Prof. Arnold J. Toynbee in the last volume of his monumental study writes:

"The power of creative suffering must be evident to anyone of my age; for the
generation into which I happen to have been born has not only been Hitler's
generation in the West and Stalin's in Russia; it has also been Gandhi's in
India, and it can already be forecast with some confidence that Gandhi's effect
on human history is going to be greater and more lasting than either Stalin's
or Hitler's."¹ One may or may not share the great historian's confidence; or
one may while accepting the spirit of the statement not like the manner in which
it has been posed. But that is of secondary importance. The contraposition of
two types of political leaders - one who believed in moral nihilism in politics
and another who introduced and stressed upon morality as the motive and determin-
ant of politics - is interesting and deserves close attention.

Gandhi has generally been acknowledged to be a great moral teacher. There
had been a host of predecessors who preached ethical norms to be followed in
personal life as also in inter-personal relations. But it was Gandhi who for the
first time asserted that morality should be the ultimate authority in the con-
duct of human affairs, in the spheres of economics, politics, society etc.
Moralization of politics had been the dream of many political thinkers, to make
it a reality had been the endeavour of Gandhi. The introduction of and emphasis
upon morality in corporate life compels one's admiration towards Gandhi.

It may be argued that politics itself is morally neutral or is a moral in
its nature and as such ethical theory has no relevance for political philosophy.
This is a problem into which we cannot go here, for it would take us far too
afar with very little prospect of solving it. Politics, in theory, we agree
with R. Osborn ², should serve the end of freeing men from the economic and
social limitations on their freedom. Unfortunately, politics tends to become
an end in itself, the exercise of power for the sake of power by men who have
last sight of, or never had, any moral objectives. It is against this approach
towards politics that the relevance of ethics for political theory is most
sharply felt. * The Greek notion of their interdependence may be recalled.

But in modern age, one must look to Gandhi to re-discover the moral basis of
politics, not in theory alone but in practice as well.

Reinhold Niebuhr finds "a constant and seemingly irreconcilable conflict
between the needs of society and the imperatives of a sensitive conscience." This
conflict - briefly defined as the conflict between ethics and politics - he
argues, "is made inevitable by the double focus of the moral life. One focus is
in the inner life of the individual, and the other in the necessities of man's
social life. From the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice.
From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness. ... 
These two moral perspectives are not mutually exclusive and the contradiction
between them is not easily harmonised." 3 It is here that one may turn to
Gandhi's philosophy for it claims harmonization of this seeming contradiction.

Dr. R. C. Majumdar while paying his "profound respect for Gandhi, the saint
and the humanitarian" arrives at the conclusion that "Gandhi was lacking in
both political wisdom and political strategy - as we commonly understand the
terms - " 4 How far this evaluation stands the test of objectivity is a matter
to be studied in detail. We can just point out in passing that Gandhi combined
in himself moral nobility with astute political realism. But to take up the
thread where we have left it, Gandhi did not share the conventional notion of
the dichotomy between individual and group morality. He had no faith in the
dictum that political morality is in the most uncompromising antithesis to re-
ligious morality. For Gandhi, human society "is not divided into watertight
compartments, called social, political and religious.\textsuperscript{5} Human life being an undivided whole the relation between ethics and politics is that of action and reaction upon one another.\textsuperscript{6} Moral virtues like truth, non-violence held no appeal for him if they could not be practised in practical and group life. To quote:

"Truth and non-violence are no cloistered virtues but applicable as much in the forum and the legislatures as in the market place."\textsuperscript{7}

And,

"Some friends have told me that truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in everyday life has been my experiment all along."\textsuperscript{8}

Further,

"We have to make truth and non-violence, not matters for mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. I shall live and die in trying to realize it. My faith helps me to discover new truths everyday. Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul, and therefore, to be practised by everybody in all the affairs of life. If it cannot be practised in all departments, it has no practical value."\textsuperscript{9}

The excerpts given above are self-explanatory and need no further elaboration. Now to pass on to consider, in brief outline, Gandhi's concept of morality.

A few points need to be clarified before we start discussion. Gandhi's frequent reference to spiritualization of political life and his statements like 'I am at heart a religious man' have lent the impression in certain quarters that his concept of politics was essentially religious which had very little in common with secular notion of public affairs. Gandhi's use of religion so much disturbs Neibuhr that he has been led to say it may have been plausible in India
but it is ultimately unsound anywhere. It is after all a matter of opinion whether Gandhi would get the ear of the people elsewhere. But there should be no misunderstanding on the score that Gandhi's spirituality was anything else than what he considered to be universal morality. True, Gandhi retained individual salvation - 'seeing God face to face' - as the ultimate aim. But it remains, one feels, a matter of theory. As Spratt observes, "It appears to have little relation to the rest of his system: duties, service, must be performed for love of mankind in the ordinary, sensible way, while salvation is attached to them only by the thread of a dogma." Gandhi himself admitted that the desire for moksha was indeed there, but it was not meant for anyone than the individual himself.

