CHAPTER II
Gandhian Paradoxes in the Realization of Swaraj

In this Chapter we would be looking at how Gandhi negotiated with the paradoxes within his own thought as he launched a very modern kind of political movement against what he called 'the ills of modernity'. To begin with, we would look at how Gandhi constructs the idea of the self, both in the personal, ethical sense as well as the larger self in the context of a civilizational idea of an Indian identity. In this, we also look at how he tried to merge this idea of the self in its relation with others, both at the philosophical level as well as in the more empirical level of social and cultural relations between groups. Then we look at the way Gandhi critiques modernity and its various institutions and see through what kind of principles does he argue his case, in other words, whether in the context of the anti-colonial struggle which had already entered modernity through colonial rule as well as through ideas from Europe, how do we look at Gandhi's conceptual universe. We would finally look at Gandhi's idea of the praja, wherein he tries to give a curious, double meaning of the word, and we see how they fit in to the conception itself as well as to the larger sense of reality.

Relations of the self:

In Chapter VI of Hind Swaraj, Gandhi makes a distinction between 'civilization' and 'true civilization'. By 'civilization', Gandhi here means the civilization of Western modernity; the civilization produced by the industrial revolution which promotes physical well being:
"Let us first consider what state of things is described by the word 'civilization'. Its true test lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life".\(^1\)

Gandhi goes on to list several indicators to this phenomenon: the building of better houses, the variety of clothing, modern weapons, technology for labour or travel, the rise in quantity and fall in quality of writing, new diseases and their doctors, and an increase of appetite. These indicators show Gandhi that, "(t)his civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion". He finds an inherent paradox in the fact that this civilization "seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so". Those involved in this kind of life "keep up their energy by intoxication" and "can be hardly happy in solitude". Gandhi finds how this civilization makes women, "who should be the queens of households, wander in the streets, or ... slave away in factories".\(^4\)

In Chapter XIII, Gandhi addresses what he means by 'true civilization'. Here he says: "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to the man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarti equivalent for civilization means 'good conduct'".\(^5\)

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\(^{2}\) Ibid. p. 37
\(^{3}\) Ibid. p. 37
\(^{4}\) Ibid. p. 37
\(^{5}\) Ibid. p. 67
So right in the beginning, Gandhi makes a distinction which is drawn at dissimilar levels: the idea of modern culture is viewed in terms of a particular, trend, or we may say, a particular practise of living, enshrined in modern forms of material and professional life. He contrasts it directly to the idea of moral life which is supposedly outside the whole practise of modern living, and is fundamentally about self-control of bodily desires and passions. Modernity to Gandhi appears to be a phenomenon which is let loose upon the senses of human beings and which is basically indulgent in nature. Moral life is supposedly a strict relationship between ethical life (duty) and self-control.

From here, Gandhi makes the difference in civilizational terms, between modernity and morality. Gandhi goes on to say that 'true civilization' is in fact Indian, as against the immoral 'civilization' of the West:

"The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behooves every lover of India to cling to the old Indian civilization even as a child clings to its mother's breast."

The distinction between the West and India as drawn by Gandhi is an Orientalism-in-reverse. The ethnocentric dichotomy in Orientalism is now posed in the traditionalist terms of "morality" versus "immorality". The West being modern is also material, and hence immoral. India is spiritual and hence moral. Gandhi endorses the essentialist distinction in Orientalism but reverses the position of values. In fact Gandhi argues in terms of an affirmative

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6 Ibid. p. 71
Orientalism, where the inferiorized spiritual essence of the East is held superior against the scientific civilization of the West.

Partha Chatterjee doesn’t touch upon the issue of Orientalist reworking in Gandhi, and puts the matter only in the perspective of anti-modernism:

“Fundamentally, Gandhi attacks the very notions of modernity and progress and subverts the central claim made on behalf of those notions, viz. their correspondence with a new organization of society in which the productive capacities of human labour are multiplied several times, creating increased wealth and prosperity for all and hence increased leisure, comfort, health and happiness. Gandhi argues that far from achieving these objectives, what modern civilization does is make man a prisoner of his craving for luxury and self-indulgence, release the forces of unbridled competition and thereby bring upon society the evils of poverty, disease, war and suffering”.

Gandhi calls modern, western civilization “the reverse of civilization”. But there is a “remedy” for Western civilization: it lies “in England discarding modern civilization which is ensouled by this spirit of selfishness and materialism, is vain and purposeless and is a negation of the spirit of Christianity”. According to Gandhi:

“The people of Europe, before they were touched by modern civilization, had much in common with the people of the East; anyhow, the people of India,

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7 Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 86
9 Ibid. p. 134
and even today, Europeans who are not touched by modern civilization are far better able to mix with the Indians than the offspring of that civilization."\textsuperscript{10}

So according to Gandhi, there exists a cultural route wherein modern Europe and India can ethically interact, but it would require an abandoning of the modern ways of life by the European and which would immediately bring them to the religious way of life which India was still apparently leading. Gandhi seems to understand colonial power in terms of modern needs and believed that religious civilizations couldn't have the same objectives. He concludes:

"East and West can only and really meet when the West has thrown overboard modern civilization, almost in its entirety. They can also seemingly meet when the East has also adopted modern civilization. But that meeting would be an armed truce, even as it is between, say, Germany and England, both of which nations are living in the Hall of Death in order to avoid being devoured, the one by the other."\textsuperscript{11}

While pointing out Gandhi's position on modern civilization, it is thus equally important to highlight what he contrasts it with. Modern civilization for Gandhi is the opposite of a religious civilization. The difference between the East and the West is that the East still retains its religious bearings, while the West has lost its own.

Gandhi makes a difference between the British and their civilization: "You hatred against them", he tells Indians, "ought to be transferred to their

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p. 130
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p. 130
civilization". In fact, he says: "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."

Gandhi’s distinction of England being immoral and India being moral partly coincides with Partha Chatterjee’s framework of the spiritual-material dichotomy of Indian nationalism. According to Chatterjee:

"(A)nticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty ... by dividing the world of social institutions and practices in two domains – material and spiritual. The material is the domain of the “outside”, of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology; a domain where the West had provided its superiority and the East had succumbed... The spiritual, on the other hand, is an “inner” domain bearing the “essential” marks of cultural identity."

Gandhi seems to make this material-spiritual dichotomy but without regarding the West “superior” in the material domain. In fact, the very materiality of the West makes it inferior as a whole. Gandhi wholeheartedly rejects the “outside” of the material domain, which had come to bear marks of Western civilization. For him, the “outer” or material domain is always an extension (and negation) of the “inner” or spiritual domain. Hence for Gandhi, the choice was relative and absolute. In fact, for Gandhi, there was a similarity in the spiritual domains of both the erstwhile Christian West and the East. So a spiritual-spiritual relationship between the West and India, where the West debunks its modernity and upholds Christian values, was acceptable to Gandhi. We can

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12 Ibid. p. 74
13 Ibid. p. 73
14 Chatterjee, Partha, The Nation and its Fragments, OUP, India, 1990
stretch the argument further and find that Gandhi upholds the material-spiritual dichotomy that Chatterjee talks about, but from outside the thematic of nationalism. For Gandhi, the material-spiritual dichotomy is essential and total: a civilization can either be material or spiritual. The material-spiritual dichotomy cannot be a question of choice "between" the East and the West according to Gandhi, but "within" the respective civilizations.

The Gandhian self in terms of this civilizational discourse is one who is faced with an absolute choice: to accept or reject, either a religious civilization that is the source of morality, or a modern civilization which is immoral. The paradox of this situation for the self is that the very nature of the choice is modern. So we can state the conceptual contradiction of the Gandhian self as one where it is persuaded to make a modern choice in favour of a religious civilization and reject modernity to remain moral.

We can now turn to Gandhi himself to see how much modernity influences his own choice of self.

