Prof. C. Wright Mills, the non-conformist humanist American sociologist, in his posthumous publication *The Marxists* made a significant observation: "As with most complicated thinkers, there is no one Marx." And "There is of course no one liberalism and no one Marxism." Had he made a close study of Gandhi and his philosophy he could utter in the same vein: there is no one Gandhi and no one Gandhism. The various presentations of Gandhi's philosophy which one can construct from his writings, written at different times in his own development, depend upon one's point of interest, and one may not take any of them to be The Real Gandhi. It is interesting to compare that contemporary and later-day commentators and politicians have selected and stressed from the writings of Gandhi. A valuable study could easily be written about it. Such a study, if undertaken, would necessarily indicate what aspects of Gandhi appealed to whom and a discerning analysis might also suggest why. To be brief. Gandhi has been presented as a prophet, a mystic, a saint, a theologian, a religious devotee - a genuine Christian, a Samatani Hindu -, a moral preacher, a social reformer, a non-violent revolutionary, a shrewd politician, a utopian, a strange combination of all these, an embodiment of contradictions: sanctity and cunning, reforming zeal and conservatism, moral passion and crude superstition, religious devotion and political maneuvering, and above all - an enigma. A study-portrait of Gandhi is well beyond our present scope. But the man behind the philosophy cannot escape our attention. Fichte rightly said: "As the man is, so is his philosophy." This is particularly true of Gandhi who incarnated his message in his life. A historical figure often baffles our understanding for his is not an 'average' personality.

* Speeches and interviews of Gandhi are indistinguishable from his writings since all the important interviews that he gave or speeches that he made have been recorded in the files of *Young India*, *Harijan* and other books containing selected passages subjectwise.
The task of finding out the real core of the thought and philosophy of an enigmatic or a highly complex personality involves discrimination. This general principle applies equally well to Gandhi and his social and political philosophy. The job is difficult but it is inescapable too. Every student of Gandhian philosophy must earn his own Gandhi.

Objectivity and detachment or neutrality are not the same thing. We do not pretend to be detached. An attitude of detachment does not enable one to select and discriminate. Neutrality is as subjective as the narrowest prejudice or the blindest passion. Objectivity demands scrupulous regard for and correspondence to facts and at the same time forbids arbitrary selection of the same to prove a pre-conceived or pre-determined conclusion. But it does not issue any injunction for suspension of judgment. Political philosophy cannot be conceived without its political orientation. When we attempt to answer 'What is Gandhism' or any 'ism' as a matter of that, our answer, consciously or unconsciously, reflects our own position in time, and forms part of our answer to the broader question of what view we take about the society in which we live. Thus the element of interpretation enters.

One may rightly assess, from the academic point of view, that Gandhi contributed much to political theory. The synthetic or syncretic character of his thought, his ethical idealism in the domain of politics, introduction of non-violence as an instrument of resolution of intra-state and inter-state conflicts etc. may be cited as instances. These are indeed his significant contributions. But one must make a deeper probe into the positive content of Gandhi's political thought.

Gandhian political philosophy, like other political philosophies, contains some temporary, local and non-essential elements as it carries within it at the same time some enduring and universal aspects. One should sift the essential from the non-essential, the abiding sentiment from an immediate prescription. Political
philosophy as we have seen earlier (See ch. I, p. 46) reflects an ideology, a statement of ideals, a designation of agency and a set of social theories. As an ideology, Gandhism is an expression of response to the challenge of a specific historical period and as such its validity for the future is liable to limitation. It does not imply, it should be clearly understood, that the validity of the Gandhian ideology at the given historical situation is being questioned. Secondly, Gandhian ideology, as in the case of other ideologies, has been made vulgar and banal. It has been canonised only to debase its true spirit. It has been presented as a closed system of a set of fixed theories expressing the acme of absolute truth. This view of Gandhism as an ideology is antithetical to the kernel of what we understand Gandhism to be. On occasions more than once philosophical rationalization has been made of Gandhism only to make it appear as a philosophy of maintaining and preserving the status quo. It has been illegitimately made a cover to put a curb upon the urges and aspirations of the toiling people for a happy and prosperous existence and a bright future. His philosophy has often been preached as a philosophy of collaboration of the contending social forces and interests, and of meek submission to injustice and iniquity, a philosophy of quietism. In our foregoing analysis we have seen that his non-violence was farthest removed from

* cf. "What is now happening to Marx's doctrine has, in the course of history, often happened to the doctrines of other revolutionary thinkers and leaders of oppressed classes struggling for emancipation. During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes hound them constantly, attack their doctrines with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaign of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to suround their names with a certain halo for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping them, while at the same time emasculating the revolutionary doctrine of its content, vulgarizing it and blunting its revolutionary edge. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists in the labour movement concur in this revision of Marxism. They omit, obliterate and distort the revolutionary side of its doctrine, its revolutionary soul. They push to the foreground and extol what is or seems acceptable to the bourgeoisie." - V. I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, Chapter I Selected Works (foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1947), Volume II, p. 143.
quietism. Gandhi's non-violence does not teach meek submission to injustice, it calls upon courage to fight oppression. As has been correctly observed by an eminent non-conformist Indian Marxist theoretician: "Anything that denied the value of the human personality, or sought to dominate it or subjugate it by physical force against its own free will, was regarded by him as 'violence', or 'untruth' which must be resisted at any cost. He was a votary of non-violence in that fundamental sense and not in the sense of seeking to reconcile himself, in a spirit of opportunism, to any particular form of society or the powers that might rule over that society for the time being. To say the least, he was absolutely incapable of that kind of opportunism or compromise." 2 But however tragic it is, there is nothing strange about this debasement of the essential core of Gandhi's political and social thought. It was perhaps Renan who once said that when Fate could not destroy a great man it sent him disciples in revenge. 3 Gandhi could not escape that lot of great men.

