the *Manusmriti* (the ethical, social, and political laws of Manu, the law giver of ancient India). He thus had, as he says, some glimpses of religion even in early life. But in spite of an abundance of Christian literature, missionaries, and churches in India, Christianity failed to attract young Gandhi, as most other Hindu boys, whose feelings would be voiced by the following interesting explanation given by Gandhi in his *Autobiography:* "Only Christianity was at the time an exception. I developed a sort of dislike for it. And for a reason. In those days Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the high school and hold forth pouring abuses on Hindus and their gods."

As a boy, Gandhi was rather frail, nervous, and shy. He was none too brilliant in his studies. He mentions having read Guzarati, English, a little Sanskrit, of which he never felt very confident, and mathematics for his matriculation

from the University of Bombay. But he was honest and laborious; and that helped him through the high school.

He learned from his mother and neighbors the Indian maxim, "There is nothing higher than Truth." He also learned that harmlessness or nonviolence was the highest virtue (*ahimsa paramo dharmah*). Though this latter is universally acknowledged among the Hindus in all parts of India, it is most rigidly practised by the Vaishnavas and particularly the Jainas, the combined influence of which turned the native place of Gandhi, Guzarat, into the land of strictest vegetarianism. Gandhi grew in that atmosphere.

But the impact of Western ideas, which began to pour into India through the High Schools, Colleges, and Universities established by the British Government, had already begun to shake the agelong ideas and customs followed by Indians. The newly educated Indian minds began to rebel and break down, if not openly, at least secretly, some of these customs which, they thought, were the causes of their physical weakness and political slavery. Young Gandhi came for a time under the influence of some older students who secretly visited places where they could eat meat and smoke cigarettes tabooed at home. He even stole a few coppers and once some gold to meet such forbidden expenses. But soon he was seized by remorse and made a clean breast of his lapses to his father, gathering the moral courage to receive any punishment his father might inflict. But to his utter surprise his father forgave him with silent tears which completely washed away Gandhi's secret leanings. This was for him the first double lesson on the powers of truthfulness and love (*ahimsa*)—how truthfulness can arouse love, and love can

silently, but most effectively, reform the heart. This sowed the seed of the twin principles of Truth and Love which grew larger and wider every day throughout his life.

As Gandhi says in the *Autobiography:* "This was for me an object lesson in *Ahimsa.* . . . When such *Ahimsa* becomes all-embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power."

As a Student in England

After the death of his father, his elder brother, a lawyer and head of their joint family, sent him to London in 1888 to study law. He could receive his mother's permission to go abroad only after taking before her the solemn vow to remain a strict vegetarian and to shun all evil company. This vow and the love and regard for his mother pulled him up from the brink of temptation and imminent fall on several occasions in London. The effect of this experience remained with him and made him take solemn vows on several occasions for making his pious wishes effective. He thus came to testify strongly, from his own life, the efficacy of taking solemn vows (*vrata*) as taught by the Hindu and Jaina scriptures.

It was in England that he diligently learned all the great and good things of the West. His legal studies did not demand much attention and he was free to pursue diverse paths of interest. He studied for the London matriculation to have a wide intellectual grounding—in Latin, French, English, as well as the elementary sciences. He tried even to take some lessons in dancing and music, though without much success. But he spent a large part of his time cultivating acquaintance

through books, meetings, and personal discussions with the many moral, religious, and even dietetic movements of the West. It was also through western appreciative exponents that he gained knowledge and confidence in the greatest things in Indian culture. Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* gave him a touching impression of the life of Buddha and his English version of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, entitled *The Song Celestial*, converted him to the teachings of the *Gita*. He plodded through the Old Testament and read the New and was much impressed. He says:

> But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the *Sermon on the Mount* which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the *Gita*. The verses, "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." . . . My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, the *Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.

Acquaintance with the theosophists and their literature introduced him to that religious movement for the unity of religions. From Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-worship* he "learned of the Prophets' greatness, bravery and austere living." From his legal studies he learned two great things. First, the maxim that the two-thirds of law are facts. He applied this later in his legal as well as his political work. It fitted nicely into his respect for truth. He always tried to collect facts patiently and laboriously and let the accumulated strength of well-arranged and attested facts decide the case. The second legal principle that left an abiding impression on his mind is the idea of *trusteeship*, which he tried to apply later for the equal distribution of wealth by persuading

the rich to realize that they were the trustees of the people's wealth and should voluntarily spend it for their welfare. During his sojourn in London he also cultivated the habit of spending very economically the money his brother sent him, and of keeping an accurate daily account of his expenditures —a habit that helped him to handle efficiently the public funds entrusted to him all through his long life.

On the whole it can be said that by the time he left London for India in 1891 after qualifying as a barrister-at-law (an attorney), all the basic principles of his life were set and habits accordingly formed. He became inclined toward a way of life which, he thought, was the best that the world had evolved through its greatest men and on which the East and the West could meet.

As a Lawyer, Social, and Political Worker in Africa

The later life of Gandhi in India, South Africa, and finally again in India may be regarded as the practical application of his earlier convictions in different fields and their extension in all directions of life.

After a short legal practice in India, without much success, he went to South Africa to prepare and conduct the case of an Indian Mohammedan merchant there. He toiled for months to collect all relevant facts, study law, and even bookkeeping, and by sheer devotion to truth he gained more knowledge about the case than even the two fighting businessmen themselves had, and he became master of the situation. He persuaded the parties to compromise the case and live in peace rather than ruin themselves by litigation. During

the subsequent years—about twenty—he always followed the same principles in practice and, while his reputation and income as an honest lawyer increased, he espoused the cause of truth and righteousness and often made legal fights end in love. He saved both *his* soul and those of the litigants, and won the esteem of all.

In South Africa he came into closer contact with many good Christians, Quakers and others, and read more of Christianity. He was influenced also by some good Muslims and studied Islam. The theosophists, too, attracted him and helped him study more of Hinduism—works on the *Gita*, Vedanta, Yoga, Jainism, and the books of Swami Vivekananda (the disciple of Saint Ramakrishna) who preached very persuasively the ideas of Vedanta to the West and won high applause in America, Europe, and India. Raichand Bhai, a saintly Indian merchant, made a deep impression on him by his ideal Hindu life. He also studied the new interpretation of Christianity by Tolstoy and Ruskin, and its application by them in individual and social life. Referring to these influences in his *Autobiography* he says:

"Three moderns have left a deep impress on my life and captivated me: Raichand Bhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You;* and Ruskin by his *Unto This Last.*"

It should be noted that Tolstoy's spiritual interpretation of Christianity, the presence of God within, brought Christianity near to the Vedantic idea of man; his emphasis on the Sermon on the Mount and the conquering of hatred by love and evil by nonresistance seemed to Gandhi to be in exact conformity with Buddhist and Jaina teachings about *Ahimsa* put into social practice. Tolstoy's book contained long letters

and accounts of the practical application of the principle of nonresistance by Quakers and others in America who strengthened Tolstoy's convictions. Gandhi was thus influenced by those American Christians, too, indirectly through Tolstoy. But Gandhi was more directly influenced by the American moral reformer and writer Henry David Thoreau whose essay on "Civil Disobedience" he read with great admiration. It is interesting to note that Thoreau, a friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, was himself influenced a good deal, like the latter, by the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Upanishads.*

From Ruskin's book Gandhi learned the dignity of manual labor, the idea that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all and that each can and should serve society by his own labor and profession in the field of his choice.

But all these lessons went side by side with a life of earnest practice into which by circumstances and inner leanings Gandhi came to be drawn. South Africa abounded in color prejudices, and even Gandhi, in spite of his British education, European dress and professional standing, was often subjected to all kinds of humiliation against which he revolted and protested only to provoke more insult and sometimes physical assault. Discriminative legislation also was proposed by the British rulers to debar Indians from rights of citizenship and other privileges. These circumstances offered to Gandhi the opportunities for applying the principles of conquering evil by love. He adopted passive or civil resistance by disobeying immoral laws, courting assault, imprisonment, and all kinds of suffering without retaliation or mental hatred and anger. He hoped that even the hardhearted rulers would ultimately be moved to pity and would realize their mistakes

and rectify the wrongs. Gandhi was particularly hopeful about his method, for he had then the deep-rooted belief in the inner goodness of the British people which he thought could be aroused by moral appeal—by showing in an effective manner the genuineness of the grievances and the righteousness of the cause. And this method of nonviolent fight ultimately succeeded.

But behind this success lay his long personal preparation and training of the fellow-workers by his own life of sacrifice and firmness in the cause of truth and righteousness. He found that if he were to serve the society wholeheartedly and train workers, he must give up his greed for money, hankering for pleasures and lead a life of utter simplicity and self-control and teach others by his own example the possibility of such a life. This led him to all kinds of disciplines and experiments. He founded a rural farm and attracted similarly-minded persons of different nationalities, white and nonwhite, to form a joint community based on the principle of plain living and high thinking. It was a big international family with a common kitchen, common ownership and run by the labor of each according to his or her capacity. In these long experiments in South Africa Gandhi worked in all conceivable and inconceivable capacities scarcely to be found in any *one* life before him. He worked as a school master, an accountant, an editor, a gardener, a barber, a tailor, a shoemaker, a compounder, a nurse, a midwife, a naturopathic physician, and what not. Several times while the British Government was involved in war he used his influence among Indians also to raise an ambulance corps, and led it himself to pick up the wounded and nurse them. Everywhere he passionately tried for perfection—both of the work and of

himself. And selfless work widened his heart, deepened his convictions, increased the number of his followers and supporters, and ultimately his silent self-denial won the admiration of people all over the world who began to see that the high ideals of religion and morality were applicable even in political life.

As the Social and Political Leader of India

With this unique African experience Gandhi came back to India, after about twenty years, to place himself at the disposal of his native land. Many of his intimate co-workers came with him and he founded at Sabarmati (Bombay) a farm and training center and named it Satyagraha Ashrama. His primary attention was to social service. He was determined to work for the removal of all social superstitions like untouchability, purda system, etc., to bring about unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, and to encourage the spread of cottage industries like spinning and weaving which could give employment to the vast majority of villagers who sat idle during some portion of the year. But gradually he was invited by the peasants, laborers, and others to solve *their* problems. He began to apply the method of truthfulness and love and to organize the people to make them nonviolent soldiers to win their righteous struggle against the British Government and the capitalists. By the increasing success of this method, Gandhi was gradually installed in the hearts of millions as their supreme leader.

