CHAPTER IV
GANDHIAN CRITIQUE OF MODERNISATION

Mahatma Gandhi was an early critic of the dehumanising character of the modern industrial civilisation which he described as "Satanic". He put his ideas in a small booklet called "Hind Swaraj" which he wrote in 1908. "Hindi Swaraj" contains the seeds of Gandhian revolution, a "whole theory of life" as he himself characterised it. It has been aptly termed as "seminal" by Mahadev Desai, his long time associate and Private Secretary. "Hind Swaraj" is a severe condemnation of modern civilisation. It provides a clue to the diagnosis of the disease that is eating into the vitals of modern civilisation. Gandhi questioned the very nature of life dictated by modern industrialism. He found fault with existing conditionalities of industrialism, because it does not conform with mankind's deepest aspirations which answers its spiritual needs. Gandhi clearly analysed that the fault lies with "the stark materialism which transformed the main motive of industry from creative self-expression to profit making, whence men become machines and societies competitive gladiatorial associations whose leaders feed the people with perpetual excitement which they miscall sport."¹

It is ironic that Gandhi who was a bitter critic of modern civilisation and who was ignored by the proponents of 'progress' and 'development' all through the twentieth century should now emerge as the greatest messiah of the same civilisation in 'crisis'. He is now perceived as the

The ultra-modern development of large-scale industries in Germany took place in a decade or so which in England were spread over a century and in America over half a century reducing the labour force to the state of beast of burden. The rapid industrialisation in the three countries intensified competition and rivalry. It also resulted in the decline of agriculture in major parts of Europe. Countrysides became increasingly depopulated. Men at the end of their military service refused to return to such semi-servile conditions, and made a bee-line to the emerging industrial townships as they sought employment in industries, thereby increasing urban slums. When labour shortage grew increasingly serious, in the newly acquired colonies under these industrial powers it was sought to be squared up by indentured immigrant labourers from the different colonies. These indentured labourers led a miserable existence under their White masters. Gandhi was witness to the sufferings of these labourers in South Africa. Compounded by his own humiliation at the hands of the arrogant racist regime, hardened his resolve to work for mitigating the sufferings of his fellow-countrymen and through this example show a path of recovery to the native population. Mahatma Gandhi could clearly comprehend the dynamics of economic imperialism which was the direct outcome of the new type of economic organisation. Borne out of modern economic technique that furthered the pace and cause of imperialism giving it a new character, which in turn gave a new political complexion to industrialism. Though imperialism had already a long history when the industrial epoch began, it acquired different orientation under the influence of free-trade doctrine and the acquisition of colonies. Gandhi was still in Europe
when the "Scramble for Africa" began. It was inspired by the motive of exploitation of the "black labour" and it also happened that these countries contained various valuable raw materials. Greed, thus, became the most important of the motives. The case of British imperialism was no different from others, though it tried hard to camouflage it under the pious cover of Utilitarianism or give it a complexion of a more idealistic kind. "Missionaries were urged to consider that the conquest of the heathen by a Christian Power was calculated to further the diffusion of true religion...." 2 It was thought that by making prominent the importance of missionary work it would, to some extent, sanctify the spirit of Imperialism. In the Far East was the rapid rise of Japan as an industrial power to reckon with. This further intensified rivalries, taking mankind adrift to catastrophe. And in all these leading industrial countries the main stay was the gigantic iron and steel industries, invariably bound up with the armament industry, perpetually endeavouring to sell armaments to more backward States. "In such ways the investment of new capital came to be bound up with the diplomatic game and its profits depended upon the danger of war." 3 Romain Rolland, the great French Philosopher who so deeply understood Gandhi explains his deep-rooted contempt for modern civilisation thus, "The nucleus of modern civilisation, its heart, so to speak is machinery. Age of iron! Heart of iron. The machine has become a

3. Ibid., p.214.
monstrous idol. It must be done away with."\(^4\) While still abroad Gandhi made a probing analysis of the causes of the miserable depth India had fallen into and the ways for the regeneration of his beloved country. On the eve of his departure for India in 1914 after twenty-one years in South Africa the Great War broke out. He lived in South Africa long enough to see the integration of clashing nationalism into a new nation -- the Union of South Africa.

