III
METAPHYSICAL OUTLOOK

Philosophy is a necessity for all. As Aldous Huxley put it: "Men live in accordance with their philosophy of life, their conception of the world. This is true even of the most thoughtless. It is impossible to live without a metaphysic. The choice that is given us is not between some kind of metaphysic and no metaphysic; it is always between a good metaphysic and a bad metaphysic." 1

Some political theorists, Arnold Brecht, for instance, hold the view that belief in the existence of a supreme being who created and plans the universe is a distinctly relevant factor for the study of the state, independent of the fact that such a deity's existence or non-existence is not demonstrable by modern science. The relevance of such theism is found in its influence on political ideas, institutions, motivations. 2

In order to make a proper evaluation of the political philosophy of Gandhi the wider philosophy of life of Gandhi should be considered. That makes a demand upon us for a brief survey of his metaphysical views.

Any student of Gandhi's writings is well aware of the fact that his writings deal simultaneously with the most immediate tactical and political considerations, and with the broadest historical and philosophical generalizations. 3 And it was quite in the nature of things. For his basic concepts were formulated not in ivory tower in philosophical detachment but those ideas were the direct result of confrontation with real life, life presenting itself in diverse and varied forms. Speculative metaphysics was not his specialized discipline. Mere knowledge or wisdom about reality devoid of any practical applicability to life had no appeal for him. To quote Gandhi:

"Philosophy without life corresponding is like a body without life... I know that in this land of ours we have enough philosophy but little life. But I know also that the laws governing the conduct of man have still to be explored and the condition of exploration is imperative and unalterable." 4

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1 cf: "We have no choice whether we shall form metaphysical hypotheses or not, only the choice whether we shall do so consciously and in accord with some intelligible principle or unconsciously and at random." - A. E. Taylor.
Dr. P. T. Raju correctly observes:

"In him does the statement that the Indian philosophy is a way of life first and a way of thought next find a worthy illustration. ... Mahatma Gandhi infused life into some of them (Indian philosophical concepts) by coming across them in the very course of his life, which is a struggle for the discovery of truth. The results of his struggle, the conclusions of his life, are not the results of an 'ideal experiment' as Bradley would call it, in which theory is compared to theory, and concept with concept, but the results of actual experiment on his own life." 5

For Gandhi, the divine is not to be found in detachment from the common life, but in discovering in the concrete demands of each particular situation the best way in which to serve humanity. 6 It was, as it were, Gandhi re-echoed William Blake: Religion is politics and politics is brotherhood. To Gandhi, politics and religion are not antithetical. * In this connection it should be noted that he has a far broader, or perhaps higher, conception of his task than the English word politics suggests." 7

Gandhi was not concerned so much with philosophical subtleties. He was a new type of philosopher, one whose feet were on the ground. He was more concerned with leading good life as was the case with Buddha. 8 Like Buddha, 9 Gandhi was primarily an ethical teacher, not a philosopher. But the comparison should not be stretched too far for Buddha was an atheist 10 while Gandhi was a theist. 11

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At the outset, it may be pointed out that "Gandhi professes strict adherence to none of the traditional philosophical schools." This would be evident from his views on God, Reality, etc. Notwithstanding that fact, Gandhi hugged certain metaphysical notions. Albert Schweitzer in his discussion on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi says: "Great as is his interest in reality, world and life negation nevertheless plays a part in his mode of thought."

He was not a rationalist in the accepted sense of the term. Critical enquiry was not his path. Gandhi's frequent use of the idea: "Ultimately we are guided not so much by the intellect as by the heart." or "Faith transcends reason" may lead one to this conclusion. To be more objective, it did not occur to him nor did he find it of any use in his Experiments with Truth to apply the method of criticism of religion. It was not possible for him, as was his mental make-up and his general intellectual development, to persuade himself to agree with the view that "Religion evolves with the evolution of society. The institutions of religion, therefore, correspond to the state of development or degeneration of a given society."

Gandhi was basically committed to the metaphysical idealist way of thinking though he was not a metaphysician in the strict sense of the term. The influence of metaphysical idealism is evident in his writings.

The Basis of His Philosophy

"Gandhiji starts from his Hindu religion; and the metaphysical solutions of eternal problems from a Hindu angle of vision form the bases of his philosophy. He has not sought to answer or solve the problems from an independent perspective of experience or reason. Rather the Hindu scriptures have created in him settled notions about reality. In this connexion it must be admitted that he did not accept the Hindu scriptures in toto ... . In this respect he is both an orthodox and an heterodox." 17

Before proceeding to discuss his views on God, Reality and Truth it would be worthwhile to trace the evolution of his faith in God.
Evolution of His faith

Was Gandhi a Theist from his early days or had he arrived at Theism via Atheism? Mr. Vincent Sheean, observes:

"He was, in fact, inclined toward atheism during these years (thirteen to seventeen, or so) and found little to answer his doubts in such Hindu scriptures as came his way". 18

D. G. Tendulkar is more positive. In his account, we read:

"A wave of reform was sweeping over Rajkot and Mohandas went through a short spell of religious crisis. He broke one Hindu custom after another. He became an atheist." 19 This was while Gandhi was in the fourth standard.

P. Spratt observes:

"Though taken to the temple in youth however, he felt no devotion, and at about fifteen he experienced doubt." 20

Louis Fischer is quite emphatic on this point. He says:

"Lest he give pain to his father, and especially his mother, Mohandas did not tell them that he absented himself from the temple. He did not like the 'glitter and pomps' of the Hindu temples. Religion to him meant irksome restrictions like vegetarianism which intensified his youthful protest against society and authority. And he had no 'living faith in God'. Who made the world, who directed it, he asked. Elders could not answer, and the sacred books were so unsatisfactory on such matters that he inclined somewhat towards atheism'." 21

After quoting from Gandhi himself to establish his 'inclination towards atheism' Fischer states:

"Gandhi's anti-religious sentiments quickened his interest in religion and he listened attentively to his father's frequent discussions with Moslem and Parsi friends on the differences between their faiths and Hinduism." 22
Fischer has adduced evidence in support of his contention at least in two other places in his biography. He has not, however, traced the evolution of Gandhi from his being an atheist to a theist. That Gandhi was a firm believer in God during the rest of his life, Fischer admits. To quote him again:

"Gandhi refused to join Britain's new Theosophist movement, but he rejoiced in Mrs. Besant's renunciation of godlessness. He himself had already traversed 'the Sahara of atheism' and emerged from it thirsty for religion. In this state he returned to India in the summer of 1891."

Elsewhere he comments:

"Except as a youth, Gandhi never doubted the existence of God as Jains and Buddhists may."

Fischer quotes a number of statements from Gandhi in his book which establish Gandhi's position as a theist and a confirmed believer in God. It may be noted that Mr. Fischer's "chief source of information on Gandhi's early life is his Autobiography". In Gandhi's Autobiography we read:

"But the fact that I had learnt to be tolerant to other religions did not mean that I had any living faith in God. I happened, about this time, to come across Manusmriti which was amongst my father's collection. The story of the creation and similar things in it did not impress me very much, but on the contrary made me incline somewhat towards atheism."

V. V. Ramana Murthy contends the construction of Fischer. He observes:

"It is clear that when Gandhi happened to read Manusmriti, he was inclined to rebel and reject in part the faith of his fathers. It was to this reading (as the last sentence in the above paragraph shows) that Gandhi attributed the inclination towards atheism. No trend towards atheism is mentioned anywhere else by Gandhi. And Fischer's construction on the phrase that Gandhi did
not "have any living faith in God" reads so much into it as to distort its real meaning. The passage from the Autobiography on which Fischer relies does not support the suggestion that Gandhi passed through a spiritual crisis in his adolescence (a common enough experience in the Western Christian world and not so common in India where social tradition leaves little room for individual reflection) and was inclined to deny God for sometime.

"It is far more reasonable to conclude that Gandhi's religious faith at that time, as he looked back on it, was not an enlightened one. Gandhi as a boy was sensitive to the religious atmosphere of his home and his class and he responded to the environment sympathetically. But he had not attained a conscious understanding of religious truths. When he began reading he could have found some passages of Manu distasteful and might have felt drawn towards atheism momentarily by reading some passage. Doubt or despair of this kind cannot constitute back-sitting and the sentence from Gandhi does not support such an interpretation.

