CHAPTER - V

GANDHI'S MIND AND TECHNIQUE
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To understand Gandhi's response towards labour movements, it is necessary to analyse the world view of Gandhi in relation to labour problems. His technique which he employed in solving the problems was unique and had no parallel in the history of India or the world. To labour Gandhi gave a new dignity and a new hope without alienating the capitalists on the basis of class conflict. Gandhi put before the capitalists a new path, a whole new category of experience and a challenge to reaffirm their integrity. To Congress, Gandhi gave a bigger shake in humanity.

Gandhi had a powerful sense of history. He knew that among the impoverished masses, labour was the most advanced class and it must get its due share before any attempt for class cooperation between capitalists and labour could be realised. It was this logic in his world view that dictated his relationship with the labour. A significant factor in Gandhi's political formation was his perception of the Congress and a multi-class organisation which represented a movement of all classes. As such the united front of all classes was his priority. And it was within this front the working class participation was envisaged by him. He was painfully aware of the limitations of the labour power, as such his appeal was to invite enlightened workers, individually with their families to participate and enter the Congress in a big way and transform it in accordance with their aspirations. He had apprehensions of Labour Class entering the Congress as a group and forcing the national movement for their sectarian interests. Gandhi hoped to avoid,
as far as possible, the mixing of politics with trade union activity. He confined his labour activities to the Ahmedabad Textile Workers Union which refrained from joining the All India Trade Union Congress. Moreover, like labour, he was eager to win over the capitalist class to his side. He understood the nuisance of capitalist class thinking. The Indian capitalist, far from seeing possibilities of development within the imperial frame work, worked out a detailed multipronged strategy precisely to undermine it and break out of it. Keeping this in mind, he not only gave call for Swedeshi but thought of such a formula where in the problems and contradictions vis-a-vis labour could be solved on the basis of Trusteeship System, conciliation, arbitration boards and umpires. The capitalists also responded and subtly tried to adjust its own attitude towards Gandhi's viewpoint in order to be able to wield maximum influence over him and the Congress.

Gandhi differentiated Indian capitalists from foreign capitalists and the British Government in India. The labour activities related to plantation industry and Railways etc. were treated differently. Moreover, Gandhi was prepared to permit radical Congress leaders like Jawahar Lal Nehru and Subhash Chander Bose to intervene in the workers' movement and protect their class interests. But such exercise was permitted within the para-meter of Indian national struggle where one class dominance was seen as uncalled for.

The psychological impact of Gandhi's Non-Violence and Satyagraha was profound. When applied in the case of labour, it gave sudden access to self-respect with drive and momentum to the working class. The faith reposed by the working class on Gandhi was simply
extra-ordinary. But Gandhi was cautious and he guided their enthusiasm in such a way where it could be beneficial to the national struggle against British Imperialism.

Before we come to the question of Gandhian Guidelines, it is necessary to preface it with a general remark concerning the relationship of theory and practice. The Gandhian theory was based on Labour unrest which was prevalent in India between 1917 to 1934.

Modern Industry began to develop in India in the decade 1850-60 when the foundation of Cotton Textile Industry and jute industry were laid in 1853. About the same time first railway line was established between Bombay and Surat. The subsequent years witnessed the advance of industrialisation and hence the working class also.  

All these changes which took place in the industrial organisation were markedly slow. By the year 1879 there were 89 cotton textile mills employing only 43,000 persons. In the field of jute in 1882 there were 20 jute mills employing 20,000 persons. In the field of Coal, India was still importing the coal.  

The following table will give an idea of the growth in the cotton textile industry until the early years of the twentieth century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mills</th>
<th>Operatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889-90</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>99,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-01</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1,56,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-14</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>2,60,847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The jute factories that started growing at the close of the nineteenth century numbered as much as 64 during 1913-1914 employing a total of 216,000 workers.4

During 1896-1900 a total of 191 mines were under operation with a labour force of 61,367 only. During 1911-1915, the corresponding figures rose up to 554 and 128,884.5

Railway shops employed about 100,000 workers or 79 per cent of the workers in transport industry.6

The other industry which developed during the period was plantation. In the coffee plantation the number of workers stood at 82,000. In the tea plantation in 1895 there were 553,811 workers and in 1919 there were 973,355 workers.7

In fact the real importance of the industrial working class lies not in its quantitative strength but in its economic and political position in the Indian society. Industrialization brought in its wake many an industrial problems and conflicts between the capitalists and the labourers. The Indian Working Class Movement up to the period of our study may be divided in three broad phases — the first phase from 1850 to 1900 as the inception of working class movement; the second from 1901-1914 as the phase witnessing the formative process of the trade unions and the third from 1915 to 1934 as the phase of developing consciousness and organised trade union and political movement of the working class. Upto this, the working class of India along with its economic struggles marched forward with the political perspective of national liberation.

In the first phase, the working class engaged the attention of some philanthropists and social workers and N.M. Lokhande was a good example of this type. With the same spirit, a Seamen's club was formed in Bombay. During this period strikes were short lived and ill organised. First strike of this period was organised in April-May, 1862 by the labourers of Howrah Railway Station. It was associated with the inescapable shortcomings of that period. There were 25 strikes recorded during 1882 and 1890 in Bombay and Madras.

These instances are sufficient to show the nature of the 'labour organizations' during the closing years of the nineteenth century. Before 1895, Indian Labour developed little class consciousness and hardly did anything to organize themselves. But the small strikes which had occurred, nevertheless, taught workers the power of united action even though they had no unions. It may be said that the Indian labour was in search for trade unions which were yet to develop in the real sense of the term.

