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GANDHI'S ALTERNATIVE AND INDIA

by

Ilan Kapoor

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

March 20, 1986

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ISBN 0-315-29846-4

The undersigned hereby recommend ~~to~~ the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of this thesis, submitted
by Ilan Kapoor, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the impact of Gandhi's ideological alternative and leadership on India during the 1915-65 period. It is argued that while the former had little bearing on the country's development process, the latter was instrumental in moulding the country's political, social and economic forces. Moreover, it is demonstrated that it is precisely Gandhi's style of leadership which rendered his ideological alternative inconsequential. The crux of the argument is that Gandhi's leadership transformed the Congress party into a powerful political organization which held together a variety of autonomous and mutually-antagonistic interests. So overriding were these interests that vital national programmes were used by them to buttress their own purposes, at the expense of the development of the country as a whole.

The approach taken in this thesis is a political-economy approach. It examines a historical process as constituted by the interrelationship between Gandhi, on the one hand, and India's social, political and economic forces, on the other. In using such an approach, it is argued that Gandhi plays such a crucial role in the period under consideration that he cannot be considered to have been swallowed up by the forces of history. It is shown, on the contrary, that he made history. Hence, no study of India's development process can ignore his legacies.

To my Mother, Father, Anish and Roy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to my Thesis Supervisor, Dr. Elliot Tepper, and Thesis Adviser, Dr. John O'Manique, for their pertinent questions and comments.

My very special thanks to Dr. Nalini Devdas, whose support and scholarly insights proved invaluable to me, and to Sandra Morrison for her caring patience in typing this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem

As the twentieth century dawned in India, the scene was dominated by a most inspiring, most controversial man of ideas and action -- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. During India's independence movement, Gandhi emerged as the first national leader on the political scene to recognize the untapped power of the Indian masses and to mobilize all sections of the Indian people against colonial rule. On the economic front, he sought to establish the ideal of equality, without recourse to violence. On the social front, he encouraged people to strive for social justice through mutual understanding.

While Indian leaders, including Gandhi, committed themselves to the immediate goal of political freedom, it was Gandhi who persistently focused attention on the larger aim of alleviating poverty and establishing social justice. His pursuit of this larger goal was based on a distinctive philosophy of life in which ethical values were crucial. For this reason, Gandhi was convinced that economic equality and social justice could be brought about through nothing less than the moral regeneration of a whole people.

The Indian independence movement brought forth a variety of choices with regard to the country's future direction. Gandhi's social, political and economic philosophy was one alternative. But the movement also yielded powerful social, political and economic pressures to which Gandhi's alternative succumbed. The result was that Gandhi's ideas were either

challenged by competing ideas or were used to secure non-Gandhian political and economic interests.

Although his ideology met with resistance, Gandhi's leadership in mobilizing and mediating between various social groups and political factions within Indian society thrust him to the forefront of the country's freedom struggle. In fact, so effective was this leadership that it not only made him the "father of the nation", but it also transformed the Congress party into a powerful political body.

After India obtained independence, Gandhi's ideological alternative increasingly became part of the past; his style of leadership, however, continued to play a significant role in the country's life. The dominant position of the Congress party, which was largely his legacy to the nation, and the country's social realities did not permit the moral regeneration of the country; nor did they permit the economic equality and social justice that he and other national leaders had committed themselves to bring about.

This thesis is concerned with Gandhi's ideas and leadership and the manner in which they had a bearing on the actual course of India's social, political and economic life during the period between 1915 and 1965. It will be argued that while the Gandhian ideological alternative had no significant impact on the nation, Gandhi's leadership did. The thesis will examine the process through which other alternatives than the Gandhian one were chosen and plans undertaken which could not accommodate for Gandhi's alternative. Indeed, it will be shown that Gandhian social, economic, and political ideals were rendered inconsequential by the very political and social forces that he helped shape.

2. The Process

Although influenced by such writers as Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau, Gandhian thought was rooted in Indian tradition. The principles of Truth and non-violence were in keeping with India's philosophic outlook, and Gandhi made them the basis of his world view. Truth and non-violence provided Gandhi with a foundation to resist the Western values and institutions which had been imposed on India by British rule. At the same time, they permitted him to propose alternative institutions and a code of behaviour aimed at uplifting India's moral, social, economic and political decay. To violence, Gandhi responded with non-violence; instead of material well-being, competition and profit, Gandhi proposed spiritual well-being, cooperation and renunciation; his alternative to private property was trust property; and he replaced parliamentary democracy, economic centralization and industrialization with village rule, decentralization and labour-intensive technology. Truth and non-violence permitted Gandhi, therefore, to propose a unique ideological alternative, which called attention to moral growth and questioned those alternatives which emphasized material growth.

But if Gandhi's philosophical outlook was unique, so was his ability to transform his philosophical principles into a programme of action, with a view to bringing about social justice and political harmony. This programme was unique because it helped in mobilizing large sections of society in order to non-violently rid India of colonial rule. But it was also unique because it sought to transform India's social, political and economic fabric through the moral regeneration of all Indians.

Unique as Gandhian thought might have been for the Indian freedom movement, it did not have any lasting impact on India's social and economic transformation. From the very early stages of India's freedom struggle and during Gandhi's leadership of the non-cooperation movement, the Indian political scene abounded in ideas on the country's social and economic future. Because independence from British rule loomed in the horizon, the national mood was one which brought forth politically mature leaders who were conscious of the possibilities of change. Accordingly, several alternatives were advocated by different groups within and outside the Congress party. The Socialists and Gandhi agreed on the need for social and economic justice; they differed, however, on the role of the State and the place for industrialization in India's economic development. Right-of-centre Congress leaders defended parliamentary democracy and modernization through private ownership of means of production, thereby opposing Gandhi's ideal of cooperative economic and political organization. Outside the Congress, the Communists criticized non-violent methods and advocated revolution and State ownership of means of production. Meanwhile, religious and other minority groups within Indian society opposed Gandhi's advocacy of social integration and transformation. The ideological alternative advocated by Gandhi succumbed, therefore, to social, political and economic pressures.

Nonetheless, Gandhi, through his style of leadership, did leave an indelible mark on India's political map. His powerful leadership of India's freedom struggle was the product of dynamic mediation between political leaders, factions within Congress and religious and social groups. This mediatory role not only permitted India's independence move-

ment to increase its following, but in doing so, also gave the Congress party an ability to accommodate diverse interests and goals. Hence, Gandhi's leadership contributed to making the Congress party India's prime political body.

Following independence, the Congress party dominated the Indian political scene. Its accommodative politics continued to absorb regional, caste and economic interests. At the same time, national leaders committed themselves to a "socialist" pattern of development which sought to build a modern, industrial nation, but which also attempted to implement such Gandhian ideas as cooperative economic organization and village-rule. Yet, it shall be shown, parochial interests within Congress, outweighed national goals. What emerged was an India fraught with disparities: a growing industrial base was in stark contrast to the poverty of the rural masses. Gone were Gandhi's ideals of Truth, non-violence, decentralization and radical, but non-violent, social transformation. But, paradoxically, omnipresent was the mark he left on Indian politics.

3. The Approach

The ensuing pages will examine two questions: (1) what impact did Gandhi's ideological alternative have on India? and (2) what impact did his style of leadership have on India? The answer to both these questions will lie in the argument that while Gandhi's ideology and programmes had no significant impact on the nation,¹ his style of leadership did; and more importantly, it is precisely the impact of his style of leadership which explains why his ideological alternative was rendered inconsequential. The crux of the argument is that Gandhi's style of leadership

transformed the Congress party from an elitist party into an umbrella organization whose success depended upon a policy of accommodation of interests. This policy, which the Congress inherited from Gandhi, involved holding together groups with varied and even mutually-antagonistic interests. It will be shown that, during the period of Gandhi's leadership and in the post-independence era, the specific interests of these groups became overriding, with the result that they used India's political organization to buttress their own ends at the expense of those of the nation as a whole. In the process, beginning even in his own lifetime, Gandhi's ideological alternative was to a large measure disregarded.

The approach taken in this thesis is a political-economy approach. Here, the interplay between social, political and economic forces and the sequence of changes which they bring about is examined in order to explain the development process of a country. Traditional political-economy analyses² tend to confine themselves to the interaction between social, political and economic forces. In this thesis, however, the analysis is modified by showing that, in examining a specific development process, it is necessary to take a wholistic view of history. Such a view entails questioning whether there are other forces than the afore-mentioned three which enter into the historical process. In what follows, it will be shown that India's development (or under-development) cannot be explained without taking into consideration Gandhi, his leadership and his ideological alternative. Accordingly, it will be argued that, during the period under consideration (1915-65), there was not only a dynamic interplay between social, political and economic factors but also a dynamic exchange

between these three factors, on the one hand, and Gandhi, on the other. Gandhi's style of leadership was modified by the three factors, and the dynamic interplay between them was moulded by his style of leadership. As for his ideology, it will be shown that it was rendered inconsequential precisely because of this dynamic interplay.

Three important points concerning our approach and methodology should be clarified from the start. The first point concerns the choice of the time period (1915-65) on which we shall be focusing. 1915 marks the beginning of the period when Gandhi started to play an active role in India's social and political scene, immediately following his return from South Africa. 1965 marks the end of the Congress party's politics of accommodation, immediately preceded by Nehru's death; it also announces the beginning of a period of economic upheaval and political fragmentation inside and outside the Congress. Nonetheless, the choice of the above dates is not a rigorous one and hence reference to dates and periods preceding or following 1915 and 1965 will of course be made when deemed necessary.

Secondly, the task before us will not be to examine Gandhian legacies in contemporary India by comparing a Gandhian blueprint with the social and economic realities of post-independent India. To do so would be, firstly, impossible because no Gandhian blueprint can be said to have existed (as Chapter 1 will point out), and secondly, simplistic because we would be ignoring India's history and social and economic complexities. Instead, our purpose will be to study the dynamics of Gandhi's ideas and leadership in the context of social, economic and political change in India during the 1919-1965 period. We shall therefore be focusing on the interaction between Gandhian ideology and methods and the process of

nation-building in India.

Finally, and most importantly, it will not be our purpose to examine the viability of the ideological alternative put forth by Gandhi, and for that matter, by other leaders and parties, or to speculate on what India's development path would have been had this alternative been taken more seriously. Similarly, as far as Gandhi's leadership is concerned, we shall not evaluate it in terms of a leadership theory or analyze whether there was a one-to-one correspondence between what his intentions were as a leader and what actually occurred as a result of his leadership (i.e. whether Gandhi was a "good" leader). Although these questions are interesting theoretical questions, they all aim to measure, or judge Gandhi's ideology and/or leadership by selecting certain criteria. Our aim in this thesis is neither to measure nor to judge; rather, it is to explain the impact of Gandhi's ideological alternative and style of leadership on India by examining a historical process as constituted by the interaction between Gandhi, on the one hand, and social, political and economic phenomena, on the other. What this approach entails, therefore, is that Gandhi's ideological alternative and leadership, as well as the ideological prescriptions of other leaders or political parties, will be viewed as historical facts; and accordingly, our purpose will be to describe the interaction between them, on the one hand, and India's political, social and economic forces, on the other.

The first chapter of this thesis, entitled "Gandhi's Alternative", will analyze Gandhi's social, political and economic ideas and programmes of action. Here, our aim will be to highlight the ethical principles on which Gandhi's thought and programmes were founded and the manner in which

Gandhi used these principles to address some of India's most pressing problems. Our second chapter will examine Gandhi's ideology and programmes in the context of India's independence movement. We shall argue that his alternative was only one of several divergent alternatives and that it was politics, not Gandhi, which determined the Congress party's ideological platform and programmes. Hence the title of this chapter -- "The ideological Mosaic, Politics and Gandhi".

Whereas the first two chapters deal with the impact of Gandhi's ideological alternative on India, the next two chapters are concerned with the impact of his style of leadership. Chapter 3 outlines the "Dynamics of Gandhi's Leadership" with an eye on explaining how his leadership was instrumental in building the Congress party by way of a policy of accommodation of interests. The content of this chapter is crucial in order to understand why Gandhi's ideological alternative was challenged during the independence movement, as the second chapter will have argued, and also to explain India's pattern of development in the post-independence period, which is the subject of Chapter 4. Indeed, Chapter 4, entitled "The Political Economy of Development", will illustrate the process of India's development in the 1947-65 period by focusing on the interaction between political, social and economic forces. Here, it will be shown that 'socialist' and 'Gandhian' development goals were countered by the very social and political forces that Gandhi helped shape in the pre-independence period.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The author is aware that Gandhi's ideological alternative has been the source of inspiration for various Gandhian movements, led by such men as Vinoba Bhave and Jayprakash Narayan, which have operated in India before and after independence. The significance of these movements in terms of India's overall development strategy and pattern, however, is considered minimal, and therefore, little reference will be made to them in this thesis.
- 2.. A typical example is C. Bettelheim's India Independent, (New York, 1968).

CHAPTER ONE

GANDHI'S ALTERNATIVE

Introduction

Gandhi's actions and writings span so many issues that it would be impossible to concisely analyze all the issues without doing injustice to their content. Yet, Gandhi's entire world vision is supported by and stems from two ethical principles -- Truth (satya) and non-violence (ahimsa). Both principles are based on a certain view of the very nature of existence. Truth, according to Gandhi, is the principle of existence and denotes Ultimate Reality. Non-violence is an ethical ideal, a criterion by which all practical action is to be tested. Thus, while Gandhi did not spell out any definitive pattern of ideas and action, his criteria for all of life's pursuits were set by the ideals of Truth and non-violence.

Gandhi described his life as a series of "experiments with truth".¹ His ideas grew as he grew. He never claimed to be consistent in practical situations or that his understanding of Truth was infallible: "I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth, I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things...When anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject".² "At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may

present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth".³ But Gandhi adds, "There is, I fancy, a method in my inconsistencies. In my opinion, there is a consistency running through my seeming inconsistencies, as in Nature there is unity running through seeming diversity".⁴ Accordingly, it is Gandhi's "method" and its implications for his social, economic and political philosophy that we shall describe in this chapter. Sections 1, 2 and 3 will analyze the principles of Truth and non-violence, on which Gandhi's "method" is based, as well as the manner in which one is to relate them to the Gandhian world view. Sections 4 and 5 will be devoted to highlighting the applications of Truth and non-violence to Gandhi's social, political and economic outlook.

1. Satya

The term satya is a designation of Ultimate Reality and is derived from the Sanskrit word sat, meaning both "ground of being" and "truth". Gandhi's use of the term retains the same meaning. He writes:

The word Satya (Truth) is derived from Sat, which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God.⁵

Implicit in Gandhi's concept of satya are three important postulates. The first is the identification of Truth with God, the second is the affirmation of the oneness of Truth, and the third is the imposition of limits to human understanding of Truth. As far as the first postulate is concerned, it should be noted that although Gandhi at first defined God as

Truth, he subsequently reversed the relationship after realizing that atheists could pursue Truth with as much integrity as people who believe in God:

...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 reasoning that I saw that, rather than say that God is truth, I should say that Truth is God.⁶

This reasoning provides us with an indication of what Gandhi meant by saying "Truth is God". "Truth is God" proclaims the ultimacy of Truth, the implication being that even God cannot go against Truth because Truth is His very essence. "God is Truth", on the other hand, proclaims the ultimacy of God, Truth being merely an attribute of God and prevailing because of His omnipotence.

Secondly, Gandhi's view that "nothing is or exists in reality except Truth" implies the oneness of Ultimate Reality. The Upanishads affirm the oneness of the individual soul with the ground of all existence (Brahman); they portray satya or Truth as inherent in every individual, as something there to discover. Ultimate Reality is therefore seen as both transcendent and immanent, the view being that all that exists stems from a single source (Brahman) which manifests and indwells every individual being. Gandhi, too, adopted such a philosophy:

I own that I have an immovable faith in God and His goodness and inconsumable passion for truth and love. But is that not what every person has latent in him?⁷

I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore of humanity. 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...I know God is neither in heaven nor down below, but in everyone.⁸

Thus, because Truth is God, and Truth is both the ground and goal of life, an individual is only to the extent that he or she manifests or realizes Truth. The more truthful one is, the closer one is to God. And, for Gandhi, ~~this~~ truthfulness is not simply truthfulness in word; its all-inclusive character entails that it is also truthfulness in thought and deed.⁹

The third and final postulate implicit in Gandhi's principle of Truth concerns the extent to which one can grasp Truth. The answer supplied by Gandhi is:

God alone knows Absolute Truth. Therefore I have often said, Truth is God. It follows that man, a finite being, cannot know Absolute Truth.¹⁰

But it is impossible for us to realize Absolute Truth so long as we are imprisoned in ~~this~~ mortal frame. We can only visualize it in our imagination. We cannot, through the instrumentality of this ephemeral body, see face to face Truth which is eternal. That is why, in the last resort, one must depend on faith.¹¹

Three important elements, which delimit the scope of human knowledge of Truth, can be drawn from the above statements. First, Gandhi believes that Absolute Truth is ultimately unknowable and that its existence can therefore only be established by an act of faith. Hence, the existence of Truth, which is God, can be verified neither by human reason nor sensory experience.

Second, Gandhi seems to be reiterating what Indian philosophical traditions say are impediments to the knowledge of Brahman (or Truth). These are avidya or ignorance, and sansara or transmigration, which bind man to the realm of rebirth and dualities.¹² If wisdom is attained and one breaks through the cycle of rebirth, Indian tradition says, one can fully comprehend the nature of Reality and therefore see the unity underlying the multiplicity of the universe. But according to Gandhi, man's impurities and limitations impede him from doing so.

The above two points beget a third point: for Gandhi, Truth cannot be brought to bear on any situation fully. Because human frailty impedes man from expressing Truth completely, life is a series of "experiments with truth". Gandhi used the word "experiment" in the scientific sense, wherein one tests a theory through a series of trials, recognizes possible errors and attempts to correct them. Thus, Gandhi's search for Truth is not a search for Absolute Truth, but a search for specific applications of truth (or "relative truths", as he called them). This point is corroborated by R.N. Iyer when he writes: "Gandhi's view of moral growth not merely allows for the inevitability of inconsistencies between moral decisions made at different times and in different situations, but also the impossibility of achieving at any time or in any situation the entirety of what one sets out to do".¹³

Notwithstanding the impossibility to fully realize Truth in life situations, Gandhi believed that, ultimately, untruth cannot prevail. "Truth transcends history"¹⁴, he wrote. Absolute Truth, for Gandhi, is therefore unchanging and unknowable in its unchangingness, but our knowledge of it is dynamic and relative.

But at this point we are confronted with a problem. If Truth is constantly manifesting itself and being discovered in relative forms in life situations, then how does Gandhi account for the seeming inconsistency that different persons facing the same situation can have different views of Truth? This is precisely the question asked of Gandhi during his testimony before the Hunter Committee¹⁵. Gandhi's answer was unequivocal:

Q. However honestly a man may strive in his search for truth his notion of truth may be different from the notion of others. Who then is to determine the truth?

A. The individual himself would determine that.

Q. Different individuals would have different views as to truth. Would that not lead to confusion?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Honestly striving for truth is different in every case.

A. That is why the non-violence part was a necessary corollary. Without that there would be confusion and worse.¹⁶

Let us, then, turn our attention to the analysis of Gandhi's concept of non-violence, where the full import of the above answer will become clear.

2. Ahimsa

Having posited that the actualization of Truth is the ideal end, of which the individual can only catch a glimpse in a given situation, Gandhi prescribes a pure and a dynamic means with which to pursue the search for Truth, namely, ahimsa or non-violence. The doctrine of ahimsa holds a

significant place in all religious traditions of India, but the Jains placed particular emphasis on it in their code of conduct and day-to-day living. The doctrine stipulates that the individual's obligations are not limited only to his fellowmen, but must also be extended to include all living beings. Non-violence, therefore, connotes "non-injury" to any living creature in thought, word or deed; and in a more positive sense, its connotation is broadened to include love, charity and active service to others. For, it is argued, "we shall be really injuring a person when we can help him but do not".¹⁷

Gandhi's deep commitment to this doctrine could be attributed to his intimate contact with the Jain tradition of Gujarat, where he grew up. Like the Jains, he too made non-violence an important part of his code of conduct:

In its negative form, it means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind. It may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. In its positive form, Ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity.¹⁸

It is important to point out how non-violence is, as Gandhi stressed in his testimony before the Hunter Committee, a corollary of the principle of Truth. For Gandhi, non-violence is rooted in the concept of unity of all beings, which in turn stems from the principle of Truth. Because Truth is immanent in all living beings, one would be denying that immanence by exercising violence against or being disrespectful of any being. Thus, Gandhi writes:

For we are all tarred with the same brush and are children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.¹⁹

Just as Truth is inherent and immanent in all individuals, non-violence, for Gandhi, is practicable by all. For Gandhi, one's knowledge of non-violence grows with self-knowledge, independent of any religious sanctions. But more importantly, Gandhi believed that not only is everyone capable of learning and practising non-violence, but also of responding to it.

That all men and women can practise non-violence is one important element of Gandhian thought; doing so by fulfilling certain requirements and being aware of certain limitations is another. For Gandhi, all men are kith and kin; however, they can be made to realize their kinship in situations of conflict only if great pains are taken to devise non-violent means of winning them over to such a realization. The practice of non-violence, therefore, requires tremendous courage, endless patience and sacrifice in order to resist untruth and bring about the common good. It also requires humility and selflessness -- humility because one has to be conscious of one's limitations and one's liability to err, like any fellow mortal, and selflessness because one has to be prepared to sacrifice one's all in the name of human kinship.

While Gandhi's own belief in non-violence stemmed from an inner conviction and moral disposition that could not tolerate violence, his aversion to violence nevertheless excluded passivity in the face of violence. Since by not attempting to put an end to violence, one would be letting violence perpetuate and implying a refusal to actualize Truth, non-violence cannot mean running away from danger or avoiding resistance. Cowardice and violence, in Gandhi's eyes, are the weapons of the weak at

heart, while bravery and non-violence are the virtues of the strong-minded:

Non-violence is not a cover for cowardice, but it is the supreme virtue of the brave. Exercise of non-violence requires far greater bravery than that of swordsmanship. Cowardice is wholly inconsistent with non-violence.²⁰

In fact, if the choice between cowardice and violence has to be made, whether in India's freedom struggle or in any submission to evil, Gandhi would choose violence:

I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence...I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour. But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment.²¹

Of course, Gandhi does not imply that we should choose violence in order to prove that we are not cowards. Notwithstanding, what becomes apparent is that Gandhi was realistic enough to recognize that there are certain circumstances which limit our adherence to absolute non-violence. At the outset, he admitted that the very fact of living involves some degree of himsa or violence, since sustaining life -- breathing, eating -- inevitably requires destruction of life. For that matter, the very idea of the need to practice non-violence is an implicit recognition of the existence of violence, which in this case, is inextricable from the basic act of living. Nevertheless, man must strive to reduce violence to a minimum.

We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of himsa. The very fact of living...necessarily involves some himsa. A votary of ahimsa therefore remains true to his faith if the spring of all his actions is compassion, if he shuns to the best of his ability the destruction of the tiniest creature, tries to save it, and thus incessantly tries to be free from the deadly coil of himsa. He will be constantly growing in self-restraint and compassion, but he can never become entirely free from outward himsa.²²

Gandhi provides us with some meaningful examples which highlight the limits and scope of ahimsa. He wrote that if, for instance, his child were to contract rabies and if there was no cure to relieve its agony, he would consider it his duty to deliver the child from the suffering by putting an end to its life, even though such an act would produce "Instinctive horror".²³ Similarly, it would be a social necessity to put an end to the life of a man who, in a fit of madness, went around killing people indiscriminately. The implication here is that the indwelling Truth within us becomes the "spring of compassion" that makes us see the concrete situations where violence becomes absolutely necessary to prevent further violence. Clearly, Gandhi realized that in circumstances of moral predicament non-violence cannot be allowed to become a fetish, so that one has to do what must be done, that is, choose that means which will involve the least amount of suffering. It might be argued, however, that the principle of non-violence is thereby rendered useless, since any act could be justified according to the interpretation one gives to "doing what must be done". Yet Gandhi's message is that the principle of non-violence must always be an attitude of mind but that there may nevertheless be situations of moral dilemma where the principle has to be transcended in order

to do what is morally possible. In this connection, G. Richards points out that "The principle of non-violence is still absolute in the sense that it informs the spirit of the circumstances in which violence is done and can produce feelings of remorse or instinctive horror as Gandhi calls it. Yet it is not absolute in the sense that it is a principle apart from morality on which morality itself is founded or a blueprint for conduct which allows for no exceptions".²⁴ Thus, just as the knowledge of Absolute Truth is beyond the reach of mortal man, so the practice of absolute non-violence is not possible. Each of our actions must nevertheless incessantly be informed by the spirit of non-violence.

