CHAPTER IV
In this chapter, we would first look at the issue of choices that Gandhi makes at each level of confrontation with British colonialism in the specific sense and modernity at large. In fact for Gandhi the issue of politics, which was intimately tied to the issue of the self, was fundamentally a journey faced with choices at each level of confronting the world. The ideas of the self were the question of choices began, spilled over to the idea about society and its relations at large, were issues of accepting and rejecting forms of life, were Gandhi's constant preoccupation. Secondly, in this chapter, we would look at the goals of politics that Gandhi had in mind. For him, politics was not necessarily about a struggle to achieve power. For Gandhi, the anti-colonial struggle was of course about driving away the British and forming an independent nation, but he was always more integrally interested in the ways and means of achieving this goal. In fact, as we have seen in the earlier chapter on Gandhi, the means of struggle were of paramount importance to him. So we find in Gandhi an entire framework of asserting the goals for politics at various levels. He of course had a picture of society in mind towards which end he wanted politics to move. But it was at the level of experimentation with politics directly through which he wanted to achieve them. So Gandhi's idea of the goals of politics were entrenched with the means of politics through which he propagated the idea of his favoured type of society.
Gandhian 'Choices': Means and Ends

It is interesting to note that Gandhi always had an either-or sense of choices made for the self as well as for society and its relations at large. For example, at the level of the self, Gandhi chose non-violence against violence with regard to politics, khadi against foreign clothes with regard to the idea of self-sustenance, village life against city life with regard to a utopia of society, etcetera. For each thing that Gandhi chose for himself and society he had a strict notion about what he was choosing against. This makes the notion of choices for Gandhi a sharp and strict notion of choosing something against, in a way its opposite thing. But in doing this, it was not as if Gandhi's choices were as absolute as he made them out to be, but rather choices which were more in the shape of engagement in a political sense with things that he confronted. In fact, Gandhi sometimes gave a unique twist to his notion of choices.

For example, Gandhi felt that religion had to play a very important role in politics. In fact the very essence of politics comes from religion. But for Gandhi religion was not about any particular tradition but rather in a universal concept of dharma, which he linked with the idea of truth. But then, Gandhi offers a second twist within this universal idea of religion and truth. As he says,

"(a)s for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I would restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate
religious surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects.¹

This means that for Gandhi though the question of dharma is universal and eternal, it has a particular, immediate context of its own which cannot be circumvented. So, in order to establish the proper role of dharma in politics and society, one has to begin, so to say, from within one's own cultural sphere. Yet again this cultural sphere for Gandhi is not necessarily based upon any traditionalist structure but rather based upon a moral and ethical idea of society. In fact, it is at this juncture of Gandhi's conception of tradition and the question of ethical choice where he gives a very modern twist to the entire issue. Because for Gandhi the issue of morality is not a settled one but rather is of an emergent nature. We would remember that Gandhi spoke of doing 'experiments' with truth. This notion of experimentation, we have seen, is linked to the achieving both individual and collective ends in social and political life, through ethical means, shaped by a historical churning process where a moral community, so to say, finally emerges after a historical engagement with the other. Since the historical situation was linked to the presence of colonialism and Western modernity, for Gandhi, the achieving of a moral community rested upon how it places its entire edifice of struggle against the notions of the same. So, the values which need to be achieved are placed against the values of the coloniser. From here we find that though Gandhi placed himself against modernist structures of thought and society, the modernist attitude of his own approach was more by the way of engaging

¹ Gandhi, M.K., Collected Works, Vol XIII, p. 219
through the ‘process’ of modernity but using it for ends which lay far away from the content of modernity. On this Anthony Parel says:

"A glimpse into Gandhi’s Western intellectual sources should go a long way towards correcting the view held by some that the Mahatma was opposed to a Western civilisation as such. Such a view is so simple as to be false ... The breadth and depth of his knowledge of Western intellectual sources suggest that his attack was limited to certain unhealthy tendencies in modern Western civilisation and that the attack was not motivated by any consideration of narrow nationalism or anti-colonialism. On the contrary, in Hind Swaraj he joins forces with many concerned Western thinkers in the defence of true civilisational values everywhere, East and West. He hoped for the day when England would reintegrate modernity within the framework of traditional British culture."

