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GANDHI

MAHATMA GANDHI'S IDEAS

by C. F. ANDREWS

MAHATMA GANDHI. His Own Story

by C. F. ANDREWS

MAHATMA GANDHI AT WORK:

His Own Story—Continued

by C. F. ANDREWS

MAHATMA GANDHI. Essays and Reflections
on his Life and Work

Edited by PROFESSOR S RADHAKRISHNAN

*(It is unlikely that the above-mentioned titles will be available
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GANDHI

by

CARL HEATH



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CREATIVE VISION	9
II. A MAN OF LIFE	10
III. INDIA'S FREEDOM	12
IV. THE HUMANE LIFE	15
V. NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE	17
VI. THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE AND THE WAR	21
VII. THE PRISONER AND THE VICEROY	26

I

CREATIVE VISION

"The survival of Great Britain depends on whether she is able to become not only a clearing-house of ideas and incentives, but also a creator of new vision."

KARL MANNHEIM, *Diagnosis of our Time*

IN these pages I am concerned to write of the character and the virtue of a great Indian, a world-famed leader of men; and I am so concerned seeing that in face of the terrors and the devastations of a second world war his late judgment or misjudgment of his country's political realities has lent itself to a widespread misrepresentation and a defamation of a noble and prophetic personality.

For M. K. Gandhi belongs to the great among men. And such as he, says Prof. John Macmurray, "are not writers of books, neither are they men of action in the ordinary sense of the term. They act in both fields through others. The impact of their personality upon other people is itself a creative energy. The mere fact of their being in the world, as the kind of human beings that they are, transforms the world so that it can never be quite the same again. Mr. Gandhi is a man of this kind. By the sublime simplicity of his moral courage he restored to the masses of his fellow-countrymen their self-respect and a belief in their own humanity. And in doing so he has changed the course of history and decided the future of a great part of the human race."¹

It is of this man that I write. It is with a desire that no fact of war, nor what may prove to have been a serious misapprehension and misjudgment of a political situation, arising in a long struggle for national liberation, should lead my countrymen to a worse misapprehension and misjudgment of the flame-like spirit that has given to the East a new redemptive sense, and to so many in the West light on the dark present road of twentieth century suffering and violence. For we are still passing through the era described by Berdyaev² as "the

¹ *Mahatma Gandhi, Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work*. Edited by Prof. Radhakrishnan, pp. 175-176. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

² *The End of our Time*, p. 57.

barbarization of Europe" in which the West with its old Christian civilization and culture can no more afford to *stone* this prophet, or to ignore him than can the East.

Even where men do not agree with this man, it yet behoves them for wisdom's and the world's sake to seek to understand him and his message. For this is an age that needs, above all else, the inspiration that comes from the linking of courage, initiative and devotion with the vision of the prophetic soul.

II

A MAN OF LIFE

"Among the greatest men on the public stage of the world are two Asiatics—Gandhi and Chiang-Kai-Shek, each moving immense masses of men along noble lines to a destiny which in essence is one with the high Christian ideal which the West has received but no longer seriously practises."

FIELD-MARSHAL SMUTS, 1939

ALL through the long history of mankind the world has been kept from ultimate tragedy and despair by prophetic and symbolic men. Their great and creative function is to see in vision the coming new day whilst the spiritual sleep of the many is still unbroken; and to acclaim the new life whilst others still perceive naught save the darkness.

Mass-men and men without vision tend always to take the existent and current methods of life around them as a closed system. These prophets proclaim a god-like power at work—that ever more light and more truth are breaking forth. Hence they know that the static must give way to the new dynamic. For they are spiritual dynamite themselves, possessed, as the Hebrew prophet had it of "a burning fire shut up in my bones." And since all true idealism must, in the event, touch the real and be moved to act, these prophetic idealists are always the most real of realists. Therein lies the secret of their salving and saving of human society. They are no mere orators or scribes. They bring new life and life freshly integrated. They are very disturbing forces, for they tend to turn the conservative world upside down and to shake all established and static customs. And they are fallible like all men, and make mistakes in the

translation of vision into act, not at times rightly estimating the waywardness of psychologic man, nor their own powers of practical judgment. But the world ignores them and contemns them at its peril. For these are the sons of light, and although the light has scorching dangers, it is vital to essential existence.

The perfectly disinterested man of my childhood was Giuseppe Mazzini. He embodied in his ascetic but burning personality the spiritual force of nineteenth century insurgent Europe, and above all of his own Young Italy. "The great exile," wrote G. M. Trevelyan, "raised the Italian movement into a religion by which thousands lived and died." This spiritual force in Mazzini is to be found in Gandhi, and comes from the fact that the latter, like the former, has within his own spirit "a power over the springs of human action which the politics of materialism may despise or explain, but can never imitate."¹

Seventy-five years ago there was born a child in India destined to embody India's soul. This child would express in life India's inherent ahimsa or gentleness, and something of its deep-seated love of truth. Circumstance might bring him into the political arena; he would become a national leader, seeking to bring the nation into freedom. But, at the end he would not be judged by his acts in that sphere, but as a spiritual incarnation, a symbolic man, a prophetic soul. And his satyagraha or soul-force would mean more to India than all he could accomplish in his wrestlings with imperial government.

