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GANDHI ON NONVIOLENCE IN ACTION AND EDUCATION

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I. Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand [Mahatma] Gandhi adopted the metaphysics of a broadly-conceived Hindu religious thought for his social critique, out of which he developed a distinctive educational philosophy which gave particular emphasis to truth and nonviolence, or the teaching of *peace*. In his social thinking he gave immense importance to, what he called, a balanced form of education. By this he meant, balanced as to *needs*, i.e. the necessities of life, against *wants*, i.e. whatever one yearns to possess, acquire or enjoy out of desire; and, more significantly, balanced as to *value*s against a disproportionate concern with the *externals* (1948: 52). By `externals' is meant the goods people generate and the sorts of activities, planning and manoeuvres people carry out in the normal course of living in order to meet the demands of commerce, material accessories, personal welfare and reproduction, and which are at the same time instrumental in sustaining the community. Indeed, how could Gandhi underestimate the importance of this aspect of life, particularly in a country that was struggling to survive, to provide food, clothing, shelter and protection to its people, especially in the aftermath of the enormous exploitation of the country's resources and labour under the colonial regime over the past few centuries? There is no denying the fact that Gandhi's philosophy embraced a definite project for social and economic development of the nation. This included the production of useful material goods, in the absence of which, Gandhi believed, people would continue to be deprived of the elemental necessities of life and be subjected to control by forces external to themselves, or the `market forces', such as competition, massive industrialization, commercial monopoly and international enterprise, all of which, in his view, easily become vehicles for exploiting others.

(1931b: 224; 1948: 40, 77)

Nevertheless, he also warned that material production should not be proliferated without the imposition of certain checks on them, especially if their expansion, in the hands of the heartless capitalists and the nouveau rich, were to create imbalances in human life or effect distortions in the scale of human values (1908b:370). Even so, Gandhi's main argument was that, above all else, and beyond illiteracy too, ignorance and fear were the real scourge of an oppressed society (1951:32). The root of the problem that Gandhi identified in this way rests with *education*, or rather with the particular form of education that has come to prevail in our contemporary, modern world (1948: 261-66). But how did he articulate this problem and what were the theoretical underpinnings to his claims?

Now Gandhi was a somewhat complex intellectual: he was conservative in his idealism, and yet he gave the appearance of being a pragmatic revolutionary; he preferred `experimenting' to theorising, and while he did not write analytical treatise on the ideas he championed and espoused, he had a good deal to say on a wide range of issues. His thoughts on education, however, have hitherto not been brought together under a systematic or coherent work; that project remains to be accomplished. The present discussion presents a vignette to this minefield. I will approach the problematic by focussing on the following considerations: a) Gandhi's view of human development and how it impacts his philosophy of education; b) his action theory based on the principles of truth and nonviolence, which for Gandhi were contiguous with peace.

I. Human development

Gandhi had a concept of education that was rooted inextricably in his notion of human development rather than in any kind of theoretical curriculum. Human development is indeed a complex process, and there have been many theories about it (Piaget: 1932; Peters: 1963, 27ff). Gandhi's thoughts on this matter was linked to his concern with education from childhood to

adolescent or the "formation of man". His views on education developed gradually over a period of time, as he pondered over and experimented with various ideas and projects in the light of suggestions and criticisms that came his way, and he modified these as his ideas matured or as the situation impressed upon him. He was, however, all too aware of the tensions, inconsistencies and loose-ends lurking in the finer details of his programs and thoughts, but in practice his own reliance on situational ethics got him out of tight corners.

One major tension that emerges in Gandhi's preoccupation with human development or formation is between the emphasis he wants to give, on the hand, to vocational training and, on the other hand, to the fostering of character and habits or dispositions of the mind, or what Aristotle called `virtues' and what are characterised as `values' in basic liberal education (Maritain, 1955: 65, 83; cf. MacIntyre, 1984). I want to dwell a little on contrasting this aspect of Gandhi's thinking.

Recognizing that human development occurs in stages, Gandhi questioned the logic underpinning the dominant system of education (as prevalent in his time, and much in our times also). In this system the child is introduced from day one to literary and literarcy training, or to the three `Rs' as this has also often called. Why is it so compelling, Gandhi asked, to start the child on a program of literary learning, when the child has scarcely had time to learn to use her hands, develop interpersonal skills, acquaint herself with the surroundings, and pay due attention to the behaviour of the teacher who will undoubtedly be a crucial role model in the child's early schooling? Gandhi questioned the urgency of the imposition of the literary process which the child would not have encountered in that way before, at least not in this abstract and detached way. (1921b; 1948: 256-58) At the back of Gandhi's mind was the question of the propriety of a particular concept of education which he felt undermined the very natural order or pattern of human development, something the ancients knew better and cared for (1945: 162). In other words, does instruction in literary arts during this early stages prove to be a sufficient

panacea and immunisation against the crippling ignorance that prevails in a large measure among the uneducated masses? He wondered whether such a program was adequate for engendering, developing and fostering awareness of values which he considered to be central to the life and survival and growth of human civilisation? He also questioned whether such a program can provide adequate basis for the building of character, or the inculcation of habits of the mind and qualities that are deemed to be essential nature of being human, as well as yield an environment for nurturing values of intrinsic worth? Reading and writing and doing simple arithmetical sums might be the basic needs of an educated person. For Gandhi, however, it was not self-evident that such a training is all that is required (1948: 256-57). Further, he did not see any logical connection between illiteracy and ignorance. To his way of thinking they are quite separate things; for the most literate people are often also the most ignorant. It is even more the case that literary learning in the wrong place, or when it is disproportionately pursued, can stunt other capacities and faculties fundamental to human formation and wellbeing (1937d; 1948: 255). Thus character-building and fostering right values cannot occur simply through "bookish" learning as he termed it. Finally, in Gandhi's view, literary learning was or is not even an adequate means to the end of social development and it has no significant application in alleviating the plight of the suffering masses (1948: 256).