He became fully convinced that the method which succeeded in the solution of smaller problems could also be successfully applied to the greatest problem of his country—

political slavery. But it could be applied only when the people could follow the path of truth and nonviolence. This demanded that they should first of all analyse themselves to find out their own defects which had made foreign rule possible. They should then purify themselves by removing their vices and should express their unanimous determination to be free. If the rulers still did not agree, all cooperation with the Government should be withdrawn by the people, which would automatically paralyze the Government, the machinery of which was ultimately run by the people. It was not, however, an easy method. Yet by repeated attempts through untold persecution and suffering Gandhi ultimately led India to freedom in 1947—thanks largely also to the moral pressure of the world at large, particularly of America, whose sympathy was roused by the high ideals and the nonviolent methods adopted by Gandhi.

For Gandhi the political freedom of India was not, however, the end, but only an important means. If India won freedom by the method of nonviolence, the method could be further extended for the solution of other problems in India and the world at large. So, though he was nearly eighty years old, he continued his mission of removing social evils and disharmony by his daily routine of work and worship until he was shot to death in 1948, ostensively for his love of peoples other than those of his community.

Mrs. Gandhi

Even this brief account of Gandhi's life and experiments would be incomplete without some mention of his wife, Kasturbai Gandhi, who was always at his back like a shadow

and, therefore, out of the limelight. She was his life's companion from the teens to the seventies. They grew together in body, mind, and spirit; worked together to raise their family of four sons, and their adopted "untouchable" girl; cooked and cleansed for their small family in earlier life, and for the bigger international family founded in South Africa and in India. She was the type of old Indian unobtrusive womanhood which claimed neither any separate existence nor any separate recognition. But yet, by complete self-effacement and identification with her husband, she enjoyed all the silent glory of a merged and united existence. She was with him in India and Africa, at home and in the community, in the kitchen as well as in prison. She followed all the zigzag path of trial and struggle through which Gandhi emerged from the narrower life of personal ambition to the wider life of love and service of God incarnate in downtrodden humanity. She also helped him gradually to transform love of the flesh into love of the spirit, and to concentrate all his energy on his social and political work.

It is important to add that Mrs. Gandhi, in spite of her submissive nature, also ruled and was often even feared. For example, when he was about to die of dysentery and no doctor could make him give up his self-chosen dietary restrictions, it was she who persuaded him even to break a vow and to take goat's milk which pulled him through.[2] As his American biographer, Louis Fischer notes: "Gandhi feared neither man nor government, neither prison nor poverty nor

2. Shocked at the cruelty practised by some milkmen who tried to milk the last drop from cows and buffaloes, Gandhi had taken a vow of not drinking milk.

death. But he did fear his wife." It was again an example of the conquering power of self-effacing love.

The world never realized her quiet service and greatness until kind death liberated her soul from the burden of decaying flesh and she was found overnight reigning as "Ba"—the mother—in the heart of the nation—of India which Gandhi used to call his one big family. Millions of rupees flowed in spontaneously in response to an appeal to the nation for establishing Kastur Ba social service net-work throughout the country.

Mahatma Gandhi

Tagore, the poet Nobel laureate of India and also one of the regenerators of modern India, accommodated in his campus at Santiniketan Gandhi's South African Party when it first came to India. He described Gandhi as "Mahatma (i.e. the Great Soul) in a beggar's garb." And the appellation of Mahatma stuck to him in spite of his bitter protest against it, when he saw later that it created in the people's mind the idea of him as a divine incarnation who could perform miracles and was able alone to take care of India's problems. Though he was the model of humility, he never believed in false humility. So we should fully accept what he said, again and again, namely that he was an ordinary human without any special prerogative or divine authority, neither a prophet nor a perfect being.

This is the most important fact for us, ordinary men and women. Unlike most of the greatest men of the world, Gandhi was not born great, but he made himself great,

through struggle and experiment, with the help of two qualities, which every one of us can cultivate more and more, as Gandhi did, namely, *love of Truth* and *love of all fellow beings.* Gandhi can be a model and hope for all. His life shows that even an ordinary person has within him a capacity for increasing perfection that can work miracles, that is, things which would ordinarily be regarded as impossible.

In the light of this long life, which Gandhi rightly described as a series of experiments with truth, we can now try to understand his philosophy.

2

God, World, and Man

> I do not claim to have originated any new principle. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it "Gandhism"; there is no "ism" about it. And no elaborate literature or propaganda is needed about it.—*Harijan*, March 28, 1936

The life of Gandhi briefly described in the prologue, and his words quoted above, would make it clear that Gandhi was not an originator of new ideas, nor could his ideas be regarded as constituting a system of new philosophy in the academic sense of the term. An academic philosophy to be worthy of the title must first of all give new theories supported by arguments and even when the conclusions are old, it must go through the arduous rational process of giving new reasons in support of them and answer objections raised against them. Gandhi had neither the special training nor the inclination to undertake such a task. He learned what he calls "the eternal truths" from the greatest traditional reli-

gious and philosophical teachers of the world. And only at times when confronted by doubts or opposition, did he try to justify them with argument.

But even then Gandhi selected and combined in his own way, out of the innumerable traditional teachings, those that appealed to him as sound and worthy of application to life. This led to a kind of new philosophical outlook, though the elements that went into its composition were old. It will be our endeavor in the present chapter and the next to find out the basic elements of that outlook, and present them under the usually accepted topics of philosophy, trying to set them into a coherent system, so far as possible.

GOD

The nuclear element of Gandhi's thought was his idea of God. All other elements ranged round this center in a peculiar way to form a new pattern. It will, therefore, be convenient to begin with it.

Though Gandhi's inquisitive mind tried to learn and assimilate the ideas of God from different sources, it only enriched and strengthened the basic belief in divinity he imbibed from the Vaishnava family in which he was born. The Vaishnavas are the most important section of the Theists, who form a large majority of the Hindus in modern India. They draw a part of their inspiration from the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Vedanta-sutra; but they do not accept the interpretation of these scriptures as given by the great Vedantist, Shankara, who upheld the doctrine of the Indeterminate Absolute (*Nirguna Brahman*). A series of Vaishnava teachers like Ramanuja, Nimbarka, Madhva, and

Vallabha, who succeeded Shankara, tried to refute his interpretation of God and all of them tried to establish the conception of God as a concrete person possessed of all auspicious qualities and perfections like omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence, and all-mercifulness. Whereas Shankara looked upon the world as a mere appearance resting on the ignorance of the individual (and therefore God's creatorship of the world also was for him no more real than the magician's creation of a show), all the Vaishnava teachers accepted the world and, therefore God's creatorship, as real. Again whereas Shankara regarded knowledge of God as the ultimate, attributeless reality as the path to liberation, all the Vaishnava teachers, on the contrary, agreed that liberation could be obtained only by the mercy of God propitiated by devotion and self-surrender. Naturally enough Shankara's abstract philosophical view remained confined mostly to a community of traditional followers in south India and a few highly intellectual scholars of the north; but Vaishnava Theism went on spreading among the masses throughout the country and from time to time acquired repeated impetus through the successive later generations of saints, devotees and poets. It was this Vaishnava Theism, which resembled Christianity and Mohammedanism, with which India came into contact, and which further influenced and strengthened the Indian theistic outlook. This made it very easy for Gandhi to accept the basic principles of theism in Christianity and other faiths of the world.

Gandhi was taught in early childhood to repeat the name of Rama, regarded by some Vaishnavas as an Incarnation of God. He did not give it up even when he came to think that the name did not signify a historical person, the son of

Dasharatha. So he says (in an article in his paper *Harijan* of April 4, 1946): "My Rama . . . is not the historical Rama. . . . He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second. Him alone I worship." During the last few years of his life when he used to hold prayer meetings in the open, he used to sing a rhyme, which purported to hold that Rama, Ishvara, and Allah are all the names of God. And when he was shot at one such prayer meeting the last words on his lips were: "Ram, Ram!"

Among the other hymns which were sung by him along with the inmates of his Ashrama, every morning and evening, were those of the famous Vaishnava saints Tulsidas, Surdas, Mira Bai, and Narsingh Mehta (whose song describing the marks of a true Vaishnava was perhaps his most favorite), and also some theistic songs of Tagore, some Christian and Mohammedan hymns. It was this devout Theism of Gandhi's which swayed the hearts of millions of his compatriots of all faiths.

Again, though he was opposed to fatalism on the one hand, and was a firm believer in the theory that man can shape his destiny by his own action, on the other hand, he believed that man's perfection and liberation can come only by self-surrender and grace. So he says in his *Autobiography:* "For perfection or freedom from error comes only from grace. . . . Without an unreserved surrender to this grace, complete mastery over thought is impossible." This is typical of a Theist, a Vaishnava. Shankara and his orthodox followers, the Advaitins or monistic Vedantins, do not believe in grace, but in knowledge as the path to liberation.

When we consider these various points little doubt is left as to the fact that Gandhi was rather a Theist than an Ad-

vaitin; that is, he was not a follower of Shankara—a believer in an Indeterminate, Attributeless, Impersonal Absolute (*Nirguna Brahman*). Yet we are sometimes embarrassed by his occasional remarks which seem to go against this conclusion. The fact seems to be that he sometimes uses some of the Indian philosophical terms and turns of expressions which have passed into common parlance but lost their precise technical significance, of which he seems to be innocent.

In course of an article in his paper *Young India* (January 21, 1926), he says in reply to a friend's question:

> I am an advaitist and yet I can support dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *anekantavadi* or *syadvadi*. But my syadvada is not the syadvada of the learned, it is peculiarly my own.

This paragraph shows, to an expert in Indian philosophy, that Gandhi is using the words *advaitist*, *dvaitism* and similarly *anekantavadi* and *syadvadi* without the precise knowledge of the meanings of those terms in technical philosophical discussions. But being aware that he is being dialectically driven beyond his depths he confesses, frankly enough, that he has been using words in his own sense, not like the learned. Space does not permit the full discursive analysis of this interesting paragraph. But suffice it to say, that his own words clearly show that he is not the advaitist in the sense of a Shankarite who would neither support dualism nor the logic of Syadvada. On the contrary this very attempt to do justice to the unity and diversity of the world would strongly

remind one of the theistic Vedantist, Nimbarka, who tries to reconcile Dvaita with Advaita. Nimbarka is the founder of one of the four schools of Vaishnava Theism. All these schools though rejecting the Advaita of Shankara, his monism that tolerates no plurality and change, advocate some kind of monism that tolerates them. It appears that Gandhi uses Advaita for this kind of monism.

Sometimes Gandhi speaks, like the Shankarite, and calls the world unreal. But reading between the lines it is found that he perhaps means by the word "unreal" only "impermanent" or "transitory" (as in the paragraph cited above). His strong sense of duty towards suffering fellow beings stood in the way of his dismissing the world as wholly unreal. In *Harijan* (July 21, 1946) he writes: "Joy or what men call happiness may be, as it really is, a dream in a fleeting and transitory world. . . . But we cannot dismiss the suffering of our fellow creatures as unreal and thereby provide a moral alibi for ourselves. Even dreams are true while they last, and to the sufferer his suffering is a grim reality."