Consider some words of the world-famous poet of India, Rabindranath Tagore:—

"When Mahatma Gandhi came and opened up the path of freedom for India, he had no obvious medium of power in his hand, no overwhelming authority of coercion. The influence which emanated from his personality was ineffable, like music, like beauty. Its claim upon others was great because of its revelation of a spontaneous self-giving. This is the reason why our people have hardly ever laid emphasis upon his natural cleverness in manipulating recalcitrant facts. They have rather dwelt upon the truth which shines through his character in lucid simplicity."

And consider also those of Salvador de Madariaga, the Spanish statesman-exile:—

¹ *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, p. 39.

"The living sense of things can only be conveyed by life; a life instilled with unity is needed to convey the living sense of unity to others. Such a life is Gandhi's. And that is why the Mahatma is perhaps the most symbolic man of our day, for he is not so much a man of action, or a man of thought, as a man of life."

A man of life! These words of Madariaga's sum up the reality of M. K. Gandhi. Many of his actions we may judge and disapprove, feeling perhaps that we see the right practical deed that needs a-doing in a wiser, western way. But how much have we understood him, or imagined that it might spiritually become us to sit at his feet, and learn somewhat of the truth of life revealed in the prophetic heart of this self-giving Indian?

III

INDIA'S FREEDOM

"I am in earnest and I *will* be heard."

WM. LLOYD GARRISON

"Freedom is the Soul of Deed."

BISHOP GRUNDTVIG

"THE figure of Gandhi persists," wrote *Audax* in the *Observer* of August 9, 1942. And it persists because M. K. Gandhi has taken to heart Mazzini's stern counsel, "Make your life the embodiment of one great organic idea." So firmly has he gripped the power of this centring of purpose that free India and himself have, for multitudes of his countrymen, become one idea. "Gandhi came and opened up the path of freedom for India." Gandhi may be prophet, and politician, and social reformer, but first and foremost and all the time he is free India.

This path of freedom belongs to a spiritual wholeness. This is no mere free action; nor is it merely freedom of thought, though it reveals itself in both. But it is *life*, and Gandhi is a man of life. The great Christian apostle expressed the same concept in a pregnant phrase: "the law of *the spirit of life* in Christ Jesus hath made me free." But let it be noted that this Hebrew, whose spiritual sense led him to urge upon his friends

again and again that they "stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free," was also the man whose political sense led him to remind the agents of an occupying and an alien Power of a prized political fact, "I was born free." Gandhi was not born free in the Pauline sense, but he is ever claiming the self-same integration. Life is no series of discreet categories, now religious, now political, now philosophical or social. Life is a forceful whole, and at the end there are not "four freedoms" but one.

It has been to Gandhi's eternal credit that he has never allowed his countrymen to imagine that a free India would be reached by the mere fact of a severance of the political link that binds her in subordination to imperial Britain. Essential as political freedom is, Swaraj or self-government means for him much more than a political condition. A prophet of the ideal way and the shining light he makes application in the real in all life all the time. Hence his action-demands have so often that quality about them that is uncompromising and will spare nothing, least of all himself and his own life. That is what the current political world finds so devastating, for it does not believe in any absolutes, any integrated life, and feels the Gandhian method is either fanaticism or else astute political high bargaining. Or to put it as the Bishop of Birmingham did last year: "A Christian theologian may stress 'the redemptive power of innocent suffering,' but, when our politicians see it used with simple trust, they cannot understand it; they suspect madness or profound duplicity."¹ Ramsay MacDonald wrote to me in 1933, whilst Prime Minister, that in his opinion Mr. Gandhi was "far more of a politician than anything else." But that after all was a superficial judgment from one who had somehow failed to note that, intense and astute as Gandhi might prove in a political situation, his yeast-like spirit was never confined to political issues only. Nor has any national politician roused response from men and women round the whole world as Gandhi has done. Nationalist politics of themselves have not that quality. Yet it is true that not a few imperial statesmen have sought time and again to simplify the issue by seeing Gandhi as chiefly, it not wholly, a political opponent, and by seeking to treat him in that sphere as a "spent force." And many times has he been imprisoned; the Congress party declared illegal; his friends dispersed and interned; his publi-

¹ Service of Prayer for India, Birmingham Cathedral, March 12, 1943.

cations prohibited. Yet "the figure of Gandhi persists." "Sooner or later," says that moderate elder statesman Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, "sooner or later you will have to come back to Mr. Gandhi." Past events for many years now have proved the truth of that dictum.

We may indeed ponder considerably why this is so. Perhaps we shall then conclude that this is so because, being a man of the spirit, the claim of this free child of God cannot be put permanently aside. Presently we have perforce again to take account of him. The inner dynamite of his soul, and his allies in the minds and hearts of men, are too strong. Suffering and repression only deepen that strength. It is indeed strange how often public men and statesmen, in their planning, forget the ultimate determining power of the spirit.