Again, we have also noticed in the previous chapter on Gandhi, that he had a very individualist approach towards interpreting his own tradition. As Nehru pointed out:

"Claiming to understand the spirit of Hinduism, he (Gandhi) rejects every text or practice which does not fit in with his idealist interpretation of what it should be, calling it an interpolation or a subsequent accretion ... And so in practice he is singularly free to take the path of his choice, to change and adapt

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himself, to develop his philosophy of life and action, subject only to the overriding consideration of the moral law as he conceives this to be.\textsuperscript{3}

So it is wrong to bracket Gandhi's ideas under traditionalism like Bhiku Parekh points out, most of Gandhi's ideas hardly seem to find place in the traditional order of his culture:

"Some of Gandhi's ideas had no parallels in the Hindu tradition. His emphasis on the dignity of manual labour was new to it and finds no mention even in any of his nineteenth century predecessors with the limited exception of Vivekananda. When he took it to its logical conclusion and advocated cleaning latrines as a way of identifying with the untouchables and dissolving all traces of egoism, he frightened away even Gokhale's Servants of Indian Society. His equation of religion with social service had been anticipated by only a few nineteenth century leaders, and his view that a total and lifelong commitment to wiping away every tear from every eye was the only path to moksha was almost entirely new. His insistence that every man was a publicly accountable trustee of his time, talents and wealth, that he should only use them for socially beneficial purposes, and that lack of punctuality and failure to answer letters represented violations of a moral trust finds no echo in the Hindu tradition. His emphasis on struggles against injustices, his intense concern for personal integrity, his fierce loyalty to his conscience, his acute sense of personal responsibility for the actions of his countrymen, and the

\textsuperscript{3} Nehru, Jawaharlal, \textit{The Discovery}, OUP, 1964, p. 362

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notions of vicarious atonement and redemptive power of suffering love underlying his fasts had no analogues in the Hindu tradition either. So we find in Gandhi a radical interpretation of tradition which is proof of a definitive modernist phenomenon. It is also highly modernist in the striking arbitrary individualist fashioning of tradition which led Gandhi to not only break away from the various rules and customs of his own tradition, but also enabled him to freely adopt principles of both philosophy and action from the sources of other traditions of the world as well. But, one must keep in mind that Gandhi was more tilted towards the religious aspects in other traditions as much as he was of his own. Though, his intimacy and acceptance of the ideas in the works of writers like Tolstoy, Ruskin, Max Nordau, Edward Carpenter, among others reveals the fact that Gandhi was equally dipped in the more specific anti-modern ideas of his contemporary time which were at the same time not non-modern, but were ideas which had its roots within the larger issues embedded within modernity itself.

So the background of the very specific choices which Gandhi made and which we will focus on shortly, we find a paradoxical nature of Gandhi's overall thinking where on the one side he rejected certain specific phenomena of modernity while holding on to certain key modern attitudes and principles with which he tried to revolutionise the very idea of tradition. In this sense, one can call Gandhi an anti-modern modernist who wished to include religion in politics but in the process politicised the very way in which one imagines politics to be. This exactly what Bhiku Parekh believes to be about Gandhi:

"In the modern age, all aspects of individual and social life were directly or indirectly organized and administered by the state. Its presence was ubiquitous, and all human relationships were politically mediated. This was particularly the case in India and other colonies. Since politics was pervasive it was the central terrain of action and no one could hope to serve his fellow men and eliminate social and economic ills without active political engagement. If political life could be spiritualised, Gandhi argued, it would have a profoundly transformative effect on the rest of society. In every age, a specific area of life was the unique testing ground of religion and morality and offered them a unique opportunity to revitalise themselves. In the modern age it was politics, and no religion could be taken seriously that failed to address itself to its challenges."

The issue of politics directly involved Gandhi with modernity as both were inseparable, conceptually and as a context of action. In fact, in the very bringing together of tradition in the field of politics made Gandhi's regenerative project a profoundly modern one. As Parekh precisely explains:

"For Gandhi then, every Indian has a duty in the modern age to become politically involved and to help regenerate his country. Political involvement took a number of forms and occurred at a variety of levels. Although participation in the struggle for independence was obviously important, it was not the most important and could itself take different forms. Since independence was merely formal and had no meaning without national regeneration, 'true politics' consisted in revitalizing Indian society, culture and character by working in the villages, fighting against diseases, hunger and

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5 Ibid. p. 91
local injustices, helping ordinary men and women acquire courage and self-respect, building up local communities and people's power, and in general devoting oneself to creating an energetic, courageous, cooperative and just country. Every activity that contributed to the realization of this goal was political in nature.\textsuperscript{6}