Anthony Parel has pointed out the key aspect regarding the structure of Hind Swaraj: "It is significant that Gandhi chose for himself the role of a newspaper editor – a very modern figure – not that of a traditional figure, the guru. The Hind Swaraj as a genre, being a dialogue between a newspaper editor and a reader, is as old as the Platonic dialogues. But the representational aspect makes it unavoidably modern. In addition to that, the context regarding whom the book is addressed to is also equally modern. As Parel points out, the Hind Swaraj "is addressed to a mixed audience: the expatriate Indians greatly

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attracted to terrorism and political violence, the Extremists and Moderates of the Indian National Congress, the Indian nation, and ‘the English”16. This desire to communicate to a wide-ranging audience of different political ideologies, and trying to present them with a critique of modern civilization, is very much a modern political enterprise. Gandhi’s aim is to present a moral alternative to what he considers modern, Western civilization, but the positivity of his discourse borrows the same narrative structure as radical Enlightenment philosophy which, in Charles Taylor’s words, “is parasitic on its adversaries for the expression of its own moral sources, its own words of power, and hence its continuing moral source”17. Gandhi reverses the discourse of reason against religious thinking, but the essentialist nature of the difference is retained. Only the position of values has been interchanged. The Gandhian self is the split-face of modernity.

We now turn to Gandhi’s idea of religion. He writes in the Hind Swaraj:

“Religion is dear to me, and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu, the Mahomedan, or the Zoroastrian religion, but of that religion which underlies all religions. We are turning away from God”18.

Parel mentions that in the HS, Gandhi uses the word “dharma” in Gujrati for religion, and in two different senses: “as sect or organized religion, and as ethic, albeit one grounded in metaphysics”19.

16 Ibid. p. xiv
19 Ibid. p. 42
Let us look at Gandhi's conception of what he calls dharma in contrast to tradition. For Gandhi, true religion or dharma (also: ethical life) is eternal:

"The true dharma is unchanging, while tradition may change with time. If we were to follow some tenets of Manusmriti, there would be moral anarchy. We have quietly discarded them altogether."\(^{20}\)

So Gandhi makes a distinction between truth and religious tradition. For him, truth, as against tradition, is not only eternal but universal: "Nothing in the Shastras which is manifestly contrary to universal truths and morals can stand"\(^{21}\). The idea of truth sounds like a matter of choice, albeit an ethical/moral choice, which can distance itself from any tradition to uphold what is seen to be a more universalistic principle of the ethical life. Truth is also transcendent: "It is not Hinduism, which I prize most highly, but the religion which transcends Hinduism — the basic truth which underlies all the religions of the world. It is the struggle for truth — for self-expression. I call it truth-force — the permanent element in human nature, constantly struggling to find itself, to know its Maker."\(^{22}\)

So the idea of truth to Gandhi is both naturalistic as well as a matter of human becoming itself. The fact that Gandhi calls it a struggle, we will find shortly, is an idea he plays at two levels: the struggle for self-control as well as the spontaneous gesture of love and friendship towards others. For Gandhi, both these impulses flow from the same source.

The question of dharma, or truth, was also the central core of politics:

\(^{20}\) Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 96

\(^{21}\) Gandhi, M.K., Collected Works, Vol LXII, p. 121

\(^{22}\) Gandhi, M.K., Interview to V.S. Srinivasa Sastr, www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL027
"I have used the language of politics" Gandhi writes about HS, "but I have really tried to offer a glimpse of dharma. What is the meaning of Hind Swaraj? It means the rule of dharma or Ramrajya. So it is precisely at the level of struggle that the idea of truth enters the political domain. Politics is a mode of recovery of the ethical life or dharma for Gandhi. However, one needs to mention in passing here, that this political utopia of Ramrajya extols, in the words of Chatterjee, "a patriarchy in which ruler, by his moral quality and habitual adherence to truth, always expresses the collective will". So already we find in Gandhi, the idea of ethical life itself having a political conception of society where a patriarchy rules according to moral codes and justly expresses the whole idea of a moral social order. We will come back to the repercussions of this idea in the political sphere of Gandhi's imagination. We will now look into the further direction which Gandhi takes to explain the key principles of what this ethical sense of political life entails. The key political concept as the equivalent of truth is, for Gandhi, "ahimsa" – non-violence. It is the sole working principle of truth:

"Without ahimsa it is not possible to find and seek Truth. Ahimsa and Truth is 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

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24 Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 92
take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, the final victory is beyond question.”

What Gandhi seems to connote here is that the idea of truth which is to be attained is a whole arduous process of ethical living. This arduous process requires the fundamental commitment to ahimsa. For Gandhi, the idea of means seems to be something which is immediately accessible to us, something which is easily possible for human beings to imbibe as a tool to undergo the process towards achieving truth. But what is ahimsa for Gandhi?

At different places, Gandhi regards ahimsa as both, a negative value, and a positive aspect.

"Truth" Gandhi says in a discussion of the Gita, "is a positive value, while non-violence is a negative value. Truth affirms. Non-violence forbids something which is real enough.”

At another occasion Gandhi says how ahimsa stands for:

"(t)he largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rule to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to one, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active Ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness.”

So the idea of means in Gandhi, as we suggested a while before, is this double impulse: of resisting violent streaks within the self, which would easily

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26 Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 107

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flow into a love for the other human being. So it is both a negative as well as positive impulse and for Gandhi, the negative is self-control while the positive is love. The idea of means, seen in this light, appears to hold on to both the impulses of self-control and love, with truth being the ultimate achievement of harmony between the self and others. So truth for Gandhi comes close to the ethical principles of recognizing otherness through a non-violent relationship.

Gandhi does mention that phrase, so crucial to ethics, which brings to light the phenomenon which makes Gandhi paradoxical regarding ahimsa, or non-violence, being something which "forbids something" as well as something which is love, truth and fearlessness. The phrase is "face to face".

"What I want to achieve..." Gandhi wrote in the introduction to his autobiography, "is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha". Elsewhere, Gandhi explains the way to go about this quest to see God "face to face" in the real world: "To see the universal and all-pervading spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself".

In a unique and extraordinary paragraph, which describes a real-life introduction to ahimsa, Gandhi grasps the entire essence of the ethics of non-violence:

"I learnt the lesson of non-violence from my wife, when I tried to bend her to my will. Her determined resistance to my will, on the one hand, and her quiet submission to the suffering my stupidity involved, on the other, ultimately

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made me ashamed of myself and cured me of my stupidity in thinking that I
was born to rule over her and, in the end, she became my teacher in non-
violence.\textsuperscript{30}

The desire to "bend" the other to one's "will" is the source of all violence in the
Gandhian conception, as the idea of will is not the idea of an imposition of the
same by someone else but can only be used towards the self in a free
wheeling manner. There is a self-will towards ahimsa and self-control. The
other can only receive the fruits of this self-control through love. But if the
other forces one's own will upon anyone, he commits violence on the freedom
of that will. But what Gandhi realized in the shape of his wife's response is
that the other always offers "resistance" to the will of the self. Ethics is the
recognition of this resistance, and the impossibility of dominance. The other
can only experience "submission" as "suffering", and ultimately rid the self of
its "stupidity in thinking" that the other can be dominated. The other is
precisely "outside" thinking, and is transcendental like Truth. This truth is
transplanted in the active agency of non-violence, which Gandhi has made
famous as satyagraha or soul-force, also known as passive resistance. As he
defines it: "Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal
suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms.\textsuperscript{31} Gandhi seeks the positivity
of his own otherness and the otherness of the British through this mutual
recognition of transcendence that would require passive resistance. If
domination is to be rendered impossible, it is only through suffering that the
self establishes its non-violent otherness.

\textsuperscript{30} Harijan, 24-12-1938, p. 232
\textsuperscript{31} Gandhi, Mahatma, (ed.) Parel, Anthony, Hind Swaraj, Cambridge Text in Modern Politics, Cambridge
University Press, 1990, p. 90
As Gandhi explains passive resistance:

"It involves sacrifice of the self. Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes."32

For Gandhi then, otherness is a relation; one that entails a sacrifice of the self in order to uphold its own otherness and render "others" (even those using power against the self) the same kind of response, through non-violence. What it means is that both the self and the other are tied to a relationship of responsibility. This responsibility belongs to the recognition of each other's free will to experiment in the ethical desire for truth through a non-violent relationship, for which one undergoes even personal suffering. But this cannot be short-circuited either by any domination from outside by others or through violence from within the self. It's a demand for non-violence from both sides which makes it possible in the Gandhian conception to begin an ethical relationship, where both sides recognize each other's freedom to achieve this sacrifice of violence for the sake of gaining justice.