This power in men such as Gandhi is moreover fertilized by their dedication of soul to "one great organic idea." Such lives never sidestep Life itself. They face and mould it. That is their very special function. Suffering, repression and contempt may come. Power only grows thereby. "When I am weak then am I strong" is no paradox. It is a realism of the deeper life. Gandhi not only "opened up the path of freedom for India," he walked straight down it in complete self-giving, cost what it might. And, as prophetic man, will continue to do so, in both this life and beyond.

Now in public affairs, as in personal, such a man can be met and won. He can never be coerced. He can be won, but the price is freedom. By which is not meant merely that he be left free. What is meant is an acceptance of freedom as a basic principle on which alone co-operation is sought. The imperialist mind is always tempted to make reservations, to see itself as belonging to a superior race and a more experienced politic which gives it the right to be the ruling party. Even in its most liberal mood it retains a sense of "we to them." It does not know how to meet with rebels as free spirits and equals. It is like the parent who cannot forsake his relationship of paternalism. The *Government of India Act*, 1935, is an astonishing example of well-intentioned men welcoming the idea, as Earl Baldwin then expressed it, of the coming to birth of a United States of India, and yet seeing it almost entirely in terms of a British act—an act of the British Parliament in Westminster. And feeling that something was wrong in the ungrateful attitude of India. Doubtless the Cripps Proposals of 1942 greatly

advanced upon the Act of 1935, but any immediate liberation was still withheld, any deep recognition that henceforth India was in truth *free*.

Meantime "the figure of Gandhi persists," that patient, prophetic figure that will not be denied, and, irrelevant to a great war as it may seem, still asks for freedom *now*.

IV

THE HUMANE LIFE

"The nobler a soul is, the more objects of compassion it hath."

FRANCIS BACON

THE greatest men and women in life are those possessed of an integrated conception of the purpose of their existence or *being*, and who show this purpose in every stage of their *becoming*. Being thus unified they are indeed real personalities, human, but also always humane. Having this wholeness of nature their faith when expressed is, as Dean Inge put it, "an energy of the whole man." They are never fanatics, for they do not act in categories, but in a unity of life. And humaneness lies at the very heart of this life. It is the divine nexus that rules high spirits giving compassion, consideration and understanding of all the created and creative world. It would be impossible that such a man as M. K. Gandhi were otherwise builded.

This characteristic shows itself in two directions, in his attitude to the creature world and to the outcaste human.

Ahimsa, non-violence, "has become to him the heart of all religion," wrote C. F. Andrews. "He holds that the truth of all life on this planet and of God Himself is to be found in this principle."¹ Now it is important to keep in mind that Gandhi takes this in a strongly positive sense. It is for him a challenging call to righteous action. He will make no blind fetish of ahimsa. It is a positive direction not a static definition. For suffering may call for *positive* relief, agony for a quick ending. Action that may be called violent may become essential to humane-

¹ *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, p. 131. (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.)

ness. The governing rule must be that there can be no justification for violence on a basis of self-interest. What is deeply attractive here is his refusal of any merely hard rule. The true man, because he is a true man, must seek ever to be humane and non-violent. His choice is always to be in that direction. But however far he may go he will "welcome any practical suggestions for coping with this problem" of getting free from the violence that so greatly attaches to "all life in the flesh."

Like all Hindus, Gandhi is greatly concerned for the right treatment of the cow, and would regard with horror any indifference thereupon. The cow is a sacred animal. Yet he braved the deep antagonism of Hindu Fundamentalists when he caused a suffering calf, past healing, to be painlessly killed. And so of other animals.

Perhaps, however, his humane spirit is best seen in regard to the fifty odd millions of the Outcastes of Hinduism. Here he is absolutely uncompromising. "I regard," he says, "untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. . . . So long as Hindus wilfully regard 'untouchability' as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, swaraj is impossible of attainment. . . . Two of the strongest desires that keep me in the flesh are the emancipation of the 'untouchables' and the protection of the cow. When these two desires are fulfilled, there is swaraj."

Long years ago he adopted an untouchable little girl. Even Mrs. Gandhi at that time opposed the idea of having such a child in the house, though later she came to agree. The question of the Outcastes has thus been very central to Gandhi. He opposed and still opposes Dr. Ambedkar, now a member of the Viceroy's Council and one of the chief leaders of the Scheduled Castes, who would separate the "Untouchables" from the Hindu community altogether. For Gandhi seeks the inner reform of Hinduism in this matter. That, he feels, admits of no compromises. Here he is seeking a spiritual unity that he knows will help his country. He will be no party to greater division. And he speaks with authority, for he has never hesitated to challenge his fellow-Hindus of every caste on this matter. His successful campaigns for the opening of the Temples to the Outcastes are well known. To him more than any other is due the new position of these Scheduled Castes, Classes, or Outcastes. He sees them all as brethren in his integrated vision of the new India. Ahimsa or the truly humane, non-violent,

and gentle spirit, can never do otherwise. I agree with Mr. Edward Thompson that, "Mr. Gandhi's efforts to remove untouchability are not the least part of his striking career."¹

One other illustration of humaneness of purpose lies in his concern over the recent and still continuing famine conditions, a concern shared by Indians and British alike. Indeed, what troubles M. K. Gandhi is not perhaps so much the special famine conditions that still afflict India periodically, but the persistent poverty of the masses of the people, so that when scarcity comes there is no background upon which to maintain life. I do not know that Mr. Gandhi has discovered the right line of solution for India's economic depression. I do know that his primary social concern has always related to the Indian village and its long-suffering peasant life and its deep abiding poverty. And there his insistence has stirred to life a multitude of efforts.