Gandhi might have been a trifle too confident and therefore often wrong-headed in drawing these inferences, and thus running as he did counter to much that is taken for granted in liberal education. He argued, of course, that he was not opposed to liberal education, if that meant basic humanistic education; it was only that he wanted to redefine this concept in terms of `action' or `doing', and to ground education in this rather more concrete facet of life (1951; 1948: 261-66). Gandhi is here making an appeal to another, perhaps equally questionable, supposition of practical action -- which may be contrasted to the Socratic abstract or `theoretic learning' -- as the foundational plank for education (1908b: 185). In this regard he appears to have been closer to the spirit of Aristotle, for whom the end of education was indeed to prepare the citizen for an

active and virtuous life of practical wisdom, politics, and leisure (Politics II, VII.ii.3). There is, however, a fundamental difference between Aristotle and Gandhi: for in Aristotle the theoria not only precedes praxis but is itself a typical activity and at once also the highest of all ideals (Ethics X.vii; cf Nicomachean Ethics, VI; Burnet: 8, 89).

This kind of thinking on education had already taken deep root in Gandhi's mind in the early years of this century, as he left England for India and then for South Africa. While studying in London he worked through a wide array of literature on religion, politics and law, including Roman Law (on which he sat a paper in Latin) (1927a:70). Here we notice a convergence taking place between his thinking on education and the strategy of `passive resistance' that he embraced shortly after his arrival in South Africa. Although Gandhi often mentions having read Socrates, Carlyle, Dr Johnson, Bacon, Huxley, Blavatsky, Arnold, the Koran and some Tamil literature, he was more immediately influenced by Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau, the Jaina Raichandrabhai, and the Bhagavadgita (1908a: 154; 1921a: 76; 1926b: 4)

Influences on Gandhi

Vegetarian society

The earliest influence of some significance in this context was that of the English vegetarians, who the young student had encountered in his desperate hunt for a decent vegetarian diet. Through his association with the Vegetarian Society it dawned on Gandhi that he could be a vegetarian on intellectual and ethical grounds, not merely on custom and traditional habit. This realization marked the beginnings of the stirring in him towards a nonviolent ordering of things. Henry Salt's Plea for Vegetarianism had more influence on him than had Bentham's Theory of Utility. Salt was a Fabian and belonged to a group with Bernard Shaw and Sydney and Beatrice Webb (1927a: 45, 61).

Ruskin

Gandhi first read the Ruskin in South Africa, in 1904. He took Ruskin to be elaborating on the ideas of Socrates (1908b:241), on whom he was himself later to write a work (1919). Ruskin's own early upbringing was marked by stiff lessons in faith, obedience and peace (Clark:15). So moved was he by Ruskin's writings that he rendered Ruskin's Unto This Last into Gujarati in South Africa and published it with his own introduction. Gandhi summarized Ruskin's teaching in terms of the following three propositions (1927a: 238; 1956):

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labor, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.

He remarked that the while he was aware of the first two, the third proposition had never occurred to him. However, Gandhi over-emphasized the third proposition in Ruskin's scheme. Ruskin advocated teaching children lessons about health, then gentleness and justice and, thirdly, a `calling by which they are to live' (1862: Preface; Vimala Rao, 1969:117, 123). Gandhi took Ruskin's third requirement as essentially that of training the child in a craft, that is to say in some sort of `work' or vocational activity. He found this ideal endorsed in the Bhagavadgita's exhortation towards `action as one's true entitlement' (II.47; III.12); and so in his own scheme for Basic Education Gandhi insisted upon handicraft and especially spinning (takli) as the sole vocation to which `lessons in history, geograpahy, arithmetic [are] related' (1951:10). These ideals inspired Gandhi to establish the Phoenix Settlement in 1904 in Natal county. What came through to Gandhi in his appraisal of Ruskin was basically a socio-economic system, founded not on the demands of materialism and industrialism but on the simple character of truthful living (1908b:371). Ruskin had expressed this succinctly in his Crown of Wild Olive (1869): `The true `compulsory education' is not teaching the youths... the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers, and then leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery and their literature to lust. It

is, on the contrary, training them into the perfect exercise and kingly continence of their bodies and souls.' (Vimala Rao, 1969:126)

Nevertheless there were also vast differences between the two thinkers. Ruskin was no great admirer of democracy preferring instead Thomas Carlyle's vision of a spartan system in the hands of heroes and prophets; and despite his vehement criticisms of its economic injustices and his concern for the poor, he remained a significant pillar of the puritan Victorian society (Clark:266). While Gandhi, on the other hand, was drawn to the ideals of a democratic social system, wherein no monolitic superstructure would dictate the economic and social life of the common people; besides he confronted a country which was already in ferment and about to break out into civil-war. The Victorians, after a good day's work, could afford the pastimes of the arts, aesthetics, music, `high culture', nature, and literature, while the Indian settlers in South Africa as much their brethren in India could ill-afford to indulgence in such pleasures, let alone find employment and meet their basic needs. Hence the two self-acclaimed educationists approached their respective challenges via different routes, but they shared the common ideal of infusing the culture of character and a `vocation' in the early life of the child.

Ruskin's theory, nonetheless, reinforced Gandhi's resolute opposition to the British system of training the Indian youth through the medium of a foreign language, whose principal aim was to supply a steasy flow of low-level public servants and clerks for the government of the day. It also vindicated his disapproval of the incursions of the machine into the Indian rural economy (1908b:240-41; Vimala Rao, 1969: 121; Tendulkar, VII: 224-25). Indeed, when asked what book has had the biggest effect on him, Gandhi answered that it was Ruskin's Unto the Last (1931c).