So in terms of the background choices in Gandhi's overall scheme of ideas we find how the idea of morality in Gandhi tries to link the particular case of a traditionalist culture within an overall modernist trend of political issues through which the regeneration of that eternal idea of morality is sought. The paradox between tradition and modernity in Gandhi's ideas were interestingly both posed with as well as against each other. Though an either-or scheme did work in certain specific contexts of Gandhi's ideas, but in this background scheme of choices, Gandhi did not have any problem in fusing everything together in the most synthetic manner. Partha Chatterjee has noted this fusing of disparate elements in the overall scheme of Gandhian thought. As he points out:

"He was not, for instance, seriously troubled by the problems of reconciling individuality universalism, of being oneself and at the same time feeling at one with the infinite variety of the world. Nor was his solution one in which the individual, without merging into the world, would want to embrace the rich diversity of the world in himself."\textsuperscript{7}

Within this overall background, then, of fused elements, Gandhi placed the specific aspects of his philosophy onto strict choices. The first involved, of

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid. p. 92  
\textsuperscript{7} Chatterjee, Partha, \textit{Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?}, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 99
course, the choice between violence and non-violence, where Gandhi fully
spoke in favour of the former and in rejection of the latter. As we have noted
the concept of non-violence as the only choice open to political resistance
was again not arguably from any philosophy of Hindu tradition but rather in
the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, according to Parekh, Gandhi “was deeply
influenced by the Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Christian theories of non-
vigence”. Gandhi of course mentions in his autobiography how Tolstoy’s *The
Kingdom of God is Within You* influenced him a lot. As Anthony Pare! notes:

“In this work Tolstoy presents Christianity, not as a dogmatic, revealed
religion, but as an ethical system. At the heart of its teaching is the ethic of the
Sermon on the Mount, which, according to Tolstoy, teaches the doctrine of
non-violence and the ultimacy of the conscience.”

Again we find that the notion of ethics linked to the question of non-violence is
borrowed from a religious source which of course was not Gandhi’s own, and
yet in keeping with his individualist strand of borrowing principles from various
traditions he does likewise in this case. But, when it comes to the strategical
implementing of the doctrine of non-violence, in the field of politics Gandhi
uses the experimentative method of satyagraha which, as Partha Chatterjee
notes had modern, even scientific notions. Chatterjee quotes Gandhi in this
regard:

“A soldier of an army does not know the whole of the military science; so also
does a satyagrahi not know the whole science of satyagraha. It is enough if
he trusts his commander and honestly follows his instructions and is ready to

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University Press, 1990, p. xxxvi
suffer unto death without bearing malice against the so-called enemy ... (These satyagrahis) must render heart discipline to their commander. There should be no mental reservation.⁹

From here we can deduce that Gandhi's principle of non-violence when used directly in the heart of politics as a weapon of resistance in the shape of satyagraha, he uses the vocabulary which belongs to a pedagogical language of scientific experimentation through which moral goals are sought to be achieved. In fact there are two more elements which seem crucial in the entire paraphernalia of the satyagraha experiment: one, the question of discipline which every satyagrahi is supposed to follow in his course of action. This evocation about discipline is linked to Gandhi's strenuous self-project of rigorous self-discipline in his experiments with truth, which here he extends to the collective level. Of course the idea of discipline can very well come from a religious mode of leading life and carrying out actions, but in this case one tends to find that it is a discipline which is sought within the overall discipline of satyagraha which is at once political and moral and hence traverses both a religious connotation of life as well as a very modernist conception of satyagraha as a science to be understood and led through an experimental mode. Two, the idea of the commander within the movement of satyagraha shows an individualist idea behind carrying forward what is a collective struggle. In fact the scientific experimentation takes place precisely at the individual level where it is through the individual that the entire project of satyagraha is lived out. Talking of satyagraha in the context of the khadi

⁹ Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 108
program, Gandhi makes the leader as the individual who leads the struggle as
the primary arbitrator of the entire politics. Chatterjee quotes him on this:

"He will so win over the village that they will seek and follow his advice.
Supposing I go and settle down in a village with a ghani (village oil-press), I
won't be an ordinary ghanchi (oil-presser) earning 15-20 rupees a month. I
will be a Mahatma ghanchi. I have used the word Mahatma in fun but what I
mean to say is that as ghanchi I will become a model for the villagers to
follow. I will be a ghanchi who knows the Gita and the Koran. I will be learned
enough to teach their children ... Real strength lies in knowledge. True
knowledge gives a moral standing and moral strength. Everyone seeks the
advice of such a man."¹⁰

