

## GANDHIJI AND SOCIAL CHANGE

MAN is the only animal who has problems, and it would appear that with the growth of civilisation, these problems have increased. They are becoming big and rather complicated. It is generally believed that we are living in an age of much greed and great fear, so that our problems are multiplying and piling up to a frightful size. On the other hand the capacity of the individual to face the human situation and to solve the problems seems to be too small. Social and political groups have become so large and well-knit that the individual belonging to a group considers himself too insignificant for initiating any change that is necessitated by the human situation. In the ancient past the individual generally retired to a sequestered place to pursue his own individual Good, without making any conscious effort for bringing about a worth-while social change in society. Change came nevertheless, but slowly, and based on the tradition of a great individual's achievements in the past. Our country has the memory of great individuals, whom we called Rishis and Munis, who knew the Good and pursued it with energy. But history has few examples in the past of individuals knowing their role in great social changes and who consciously discovered ways and means for precipitating them. The dynamics of social change in a large way were not much understood in the past. I believe that Gandhiji studied the science of social change and found techniques for making it almost an art.

According to him, human progress is generally due to an individual and not to a group. It is the Individual who knows The Good, realises it in himself and then relates it consciously or unconsciously to the Good of Others. In fact, the Good of man is not a political or a social question, but a philosophical question, which only individuals can understand. Gandhiji had his own

idea of the Good and tried to relate it to the Good of India, so as not to be inconsistent with the Good of Humanity. He had a view of The Good, a sort of Utopia in an age which rejects all Utopias; but more than that he evolved wonderful techniques for establishing his Utopia in a troubled world. This man with a mission had, I believe, a simple but unique core of a creed, that defined The Good he wished to establish in human relations. It had at least three basic elements that went to form the Good. One of these was Service to God and Man, which he briefly stated in the following terms. "Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and his activities, social, political, religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His Creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. I am a part and parcel of the Whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of Humanity. . . . If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity . . . . My creed is service of God and, therefore, of humanity . . . ." India had men with great visions of God, but hardly any who believed that "the only way to find God. . . . is by Service of All" . . . . Most of them behaved as if they believed that the vision of God could be enjoyed in Himalayan retreats and forests. Even Buddha, who not only had a vision, but also a mission, preached the life of a monk who had completely retired from the business of the world to be rid of temptations and desires. So also we Indians have believed that God is not only in Heaven but in his Creatures, but we act as if such a God is more manifest in ants and birds and animals than in Man. And the Service of All is too vast an idea to mean to us anything real in actual

life. Gandhiji thought so too, but he descended to the practical Christian ideal of loving thy neighbour as thyself. He gave this idea a point and force by calling the lowliest and the lost as our closest neighbours. Vivekananda gave us the idea of Daridra-Narayana, of the God in the Poor. But it was Gandhiji who made it a gospel for his mission and the basic element of his simple creed, which he summed up by saying, "The Good of the individual is contained within the Good of All."

The other element of his creed was his idea of Truth. "Abstract truth has no value unless it incarnates in human beings. Does not God Himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Still we know that He is one. But Truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in every one following Truth according to his lights. . . ." In the past we conceived God as Truth, as Love, as Compassion, and so on. But rarely had Truth become the right designation of God. And Gandhiji's Truth was not abstract, or absolute, but Truth as man discovered it by continuous search, which he called "experiments" about Truth. As such relative Truths would vary with individuals and be only a fragment of the absolute Truth, he suggested the golden rule of mutual toleration or, better still, Ahimsa for the constant search of a higher truth. In this way he brought God down to earth and tried to live in the midst of two worlds of God and Man.

In the past man was mainly concerned about his relation to God, and now Gandhiji was also concerned about his relation to man or God in man. Here was a Mahatma who bothered little about metaphysics and rather mixed it up artfully with social physics or the Service of the life of man in society. No time was wasted on discovering what may be called Absolute Truth, but all the time there was to be a hot pursuit of truth as found in the work-a-day life, to lead to a hotter pursuit of a higher truth. The last basic element of his creed was his belief in the Oneness of Man. "I believe in absolute oneness of God and

therefore also of humanity. What though we have many bodies. We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source." There is nothing new about this belief, which is more ancient than the *Upanishads*. But Gandhiji built on it the movement of his Faith in man and his capacity for rising to any heights, "if we only know how to strike the right chord to bring out the music."