"Mr. Fischer's words that "Gandhi's anti-religious sentiments quickened his interest in religion" might apply to an agnostic or an atheist, but Gandhi was neither. He was a man of inform faith and he seems to have come by his opinions and beliefs first by docile acceptance of the practices at home, then by some early and some later reading, and mostly by absorption from the teachings of saintly men of all faiths. It was a gradual and quite steady evolution of the philosophy of Ahimsa .... Gandhi's urge for the religious life was innate in him and many factors strengthened it." 26

Gora's presentation of 'Gandhi's God' deserves our attention in this connection.
His primary concern was humanity. On account of this deep concern, he could proclaim boldly: "I can neither say my theism is right, nor atheism is wrong." * ... he was pre-eminently a practical man ... Practice was his test of fitness ... he found belief in god of the 'Raghupati Raghava' type widespread when he took up the cause of Indian Independence. He allowed the belief which he too shared in his own way, to continue as long as it did not impede the Indian Independence Movement. " Further, to establish his thesis, Gora says:

"He even invoked the blessings of god in the Congress pledge. But when it was objected to, he readily admitted: "So far as the conscientious objection is concerned, the mention of God may be removed if required from the Congress pledge of which I am proud to think I was the author. Had such an objection been raised at the time, I would have yielded at once." (Young India, 5-3-25). **

"To quote another instance: In 1946, the Indian National Congress was still in the wilderness. Gandhiji suggested a form of pledge suitable for the Independence Day (January 26) of that year. In this form also there was a reference to god. In a conversation I drew the attention of Shri Prabhakar to it and pointed out that though I liked to take that pledge, I could not do it in full on account of the reference to god in it. Sri Prabhakar took the matter to the notice of

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* Gandhiji in course of a conversation with Gora on 30 March, 1945.
** But in the same issue, Gandhi writes: "One may banish the word 'God' from the Congress but one has no power to banish the Thing itself. What is a solemn affirmation, if it is not the same thing as in the name of God? And surely conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called God." (VI, 5-3-25, p. 81.)
Bapuji and he wrote to him in reply: "I seek for the fulfilment of my pledge, the assistance of that which we may or may not call divine but we all feel within us. He (referring to me) can have the above as an alternative. All true atheists know that there is some power within them."

To press his point further, Gora observes:

"Apart from the consideration whether the alternative which was offered by Gandhiji to the Congress pledge was theistic or atheistic in nature, it is noteworthy that he moved from 'God' to 'some power which we may or may not call divine' in order to accommodate me. So, I think, what was important to him was not so much the concept of god, but how far the belief or non-belief in god contributed to the commonweal."

And further:

"It was, perhaps, with this view that he agreed to drop the mention of god from the form of my daughter's marriage; he allowed my son-in-law to sit at the prayers without reciting the verses; he called himself a super-atheist and he wished the communities to atheism if that served to stop communal hatred and riot." **

As for the evolution of Gandhi's view on atheism Gora feels:

"There was visible change in his attitude towards atheism between 1941 and 1948. In his letter to me dated 11-9-41, he said, "Atheism is a denial of self. No one has succeeded in its propagation." But by 1946, while stating emphatically the difference between him and me, he was willing to leave to the future to judge whether the theistic

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** During a serious outbreak of communal rioting in Bombay, Gandhi exclaimed that it was better that man should cease to believe in God than forget to live in peace and fellowship with his neighbour.
or the atheistic thought was better. In 1948, he agreed to perform the marriage of my daughter dropping out the reference to God from the form of the ceremony."

And the atheist assures himself by saying:

"If he felt that the progress of humanity required leaving God altogether, I am sure, he was not the man to hesitate."

Whether one agrees or not with Gandhi's philosophy, it has been admitted by all that he was essentially a practical man and therein lay his genius. An essential practical bent of mind and 'practical concern for humanity' do not necessarily exclude one's unshakable faith in God. Whether that type of humanitarianism gets the sanction of a rationalist or an atheist is beside the point, Gora, an honest and zealous atheist, in his admiration for Gandhi, it seems, tries to conform the Gandhi-image to a definite pattern i.e. to his atheism. This is an entirely subjectivist approach. The incidents referred to above by Gora, on close scrutiny, will reveal the essential fact that as for himself, Gandhi did not move an inch from his faith. In a letter to Gora dated 9. 4. 46, Gandhi asserted:

"For you consciously ignore God. Equally consciously, probably more progressively (emphasis added), I rely upon God."

The concessions made by Gandhi, in our opinion, do not signify any transformation of his faith for to Gandhi, God is even the atheism of the atheist. The concessions do not indicate any "visible change in his attitude towards atheism" but they speak for Gandhi's catholic outlook which is a characteristic-mark of his personality. From all available accounts of his life, sympathetic and hostile, we gather that he respected the beliefs and cultures of other, and thereby teaching others to respect and foster real freedom of thought.

An objective reading of Gandhi's Autobiography and other relevant accounts would suggest that at an early age he experienced doubts (Gandhi's own words quoted)

* Gandhi's respect for the noted atheist Bradlaugh may be recalled.
But the account of inclination 'somewhat towards atheism' is overscoring the point. It was not possible for an average boy (Gandhi was quite average at that age) to arrive at atheism intellectually. It might be presumed that atheism, as philosophically understood, was unknown to him at that period of his life. Gandhi, it seems, used the term 'atheism' rather loosely in Autobiography. To trace the evolution: during his stay in London, his religious doubts were finally removed by reading, discussion and experience. The next phase marked a definite advance in his religious consciousness. His interest in religion, hitherto not very pronounced, became acute. This was during his first year of stay in South Africa. And that interest never flagged during the rest of his long and eventful career.

It may be noted in this connection that even at the early age when he felt inclined 'somewhat towards atheism' he developed "the conviction that morality is the basis of things, and that truth is the substance of all morality." Truth to him was sovereign and this life-long adherence and devotion to truth could lead him to say 'Truth is God' instead of 'God is Truth' the significance of which we shall discuss later in detail.

** Ibid, ch. on Christian Contacts.

Gandhi put Raychandbhai some questions of a religious character (viz., What is the soul? What is God? What is moksha etc) in a letter written from Pretoria prior to June 1894. The original letter could not be traced. The questions asked have, therefore, been extracted from Raychandbhai's reply published in Shrimad Rajachandra, a Gujarati book edited by his brother, Sri Mansukhlal R. Mehta. See The Collected Works of Mahatma, (The Publications Division, GOI) vol.1, pp 90-91.

The effect of Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is within you" on
Concept of Reality

Gandhi started with the conception of an omnipresent fundamental spiritual reality which could be *Sachchidananda* or Brahman or Rama or simply Truth.

Explaining Gandhi's concept of *Sachchidananda*, Dr. Viswanath Prasad Vaman observes:

"Gandhi conceived of Sat or Truth not only as an ethical category but as an ontological being of the highest realm. Truth is not merely a value or ideal but is the highest concrete reality. God as Truth is the eternally perfect consciousness. This truth according to Gandhi is not only the supreme existence but also the Chit or the highest gnosis and consciousness because there can be no knowledge apart from truth. It is clear that truth as an ontological absolute is not the personal God of the theistic religions but nevertheless as a great Vaishnava devotee Gandhi always engaged in prayers to God every morning and evening."

This faith in the omnipresence of God he inherited from his family and more particularly from his devout mother; the study of the writings of Tolstoy and the Gita and his exchange of spiritual ideas with Raychandbhai deepened and strengthened this faith.

Concept of God

To Gandhi, God is both immanent and transcendent. In his words:


*Sat*, lit. being. In ontology: existent, in ethics: good; in epistemology: true (cf. Satya)

*Chit*, lit. consciousness.

*Ananda*, lit. bliss.

**"My Rama; the Rama of our prayers is not the historical Rama. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without or second." - Harijan, 28-4-46., p. 111."
"I do discern that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God.... And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

"And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent, for I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is life, Truth, Light. He is the supreme Good."

Gandhi an Advaitist?