Religion, for Gandhi, identified with ethics rather than theology or metaphysics; "except as ethical teaching", observes Prof. W. H. Morris-Jones, "it occupies in his thought the place of a preface to be hurriedly passed over.

What did Gandhi mean by religion? Let Gandhi explain:

"It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated its true correspondence between the Maker and itself." His religion, he claimed, was not bound by 'geographical limits'.

In Ethical Religion the relationship between religion and morality is more precisely put. "There is no religion higher than Truth and Righteousness." This emphasis on Truth and Righteousness as the supreme religion led him to affirm that there is no divorce between religion and morality. According to Gandhi, morality is the 'essence of religion'. "Religion is to morality what
water is to the seed that is sown in the soil. True religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other." 16 or "Religion is synonymous with allegiance to the moral law." 17 He was categorical in his pronouncement that "As soon as we lose the moral basis, we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man for instance cannot be untruthful, cruel and incontinent and claim to have God on his side." 18 He would reject any religious doctrine "that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality." 19

Religion and morality, according to Gandhi, are identical. 20 Gandhi saw that while religions may differ widely in their theologies, they are strikingly alike in their moral teachings. This ethical unity is unfortunately, however, overshadowed by their theological disunity, "a disunity that does much to render ineffective their moral teachings." Osborn notes: "And yet it is the humanist aspect of the great religions that have secured their survival and growth...." 21 Gandhi stressed on this essentially moral 'humanist aspect' of the great religions. He believed that behind all faiths there is a common ethical basis - a universal religion.

* S. K. George called Gandhi's religion 'basic'. "Gandhi's religion is basic in three aspects. First, in the breadth and depth of its definition of ultimate Reality as Truth. Second, in its insistence that religion is all-pervasive and not a compartmental concern. And third, in its unreserved acceptance of the validity of all religions." - 'Basic Religion: A Study In Gandhi's Religion' in Gandhi Memorial Peace Number (ed: Kshitis Roy, The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Santiniketan, 1949), p. 96.

Vincent Sheean defines Gandhi's religion as 'essential religion'. "... a powerful impetus toward essential religion, as distinct from ecclesiastical orthodoxies, is one clear result of the Mahatma's life struggle. ... By this I hope not to be understood as suggesting any Gandhiian cult, creed or synthesis." - Lead, Kindly Light (Random House, New York, 1949), p. 253.
"It means", as he said, "a belief in the ordered moral government of the
universe ... This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does
not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality." 22 The "study of
other religions besides one's own will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity
of all religions and afford a glimpse also of the universal and absolute truth
which lies beyond the 'dust of creeds and faiths'." 23

Religion viewed as a moral influence leans heavily on a humanistic inter-
pretation of ethics, observes Osborn. 24 If love of God is expressed as love of
humanity, or if 'God is the helping of man by man', religion shares with humanism
a common background in men's need for one another.

But religion usually makes exhortations to people to love one another, to
refrain from acts which harm one another, without recognizing the compulsions of
social conditions which frustrate men's natural tendencies to co-operation, lead
to what Niebuhr calls 'sentimental moralism'. (His strictures were aimed at
liberal Christian thought during the world economic crisis of the 'thirties.)
Gandhi's credit was that his ethics recognized the social-institutional aspect
and kept itself free from 'sentimental moralism'.

In Ethical Religion, Gandhi introduced the subject by a reference to the
antagonism between riches and righteousness; the contemporary indifference to
religion is due to the accumulation of wealth. The doctrines propounded in the
said book are the eternal laws of morality which are found alike in all religions
and are, therefore, binding on all. Morality is binding upon us, Gandhi held,
because it is the eternal and immutable law of nature. It is its own reward. The
moral law is independent of our feelings and opinions, but it "has its seat
in the soul of every man. Truth is within ourselves." 25

The sense of shared humanity lies at the base of morality. Gandhi's emphasis
on self-transcending service as the criterion and hallmark of morality is free
from any sectarian theological sentiment and conveys a universal appeal. He
Our desires and motives may be divided into two classes - selfish and unselfish. All selfish desires are immoral, while the desire to improve ourselves for the sake of doing good to others is truly moral. The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind.  