But it should be noted that even the non-Shankarite theists, though affirming, unlike Shankara, the reality of the world, attach to it a lower value and aesthetically describe it as a sport of God. Gandhi echoes this theistic sentiment when he says in *Young India* (March 3, 1925): "Let us dance to the tune of his Bansi-flute, and all would be well." In this connection he calls the world an illusion, Maya. But this word is also used by him, like the Vaishnavas, in the sense of Lila or sport. So he says: "Therefore, it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport—Lila, or calls it an illusion—Maya." It is taking this sportive view of God that he describes God as

"the greatest tyrant . . . [who] . . . dashes the cup from our lips," . . . "to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense."

Again, though he sometimes says like a Shankarite that he does not believe in the personality of God, closer scrutiny shows that he means by the words the possibility of God's assuming the form of a human being. The following statement would make it clear:

"God is not a person. To affirm that He descends to earth every now and again in the form of a human being is a partial truth which merely signifies that such a person lives near to God."

Even Western philosophers differ as to the exact meaning of personality. If personality implies self-consciousness plus will, Gandhi may be said to believe in the personality of God whom he regards as the omniscient, omnipotent creator, and just governor of the world. On the whole, therefore, it will be reasonable to think that Gandhi was a theist —a Vaishnava, rather than an Advaitist—a follower of Shankara.

It should be mentioned, however, that the Advaita school of Shankara received great attention in the West since the end of the last century, and it was this school, though with some modern adaptation, that the great Indian Vedantist, Vivekananda, preached and popularized in Europe and America. As a result of this it also regained some new prestige among the English-educated people in India. It is quite possible that Gandhi also was influenced by some of the more popular ideas of Advaita which passed current into the country. So we find him sometimes speaking in an Advaita lan-

guage. But whatever might be the case these ideas floated loosely on his mind. His theistic attitude and outlook dominated his thoughts as well as his practical life.

God, for him, was the all-pervasive Reality, immanent in man and also in the world, which he regarded as His manifestation and creation. But unlike an ordinary pantheist he believed that God was also transcendent. He is in the world, as well as beyond it. He is not expressed fully by his creation —just as a poet is not by his poems. Gandhi has thus a comprehensive conception of God, like that of the western panentheists. Like Whitehead, in more recent times, who describes God from both the primordial and the consequent aspects and tries thereby to comprehend the diverse religious concepts of God, Gandhi also tries hard to comprehend the diverse elements of current religious traditions and to understand them as the different aspects of One Reality whose infinite richness surpasses our full comprehension. In the *Young India* article referred to above he goes on to say:

> I believe Him to be creative as well as non-creative. . . . From the platform of the Jainas I prove the noncreative aspect of God, and from that of Ramanuja the creative aspect. As a matter of fact we are to know the Unknown, and this is why our speech falters, is inadequate and even often contradictory. That is why the *Vedas* describe *Brahman* as "not this, not this." But if He or It is not this, He or It is. . . . He is one and yet many; He is smaller than an atom, and yet bigger than the Himalayas.

The logic of the manifoldness of truth consequent on the many and inexhaustible possible aspects of Reality is particularly emphasized by the Jainas in India in their doctrines of *Syadvada* (that many apparently conflicting judgments are possible about any subject taken in different aspects and

therefore each judgment gives only a partial truth), and *anekantavada* (that everything has multiple characters). Gandhi accepted this logic, for it enabled him to reconcile apparent contradictions in all fields of life and enabled him to have respect for others' views and humility about his own. We are not aware whether he had any knowledge of the technical arguments in support of the Jaina logic. He knew however the oftquoted Indian parable which favors this point of view. In the article previously mentioned he says:

> It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussulman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and vice versa. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love. My anekantavada is the result of the twin doctrine of *satya* (i.e. truth) and *ahimsa* (i.e. love).

Gandhi found further confirmation of this all-inclusive attitude in the teachings of Jesus: "In my father's house there are many mansions. . . . I am not come to destroy but to fulfil."

It is with this catholic and all-round outlook that he described his conception of God on different occasions, from different points of view; and his basic idea of God as the all-pervasive reality underlying *all* phenomena, concrete and

abstract, sometimes inspired him to ecstatic raptures that momentarily overflowed the well-disciplined measures of his habitual thought and speech. As one of the rare specimens of such a comprehensive and eloquent description we may take the following paragraph from *Young India* (March 3, 1925):

> God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know. To me God is Truth and Love, God is Ethics and morality. God is fearlessness. God is the source of light and life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. He transcends speech and reason. He is a personal God to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply Is to those who have faith. He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for he leaves us unfettered to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known for he often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for himself at our expense. Therefore, it is that Hinduism calls all this sport—Lila, or calls it an illusion—Maya.

Students of philosophy may find in this description a very similar parallel to the famous description of God by the great scientific, mathematician-philosopher of the century, Alfred North Whitehead, in his *Process and Reality:*

"It is as true to say that God is permanent, and the world fluent, as that the world is permanent and God is fluent. It is as true to say that God is one and the world many, as that the world is one and God many." And so on.

The similarity between the two lies in their attempts to comprehend in one synthetic sweep the divergent aspects of Godhead and the different religious traditions represent-

ing different points of view. Both descriptions appear, to superficial view, as jumbles of contradictions which can, however, be reconciled by recognizing the possibility of divergent aspects and viewpoints. Even Whitehead has been misunderstood and severely criticized by philosophers, and more so may be Gandhi. For they impose too great a strain on the customary moulds of thought. Yet, when the world is fast shrinking towards one community under the pressure of the scientific devices for overcoming space and time, and the peoples and ideas so long inhabiting isolated areas are running into one another, the necessity of synthetic outlooks is being more and more felt by the greatest men of the world in different spheres. It is no wonder, therefore, that Whiteheads and Gandhis would think alike.

God and Evil

In some respects, however, the paragraph cited above shows Gandhi moving too fast even for a Whitehead. For he takes our breath away when he stretches his idea of God not only to include the good and the benign aspects of the world, but even its terror, tyranny, and atheism. These points make us pause to understand what Gandhi really means by God.

In the history of the religions of the world we find two general types of conception about God. God is either conceived as a benign power struggling against an opposite principle or principles responsible for the world's evils, or God is regarded as the only and all-inclusive reality. Though in accordance with the first conception God may be, and often is, conceived as ultimately capable of overcoming the evils

or Satan, yet it makes God subject to partial limitation by an opposite principle. The religious sentiment wants an all-perfect and all-complete object of worship as an unfailing source of help, and nothing but the second conception of God fully satisfies it. Moreover, religious belief is encouraged to posit the idea of an all-inclusive God by the monistic tendency of science which also tries, so far as possible, to explain the diverse phenomena of the world by bringing them under as few principles as possible, if not one principle. But as soon as God is made all-inclusive, evils also necessarily come to be lodged in Him. Developed Christianity and Monistic Indian thought with which Gandhi was in the deepest sympathy, face the problem of evil rather than sacrifice the infinity and sole reality of God. Trying to describe this all-inclusive idea of God, Gandhi is realistic enough to include His aspects of suffering, terror, and tyranny.

The question then naturally arises, does he then accept the position that God—this total reality—is both good and bad—as the above description seems to suggest? Or does he hold that the evil is only apparent, or that though it is real, it is or can be ultimately overcome? By family tradition and temperament Gandhi's heart remained captivated by the theistic romantic and benign conception of God as possessed of supreme grace, goodness, love, beauty, and harmony. The study of the great religions also strengthened this disposition. Throughout his long life of struggle he lived in such a God, courted His grace, took refuge in Him, "The Rock of Ages," prayed to Him, "Lead Kindly Light," saw Him in the great harmonies of nature and in man's love of man, and tried "to dance to the tune of His flute." But his rational mind and

moral nature led him to recognize also the grim realities of evils and imperfections in the world. They were, however, the greatest challenges to his theism. But his faith was too great a source of practical value to him to be sacrificed. He follows, therefore, the traditional ways of reconciling the existence of evil with his belief in God as the only and omnipotent and benevolent Reality. He tries to understand, like Christian theists, moral evils, sins and vices, as being due to the acts of man who has the freedom of will. To this he sometimes adds the Indian theory of Karma according to which actions of man are responsible not only for virtues and vices, but also for the physical conditions into which he is born. So Gandhi sometimes speaks of sins of men reacting on nature and creating catastrophes.

He is sure that God could remove and prevent evils if He would. But God like a good democrat allows man full opportunity to remove evils by his own free effort and thus grow morally strong. As a stern and just educator God allows or directs by relentless laws the painful consequences of man's action so that he may learn to correct himself. But still, on the whole, he feels that the complete explanation of evil could be given only if man were able to know fully the motives of all actions of God. But that is not possible. So he confesses (in *Young India* of November 11, 1928):

"I cannot account for the existence of evils by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that he has no evil."

He writes in another issue of that paper (March 3, 1925):

"He is the greatest democrat the world knows for he leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good."

As a man is very unwilling to attribute bad motives to a tried friend and interprets even his apparently undesirable actions, of unknown motives, in the most charitable way and vaguely trusts that there must have been *some* good intention behind his curious behavior, similarly a person who has enjoyed repeatedly the benefits of the belief in God tries to understand the evils of the world as being inspired by some unknown good motive. The overwhelming force of the beneficial effects of faith in God enjoyed by him in life dispels from his mind both the doubts about God's existence and about His *bona fides*. Gandhi could not find it in his heart to believe that the evils that we find in the world are due to any evil intention of God who has been his unfailing friend throughout his life, in personal and public struggles.

God Is Truth, Truth Is God

Having thus overcome the obstacle of evil, Gandhi has little difficulty in conceiving God as the one, all-pervasive Reality in which everything—good and bad—lives, moves, and has its being. Even the atheism of the atheist appears to him to be a work of the Divine. Perhaps a short spell of atheism and scepticism which Gandhi experienced in early life convinced him of the healthy effect of rational doubt as a sound means to the generation of firm faith. Moreover, rational atheism appeared laudable as a fearless devotion to what the atheist regards as the truth. The spirit of the pur-

suit of truth is, therefore, common to both the rational theist and the rational atheist.