Having no professional philosophical background Gandhi used philosophical terms not in technical sense but in his own sense. In reply to a friend's question (one of the questions from the article "Three vital questions" in Young India, January 21, 1926, p. 30 - Tr. from Navajivan by M. D.) he said:

"I am an advaitist* and yet I can support dvaitism (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing it has a something about it which persists and is therefore to that extent

* "The main idea of the advaita (non-dualistic) Vedanta philosophy as taught by the Sankara school is this, that the ultimate and absolute truth is the self, which is one, though appearing as many in different individuals. The world also as apart from us the individuals has no reality and has no other truth to show than this self. All other events, mental or physical, are but passing appearances, while the only absolute and unchangeable truth underlying them all is the self." - Surendranath Das Gupta, A History of Indian Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 1951), Vol. I, p. 439.
real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an anekantavadi or svadvadi. But my svadvada is not the svadvada of the learned, it is peculiarly my own."

The statement "I am an advaitist and yet I can support Dvaitism" is, from the standpoint of philosophy, untenable. To apprehend this 'contradiction' it would be better to read Gandhi's mind.

"I believe in Advaita (non-dualism). I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives ... When we descend to the empirical level, we descend to the world of duality. In God there is no duality. But as soon as we descend to the empirical level, we get two forces - God and Satan, as Christianity calls them." (Conversations of Gandhiji by Chandrashankar Shukla, Vora & Co., Bombay, p. 37.)

* The doctrine of Relative pluralism (anekantavada): "The Jains regarded all things as anekanta (na-ekanta), or in other words they held that nothing could be affirmed absolutely, as well all affirmations were true only under certain conditions and limitations." - Ibid, p. 175.

**The doctrine of svadvada holds that since the most contrary characteristics of infinite variety may be associated with a thing, affirmation made from whatever standpoint (nava) cannot be regarded as absolute. All affirmations are true (in some svadasti or 'may be it is' sense); all affirmations are false in some sense; all affirmations are indefinite or inconceivable in some sense (svadavaktavva); all affirmations are true as well as false in some sense (svadasti svannasti); all affirmations are true as well as indefinite (svadasti cavaktavvasca); all affirmations are false as well as indefinite; all affirmations are true and false and indefinite in some sense (svadasti svannasti svadavaktavvasca)." - Ibid, p. 179.
In the passage quoted above (VI, 21-1-26) Gandhi did not use *advaita* in the sense Sankara used the term nor did he take into account the philosophical implications of *anekanantavada* or *svadyada*. For a Sankarite would neither support dualism nor the Jain doctrines. Dr. Dhirendra Mohan Dutta thinks that Gandhi's position reminds one of the theistic Vedantist, Nimbarka, who tried to reconcile *Dvaita* with *Advaita*. He observes: "All these schools (the four schools of Vaishnava theism) though rejecting the *Advaita* of Shankara, his monism that tolerates no plurality and change, advocate some kind of monism that tolerates them. It appears that Gandhi uses Advaita for this kind of monism." 33

Gandhi's description of the world as 'unreal' (as in the paragraph referred to above) sounds like a Shankarite re-echo. Dr. Dutta is justified in interpreting that here, in this context, 'unreal' stands for 'impermanent' or 'transitory'. For Gandhi, the leader of masses who participated eagerly in all human affairs and action, it was not possible - in that case he would not have been what he was actually - to maintain the air of Sankarite indifference to this mundane world. It was only possible for him to assert: "Joy or what men call happiness may be, as it really is, a dream in a fleeting and transitory world... But we cannot dismiss the suffering of our fellow creatures as unreal and thereby provide a moral alibi for ourselves. Even dreams are true while they last and to the sufferer his suffering is a grim reality." (Harijan, July 21, 1946). Whatever metaphysical notions he might have cherished, the note of service to humanity rings out unequivocally in his writings. As Joan V. Bondurant observes: "despite the everpresent overtones of religion in Gandhian thought, concern for human needs lies at the core of Gandhian teaching." 35

Commenting on Gandhi's claim to be a Vedantaist, P. Spratt makes a significant observation. He says:

"The Vedanta is usually considered a type of the metaphysical theory in the worst sense, abstract, static, cold, void of human interest or relation to practical life, as well as totally incredible. But as its similarity to
Hegelianism would suggest, it is quite capable of being interpreted in a progressive sense, and its ethical implications are not necessarily quietist.

It is possible that Mr. Gandhi's view of the Vedanta is of this type. He is certainly not antagonistic to a progressive outlook.**

In this passage the Vedanta is meant as including and reconciling the other systems of Indian Philosophy. Gandhi's use of the story of the elephant and the blind men illustrates this viewpoint. That all is one, and is spiritual, and all the aspects under which the world is known are genuine aspects of it, and are reconcilable with its unity. As none is without truth, and each is entitled to his opinion, Gandhi believed, that each must find his own way to salvation.

Sometimes like a Vaishnava theist he exclaimed: "Let us dance to the tune of His bansi-flute, and all would be well." (Young India, 5-3-1925, p. 81) In the same article we find him saying: "Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport - Lila, or calls it all an illusion - Maya." The word Maya he did not use in Sankarite parlance but like the Vaishnavas in the sense of Lila or sport.

Dr. D. M. Datta in his masterly treatment of this aspect arrives at the conclusion:

"On the whole, it will be reasonable to think that Gandhi was a theist - a Vaishnava, rather than advaitist - a follower of Shankara."**

Prof. Benoy Gopal Ray makes out:

"His philosophy is more or less the Vaishnava Philosophy."**

Dr. P. T. Raju holds:

"There is no doubt about Mahatma Gandhi's being an absolutist and a monist."**

Dr. B. S. Sharma concurs with the same view.

Dr. D. M. Datta's opinion on this point seems to us, on the whole, quite logical and tenable.

In the Hindu view of God infinity, eternal nature, perfection, absoluteness are predicated of Him, but at the same time it has been maintained that He is
Gandhi gave expression to such a comprehensive description in the passage quoted below:

"God is that indefinable something which we all feel but which we do not know. To me, God is Truth and Love, God is ethics and morality, God is fearlessness, God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. ... He transcends speech and reason. ... He is a personal God to those who need his personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us .... He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible .... He is the greatest democrat the world knows. He is the greatest tyrant ever known. We are not. He alone is."

Dr. D. N. Datta finds in this description a very similar parallel to the famous description of God by Alfred North Whitehead. After citing a relevant passage from the mathematician-philosopher's *Process and Reality* he observes:

"The similarity between the two lies in their attempts to comprehend in one synthetic sweep the divergent aspects of Godhead and the different religious traditions representing different points of view." 42

**God: Personal or Impersonal?**

Is God a person? To Gandhi: "God is not a person." He says:

"I do not regard God as a person. Because God is an Idea, Law Himself." 43

Yet he did not mind calling Him 'a personal God' (as in the passage quoted above). The difference may be interpreted to be between the philosophical idea of

*"Hinduism offers us a graduated scale of interpretations from the most impersonal to the crudely personal." - S. Radhakrishnan, The Heart of Hindusthan, ch. on The Hindu Idea of God (Natesan, Madras), p. 60.*
a personal God which is one of standpoint and not of essence. Prof. B. G. Roy on this point finds it "hard to reconcile these different ways of Gandhiji's thinking." He raises the question:

"If God be equated with a system of laws, there is hardly any reason to attribute personal qualities to Him." In the case of Gandhi, "May be God has been viewed by him from two aspects, viz., personal and impersonal. The personal aspect presents the phenomenal picture of Divinity. But the real Divinity is to be found only in the impersonal."

The Problem of Evil:

As we have seen above, Gandhi viewed reality as Sat-Chit-Ananda. To Gandhi, the truth value is the most important; others are only its corollaries. If God is regarded as the only and all-inclusive reality then He is Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram. If God be Shivam, how can there be evil? Gandhiji replied:

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

For God, there is nothing good, nothing evil. To Gandhi, "Good and evil are, for human purposes, from each other distinct and incompatible, being symbolic of light and darkness." Good was self-existent, evil was not. It was like a parasite living on and round good. It would die of itself when the support that good gave was withdrawn. "Evil in itself is sterile. It is self-destructive; it exists and flourishes through the implication of good that is in it. ... in order to overcome evil one must stand wholly outside it, that is, on the firm solid ground of unadulterated good."