Later, in 1937, Gandhi's attention was drawn to Armstrong's Education for Life in which the author emphasized education through the use of the hands (1937b; 1962a:302). It followed, in Gandhi's view, that vocational training had to be the answer to the problem of education. This conviction was further entrenched in his 1937 Wardha Education Scheme which he proposed as

a national panacea for the uneducated masses who he thought continued to be exploited and oppressed because they had been deprived not of simply liberal education but of an all-rounded education.

Does this mean, however, that Gandhi had forgotten the original concerns with human development in terms of character-building, habits, virtues and so on, or did he now believe that the process of human development was somehow bound up with vocational training, i.e. learning through the manual process more than through the cognitive processes? In more simple terms, does vocational training provide a sufficient environment for education? Further, is not the project of industrialization pivoted in a rather fundamental way to this premise also? Does Gandhi have an argument that distinguishes vocational training as he sees it from the emphasis it receives in the modern Western world, where productivity and utilitarian returns for education appear to be the more fundamental goals of education? Was he or was he not aware of the enslaving capacity of an industrial program to which education might be made a subservient ally, particularly in its role as the provider of skills and training necessary for `turning the wheels'?

Gandhi had one unequivocal answer to all these questions. To whit: the wheels he wanted turned were not the massive cog-wheels of an overdeveloped technocratic industry, but rather those of a small-scale, rural-based and communally-orientated cottage or handicraft industry, symbolized in the takli (hand-spinning wheel, 1937c:266), and in this respect he wanted to see that values, virtues and habits of the mind and body received as much if not greater attention. Indeed, it was precisely this awareness that led Gandhi to place an even greater emphasis on vocational training, by which he meant simple crafts and skills, such as shedding, spinning, weaving (charka), conducted in a cooperative effort in a community-setting in which everyone participated and shared equally the wide range of responsibilities and benefits alike (1937b). This process would ultimately be geared towards uplifting the economy of the rural sectors and not merely to function as a resource for the urban industrial development.

Thus a distinction was wedged, between a labor-cooperative rural economy and machine-based industrial economy, which Gandhi was to refine, revise and deepen over the next few decades (Nanda: 377).

However, as critics in his own time, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Jawarharlal Nehru, pointed out, Gandhi seemed inordinately preoccupied with `bread and butter' issues, as was reflected in his lop-sided emphasis on vocation or `learning through the hands', which created tensions within his educational philosophy and in some ways made his scheme harder to implement in more practical terms. Secondly, a handicraft as the instrument for the implementation of education, the critics argued, is more likely to impair or stunt the intellectual growth of a young mind than to produce moral and well-equipped minds. As C.F. Andrews put it, Gandhi would have all the `lessons in history, geography, arithmetic related to the craft' which would seem an awesome task (1929:335). Or, as Tagore was to remind Gandhi through a poetical allegory, the urge of the bird when it wakes up in the morning is to soar towards the sky and sing before it looks for worms! (Prabhu-Kelekar, 1961:72).

Gandhi replied that it may be so for birds which were well-fed the night before, but for the vast majority of the people who could barely obtain enough physical sustenance, the modern educational system produced an elite group of educated individuals who refused to work with their hands and lived a parasitic life. This tended to alienate the masses who worked with their hands and produced wealth but were deprived of all opportunities of a formal education (1937c; Prabhu-Kelekar:81).

Thus Gandhi advocated a scheme in which socially useful productive work becomes the center of the educational process and inculcates the dignity of manual labor or action per se in conjunction with, rather than being divorced from, intellectual learning (1921b:48; 1937a:13; 1937b:243). The core of his emphasis was not so much on `occupation' and the rhetoric of `efficiency' that a purely economic motive might entail, as it was on education through manual

training which is at the same time developmental as it is pleasurable. That is to say, Gandhi somehow believed that there was an inextricable link between learning in the liberal sense of art or the humanities and the playful activity of hands: put rather crudely, liberal art learning, for example in history and letters, and manual training, for example in a craft, must as it were happen in unison or go `hand-in-hand'. Such a system of education, Gandhi further believed, would eliminate the dichotomy between work and education, as well as untie the binary-oppositions between play and training, work and leisure, liberal and pragmatic or productive education, and art and science (1937a:17; 132). In some ways, Gandhi's polemic, if not his programn, echoed that of A.N. Whitehead, who also insisted on a closer integration of literary, technical and scientific education (1950).

II. A moral strategy for peace.

Now given the premise that education is a very important instrument for human development or formation, the challenge facing Gandhi was to determine a stratagem for fostering the moral growth and development of the child concomitantly with vocational training. In this process the child qua individual is taken to be the center of the primary concern, i.e. what she is, not what she has been or should have been. Further, the art of teaching, the medium of instruction and the role of a teacher are not be formalised in the way in which much Western forms of learning has become; rather, learning can proceed by emulation or osmosis and by free association, through experience and participation, through travelling and accompanying those more skilled, and in other more informal ways. Voluntary initiative, collaborative and cooperative efforts would constitute the groundplan of such a school without walls as Gandhi had envisaged -- much before, let me add, Ivan Illich's much vaunted `deschooling' approach. Gandhi was firmly of the view that the process of education was coeval with socialization and the enculteration process. Thus, to Gandhi's way of thinking, education was the necessary pre-condition for humanisation of the human animal. Such development as is entailed in the bio-social process takes into

account not only the cognitive, but also affective and conative developments, and requires a particular kind of environment, both for learning and living, or learning through living, as Gandhi might have put it (1948:258). Again, this development is not separated from the development of human personality; that is to say, the harmonious growth of various desirable traits pertaining to the cognitive, the affective and the conative faculties are held to be the prerequisites (C.L. Sharma, 1976:607). The environment must be appropriate for facilitating the cultivation of certain values, such as moderation, temperance, self-restraint, respect for others, truthfulness in being, and nonviolent actions. Gandhi argued that his whole scheme was grounded in the fundamentals of truth and nonviolence: truth being the ultimate bench mark by which all achievement is measured.

