Gandhi's relationship with the capitalists has been viewed by his critics as his inclination towards them and capitalism. But his attitude towards capitalism is as visible as sunlight. He had scarcely any soft corner for the western capitalist system of production. For it can neither suit the Indian conditions nor square well with his value system since it promoted acquisitiveness. It is true that capitalism has its history of successes and its magical power offering panacea for the ills of underdeveloped poverty. Gandhi himself was also seriously confronted with this concerning problem of underdeveloped India. The increasing contrast between the affluent nations embracing industrialisation and sated world of the industrialised nations in which remainder of mankind was struggling for hunger. Both the opposing models, Western free enterprise (Capitalism) and State regulated system (Socialism) had their own achievements and records to influence him. But he was unimpressed by these models. As already discussed in Chapter III he attempted to offer Trusteeship as an alternative model which also is in consonance with the Indian conditions. The inherent imperfections of capitalism, its historical growth based on profit-maximization and exploitation which eventually led it to the highest form of exploitation known as colonialism and Imperialism was plainly apparent to everybody. Gandhi, thus
comparing capitalism with his dream of perfections found its inherent contradictions as uncongenial to human progress. More appropriately in Gandhi's terminology as opposed to his philosophic view of Truth and Non-violence, the system of capitalism could no longer deliver the goods. Capitalism is a word for a system that can stand on its own attainments and failures. Gandhi, too weighed capitalism from this point of view and came to the conclusion that "I don't fight shy of capital I fight capitalism". He rejected it as a system and did not hesitate to call it Satanic. It could no longer attract him even though it fascinated the whole world because of its tremendous advance in science and technology. Having lucidity in his approach towards capitalism, he equated it with the western civilization. Gandhi's rejection of capitalism is based on following grounds;

He found that advancement and success of capitalism gave new directions and channels of exploitation and dominance over underdeveloped nations. The Great Britain was the champion of colonial policy while other European countries such as the Dutch, the Portuguese and the French too had their colonies. India had been a victim of colonialism for more than three hundred years. Gandhi, the leader for three decades, fought tooth and nail against colonial exploitation and held capitalism responsible for it. In 1909 in Hind Swaraj, he condemned modern

1. Young India; October 7, 1926, p. 348.
civilization which he considered a 'Satanic Civilization' a 'disease' for, it "takes note neither of morality nor of religion". His indictment of western civilization simply shows his political attitude as a leader who was fighting against the so-called white man's 'civilising mission' in colonies. On sensing that the emerging elite was dazed and dazzled by the splendour of western civilization, he openly raised his voice against it. He rather claimed the superiority of ancient Indian culture and appealed to the Indians to cling to it like a child clinging to his mother. His patriotism was hurt when he found that the educated Indians, whether doctors, lawyers, teachers had become aliens to Indian culture under the influence of the west.

Capitalism as a system of production makes rich richer and poor poorer and thereby widens the gulf between the sections of a society. Thus, it puts a total strain on national infrastructure. Further continuous depletion of natural resources on which the lust for capitalism stands, create ecological and environmental imbalances. Gandhi had observed the behaviour and actions of the rich nations in their colonial ambitions and hence managed deliberately to reduce human suffering by conserving


natural resources for a decent life. This approach of Gandhi seems original neither competitive nor reactionary to left or right ideologies.

To Gandhi, man is not means but all activities are developed and centred around him for his well-being. In Gandhian scheme of things, man has a very dignified place who is not treated as material being but as a divine essence. His repudiation of capitalism and imperialism was a result of the fact as he believed that it hurts the individual. In 1924 he openly declared that "the individual is the one supreme consideration" and adhered to this belief throughout his life.

To Gandhi, use of machinery was not bad if it is done properly taking into account the economic needs. He never opposed its use if it is done properly under village economy for self-sufficiency and on non-exploitation. Gandhi's suspicion regarding introduction of machinery in a country like India where there is a need to develop labour intensive technique because of over population seems to be long visionary and far-reaching aims. Taking into view the economic conditions of India, he felt that any introduction of machinery was an imposition of British civilization which would eventually prove as suicidal leading to mass unemployment.