Gandhi's concept of morality breaks with conservatism. 

"True morality consists not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for ourselves and in fearlessly following it." 

This note seems to be a re-echo of the sant tradition which was deeply rooted among the vast masses in India and ran parallel to the iron-framed orthodox tradition. Gandhi felt himself closer to this popular tradition. 

Action to be moral, in Gandhi's opinion, must be voluntary. 

"No action which is not voluntary can be called moral. So long as we act like machines, there can be no question of morality. If we want to call an action moral, it should have been done consciously and as a matter of duty. ... Any action that is dictated by fear or by coercion of any kind ceases to be moral. It also follows that all good deeds that are prompted by hope of happiness in the next world cease to be moral." 

This contains two essential principles that underlie Gandhi's concept of morality. 

First, anything that denies the growth of human personality violates truth, engenders violence and hence immoral. Secondly, service without any self-regarding motive is the essence of moral behaviour. 

The effect of this emphasis on the ethical core of religion is very significant. As a logical step, religion becomes a personal quest and a way of life. Every one should be free to choose his own. Gandhi wrote: "Religion is a very personal matter." This is almost secularising religion, it becomes merely ethics, which even an atheist can find to be useful in the conduct of his life.
TRUTH

Ethical Religion affords incidentally an indication of the meaning of Truth. When not used in a metaphysical sense it seems to mean the moral law, or set of laws. Truth as a duty will mean the duty to obey the moral law, the duty to do one's duty, 'a tautology' - Spratt calls it. This deduction is confirmed by his writings, in which Truth is made to cover very various principles.

When Spratt put this difficulty to Gandhi, he replied that it meant more than merely do what you believe to be right. It meant, do what you believe, not what others believe, to be right. You must depend on your own judgment and conscience, and must develop them; and you must be prepared to abide by the consequences of your own judgment, and if necessary suffer accordingly. "If this is a principal meaning of Truth", Spratt remarks, "the value which he attaches to that doctrine is easily understood". We agree with the learned reviewer that "It expresses his (Gandhi's) life's work of urging people to transform themselves, and more particularly his work of training himself to be fit for the task." 30

We may recall here an interesting conversation that took place between Gandhi and Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose. Gandhi asked Prof. Bose if the scientist-professor did not at all believe in God. Prof. Bose confessed that the problem whether God existed or not, or what was the primal cause of the Universe, had never seriously come into his life. He did not concern himself with the question of such ultimates.

'Don't you believe in anything?', Gandhi asked.
Prof. Bose said, 'Yes, as a scientist, I do believe in truth. For, in the laboratory or in our scientific investigation, we undoubtedly try to discover the truth by observation and experiment. Unless we believe that there is something worth striving for, why should we engage in the chase at all? Truth may be like a carrot dangling before a donkey's nose, but it is there all the same.'
Gandhi said: 'That will do'. 30A

The question of theological belief was not important. What was important for Gandhi was that one must be prepared to suffer for realizing the truth as one conceived it to be.

AHIMSA

Closely intertwined with the concept of Truth is ahimsa. According to Gandhi, "without ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsa and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather of a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which is the reverse? Nevertheless, ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question." 31

END AND MEANS

The relationship between the end and the means is of crucial significance in
Gandhian thought. "Means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life," wrote Gandhi. 32 And "They say 'Means are after all means'. I would say 'means are after all everything'. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end." 33

His belief in metaphysical idealism led him to pin his faith in ethical idealism. "Indeed the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception." 34 Besides, the end grows out of the means. "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree." 35

Gandhi extended this concept of the controvvertibility of ends and means in the sphere of social-political matters. He wrote: "If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." 36 To him, "the attempt made to win Swaraj is Swaraj itself." 37 All his efforts were concentrated on perfecting the means to attain the goal. Having once determined the goal, he never attached importance to its repetition. "The clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there, if we do not know and utilize the means of achieving it. I have, therefore, concerned myself principally with the conservation of the means and their progressive use." 38 His insistence on non-violent means to achieve freedom of the country should have to be understood in the background of his fundamental ethical belief. Gandhi's philosophy of action as expressed in Satyagraha may better be understood and appreciated in terms of ends-means relationship. 38A