A correct appreciation of Gandhi demands that he must be viewed in the proper historical perspective. 4 The strength and weakness, the achievement and limitation of his philosophy can only be assessed from that point of view.

Gandhi voiced an indignant protest and raised the standard of revolt against foreign subjugation, economic exploitation and what is more fundamental—de-humanization of man—that accompanies modern civilization. One reviewer has said: "the

# cf. "...Tolstoy's views must be appraised not from the standpoint of present-day Socialism (such an appraisal is, of course, needed, but it is not enough), but from the standpoint of that protest against approaching capitalism, against the ruination of the masses and their divorcement from the land, which had to arise from the patriarchal Russian countryside." — V.I. Lenin, 'Let Tolstoy As The Mirror of the Russian Revolution', Proletarii, No. 35 September 11 (24), 1908 in Articles On Tolstoy (foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1951), p. 10.
philosophy of Gandhi ... appears essentially to be a philosophy of protest." 4 But it was more than an individual protest. Gandhi gave that protest a concrete shape and transformed it into collective action. This is an historic achievement of Gandhi.

Gandhi's supreme contribution to the Indian nationalist movement lies in the fact that it was he who created a mass basis for that movement. The great historic significance of Gandhi is that he evolved a technique of direct mass action which placed unhesitating reliance on the creative political role of the common masses of the people and on their independent initiative for action. Gandhi's appeal to disciplined mass action and mass initiative immediately opened up a new dimension in our political struggle and imparted to it a depth, volume and momentum hitherto unknown. It widened the social basis of the movement unprecedentedly and tapped for it never-failing resources of power. 5 Gandhi gave a life-tonic to the semi-paralysed people. As Clare Sheridan notes: Gandhi, like Lenin, gave a message that has enabled the humble to raise their heads, and recognise their place in the sun. 6

What was the basic drive behind Gandhi's political philosophy and technique of action? The ultimate inspiration for the idealism of Gandhi, like any other humanist, came from the great importance he laid on basic human values. Humanism is the key point and enduring element of his philosophy. 7 Humanism takes its origin from the rebellion of man against inhuman conditions and its single aim

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4 We use the word 'humanism' advisedly. One may object to employment of such a term on the ground that India has not experienced humanism of the European Renaissance type and 'humanitarianism' might be an apt description. This argument does not carry conviction with us. We deliberately refrain from using the expression 'humanitarianism' in assessing the content of Gandhi's thought since the same expression has been usually associated with philanthropy and apolitical activities. Gandhi, we consistently maintain, was immensely political and though a very kind man did not advocate philanthropy since it does not serve any effective social purpose. For his views on the subject, see Young India, 13-10-21, p. 325 ; 13-6-25, p. 282 ; 24-2-27, p. 58.
is the aim of the recovery of man's lost humanity. The question of attaining the
goal of human well-being engaged the best minds of mankind through the ages.
There is, so to say, a historical continuity in the articulation of humanist
ideal. It is true many of these humanists spoke in a language now strange to us
and on many occasions from the point of view of religious movements and religious
beliefs. True, general maxims which have survived for hundreds and thousands of
years take on new content under new social conditions. For every epoch has had
its own type of humanism. Yet the humanist content of the commandment "love thy
neighbour as yourself" has survived for two thousand years. Absolute morality
and absolute commandments are of no consequence from the standpoint of social
science. "But it is a scientific truth", Prof. Adam Schaff, a leading Polish
Marxist philosophical writer reminds us, "that there are human relationships,
which manifest themselves in every form of social life, and are reflected in
humanist ideas, regardless of differences in social context and social outlook." Gandhi inherited and enriched that noble humanist tradition. The abiding humanist
content of Gandhi's philosophy being strongly emphasized upon, it is necessary
at the same time to understand its specific nature, its uniqueness, which is of
decisive importance for investigating its character and its prospects of real-
ization.

With Gandhi "The supreme consideration is man". He often used to say
"With me man comes first". "My life is one indivisible whole, and all my

* cf. "This is the sum of all true righteousness
Treat others, as thou would thyself be treated...
A man obtains a proper rule of action
By looking on his neighbour as himself"

Monier-Williams's translation in
Brahmanism and Hinduism 1891,
activities, run into one another, and they have all their rise in my insatiable love for mankind," he wrote. Man stands as the sun in the solar system of his political philosophy. Even in such an esoteric field like metaphysics he wanted to realise the Absolute through service of man. He was of the earth, earthy, as he himself affirmed. He wanted the kingdom of God. But it was to be established not in heaven, but here on this earth as kingdom of righteousness. He could well re-echo the German poet, Heinrich Heine:

"The Kingdom of Heaven that is promised,

We want to build upon the earth."