Contrary to generally held views, it was not simply nonviolence that Gandhi had championed and fought hard to instill in people, but also the ultimacy of truth, of which non-violence was an expression, albeit a relativised expression (Bondurant:19-22). Without understanding truth and without living this - however one does it - nonviolence cannot, in Gandhi's more anguished reflections, amount to very much more than an expedient means. The means and the end must be one and the same: this meeting occurs in truth. Thus if non-violence (ahimsa) is the means; truth is the end (1948: 14). But what is all this to mean in the context of education? We should look for a response to this question in the context of Gandhi's reading of Tolstoy and Thoreau.

Tolstoy

The more significant influence on the specific issue of teaching values and virtues, and a particular kind of virtue at that, came to Gandhi from Tolstoy and Thoreau. I shall attempt to show how some liberal and radical ideas from these writers entered Gandhi's Basic Education Scheme. Rousseau and the protagonists of `free' style education had argued that children should be left to their own means and devices in order for them to develop into adults, and in

such a way that no place is left for adults to impose their own values on the children. Gandhi disagreed with this proposition and argued instead that adults have the responsibility of initiating children into what is considered valuable, even if these are `useless' values: this, indeed, is the process of culture, its formation and its transmission without which a society cannot survive. His insistence on this is borne out in a sermon he gave to an assembly of school girls:

> I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing which the girls ought to get from here. It should show in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behavior, how you sit, how you walk, how you dress, etc, so that anybody might be able to see at a glance that you are products of this institutions. Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders. (1946b:36; 1953:161)

But what, we may ask, is so Tolstoian about this recommendations? Perhaps it is Tolstoian not so much in the specifics as in the general framework it provides for thinking on morality and the `form of life' that shuns the excesses of an overdeveloped industrial and highly bureaucratised society (Gandhi, 1927a:90; Tendulkar II: 418-20). Tolstoy advocated a life of simplicity, purity, temperance, which does not make comprises to the tendency towards acquisitiveness, greed, envy, malice and such ills as he thought afflicted the human race. Of course, Tolstoy's principle of `non-resistance to evil' was to have an even profounder impact on Gandhi, which he saw echoed in his reading of the Sermon on the Mount, and in the Bhagavadgita's apparent revocation of war and violence (1909; Doke, 100; 1927a:61; 1946a:77-86). In some ways, this echoed the Jaina practice of ahimsa about which Gandhi had learned a good deal from his friend and near-guru Raichandrabhai, a Jaina poet and merchant (1921b:1-5; 1927a:74-76, 114). Raichandrabhai had taught Gandhi, through

examples and his sharp intellect, the Jaina system of thought centering on the doctrine of ahimsa. But beyond the basically negative intent of not harming or non-injuring, which is tantamount to a passive disposition, Raichandrabhai was not able to provide to Gandhi's intellectual satisfaction a more positive basis for action on which he could anchor his struggle. Increasingly drawn to Western methods, the Tolstoian spiritualised ideals were reinforced in Gandhi's mind through his earlier associations in South Africa with theosophists, Christian missionaries (Protestant and Catholic), Trappists, Plymouth Brethren, Unitarians, various nonconformists, pacificists and suffragettes, and Quakers, some of whom he also joined for daily prayers and from whom he took instructions at their church meetings (1926b:4; Hunt, 1986: 18-25). The Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel and Tolstoy's rendering of this in his The Kingdom of God is Within You was the message that he took with him to South Africa (1927a:61; Pyarelal, 1965:702; Hunt 1986:42).

By the turn of the century Gandhi was putting forward his ideas on paper in his periodical Indian Opinion and in his booklet Hind Swaraj, which he wrote in 1906 and published in English as Indian Home Rule in 1909. His attention shifted back to Hinduism, first for a way of life that could be called `pure' and `undefiled' leading to the practices of restraint, equinimity, non-possession, vows, fasting, cleanliness, and continence as well as tolerance of others beliefs. (1926b:4; 1959:13-15, 18) Secondly, for a weapon with which to fight the injustices and iniquities of the system as oppressive as the South African regime, he marshalled much strength in his own personal attitude, will and determination. These were the early `experiments' he performed on himself, the proven virtue of which he was to commend to students in the settlements and later in the ashram-schools he had started in India. These so-called experiments led him to the discovery of a method which he called satyagraha : truth-force, soul-force, or the spiritual end which is achieved through nonviolent resistance (1908a:23; 1928a). Gandhi was much influenced by the Tolstoian maxim (in Gandhi's rendering): `Resistance to aggression is not simply justifiable but imperative; non-

resistance hurts both Altruism and Egotism' (Nag:91). It had became clear in Gandhi's mind: whatever `non-resistance' involved it had to be a positive and a non-violent means of bringing the opponent to confront a conflict situation and a method of securing rights by means of personal suffering. The possibility of conflict in any situation was not to be overlooked and this was to be confronted heroically, not simply ignored or avoided in the interest of some more prosaic posture. Actively withdrawing of cooperation and soulfully refusing to be associated with what is ostensibly an `evil' or illegitimate practice or policy, even where this is legally binding, was, in Gandhi's reading, a moral duty and responsibility of the citizen.

Ironically, just such a principle had been demonstrated in England in the nonconformist rallies following the passing of the 1902 Education Bill, which also shortly inspired Gandhi's boldly defiant idea of burning pieces of legislation in South Africa in 1906 (Hunt: 53). But an even stronger and more concrete example of the consequential civil disobedience strategy germane to such protests was highlighted in America -- in the life of Thoreau.