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: "Gandhi was never tired of talking about means and ends and of laying stress on the importance of the means. That is the essential difference, I think, between his approach and the normal approach which thinks in terms of ends only and because means are forgotten, the ends aimed at escape
This insistence on the supreme importance of the means distinguished Gandhian ethics and logically his other theories about man, society etc. from what Nehru called 'the normal approach'. Gandhian concept of the ends-means relationship distinguishes itself from the Marxian concept of the dialectical inseparability of means and ends. In may be pointed out here that Gandhi under-stood Marxism - he shared the general belief - as advocating the dictum: 'the end justifies the means'. He on different occasions, as we shall see later, told that while he held great regard for the Marxian ideal 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' - he called it the ethical ideal of non-possession - he differed from the Marxists on the question of the employment of means. We shall examine the implication of the respective points of view in our evaluation of the Gandhian ideal of the State where a contrast, in brief, will be attempted. (See pp...)

'CONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME'

Gandhi's concentration on means followed logically from his fundamental faith. He wrote in 1920: "For me I say with Cardinal Newman: 'I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me.' The business is essentially religious. The business of every God-fearing man is to dissociate himself from evil in total disregard of consequences. He must have faith in a good deed producing only a good result; that in my opinion is the Gita doctrine of work without attachment. God does not permit him to foresee the future." 40 (For similar statements see Young India 25-12-24, p. 427, Harijan 20-4-34, p. 78, Harijan, 23-6-46, pp. 189-90.)

Philosophically viewed, this concern for "taking care of the present" leads to the pragmatic world-view. And pragmatism is not so far removed from philosophical idealism as is commonly supposed. Gandhi combined practical realism with philosophical idealism. He was fond of saying "I am a practical idealist."
GANDHIAN ETHICS AND BENTHAMITE UTILITARIANISM

Man's ultimate aim, according to Gandhi, is the realization of God. But he did not prefer the seclusion of solitude for individual salvation. It is through service of humanity that one should try to attain self-realization. Here the ethical note is pronounced. Self-realization to Gandhi means realization of "the greatest good of all". "The greatest good of all" or Sarvodaya includes social and political emancipation the absence of which impedes moral and spiritual regeneration.

Gandhi regarded himself as an ethical absolutist and quite logically from his own point of view, rejected Benthamite formula of the greatest good of the greatest number as imperfect and inadequate. In 1926 he wrote: "A votary of ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula (of the greatest good of the greatest number). He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die, so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number, and therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself." 41

In Mahadev Desai's Diary (entry dated June 4, 1932) we read Gandhi's opinion about the said doctrine. "I do not believe in the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. It means in its nakedness that in order to achieve the supposed good of 51 per cent the interest of 49 per cent may be, or rather, should be sacrificed. It is a heartless doctrine and has done harm to humanity. The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can only be achieved by uttermost self-sacrifice." 42

The utilitarian doctrine carried to its extreme limit, in theory, stands for
the 'democratic' tyranny—suppression of the minority by the majority—the professed aim being the good of 'the greatest number'.

Spratt observes in this connection: "the difference between "the greatest number" and "all" seems merely verbal; and the principle (of non-violence) is not strictly absolutist, since it admits exceptions. It is in principle quite opposed to utilitarianism. But its practical outcome differs from utilitarianism only in the same sort of way as do the feelings of nearly all people. Few, I imagine, would be strictly utilitarian about deliberate torture, at least when inflicted upon humans. Mr. Gandhi feels in the same way about animals." 43

It is common knowledge that popular usage has degraded the meaning of the term 'utilitarianism'. Utilitarianism has become identified with materialism in its worst ethical sense. A close student of utilitarianism comments: "One wonders how far Thomas Carlyle, with his vehement rhetoric, is responsible for this!" 44 It may be just a guess—we are not sure—that Gandhi who read Carlyle might have formed his opinion from that source. Whatever be the case, in theory Gandhian Sarvodaya and utilitarianism is opposed to each other though in practical matters the distinction is too thin to be recognized.

THE TRUE SOURCE OF RIGHTS IS DUTY

Gandhi differed from the Benthamite concept of rights and held that the true source of rights is duty. It was not only a question of personal moral norm with him but he held this doctrine to be applicable in the realm of public life. We shall see subsequently how this moral maxim is embodied within the general framework of his political theory. (See ch. 4, sec. on Rights, pp...) 44-74

SELF-PURIFICATION

As Gandhi did not believe in double standard between private and public life*,

he always insisted that a Satyagrahi cannot really reform others unless he reformed himself. Self-purification is the watchword of Gandhian morality. As he wrote in his Autobiography: "Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification." For him, "the movement of Swaraj is a movement of self-purification." Self-purification, in his opinion, enables one to attain 'Swaraj' - the inner freedom. He conceived the relationship between inward freedom and Swaraj in political-economic sphere as integral. We shall attempt subsequently to see how he synthesized between 'Swaraj' of the individual and Swaraj of a people. (See pp...)