He had no charm for life beyond; the supreme task that he assigned himself was to reshape human life and that on a mundane plane. He ceased to be other-worldly. In the words of Shri K. M. Munshi: "He (Gandhi) killed 'other-worldliness' which was India's obsession." Even Prof. George Catlin who found in Gandhi "the punctilios of a theologian" could recognise that Gandhi's "escape was not from reality but unto it." Gandhi based his philosophy upon action, not upon contemplation. This is a new note in the mainstream of traditional Indian philosophy which put its primary emphasis upon contemplation. This carries decidedly a progressive significance. Because of his participation in real life that Gandhi felt no difficulty in affirming the same even within the general framework of his metaphysical idealism.

Gandhi's ethics was imbued with the moral recovery of man. But then he was not merely a moral reformer. Moralists, as Niebuhr says, have placed too great an emphasis upon the value of honesty as a method of escape from injustice in political life. But Gandhi was not a moralist in that sense. Much has been said of Gandhi: "he knew very well where the furniture of earth lay." - Ranjee Shahani, Mr. Gandhi (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1961), p. 79.
made out of his theory of conversion or 'change-of-heart' to suggest that he preached moral suasion as the only means as opposed to organised resistance of the people. Change-of-heart theory has generally been assumed to be a theory of leaving the matter of dispute at the mercy of the wrong-doer. One may not subscribe to the Gandhian theory of conversion - it is a question of one's intellectual preference - but it should not be vulgarized. Gandhi did not mean conversion in the sense it has been generally attributed to. No doubt, Gandhi pleaded for moral suasion as it was one of his fundamental faiths to believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. If, however, moral suasion failed to bring about the desired effect, would Gandhi retire from the field? No, certainly not. Non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience would follow. He said: "It is not a question of changing this man's heart and that man's heart, we have to do or play our part rightly and in the hope that others will also act in the right manner. He felt no moral compunction to advocate confiscation of the vested interests where necessary and take-over by the State of the possessions of the rich with the minimum exercise of violence. Gandhi was not merely a moral preacher. Had he known Marx a bit closely, he could well endorse Marx: 'preaching is only 'so much worthless earnestness'. Gandhi was essentially a fighter with a new weapon that he forged in his encounter with the mightiest empire. The technique of Satyagraha that he evolved was conceived primarily in terms of human needs which proved itself, at the given period, to be politically realistic and morally ennobling. Gandhi's morality was not prescriptive. He did not believe in the dichotomy of individual and group morality. He held that for the common man's moral and spiritual advance, wise and suitable external arrangements of organized life are as necessary as a healthy body. If he were merely a spiritual savant or an ordinary moral reformer he would care less for the external and organizational conditions and institutional arrangements and would
yearned for his spirit to roam in regions of mukti or nirvana. But that was not his way. He could well share the famous British poet T. S. Eliot's sentiment that the life of virtue is the purpose of human society. But he knew well enough that moral virtue did not exist in a vacuum but entered into all social, economic and political institutions. That explains why for Gandhi economics and politics were not divorced from ethics. His understanding of what constitute good ethics and good economics may not lend itself for general approval. That is a different matter and should be viewed in the background when such formulations were made. But the urge behind such formulations should not be missed. He wanted to rehabilitate man spiritually, morally and in his social relationships. That is important.

In his views on sociology and economics one may find an attitude of looking back to the past if they are taken literally and without having any regard for the context in which the sentiment was expressed. His attack on modern industrial civilization is reminiscent of the romantic reaction against the introduction of industrial complex in society. But it would be wrong to conclude therefrom that his opposition to big machines and appurtenances of modern industrialism arose from any obscurantist faith in the virtues and efficacy of cottage industry and handicrafts. One may rightly question the ahistorical nature of his views on the subject. But what led him on to take up such a position? Not an abstract spiritual principle weighed with him. He was seized with a righteous moral passion against de-humanization of man that characterizes the modern industrial-capitalist

"What I am concerned with is not spiritual institutions...but the organization of values, and a direction of religious thought which must inevitably proceed to a change in our social attitude... The life of virtue is the purpose of human society." - The Idea of a Christian Society (Faber And Faber Ltd., London), passim.
civilization. It was a voice of eternal protest of humanism against de-personalization, a process of turning man into a cog in the wheel of the vast impersonal machine.

The basis of his political theory is equally rooted in his concern for humanity. His passion for service flowed out of his inexhaustible love. His was a philosophy of love. But "Love for him", as has been rightly pointed out by Icharya Kripalani, was a collective and not an individual tie-love of the poor, love of humanity. Gandhi's humanism was not a milk-and-water sentimentalism but manliness and defiance of evil. There is a dialectic of love and hate in human life. We are not sure whether Gandhi recognized this operation of dialectic. Possibly he did not. He, like Buddha and Christ, like any other ethical idealist, preached love (and practised too) to conquer hatred. But he bore intense hatred too. It was a hatred of a new quality, hatred without spitefulness. Because of his optimistic faith in what he considered to be the redemptive capacity of man, he placed man above the system and he bore no hatred for the man personally who appeared as the perpetrator of violence and exploitation. His goal was to "combine the greatest love with the greatest opposition to wrong." If he hated anything he hated monopoly and concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a few; he hated exploitation of man by man and cowardly submission to the same. Could he not burn with intense passion he would have failed in his responsibility as a moral person which he was through and through. This burning passion could alone inspire him to offer organized resistance to what was morally degrading. His was of Hegel saw the employed individual as completely subordinate to a mechanical system, to economic law, to the blind necessities of finance and the market. He described industrial society as "a vast system of mutual interdependence, a moving life of the dead. This system moves hither and yon in a blind elementary way, and like a wild animal calls for strong permanent control and curbing." Quoted in John Lewis, Marxism & The Open Mind (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1957), p. 153.
not a philosophy of non-resistance as preached and practised by the Christian
Pacifists.