We can begin to understand what Gandhi meant by "doing what must be done" in the light of his attitude towards war. Of course, Gandhi always preached the immorality of war. Yet, as a citizen of the British Empire, he participated in the Boer War of 1899, offered the services of an Indian ambulance unit in the 1906 Zulu Rebellion and enlisted Indian recruits for the British armed forces during World War I. Gandhi's position regarding the seeming inconsistency of participating in the war effort while at the same time abiding by the doctrine of non-violence was the following:

When two nations are fighting, the duty of a votary of ahimsa is to stop the war. He who is not equal to that duty, he who has no power of resisting war, he who is not qualified to resist war, may take part in war, and yet whole-heartedly try to free himself, his nation and world from war. ²⁵

Hence, it is the unquestionable duty of the practitioner of non-violence to resist evil in order to put an end to it. The choice is not between acting and not acting, since it is one's duty to act for the

common good. The choice ~~is~~ only with regard to the means, that is, violence or non-violence.²⁶ And since, for Gandhi, violence is wholly inconsistent with the preservation of unity, the duty of the practitioner is to act non-violently.

Consequently, the Gandhian principle of non-violence requires a sense of duty, selflessness and courage on the part of its practitioner. According to Gandhi, it is practicable and can be responded to by all, and as such, always ought to constitute an attitude of mind. Yet, Gandhi also allows for human limitations and situations of moral dilemma. Most importantly, the principle of non-violence is directly related to the concept of unity of all beings incorporated in the idea of Truth. This leads us to the discussion of the relationship between Truth and non-violence, satya and ahimsa.

3. Satya and Ahimsa

To briefly summarize our discussion up to this point, it can be said that Truth is the ground of being and manifests itself as the unity and harmony of all beings. Non-violence, with its positive implication of love, is the ideal method for human beings to discover, express and live by the unity of all things. Yet Truth in its fullness is beyond ken and complete non-violence is beyond human possibility. Gandhi is concerned, therefore, with applying the method to the extent that it is possible in any situation.

Without ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth, unstamped metallic disc. Who can say which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty...But we have no means of realizing truth in human relationships except through the practice of ahimsa. Truth came naturally to me. Ahimsa I acquired after a struggle.²⁷

Three important implications can be drawn from the above statement. First, Gandhi tells us that his search for Truth necessarily led him to the recognition of the need to practice non-violence. The one and only means of realizing truth on earth, therefore, is non-violence. Just as Mahayana Buddhism indicates that compassion can never fail in one's pursuit of wisdom, so Gandhi advocates that non-violence is completely in accordance with Truth and can never fail. It is to this inseparability of the two concepts, this unity-in-difference, that Gandhi referred when he testified in front of the Hunter Committee. In his view, all seekers of Truth will necessarily use non-violence. The difference will lie in the specific details of implementation of their method. Each of them will have further insight into Truth through the practice of non-violence, but each of them will not necessarily have the same insight.

A second related point is that one's ability to manifest or work out Truth in a concrete situation depends on the extent to which one practices non-violence. Ideally, an individual capable of practising absolute non-violence would fully identify with Truth and would be able to express it without a shadow of a doubt; but Gandhi realizes that there are

impediments which beset all human beings. Men and women must therefore rely on relative truths in time and space and strive to act according to the spirit of non-violence. In this sense, Absolute Truth, for Gandhi, is always an end-in-the-making. It is subject to a process of experimentation, which, in turn, depends on one's ability to practise non-violence. One may not always know the outcome, but through the practice of non-violence, one can be sure to continually achieve relative truths in life situations.

Finally, because Truth is an ever-receding goal, in the sense that it throws light on the method of non-violence but transcends every specific life situation, constant attention must be paid to the means with which one approaches the goal. Gandhi was vehemently opposed to any kind of Machiavellian (or Kautilyan) realpolitik, where the end justifies the means. For him, no end, however good, could legitimately be pursued through violent means.

They say "means after all are just means". I would say "means are after all everything". As the means, so the end.²⁸

Satya and ahimsa constitute the basis of all Gandhian thought. On the one hand, Gandhian idealism conceives of the the two principles, respectively, as the ultimate end and as the purest of means with regard to all action. Truth and non-violence must, according to Gandhi, be accepted, not because they can empirically be proven, but because they are good in themselves. On the other hand, Gandhi was enough of a realist to bring them down to the level of human beings. The result is that Truth and non-violence take on temporal and spatial dimensions. In other words, in

the practical application of the ideals of Truth and non-violence, the practitioner finds that there can be no set rules or unchangeable patterns of action. What is demanded is consistency of discipline in constantly attending to the ideal of Truth to the extent that it has been already grasped by the practitioner, in carefully evaluating one's understanding of the ideal by testing one's motives, and in skilfully and non-violently applying the ideal of Truth to the situation at hand. One is then able to grasp the further understanding of Truth which the situation makes possible.

4. Satyagraha

Gandhi devised a new and powerful technique -- satyagraha -- with which to put the principles of Truth and non-violence into practice. The word satyagraha literally means "soul-force" or "truth-force". It was often translated as "passive resistance", but Gandhi took exception to such a rendering, arguing that the technique implies neither passivity, weakness nor violent resistance; rather, it involves activity, courage and non-violence. The word, therefore, correctly describes the technique: satyagraha is a non-violent tool designed to counter untruth, injustice, conflict, i.e. impediments to the unity and harmony of all living beings. The technique involves sensitizing one's opponent to Truth, and in doing so, further sensitizing oneself to Truth. The effectiveness of the technique is, of course, based on the belief that Truth is immanent in one's opponent and that one can appeal to his or her conscience and humanity. Yet, just as - (and because) the knowledge of Absolute Truth and the

practice of Absolute non-violence elude human beings, so the technique of satyagraha has its limits. This section will outline these limits by focusing on the qualifications required to practice satyagraha. It will also describe some of the programmes and social issues connected with Gandhi's satyagraha movement.

What made satyagraha a powerful weapon during the freedom movement was Gandhi's ability to make the civil disobedience campaign a mass-movement. It was not superior numbers which made the technique powerful, but rather the effective mobilization of the public against injustice. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that on several occasions Gandhi called off the civil disobedience movement in order to rectify his "Himalayan miscalculation" of calling upon people to practice satyagraha before they were qualified to do so. Thus, along with the powerful Gandhian tool of satyagraha comes the responsibility to ensure that the practitioner's motives are pure and that he or she is qualified in exercising satyagraha ably.

Of course, given that one's knowledge of Truth and practice of non-violence is limited, Gandhi could not and did not prescribe a set of rules or qualifications which had to be met to use satyagraha. He wrote:

I am myself daily growing in the knowledge of Satyagraha. I have no textbook to consult in time of need, not even the Gita which I have called my dictionary. Satyagraha as conceived by me is a science in the making.²⁹

Nonetheless, because it aimed at upholding the principles of Truth and non-violence, the use of satyagraha, for Gandhi, implied that it be directed towards a just cause, and that the practitioner be both strong

and pure. Let us analyze these conditions.

First, Gandhi asserts that "there can be no Satyagraha in an unjust cause".³⁰ According to Gandhi, before one can use satyagraha, one must first fearlessly obey the laws of society, surrendering oneself completely to what is deemed to be the common good. But, if in one's pursuit of Truth, one is constrained by an unjust law, one cannot surrender oneself to it, for to do so would be to let injustice prevail. In this instance only, then, does one have the right and duty to resist the law through the practice of satyagraha. But Gandhi adds a further caveat: one can resist the unjust law non-violently only if one bears fully the consequences of its breach by courageously submitting to the penalty.³¹ That is why discipline is an integral part of the technique of satyagraha. That is also why Gandhi warned against the premature launching of the satyagraha movement without extensive examination of the motives.

Second, satyagraha requires fortitude (tapas) in order to resist conflict. Although Gandhi's own translation of the word tapas was "self-suffering", it should be noted that the notion of self-inflicted pain or penance by mortification of the flesh is excluded. Tapas is a self-chosen discipline that involves, on the one hand, concentration, which gives one energy, and on the other, self-purification. Since the practitioner of satyagraha cannot act cowardly, submit to injustice or use violence, he can use moral persuasion to win over his opponent to the realization of unity and harmony of all beings. It is tapas which gives the practitioner the strength and patience to non-violently resist his or her opponent and secure mutual respect.

In the application of Satyagraha, I discovered, in the earliest stages, that pursuit of Truth did not admit of Violence being inflicted upon one's opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For, what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to the vindication of Truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self.³²

Satyagraha is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force... If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.³³

Thirdly, since satyagraha implies sacrifice of self, it also necessarily implies self-purification on the part of its practitioner. Self-purification ensures that the technique of satyagraha is not used for selfish reasons; for, by definition, satyagraha must be used for the common good. According to Gandhi, self-purification is a continuous process and can take on several mutually-reinforcing forms. It can take the form of a commitment to be moral through self-chosen vows and pledges. Here, one strictly abides by one's own code of conduct. It can also take the form of brahmacharya or chastity. According to Gandhi, one must be in control of all one's senses in order to be pure in thought, word and deed. This means controlling one's palate, abstaining from alcohol and tobacco, and eating not for pleasure but to keep one's body healthy.³⁴ It also means sublimating sexual energy by rising above sexual temptations. The point being made by Gandhi, therefore, is that internal purity is a reflection of not only one's mental disposition and moral rectitude, but also of all the organs of sense. Thus, to practice satyagraha, one must

ensure that one is upholding, to the extent possible, the principles of Truth and non-violence, that one's motives are pure; and that one is disposed to sacrifice oneself for the common good. And because, by definition, satyagraha is a dynamic technique, it also requires a continuous reassessment of the situation at hand by testing one's motives and re-evaluating the understanding of Truth that the new situation has brought about.

Given these stringent demands on the individual, it should come as no surprise that Gandhi was reluctant to encourage the uninitiated to practice satyagraha. That is why he distinguished several forms of satyagraha: purificatory devices, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, and the Constructive Programme.

Purificatory devices include pledges, prayers and fasts. They are used to fight a social evil, as well as to cleanse the practitioner's body and mind of impurities. For Gandhi, fasts held a special place, for they expressed an act of total faith in Truth, with the knowledge that dying as a result of a fast would aid in the concretization of Truth. But Gandhi warned against the use of fasts for minor issues:

I have been...driven to the conclusion that fasting unto death is an integral part of satyagraha programme, and it is the greatest and most effective in its armoury under given circumstances. Not everyone is qualified for undertaking it without a proper course of training.³⁵

During India's freedom movement, Gandhi's own fasts were directed more towards pacifying unruly individuals within the satyagraha movement than towards the British. When the concretization of Truth met with obstacles as a result of wanton acts of violence, he resorted to fasts to

focus the attention of all concerned to such an obstacle.

Non-cooperation, according to Gandhi, "predominately implies withdrawal of cooperation from the State that in the non-cooperator's view has become corrupt..."³⁶ Non-cooperation includes hartal (voluntary suspension of business, usually for a period of twenty-four hours), boycotts and strikes. Hartal was a traditional Indian form of protest, used in pre-colonial India by subjects against their ruler in order to attract attention to an unpopular law.³⁷ The most striking example of such protest during India's freedom movement was the hartal of 1919, the first nationwide satyagraha, which included the boycott of public institutions such as schools and courts of law. The hartal was directed against the Rowlatt bills, which were designed to strengthen the hands of government and control seditious resistance to foreign rule with the help of preventive arrests and detentions. Non-cooperation in the form of boycotts championed the boycott of foreign imported goods in order to relieve Indian unemployment and boost national industries (a programme we shall return to as our discussion unfolds). An example of a strike was the 1918 Ahmedabad labour satyagraha, conducted by Gandhi in order to raise the mill workers' low cost of living allowance.

Civil disobedience involved breaking an unjust law non-violently by invoking the sanctions of law and courageously suffering imprisonment.³⁸ It therefore took the form of marches, defiance of specific laws and non-payment of taxes. Here, the Kheda, Bardoli and Salt civil disobedience campaigns of 1918, 1928 and 1930, respectively, may be cited. In the case of the Kheda satyagraha, peasants resorted to the withholding of land revenue payments from the government in order to

overcome widespread famine due to crop failures. The campaign terminated with the government granting remission to the poorer peasants. Similarly, the Bardoli campaign successfully persuaded the Bombay government, to launch an enquiry into the unjust levying of land revenues after a no-tax campaign was organized by the people. But by far the most effective campaign, owing not only to its immediate goal of countering the Salt Laws but also to its symbolic and positive impact on India's freedom struggle, was the Salt satyagraha. This campaign sought the removal of the unpopular Salt Acts that gave the government a monopoly on salt and permitted the levying of a salt tax. The campaign culminated with the repeal of the Salt Laws, following a well-organized operation to make and sell illicit salt, and the famous March to the Sea, led by Gandhi.

What distinguishes non-cooperation from civil disobedience is that the former is less demanding of the individual because it includes less extreme forms of resistance. It can therefore be practised by everyone. Civil disobedience, according to Gandhi, is resistance to a specific law of the State and can be practised only by those who have the courage and discipline to submit non-violently to the consequences of such resistance:

By its very nature, non-cooperation is even open to children of understanding and can be safely practised by the masses. Civil Disobedience presupposes the habit of willing obedience to laws without fear of their sanctions. It can, therefore, be practised only as a last resort by a select few in the first instance at any rate.³⁹

Finally, the Constructive Programme is geared towards social reform. Satyagraha, for Gandhi, must not be seen simply as resistance to evil; it

also has a more positive goal, namely, redress of wrong. To resist evil is only one aspect of the concretization of Truth; the other aspect is the concrete realization of harmony. Thus, while purificatory devices, civil disobedience and non-cooperation are aimed at the vindication of Truth through resistance, the Constructive Programme has a more positive intent: it attempts to better social conditions by encouraging social activity and raising social consciousness. During the Independence movement Gandhi incessantly emphasized the Constructive Programme, for he wished to stop public attention from focusing solely on the immediate goal of political freedom and to divert resources to social reform. He therefore devoted a large part of his energy and life to such issues as Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of Untouchability, equality of women, prohibition, and the encouragement of education, cottage industries and village uplift. We shall outline many of his economic ideas in the last section of this chapter; let us, for the moment, concentrate on the social issues of Hindu-Muslim Unity and abolition of Untouchability.

A. Hindu-Muslim Unity

It should come as no surprise that Gandhi called for communal harmony, since communal strife is a negation of the Gandhian ideal of fundamental unity of all living beings. His "fasts-unto-death" in Calcutta and Delhi, soon after independence, to end communal violence are noteworthy, and so are his efforts to bring Hindus and Muslims together in joint political and social activity.

From the philosophical standpoint, Gandhi argued that Hindus and Muslims could not be enemies because they share the same God. This argument is related to his idea that Truth is God, and hence, Muslims and Hindus share the same Truth. "Religions", he wrote, "are different roads converging to the same point".⁴⁰ He therefore stressed the common values of all religions, especially those of the Gita and the Koran. In his eyes, communal divisions were the result not of different religious beliefs but of the misunderstanding by Hindus and Muslims of the true message of their religions and a lack of appreciation for their shared values.

For Gandhi, no religion could claim to have a monopoly on Truth or be superior to another. By abiding by one's own religion, therefore, one could be sure to be able to discover truths similar to one's fellow man abiding by a different religion. But more importantly, Gandhi underlined the need to look beyond one's religion. Because each religion was, according to him, only a partial statement on Truth, one had to use one's religion as a stepping stone towards the understanding of the larger goal of Truth. Here, Gandhi's attitude may be said to have been remarkably non-sectarian, since it compelled all religions to look towards the common goal of Truth, while at the same time, respected each one of them and stressed their common values.

From a political standpoint, Gandhi believed that the urge for political freedom from British rule would unite all Indians, and hence Hindus and Muslims.

Hindu-Muslim unity means not only unity between Hindus and Muslims, but between all those who believe India to be their home, no matter to what faith they belong.⁴¹

Gandhi also believed that the British were exploiting communal divisions and separatist sentiment in order to weaken opposition to their rule of India. He therefore urged Hindus and Muslims to solve their quarrels mutually rather than resort to British mediation.

Consequently, Gandhi's stand on Hindu-Muslim unity was a non-sectarian and nationalist one. He believed that Hindus and Muslims could live in peace together, not by modifying their attitude towards their respective religions, but by modifying their understanding of each other. He also believed that the common urge to freedom would enable Hindus and Muslims to take an enlightened view of their separate identities and religions.

B. Abolition of Untouchability

Gandhi regarded Untouchability as "the greatest blot on Hinduism". For him, the ill-treatment of India's Untouchables was a violation of all principles of human dignity. To the notion that Hindu scriptures sanction superiority on the basis of caste, Gandhi responded by saying that such a notion distorts the spirit of all that Hinduism stands for. "The letter killeth", he wrote, "it is the spirit that giveth the light".⁴² For him, the varnashrama or caste system as practised in India had degenerated into a system which wrongly upholds the superiority of the "twice-born" castes over the lower castes and outcastes.

Far from condemning the caste system, however, Gandhi defended it:

I believe that caste has saved Hinduism from disintegration. But like every other institution, it has suffered from excrescences. I consider the four divisions alone to be fundamental, natural and essential... I am certainly against any attempt at destroying the fundamental divisions... (The caste system) lends itself easily to reformation.⁴³

Thus, while Gandhi saw India's caste system as having degenerated, he defended the notion of an ideal caste system as he believed it was intended by its founders; that is, as an essential and natural form of social division, which included different outlooks and modes of life but, which altogether excluded any superiority in status:

I do regard Varnashram as a healthy division of work based on birth. The present ideas of caste are a perversion of the original. There is no question with me of superiority or inferiority. It is purely a question of duty. I have indeed stated that varna is based on birth. But I have also said that it is possible for a Shudra, for instance, to become a Vaishya. It is the abuse of Varnashram that should be combated, not the thing itself.⁴⁴

Gandhi was not, then, against the system of hereditary caste divisions or the allotment of certain types of work to the Untouchables as much as he was against the treatment of Untouchables as pariahs and the superiority assumed by the upper castes. Furthermore, to the extent that he defended the ideal caste system, he was echoing his belief in the Hindu idea of individual duty (svadharma). Svadharma means finding one's position within society and performing those duties incumbent upon that position. One individual's duties are in no way superior to another's. The natural division of labour creates an atmosphere of interdependence, so that

the brahmins are as dependent on others castes as the latter are on the brahmins. Each individual performs his or her duty for the welfare of society.

The scavenger's children may remain scavengers without being or feeling degraded and they will be no more considered untouchables than Brahmins. The fault, therefore, does not lie in recognising the heredity and transmission of qualities from generation to generation, but it lies with the fault, ation
tion of inequality.⁴⁵

When asked where he would class the Untouchables within the caste system, Gandhi responded by saying that "they will be classed as Shudras instead of Atishudras"⁴⁶, that is, they would be integrated into the labour caste. But, for Gandhi, no social reform could take place in India without the removal of inequality within the caste system, the disappearance of the practice of Untouchability and the total integration of the Untouchables within Indian society.

Gandhi involved himself closely with the Untouchability issue. On his initiative, by 1933, the Congress had spent about two million rupees on the Abolition of Untouchability programme. He himself conducted several tours of the country, promoting Harijan work (he named the Untouchables "Harijan" or "children of God") and popularizing his ideas on Untouchability. He lived among the Untouchables in Delhi and Bombay in 1946, and founded a weekly paper called Harijan in 1933. In 1924-25, he successfully carried out his Vykom satyagraha against entrenched Brahmin groups who prohibited the use by Untouchables of roadways passing the Vykom temple. In 1932, he fasted in protest to the British government's Communal Award,

which granted separate electorate to the depressed classes. Gandhi could not conceive of giving separate electorate to the Untouchables, because to do so would be an implicit approval of Untouchability and de facto segregation of the Untouchables.

To conclude this section on satyagraha, it can be stated that the Gandhian technique of satyagraha aims at the redress of a wrong, not through coercion but through conversion. While everyone is capable of practising and responding to satyagraha, there are certain requirements which condition its practice. The practitioner must have resolute will, a healthy body, a detached state of mind and the capacity to suffer the consequences of his or her actions. These requirements are not, of course, set in stone; they only illustrate the implications of subordinating all actions and thoughts to the criteria of Truth and non-violence. Each branch of satyagraha, as laid out by Gandhi, is practicable in particular situations. But Gandhi placed particular emphasis on the branch aimed at positive social activity. This only points up Gandhi's constant preoccupation with bringing about social harmony.

5. Swaraj and Swadeshi

Swaraj literally means self-rule. In the Upanishads, it connotes the idea of independence of the moral self, i.e. of Truth immanent in the human being. In the early 1900s, two Indian nationalist statesmen, Naoroji and Tilak popularized the term, giving it the meaning of national independence. Gandhi combined both these connotations. For him, swaraj or

self-rule meant being one's own master. In the context of the freedom struggle, this did not mean simply that India rid itself of foreign rule, but more importantly, that it determine its own destiny by living according to its own inner law of being. India, for Gandhi, had to shed British authority and British political institutions in order to recover its identity and truly experience Indian political rule.

Swadeshi means "belonging to one's own country" or "native". At the end of the nineteenth century, the word was coined by Bengali nationalists in order to describe their patriotic boycott of British goods. But, for Gandhi, swadeshi is not a boycott movement; rather, it consists of an attitude of mind which "restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote".⁴⁷ This spirit, whereby it is everyone's duty to use those products which are produced locally, would lead to a self-reliant, self-contained nation. For, according to Gandhi, India had to sustain herself before she could sustain any other country.

The concepts of swaraj and swadeshi lay the foundations of Gandhi's political and economic thought. In this section, we shall analyze them by, firstly, concentrating on Gandhi's political philosophy and its implications for his views on Indian democracy; and secondly, outlining Gandhi's normative economic viewpoint and the resulting Gandhian position on production, consumption, technology and distribution.

A. Swaraj

Gandhi's entire political philosophy stems, predictably, from his

concepts of Truth and non-violence. The view that every individual is endowed with immanent Truth upholds the uniqueness and ultimacy of the individual. This means that each individual is uniquely capable of discriminating between what is consistent or inconsistent with his own teleological drive towards Truth and the common good. Any external authority, any State, impeding him from doing so is alienating his unique individuality and stopping him from voluntarily surrendering himself to society's service. Hence Gandhi's recourse to satyagraha. As R.N. Iyer assiduously points out, "Gandhi's concept of Truth was developed in an effort to undermine external authority and to reaffirm the moral autonomy and authority of the individual as an agent and active performer in the arena of politics and social life."⁴⁸

Implicit in the argument that no State can dictate to an individual what can, by definition, only be determined by the individual himself is Gandhi's abhorrence of the State. For him, the State had become an omnipotent, centralized and coercive entity. Instead of serving the individual, from whom it derives its very existence, it tends to crush the individual who opposes it. Witness the following statements on the subject by Gandhi:

The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence.⁴⁹

I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress.⁵⁰

Of course, Gandhi's views on the individual and the State were probably the outcome of his battle against British rule of India. However, his thoughts on the subject were also influenced by his reading of Henry Thoreau's On the Duty of Civil Disobedience and Leo Tolstoy's The Kingdom of God is Within You.⁵¹ From Thoreau, Gandhi extracted his doctrine of Civil Disobedience and the view that individual conscience is above the dictates and laws of the State. From his reading of Tolstoy, Gandhi saw confirmation of two ideas dear to him: first, that Truth resides within each individual and can be checked by nothing and no one; second, that there is a need for fundamental social change through conscientious revolution and voluntary renunciation.

Due to his anti-authority stand, Gandhi, like Tolstoy and Thoreau, has been called a "philosophical anarchist". Gandhi's "anarchy", however, is not anti-political, nor does it imply unruliness. Rather, it is "civil", in the sense that it is neither criminal nor violent; it assumes a willing acceptance of the penalty resulting from the breach of a State law; and most importantly, it is a positive and "enlightened" anarchy, where the individual considers it his duty to sacrifice himself for the sake of society since Truth abides in society as well as in the individual.