In many respects, the Great War marked an end of an epoch, while in other respects it was a mere incident in a continuing process. It was a big jolt to the philosophy of linear progress which expressed itself in the optimism of the nineteenth century. It exposed, as nothing else did the pitfalls of politics depended upon modern economic developments in which the giant iron and steel industries escalating arms race leading the world to its sure doom. Till his last Gandhi was conscious of the dangerous truth that the causes that brought about the Great War are more active than ever before. His apprehensions were proved right when the Second World War broke out within the span of the two decades. Unless checked by not only an international agency controlled by individuals driven by self-interest anyway but by individuals oriented towards the good of all, that civilised mankind could be saved from collective suicide. This explains Gandhi's severe condemnation of modern civilisation. His negative attitude towards modern civilisation, concretized during his sojourn in England. He sharply reacted to the growing industrialism of Britain. At the same time Gandhi was always more than generous in acknowl-

edging his debt to the good hearted souls in England. It will not be wrong to admit here that it was in the city of London where Gandhi's first spiritual illumination took place whence he discovered to his dismay that the noble qualities of English character were to be practised only in Britain and subordinated abroad to the system of imperialism which was now a handmaiden of the new economic order based on industrialism. This led him to the conclusion, which lasted til the end with him, that the evil lies in the machine age in which machines instead of serving as a tool, was becoming the master of man. The tedious hours of toiling in the factories, the employment of men, women and children in hazardous occupations, the exploitation of human beings by vested interests has taken away the quality of life with no sight of the provision of the much promised leisure. The erosion in human values was everywhere to be seen by anybody with slightest sensitivity, it could not escape Gandhi. Gandhi studied in England during the period when reaction against industrialism was beginning to gain ground. Those who were leading this protest movement against excesses of industrialism were not obscurantists but were the foremost social thinkers and philosophers of all times. They were moved by a profound concern for human values. There were notable figures like John Ruskin and William Morris, Leo Tolstoy and Henry David Thoreau who were cautioning mankind to halt the progress to destruction by advocating a return to simple way of life. They were moved by the sight of the "Satanic Chimney's of the factories belching black fumes, innocent childhood toiling for endless hours in the womb of mother Earth, depleting her precious natural resources. They were moved by the experience of the
exploitation of human beings at starvation wages. Their writings stirred the sensitive mind of Gandhi. He was horrified to see the traits of industrialisation -- and if this is the state at the nascent stage what will become of the human society when Industrialisation attains maturity, Gandhi saw industrialism at its worst in England, then in South Africa and this ultimately led him to the understanding of the causes of the miserable plight of his beloved country, the depth of despair modern civilisation is leading her to. It was these experiences that prompted Gandhi to boldly declare, that "It represents not the spirit of God or Christianity but the spirit of Satan. And Satan's success are the greatest when he appears with the name of God on his lips. Europe is today only nominally Christian. It is really worshipping Mammon."5 Gandhi advocated natural growth through the evolutionary processes where ideas of progress are rooted firmly in the indigenous soil, as against ideas transplanted from foreign soil and loosely planted. But for the success of this he held out the suggestion of, "driving out Western Civilisation, all else will follow."6

At the same time it is essential to understand that Gandhi's condemnation of the Western civilisation emanates from his rejection of the modern West because of its secular scientific world view. "Gandhi stood against Western traditions only to the extent that the West had traditionalised modernity. He stood for the East only to the extent the East

stood - by intent or by default - against the modern culture. ...Stripped of its modern self, the Western civilisation to him was not essentially different from its Eastern counterpart. "7 Gandhi's critique is directed at the heart of the urban industrial vision. His condemnation of Western civilisation was based on the roots of this civilisation -- Machines. It was the domination of Machine, the root cause of the malaise that afflicted India. "It is machine that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared." 8

But it was equally true that our poor peasantry, our village artisans, weavers et. al. gave a stiff fight to Manchester almost to the end of the 19th century, if they ultimately lost the battle not because the Western industries won, but because we abandoned them for the mill made products, a fact Gandhiji acknowledges with sorrow in the 'Hind Swaraj'. "How can Manchester be blamed? We wore Manchester cloth and this is why Manchester wove it." 9 He had a word of caution against increasing machinisation of our cottage industries which had sustained Indian economy for thousands of years. "Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilisation, it represents a great sin." 10

8. Ibid., p.82.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p.83.
From this evolved his dislike for machinery. He saw in the industrial growth in the nascent stage in India the steadily growing number of rural immigrants crowding in Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur and other industrial townships. "The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The conditions of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country it will become an unhappy land. It may be considered a heresay, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money, but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I can call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than the American Rockefeller. Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard for any India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom."11