Gandhi finds here a valuable clue for the expansion of his faith and his notion of God. Writing in *Young India* (December 31, 1931) he says:

> I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be God, God is truth above all. . . . But two years ago, I went a step further and said Truth is God. . . . I then found that the nearest approach to truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found, too, that love in the sense of *ahimsa* had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and not even the atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reason that I saw that rather than say God is Truth I should say *Truth is God.*

This oft-quoted passage gives a glimpse into Gandhi's mind, the simple manner of its growth by experience and interaction, unhampered by the knowledge of philosophy which bristles with the different meanings of truth, distinctions between truth and reality, and the rules of formal logic which prevent the simple conversion of the proposition "God is Truth" into "Truth is God." A child gracefully describes movements with its supple limbs that the stiff adult frame fears to imitate. Poets, prophets, saints, and even the man in the street sometimes directly see relations and propound truths which science and philosophy can try to reach

only through long and arduous processes. Let us see, however, some of the chief difficulties which Gandhi's statements would present themselves to a student of philosophy. Not to raise more difficulties than we can hope to settle in this short treatise, we may accept the most common description of truth as conformity of knowledge with reality, and let us also accept the common usage in English by which true knowledge is also called a truth—just as a beautiful woman is called a beauty. Yet how can we say of a being or a reality like God that He is Truth, unless we ignore the gulf that separates truth and reality? Truth is, after all, the knowledge, the picture of reality in the human mind and not reality itself, it will be said. But this difficulty is chiefly caused by the assumption of the ordinary dualistic theory of knowledge which is not accepted even by all philosophers. As Professor J. H. Muirhead points out in the course of his article on Gandhi (in *Mahatma Gandhi*, edited by S. Radhakrishnan), Plato, while thinking that in ordinary knowledge, through sense and imagination, knowledge and the known remain distinct, holds that "There is a higher level still . . . in which these two are united but also transcended in a sense of an immediate vision and absorption in what is seen." True knowledge or truth thus becomes identical with reality. It is in the light of this highest knowledge that prophets and seers identify truth with reality. As an example, Muirhead quotes the gospel saying, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This is also cited by Tolstoy, at the very beginning of his book *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, which impressed Gandhi so much. We may add that the Upanishads, which also influenced Gandhi, describe God—Brahman—as Truth, Knowledge,

and Infinite. The Upanishadic seers—like the neo-platonic mystics of later days, the Sufis of Islam—and Tolstoy conceive of God as the reality within us, which directly manifests itself in our inner knowledge, consciousness, and life. So knowledge is nothing but God itself, and knowledge of God is not different from this God in us. Jesus also declares, according to St. John (14:6): "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

It is by taking this inner view of God manifested in knowledge, love and conscience, and reason that Gandhi, like other spiritual thinkers and writers of the world, describe God as Truth, Love and Conscience, and even as atheism—the reason and faith that work within the atheist.[1]

Having thus understood Gandhi's description of God as Truth we may try to understand the validity of its converse, Truth is God. It is true that ordinarily such a simple conversion of a universal affirmative proposition would be fallacious. From "All men are mortal" we cannot deduce "All mortals are men." But there are exceptions to this rule too. When the subject and the predicate are equal in extent, simple conversion is permissible (e.g. "All men are rational animals" can be simply converted into "All rational animals are men"). Similarly the transition from "God is Truth" to "Truth is God" cannot be gainsaid by the rules of formal logic, since God is taken as identical with Truth.

Though the interchange of subject and predicate in an identical proposition is logically unimportant, it was a momentous psychological transition for Gandhi. He says in con-

1. For a modern inner view of God, in tune with the spirit of Tolstoy and Gandhi, see Arthur Campbell Garnett, *God in Us* (Chicago: Willet, Clark and Co., 1945).

tinuation of the passage cited above: "And I came to the conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began fifty years ago."

The psychological importance of the change is due to the fact that the subject of a proposition or a sentence is "that with which the speaker starts and about which he tries to know and assert something." "God is Truth" reflects the fact that Gandhi's search in life started with God, whom he tried to know and describe, use and enjoy. As he says, he accepted the idea of God from the world's existing religions. He seemed to have no doubt at the beginning about the existence of God, about whom he was eager to know more. But the world's unbelievers and atheists—with many of whom he had to work in the political field—gradually revealed to him that the traditional idea of God is subject to very serious doubt. But he found that even they rejected God, if at all, on honest enquiry, because they wanted truth, without which the human reason could not be satisfied. Reason could reject everything but not truth. Truth has the greatest appeal to all human beings. The hope of humanity lies in organization based on appeal to reason, rather than to blind religious notions about God which have wrought havoc in the world. So he changed his emphasis from God to Truth—which seemed to suggest: "I don't care for God if He is anything but Truth, anything but the undeniable Reality revealed in man and outside."

"Truth is God" also suggests: "Truth should be the object of worship." And it really was for Gandhi always. But yet it waited to be known more clearly and needed emphatic affirmation after experimentation. In practical consequence, it was an expansion of his faith by which he could sympa-

thize as his brothers-in-faith with all persons who tried to follow, in their own lights, the common goal of Truth. This won for him—as a response to his real sympathy and love—the countless millions, including so-called atheists, who gathered around his social and political banner and marched after him braving bullets, prison, and death.

But let it not be forgotten that this was an *extension* of his early faith in God and not a relinquishing of anything that was vital in it. Narrow ideas of God have always created more mischief and hatred in the world than even honest atheism. In India as well as in the Christian, Mohammedan, and other societies, persons not holding a particular conception of God have been criticized and hated as nastikas, atheists, heathens, kafirs, and the like. It is not remembered that "God" like "matter," may have a wide range of meanings for different persons with different experiences and backgrounds. A Newton, an Einstein, a Whitehead, a logical empiricist, and a man in the street, all believe in and speak of matter and use the common word. Yet their conceptions of matter vary widely. Similarly we can accept and recognize the widely diverse variations of the meaning of the word "God." Bishop Berkeley, while denying the ordinary belief in the extra-mental existence of matter, accepted it in the sense of a cluster of ideas. Even so the atheist who adores truth or a humanist who adores humanity or a naturalist who feels a cosmic emotion, though fighting shy of the word "God," may be said, in some senses, to accept God. Even they have their deities in the sense of the highest object of value, veneration, or love. And this would appear to be Gandhi's plea for the inclusion of the atheist within his religious fold. It was however a thin dilution of the faith which

he prepared for sharing with all and sundry in his public life. There is little doubt that the faith he himself enjoyed, in prayer and silence, was much stronger. It was the "dynamo" behind his life of powerful activity.

Proofs of the Existence of God

Though Gandhi had no academic philosophical training, his study of religious books, particularly of Christian theology, and his earnest discussions on religious matters with all kinds of persons, made him well-posted in most of the classical arguments for the existence of God. In the collection of his writings bearing on Hinduism and entitled *Hindu Dharma* an expert theologian can trace brief statements of the many arguments in his articles on God. The causal argument is present in the attempt: "If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed, then it is proper to believe in the Parent of the whole creation." The cosmological and the teleological arguments are found blended together in: "There is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. . . . That law then which governs all life is God. Law and law-giver are one." The moral argument is very much valued by Gandhi and he constantly draws upon it. Conscience, for him, is the voice of God; the inner call to duty, to which he repeatedly turned and on which he waited by fast and vigil, was the direct intimation of the good and the divine in man. The authoritarian and the historical proofs appear together in: "Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line

of prophets and sages in all countries and climes." Gandhi sometimes takes advantage of the democratic criterion of majority, too, in testing the rightness of his faith when he says, humorously, for example, "I am one of the millions of wise men who believe in Him."

But in spite of all these arguments he knew, like Lotze and other philosophers, that no argument can convince a person unless there is some direct experience. "There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses."

He recommends, therefore, also the pragmatic test:

> He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love.
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> He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary.

It is by this practical method of acting on a working hypothesis so commonly employed in Science, that Gandhi increased his faith day by day through his long life. Working like a scientist on the hypothesis that God—as Truth and Love—ruled the world, he behaved with love and trust toward all fellow beings in his private and political life. The response of love and trust which he obtained strengthened his faith, which in turn enabled him to retain love and trust, even for persons who appeared satanic to others. Even in very trying political situations which would drive others

mad with anger and hatred, he never lost faith in the presence of God in man. Gandhi's repeated and unprecedented success generated faith also in his wavering colleagues and his opponents. Samuel Alexander, the British philosopher points out that, "It is our mental responses to objects that discover the objects to us." We can know the existence of the spirit in another person by the mind's response received from him. The same is true of the awareness of the existence of God. It is by the response to his faith that Gandhi came to strengthen his belief in God.

Religion

Though Gandhi was a lover of God, he had no attraction for any abstract entity called by that name. "God to be God must rule the heart and transform it." Religion means to accept God for life. Acceptance of God means to allow love, truth, and reason to rule the heart and remove selfishness, ill will, ignorance, and unreason, and all the passions like anger, greed, and lust that follow therefrom. Therefore, for him "the essence of religion is morality." . . . "True religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other." Yet, "Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil." This simile would suggest that though morality is not impossible without religion, its growth is greatly helped by religion. But, on the other hand, morality helps religion by purifying the heart of passions and prejudices that stand in the way of realizing God in one's own self and in others. "The purer I try to become the nearer I feel to be to God." So religion and morality help each other.

"Prayer is the very soul and essence of religion," and

Gandhi prayed every morning and evening without fail, like, and with, the rising and the setting of the sun, wherever he was and whatever he did in his life, busier than which no life could be. But "Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness." [2] . . . "Our prayer is a heart search." It is "a call to self-purification" and "a call to humility." It is also an attempt to prepare ourselves "to share the sufferings of our fellows whoever they may be."

In all critical stages in his life, whenever he had to make a momentous decision, he would retire to himself, and even observe silence and fast, and check his accounts and motives with the God in him—Truth, Reason, and Love—and earnestly pray, "Lead kindly light." He came out refreshed, determined, and invigorated. He forged ahead, with redoubled energy and love, into outward action, enthusing his followers, winning the heart of his opponents, and sweeping away, like a miracle, the age-long obstacles, hatred and shackles that degraded his countrymen and those that ruled over them. Repeated and increasing success confirmed his faith.

He tried to place his body and mind at the service of God, efface his ego and vanity by surrendering himself to God and doing His will and His work. He did not allow his little self and its narrow desires to stand in the way of the larger interest of humanity—which was God incarnate to him. So he often exclaimed impatiently, "I must reduce myself to zero." He tried to dedicate the results of his honest efforts—success as well as failure—to God, as the harvest of the Divine Will acting in him. He thus tried to escape the madden-

2. *Vide: Selections from Gandhi*, Nirmal Kumar Bose, ed. (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Pub. House, 1948), p. 12.

ing vanity of success and the depressing effect of failure. But the harvest often pleased him and filled him with gratitude to the God in him and outside.