Behind the whole ethic of Gandhism one finds a passionate opposition to all
relations, all conditions in which man is a humiliated, enslaved, despised creat-
ure. That is why Gandhism is a humanism.

Humanism places man above things. Man is considered to be a creative agency,
a moral and intellectual being, not an automaton. Man, for a humanist, is not an
abstract concept. Humanism regards man to be a concrete, real being, living in
association with other individuals. Gandhi's "was not a loyalty to abstractions;
was a loyalty to living, human beings," 26 observes his biographer Louis
Fischer. True, that he did not or could not recognize man as an ensemble of social
relations in the sense Marx insisted that man must be taken in his social and
historical milieu which means that one must discover man in his origin, in his
evolution, in the development of society, in his history. 27 But then Gandhi's
concept of man was not an abstract one as was in the case of many philosophical
materialists and mechanical materialists. An essentially practical man that he was,
he viewed man as a concrete being though not in his historical setting. His appeal
to individual conscience and his emphasis on individual regeneration and his
pronouncements on the dignity and moral authority of the individual like "The
individual is the one supreme consideration" 28 or "Ultimately, it is the
individual who is the unit" 29 have led many reviewers to brand him as an

* The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstance and up-
bringing and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances
and changed upbringing, forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men
and that the educator must himself be educated." - Marx, Third Thesis on Foun-
dation.

"Man is the sole animal capable of working his way out of the merely animal
state - his normal state is one appropriate to his consciousness, one to be created
individualist. But his was not a case of individualism in the sense it is generally understood to be. He did not subscribe to the individualist philosophy that what is best for the individual would automatically work to the social good.

"Thus God and Nature formed the general frame
And bade self-love and social be the same."

(Pope)

Gandhi's concern for individual freedom does not seek the elevation of the individual ego. Nor is Gandhi's a strictly voluntaristic ethic. Gandhi's individual is a social individual. He did not want to subordinate the individual to an abstraction like the society or the State. The individual should not be sacrificed at the altar of anonymous industrial complex or impersonal state machine. This is an eternal note of humanism. We have argued in our foregoing analysis the objective progressive significance of his insistence on the ultimate authority of the individual. It had a trans-local appeal too. The peoples of the highly industrialized-West alienated from the products of their labour and from themselves owing to operations of capitalist economy might have found in Gandhi a true Messiah who at last took up the cudgels on behalf of the forlorn and solitary individual. Whatever view may be taken of his concern for the individual, one thing stands out in bold relief: his unswerving fidelity to the dignity of the human personality and his fundamental opposition to anything that would undermine that dignity in the slightest degree or thwart in any manner the right of every human being to live and to be.

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of. "What is to be avoided above all is the re-establishing of "Society" as an abstraction via-a-vis the individual. The individual is the social being. His life ... is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life. Man, much as he may therefore be a particular individual (and it is precisely his particularity which makes him an individual, and a real individual social being), is just as much as the totality - the ideal totality - the subjective existence of thought and experienced society present for itself; just as he exists also in the real world as the awareness and the real enjoyment of social existence, and as a totality of human life-activity." - Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (Tr: Martin Miligan, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, n.d.), pp. 104-05.
George Orwell commented: "Gandhi's teachings cannot be squared with the belief that man is the measure of all things and that our job is to make life worth living on this earth." And "One must choose between God and Man ...." 31

It may further be pointed out that in Gandhi's humanism one misses the secular note of Renaissance humanism or the rationalist spirit of Enlightenment or the critical objectivity of socialist humanism. As we have seen earlier (See ch. on Human Nature, p.45), Gandhi's humanism was rooted in traditional Indian humanism. It was, in a fundamental philosophical sense, based on spiritual experience of the "oneness of being". It was in the nature of Indian humanism not to turn the mind and achievements of Man away from the Absolute. For a clear appreciation of the difference in philosophic outlook between the motto of the West and that of India, one should refer to the source of inspiration of respective humanisms. The fundamental inspiration of Western, secular philosophic humanism had its origin in Protagorean dictum: 'Man is the measure of all things'. (C. 500 B.C.) The motto of Indian philosophy is: "This Atman (the vital essence in Man) is the same in the ant, the same in the gnat, the same in the elephant, the same in these three worlds... the same in the whole universe." * Therein lies the fundamental difference in approach. But it would be inaccurate to imply that Gandhi's humanism was indifferent to 'make life worth living on this earth'. It was indeed Gandhi who struggled all his life to make life meaningful and all-rounded. He invested all his being in the task of lifting man from the realm of existence to that of life. And that not in a metaphysical sense, but in a real sense - close to this earth. For Gandhi, it was not a question of choice between God and Man. Because he found his God in man. Gandhi's credit was that he established an objective standard

* esa atma samah plusina Samo masakena Samo
  pagena Samo ebbistribhir lokaih ... Samo ' nena
  Sarvena.