The notion of service is another key element in Gandhian ethics "We may not know God", Gandhi says, "but we know his creation. Service to His creation is the service of the God"33. Hence, he furthers, "I recognize that God manifests Himself in innumerable forms in this universe, and every such manifestation commands my spontaneous reverence."34 So Gandhi aims not at knowledge of God, but the recognition of His forms. These forms command his

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32 Ibid. p. 90-91
33 www.mahatma.org.in/books/showbook.jsp?id=9&book=bg0069&link=bg&lang=en&cat=books
reverence. Hence service to others, as God's forms, is Gandhi's ethical occupation. For Gandhi, the ethical relationship in society can be only maintained in a face-to-face community:

"I am so constructed that I can only serve my immediate neighbours, but in my conceit, I pretend to have discovered that I must with my body serve every individual in the Universe."\(^{35}\)

Hence we come to this point where Gandhi explains the zone of achieving the ethical life. The primary consideration seems to be to concentrate on those who are within the range of social contact. There is the immediate other who demands attention, and one cannot bypass this immediate responsibility of the face-to-face relationship and construct a general view of ethical approach which is beyond the social sphere to begin with. Even though Gandhi argues for a universal principle of truth and the ethical life, the context under which such a principle would flower is based on immediate social responsibility towards those concrete others whom the self faces in daily life. In his views on swadeshi (national self-reliance), Gandhi explicates the notion of service as possible only within the immediacy of the community:

"...Swadeshi is that spirit in us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must 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. In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by

curbing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve these industries by making efficient and complete where they might be found wanting.36

There has been a growing intellectual interest in the similarities between Gandhian ethics and that of the most influential and widely respected ethical thinker in France in the second half of the twentieth century, the late Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas also talks about ethics in the 'face-to-face' mode of realization as Gandhi does. Both talk of a non-violent relationship between self and other where violence is seen to be a destruction of that primary ethical relationship between self and other where responsibility entails suffering for the other. Though Gandhi talks in the language of truth and Levinas limits himself to using the word ethics, both say similar things on what is primary to them, which is, the realization of a non-violent relationship with the other to be the most important goal in society. Gandhi's idea of ethics, which is partly drawn from the Christian source of the Sermon of the Mount brings in this interesting relationship between him and Levinas, who adheres to the Judeo-Christian tradition to supply the basis of his ethical philosophy. It would be quite useful to compare the two at this stage. We would not be interested in purely theoretical comparisons as Gandhi was not a theoretical philosopher. But what we would in turn locate are the points of convergences, certain key linkages, and a similar echo, in their language of ethics. We would straightaway go into the key aspects of Levinas' philosophy without placing him within the overall discourse of the Western philosophical tradition (whose

basic ontological assumptions of the "self" Levinas questions, as he introduces the primacy of "transcendence" into the "immanent" discourse of the phenomenological tradition, and brings in what is regarded as a radical sense of ethics).

Let's introduce some ideas of Levinas and then highlight certain similarities with Gandhi's approach. In the words of Colin Davis:

"Levinas' version of ethics is not concerned with classic ethical questions regarding virtue, duties or rights, or with the formulation of moral principles, rules or codes. Rather, Levinas focuses on the ethical significance of the encounter with the Other, that is with an alterity which cannot be understood as a mere extension or reflection of myself, and which therefore also radically challenges both who I am and what I think. Through this encounter, I discover that I am not alone, that the universe is not subordinate to my needs and desires. The Other escapes me and it confronts me with the unwelcome revelation that the world does not belong to me at all. Levinas uses perhaps one of his best known terms, the face (le visage) to refer to the initial shock of this discovery of alterity. The face is a point of mediation between the real, living presence of another person, and the transcendence of the other, the fact that he or she is not a simple reflection of myself and does not belong to my world"37. As Colin Davis further explicates the circumstance:

"The Other opposes me with a resistance which cannot be measured in quantitative terms; this is what Levinas calls "the resistance of what has no resistance", and more precisely "la resistance ethique" (ethical resistance). In

a typical Levinasian paradox, whilst being infinitely weak, the Other is also infinitely strong; my acts of violence towards it will always fail because the face of the Other transcends my world".38

Damien Casey has shown how Gandhi's position is close to Levinas. He mentions how in *Ethics and Infinity*,

"Levinas states that 'the term “transcendence” signifies precisely the fact that one cannot think God and being together. So too in the interpersonal relationship it is not a matter of thinking the ego and the other together, but to be facing. Gandhi seemed to consider that it was in the act of facing the other in political conflict, that the possibility of genuine transcendence arose"39.

In Gandhi, the question facing the Muslim or the harijans was not a matter of concepts or law. For him, the question was of justice felt for the other, and in this sense, a matter of conscience, from which one cannot run away. So this act of responsibility for the other in Gandhi is to turn to the other without preconceptions regarding the relationship but more crucially in finding out what is missing and what can be shared together. For this, the act of responsibility demands primarily a facing of the other in the open and meeting him without any preconditions except the desire to render justice. Since the idea is primarily about communication, violence was ruled out because in violence, for Gandhi, people don't communicate but end all communication through violence. Gandhi has strict notions about the self but when it comes to facing the other, it is the generosity which opens out without certainties towards the other is what Gandhi seeks. To think of the self and to think of the

38 Ibid.
other are not the same things in Gandhi, and hence the attitudes are completely different. With regard to the self the order is that if restraint, which is to help the self to practise non-violence. But once that restraint is practiced within the self, one is free enough to then go towards the other with a full confidence of one's generosity. In fact non-violence and generosity works hand in glove in Gandhi's conception. Non-violence leads to generosity, in fact, is responsible for generosity to exist in one's relationship with the other.

Casey further points out how both Gandhi and Levinas is aware that this sense of responsibility is impossible without entailing a degree of risk which has to be undertaken if the relationship of non-violence has to be achieved between self and other. For Gandhi, it meant the sacrifice of the self the way for Levinas it means putting oneself to a hostage position for the sake of the other. There was no getting away from this:

"Levinas echoes Gandhi when he suggests that 'communication with the other can be transcendent only as a dangerous life, a fine risk to be run'. Genuine openness to the other involves the risk of death. To practice Satyagraha is also to be responsible for the other, a responsibility that mere opposition denies. Non-violence, Levinas states, 'instead of offending my freedom, calls it to responsibility and founds it. As non-violence it nonetheless remains the plurality of the same and the other'. The Satyagrahi could be considered to hold himself as hostage for another. For Levinas, 'to be oneself, the state of being hostage, is always to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the responsibility for the other'"40.

40 ibid.
Here we find that there is enough of similarity between Gandhi's idea of satyagraha as a tool where death is positively and courageously sought in the moral strength of fighting for the sake of truth, a truth that is held hostage between the unsolved relationship with the other, and can be gained only through communicating non violently with the other. Truth is something which can only be discovered and gained together. The question of truth, which Gandhi gave primacy in his understanding of god, is something which cannot be sought alone, inside oneself, but something which has to be found outside the self, in the field of that space where you confront, or face, the other. Casey has indeed pointed out:

"Gandhi's thought arose out of the field of conflict in which he tried to preserve a basic dignity and even primacy of the other without compromising his position. Gandhi considered that 'to hold on to truth' entailed putting oneself in question. Likewise Levinas asks, 'can the Same welcome the Other, not by giving the Other to itself as a theme... but by putting itself in question?' Both Levinas and Gandhi shared an anxiety in the face of the other which they considered to be an ethical necessity."

Like Levinas says about asking the question, Gandhi too acknowledges that the self and other are different. In fact precisely because there is a difference, cultural and historical, there arises the need to meet the other who is different but to whom we have to offer the self as a welcome gesture of friendship. Gandhi does put the question of putting oneself in question as for Gandhi, truth is not already gained, nor an answer which can be sought and got in isolation. The truth which Gandhi seeks in the field of politics, is one where

41 Ibid.
you suffer for the other precisely because you have put yourself in question in various ways, where you question your motives and actions according to moral principles of truth and justice, and for which you are ready to suffer because truth cannot be easily purchased without realizing the differences with the other is of a serious nature and demands sacrifice and love.

Gandhi desired to seek the Truth at the very heart of politics:

"To see the universal and all-pervading spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."\(^{42}\)

The nature of truth itself brings Gandhi to politics. Truth can be sought only through politics. But truth was also changeless:

"It is a charge against India that her people are so uncivilized, ignorant and stolid, that it is not possible to induce them to adopt any changes. It is a charge really against our merit. What we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change."\(^{43}\)

If truth is changeless, what is politics? Or rather, how is politics related to truth? From numerous indications in Gandhi's writings, we can pick his idea on education and make the link between truth and the goal of politics.