This was Gandhi's way of realizing God. For the philosophy of this way of life, or religion, he sought confirmation in the teachings of the great religious teachers, but particularly in the *Gita* which was his constant guide, on which he also wrote a commentary supporting in his own light the *Gita* doctrine of salvation through selfless action. In the introduction to this commentary he observes, "The Gita says: 'Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit—be detached and work—have no desire for reward and work,' " and "Salvation of the Gita is perfect peace."

Renunciation for Gandhi was not flying from the world, nor salvation a post-mortem goal. True renunciation is action without selfish motives and true salvation is liberation from the bondage of selfish desires and passions that fetter and torment man. Gandhi's final aim, like that of Christ, rightly interpreted, was "to bring heaven upon earth."

The Diverse Religions

Gandhi's attitude towards the diverse historical religions of the earth may be briefly noted here. By his personal study of the many great religious scriptures he found that every one of them contained good precepts capable of helping man attain a truly religious life. But on the other hand he also found that the many interpretations, commentaries, and practices which have grown within each religious tradition contained things which were morally degrading and unsupportable by reason. So all religions were good as well

as bad—good at the source and in ideals, bad in subsequent accretions and practices. Every person is, therefore, thrown back on his reason to select the good elements and reject the bad ones. Gandhi, therefore, places "sober reason" above the scriptures when they tend to confuse and mislead the mind.

Religion, therefore, becomes a personal quest and a way of life. Everyone should be free to choose his own. "Religion is a very personal matter," writes Gandhi in *Harijan* (December 28, 1936). "We should try by living the life according to our lights to share the best with one another, thus adding to the sum total of human effort to reach God."

On this basis he conceived the possibility of fellowship of all religions. He gives his considered opinion on this matter in the following statement:

> After long study and experience, I have come to the conclusion that (1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some error in them; (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism, in as much as all human beings should be as dear to one as one's own close relatives. My own veneration for other faiths is the same as that for my own faith; therefore, no thought of conversion is possible. The aim of the Fellowship should be to help a Hindu to become a better Hindu, a Mussalman to become a better Mussalman, and a Christian a better Christian. . . . Our prayer for others must be NOT "God, give him the light thou hast given me," BUT "Give him all the light and truth he needs for his development." Pray merely that your friends may become better men, whatever their form of religion.[3]

To the well-meaning Christian missionaries who were anxious to convert Indians to Christianity his request was: "Make us better Hindus, i.e. better men and women." A mere

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 226–27.

change of name means little without a change of heart. The innumerable churches, denominations, quarrels, recriminations, and inquisitions, and color prejudices that checkered the history of Christianity held out no hopes to Gandhi. And the repeated wars that Christian nations waged against one another in modern times, and the parts played by the churches and their eminent bishops to help the decimation of their brothers in faith on the other side, made him sick unto death. He turned to the preacher to say: "It is better to allow our lives to speak for us than our words." [4]

He had unbounded veneration for all the great religious teachers. But they were to him Ideal Expressions of God. He did not attach, therefore, much importance to their historicity. So he thought of Rama, Krishna, as well as of Christ. He says:

> God did not bear the cross only 1900 years ago, but He bears it today, and He dies and is resurrected from day to day. It would be poor comfort to the world if it had to depend upon a historical God who died 2000 years ago. Do not then preach the God of history, but show Him as He lives today through you.[5]

An account of Gandhi's religious faith would be incomplete without a mention of his attitude towards Hinduism. The perusal of his writings on this topic collected and published under the title *Hindu Dharma* will throw full light on the matter. Gandhi believed that every individual is born with definite hereditary tendencies, in a cultural and physical environment and is, therefore, capable of development in a particular way. It is futile and unnecessary to ignore the

4. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 227–28.

religious heritage with which an individual is born. The question is how to develop it to its best along its own easiest and quickest path. The words, symbols, and categories of the religion—the cross, the crescent, the om, heaven, hell, perdition, salvation, *moksha*, and the like—in the atmosphere in which a person is born, can arouse spiritual emotions and enthusiasm which no alien ones can so easily awaken. That is what he found in his own case, in spite of his closest association, and widest possible sympathies, with the followers of other religions. He found, therefore, that psychologically Hinduism would suit him best.

But did it suit him morally? Did he not hold: "Any tradition, however ancient, if inconsistent with morality, is fit to be banished from the land?" [6] In spite of the fact that he was painfully aware of the many evil practices and superstitions which had grown within Hinduism during the five thousand years of its development under diverse influences in different parts of the country, he felt sure that it was sound at its source and in its essentials which inculcated the highest ethical principles. The Upanishads, the *Gita* and the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas offered him the best nourishment for his rational mind and moral nature. The presence of God in all beings, the love of all creatures, the ethics of self-discipline, and selfless service, leading to liberation, were all present in them.

He doubted not that they were present in other religions too. But there was one more thing here, he missed elsewhere —the recognition of the value of other faiths, as taught for example, in the *Gita*. He was specially proud of this. For this

6. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

enabled him to remain a Hindu and yet enjoy the beauties and benefits of other faiths and develop the most cordial relations to all human beings. He was proud too that the Hindus "gave shelter to the early Christians who had fled from persecution, also to the Jews known as Beni-Israel as also to the Parsis (Zoroastrians)." [7]

Hinduism, he thought, was a mighty ancient tree with many roots and branches and capable of unlimited development. Just as Protestants did not change their faith because of their dislike of Catholic practices, but they reformed Christianity, and just as the Unitarians did not also change their faith out of dislike for the doctrine of trinity, but reformed Christianity to their own liking, similarly, thought Gandhi, Hinduism could be reformed and has been reformed in all ages according to the best lights of the times. Fortunately Hinduism is not fettered by some fixed official creeds. "Hinduism is a living organism liable to growth and decay," and that was his great hope.

He felt that if he remained a true Hindu he could reform the Hindus in a more effective manner from within. Reformation of Hindu society in the teeth of all orthodox opposition was one of the chief tasks to which Gandhi dedicated his life; and no one could achieve so much in so short a time. That was also an achievement for humanity at large.

What the world needs today are good men who can pass the highest canons of every religion. The readiness with which Gandhi has been accepted by the best minds of all great faiths of the world as an example of their cherished

7. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Pub. House, 1950), p. 257.

ideals, shows that he passed such canons. He stands, therefore, above all faiths—yet so dear to many.

The Rock-bottom Unity

The secret of the appreciation of a really good man by persons of all religions is that *behind all faiths there is a common ethical basis*—a universal religion. "It means," as he says, "a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. . . . This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality." [8] The "Study of other religions beside one's own will give one a grasp of *the rock-bottom unity of all religions* and afford a glimpse also of the universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the 'dust of creeds and faiths.' " [9]

THE WORLD

Gandhi's conception of the world of animate and inanimate nature follows from his conception of God. He does not formulate it systematically in one place. We can get glimpses into his mind from casual remarks in different contexts.

Nature's Charms

Nature for him is the outer expression of the all-pervasive living Reality. "God manifests Himself in innumerable forms in this universe and every such manifestation com-

8. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

mands my spontaneous reverence." [10] One can find from this statement of Gandhi's his inner attitude towards nature. India is blessed with a rich variety of natural phenomena—the rolling clouds and the clear sky; the bright sun and the mellow moon, the visible stars and planets and the distant milky way; the six seasons turning round with their changing offerings of flowers, fruits, and luscious crops; rivers in spate, gurgling streams, and dreary sandy traces of dried up beds; lowly shrubs, twining creepers, and tall *sals* and banyans; birds of countless varieties, plumes, and voices; the innocent antelopes, the gorgeous peacocks, the royal Bengal tigers, and the mighty herds of elephants; the blue seas on three sides, the girdles of hills in the middle, and crowning all, the long and high Himalayas which stand in their mystic and solitary grandeur and invite the weary and the contemplative, but smile, with their eternal snows, at the childish attempts of the insolent to spoil nature. The greatest of the ancient and the modern Indian poets—Kalidasa and Tagore —observed, enjoyed, and responded to the diverse charms of nature and thereby won undying laurels at home and abroad. India's nature has attracted even some of her greatest modern scientists. Sir J. C. Bose's epoch-making researches about the sensitivity of plant life and Sir C. V. Raman's famous researches about the colors of the sky and the seas have drawn inspiration from that wonderful nature and opened up new vistas of knowledge. Religious aspirants of India have gone always back, for contemplation or for God, to the lap of nature—to the forests, the hills, or the banks of rivers and most of all to the Himalayas which combine all these features.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Gandhi was quite sensitive to the charms of nature which he interpreted in his own way and responded to accordingly. He wanted to understand nature as an expression of God and tried to see life in everything breaking down even the customary distinction between the animate and the inanimate. He drew inspiration for this view from Sir J. C. Bose's researches which he hoped would be more and more confirmed by science. The idea of the continuity through different forms of being got confirmation from the Darwinian theory of evolution which was one of the few modern scientific theories which seemed to have deeply influenced him. But the Darwinian theory was taken by him as supporting the idea of gradual progress—as it is popularly taken in the West too (contrary to the belief of some biologists). This confirmed his meliorism—the belief that man can improve his destiny if he will follow the path of nature.

Return to Nature

Gandhi's asceticism can even be interpreted to be a kind of wish to return to the lap of nature. His fondness for naturopathy, the treatment of diseases by the application of the major natural elements—water, earth, heat, light, and air—was an indication of this temper. He got inspiration in this matter from Just's *Return to Nature*. He was so confident of the healing power of nature that several times he staked the lives of his dearest ones and of himself in experimenting with nature's simple remedies even when the best modern medical treatment could be had for the mere consent. He loved to keep in touch with mother earth by taking long constitutionals barefooted and through open natural

landscapes. His dress—the loin cloth—left the major parts of his well-formed body open to the healthy influences of light and air. This scanty linen interpreted also the ratio of his regard for social convention to his trust in nature. His physical habits seemed to declare: Nearer to nature, nearer to health; when the body is sick, go back to nature. One of his great hobbies throughout his life was to experiment with diet to find out "the natural diet of man."

But he turned to nature also for mental and spiritual health and repose. He said his prayers with his comrades in the open air under the canopy of starlit heavens before sunrise and at dusk. Once when he was nearly heart-broken owing to depressing political events, he felt the call of the Himalayas. But love of man stood in the way.

The Conception of Beauty

Perhaps from these facts we can find a clue to Gandhi's aesthetics [11] as well. Nearer to the God in nature and nearer to the God in man, the more of beauty. God expresses himself in the harmonies of nature which overcome discord and in the love and goodness of man which overcome hatred and evil. The harmonies of God enchant the soul. They are the source of beauty. Referring to the practice of tree-worship among some peoples in India, Gandhi once observed:

"I find in it a thing instinct with a deep pathos and poetic beauty. It symbolizes true reverence for the entire vegetable kingdom, which with its endless panorama of beautiful shapes

11. I am grateful to Professor Francis Shoemaker for drawing attention to the aesthetics of Gandhi.

and forms, declares to us as it were with a million tongues the greatness and glory of God." [12]

Again when he first visited some of the foothills of the Himalayas where Hindus go for pilgrimage he felt the same charm. He says in his *Autobiography:*

"I was charmed with the natural scenery . . . and bowed my head in reverence to our ancestors for their sense of the beautiful in nature, and for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of nature with religious significance."