By the end of 1914 the strength of industrial workers in India rose to 950,973. During the second phase the strikes in the Government of India Press in Calcutta which took place on September 27, 1905 deserves special attention. As a result of this strike Bengal Press Workers union,

one of the earliest trade Unions of the country came into existence on October 21, 1905. In September, 1905 the workers of Burn & Company at Howrah and Calcutta Corporation Tramway Company struck work. Scavengers of Calcutta Corporation organized strike during same period and their demand of wage increase was partially met. Guards of East India Railway struck work in October, 1905. In August, 1906 a big strike occurred in Clive Jute Mills of Budge Budge and the Jute Workers' Union was formed during strike. A big strike broke out in July-September, 1906 on the Bengal section of East Indian Railway. This strike which was the impact of anti-imperialist political awakening, did not end in vain and the East Indian Railway Employees' Union came into being.  

There was a widespread strike on May 1, 1907 in the Railway Workshop at Bombay and in November indefinite strike of guards and drivers in East Indian Railways. The strike was so successful that practically none of the trains could reach Calcutta on July 23, 1908. The Bombay workers began its first political strike in protest against the conviction of Tilak.  

Truly, during this period strike action of the workers increased both in numbers and in intensity but the Indian working class movement had not yet reached a sufficiently organised and powerful stage. As the workers themselves were not sufficiently mature to guide their movement at this stage the middle class trade union workers played a commendable role in organizing and leading the working class struggles during this period.  

Organised Trade Union Movement was the special feature of the third phase. As an evidence of intensity R.K.Das has quoted the following figures:—  

16. Ibid., pp. 93-94.  
17. Ibid., pp. 100-109.
"November 4 to December 2, 1919, Woolen mills, Kanpur 17,000 men out; December 7, 1919 to January 9, 1920 railway workers Jamalpur, 16,000 men out; January 9-18, 1920 Jute Mills, Calcutta 35,000 men out; January 2 to February 3, general strike, Bombay 200,000 men out; January 26 to February 16, mill workers Sholapur, 16,000 men out, February 24 to March 29. Tata Iron and Steel Works, 40,000 men out; May 1920 mill workers, Ahmedabad 25,000 men out."

It can be safely asserted that none of the industries of India was free from strike during the later half of 1920. Strikes became a part and parcel of industrial life. Rajni Palm Dutt said, "These were the conditions in which India's Trade Unionism was born."

The starting point of India's Trade Unionism was commonly derived from the Madras Labour Union formed by B.P.Wadia. Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association was founded in 1918 by Gandhi. The Indian Working class thus rapidly started becoming conscious of concerted action and it is estimated that in 1920 there existed 125 unions with a total membership of 250,000. Foundation of All India Trade Union Congress in 1920 was the historical moment in working class struggle. By 1927 the All India Trade Union Congress had fifty seven affiliated unions with a recorded membership of 150,555.

Statistics of strikes from 1921 to 1934 shown in Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India and as reported in the book of Sukomal Sen is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Stoppages</th>
<th>No. of workers involved (thousands)</th>
<th>No of working days lost (in lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we saw the existence of Labour as a force merged in different phases with the advent of time, Gandhi's economic thought or philosophy also got its shape with time based on his experiences and need of hour. It was not the outcome of his brain sitting at home. It grew and developed through the experiences in the field. As and when the economic problems took a turn, he shaped his economic thought accordingly. There had been a criticism on this account to which he replied, "People say that I have changed my view, that I say today something different from what I said a year ago. The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same, my works and deeds are directed by prevailing conditions."

We can trace the development of his ideas in two separate phases:

From beginning of his campaign in India upto 1919.

During the first phase he strongly objected to the use of machinery and methods of production. He also rejected the western civilization. We can infer that his approach was anti-materialistic. His book 'Hind Swaraj' depicts his frame of mind at that time. In the second phase he thought of providing an alternative to the western civilization.

His family atmosphere, religious scriptures, moral philosophers and to a great extent the poverty of Indian people had a great influence in providing a definite form and shape to his economic philosophy.

The impact of his parents particularly his mother, experiences as a student, the role of his teachers from school days onward, his interaction with his fellow students, the mutual influence with moral overtones and his work in South Africa, were great experiments in developing and changing a new course.

His interest in labour problems started when he was in South Africa. The plight of labourers there had a great influence on his mind. He came into contact with one of his clients, Balasundram, an indentured labourer in South Africa. Gandhi described this incident. "From that day there grew a bond between labour and myself which became closer and closer with the passage of time."23

His experience in India further convinced him about the path which he deliberately set for himself. The cumulative experience of one and all, including his interaction with British repression prepared him to meet the ongoing challenge of British imperialism which was all set to

23. Harijan, February 2, 1934, p. 3.
maximise the exploitation of Indian masses and strengthened its stronghold on India on colonial lines. To balance the strength and fight against his opponents i.e. the British Government in India, he needed self-confidence and great determination to mobilise the Indian masses.

After his return to India on January 9, 1915 from South Africa Gandhi decided to remain in India for the rest of his days to serve the people. He then made an extensive tour of India to acquaint himself about the living condition of the people. He particularly met the peasants and the labourers and saw their poverty and horrible living conditions. He who was sympathetic and cooperative towards British rulers in the beginning, denounced them after this tour and called their system of rule as 'Satanic System'. With a firm mind he resolved to oust the Britishers from India. At the special session of Congress in 1920 he declared that no cooperation was possible with such a Satanic Government. The Congress under Gandhi's leadership resolved that in order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom for the starving millions. In Gandhi's opinion British rule was responsible for political dependence of India, its economic breakdown and cultural deterioration.