V

NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

"I do oppose
My patience to his fury, and am armed
To suffer with a quietness of spirit,
The very tyranny and rage of his."

Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Sc. 1

THE most characteristic doctrine brought to bear upon public affairs by M. K. Gandhi is that of non-violent resistance, or satyagraha, the force of the soul, as opposed to the material power and violence manifested in the warfare in which all Christian countries still engage. I say *still* engage, because it is very evident that with the advent of world wars the Christian world *is* becoming increasingly conscious of war's moral wrong. This is shown in the words of the *Message* issued by the world-wide Conference of the non-Roman Churches at Oxford in July 1937. Speaking of war this *Message* says: "The universal Church, surveying the nations of the world, in every one of which it is now planted and rooted, must pronounce a con-

¹ *Enlist India for Freedom*, p. 74.

demnation of war unqualified and unrestricted. War can occur only as a fruit and manifestation of sin."¹ No doubt this is held, in a sinning world, to be subject to modification in practice: in resistance, for example, to violent evil and to aggression. But it indicates a newly developing attitude. Total war is moreover becoming too frightful and exterminating for the nations to let it continue unchecked in its devastation of life, or to believe that such destruction can have moral sanction.

Gandhi is *not* a non-resistant. He has always taken the position of a most sturdy resistance to evil, to tyranny, and to all manner of sin. But he is a most thorough believer in the virtue and the power of a resistance which is not violent and which conquers by suffering. He seeks to win, that is, by a vicarious suffering which touches the emotions to the changing of action, and which is "a dynamic incomparably greater than that of all reason or rational persuasion." And, be it added, incomparably more converting in its power than violence and war. It is a strange phenomenon that whilst the Christian West in *theory* makes much of the Christian doctrine of redemptive suffering, Western *practice* follows the Heathen way of power-politics and military force. Truly Smuts's account of it is not far wrong when he speaks of "the high Christian ideal which the West has received, but no longer seriously practises." For it cannot be denied, as he says, that this "motif of suffering is central to the Christian religion."

Gandhi's contribution to political thinking is by way of a direct challenge to this Western dualism. He will oppose material compulsion by the driving force of the soul, by that undoing suffering and endurance that will not give way, though it leads to martyrdom. And this, he says, "is a weapon to be used not only by individuals, but also to settle international disputes." In practice it is a spiritual power manifested in passive material resistance, overcoming brutal evil by redemptive suffering good. This is satyagraha, the force and truth of the soul.

In Gandhi's thinking truth or satya, and gentleness or ahimsa, are really one in essence. You cannot at any rate advance the truth by outward violence, for truth is an inward perception. Truth or satya is, he says, God. And ahimsa, God's love or gentleness, "is hurt by every evil thought, by hatred,

¹ *The Churches survey their Task*, p. 59. (London: George Allen & Unwin.)

by wishing ill to anybody." Hence ahimsa is essential to the discovery of truth and right relationship.

It is strange that Christian statesmen should reject these things and believe so firmly in heathen weapons of violence and material power. It is stranger that the man who has continuously taught and practised a resistance without material violence or bloody revolution; who has called off civil disobedience when it has so resulted; and who has fasted in penitence when his followers and colleagues have forgotten the deeper implications of their faith, and followed too readily the contradictory pattern woven in the world of men by the western disciples of Jesus, should excite such anger by his satyagraha and non-violent resistance. For Gandhi's doctrine after all has close relationship to the teaching of Christ. "It was the New Testament," he writes, "which really awakened me to the rightness and value of Passive Resistance." Could it be otherwise, or what meaning should we ascribe to the doctrine of turning the other cheek, of overcoming evil by good, and of loving your enemies; and, indeed, to the Cross of Christ itself? For Jesus fearlessly faced hatred and wrong, always resisting it with the overcoming power of love and suffering, even to the final test and seeming failure of the Cross. And the Christian, statesman or otherwise, has to ask himself quite searchingly: Was this Cross a weak endurance merely or a crowning act of redemptive power?

What Gandhi has done is to apply this teaching in the political sphere. That is the root of his offence; as an idealism it is a good religious tenet, but as a realism in daily life—no. And when, like Thoreau, he translates it into civil disobedience to unjust law, autocratic government becomes seriously alarmed.