Gandhi saw in the process of individual and social disintegration the elimination of religion which according to him formed the most vital aspects of human experience. This was substituted by the profit motive. Selfless service in the cause of humanity was forgotten. "That you cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest

value we have to make our choice. Western nations are today
groaning under the heel of the monster god of
materialism."\textsuperscript{12} Gandhi detested industrial civilisation
which he said "is a disease because it is all evil. Let us
not be deceived by catchwords and phrases. I have no
quarrel with steamships or telegraphs. They may stay, if
they can without the support of industrialism and all it
connotes. They are not an end. They are in no way indis-
pensable for the permanent welfare of the human race. To
change to industrialism is to court disaster.\textsuperscript{13}

The ultimate aim before Gandhi was not simply to
present a condemnation of the modern civilisation but to
suggest an alternative path, a critique and a blue print of
the civilisation in the true sense of the word. Accordingly
he argued, "True test of civilisation lies in the fact that
people living in it make bodily welfare the object of
life."\textsuperscript{14} Mass production, standardisation, robotization,
urbanisation, speed and multiplication of wants through
artificially induced desire for more and more has been the
hallmarks of the modern civilisation. Each of these postu-
lates were forcefully demolished by Gandhi as nothing but
the creation of Satanic civilisation. "If I preach against
the enjoyment, and ask men and women to go back to the
simple life epitomized in the Charkha, I do so because I
know, that without an intelligent return to simplicity,

\textsuperscript{12} Quoted from lecture delivered by Gandhi at Muir Central
College, Allahabad, 22.12.1916.

\textsuperscript{13} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Young India}, 7 October 1926, p.348.

\textsuperscript{14} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Hind Swaraj} (Ahmedabad, 1938), p.32.
there is no escape from our descent to a state lower than brutes." 15 Nothing could convince Gandhi of the utility of those quick instruments of locomotion. He questioned how do these instruments advance man's spiritual progress. "I wholeheartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilisation stands for all this and I have understood it to do so, I call it satanic." 16

One of the central point in the argument of Gandhi against modern civilisation was the standardisation as against variety, inherent in the process of mass production. What is worse the assembly line technique involved in the mechanised mode of production deprived the masses of their livelihood by taking away from them the markets. Gandhi brushed aside all counter arguments against his advocacy for production by the masses. To Henry Ford's argument that mass production involves the "question of raising the standards of living of the people" Gandhi's answer was that he did not subscribe to this hypothesis. "I do not believe in it at all. There is a tremendous fallacy behind Mr. Ford's reasoning. Without simultaneous distribution on an equally mass scale, the production can result only in a great world tragedy. Take Mr. Ford's cars. The saturation point is bound to be reached soon or late. Beyond that point the production of cars cannot be pushed. What will happen then? Mass production takes no note of the real requirement of the consumer. If mass production were in itself a virtue, it

15. M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 21-7-1921, p.228.
tion to a new low level." 19

Beginning with the Industrial Revolution the process of degeneration which has brought the modern civilisation to its present pass, has only quickened its pace with every successive new and better invention. Under the lure of mass production, phenomenal profits, material values replaced spiritual and human values, and human labour lost its dignity and status.

Industrial Revolution brought irreversible change in the sedate peasant life, by bringing about change over from agricultural and cottage industries to industrialism, it caused the individual worker lose many vital values - skills of the craftsmen, inner satisfaction purposeful social responses, cohesive social existence, economic security and stability. These losses were integral and irreparable for they were basis of the pre-industrial lifestyle. That is the impasse of a materialistic civilisation which is our present inheritance. The beginning of mankind's salvation lies in facing and answering the biblical question "What shall it avail a man if he gains the whole world and lose his soul."

In spite of vehement protestations from Gandhi that he was not against machinery per se but was against the craze for machinery somehow the label remained stuck with him. when asked if he was against all machinery? Gandhiji said, "My answer is emphatically "No'. But, I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by

the seeming triumph of machinery.... What I object to, is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all, I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.\textsuperscript{20}

Gandhi was for machines so long as it did not tend to make atrophied the limbs of human beings. He regarded human body as a super machine. A Charkha is machine, or for that matter Sewing machines. But these are machines exploited by men. Where machines exploited men, his objections were to them. Practical idealist that he was, Gandhi recognised the place of machinery, 'it has come to stay'. He invited suggestion to every improvement in the machines that would lighten the burden of millions. He did not see the need for industrialisation for India necessary. At the same time he did concede that "some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key industries, I would have state ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest in

them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence. I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no pariahs of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers. The two are sores of the same disease.\textsuperscript{21}