Indian agriculture, industry and civilization were badly affected as the time advanced under British rule. Steadily, the peasants became poorer and poorer and reached a state of indebtedness whereby they began to lose their lands. Due to the wrong policies of the government not only the conditions of villagers deteriorated but the handicrafts of cities and towns

also came to an end. In this connection Dr. Radha Kamal Mukerjee said, "So long as there is no radical change in the rural economy of India through land adjustments, agricultural co-operation or scientific farming, the problem of the landless peasants will become more and more acute and there will be a tendency for this class to come in line with the industrial proletariat of the cities. That will portend social upheavals."\(^{27}\)

In view of Prof. D.R. Gadgil the decline of the old handicrafts was the only dramatic event in this economic transition; collapse of which was sudden and complete.\(^{28}\) The causes of decline of handicrafts of India were enforcement of British free trade, heavy import duties in England over Indian manufactured goods, non-availability of raw materials to Indian handicrafts due to their exportation, imposition of transit and customs duty, special privileges granted to the British Traders in India, compulsion on Indian Craftsmen to disclose their trade secrets and exhibitions displaying British goods.

The artisans and craftsmen who were out of jobs began to seek jobs in factories. R.P. Dutt wrote that millions of ruined artisans and craftsmen, spinners, weavers, potters, tanners, smelters, smiths from towns and villages had no alternative than to go to agriculture which transformed India into an agricultural colony of British manufacturing capitalism.\(^{29}\). To the admirers of British rule for providing transportation, communication etc. in India, Gandhi wrote "Such benefits as have already accrued to India are not part of foreign rule but really the result of contact with a robust people.

\(^{28}\) Gadgil, D.R., op.cit., p.17.
\(^{29}\) Dutt, Rajni Palm, op.cit., p.129.
The good is incidental, the evil of foreign rule is inherent and far outweighs the good. Famine as we know it today, is the creation of British rule.

English education was introduced in India to form a group of such privileged Indians who could serve as interpreters between Englishmen and Indian people. This was also a means to bring in western civilization.

Observing the poverty, exploitation and humiliation of Indian masses, Gandhi proclaimed that the only solution to India's problem was Swaraj. So Gandhi's economic ideas were the outcome of the effects of the circumstances. He was always ready to change his course of action if circumstances so demanded. He changed his economic ideas according to the need of the hour. His opinion about machinery, industrialization, trusteeship, capital-labour relation etc. changed from time to time during 1909 to 1934. This inconsistency in his ideas was like that of Tolstoy about which Gandhi praised in these words "Much has been often sought to be made of the so-called inconsistencies of Tolstoy's life but they were more apparent than real. Constant development is the law of life and a man who always tries to maintain his dogma in order to appear consistent derives himself into false position. That is why Emerson said that foolish consistency was the hobgoblin of little minds. Tolstoy's so-called inconsistencies were a sign of his development and his passionate regard for truth. He often seemed inconsistent because he was continuously outgrowing his own doctrines." Same is exactly true of Gandhi also.

In the unequal battle with the British Government he largely dependend on his own strength and ideology which changed the course of


Indian struggle against the British Imperialism. To understand all this, it is necessary to fully grasp the working of his mind, technique from time to time in relation with British bureaucracy in India in general and British Government in particular. Since the labour was the major segment of Indian Society, we will concentrate on this aspect in this chapter.

Let us investigate his responses towards capitalists and labour since the influence of Socialist ideology after the October/November, 1917 revolution of Soviet Union was increasing in India and the Labour was susceptible to its influence, Gandhi decided to take on this ideology and present his own thesis on this all important issue.

Actually in India he found similar conditions of labourers as were prevailing in South Africa. Political and labour fields in India lay open before him. He was welcomed from both sides. "The emergence of Gandhi in Indian politics as a nation builder and the emergence of the working class as a political force in India nearly coincided in 1920s."

Village uplift was Gandhi's first task and uplift of the workers the next, though he had not then taken to his loin cloth but he had shed the European dress to identify himself better with Kissan and Majdurs whom he so eagerly longed to serve. He was then quite new to public work in India and the labour movement was still in its infancy. But as always he was determined. He knew his mind. He had decided to work wholeheartedly for the downtrodden. He wanted to translate his love for poor in concrete terms.


For this he evolved his own technique to serve the cause of Peasants and workers. The process to evolve this technique including his mindset needs critical understanding.

In his writings and speeches Gandhi advocated manual labour for all, irrespective of caste, qualification and occupation. In his opinion manual labour was equally dignified as mental or intellectual labour. He preached as well as practised this principle. He wrote in this connection, "I do not know whether I am a Karamyogi or any other Yogi. I know that I cannot live without work. I crave to die with my hand at the spinning wheel." Gandhi wanted that an individual should direct the activities of bread labour towards the service of mankind and for general good.

To him bread labour was very important. According to him 'every healthy individual must labour enough for his good and that intellectual faculties must be exercised only in the service of mankind and not for earning a livelihood or hoarding wealth. The bread labour must be voluntary and intelligent and should be aimed for general good.' He emphasized that the quality that deserves respect in an individual and provides enough work for yougnmen and women, was of getting rid of shame that was wrongly attached to physical labour.

Gandhi was of the view that idea underlying the bread-labour could create harmonious relations between the employers and employees. In case the capitalists also engage themselves in physical labour then the


difference between them and the workers would vanish and there would emerge a sense of equality. The workers, in the long run, would be forced to consider that employers were also labourers and not anything different.  

He also considered the concept of bread labour as a sure way of bridging the gulf between the manual work and non-manual work and solving the problem of isolation and indifference of workers from socio-economic system.  

He emphasized that scavanging was a respectful occupation and advised everybody to do enough physical labour in order to justify his earnings. His views about the industrial relations were based on absolute equality and dignity of labour. He would not allow anyone to live on easy bread. Success could be achieved only by dint of hard work. He made it clear by saying, "He who eats without performing this sacrifice (hardwork), eats stolen bread on the lines of Biblical maxim 'Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow."  