During his long life he discussed the method of love, or what he termed non-violence, for reforming man in the image of his Maker. Gandhiji trusted man more than his institutions or his groups and considered him superior to both. In a world of tremendous institutions and big groups, where man tends to become a spare part of a complicated whole, or becomes a mass or group man, Gandhiji restored the individual to his pristine position and prestige. In a world foundering on its faith in institutions, Gandhiji restored the old faith in man as the master of institutions and the master of his destiny. Man is not merely a Thing or an Observer of a Thing, but is also an end in himself. Man has also a mission and so inspires faith in himself. This core of his creed could be easily expanded but even in this limited form it was unique in the history of India partly in its content and mostly due to its significance.

But going beyond his creed, Gandhiji made deep researches in the science of human relations and acquired unusual skills for discovering individuals and changing them. He insisted that real change is inner and is of mental attitudes. Without such a basic change no tensions could be eased and no human problems could be solved. Therefore, he gave the most concentrated and personal attention to individuals. It is difficult to say whether in his strenuous career he gave more time to personal or to public affairs, but I am certain that he gave much more importance to the first. The moral lapse or collapse of an individual shook him much more than his so-called public defeats or retreats. He believed that when one

man falls, the world also falls along with him and the good of the individual is the concern of all men. So also he was anxious not only to take the best out of himself but best from others, knowing their limitations. He regarded men not as they were, but as they wished to be. Once, a correspondent twitted him for his intimate relations with Shri G. D. Birla, the master of millions, much of which would, according to him, be tainted money. His reply was: "Wherever I see purity, truth and non-violence even in the smallest degree, I start collecting the treasure with the care of a miser. . . ." This led to a confession of Birlaji that "I am a Gandhi-man." The conversion of a Birla, to whatever extent, was for him a greater achievement than the acquisition of all his wealth for material good. It was this personal care and affection lavished on his workers, that overflowed even to their relatives, which made Gandhiji a "Bapu," dearer and closer than their blood fathers. Conversion of the individual through trust, affection and understanding was the master technique of Gandhiji, from which other techniques and skills arose and proliferated. This skill is all the more valued considering that almost none of his close associates has been able to imbibe even a fraction of his personal magnetism and enchantment. Gandhiji "infected" others and no one who came out after meeting him was the same as before. It was "dangerous" to meet him and even his "enemies" knew it.

When Gandhiji started the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati he prescribed a number of disciplines for life in the Ashram. All Ashrams in the past observed certain disciplines and these were then called "YAMAS" and "NIYAMAS." Gandhiji took over bodily all the five ancient "Yamas," viz, Ahimsa, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Asangraha (nonviolence, truth, non-stealing, continence and non-possession), but he started pouring new wine into old bottles. He built up a huge and imposing edifice on Ahimsa alone, with exquisite implications and manifold applications. And so to a smaller extent the other virtues were built up and numerous implications

were built in to them until all looked renewed and renovated almost out of recognition. But these formed his basic virtues for every individual and his primary test for the valuation of individuals. Without these in a fair proportion nothing could be done about the individual and his good. In ancient times, Vrats or vows were commonly taken and observed about the pursuit of these virtues and Gandhiji tried the same in his Ashram and outside. In a world in which vows for moral discipline are rare and almost out of date, Gandhiji luxuriated in the practice of taking vows, for that meant changing men and building up their character. But Gandhiji introduced a more radical change about "Niyamas," the secondary virtues and disciplines. The traditional ones were for physical purity, contentment, asceticism, study of scriptures, faith in God, all more or less for helping the practice of Yoga or concentration of mind. Gandhiji was also a Yogi, but of a different type called a Karma Yogi. As such his vows were entirely of a different pattern and having a close relation with urgent human needs of the present times, more especially of India. These were manual labour, tastelessness of food, fearlessness, equality of religions, Swadeshi, abolition of untouchability. Almost all were new and all arose out of the human situation in India. The basic virtues were the foundation but the secondary virtues built on them a new monument fit for human habitation now and here. Gandhiji had his own ideas of a just or a righteous society and he found out the virtues adequate for building up his Kingdom of God on Earth. The basic virtues changed the inner man, the secondary virtues gave a new role to him with regard to society. The first showed How change could come and the second pointed the change for What. The change of the individual led to the change of others, for according to Gandhiji not a single virtue aims at the good of the individual. It is true that the good of the individual is the concern of the world but the good individual should also be concerned about the world. Gone were the days of personal

salvation by a retreat from the world into seclusion.

It is remarkable that Gandhiji's autobiography has been called "Experiments of Truth." These experiments were a constant quest about the meaning of life and the implications of the values of that life. The vows were for him the values of life and his experiments were continuous tests and assessments of these values, not within a hermitage but on the large and broad theatre of a troubled world. While examining himself about the good life he started a process of examining the good society and the virtues adequate for it. It is remarkable that almost all his virtues, basic or secondary, and so also his vows, did not arise out of metaphysical investigations or from an urge to asceticism, but arose out of the force of circumstances or needs of the times, to which he gave the necessary response. Finally a time came that, due to the process of self-examination, he was almost ever ready for any human situation with an answer.