The "panoramic scenes" of nature, "the starry heavens overhead stretching in an unending expanse," and the like, are for Gandhi more beautiful than human artistic products. They are "the eternal symbols of beauty" to him. This would imply that they also are not beautiful as such, but as symbolizing God, the original beauty. His favorite name of God, Rama, etymologically means "charming."

Among the products of human manufacture Gandhi saw beauty in those that involved honest labor, entailed no exploitation, reflected no greed, and served good purpose,—in a word, those that expressed the God in man. By the habitual evaluation of human work in the light of his moral principles even his external senses could see beauty only in the good and ugliness in the bad. The spinning wheel, millions of which he introduced for employing the villagers fruitfully during their idle hours, became the very emblem of ideal social service. So the sound of the simple craft received from him the permanent epithet of "music of the wheel." On the other hand, the mills and machinery which disturbed the peaceful village industries, broke the homes,

12. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, pp. 78–79.

created conflicts between capitalists and laborers, and were farther from nature, wore to him a hideous, dismal, and heartless look. No wonder his eyes should see in the smooth starchy texture of the mill cloth "a dead polish." On the contrary the handspun looked to him soft, lovely, and graceful. Its coarseness was crowded out of sight or perhaps was revealed as the very stuff of nature.

Coming more precisely to the "conscious art of man," like painting and music, we find naturally enough that he regards them as only the outer expressions of inner strivings of the soul and they are valuable in so far as they help man to self-realization. He says, "All true art is thus the expression of the soul. The outer forms have value only in so far as they are the expression of the inner spirit in man. . . . All true art must help the soul to realize its inner self." [13]

There is real beauty also in truth. "All truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures or songs are highly beautiful. People generally fail to see beauty in truth." Moreover, "purity of life is the highest and truest art." [14]

We find thus that Gandhi's ideas of beauty, goodness, and truth run into one another. Because he traces each back to the concrete ultimate, God, in whom these three are blended together. God is true, good, and beautiful (*Satyam, Shivam,* and *Sundaram*). To understand the same fact from the subjective point of view Gandhi's mind strives after—and has attained in a considerable degree—a harmony and balance of all its diverse aspects, emotion, will, and thought. For such an integrated mind nothing is ultimately satisfactory to one side if it cannot satisfy the others. Or rather, such a

13. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi,* p. 273.
14. *Ibid.,* pp. 273–74.

unified mind does not react piecemeal, but as a whole, and nothing that is not true, and good, and beautiful, can satisfy it. A picture that is judged beautiful by the isolated canons of beauty will jar on such a mind if it offends the moral sense or reason, that is the sense of consistency. Gandhi does not accept, therefore, "art for the sake of art." The production of a perfect art satisfying the whole and integrated mind is possible only for the all-round perfect artist. "True art must be evidence of happiness, contentment and purity of its authors." [15]

The Laws of Nature and the Place of God

From the beauties of nature we may pass to another aspect which also impressed Gandhi very much. "All things in the universe including the sun and the moon and the stars, obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go on for a single moment." [16] Gandhi perceives in the inexorable laws of nature nothing but the force and the will which maintains the world in harmony and order, and saves it from destruction. This force for him is nothing but God, and the laws are nothing but the ways of the working of that force. Therefore he thinks that there is ultimately no distinction between the law and the law-giver. "God's Law and God are not different things."

Though Gandhi, as a theist, was a believer in mercy, mercy did not mean for him God's willingness to exempt man from the operations of the law. Man has to take the consequences of his action. He believes in the Indian theory of *karma* or

15. *Ibid.*
16. Gandhi, *Hindu Dharma*, p. 125.

action which inevitably generates its own results according to the laws which God laid down to rule the world justly. He says, "Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap. The law of Karma is inexorable and impossible of evasion. There is thus hardly any need for God to interfere. He laid down the law and, as it were, retired." [17]

Man and nature being both subject to the law of God the acts of man influence nature and vice versa. Human sins bring automatic punishment. Criticizing some bad social customs he says: "I am superstitious enough to believe that all such sins that a nation commits react upon it physically. I believe that all these sins of ours have accumulated together to reduce us to a state of slavery." [18] In the great earthquake of Bihar he saw punishment for the moral sins of society.

But a person who cares to know the laws of God in nature with the help of the God in man, known as reason and love, and moulds his will and character in their light will enjoy the grace of God—the benefits of His laws. By living a life in accordance with nature he will enjoy health, safety, and prosperity; and by living in love with men and the living world he will get back love and sympathy. "Self-surrender" to the will of God would appear in this light nothing but obedient acceptance of the divine law of harmony, love, and reason. "Self-effacement" would mean effacement of the evil will that leads towards strife and disharmony (between man and nature, and man and his fellow beings), and towards unreason. Praying for Gandhi, as we already saw, was not "asking," but it was an ardent effort to acquire a constant remembrance of God (what the Indian theists

17. *Ibid.*, p. 298.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

call *dhruva smriti*) so that life might be led in accordance with His laws. No perfection is possible without "mercy" and mercy is nothing but the saving grace of God as reason and love operating from within the head and the heart of man.

It will be realized thus that Gandhi's theism was not far from naturalism. Really speaking, strict naturalism—to be faithful to the spirit of truth and reason—is a theory of the head, indifferent to value and emotional valuation. But its theories touched up with the emotion, along lines indicated above, can convert, for the enjoyment of man, the vast *It* of nature into a *Thou*, as William James would put it. In Gandhi's well balanced mind, emotion and will moved with knowledge and made him enjoy the fruits of his knowledge in every possible feeling, and both knowledge and feeling went into action in every sphere of life. This ideal of all-sided development is expressed in his writings: "But he is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if he ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest action of His votary."

To regard such a theistic version of naturalism as unscientific, is to forget the limits of science, the province of science. Pure science is not concerned with the emotional evaluation and practical utilization of the truths discovered by it. If it is not unscientific to appreciate and applaud the vibrations of sound of particular timbres, volumes, and intensities as lovely music, and if it is not unscientific to love a complex configuration of electrons and protons as one's sweetheart rather than as a complex mathematical formula, then it is not also unscientific to *love* and *enjoy* nature, so wonderful in its constitution as discovered by science itself.

It is ultimately a matter of temperament and choice how best we should and can organize scientific ideas with emotion and action. Gandhi could sympathize with an honest atheist and could, on the other hand, say about the nature of God, "He is a personal God to those who need his touch." [19]

It must be pointed out that his own basic nature appreciated and longed for such a personal touch. He tried his utmost to assimilate the ordinary scientific ideas and tried to go a long way with naturalism. But where science was silent or stopped, his trusting mind did not. This was the region of his faith which gave him comfort and confidence. He realized that in spite of the attempt of science to understand nature, in the light of her laws, our knowledge was limited. There were many indescribable and inscrutable phenomena, and many uncertainties in our knowledge of the changeful phenomena of the world. In some of these he was inclined to see the hand of God and the play of His mercy. For example, several times he received money, unasked and from unknown sources, just when he was in great difficulty. Again, for twenty-five years he and the members of his several centers in South Africa and India had "uniform immunity" from snake-bite though there were snakes and they were not killed. Thinking retrospectively on such long and repeated experiences he observes in the *Autobiography:* "I see, with the eyes of faith, in this circumstance the hand of the God of Mercy." Apologetically he adds, "I have no other language to express the fact of the matter." He opines that such a thing "is not a fortuitous accident but a grace

19. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 3.

of God," and even if it be called a superstition he will "still hug that superstition." "Hug" is the word that correctly expresses his attitude of loving trust in God when reason fails to explain and yet does not permit the credulity of accepting the improbable as a matter of accident or chance coincidence.

"Nature Red in Tooth and Claw"

Gandhi was not blind to the phenomena of destruction, discord, and death in the inanimate and animate world. He was aware of "nature red in tooth and claw." But looking back to the evolution of the world he felt convinced that the forces of attraction and love dominated over the opposite ones, and saved the planets and stars from clashing into destruction and also saved the animals from exterminating one another. Love acts even in the most ferocious animals which so tenderly nurse their young ones and makes their families possible. The gregarious instinct in insects, birds, and beasts shows again the unifying force of love and fellow-feeling. The progress of human society is a further expression of the same principle. "Nature lives by attraction. Mutual love enables Nature to persist." If man is to progress further he has to trust to this dominating and saving principle and organize society on its basis more and more.

Sometimes Gandhi tries even to go a step forward on the ground of his belief in the far-reaching consequences of human behavior on nature. Man's hatred calls forth hatred not only from man but also from other parts of nature. The whole world of nature is a field of mobile forces and a slight

agitation somewhere shakes the entire world in perceptible and imperceptible ways—as Whitehead wanted to show. It was a belief like this which seemed once to prompt Gandhi to say that the snakes and the tigers are nature's or God's answers to man's anger and destructive tendencies. Perhaps he believed in the idea of the Yoga philosophy of India that if a man can totally overcome his inclination to harm others, then men and beasts will also shed all harmful propensities towards him. Love calls forth love from all. A good will generates goodness in all beings.

The Vast World of Space and Time

Regarding Gandhi's conception of space and time we find that he was influenced by the general Indian ideas about them. The world is not believed, in Indian philosophy, to have originated at any assignable time. The cause of any event, as a Western logician and a scientist also will agree, is its immediate invariable antecedent (perhaps some would add to these adjectives "unconditional" too). So if we try to find out the cause of any event of the present world (or the totality of all such events which is the world itself) we would have to go back to the just previous antecedent or antecedents. If again we want the cause of the latter we have to go back to events just preceding it. If our curiosity still persists we can go back and back in time. We cannot stop at any stage as the first in time except arbitrarily, since regarding that, the question is also possible, what is the cause of that? So the very nature of the conception of time, as a series of succession, is such that we cannot possibly assign, nay, even think consistently of, the absolute beginning in

time. The world is thus regarded as beginningless. Time is without beginning and without end.

This general Indian theory of time impresses many Indian minds with the idea of infinite possibilities which, though not actual now, might have been in the remote past or be in the remote future. This generates again the tendency to take a long-range view of things, rather than care for immediate success. A famous Sanskrit poet writes in the introduction to one of his early ventures: "Some day some one will be born possessed of a similar mind (and appreciate my poems). Time is without limit and the world is wide." Time *did* serve him well. In a similar manner, Gandhi hoped that his ideals of nonviolence and truth would some day succeed. So he retorted to a sceptical inquirer, "A few thousand years are but a speck in the vast time circle." We can find in it one of the roots of his great patience, optimism, and farsight.