Prof. B. G. Roy in his analysis of the topic observes:

"To say that God creates evil and does not own it is unintelligible."
Gandhiji does not satisfactorily tackle the problem of evil. He thinks of evil as a means of punishment in the hands of God, the moral governor. Is evil one of His Laws? An affirmative answer to this question would lead us to infer that evil enters into Godhead, Gandhiji would deny any such conclusion. Evil may exist in Godhead as a Law reconciled with good. We do not know how the reconciliation takes place but somehow the two laws, viz., evil and good exist in a reconciled way in a Divinity. But Gandhiji would not agree to this position also. He could not conceive God as the purest synthesis though he regarded Him as the system of Laws. 51

One would tend to agree with Prof. Ray's views but the fact should not be ignored that as Gandhi was not an academically trained philosopher, it was not expected of him to tackle these subtle philosophical questions satisfactorily. Dr. G. N. Dhowan reminds us that "Gandhiji is, however, not concerned so much with philosophical explanation of evil as with the specific kinds of evil, political, social and economic." 52 And this reading seems to be justified.

From God as Truth to Truth as God

In this section we shall make an attempt to trace the evolution of Gandhi's thought about the identification of God with Truth and the significance this evolution bears upon Gandhi's philosophy. The full discussion on Gandhi's concept of Truth - in its absolute and relative character - shall be made later in relation to the basic precepts of Satyagraha.

It is well known that Gandhi identified God with Truth. In 1925, in a talk with Christian missionaries in Darjeeling, Gandhi said that for him "God and Truth are convertible terms." 53 The following year in an address at Wardha he had declared "... to me Truth is God and there is no way to find Truth except the way of non-violence." 54 In reply to the question - "Why do you regard God as Truth?" Gandhi's speech before a gathering of Conscientious Objectors in Villeneuve in Switzerland in 1931 deserves our close attention because of its momentous significance. (The Speech is given in extenso in Appendix I.)
To quote Gandhi:

"I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be God, God is Truth above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description, I have come to the conclusion that for myself God is Truth. But two years ago, I went a step further and said Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. Then I found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found, too, that love in the sense of ahimsa had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and not even the atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God - from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say God is Truth I should say Truth is God."

In Contemporary Indian Philosophy, edited by B. Radhakrishnan and J. H. Luirhandh, Gandhi re-affirmed his position. How did he arrive at this position?

"I claim to be a votary of truth from my childhood. It was the most natural thing to me. My prayerful search gave me the revealing maxim 'Truth is God,' instead of the usual one 'God is Truth.' That maxim enables me to see God face to face as it were. I feel Him pervade every fibre of my being."

The 'fine distinction' between the two statements, viz., God is Truth and Truth is God has been interpreted by some scholars to be of substantial significance.
Prof. N. K. Bose observes:

"With this changed creed, he could easily accommodate as fellow-seekers those who looked on Humanity or any other object as their god, and for which they were prepared to sacrifice their all. By enthroning Truth on the highest pedestal, Gandhi thus truly became a catholic, and lost all trace of separateness from every other honest man who worshipped gods other than his own." 57

This change, as has been interpreted by Prof. Bose, relieves a Satyagrahi from the necessity of any theological belief which was so long considered to be sine qua non for Satyagraha.

Prof. Joan V. Bondurant comments on this 'changed creed' as follows:

"It may have been with Gandhi's deliberate change in the structuring of his theological statements that he consciously allowed for the freer construction of Satyagraha. Again, this can be but another example of Gandhi's philosophical formulations following upon his practical experiments and his efforts in applied ethics." 58

Dr. P.T. Raju's observations on this point may be noted. He says:

"No student of logic can fail to understand the significance of the change from "God is Truth" to "Truth is God". Every significant judgement presupposes an existent subject, and the judgement is about that subject. In the judgement "God is Truth", the existence of God is presupposed. But this existence may be questioned, when the predicate, Truth, would have to be referred to a non-existent subject, and the judgement would be without logical significance. But none questions that there is truth in the universe. When it is said that God is the same as that Truth, the judgment becomes significant, and practically amounts to the proof of God." 59

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*It makes all the difference in the world whether we put truth in the first place or in the second place.* - Whately.
Dr. D. H. Dutta observes:

"It is true that ordinarily such a simple conversion of universal affirmative proposition would be fallacious. But there are exceptions to this rule too. When the subject and the predicate are equal in extent, simple conversion is permissible. Similarly the transition from "God is Truth" to "Truth is God" cannot be gainsaid by the rules of formal logic, since God is taken identical with Truth.

"Though the interchange of subject and predicate in an identical proposition is logically unimportant, it was a momentous psychological transition of Gandhi.

"God is Truth" reflects the fact that Gandhi's search in life started with God. ... He seemed to have no doubt at the beginning about the existence of God, about whom he was eager to know more. But the world's unbelievers and atheists - with whom he had to work in the political field - gradually revealed to him that the traditional idea of God is subject to very serious doubt. But he found that even they rejected God, if at all, on honest enquiry, because they wanted truth, without which the human reason could not be satisfied. Truth has the greatest appeal to human beings ..... So he changed his emphasis from God is Truth - which seemed to suggest: "I don't care for God if he is anything but Truth, anything but the undeniable, Reality revealed in man and outside.

"Truth is God" also suggests: "Truth should be the object of worship." And it really was for Gandhi always. But yet it waited to be known more clearly and needed emphatic affirmation after experimentation. In practical consequence, it was an expansion of his faith by which he could sympathize as his brothers-in-faith with all persons who tried to follow, in their own lights, the common goal of Truth.

"... this was an extension of his early faith in God and not a relinquishing of anything that was vital in it..... "God" like "matter", may have a wide range of meanings for different persons with different
experiences backgrounds. ... And this would appear to be Gandhi's plea for the inclusion of the atheist within his religious fold."

Prof. Dutta comments further:

"It was however a thin dilution of the faith which he prepared for sharing with all and sundry in his public life." 60

Quest for Truth is the hallmark of humanity's march for enlargement of the frontiers of knowledge; still more it involves practical participation in things. Truth was the master-passion, if that term may be permitted to be used, of his life. And this urge for Truth led him to the vortex of practical action. The strict logical implications of the simple conversion of 'God is Truth' to 'Truth is God' did not engage his thought. Whether that conversion "is permissible" or "simply fallacious" or "a thin dilution of his faith" did not worry him. What, to him, seemed more important was the practical bearing of this transition.

**Concept of Soul**

All the traditional Indian systems except Buddhism admit the existence of a permanent entity variously called atman, purusa or jiva. Notwithstanding the divergences of view as to the exact nature of soul there is general agreement that it is pure and unsullied and that all impurities of action or passion do not form a real part of it.

From the standpoint of metaphysics, soul is not different in essence from God. As a believer in "absolute oneness of God, and therefore, of humanity" he could affirm: "What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul." 61 "I believe in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives." * 62

* Dr. Gopi Nath Dhanwan on this passage commented: "The famous texts Tat twamasi (Thou art That) and Soham (I am He) and the statement of Jesus: "I and my father are one" and the Biblical statement, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him. " express this very idea of consubstantiality of the spirit in man and God." - The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi (NPH, Ahmedabad, 1951), p. 49n.
Gandhi subscribed to the teleological belief that "all life in its essence is one, and that the humans are working consciously or unconsciously towards the realization of that identity." In a mood of philosophic exaltation he could exclaim: "Our existence as embodied beings is purely momentary; what are a hundred years in eternity? But if we shatter the chains of egotism, and melt into the ocean of humanity, we share its dignity. To feel that we are something is to set up a barrier between God and ourselves; to cease feeling that we are something is to become one with God."

This fundamental unity of all life is, to Gandhi, a principle far higher than that of the mere brotherhood of man. Man is not lord but servant of God's creation.