This leads us to his great discovery of the science and technology of Satyagraha, which history will record as more momentous for human relations than space travel in an atomic age. Gandhiji had a slight figure and a meek appearance but his whole mental and emotional texture was that of a fighter. He was always up against some injustice in a world full of imbalances and maladjustments. He began his first fight in South Africa against the colour bar and ended his life in a valiant fight against his own people in a Communal War. When at peace he was always, as it were, preparing for war. His attention to individuals, his building up of their character, their cultivation of social virtues, his endless experiments about truth, all ultimately led to the great good struggle for the victory of Good over Evil. For him the minds of men were a Kurukshetra, and so were the haunts of men, with a difference that this Kurukshetra (field of battle) was truly and really a Dharma Kshetra in terms of the *Gita*. What the scripture described as a

spiritual struggle in the form of classical literature became for Gandhi a model for actual life.

Gandhiji was a revolutionary by nature who altered the meaning of the word revolution. According to him, revolutions begin in the minds of men and result in the change of attitudes of men. They are essentially psychological and ethical, leading to the evolution of new values in human relations. The theory of outer and violent revolution was utterly rejected by him and this rejection was proved to the hilt by actual failures of so-called revolutions, taking the latest, *i.e.*, Russian one, into account. According to him the history of the world would have to be rewritten in terms of the human situation and human values, and not in terms of shifts in position of power.

It will thus be seen that Gandhiji in every way tried to restore the individual to his pristine and inherent importance as the Centre of life. He had the vision of the Good and along with it knew the features of the Good Society. In a large world full of problems, in which man felt small and helpless, he found out the role of the individual and related him to the needs of humanity. In a world given over to pessimism he kindled the light of hope arising out of his faith in God and therefore in Man. He had the knack of finding out great issues without seeming to seek them and faced up to them without being overwhelmed. But these and other issues yet remain with us, waiting for others to cultivate the faith of Gandhi and discover additional techniques for solving them. If nothing else then at least this much was discovered by Gandhiji: that social changes are primarily psychological and emotional, which can be achieved only by vision of the Good by individuals and by the pursuit of techniques far more refined than the ones pursued so far by men. It seems to me that herein lies the only hope of survival for mankind, *i.e.*, to find the moral equivalents of conflict in a world of crisis.

N. R. MALKANI

New Delhi, India

## *Letter from* **WARSAW**

WARSAW.—It's hard to take the Poles seriously, mainly because they do not succeed in taking themselves seriously. On this, my fourth visit to Poland in three years, oddities continued to turn up in Warsaw life which, when explanations are sought, seem to become even more unlikely.

Take fresh tomatoes. At my first meal in Warsaw (in May), after two almost fruitless and vegetableless weeks in Moscow, I saw some lovely tomatoes and incautiously ordered them, the menu not being legible to me, by means of the traveller's rudely pointing finger. They were luscious, and I ate several, but the bill was quite a shock: each small tomato cost Z1 18., or 72 cents. (My hotel room, still \$4.10 per night as in former years, was by comparison a bargain.) In the stores, these tomatoes were Z1 160 per kilo, or about \$3.20 per lb. I persisted in trying to trace this tomato phenomenon, and was rewarded with two explanations. It was first claimed that these were COMECON tomatoes, imported from Bulgaria by way of the international Socialist trade plan of that name, which uses some pretty unrealistic currency equivalents. A second explanation, disdainfully provided by a local journalist, was that they were the depressing result of having opened certain channels of trade to private enterprise. I think the political content of these explanations higher than the economic. No one offered an explanation of what justification the Workers' State has, for any reason at all, in selling tomatoes at \$3.20 a lb. This is, however, a separate phenomenon, not characteristic of food prices in general.

Drinking is a serious problem in Poland, and becoming more so. Vodka prices for local consumption are very high, though a bottle of the best brand is available to the traveller in the airport's tax-free store for 65 cents U.S., no other currency being accepted. Since it is simple to make from potato peelings and sugar, illegal vodka production and bootlegging are rife. Yet I

was told by a good, non-Catholic citizen that a recent offer of the Church to join the Government in an all-out anti-liquor campaign had been rejected by the authorities. Why? My informant alleged three reasons: first, acceptance would be an admission by the Party of a problem it could not handle; second, successful conclusion of such a campaign would inevitably reflect some credit upon the Church, whereas Marxist ideology requires this not to occur; and third, huge excise income from the sale of vodka would thus be lost. This is interesting because in all the Marxist world Poland is the only place where there is a continuing, uneasy stand-off relationship between Church and State. The Church claims 90 per cent of all Poles as church members. Elsewhere the Church seems to exist on State sufferance only.

