GANDHI has become a part of our national being. We respond to his name, achievements and memory emotionally. It may be explained in terms of his too closeness to us, both in respect of time and space. Too much of proximity usually stands in the way of an objective appreciation which demands an intellectual-analytical approach. Emotion is not intelligence. Enthusiasm is not understanding. Emotion is helpful and good in its own sphere. But when it overpowers our intellect we lose our perspective and fall victims to a sort of optical illusion. We get ourselves bogged in utter confusion. Emotion divorced from and unrestrained by intellect degenerates and issues in blind adoration, dogmatism and fanaticism. Bhakti is not a sure guide for comprehension, it is vichara that helps us to understand and comprehend. One may recall here the wise words of the Yogavasistha Ramayana.

"This human life is for the attainment of knowledge. And if a man always analyses the root cause of everything (vichara), his sorrows will become less and less. Remember this and with determination always analyse the root of everything. Never neglect the intellectual approach (vichara), never minimise its value." (Mumukshu-Vyavahara-prakarana, 12/12).

"This constant aid in the shape of vichara is an unequalled remedy for the sorrows of life." (Ibid, 14/2).

"Rama! it is better to be a worm inhabiting a dung-heap, or a serpent confined to the mountain cave, than to lose one's analytical insight in life. Its loss is the root of all unhappiness. The sages have deprecated its loss, and you should never lose your vichara in life." (Ibid, 14/46-7).

"For one who is fallen into the dark abyss of ignorance, there is no means of rescue except vichara, the analytical-intellectual approach." (Ibid, 14/48).

*Gandhi wrote: "Blind adoration, in the age of action is perfectly valueless, is often embarrassing and equally often painful."

- Young India, 12,6,24, p.197.
The utter cynical and contemptuous disregard for Gandhi and his philosophy, on the other hand, is equally emotional. The fount is the same. It is not intellect but emotion that rules such judgment or rather the lack of it. Both the extreme points of view - gushing adoration and angry condemnation - though apparently opposed to each other have a common bond of kinship in their allegiance to emotion as the determinant of their valuation. Anti-intellectual approach unites the two extremes. But judgment presupposes analysis, i.e. vichara or an intellectual approach. The plea for an intellectual approach to understand Gandhi and his philosophy might evoke sceptic deviation. But to move away from following this approach would be inexcusable. The job is indeed difficult but it is nevertheless rewarding.

Gandhi has been universally acclaimed to be a great man. No account can be adequate of the greatness of a great man. But it is in the nature of man to measure and evaluate. Paying homage to the great man is one thing; assessing his greatness is another. Admiration of the great man is doubly admirable if that follows an objective appraisal.

What does greatness mean in history? What is the role of the great man? The concept great is a relative concept. In the ethical sense every man is great who to use the Biblical phrase "lays down his life for his friend." But to be more specific. The great man is an individual, and being an outstanding individual, the famous British historian E. H. Carr reminds us, is also a social phenomenon of outstanding importance. The greatness of the great man cannot be abstracted from society and history. But one need not, we think, as Tolstoy did, decry great men as no more than 'labels giving names to events'. At the same time we do not subscribe to the view which places great men outside history and sees them as imposing themselves on history in virtue of their greatness, as "Jack-in-the boxes who emerge miraculously from the unknown to interrupt the real continuity of history." Hegel's classic description of the great man sums up the true significance of greatness. To quote him:
"The great man of the age is the one who can put into words the will of his age, tell his age what its will is, and accomplish it. What he does is the heart and essence of his age; he actualizes his age." 5

Every social epoch, Marx wrote endorsing Helvetius, needs its great men, and when it does not find them it invents them. 6 George Flekhanov in his The Role of The Individual In History developed the Marxian idea and ably demonstrated that great men being products of history also act as the agents of history. 7 The very meaning of "greatness" more particularly in social and political matters is not something fixed but is historically conditioned. As has been said: "Each society not only has its own economic organization, its own law of population and its own art-styles; it has its own criterion of greatness. ... In politics and religion the "great man" is the man who can get himself believed in. To get people to believe in him, he must in some way gratify or fulfill their need." 8

* See Ch. V., pp. 152-53 for Flekhanov's elaboration of Marxian view on this point.