What is the nature of soul? To quote Gandhi: "Soul is apart from life. The latter is conditioned by the body, the former is not." The soul is Godhead within man; it is self-acting; it persists even after death; its existence does not depend upon the physical body; it is matter rarefied to the utmost limit. Hence whatever happens to one body must affect the whole of the matter and the whole of spirit. He held the belief "that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent."*

* Dr. S. C. Gangal on this passage: "This brings us to a significant point of Gandhi's philosophy - that man, the individual is the one supreme consideration; the centre of all social life. Hence the emphasis on the regeneration of the individual in his social and political technique." - The Gandhian Way to World Peace (Vora & Co., Bombay, 1960), p. 53. (We shall offer a detailed analysis of Gandhi's dictum: "The individual is the one supreme consideration" (VI, 13-11-24, p. 378) later.
That is why he could assert: "... whether an individual is good or bad is not merely his own concern, but really the concern of the whole community, may of the whole world." 69

Because of obvious limitations, we need not enter into a discussion of the intricacies of the problem of soul. What is important to be noted in this regard is Gandhi's belief in the existence of soul. And this faith may be interpreted to have sustained him during periods of psychological strain. For the necessity of belief in the existence of soul he said: "With the knowledge that the soul survives the body, he, the Satyagrahi, is not impatient to see the triumph of truth in the present body. Indeed, victory lies in the ability to die in the attempt to make the opponent see the truth which the Satyagrahi for time being expresses." 70

From epistemological point of view, the intuitive knowledge of God & the experience of soul are conterminous. * But then the problem remains: how is the empirical self, i.e. the finite self related to what is called the eternal, metaphysical self? Could Gandhi provide any satisfactory explanation? Dr. B. S. Sharma holds: "To this (i.e. relation of empirical self to metaphysical self), Gandhi's philosophy, like ancient Hindu philosophy, would give no satisfactory explanation. The empirical self is treated as a reflection of the metaphysical self and is based more or less on assumption." 71

* "In the spiritual experience itself, the barriers between the self and the ultimate reality drop away. In the moment of its highest insight, the self becomes aware, not only of its own existence but of the existence of an omnipresent spirit of which it is, as it were, a focussing. " 8

Basis of Belief in The Existence of God: Faith the Ultimate Arbiter

What is the method of apprehending the ultimate nature of universe? Philosophical Idealists differ. According to many thinkers reality cannot be apprehended by empirical investigation or by reference to reason which, in its turn, is based upon sense-perception. Many western philosophers, e.g., Hegel, Bradley, Bosanquet, Croce etc. tried to substantiate idealism on grounds of reason. But Gandhi's path was different. He did not concern himself with the ontological arguments of the existence of God, who was for him, the Supreme Being.

Gandhi's faith in the reality and providence of God was absolute. To him reasoning is an inadequate media for apprehending the Absolute Reality. The question of the existence of God never troubled him (excepting during his early youth - the account has been given above). Can God's existence be proved? "God's existence cannot be, does not need to be, proved.God is." "Does a child reason out the existence of a mother's love? Can he prove it to others? He triumphantly declares: 'It is'. So must it be with the existence of God. He defies reason. But He is experienced." He confessed that he had "no argument to convince through reason. Faith transcends reason." But is this faith blind faith, which is the same as superstition? He held: "True faith is appropriation of the reasoned experience of people whom we believe to have lived a life purified by prayer and penance. Belief, therefore, in prophets or incarnations who have lived in remote ages is not an idle superstition but a satisfaction of an inmost spiritual want." To him, it did not appear as an intellectual want; it was not a question of argument. "If you would have me convince others by argument, I am floored. But I can tell you that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. Then I can also testify that I may live without air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that cannot kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my belief in God, and I am dead. You may call this a superstition,
but I confess it is a superstition that I hug...." 76 But did he think that superstition was necessary for him? His reply was categorical: "Yes, necessary to sustain me." 77 Are faith and reason antithetical in nature? "Faith does not contradict reason but transcends it. Faith is a kind of sixth sense which works in cases which are without the purview of reason." 78 "My reason follows my heart. Without the latter it would go astray. Faith is the function of the heart. It must be reinforced by reason. The two are not antagonistic as some think. The more intense one's faith is, the more it whets one's reason ..." 79

What is the place of reason in Gandhi's philosophy? Did he call for abrogation of reason in human life? "I plead not for the suppression of reason, but for a due recognition of that in us which sanctifies reason itself." 80 "I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality." 81 "Every formula of every religion has, in this age of reason, to submit to the test of reason and universal assent." 82 But he was not agreeable to attribute to reason the 'omnipotence' which the rationalists claim for reason and sceptical enquiry. He held that reason has limited efficacy. "Reason has its place, only it must not usurp the heart. If you will go through any twenty-four hours of the life of the most reasoning man you know, you will find that most of his acts done during that time are done by feeling, not by reasoning." 83 

* On the other hand, as has been noted by P. Spratt, "he shows a strong preference for reason and a distrust of emotion in public affairs. It is part of his social ideal, of the self-reliant, self-restrained individual." But "there can be no doubt about the conclusion, with which Mr. Gandhi himself agrees (in reply to a question by Spratt) that feeling does predominate his mind, and when the two conflict, generally control thought." - Gandhism, pp. 119 - 120.
This reference to feeling-function as opposed to the thinking and other functions is characteristic of him throughout his life.

For Gandhi, "it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent." But faith is the ultimate arbiter.

Re-inforcement of faith by reasoning is a basic postulate of Vedanta philosophy. According to the Vedanta an initial faith is necessary for religious life and thought. By itself reasoning is considered to be an empty form or method of thinking. Lotze and other philosophers also held that no argument can convince a person unless there is some direct experience. As Lotze put it: "Therefore, all proofs that God exists are pleas put forward in justification of our faith." This faith, according to him, springs from "the obscure impulse which drives us to pass in our thought - as we cannot help passing - from the world given in sense to a world not given in sense, but above and behind sense."

* According to Jung's Psychology, there are four functions which we use to orientate ourselves in the world (and also to our own inner world): sensation, which is perception through our senses; thinking, which gives meaning and understanding; feeling, which weighs and values; and intuition, which tells us of future possibilities and gives us information of the atmosphere which surrounds all experience. - Psychological Types (Tri H. Godwin Baynes, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., Harcourt Bruce & Co. Inc. New York, 1923) p. 568.

"When we think, it is in order to judge or to reach a conclusion, and when we feel it is in order to attach a proper value to something." - Modern Man in Search of a Soul (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1941), p. 105.

** Dr. Dhawan on this passage: "What Gandhiji means by this statement seems to be that though intellect has its limitations, it leaves us free, as Kant also held, to believe in the existence of God." - The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, (NPH, 1951), p. 52.
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This kind of dependence of reason on faith that is on matter supplied from a non-rational or ultra-rational source is an integral part of theology. * And Gandhi shared this theological belief.

Dr. D. M. Datta correctly observes that the cosmological and the teleological arguments are found blended together in his writings. 87 To quote Gandhi: "There is orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind Law, for no blind Law can govern the conduct of living beings.... That law then which governs all life is God. Law and the Law-giver are one." 88 But what is the basis of this faith? Feeling. In his words, "Nevertheless I do feel as the poor villagers felt...." 89 (emphasis added)

The reference to transcendental reality is the basic postulate of his metaphysical outlook. And this he shared with the broad mass of the Hindu people. As Mr. Vincent Sheean observes:

"What is distinctive in the broad mass of the Hindu people, as compared to all other great divisions of humanity, is the unquestioning (and largely unthinking) acceptance of transcendental reality in the common consciousness. The Hindu is perhaps born co-conscious with his contemporaries; it sometimes seems as if they may be so; but whether it is or not,

*A contemporary philosophical writer, himself a modern theologian, makes the following observation on the nature and validity of religious experience:

"The truest visions of religion are illusions, which may be partially realised by being resolutely believed. For what religion believes to be true, is not wholly true, but ought to be true; and may become true if its truth is not doubted." - Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man And Immoral Society. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons Ltd., London, 1947), p. 81.
he acquires the common consciousness with the growth of his mind and body, so that long before he has learned to formulate his beliefs they are deep in him, ineradicable by subsequent surface processes such as the scientific knowledge taught in the colleges. The universality of the spirit, the participation of each person in it, the transmigration of souls, the ultimate "realization of God" (in the mystical sense) as a possibility for every man born - all these ideas, which are philosophical or religious in the West, are part of the most intimate mind of the most ordinary Hindu. 90

Whatever be the metaphysical interpretation of his faith the moral note is predominant in his writings. The significance of this emphasis we shall deal later in connection with his ethical concepts. But for the present purpose it may be pointed out that the law-governed universe is the basic postulate of his metaphysical outlook which, in his case, is integrated with ethical principles as he conceived them to be. In reply to a question by Spratt, he held: "anybody who believes that the universe is governed by laws, even if it is not known what they are, believes in God in his sense, and agrees that the idea is analogous to the Rta."