In Warsaw I continued efforts to find out why standards of service in Socialist states are so low. Service happens to be reasonably good in the privileged establishments of Warsaw, so it is really the Soviet Union to which the following explanations are said to apply. "Look," said a Russian, a little annoyed at me, "we don't think these services are important. We put our best people in productive enterprises." A thoughtful Pole offered the opinion that Russians are still dominated by the ideals of the Revolution. "Nobody wants to serve another person." But a long day on a plane flight with a Czech film director brought, among other ideas, this one: An error in Socialist thinking, he said, had been committed. It had been thought that each person would effectively serve others on account of his wish to be well served himself. This has not worked out, he continued, because the threshold of the citizen's absolute rights had been raised so high as to make the motive ineffective. Whatever may be the objective truth, this last explanation certainly deserves a high rating for ingenuity. In any event, people are vastly brighter and service is vastly better in Warsaw, where flourisheth the tip, in all its aboriginal, pre-Socialist glory.

A good deal of my time in Warsaw was spent with journalists. This was a new field for me, and I kept people going over the Polish press, reading me the headlines and getting quick *precis* of leading articles. What Americans think of as news reporting was depressingly absent. It is rather in the commentaries, both in the dailies and in the more typical specialized weeklies—of which in Warsaw there are twenty-three worth noticing—that the Polish temperament shines. Nevertheless, I had the over-all impression that it really wouldn't matter if the whole bunch of commentators were eliminated. I don't want to be unfair about this, but a well-known columnist at a dinner party one night (the guests all Poles but me) seemed to sum it up in his comment about a fellow journalist: "I like him," said he, "though he wrote an article against me in his paper last week. Never mind. I shall write a hard one against him next week."

Poles must surely be the Irish of Eastern Europe.

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

## REVIEW

### "NO ONE KNEW WHAT TO DO"

LATE in 1952, Danilo Dolci, a young Italian architect, began a fast in Trappeto, a village in Sicily not far from Palermo. He was living in a house where he had watched a child die of starvation. When he first heard of the plight of this child, it was too late to offer help. The child had been without nourishment for so long that it turned away from food. In this blighted land, thousands were continually unemployed. There was no medicine for the sick, no food for the hungry. Men whose families were starving took to banditry to feed their families. Dolci saw that the Iato river ran into the sea, but that its waters might be diverted by a dam and made to irrigate a large area, giving work in agriculture to all the people who needed it. Government officials were indifferent to this proposal, and when the child died of hunger, Dolci fasted.

Days went by. Dolci's friends pleaded with him to start eating again. He said, "Before anything'll be done, someone's got to die." After seven days he had a stroke in the night. His pulse was weak and irregular. Finally, a Monsignor, a physician, and a baroness agreed to contribute to the irrigation project, but only after Dolci obtained from his associates the assurance that they regarded the help as a fair beginning toward what was needed did he eat anything.

*Outlaws (Banditi a Partinico* in the original Italian edition), the second of Dolci's books to appear in the United States, is an agonized penetration of the lives of Sicily's poor. They are not just *poor*. Many of them are in a state of semi-starvation much of the time. Late in the war, with the return of the men who years before had enlisted to avoid hunger and the sight of their children crying for bread, stealing became universal:

Certainly there wasn't anyone in those days who didn't steal in one way or another. The soldiers began to come home, then the prisoners of war, and they all

found their families living in the most squalid conditions and, for the most part, sick from lack of proper food. The men had no money to buy medicines with and so all the robberies and kidnappings began. And you can't deny that a man who'd been fighting and risking his life for his country, hadn't just as much right to risk his life to get food and medicine for his wife and children when he had no other way of getting them, seeing that there wasn't any work for him.

The government was indifferent, the police brutal. Men were beaten to death in jail, with no questions asked. The *Mafia* infested the region and attracted young men to a life of crime. In a preface to the section of *Outlaws* devoted to a "Report on Partinico," Dolci writes:

I cannot believe that we are all of us so cruel that we want to go on killing our fellow-beings or to see them killed in this way. We know only too well that life must go on.

Here are some facts on the main bandit area of Sicily (Partinico, Trappeto, Montelepre—population 33,000). Only one of the 350 "outlaws" in the area comes of a family in which both parents reached the fourth grade at school.

A total of 650 years spent at school (less than two years on an average per person—and what schooling!) is balanced by a total of more than 3,000 years spent in prison.

Madmen, cripples and deaf mutes number more than one hundred.