** Of. Dr. Leavis means something like the Hegelian description of greatness when he says that great writers are "significant in terms of the human awareness they promote." - F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (Chatto & Windus, London, 1950), p. 2.

Speaking of the role of the great men in Science, Prof. J. D. Bernal says: "The hold of the "great men" myth on the history of science has indeed lasted far longer than in social and political history. ... No great men have had decisive effects on the progress of science, but their achievement cannot be studied in isolation from their social environment. ... The fact that they are men of their time, subject to the same formative influences and suffering the same social compulsions as other men, only enhances their importance." - Science in History. (Watts, London, 1957), pp. 21-22.
Our reference to greatness as being historically conditioned should not be construed to mean that we believe in History with a capital H. We have no belief in Divine Providence, World Spirit, Manifest Destiny, History with a capital H, or any other of the abstractions which have sometimes been supposed to guide the course of events. We share the view of Marx: "History does nothing, it possesses no immense wealth, fights no battles. It is rather man, real living man who does everything, who possesses and fights." It is the conscious intervention of thousands and millions of men that re-orient the course of history. Man makes himself and creates history.

An outstanding individual lays his claim to greatness when he being at once the child of his age becomes the creator of social forces which change the shape of the world and the thoughts of men. It is the great man who unleashes the latent historical forces. Its impact is tremendous, nay inconceivable. As one reviewer of history has correctly stated: "Historical forces can be more explosive than atom bombs." 9

The people of India believed in Gandhi. He could get himself believed in for he fulfilled the historical need. The great Gandhi could realize the historical necessity of the hour and actualized the need of the age. It was he alone who could respond to the challenge of the given historical period. It was he who released the latent energy of the millions of people - the creative force of history. That made him one of the greatest leaders of mankind and undoubtedly the greatest of our country. It has sometimes been suggested that he was more of a prophet of spirit and "the prophets of spirit make history just by standing outside history" 10 or that Gandhi "had his roots outside time, and drew thence." 11 We fail to persuade ourselves to subscribe to this view. No great man can stand outside history. The fact that they are rooted in history only enhances their greatness. This was particularly true of Gandhi. We do not dispute that Gandhi was a spiritual man, a Mahatma or Great Soul. 12 But Gandhi would
not have been the same Gandhi if he were only a spiritual man. Carl Health correctly notes: "If he is a Mahatma or Great Soul, he is also a man of the people amongst the people." He was a prophet indeed - but a prophet of a new type - a prophet of national, economic and social emancipation. The people need prophets. They are needed in the normal functioning of a democratic society. They are needed especially in the periods of crisis and basic renewal of society. The primary work of the prophet or the inspired servant of the people, Jacques Maritain, the Catholic philosopher, reminds us, "is to awaken the people, to awaken them to something better than everyone's daily business, to the sense of a supra-individual task to be performed." Gandhi fulfilled this criterion of a prophet and he could only do that as he felt instinctively, so to say, the needs of the hour. The elemental insight that he possessed enabled him to feel that way.

Romain Rolland said of him: "For if there is such a thing as genius, great by its own strength whether or not it corresponds to the ideals of its surroundings, there can be no genius of action, no leader, who does not incarnate the instincts of his race, satisfy the need of the hour, and requite the yearning of the world. Mahatma Gandhi does all this." It was because Gandhi could realize the historical necessity and evolve a technique which could rouse the masses into action that he earned the supreme leadership of the nation. The message that he gave or the philosophy that he preached and practised reflect in a measure the social reality of the period - his ideas seized the times - and at the same time embody the impulse and contain the urge for transcending the given reality. Every great man, though being historically conditioned, always give a new lift to history. Gandhi was one of those great men who being bound by history gave a new direction to the course of history. Therein lies his true significance. Gandhi and his philosophy should have to be viewed from that perspective.

A few more brief introductory remarks have to be made before we start our
discussion. Gandhi did not systematize his thought. It was not in his nature. He did not assign himself the task of setting up an intellectual and academic discipline. He was not a theorist; he was primarily an actionist or a Karma-Yogi. "I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain." 16 For him, the means to knowledge was not contemplation but action. He himself said: "There is no such thing as 'Gandhism', and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems...."

Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it "Gandhism"; there is no "ism" about it." 17 This natural disinclination or aversion for founding any 'ism' and sect helped him to grow to be a continuously evolving personality.

Gandhi did not consider political philosophy as a distinct, autonomous intellectual system separated from ethics, economics, sociology etc. He viewed life in its totality. He looked at life en face, not in profile. So for Gandhi there was no line of demarcation between economics and ethics, ethics and politics, politics and economics etc. This might have been due to the influence of Indian philosophical tradition. Every problem is discussed by the Indian philosopher from all possible approaches - metaphysical, ethical, logical etc. This tendency has been called by some thinkers, like Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal the synthetic outlook of Indian philosophy. 18

Any study of political philosophy should start with defining its scope. The first task would be to sort out the elements that constitute political philosophy. Prof. C. Wright Mills suggested that:

First of all, a political philosophy is itself a social reality; it is an ideology in terms of which certain institutions and practices are justified and others attacked; it provides the phrases in which demands are raised, criticisms made, exhortations delivered, proclamations formulated, and at times, policies determined.
Second, it is an ethic, an articulation of ideals which on various levels of generality and sophistication is used in judging men, events and movements, and as goals and guidelines for aspirations and policies.

Third, a political philosophy designates agencies of action, of the means of reform, revolution or conservation. It contains strategies and programmes that embody both ends and means. It designates, in short, the historical levers by which ideals are to be won or maintained after they have been won.

Fourth, it contains theories of man, society and history, or at least assumptions about how society is made up and how it works; about what are held to be its most important elements and how these elements are typically related; its major points of conflict and how these conflicts are resolved. It suggests the methods of study appropriate to its theories. From these theories and with these methods, expectations are derived.

To examine any political philosophy, then, we must examine it as an ideology, a statement of ideals, a designation of agency or agencies, and as a set of social theories. 19

Gandhi's political philosophy contains in a way this miscellany of elements. Any study undertaken for the purpose of systematizing and giving a theoretical construction of his speeches and writings shall have at first to find out the nature of his political philosophy. The rough social and political theory that he evolved can be traced back to his basic humanistic outlook. He talked often in terms of god, spirit, soul etc., but in its inspiration the secular consideration played the key role. For him though there was no antithesis between spiritual and worldly matters. He had certain fundamental beliefs from which he never budged an inch. * The basic moorings of his overall world outlook is, however, to

* "There are eternal principles which admit of no compromise, and one must be prepared to lay down one's life in the practice of them." - Harijan, 5-9-36, p. 238.
be found in philosophical idealism. But in social and political matters he did not start from a priori considerations, but looked at the world empirically. An experimenter with Truth that he was, it was logical on his part to develop this empiric attitude regarding practical affairs. This might have been due to the influence of his contact with the Englishmen during his student days and afterwards. Empirical outlook is said to be one of the characteristic features of the Englishmen. We are not sure whether Gandhi imbibed this trait consciously. It is quite likely that he did not emulate this outlook from the English source consciously. But that does not invalidate the hypothesis. The lack of an adequate intellectual system is in certain sense a defect. But from the point of view of immediate effectiveness at least, his lack of a formulated system was evidently an advantage. His greatest merit as a thinker, Spratt says, was his eclecticism. 20 Gandhi concerned himself mainly with prescribing practical cures for the evils of the world and as such he had necessarily to be pragmatic in his approach. Gandhi being a most modern type of mass leader had to move millions of men. As practical idealist that he was, he undertook upon himself the responsibility of translating his life-philosophy into action. As a practical man, he was concerned with taking care of the present. 21 One step was enough for him. He wrote: "I know only the moment's duty." 22 This pragmatic approach characterizes his political philosophy. ** There are