4. Young India; November 13, 1924, p. 378.
Gandhi also observed that capitalism in the form of imperialism is a promoter of war. Being humanist he presented an approach for the well-being of all and to save the humanity from wars and destruction. His concept of non-violence was the landmark in this direction. He found that under capitalism, tendency for profit-maximization has been the major characteristic of the capitalists. The history of world wars testifies this fact. When the Great Britain had monopoly as a leading industrialist in the world, the challenge put forth by the west Germany to its capitalist dominance aggravated antagonism between the two and eventually became the decisive factor which led to the first World War.

Gandhi wanted to prepare such conditions which would result in building of an atmosphere or world order free from tension and war. In this direction he advanced the idea to transform man from ignorance and untruth. For, he believed in moral goodness of man. To fulfil this end Gandhi attempted to present a complete philosophy of man. He was, however, no mere a thinker or visionary who made castles in the air, but being a practical idealist he knew the fact that no man is perfect. Everyone is a mixture of good and bad. For the creation of a better society, it needed to transform man's consciousness from ignorance. Gandhi's scheme tolerates capitalists on this ground that gradual transformation may bring about desired results but has vehement opposition to the capitalist system.
In Gandhi's words, "I have no absolutely design on capitalists. I can have none as I don't believe in violence. But I do want cleanliness in capitalism as well as in labour. And I should certainly resist capitalism being used to exploit the resources of the country for the use of few by the foreigners or home born".  

In the context of the nature of Indian Capitalists and their role in national liberation movement, Gandhi presented a pragmatic approach. But his close intimacy and personal relationship with the Indian capitalists and sometimes his soft corner towards them does not mean that he favoured the capitalists, zamindars, industrialists and moneylenders and ignored the labourers, peasants and weaker sections of the Indian society. The Indian capitalists, though very close to him, were unable to make Gandhi a supporter of capitalism. In the words of Gandhi, "I am not ashamed to own that many capitalists are friendly towards me and do not fear me. They know that I desire to end capitalism almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced socialist or even communist. But our methods differ. Our opinions differ".  

Throughout his political carrier, Gandhi's inclination for the welfare and upliftment of the peasants, labourers and weaker sections is discernible. Though surrounded by his capitalist friends, Gandhi seems to be conscious of his goal of

5. Young India; February 23, 1922.
6. Harijan; December 16, 1939, p. 376.
establishing an egalitarian society. Their (capitalists)
friendship and association could never deviate Gandhi of his
real motives and actions. Even in South Africa, though he
went there to provide legal assistance to a firm, it was the
pitiable condition of the Indian labourers that attracted his
attention most. His public life and his struggle with the
authorities started thus with his championing the rights and
privileges of the Indians, among whom the poor indentured
labourers were the most suffering lot.

Gandhi's first success in his public life was concerned
with the release for Balasundaram, an indentured labour, who
was tortured by his master. Gandhi himself acknowledged,

"Balasundram's case reached the ears of every indentured
labourers and I came to be regarded as their friend. I hailed
this connection with delight. A regular stream of indentured
labourers began to pour into my office and I got the best
opportunity of learning their joys and sorrows". 7

On his return from South Africa, he led Ahmedabad mill-
workers against the mill owners. He made the cause of the
textile workers his own and identified himself with the worker's
cause to such an extent that he appears to be known the First
Trade Unionist in India. The mill hand workers had a very fair
demand of increase in wages to compensate the special war-time

op. cit.; p. 115.
allowance withdrawn by the Mill-owners arbitrarily. In his appeal to Mill-owners, Gandhi wanted them to bind the workers with silken thread of love\(^8\) and was successful in getting an arbitrator appointed to look into the problem.

Initially, Gandhi was not anxious to join the struggle directly but when he observed that open struggle was inevitable, he took the workers' side and assumed direct and active leadership. Now he started his real work of educating both the workers as well as the employers, through his daily bulletins. To the mill workers, Gandhi was giving essential training needed for the spirit of Satyagrahi, and calling for the change of heart in the mill-owners. Since the cause appeared to Gandhi just and fair, he advised the labourers to go on strike which went on for 21 days. When he saw that the labourers were retracing their steps due to many hardships, he declared a fast unto death to show the moral aspect and legitimacy of the workers' demand for wage increase. In Gandhi's own words,

"I can not tolerate for a minute that you break your pledge. I shall not take any food nor use a car till you get 35% increase or all of you die in the fight for it."\(^9\) Only after three days' fast, the mill-owners conceded the full demands of the workers. When Ambalal Sarabhai on behalf of the Mill-owners offered to accede to the labourers' demand for 35% increase

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in their salary provided Gandhi gave an undertaking not to champion their cause in future, Gandhi declined the offer.\(^{10}\)

For, it was not only impossible but also unnatural for Gandhi to agree with the industrialists to refrain all the times in future from serving the cause of labour.