In 1925, he said that in free India of his dreams the basis for franchise would be bodily labour in some form or other.  

In those days, when Gandhi started his campaign in the field of labour, industrialization and machinery were being introduced in Europe as well as in India.

There had been a lot of dispute over the issue whether Gandhi was in favour or against machines. Study of his ideas on industrialization and machinery which he expressed at different occasions gives an indication that his ideas were steadily and gradually developing.41

He altogether condemned industrialization and machinery in his book 'Hind Swaraj' in which he wrote that machinery had begun to ruin Europe and this ruination was approaching the English gates. He declared machinery a symbol of great sin of modern civilization. Thus we find that in 1909, the year in which this book was published, Gandhi was deadly against machinery. He further expressed himself in this book that the workers in the mills of Bombay had become slaves and condition of women there was shocking. These women, he wrote, were not starving when mills were not there. He added that India would become an unhappy land if craze for machinery continued. Also he could find no good point in favour of machinery.42

In 1925, he, however, admitted that machines had become a permanent feature and could be used for the welfare of humanity. He said, "Machine has its place, it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. I would welcome every improvement in cottage machine but I know that it is criminal to displace hand labour by the introduction of power driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their homes."43

42. Gandhi, M.K., Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, Ahmedabad, 1946, pp.63-70.
43. Ibid.
B.G. Radhakrishna interpreted the views of Gandhi expressed in 'Hind Swaraj' differently saying that though according to Gandhi machinery had impoverished India, he was not against machines quo machine but in so far it stood for the enslavement of man. In 1926, he declared that use of machinery, which subserves the interest of all, was lawful.

The fact that Gandhi had changed his views and was now not against industrialisation and machinery was clear from an interview he gave to a young Ashram worker Shri Ramachandran in 1924. When Ramachandran asked Gandhi how he was fighting not against machinery as such but against its abuses which were so much in evidence that day, Gandhi replied, "I would unhesitatingly say, yes but I would add that the Scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instruments of greed. Then the labourers will not be overworked and the machinery instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help. I am aiming not at eradication of all machinery but limitation."

Gandhi used to advise both capitalists and workers not to do anything that might hinder the growth of industry. He always urged the workers to develop a strong sense of attachment with the industry concerned and consider the industry as their own like capitalists.

Gandhi had certain objections to the use of machines like craze for machinery and its indiscriminate multiplication. He had no intention to do away with machinery but he wanted some restriction to be imposed on

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44 Radhakrishna, B.G., op cit., p. 110.
45 Young India, April 15, 1926.
46 Radhakrishna, B.G., op cit., pp.110-111
its use. He was in favour of using the machines in cottages to relieve the burden of crores of poor but was against their use when they turn men into robots resulting in setting aside human labour.\textsuperscript{48}

Gandhi was in favour of scientific invention and improvement in machinery, which added to the efficiency of cottage industries and which did not enslave a man. He was against modern craze for labour saving devices.\textsuperscript{49}

Gandhi was also in favour of provision of certain key and heavy industries in urban areas owned by state. He listed several such machines which could find place in urban economy. The list included heavy machinery for public utility works and still heavier ones to produce those heavy machines. He wanted such machines to be owned by the state.\textsuperscript{50}

Gandhi was of the view that the industrialist, who became rich with the support of labour, had no moral right to use that wealth for personal advantage. He used to tell them that they were entitled to use a portion of the earnings for their personal use and the rest of it was to be held in a trust of which they were to be themselves trustees. He said: -

"What I expect of you is that you should hold all your riches as a trust to be used solely in the interest of those who sweat for you and to whose industry and labour you owe all your position and prosperity."\textsuperscript{51}

This was a method to bring about economic equality in a non-violent way as against the methods recommended by Communists and Socialists.

\textsuperscript{48} Mishra, O.P., \textit{op.cit.}, p.20.  
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{50} Radhakrishna, B.G., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 107  
\textsuperscript{51} Gandhi’s Speech at Opening a Creche at Ahmedabad, May 1, 1928; \textit{Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi}, Vol. XXXVI, p. 289.
Gandhi's trusteeship formula provided method of change of order of capitalist society into an egalitarian order. There was no place for capitalism in it and it gave a chance of reformation to owning class. It provided no right of private ownership of property except to the extent to which it might be permissible for welfare of society. It did not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.\textsuperscript{52}

This trusteeship technique of Gandhi was actually an experiment with truth and non-violence to achieve solutions to economic problems. In his opinion it was a method which would unfold a new order of life of universal benefit replacing the present selfish order.\textsuperscript{53}

Gandhi knew that it was difficult to change the selfish nature of man, i.e. his nature of possessiveness, within a measurable distance of time and hence suggested a practical method to allow them to keep the property with themselves in trust for use by society; a sort of encouragement for taking a step towards dispossessing themselves. Thus he gave practical shape to his ideas. Such trustees, though not legally bound, were constructive in the sense of due fulfilment of their trust. In this concept of trusteeship, the man must think himself the trustee of all riches he has gathered but is allowed to utilize only a part of it for his personal use.\textsuperscript{54}

"The theory of trusteeship postulates an enlightened recognition of the new social need and the required readiness on the side of the private owners to part with their private rights."\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Misra, O.P., \textit{op.cit.}, p.23.
\item \textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 23.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Jha, Shiv Chandra, \textit{The Indian Trade Union Movement}, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 42-46.
\end{itemize}
According to Gandhi it was fully consistent and capable to co-exist with the principles of Truth and Ahinsa. He said that his theory of trusteeship was neither a make shift nor a camouflage and that he was confident that it would survive all other theories. It had the backing of philosophy and religion. It was the weakness of wealthy that they didn't adopt it. No other theory co-existed with non-violence. 56

"The theory is an improvement on all other systems as it dealt with the social, political and economic problems simultaneously."