CARDINAL VIRTUES

Self-purification, according to Gandhi, involves the constant cultivation of cardinal ethical virtues like Truth, Ahimsa or Love, Brahmacharya or Chastity, Control of the Palate, Non-Stealing, Non-possession or Poverty, Fearlessness, Removal of Untouchability, Bread Labour, Tolerance i.e. Equality of Religions and Swadeshi. Gandhi, as we have observed earlier, (See pp.37.) while accepting the traditional virtues supplemented them in conformity with the temper of the age and the demand of the situation. One may refer to From Yeravda Bandir for an elaboration of these virtues. The sociological significance of these virtues shall be dealt with at appropriate places. The twin concepts of satya and ahimsa shall be discussed in the chapter on Satyagraha.

NATURE OF GANDHI'S ETHICS: SPRATT'S VIEW CONSIDERED

A study of Gandhi's ethics leads us to consider certain questions. What is the nature of Gandhi's ethics? To what extent does it derive its origin from traditional Hindu ethics? How much has Christianity influenced Gandhi's formulation of ethical norms and discipline? Does it correspond to modern, bourgeois values? or is it an expression of the values of society encumbered by mediaeval orthodoxy? We hold these to be moot questions that one must
tackle for proper understanding and evaluation of Gandhi's ethics.

Gandhi held moral laws as 'immutable'. According to him, certain moral values are not conditioned by time and space. It was logical from his own standpoint of ethical idealism to view the moral problems this way. Besides his own fundamental faith in the immutability of moral laws, which was decisively of prime importance to him, another factor might have played its part in his insistence on observance of cardinal moral virtues. Placed as he was, he had to make exhortations for cultivation of these virtues and as a pastmaster of mass psychology, he might have felt that exhortations could only render themselves effective if made in absolute terms.

From the standpoint of social science, moral values cannot be said to be unrelated to the process of social evolution. Moral ideas are not something fixed; they evolve in course of evolution of the society. They arise out of the human situation and in relation to the historical conditions of society. Moral ideas correspond to the given stage of social development. The material basis of the society conditions the development of ethical concepts. General moral concepts like truth, honesty, good, right, justice and a host of others derive their concrete meaning in the actual material process of life. But moral ideas do not merely reflect conditions. They are also social forces which influence and affect the human situation. Secondly, there are permanent and durable elements of morality that belong to all forms of social organization—primitive, feudal, capitalist and socialist. Engels pointed out that feudal morality, bourgeois morality and proletarian morality have much in common because they represent three different stages of the same historical development. Keeping this background in view, let us try to approach Gandhian ethics.

P. Spratt in his analytical study of Gandhism offers certain suggestions which merit close attention. His analysis because of its off-the-track approach may not commend itself for unanimous agreement. But that does not render any
the less significant his observations. They provoke. Hence an attempt to follow his argument.

A brief note is to be added before we attempt an examination of Spratt's view. When Spratt or any serious analyst as a matter of that qualifies certain moral virtues as "bourgeois" or "mediaeval" it should be understood to mean in its sociological context and not in any vulgar hedonistic sense as representing the actual, sordid interests of any particular class. This note, one may rightly hold, is superfluous, if not definitely unwarranted. But this seems to be necessary in view of the confusion that exists in certain quarters. 47

Spratt's views on the subject may be pieced together as follows:

1) Ethics is a 'product of independent and individualistic thought.'
(p. 30)

2) 'India has not experienced on any great scale a change corresponding to the "bourgeois-democratic revolution" of Europe. Perhaps the greatest part of Mr. Gandhi's work has been promotion of this kind of change. His ethics can best be regarded as that of the insurgent bourgeois, striving to free himself from mediaeval encumbrances.' (pp. X-XI) "His desire is to lift the people out of their mediaeval degradation." (p. 32)

3) Gandhi's experience as a student in England and then in South Africa developed his admiration for the bourgeois ideal of character and conduct.
(p. 20)

4) 'His life has become a symbol of Truth, as he might himself express it. He is striving to make himself a perfect example of the individuality maintaining its own integrity against all temptations - the Will willing itself, as Hegel might have said. It is also the the grafting of the self-assertion of bourgeois Europe upon the renunciation of mediaeval India.'
(p. 127).