Thoreau

Thoreau, for a while a caretaker of the New England Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson (who was already versed in classical Hindu texts), argued for a government which was based not on the blind might of the majority but on conscience; hence he urged that conscience must decide on questions of right and wrong. Where an individual thought that the government had offended the rule of conscience, the individual had every right to disobey the law; for law `never made men a whit more just': `I think we should be men first and subjects afterwards' (1960: 223). Thoreau meant by this statement that our obligation to be subjects or citizens was secondary to our duty to conscience and our respect for that which is right. Grounded in this belief, he was happy to spend a night in prison than to pay

poll-tax, which he thought to an be unjust way of extracting money from one's rightful earnings. There was, however, not the slightest hint in Thoreau's thinking that the kind of resistance he advocated should in any way be violent or should `hurt another's shoulder' (1960:224). These ponderings of a civil resistance advocate were to have quite an impact on Gandhi's broader thinking on the State and its relation with education.

Thus, as early as 1907 Gandhi started to write a series of articles under the heading `Duty of Disobeying Laws', drawing on Thoreau's essay `On the Duty of Civil Disobedience', and in 1911 he published extracts from his Indian Home Rule in his periodical Indian Opinion under the heading `Thoughts from Thoreau' (1907; 1911; CWMG 16:496). Gandhi would continue to invoke Thoreau in legitimating the act of disaffiliating and withdrawing or withholding support from a government that rules against the will of the people and emasculates riches and power for its own ends (Tendulkar 1951: I:357). By the same token, education, when it is centralised and controlled by the government, can no longer be trusted to serve the ends of the people. Gandhi wanted to point out that education, even in its most well-intended form, can easily become an agent for violence which the State is capable of perpetrating, in rather imperceptible ways, through one of its many institutions into whose service the `educated' adults are eventually enlisted. More recently the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has presented detailed analyses of the subtle ways in which `symbolic violence' infiltrates and pervades just about every sphere of modern life, not least education, capitalizing on the artifical, though historically entrenched, boundaries of gender, class, race and ethnic differences (1977;1984; cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1955). Violence, then, takes many and varied forms, and physical violence is merely its gross manifestation; there is also violence of the more subtle and symbolic kinds, such as in certain uses of language, in attitudes, in `looks', and, more importantly, in the way in which a society structures itself so as to privilege one group, class or `caste', and gender over another (Gandhi, 1948:65). The State, said Gandhi, `represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The

individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence' (1948:42).

Nevertheless, Gandhi believed there is a method for countering all forms of violence, namely, in what he had already called satyagraha or the nonviolent method of self-sacrifice coupled with non-cooperation, and that too as a calling of duty (1908a:91). Ahimsa or the principle of `not hurting or harming' another remained integral or central to this method. But to this cardinal rule of not hurting or harming another, forcing or demeaning another, Gandhi added another principle, namely that, one should not, under any circumstances, violate the person's essence or her humanity, for such violation can only evoke counter-reaction which could itself be violent and which may end in a truce, but not in truth (Erikson 1969: 412). To acknowledge the dignity of another human being even where one opposes her is another way of showing respect to the truth in the person. Situations of potential conflict behoves the parties involved to be more keenly sensitive to this requirement regulated by the principle of ahimsa.

Like Thoreau and Tolstoy, Gandhi also realised that the ideal of satyagraha is not something that can be pursued in a rarefied rational and intellectual discourse, nor taught in pure abstract terms. He believed that it was something that had to be learnt through experience, nay, by repeated experience of what in modern psychoanalytic terms may be called `optimal frustrations' (Kohut). Much as the `forms' in Plato's theory of knowledge, whose usefulness has to be demonstrated for their full impact on the learning mind, satyagraha has to be learned through its demonstrative effect. Thus Gandhi emphasised time and again the indispensibility of the elements of sacrifice and suffering. He gave the example from his own experience in the near-war situation which he faced in South Africa in 1906, when he had to choose between allying himself with violence or finding some other means of confronting the crisis and combating the cause of fear (1927a:130). In 1917, he staged his first major satyagraha in Champaran in Bihar - an event which heralded and

commended the Gandhian method to the subcontinent, much to the surprise of the Indian nationalists who had virtually resigned to the inevitably of war for the eventual freedom of India from the expatriate rulers (1927a:331). In looking for a moral equivalent of war, as he put it, Gandhi came to the conviction that `things of fundamental importance are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. Suffering is the law of human beings; war is the law of the jungle' (1920a:132; 1931a:189). And the virtue of suffering was that `it was infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason.' (1948:16-18) It was this conviction about individual and collective suffering as the method of securing justice that was to provide an enormous motivation and a dialectic in the development of the concept of non-violent resistance (1920a:156). Nonviolence, which Gandhi used interchangeably with peace, was the fundamental moral principle to be fostered in the processes of socialization, formation and enculteration.

III. Nonviolence and Human Nature

A conviction that further motivated Gandhi was his basic belief in the fundamentally nonviolent, intrinsically good and inherently intelligent and non-aggressive disposition of human nature. He held to this belief despite history's apparent falsification of this supposed fact about human nature. Thus the task that faced him was to identify the particular deficiency in the social process that gives rise to frustration, fear, ignorance, and anger, which more often than not manifest themselves in acts or attitudes of violence. In so doing, Gandhi thought he would have also identified the root cause of violence; although there is much controvery as to whether Gandhi actually understood and appreciated the complex historical actuality and species-nature of the human condition as recent researches in psychology, biology and psychoanalysis have attempted to highlight (Erikson, 1969 424-45). Gandhi conceded, however, that human beings are `at times seen acting like an animal. He

is endowed with brute force as well, and, so long as he has not developed awareness of his spiritual nature he remains an intelligent animal' (1920a:132). Fear invariably unleashes the brute force of violence in human beings (ibid:157).