As Chatterjee explains, what Gandhi seeks to define here is how the moral
authority of the individual commander is paramount and is also a product of
superior knowledge to the pedagogical status of the commander coincides
with his having a superior moral authority. So we find in Gandhi a technique of
struggle that rests on the high pedagogical assumptions and moral
implications of the individual arbitrator. In fact in Gandhi's idea of the
satyagrahi the overall conception is always that of the individual who would
within the limits of his own identity carve out the moral possibilities of the
satyagraha movement taken as a whole. Gandhi lays down stringent
guidelines for the individual satyagrahi:

"The solitary satyagrahi has to examine himself. If he has universal love and if
he fulfils the conditions implied in such a state, it must find expression in his

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 122
daily conduct. He would be bound with the poorest in the village by the ties of service. He would constitute himself the scavenger, the nurse, the arbitrator of disputes, and the teacher of the children of the village. Everyone, young and old, would know him; though a householder, he would be leading a life of restraint; he would make no distinction between his and his neighbour's children; he would owe nothing, but would hold what wealth he has in trust for others, and would, therefore, spend out of it just sufficient for his barest needs. His needs would, as far as possible, approximate to those of the poor; he would harbour no untouchability, and would therefore, inspire people of all castes and creeds to approach him with confidence. Such is the ideal satyagrahi ... Such a satyagrahi will not find himself single-handed for long.  

What Gandhi tries to rigorously lay down here is the entire range of moral choice and action by the individual satyagrahi. The individual would have to constantly fulfill the wealth of choices laid down before him. The idea is of a completely selfless individual moving through the entire edifice of social life. It would be an almost impossible task placed as such by Gandhi before the individual to constantly keep recovering both his achievements an examining the failures as well. In fact though in the ideational sense Gandhi's political movement of satyagraha is both modernist and collective, at the individualist level the moral dictums are more thoroughly expanded which is deemed to have an effect on the overall movement.

What also seems crucial to the experimentation of satyagraha is that the notion of service and social work is held as paramount as the concept of non-

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violence. Since non-violence is about a self-choice where an individual must suffer violence without hitting back or injuring the one who commits violence against him, the element of suffering is the key to the entire project and moral code. This sense of suffering is what links the practice of non-violence to the idea of service to others he way Gandhi conceptualized it. It seems the notion of service would be like a preparatory course which would create a general attitude to suffer for the sake of others and hence to translate this sense of responsibility to the practice of non-violence. As has been shown in the earlier chapter on Gandhi, there is a paradox at this level between Gandhi’s idea of self-restraint and his idea of spontaneous service and generosity towards others. In this context it would be useful to mention that this paradox between self-restraint and the spontaneous service is what creates the Gandhian framework of struggle. What of course brings them together is Gandhi’s notion of truth which entails both non-violence and self-sacrifice. But still, the two of course implies two different directions of individual practice. On the one hand, the individual practices extreme self-restraint, not only in the face of physical violence, but also in the face of his own indulgent desires. On the other hand, he’s supposed go out of his way and render help to all kinds of people in society and offer himself to all kinds of social work. The spirit of service would be rendered by the individual in a selfless manner which is taken from Gandhi’s understanding of the Gita where the individual would not offer service in the hope of any return or from any desire which is more than the need of the other person. In other words, even in the spirit of service the self would be restrained to act on selfish motives or any spirit of indulgence. Nevertheless, the question of self-restraint is about moral pressures put on the self whereas the spirit of service is essentially based upon the notion of an
ethical desire towards the other. Both, hence, as we can see, do not have the same philosophical sources in their respective principles of action. Thus, here is a dichotomy which the individual who lives out the Gandhian principle in his life, faces. Gandhi has this quintessential double choice for the individual where the self is bound and the other is free. In fact it shows a notion of freedom, which seems to be different in the case of the self than that of the other. In the case of the self, freedom is linked to the idea of self-restraint and sacrifice, a kind of giving up of desires for the sake of a purificatory idea of freedom. While the other engaged in communication with the self is given the freedom to morally engage with the self and work out its own case, so to say. The Gandhian self as such is not interested in the vices or virtues of the other but merely demands the attention of the other with regard to the crisis within his own self and the desire of engagement with the other.