** cf. "The Hindus were the first pragmatists; we at the other end of the world have at last rounded to their original insight, though only in respect of everyday things."- W. Llmon Henry Sheldon, 'Contrast between East and West' in Essays in East-West Philosophy (ed. Charles A. Moore, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1951), p. 294.
commentators of Gandhi's philosophy who find in him a spiritual leader above everything else and those who ignore the historical significance of Gandhi do not share this view. But any analysis which takes into account the role of Gandhi in its totality, can never brush aside his incomparable political realistic acumen. This sense of native realism was reflected in his pragmatic approach. He had no inclination for determining the distant goal by definitions but by action. As he himself wrote: "I have purposely refrained from dealing with the nature of Government in a society based on non-violence ... when society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today. But I cannot say in advance what the Government based wholly on non-violence will be like." 23

The compulsion of practical politics makes a mass leader pragmatic. For a mass leader has to move about in the essentially pragmatic world. Gandhi's credit was that his pragmatism did not degenerate into opportunism as has been usually the case with other lesser men. He was not that of a pragmatist to deviate from his basic principles of Truth and Non-violence.

The essential characteristic of Gandhi's personality and of his life was its continuous growth and evolution. He always felt that he was experimenting with Truth. The title of his autobiography is significant. Louis Fischer says of Gandhi: "He allowed truth to lead him without a map. If it took him to an area where he had to discard some intellectual baggage or walk alone without past associates, he went. He never impeded his mind with STOP signs." 24 Acharya Kripalani correctly notes that generally Gandhi tried to solve problems as they arose, in consonance with his basic principles of morality, the genius of his people, their historical background and the existing circumstances of the country.25

political philosophy being grounded on certain basic principles evolved and out of practice. This growth and evolution of his dynamic personality has he did misunderstood. It has been alleged that he was inconsistent. True, that

r to be consistent. He wrote:
"I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my pursuit after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop with the dissolution of the flesh." 26

"I have never made a fetish of consistency. I am a votary of Truth and I must say what I feel and think at a given moment on the question, without regard to what I may have said before on it. ... As my vision gets clearer, my views must grow clearer with daily practice. Where I have deliberately altered an opinion, the change should be obvious. Only a careful eye would notice a gradual and imperceptible evolution." 27

Speaking of his growing experiences he wrote:

"At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth. I have saved my memory an undue strain; and what is more, whenever I have been obliged to compare my writing even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency will do well to take the meaning that my latest writing may yield unless, of course, they prefer the old. But before making the choice they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies." 28

Gandhi explained why he had to change his view. He modified his views as the circumstances demanded. To quote him:

"People say that I have changed my view, that I say today something different from what I said years ago. The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same. My words and deeds are dictated by prevailing conditions. There has been a gradual evolution in my environment and I react to it as a Satyagrahi." 29
This evolutionary character is best manifest in Satyagraha which Gandhi called "a science in the making." 30

This study does not pretend to be a comprehensive review of the evolution of the unique personality of Gandhi nor of his leadership pattern; it does not deal with exhaustiveness of all aspects of the Gandhian theory and technique of action. We do not propose to evaluate his role in Indian politics in this study. It may be found necessary to refer to some of the political events only to place his ideas in their background. It will primarily concern itself with tracing the evolution of his theoretical concepts. The limitation is obvious. But however limited be the scope of the present study, it will fail in its task if it does not take into account the life philosophy of Gandhi. This awareness impels us to discuss, though not in much detail, his metaphysical outlook, ethical principles, sociological views, concept of human nature, philosophy of history, the basic theoretical precepts of the technique of Satyagraha, economic thought, etc. It is only in the background of these concepts that his political theory can be properly viewed and appreciated.

The social and political philosophy of Gandhi passed through two broad phases of development, one extending about 1904 to 1920 and another covering the subsequent period. But this is just a broad division; it should not be taken too rigidly.

As has been suggested by Prof. Nilimal Kumar Bose in Studies in Gandhism, 31 we have tried to arrange as far as possible Gandhi's utterances and writings in chronological order the purpose being to understand each in relation to the circumstances under which it was written. This we have felt to be the only way to view the evolution of Gandhi's political and social philosophy in its proper context. This method enables one to find out how his ideas and opinions have changed in course of time, when they have changed at all. It would be well to recognise the fact that the process of evolution that Gandhi underwent was in
conformity with his growing experiences as well as changes in objective reality. The evolution of the political philosophy of Gandhi can only be appreciated if we attempt to view this development both from within and from without. His political philosophy, therefore, has to be understood in the background of his mental development as well as in the context of objective situation. One must view the process with the aid of a psychograph as well as a sociograph.