Gandhi was against any legal restrictions on trustees. He wanted them to be bound by mutual love and affection. 58

Gandhi considered the whole world as one family without any discrimination of caste, colour or religion. If the rich were the trustees of their own wealth, the poor possessed the power of labour. As such the poor were no inferior to rich and must be treated as equal. 59. In his opinion united labour was more powerful than capital. Thus, the power of labour lies in its unity and both capital and labour hold their power in trust. Moreover, Gandhi's main aim is to give a new meaning and vigour to the concept of power and the ownership which generates power. 60

The theory of trusteeship could not escape criticism. Some critics called it simplistic, and some others called it unrealistic and impractical. Inspite of all this criticism, Gandhi remained firmly attached to his doctrine. 

59. *Young India*, March 26, 1931.
60. *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.
of trusteeship which, he argued, was morally legitimate having been based on non-violence.  

Jawahar Lal Nehru had his doubts about this theory as according to him it provided unchecked power of wealth to an individual who could not be expected to use it solely for the public good. He raised the question whether the best of us were so perfect as to be trustee that way.

Gandhi's trusteeship theory was aimed at reforming the individual by removing the evil in him. It considers both capital and labour equally powerful, thus avoiding class conflict between them. It specially suggests that industrial relations should be based on co-operation rather than conflict.

Gandhi wanted the workers to fulfil certain obligations under the trusteeship theory. The prevailing climate of industrial relations was to change. In this climate the workers play all sorts of tricks to put in as little a labour as possible while the Capitalist wanted maximum work on little pay. The solution of this tussle lay in the theory of trusteeship. It would oblige the workers to regard the mills in which they worked as their own. There would, then, be no complaint of overwork and no illwill towards employers. In his own words, "But that cannot happen until there is a single mill-hand who does not regard the mill in which he works as his own, who complains of sweating and overwork, and who therefore nurses in his breast nothing but ill-will towards his employers."

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63 Surneni, Indra, *op.cit.*, pp. 138-139.
Gandhi was strongly in favour of the concept of minimum living wage. His definition of minimum living wage was that which could provide a reasonably balanced and sufficient nutritive diet to enable a man to keep fit in his eight hours normal quota of efficient work all the year round, minimum clothing and housing and other ordinary comforts.66

He was of the view that labourers had a fundamental right to necessaries of life. He made it clear by saying "I do not want anything more for workers and peasants than enough to eat and home and clothe themselves, and live in ordinary comforts as self-respecting human beings."67

Gandhi's demand was a 'living wage' for workers which meant minimum wage. He said that he was not concerned with the name; he had no objection for calling it 'minimum wage' but to him the name 'living wage' was the most appropriate. He argued that 'living wage' meant irreducible wage. And once it is accepted in principle, then the question naturally arises as to what might be included in it.68

He made it clear that if any industry was not in a position to pay the minimum living wage to its workers, then it was better for that industry to close down.69

Gandhi grudgingly accepted the class basis of society. His belief was that society would always contain unequal members because it was a natural phenomenon. Intelligence and tact are found in varying degrees in men. These qualities are found in Capitalists and not in labourers.70

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68. Harijan, February 3, 1937.
said that it was clear that labour would never attain to that intelligence. If it did, it would cease to be labour and become the master. He further added that the Capitalists did not fight on the strength of money alone; they possessed intelligence and tact.\footnote{Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, XVII, pp.17-20; Young India, February 11, 1920, p.7.}

Gandhi accepted the historical existance of the class struggle. He had a desire to abolish this struggle by bringing capital and labour on equal status.

He wrote in Young India in August, 1927, "I do not think there need be any clash between capital and labour. Each is dependent on the other."\footnote{Young India, August 15, 1927.} In a subsequent issue of the same journal he promised to benefit the peasant and workers without class-war.\footnote{Ibid., February 20, 1937} And throughout his life Gandhi stuck to his views.

It was his metaphysical faith of equality of man on which Gandhi formulated the doctrine of class collaboration.\footnote{Singh, V.B., "Mahatma Gandhi on Labour: An Interpretation", Indian Journal of Labour Economics, 1963, p. 437.}

Through his paternalistic attitude towards capital and labour he regarded them as members of the same family; capital being the trustee for the good of the workers.\footnote{Jha, Shiv Chandra, \textit{op.cit.}, p.45.} Gandhi said, "I have always said that my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony; capital not only living to the material welfare of the labourers but to their moral welfare also Capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them."\footnote{Young India, August 20, 1925.}
Gandhi had the faith that labour was a great power in society which lay in their unity and in development of their self consciousness. In 1936, he addressed a mine-workers meeting thus, "If the workers only knew what they could do for themselves by training and intelligent combination, they could realize that they were no less proprietors of the mines than the managers and the share holders."

Gandhi was not against capital. He knew very well that capital would be required in some form or other. He expressed his views in Harijan thus, "Capital as such is not an evil; it is its wrong use that is evil. Capital in some form or other will always be needed."  

Gandhi emphasized on the need for removing conflict and hatred among labour and capital. In Young India in 1926 he wrote, "I do not fight shy of capital. I fight Capitalism—capital and labour need not be antagonistic to each other. I cannot picture to myself a time when the rich would sprun to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in the most perfect world we shall fail to avoid inequalities but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness. There are numerous examples of the rich and the poor living in perfect friendliness. We have but to multiply such instances."  

Under the influence of Ruskin's writings, Gandhi held the view that despite their conflicting interests, the labourers and capitalists need not

79. Harijan, July 28, 1940.  
80. Young India, October 7, 1926.
be antagonistic. Paternal authority and responsibility if introduced, replaces the exploitative character of relations by family character bringing harmony. Gandhi's views were fully in confirmation of the views of Ruskin that it was the balance of justice and social affection which should govern the relations between employers and employees.  