90

* "The faith in an order - a law that makes for regularity and righteousness and works in the gods, the heavenly bodies and creatures - pervades the poetic imagination of the seers of the Rg-Veda which calls this inviolable moral order Rta. " S. C. Chatterjee and D. M. Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy (University of Calcutta, 1939), p. 17.

Rta is an anticipation of the inescapable Karma.
The method of religion, so claimed Gandhi, is not far different from that of science. Scientific truths are arrived at on certain hypotheses. "Precisely in that manner speak the rishis and prophets. They say anybody following the path they have trodden can realize God." 92

To sum up. For him, firm faith in the Divinity is indispensable for man. God is, to him, only another name for Reality, Truth, Law, Love etc. To him God is "the Sum of all that IS." 92A

Gandhi was not a man of conceptual cognition. He believed in intuitive knowledge. * Prof. Benoy Gopal Ray observes in this connection: "There are some who lay undue importance on intuition in Gandhian philosophy. They class

* Intuition, says, Jung, is perception via the unconscious.

Radhakrishnan distinguishes between the "immediacy which appears at the sub-intellectual level (feeling) and the immediacy which appears at the supra-intellectual level (intuition)", the latter of which he regards "to some extent the result of discursive thinking." And then "All dynamic acts of thinking are controlled by an intuitive grasp of the situation as a whole." - An Idealist View of Life (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1932), p. 149.


"Hindu thought has no mistrust of reason. There can be no final breach between the two powers of the human mind, reason and intuition." - S. Radhakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life, (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, Seventh Impression 1948), pp. 16-17.

Bertrand Russell on the relation between intuition & reason: "... the opposition of instinct (intuition) and reason is mainly illusory. Instinct, intuition or insight is what first leads to the belief which subsequent reason confirms or confutes; but the confirmation where it is possible, consists, in
him as a mystic since his philosophy of truth is in affinity with that of such mystics as Jesus Christ, St. Augustine and St. Bernard. 93 The emphasis on intuition and Gandhi's frequent mention of 'still small voice' might lead people to class him as a mystic.

Leaving aside the question of the relationship of intuition and scientific method for the present, let us try to answer the question: Was Gandhi a mystic? Romain Rolland called him a mystic. 93A Dr. Dhawan asserted that "he had real mystical experiences" 94 and referred in this connection to Gandhi's inner voice. Before proceeding to examine the view that Gandhi was a mystic and the inference that he had mystical experiences, we should rather try to ascertain what he himself had to offer on the subject.

"The 'still small voice' within you must always be the final arbiter when there is a conflict of duty." 95 "Having made a ceaseless effort to attain self-purification, I have developed some little capacity to hear correctly and clearly the 'still small voice within'." 96 "My claim to hear the voice of God is no new claim. Unfortunately there is no way that I know of proving the claim except through results.... His voice has been increasingly audible as years have rolled by." 97 Speaking of his fast in September 1932, he wrote: "For me the

the last analysis, of agreement with other beliefs no less instinctive. Reason is a harmonizing and controlling force rather than a creative one. Even in the most purely logical realm, it is insight that arrives first at what is new." - Mysticism & Logic (Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1918), p. 17.


The British Marxist Dr. John Lewis observes: "What science rules out is not intuition but untested intuition, the taking of the intuition itself as sufficient evidence for its own truth. For science, what is perceived intuitively must then be tested by observation, experiment and reasoning, and only contd....
Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth, or the Inner Voice or "the still small voice" mean one and the same thing. I saw no form. I have never tried, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was like a Voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain it was the Voice, and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fact were fixed.*

Once in answer to a question if he had any mystical experience he said, "If by mystical experience you mean visions, * no ... But I am very sure of the voice which guides me." 99

Dr. Caijun Chang, a Chinese scholar has the following observation to make on Gandhi's inner voice. His inner voice did not come from his whims or his idiosyncrasies, but it came from the work of self-control and purification of heart; so he became a law unto himself, according to which he judged and acted in a sense of righteousness and justice." 100

P. Spratt in his study makes an analysis of Gandhi's inner voice and offers certain remarks which deserve attention. He has, after ascertaining the psychological make-up of Gandhi, arrives at the conclusion:

"The voice is always preceded by an acute and painful internal struggle, and its occurrence, which is followed by internal peace, always represents a decision which it would be painful to reach and difficult to justify by ordinary thought. It is religiously or spiritually true.


* Tolstoy called the visionaries fanatics. "Or when some fanatic beheld a vision"- The Kingdom of God is Within You (Tr: A. Delano, Walter Scott Ltd., London, 1894), p. 75.
The effect of this voice is to render its injunction sacred, to safeguard it against criticism, by himself or others, and against laziness or any fleshly impediment. The voice thus partakes of the nature of conscience, but it cannot be identified with conscience, as Socrates' Daemon can. The conscience is satisfied by an appeal to ordinary principles or modes of feeling. This voice seems to speak for an extra or pseudo-conscience, and suggests an extravagant sort of act, usually a fast, which is commonly subject to suspicion as to its motives, and is such that Mr. Gandhi's normal puritanical conscience might very well not approve of it. Prof. Louis Renou explains Gandhi's 'inner voice' as a feeling of what the masses expected of him.

Writing under the heading 'The characteristics of Mysticism' Evelyn Underhill states:

"Its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual. It is in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, rearranging or improving anything in the visible universe. The mystic brushes aside that universe even in its most supernormal manifestations. Though he does not, as his enemies declare, neglect his duty to the many, his heart is always set upon the changeless One.

"This One is for the mystic, not merely the reality of all that is, but also a living and personal object of love; never an object of an exploration. It draws his whole being homeward, but always under the guidance of the heart. Living union with this One - which is the term of his adventure - is a definite state or form of enhanced life. It is obtained neither from an

* Socrates' inner voice was prohibitive in nature.

"I have had it from childhood: it is a kind of voice which whenever I hear it always turns me back from something which I was going to do, but never urges me to act." - Apology.
intellectual realization of its delights, nor from the most acute emo-
tional longings. Though these must be present, they are not enough. It is
arrived at by a definite and arduous psychological process - the so-call-
ed mystic way - entailing the complete remaking of character and the
liberation of a new, or rather latent, form of consciousness, which
imposes on the self the condition which is sometimes inaccurately called
"ecstasy" but is better named the Unitive State." 102

Referring to Gandhi, Prof. Benoy Gopal Ray holds: "He was not a mystic
since he never led the mystical life." 103

He continues, that from the standpoint of the principles adumbrated by Under-
hill: "he cannot be called a mystic in the sense in which Jesus Christ, St.
Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, Sri Chaitanya and others are so called. May
we suggest that Gandhi though not a mystic, had on several occasions what may be
called the mystic mood? This suggestion becomes rather plausible when we take
into consideration the "inner voice" which Gandhiji had experienced in his life
.... What is this voice? Is it simply the working of the subconscious? When he could not come to any definite conclusion regarding any in-
tricate and many-fangled situation, political or otherwise, he ceased thinking
consciously over it. The whole idea sank into the subconscious and suddenly one
fine morning, the decision arose from the depths of the subconscious and took
possession of his whole conscious mind. Gandhiji called it his inner voice. A
psychologist would call it the voice of the subconscious. Should we then dismiss
the experience of the "inner voice" as the working of the subconscious?"