He always fought against injustice and exploitation and never spared the capitalists and often sided against them in case of open conflicts with labour or peasants. For example, in 1921 Gandhi criticised the Indian industrialist Tata, because he had dispossessed peasants of their valued land in order to enlarge his industrial enterprise.\(^{11}\)

In September 1936, the Mill-owners' Association of Ahmedabad asked the Textile Labour Association to accept a 20% cut in wages because of heavy foreign competition and the world economic-depression as they could not afford to pay existing wages. On Labour Association's refusal the case went to the Arbitration. Sh. Kasturbhai Lalbhai represented the employers while Gandhi represented the labour. Gandhi said, "No cut should be made till the mills have ceased to make any profit and are obliged to fall back upon their capital for continuing the industry".


\(^{11}\) C.W.M.G.; Vol. 20, p. 67.
Gandhi further emphasised, "It is vital to the well-being of the industry that workmen should be regarded as equals with the shareholders and they have therefore every right to possess an accurate knowledge of the transactions of the mills."  

The Chairman Govindrao Madgavkar agreed with Gandhi and did not accept the idea of wage reduction.  

Thus Gandhi's participation for the workers' cause in Ahmedabad and his attitude towards labour throws direct light on the relation between capital and labour and the role of Labour Unions.  

To protect the cause of labour and save them from ruthless exploitation of the millowners, he tried to raise consciousness among the working class about their position in the process of production. So he declared on Feb. 25, 1920,  

"By establishing unions, we do not wish to intimidate the millowners but to protect the workers, and we certainly have the right to do this. To those of you who believe that the unions we are establishing are for the purpose of fighting or coercing the mill-owners or that we shall be able to use these unions for such purposes, I would advise not to join the purposed union at all. I have never done any thing in my life to coerce owners or harm their interests, and I will never allow myself

12. Ibid; Vol. 64, p. 352.
to be an instrument in this. Only, if they try to suppress the workers, I will be ready to give up life to save them". 13

Regarding the relation between capital and labour, Gandhi gave dignified place to the labour, i.e. of an equal partner with the capital. Both are interdependent. One can not function without the co-operation of the other. He said, "A labour skill is his capital, just as the capitalist can not make his capital fructify without the co-operation of labour, even so the working man cannot make his labour fructify without the co-operation of capital." 14

Gandhi does not regard capital as an enemy of labour. In his own words, "I am for the establishment of right relations between capital and labour, there is no antagonism between the two". 15 To Gandhi, difference between them is due to lack of intelligence and disorganisation of working class. He feels there is nothing inherent in capitalistic class to compel it to exploit the working class. He said further, "If both labour and capital have the gift of intelligence equally developed in them... they would get the respect and appreciate each other as equal partners in a common enterprise". 16

Gandhi held the view that capitalists should understand the dignity of labour and hence he did not think there need be

15. Young India; Jan. 8, 1925, p. 10.
any clash between labour and capital. But it does not mean that he advocated submission to the capitalists' exploitation, for the non-violent struggle is open to resist the capitalist exploitation. He also feels that exploitation of the poor can be curbed not by killing a few millionaires but by learning the art of non-violent non-co-operation by the workers with their exploiters. In his own words,

"We seek not to destroy the capitalist. We seek to destroy capitalism. If we want capital to extinct or if we abolish moneyed men, we will never succeed. What we must do is to demonstrate to the capitalists the power of labour and they will consent to be the trustees of those who toil for them".

Gandhi's involvement in the cause of the labour obviously demonstrates his desire to raise their status. His open rejection of capitalism and advocacy of rural based economic system also indicates that he wanted to improve the life conditions of the downtrodden, rural backward and urban labourers. He was sure that capitalism could not make the life of working class easier as the degree of ruthless exploitation went on increasing and hence he declared,

"You can not build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages. Rural economy as I have conceived it eschews exploitation together, and
exploitation is the essence of violence. You have therefore
to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be
rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel."\textsuperscript{17}

Gandhi should be hailed as the champion of the proletariat
as he propounded the economic ideas to make an end to the
exploitation of the labour. His rejection of capitalistic
philosophy and favouring of rural economic system based on
decentralization and spinning wheel, the symbol of cottage
industries was an endeavour to reduce exploitation of the labour.
As in Gandhian village economy, the labourer finds employment in
his own village and does not allow mill-owner to exploit him.
Thus, reviving rural industries based on cottage and handicrafts
Gandhi supports the proletariat, although communists consider
him as the enemy of proletariat class.