"According to Gandhi class war is foreign to the essential genius of India which itself is capable of evolving Communism on fundamentals of rights of all on equal justice." The purpose behind the class-war is to create equality in society but the means adopted in class-war by people are destructive while the means suggested by Gandhi are constructive.  

There can be no peace, justice and equality through violence as violence only invites violence. Gandhi was not unaware of existence of class-conflict but according to John Gutang, the conflict in Gandhi's doctrine was not regarded as an antagonistic relation between two human beings of two classes in which weakening of opposite party was important but was a conflict which invited a discussion.  

Gandhi preached that capitalists and labourers depended on each other for their existence. If one of them is destroyed, other cannot exist. V.V.Giri wrote that Gandhi rightly reckoned capital and labour as two wheels of the same chariot, wheels of which should move in unison. He further added that he (V.V.Giri) had carefully and honestly tried to follow Gandhi's principles of truth and non-violence while dealing with the management which brought much benefit to the working class.  

84. Ibid.  
Gandhi advocated clear understanding, respect and equality between capital and labour. He pleaded for strong labour organisation. These were the essential factors for cordial industrial relations.  

In his definition of rights, Gandhi linked the duties. He wrote, "All rights to be deserved and preserved come from duty well done."  

He was deadly against those who talked of their rights without doing their duty. In Young India, he wrote, "I want to deal with one great evil that is affecting the society today. The Capitalist and the Zamidar talk of their rights. The labourer on the other hand of his. If all simply insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos." In his opinion, "No people have risen who thought only of rights. Only those did so who thought of duties. Out of the performance of duties flow rights and those that knew and performed their duties came naturally by the rights." He advised every body to do his duty to bring law and order and peace. He wrote, "If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind."  

Labour was unorganised at the time when Gandhi started taking interest in labour problems. Gandhi believed that labour was a great power which lies in combination i.e. unity but he wanted to organise them in his own way. Gandhi once wrote:

"I am not opposed to the organisation of labour, but as in everything else, I want its organisation along Indian Lines or if you will, my

89. Young India, January 15, 1925, pp. 17-18.
Gandhi wanted the labour organisation on Indian lines. He believed that India had her distinct tradition and she was capable of finding her own solution to the question of capital and labour. He had described 'my lines' in the following way: "..................I am doing it. The Indian labour knows it instinctively. I do not regard capital to be the enemy of labour. I hold their co-ordination to be perfectly possible. I undertook in South Africa, Champaran or Ahmedabad was in no spirit of hostility to the capitalists. — My ideal is equal distribution ............ I therefore work for equitable distribution."\(^91\)

On another occasion he observed, "The labour has but to realise that labour is also Capital. As soon as labourers are properly educated and organised and they realise their strength, no amount of capital can subdue them. Organised and enlightened labour can dictate its own terms."\(^92\).

Gandhi wanted to test his ideals in the field of labour. He started organising them right from 1917 when Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association was formed under his guidance. It was actually his laboratory for research and experiments on labour. He held the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association up as a model for all India to copy.\(^93\)

He recommended formation of trade unions and organisations of workers with a warning that they must be run on right lines otherwise they would lead to irresponsible social behaviour. In the struggle between capital and labour the capitalists were to be blamed generally but in Gandhi's

91. *Young India*, March 17, 1927, pp. 85-86.
view labour could be more tyrannical than capital when labour realises its strength.94

Another reason that Gandhi gave for the need of organisation of labour was that after a proper organisation they would have more wealth and more resources through their labour than the Capitalists through their money. He advised workers to make use of the organisation (i.e. trade union) to reform themselves into good citizens and also to defend themselves against hostility from outside.95 The trade union, according to Gandhi, was to take care of the worker's life in all respects both inside the factory and at home.96

The programme that Gandhi gave to the trade unions was not only for raising their economic status but also for boosting their moral and intellectual behaviour. He wanted to make the workers masters of the means of production and not slaves as they were.97 In his opinion trade union was not there only to obtain the due share of benefits worth their labour but its final aim was to make the workers part-proprietors side by side with the employers.98

In a mass rally of mill-hands at Ahmedabad, which was considering the formation of a labour union, Gandhi made his intentions clear by advising such persons not to join the proposed union who believed that the union was being formed for fighting with the mill-owners and told

97. Ibid.
98. Raman N. Pattabhi, Political Involvement of India's Trade Union, Bombay, 1967, p.80.
them that he had not done anything in his life to harm the mill owners interests and would never like to be involved in such acts.  

The final goal of Gandhi was to improve and develop the workers' physical and mental conditions and to solve their disputes with the millowners through conciliation and arbitration.

In his opinion trade unions and trade unionism would flourish only if the path of conciliation is adopted by the workers. He didn't confine the scope of the union activities to enhance the wages of the workers only but enlarged its field to deal with all sorts of their personal problems. It was his heart felt desire to run the unions on positive lines for healthy growth and to gain strength. He would not allow them to indulge in unfair practices. They would gather momentum only if run on right lines. But inspite of all his love and enthusiasm for trade unionism he was not in favour of formation of any association on all India level. When an appeal was made for affiliation of Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association to All India Trade Union Congress he replied:

"Labour in India is still extremely unorganised. The labourers have no mind of their own when it comes to matters of national policy or even the general welfare of labour itself. Labourers in various parts of India have no social contact and no other mutual ties. It is provincial and even in the same city it is highly communal. There is no absolute cohesion among provincial leaders............ leaders in different provinces have no single policy to follow. In these circumstances an All India Union can only exist on paper."  