But this notion of the self and the other has specific connotations in the real field of national politics in the Gandhian framework. Since Gandhi addressed primarily the Hindu self in his discourse on nationalism he draws out specific notions of engagement vis-à-vis the Hindu's own self, the Muslim's and the British. So far we have been looking at the idea of the self from the internal guidelines made for the Hindu community, though Gandhi does not explicitly mention this, keeping his language universal, but implicitly one can read it in that manner from certain contexts of engagement that he draws. In the *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi speaks of how the Hindus should maintain a proper relationship with the Muslims. For him both Hindus and Muslims are a part of Indian culture but regard the truth of the differences between them. On the Hindu-Muslim question in India, Gandhi had said:
"My belief is unshaken that without communal unity, Swaraj cannot be attained without non-violence. But unity cannot be reached without justice between communities. Muslim or any other friendship cannot be ought with bribery. Bribery would itself mean cowardice, and therefore violence ... I can disarm suspicion only by being generous. Justice without generosity may easily be Shylock's justice."  

So with regard to the Muslim community the question of choice for the Hindu self is one of trying to attain a fair sense of justice. But here, the question of sacrifice of the self for gaining the friendship of the other is for the sake of achieving unity. In the *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi laid out instances where the Hindus and Muslims have to maintain tolerance with regard to each other and minimise mutual distrust. But he was very sure that even though Hindus and Muslims would keep having problems with each other, the ethical issue would have to be sorted out between them and not mediated by any third party. For Gandhi, the Hindu-Muslim problem was a problem internal to the nation where differences were to be sorted out in terms of mutual choice based on tolerance of each other. This is what Gandhi says in *Hind Swaraj*:

"There is mutual distrust between the two communities. The Mahomedans, therefore, ask for certain concessions from Lord Morley. Why should the Hindus oppose this? If the Hindus desisted, the English would notice it, the Mahomedans would gradually begin to trust the Hindus, and brotherliness would be the outcome. We should be ashamed to take our quarrels to the English. Everyone can find out for himself that the Hindus can lose nothing by

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12 Anand Hingorani ed. *Gandhi Series* (Vol. 3) or V.V. Ramamurthy *Essential Writings*, p. 406-407
desisting. That man who has inspired confidence in another has never lost anything in this world."\textsuperscript{13}

From this we see how Gandhi's conception of the relation between two communities is posed outside law. For Gandhi the language of law and order is an impersonal language where the mediator serves his own interest than the interest of the parties involved. According to Gandhi since the question of justice between Hindus and Muslims essentially lies between them, in the way they would show tolerance for each other's beliefs and demands, would only entail the possibility of justice between them. Here Gandhi alludes to the direct relationship between the self and the other without the mediation of any third. Since the question of Hindu-Muslim differences lies within the purview of both groups comprising the idea of a single nation hence both these communities were taken together separately from the coloniser.

When it comes to the self-other relationship between the Indians and the British, Gandhi's approach is different. He looks at the British as a threat for the self but not essentially in the human sense but because of the values that he carries in the name of his rule. So for Gandhi it is not the Britisher but his cultural values which are a real threat for the self and therefore has not only got to be opposed but rejected forthwith and thrown out. But since here too the ethical relationship between the Indian and the Britisher, in the same way between the Hindu and the Muslim, entails an ethical relationship, therefore at the level of political engagement the tool would still be a non-violent one. In fact as Gandhi has shown in the \textit{Hind Swaraj}, his arguments against Western

civilisation come from a realisation of the positive harm that it brings along with its baggage of modernity and enforces upon a subjugated population. The real scare for Gandhi is not that the British dominate India politically which of course can be challenged through a serious non-violent struggle but the fact that the cultural values of the British have seeped in so much into the Indian psyche as well as in its emerging social structures that even if tomorrow the British are defeated politically they might still triumph at the level of culture by leaving behind a country where the value system has become that of the modern West. This fact is what Gandhi finds impossible to accept and a dreadful story to happen. Gandhi finds modernity to be the chief culprit in the cultural outlook of the British as he finds both technology as well as the essence of modern institutions and professions to seriously come in the way of any spiritual relationship between Indians and the British - in the way he looks at any relationship between the self and the other which should be desirably unmediated by this inherent self-interest of modern professions, the fetish value system of technology and the wealth-centric attitude of modern institutions. In all this Gandhi finds a departure of the spiritual nature of relationship between the self and the other where the values of sacrifice, tolerance, simplicity and mutual trust gets sidelined. So to sum it up, Gandhi’s sense of relationship with the British is a complete rejection of its ideas but an engagement of mutual purification where a relationship outside the discourse of power could be established on ethical norms. He of course contextualises the source of these norms in religion though when he says “the spirit of Christianity” he means it in the same manner that he addresses Hinduism - not in terms of a traditional structure but a moral and ethical attitude. As he says:
"The true remedy lies, in my humble opinion, in England discarding modern civilisation which is ensouled by this spirit of selfishness and materialism, is vain and purposeless and is a negation of the spirit of Christianity. But this is a large order. It may then be just possible that the British rulers in India may at least do as the Indians do and not impose upon them the modern civilisation. Railways, machinery and corresponding increase of indulgent habits are the true badges of slavery of the Indian people as they are of Europeans. I, therefore, have no quarrel with the rulers. I have every quarrel with their methods."\(^{14}\)