Gandhi's writings on the subject makes it amply clear that he was not fighting machinery per se but the madness of thinking that machinery saves labour. What he was for, was that dead machinery must never be pitted against the millions of living machines represented by the villagers scattered in the seven hundred thousand villages of India. But he also recognised the pull of machines. His basic rejection of machines stemmed from the fact that it subserves rural economic structure. "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."\textsuperscript{22}

To Gandhi the growth of cities represented evil, unfortunate for mankind and the world, unfortunate for England and certainly unfortunate for India. "The British have exploited India through its cities. The latter have exploited the villages. The blood of the villages is the cement with which the edifice of the cities is built. I want the blood that is today inflating the arteries of the cities to run once again in the blood vessels of the vil-

\textsuperscript{22} M.K. Gandhi, \textit{Hind Swaraj} (Ahmedabad, 1930), p.84.
riages." 23 This was Gandhi's forceful argument in favour of adopting a rural based economy in India on the eve of her independence. He regarded cities with their insolent torts as a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers. "We may not be deceived by the wealth to be seen in the cities of India. It does not come from England or America. It comes from the blood of the poorest." 24 It was the exploitative nature of the industrial economy the life-blood of the modern civilisation which made Gandhi its bitter critic. He had a wonderful grasp of the village economics. He understood the mechanics of modern economy which showed the brute pressure from the top that crushes those at the bottom. The insatiable material ambition at one end and consequent war at the other has been the curse of the modern civilisation. His advocacy for non-exploitative machinery was based on his profound conviction in non-violence and love for humanity. He admired modern science and scientific temperament. He realised the necessity of scientific achievement. "He admired the disinterested zeal and the spirit of self-sacrifice of European men of science and frequently calls their abnegation greater than that of Hindu believers. But he disapproves the goal, they are pursuing even though he admires their state of mind. There is an evident antagonism between Gandhi and European science." 25

Gandhi seemed clearly overwhelmed by the sheer survival

of Indian Civilisation for over five thousand years without a break in her continuity whereas all other contemporary civilisations had perished. It is because thousands of years ago India learned the fundamental truth of self-control and that is the eternal meaning of Swaraj for Gandhi — Swa — self and Raj — control and it is through this that she mastered the science of happiness. If India wishes to survive the onslaught of modern civilisation she must go back to the sources of her ancient culture. "India has withstood the onslaughts of other civilisations because she has stood firm on her own ground. Not that she has not made changes. But the changes she has made have prompted her growth. To change to industrialism is to court disaster.... India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West, of which she shows signs of tiredness, but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. India is in danger of losing her soul. She cannot lose it and live."26

Gandhi argues, "where this cursed modern civilisation has not reached, India remains as it was before.... The tendency of the Indian Civilisation is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western Civilisation is to propagate immorality." The basis of real civilisation is the force of love, "The Universe would disappear without the existence of that force." Gandhi defined "Civilisation as that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over

26: M.K. Gandhi, Young IndiaS. 7.10.1926, p.348.
our mind and our passions." 27 In short, civilisation to Gandhi was "good conduct".

Gandhi found a revalidation of these fundamental postulates in the Indian civilisation and its philosophy of economics which rests on mutual cooperation rather than cut-throat competition; on simple living and high thinking instead of useless multiplication of wants. 28 Gandhi used "wants" and "needs" interchangeably. His philosophy of wants is conditioned by limitation. He desired, "Civilisation, in no uncertain terms, to consist not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service." 29

Gandhi's fundamental objection to industrialism was based on the fact that it was industrialism that enabled one country to exploit another. To him, industrialism was undesirable anyway whether for the nations of the West or for India. "Industrialism is I am afraid going to be a curse for mankind. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, or foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors." 30 Indeed the West has had a surfeit of industrialism and exploitation. Gandhi's condemnation of modern civilisation has its roots not so much in the intellectual but in the ethical and as Dr.