According to Gandhi, "(o)ur ancient school system is enough. Character-
building has the first place in it, and that is primary education"44. "It is worth
noting" to Gandhi "that, by receiving English education, we have enslaved the
nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny, etc., have increased; English-knowing Indians
have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into people"45. But he
acknowledges that "(w)e are so much beset by the disease of civilization, that
we cannot altogether do without English education"46. But it is possible to
rectify the damage if "(t)hose who have studied English... teach morality to
their progeny through their mother-tongue, and to teach them another Indian
language... Even in learning English to such a limited extent, we shall have to
consider what we should learn through it and we should not"47. Finally,
Gandhi favours the return to religious education. But he doesn’t have any faith
on the traditional teachers – the Mullahs, the Dasturs and the Brahmins – who
he finds to be "hypocritical and selfish"48. What Gandhi proposes, as Parel
outlines, "is education in ethics which, though ultimately drawn from religious
texts, can still be taught in a non-fundamentalist fashion". The point is well
taken, if we don’t take Parel’s arbitrary use of the word "non-fundamentalist"
too seriously. Parel is quite anxious to steer clear of a contemporary political
meaning of the word "fundamentalism" which we need not self-consciously
attach by way of cleansing its meaning when dealing with Gandhi. After
making the case for such a religious education, Gandhi proclaims the
imperative:

44 Ibid. p. 102-103
45 Ibid. p. 104
46 Ibid. p. 104
47 Ibid. p. 104
48 Ibid. p. 106
"In order to restore India to its pristine condition, we have to return to it. In our civilization, there will naturally be progress, retrogression, reforms and reactions; but one effort is required, and that is to drive out Western civilization. All else will follow.\textsuperscript{49}

There is certainly an attitudinal and doctrinal link between Gandhi's views on English education, as much as his views on civilization and politics as a whole. From the above statement on education, we can re-draw a parallel to how Gandhi links truth and politics.

Truth to Gandhi, as we have mentioned, is an unchanging form of knowledge. But "politics encircle us today like a snake"\textsuperscript{50}. This snake cannot be ignored. In fact, it was impossible to found morality without dealing with the evils which this snake has encircled around us. Duty towards the world was precisely to meet this evil, warn people of its seducing powers, and restore the importance of morality. Since morality wasn't outside the condition of the world, a person with a genuine sympathy for the world would work for the restoration of morality amidst this situation of immorality. Gandhi presents the difference in stark terms. Modernity had to be rejected. The snake was not to be killed physically, but its fangs made powerless. Only by doing this could we recover the genuinely moral past. There is a strong element of the idea of "return" in Gandhi. So politics was, in a sense, the battle for this return. Modernity is a negative situation, but beneath its sway, the eternal shines forth, and is capable of self-regeneration without the help of anything modern. Gandhi's sense of politics is a battle against this negation of truth, of 'true' civilization.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid. p. 106
\textsuperscript{50} Chatterjee, Partha, \textit{Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?}, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 110
and of morality. It is as negation that politics establishes itself against modernity. Modernity is a negation of truth. Truth, in its “pristine condition” is what lies beyond modernity. There would be, within our own civilization, “progress, retrogression, reforms and reactions” but the very nature of these changes, which are important for Gandhi, would be possible only when modernity is no longer the frame of reference. So for Gandhi, the immediate task of politics was the restoration of the moral order through a political activity that halts modernity. As he said:

"I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole... I don't know of any religion apart from activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities without which life would be a 'maze of sound and fury signifying nothing'"51.

Gandhi had to rid the people of the evils of modernity. Politics was the very bane of modernity; hence to indulge in politics was to get at the very heart of this evil and try to turn it into a moral activity. Politics had become, in Gandhi's understanding, a part of the "indivisible whole", and so it was necessary to give a moral basis to politics, so that it doesn't lose itself to the immoral practices of modernity. The two principles in this politics of return were ahimsa and satyagraha, one derived from the other. Chatterjee points out that, in Gandhi, the political principles of ahimsa and satyagraha "was not conditional upon the masses themselves understanding all its principles or

51 Iyer, Raghavan N., The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 41
their full implications" and also "did not depend upon everyone accepting it as a creed"52. He offers two citations from Gandhi in this regard: "A soldier of an army does not know the whole of military science; so also does a satyagrahi not know the whole science of satyagraha"53. And again: "Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before India or, for that matter, before anyone except in casual or informal talks. I placed it before the Congress as a political weapon, to be employed for the solution of practical problems"54.

First of all, the fact that Gandhi calls satyagraha a science, once again reflects that besides certain key elements of modernity in his very constitutive elements of the self, even his principle of action borrows a modern vocabulary of 'science'. One must keep in mind that he had conducted "experiments" with truth. Hence the realization of truth was a kind of scientific activity, where the process of trial-by-error is very much a part of the enterprise. Besides the teleological concept of truth, Gandhi is quite similar in his standpoint here as Nehru, who also spoke of this scientific attitude. Hence, Chatterjee's observation of the scientificity of Gandhi's working-principle of non-violence is absolutely true. But of course, this scientific methodology was at the "relative" level of truth. The absolute level of truth, which is unchanging and transcendental, was "beyond critical enquiry and philosophical speculation"55.

The teleological aspect of Gandhi's politics is what Chatterjee calls "utopia"56. Chatterjee recognizes the political aspect of Gandhi's ideology in the experimental mode of satyagraha. In this regard, Chatterjee shows that

52 Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 108
53 Ibid. p. 108
54 Ibid. p. 108
55 Ibid. p. 97
56 Ibid. p. 98
Gandhi, by advocating the supreme test of politics in “death”, tried to reconcile the utopian aspect with the practicality of its political ideology. Chatterjee concludes about Gandhism: “It had gained strength from an intensely powerful moral critique of the existing state of politics. In the end, it saved its Truth by escaping from politics.”

But for Gandhi, Truth was always outside politics. And yet, politics was the battleground for the establishment of Truth. Hence Truth was not to be “saved” as Chatterjee notes, but rather “found” in that disjunction between the solution of politics and the demands of morality. Of course Chatterjee does recognize Gandhian ideology as one which sees “a disjuncture between morality and politics... a disjunction which the ‘experimental’ conception of ahimsa was meant to bridge.”

And yet, according to Chatterjee “it was a disjuncture the steadfast denial of whose very existence had been the foundation of the original conception of Hind Swaraj.” The “steadfast denial” that Chatterjee talks about points to Gandhi’s standpoint regarding the association between religion and politics. But Gandhi didn’t seem to bring them together because he thought they weren’t separate zones. In fact, Gandhi indulged in politics precisely to implant a moral foundation of ethics at the very heart of politics. The success of political “ends” was not Gandhi’s main concern (though he was fighting for it), but the ethical “means” which would force politics to take notice of what its inherent violence was trying to deny. The work of religion was to counter an immoral modernity. In this sense, India’s independence is a failure from the Gandhian perspective,

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57 Ibid. p. 109
58 Ibid. p. 110
59 Ibid. p. 108
60 Ibid. p. 108
because though freedom was achieved, it was also followed by the triumph of the modern state and its ideology. The question of means was of substantive value for Gandhi, and it alone signified the value of ends. In a way, means were ends in themselves for Gandhi. As long as the “utopia” of the end is not achieved, where a moral community finally usurps politics, the relationship between politics and religion will hold. But the basic relationship is always presented as antagonistic in Gandhi. This disjuncture however itself is political, as politics for Gandhi is born out of this disjunction. Without this disjunction, there would have been no politics. Truth was the moral tool for engaging in politics. When politics becomes the language of violence, a non-violent response becomes the way of encountering (meeting) politics with truth. Gandhian politics, in this sense, is a relativistic conception of a politics of truth where politics and truth are antagonistic. As Gandhi says: “Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms”\textsuperscript{61}. The elements of suffering and death are elements Gandhi introduces to the very framework of political resistance. It was all for the sake of “securing rights”. So it was not an “escape” from politics that Gandhi sought through Truth, but to hold politics at ransom through the experimental mode of truth-seeking as propagated through the practice of satyagraha. In this sense, ahimsa was not meant to “bridge” the gap between morality and politics as Chatterjee says, but to highlight the very nature of the division between the nature of politics and the nature of truth.

Let’s now turn to how Gandhi links up truth with history.