(Bhdraranyaka-Upnishad 1,3,22, C. 1000 B.C.)
cf judgment in terms of social criteria. His philosophy came home to roost in human needs. The truth concept as it functions in Satyagraha is that of relative truth. Truth in Satyagraha, as has been pointed out by Prof. Bonduant, leads to ethical humanism. It is, however, difficult for a rationalist or a socialist humanist to accept the philosophical premise on which Gandhi's humanism rests. stripped of its metaphysical postulates, one is amazed to find the splendid humanist core of Gandhism.

Gandhi spoke in traditional idioms. This might mislead one to infer that he wanted to look backwards and therefrom a hasty conclusion is arrived at that he was anti-rationalist and hence non-humanist, if not anti-humanist. The temptation to exploit the pre-scientific phraseology so obvious in Gandhi's writings should be avoided. We have traced earlier that he added new meanings to old terms. It was as a means of communicating with the vast masses of the people that he chose to speak in traditional idiom. It was as an art that it should be understood. His humanism can never be questioned on the pretext of this apparent traditionalism.

A few comments may be offered here from the standpoint of Marxian socialism and the present-day movement for social progress and human emancipation. Gandhi's humanism may properly be characterized as empiric humanism. This empiric approach was at the same time the source of his strength as well as of his weakness. Empiricism, though valid in a limited sense, does not approximate science. Gandhi's empiric approach is reflected in his analysis of institutional, social and economic questions, as also in his attempts to find a solution for them by identical means. As has been noted in a sober Marxist appraisal (quite unlike the formulation of some Marxists who branded Gandhi as an 'agent' of the Indian bourgeoisie), "The Gandhian approach to the numerous social and economic problems that confront us today and the solutions he suggested had the imprint of not rising above this empiric humanism, which is not necessarily the surest and most dependable guide in these matters."
This limitation of Gandhism, considered from the socialist point of view, is to be found in its ahistorical nature. History, as is understood in modern times, had no appeal for him. Gandhi was indifferent to the laws of motion of history. This feeling of indifference may be explained in terms of the cultural milieu. (See ch. on Gandhi's Interpretation of History.) He busied himself throughout his life in the task of perfecting moral means. However important that was, this concentration on means left a vital gap in his thought-process and understanding. As one reviewer of history observes in a different context: "Moralising is incompatible with historical insight." He did not set before himself the task of discovering the laws of social relations, the impulses, causes and effects of history. Will Durant has said: "He (Gandhi) makes very little application of history to the understanding of the present." Gandhi himself admitted that he had learnt very little from history. "My method is empiric", he told Rolland. Because of his temperamental or constitutional indifference to history, he did not engage himself in the task of discerning the dynamics of history and could not, therefore, consciously comprehend the dialectic of history while responding to the challenge of history and fulfilling the need of an historical epoch. It may sound strange but it is nevertheless true. As Amaury De Riencourt observes: "An immense historical phenomenon himself, Gandhi had no more conception of and no more feeling for historical significance than the average Indian farmer. They both moved onward when their instinct told them that another imperial bastion was about to crumble, and thus onward, until there was nothing left of the disintegrating imperial structure." Horace Alexander, a very sympathetic reviewer in his estimate of Gandhi observes: "He sees the world with the eyes of a peasant." But he was not just an ordinary peasant. As Jawaharlal Nehru recorded in his Autobiography: "He (Gandhi) does represent the peasant masses of India: he is the quintessence of the conscious and subconscious will of these millions. It is perhaps something more than representation; for he is the idealized personification of those vast millions.
Of course, he is not the average peasant. A man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision; very human, and yet essentially the ascetic who has suppressed his passions and emotions, sublimated them and directed them in spiritual channels; a tremendous personality, drawing people to himself like a magnet, and calling out fierce loyalties and attachments— all this so utterly unlike and beyond a peasant. And yet within he is the greatest peasant, with a peasant's outlook on affairs, and with a peasant's blindness to some aspects of life. But India is peasant India, and so he knows his India well, reacts to her slightest tremors, gauges a situation accurately and almost instinctively, and has a knack of acting at the psychological moment. 41