Again, in the context of the Hindu community itself Gandhi felt that the untouchables form an other, who had to be made part of the self. Here the question of choice had to be within the Hindu religion but broadened beyond any Brahminical understanding and the social and cultural ideology of difference which was promulgated therein. For Gandhi the idea was to reach out to the untouchable, share their work, and make them feel a part of he society they rightfully belong to without any basis whatsoever of regarding them as inferior to the rest of the Hindu community. But Gandhi did have a bias in this regard as he restricted the question of untouchability only in the social sphere and wanted the improvement of relations and acceptance of the rightful dignity of the untouchables through social mores of interaction. He did not desire to bring it into the political realm and it is precisely here that people like B.R. Ambedkar confronted him. Politically Gandhi never desired a divisive politics by the untouchables and their leaders which would in any way harm the social and political unity of the Hindu community. In this he was merely

\(^{14}\) Ibid. p. 135
interested in a retributional and rectificatory politics waged socially within Hindu society but not allowed to go further. As Bhiku Parekh explains Gandhi's attitude in this regard:

"The fight against untouchability caused Gandhi considerable difficulty. He refused to use the 'Western method' of asking the government to legislate against it on the ground that all the arguments he had advanced against state-initiated reforms applied to it with particular poignancy and force. Millions of caste Hindus sincerely believed that it was an integral part of their religion. So long as they held that belief, they were bound bitterly to resent its abolition, and an unpopular reform was either likely to be fiercely resisted or deviously circumvented. By requiring them to act against their belief, it also violated their integrity and created a lie in their souls. Again, state intervention implied that the Hindus had become morally so degenerate that they were incapable of recognising the inhumanity of untouchability and mounting a campaign against it, or even of throwing up a few determined men and women prepared to lay down their lives for the good name of their religion. Gandhi did not think that this was the case. He was prepared to devote his own life to fighting against untouchability, and felt sure that he could both organize a committed cadre and mobilise the moral energies of the Hindu masses."\(^{15}\)

As in the case of the Muslims, even with regard to the question of the untouchables, Gandhi did not want a statist solution as he was against any third-party intervention about an issue that he always regarded as internal to

the community or groups within the community. He expected Hindu society to regard the problem as one where social changes have to be ushered in and the trust and respect between groups to be achieved through opening up the narrow confines of traditional adherence to prejudices against people of different castes. This choice was rejected by leaders like Ambedkar as he felt that by side-stepping the political issue Gandhi wasn't achieving much except tokenism for the untouchables who needed a political guarantee against further exploitation. In fact, Gandhi's upholding of the varna system even as he condemned caste was a serious problem for Ambedkar, who never trusted Gandhi's intentions behind playing the role of spokesperson for the untouchables.

To quote Ambedkar:

"Do the Untouchables regard Mr. Gandhi as being in earnest? The answer is in the negative. They do not regard Mr. Gandhi as being in earnest. How can they? How can they look upon a man being in earnest who, when in 1921 the whole country was aroused to put the Bardoli programme in action, remained completely indifferent to the anti-untouchability part of it? How can they believe in the earnestness of a man who is prepared to practise satyagraha for everything and against everybody but who will not practise it against the Hindus for the sake of the Untouchables? How can they believe in the earnestness of a man who does nothing more than indulge in giving sermons on the evils of Untouchability?"16