A civil resister is, if one may be permitted such a claim, a philanthropist of the State. An anarchist is an enemy of the State and is, therefore a misanthrope.⁵²

There are two implicit notions which can cause one to call Gandhi an anarchist: first, the notion that while the individual must surrender

himself to society's service, he must nonetheless have the right to resist that State law which runs contrary to his conscience; and second, that the ideal society is one which is self-regulated and stateless and where citizens freely and spontaneously cooperate. This harmonious society Gandhi calls Ramarajya or Kingdom of God. But he is quick to add that individual imperfections make it impracticable. Here, he is reiterating his position regarding the impracticability of perfect non-violence and the impossibility of realizing Absolute Truth because of human frailty. This being the case, then Gandhi allows for some measure of unruliness. He therefore qualifies his ideal society by saying that a perfectly harmonious society being inconceivable on earth, then a stateless⁵³ one is also inconceivable. Hence, the best government is that which governs least:

If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal State, therefore, there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement by Thoreau that that government is best which governs least.⁵⁴

Given the above analysis, we may conclude that Gandhi's political philosophy is based on two main ideas: the primacy of the individual, and the recognition that some form of government is required to compensate for the individual's lack of perfect self-rule. But the question now arises as to how Gandhi strikes a practicable medium between these two ideas, i.e. what place does he give to the individual in society and what political framework did he have in mind for India?

The answer to the first question is that Gandhi attempted to conceive of a swaraj in which an equilibrium is struck between the will of the individual and the collectivity of individuals. The community and the individual enrich each other through the exchange of ideas and the taking of decisions by consensus rather than force. When the individual accepts the guidance of the community, he or she does not consider the guidance external to himself or herself. The individual and the community are both committed to Truth, and it is through the common search for Truth that society is bound and the individual sustained by the community. Hence, Gandhi advocates the ideal of the individual-in-community and does not conceive of the community as prior to the individual.

The corollary to this line of thought is that the political health of the community will depend on the extent to which each individual can rule himself or herself. Swaraj of the people implies the "sum total of the Swaraj (self-rule) of individuals",⁵⁵ wrote Gandhi. To approximate the perfect state of swaraj, certain conditions must be met. First, the individual's duty should primarily be towards the welfare of his fellow men:

Progress toward Swaraj will be in exact proportion to the increase in the number of workers who will dare to sacrifice their all for the cause of the poor.⁵⁶

Second, the individual must be conscious of his capabilities, rights and duties:

Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.⁵⁷

Finally, swaraj must exclude the monopoly of power by the few:

Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of countrymen...I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange "king for king stork".⁵⁸

The point being stressed by Gandhi once again, therefore, is that a harmonious society necessarily requires a corporate spirit, discipline and moral rectitude on the part of its members.

The answer to the question as to what form of government Gandhi proposed for India lies in his definition of swaraj. It will be recalled that self-rule for Gandhi implies living according to one's inner law of being, one's own identity. It cannot therefore mean exchanging "king for king stork", i.e. British rule without the British. In fact, Gandhi condemned British parliamentary democracy. In Hind Swaraj, he characterized parliaments as "sterile"⁵⁹ because they are unstable and inconsistent, each new government undoing what its predecessor has done. Parliamentary democracy, for Gandhi, is based on the selfish premise that each individual will vote according to his own "little interest", oblivious of the interest of society as a whole. The alternative, therefore, is a democracy in which the Indian masses and villages, rather than political parties, regulate authority, and in which each individual puts the common welfare above his own. For Gandhi, society can be ruled through consensus at the village level, not through the intermediary of elections and the ballot box. Thus, the swaraj of his conception is panchayat raj or rule of the village republics.

Two important points should be noted with regard to Gandhi's village-based democracy: on the one hand, he wanted to revive India's pre-colonial political make-up of self-supporting villages, each ruled by consensus with the help of a council of panchayat made up of five of the village elders; and on the other hand, he displayed political sagacity and realism in seeing India's power in the villages and in the hands of the rural masses. In fact, he shifted his own headquarters to a village and obtained that Congress hold its annual sessions in rural areas. The underlying idea was to have "grass-roots" democracy:

The best, quickest and most efficient way is to build up from the bottom...Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, intelligent, corporate work...⁶⁰

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual...ready to perish for the circle of villages...sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which he is an integral unit. Therefore, the utmost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all and derive strength from it.⁶¹

According to Gandhi, therefore, India's swaraj or self-rule needed to take the form of panchayat raj, which would depend upon not the pull of political groups, but the push of the village's own creative activities.

But, just as the search for Truth necessarily involves the practise of non-violence, so for Gandhi, the pursuit of swaraj or self-rule necessarily requires the spirit of swadeshi or self-reliance. Accordingly, healthy political life goes hand-in-hand with economic self-reliance, and

in addition, the extent to which a country is politically healthy depends on its economic capabilities. That is why, during the independence movement, Gandhi continually warned against paying too much attention to the immediate goal of Indian independence at the expense of the country's poor economic conditions. Let us, then, turn our attention to Gandhi's economic outlook.

B. Swadeshi

I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful.⁶²

Gandhi's economics, too, is shaped by his concern for the well-being of the individual. His major preoccupation during the independence movement was to improve the economic welfare of the rural masses of India. Improving economic welfare, however, does not necessarily mean material progress. As is evident from the above statement, Gandhi is not opposed to material progress per se, as much as he is against material progress which is inconsistent with the moral well-being of the individual, i.e. the individual's search for Truth. Thus, for Gandhi, there is no economic development unless it is concomitant with spiritual development.

The means with which one is to effect the kind of economic development referred to above is also of utmost importance. For Gandhi, one must be able to bring about economic development by focusing on the needs of the individual, without at the same time harming any individual. One must, therefore, use non-violent means. This preoccupation is evident throughout his economic outlook.

Although Gandhi puts forth no economic theory or model, he does have a point of view on production, consumption, technology and distribution of wealth.

(i) Production

Gandhi makes four points about production. First, the organization of production must reflect the political organization. Economic decentralization must therefore accompany panchayat raj or village-rule. The idea here is to localize all inputs and outputs in order to permit each village to be self-sufficient, at least for its vital needs. Hence, there is no specialization of production, and trade between villages is minimal.

Gandhi implicitly recognized that, in his day, India had neither perfect competitive markets nor mobility of factors of production. On the one hand, he argued that competition is alien to Indian economic behaviour, given that the caste system is based on an organic pattern of social organization. Indian society, for Gandhi, is therefore based on mutual responsibilities rather than individual rights. On the other hand, in the India of Gandhi's time, land ownership patterns were more or less fixed through custom and the workings of the caste system.⁶³ Hence Gandhi's insistence on localization of all village activity (mainly agriculture).

Second, production is determined by social necessity and not personal greed. Demand-oriented production is therefore replaced by need-oriented production. Production must ensure full-employment and the satisfaction of primary needs. And every villager must get enough food to feed, clothe and

house himself and his family. Accordingly, Gandhij wrote:

According to me the economic constitution of India and, for the matter of that, the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can only be universally realized if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in control of the masses.⁶⁴

Thus, as indicated above, the means of production must belong to the village community. Thus, all land, implements and cattle are communal property. And to the extent possible, each family has as much land as it can till.

It is important to note that when Gandhi was asked about what would be done with existing public utility companies or "key" large-scale industries, he answered by saying that he was "socialist" enough to believe that such industries should be nationalized:

...I would have State ownership where a large number of people have to work together...Heavy industries will be centralised and nationalised. But they will occupy the least part of the vast national activity which will mainly be in the villages...⁶⁵

Finally, because production is need-oriented and not exchange-oriented, the distribution of output takes place simultaneously with its production. Hence, there are no markets. Any surplus produced is equally distributed among the community.

(ii) Consumption

Consumption, according to Gandhi, should be kept to a minimum

consistent with the satisfaction of basic needs. He himself opted for voluntary simplicity and plain-living. This mode of life, he felt, reflected that of the Indian rural masses. But it also reflected his belief in the ideal of non-attachment to worldly things and renunciation of the fruits of action.

Our civilization, our culture, our Swaraj depend not upon multiplying our wants -- self-indulgence, but upon restricting our wants -- self-denial.⁶⁶

When production and consumption both become localised, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears... There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few...⁶⁷

Not only should one restrict one's wants, but according to Gandhi, one should also use that output which is produced by one's immediate neighbours in order to ensure their welfare. Here, Gandhi is reiterating the spirit of swadeshi, which, it will be recalled, means serving one's immediate environment to the exclusion of the more remote.

During the independence movement, the swadeshi doctrine was a powerful weapon against British textile import tariffs since it involved the boycott by Indians of foreign textiles. It was criticized as being chauvinistic and protectionist by the British. But to such criticism Gandhi responded by saying that the duty to help a neighbour is neither selfish nor exclusive since it in no way involves the exploitation of any other human being. Moreover, he argued that swadeshi is not motivated by hatred of foreign goods or British textile workers, but by concern for India's poor.

Under this plan of life, in seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that, in all humility, I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature.⁶⁸

A true votary of swadeshi will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner...(Swadeshi) is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the pursuit of ahimsa, i.e., love.⁶⁹

Consumption, for Gandhi, had therefore to be simple and directed toward satisfying not only one's own basic needs, but also those of one's immediate neighbours.

(iii) Technology

It is the need for plain-living, coupled with the goal of full-employment, which determine Gandhi's technological choice: technology must be labour-intensive and rudimentary.

At the very centre of Gandhi's preoccupation with full-employment is his concept of bread-labour, which is the amount of labour needed to produce the necessities of life. Here, he was influenced by both Ruskin and Tolstoy. Tolstoy and Ruskin's writings insist upon the need to work in order to live and satisfy one's basic needs, to use one's intellectual capacities not for amassing a fortune but for the service of mankind. The ethics of labour described in Ruskin's Unto This Last "captured and transformed" Gandhi. Gandhi understood Ruskin's teachings to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth leading.⁷⁰

Thus, Gandhi believes in the intrinsic value of labour, the obligation of body labour for the production of basic needs and the right to employment. It should come as no surprise, then, that he is critical of industrialism and mechanization. Hind Swaraj severely condemns the spirit of industrialism, arguing that it engendered fierce competition, concentration of wealth and the exploitation of man. It also depicts a conflict between Western and Indian civilizations, upholding Indian values and institutions and criticizing the imposition of Western values and institutions on India.

...there is much that we can profitably assimilate from the West. Wisdom is no monopoly of one continent or one race. My resistance to Western Civilisation is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asiatics are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West.⁷¹

But most of all, Gandhi was vehement in his criticism of industrialism's indiscriminate use of machinery. The irrational propagation of mechanization, according to Gandhi, leads to large-scale industrialization, which in turn engenders uncontrollable urbanization and dehumanization of man.

Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes. Where there is machinery there are large cities; where there are large cities, there are tram-cars and railways...⁷²

Nonetheless, Gandhi was not against machines; rather he was against the social disruptions caused by mechanization. For him, India needed to make it a priority to remove the burden of unemployment by putting to work its abundance of labour. Any machinery which displaced labour, therefore, was "sinful".⁷³

What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on "saving labour" till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all.⁷⁴

Consequently, Gandhi's choice of labour-intensive technology was based on a labour theory of value, which defends the intrinsic value of labour and the right to employment. Gandhi implicitly refuted the neutrality of technology, arguing that capital-intensive technology displaces labour. Accordingly, one must make machinery for man, not man for machinery. Once again, the supreme consideration is man.

The practical application of Gandhi's ideas on production, consumption and technology can be seen in his popularization and encouragement, during the independence movement, of the use of the charka or spinning-wheel for the production of khadi (khaddar) or, homespun cloth. For Gandhi, the technology of the spinning-wheel, and the production and consumption of homespun cloth provided a means with which to alleviate the

misery of India's village poor. Thus, khadi epitomized the spirit of swadeshi or self-reliance:

My swadeshi...chiefly centres around the home-spun Khaddar and extends to everything that can be and is produced in India.⁷⁵

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and moral regeneration of India.⁷⁶

From 1922 onwards, the Congress party responded to the cause of khadi by encouraging the use and production of homespun clothing by all Indians. For the Indian masses, khadi became the symbol of freedom. For the elites, it provided the impetus to give up Western clothing, to learn the dignity of manual labour through spinning, and most importantly, to identify with the masses.

The technology of the spinning-wheel was simple and labour-intensive. Unlike spinning and weaving mills, which deprived the villages of a substantial means of livelihood, the use of the spinning-wheel engendered employment. But it also had many other advantages: the simplicity of its operation; its modest capital requirements; easy availability and low cost of raw materials; ready markets in the vicinity of the manufacture of khadi; and its consistency with the socio-religious fabric of villages.⁷⁷

Gandhi's khadi programme, therefore, underlined the utility of an indigenous technology and activity. It also opened the door for the rejuvenation of other traditional activities such as carpentry, stone carving or brick-laying.⁷⁸ More importantly, however, it was consist-

ent with the goals of decentralization, bread-labour, plain-living and full-employment. Thus, it truly embodied the spirit of swadeshi or self-reliance.

(iv) Distribution

In the Gandhian scheme of things, economic harmony depends upon a just distribution of wealth. Working towards economic harmony, however, means abolishing the conflict between labour and capital. For Gandhi, there is no inherent irreconcilable antagonism between capital and labour, for they supplement each other. Implicit in this view, then, is the possibility of resolving conflict by cutting accross class. For Gandhi, the moment exploitation of labour by capital ceases, we have only men, who share the common goal of Truth.

The ideal of class war does not appeal to me...Those who talk of class war as inevitable have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin deep.⁷⁹

To abolish the conflict between labour and capital, to remove the exploitation by the owners of capital, labour can organize and resort to satyagraha. Yet, Gandhi's idea of establishing a society based on equality goes beyond satyagraha. Hence his trusteeship doctrine. Trusteeship is Gandhi's non-violent alternative to the confiscation or appropriation of wealth:

Indeed, at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of trusteeship of the wealthy for superfluous wealth possessed by them. For according to the doctrine they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours.⁸⁰

The trusteeship doctrine is based on four main premises. First, it defines certain rights and duties for the wealthy and the poor. No one, according to Gandhi, has a moral right to capital. It is therefore the right of the poor to expect the propertied classes to use their superfluous wealth for the well-being of the poor; and it is the right of the wealthy to expect the poor to regard them as trustees. Conversely, it is the duty of the propertied classes to effect the necessary changes in order to reduce their superfluous wealth and utilize it for the common good; and it is the duty of the poor to believe in the honest intentions of the wealthy. Trusteeship requires mutual trust.

Second, trusteeship assumes that talent will be used for the benefit of all and at the expense of no one. Accumulation of wealth as a result of talent is therefore communal property.

Third, trusteeship applies not to the ideal Gandhian world of equitable distribution, but rather to a capitalist world where accumulation of wealth has taken place through private, not collective, ownership. Trusteeship in the capitalist world provides a means for the owners of the means of production to reform themselves. As G.D. Gadre points out, trusteeship is not optional, it is a moral imperative and obligatory; "It is a transitory state, leading to cooperativization of large-scale property. The transference from private ownership to trust ownership does not give any claim for compensation...(Rather, capitalists become trustees and)

workers become partners in the management of trust property."⁸¹

Finally, Gandhi's trusteeship doctrine assumes his belief in non-violence, for it reveals his awareness that any direct attack on the foundations of capitalism should bring about violent political and economic upheaval.

It is important to note that Gandhi's optimism that owners of capital would reform themselves does not preclude State intervention should voluntary reform not take place. It is equally important to note, however, that Gandhi did not come to the realization that State intervention might be required until 1936, more than thirty years after his own efforts to try to convert capitalists.

What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State but an extension of the sense of trusteeship...However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State ownership.⁸²

Thus, Gandhi's trusteeship doctrine may be summed up in the following formula which was prepared by a colleague of his, approved by him and published posthumously in Harijan, October 25, 1952:

- 1) Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
- 2) It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
- 3) It does not exclude legislative regulation of ownership and use of wealth.

4) Thus, under state-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society.

5) Just as it is proposed to fix a maximum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the minimum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be toward obliteration of the difference.

6) Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

To conclude this section on swaraj and swadeshi, we may stress Gandhi's attempt to convey throughout his political and economic outlook that a mean must be struck between individual freedom and social restraint. Voluntary submission to social obligations for the sake of social harmony enriches the individual and the society of which he or she is part. Clearly, this is the spirit of Gandhi's concepts of self-rule and self-reliance. And it is a spirit which directly stems from the criteria of Truth and non-violence.

Conclusion

Gandhi's ideas were truly an alternative for India. They were an alternative, firstly, because Gandhi made the ethical criteria of Truth and non-violence the basis of all his thought and actions, thereby underlining that everything is organically bound and that nothing can be tackled individually without having a sense of the interconnectedness of

all things; secondly, because they rejected the unnatural imposition on India of foreign rule and of Western values and institutions; thirdly, because they forced Indians to look at their own heritage, be proud of Indian values and traditions, and not indiscriminately imitate all that was British; fourthly, because they addressed all the pivotal political, social and economic problems of Indian life; and most importantly, because they focused attention on bridging the gulf between the Indian elites and the poor rural masses.

Yet, at the same time, Gandhi's ideas were revolutionary, in the sense that, if they were put into practice, they would result in drastic changes. On the one hand, they implied drastic economic, social and political transformation by means of the self-restraint and moral rectitude of every individual. On the other hand, they sought to transform non-violently and upheld the individual. The goal, for Gandhi, was to approach the ideal of unity of all living beings. Certainly, Gandhi's own actions and attempts to put his ideas into practice set the example and demonstrated to what extent they were practicable. To what extent they had a bearing on India, however, still remains to be seen.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. It is important, in this chapter at least and as a methodological procedure, to accept Gandhi's integrity as a seeker of Truth. "If we do not", writes R.N. Iyer, "we shall be constantly tempted to explain away his political statements and concepts entirely in terms of his psychological make-up or the historical conditions which shaped his thought". The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi (New York, 1973), p. 8.
2. The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi, R.K. Prabhu and U.R. Rao, eds. (Ahmedabad, 1967), p. 2 (hereinafter referred to as MMG).
3. MMG, p. 38.
4. MMG, p. 37.
5. M.K. Gandhi, Non-Violent Resistance, (New York, 1967), p. 38 (hereinafter referred to as NVR). In the Western tradition, one can distinguish three concepts of Truth: (1) an ontological concept, which underlines the conformity of a thing (being) with itself (e.g. "true gold"); here, Truth is transcendental and is identified with Good, Unity, Beauty...(2) a logical concept, which points up the conformity of thing with idea (e.g. "this metal is gold"); and (3) a moral concept, which highlights the conformity of idea (thought) with word (e.g. "this metal is gold", when the speaker knows it is gold and is therefore telling the truth). Gandhi's meaning is similar to (1) above, but also includes (2).
6. MMG, p. 51.
7. The Essential Gandhi, L. Fischer, ed. (New York, 1962), p. 206.
8. Ibid. p. 229.
9. M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography (Ahmedabad, 1927), p. xi.
10. MMG, p. 45.
11. NVR, p. 40.
12. For further information on the philosophical concepts of avidya (ignorance) and sansara (transmigration), see M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, (London, 1970), Introduction and Chapter II.
13. R.N. Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, pp. 65-6.
14. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, Vol. 2, p. 3.

15. Following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in 1919, in which a crowd of peaceful, unarmed people were fired upon and killed, the Hunter Committee was appointed by the government to inquire into the tragedy. Gandhi and other Congress leaders were asked to testify at the Committee hearings.
16. NVR, p. 39. Emphasis added.
17. M. Hiriyanna, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, (London, 1932), pp. 55-6.
18. Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, (Madras, 1930), p. 346.
19. M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 206.
20. MMG, p. 119.
21. Ibid. p. 142.
22. M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 264.
23. The Essential Gandhi, p. 215.
24. G. Richards, The Philosophy of Gandhi, (London, 1982), p. 38.
25. M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 264.
26. G. Richards, The Philosophy of Gandhi, p. 40.
27. MMG, p. 128.
28. The Essential Gandhi, p. 119.
29. MMG, p. 168.
30. NVR, p. 56.
31. Ibid., pp. 7 & 75.
32. MMG, p. 167.
33. M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj (Madras, 1924), p. 87.
34. NVR, p. 45.
35. M.K. Gandhi, Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (London, no date), p. 107.
36. NVR, pp. 3-4.
37. J.V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence, (Berkeley, 1965), p. 119.
38. NVR, pp. 3-4.

39. Ibid.
40. M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, p. 50.
41. M.K. Gandhi, The Hindu-Muslim Unity, (Bombay, 1965), p. 11.
42. M.K. Gandhi, Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 169.
43. Ibid., pp. 171-2.
44. M.K. Gandhi, Untouchability, (London, no date), pp. 23-4.
45. Ibid., p. 26.
46. Ibid., p. 67.
47. C.F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, (McMillan, 1930), p. 118.
48. R.N. Iyer, The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 173.
49. MMG, p. 135.
50. Ibid.
51. See Gandhi's references to these works in Hind Swaraj.
52. NVR, p. 60.
53. It is not clear whether Gandhi equates "State" with "government" or whether he is using the Marxist definition of "State", which points up the exercise of power by the dominant interests within society, or whether he is referring to both. All one can say is that Gandhi was circumspect of any type of power being exercised, whether by the government or by the dominant groups within society.
54. MMG, p. 134.
55. Ibid., p. 321.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 317.
58. Ibid.
59. M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, p. 17.
60. MMG, p. 371.
61. Ibid., p. 252.
62. Ibid., p. 263.

63. C.C. Clump, "Gandhi's 'Way' Today", Social Order, Vol. 3, October 1953, p. 354.
64. MMG, p. 243.
65. Ibid., p. 247.
66. Ibid. 188.
67. Ibid., p. 238.
68. Ibid., p. 414.
69. Ibid., p. 415.
70. M.K. Gandhi, Autobiography, p. 224.
71. M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, p. 234.
72. MMG, p. 108.
73. It should be noted that Gandhi approved of sewing machines because he believed they were efficient and did not displace labour.
74. MMG, p. 235.
75. Ibid., p. 413.
76. Ibid., p. 417.
77. As summarized by T.K.N. Unrithan, Gandhi and Social Change, (Jaipur, 1979), p. 71.
78. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, Vol. 3, pp. 388-9.
79. MMG, p. 210.
80. Ibid., p. 269.
81. G.D. Gadre, "Gandhi", Gandhi, Theory and Practice, S.C. Biswas, ed., (Simla, 1969), p. 178.
82. MMG. pp. 123-4.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IDEOLOGICAL MOSAIC, POLITICS AND GANDHI

Introduction

When one studies the Indian nationalist movement during the first half of the twentieth century, one is struck by the variety of political, social and economic ideas put forth at the time. This variety stems from the fact that the nationalist movement brought together Indians of all social origins, espousing a spectrum of religious and political beliefs. One therefore encounters, on the one hand, nationalist leaders preaching scientific socialism, Gandhism, Western liberalism, Marxist communism or Pan-Islamism, and on the other, corresponding political parties comprising Liberals, Extremists, Socialists or Communists. What emerges is that far from being a monolithic movement, the freedom movement was a mosaic of statesmen, ideologies and political pressures. True, all political groups shared the objective of political freedom from the British. But they differed in their conception of India's future political, social and economic map. What also emerges is that Gandhi's outlook was only one of several contributory and competing ideologies in India at the time and that concrete plans for the government of an independent India were chalked out during his lifetime to a large extent by other nationalist leaders such as the Nehrus and Patels or political pressure groups.

In this chapter, we shall study the interaction between Gandhi's alternative and the ideological and political make-up of the nationalist movement. In order to do so, we shall, as a first step, review historically the development of the major political parties from 1885, the year the Indian National Congress was created, to 1947, the year India obtained independence. This review will, firstly, provide us with an understanding of the players within the nationalist movement and their methods and goals, and secondly, permit us to move on to the next step of our analysis: an outline of the effect of Gandhi's ideology on the nationalist movement and the resulting decisional and ideological consensus. Our purpose will be to show that there were several other ideological alternatives than that of Gandhi and that it was the interaction between political, social and economic forces during the nationalist movement which determined decision-making and planning for India's future.

1. The Political Parties

The Indian National Congress (INC) dominated the political scene during the nationalist movement. It was able to accommodate a variety of social interests, with the result that it became a forum for ideological debate and spoke for the majority of Indians. In fact, apart from the Muslim League,¹ all major political parties officially became part of the INC at one stage or another of the nationalist movement. Let us review this process, and in doing so, highlight the ideological content of the major political parties from 1885 to 1947.