The upkeep of the police force, security forces and the prison service cost the public 13 million lire a month, more than 150 million lire a year. Yet, to take only one example, not a single graduate has reached the area so far from any of the 28 schools now training social workers in Italy. Four thousand people are out of work. Local government is disorderly and inefficient.

Over a period of nine years, more than four and a half billion lire of public money have been spent on repressive measures; yet no one has lifted a finger to utilize the waters of the neighboring stream which, properly harnessed, would provide work for everyone. (As it is, more than 40 thousand million lire have been allowed to run to waste in the sea.) Without unemployment there would have been no banditry.

In the whole area, there is no organization which provides for relief for the families of men who are in prison or who have been killed. Their children are, for the most part, condemned to illiteracy and have to start earning their own living at the age of five or six. . . .

Danilo Dolci plans to spend the rest of his life in this region, working for the relief of these people. Dolci is now thirty-seven. Trained as an architect, in 1959 he was building houses in northern Italy when he decided to study the ruins of Greek temples in Sicily. There he encountered the overwhelming misery and degradation of the island's poor, and found another kind of lifework. In March of this year, while visiting in New York in quest of trained people to help man his reclamation projects, he told a New York *Post* reporter:

I do not think I was motivated toward the poor solely through compassion for them. I was faced by the problem of how life was to be lived. I had studied architecture, and it seemed to me that architecture was building injustice into stone. In Italy, one builds for the rich.

I thought the best way to understand was to look at life from the point of view of people who hadn't succeeded in living. It was not the reaction of St. Francis kissing the sores of the sick. But to begin to know, we must do things not so much for others and not even for oneself. We do it for the sake of doing the *thing itself*. That is the way to understanding.

Speaking of his need for helpers, he said, "We don't accept people without qualifications. Good will is not enough—there is danger in spiritual tourism."

Dolci's work is showing some progress. Six small centers have been started in west Sicily. Some fifty people, many of them non-Italians, conduct experimental agricultural stations, provide recreation programs for children, teach adults home-making and farming skills and train the people of the region to plan for long-range needs. The dam for which Dolci fasted is now being built by the government.

Sometimes called the Italian Gandhi, Dolci sat out most of World War II in jail as a

conscientious objector. His work is animated by the spirit of non-violence. His first serious conflict with officialdom came after he had organized a "strike in reverse," when the whole village of Trappeto was out of work. He created a voluntary "public works program" and put forty men to work building a road that the community needed. Soon eighty men showed up for work for which no pay was available. Shopkeepers gave the laborers credit for food, hoping that Dolci would somehow get them some money. When the police tried to stop the men from working at this "unauthorized" project Dolci refused to call it off and was jailed. However, his prosecution in the Italian courts brought Italy's leading writers and intellectuals to his defense and attracted worldwide attention. He was set free, but it is said that some charges are still pending against him.

*Outlaws*, published by Orion Press (\$4.95), tells the story of Dolci's early struggles, gives brief biographies of typical inhabitants of Trappeto and Partinico, and eye-witness accounts of the sufferings of the people. There is a section devoted to the lives of a number of the "outlaws," written by or taken down from the members of this group, and finally a projection of Dolci's conception of what remains to be done in Sicily. Dolci's view of these undertakings is conveyed in a passage which concludes the description of conditions in Partinico:

Partinico is only a small place, but its story is reflected all over the world. Some, nay many, who are unwilling to be suffocated and die, rise in revolt. Sometimes, too often, they do not understand that in order to shake off the grip of want, of circumstance, of lack of freedom, they must make themselves masters of these very circumstances. They must become lords of the universe by dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to the perfect service of all men, through God. They are often embittered and halt, these children of God. In trying to assert themselves, they cause harm and trouble to their fellows, and their fellows reply by seeking to push them aside, instead of doing their utmost to respect their point of view and to cure their ills.

The conflict is the same wherever it occurs, whether it is a small town or state that is concerned or one continent against another; the only difference lies in the number of people and the extent of the territory involved. Men still do not understand that they are, in fact, sick beings in need of treatment and so they persist in employing the same evil methods against each other—those of death and not of life.

Why is it that one half of society should see the other half ailing and yet not send its best physicians immediately on to finding a cure?

There is nothing new in all this, as we all know: the perfect life overcomes all obstacles, the only cure is life itself. We may make the occasional mistake, through our shortcomings, but the general scheme of things should surely be clear enough to us by now: to think that one can create life by destroying it is to transcend all the bounds of reality.