This lack of understanding of the course of social development explains why he, despite his unceasing denunciation of capitalism, prompted by the most deep-felt sentiment, did not enjoin upon the toiling people to traverse the historically ordained path for establishing a higher form of social organization i.e. socialism. But he was a socialist of another type. He was a socialist in the sense that he wanted fundamental socio-economic reconstruction but that was to be achieved in his own non-violent way. It was ethical humanism that shaped his concept of socialism. It was this again which explains his advocacy of humanization of social relations. In that profound sociological sense—and in no other sense, it is stressed here—it may be said that he could not consciously transcend the world outlook of a bourgeois. But as has been correctly pointed out by an Indian Marxist academician: "The bourgeois consciousness of Gandhi should not, however, be confounded or identified with the sordid consciousness of an ordinary bourgeois." 42 Had he been an ordinary bourgeois nationalist leader, he would have run for grabbing power, as had been the case with other nationalist leaders, at the expense of his principles which he held dear to his heart (the bourgeoisie profess principles only to violate them in practice) and at the cost of genuine democratic freedom for the achievement of which he led the Indian people in successive heroic battles. But
that was not his way. That could never have been. He was made of a different metal. His allegiance was for ever to the masses working in the fields and factories. This is no place to recount the occasions when he chose to go his own way leaving the organisational platform of the Congress to other politicians to go their own. The gulf between the leaders of the Congress and Gandhi yawned with the approaching prospect of political transfer of power on the basis of compromise which was to subvert the very foundation of genuine independence for the people. As days passed, Gandhi became thoroughly disillusioned and he expressed his anguish in language that only became of him. It was a tragedy indeed - but history provides such tragedies - that "Gandhi had been defeated by the Congress machine and by the key men in the Government," as Louis Fischer records in his biography. It is not a question of the mere personal tragedy of Gandhi, it is in a sense the tragedy of the Indian Revolution that power came to us in a truncated shape. The task of national liberation movement, it is common knowledge, is to establish a democratic political order and completion of democratic social tasks, not a socialist transformation of social relations and political rule of the toilers organized as a class. But our bourgeois-democratic revolution could not fulfill that historic democratic task - it was a half-baked, truncated revolution, if that appellation be permitted at all. It is not a question of this man's or that man's share of guilt or quota of fault. One must look beyond the surface. It was in the nature of things as they stood. For our independence was not earned - the tall claim of 'peaceful revolution' notwithstanding - it was a case of barter, a case of mutual give-and-take. This was against the very grain of Gandhi's concept. His non-violence was no substitute for surrender to evil - compromise of the fundamental interests of the people means surrender and nothing else - it was as an effective political means - his personal faith apart - that he offered this doctrine to India to emulate. But the official leadership, truly corresponding to the interests of the native bourgeoisie and allied vested interests - the question of personal motive for power of this leader or that leader
might have been the least consideration that weighed with them—failed Gandhi and Indian revolution too.

One may only surmise—it is difficult to substantiate—from his prayer speeches of this period that his mind was moving in the direction of a new venture. He hoped—'a desperate dream', Fischer calls it—44—that 'the goodness of the people of the bottom' would 'assert itself against the mischievous influence' and 'wrong at the top'. He might have felt that the bitter ashes of this independence and people's own real experience would in due course dispel their illusion and they would learn again to stand on their own. He counselled patience to those who wanted him to lead a lonely furrow against the wrong way India was going. 45 It might be anybody's guess that he was biding the proper time and opportunity to prepare the ground for a fresh advance in terms of Satyagraha. 46 It is again a matter of conjecture whether the contemplated Satyagraha would have come round at all for the die was already cast. The thread of history was off his hands. To Gandhi, a practical leader and a man of keen and superb organizational sense that he was, it might have appeared primarily as a problem of organization. We do not undervalue the importance of organization in any way. It is one of the two essential elements of political action. It is the art of revolution. But the science of revolution i.e. the analysis of the process of revolution cannot be ignored. The dilemma that confronted India was in a fundamental sense the problem of looking at and changing history. Gandhi did not approach the problem from this standpoint. True, he wanted to give a new shape to India but lacked the equipment of historical insight which was so very necessary for re-orientation of the course of events.

The post-second world war India, particularly the days during November, 1945 to July, 1946, witnessed the upsurge of the common masses of the people—the students, youth, middle class employees, policemen, air force personnel and the naval ratings. It would seem, therefore, that a situation subsisted which called for vigorous organization and bold leadership with a view to bringing about the
Basic changes. The only historic step that could be considered legitimate from the point of view of the movement of the toiling people was to move ahead for a clean sweep of imperialism and allied vested interests. Unfortunately, however, the leadership was not forthcoming and the organization was not commensurate with the emotional upheaval. Nobody could fail to discern the essential reformist character of the official national leadership which was more than pronounced at this phase of the national movement. Gandhi with all his love for the masses and his supreme concern for the freedom of the common man did not approve of the way these sporadic movements were developing. He could not endorse those actions for his way was different. He was more than loyal to his fundamental ethic of non-violence. It was a matter of his political conviction too. He held that violent battle would not ultimately bring in power to the people. Could he look at history from an analytical, objective point of view, one might hope, the course of Indian revolution would have taken a new turn and contemporary India would have looked different. But that was not to be. He could not place himself in historic perspective. In his sincere eagerness to bring Swaraj for the masses through non-violent means, he could not realize the historical specificity of the situation and the prospect it offered. This explains why he could not actualize the needs of the hour at that period. But it is too tall an order to execute. It is too much to expect from one man who awakened us from our torpor and lethargy, gave us self-confidence and dignity, made us men so to say and sent us to the battle-front to achieve freedom of our country at one historical period would in the same person fulfill the historical need of another age the impact of which was yet to be felt. It might be that out of our affectionate regard for him, we would have liked to see Gandhi as the Generalissimo of the battle for the establishment of socialism. The sentiment is admirable insofar as it expresses our attachment to him. But Gandhi's failure to assign himself that role does not
The limitation of Gandhism should not however be ascribed to the subjective factor alone. The alleged contradictions of Gandhi—his 'immense power for good and shocking limitations'—should have to be viewed from an objective standpoint. The 'contradictions' that one may find in the views of Gandhi reflect the contradictions of his age. Gandhi's thought reflected his vision for the future and his responsiveness to the concrete demands of the people. It mirrored too the complexity of Indian political movement and society at large and the contradictions which were embedded in the process of Indian social development.