Satyagraha, apart from a real purification of spirit, is, like all the teaching of the children of light, subject to very obvious dangers. It is easy to see that it may be abused by the instinctively violent-minded, and the supposed resistance of love may but cloak a flaming hate. But if used in hatred and as a political weapon merely, satyagraha is no satyagraha. And when Gandhi proclaims a doctrine of patient endurance and suffering in firm resistance to injustice and exploitation, it is as unreasonable to accuse him of causing the violence of the violently-minded, as it is to hold in contempt the Prince of Peace because His orthodox disciples so habitually turn to the bomb

and the bayonet to enforce their ideas of how things ought to be.

Satyagraha is a call to a tremendous discipline. This is a discipline M. K. Gandhi has always enforced upon himself in India, as in South Africa in earlier days. It is the discipline of the devoted soul with no end to serve save his vision of the Truth, a vision he knows is not for India only, but for all humanity. It is a discipline that involves at times the acceptance of strange paths of suffering, of deep disappointment and of defeat. Gandhi has faced these happenings in full measure. Many times there have come to him the "chastisement and tears" the prophetic soul must know, when human weakness leads the pilgrim, and above all the pilgrim's companions, into *Bypath Meadow* and to the dungeons of *Doubting Castle*.

Field-Marshal Smuts has known Gandhi better perhaps than most public men, and has analysed this method of non-violent resistance and converting suffering with both sympathy and understanding. Clearly Gandhi's method is not his own in present conditions. But he concludes that "it is a procedure which deserves the attention of political thinkers. It is Gandhi's distinctive contribution to political method."

Satyagraha in the present-day world of political man is still so novel a practice that errors of judgment there will certainly be in any application. The perfect manner of its working can only come by experience and long practice. None the less is it true, as Rabindranath Tagore says, that: "India has created a new technique in the history of revolution, which is in keeping with the spiritual traditions of our country, and if maintained in its purity will become a true gift of our people to civilization."¹

¹ *Mahatma Gandhi. Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work.* Edited by Prof. Radhakrishnan, p. 281.

VI

THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE AND THE WAR

"India wants to forget the past of conflict and stretch out her hand in friendship. But she can do so only as a free nation on terms of equality."

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, October 10, 1939

BECAUSE the problems raised by the Second World War are far-reaching and complex, and because we are right in the heart of the struggle and have been for five long years of suffering and endurance, and because passions have mounted high, it is not easy to speak of M. K. Gandhi's relation thereto.

The outstanding and most salient fact to be remembered is that when the war came the Indian nationalists were already deeply committed to a "whole-time" struggle for national freedom and independence. India's freedom as a nation stood first in all their thoughts. This might have taken a different perspective but for another fact not to be forgotten. India, on the verge of constitutional liberation, and, two and a half years later, to be assured of complete independence after the war, if she elected for such, was not consulted at all as to her willingness to take part in the impending struggle of the nations. Canada might decide to join in with Great Britain. So might Australia and the other free States of the Commonwealth, though one, Eire, chose neutrality. But India, nearly five times the size in population of all these put together, Great Britain included, had no voice. She had but to obey the decision of the British Government. "Indians," wrote Mr. J. A. Spender in *The Times* of January 14, 1941, "feel their self-respect to have been wounded when they were taken into the war without their consent being asked."

At that time Mr. Nehru made a stirring appeal in the *News-Chronicle* of October 10, 1939. "India," he said, "wants to forget the past of conflict and stretch out her hand in comradeship. But she can do so only as a free nation on terms of equality." His appeal fell on deaf imperial ears. It was not until the spring of 1942 that the Cripps Mission was sent to India, and not till the days of disaster in Malaya and Burma.

There is to be added to these facts Mr. Gandhi's own spiritual politic rooted in ahimsa and non-violent forms of resistance. Yet had freedom been then recognized, and the nationalists given a due exercise of power, even if a limited one, in face of the grave dangers facing his country, he would have stood aside. In face of imperial pressure, and no prospect of immediate freedom, his duty counselled him to continue the struggle with the occupying power.

Now doubtless some distinction must be made between Mr. Gandhi and the Congress Party. Mr. Gandhi is not strictly a member of the party. His position is always that of a "spiritual director." He counsels, he does not decide. And he has neither sought to determine its policy with respect to the war, nor to hinder what might have been a full national support of the United Nations' cause throughout India. Mr. Nehru wrote in the article quoted above and without contradiction from Mr. Gandhi:—

"Will this terrible war make an essential difference to human freedom, and end the causes of war and human degradation? India will gladly throw in her resources for a new order of peace and freedom. If this kind of peace is the objective, then the Allies' war and peace aims must be clearly defined. . . . The first step therefore must be a declaration of India's full freedom. This has to be followed by its application now, in so far as possible, in order to give the people effective control of the Government of India and the prosecution of war on India's behalf."

Had the response been on the lines of the Cripps's Proposals with some immediate steps to implement the words "*application now, in so far as possible,*" there can be little doubt as to where the national movement would have placed itself. Those who expected a full support in war whilst they continued to ignore or treat as irrelevant the claims of national freedom *now*; and who were aggrieved when for this support was substituted the resignation of the Congress Party Governments in the Provinces, were misconceiving altogether the passionate devotion the cause of national freedom always evokes. This war was but beginning, and they were asking the Indian Mazzinis and Garibaldis to call off their struggle with the imperial occupier because of a greater impending issue as the West saw it—to call it off without any indication of their own

willingness to reach in India that freedom for which they claimed to be fighting the Axis powers, and demanded India's support. It is indeed needful that we understand this national struggle if we are to understand India in this war *and after*, and Mr. Gandhi's part therein.