Immediately after the war Dolci worked with a Catholic priest, Zeno Saltini, who had founded a community for children and adults displaced by the war. This undertaking ended in financial disaster and was disavowed by the Church. Dolci felt that the social problems of Italy could not be solved in an isolated setting. He settled in Trappeto and later married the widow of a fisherman with five children. Dolci is said to have "drifted from the Church," and his two daughters (there are also two sons) were never baptized. It is clear, however, that Dolci embodies the spirit of non-sectarian religion. His dream of the future, as told to the New York *Post* reporter, is this: "Painters create beautiful pictures; musicians create beautiful sounds. Why can't the same thing be done with human existence? Life, too, should be a work of art."

## COMMENTARY

### GANDHI AND THE WEST

A HUNDRED—possibly fifty—years from now, M. K. Gandhi may begin to be understood by the modern world. Right now, he moves, puzzles, and even jars the people of the West. His role for the people of India is a separate subject, important enough, but in the long run less important than his services to the world.

Gandhi captured the attention of the West through his *power*—something the West respects. And underneath the power, the West sensed something else—something it could not define, but could not help but honor, if only by pietistic expressions which were almost invariably tainted by the hypocrisy of conventional Western religion.

Somehow or other, Gandhi discovered part of the secret of the authentic good life, and blocked in its ageless symmetry for all to see in his own behavior. In time, Western intellectuals began to make appreciative expressions about part of Gandhi, *this* part, or *that* part. But Gandhi as a whole was too much for them. That is, most of Gandhi's critics were unwilling to make a thorough investigation of his reasoning concerning proposals that the West found it difficult to sympathize with or understand.

It is just conceivable that where Gandhi seemed naïve and "unprogressive," or bound by ancient religious austerities which the modern world has outgrown—precisely *there* are aspects of modern culture which need fresh examination. Perhaps Gandhi's answers on these points are not the solutions which the world will finally accept or should accept. There are some changes in man's life, individual and collective, which can come only after the evolution of a perceptive grammar of self-discovery. Yet Gandhi's refusal to "go along" with certain prevailing notions of the times may turn out to be an important provocative to fresh thinking and in this sense a contribution to the world's regeneration. His greatest work, of course, was his forging of the ancient idea of

*Ahimsa*, or Harmlessness, into a great fulcrum to lift the world to peace.

What, finally, comes out of this article by Prof. Malkani? It is the idea of training oneself to be a tempered instrument for good through disciplines voluntarily undertaken. "Finally," says Prof. Malkani, "a time came that, due to the process of self-examination, he was almost ever ready for any human situation with an answer."

It would cheapen this point to rush on to an advocacy of courses in self-discipline. This sort of thing belongs in the region of private self-discovery. You do it, if you do it, because some personal alchemy shows the way. The last thing we need is collective monkishness, or rivalry in religious ostentation. It has taken the West a thousand years to cut loose from all that, with half a century or so of Freudian "liberation" to boot, as a kind of interest on the emotional debt to ourselves.

But a hundred years from now—or, as we said, perhaps fifty—we may see in what sense Gandhi spoke to our condition.

Prof. N. R. Malkani, author of this week's lead article, has been a member of the Indian Parliament since 1952. He first met Gandhi in 1917 and three years later joined him in the first Satyagraha movement. Thereafter he was a Gandhian "constructive worker," and is so today.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### NOTES ON CREATIVE INDEPENDENCE

THE truly engaging child or youth is never, of course, one; who strives mightily to please his elders, but rather one with an inspiration of his own. We were taken by these excerpts from the latest issue of *Swing—Writings by Children*, beginning with some comments by fifth-graders, among which was this one: "Almost every western book I read the cowboys win. I like books when Indians win." This child may grow into a stimulating devil's advocate for the future. If we can educate her well enough so that she won't want Russia to win, and if she can retain her see-both-sides-of-the-fence spirit, she will be likely to try to understand the people most people don't like—a tendency of inestimable value in school, in the home, and in summit conferences.

Of course, there are those youngsters who just plain like to fight, but are at least independent enough to admit it as a personal predilection. This, on the subject of fights, comes from an eight-year-old Californian:

Fight Fight thats all I ever do. A punch in the stomach for me, a sock in the eye for you. A bloody nose a big black eye. And very soon I'll make you cry. The fights on t.v. aren't half as fun as the ones we have at school. But teacher always stops us soon we think shes very cruel.

*Swing* is a quarterly publication of unedited writings by children. Single copies are fifty cents; subscriptions, \$2.00 a year. The address of *Swing* is 222 East 21st Street, New York City.

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The Creative Art in Education Clinic at Syracuse University has put together an excellent credo in a brochure exploring why children "should be taught to search for an active realization of their own creative powers." The practical philosophy is this:

In order for a child to be a productive individual, to experience a sense of well being and autonomy, he must be free of coercion and command. But *freedom of* has so frequently been misunderstood as the *absence of* interference rather than the presence of some imperativeness. If the development of individuation is to take place, each child must have the freedom to develop and exercise his integrity. A child is free and will always be free in the degree that he is capable of framing purpose, consciously and intuitively selecting and ordering the means of expressing his own feeling, insights, and interpretations. . . .