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It is of course a fact that Gandhi went into a fast against the Macdonald Award of 1931, which granted a separate electorate to the untouchables. It was an act keeping in view his overall attitude about helping the cause of the untouchables only through his engagement with the Hindu society at large and addressing the issue outside the bounds of legislative laws which sought to differentiate the untouchables from Hindu society. In fact Bhiku Parekh notes how Gandhi’s tirade against untouchability was more on the moral plane rather than granting genuine political changes to the lives of the Untouchable community whenever the occasion arose which irked people like Ambedkar and made them suspicious of Gandhi’s overall intentions as he never took up any issue or supported any cause which put the untouchables in a strong political position as a group which could negotiate the question of power and fight years of tyranny from upper caste Hindu society on their own terms. As Parekh puts it:

"(T)he manner in which he (Gandhi) formulated his critique and planned his campaign was a source of both his success and failure. It enabled him to undermine the moral basis of untouchability but prevented him from dealing with its economic and political roots."\(^{17}\)

This then was the Gandhian impasse on the question of the untouchable other. He refused to make the issue a political one at the level of confrontation, as he was not aiming at revolutionary changes in society at the level of political power. The nationalist predicament ensured that the communities should fight for justice, even within themselves, through a language of desired unity and acceptance of common moral norms, not

\(^{17}\) Ibid. p. 209
necessarily lying within religious doctrines. Since the fight against British colonialism was necessary at the level of a spiritual regeneration of society, this notion of difference between the colonizer and the colonized was seen by Gandhi to hold true even about internal conflicts within Hindu as well as a pan-Indian society.

**Gandhian ‘Goals’: A Political perspective**

What are the goals for national politics that Gandhi envisages? The chief goal Gandhi hopes to achieve is swaraj. But swaraj, or self-rule, is not merely political independence. There are two main political choices behind achieving this goal as we have seen: Gandhi places these two choices in the sense of justice to be achieved between communities and the rejection of Western modernity. What we will see here is how Gandhi tries to direct these two political choices in the way of achieving swaraj.

In the *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi addresses the issue of self-rule or swaraj as a critique of the prevailing notions of swaraj. In other words, he begins by addressing what swaraj is *not*. As we have seen, Gandhi was more wary of English rule than of the Englishman himself. He was more alert on the effect of the “tiger's nature” rather than the tiger. To “want English rule without the Englishman” is precisely what Gandhi found dangerous in the political idea of swaraj. We have also noted how Gandhi desired swaraj to be “experienced for each one himself”, which is an individual extension of a social achievement. In fact, one finds the idea of self-rule to be taken extended from the notion of the individual self to the larger, national self, where freedom from British rule is a result of a strict idea of self-control and rejection of the lures of
modernity. From a political point of view, it meant for Gandhi, the rejection of modern institutions of rule and the arbitration of any impersonal body of governance in any matter regarding two groups engaged in a political battle.

It is here that non-violence as a method of political struggle is launched with a double purpose by Gandhi: it is to gain self control through abstinence from violence as well as a disciplinary method to thwart the influence of the colonizer's culture. For Gandhi, it is impossible to practise the one without the other. Of course non-violence had a philosophical and moral power all of its own; something that Gandhi equated with the notion of truth itself. But in the overall scheme of his politics, the idea of non-violence certainly gave fillip to the distance Gandhi wanted to draw between the colonizer's cultural influence and the nation's own spiritual identity. In fact, even though one might argue that this is a consequentialist argument with regard to Gandhi's purpose of a non-violent struggle, one needs to answer back that the point is not excessively made in terms of Gandhi's intentionality but rather in terms of the outcomes it served as an idea of mass struggle. If swaraj as a goal which was both political and cultural in nature, for Gandhi it was essential that the struggle against the British should be one where intense activity should take place more within the self of the individual and the community whereas the outcome of this intense activity should reflect on the distance the self would be able to maintain from the corrupt influences of the colonizing force. Non-violence served both these purposes all at once in Gandhi's methodology of struggle.

Hence we find in Gandhi's idea of swaraj an inward looking activity, more concerned with the modalities of the self than bothering to engage with the
other, in this case the British colonialists, in ways outside the cultural and spiritual spheres of the self. In fact, the struggle was all about drawing the colonizer into one's own sphere and thereby prove the force of its moral supremacy. It is surely with such a desired notion in mind that Gandhi felt that if the Englishman would turn into an Indian in his thinking and habits, there would be absolutely no problems in his staying over in India. As he put it in the Hind Swaraj: 'If the English become Indianised, we can accommodate them. If they wish to remain in India along with their civilization, there is no room for them'\textsuperscript{18}. It is rather a fierce notion of cultural assimilation which Gandhi has. But the crux of this attitude comes from the danger which he finds in the cultural influence of modernity. It is indeed a paradox because Gandhi did gain a lot from the modern notions of cultural understanding as we have repeatedly seen. But in his case he makes a distinction for sure, which is itself modern, of being an individual who is knowledgeable enough to understand what is wrong and what is right. What would such an idea achieve in the field of politics?