I have never been a mere defender of the political decisions of the Congress Party, prompted, as they have been, at times by M. K. Gandhi. The resignation of the Congress Governments in 1939 seemed to me an act of enthusiastic unwisdom, a throwing away in indignation of rightly held power. The dropping of Mr. Gandhi in 1941, when in July of that year it was hoped that Mr. Rajagopalacharia's move towards co-operation with the Government of India would bear fruit, followed by a rapid return to his leadership when the move failed, was opportunist politics that suggested no certainty as to what the party really believed in the matter of non-violence. And the rejection of the Cripps's Proposals after seventeen days was as unwise as the Quit-India-Civil-Disobedience resolution of August 2, 1942, was provocative. Mr. Gandhi, however, expresses in so great a measure the soul of India that wise or unwise as some of his reactions to British proposals and deeds may be, the Indian leaders always come back to him. That is a vital factor in the situation. For although on the immediate issue they may not agree with him, and may resent a sagacity saturated with a moral and religious principle, and an outlook on life they are not prepared for, they know he is the soul of India and they cannot do without him. That he is a "spent force" is a foolish British notion. And Mr. Gandhi from his standpoint, seeing as he does life in a whole and integrated *way*, cannot cease to take part in the political issues that confront his country. But in consequence he is a disturbing moral conscience, and one moreover that will never act as an ordinary politician. That is quite certain.

Take the problem of Japan. I will unhesitatingly assert, in the words of General Smuts to a Press conference at the end of 1942, that to accuse him of playing fast and loose with the Japanese is "sheer nonsense." It is not a possible account of M. K. Gandhi at all. But his own way of meeting and treating Japanese violence and cruelty can never be that of the Christian military Powers. Nor is his method one that would be adopted by any *Indian* Government, Congress or otherwise, that came into power to-day. Mr. Gandhi knows this full well and admits

it. In respect to Japan, I am not here concerned with the details of what he has actually said or written from day to day in these past years. They are to be found lucidly given in Horace Alexander's "Special Penguin," *India since Cripps*. I am concerned merely to indicate the working on this matter of his non-violent resisting mind. The Japanese came into the war with the attack in Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941. Gandhi's belief then was that Japanese aggression was directed against the Americans and the British, and not against the Indians as such. In May 1942 he wrote: "I feel convinced that the British presence (in India) is the incentive for the Japanese attack." The withdrawal of the British from India would cause the Japanese, he thought, to change their plans. If this did not happen, and the Japanese seized strategic ports, the Indians would then offer "stubborn non-violent non-co-operation. If the whole of India responded to this Japanese arms would be sterilised." "That involves the determination of India not to give any quarter on any point, and to be ready to risk the loss of several million lives." His sympathies, he declared, were with China and Russia. "America and Britain lack the moral basis for engaging in this war unless they put their own houses in order, withdrawing from their power-positions in Africa and Asia and removing the colour-bar." He could only laugh at the idea that he could be pro-Japanese; that, passionately devoted to freedom, he could "consciously or unconsciously take a step which will involve India in the position of merely changing masters."

On the war generally a National Government would, he held, "enter into a treaty with the United Nations for defensive operations." He is thinking personally of non-violent defence as shown above. But he foresees that under a National Government India, like the other nations, may "go war-mad," and his be but "a voice in the wilderness." There is, moreover, his appeal *To Every Japanese* (July 18, 1942). In this, whilst pleading with them to cease their aggression on China, he emphasizes that the Indian National Movement "is an unarmed revolt against British rule. In this they need no aid from Foreign Powers."

All this has its importance in understanding M. K. Gandhi, because the events of the summer of 1942 and of the Cripps Mission just before have led to a wholly unjust, and, indeed, in the light of his life work a stupid attack upon him as an enemy

of Britain and a secret friend of Japan. I repeat General Smuts's verdict on this "sheer nonsense!"

Moreover, we must recognize that for the Indian struggling for national freedom the War, vast as it is, is in one sense, incidental. When it is over the same situation will be there unless a convenient wisdom finds a prior solution. The next chapter will deal with that problem. Meantime Great Britain has to face in India an utter distrust of all her intentions. And the burning need in Gandhi's soul is all the time for India's freedom *now*.

But this freedom is to him, I repeat, no mere severance of a political bond, though that is an essential part of the picture. India's freedom means an advance of India into a new life, when all things must undergo a transformation, and war and the whole method of war and exploitation, and all forms of human oppression, of man by man, and nation by nation, must cease. This is the world of truth and ahimsa that he invites his people to enter. It will, he is always saying, claim a severe discipline, a new education, a devotion to God, and a selfless service of men. It will call for constant physical labour, humility and sacrifice. But it will be Life in the Truth. In a noble little book of messages to his Ashram from Yeravda Central Prison, written in 1930, he wrote of Truth: "How beautiful it would be, if all of us, young and old, men and women, devoted ourselves wholly to Truth in all that we do in our waking hours, whether working, eating, drinking or playing." And what is Truth? He has given his answer in a contribution to an important book on *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*,¹ edited by Prof. Radhakrishnan: "Truth is God; nowadays nothing so completely describes my God as Truth." Thus his claim is for entire devotion to God.