“History” to Gandhi, “is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul”\textsuperscript{62}. As Chatterjee puts it, history for Gandhi, “is built upon the records not of the working of the force of the soul but of its exact opposite. It is a record of the interruption of peace”\textsuperscript{63}. The following illustration highlights Gandhi’s view:

“Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and re-awakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this. But if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason take up arms or go to law – which is another form of the exhibition of brute force – their doings would be immediately noticed in the Press, they would be the talk of their neighbours, and would probably go down in history. And what is true of families and communities is true of nations\textsuperscript{64}.

Hence, in Gandhi’s case, as Chatterjee puts it: “History.. does not record the Truth. Truth lies outside history; it is universal, unchanging. Truth has no history of its own”\textsuperscript{65}.

To Gandhi then, politics seemed like an activity finally meant for escaping the traps of history. The politics of passive resistance is a resistance to this very notion of history based on brute-force. It is to implant the notion of peace within the violent discourse of history. Hence, politics becomes, in a way, a voice of the otherness within history; a voice that speaks to history from beyond history; a Truth which history suppresses, but cannot wish-away. The

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. p. 90
\textsuperscript{63} Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 93
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid. p. 93-94
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. p. 94
force of the soul is interrupted by history. The politics of passive resistance, based on soul-force, interrupts history in turn.

**Evils of Modernity:**

Here we look at three specific issues that Gandhi identifies as evils of modernity: self-interest, technology and industrialization.

Partha Chatterjee has pointed how Gandhi’s answer to why India became a subject nation of the British was based on the question of a “moral failure.”66 Gandhi was categorical in *HS* about the fact that, “we keep the English in India for our base self-interest.”67 This self-interest is born, for Gandhi, out of the desire for materiality. As he says: “In order to become rich all at once, we welcomed the Company’s officers with open arms.”68 Modern civilization, as symbolized by the British, was the civilization of materialism. It was the opposite of morality, as, for the people besieged by this civilization, “money is their god.”69 Gandhi reverses the focal point of the success of British colonialism due to its inherent progressive culture (as Nehru saw it), by representing modern, British civilization in purely negative terms and castigating Indians for willingly giving themselves up to the ills of that civilization. “The English have not taken India”, he says, “we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them.”70 For Nehru, there was a fundamental disjunction between colonialism

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66 Ibid. p. 86
68 Ibid. p. 40
69 Ibid. p. 41
70 Ibid. p. 39
and modernity. For Gandhi, one was a product of the other. Hence, colonialism was possible only because Indians accepted the ideology of modernity. This acceptance was due to material self-interest. Self-interest was the fundamental drive of modern civilization. It was aimed at instrumentalist ends. Self-interest for Gandhi was incompatible with morality. Self-interest was the driving principle of the major institutions of civil-society. Chatterjee in fact reads the *HS* as a "critique of civil-society"71. Gandhi's discussions on lawyers, doctors, the Parliament and on education, locates the primary problem within all these systems as one of self-interest.

In his discussion of lawyers, Gandhi holds that lawyers "will as a rule, advance quarrels, instead of repressing them"72. In fact, Gandhi knows them to be "glad when men have disputes"73. So the very nature of the profession demanded self-interest. He feels the Hindu-Muslim quarrels have "been often due to the intervention of lawyers"74. According to Gandhi, if "people were to settle their own quarrels, a third party would not be able to exercise any authority over them"75. A third party, then, is a self-interest driven arbitrator of disputes. His interest lies "outside" the interests of the parties under conflict, and hence it always seeks to perpetuate the crisis instead of solving the matter. Gandhi seems to make a distinction between moral interest and self-centered interest. In one of his addresses he had said: "A true lawyer was one who placed truth and service in the first place and the emoluments of the

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71 Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 85
73 Ibid. p. 59
74 Ibid. p. 60
75 Ibid. p. 61
profession in the next place only. For Gandhi, any displacement of interest results in falsehood and immorality. Modern professions like law in fact indulge in this kind of displacement of all justice-seeking interest. As he says in HS: "Surely the decision of a third party is not always right. The parties alone know who is right. We, in our simplicity and ignorance; imagine that a stranger, by taking our money, gives us justice". Only the parties in conflict know the Truth of a dispute. So they are the ones who could reach a solution. Justice cannot be given by anyone who isn't directly involved with the dispute. Gandhi seems to forward a traditionalist idea of dispute, where the question of solving disputes was a community concern and cannot be rendered by independent institutions outside the immediate structure of the community. Modern institutions were self-interest institutions, serving nothing except their own material gain. It's an instrumentalist idea of civil-society.

The medical profession, according to Gandhi, "ignores the soul altogether and strains at nothing in seeking merely to repair such a fragile instrument as the body. Thus ignoring the soul, the profession puts men at its mercy and contributes to the diminution of human dignity and self-control". The doctor only helps people to further indulge themselves by reducing their suffering through medicines. To Gandhi, diseases are a result of "negligence or indulgence". Health is a result of moral life; disease is the result of immorality. Doctors, according to Gandhi "violate our religious instinct... We may pretend to be civilized, call religious prohibitions a superstition and wantonly indulge in what we like. The fact remains that the doctors induce us

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76 Ibid. p. 60
77 Ibid. p. 61
78 Ibid. p. 64
79 Ibid. p. 64
to indulge, and the result is that we have become deprived of self-control and have become effeminate.\textsuperscript{80} Health is the result of self-control. Religious prohibitions are sanctified prescriptions to Gandhi. It is a kind of religious naturalism that Gandhi propagates. The repetitive cycle of having medicines and falling sick is a situation where the body has lost touch with the soul. Gandhi’s idea of the moral self is the disciplined self. It is also a self-cleansing self, which should suffer for its own indulgences rather than try to escape it.

The problem of modern education according to Gandhi was if “it simply means a knowledge of letters” which is “merely an instrument”. It can be “well used or abused”\textsuperscript{81}. There is a significant passage in the \textit{HS} to which we would now turn our attention:

“A peasant earns his bread honestly. He has ordinary knowledge of the world. He knows fairly well how he should behave towards his parents, his wife, his children and his fellow-villagers. He understands and observes the rules of morality. But he cannot write his own name. What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage and his lot?”\textsuperscript{82}

Education is thus a matter of learning about ethics. It is well learnt through observing “the rules of morality”. The knowledge of it comes from ordinary life. The goal of education is ultimately happiness: the happiness that derives from leading an ethical life. It’s an anti-intellectual idea of education. In the words of Chatterjee, Gandhi views modern education as one “which ignores completely the ethical aspect of education and the need to integrate the individual within

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. p. 64
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. p. 100
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. p. 101
the collectively shared moral values of the community, and instead cultivates ‘the pretension of learning many sciences’\(^\text{83}\). Gandhi doesn’t view the need for education as a way to gain objective knowledge of the world. He views the importance of education completely in terms of subjective gains. He asks the question: “I have learned Geography, Astronomy, Algebra, Geometry, etc. What of that?”\(^\text{84}\) His own response is: “I must emphatically say that the sciences I have enumerated above I have never been able to use for controlling my senses”\(^\text{85}\). Knowledge should contribute to a disciplining of the senses. Only through self-discipline does knowledge teach us how to relate to others. Thus, the sense of ethics here is presented as a dispassionate criteria, something achieved through the disciplining of the senses. Behind Gandhi’s idea of the spontaneity of the face-to-face encounter, there seems to be quite a rigorous notion of self-control. One might place this tension between self-discipline and the desire to respond freely to the other, in the basic tension between the idea of the self in the Gita and the ethical idea of the New Testament. The idea of self-control in the Gita opens up to a radical critique of the self as well as a radical critique of reality itself. This finally makes the justification for a moral war. The question of violence is bypassed by the question of moral justice and in fact, justifies the use of violence for the cause of restoring dharma (ethical life). The self is argued as a mere instrument of dharma, and by denying its reality (its ego), it denies the reality of the other. Here, the other is part of the self, and the self and the other-self are all part of divinity. It’s a totalizing discourse. In a dizzying manner, the Gita

\(^{83}\) Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 91


\(^{85}\) Ibid. p. 101-102
tries to peel off one reality after another, till an almost unreal nature of the
world and the self is established. In the end however, the ethical nature of
Arjuna’s doubts about killing his own brethren is thoroughly dissolved by
Krishna’s rhetorical philosophy of the self, coupled with an extra-human vision
of his divinity. The vision of divinity is the discourse of power, legitimizing the
philosophy. The Sermon of the Mount makes the presence of the other as a
fundamental reality facing the self, a fundamental truth that beckons a
response from the self, and hence a fundamental responsibility. The
"presence" of the other as "face" is an insurmountable reality. Here, the self is
not the other. The other is not the self. Against the Gita’s notion of the other
as immanent to the self, here the other is transcendent. Hence the self will
violate the disjunction of this relationship by violating the other’s presence, in
other words, by using violence against the other. This forms the primacy of
ethics in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Gandhi holds on to both the
philosophies but never acknowledges the tensions, in fact quite a
fundamental difference, between the two.