For Gandhi, the answer would certainly be a usurpation of politics by a moral society, rather an end to politics. But like the old belief of poison needing poison for cure, for Gandhi, politics cannot be circumvented in order to find solutions that would render politics unnecessary. And we know what that political utopia is which Gandhi wants to achieve: the patriarchal utopia of ram rajya, a political order which for Gandhi is the ultimate establishment of dharma, which is, a moral order of society.

In a way, we can then say that the Gandhian goal of politics is to search for those means, or choices, through which we can finally establish a society of no-politics. For Gandhi, politics seems to be a profoundly modern idea against which he contrasts an older idea of community life where politics doesn’t exist. Gandhi equates politics with modernity itself and positions himself against its entire edifice from outside. But an organic understanding of life and ethics takes him to the very heart of politics, which he has to first cleanse, get rid of, before the moral utopia of ram rajya can be established. Perhaps Gandhi exaggerated this idea of utopia in the face of an overwhelming and powerful Western onslaught of cultural moorings and ideology of life. For Gandhi, to offer a stern and almost absolute resistance to this power was a matter of self-dignity. Since he was desperate and sure of situating himself ideologically outside the impact of modern European culture, with all his plural ethical baggage, he nevertheless resorted to offering to the Indian masses a utopia strictly home-grown as an idea, though devoutly Hindu. But again, as we have seen, he wished for an experimental attitude towards Hinduism and all its various thought-process and traditions. In his language of experiment, he even incorporated those very modern concepts, which he was extremely uncomfortable with, the main affinity being non-violence called a proper science. By equating these terms, one may perhaps say that Gandhi’s attitude towards politics was also fairly scientific, of which as we have noted in the previous chapter, Partha Chatterjee has spoken about. Gandhi wanted to guide the non-violent political movement like a scientist guiding his experiments. Scholars have pointed out Gandhi’s anarchic influences, but one finds Gandhi’s attitude towards violence pretty much anti-anarchic as for Gandhi, violence is the main source of anarchy. This point is amply proved by
Gandhi's abhorrence to any act by the militant nationalist groups where violence was involved. Violence is anarchic as it is uncontrollable, and Gandhi was all for self-control. Gandhi's patient negotiations with British rulers were also a proof of Gandhi's anti-anarchic nature. It is true that Gandhi's idea of politics was anti-statist. He wanted the Congress to serve as a movement rather than as a political party holding state power. For him, as we have seen in the earlier chapter, the idea of state power is diametrically opposite of political movements aiming for moral changes in society. Though this attitude does have a minimalist, symbolic link with the anarchic idea of politics, what strictly differentiates it from the theories of anarchism is Gandhi's method, based on strict and spiritual notions of self-control and non-violent experiments with the self and with the other.

In all this, how does Gandhi hope to reconcile justice between communities? This is the last question we address in this section.

The question of justice in Gandhi is also as much experimental in its political goals as his other passions. For Gandhi, the question of justice between communities and groups has to be solved through direct interaction of trust building and generosity rather than laying down legislatures of difference. It involved a constant spirit of sacrifice by the self for the other, and earns unity through the sense of granting justice. Gandhi juxtaposes the question of justice and the question of unity as both means and ends in this regard. But since this entire issue is placed at the level of sentiments, or one may say, sentimental politics, there occurs a moment of impasse about the issue, where communities are supposed to abandon their separate political aspirations and work towards the common breath of sentiments. In fact,
politics itself is sought to be stalled in the name of trying to get the other to one’s side. The guiding principle seems to be a politics of persuasion. The politics of persuasion which Gandhi follows in this regard, both recognizes the areas of difference seriously, but at the same time refuses to grant this difference any moral legitimacy as difference is seen to occur only because each side has not tried hard enough to win over the other’s heart. So any politics that would seek to legitimize this difference would be an immoral political option to Gandhi, as the case would then turn into a legal and political issue made for the intervention of legislatures and courts which Gandhi abhorred. This then is the Gandhian predicament in the face of the politics between communities where justice is regarded as a political issue to be however solved through moral methods.