30. M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 12.11.1931.
critique.

What Gandhi condemns in modern civilisation is the outward manifestations which came to dominate the Western world when Industrialism took hold of their lives. Man and Nature became mere objects to be managed, manipulated and used. The material world came to be looked upon as devoid of any spiritual significance and value. It is the working out of this worldview in reality that made modern civilisation a "Satanic" civilisation in Gandhi's view, which does not see man in its totality, wherein man was the centre of the universe but as what Iris Murdoch calls a "broken totality". And it is this logic Gandhi questions by counterposing "his own world view in order to mend the 'broken totality' and restore the fullness and wholesomeness of the human being." Gandhi's world view is premised essentially on ethno-religious pursuits. He had infinite faith in man's capacity for self-development and on the basic goodness of human nature. He held a holistic view of life which is not divided into separate compartments. His ideal man was a good human being a truly Universal man who was -- good to his family, his neighbour, society, country and the world. "Projecting an organismic vision of the world, Gandhi recognises the essential unity of existence." For him "morals, ethics and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built on sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass'

32. Ibid., p.52.
33. Ibid., p.54.
34. Ibid.
good only for making a noise and breaking heads'. Hence Gandhi's Man is the spiritual man, wholly integrated with his community as well as the phenomenal world. But to reach this stage it is imperative to rise above self-interest. This is possible only if Man becomes morally and spiritually enlightened which is not possible in the technological modern civilisation based on material comforts and greed. It is in this perspective that Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation becomes understandable. And it is with this reasoning that his describing of modern civilisation as 'evil' has its definite meaning. As Gandhi himself says, "modern civilisation takes note neither of morality nor of religion. Its votaries calmly state that their business is not to teach religion. Some even consider it to be a superstitious growth. Others put on the cloak of religion and prate about morality. But after twenty years experience, I have come to the conclusion that immorality is often taught in the name of morality."

Attempts to contain Gandhi by praising his ethics and devaluing his thought, though common enough, flout the first principle of Gandhi's critique of modernity. Says, Ashis Nandy, "Gandhi rejected modernity not on the grounds of ethics alone but also of knowledge, the two reasons were intertwined. He would have been horrified by any plea for non-violence which was not informed with the belief that non-violent methods were superior to Machiavellism, morally and strategically. Traditional technology, too, was for him an ethically and cognitively better system of applied knowl-

edge than modern technology. He rejected machine civilisation not because he was a saint making occasional forays into the secular world, but because he was a political activist and thinker with strong moral concerns. That is why attempts to contextualize Gandhi by referring to the relatively humane conduct of the British in India fail after a point. He was not a saint whose methods accidentally succeeded under a benign regime which recognised his saintliness. Rather, the methods had a built-in awareness of the nature of man-made suffering in our times, they had been evolved in a proper police state which had racism as its declared ideology, South Africa.  

Gandhi did not find much to choose between Capitalism and Communism. For it is well known that whatever may be the ideological differences between America and Soviet Russia both amassed huge profits out of escalating arms race, by keeping developing countries suppressed. Soviet Russia's hegemony over East Europe was naked and ruthless. They have both denied to the people in the countries under the orbit of their influence, aspirations for freedom. America's professed concern for Human Rights and democratic values are meant only for the Western world. Equality is still a distant dream for the black population in the United States of America itself.

The growing disenchantment of the people in the midst of plenty, the disintegration of the institution of marriage and family, the social strain and stress experienced by

present day America, which is the leader of world's economy, are common to all developed capitalist economies. They reflect the all pervading crisis modern civilisation is facing. Similarly, in the erstwhile Soviet Russia an agrarian economy was transformed at the shortest period of time into an industrial economy. Heavy industries were built with the slave labour of her peasantry, who were uprooted en masse by introducing collective farms. Everything humane was sacrificed at the altar of the new god - industrialisation of Russia. In spite of unprecedented atrocities, labour camps, mass murder and brutality resorted to with the sole objective of competing with the West ultimately spelt doan for the Soviet Russia. Science and technology, development and progress were not able to solve the basic problem of mankind - poverty and unemployment. With everything under State control yet people reeled under inhuman conditions generated by industrialism. The world was aghast to learn about the volume of corruption and brutality prevalent under the Soviet regime.

Gandhi had forewarned us that mass production through machinery even when State owned, will be of no avail. In answer to Jawaharlal Nehru's argument in favour of industrialisation for India when he said, "Personally I hope that heavy or light industries should all be decentralised as far as possible and this is feasible now because of the development of electric power. If two types of economy exist in the country there would be either conflict between the two or one will overwhelm the other."38 In reply Gandhi had

of Love was greater scientist than any of our modern scientists." 41 Gandhi acknowledged humanity's debt to that Man Divine.