100. Ibid.  
The reasons given by him for not forming a union on All India level were simple and quite understandable. He wanted to organise the workers properly before taking such a step. He first wanted individual organisations in industries, plants and localities and not a central labour organisation. He believed that any attempt to organise the workers on all India basis would lead to aggravate class conflict and thereby weaken the national integrity. 

He was so confident of the right working of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association that he once declared: "If I had my way I would regulate all the labour organisations in India after the Ahmedabad model."  

Gandhi was not totally against strikes. He was of the view that this weapon should be used by workers as a last resort. He wanted this right (to strike) to be exercised with extreme discretion when all attempts of reconciliation had proved unsuccessful. He held the view that the strikes were the inherent right of working class for the purpose of securing justice.

Gandhi used to advise that under the compelling circumstances when employers had refused to accept the decision of arbitration, the workers not only should but must resort to non-violent non-cooperation with the employers i.e. the strike. The strike under such circumstances was to secure justice. In such a case Gandhi desired that the workers should be prepared for a strike for an indefinite period because in his opinion no strike could be

successful if it could not be prolonged indefinitely. At the same time he wanted the conditions laid down by him to be followed strictly.\textsuperscript{106}

He wanted the workers to get rid of their inferiority complex to realize their true worth and to learn the art of uniting themselves and form unions. He had no objection to strikes but he advised the workers to perform their duties which to Gandhi was the only right worth living for and dying for. This right to do one's duty covers all legitimate rights. Gandhi would favour only that strike if the rights of workers did not follow as a matter of course from the performance of their duties and also if it is based on truth and non-violence.\textsuperscript{107}

Gandhi was against the use of labour strikes in their work place for any political purpose. He would favour a strike under some specific conditions. Question of sympathetic strike arose at the time of Assam Bengal Railwaymen's and steamship workers' strike in 1920. He accepted sympathetic strikes as a moral right of workers but was against them if deliberately called for disconcerting the government and if the workers were not enlightened enough.\textsuperscript{108}

Gandhi didn't approve linking of economic strikes with political strikes. He was against use of political strikes for economic gains and vice versa. He forbade strikes by police and scavengers as he considered these services as essential. He advised them to utilize other effective and honourable means to redress their grievances.\textsuperscript{109}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{106} Jha, Shiv Chandra, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 42-46.
\item \textsuperscript{107} Radha Krishna, B.G., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 115.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Chatterjee, Rakhahari, \textit{Class Conflict and Nation Building - Gandhi and the Indian Labour Movement}, \textit{Indian Journal of Political Science}, October, 1976, p. 49.
\end{itemize}
According to Gandhi a strike should satisfy the following main conditions:

1. The strikers should not indulge in violence.110  
2. The labourers should not go on strike if they were not able to support themselves out of their own savings.111  
3. There should be no strike without a genuine and just reason.112  
4. There should be unanimity among the strikers regarding the decision to go on strike.113

Gandhi was not opposed to strikes but he wanted a strike to be the last resort when the methods of negotiations and conciliations had completely failed.

He accepted that it was the right of workers to go on strike to seek justice but he strongly recommended arbitration or adjudication as the foremost and main method of settling the industrial disputes. Any strike before trying arbitration, and that too honestly, was totally disapproved by him. In his opinion arbitration was even helpful during the period that followed a strike. He had full faith that the principle of arbitration would prevail in future replacing strikes for ever.114

Gandhi pleaded that conciliation and arbitration, if adopted voluntarily, proved the best method of developing better industrial relations. This method provides a good chance of better understanding and adjustment according to circumstances.115 To sort out differences or disputes between

111. Young India, September 22, 1921.  
112. Ibid.  
113. Ibid., February 6, 1921.  
the workers and employers, he suggested that there should be voluntary conciliation in the first place and in case the differences are not resolved by conciliation, these could be referred to a third party for arbitration whose verdict should be binding on both the parties.\textsuperscript{116}

Gandhi admitted that even in best regulated concerns there would be differences, at one time or other, between the employers and employees. To maintain mutual respect, recognition of equality and strong labour organization in such concerns, arbitration would be the best solution. It would help to keep perfect understanding between them.\textsuperscript{117}

He used to advise the Ahmedabad workers to approach the mill-owners through their unions and if the decision of the mill-owners did not satisfy them, they should appeal to arbitration. He told them that if they wanted justice without any violence, the best procedure was to appeal to the good sense of the employers and accept the arbitration principle. At the same time he admitted the strike was the inherent right of workers but told them that strike was a crime when the principle of arbitration was accepted by the Capitalists.\textsuperscript{118}

Even when the workers have enough sense of responsibility, it is quite possible that they are influenced or predominated by class-consideration and bias. So in that situation, the persons whose interest is directly involved in it, cannot consider the issue selflessly. Therefore, it is advisable that a third party chosen by them should examine the issue.\textsuperscript{119}

Gandhi said that the public had no way of judging the merits of a strike

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Jha, Shiv Chandra, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 43.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Jha, Shiv Chandra, \textit{op.cit.}, p.43.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Mathur, J.S. & Mathur A.S. (eds.), \textit{op.cit.} p. 416.
\end{itemize}
unless it was backed by impartial persons enjoying public confidence. He held the view that interested persons could not judge the merits of their own case and as such it needed an arbitration or adjudication.¹²⁰

There are other advantages of arbitration. The workers would feel their involvement in the working of their mills and could settle their disputes by finding a way-out through discussion. Under this method (arbitration) the workers feel a sense of participation in industrial management and in the long run, its outcome would be an atmosphere of collective bargaining and industrial democracy. Gandhi was involved in the 1918 Textile Wage strike at Ahmedabad in which the workers were demanding 50% increase in wages. The management was not willing to grant more than 20% increase. Gandhi mediated and tried to solve the problem by drawing a golden mean i.e. 35%.¹²¹