In any event, education, when it is to be true to human nature as Gandhi conceived it, must tackle these seeds of violence and find ways of diffusing them, or preventing their eruption, and rechanneling the same energy into more creative and constructive channels -- a move undoubtedly in keeping with Freudian insights. Better still, if there is a way of directing human development away from these detrimental affectations into more positive and creative channels, indeed, more purposive areas of growth, then only the task at hand could be fully realised. The presence of fear, anxiety, anger, and the lack of self-confidence and self-affirmation were, in Gandhi's analysis, among the more immediate causes of violence, however justified that may seem in terms of the degree of oppression, suffering, poverty, wrong and injustice the opponent or an oppressive system may have inflicted or perpetuated.

A basic assumption of the technique for countering this violence, as we indicated, is that no harm or injury, hatred or violence should be directed, either in thought, word or deed to another, least of all to the opponent or adversary in protesting against the wrong-doings, injustices and so on. But these are dispositions and habits of the mind and body that have to be developed, firstly, outside the conflict situation, the very moments when there are no conflicts, and secondly, during the growth and development of character and personality. Unless these dispositions are internalised beyond revocation, and unless they became as it were forged with the will, the very seat of the soul-force, the good and benign intentions of the individual could well fail her in the real situation where the individual's `inner culture' is tested. And as Thoreau had pointed out, the weakness of the resisters tend to lend greater support to the system being opposed (1960: 228).

When translated into educational principles where such a conflict situation is not

normally what faces the pupil -- although there may be occasions for conflicts with teachers and fellow pupils, and also with parents -- the aim is to instill an attitude of love, care and interpersonal harmony; more than that, a feeling of cooperation and of one-ness of the group is a virtue to be cultivated. Conscious suffering, Gandhi argued, was a dynamic condition for the nonviolent action in any circumstance. Some degree of pain and suffering is not to be shunned where the act of appealing to another's heart can become the best way to ameliorate the fearful situation. The task of education is to create and foster an environment, internal and external, wherein the tensions and conflicts are managed and reduced.

Gandhi explored other ways of reinforcing the fostering of ideals of social welfare, justice, individual happiness, freedom and creativity, which are of course basically liberal values, along with spiritual ideals, which he thought provided sustenance to the more fundamental ideals of peace and truth. He also mentioned love (1940). Obviously human development covers a lot more than basic liberal and religious or spiritual values. This broader concern, however, is not my brief here. Gandhi was aware of the place of health education and social services as well as rural development, which formed the broader ambience of Basic Education he had proposed at the Wardha National Education Conference in 1937 (1937a). To all of these he extended his principle of nonviolent mode of action: indeed, no sphere of activity (whether it be individual, interpersonal, social or national) was to be exempted from the strictures of this moral imperative. The problem, as Gandhi saw it, was how human beings socialise and enculterate their younger population in order to make them into viable members of the society? Obviously, education was to medium. But what sorts of ideals should education pursue? Vimala Rao sums up Gandhi's response to this question in the following quote:

> `...[T]rue education means self-control and self-discipline to such an extent that it goes against the nature of youth. e.g., the rules he lays down for a student to observe to belong to his Satyagraha Ashrama are, to mention a few, "the vow of Truth,

> Doctrine of Ahimsa the vow of celibacy, the vow of control of the palate, the vow of non-thieving, the vow of Swadeshi, the vow of fearlessness, the vow regarding the untouchables, Hand-Weaving ....In his violently anti-Western mood, Gandhi imposes a spartan simplicity on the youth.' (1969:125)

Gandhi's `violent anti-Western mood' -- if this description is at all correct -- aside, in the Bhagavadgita, Gandhi had found another support for this principle of action, for the Gita advocated planting the seeds of selfless dedicated action (nihkama karma or anasakti), which was so very necessary, in Gandhi's belief, for a nonviolent struggle (1926a). The fundamental message that Gandhi read in the Gita centred on the need to exercize asteya (not coverting), aparigraha (non-possessiveness) nishkama karma (selfless action) and brahmacarya (continence) (1959:4-12). These are not ideals one can learn through books or simply in one's appreciation of literary processes, rather they are to be realised through intentional praxis, just as one has to be immersed in the meditative praxis to realise, for instance, the truth of the Buddhist teachings on Emptiness.

Here again, Tolstoy's thoughts echo in Gandhi's scheme. Where else did Gandhi first attempt to put into practice the Gita's teachings which he had imbibed in England but at Tolstoy Farm in Transvaal? Tolstoy's rejection of violence as the very negation of violence was to be of great consequence to Gandhi's thinking. Tolstoy's principle however was weighted heavily on its emphasis on `non-resistance'. Tolstoy had insisted on the consistent application of love in all walks of life for the most efficient resolution of conflict. But this is a negative principle, for its application in practice amounts to little more than withdrawing cooperation with the perceived perpetrator of evil or the wrong-doer. To be sure, this has its parallel in the traditional or classical Indian notion of ahimsa or non-injury, non-killing, non-harming, but in intent this is also a negative idea, as Gandhi was incessantly reminded by his detractors. There is no positive injunction or exhortation to action accompanying this principle, such as, `do x in place of y'; put simply, it is about not doing y. In that respect the

traditional idea of ahimsa could be seen as a non-progressive and non-motivational ethic. Gandhi was therefore anguished about both the Jaina principle he had learnt from Raichandrabhai and the `non-resistance' principle he took from Tolstoy's teachings. Gandhi wanted a more constructive approach, an ethic with a content in it, and a principle that could have a much more universal, positive and practical application (1931a, 1931d). Such a practice as he envisaged motivated by the principle would begin with the individual and extend to the larger group or collective. Students were thus called upon to boycott schools and colleges and to join en mass the noncooperative movement, dharna (`sit-ins') and hartals or stop-work strikes, with a positive attitude that the desired goal can be achieved with recourse to violence. This, he believed, was a responsible use of the nonviolent strategy (1921b; 1940:457).