He opines: "It will be perhaps unwise to explain all cases of the "inner voice"
that Gandhiji had heard in the above manner. On certain occasions as a true
mystic he heard within him a voice that was not his own... It is indeed very hard
to assess the value of a mystical experience. Logically the value is Zero since it
cannot be brought under the scope of scientific investigation." But then, "A
Verrier Elwin in his comparative discussion on western mysticism and Gandhi's experience calls him a "non-professional mystic". 105

P. Spratt, whose observations on Gandhi's inner voice we have noted above, remarks on Gandhi's being described as a mystic personality in the following terms:

"... though he shows none of the more sensational phenomena of mysticism, the description (as a mystic) is justified. Trust in God is the ultimate means, the last step, in all his more difficult achievements, of self-training and of public work. By means of prayer and faith he can still further concentrate his psychic energies, check all internal opposition, and present to his task a self at least for the time completely united." 106

Referring to Lord Roseberry's description of Cromwell as "a practical mystic, the most terrible and formidable of all combinations, he holds that" the description would apply well to Mr. Gandhi. 107

Be it noted here that the predominant element in Gandhi's life was service towards fellow-beings which acquired for him a mystical significance. The service of humanity became, in his life, conterminus with service of Truth, the ethical law governing the universe; it was his path to God as he conceived it.

Gandhi on Law of Karma, Rebirth & Freedom of Will

The belief in the immortality of the soul led Gandhi logically to believe in the doctrine of re-birth arising from the doctrine of Karma which is itself the offspring of the Vedic Rta.

Being born and reared up in this country where age-long philosophical concepts and religious traditions have struck deep roots, it could be expected of Gandhi to declare: "I firmly believe in the Law of Karma, but I believe too in human endeavour. I regard as the quantum bonum of life the attainment of salvation through Karma by annihilating its effects by detachment." 109

The law of Karma is inexorable and impossible of evasion. There is thus hardly any need for
God to interfere. He laid down the Law and as it were retired.

As for the doctrine of re-birth: "I am a believer in previous births and rebirths." I believe in rebirth as much as I believe in the existence of my present body. In one of his letters to Tolstoy dated October 1, 1909 He wrote: "Re-incarnation or transmigration is a cherished belief with millions in India ... It explains reasonably the many mysteries of life. With some of the passive resisters who have gone through the gaols of the Transvaal, it has been their solace." 113

The basal conception of Karma, re-incarnation and liberation is recognized by all Indian philosophical systems, the exception being the Carvaka Materialism. The Law of Karma in its different aspects may be regarded, as has been interpreted by Indian idealist philosophers, as the Law of conservation of moral values, merits and demerits of actions. This law of conservation means that there is no loss of the effect of work done and that there is no happening of events to a person except as the result of his own work.

* " ... the principle of Karma, which is no ethical dogma in any western sense; nor is it a doctrine of reward and punishment, though generally so regarded, and still less it is comparable to the western law of "measure for measure" (lex talionis). For the fully developed Karma-phalam (Karma-fruit) by no means corresponds in size to the small Karma-bija (Karma-seed). It is therefore not the static law of the correspondence of deed and reward, but the dynamic and biological law of development and growth, that forms the presupposition of the Karma-doctrine. ... It is purely biological ethics, revealed in the inviolable law of cause and effect, and imposing on the individual a super-personal responsibility towards both the future and the cosmos." - Batty Heimann, Indian and Western Philosophy (George Allen & Unwin, London, 1937), p. 71.
To the charge that the theory of *Karma* implies denial of human freedom, Radhakrishnan replies:

"The theory of *Karma* recognises the rule of law not only in outward nature, but also in the world of mind and morals. ... the principle of *Karma* insisted on the primacy of the ethical and identified God with the rule of Law. *All's Law, yet all's God.* *Karma* is not a mechanical principle but a spiritual necessity ... Sin is no much a defiance of God as a betrayal of self. We carry with us the whole of our past. It is an ineffaceable record which time cannot blur nor death erase.

... The principle of *Karma* reckons with the material or the context in which each individual is born. While it regards the past as determined, the future is only conditioned. The spiritual element in man allows him freedom within the limits of his nature ... The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past *Karma*, but we can *all* call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play, we gain or lose. And there is freedom.

... The theory of *Karma* allows the man the freedom to use the material in the light of his knowledge." 114

Thus interpreted, there appears to be no antithesis between the law of *Karma* and the concept of freedom of will. Gandhi, it seems, had accepted this fundamental concept of Indian Idealism from this point of view, otherwise how could he pin his faith in human endeavour? But, they, exercise of free will is limited, the past being determined, by previous *Karmas*. As Gandhi said: "The free will we enjoy is less than that of a passenger on a crowded deck." 115 But does this mean that he accepted the philosophical concept of *Karma* in toto? For him, *Karma* alone is powerless. "My *Karma* would not come to my help. Although I believe in the inexorable law of *Karma* I am striving to do so many things, every moment of my life is a strenuous endeavour, which is an attempt to build up more *Karma* to undo the past and add to the present." 116 In the passage quoted
above, Gandhi, it should be noted, stressed not on Sanchita (accumulated) Karma nor on prarabdha (fructifying) Karma but on Sandhyamana (accumulating) or Kriyamana (which is being done) Karma. This possibly explains his emphasis on service.

Granting our will to be free, though within limits, "we cannot command results; we can only strive." 117 This follows from his interpretation of the Gita which to him appeared as the gospel of selfless action. The deterministic note of Karma cut its influence on Gandhi when he said: "Man can change temperament; can control it; but cannot eradicate it. God has not given him so much liberty. If the leopard can change his spots then only can man modify the peculiarities of his spiritual constitution." 118 The only way to undo the effect of previous Karma, Gandhi prescribed, is the way of complete detachment. That again is a Gita-teaching. But "Inspite of the greatest effort to be detached, no man can altogether undo the effect of his environment or of his upbringing." 119 In this statement we find the teachings of ancient Indian philosophy reiterated. And this belief he shares with the broad mass of the Hindu society. But for a man who believed in accumulating Karma, free will would not be negatived totally for then he would have justification for participation in the actual processes of life. Man, viewed from this standpoint, is not completely a habit-governed creature; a creature of his environment. He can, within limits, mould his destiny.

One may find here a parallel in the Buddhist doctrine of Karma. As Christmas Humphreys explains: "The Buddhist fails to see any conflict between the hypotheses of freewill and predestination; for Karma and freewill are two facts of the same spiritual truth." 120 or as Ananda Coomaraswamy said: Buddhism "is fatalistic in the sense that the present is always determined by the past; but the future remains free. Every action we make depends on what we have come to be at the time, but what we are
coming to be at any time depends on the direction of the will. The Karmic Law merely asserts that this direction cannot be altered suddenly by the forgiveness of sins, but must be changed by our own efforts." 121

In reply to a question put forward by Prof. N. K. Bose, Gandhi replied: "While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold it is better for him to live by the exercise of the will." 122 The shift of emphasis from 'is' to 'ought', from habit to the exercise of will i.e. self-direction gives us a clue to an understanding of his philosophy of history as well as the theory of conversion of the opponent by peaceful, non-violent means which is basically an ethical theory and not a metaphysical abstract concept.

Conclusion

The survey given above of Gandhi's metaphysical views establish that those were based on certain assumptions, viz., unshakable faith in the existence of God; Universe as the manifestation of Law i.e. of an immutable moral order; Truth as God is absolute; Absolute Truth is Reality; Reality is transcendental; immortality of soul; primacy of spirit over matter; inexorableness of the Law of Karma etc.

Whether these assumptions are rationally valid or not; whether his hypotheses can be called scientific or not; whether his intuitions are scientifically verifiable or not; whether the "spiritualist" philosophy of Gandhi is a guide-post for humanity to follow or not may be regarded as legitimate questions. But they do not come within the purview of this study. It is beyond the scope of this treatise to offer a philosophical critique of his fundamental faith, which as we have noted above, is basically an ethical metaphysics*

* In Gandhi's philosophy one may find "a synthesis of Vedanta metaphysics and Jaina-Buddhist ethics" - W. P. Varma, Gandhi and Marx, The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. xv, No. 2, p. 117.

Schweitzer, Spratt and others have emphasised the influence of Christianity on Gandhi's ethics.

Details to follow in the chapter on Gandhi's ethical principles.
that nomenclature may be permitted to be used. We have limited ourselves to an exposition of his viewpoints which come under the academic discipline of metaphysics. The interpretations and commentations of scholars have been cited only in order to present his metaphysical outlook in its perspective and in a systematized form. The discussion of metaphysical notions has its usefulness, specially in the case of Gandhi, since his politics and metaphysics are intertwined as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter.