A. The Moderates²

The creation of the INC was an outgrowth of several factors: social and intellectual awakening among elites as a result of the spread, during the nineteenth century, of socio-religious organizations, founded by such men as Rammohun Roy for the purpose of social reform; the emergence of an urban educated class from the system of education, administration and law developed by imperial rule; and British recognition of the need to create an organization to siphon off Indian unrest, in light of the "Mutiny" of 1857. Thus, the INC was founded in 1885 with the consent of the British government (and participation of several British intellectuals).

The first leaders of the INC were liberal-minded Moderates. They had two main objectives. First, they called for continued association with Great Britain. This objective reflected their faith in the British Empire, their admiration for British institutions and their belief in constitutionalism and parliamentarianism. Second, the Moderates sought social reform in India through a gradual synthesis of traditional and modern values. This objective was based on faith in progress, secularism, and scientific knowledge. Western education held a special place in the eyes of the Moderates for it could permit, according to them, the inculcation of values and ideas required to modernize India.

The Moderates were not, however, uncritical admirers of British rule of India. They were motivated by a sense of nationalism, which led them to fight for administrative reforms and the right of Indians to be admitted to the civil service. They criticized heavy military expenditures, and the British famine policy and revenue system.³ More importantly, they

were the first Indian nationalists to draw attention to the economic exploitation and poverty of India. Thus, Dadabhai Naoroji, the first Indian to be elected to the British Parliament, put forth his "Drain Theory" which argued that India was being impoverished by British rule. Similarly, G.K. Gokhale talked of the problems of agricultural indebtedness, irrigation, and of the need for scientific agriculture and cooperative credit.⁴

Nonetheless, the methods of these Congress leaders were 'moderate'. They believed in orderly progress and constitutional agitation. Hence, they called for neither self-government nor a break with imperial ties; rather, they sought adjustment with the Raj. They believed in rousing consciousness through enlightened discussion and education. They organized deputations to England, established newspapers and took part in public meetings.

The leadership of the Moderates can be noted for its homogeneity in outlook due largely to the socio-economic origin and status of its members. Most members were educated and wealthy, and the party leadership was composed mainly of lawyers and educationists such as Justice M.G. Ranade, Justice Chimanlal Stelvad, G.K. Gokhale and Pherozshah Mehta. These men brought with them a sophisticated intellectual background and experience in administration. They therefore infused in the Congress, at the outset, the value of working with bureaucratic institutions and pluralistic structures.

With the death of Gokhale and because of the growing feeling that they could do best for India by cooperating with the government, some of the Moderates seceded from the Congress and formed the Liberal Federation.

Nevertheless, their influence became clearly visible in the politics of the Swaraj Party, formed within the Congress in 1923 by a group of prominent Congressmen, including C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru (Jawaharlal Nehru's father) and Vitalbhai Patel (brother of Sardar Patel). This group, known as the Swarajists, represented the educated, merchant and upper caste elites of Congress who emerged as a force intent on stemming the tide of non-cooperation (see section 2B of this chapter). The Swarajists emphasized the need for constitutional government and pressed for the directly political approach for the achievement of dominion status within the Empire. On the economic front, they pressed for the preservation of capital and private property. At the same time, they subscribed to the doctrine of class collaboration, urging capitalists to respect the rights of labour and warning labour against unreasonable economic demands.

The Swarajists wielded considerable power within the Congress, especially during the late 1920s when they controlled the party's political apparatus. Like the Moderates, they came to be known as the Constitutionalists due to their policy of using the legislatures to obtain dominion status and press for an economic programme entailing rapid economic growth through industrial expansion and the development of heavy industries.

B. The Militant Nationalists⁵

Shortly after 1915, the year of the death of the Moderate leader, Gokhale, a group of militant nationalists (sometimes referred to as "Extremists") emerged within the Congress. This group had grown

increasingly dissatisfied with the cautious constitutionalism of the Moderates. More importantly, the group had become frustrated with the lack of cooperation by the government with the Congress. In 1904, the government had partitioned Bengal, causing outrage within the ranks of the Congress, especially the party's militant Bengali contingent. In 1909, the government introduced a mild measure of political reform by admitting a few elected Indian members to the Viceroy's and Government Councils, which resulted in demands for greater representation and power. Finally, India's participation in the war effort during 1914-18 was viewed as adequate reason for the British to grant India greater political autonomy. Government obstinacy had, therefore, reinforced, if not created, militancy within Congress.

The dissatisfaction of the militant nationalists manifested itself in the form of fervent nationalism and a call for swaraj or self-rule. Some extremists became aggressively anti-British and resorted to terrorism; others drew inspiration from India's past to infuse Congress with a sense of national pride and create a campaign for the boycott of foreign goods (swadeshi). Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the leader of the militant nationalists, dressed his militancy in religious garb by reviving the cult of Shivaji (a Maratha warrior of the seventeenth century) and the Ganapati Festival⁶. Such a tactic caught popular attention, but was restricted to Maharashtra. Tilak also wrote a scholarly commentary on the Gita, which he interpreted as preaching a philosophy supporting political, social and religious action (and which many Extremists misinterpreted as an endorsement for political struggle through violence). But Tilak was not so much concerned with religious and social action as much as with

political struggle. He and other militant nationalist leaders brought the demand for swaraj to the forefront of the nationalist struggle. In fact, his forceful declaration, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it", became a common refrain during the nationalist movement.

Yet, in spite of a tilt of balance in favour of the militant nationalist leaders, the Congress party did not increase in any large measure its political effectiveness. In 1919, the Government of India Act established a moderate form of responsible government in the provinces under British tutelage. But Tilak and Congress declined to cooperate with the government on the basis of the Act. The lack of political effectiveness of Congress was due to the lack of an organizational base with which to mobilize popular support. Admittedly, the Congress had support in Maharashtra, Bengal and Punjab, as well as the backing of part of the business community as a result of the swadeshi campaign. But this support was restricted to the urban, educated middle and upper classes. The Congress had to wait until Gandhi's leadership, after the death of Tilak in 1920, for the organizational lacuna to be addressed. Nonetheless, what the militant nationalists did establish within Congress was, firstly, a sense of immediacy of the need for swaraj, and secondly, a tradition of nationalist radicalism, which countered the conservatism of the liberal Moderates and increased ideological debate within the party.

C. The Muslim League⁷

An important development during the nationalist movement was the growth of Muslim nationalism outside the umbrella of the Congress. The

Muslim League was created in 1906 as a forum for the expression of Muslim nationalism, and in spite of brief periods of cooperation with the Congress between 1916-36, it became a strong political opponent which eventually brought about the partition of India and creation of a separate Muslim State.

The reasons for which Muslim nationalism developed separately from mainstream Indian nationalism are many and must be clearly spelled out. First, while Hindus and Muslims may be said, for all intents and purposes, to have lived together in mutual tolerance under Moghul rule (1517-1750)⁸, the relationship changed under British rule. The British weakened the authority of the Moghuls by keeping Muslims out of responsible administrative positions. In addition, to the resentment of the Muslims, the British substituted English for Persian as the official language of government. As a result, Muslim dissatisfaction with, and lack of adjustment to, British rule manifested itself during the 1857 "Mutiny", for which the British held the Muslims largely responsible. Moreover, while Hindu society underwent dramatic cultural reform during the nineteenth century, Islam tended to remain bound to tradition: On religious grounds, Muslim leaders forbade the learning of English. It was Hindus, therefore, who took advantage of government and missionary schools, and the impact of British education was felt by only a small minority of Muslim intellectuals. The result was that Hindus, especially Brahmins, dominated the administrative, business and academic professions, while Muslims increasingly experienced economic hardships, loss of power, and alienation.

The first Muslim leader to address this Muslim alienation was Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98). While he urged Muslims to abide by the fundamentals of their faith, he also focused attention on the need for Muslims to adjust to British rule. He therefore called on Indian Muslims to protect their identity from Hindu and Congress domination, while at the same time, reconcile themselves to British rule and education. On the subject of Hindu and Congress domination, he warned that the introduction of representative government would be dangerous because Indians would vote on the basis of religion and not politics, thereby giving way to Hindu-rule and Muslim subjugation. And in order to promote Muslim adjustment to British rule, he founded an educational movement for the Muslims in Aligarh, where he established the Anglo-Oriental College.

Second, communal relations between Muslims and Hindus were negatively affected by the introduction of the principle of "special" representation by British authorities, at the request of the League, whereby a larger number of electoral seats is allocated to a minority group than its number calls for. In 1909, the government endorsed the principle of separate electorates in the Morley-Minto reforms; in 1933, it introduced separate electorates for Untouchables; and in the Act of 1935, it tried to solve the communal problem through the idea of "weighted" representation.⁹ The result was the politicization and aggravation of communal antagonisms.

Third, the Muslim nationalist movement was reinforced by the pull of Pan-Islamism, which in turn, begot the idea of Muslim separatism. The champion of Pan-Islamism was the Muslim poet and leader Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938). Iqbal believed that Islam was an integrated religio-political

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community, that religious affinity was a bond of unity among all Muslims of the world. Hence, he and several other Indian Muslim leaders supported the Khilafat movement after World War I to protest against Britain's role in dismembering the Ottoman Empire, deposing the Sultan of Turkey and liquidating his Caliphate (spiritual leadership of the Muslims). But Iqbal not only stood for Islamic solidarity throughout the world, he also came to support the demand for a Muslim State. In 1930, he called for the amalgamation of the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan to form a North-West Indian Muslim State. And in 1940, the Muslim League supported a "two-nation theory", which paved the way for the partition of India and creation of Pakistan.

The leader behind the "two-nation theory" was Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah had hesitated before supporting the idea of Muslim separatism. He had entered the arena of Indian politics as a member of the Moderate group within the Congress, but later joined the Muslim League. In 1916, he helped consolidate nationalist forces through an agreement of cooperation, known as the Lucknow Pact, between the League and Congress. During this period, Jinnah strove to steer the League along secular lines. It was not until 1930, when he became the leader of the League, that he began to accept the communal approach. After the provincial elections of 1937, the Congress routed the League and proceeded to form governments in all the provinces without entering into any coalitions with the League, even in the Muslim-majority provinces. This political wilderness transformed the League's approach to the communal problem by replacing the demand for separate electorates into a demand for a separate State for the Muslims.

Jinnah came to believe, as did Syed Ahmed Khan fifty years earlier, that majority-rule in India implied Congress-rule, and Congress-rule meant Hindu-rule. Hence his two-nation theory in 1940, which denied that Hindus and Muslims could form a nation together and stressed their differences as communities, religions and social systems.

Muslim separatism was, therefore, the product of unequal development of Hindus and Muslims during British rule, the system of separate electorates, and the inseparability, in the eyes of the leaders of the League, of religious and political issues. Within the context of the nationalist movement, the Indian Muslims increasingly came to think of themselves as a community separate from the emerging Indian nation.

D. The Gandhians

The Gandhians hailed mainly from land-owning and middle-class groups. Many of the principal leaders of this group such as Vallabhbhai Patel (Sardar Patel) and Rajendra Prasad, both lawyers of peasant origins, rose from within the ranks of the Congress through their participation in Gandhi's peasant-oriented satyagraha movements in Gujarat and Bihar (see Chapter 3). These leaders were attracted by Gandhi's belief in reviving India's villages, peasantry, spinning and prohibition. As a result of his social reform movements, Gandhi also benefited from the support of Westernized intellectuals and a moral reform group of which Vinoba Bhave became a prominent leader.

E. The Communists

The Communists drew support from the lower middle class, students, peasantry and industrial workers. Two main communist parties operated during the nationalist movement, the Royist Party and the Communist Party of India, each one claiming to be the true representative of India's communist movement. Although neither gained any significant political clout, each of them influenced the ideological debate within Congress, especially at the time of the coalition of the Left during the 1930s. The base of the two parties lay mainly in Bombay, Bengal and Punjab, where Workers' Parties, Peasants' Parties and trade unions were organized to press for political and economic demands through industrial strikes and agitation in rural areas.

(i) The Royists¹⁰

The father of Indian Communism is usually considered to be M.N Roy (1887-1954). Roy started his political life as a national revolutionary, then became actively involved in the international communist movement, and ended his life by revoking Marxism in favour of 'radical humanism'. Yet, in spite of this ideological evolution, Roy proved to be an influence on India's burgeoning left-wing politics.

After being convicted for his involvement with a Bengali terrorist movement, Roy fled India in 1915 and settled in Mexico, where he became an ardent Marxist. In 1920, at the Second Congress of the Comintern in the U.S.S.R., Roy advocated that Communists in all colonies should pursue a

militant policy to overthrow colonial rule. This position reflected Roy's distrust of India's 'bourgeois nationalist' freedom movement. He criticized the Congress' Moderates for their conservative methods and ridiculed the Extremists and Gandhi for their recourse to 'revivalist' ideology. The Congress, according to Roy, lacked an ideological focus and a revolutionary programme. He therefore stressed the need to organize and mobilize India's revolutionary forces in order to revolt violently against British rule.

Roy's position ran contrary to that of Lenin. In the absence of any viable communist movement in the colonies, Lenin stressed the need to cooperate with bourgeois nationalist movements, which, according to him, contained progressive elements. Roy was nonetheless chosen by the Comintern in 1920 to organize India's communist movement. But he increasingly fell out of favour with Moscow and the Communist Party of India, and in 1929, was expelled from the Communist International.

After his breach with the Comintern, Roy returned to India and attempted to create his own communist movement. In doing so, he came to believe in the need to closely associate with national mass organizations to bring about revolution. He and his followers therefore joined the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934 with the idea of splitting it and absorbing the true communist elements. The Royists played an important role in shaping CSP policies and programmes, especially the CSP's economic programme. But Roy could not see the CSP as a true socialist party. Firstly, he saw it degenerating into a 'bourgeois parliamentary' party. He criticized its excessive dependence on Nehru, whose pseudo-socialist demagogy, according to Roy, was aimed only at rationalizing Gandhi's

irrationalism. Secondly, Roy disagreed with the Congress Socialists' insistence that the Congress party should pursue the double goal of Socialism and freedom. He insisted on the inevitability of the establishment of Socialism once the goal of independence was attained. He therefore called for the pursuit of the goal of independence and the need to eschew radical economic demands in favour of moderate proposals.¹¹ These differences resulted in the resignation of the Royists from the CSP in 1937.

After the mid-1940s, Roy increasingly became a Marxist-revisionist and moved towards the philosophy of Humanism. He criticized Marxist theory for failing to recognize the non-proletarian class (especially the bourgeoisie) as a progressive force. In addition, the brutal excesses of Stalinism caused him to advocate the necessity of introducing morality into politics, of moving away from power struggle and the party system toward the creation of a 'spiritual' community through education and science. Thus, in contrast to his forceful criticism of Gandhi only ten years earlier (to be examined in more detail in Section 2), Roy ended up moving surprisingly close to Gandhism.

(ii) The Communist Party of India (CPI)¹²

The CPI was created in 1925, with the support of foreign agencies, which supplied it with inspiration and financial assistance. In particular, British Communists such as Bradley, Spratt and Dutt provided the CPI with a framework and strategy.

In 1926, R.P. Dutt explained the aims of the Communists in India in his book Modern India. He asserted that India's capitalist development was not a national development because the Indian bourgeoisie was collaborating with British capitalist interests. India's national struggle had therefore to be a struggle of the working classes against the political and economic exploitation of British and Indian capitalists. This thesis was reinforced by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, which in contrast to Lenin's policy, scathingly attacked all nationalist reformist ideologies and called for the exposure of the treacherous and counter-revolutionary alliance of Indian capitalists and landlords within the Congress. Accordingly, the CPI refused to cooperate with the Congress or take part in the 1930 non-cooperation movement. Instead, the Party's objective was to organize a proletarian urban revolution and to extend it to the rural areas in order to absorb India's peasantry in a nationwide struggle against the imperial rulers, capitalists and landlords. In accordance with the Soviet model of democratic centralism, the idea was to create workers' and peasants' soviets under the control of the Party.

The CPI's decision not to cooperate with the Congress was, however, reversed in 1935 after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern favoured the formation of an international popular front against fascism and imperialism in all countries. This position was further developed in India by the Dutt-Bradley Thesis, which advocated the need for a common national struggle through cooperation with the Congress. The members of the CPI therefore joined the Congress Socialist Party in 1936 with the aim of radicalizing it. By 1939, many of them held high positions within the CSP. Two of them, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Sajjad Zaheer became Joint Secretaries

and two others sat on the CSP's Executive Committee. In 1940, however, they were expelled from the CSP after the discovery of CPI documents revealing their intention to capture and destroy the CSP.

Like the Royists, the CPI was able to exert a considerable amount of influence within the CSP, even when functioning outside the umbrella of the Congress. This influence is visible particularly in the CSP's social and economic policy based on public control of agriculture and industry, its secular goals and its anti-imperialist and internationalist stand. Notwithstanding this influence, however, the brief unity of the CSP and the Communists was more formal than real and flowed primarily from the existence of a common enemy, the British. Ideologically, what tended to unite them was their allegiance to Marxism. Where they stood poles apart was in their attitude towards Gandhi and the nationalist movement. The Communists tended to discredit Gandhi's leadership of the freedom struggle and tried to weaken the 'bourgeois-led' Congress, while the Socialists, as we are about to see, viewed Gandhi and the nationalist movement as essential for India's political struggle.

F. The Socialists¹³

The All-India Congress Socialist Party came into being in 1934. The necessity to form this party under the aegis of the Congress came as a result of deep-felt frustrations caused by Gandhi's suspension of the civil disobedience movement in 1933, the Swarajists' inability to achieve independence through constitutionalism, and the absence within Congress of a radical economic programme. These developments militated against the

importance attached by the Socialists to rapidly achieving political independence on the one hand, and transforming India's economic structure into a socialist one, on the other.

The CSP's immediate goal was complete independence from the British Empire and the transfer of political power to India's working classes. It wanted to merge the class struggle with the nationalist effort by creating a united front of the peasantry, labour and middle class. Yet, while the Socialists shared common Marxist goals, they were divided between Marxist and non-Marxist ways of carrying out these goals. While all Socialists agreed on the need for mass direct action, the Marxists did not exclude armed overthrow of the British or violent struggle against capitalism. Non-Marxists, however, condemned violence and believed that Marxism had to adjust to the principle of political democracy. Here, they were influenced by British social democratic ideas, as well as Gandhism, and their social democratic views were reinforced by the excesses of the Soviet model under Stalin. Nonetheless, doctrinal differences among the Socialists were minimized in the interest of unity of the CSP.

The economic thinking of the CSP had been greatly influenced by the 1929 economic crisis, which had, according to CSP leaders, highlighted the ills of capitalism, and by the Soviet economic model, which had made possible radical economic and social transformation. The Socialists asserted that the extremes of inequality and the absence of equal opportunity were the result of capitalism's defence of private ownership of the means of production. Hence, they upheld the need to collectivize the means of production. Accordingly, they focused on the necessity of "scientific

socialism", which implied fundamental transformation of economic and social structures through the machinery of the State. Only the State, according to the Socialists, could abolish private property and bring about social ownership of the means of production and equal distribution.

In the case of India, the Socialists believed that the problem of production was no less important than that of distribution. In their eyes, to move out of a state of poverty and population explosion, rapid economic growth was required through large-scale production, public ownership of key industries and collectivized agriculture. Socialism had, therefore, to address qualitative as well as quantitative goals, and in doing so, to adjust to particular Indian problems and conditions.

While the membership of the CSP derived mainly from trade unions, peasant organizations and youth movements within Congress, its leadership consisted of highly-educated, middle-class, urban Indians. The principal leaders were Jayprakash Narayan, Asoka Mehta and Subhas Chandra Bose. The most influential among them, however, was Jawaharlal Nehru.

Although he never became a member of the CSP, Nehru openly declared his allegiance to socialism. But unlike many of his fellow colleagues, his socialism was not doctrinaire. On the one hand, he believed in curbing the profit-motive, promoting public ownership of means of production and using the State to regulate economic activity. On the other hand, he was a product of the liberal democratic tradition, which defended parliamentarianism and upheld the freedom of the individual.

Nehru became the hero and source of inspiration of the socialist wing of the Congress. During his leadership of the Congress, he articulated many of the CSP demands and appointed several prominent Socialists to the

Congress Working Committee. It was his leadership, therefore, which greatly strengthened the cause of the Left within the nationalist movement.

What becomes apparent from this overview of political groups and ideologies is that the nationalist movement did not embrace a narrow nationalism bent simply on freeing India from the British. Instead, it brought into focus the awareness of India's social, political and economic problems and became a forum for the ideological articulation of views on how best to solve these problems. The variety of views stemmed from the diverse social origins of the members within the nationalist movement; but it was also due to the impact of British rule on India: the exposure of Indian society to modernity produced greater awareness of traditional identity, brought about a reinterpretation of traditional ideas and facilitated the emergence of new ones. The overall result was a spectrum of overlapping and sometimes conflicting goals within the nationalist movement: centralism vs. decentralism; authoritarianism vs. representative democracy; radicalism vs. conservatism; the party system and majority-rule vs. minority group representation; and State vs. private ownership.

2. Gandhi's Ideology and the Nationalist Movement

In Chapter 1, we analyzed Gandhi's world view and its implications for his ideas on political, social and economic development. In Section 1 of this chapter, we highlighted the ideological spectrum of the nationalist movement, the principal party leaders and their philosophies, and

some of the political, social and economic concerns and pressures which dominated the scene. In this section, we shall combine the findings of our previous investigation in order to bring to light the interaction between Gandhi's ideology and that of other nationalist leaders and political groups. This analysis will involve a description of ideological dissent, conformity, or eclecticism within the Congress party; it will also involve an outline of the policies and goals which emerged as a result of ideological debate and political and economic pressures. Accordingly, we shall review the response of nationalist groups to Gandhi's philosophy of life, his satyagraha programme, and his social, political and economic philosophy.

A. Reaction to Gandhi's General Outlook

In outlining some of the major criticisms of, and reactions to, Gandhi's ideas, it is important to bear in mind that the political and ideological equation between Gandhi and other nationalist leaders was not static; it was a function of numerous variables such as personal relationships, social and political pressures and changing situations. This point is borne out, in particular, by the Gandhi-Nehru and Gandhi-Communist relationships. Although Nehru and Gandhi had different ideological viewpoints, these differences were transcended by their mutual respect and emotional attachment. Gandhi's impatience with Nehru's "radical" economic and political demands did not stop him from contributing, in large measure, to Nehru's rise to power within the Congress party. And Nehru's ideological criticism of Gandhi did not prevent him from frequently

following Gandhi's decisions based on the strength of his trust in Gandhi's 'intuition' and his recognition of Gandhi's leadership for the national struggle. Of his ambivalent relationship with Gandhi, Nehru wrote in his Autobiography:

Ideologically he (Gandhi) was sometimes amazingly backward, and yet in action he had been the greatest revolutionary of recent times. He was a unique personality, and it was impossible to judge him by the usual standards, or even to apply the ordinary canons of logic to him.¹⁴

Unlike the Nehru-Gandhi relationship, which often wavered, the communist view of Gandhi underwent gradual change. What changed was not the communist critique of Gandhi's ideology or leadership, but rather the communist perception of his personal loyalties. While the Communists started by questioning his moral greatness, they increasingly came to recognize his commitment to the political struggle and his integrity as a moral individual and as the leader of the nationalist movement. This evolution is noticeable, as has been previously mentioned, in M.N. Roy's critique of Gandhi,¹⁵ as well as the writings of R.P. Dutt and E.M.S. Namboodiripad, two important members of the CPI.

Notwithstanding these changing relationships and perceptions, however, there was lasting resistance in the nationalist movement to Gandhi's philosophy of life, which as we have noted, rested upon the principle of Truth. Let us examine this resistance. In the first instance, Gandhi was greatly criticized for his spiritual outlook. His belief in Truth as God and his insistence on moral integrity and spiritual regeneration militated

against the secular values held by Moderates, Socialists and Communists alike. Their rationalist outlook did not take to Gandhi's spiritualism. Many of them found his ideas unpracticable and austere. They therefore often accused him of revivalism and obscurantism. And Gandhi's call for such spiritual goals as renunciation, celibacy and purity did nothing to alleviate these accusations. In his Autobiography, Nehru despaired at Gandhi's emphasis on sacrifice and fasts and confessed that Gandhi's language was often incomprehensible to the "average modern".