We have thus far discussed the overall ethical structure of Gandhi’s approach
to the idea of ethics. We will now turn our attention to how Gandhi looks at the
modern situation with regard to specific institutions in the formation of social
and political life. This is the immediate context in which Gandhi places his
critique of modern forms of institutions where he throws up those questions of
ethical life which he finds to be lacking. For Gandhi, the specific forms of
modern institutions were a matter of immediate concern as they were the
social and political forms of life propagating schisms between ethical relations
through new ways of forming relations among people, where material considerations were replacing ethical ones.

To go back to Gandhi’s view of education, he equated without much rigour, the learning of English education along with the "object of making money"\(^86\). The instrumentalist drive behind modern education is reiterated as in other cases. According to Gandhi, "English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into the people"\(^87\). Anthony Parel has pointed out how Gandhi "makes a noteworthy distinction... between using English for the acquisition of secular knowledge and using the mother-tongue for the acquisition of ethical knowledge"\(^88\). But there is an obvious hierarchy in Gandhi about the two knowledge systems.

We would now turn to Gandhi’s view of the Parliament as an instrument of the state. His view is quite scathing:

"It is generally acknowledged that the members (of Parliament) are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest. It is fear that is the guiding motive... Members vote for their party without a thought. Their so-called discipline binds them to it. If any member, by way of exception, gives an independent vote, he is considered a renegade... The Prime Minister is more concerned about his power than about the welfare of Parliament. His energy is concentrated upon securing the success of his party. His care is not always that Parliament should do right... If they are considered honest because they do not take what they are generally known as bribes, let them be so considered, but they are open to subtler influences. In order to gain

\(^{86}\) Ibid. p. 104
\(^{87}\) Ibid. p. 104
\(^{88}\) Ibid. p. 104
their ends, they certainly bribe people with honours. I do not hesitate to say that they have neither real honesty nor a living conscience.89

We find Gandhi here making a criticism of collective self-interest. The institution of Parliament inspires members to lose their own individual voices and serve the interests of the institution and the leader. There is no creativity. Power is the sole consideration for its activities. There is a fusion of private self-interest spilling over to a collective self-interest. The entire machinery of the institution runs on an instrumentalist motive. Gandhi has a negative notion about the political party. The interests of the party is shown to be resting upon the collective hypocrisy of individuals having given-up their own views for the sake of a unified view. Chatterjee mentions how Gandhi refuses to have faith on any "effective combinations" of "individuals and groups sharing a set of common self-interests" which might make "the institutions of representative democracy" work for the "common interest of the entire collectivity".90 Gandhi has no faith on representative politics and institutions. The interesting aspect about Gandhi's criticism here seems to be the distinction he makes between individual choices and collective decisions. He seems to appreciate the position of the renegade who is however made to stand out and tamed by the system. So an individual choice not based on narrow self-interest seems acceptable to Gandhi.

We would now turn to Gandhi's views on technology. In the HS, Gandhi discusses the advent of railways. Gandhi finds the railways a dangerous technological innovation. There are two basic concepts on which Gandhi

89 Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 31
90 Ibid. p. 91

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focuses: the idea of speed and the idea of communication. "Good" he says, "travels at a snail's space", but "evil has wings". Gandhi makes a normative distinction between speed and slowness: "Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time". Gandhi's idea is that slowness is creative and speed is destructive. For him, speed, by its frivolity, exaggerates differences: "I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men traveled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another's languages, and there was no aloofness between them". Slowness, it is implied, has more time to share with others. Hence, the face-to-face communion is possible. Speed inspires people to spread their evil intentions as it takes less time and effort. "The holy places have become unholy. Formerly, people went to these places with very great difficulty. Generally, therefore, only the real devotees visited such places. Nowadays, rogues visit them in order to practise their roguery". Gandhi believes in the virtue of the "natural segregation" of ancient times. Locomotives disrupt this life world and introduce diseases and other evils by bringing too many people to quickly together. Gandhi's contention seems to be that technology creates its own fetish and displaces the ends which society seeks for itself. Technology comes as a disruption to the natural condition of societies and their ways of interacting with each other.

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92 Ibid. p. 47-48
93 Ibid. p. 48
94 Ibid. p. 47
95 Ibid. p. 47
In a striking sentence Gandhi's says: "Every time I get into a railway car, use a motor-bus, I know I am doing violence to my senses of what is right." What is sensed here is the rift in the relationship between being and technology. Gandhi has a dreaded notion that the comfort of technology might take him away from the more organic concerns of the self and induce in him the pleasures of 'things' which lie outside the immediate sphere of the human. Technology is seen by Gandhi as something 'outside' the sphere of being, of the self, and is introduced from the outside as a means to take the self away from his immediate organic horizon.

We can extend Gandhi's view on technology to what he says of machinery in general. "Machinery" Gandhi says, "has begun to desolate Europe." He then goes on to take stock of the entire problem of machinery:

"Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes. Where there is machinery there are large cities; and where there are large cities, there are tram-cars and railways; and there only does one see electric light... Honest physicians will tell you that, where means of artificial locomotion have increased, the health of the people has suffered.

Gandhi was "opposed to machinery which displaces labour and leaves it idle." On the other hand, "a few capitalists have employed machine-power regardless of the interests of the common man." So on one hand, the alienation of labour, and on the other, the concentration of wealth, is what

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96 Ibid. p. 132
97 Ibid. p. 107
98 Ibid. p. 110
99 Ibid. p. 108
100 Ibid. p. 108
Gandhi identifies in his understanding of the psychological and economic aspects of technological progress.

But finally, the domination of human beings by machinery would result in a moral crisis. "Increase of material comforts", the kind of which technology augments, for Gandhi, "does not in any way whatsoever conduce to moral growth". Hence, "scientific discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instrument of greed." Gandhi's language of refutation of technology is both aesthetic and moral. The idea of a healthy society is for Gandhi one where "artificial" means of travel and scientific luxuries have no place. Cities evoke images of stifled life for Gandhi, and appear doomed. He said: "To me the rise of cities like Calcutta and Bombay is a matter for sorrow rather than congratulation." To Gandhi, technology is violent upon man's natural relationship with his social environment. He was aware of the perils of machines controlling human beings. He was fearful of the unlimited growth of machinery, a process that is self-regenerative, and bound to its own logic, which may not coincide with what society really needs. It also results in the concentration of wealth and the division of labour. The fact that Gandhi thought machinery was desolating Europe is also an aesthetic observation about how human society was disappearing under the vast structures of technology.