Modern civilisation brutalised by the ethos of industrialism was shown the path of recovery by Gandhi. He advocated the philosophy of 'Bread Labour' which is postulated by simple life based on dignity of labour, and 'Trus­teeship' which provides a means of transformation of the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. What is needed is a thorough social awakening to begin with, the rest will follow. "I suggest," said Gandhi, "that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thieve it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day-to-day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality so long we are thieving." 42 'Voluntary simplicity', 'Non-possession', 'Swadeshi' and 'Decentralisation' are the vital requirements of founding the ideal society of Gandhi's dream, a non-aggressive society in which peace would reign as a way of life.

This sedate ideal faces a serious challenge by International Economic system which starts from the assumption that the productive factor "labour" is scarcer than the produc-

41. M.K. Gandhi, Young India, 5.5.1920.
tive factor "capital". This is the challenge the developing countries are faced with today, except that in their case the position is reversed, the productive factor "capital" is scarce whereas the productive factor "labour" is available in abundance. "Development Aid" and "transfer of technology" is held out as sops to the Third World Countries. Today, the developing countries incur heavy debts to buy modern machinery with which to build roads for imported cars. Heavy capital expenditure per worker presupposes considerable wealth. This the developing countries do not have; indeed, such methods tend to have the opposite effect, for under these circumstances the jobless millions can never be found productive employment. The great change taking place in our age, the mutation of our whole civilisation is the integration, the structural fusion of the world into an indivisible economic and social community of interests.

Today, a world threatened by environmental crisis is searching for a way out. One thing is amply clear that the problem has to be tackled on a global basis. With each passing year it is increasingly being dinned into our ears that the "Spaceship Earth" is one entity. The crisis is a contribution of the developed and industrialised countries who seem least perturbed by the threat and even less prepared to change the course of development. They expect the Third World countries to develop at a slower pace and provide the much needed markets for the Developed West. This makes the world not a more beautiful and simple but a more complicated and dangerous place. This definitely does not augur well for the emergence of a wholesome world. If we wish to prevent the emergence of a society radically unwholesome, non-salutary and possibly incurable one, the
world will have to acquire entirely new methods of production and economic planning.

Mahatma Gandhi had already advocated that it was not mass production but production by the masses that could take India and the other countries of the Third World to the path of happiness. This is easier said than done. The countries of the Third World are all in the clutches of the developed West, they hold the strings of the purse. In the guise of transfer of technology, obsolete technology is being transferred to the poor countries. This is "technological colonialism". That is foisted on the poor countries who need "appropriate technology" conducive to their economic needs and are also environment friendly. But this is being denied and discouraged by the Industrialised Countries on the plea that it would keep the developing countries on a lower economic level. Whereas the truth is "appropriate technology" will be detrimental to the transfer of consumer habits of the West. For under the guise of integrating world economy, liberalisation etc. consumer goods are sold in the poor countries which were intended for the consumer in an economy oriented to the cultivation of demand. This is what Ivan Illich had in mind when he warned that the road to poverty is paved with technical assistance, the introduction of modern consumer goods which a minority at most can afford at the expense of the majority. And this is what Industrialism is all about that Gandhi found repugnant in the modern civilisation. Gandhi was in the forefront amongst "Those who put in their faith in the uniqueness and totality of man, those who believe in the reality of intellectual and spiritual values, are furthering the evolving realisation of
a great truth, they help to bring about a dawn which will put to flight the dark light of dehumanisation and thus chart the way towards a meaningful and valueful life."\textsuperscript{43}

Gandhi's understanding of the West was not alien to the West. Gandhi had made a careful study of the Western Civilisation. He had imbibed what was relevant to his universal philosophy and rejected what was irrelevant. "He was one of the very few among the Third World's nationalist leaders to see the full implication of the West's Faustian compact with modernity."\textsuperscript{44}

It was a matter of deep conviction with Mahatma Gandhi that what is morally wrong can never be socially or politically right. Gandhi was in the very theatre of the Great War. He had seen from close quarters the gathering war clouds. He saw the nineteenth century coming to its disastrous end as a result of the conflict between industrial technique and political theory. Mass production through machines, railways, telegraphs improvements in the art of war in the name of economic nationalism. These dominant forces, an integral part of the modern civilisation progressively led the world to increasing tensions and conflicts. And all this convinced Gandhi beyond any doubt, of the immoral foundations of the modern civilisation. Therefore, for Gandhi the nineteenth century failed because it was built on unethical foundations. Through this one failure, no matter how great was the increase in wealth, knowledge


\textsuperscript{44} Ashis Nandy, "From Outside the Imperium", \textit{The Statesman}; August 15, 1987.