In the second instance, Gandhi was seen by many to resist modern ideas and to have scant regard for science. In this connection, one of his severest critics was the famous Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore warned against Gandhi's rejection of Western secular knowledge and science. While he agreed with Gandhi that India should reject such Western values as competitiveness, he stressed that "if we are biased against Western science just because it is of the West, we shall not only deprive ourselves of the principles it has to teach, but pull down our own Eastern spirituality".¹⁶ Gandhi, of course, retorted that he was not against Western ideas and science per se as much as he opposed their blind adoption and social disruptions. But Gandhi's credibility on this issue fell to the wayside when, for example, after the 1924 earthquake in Bihar, he asserted that the calamity was a divine chastisement "sent by God for the sin of Untouchability", inferring that natural phenomena were contingent upon human behaviour. The statement drew sharp attacks from many prominent leaders, including Nehru, Bose, Tagore, Jinnah and Roy, who accused Gandhi of being irrational, unscientific and irresponsible, especially since many of the victims of the earthquake were children and Untouchables.¹⁷

A third related criticism of Gandhi's world view concerns the danger of it restraining social progress. Tagore voiced this criticism by stating that India's emancipation required a revitalization of creative intelligence but that Gandhi's cult of the charka and other similar traditional institutions would impose blind uniformity on the masses, paralyze their reasoning power and perpetuate their habit of reliance on gurus and leaders.¹⁸

It was, however, the Communists who reserved the most vociferous and pointed arguments against Gandhi on this issue. Like Tagore, they too accused Gandhi of preaching 'cultural backwardness', 'moral coercion', 'blind faith' and 'subservience', which according to them, inhibited rationality and social progress. But they carried their argument further in asserting that the bourgeoisie was using Gandhi's 'revivalist' ideology to justify its exploitation of the masses, and more importantly to thwart revolution. This line of thought emerges in all communist criticisms of Gandhi and shall be expanded as our discussion unfolds. Suffice it for the moment to quote M.N. Roy on the subject:

The religious ideology preached by him (Gandhi) also appealed to the medieval mentality of the masses. But the same ideology discouraged any revolutionary mass action. The quintessence of the situation...was a potentially revolutionary movement restrained by a reactionary ideology.¹⁹

B. Congress and the Non-violent Method

While the above three criticisms refer to general reactions to

Gandhi's outlook on life, no analysis of Gandhi's impact on the nationalist movement can be carried out without specific reference to the concept of non-violence. It was, after all, this concept which Gandhi stressed as, and which became, the dynamic element of his world view. It was his satyagraha programme which made possible what he referred to as the "vindication of Truth". Yet, in what follows, it shall be seen that the programme was not used or accepted in the spirit intended by Gandhi.

The majority of the Congress did not believe in non-violence as a moral principle, but instead wished to use it as a political tool. Although in 1920 the Congress had adopted Gandhi's programme of "progressive non-violent non-cooperation" for the establishment of swaraj, Gandhi failed on two occasions (1929 Lahore Congress and 1934 Bombay Congress) to convince the party to change its guiding constitutional principle for all Congress programmes from "peaceful and legitimate means" to "truthful and non-violent means".²⁰ This failure confirms the fact that Congress leaders were interested in his non-violent programme as a means to attain only the political goal of swaraj and not as an end in itself. Thus, Nehru declared:

... for us and for the National Congress as a whole the non-violent method was not, and could not be, a religion or an unchallengeable creed or dogma. It could only be a policy and a method promising certain results, and by those results it would have to be finally judged. Individuals might make of it a religion or incontrovertible creed. But no political organisation, so long as it remained political, could do so.²¹

Further evidence of resistance to Gandhi's programme of non-violent action is provided by the reaction to it by the Swarajists and by the controversy over India's war effort in the Second World War. As far as the

Swarajists are concerned, it will be recalled that the very existence of the Swaraj party was the result of a movement within the Congress party to stem the tide of Gandhi's satyagraha movement. Politically, the Swarajists had grown frustrated with the ineffectiveness of the civil disobedience movement, especially since Gandhi called it off in 1922 citing violence at Chauri Chaura. On the philosophical plane, although Swarajists such as Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das believed in non-violence as a concept connoting absence of direct violence, their belief had no place for Gandhi's high moral principle, which was connected with the search for Truth. As well, for them, satyagraha could lead to chaos, for they feared civil disobedience to constituted authority would produce an ungovernable nation. This fear stemmed from their faith in constitutional agitation and their belief in law and order.

As a consequence, in 1923 the Swaraj party successfully entered the newly-formed legislative councils with the intention of pressing for swaraj and of wrecking the councils if the government refused to cooperate. Although the threat to wreck the councils was never carried out, the success of the Swaraj party in the 1923 elections earned it considerable influence within the Congress and within India's legislative activity. Most importantly, the party's success put a halt, in the late 1920s, to any Gandhian non-violent political action. In fact, between 1924-27, Gandhi was forced to refrain from any political activity, and instead, devoted himself to his Constructive Programme.

The controversy over India's participation in the Second World War had mainly to do with opposition within the Congress to Gandhi's stand. Gandhi urged that India help Britain unconditionally, but he warned that

any support could only be non-violent and moral in character. For him, non-violence could be an effective shield against aggression. In fact, he suggested that India could ward off any invasion or occupation through civil disobedience. Congress leaders were exasperated by such a stand, to the point where they doubted whether they could entrust the Congress' leadership to such a committed pacifist as Gandhi. They did not share Gandhi's boundless faith in non-violence. Accordingly, in 1940, the Congress Working Committee declared, firstly, that India's independence was bound to the maintenance of freedom and the defence of its borders, and secondly, that while the satyagraha programme applied to India's internal political struggle, it could not be extended to an external war. So concerned was the Committee that it decided to temporarily absolve Gandhi of his responsibility of leading the country toward a non-violent struggle. What followed was the Congress' 'Poona Offer', which declared the party's willingness to help defend against external aggression on the condition that Britain declare its intention to recognize India's independence after the war.

It should be pointed out that the above two examples, far from being isolated events marking open opposition to Gandhi's philosophy and programme of non-violent action, were the consequence of mounting frustrations with Gandhi. Well before the satyagraha movement caught on in India, G.K. Gokhale, whom Gandhi considered his guru, warned against making demands well beyond people's capacity in the practice of non-violence. Similarly, Tilak opposed satyagraha, stressing that "Politics is a game of worldly people, and not for sadhus".²² Gandhi, for his part, was well aware that his programme required strict discipline and could not be used

to gain quick results. He knew that non-violence could be used against Truth, and not for it, if practised with an impure heart and without training. He nevertheless proceeded to have Congress endorse and use satyagraha as a means to oppose colonial rule and promised swaraj within a year.²³ But when sporadic acts of violence broke out, he felt obliged to suspend the movement (in 1919 and again in 1922).

Nehru, Bose and other leaders were shocked and puzzled by Gandhi's decision. For them, civil disobedience was the only way ahead. They regretted sporadic violence arising out of ignorance, but it could not be permitted to destroy an effective political weapon. In this regard, Nehru wrote:

Must we train the three hundred and odd millions of India in the theory and practice of non-violent action before we could go forward?...If this was the sole condition of its function, then the non-violent method of resistance would always fail.²⁴

Swarajists such as Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, like Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose, disliked the sudden retreat. However, as pointed out by Sumit Sarkar, "the disagreement was probably no more than tactical, over a question of timing. Motilal and C.R. Das felt, with some justice, that acceptance of the British peace feelers during the Prince of Wales' visit in December 1921 would have brought some concrete gains in the shape of constitutional concessions, whereas Gandhi, who had rejected all compromises then, had now called off civil disobedience without any returns."²⁵ Gandhi was, therefore, assailed for his short-sightedness and straightforwardness as a politician in dealing with opponents.

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Gandhi was to call off the movement twice more -- in 1931 as a result of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact by which he agreed to attend the Second Round Table Conference, and again in 1933, much to the consternation of many Congress leaders. These decisions, often made when most of the Congress leaders had been imprisoned by the government, dashed mounting hopes and caused a great deal of agitation within the ranks of the Congress.

Nonetheless, it is significant to note that, in contrast to the above reactions, the decision to call off the satyagraha movement in 1922 was well received by business groups and landed elites (who later supported the Swarajists), most of whom had a lot at stake when the movement turned into a violent social struggle. Indeed, the 1919-20 period had witnessed widespread labour and peasant unrest, especially in Bombay, Bengal, Rajasthan and Bihar, in the form of strikes and non-payment of rent or land revenues. It was therefore imperative for business and landed interests to halt the wave of unrest.²⁶ Accordingly, their concerns found expression in the Congress Working Committee's resolution endorsing Gandhi's decision to call off the satyagraha movement in February 1922:

Clause 2. In view of the violent outbreaks every time mass civil disobedience is inaugurated, the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience...be suspended, and instructs that local Congress Committees to advise the cultivators to pay land revenue and other taxes due to the government, and to suspend every other activity of an offensive character.

Clause 6. The Working Committee advises Congress workers and organizations to inform the ryots (peasants) that withholding of rent payment to the zemindars (landlords) is contrary to the Congress resolutions and injurious to the best interests of the country.

Clause 7. The Working Committee assures the zemindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights, and that even where the ryots have grievances, the Committee desires that redress be sought by mutual consultation and arbitration.²⁷

Clearly, the emphatic references to the necessity to pay rent throws light on the weight of landed interests within Congress (mainly Gandhites) at the time (see Chapter 3) and lends credence to the Communists' claim that the resort to non-violence served to restrain the masses from shedding the yoke of India's feudalism and capitalism. Thus, R.P. Dutt wrote:

The dominant leadership of the Congress associated with Gandhi called off the movement because they were afraid of the awakening mass activity; and they were afraid of the mass activity because it was beginning to threaten those propertied class interests with which they themselves were still in fact closely linked.²⁸

What becomes apparent is that the Congress accepted Gandhi's concept of non-violence not as a moral principle and technique but purely as a tool with which to attain political objectives and/or protect economic interests. However, the moment the tool became ineffective or inoperative as a result, at least in part, of Gandhi's own making, Congress members either were left in disarray or turned to other causes -- the Swarajists to constitutional agitation, the Gandhians to the Constructive Programme and others to Marxism or radical forms of protest. Thus, in a very real sense, Gandhi repeatedly aroused expectations and aspirations which he could not always satisfy.²⁹ In doing so, he contributed to the development of competing ideas and interests within Congress. In the 1920s, the competition was represented by the Swaraj party. Similarly, in the 1930s, as a result of the abrupt retreat from satyagraha and

dissatisfaction with right-wing politics, Socialists, Communists, trade unions and radical student organizations increasingly came to assert themselves within the nationalist movement.

C. Social and Political Realities and Gandhian Social Goals

In Chapter 1, we underlined Gandhi's constant concern for unity. This concern, we pointed out, was visible in his attitude towards social issues, and in particular, Hindu-Muslim unity and Untouchability. In what follows, however, it shall be argued that the need for unity was not necessarily shared by other national leaders or in fact made possible in the light of social and political pressures.

(i) Hindu-Muslim Unity

The goal which Gandhi, and for that matter Congress, can be said to have the most miserably failed to achieve is that of Hindu-Muslim unity. There are two main reasons which account for this failure. Firstly, while Gandhi and the Congress sought at high cost to bring about communal harmony, they did not consider the historical and cultural factors explaining Muslim separatism (see Section 1C of this chapter). Their stand was based on the unfounded assumption that Hindus and Muslims would be able to rise above their different religious identities and that each community had the same political aspirations. These assumptions reflected Gandhi's and Congress' inability to understand that Muslim identity was rooted in the idea of Muslim brotherhood (Pan-Islamism) and that Muslims felt threatened by

exclusively Indian nationalism and "secular" democracy. (It should be noted that, in contrast to most leaders of Congress, Gandhi advocated not secularism but, in accordance with the idea that Truth is God, non-sectarianism i.e. respect for and harmonization of communal differences; but once again, his colleagues found this view too idealistic.) Gandhi and Congress therefore concluded that when the movement against colonial rule gained momentum, communal differences would disappear. Such a view smacked of insensitivity to Muslim susceptibilities and contributed to the estrangement of many Muslims.

True, not all Indian Muslims identified with the Muslim League's ideology of separatism, for many of them, including such prominent leaders as Maulana Azad and Zakir Husain, joined the Congress party. Nonetheless, the Congress' misunderstanding of the historical and cultural gulf which separated most Muslims from Hindus caused it to adopt an insensitive approach towards the Muslim League.

Secondly, Gandhi's insistence on moral means and his use of terms and symbols derived from Hindu thought was anathema to the Muslims. They could not easily identify with such terms as ahimsa, swaraj or swadeshi, in spite of the fact that Gandhi stressed his belief in the common truths of all religions. Moreover, modernist leaders such as Jinnah did not take to Gandhi's moral approach to politics or sympathize with Gandhi's belief in the need to achieve the larger goal of social regeneration. The result was that the Muslims suspected the Congress as a Hindu organization. Jinnah, the politician, assiduously fed these suspicions, while Gandhi and the Congress failed to allay them.

Thus, the Muslim community was alienated not only by the Congress'

commitment to secularism but also by the non-secular Hindu colouration of Gandhi's language and concepts.

It is ironic that Gandhi, who strove for communal harmony, proved to be instrumental in politicizing the Muslim community by championing the Khilafat cause in the early 1920s. Pan-Islamism had until then been restricted to upper-class, educated Muslims; Gandhi helped in spreading the movement to the Muslim masses. Paradoxically though, for the two reasons cited above, Gandhi never repeated this success: the Muslims were conspicuous by their absence during the satyagraha campaigns of the 1930s.

In the late 1930s, the Congress made two fatal decisions which strengthened the hand of Muslim separatism to the point of no return. In the first instance, flushed with its overwhelming victory in the provincial elections of 1937, the Congress refused to enter into any coalitions with the Muslim League (especially in the United Provinces, where the League's following was strong) unless the League repudiated its claim to a separate State and its members joined the Congress. Congress' advocacy of absorption rather than partnership³⁰ greatly embittered Jinnah and the League and strengthened Muslim separatist feelings. In the second instance, when Britain unilaterally declared India at war with Germany without consulting the Congress, Congress withdrew its support for the Indian war effort and ordered all provincial governments to resign. This decision left a political vacuum which led to the rise and intransigence of the League after the war. For, while most Congress leaders were imprisoned during the war, the League benefited from the good favour of the government because, contrary to the Congress, it lent its support to India's war effort. Jinnah and the League emerged from the war with a

strong bargaining position which resulted in the partition process.

When the British government decided after the war to relinquish its rule of India and the danger of civil war loomed as a result of communal violence, Congress leaders decided, much to Gandhi's anguish, that partition made more sense than forced union with the Muslim League. Gandhi, true to his spirit, fought against partition and communal violence to the bitter end. His fasts in Calcutta and Delhi to stop the violence are memorable, as is his eleventh-hour proposal to stop civil war and partition by calling upon Jinnah to form an exclusively Muslim League government. But for Nehru, Patel, Azad and other Congress leaders, the Gandhian ideal of communal unity was outweighed by the looming danger of civil war. Thus, as Michael Brecher points out, "It was ironic that... Nehru and Patel should have broken with the master on the most significant issue affecting India in modern history."³¹

The paradox is that, while in 1940, the Congress had refused to accept to use non-violence to counter internal but not external danger (see Section 2B), seven years later it declined to use it to fight off internal danger. (As it turned out, the decision to partition the country had horrifically violent consequences.) This only points up the fact that Congress espoused many of Gandhi's ideals, which it used for political gain but which it could not and did not live up to.

(ii) Untouchability

A 1931 census report estimated the number of the depressed classes (or Untouchables) at over 50 million or one-fifth of India's Hindu

population. Hence, apart from the nature of the Untouchability problem, the size of the problem was of vital importance to India's social reconstruction. Gandhi made it a primary concern of his and successfully called public attention to it. Yet, it is paradoxical that his most bitter critic was Dr. P.R. Ambedkar, himself an Untouchable and leader of the All-India Depressed Classes Federation.

Gandhi, it will be recalled, refused to attack India's caste system as a whole. Instead, he tried to integrate the Untouchables into Hindu society by attempting to throw temples open to them or getting caste Hindus to acknowledge that Untouchability is not sanctioned by Hindu scriptures. "One step is enough for me", he often said, stressing that only when religious equality within Hindu society was achieved would the social, political and economic status of the Untouchables (or Harijans) improve. Ambedkar's philosophy was radically different. He deprecated Gandhi's entire approach to the problem. He scathingly criticized Gandhi's attempt, firstly, to glorify India's past by trying to maintain intact a social structure which permits the perpetual domination of one class by another on a hereditary basis; and secondly, to preach that the work of Untouchables is a noble profession, thereby deluding them into accepting their misfortunes by presenting these misfortunes as the best of fortunes.³² Thus, Ambedkar concluded that:

All that Gandhism has done is to find a philosophic justification for Hinduism and its dogmas. Hinduism is bald in the sense that it is just a set of rules which bear on their face the appearance of a crude and cruel system. Gandhism supplies the philosophy which smoothes its surface and gives it the appearance of decency and respectability and so alters it and embellishes it as to make it even attractive...³³

For Ambedkar, only if the caste system disappeared would Untouchability disappear. Accordingly, the caste system would have to be abolished and the practice of Untouchability punishable by law. At the same time, educational programmes, economic improvement schemes and political organization of the Untouchables would have to be encouraged. This approach received the backing of the Congress' Socialist wing, which in contrast to the Gandhian attempt to confine reform to the religious and social spheres, highlighted the need to link the Untouchability problem to the economic and political spheres as well by weakening the economic, social and political ties of the Untouchables to caste Hindus.

The disagreement between Gandhi and Ambedkar was partially resolved in 1932 when the government announced the Communal Award, which granted separate electorate to the Untouchables. Gandhi announced that he would fast unto death unless the award was withdrawn, arguing that the Award would lead to a further division of society by acknowledging the inferior status of the Untouchables and giving them a vested interest in not changing their status. Although Ambedkar was outraged by this stand, he and Gandhi concluded the Poona pact, whereby he agreed that the Harijan could become part of the Hindu community provided they were guaranteed certain safeguards. These safeguards entailed giving the Untouchables not a separate electorate, but twice as many seats in the provincial assemblies at the cost of caste Hindus. The pact was criticized by some provinces, and in particular by Bengal, where a large portion of caste Hindus were called upon to yield seats to the Untouchables.

Hence, despite their differences, Gandhi and Ambedkar succeeded in bringing the Untouchability issue to the forefront of the Congress' social

platform. Yet, it was Ambedkar's policy, not Gandhi's, which the Congress party endorsed to address the Untouchability problem. Ambedkar and the Congress stressed and succeeded in bringing about a minimum of political representation for the Untouchables through the introduction of political safeguards. These safeguards underlined, rather than removed, the status of the Untouchables and militated against Gandhi's emphasis on non-political means to solve the Untouchability problem.

D. The Debate Over Political and Economic Issues

The debate over political and economic issues during the nationalist movement was a protracted one as a result of, on the one hand, the fifty-year length of the movement, and on the other, its diverse social and political composition. Nevertheless, as will be shown, at the dawn of independence, a general consensus on India's political and economic future had emerged. What impact did Gandhi's political and economic thought have on this consensus? We shall endeavour to answer this question in this final section.

(i) Political Issues

Gandhi, as we have seen, was a strong advocate of village-rule, for he believed that only a decentralized political structure would free the individual from the might of the State. In fact, his entire satyagraha programme was directed towards undermining State authority. What is more, Gandhi shunned parliamentarianism and power politics because he thought that competitive politics was alien to Indian society. As it happens, his

last proposals for India's political future (dated January 30, 1948, the day of his assassination) advocated the disbanding of Congress as a political organization, its transformation into a body for social service, and a decentralized political structure with the village panchayat as the main decision-making body. Yet, Gandhi was fully aware that none of these proposals would be taken seriously by his colleagues.

By the mid-1930s, Gandhi was forced to admit that constitutionalism had made its impact on Congress. On the one hand, the satyagraha programme had not had the success that he imagined and met with resistance from the Swarajists. On the other hand, both the left and right wing of Congress were advocates of parliamentary democracy. Accordingly, when the British government put forth the Government of India Act of 1935 introducing a measure of responsible government in the provinces, the Congress decided to contest the 1937 elections under the Act. This decision was indicative of the will to move ahead politically through constitutional means.

The Act proposed a federal structure for India. A bicameral central legislature was to be made up of members nominated by princes and by "weighted" electorates for Muslims and other special groups. Foreign affairs and defence came under viceregal control, as did the railways and currency and exchange control. Thus, the central government, headed by the viceroy, was given a powerful role, much to the dislike of the Congress. However, some positive steps were taken in the provinces, where dyarchy was replaced by responsible government and the electorate was increased from about 6 million to 30 million.

The Congress Socialists at first rejected the Act because it continued to give the British a large say in internal matters. But in the

absence of any viable scheme of resistance to the raj at the time, the Act was considered by most Congress leaders as the only available means to push for independence. The parliamentary mentality had come to stay within Congress.

If parliamentarianism had come to stay, so had the idea of a centralized political structure. This was true for several reasons. First, Nehru, who had emerged in the 1930s as Gandhi's successor, was committed to building a socialist and secular society which required a powerful State to redistribute wealth, manage resources, organize production and bring about social reform. In contrast to Gandhi, for Nehru and other Socialists, a powerful State did not necessarily entail the end to individual freedom. On the contrary, the socialist State, according to them would enhance individual freedom by removing social and economic inequalities. Second, after years of struggle against the British to gain control of government, Congress leaders were ill-disposed to relinquish political control to the villages. Moreover, as pointed out by Judith Brown, the structure of government which India was about to inherit from the British was authoritarian; any large-scale decentralization would, therefore, probably have resulted in political chaos.³⁴ Finally, during the mid-1940s, the spread of communal violence and the resulting influx of refugees necessitated strong central administrative control.

This is not to say that Congress leaders were altogether adverse to the Gandhian idea of decentralization. They were sensitive to the need for India's polity to respect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country and the concomitant requirement to allow for the expression of diverse interests. Nehru, for his part, did not exclude a place for

decentralized planning and decentralized political activity. Nonetheless, the Gandhian concept of democracy through village-rule was unseated to a large extent by socialist political ideology and overtaken by historical circumstances and political exigencies. In this regard, Judith Brown states, "It is ironic that Gandhi, who had spent so much effort decrying the so-called unbridled power of the British raj, found himself at the end of his life in uneasy alliance with future Indian rulers who planned far greater interference in society, and envisaged wider governmental power than the British had ever dared to contemplate."³⁵

(ii) Economic Issues

Gandhi's economic thought, like his political thought, met with resistance from many quarters of the Congress Party, and especially from the left-wing. His critics reproached him for mixing morality and economics, arguing that the hard realities of India required remedies involving more than just moral regeneration. The country, according to them, necessitated the transformation of its entire social and economic structure. We shall, in this section, study the criticisms of Gandhian economics, the alternatives proposed and the process through which these alternatives became part of the Congress' economic platform.

Where Gandhi differed from most Congress leaders was in his belief in making India a non-violent society. Non-violent economics, for him, presupposed simplicity, self-sufficiency, labour-intensive technology and equitable distribution. But while he proposed making India into a self-contained, village-based country, his colleagues put forth policies to

rapidly make India economically viable through material progress. For Congress Socialist leaders such as Nehru and Narayan, it was no longer possible to survive as a self-sufficient village-based economy in an interdependent world economy. India had to industrialize to become strong. Hence, it was futile, according to them, to turn one's back on modern technology. Implicit here was an attack on Gandhi's attitude towards industrialism.

If, for Gandhi, industrialism was inherently evil because it produced inequality and unemployment, for Nehru and the Socialists the evil was due to capitalist social organization, which had made private property and the pursuit of personal gain a prime motivation. The fault, according to them, lay not in production or technology but in distribution and the organization of production. And unemployment was the result not of lack of work but of inadequate facilities and unequal distribution of the means of production.³⁶

The Swarajists as well as the Congress Socialists were also critical of Gandhi's trusteeship doctrine. While there was general agreement with Gandhi on the need for equitable distribution and land reform, most Congress leaders (and especially the Socialists) entertained no hope that the propertied classes would use their wealth and power as trustees. For Jayprakash Narayan, Gandhi's trusteeship doctrine was nothing but a religious doctrine which helped to preserve the status quo. He pointed out that, throughout history, the object of all religious morality had been to persuade men to repair the injustice of accumulated wealth and hold it as trustees. Gandhian trusteeship, according to Narayan, was no exception to this rule.³⁷ M.N. Roy saw trusteeship as a means of deceiving the

servile classes by telling them that a dose of morality would stop the wealthy classes from misusing their economic power. Implicit in these criticisms was the idea that capitalist system, which, according to them, Gandhi defended, and Gandhian humanism are contradictory because the survival of capitalism depends on the maximization of profits and the control of the means of production. Thus, even though Gandhi and the Congress left-wing shared the ideal of an egalitarian society, they differed in the means with which to achieve it. Gandhi proposed a non-violent, moral approach -- calling upon the propertied classes to reform themselves; Nehru and the Socialists proposed a systemic approach -- changing the economic and social structures, "gently if possible, forcibly if necessary"³⁸ i.e. through the machinery of the State. (As pointed out in Chapter 1, Gandhi did come around to accepting the Socialists' view on this issue, but only in the late 1930s.)