Basically every human being creates for a universal purpose: to interact with his environment, giving it form and becoming what he himself creates. Creative expression fosters this process of self-actualization. It is the struggle to be one's self.

Each human being is endowed with the potential of becoming a dynamically integrated individual. He holds within himself the essential force which is integrated with and governed by the natural laws of life—the *fulfillment of one's potentialities*. It should, therefore, be borne in mind that the true value of art experience lies in the wholehearted enlistment of the self in the doing.

Art activity can contribute greatly to this empathic instinct. It is capable of producing great sensitivity, personal integrity, and a feeling of being intensely alive. The individual who experiences a dynamic integration usually has a clearer memory, more intense perception, and is more optimistic and courageous. He is a free unit of energy expending itself, responding as an entire person, operating on conscious and supra-conscious levels, and utilizing all that he has experienced and can imagine. He is free to make independent decisions in the ways of his own development.

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Some "constructive independence" at the collegiate level is to be noted among those who have risen above their celebrated "apathy" to oppose the psychology engendered by the House Un-American Activities Committee. In the May 27 *Nation*, a Yale graduate student, Alan C. Elms, summarizes developments on this front:

The country's largest and most respectable youth organization, the U.S. National Student Association, passed a resolution last summer calling for specific

revisions of HUAC procedures to safeguard Constitutional rights, or, these measures failing, abolition of the committee. Since then, members of the NSA have helped stimulate or organize anti-HUAC movements on dozens of member campuses.

The group most responsible for nation-wide campus interest in HUAC is the body of college journalists. What started as scattered college newspaper articles questioning the validity of *Operation Abolition* has become a wave of anti-HUAC editorials, counterattacks by students or patriotic groups, and pitched battles in the letter columns. Attacks on the committee have spread from the columns of major "liberal" student newspapers to those at such unlikely places as the University of Nebraska and Middle Tennessee State College.

NSA and other student groups have turned their efforts toward "changing the atmosphere" which today allows the committee to operate unchecked. They seek to provide campuses with a broad orientation on the whole civil-liberties problem. . . .

Veterans of the anti-HUAC crusade are hoping that the enthusiasms of the new recruits may achieve what they themselves have failed to accomplish over two decades.

It seems to us that these youths of NSA—and others who are unaffiliated—are sophisticated in a useful sense of this word. Fortunately missing is the pretentiousness of past student movements having to do with politics. This kind of opposition is genuinely creative, because it requires independent thought.

There are many indigenous efforts to turn the tide against "slogan thinking." One brief example recently appeared in the University of California's *Pelican*, in a form which Mr. Elms calls a "bitter revision of the Mencken-Nathan 'American Credo'":

AMERICANS BELIEVE:

That behind every student voicing an unorthodox opinion there is a Communist agitator...

That a professor's value may be found by adding the number of books he has written to his salary, then dividing by the number of pages in his FBI dossier....

That all immigrants come to America in search of liberty, and that when they attempt to exercise it they should immediately be sent back....

That freedom may be protected from abuse by taking it away. . . .

That the sun never sets on the Free World.

We have, it seems, considerable wealth of student intelligence in the United States. Some of it, no doubt, will remain active when these students go out into the world. One hopes that it will be enough.

## *FRONTIERS* Psychology and "Business"

GERARD PIEL'S *End of Toil* in the June 17 *Nation* is a detailed analysis of trends toward the twenty-hour work week and an increase in unemployment. In 1961 it is possible to produce all basic national products with one-third of the 1900 labor force, and in the same quantity. And as Mr. Piel points out, our growing unemployment figures ought to be augmented by 2.5 million persons now in the armed forces, since from the economic point of view nothing is being "produced" by their activities. We also think this writer is right in saying that only very few people are actually able to believe that an increase in the armed forces would be beneficial.

In his conclusion, Mr. Piel, who is editor of the *Scientific American*, points up some of the implications of increased use of automation—an inevitable development:

If a fraction of the labor force is capable of supplying an abundance of everything the population needs and wants, then why should the rest of the population have to work for a living? Preposterous alternatives suggest themselves: the cash registers might simply be removed from the counters in the supermarkets. If production cannot be maintained at a profit under such circumstances, then why should a profit be made? Some other standard of social accounting might serve even better to reduce waste and inefficiency.