5) 'Hindu religious and ethical thought is pronouncedly subjectivist and
introverted.' (p. 114) 'In spite of the teaching of reformers from Buddha's time Hinduism is relatively lacking in ethical element.' (p. 147) The virtue of active benevolence that Gandhi accepted wholeheartedly 'has always been characteristic of Christianity.' (p. 147) 'According to the theory of the most of the Hindu schools, morality is of only relative importance; it concerns existence in time, not eternity. It is commonly said that Christianity is a primarily ethical religion, as opposed to Hinduism, the chief interest of which is metaphysical. As on the similar question of knowledge and works, Mr. Gandhi's position is clearly nearer to the Christian.' (p. 151). 'Indian morality is formal and prescriptive'. (p. 149) In Gandhi's ethical ideas the modern, European element seems to be more pronounced. (p. 140; p. 143, p. 147) 'even in the matter of non-violence his attitude is one of freedom and protest against tradition and prescriptive morality.' (p. 149) In Gandhi's interpretation of the Gita the inner aspect is not omitted, but 'he twists the whole teaching into a support of his own doctrine of practical service.' (p. 115) Gandhi follows the modern commentators influenced by European thought in making the central doctrine of the Gita 'ethical, not spiritual.' (p. 143) 'No less clearly modern or Christian is the prominence which he gives to the individual judgment of the ethical truth, the conscience.' (p. 148)

'Deussen says that while Christianity sees the essence of man in will, Brahmanism sees it in knowledge. It is quite obvious with which view Mr. Gandhi would feel more sympathy. The whole of his teaching and example of initiative and energy in worldly business is an attempt to modernise India. His attitude to knowledge is equally opposed to tradition.' (pp. 148-49)

'His insistence on useful labour, in the Ashram and generally, is a clear case. It comes directly from Tolstoy. His social teaching, with its democratic and equalitarian character, must be considered foreign to the practice, and to most of the theory, of Hinduism, though most reformers
have preached similar doctrines. His humility may probably be regarded as
owing something to Christianity. This feature is one of those which suggests
that the influence has been specifically Christian rather than generally
European: in no other way could anybody learn humility from Europe' (p. 150)

His teaching may be regarded as inclining towards that type of ethical
type which makes the conception of duty predominant, as opposed to the
which lays stress upon virtue. Whatever may be said of practice,
philosophical Hinduism generally has given more attention to the development
of virtue than to the performance of duty.' (p. 151)

'His ethical system, with its consistent emphasis upon the development of
individual character, is far better calculated to achieve its object than
Vivekananda's mere exhortations to an imitation of western energy. Vivek-
amanda is out of sympathy with European thought, and he sees only its
superficial success. Mr. Gandhi has in the nature of the case been able to
understand its spirit far more thoroughly. Mr. Gandhi's way may after all
prove to be the true way to the modernisation of India.' (p. 186)

Lest it be misunderstood we repeat once again that Spratt while calling
Gandhi 'a bourgeois thinker' (p. 186) makes it very clear in which sense
he uses the term. He makes it explicit when he says: "it is unsound to
regard him as the agent of the wealthy classes...." (p. 244)

Spratt's analysis stresses two things: first, the virtues that Gandhi
emphasized upon are individual, modern virtues and secondly, his concept
of morality is more Christian than Hindu in its inspiration. Spratt calls
Gandhi 'a Christianised Hindu' (p. 127; pp. 166-67).

We have traced in Chapter II the impact of western influence on the origin
and development of Gandhi's ideas. We have also seen there that Gandhi's passion
for service owed much to Christian influence. One may recall here that Gandhi
called Gokhale "my Raja Guru". Gokhale's motto was to 'spiritualise public
life' and impart character to his countrymen. The liberal politician wanted to
impregnate Indian public life with modern values which incidentally had their
origin in the West. Gandhi, as has been observed earlier, promoted the process
of modernization and helped in the growth of modern values in a society that
lingered in the twilight of mediaevalism. To quote Sri K. M. Munshi: "He (Gandhi)
broke the iron grooves in which our society was cast." 49 This is true notwith­
standing his apparent conservatism. The moral values that he emphasized upon
corresponded to the impulse of the given period of Indian history and his
ueering insight enabled him to realize that transformation of the individual
lives were necessary for doing anything meaningful and positive in social life.
We shall see subsequently the significance of Gandhi's emphasis upon individual
regeneration as the key to national emancipation.

Considered from the sociological point of view, the ethical norms that he
wanted to introduce in public life were, in essence, modern and bourgeois virtues
as compared to the age-long mediaeval values prevalent in his days. Spratt's
analysis on this score seems to be based on a correct appraisal of the problem.