Nevertheless, there was general enthusiasm towards Gandhi's promotion of the swadeshi and khadi programmes. The swadeshi programme greatly helped India's fledgling textile industry. The khadi programme was, however, well-received not for the technology it proposed as much as for its symbolic value. Nehru, for example, depicted the programme as a "throw-back to the pre-industrial age"³⁹ and rejected the idea that labour-intensive technology could be a panacea for India's unemployment problem; he did, however, see the programme as an important psychological tool to bridge the gap between villages and cities, elites and masses.⁴⁰

What, then, was the alternative to Gandhian economics? Although the alliance of the left-wing parties in the 1930s was short-lived, it nevertheless succeeded in influencing Congress' thinking and was greatly

helped in the task by Nehru's leadership. As we have seen, inspired by Fabianism and the Soviet model of development, Nehru and Socialists advocated "scientific socialism", which entailed social ownership and management of the means of production, egalitarian distribution of output, rapid industrialization through heavy public investment, and the substitution of administrative controls for the market forces of supply and demand. In short, they proposed a planned economic system.

At the Karachi Congress of 1931, and with the backing of Gandhi, Nehru managed to get the Congress to pass a resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy which envisaged state ownership of key industries and services, including mineral resources, public utilities and transport. The resolution also called for minimum living wages for industrial workers, limited working hours, healthy working conditions, protection against old age, sickness and unemployment, and a reduction in agricultural rent paid by the peasantry.

More important than the Karachi Resolution, however, was the establishment of the National Planning Committee in 1938, headed by Nehru. After the assumption of provincial ministerial office in 1937, the Congress convened a conference of the industry ministers in the provinces and key members of the Indian business community to evolve a common plan of economic development. Although interrupted by the War and the 'Quit India' movement of 1942, the work of the Committee proved to be instrumental for India's economic future. The Committee set out to devise a plan for the attainment by India of national self-sufficiency and the doubling of living standards within ten years. The Plan placed emphasis on heavy and basic industries as strategic factors for India's development process.

At the same time, cottage industries were not neglected, and their role in generating employment was recognized (a Gandhian influence). In agriculture, it was recommended that the cooperative principle be applied "to the extent possible", while the zamindari system (intermediary landlordism) was targeted for abolition. An important feature was that only key industries (public utilities, resources, transport, communications) were to be reserved for the public sector, thereby leaving the private sector to freely operate in non-key sectors.

It is important to note that the business community, rather than feel threatened by these proposals, supported the idea of planning. In fact, in 1944, it put forth the Bombay Plan which was similar to the Congress' plan. As pointed out by Sumit Sarkar, the reasons for this support are twofold. First, Indian industry benefited from the Congress provincial ministries.⁴¹ The ministries had given a swadeshi orientation to their economic policies by encouraging the consumption of Indian products, on the one hand, and attempting to break down tariff barriers protecting the subsidiaries of giant British firms which had been a threat to local industries, on the other. Secondly, and most importantly, economic growth in India required large-scale structural changes involving heavy investment, technology and low initial profits. "The logical alternatives therefore were either encouragement of investments of the 'India Limited' type (and foreign capital was not really interested in low-profit capital goods), or efforts to promote basic industries through state initiative, investment and planning...(Capitalists were) ready to accept a measure of state regulation, planning, public investments in basic industries to create a favourable infra-structure for their own growth, and even

'socialist' rhetoric -- so long as socialism did not mean wholesale nationalization along revolutionary lines... Thus there were signs in 1938-39 of a novel and very significant realignment. Indian capitalists, while retaining close ties with elements in the Gandhian 'Right' like Patel and Rajaji, had also started cultivating sections of the Congress 'Left'. Nehru's vision of a modern industrialized India, after all, fitted in much better with bourgeois aspirations than the Gandhian evocation of rural simplicity and handicrafts, and there was enough indication already that the former's socialist flourishes were eminently manageable."⁴²

It can be stated, therefore, that with few exceptions, the political and economic consensus which emerged within Congress before the attainment of independence included negligible reference to Gandhian thought. In fact, in many cases, the consensus was diametrically opposed to Gandhian ideas, as witnessed by the Socialist plans for economic and political centralization versus the Gandhian ideal of democracy through decentralized village economic and political activity. And when certain Gandhian influences did emerge, as in the case of the khadi programme or the 'buy-Indian' movement, they were the result more of political and economic expediency than of genuine concern for a "non-violent society".

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to analyze whether Gandhi's ideological alternative had a bearing on the nationalist movement. What has emerged from the analysis is that Gandhi's ideological influence on

the movement was minimal, and that if his ideas did have an impact they were constrained by social, political and economic interests within the movement, with the result that they were not used in the spirit intended. Three main reasons explain this process.

First, as was shown in Section 1 of this chapter, the nationalist movement, and the Congress party in particular, was made up of members with diverse backgrounds that reflected India's own multi-dimensional social fabric. This diversity brought forth a variety of interests, goals and social and political parties and a plethora of outstanding leaders at all levels. What resulted was that not only was Gandhi's ideological alternative one of several other alternatives, but more importantly, it was inevitably subject to political and economic pressures.

Second, because Gandhi combined moral and strategic issues, he often bewildered or shocked his colleagues by effecting reversals in strategy. Thus, there was a great deal of uncertainty with regard to his future intentions and tactics, which in turn, caused deception within the ranks of the Congress and resort to non-Gandhian ideology or tactics.

A final, related reason is that Gandhi placed strong emphasis on his ethical dimension of politics, which was frequently at variance with economic, political and social realities. He set very high standards, thereby begetting important but often unfulfilled goals. He was therefore criticized for being too idealistic, too utopian, and for making no allowances for mortal men. In this regard, Rajni Kothari writes, "In a peculiar way Gandhi missed the essence of democratic politics...That Nehru could transcend this shortcoming is a tribute to his entirely different intellectual background and to his ability to preserve this despite the magnetic

influence of his master."⁴³

The overall result was that Congress leaders ended up taking decisions which increasingly excluded Gandhi or which were at odds with what he proposed. At the time of independence, therefore, it was already clear that Gandhi's ideological alternative was to have little impact on India's future.

Nonetheless, Gandhi was fully conscious of the reasons for which there was opposition to many of his ideas and why they were being used to fulfill political and economic goals. He was not adverse to derogation. In fact, it is partly in deference to opposition that he retired from the Congress in 1934. (He believed that he could not remain in the party because he did not want to inhibit his critics, mainly the Socialists, from propounding their ideas. He nevertheless remained active within the party from behind the scenes.) But in spite of the adversity to his ideas, he consistently and unflinchingly stood by his ideals. And even the most ardent critics praised him for doing so. Thus, E.M.S. Namboodiripad points out, "it is characteristic of Gandhi-ji, that while all his lieutenants were celebrating attainment of complete Independence, he was more concerned with the instability of the newly created Indian state than feeling happy at its formation. While the other leaders of the Congress were acclaiming the transfer of power as the triumph of Indian national movement under their leadership, he made it his job to draw peoples' attention to the two main sources of India's political instability; first, the strained relations between Hindus and Muslims, which, in its turn led to strained relations between the two newly-created states of India and Pakistan; and secondly, the decay and degradation inside the Congress organisation".⁴⁴

But there was more to Gandhi than just his ideas. He was also a dynamic leader who, driven by his moral energy, was highly successful in making the Congress into a mass organization with a powerful organizational base. It is, therefore, in the type of movement that he created that we find his most lasting impact. This is the issue we shall address in the next chapter.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 2

1. Even the Muslim League worked closely with the Congress party on many issues and programmes, and did not pull away from the party till the late 1930s.
2. For further information on the Moderates, see the following sources: S.P. Aiyar, "Gandhi, Gokhale and the Moderates", Gandhi, India and the World, S. Ray, ed. (Temple University Press, 1970); D. Argov, Moderates and Extremists in the Indian Nationalist Movement, (London, 1967); A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, (Bombay, 1966), pp.321-8 and 354-5; S. Ghose, Socialism, Democracy and Nationalism in India, (Allied Publishers, 1973), p.27; S.A. Kochanek, The Congress Party of India, (Princeton, 1968), Chapter 13; R. Kothari, Politics in India, (Boston, 1970), pp. 42-6; B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties, (Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 213-231; M.D. Palmer, The Indian Political System, (Boston, 1971), pp.72-82.
3. S.P. Aiyar, "Gandhi, Gokhale and The Moderates", p. 111.
4. Ibid.
5. For information on the Militant Nationalists, see the following sources: A.R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, pp.328-38; S. Ghose, Socialism, Democracy and Nationalism in India; R. Kothari, Politics in India, pp.46-50; B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties, pp.139-43; M.D. Palmer, The Indian Political System, pp.82-4.
6. The Hindu God, Ganesh, "Remover of all Obstacles", is worshipped throughout India, but Western Indians are particularly attached to Him. During the Ganapati Festival, they celebrate His birthday by worshipping His clay image and then taking it in a procession to be immersed in the sea. The procession is noted for its fanfare and music. Tilak resuscitated the festival because he believed that it could serve as an outlet not only for religious zeal, but also for nationalist sentiment and agitation.
7. For information on the Muslim League, see the following sources: S. Ghose, Socialism, Democracy and Nationalism in India, Chapter 4; R. Kothari, Politics in India, pp.60-72; B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties, pp.395-442; A.B. Shah, "Gandhi and the Hindu-Muslim Question", Gandhi, India and the World.
8. Except, perhaps, under the Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb, who was a devout Muslim and is said to have been intolerant of Hindus (although some historians dispute this fact). See P. Spear, A History of India, Volume 2, (Penguin, 1978), pp.55-6.

9. See A.P. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, (Bombay, 1966), pp.398-400.
10. For information on the Royists, see the following sources: D. Dalton, "Gandhi and Roy: The Interaction of Ideologies in India", Gandhi, India and the World; S. Ghose, Socialism and Communism in India, (Calcutta, 1971), pp.143-69; J.P. Haithcox, "Left Wing Unity and the Indian Nationalist Movement: M.N. Roy and the Congress Socialist Party", Modern Asian Studies, III, I (1969); M.N. Roy, Memoirs, (London, 1964); P. Spratt, "Gandhi and the Communists", Gandhi, India and the World.
11. J.P. Haithcox, "Left Wing Unity and the Indian Nationalist Movement," pp. 43-6.
12. For information on the CPI, see the following sources: R.P. Dutt, India Today, (Bombay, 1949); S. Ghose, Socialism and Communism in India, pp. 293-317; S. Ghose, Socialism, Democracy and Nationalism in India; J.P. Haithcox, "Left Wing Unity and the Indian Nationalist Movement,"; B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties, pp. 254-65; P. Spratt, "Gandhi and the Communists", Gandhi, India and the World.
13. For information on the Socialists, see the following sources: S. Ghose, Socialism and Communism in India, pp. 92-120 and 181-195; S. Ghose, Socialism, Democracy and Nationalism in India; J.P. Haithcox, "Left Wing Unity and the Indian Nationalist Movement"; B.B. Misra, The Indian Political Parties, pp.282-90; J.P. Narayan, Why Socialism?, (Benares, 1936); J. Nehru, Discovery of India, (New York, 1959).
14. (Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 365.
15. As was pointed out in Section 1E of this chapter, Roy came to accept not only Gandhi's complete integrity, but also Gandhi's outlook.
16. As quoted by S. Ray, "Tagore-Gandhi Controversy", Gandhi, India and the World, p. 126.
17. See, in particular, Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p. 490.
18. S. Ray, "Tagore-Gandhi Controversy", p. 129.
19. M.N. Roy, Memoirs, p. 379.
20. S. Ghose, Socialism, Democracy and Nationalism in India, p. 27.
21. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p. 84.
22. Sadhus are religious men. As quoted by S.P. Aiyar, "Gandhi, Gokhale and the Moderates", Gandhi, India and the World, p. 103.
23. See S. Sarkar, Modern India, pp.187-204.

24. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p. 83.
25. Modern India (New Delhi, 1983), p. 226.
26. See S. Sarkar, Ibid., pp. 199 ff.
27. As quoted by R.P. Dutt, India Today, p. 290.
28. Ibid.
29. S. Sarkar, Modern India, p. 255.
30. P. Moon, Gandhi and Modern India (New York, 1969), p. 207.
31. Nehru, A Political Biography, (London, 1961), p. 375.
32. B.R. Ambedkar, "What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables", Gandhi, Maker of Modern India?, M.D. Lewis, ed., (Massachusetts, 1965), pp. 51-2.
33. Ibid., p. 54.
34. "The Mahatma and Modern India", Modern Asian Studies, III, 4 (1969), p. 324.
35. Ibid.
36. For an exposition of the CSP's economic platform and philosophy, see S. Ghose, Socialism and Communism in India, (Calcutta, 1971), pp. 181-95.
37. Why Socialism?, pp. 85-7.
38. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, p. 552.
39. Ibid., p. 523.
40. Ibid.
41. See S. Sarkar, Modern India, pp. 358-61.
42. Ibid., pp. 360-1.
43. Politics in India, p. 57.
44. The Mahatma and the Ism, (New Delhi, 1959), p. 107.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DYNAMICS OF GANDHI'S LEADERSHIP

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we argued that the interaction between social, political and economic forces within the nationalist movement militated against Gandhi's alternative. This argument will be brought further into focus in this chapter wherein we shall show that Gandhi's leadership had a powerful impact on the nationalist movement and that it is this very leadership which explains why his ideological alternative was rendered inconsequential.

In what follows, we shall study Gandhi's rôle in making the Congress party into a powerful political vehicle during the nationalist struggle. It shall be shown that he was instrumental in mobilizing popular support for the party by transforming it into an organized political network capable of accommodating a diversity of interests. We shall, therefore, focus on Gandhi's leadership style and organizational skills, and their combined impact on the Congress party. Accordingly, the first part of this chapter will highlight some of the philosophical considerations which underlay the dynamics of Gandhi's political strategy; the second part will point up Gandhi's leadership style; the third and fourth sections will concentrate on his ability to harness the support of social networks for the benefit of the Congress and on his mediatory skills, with reference to specific

case studies; and finally, the last section will examine the structural changes he introduced in the party and the resulting effect on membership and social and political composition.

In showing how Gandhi played a major part in moulding Congress' structure, organization and politics, it is important to bear in mind, as is stressed by Rajni Kothari,¹ the historical context that preceded, and indeed facilitated, his entrance into the Indian political scene. First, Gandhi and the Congress' penetration into India's rural hinterland was helped, paradoxically, by the administrative unification, law and order, educational institutions, communications and transportation systems (especially the railways) which British rule had brought to India. In other words, the Congress' direction was moulded, at least in part, by "the structure that the British had already evolved."² Second, Gandhi's style of leadership was enhanced by two notable cultural characteristics of Indian society. One characteristic is the fact that Indian society tends to be polycentric, in the sense that it is able, and has been throughout its history; to continually assimilate diverse influences. Gandhi capitalized on this characteristic in his efforts to make the Congress into an eclectic organization. Another cultural characteristic is the long-standing Indian tradition of high regard for "civilizing elites", whose accepted role it is to integrate local cultures, mediate social conflicts and act as custodians and interpreters of tradition. Gandhi fitted this role easily. Hence, concludes Kothari, "Gandhi's genius lay in mobilizing such a past for changing the directions of the present".³ In what follows, it is this "genius" that we shall attempt to examine.

1. Ideology and Political Strategy.

In Chapter 1, we stressed Gandhi's constant preoccupation with the idea of unity and harmony, whether in social issues, economics or politics. This preoccupation, we noted, stemmed directly from his belief in Truth and non-violence. In this section, we shall outline how his pursuit of unity reflected in his political strategy.

The issue of class conciliation weighed heavily in Gandhi's political strategy. Rather than condemning the caste system in order to question the treatment by the upper castes of Untouchables, for instance, he defended it. This approach encouraged a change in the attitudes of the upper castes without threatening or alienating them by questioning the legitimacy of their social status, and at the same time, it attracted the political support of the Untouchables by championing their cause. The same holds true in the case of Gandhi's trusteeship doctrine. Instead of seeking to destroy capital in order to push for greater economic equality, his efforts were directed towards regulating relations between capital and labour through negotiation and compromise. Indeed, Gandhi repeatedly resisted pressures for an all-out struggle against landlords or capitalists. This was true particularly during the 1930s economic crisis, when there were strong calls from left-wing Congress members for non-payment of land revenues and general industrial strikes. For Gandhi, to achieve class conciliation the ills of the working class had to be addressed without alienating the propertied classes by threatening to directly destroy or appropriate their wealth.

Implicit in the Gandhian approach to establishing harmonious economic and social relations was the reluctance, firstly, to attack any particular persons or group of persons, and secondly, to mix class grievances with the political goal of independence. With regard to the first point, Gandhi never spoke ill of, or pointed an accusing finger at, any particular individuals, because to do so would be to victimize them, to harm them in word. Instead, he attacked institutions, systems or causes: he criticized not the British, but colonial rule; he condemned not high-caste Hindus, but only their practice of Untouchability; and he deprecated not capitalists, but rather their "superfluous" wealth. By adopting such an attitude, Gandhi was leaving the door open for the perpetrators of injustice to reform themselves and thereby contribute to the establishment of the harmony and unity of all beings. With regard to the second point, F. Frankel states that, during the 1930 civil disobedience campaign, Gandhi deliberately avoided class issues by confining the no-tax campaign to ryotwari, and not zamindari,⁴ areas when non-payment of land revenue was made the focal point of peasant mobilization for civil resistance.⁵ Thus, by refusing to advance the nationalist cause by capitalizing on class grievances, Gandhi prevented any alienation on class lines. In doing so, he minimized possible alliances between the propertied classes and the raj, for any such alliance would probably have greatly weakened the nationalist movement and resulted in violent social upheaval and increased British repression. As pointed out by G. Rosen, therefore, "in areas of agricultural policy and labor policy, the Congress under Gandhi developed both a theory and a style of compromise that made it possible to avoid

conflicts that would seriously split the independence movement."⁶

The priority given by Gandhi to the need for cohesion is also visible in his efforts to avoid letting personal rancour or ideological differences between him and other Congress leaders get in the way of the nationalist cause. This point is borne out by two noteworthy examples. In the face of opposition by the Swarajists in the early 1920s, Gandhi stayed aloof from Congress politics and instead turned to his Constructive Programme. Similarly, in the mid-1930s, he retired from Congress and devoted himself once again to the Constructive Programme in deference to criticisms by the Socialists of his ideas. And, on both occasions, he came out of retirement when the mood within Congress had changed or mellowed. To quote Kothari on the subject: "He...showed a great deal of intuitive genius in sorting out some of the dilemmas that emerged, especially those that had implications for the building of a political community: His greatness lay in accepting defeat where he had failed and yet pushing ahead with the central tasks."⁷

What is apparent from the above is that Gandhi's belief in unity translated into remarkable political realism. His strategy of trying to accommodate all groups and alienate none not only aimed at satisfying his goal of non-violent resolution of conflicts, but also had the effect of rallying political support for Congress from all sections of Indian society. This point is further expanded in the ensuing pages.

2. Leadership Style

What made Gandhi a unique leader was not simply his uncommon ideo-

logical viewpoint but also the way in which he projected his ideology onto his style of leadership. His charisma and personality had the effect of attracting widespread attention, while the use of powerful symbols enabled him to mobilize public attention and bring people together under the umbrella of Congress. In this section, we shall study the attributes of his style of leadership.

Gandhi was undoubtedly a charismatic leader. Max Weber, who used the term in connection with forms of socio-economic organization, defines "charisma" as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader."⁸ Gandhi's charisma fits well this definition and for three main reasons.

First, his charismatic leadership stemmed from his "saintliness", his moral rectitude, his integrity. Because of his deeply-held principles, he always acted selflessly (and was perceived as doing so), representing the interests of society as a whole, rather than those of any particular individual or group. It is fitting, therefore, that he never identified himself with any particular political party or social group.

Secondly, Gandhi was regarded as exemplary, in the sense that there was a one-to-one correspondence between what he preached and practised. He had a simple life-style. He would take an interest in everyone and care about all issues, however insignificant. He would back all his actions with firm and inspiring conviction. And even when he made mistakes, he

would openly admit to them, thereby allowing people to share in his growth (or, as he called it, his "search for truth").

Finally, Gandhi was seen by the Indian masses as "superhuman", in the sense that he embodied their idea of an ideal-type. H.N. Brailsford states that Gandhi was often regarded as a mystical saint, who in popular Hindu tradition, is portrayed as having complete self-control and is, therefore, capable of commanding the universe.⁹ Indeed, Gandhi's disciplined life-style and the novelty of his satyagraha programme fitted well into this tradition.

The overall result of Gandhi's charismatic leadership, consequently, was that he appealed to everyone, to leaders and masses alike. Not surprisingly, it was very soon after he entered India's political scene that people started to refer to him as the "Mahatma" (great soul) or "Bapu" (father).

But charisma was only one component of Gandhi's style of leadership. Another component was the intimacy that bound him to his co-leaders. Gandhi persistently cultivated close relationships, and he never allowed doctrinal differences to get in their way. In the previous chapter, we mentioned the emotional bond between him and Nehru. The same may be said to have existed in his relationships with such leaders as Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad or even G.D. Birla, the industrialist. For their part, these leaders, although they might have on several occasions disagreed with Gandhi on fundamental matters, nevertheless remained closely attached to him. In a description of Patel's relationship with Gandhi, for example, G.D. Birla declared: "He quarrelled with him privately and followed him publicly. It is curious that many high men in India differed from Gandhi,

yet followed him often blindly."¹⁰ And this intimacy with Congress leaders, carefully cultivated by Gandhi, made him a common bond and a unifying force within the party.¹¹

The final and most important attribute of Gandhi's style of leadership was his use of symbols, which were remarkable for their multi-dimensionality and functionality.¹² We may distinguish three types of symbols, each serving a specific purpose. The first type of symbol had a bridge-building function in that it bridged the gap between the traditional and the modern. Gandhi reinterpreted traditional concepts by charging them with modern values. Thus, he used the trusteeship doctrine, which traditionally referred to the social and religious obligation of the upper castes to be charitable to the poor, to try to bring about the secular ideal of economic equality. Similarly, he spoke of panchayat raj when referring to the idea of decentralized democracy and hartal in reference to a strike... Although outwardly traditional, these symbols expressed modern political and social concepts. And they enabled Gandhi, firstly, to give to Indians a renewed sense of nationhood and identity, and secondly, to reach out to those groups which were unfamiliar with or had previously been uninvolved in the mechanics of politics.

Gandhi bridged the gap not only between traditional and modern ideas, but also between traditional and modern Indians, the rural masses and urban elites, the rich and the poor. He wore khadi, spoke a veracular, travelled third class, used terms and imagery of the Ramayana and encouraged his co-leaders to do likewise in an attempt to bring them closer to tradition, to the rural masses. "Literally and metaphorically Gandhi clothed the leaders of modern India in the robes of tradition, and

thus eased India's passage into the modern world."¹³

The second category of symbols had the function of directing people towards the pursuit of public service. Gandhi made his own life symbolic and exemplary, in the sense that he devoted a large part of it to selfless social service, thereby encouraging others to follow. He also linked the traditional concepts of unity, duty, charity and liberation to the need to carry out welfare activities. The result was that he managed to send thousands of Congress workers and Gandhian followers to the rural areas to help in such programmes as village uplift, Harijan work, khadi and prohibition. As well, he managed to obtain financial support for his programmes from the business community (Tata, Birla and other textile manufacturers and traders). In this regard, A. Embree writes: "He helped them (the industrialists) to fulfill their classic role as men of affairs who recognize saintliness and are willing to pay for its upkeep but do not feel compelled to emulate it."¹⁴

Thirdly, Gandhi transformed social and political issues or ills into potent symbols. The term "Harijan" came to symbolize his fight against Untouchability and was a psychological means of getting caste-conscious Indians to view the Untouchables as their brethren, as "children of God"; khadi and charka conjured up the issues of simple technology, simple living and decentralized village activity; the propagation of Hindustani attempted to press for a unifying national language; and the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity came to symbolize communal harmony and religious tolerance. But probably the most powerful and effective symbol of Gandhi's creation was the 1931 Salt March. In attempting to fight the salt tax, which itself was symbolic of the political struggle against the raj, by

symbolically walking to the sea to make illicit salt, the March attracted tremendous publicity and made Gandhi into a messianic figure. It also triggered off a civil disobedience campaign. Its most significant contribution, however, was that it brought together Indians of all walks of life -- students, peasants, businessmen, traders, women -- giving them a sense of national identity.