These questions are put in a deliberately extreme form. They suggest the kind of overturn in the values of our society that is already quaking the ground beneath our feet. The virtues of thrift, hard work and profit are rooted in scarcity. With the middle-income family typically in hock to installment-purchase contracts and with the private-money market supplying less than 2 per cent of the new capital in our economy, thrift long ago ceased to serve a significant economic function.

Anti-automation propaganda is, in Mr. Piel's opinion, entirely beside the point. The challenge of automation is not one of unemployment, but of psychology. He continues:

Any hard work that a machine can do is better done by a machine; "hard" these days means mostly boring and repetitive, whether in the factory or office. But the instinct for workmanship, the need to feel needed, the will to achieve are deeply felt in every heart. They are not universally fulfilled by the kind of employment most people find. The liberation from tasks unworthy of human capacity could free that capacity for a host of activities now neglected in our culture: learning and teaching, the sciences, arts and letters, the crafts, medicine and its allied works, politics and public service. The Peace Corps now being created suggests that disemployed factory workers might be mobilized in cadres to find rewarding employment in teaching their skills to citizens of the poor nations still on the threshold of their industrial revolution. Characteristically, the new kinds of employment that open up to people involve their interaction with other people, rather than with things.

Such considerations suggest a psychological shift away from the "profit motive," but this, apparently, is a kind of pioneering which "big business" is temperamentally unsuited to provide. And "big business," not the consumer, controls our economy. Discouraging evidence is provided by the *New Republic* for June 5 in an article by Theodore K. Quinn, called "The Corporation Conscience." Mr. Quinn, who was once chairman of the board of the General Electric Finance Corporation, argues that the conception of a "corporation conscience" is purely a myth. Recent price collusion cases involving both Westinghouse and General Electric, he says, amounted to a vast conspiracy against antimonopoly laws. Mr. Quinn writes:

Being unable to deny the fact of concentrated power and control by giant corporations, a number of apologists in unconscious desperation, have reached far back into the realm of hopeful fantasy and come up with a frail, transparent whimsy which they call the Corporation Conscience. Since so much undemocratic power is untenable it simply must be guided, if not governed, by a conscience, whether or not there is any such thing. For only something like a conscience could weigh the equities that are not measurable by any economic standard.

But unhappily, there is no such thing as a Corporation Conscience. Man has qualities of

fairness, consideration, pity, compassion and generosity along with the cruelties and indecencies he will perpetrate or tolerate. However, when he joins with others in a mob, a movement, a fanatical cause, a gang or a corporation the responsibility of everybody is nobody's. The individual often permits the purpose of the collective undertaking to overcome or replace his conscience. The plea of Eichmann in the Israeli trial will be that he was only obeying orders. The answer of the convicted executives in the Philadelphia case was that they were acting for the benefit of their employers, not for themselves, and some of them consider this a valid excuse—no matter what they did.

Only the individual has a conscience. There simply is no such thing as an inanimate, inhuman or joint conscience. The individual can feel, breathe, sense and realize his blessings and his duties. Nature takes hold of him and never lets him go. But the mob, the gang, the corporation cannot sense anything. The corporation cannot conceive or give birth or recreate itself. It is a mechanism, a thing, not a person.

What can only be meant by the Corporation Conscience is the conscience of the human beings who control it. The Westinghouse Corporation's position with respect to its convicted executives in the Philadelphia case was that they had suffered enough. There is a certain honesty and decency in this. While the chief officials denied personal responsibility they did not go so far as to place complete blame on subordinates to the extent of discharging them. General Electric's chief officials took an entirely different course. They drew a cloak of righteousness around themselves, despite the evidence, the Judge's conclusions and the Company's long record of antitrust violations, and placing the entire blame on their 14 convicted executives they discharged all of them. It is difficult to resist the observation that this was done for appearance's sake. Now we are supposed to believe that only Mr. R. J. Cordiner, the chief executive, was innocent. He among all of them did not know what was going on. In these two instances we have interesting examples of just how so-called Corporation Conscience works in practice.

Well, here we have some fascinating possibilities in terms of human freedom from drudgery, but along with it an increased opportunity for clever management to manipulate the economy for greater corporate profits. To the extent that the federal government develops its

kind of "conscience," we may see enlightened controls of a socialist nature, but the root of the problem of the future seems to be psychological—even philosophical. How can the average person resist the blandishments of advertising so obviously effective in selling him things he doesn't need? Only by finding uses for his time that have nothing to do with production and consumption. On the other hand, as Erich Fromm has pointed out, a twenty-hour work week will cut so many people adrift from familiar moorings that the business of psychiatry will increase in direct proportion.

In our time, apparently, "conscience" will have to be redefined with a positive orientation. Morality based upon a conception of what must not be done will have to be supplanted by a meaningful conception of how one *should* spend one's time and energy to fulfill human promise.