This is Gandhi, the prophetic man. "At the time when leaders in other lands," wrote Prof. J. H. Muirhead in 1939, "were either challenging the existence of any such thing as human justice or of any moral governance of the world, or were seeking to do justice to one class of society by the persecution of another, Gandhi was engaged in a crusade for the deliverance of India from bondage to another nation, and of any class in India to other classes, in the name of the unity of mankind and of a kingdom not of the world."

Whatever be our judgment of the immediate political

¹ London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

wisdom of some of M. K. Gandhi's actions, that is truly and finely said.

VII

THE PRISONER AND THE VICEROY

"This is a very personal letter. Contrary to the Biblical injunction I have allowed many sins to set on a quarrel I have harboured against you, but I must not allow the old year to expire without disburdening myself of what is rankling in my breast against you."

M. K. GANDHI in prison, to the Viceroy, December 31, 1942

SOME consideration must now be given to the strange and moving correspondence between Mr. Gandhi and the Viceroy during December 1942 and January–February of last year.¹ I know of nothing quite comparable in modern history. Here is a State prisoner accused of the responsibility of creating a rebellion of violence. He is interned, and so are all his colleagues, men and women of standing and eminence, some recently Prime Ministers and Ministers of Provinces, or members of Provincial Legislatures, together with hundreds of other lesser people. And here is a Viceroy, the deputy of the Imperial Government that sits in London, a man exercising immense power. And these two correspond as *friends*, the first asking quite simply why the second has arrested him?—"I had thought we were friends, and should still love to think so" (December 31, 1942).

This correspondence will become historic. It should be read carefully and with much sympathy. For the writers are both religious men, and each, as the correspondence develops, makes a strong case. Both exercise restraint and patience. Yet I cannot help thinking that as he sits at home and breathes the fresh cool air of Scotland, Lord Linlithgow will perhaps wish that he could modify much that he then wrote to his prisoner "friend" in Poona. For after all Mr. Gandhi asked very simply that, accusing him as the Viceroy did of the main responsibility for the violence and rioting that took place after the internments, he, the Viceroy, should send for him and convince

¹ Released by the Government of India, February 10, 1943, with a statement.

him of error, and he "would make ample amends." He asked further, since clearly the Viceroy expected some statement, that he might consult with his fellow-prisoners and colleagues, if the policy of the famous resolution of August 8, 1942, which the Government held to be the root and cause of the trouble, were to be modified. Again he recalled to his friend "that any violence on the part of Congress workers I have condemned openly and unequivocally. I have done public penance more than once," but, he added, "on every such occasion I was a free man." And he tells the Viceroy, after two months of correspondence, that if "I cannot get soothing balm for my pain I must resort to the law prescribed for satyagraha, a fast according to capacity." And he warmly resents Lord Linlithgow's suggestion that a fast of the kind projected is "a form of political blackmail," and "an easy way out." "That you, a friend, can impute such a base and cowardly motive to me passes comprehension."

The Viceroy remained unmoved. His one governing idea was seemingly that the prisoner should repent.

Mr. Gandhi pursued his redemptive fast. It made no difference to political fact. Officialism remained hard, though somewhat anxious. He has now—a year later—been released *unconditionally*—by Lord Wavell. The man who might have earned a lasting fame by winning the prophet's co-operation had, in spite of a common deep faith in God which linked him to his prisoner, no imagination that could enable him to do so. Once again the opportunity passed, and the rift between India and Britain deepened. The Soldier now sits in the place of the Kirk Elder. Will he show in his dealings with M. K. Gandhi a spiritual capacity his predecessor lacked, and touch with a creative hand of healing the sore place that separates Britain from India?

This indeed raises the question of what is the nature of the path of understanding that can reach and disarm a tense antagonism and resolve a struggle in justice and co-operation. What is conciliation and its true and fertile technique?

The first step is of course a clear recognition of what is involved in any given quarrel. Unfortunately the religious world has tended to establish in the mind of the ordinary man a thought of reconciliation which vitiates the whole method by a destructive association with elements of feebleness and sentimentality. The search for conciliation in public affairs

is in many minds an activity of people always ready to delude themselves over, and to show sympathy for, the wrongdoing of other persons and nations. Hence, in spite of a tense and antagonistic situation, even deeply religious and, Christian people put it aside as inappropriate, or as impossible for the present, and comfort themselves with the really weak spiritual notion that "a time will come." It may well be that we need a new word for the line of direct spiritual action intended. For no true advance in political and social agreement is to be found in a sentimental attitude of men toward each other, either of nations or of classes, but only in a new understanding of social order; a new conception of the integrated social life of man and of the way thereto; and in a willingness of mind to experiment courageously in spiritual methods. We need both to get rid of the sentimental attitude which sees the other side as the depressed class and "longs to make it up"; and of the equally sentimental attitude of those who claim that, for a time, there is no other way than physical force, but who invariably come in the end to negotiations when the exhaustion point is reached, and the appalling fertility of the way of destruction and repression is clearly manifest.