Thus, the creation of symbols gave great depth to the nationalist movement by popularizing what nationalist leaders considered important social, political and economic issues and problems. Many of the Congress' programmes were successful because they were simply communicated through symbols. Interestingly enough, Gandhi also had symbolic ways of propagating the symbols he created. His evening prayer meetings were a forum for the free discussion of issues and problems. They became an institution and were widely followed and publicized. As well, the publication of a newspaper, which Gandhi named Young India and then Harijan, was his way of educating the public on satyagraha and keeping all his ideas and opinions in the public eye.

Consequently, Gandhi's leadership style had the effect of forging new links between Indians. It effectively reached out to the rural masses and brought India's economic, political and social problems to the forefront of the nation-building process.

C: Subcontractors

We have up to this point examined only the philosophical foundations and components of Gandhi's leadership and their translation into political

strategy. But in order to understand the impact of his leadership in terms of actual political participation, we must study its dynamics, its applications. To do so, we shall focus on Gandhi's early career in India (1917-20), for it is during this period that he made it possible for the Congress party to become a broad-based organization. It will be argued that the political participation of India's rural areas was based not on direct links with the rural masses, but rather on the absorption of a plethora of intermediaries and local elites. To describe this process, we shall rely primarily on Judith Brown's detailed study of the mechanics of Gandhi's leadership in Gandhi's Rise To Power.¹⁵

Brown analyzes Gandhi's emergence as a leader by concentrating on his early satyagraha programmes. In the 1917 Champaran satyagraha in Bihar, Gandhi's first campaign in India, she finds that Gandhi relied heavily on a small group of professionals (mainly lawyers) for the success of the campaign. One member of this group was Rajendra Prasad, a lawyer who became one of Gandhi's closest associates and for whom Champaran was a door to fame. Other members of the group were businessmen from local towns, who joined the campaign because they realized that success could increase their power and prosperity, and peasant leaders, who had grievances against the British planters of the region. All these men hailed not from the rural masses but from the rural and urban elites of Bihar. Thus, Brown points out, Gandhi "went into the village dressed in the sort of clothes villagers wore, speaking the vernacular, espousing causes which concerned his rustic audience: while doing so he drew in the local business and educated man who had had little interest or influence in the

Congress style of politics. He acted as go-between for these different groups, mediating between two tiers of public life, and in return secured a powerful provincial following."¹⁶

The Kaira satyagraha of 1918 in Gujarat concerned itself with the grievances not of poor peasants, but the prosperous Patidar farming community of the region. Brown points out that most of the funds for this campaign came from Bombay merchants of Gujarati origin, while Gandhi's assistants hailed from the local Patidar community or were small-town, Gujarati lawyers. Vallabhbhai Patel, a lawyer and a Patidar was the most important among these assistants. He was the ideal go-between in Gandhi's attempt to bridge the gap between the educated elite and the villagers. Patel subsequently rose to become a Congress leader and a formidable organizer, bringing with him the backing of Western India's landed and business elites. Thus, as in Champaran, the Kaira satyagraha secured the support of rural and small-town elites. In this regard, Brown concludes: "...Gandhi took up an issue which was comprehensible and important to peasant cultivators, basing his campaign of support in the villages, while articulating rural discontent through the better educated urban groups, who had some overt political awareness and expertise. His strength lay in being the mediator between these groups."¹⁷

The same pattern of leadership occurred in the Rowlatt satyagraha of 1919 and the Khilafat movement of 1920. The Rowlatt satyagraha, Brown reveals, relied on the intermediary networks that Gandhi had built up during his previous campaigns, and in those areas where few links had been forged, the Congress and Gandhi depended on the cooperation of existing local leaders and elites. During the Khilafat campaign, Gandhi managed to

rally the support of the Muslim community by mediating between moderate Muslims, made up of prosperous Bombay merchants, and radical Muslims, representing lower middle class Muslims, including religious leaders interested in the Khilafat cause. The success of these two campaigns thrust Gandhi into a commanding role in Congress and made him the party's crucial link to the rural areas, as well as to the Muslim community. To quote Brown on the subject: "After the Rowlatt satyagraha Gandhi's standing in Congress had risen considerably, but the leadership of the Khilafat agitation gave him real power among Hindu and Muslim politicians, enabling him to exert leverage on both because he was the guarantor of the hopes and fears of both."¹⁸

It becomes clear that Gandhi's leadership relied on an intermediary group of what Judith Brown calls "subcontractors" to reach out to the four corners of India. Here, three points must be stressed. Firstly, Gandhi's political subcontracting extended political participation in both urban and rural areas indirectly through rural and small-town elites and not directly between the Congress politicians and the masses. Gandhi's leadership, therefore, relied on intermediate networks and not, as is frequently thought, on mass political contact.¹⁹

One may well question whether Brown gives due weight in her analysis to such factors as Gandhi's charisma, which in some measure, did bring about mass political contact. Brown's theory does not, however, exclude charismatic leadership. Although not explicitly stated, her analysis of Gandhi's leadership shows how his charisma was, as Max Muller puts it, "routinized" or "rationalized". Muller writes, in this regard, "...in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process,

of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both".²⁰ Indeed, as Brown points out, Gandhi's leadership and campaigns brought forth many followers and future Congress leaders such as Rajendra Prasad and J.B. Kriplani from Bihar, and Patel and Morarji Desai from Gujarat. Because of their association with Gandhi, and probably also in their own right, these leaders were identified as charismatic leaders. The result was that the Congress party soon became a charismatic organization, which through a network of charismatic leaders, was able to reach out to the Indian masses as no party had ever done before in India.

A second point is that Gandhi's leadership had the effect of involving groups which had until then been left untouched by Congress politics. For example, as Brown reveals, "Gandhi gave the Patidars a more sophisticated way of expressing their concerns and the urban educated the solid backing of a tough, rural elite. He introduced the former to politics of a kind, and began to educate the latter to be his 'subcontractors' in the process of reaching down through society to groups the more conventional politicians had hardly touched."²¹ The result was a change in the composition of Congress' membership, which was previously dominated by high-caste, educated, urban elites, but which increasingly opened up to middle-class professionals, non-Brahmins and rural elites.

Finally, while Gandhi's leadership secured a network of subcontractors, this did not mean he necessarily commanded their loyalty. On the contrary, as Brown assiduously states, many of the intermediaries

constituted a "potential source of disaffection, if they decided that Gandhi's movement as centrally conceived in Congress did not suit their local interests. On their reaction Gandhi's power stood or fell."²² This point is crucial in order to understand Gandhi's subsequent loss of control of the civil disobedience movement in 1922 and 1933 and of Muslim support after the mid-1920s. It is also this source of disaffection which explains, at least in part, internal party opposition to many of Gandhi's programmes.

4. Mediation

If Gandhi's leadership enabled the Congress to forge links with previously uninvolved groups, it also played a major role in maintaining cohesion between the various political forces within the party. We have already alluded to the way in which Gandhi's intimate relationships with Congress leaders made him a common bond between them. In this section, we shall briefly expand this point by looking at his role as a mediator at three crucial junctures of Congress politics.

One such juncture was the result of the so-called 'Dominion Status-Purna Swaraj Affair'. At the beginning of 1928, the sub-committee of an All-Parties Conference produced what came to be known as the Nehru Report. This report had been drafted by two eminent jurists -- T.B. Sapru, a liberal ex-Congressman, and Motilal Nehru, the Swarajist. It was the first major effort by Indians to draft a constitutional framework for the country. One of its proposals was that India should have the same status as other self-governing dominions within the British empire. The advocacy

of dominion status was, however, strongly opposed by a growing number of young left-wing radicals, among whom Jawaharlal Nehru was becoming the most influential. These radicals favoured complete independence or purna swaraj. Considering unity of the party and the attainment of swaraj as crucial, Gandhi came up with a compromise formula which was adopted by all sides at the 1928 Calcutta session of Congress: the party opted for dominion status, provided it was conceded by Britain within a year; failing this, the party would make complete independence its goal. As it happened, the British government did not heed the Congress' proposal, with the result that the 1929 Lahore session adopted purna swaraj as its immediate political objective. The important point, however, is that Gandhi's mediation skills succeeded in maintaining party unity by salvaging the Nehru Report, while at the same time allaying the concerns of the radicals.

It was during the mid-1930s, however, that Gandhi's mediatory skills proved most crucial and effective for party unity. In the first instance, he became increasingly sensitive to the growing ideological cleavages within the Congress during the mid-1930s, and in particular to the Socialists' frustrations with the absence within the party of a 'radical' economic programme. In an effort to soothe these frustrations, Gandhi succeeded in making Nehru the Congress President in 1936. To do so, he persuaded Patel, whose candidacy had been proposed for the position, to withdraw in favour of Nehru. Gandhi managed, therefore, to avoid possible defection by left-wing forces.

Next, when Nehru became the Congress President in 1936, he appointed a number of prominent Socialists (one of whom was Jayprakash Narayan) to

the powerful Congress Working Committee. But the presence of the Socialists constituted a threat to the 'Old Guard', who mistrusted them mainly for ideological reasons. As a result, Patel, Prasad, Kriplani and four other Working Committee members resigned on the grounds that Socialism was not the goal of the Congress party and that the militancy of the Socialists was prejudicial to the best interests of the country.²³ Gandhi deftly and firmly resolved the looming crisis by insisting that the 'Old Guard', many of whom were his faithfuls, withdraw their resignations.

Gandhi therefore played the role of peace-maker within Congress. He mediated between various political forces within the party and bridged the gap between conservatives, such as Patel and Prasad, and left-wingers, such as Nehru and Bose. Had it not been for these skilful mediation efforts, the divisive tensions between the conservative Constitutionalists and the left-wing Socialists might well have resulted in acute crisis and considerably weakened the nationalist movement.

5. Party Structure and Membership

We have already examined the impact of Gandhi's leadership on political participation.* But we have not yet focused on the changes in the structure of the Congress brought about by his leadership; nor have we studied how increased political participation within Indian society reflected on the overall membership and social and geographical composition of the party. In this final section, we shall study these two questions.

It is often said that to lead effectively, a party needs efficient organizational machinery. This was certainly a requirement which needed to be fulfilled by the Congress at the beginning of the century. For it to become sophisticated and representative, it needed a broad-based structure. Under Gandhi's leadership, it acquired both structure and broad-based representation.

Prior to 1920, the Congress party had neither viable organization nor recruitment programme, nor sufficient funds. It was based only in major cities and towns; it imposed knowledge of English as a qualification for membership; and its members came from primarily the professional and business classes. Not surprisingly, therefore, the party catered to a limited audience and articulated only tame political demands. This state of affairs changed slightly under the leadership of the militant nationalists, mainly due to Tilak's populist tactics, but took a dramatic turn when Gandhi emerged as the leader of the party after 1919.

Gandhi took several steps to transform the party into an efficient and broad-based organization. First, he created a permanent fifteen-member Congress Working Committee (CWC), which became the instrument of collective leadership. It overshadowed the larger and ineffective All-India Congress Committee (AICC). Gandhi wanted to create a compact and powerful executive which would be able to direct a very heterogeneous party. Hence, the CWC was to Congress what a cabinet is to Parliament.²⁴ With it rested ultimate authority. Moreover, writes G. Krishna, "In it the Congress acquired for the first time in its history an executive body which was active throughout the year".²⁵ Second, in order to broaden the Congress' social and geographical base, the party was reorganized

at the provincial level. In 1920, the Provincial Congress Committees (PCCs) were organized on a linguistic basis to represent India's 21 linguistic regions, and local organization was extended to the district and sub-district levels. As a result, after 1921, the Congress' organizational machinery extended to almost the whole of British India.²⁶ Third, in order to enhance political participation at the local level and bring the Congress closer to the masses, the PCCs were instructed to conduct their deliberations in their local language, while the proceedings of the Congress sessions were conducted to the extent possible in Hindustani.²⁷ Finally, the Congress introduced paid membership, which created a permanent source of revenue to support the full-time party work and staff.

The overall result of these important structural changes within the party was, on the one hand, greater geographical and social representation, and on the other, greater potential for agitation and electoral politics. How did all this reflect on the party's membership levels and composition?

Between 1892-1909, close to 40% of the delegates to the Congress annual session were lawyers, 25% were urban professionals (doctors, teachers), while the remainder were landed gentry, merchants and traders, financiers and Indian royalty.²⁸ Delegates from the lower castes, peasantry and lower-middle classes were conspicuous by their absence at these annual sessions, as were Muslim delegates. In addition, most of the delegates came from Bombay, Bengal and Madras. Hence, Orissa, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, Punjab and even regions within the Bombay

Presidency were unrepresented. During the reign of the militant nationalist leaders, the social composition of the party started to diversify, with greater representation from the lower-middle classes. However, the geographical composition still reflected large regional imbalances, most representation being concentrated in Maharashtra and Bengal. Moreover, the party lost a large part of support from the princes, zamindars and upper-class moderates as a result of the more "radical" political demands articulated by leaders such as Tilak.

Although figures are incomplete, by 1921 the Congress benefited from spectacular membership growth: about two million new members joined within two years.²⁹ Of particular importance was the fact that the Congress' strength grew considerably in Gujarat, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, Bihar and Andhra. And if membership levels and geographical composition underwent dramatic change, so did social composition. This change is reflected in the following statistics: the number of peasant delegates attending the Congress annual session was 688 in 1918 and rose to 1,095 in 1919; the number of Muslim and women delegates at the annual session increased nearly fivefold between 1918 and 1920; and while in 1919 the percentage of total AICC members coming from rural areas was 41%, it increased to 65.4% by 1923, with a proportionate percentage reduction in AICC members from urban areas.³⁰

Notwithstanding the significant changes in the social composition of the party, available data suggests that Congress' leadership and organization during the nationalist movement was recruited mainly from urban and rural elites.³¹ This evidence corroborates our findings in Section C on subcontractors. New recruits from rural areas came primarily from the lahdowning castes, with the result that they, as well as urban business-

men and professionals, dominated the Provincial and District Congress Councils. Thus, while Gandhi's leadership and organization permitted the party to penetrate deep into India's rural hinterland, there was limited access for the lower sections of the rural masses to the party organization.

It should be noted that the Congress' membership level and composition underwent significant fluctuations throughout the pre-independence period. Between 1923-27, for example, membership slumped, mainly as a result of the suspension of the civil disobedience movement, while during the 1937-40 period, it rapidly increased after the Congress took power in the provinces. The social composition, too, was influenced by exogenous factors. During the early 1930s, the party was able to recruit from the ranks of the peasant proprietors and land tenant holders, and not from the agricultural labourers, mainly because the Depression had sharply increased the rent and revenue burdens of the latter.³² Similarly, the overall weight of industrialist groups in national politics greatly increased during the 1930s, primarily because the Depression had slackened colonial economic ties in India, thereby creating major opportunities for indigenous industrial development throughout India.³³ An indirect benefit to Congress of such development was greater access to funds and contributions, although here Gandhi's own canvassing for funds from the Gujarati and Marwari business community by itself proved highly rewarding.

To summarize, it can be stated that organizational changes instituted during Gandhi's leadership greatly enhanced the Congress' mobilization capabilities. Added to Gandhi's effective leadership qualities, these increased capabilities produced dramatic changes in the Congress' member-

ship levels and geographical and social composition. The result, as we have noted, was the penetration of the party into areas previously left untouched by Congress politics.

Conclusion

The recurrent theme throughout this chapter has been that Gandhi's leadership during the independence movement proved to be a powerful unifying force for the Congress party. It played a fundamental role in building the party by displaying a high degree of tolerance. Gandhi avoided the danger of class struggle through his class conciliation techniques. He rejected nothing, neither tradition nor modernity; rather, he used tradition to make the Congress party appear as part of India's unfolding past. Within the party, he cultivated close relations with other leaders, tolerated ideological dissent and resorted to effective mediation when the danger of party disintegration loomed. Finally, he brought to the party his organizational skills, which permitted it to spread its influence throughout the country. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the Congress was able to accommodate all social groups and assimilate all major political strands. Gandhi can be said to be the "father of the nation" in a very real sense.

Two important implications can be drawn from the above. On the one hand, although Gandhi was criticized for having lacked political savvy because of his utopian ideals, it is precisely the ideal of keeping the Congress unified which prevented the deep and lasting antagonisms that have characterized many other freedom struggles. On the other hand, it is

because Gandhi valued the cohesion of the party above all other considerations that many of his ideas and programmes did not bear fruit. He secured large representation for the party by creating organizational and social networks or incorporating existing ones, but he could not necessarily count on their loyalty. The divisive forces within the country found in the Congress party the institutional support to express their respective autonomous structures and interests. Thus, by accommodating all interests, Gandhi also sowed the seeds of dissent within the party. This corroborates our analysis of the previous chapter. It is also the import of the next chapter.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 3

1. Politics in India, (Boston, 1970), see pp. 77-85.
2. Ibid., p. 79.
3. Ibid., p. 81.
4. In an effort to introduce private property rights in land in Northern and Central India as well as parts of the South through the Permanent Settlement, the British recognized the exclusive property rights of the zamindars, who had traditionally been tax collectors. This move proved detrimental to the cultivator, for it deprived him of security of land tenure by converting him into a tenant-at-will. The Permanent Settlement was subsequently repealed in some areas of India (Bombay, Presidency, Gujarat and Madras) and was replaced by a ryotwari settlement, which gave property rights directly to the ryot or cultivator. See F. Frankel, India's Political Economy, 1947-1977 (Princeton, 1978), pp. 30-2.
5. Ibid., pp. 47-9.
6. Democracy and Economic Change in India (Berkeley, 1966), p. 63.
7. R. Kothari, Politics in India, p. 58.
8. The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, (New York, 1947), pp. 358-9.
9. "Why India Follows Gandhi", The Forum, LXXXV, May, 1931, p. 287.
10. In the Shadow of the Mahatma, (Bombay, 1955), p. xv, as quoted by S.H. Rudolph, "Gandhi's Lieutenants -- Varieties of Followership", The Meanings of Gandhi, P.F. Power, ed., (University Press of Hawaii, 1979), p. 53.
11. Gandhi's relationships with Bose and Jinnah are exceptions to the rule. Both scorned Gandhi's moral approach to politics and were baffled by many of his political beliefs and strategies. Nonetheless, their personal relations with Gandhi remained cordial.
12. See R. Kothari, Politics in India, pp. 52-5.
13. J.M. Brown, "The Mahatma and Modern India", Modern Asian Studies, III, 4 (1969), p. 341.
14. "The Function of Gandhi in Indian Nationalism", The Meanings of Gandhi, pp. 67-8.

15. J.M. Brown, Gandhi's Rise to Power, (Cambridge, 1972). See also J.M. Brown, "The Mahatma and Modern India", pp. 337-9.
16. Gandhi's Rise to power, pp. 78-9.
17. Ibid., p. 106.
18. Ibid., p. 229.
19. Sir Reginald Coupland, for instance, has written that "What gave the Congress its present strength was its conversion from a movement of the intelligentsia into a movement of the people, and that was Mr. Gandhi's doing, almost singlehanded." The Indian Problem, (Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 92.
20. The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, p. 364. See also pp. 367-73.
21. Ibid., p. 107.
22. Ibid., p. 344.
23. See B.R. Nanda, "Gandhi and Nehru", The Meanings of Gandhi, P.F. Power, ed., (University Press of Hawaii, 1971), pp.22-3.
24. G. Krishna, "The Development of the India National Congress as a Mass Organization, 1918-23", Journal of Asian Studies, XXXV, 3 (1966), p. 415.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p. 417.
27. Ibid., pp. 415 and 419.
28. G. Rosen, Democracy and Economic Change in India, p. 57.
29. G. Krishna, "The Development of the Indian National Congress", pp. 419-20.
30. Ibid., p. 420-3.
31. S.A. Kochanek, The Congress Party of India, (Princeton, 1968), pp. 319-41.
32. S. Sarkar, Modern India, (Delhi, 1983), p. 258.
33. Ibid., p. 260.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

At independence, India's political leaders had the staggering task of trying to move the country out of a state of poverty as rapidly and equitably as possible. In 1950, the average annual per capita income was a mere US\$82 (1973 dollars), nearly half the population had an inadequate food intake and 90% of the population was illiterate. While 80% of the population resided in rural areas, the agricultural sector was highly undeveloped. In fact, food production had for decades grown at a much lower rate than the population. The industrial sector, for its part, constituted only 17% of national income and relied heavily on a small and powerful class of entrepreneurs. Hence, the country had emerged from colonial rule with a very poor base with which to increase investment and develop agriculture and industry.

For Nehru and other top leaders of the Congress party, the only way out of this state of poverty was by pursuing a "socialist pattern of development". They saw the State as an important instrument for the development of infrastructure, capital accumulation and industry. Inspired by the Soviet model of planning, they therefore tried to achieve the double objective of developing the agricultural sector, through land reform and village development, and the industrial sector, through public spending

in heavy industry and control of the private sector.

But India's political and social organization did not make these objectives successful. The Congress party having been moulded by Gandhi through the assimilation of a diversity of social groups and interests, there developed a large gap between the policies articulated by the modern leadership and the interests of industrial and rural elites, to the detriment of the poor masses. Consequently, the economic and social inequalities, which Gandhi and other leaders had committed themselves to remove before independence, continued to persist, and indeed to hamper India's development, after independence.

This chapter will examine the above process by focusing on the relationship between India's economic development and social and political organization during the 1947-65 period. We shall argue that the very political, social and economic forces that Gandhi was instrumental in moulding during the pre-independence period brought about India's pattern of mis-development in the post-independence period. We shall start by examining the political and economic framework put into place under Nehru and then proceed to highlight the contradictions inherent in the interaction between these forces.

1. The Political and Economic Framework

Having led the nationalist movement, the Congress party naturally became the ruling party after independence and formed the country's first government. As a consequence, the new ruling Congress elite shared the same ideological background as the outgoing one. The Nehru government set

out to incorporate the party's ideological platform into a political and economic framework, by translating it into concrete institutions. Thus, a Constitution was drawn up and a system of economic planning was put into place.

The Constitution, promulgated in 1950, was largely based on the Motilal Nehru Report of 1928 and the 1931 Karachi Resolution put forth by the Congress Socialist wing. It proclaimed India a democratic republic with a parliamentary form of government. It also provided for a federal structure made up of a central government and twenty-two states. Legislative power rested with two houses of parliament and the president, while the executive branch of government lay in the hands of the Council of Ministers, headed by the prime minister.

An important constitutional provision was the distribution of powers between the central and state governments. Although the central government was vested with a considerable amount of initiative and a major share of the nation's financial resources, it nevertheless had to rely on the state governments for the effective implementation of many central programmes. Indeed, the state governments' jurisdiction extended to such key areas as justice, communications, local government, education and the rural sector, including taxation of agricultural revenues, land reform and agricultural credit. The only way the Centre could have a say in these areas was through its financial control over state programmes.

As far as the political, social and economic life of the country is concerned, the Constitution guaranteed a number of fundamental rights, including equality before the law and freedom of religion, speech, expression, assembly, movement and, significantly, property. In this

connection, the practice of Untouchability was abolished and made punishable by law. As well, special provisions were enacted to reserve seats for the "Scheduled Castes and Tribes" in the central and state parliaments in proportion to their percentage in the population and to secure posts for them in the public service, schools and colleges. In addition to guaranteeing rights, the Constitution set out a number of guiding, albeit non-enforceable, principles (Directive Principles of State Policy) which enjoined the central and state governments to secure the welfare of the people, ensure that the ownership and control of material resources are distributed so as to serve the common good and promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of society.