Apparently, Gandhi championed the cause of labour,
peasants and downtrodden in his endeavour for the establishment
of egalitarian society. The introduction of trusteeship concept
by Gandhi as already explained in Chapter III, was aimed at
ending capitalism and establishing socialism of his own design.
His economic system is designed to liberate the labour whether
urban or rural from any kind of exploitation. For Gandhi held
capitalism responsible for all the economic ills in society and
so a great impediment in the realization of an ideal society.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid; Nov. 4, 1939, p. 331.
So he aimed at replacing capitalism by a system which was consistent with human grace and could be realized by a gradual process.

Gandhi's faith in the goodness of man and his view of human nature made him to advise the wealthy class of the society to renounce their greed and possessiveness, if not their wealth and possessions. In his own words says Gandhi,

"Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth — either by the way of legacy or by means of trade and industry — I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me. What belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by million of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of community. I want the privileged class to outgrow their greed and sense of possessions and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour". 18

Shorn of its idealistic tone and mystical language, Gandhi was reminding the capitalists that their wealth did not belong solely to them as it was not the result of their efforts alone but the product of various factors and forces in society in which the labour has played a vital role.

This was Gandhi's attitude and moral appeal to the capitalists and affluent sections of the society to consider

themselves not as owners of their wealth but as trustees. With this, Gandhi was pragmatic enough to appreciate the age-old experience of the business class and wanted to utilise their talents for the prosperity of the nation. In Gandhi's own words, "We must not under-rate the business talent and know-how, which the owning classes have acquired, through generations of experience and specializations". Alongwith, Gandhi gives the present owning class one more chance of reforming itself. For Gandhi believes that human nature is never beyond redemption.

But Indian Capitalists were afraid of Gandhi's opposition to capitalism and his inclination towards a system which was akin to socialism but had its roots in Indian spiritual heritage. The worship of God, according to Gandhi is the service of the people. Hence Gandhi says, "When I was practising in South Africa, many people used to called themselves socialists. But they were less of socialists than I was. I used to work among the labourers I have made this part of my life's work. This is true socialism. I have always considered myself a true servant of the peasants and of the workers. There is a difference in my socialism and Jayaprakash Narayan's method of approach towards socialism. I am of the opinion that even a king can be a socialist by becoming a servant of the people".

Certainly, the trusteeship formula was Gandhi's serious effort to end capitalism. But political compulsions and

practical considerations prevented him from planning to start a movement against the capitalists and landlords since the main objective at that time was to fight the British for Swaraj. Rather he worked to carry the capitalists and landlords with him in his fight against a foreign power.\textsuperscript{22}

During the period of freedom movement, Gandhi played a role of a revolutionary. Even after attainment of national independence when the capitalists and zamindars ceased to be revolutionary, it was for Gandhi to play still the role of a revolutionary. The long term view of Gandhi was perhaps to fight against the system that resulted in grinding poverty for the masses living in poverty. He was committed to his trusteeship concept and the resultant establishment of a new social order based upon equality and justice. But for the rich capitalist class, after getting political freedom, a revolutionary like Gandhi was no longer needed and his methods no longer fitted in the changed situation. As Gandhi himself had realized, "I am quite of your opinion that some day we shall have to start an intensive movement without the rich people and without the vocal educated class. But the time is not yet".\textsuperscript{23}

Gandhi's efforts produced quite opposite results to his predictions. During the last months of his life he was in panic.

\textsuperscript{22} Harijan; October 25; 1952. pp. 300-301.
\textsuperscript{23} Tendulkar D.G.; The Mahatma op. cit.; Vol. VIII, pp. 351-52.
and full of agony. For, he wanted to achieve something positive for the peasants, harijans and labourers. In an optimistic mood, he said,

"In a free and Independent India, antagonism between the classes will be removed... There will certainly be no have-nots, no unemployment, and no disparity between classes and masses as we see today".24