Herbert Marcuse's in One Dimensional Man was responding to the human and social alienation faced by Europe during the coming of industrial society. We can see from the following quote from Marcuse where he speaks of a kind

101 Ibid. p. 166
102 Ibid. p. 165
of thinking which coincides with the coming of industrial society, how the
dichotomy between the "rational" and the "utopian" is created:

"We live and die rationally and productively. We know that destruction is the
price of progress as death is the price of life, that renunciation and toil are the
prerequisites for gratification and joy, that business must go on, and that the
alternatives are Utopian. This ideology belongs to the established societal
apparatus; it is a requisite for its continuous functioning and part of its
rationality."\(^{104}\)

This passage immediately reminds of Chatterjee's calling Gandhi's idea of a
perfect society a "utopia". One finds Chatterjee's vocabulary a part of the
thematic of the Enlightenment discourse to which Marcuse advances his
critique. Chatterjee uncritically introduces Lenin to point out the "backward-
looking petty-bourgeois utopia" of Gandhi and "concedes" points to Gandhi in
the same manner that Lenin is supposed to have conceded points to the
"Populists" who had "nevertheless took 'a big step forward' by posing,
comprehensively and in all its economic, political, and moral aspects, the
democratic demand of the small producers, chiefly the peasants."\(^{105}\). In a
"theoretical" sense however, Chatterjee would still hold Gandhi "reactionary"
like Lenin did the Russian Populists who had "simply a Romantic longing for a
return to an idealized medieval world of security and contentment."\(^{106}\). Without
going further into Chatterjee's Leninist interpretation of Gandhi as a
"reactionary", lets take stock of Chatterjee's approach. First, how come Lenin
enters the anti-Enlightenment discourse of Chatterjee so positively? Is

\(^{104}\) Marcuse, Herbert, *One Dimensional Man*, ABACUS, Britain, 1972, p. 120

\(^{105}\) Chatterjee, Partha, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 98

\(^{106}\) Ibid. p. 98
Leninist Marxism outside the thematic of Enlightenment rationality? The anti-utopian discourse in Lenin is straight out of the rationalist discourse of Enlightenment discourse. Then how come Chatterjee passes judgment against Gandhi borrowing the same criteria of the so-called 'utopian'? This is a complete ideological turnaround by Chatterjee unless both he and we accept that there are fundamental theoretical disjunctions between the Leninist ideology and the liberal strands of Enlightenment philosophy, of which Marxism is also a product. Again, Chatterjee never grapples with democracy anywhere in his framework as a category. How come suddenly he "concedes" the democratic linkage to Gandhi's utopian idea? Even if the aspect of democracy used by Lenin in the specific terms of the peasant's demand is taken as an ideological standpoint, how does the idea of democracy itself get linked to the peasant demand? Chatterjee has contradicted his own framework in this regard and mixed up issues in order to satisfy his polemical arguments against the elite nationalist discourse.

We now turn to a related issue of industrialization. According to Gandhi,

"Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use".  

Hence industrialization would create an uneven balance between the village and the city. The competitive, capitalist spirit would usurp self-sufficiency. The direction of economic sustenance would be fundamentally reversed. In fact,

107 Chatterjee, Partha, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 88
even the "socialization of industries would not alter the process" according to Gandhi:

"Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them".\(^{108}\)

Against this, Gandhi's solution was the more indigenous production of *khadi* as a homegrown industry:

"(Khadi) connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country... Khadi must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessaries of life in India and that too through the labour and intellect of villagers. That means a reversal of the existing process. That is to say, instead of half a dozen cities of India and Great Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 70,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world in so far as it benefits both parties....

Moreover, khadi mentality means a decentralization of production and distribution of the necessaries of life".\(^{109}\)

Hence, the logic of colonialism, which is tied to the logic of industrial capitalism, can be reversed by the productive capabilities of indigenous

\(^{108}\) Ibid. p. 88

products by villages. This would reverse the order of economic power and thwart exploitation. In fact, khadi would signal a new “mentality” altogether, and become symbolic of the fight against the overall ideology of modernity.

**The Nation as *praja*:**

Anthony Parel has pointed out that Gandhi enters the debate on whether India is a nation “by claiming that India is a *praja*, the word he uses for nation”\(^{110}\). Parel explains the dual notion of the word *praja* in Gandhi: “the first refers to the Indian people as a whole composed of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsees, Buddhists and others. The second refers to the modern educated elite – the lawyers, the doctors, the wealthy, etc.”\(^{111}\).

So we find, within the dual meaning of the word *praja*, a twofold conception: the idea of the nation as a *cultural collectivity* and the idea of the nation as a *professional collectivity*. It’s a fusion of pre-modern and modern elements of the idea a social collective.

Parel elucidates how Gandhi’s notion of the nation as praja far predates modernity:

“India was a *praja* already in the pre-Islamic period; the ancient *acharyas* (teachers of Indian philosophy) contributed immensely towards the consolidation of the idea of *praja*. The places of pilgrimage they established in the South and the North, the East and the West of India were important praja-building centers. Moreover, pre-Islamic Indian culture was characterized by its

\(^{110}\) Ibid. p. liii

\(^{111}\) Ibid. p. 115
openness to outside values of Islam and other religions. The recent Hindu-Muslim hostilities are therefore resolvable within the context of the notion of the praja. In other words, the traditional notion of praja offers a basis upon which the new edifice of a modern, composite Indian nation-state could be built.\textsuperscript{112}

Let us now turn to Gandhi's own words in the matter:

"I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men traveled throughout India on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another's languages, and there was no aloofness between them. What do you think could have been the intention of those far-seeing ancestors of ours who established Shevetbindu Rameshwar in the South, Juggernaut in the South-East, and Hardwar in the North as places of pilgrimage? You will admit they were no fools. They knew that worship of God could have been performed just as well at home. They taught us that whose hearts were aglow with righteousness had the Ganges in their own homes. But they saw India was one undivided land and so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world.\textsuperscript{113}

The following enterprises, according to Gandhi, were responsible for the pre-modern notion of praja: ancient modes of travel, exchange of languages and the establishment of religious pilgrimages. This was responsible for the

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid. p. liii
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid. p. 48-49
formation of the first conception of praja, the pre-modern one, which is of a cultural collectivity.

However, this cultural collectivity was not of a single religious community. In fact, for Gandhi, the Indian nation was not co-terminus with any one religion:

"India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merge in it. A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it. That country must have a faculty of assimilation. India has ever been such a country. In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If they do, they are not fit to be considered a nation. If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in dreamland. The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsees and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow country-men, and they will have to live in unity if only for their interest. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms: nor has it ever been so in India."\(^{114}\).

So Gandhi has a similar cultural normative as Nehru where differences are themselves part of the idea of the Indian "nation". The observation that "there are as many religions as there are individuals" would sound like a modern idea, but might have been very much an ancient reality as well. This is veered towards the understand that certain attributes of individualism in society was always present before modernity, and that modernity has added new

\(^{114}\) Ibid. p. 52-53
structures to the idea of the individual as the medieval idea of statecraft gave way to modern ways of imagining the state and the individual's status in society.

For the professional collectivity to acquire the status of a nation, Gandhi makes the following demands:

The lawyer should give up his profession and take up a handloom. A doctor should give up medicine, and instead of mending human bodies should take up the duty of mending souls. The doctor should also take up the handloom. The English crafts along with the language should be rejected. Everyone should aim at indigenous self-sufficiency. Gandhi's idea of society is anti-professional. Modern professions are based on self-interest. They come to form an instrumentalist idea of community. Professions have to be given a spiritual direction. The rift between the pre-modern religious community and the modern professional community has to be mended by common ethical norms. It is through the subordination of its craft that a professional collectivity can become a moral community. The critique of modern civil-society in Gandhi as pointed out by Chatterjee, hence seems to be a question of the subordination of civil-society within the overall framework of a moral community.

The main challenge facing the praja is of course a common one. Gandhi defines the nation, or praja, as one “who are affected by European civilization, and who are eager to have Home Rule”\(^{115}\). Note that Gandhi doesn’t merely say British colonialism but “European civilization”. The fight against British

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\(^{115}\) Ibid. p. 115
colonialism is a fight against Western modernity. It was, in a way, a fight against elements that had made him a lawyer, and was also part of his self-upbringing. It was, in this sense, a fight against the split-face of his self. It was a fight for self-recovery, where the self is dipped in ancient religious traditions of the East and West, and the sense of ethical life emanating from it. It was supposed to be a self that would interrupt the evil discourse of modernity. But the self was also the split-face of modernity: it was within modern life that choices could be made and implemented.

Gandhi's political goal for the praja was swaraj. For Gandhi, swaraj or home rule, wasn't a matter of change of a government. He criticizes the mentality that desires "English rule without the Englishman", which is the same as desiring "the tiger's nature, but not the tiger". It is a way of thinking that "would make India English" but, then, India "will be called not Hindustan but Englishtan". The point however is that "if we become free, India is free". So it is not the political freedom of India, which would ensure the freedom of its people. It had to be certain kind of freedom experienced by the people, which would ensure the real freedom of India. To Gandhi, "such swaraj had to be experienced by each one for himself". It was an internal freedom experienced by every individual, which would bring about political freedom in the substantive sense. "Real home-rule" to Gandhi, "is self-rule or self-control". Freedom to Gandhi was paradoxically a matter of controlling the self. We come back to the discourse of the self in the Gita. In a political sense too, it's a kind of negative freedom: freedom as a refrain from certain actions.