We have pointed out Gandhi's limitation not in order to deflate his greatness but only to assess that greatness in objective context. However indifferent he was to the course of social evolution, he was never for a while indifferent to the grinding poverty of the people and the humiliating division among men based on exploitation. For his only concern was to lift the millions of people out of their sub-human level of existence and to make their life human and humane too. His was the ambition to wipe every tear from every eye, as Jawaharlal Nehru so eloquently put it. It was through his tongue that the deeply felt but mute urges and aspirations

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* cf. V. Gordon Childe wrote that the 'greatness' of the great man "will be all the better appreciated the more faithfully the discrepancies between his conscious intuitions and the consequences of his acts, as revealed to historical reflection, are exposed and emphasized." — What Is History? (Henry Schuman, New York, 1953), p. 43.

** See ch. I. for elaboration of this point.
of the people found their expression. He was indeed the speech of the nation.*

Speaking of Gandhi to Havelock Ellis, Olive Schreiner, the gifted novelist said: "Mr. Gandhi spoke as though he were a mere echo; echo of what? Of no recognizable human virtue; it was as though the Collective Unconscious of his country was muttering and mumbling through him. Have you ever known a whole nation to speak at the same time? Mr. Gandhi, I knew, was India and India was Mr. Gandhi. How could I remain deaf to this vastness? The tones, though gentle and caressing, had in them an undercurrent of oceanic thunder." 47

Someone has said of him: "Here is a man who has ceased to be one of us and has become an elemental being, a gust blowing from the earth, a passion enclosed in a wizened body. In him suffering is speaking, centuries of poverty and exploitation have found a voice." 48

This elemental humanism is the positive content of Gandhi's political and social thought which shall endure forever. Because of this essential humanism he kept his faith in Man. "You must not lose faith in humanity," he wrote Amrit Kaur at a period when darkness enveloped the political horizon of India. **

"Of the people are silence. I will be the advocate of this silence. I will speak for the dumb. I will speak of the small to the great and of the feeble to the strong. ... I will speak for all the despairing silent ones. I will interpret this stammering. I will interpret the grumblings, mumurges, the tumults of crowds, the complaints ill-pronounced and all these cries of beasts that through ignorance and through suffering, man is forced to utter. I will be the word of the people. I will say everything." - Victor Hugo, Quoted in Young India, 21-7-21, p.232.

Sometimes, thinking of Gandhi with his loin cloth and his little spinning wheel standing up to the British Empire, and then thinking of the tremendous material and military resources of the empire— one might wonder: 'Isn't he naive—isn't the whole idea naive?'

An American journalist, Frances Gunther has nicely answered this poser:

"Yes, it is naive.

Yet—in politics, as in art, there comes a period when sophistication ties itself up into so many knots and complications and dead-ends—when the forms of culture bear so little relation to the real life of the people—that there is only way out:

One must break the forms. One must go back to the first principles. One must, whether one prefers it or not, become naive, to find the truth again.

That in its essence is perhaps the secret of Gandhi's great power."

His ideas were naive but nevertheless they were tremendously powerful—for such simplicity concealed within itself astuteness.

Gandhi combined in himself a keen sense of astute realism and the essentials of true idealism. Any philosophy of Man derives its inspiration from the idealism. It redeems the world not by separating itself, but by recognizing its worth, loving it all with its imperfections, acknowledging the legitimacy of collective action. It is only by full participation that it becomes possible to purify and uplift by slow degrees our imperfect but not ignoble world. Gandhi recognized this and eagerly participated with all his strength to move this world from imperfection to approach perfection. This thirst for perfection has often led many reviewers to call him a utopian visionary. He was and he was not. He was not a utopian visionary in the sense that he never ignored the concrete and the real. Aldous Huxley called him "a dreamer" who "had his feet firmly planted on the ground." He undertook upon himself the mighty task of re-shaping the reality and adopted such programmes as would enable him to realize that objective. There he was hundred percent a practical
But he dreamt too. He dreamt in terms of transcending the present; he dreamt of a new world where poverty and exploitation would be banished forever — where non-violence i.e. love would govern human life. He dreamt of a society where human individual would be emancipated from the fetters that restrict his flowering into a personality. In that sense he was a utopian. As Ashoka Mehta so aptly puts it: "In him (Gandhi) utopianism is epitomised at its highest and best." 52 This utopianism might present no appeal for us today when our feelings are numbed under the weight of over-practical considerations. But utopianism endures. It is the element of dream or utopia that stirred man into action through the ages and will continue to do so. Viewed from the standpoint of sociology, utopia is the ultimate point of reference which determines what questions shall be posed as to social events. Utopia, Mannheim said, inspires collective activity which aims to change the existing social reality to conform with the goals, which transcend reality. 53 Those Marxists who care less for the essential humanist content of socialism and have become habituated to deriving their political ideas and programmes from a completely amoral, power-oriented outlook about men and events might feel shocked when we say that the ultimate source of inspiration for Marx and Engels was nothing but this element of utopianism in the sense we have explained the term. It is not sufficiently understood that Marx's own thinking was basically humanist. Everything in Marxism — its philosophy, political economy and political theory — is subordinated to its essential humanism. But this is no place for an exposition of scientific humanism as propounded by Marx. It is true that Engels called upon the utopian socialists to abandon the a priori fabrication of ideal societies and to devote their energies instead to precise analyses of current social forces. But the founders of scientific socialism did not ignore the critical element of utopian socialism. This point has been very succinctly summed up in a recent publication of an Austrian Marxist: "Marxism rejects any ideal Utopia with the severity of science; yet Utopia is its golden background." 54 It is the singular privilege of man to conceive dreams. The one common thread that
links all types of humanism is this essential utopianism. Gandhi's humanism contained this utopianism too.