All those who seek the direct path of conciliation have need to add a considerable dose of Greek intelligence to any qualities of good-heartedness and altruism they may possess. Conciliation needs to be seen as the one and immediately practical path that will prevent the inevitable degradation of the human spirit ensuing when physical force is resorted to, and that will build constructively a new and positive integration. Conciliation is the immediate practical co-operative activity of intelligent men of goodwill applied jointly to the solution of a case of social disorder. It implies no surrender of principle, nor does it demand a reversal of judgment on the part of any as to the causes of the present dispute or disorder. But it does call for a sympathetic intelligence, for a recognition of human error and human weakness, and for a keenness of will to find what religious people would call the will of God.

This involves certain spiritual conditions. Men cannot seek co-operatively to find this divine will, nor reach with constructive force to a new integration save in the spirit of freedom, and equality, and brotherhood. They cannot do it apart from God and the qualities of his life and nature, apart that is from spiritual grace, by whatever name they call it. Where these

spiritual conditions are ignored the decisions reached are but modifications of decisions of force. They are without creative grace. Europe to-day is an outstanding example of heathen and unreconciling method. There will never be peace in the European world until its nations assume in their relations with each other, that each is free, equal and friendly, and that all have a common life in which agreement *can* be reached. Till then they cannot be reconciled; and until they are so, unhappiness, disaster, national antagonisms, and war, must remain as germs of disease, and often virulent disease in the body politic of this Continent and of these European Islands.

Applied to India and the Indian situation! Can any sit down and say with sincerity "the time is not yet." *Now* is the appointed time; and *now* is always the appointed time. *First* be reconciled. What the situation calls for is a really *transforming* act.

What sort of transforming act or acts are here involved? Prof. H. G. Wood has written in another connection of forgiveness "as meaning essentially re-imagining people." What is needed first is to re-imagine the situation by changing places mentally with Indian nationalists seeking the freedom of their country as a primal need. Nothing can be reached by repetitions of the same unimaginative order always suggesting that the other side is wholly to blame, and that nothing can be done until they confess it. For first, it is untrue, secondly it is uncreative, and thirdly it is political bankruptcy in such a tension-situation as the Indian. The next step is the promotion of free consultation. It is worse than useless to repeat that the Indian leaders must first find a unity when quite definite steps are taken to prevent Mr. Gandhi from communicating with his colleagues in prison, and these with any outside leaders, Congress, Moslem, Christian, or otherwise. Yet this futile and provocative statement has been repeated again and again, even in high places.

The next step in a transforming act would be for the Viceroy to call all these leaders together to meet him. Would they come? Yes, if they knew of his determination to solve the problem *now* and move forward on the basis of the conclusions reached. Lord Wavell has done a right and commanding thing in showing at once, as new Viceroy, his consuming concern over India's poverty. But that, like other problems, cannot be solved whilst the political tension is left as an open

sore and the Imperial Government refuses to make any further effort peacewards.

In the present war this political issue has gone far beyond one of Great Britain and India only. There is the general Far-Eastern problem of the post-war future, and the fruits that will surely ripen of those seeds of deep antagonism a stiff and intransigent spirit and refusal to move, is now sowing. This indeed is what has alarmed much informed American opinion. Nations at war do not remain enemies indefinitely. Is India to look to the West with continued friendship, or will she turn in her popular movement, with bitterness at heart, to a strong combination with a renascent China and a new Japan? The days are fateful, and our imperialists are sowing dangerous seed.

Meanwhile M. K. Gandhi still occupies his place in the affection and respect of millions of his country-men and of many thousands in all parts of the civilized world, and that not least in these Islands. "The figure of Gandhi persists." The war is around us in all its fury and destructiveness, and none can say what kind of a Western Christendom or what Orient will emerge. But even the greatest of wars come and go and are forgotten. Great ideas cannot be lost or destroyed though their realization wait on time. *India will be free*, and in her freedom she will not forget that strange little man, the mahatma or great soul, that "opened up the path of freedom" for his country. Throughout his public life Gandhi has spoken,

"Upon a world-wide stage, that yet shall see,
Amid the warring nations sunk in strife,
An India rise, of her own birth-right free
Bearing aloft a brimming bowl of Life."¹

And in Gandhi India speaks to the wider world,

"A message that shall leaven all the race."

That wider world will not forget his prophetic soul. As it learns through hard and devastating suffering to put material violence finally out of its thinking and practice, and to face life co-operatively in satya and ahimsa, truth and gentleness, it will turn again and do homage to the Indian apostle who sought to make of these a daily realism and a new creation, not for India only, but for all Humanity.

¹ Effie M. Heath, *Mirror and Remembrance*, p. 11.