As to the point that Christian element was more pronounced in Gandhian
ethics and that Hindu thought lacks ethical content are matters of sharp
controversy. How far Gandhi's concept of ahimsa was influenced by Christianity
has been discussed in a previous chapter and no further discussion seems to be
called for.

Albert Schweitzer remarks: "It is one of the most important of Gandhi's
acts that he compels Indian ethics openly to come to grips with reality.... So in
one corner his world and life affirmation is marked 'Made in England'. 50
Schweitzer's thesis that Indian thought characterized itself by its stress on
world and life-negation has been subject to criticism from many quarters. But
that is not important here. Only one point needs to be recorded which is deemed
to be relevant. We do not share Schweitzer's opinion in toto for instances can
be cited and authoritative texts can be quoted to disprove his thesis; but on the whole, the main strand in Indian thought, we agree with him, had been centred round what he calls 'life negation'. Gandhi while remaining wedded to Indian metaphysical idealism in theory broke new ground by giving priority to ethical virtues. This speaks of his non-conformist attitude towards Hinduism.

Farquhar complained that "There is practically no ethical philosophy within the frontiers of Hindu thinking." 51

Radhakrishnan contends this construction of Hindu ethics. Refuting the charge of indifference to ethics in Hindu thought, he says: "The charge, however, cannot be sustained. Attempts to fill the whole of life with the power of spirit are common. Next to the category of reality, that of dharma is the most important concept in Indian thought. So far as the actual ethical content is concerned, Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism are not inferior to others. Ethical perfection is the first step towards divine knowledge." 52

It has sometimes been made out that European writers on Indian philosophy have wrongly interpreted Hindu ethics. But the thesis that Hindu thought lacks ethical content finds its proponents even among Indian scholars.

Ganapathia Jha in a discussion regarding morality in Indian philosophy commented: "... instead of there being no room for morality in Indian Philosophy, there is a very strict discipline involved in the study and consummation of that Philosophy." He added to say that Indian philosophy gives only "catalogue of virtues", but it does not mention the word "conscience". 53

One may contend the learned reviewer's interpretation by pointing out that the Yogavasistha Ramayana placed all its emphasis on conscience as the ultimate arbiter. (See p. 45 for an excerpt from Yogavasistha which was quoted in Young India.) It may be pointed out as a counter-argument to this proposition role of that while Yogavasistha duly emphasized the conscience and most emphatically enjoined upon not to obey any injunction, however sacred it may supposed to be,
that violated conscience, yet withal most of the schools of Indian traditional philosophy have not preached this doctrine for emulation. Rather allegiance to authority has been definitely upheld as a positive virtue. It would be presumptuous on our part - as we lack the necessary professional training in the academic discipline of Indian philosophy - to pronounce any authoritative judgment on this issue. And it is very difficult to say the last word on Hindu philosophy which contains within itself different schools of thought, often at variance with one another, within its fold. A point may be made out here without fear of contradiction that Indian philosophy is primarily metaphysical. Ethics comes here as the step towards comprehension of metaphysical reality or 'divine knowledge'. This is evident even from Radhakrishnan's statement quoted above. Morality itself has not been accorded the supreme position. Another point relates to the practice of Hinduism. That it has not helped in the growth of individual conscience as the supreme determinant of human action is common knowledge. We have seen earlier (Prof. Susil Kumar Maitra's opinion cited above, see p.14) that Hindu morality primarily aims at the autonomy of the individual and that there is practically no recognition of the social duties proper i.e. of the duties of social service in a positive sense. Gandhi, it is maintained, aimed at social service in a positive sense and there he broke with the conventional Hindu concept of morality.

Gandhi's interpretation of the Gita was his own. The orthodox interpretation could not satisfy him for he wanted the Gita to be the unfailing source of his philosophy of action. He was conscious of the fact that it might bear interpretation that his reading of the Gita was coloured by the Sermon on the Mount. As he himself told Vincent Sheean: "I must tell you that orthodox scholars have criticized my interpretation of the Gita as being unduly influenced by the Sermon on the Mount." 54
KANT AND GANDHI COMPARED

Kant's 'categorical imperative' may be expressed precisely and completely in the form: "So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of another, in every case as an end in itself, never as a means only." The great German idealistic philosopher found the nature of moral behaviour in actions which conform with a universal law. But the universal law, he stressed, is derived from the motion of man as a rational being. The test of the rightness of an act lies in the answer to the question: 'Could you, as a rational being, will that others do it?' And this is to ask, 'Could you will that it be part of human conduct?' The universal moral law, Kant believed, each rational being carries within himself. It is that without which, he held, there neither would nor could be any ethics at all, for it is the unconditioned obligation ('the categorical imperative'), the "Thou shalt", the demand that we do our duty, no matter what the cost. His demand that we treat every man as an end, never merely as a means, is a plea that we strive to overcome the unsocial, irrational aspects which throw us into conflict with our fellows.