He used to advise the workers not to take a risk of strike without holding negotiations with the mill-owners. In case arbitration is suggested by the mill-owners, then the principle of Panchayat should be accepted whose decision should be binding and acceptable to both the parties.¹²²

Gandhi wanted the trade unions to do the work of uplift of workers rather than to incite them to go on strike. He was aware of the fact that labour leaders would utilize the labour for political gains. He was against it. Gandhi was against exploitation of labour by politicians for their own ends. In his opinion the greatest political contribution of worker was to better

¹²⁰ Young India. February 11, 1920.
¹²² Young India, February 11, 1920.
their own conditions, to claim for their rights and ask their employers to give them the status of proprietors or sharers.123

Gandhi admitted the fact that labour if developed from within could prove to be great national force but even then he was not in favour of introduction of politics into trade unionism. Speaking against such exploitation he declared "I have not the remotest idea of exploiting labour or organising it for any direct political power of first class importance when it becomes a self-existing unit. Labour in my opinion must not become a pawn in the hands of the politicians on the political chess board. It must by its sheer strength dominate the chess board."124

Gandhi had the clear perception that labour leaders would try to use labour unions for enhancing their political interests. He was also aware that such leaders were desirous to become Capitalists themselves. His advice to the workers was to avoid and oppose those leaders. Not only this, he was also opposed to winning such gains which were not concerned directly with the labourers; might such gains be political. The importance of this approach has been realized now when politics has entered the labour movement and labour leaders have weakened the movement by their selfishness and rivaliries.125 He used to say, "It is most dangerous thing to make political use of labour."126

He was successful in keeping the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association aloof from political struggles. His own activities were confined

123. Bose, R.N., op.cit., p. 35.
to the principles of well-being and happiness of others. The Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association had no political objective in its constitution unlike other trade unions in India. The only objective of Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association was the nationalization of textile industry.\textsuperscript{127}

While Gandhi was against participation of labour organisations and unions in politics, he had no objection to the participation of workers in politics as individuals.

In reply to a question regarding whether or not working class should take part in politics, his reply was in affirmative and said that they could surely take part in politics of national community and could become members of the Indian National Congress in their individual capacity. He also permitted them to take part in freedom movement along with their family members so far as their activities were limited to boycott the foreign cloth and participation non-violently. His decision of allowing the individual workers to participate in politics was one sided. He was opposed to the participation of Congress in the affairs of Labour organisations and vice-versa.\textsuperscript{128}

He never permitted the Congress to be influenced by labour under the pretex that in that case the Congress would get diverted from its main aim and would indulge more and more in protection of labour interests because of the weight of their huge number. Such a situation, according to him, would do harm to the freedom movement. He had the fear that the Indian Capitalists would then become unfriendly to Congress and would side the government for self protection causing financial loss to the Congress party.\textsuperscript{129}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{127} Raman, N. Pattabhi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 81.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Chatterjee, Rakhahari, "Class Conflict and Nation Building - Gandhi and the Indian Labour Movement", \textit{Indian Journal of Political Science}, October, 1976, pp. 51-52.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
After the study of the above descriptions, several things have emerged. The speciality of this phase was that while the labour force, in the beginning of the 20th Century, was in its state of infancy, Gandhi entered the Indian political and social scene. As the labour was slowly gaining strength, Gandhi's influence was also increasing. He was practising his principles effectively and strongly in the economic field. Though he was not an economist, yet the principles he put forward in this field were of significant value and the manner in which he applied these principles, in tune with time and circumstances, was the special characteristic of his thoughts. Just as in the beginning he strongly opposed industrialization but later on when he found that there could be no progress without it, he accepted it. His acceptance was subject to the condition that industrialization should not create unemployment. At the same time he evolved the principle of 'Bread Labour' according to which every one was to earn his own bread; a practical axiom in the benefit of labour. The principle of class harmony advocated by him, created a feeling of brotherhood in the society.

Yet there were some principles of Gandhi which seemed apparently very influential but these were more idealistic than practical as for example the theory of Trusteeship and Arbitration. Trusteeship formula advanced by him was not put into practice by even his devotees. In fact it is not practicable that he who earns may distribute his earnings among others. In Ahmedabad and Jamshedpur, too, where the owners of the industries were very close to Gandhi, we do not find any sign of acceptance of Trusteeship theory.

As far as arbitration is concerned, if we review the Ahmedabad strikes we find that the settlement of 1918 strike by arbitration did not
satisfy the demands of the workers fully. Even then the workers had to accept it. In the same way under the influence of Gandhi whatever settlements were reached through arbitration, the workers were the losers.

Gandhi's demand for workers was a 'living wage'. This again is a controversial issue as to what should be the living wage. No doubt Gandhi founded the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association but he was never in favour of organising the workers at all India level. Even after formation of All India Trade Union Congress, he did not allow the affiliation of Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association with it. Not only this, he tried to convince Lala Lajpat Rai and Andrews not to join All India Trade Union Congress. But later on when Indian National Trade Union Congress was formed we observe a change in his thinking.

In fact, the distinct feature of his principles was that they were based on humanitarian grounds. Gandhi would always attract attention because of his emphasis on sensibility and the truth of the heart, doctrines which set him apart from his contemporaries. In his solutions for Labour unrest he could not be criticised as having rejected reason and objective truth in favour of crude idealism. His passionate denunciation of violence and support for Satyagrah and Non-Violence was easier for many workers to stomach than the violent rhetoric and violent action from the capitalists and the Government. The Government were shocked and dismayed, radicals felt betrayed and his opponents felt threatened. However, Gandhi continued to make doctrine and programme of what had emerged so spontaneously from the Labour strikes and Labour struggles vis-a-vis the capitalist and the Government.