By the term psychograph is meant a statement of the inner processes of thinking, evaluation and acting; while the term sociograph stands for the matrix of the social situation which defines the possibilities and limits of one's actions. The relation that exists between mind and external circumstances is that of interaction. Ideas once formed exert tremendous force on the externals. One should not neglect the process of ideation. It would be a false pretense of objectivity if one neglects the inner view of things. This general statement is more particularly true in the case of Gandhi who laid much store on the creative function of the mind. As we pursue our study, sometimes we may even find that only the connotation of certain terms changed for him, while his fundamental opinions remained unaltered in their essence.

Another point. Gandhi's political philosophy, like any other political philosophy, at once provides specific answers for specific situations and contains general principles of an enduring nature. One must try to be careful enough to distinguish between these elements so that there is no distortion in a balanced evaluation of their relative importance.

We have drawn heavily upon Gandhi's writings for we have felt that understanding becomes easier if one cares to refer to his utterances and writings in their original. Moreover there is a pronounced tendency to cull out some isolated passages - there is enough scope of it - to support one's own view of Gandhi. The motive has not always been free from bias or prejudice. We have tried - we are not, however, sure of our success - to avoid the easy temptation of arbitrarily selecting some.
passages to fit Gandhi into an image after our own heart. But this should not be
construed to mean that we have suspended our evaluation of his ideas in course
of our analysis. Analytical-intellectual approach does not rule out but, on the
other hand, demands such evaluation.

We have also taken into account the interpretations that have been given at
various periods by different scholars and commentators. As the following pages
will show, we have sometimes too readily agreed and sometimes sharply differed
from these reviewers. But all the same we have recognised the justification for
referring to these sources in order to make this study free from subjective
bias.
NOTES


12. For a philosophic explanation of the term 'Mahatma' see Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India (Tr: Joseph Campbell, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1951), Sec. on 'Philosophy as Power', p. 66.


The statement was made by Gandhi in Feb.-March, 1936 at the Gandhi Seva Sangh session at Saoli. Some writers point out that Gandhi held a different opinion earlier. As a support of their contention they quote Gandhi's statement in Karachi Congress, 1931: "they might kill me but they cannot kill Gandhism. If truth can be killed, Gandhism can be killed." But that is not an objective presentation of facts. In the said statement he also said: "For what is Gandhism but winning Swaraj by means of truth and non-violence?" Gandhism in this context is meant to be an expression which, succinctly but comprehensively, summarizes the philosophy that underlies his doctrine of Truth and Non-violence. He did not mean it as a system of philosophy nor as a rigid dogma. This finds confirmation in the following:

"Let Gandhism be destroyed if it stands for error. Truth and ahimsa will never be destroyed, but if Gandhism is another name for sectarianism, it deserves to be destroyed." - Harijan, 2-3-40, p. 23.

The passage quoted above was an observation that Gandhi made in his speech on the third day at a seven-day session of the Gandhi Seva Sangh at Malikanda, East Bengal which commenced on February 20, 1940. See D. G. Tendulkar, Mahatma (The Publications Division, GOI, 1962), vol. V, p. 245.

16. Harijan, 3-3-46, p. 28.
17. Harijan, 28-3-36; D. G. Tendulkar, Mahatma (The Publications Division, GOI, 1961), vol. IV, pp. 54-55.
18. S. C. Chatterjee and D. M. Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy (University of Calcutta, 1939), p. 3.
21. Young India, 26-12-24, p. 427.


25. J. B. Kripalani, Gandhian Thought (Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, New Delhi, Orient Longmans Ltd., Bombay, Calcutta etc., 1961), p. VIII.

26. Harijan, 26-4-33, p. 2.

27. Harijan, 28-9-34, p. 250.


30. Harijan, 24-9-38, p. 266.