However, Gandhi was criticised for encouraging students to disrupt the educational process. But Gandhi's response was that noncooperation was the only means of forcing the impending challenge since it combined the ideals of ahimsa with rightful protest. What Gandhi was giving voice to here is the systematic and restrained training of ahimsa, in the context of the praxis he called sadhana, which is not unlike the discipline Martin Luther King Jr and his group initiated the prospective Black (Afro-American) protestors into.

IV. An Outline of Gandhi's Basic Education

Gandhi's outline for a scheme of education was presented in what is called the Nai Talim or Basic Education. Basically, Gandhi argued for a highly decentralised and minimally State-controlled system of education (1937b). Even the term `system' seems to do injustice to what Gandhi strived to achieve, which was basically a highly de-institutionalised scheme for education that blended in every way into the daily life and activities of a community. The model that appealed to him most was that of the self-contained village community, that is to say, a close-knit, intimate habitat whose residents work cooperatively and care for each

other's welfare as well as share in each other's sorrows and travails and whatever they produced from their meagre resources. By contrast, the structures that surround the modern processes of education, serving as they do the dual role of child care and teaching, only help to confound and add more weight to the massive structures which our modern societies have evolved, predominantly for the purposes of imposing external control and coercive regulations on its citizenry, so Gandhi thought. The system of education brought to India under the British Raj betrayed one such institutional structure, whose sole aim, as we noted earlier, was to train young people to become clerical and administrative personnels in the bureaucratic machinery and the economic designs of the alien rulers. Industrialization had not reached India to the extent that it had impacted on Europe and North America, and so the rulers did not feel the need to upgrade the educational system towards training skills in the technical, scientific and productivity areas. The subservient and largely ignorant masses provided a vast pool for the menial tasks required by the expatriate establishments, such as the East Indian Company. The country's raw material base and resources were being ruthlessly eroded without the possibility of local checks or intervention, even of the kind, say, that conservationists and environmentalists have more recently been concerned to. Gandhi's contention was that the alien power, by dint of its selective and elitist educational process, was creating a virtual mercenary class which distanced itself from the indigenous population, whose potentiality was nonetheless severely undermined. The educated class became in the hands of the other, ruling, elite the surrogate instrument or agency for ruthless exploitation. The British system, from Lord Macaulay to Ram Mohan Roy, seemed bent on enslaving the Indian mind and imposing English as the medium for subjugating traditional learning (Gandhi, 1928b).

His critics, however, argued that Gandhi was turning his back not only on liberal education but also on science and industry and advocating a primitive economy which would perpertuate poverty. He remained adament in his repudiation of all forms of enquiry that

directly or indirectly lend credibility and support to the ideology of the `machine age' (1937c). His principal objection was that mechanization tended to concentrate the production of wealth in the hands of the few, and he was concerned about the effect such an economic scenario had on the social structure in which the rural masses were marginalised (Nanda: 378).

Gandhi, then, was no admirer of the highly industrialised and machine-orientated society, for this embodied its own form of exploitation and oppression (1948:66; Nanda: 378). He did not want India to look for its answer in this particular direction. Rather, he would turn his gaze to the villagers whose plight he also single-mindedly championed in this nationalistic cause. Of course, this move was fundamentally linked to his larger program of bringing India to swaraj or home-rule, which for Gandhi meant more than independence from the British rule. Sawraj for him was a symbol of self-sufficiency, self-supporting and spiritually unique community of people who pursued a more simplified life of truth, purity and non-violence as their cardinal virtues. (1921a: 18-22; 1948:37,146) The term he used to describe this non-dependent state was Swadeshi (literally, `self-supporting condition' 1959:15), and which he related to the traditional human end of rightfully earning a decent living (1920b). Short of this, he could not see how India could survive and live up to its ancient and classical heritage (1948:43).

If a society was to develop in this direction he strongly felt some method other than the dehumanizing process of industrialization, and the system of education that this process required, was called for. He therefore made a distinction between a heartless drive towards occupational training and vocation (CWMG 66:191-95). He would characterise vocation as the `bread and butter' or the foundational resource of a society. Vocation would provide the fundamental material and social needs such as food, shelter, welfare, and, of course, learning. But Gandhi would not look to the city and the urban-dwellers to provide this resource; for the urban environment was sadly corrupted by Western bourgeois life and it

encouraged unmitigated industrial growth along with its supporting institutions, which in the long run alienates the rural sectors, with the resultant effect of polarizing the society. Did Gandhi hold the same disregard fzor technology? To answer this question, let us consider the following.

Technology, it would appear, is a time-bound artifact, and as a society needs a modicum of sustainable technology, its form may vary from one culture to another, from one epoch to another, and from society to another. Technologies are, then, `cultural instruments' and there are no invariants in these matters. (Ihde 1990:133, 149, 159) Thus, what, for example, the modern West has developed as its infrastructure to support its growth need not be what another culture might regard or require for its survival and sustenance. The Australian Aborigines, for example, as is nowadays recognised, had a rather sophisticated form of `technic' [techne, in the Heideggerian sense] which paradoxically entailed the rejection of much that in the present Western civilization is taken for granted, if not also considered to be indispensable. The Aboriginal population had developed basic tools and artifacts for gathering food, creating shelter and for dealing with the harsher elements of nature; but these tools were used rather judiciously so that the harmony and rhythm of nature were not disturbed in an irreversible way (i.e. no violence was done to nature). In any event, they never developed a `science' or a cluster of knowledge which in the modern world at least has helped to embed technology in culture. Alternatively, the growth of modern technology, reinforced by the emergent strength of the empirical sciences and by the ideology of capitalist laissez-faire system over the last three centuries, appear to be antithetical or inimical to the orientations of the so-called `primitive' or premodern cultures.