The infinite vastness of space and the universe is also a dominant idea in the Indian mind. Our earth is only a part of the planetary system which composes our world. But there are many such worlds above and below. Sometimes they are counted as fourteen. Religious poets and the Vaishnava theists derive from this a lesson for humility—how insignificant is man compared with the earth, and how small the earth itself compared with the universe! Gandhi's constant striving for humility was based on this realistic perception of the tininess of the human body compared to the universe. But with it, of course, he carried the counterbalancing idea of the vast capacities of the spirit in man and the Vaishnava idea that the human life is the greatest luck and opportunity: "It is a rare thing to be born as a man."

MAN

Man is a complex being. His body is a part and product of nature and it grows and decays according to the laws of nature. The body is born of the parents and therefore, "the original capital on which a child starts life is inherited from its ancestors," and the "environment does play an important part." But man is not all physical. Man has consciousness, reason, conscience, will, emotion, and similar qualities and powers which are the expressions of the spirit or soul present in him. But body and soul are not two ultimate and independent realities. The only ultimate reality is God who is manifested differently as body and as spirit, as matter and consciousness. Gandhi is not a dualist, but a monist who believes in one all-pervasive reality.

In the history of philosophy, in India and the West, there have been many philosophers, called dualists and pluralists, who have tried to understand and explain the world by assuming two or more ultimate and independent realities. But they have encountered the great problem as to how two or more absolutely different and independent entities could at all be interrelated if they are so different. Yet interrelation between mind and body is difficult to deny. To avoid this difficulty the monists try, in many different ways, to understand this universe by assuming one all-pervasive reality. There have been different types of monist in India, as in the West. Broadly speaking they are of two types. Shankara and his followers are the most uncompromising monists in India. They hold that all change and multiplicity are mere appearances. Therefore, according to them the body and the mind

are the finite appearances of the One Ultimate Real, Brahman. So the self of man, correctly understood, is nothing but Brahman. The finitude of man is due to his ignorance of his real nature, which being known, man realizes his complete identity. This doctrine is known as *Advaita*, literally meaning nondualism. It is so called because it is the negative answer to the implied question: "Are man and God (Brahman) two?"

The other type of monism in India while admitting the existence of One All-pervasive Reality, Brahman, or God, does not regard the finite and the multiple as mere appearances; the external objects, the bodies and selves are all *real* though finite. These monists try to explain the relation of the finite and the multiple realities to the One Reality in different ways, as we saw in an earlier section. All of them agree, however, to deny Shankara's doctrine that man and God—the self and Brahman—are absolutely identical in reality. These interpreters of the *Vedanta* are the founders of the many schools, commonly known as the Vaishnava schools and all are opposed to the *Advaita* of Shankara.

We have discussed previously that though Gandhi sometimes calls himself a follower of *Advaita*, he cannot be strictly regarded as following the *Advaita* of Shankara for he does not regard the world as a mere appearance. By *Advaita* he seemed to mean monism in general, including both the types distinguished above. This word has sometimes been loosely used in the wider sense of monism and he follows that trend.[20]

20. It is interesting to note that even the position of Madhva, the most pronounced advocate of *Dvaita* (dualism between self and God), has been described by one of its followers, Dr. B. N. K. Sharma, as *Svatantra Advaita*.

Relation of Man to God

Gandhi's conception of the relation of man to God show again his general affinity to the Vaishnava thinkers rathe than to Shankarites. He never enters into the intricacies o the exact relation between man and God; and it is not, therefore, possible to determine to which of the four leading Vaishnava schools, if any, he would belong. In his little commentary on the *Gita* he uses many concepts that characterize the general Vaishnava attitude which was inherited from the family and strengthened by the influence of Christianity and Islam. For example, again and again he speaks of God as master (*prabhu*) and the ideal man as the servant (*dasa*) of God. He also speaks of man as the part (*amsha*) of God or of the Divine Power. Sometimes again, he looks upon every man as the incarnation of God (*Jiv-matra ishvarke avatar hai*). But the most illuminating is his quotation of the current saying of Indian Mohammedans, which he cites here and in other writings with great approval: "Man is not God; but neither is he different from the light (or spark) of God (*adam khuda nahin; lekin khudake nurse adam juda nahin*)."

Here again we find his preference for some type of identity-indifference relation which is differently maintained by the Vaishnava Vedantists and in recent times by Tagore. The Shankarites are advocates of rigid identity. Gandhi tries to keep his conception of man and God mobile and dynamic by thinking of God as force, as life, etc., as if to make him admit divergent lines of a manifestation, incarnation and inspiration.

The Individual

The individual is a real and unique center of the life of God and at the same time God is the one ground of all individuals and binds them together in an inseparable relation. So Gandhi says on the one hand, "The individual is the one supreme consideration." On the other hand, he says with great enthusiasm, "I believe in absolute oneness of God and *therefore also* of humanity. What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the *same source*." [21]

We must pause here to understand clearly the old and modern Indian conceptions of individuality to make Gandhi's conception more intelligible. It has been much misunderstood; yet it has such a great importance for the conception of society and the state and man's duties towards them.

One great point to understand is that the Indian theists though admitting the existence of God as a creator never hold that the souls of individuals are created by God. Their souls are original and co-eternal with God, though parts of God and as such dependent on God. As creator God only wills into existence the different combinations of material elements, or God only differentiates and integrates the eternally existing matter, for the formation of the particular bodies and environmental objects for the souls. The souls—of human and subhuman living beings—are, therefore, eternal verities liable neither to creation nor to destruction. This is a very striking conception as compared with the theisms of other countries.

21. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, pp. 26–27.

Even Shankara and his followers, who do not believe in the ultimate reality of separate human souls, affirm as strongly that *as we now are*, steeped in ignorance and the deep-rooted beliefs and habits resulting from it, we cannot gainsay our individualities which do exist for all practical purposes. We have to remove these, our ignorances, beliefs, and habits only by recognizing, utilizing, and employing our individualities—our bodies and minds—for gaining knowledge about ourselves and the world, for reforming gradually our bad emotions, passions, and habits by repeated contemplation of truths and action in their lights. The body, family, society, and state have all to be organized and utilized for the redemption of the individual from the fetters of ignorant ideas and habits and for the realization of his perfect unity with Brahman. The life of Shankara, spent in active social organization, illustrates his teaching.

The Buddhists who did not believe in any substance, therefore neither in God nor in the human soul, believed still the *fact* of personality created by ignorance and its many effects. And like the Shankarites they also recognized that it is not by ignoring personality but by its correct understanding and consequent reformation of feeling and will through action that one can realize the supra-personal state of nirvana. The long, active life of Buddha for the redemption of suffering fellow beings shows his compassion for all individuals.

In spite of the differences in the conception of the individual *all* Indian thinkers would, therefore, agree on the primary and practical importance of personality, its reorganization and utilization through a life of knowledge, dis-

cipline, and selfless activity—even if, for *some*, the ultimate goal is a super-personal state.

It is true that the teachings of Buddha and Shankara were misunderstood and misapplied. The negative elements of their doctrines came to drown the positive and constructive elements. Similar things happened also in Christianity where the world-denying ascetic practices and institutions prevailed over the positive doctrines at times. There is no doctrine in the world which is too good to be corrupted.

But in recent times, during the last one hundred years, the positive aspects of the teachings of the old great philosophies of India have again been revived, in consonance with the modern Western emphasis. Vivekananda (1862–1902) has greatly emphasized the positive aspect of *Advaita Vedanta*, namely that "All this is nothing but Brahman" rather than the negative aspect of the same truth which stops short of the whole truth by saying "All this is nothing." On this basis, and following the good example of Christianity, he inculcated the idea "man-God" (*nar-narayana*), and the service of suffering humanity as the best worship of God and as the path to salvation. By infusing into the mind of man that he is nothing but Brahman he inspired courage and confidence into the drooping spirit of the country which lost all self-confidence. He combined the compassion of Buddha, for the alleviation of the suffering of fellow beings, with the Advaita idea that there is but one Brahman in all, and final salvation cannot be attained until all are saved. The positive and dynamic results of this combination can be judged from his utterances like the following which whipped up the enthusiasm of the people for a renascence in all spheres

of life: "A religion which will give us faith in ourselves, a national self-respect and the power to feed and educate the poor and relieve the misery around me. . . . If you want to find God, serve man." As Romain Rolland puts it: "And with this as his foundation stone, pride, ambition, love, faith, science and action, all his powers and all his desires were thrown into the mission of human service and united into one single flame."

Re-echoing the compassion of the Buddha as depicted in the Mahayana Buddhism (from which Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Buddhism have stemmed) Vivekananda solemnly declared like the Bodhi-sattva: "May I be born and reborn again and suffer a thousand miseries if I am able to worship *the only God* in whom I believe, *the sum total of all souls*, and above all my God, the wicked, my God the afflicted, my God the poor of all races." "Religion is not for empty bellies." [22]

The persuasive speeches and writings of Vivekananda ushered in the religious, national and yet international movements of India which culminated in her political freedom. His disciples have been working since, throughout the country for the spread of education, social reformation, relief of the sick and the afflicted. They have also established many centers of *Vedanta* in America and Europe.

Tagore (1861–1941) taught, on the basis of the Upanishads, Buddhism, and the Vaishnava poets of medieval times, the same ideal of constructive social effort rather than a world-denying cult of defeatism; and he also attracted atten-

22. See: Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, E. F. Malcolm Smith tr. (Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, Advaita ashrama, 1947), for these and similar ideas.

tion to the presence of God in the poor and the suffering people. In the *Gitanjali*,[23] which won the Nobel prize, he sings:

> Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest and lost.
>
> He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them. . . . Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down in the dusty soil.
>
> Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us. . . . Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

Personality for Tagore is "where infinite becomes finite without losing its infinity." It is the core of reality and value for man. In sympathy with Whitman he thinks about man that "in the centre of his world dwells his own personality." Man has to work from this center gradually to expand it towards infinity through love and service of man, love of nature and cultivation of all the creative arts. He founded an international university and social service center at Santiniketan (where Gandhi's party first lived in India) to give practical shape to his ideas. His song has become the national anthem of free India.

For understanding the ideological background of modern Indian life and the conception of man, it would be misleading to harp, therefore, on the traditional oversimplified notions of India and the East as the sleepy hollow of acosmism and defeatism, maya, neti neti, and nirvana and the like. These notions depict only antiquated half-truths which are some-

23. Rabindrath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (London, Macmillan and Co., Ltd.), pp. 8–9.

times more misleading than ignorance and falsehood. They do not take into consideration the dynamic and constructive forces of ideology which helped the country rise from slavery through an intense and prolonged struggle for freedom against some of the mightiest forces of deep-rooted vested interests.