Like critical-Utopians, Gandhi roused our consciousness about the necessity of social change and unlike them, believed in and led political action. His political action waged in one historical context was not in its immediate nature bound for the establishment of socialism. But that does not minimise its creative role. To repeat, the whole process should be viewed in correct historical perspective, as Lenin cautioned.

What is the significance of Gandhi to a socialist humanist? In our opinion, socialists of today have much to imbibe from the essential elements of Gandhism. The socialists should treasure what was most precious in Gandhi's psyche, his deep humanism, his unbounded love for humanity, his readiness to suffer and make supreme sacrifice for the liberation of the people. Secondly, his message of fearlessness and courage is a legacy that will inspire mankind for ever. Thirdly, the Gandhian technique of dealing with large numbers of human beings en masse, his method of evoking self-confidence and a creative response in them, of building up their initiative step by step and then hurling them into action in a disciplined manner at the crucial historical moment is a matter of emulation. An Indian Marxist leader correctly points out that it should be any socialist's endeavour in the phase of struggle against poverty, exploitation and inequality to learn and imbibe as much as may be possible or necessary of that humanism and mass approach which made Gandhi the leader of suffering humanity for all time." 55

This is not a plea for neo-Gandhism. If it is anything, it is a plea for treasuring the inheritance of all that is noble in Gandhi's humanism.

Stefan Zweig in his inimitable style wrote of Tolstoy: "Every statesman, every sociologist will discover prophetic foresight in his fundamental criticism
of our age, every artist must be spurred on by the example of this mighty poet, who tomented his soul, and might battle injustice on earth with the power of his words. It is always an exquisite delight when we can regard a towering artist as a moral example also, as a man who, instead of ruling by his celebrity, makes himself the servant of humanity, and in his struggle for true ethos submits to only one out of all the authorities on earth - his own incorruptible conscience.

This could well be said, with necessary changes, of Gandhi.

Gandhi belonged to mankind. He now belongs to mankind. Not until humanity itself dies will Gandhi die. For his was a voice of eternal revolt against oppression and injustice - the eternal voice of humanism.
NOTES

5. "That 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." - Sir Reginald Coupland, *The Constitutional Problem in India* (3 vols. in one; Oxford University Press, London, New York, 1944), p. 92.
6. "He (Gandhi) was a hyphen connecting the middle classes and the people which transferred energy from each to the other. It was he, and almost he alone, who converted Indian nationalism from a middle class movement to a mass emotion embracing all classes." - Percival Spear, *India - A Modern History* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1961), p. 359.


23. "All the ideas which Gandhi made the basis of his political system are rooted in his humanity, which is so deeply bound up with the misery of his people, and in his own heart-breaking experiences." - Rene Fulop-Miller, Gandhi The Holy
"His (Gandhi's) humanity is one of the profoundest things that history has seen. He has pity and love for every race, and most of all for the poor and the oppressed." - Edward Thompson, 'Gandhi: A Character Study' in Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections (ed: S. Radhakrishnan, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, Calcutta etc., 1956), p. 268.

"In a sense Mr. Gandhi was the vicarious conscience of earth's dumb, depressed millions." - G. Stephens Spinks, 'Politics and Morality' in Gandhi Memorial Peace Number, The Viswa-Bharati Quarterly (ed: Kshritis Roy, Santiniketan, 1949), p. 209.

Recalling his conversation with Gandhi during Round Table Conference (1931) the Rt. Hon. Viscount Sankey observes that Gandhi's concern for the poor prevailed throughout the talk. - See Essays, op. cit., p. 241.

"What he was concerned with was the human problem of how the Indian poor lived." - The Rt. Hon. Lord Halifax in Essays, op. cit., p. 355.

Gandhi was asked whether his service was done through love of the cause for which he worked, or for love of the people whom he served. He replied unhesitatingly that his motive was love of the people. - John S. Hoyland in Essays, op. cit., p. 122.

25. Young India, 10-3-20, p. 5.


29. Harijan, 28-7-46, p. 236.

30. Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence (Oxford University Press, Bombay

32. Joan V. Bondurant, op. cit, pp. 31-32.

33. Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri, The CALL, op. cit., p. 20; also in GANDHI MARG, op. cit., p. 183.

34. Jawaharlal Nehru in The Discovery of India noted that Gandhi did not possess any feeling for history and historical sense. - see Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi (Signet Press, Calcutta, 1949), p. 134.

35. In Jawaharlal's Autobiography we read: "He (Gandhi) came to represent India to an amazing degree and to express the very spirit of that ancient and tortured land. Almost he was India, and his very failings were Indian failings." - Nehru, op. cit., p. 118.


55. Tridib Kumar Ghoshdari, The CALL, op. cit., p. 20; also in GANDHI JARG CP. CIT., p. 184.