Gandhi had envisaged, again in a rather different light, a form of technology that would be suited specifically for the needs of India. As we said, he wanted to return to the village economy which in former times was quite capable of providing for its inhabitants and could even be self-sufficient. Such an economy did not unduly drain the energies of the

people, nor encouraged greed, envy, acquisitiveness, hyper-competition and aggressive achievement-orientated behavior. Rather, as in more enlightened socialists frameworks, it worked on the principle of cooperation, equity and distribution, and for welfare of all concerned (Sarvodaya) (Bose, 1987:43-48). These were the principles that had been lost, not only to the villages, but to the whole of India, and which he wanted to rescue.

It follows from Gandhi's response to the question of technology that a system of education that removes the individual from the total context of life, and imparts to her a set of formalised, abstract ideas which are not immediately relevant to meeting the problems and challenges of life, was simply fruitless; indeed, it would be a travesty of what education should stand for. Alternatively, a system that erred on the side of technical training for its own sake or in the interest of a purely utilitarian ethos, and which takes no notice of the needs of the intellect as well as of the spirit (or `soul') of human beings, was to him incapable of providing the greatest good for one and all (i.e. not simply for the greatest number, as classical utilitarianism would have it) and therefore had to be rejected (1908b:239; 1945: 53-54). Both such systems are unbalanced and in the long run may even prove to be harmful to society.

Again, from his experiments in South Africa, namely at the Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi had come to believe that the environment in which education is to proceed must actually be the very environment in which the student is to continue to grow, to draw upon for life-resources, and to which she must also contribute as a benefiting member. Thus the idea of an educational system that was divorced from the life and activity of the community, in short, from the whole context of experience and life-world of the community, was an anathema to Gandhi. Hence he sought to transform the system by incorporating the school in the very `heart' of the village community or the extended home-ground of the child. Traditionally, this is how education was pursued in India: the child was an obligatory `apprentice' to the parent from whom he learned the family trade, and also imbibed the

community's history, heritage, values, virtues and self-understanding; and, in return for this learning, he served the community, became a parent and transmitted the same knowledge to the next generation. In some traditional systems the student would enter and live in the house of the teacher as an `apprentice-in-teaching', and learn the same arts and duties that the teacher as a householder would pursue. Thus, institutions beyond a village guild seemed hardly necessary. And so a truly integrated system of education, in Gandhi's thinking, proceeds outwardly from the home-base to the village and to the community at large.

Concluding remarks

In concluding I should like to consider an example of the practical application of the Gandhian method as we have outlined. It is often asked how, against the torrent of a mob, Gandhi was able to bring about an ocean of peace and calm? In an angry crowd gathered to air some grievances and stage a protest against a cause, it is often all too easy for a few provocateurs to channel the anger in directions that can be volatile and violent. During one such volatile gathering, Gandhi appealed to the hearts of those gathered; he called for unity and discipline and urged the crowd to refrain from violence. Not only that, but he insisted that the gathering was as much for the purposes of making a protest as it was for deepening a personal experience of nonviolent resistance -- i.e. of peace. The protest might fail to achieve its intended (political) end, but that should not deter the satyagrahis from experiencing and sharing the deep sense of peace which such an action in its own accord should bring about. This latter goal is in a way distinct from the more immediate aim of changing the attitude, say, for example, of the government, or bringing about reforms in policies and so on. In other words, the gathering is to be seen, quite apart from all else, as an occasion for the continuing experiment in strengthening the sense of peace, individually and collectively. This, then is its spiritual trajectory. It was through such an appeal that

Gandhi was able to sway the intense ocean of anger away from a potentially volatile reaction towards an inner, more reflective experience of peace. The crowd later dispersed without any trace of violence. The regular prayer meetings that he held with gatherings of Hindus and Muslims and Sikhs in his ashrams and elsewhere became like workshops for intense praxis where the sense of peace was harnessed and felt more deeply before any practical activities or efforts were engaged in (CWMG 86:419; Prabhakar, 1968).

Gandhi, then, maintained his faith in nonviolence to the very end; while he intended it to be a means to truth, and nonviolent action as a morally exemplary form of political action, he elevated nonviolence as a virtue on par with truth, obscure as this notion might seem to be. Nonviolence is to be valued not simply as the prototype of what one ought to do, or not to do as in the case of Jaina ethical teachings, but as the cultivation of an inner disposition, or habit of the ego-mind-desire complex, that would ensue in a measured action appropriate to the circumstance at hand. Time and again, Gandhi attributed the lack of this and such values to the absence of proper education; and he also complained that the environment was too artificial to instill deeper values and to challenge students to work through difficult and trying situations without resorting to violence or harm of any sort. But the kind of training he had in mind would foster universal ethics, unfettered by the bureaucratic, mechanistic and fanatical tendencies that appeared to be characteristic of the more orthodox educational systems.

Gandhi perceived a direct link between the nonviolent order which he wished to see established in India and his scheme of Nai Talim or Basic Education. Even the spinning wheel had a place in the elementary curriculum (1937b). Manual activity and craftwork, such as spinning, while they fulfill certain vocational needs, also provide the ambience for the development of specific traits within the individuals (Pillai:136), which in turn is necessary for transmission of values. The values he considered fundamental pertain to mental self-reliance, material self-sufficiency, physical well-being, social concerns, regard for nature,

and fine arts, such as music (1937a:93). Gandhi gave prominence also to the questioning of experience, to the thirst to understand and know why one is doing such and such. And this enquiry, he insisted, must occur in the horizon of nonviolence (Spykes: 23). So Gandhi would reiterate, at a 1938 National Education Board meeting, that: `We shall have to concentrate on nonviolence. All our problems therefore have to be solved nonviolently. Our arithmetics, our science, our history will have a nonviolent approach and the problem in these subjects will be coloured by nonviolence' (1938a; 1950:145). In the same speech Gandhi proudly contrasted his unique `school of nonviolence experience' against the `school of violence' perpetrated by Hitler and Mussolini in Europe and claimed that his school and philosophy would outlast theirs (1937). History is perhaps a better witness to and judge of this claim.

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