Gandhi's concept of universal morality is similar to the Kantian principles. His insistence on doing duty for the sake of duty, unperturbed by any anxiety for the result of actions "has an essential similarity", observes Dr. D. M. Datta, "to that of the great western philosopher Immanuel Kant who advocated the performance of duty for duty's sake without being moved by any thought of pleasurable consequences and with the faith that God sees that good deeds are ultimately followed by happiness." 55

Spratt also draws a comparison between the two. "It is perhaps Kant more than any of the other eminent ethical theorists to whom one would look for a spirit similar to Mr. Gandhi's. There is some similarity in their ideas: Kant emphasised duty, held that the criterion of right and wrong is motive only, upheld a rather extreme doctrine of altruism, condemned mere adherence to tradition, and despised
the goods which this world can provide; and so far Mr. Gandhi agrees. Even in
these points there is to be seen something of the stern puritanical spirit which
is so often found in his ethical writings. Christianity is said to stress God's
love, Hinduism his justice. In this respect Mr. Gandhi usually remains a Hindu.

"... perhaps, he is trying to adhere to another Kantian principle, that a
man's actions should be such that he can desire that his example should be
universally followed. He often remarks that it is more important that the
principle should be good than that people should always be able to act on it.

"We must set our standards right." Often when ordinary considerations suggest
that his principle is inapplicable he remarks: This is the test of our
principle. He is perhaps referring to the need for rigid moral conventions by
which the categorical imperative could be defended." 56

GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTION

Gandhian ethics, if studied in isolation from his life and his other social
doctrines, may lend the impression that it is another variant of abstract moral-
ity. But Gandhi avoided that much-too-common danger of ethical absolutism by
relating his ethics to social life. He did not for a moment believe that moral
virtues exist in a social vacuum. The concept of morality involves universality
of application. But if society is divided into castes and sectional interests,
between privileged and unprivileged members, the application of moral rules
tends to be narrowed into the protection of special interests. The social
problem must be tackled at the proper level. Gandhi recognized that. In his
case, ethics was not divorced from justice. He added sociological content
into his ethical principles. Therein lies his distinctive contribution.
NOTES


5. Young India, 2-3-22, p. 131.


7. Harijan, 8-5-37, p. 98.


14A. Young India, 11-8-20 in Young India 1919-22 (S. Ganesan, Madras, 1922), p. 283.

16. Ibid.
19. Young India, 21-7-20, p. 4.
23. Young India, 6-12-28, p. 406.
27. Ibid, p. 6.
32. Young India, 26-12-24, p. 424.
33. Young India, 17-7-24, p. 236.
34. Ibid.
38A. For a detailed discussion, see Joan V. Bondurant, Conquest of Violence (Oxford University Press, Bombay, Calcutta etc., 1959), pp. 32-35 and ch. VI.

Prof. Morris-Jones (article cited above, pp. 219-224) makes certain critical observations about Bondurant's study.


40. Young India, 29-12-20 in Young India 1919-22 (S. Ganesan, Madras, 1922), p. 714.

41. Young India, 9-12-26, p. 432.

42. The Diary of Mahadev Desai (Translated from the Gujarati and Edited by Vairji Govindji Desai, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1953), vol. I, p. 149; see also Ibid, p. 221; p. 264.


45. Young India, 12-6-24, p. 195.


Dr. Prasad's understanding of Spratt's analysis, we are constrained to remark, does not correspond with what Spratt has actually meant. He has quoted Spratt out of context to prove that Spratt "understands him (Gandhi) as 'bourgeois and individualist'. (p. 16)" (Reference is made here to Spratt's Gandhism - An Analysis.) In p. 16 of Gandhism we read: "There is to be noticed the first indication of another bourgeois and individualist virtue, thrift. Mr. Gandhi is not thrifty in the full sense, far from it. But he has some of the qualities of the genuinely thrifty man..." This proves that the quotation excerpted in Mahadev Prasad's book is torn out of context. What Spratt has meant by Gandhi's
bourgeois virtues' has been discussed in the body.


52. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 52.