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116 Ibid. p. 28
117 Ibid. p. 28
118 Ibid. p. 73
119 Ibid. p. 73
120 Ibid. p. 118
that are considered violent and immoral. It's a purely self-inflicted sense of personal freedom. The moral aim is dharma. In this, Raghavan Iyer has compared Gandhi's idea of dharma with Kant's idea of the "universalizability of the Categorical Imperative of Duty". But to call Gandhi "wholly Kantian, owing to his adherence to the Gītā" \(^{121}\) is to fuzz a modern, Western tradition of philosophy with the non-theoretical nature of Gandhi's thoughts taken from diverse traditions and placed in an Indian religious and modernist tradition. However, we can draw comparisons at the level of both Gandhi and Kant echoing a similar, modernist trend in their ideas. For example, Kant's idea of freedom as the freedom of individual thinking against the authority of tradition, finds a similar direction in Gandhi's idea of a self evolved freedom, where certain universality of ethical truths and not tradition is accepted as sacrosanct. Kant of course places that way of thinking in reason, while Gandhi places it in the ancient notion of ethics derived from religion. But the point is: Gandhi's own philosophical ideas are radically chosen from different traditions, both the ancient and modern West, as well as Indian. His distinction between tradition and universal truth is also extremely arbitrary. The nature of these distinctions as well as his radical self-choices is impossible without a critical thinking that is not based on certain notions of what is called enlightened reason. There can be no claim of any so-called universality of philosophical ideas without a historical context, and through this itself similar directions can be drawn across contexts. Hence, the idea of enlightened reason cannot merely remain a Eurocentric idea as Gandhi's different working of the idea itself entails. Even though Gandhi's philosophical plea is anti-modern, his own premises and direction of ideas are modern.

\(^{121}\) Iyer, Raghavan N., *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 71
And yet, the challenge of the *praja* was not to inculcate the "nature" of the colonizer's civilization. The thrust seems to be on the fallacy of borrowing of ideas from the West, and hence a lack of self-creativity with regard to one's own civilization. But the idea in Gandhi still isn't re-working ideas *outside* the present circumstances of choices, whether at the individual or collective level. For example, as Sunil Khilnani points out regarding Gandhi's autobiography: "To write an autobiography, Gandhi confessed to his readers, was to indulge in something of an unnatural practice, one that was "peculiar to the West". Yet his use of the form marks a landmark in non-Western, and specifically Indian, literary invention". Also, without the modern influences in Gandhi regarding social evils, etc., there would have been no criticism of Indian traditions like the caste system. The referent however, for Gandhi, has to be India's own cultural past. There is a strong notion of civilizational autonomy in Gandhi. Only as an autonomous culture could India consider itself free from colonialism. At the individual level, freedom would mean radical interpretation of tradition and modernity, but for such a condition, an *attitude* of rejection of the modern West was crucial. Only then could individuals within the Indian civilization begin to think of *alternative* forms of life. For Gandhi, modernity was creating alternatives only *within* its ideology. The point was to include modernity *itself* within alternatives.

Gandhi's idea of swaraj is not merely a philosophical formulation. It is part of his political programme. But it is for Gandhi, unlike what Chatterjee argued as "utopia", not to be considered "like a dream", but something which "we have once realized it...will endeavour to the end of our lifetime to persuade others..."

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122 Khilnani, Sunil, "Gandhi: In his Own Words", in The Hindu, 30-09-2001
to do likewise"\textsuperscript{123}. As Parel correctly points out, swaraj for Gandhi, "in so far as it requires self-rule, is not, and cannot be a utopia; it is something that can be achieved here and now"\textsuperscript{124}.

There is an address to the Indian National Congress by Gandhi under the title ‘Constructive programme’ which outlines his entire political philosophy of swaraj, or what he calls "poorna swaraj or complete independence"\textsuperscript{125}. It is a prescriptive document for achieving swaraj.

The first issue taken up is that of communal unity. In the very beginning, Gandhi makes a distinction between "political unity" and an "unbreakable heart unity"\textsuperscript{126}. To achieve the latter, Gandhi urges Congressmen to "represent in his own person Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jew, etc"\textsuperscript{127}. It’s an idea where members of a political party represents various religious communities as a notion of its very self. It is aimed at the cultivation of "personal friendship"\textsuperscript{128}. It is not clear whether Gandhi means by this that the Congress can likewise as a party represent every religious community. He of course sees it as outside the political sphere. One must remember that Gandhi wanted the Congress disbanded when he found the party guilty of failing to control communal strife. Gandhi’s notion of the party is far different from the theories of ideologues like Lenin who equated the party with capturing state power. For him the moral legitimacy of the party is derived from its role as a political and social movement, rather than one holding state power. He wanted the Congress, by 1945-46, to "play an oppositional role,

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid. p. 73
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid. p. 170
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid. p. 171
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid. p. 172
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid. p. 172
pointing out the misdeeds of government and preventing the enactment of bad laws”, as Chatterjee points out.\textsuperscript{129} We can say that for Gandhi, when it comes to the conflict between politics and truth, the party’s politics would be to side by truth, even in the face of giving up or distancing itself from power. It is again not an “escape” from politics, but to place oneself in that disjuncture where the battle between politics and truth happens. Hence, the party in this situation, in Gandhi’s conception, would be representative of national communities only at the social sphere. In the strictly political sphere, the party would stand for the "gap" between state and the people. Hence the idea seems to be that the responsibilities of social representation would itself prevent a political representation of social communities aimed by the party. In other words, social representation cannot be put to use in the political sphere. It shows a disjuncture between the social and the political spheres in Gandhi, at the level of representation.

The other important aspect of the constructive programme was regarding khadi. Gandhi explains the entire mindset behind his desire for the khadi programme. We would well understand this standpoint of Gandhi where the reversal of the modern economic logic was meant to uplift the villages and indigenous products as a response to the modern, colonial ideology. Here Chatterjee questions the failure of the Gandhian idea that couldn’t make ground in the overall political implications of its principles. Chatterjee argues that the Gandhian ideology "could not admit that capitalists must be coerced into surrendering their interests"\textsuperscript{130}. As a result, as Chatterjee points out, “the peasantry were meant to become willing participants in a struggle wholly

\textsuperscript{129} Chatterjee, Partha, \textit{Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?}, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 114
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid. p. 123
conceived and directed by others. Without going into the couple of examples to which Chatterjee draws attention to, we take his standpoint that:

"Gandhism could only assert the superiority of its moral claim; it could not find the ideological means to turn that morality into an instrument of the political organization of the largest popular elements of the nation against the coercive structures of the state."

The first point to note here is that leaders on whose morality the entire project rested upon always represented the peasants in their own struggle. In this respect Chatterjee provides an example of Gandhi’s explanation of the idea of the samagara gramsevak:

“He will so win over the village that they 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 meant 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."
This is what Chatterjee highlights as the "inadequacy of the theory as a political theory of mediation" where the peasants "would follow the mediator because of his moral authority"134.

The Gandhian movement, which takes on a mass proportion at the political level, however finds it difficult to fulfill its moral obligations in the same proportion. It raises questions about how the principles of morality that Gandhi holds could be generated at the mass level. And if it fails to do so, how then could the Gandhian movement become decisive as a transformative politics. The "model" perspective creates a hierarchy within the structure of the movement where the leader is responsible not only for his own moral consistency but the consistency of the whole mass of people. This representative idea of the movement creates the gap between the leader and the peasants, thus jeopardizing the mass direction of the movement itself. Hence, the problems between morality and politics is fought at the individualistic level of the mediator, while the peasants have to remain passive, bounded by the same morality as the mediator, but not having the same luxuries of arbitrary power and knowledge to decide the political fate of the movement.

At this highest point of its political manoeuver, Gandhian politics ends in a paradox. The idea of the praja at the level of political movement finds itself caught between the moral intransigence of the leader and the political possibilities of the masses. It seems difficult for Gandhian politics to fight its own "experimental" philosophy, faced as it is with strict codes of moral-versus-immoral methods of struggle. One interestingly finds that though

134 Ibid. p. 124
Gandhi appeals for an anti-modern philosophy of society and politics, it is precisely the very modern, even scientific nature of its politics of truth, which jeopardizes the Gandhian movement from taking real roots. Perhaps it's not an irony at all, but rather a confirmation that the contradictions of modernity are so deep that it is almost impossible for any movement based on a radical critique of its principles but caught within its condition, to succeed in any feasible manner.