Gandhi utilized the new positive ideas of modern India by assimilating them in thought, living them in his life, and giving them social and political shapes. This entire concrete process and experience gave birth to his own philosophy of man and life that finally raised the people from slavery.

His notion of the presence of God in man amounts to a belief that man has free will, reason, conscience, and love. Man is the maker of his destiny. If he chooses to use his reason correctly and guides his life by listening to the dictates of his conscience (the inner voice of God), and lives with his fellow beings with love in his heart, he can realize God and bring heaven on earth.

Every individual is unique because of his peculiar physical and mental inheritance and equipment. What an individual now is, is the effect of his action—his habits of thinking, feeling, speaking, and acting in the past. Man makes himself through all these diverse activities, internal and external. They appear to be so insignificant separately, but taken together they create the tremendous forces that shape his health, character, and his entire destiny. "Man is the maker of his destiny." But he must thoroughly understand his peculiar nature and try to perfect it. He can degrade himself by ignoring truth, neglecting conscience, and pandering to the animal passions, and can turn himself into a brute. But he can, if he will, also follow an opposite path and become more and more like God, in love, goodness, and abiding

joy, for "The divine powers within us are infinite." By his life and teachings Gandhi exhorts like the *Gita:* "Raise yourself by yourself; do not depress yourself. You are your friend, you are your own foe." So also taught Buddha: "Be a light unto thyself." This is also the purport of the teaching of Jesus in the parable of the talents.

What has raised man to the present state above the brutish life is control of the bad impulses. "The brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is man because he is capable of, and only in so far as he exercises, self-restraint," says Gandhi in his *Autobiography*. Human civilization has become possible because of the control of the baser tendencies like hatred and selfishness, and it can flourish in so far as these are replaced by good-will and love.

The Progress of Man

When Gandhi is in a mood to philosophize on the course of history he takes a long-sighted view and judges things as a whole in the light of the dominant trends. Viewing human history in this way he feels confident that humanity is on the whole progressing. He says, therefore, "I believe that the sum total of the energy of mankind is not to bring us down but to lift us up, and that is the result of the definite, if unconscious, working of the law of love." [24]

But though it means, for him, that God, as love and reason, is working through man to help man raise himself, he does not forget that God has given man freedom to play the game in his own way, only trusting that man would learn to improve himself even by his failures, making them the pillars of his success. So Gandhi speaks in a balanced tone:

24. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi,* pp. 22–23.

If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards *ahimsa* (i.e. love), it follows that it has to progress towards it still further. Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression, then there is inevitable retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle, unless it be God Himself.[25]

To follow the path of progress man must constantly strive to improve his life by improving his morals, society, and politics. We shall consider these topics in the next chapter to see how Gandhi applied his philosophy to his own life and to practical social and political service.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

3

Morals, Society, and Politics

> But this is Philosophy. Let me pray and let my readers join in the prayer to God that he may give me the strength to live up to that philosophy. For philosophy without life corresponding is a body without life.—*Young India,* April 14, 1927.
>
> I claim that human mind or human society is not divided into watertight compartments called social, political and religious. All act and react upon one another.—*Young India,* Sept. 3, 1925.

Gandhi's philosophy of morals, society, and politics would seem to be only an application of his philosophy of God, nature, and man. It would, however, be more true to say that both of these philosophies grew simultaneously in and out of a life of varied experience in which thought, feeling, and action worked together in harmony.

Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because 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.[1]

1. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi,* p. 26.

This is an expression of the positive spirit of seeking God through the service of man, the realization of the truth through action. We have seen how this spirit grew in modern India and paved the way for a renascence, by the reinterpretation of ancient Indian thought and redistribution of emphasis. But the renascence which started on the level of thought and feeling and only partially in social action, attained in Gandhi the width and the intensity of a flood that burst into all-sided activity, private, social, and political.

It is important to bear in mind that the influence of the West contributed to the strength of this new movement in India in two ways. First, the impact of the West on India through British rule was the stimulating cause of the cultural renascence in the country before the appearance of Gandhi. Secondly, Gandhi himself was directly influenced by Western Christian social and political reformers like Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau, and the Friends (Quakers) of Great Britain, America, and Africa. But for this second influence India's path of social, economic, and political recovery would have been in many respects more or less a blind imitation of the West. These Western critics and reformers of Christianity and of the economic and the political ideologies of the West showed Gandhi the dangers of the blind imitation of the West. Tolstoy's book called *The Kingdom of God is Within You or, Christianity Not as a Mystical Teaching but as a New Concept of Life* gave him the idea of the possibility of the application of the high principles of love and nonresistance in practical politics. These Western ideas only confirmed what Gandhi learned also from the best of Indian teachers.

MORALITY

Morality is, for Gandhi, the very foundation of life. The existence and progress of individuals and society depend on morality. It keeps in check the passions and impulses that lead to discord, strife, and ruin, and it promotes the other-regarding feelings that create harmony, peace, and happiness. Morality has the greatest survival value. It has evolved gradually through the long process of the evolution of man. It has been found more and more helpful and has come to be ingrained in his very nature. The moral sense or conscience has, therefore, become man's inner guide.

The realization of God is the ultimate goal of human life. But God is not an abstract entity. He is the Truth or Reality that lives in man's own self and in the selves of others. He is, of course, the reality in every thing in the universe. But He is manifested in the living more clearly than in the non-living, and in man more than in the other living beings. The realization of God can, therefore, be attained best through the realization of the God in one's own self and in humanity.

Every individual is a definite center of the life of God manifested through particular physical and mental conditions. Everyone is born with certain definite tendencies, good and bad, selfish and unselfish. He must try to know himself and reform himself, and gradually widen his limited circle of existence towards the Infinite Self, God. This can be done only by considering and including the interests of others. The path to the realization of the True Self or God, therefore, lies through the love of others and the performance of duties towards others as such love demands. Morality thus becomes "the essence of religion."

Love

Love (*ahimsa*) is the essence of morality. It is the nearest approach to God, the Truth manifested in our knowledge of Reality. Love helps the finite individual to widen his narrow self. It breaks the barrier between himself and others and makes the life of the individual include more and more of others, and it takes him thus towards the Universal or God. Love in man is the Divine Law or God inherent in him. Without this Divine Impulse man would have remained confined to his narrow ambit of selfish existence, if he could exist at all. No amount of reasoning or threat can accomplish what love can do quite spontaneously. All duties towards one's fellow beings follow from love. The performance of duty is also made pleasant by love. Love penetrates into every sphere of life and tunes all impulses to one pleasant, orchestral harmony, Gandhi tried to realize this truth. So he says:

"My life is one indivisible whole and all activities run into one another, and they all have their rise in my insatiable love of mankind."

Again, "For me, the Law of complete Love is the Law of my being." [2]

Knowledge

But love itself has to be gradually perfected by knowledge and moral effort. Love in its unenlightened form is manifest as a blind animal appetite centered mostly in the body. Knowledge liberates love from its narrow limits. When man

2. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

is ignorant of his real nature, he is moved by the cravings of the flesh with which he completely identifies himself. But when he realizes his underlying Reality and through it his inseparable relations with the rest of existence, his love extends beyond his body and its immediate interests. Thus we find that love and knowledge of Truth help each other. Love without Truth would be blind and narrow, Truth without love would be a mere unrealized Ideal.

Gandhi places, therefore, great emphasis on the necessity of knowledge for morality. Mere mechanical action, performed either under the influence of blind impulse or customs is not really moral. Morality implies conscious, deliberate volition.

> No action, which is not voluntary can be called moral. So long as we act like machines, there can be no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have been done consciously and as a matter of duty. Any action that is dictated by fear or by coercion of any kind ceases to be moral.[3]

A good action requires also the knowledge of the conditions of other fellow beings concerned, the environmental conditions and particularly the motives behind the action. Self-analysis, therefore, acquires a great importance in the ethics of Gandhi. One must always be on guard, he thinks, and watch the motives that prompt one's action. "Our desires and motives may be divided into two classes—selfish and unselfish. All selfish desires are immoral, while the desire to improve ourselves for the sake of doing good to others is truly moral." [4] Self-analysis is necessary to check our selfish motives. Without self-analysis there cannot be self-purifica-

3. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

tion. Whenever Gandhi had any conflict or discord with individuals or any organizations his first step was to retire into himself to check his motives and actions; and if he found any defect on his side he would confess it and try to remove it.

But like some modern psychologists Gandhi was aware that self-analysis might be sometimes deceptive and that others could at times see our motives and desires more clearly by observing our behavior. So he also attached importance to the opinion of others. His advice was: "We must also try to see as others see us."

We find thus that knowledge, from every point of view, is essential for good, as well as successful, moral life.

Free Will

Freedom of will is a necessary postulate of morality, according to Gandhi, as to most ethical thinkers. But he recognizes that man is not entirely free. Every man is born with certain limitations. He should know them and develop himself to the best of his capacities. All limitations cannot be totally overcome. Moreover, the laws of nature to which man is subject prescribe also some limits. But man can know these laws and learn to obey them and derive benefits from them. Man's own action, too, creates habits and tendencies; and he is driven by them too. The tendencies with which man is born are regarded by Gandhi, like ancient Indian philosophers, as also the effects of his own action in previous lives. But in spite of all these limiting influences, and even within their arena, man has sufficient scope for exerting his will and moulding his environment, body, and mind. He can

thus improve his conditions and change his habits and shape his destiny.

Soul Force

But he can draw additional strength from another source too if he has the will and the faith. One of the chief sources of the weakness and helplessness of man is his egotism—his mental identification of himself with his mind and body. This isolates himself from the rest of Reality. To superficial thought the ego appears as the very source of energy, and the assertion of the ego appears to be the only way of getting power and success. This is, however, a partial truth. Self-assertion is necessary and even beneficial for a person who suffers from utter inertia (*tamas*) and who cannot even command the physical and mental energy normally available to him. But one who has not only perfectly mastered his body and mind but has also realized that he is an inseparable part of the All-pervasive, Omnipotent Reality, can command an extraordinary power, particularly for the service of humanity.[5] Such a person has a much greater confidence in himself and others as parts of the one whole. He has an ardent love for others by which he can serve, move, and lead his fellow beings towards perfection with an ever-increasing speed. This is what Gandhi calls *soul-force* which he often contrasts with brute-force.

While brute-force is based on egotism which creates conflict and misery, soul-force is based on love, trust, and humility which create harmony and happiness. Gandhi lays great emphasis on humility. *Genuine humility* is, however, very

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.