During the time that the framework of constitutional arrangements was being put into place by the Constituent Assembly, the Nehru government, through the Planning Commission, began to draft a national programme of planned development. The Commission was entrusted with the task for formulating five-year plans by enunciating economic and political priorities, emphasizing a general model of development and recommending the means of mobilizing resources to implement planned objectives. Accordingly, the Commission, under the chairmanship of Nehru, put forth as its primary goal the achievement of self-sustained growth through peaceful social change. It also accepted the Directive Principles of State Policy as the guide to economic and social development to be attained through planning. It singled out, in particular, that all citizens have a right to an adequate means of livelihood, that the ownership and control of the material resources of the country are distributed to serve the common good, and that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concent-

tration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.

By 1950, therefore, a political and economic framework was put into place for the country's future transformation. While the Constitution provided the parametres for the distribution of political power, the system of planning announced an institutionalized means of fostering growth with equitable distribution. How and the extent to which this economic and political framework brought about intended results shall be examined in the next two sections.

2. The Gap Between Economic Strategy and Results

When formulating the economic strategy of the country, Indian planners were faced with two primary tasks -- to bring about economic growth and distribution and to develop simultaneously the agricultural and industrial life of the country. The first three five-year plans (1951-66) under Nehru's leadership put together programmes designed to achieve these goals. Their ability to do so, however, was based on overly optimistic premises.

The First Plan (1951-56) drew together a variety of specific programmes for coordinated investment, with a major emphasis on agricultural development. In the area of industry, the Plan upheld the idea of a mixed economy. Allocations to industry and mining made up 7.6% of total plan outlays,¹ the major part of which was devoted to the expansion of basic industries such as mineral development and heavy electrical equipment. The Plan announced a progressive widening of basic industries in the future. It also stressed the need to re-orient the private sector to the

needs of a planned economy. With regard to the latter provision, the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act of 1951 gave the government control over the creation or expansion of industrial plants in the private sector. The Plan, therefore, envisaged an expansion of public investment and tolerated private industry.

The most important feature, though, was the programme for agricultural development. The Planning Commission traced the roots of India's agricultural problems not only to the lack of modern agricultural techniques and resources but more importantly to the institutional obstacles which prevented the efficient mobilization of labour and resources. One such obstacle was the unequal pattern of land distribution. In 1954-55, 22% of rural households owned no land, 25% owned fragments of less than 1 acre and 14% owned uneconomical or marginal lands; together they made up about 61% of India's rural population and owned less than 8% of all land.² In contrast, the upper 18% of all rural households held more than 10 acres and together owned nearly 64% of all land.³ A second obstacle was that a large number of landless or subsistence farmers used archaic methods of production and did not have the means to increase their yields. More importantly, however, even many large landowners could not benefit from their investments in land because the size of their holdings were less than the optimum area required for efficient cultivation. This arose from the fact that they held fragments of land scattered within or between villages.⁴ A third and final obstacle was the lack of agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation and fertilizers. "For development to proceed further", argued the Planning Commission, "re-adaptation of social institutions and social relations thus becomes necessary".⁵

The Plan put forth three main proposals to enhance agricultural development. First, it called for major land reform, recommending an upper limit to the amount of land that an individual may hold (approximately 40 acres). It also abolished the zamindari landlord system. Second, it proposed fundamental organizational changes at the village level through the Community Development programme. This three-pronged programme was designed to bring about social reform at the village level which, it was thought, would in turn generate institutional changes in the rural areas: (1) Community Projects were set up to coordinate government agricultural policies with the help of multi-purpose project staff (agricultural extension workers assigned to assist with crop production and techniques, as well as health and social welfare); (2) the political involvement of villagers was encouraged through the integration of elected bodies (panchayats) with the planning process; and (3) the establishment of village cooperatives, with government financial backing, was stressed as a means for villagers to control credit, marketing and distribution, thereby doing away with intermediaries and money-lenders. Finally, the Plan sought to provide agricultural infrastructure, mainly in the form of irrigation projects, and allocated 16.3% of plan outlays for this purpose.⁶ All in all, the First Plan allocated 36.6% of total outlays to agriculture.⁷

The solutions offered in the agricultural sector were, therefore, a combination of Gandhian and socialist ideas, stressing cooperatives and panchayats as the vehicles for planned agricultural development. Indeed, the major thrust of the agricultural programme was the creation of new

development agencies and community action projects aimed at peacefully removing institutional blockages. Implicit here was Nehru's belief that the political and economic organization of the rural masses would weaken their dependency links on powerful rural elites. This point is stressed by F. Frankel: "In the agricultural sector, the entire development strategy was conceived as an organizational device for weakening the social pillars of economic and political dominance by the landed castes. The Community Development program was assigned the task of creating in the mass of the rural population an awareness and desire for the implementation of new principles of social justice based on equality and participation, which would find organized expression in the cooperative and panchayat institutions."⁸

Owing to good monsoons and sufficient foreign exchange reserves, the modest targets of the Plan were fulfilled, which gave the impression of great agricultural success. In the span of five years, national income rose by 18%, while population grew at a rate of 6%; industrial production increased by 6.2% annually and food production by 15%.⁹ In 1956, close to 120,000 panchayats had been set up throughout India, while 1,000 development "blocks", containing nearly 140,000 villages with a population of 79.5 million inhabitants, had been instituted.¹⁰

These impressive results infused planners and leaders with confidence and induced them to step up substantially the country's industrial development. As a result, the Second and Third Plans (1956-66) emphasized industrialization through import substitution -- an autarkic strategy aimed at reducing the country's dependency on imports and foreign aid. This strategy entailed large increases in public investment and a shift

away from the production of consumer goods to more basic capital and intermediate goods. It also entailed a reduction in total plan outlays for agriculture and irrigation from 34.6% in the First Plan to 17.5% and 21.8% in the Second and Third Plans, respectively.¹¹ Most importantly, however, the strategy rested on two important assumptions. First, it was assumed that substantial increases in agricultural production would take place, not through the use of increased inputs and mechanization, but through the increasing efficiency of labour and available land. The economic strategy, therefore, counted on the success of land reform and the effective mobilization of manpower and resources through the Community Development programme. Second, it was assumed that the large monetary reserves built up during the Korean war period, when commodity prices were high, would pay for the imports of strategic plant and equipment in the short run, before exports could be increased. "...the critical error was underestimating the time required for closing that gap."¹²

Hence, the Second the Third Plans marked a significant shift towards State expenditure in the public sector and an emphasis on heavy industry. The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 sought control of the "core" industries, namely munitions, atomic energy, railways, coal mining, iron and steel, petroleum, heavy engineering and shipbuilding. As a result, from 1955 to 1965, 55-60% of added investment in the organized industrial sector took place in the public sector.¹³ In addition, the government imposed a number of economic controls which covered price-fixing, wage control, supervision of foreign trade and regulation of the formation of new companies. But far from hampering the expansion of the private sector, State investment favoured the development of the private sector. The

public sector was reserved only to "industries in which private enterprise was incapable and unwilling to unite the necessary resources or to risk itself."¹⁴ Public authorities encouraged investment by private enterprises through price manipulation, subsidies, and loans on very advantageous conditions; and, new financial institutions were set up to provide private capital with resources originating from public funds and foreign financial aid. Consequently, private investment increased by 100% during the Second and Third Plans.¹⁵

Industrial production made substantial gains from 1951 to 1965, particularly in coal, steel and electrical power. But the policy of import substitution, while induced by concern for achieving economic self-sufficiency, was allowed to become a protectionist wall that shielded incompetent, bureaucratic and inefficient enterprises. Huge balance of payments deficits resulted due to imports of equipment for the capital-intensive public sector. Shortages of raw materials and stagnation of public investment created bottlenecks and a lack of demand in certain essential areas. More detrimental was the overgrowth of private industries producing consumer goods of secondary importance, which required imports of raw materials and semi-products and thus immobilized large amounts of currency needed for the public sector. As a result, foreign aid financed larger and larger portions of government investment in the public sector (28% and 40% of public investment in the Second and Third Plans, respectively¹⁶).

The slow progress of agriculture and the rural market's low rate of expansion did nothing to either improve the economic situation or reduce the existing disequilibrium between the agricultural and industrial

sectors. While the abolition of the zamindari system led to the removal of some of the worst feudal practices, the full implementation of agricultural reform was not carried out for fear of the divisive effects of such action (a problem we shall return to). The central government was unsuccessful in its attempts to convince the states to accelerate the pace of reform. Moreover, resources of new irrigation facilities were diverted more to conspicuous drought relief operations than to high yield areas. And while food production increased only slightly, the severe droughts from 1965 to 1966 resulted in the need to import large quantities of food.

That the strategy of the Second and Third Plans failed is hardly surprising, given that it was based on the premise that the agricultural sector would perform well and foreign exchange reserves would hold out. Planners did not foresee that large investment outlays on basic and heavy industries would result in dramatic increases in demand for raw materials and foodgrains, which could not be met. As a consequence, bottlenecks developed, triggering inflation. This distorted the entire industrial cost structure and increased dependence on food and capital goods imports. Indeed, in 1957, agricultural production fell below 1954 levels and inflation increased by 14%;¹⁷ and in 1961-62, agricultural production actually declined, with the result that the country had to deplete its foreign exchange reserves for food imports.

Consequently, in 1965, India stood at a crossroad. Although she had advanced industrially and agriculturally over the last fifteen years, there nevertheless remained a number of critical structural problems: imbalances between agriculture and industry, ineffective agricultural

reform, and highly unequal distribution of economic growth. The planned strategy of redressing these problems had hinged on the effective performance of the industrial and agricultural sectors; yet the successful operation of these sectors itself hinged primarily on the positive outcome of agricultural reform. It is, to the social and political forces in operation in the country, which Gandhi had brought together under the umbrella of the Congress party, that we must turn in order to understand these structural problems.

3. Political and Social Organization

When India emerged from independence, its leaders were committed to development through peaceful, democratic means and hence to the avoidance of the political costs of a direct attack on the existing social order. Yet, coupled with the political organization of the country, it is this social order which impeded equitable development. Although public investments increased in industry, there remained a powerful private sector dominated by industrial and agricultural elites. The role and power base of these elites are important factors to consider when analyzing the country's development process.

The first factor to consider is the oligopolistic character of capital in India during the 1947-65 period. While the industrial elite was very small (1.5% of the population¹⁸), its high income (16.5% of national income in the early 1950s¹⁹) and concentrated wealth provided it with considerable economic clout. Thus, the Tata group controlled 76.9% of the total production of the metallurgical industry, and along

with the Birla group, dominated the chemical industry; the Birla and Dalmia Jain groups controlled many financial and investment concerns, as well as insurance and newspaper companies.²⁰ The high concentration of wealth and the concomitant slowly growing industrial market therefore led to problems of capital surplus: profits were not ploughed back into the private industrial sector because of the risk of rising production capacity and falling prices. In addition, sluggish demand in the 1960s, coupled with the government price controls, meant that investors were unable to pass on rising costs to the consumer. The result was that profits were diverted to unproductive activities with highly profitable rates of return. Two such activities were: investment in the parallel black economy (i.e. speculation on real estate, black marketing, smuggling); and the flow of resources into usurious activities in the countryside. As a consequence, the national economy suffered because of a lack of real capital formation, and measures designed to reduce the peasantry's dependence on moneylending capital had little effect.

But by far the most important factor to consider is the accommodative politics of the Congress party, which was a legacy of Gandhi. Gandhi's mediatory approach was not abandoned. Under Nehru's leadership, the Congress remained a unifying force and its strength lay in its ability to mediate between local groups. What this meant, however, was that it was unable to further the interests of one group too forcefully, lest it alienate the interests of another. This paradox created unsurmountable problems for the central leadership and had far-reaching implications for the country's development.

Firstly, the Congress recruited, not from the poorer sections of

society, but rather, as in the pre-independence period, adapted to existing social structures by recruiting from the agricultural and urban elites. This strategy permitted the party to have easy access to electoral support and continue to dominate the Indian political scene.

Secondly, in the rural sector, the party absorbed the middle and upper/landowning castes. These groups became so well entrenched in the party, as well as in the state and local administrations, that the rigorous implementation of agricultural reforms, such as legislation to impose ceilings on landholdings, form credit cooperatives and impose higher agricultural income taxes, were successfully blocked.

In the case of land redistribution programmes, it is important to note that when land ceilings were imposed, landowners found effective ways of circumventing them.²¹ While the principle of imposing ceilings was first announced in 1953, most states did not pass legislation until the early 1960s. In the meantime, many landowners arranged the partition or transfer of their holdings to avoid the impact of the new laws. In addition, several states set no limit to the amount of land landowners held as long as they cultivated it. Ostensibly, the idea was to prevent the fragmentation of larger and efficient farms. The consequence, however, was that landowners campaigned to evict tenants, in order to add to the area of their farms.

Thirdly, not only were the rural elites able to block land reform, but they also were able to use agricultural development programmes to further their power. The introduction of electoral politics in the Community Development programme strengthened the landed elites by enlarging their role as intermediaries between villages and the higher levels of

government. "...the propertied classes, far from being outflanked by popular majorities, showed themselves adept at manipulating the fragmented peasantry along divisions of kinship, caste, factional and economic lines. They mobilized their followers and gained control over village cooperative and panchayat bodies".²² In the process, the Congress came to count on these men because they controlled large vote banks, and the rural masses were forced to rely on them in order to be able to relate to the political process or articulate political demands. The result was that the Community Development programme, rather than permitting the landless and subsistence farmers to use the new village cooperatives and panchayats to undermine the power of the dominant elites, increased the economic and political clout of the elites by permitting them access to greater sources of credit and agricultural inputs.

Fourthly, while the Congress enjoyed the support of the elites at both the national and state government levels, paradoxically, the central government could not carry out policies which would undermine the interests of state governments. The states were an essential part of the implementation of the plans, yet their power rested on the protection of landed interests and on a network of patronage which provided both rural and urban elites with access to colleges, employment and industrial licences and contracts. Hence, by the mid-1960s, power lay in the hands of the states and not the national leaders.

Finally, the Congress also recruited from the industrial elites. It benefited from large financial support from the leading industrialists. The industrial elites, for their part, benefited from their membership to the Congress. They were able to ward off threats of complete nationaliz-

ation of industry, but favoured the expansion of public investment in those sectors which they were unwilling to tie up long-term wealth and which required more funds than were available to them. "Big capital therefore accepted and even demanded state expenditure in development."²³

Consequently, the main beneficiaries of planned development were the most prosperous sections of society. Not surprisingly, because agricultural reform was at the centre of the Nehru government's strategy of increasing foodgrains and mobilizing resources to finance large-scale industrialization, the strategy was impaired. Parochial loyalties and interests far outweighed national commitments.²⁴

Conclusion

Two points emerge from the above analysis. Firstly, after independence, Nehru and other Indian planners faced precisely the same obstacles to their programmes as did Gandhi during the nationalist movement. Because the Congress was a broad-based organization, because it continued to absorb a variety of social and regional interests and pressures, all national policies were subject to these interests and pressures. The result was that the policies either had no impact, owing to resistance at state and local levels, or did not reach the groups towards whom they were directed, owing to the fact that local elites made use of them for their own benefit. Neither result, unfortunately, improved the lot of the poorest sections of Indian society. The logical implication is that while planned development did lead to growth, it did not, and given India's social and political complexities, could not, lead to equitable distrib-

ution.

The second related point is that it is largely because of the dynamics of Gandhi's leadership in pre-independent India that economic and social development in post-independent India met with obstacles. Gandhi's leadership moulded the style of the Congress by infusing it with the tendency to accommodate all interests and rely on intermediary networks and subcontractors. Yet, accommodation does not mean control, and so just as Gandhi could not count on the loyalty of these networks and subcontractors or on their acceptance of his ideas and programmes, so Nehru could not count on their cooperation for the successful implementation of his economic and social policies.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 4

1. Government of India, Planning Commission, Second Five Year Plan (New Delhi, 1956), pp. 51-2.
2. F. Frankel, India's Political Economy, 1947-1977, (Princeton, 1978), p. 97.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Government of India, Planning Commission, First Five Year Plan, (New Delhi, 1953), p. 7.
6. Second Five Year Plan, pp. 51-2.
7. Ibid.
8. India's Political Economy, p. 109.
9. J.W. Mellor, "The Indian Economy: Objectives, Performances and Prospects", India: A Rising Middle Power, J.W. Mellor, ed. (Colorado, 1979), p. 177.
10. C. Bettelheim, India Independent, (New York, 1968), pp. 124 and 209.
11. Second Five Year Plan, pp. 51-2, and Third Five Year Plan, p. 27.
12. J.W. Mellor, "The Indian Economy," p. 98.
13. Ibid., p. 101.
14. C. Bettelheim, India Independent, p. 234.
15. Ibid., p. 154.
16. Ibid.
17. F. Frankel, India's Political Economy, pp. 142 and 216.
18. C. Bettelheim, India Independent, p. 54.
19. Ibid., p. 55.
20. Ibid., pp. 64-72.

21. See F. Frankel, India's Political Economy, pp. 192-4.
22. Ibid., p. 201.
23. C. Bettelheim, India Independent, p. 159.
24. F. Frankel, India's Political Economy, p. 20.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, we have taken a political-economy approach to answer two questions: (1) what impact did Gandhi's ideological alternative have on India? and (2) what impact did Gandhi's leadership have on India? The approach has involved looking at a historical process made up of the interplay between Gandhi, on the one hand, and social, political and economic forces, on the other. Here, we have treated Gandhi's ideological alternative, his leadership, as well as the ideological prescriptions and interests of other leaders and political groups, as historical facts which all enter into the historical process under consideration.

With regard to question (1) above, we have argued that Gandhi's ideological viewpoint and programme of action were unique, but their impact on India was marginal. Both were based on fundamental values which aimed at bringing about the harmony and unity of all living beings, on the one hand, and addressed India's most pivotal social, political and economic problems, on the other. Other leaders and political parties formulated development plans which sought to bring about economic growth through industrialization, equitable distribution through the mechanism of the State or expropriation, and political participation through parliamentary democracy or violent revolution. In contradistinction, Gandhi's view of development aimed at bringing about a simple, village-based, non-violent society through moral regeneration. Thus, Gandhi's view questioned not only the development plans and programmes stressed by other leaders and parties, but also the means through which these plans and programmes were

to be achieved.

Nonetheless, political leaders and interest groups within and outside the Congress party failed to accept ~~Gandhi's~~ development outlook or programme of action. And even when some of Gandhi's programmes were put into practice, they were used to secure goals which were inconsistent with Gandhi's outlook: non-violence was used only as a political tool and not as a means of bringing about greater harmony among all living beings; swadeshi was used as a politically expedient way for the Congress to win over the support of the textile manufacturers, rather than as a way to make India's villages economically self-sufficient; the idea of decentralization was accommodated into the planning system, which paradoxically, was centrally formulated and administered; and panchayat raj was used by local elites to secure their own ends, to the detriment of the poor masses.

With regard to question (2) above, we have shown that Gandhi's leadership was instrumental in shaping India's social, political and economic forces. This was the case for two reasons. Firstly, in the eyes of the Indian masses and political leaders, Gandhi had unquestioned moral integrity and charisma, which permitted him to rise above social, political and economic pressures and interests. He was non-partisan, non-sectarian and was generally perceived as always acting in the name of a collective rather than personal goal. No political party or social group could claim him as its own, and yet each one recognized him as a common bond. Secondly, Gandhi's style of leadership was so powerful that it enabled him to mediate between political leaders and parties, as well as accommodate diverse interests through the creation and absorption of intermediary

networks.

The overall result of Gandhi's leadership was to transform the elitist Congress party of the early 1900s into a powerful umbrella organization which held together a variety of autonomous and mutually-antagonistic social, political and economic interests. And the impact of this leadership was to be discerned not only during Gandhi's lifetime, but also after his death, when his style of leadership was institutionalized and perpetuated within the Congress as a means of maintaining the party's dominance as a political force.

By examining the crucial role played by Gandhi in the 1915-65 period, this thesis has argued that while he succeeded in attracting and unifying the country's diverse political, social and economic forces by way of his style of leadership and his peaceful approach, he (and later Nehru) did not convince these forces to put national interests above their parochial interests. In the process, his ideological alternative was rendered inconsequential. This argument only serves to point up the dynamic interplay between Gandhi's ideological alternative, his leadership and India's social, political and economic forces during the 1915-65 period; and it also highlights an important paradox: by avoiding at all costs the alienation of any group or interest, and by adapting to existing power structures, Gandhi and the Congress party avoided violent revolution; but by the same token, they sowed the seeds of dissent on matters of national interest, i.e. the country's economic, political and social development.

Two important points must be stressed to understand the above argument. First, the Congress party, built by Gandhi through a policy of accommodation, depended on intermediary networks and interest groups for

its survival as a party and for the implementation of vital national political, economic and social programmes; these intermediaries and interest groups, in turn, depended on the party to buttress their own ends. The relationship between the two was not, however, a perfectly interdependent one. Parochial interests within the party were overriding, with the result that the benefits of national programmes accrued only to these interests, at the expense of the development of the country as a whole.

This point is best illustrated by Gandhi's unsuccessful efforts to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. At first, he succeeded in rallying the support of the Muslim League by championing the Khilafat cause. But this support waned owing to several factors, the principal ones being the Congress' misunderstanding of Muslim sensitivities, Muslim intransigence and separatist tendencies, and most importantly, the Congress' refusal to enter into political coalition with the League after the 1937 elections. The result was the partition of India, which Gandhi vehemently opposed but was unable to prevent. Political and social exigencies far outweighed his efforts to bring about communal harmony. Yet paradoxically, it was he who had played a major role in creating these exigencies by contributing to the politicization of the Muslim cause during the Khilafat movement, and more significantly, by making the Congress party into a powerful political organization, over which he soon had no control and whose decisions he influenced less and less.

Second, implicit in our analysis are the complexities of India's social, political and economic fabric. No study of India can ignore the vastness of the country, the staggering size of the population, rich and deep-rooted traditions, and most importantly, cultural and social

diversity. Our study has identified these complexities as the root cause of Gandhi's, and for that matter, the Congress' inability to bring pressure to bear on parochial loyalties and interests. Before independence, Gandhi's style of leadership permitted the Congress party to reflect the country's diverse social and cultural make-up and hold together the country's divisive forces. The devolution of power from the British to the Congress after independence provided parochial loyalties within the party with increased access to, and control of, the country's resources, which further brought into focus this diversity and divisiveness.

The argument of this thesis has important implications for the field of development. It demonstrates that when studying the political, social and economic development of a country, one must look at a historical process as constituted by the interaction between a wide range of factors. What is crucial to such an approach is that all significant factors which enter into the historical process under consideration must be given due weight. It cannot be taken for granted that social, political and economic factors override other factors which make up the historical context. Understanding the development of a country, therefore, requires a descriptive historical analysis, which in turn, includes: (a) looking at a movement or historical process; and (b) taking a wholistic approach i.e. examining all the specific variables, be they economic, political, social, cultural, ethnic and/or anthropological, which make up this movement.

General theories of development fail to grasp that each nation in a given, specific period of history will exhibit specific, special and even unique features of development. The result is that such theories tend to give weight to only those features which prove their respective arguments. The significance of a descriptive historical analysis, therefore, is that.

it serves as a corrective to the tendency to derive from general theories criteria for development which are then applied, often indiscriminately, to widely differing developmental situations.

It has been demonstrated that a descriptive historical approach is particularly appropriate when studying countries such as India, where one is forced to reckon not only with history and tradition, but also with a large number of other variables. In the case of India this signifies taking into account caste, religion, ethnicity, culture -- variables which are unique to Indian society. One cannot, for instance, study Indian political behaviour by looking simply at the system of parliamentary democracy and the historical make-up of political parties; one must also look at the interaction between the political system and such variables as caste and social diversity. Nor can one understand the phenomenon of modernity in India without coming to terms with the interplay between modernization and traditional values and institutions.

In this thesis, we have argued that any analysis of Gandhi's ideological alternative and style of leadership must be related to the development process of India. As a corollary, any study of India's pattern of development must be linked to Gandhi's style of leadership and take account of his ideological alternative. In other words, India's development process and Gandhi are inextricably bound.

What the above implies is that Gandhi occupies such a prominent rôle in Indian history that, when studying the country's development process, Gandhi cannot be considered to have been absorbed in the interplay between social, political and economic forces. We have argued, on the contrary, that he plays a rôle which is crucial to this dynamic interplay. In other words, Gandhi made history and, therefore, he does matter.

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