The subjective aspect of Gandhi's life (i.e. realization of God) had its objective counterpart (service of humanity and particularly of the poor and uplift of the masses). Political philosophy deals primarily with the objective aspect. But the subjective aspect of one's life cannot be ignored. While not subscribing to the belief in the metaphysical sovereignty of ideas, one cannot gainsay the importance of ideation. Ideas once formed determine human action to a very large extent. But, then, one's subjective development does not take place out of a void, it grows out of concrete, objective reality. Thought is real enough, but it never takes place except in brains. Brains are material, but they think. The process is dialectical.

Gandhi's metaphysical outlook was not a category in-itself; this outlook permeated the whole gamut of his life. The social and political doctrines which he formulated bear the imprint of his basic precepts. The point of departure for our study is to make an attempt to understand his philosophy in relation to life since he lived this philosophy and not merely preached them. And that seems to be the scientific approach for practice is the criterion of truth. We shall have the occasion to discuss Gandhi's social, economic and political thought and then we shall be in a better position to judge for ourselves the social significance of his philosophical generalizations. The valuation of such significance lies in terms of human needs and for the realization of a better, fuller and all-round life.
To conclude, Gandhi's metaphysical outlook was the ideological reflex of a given social reality. And it is in the context of this social reality that his outlook has to be assessed. All his metaphysical notions can be traced back to the belief and traditions of Hindu society which have more or less remained static for a long historical period. India has remained wedded to metaphysical idealist and religious mode of thought simply because she has no opportunity for outgrowing it. And Gandhi had moved within the ideological framework of Indian idealism. The antedatedness that a rationalist or materialist or modernist may find in Gandhi's fundamental concept should be viewed in that perspective. Otherwise, subjective reactions would overwhelm us at the cost of objective appraisal which any study worth its name is charged with. This applies equally well to those who find in Gandhi's philosophy the consummation of the spiritual quest of humanity. In fine, Gandhi's spiritual development and his statements elucidating his concepts concerning the universe, reality, etc., have to be referred back to the development of Indian thought which, in its turn, is related to historical, social development.
NOTES


3. Dr. Paul F. Power is right in observing: "In Gandhi's case certainly metaphysics and political notions are intertwined." - Gandhi on World Affairs (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1961), p. 35.

Dr. Gopinath Dhawan overemphasised in stating: "His political philosophy and political technique are only corollaries of his religious and moral principles." - The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 2nd Rev. Edition), p. 41.


"My notion has been purely religious.... I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind; and this I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity." - M. K. Gandhi. Harijan, 24-12-38, p. 393.


8. "Gandhi, to whom, as once to Buddha, the sorrow of human creatures has shown its uncovered face, could no longer spend his emotions and energies on any activity which did not contribute directly to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and comforting those that mourn." - Rene Fullopp Miller, Gandhi The Holy Man (Tri: Flint and Tait - G.P. Putnam's Sons, London and New York, 1931), p. 67.
9. "In the earliest period of Buddhism more attention was paid to the four noble truths than to systematic metaphysics." - Surendranath Das Gupta, A History of Indian Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 1951), vol. I, p. 166.

10. Gandhi did not subscribe to the view that Buddha was an atheist. "I have heard it contended times without number and I have read in books also claiming to express the spirit of Buddhism, that Buddha did not believe in God. In my humble opinion such a belief contradicts the very central fact of Buddha's teaching..." in With Gandhiji in Ceylon by Mahadev Desai (S. Ganesan, Madras), p. 58.; Young India, 24-11-27, p. 393.

Commenting on Gandhi's reflections on this topic, Aghedananda Bharati in a learned discourse ('Gandhi and Buddhist Atheism' - Gandhi Marg, vol. V, No. 2, p. 126) observes: "I believe he just did not know the doctrine sufficiently well to make any pronouncement of this kind."

Marie B. Byles says on this point: "Those who experience what Gandhi called 'the real presence of God within', would not argue as to whether Gandhi was or was not right in saying the Buddha was not an atheist." - Gandhi Marg, vol. V, No. 3, p. 264.


14. N. A. Nikam contends this view. He asserts: "Gandhi's religion is the freedom of a free rational and even a sceptical enquiry into the foundations of religious faith." - Gandhi's Discovery of Religion (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, July 1963), p. 20.

15. It does not mean necessarily that Gandhi threw aside reason, that Gandhi's doctrine is all faith and that blind one too. Spratt has correctly said: "He does not completely lack the elements of the scientific type of mind. His thinking is of
an empirical character...." (op. cit., p. 130) But 'the peculiarity of the
scientific man is his desire to know merely for the sake of knowledge. Mr. Gandhi
certainly lacks this element of the scientific type of mind." - (pp. 130-131).

Dr. Paul F. Power observes: "The absence of any full-scale criticism of
scientific method by Gandhi cautions against any conclusion that he was anti-
scientific. He opposed scientism, the ideology of science, and he fully expected
modern science to answer to his values." - Gandhi On World Affairs, pp. 91-92.

19. D. G. Tendulkar, Mahatma (The Publications Division, GOI, Oct. 1960),
vol. I, p. 25.
21. Louis Fischer, The Life of Mahatma Gandhi (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay,
1955), Part 1, p. 25.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid, p. 46.
26. V. V. Ramana Murthy, Non-Violence in Politics (Frank Bros. & Co., Delhi-6,
1958), pp. 133-134.
27. Gora (G. Ramachandra Rao), An Atheist with Gandhi (Navajivan Publishing
House, Ahmedabad, 1958), pp. 56-60.
30. Gandhi's article in Contemporary Indian Philosophy (Nis. S. Pattnakrishnan
31. Dr. Vishwanath Prasad Yama, The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi and

Dr. V. P. Varma holds that "his views are similar to those of the theistic interpreters of the Vedanta like Ramanuja and Madhava."

For obvious reasons, we are not entering into a discussion of the ontological position of the philosophies of Ramanuja, Nimbarka and Madhva. Dr. Surendranath Das Gupta's A History of Indian Philosophy (vol. III for Ramanuja and Nimbarka and vol. IV for Madhva) deal elaborately with their philosophies.

37. D. M. Datta, op. cit., p. 27.
39. Dr. P. T. Raju, op. cit., p. 297.
41. Young India, 5-3-25, p. 81.
52. Gopinath Dhawan, op. cit., p. 57.
55. Young India, 31-12-31, p. 427.
59. Dr. P. T. Raju, op. cit., p. 297.
62. Young India, 4-12-24, p. 398.
68. Young India, 4-12-24, p. 398.
71. B. S. Sarma, op. cit., p. 28.
72. Young India, 23-9-26, p. 333.
73. Young India, 9-7-25, p. 239.
74. Young India, 11-10-26, p. 340.
75. Young India, 14-4-27, p. 120.
77. Ibid.
79. Harijan, 6-4-40, p. 79.
80. Young India, 14-10-26, p. 359.
81. Young India, 21-7-20, Quoted in Teachings of Mahatma Gandhi by Jag Parvesh Chandar (Indian Printing Works, Lahore, 1945), p. 484.
82. Young India, 26-2-25, p. 74.
83. Harijan, 12-12-48, p. 346.
84. P. Spratt, op. cit., p. 6.
86. Lotze, Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion, pp. 8-10. Quoted in Chatterjee and Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy (University of Calcutta, 1939), p. 427.
89. Ibid.
91. F. Spratt, op. cit., p. 105.
92. Harijan, 13-6-36, p. 140.
94. G. N. Dhanaw, op. cit., p. 47.
96. Pyarelal, The Epic Past (Mohanlal Mananlal Bhatt, Ahmedabad, 1932), p. 34.
97. Harijan, 6-5-33, p. 4.
98. Harijan, 8-7-33, p. 4.
99. Mary F. Farr, Conversations and Correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi, Quoted in Dhanaw, op. cit., p. 47 n.
100. Garsun Chang, China and Gandhian India (Ed. and Published by Dr. Kalidas Nag, The Book Co., Cal., 1956), p. 286.


105. Verrier Elwin, 'Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Truth', Modern Review, August-October, 1933.


115. Harijan, 3-3-40, p. 55.


117. Harijan, 6-5-39, p. 112.


119. Young India, 30-1-30, p. 37.
