

The Gandhian Way (CONTINUED)

by **ARTHUR KOESTLER**

1. Gandhiji could not have remained Prime Minister for any length of time without "compromising his own basic beliefs"—as he did on the Kashmir question, for instance.

2. If you include in "personal morals" sexual abstinence and Gandhiji's personal diet, the answer to your question is obviously yes.

3. Yes. Graspingness is a vice, but poverty is no virtue.

4. By paying lip-service to it.

5. Undoubtedly the philosophy of non-violence does exert a certain influence. Unfortunately this influence operates one-sidedly, that is, mainly in the free world.

by **THAKAZHI SIVASANKARA PILLAI**

1. Gandhiji would have been an utter failure as the Prime Minister of India. He could inspire and mobilise Indians for the struggle for freedom. I doubt that he could solve the problems of modern India. The life of this century will not pause to listen to the solitary voice of a wayside preacher. Knowing full well the Indian mind, Gandhiji evolved his own political beliefs to suit the national struggle. Independent India is different from India under foreign domination.

2. People will never acquire Gandhiji's keen sense of personal morals. I don't think it is too severe. Here and there you may find a few people with a religious bent of mind who are really earnest to acquire it. But the common people may not care to learn and practise it. His moral code is slowly acquiring the status of religious teaching and we find rituals taking shape around Gandhian principles of morals. The so-called adherents of Gandhian principles are mere observers of rituals. To observe rituals is one thing and to practise principles is another.

3. Gandhian social ethics do conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity, and happiness, according to Gandhiji's social ethics, is different from modern notions of progress and prosperity.

THE EDITOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How, in your opinion, would Gandhiji have fared as the Prime Minister of India, without compromising his own basic political beliefs?

2. Is the Mahatma's keen sense of personal morals too severe to be ever acquired by the people?

3. Does the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics, based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty, conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity?

4. How far do you think Independent India has upheld the teachings of Gandhiji?

5. What is the relevance of the philosophy of non-violence in the context of the nuclear threat?

4. Gandhiji's teachings were found useful during the national struggle. We were never able to get at the spirit of his teachings, though we followed his strategy of the struggle. Now we have conveniently shelved his teachings.

5. Non-violence could be explained well at an international forum where the various tactics needed to face the nuclear threat could be discussed with originality.

by **HAREKRUSHNA MAHTAB**

1. The question is so hypothetical that a straight answer cannot be given to it. First of all, prime ministership requires something in addition to one's own political beliefs, and that is administrative ability. If Gandhiji had ever cared to be the Prime Minister he would have had to give up his missionary work. So far as I knew Gandhiji, he was not constituted to be a Prime Minister, but assuming that he had been the Prime Minister, he would not have had any occasion to make any compromise on his basic political beliefs. If it had come to that, he would have resigned from office.

2. Many authors have written on the question whether a society can be moral in the circumstances where a man can be moral. There is a distinction between personal morality and social morality. While killing is immoral on the part of a person, it is not so in the case of a society when it enters into war with another society. Therefore our ancestors have prescribed a special moral code for society, as distinguished from that governing an individual. In the same manner Gandhiji, while insisting upon personal morality, used to set limitations to it in the case of its application to society. That was his greatness. He did not enunciate any new principles, but he showed the limitations of the ancient principles in their application to the day-to-day life of an individual and of a society. Gandhiji never suggested that the strict morality prescribed for the individual could be observed by society.

3. Gandhiji never set up any ethics of poverty. He was against poverty, but he used to insist upon identification with the poor and downtrodden. One of Gandhiji's main tasks was to remove poverty from society. But so long as the poverty is there, he used to insist that those who are better off should identify themselves with the poorer sections of society. Gandhiji definitely insisted upon non-possession, which means a renunciation of the acquisitive tendency and habit. The most modern notion of progress and prosperity is that there should be no acquisitive tendency in any member of society, so that there may be no scope for class conflict.

4. Unfortunately, soon after Independence India side-tracked the Gandhian way. Most of our current problems would not have arisen if India had stuck to the Gandhian way.

5. The philosophy of non-violence remains the same in the context of the nuclear threat as in the context of conventional weapons. In spite of the development of nuclear weapons, the world is moving more and more towards co-existence and the settlement of disputes by negotiation; and these are products of the philosophy of non-violence in the international field.

by **M. R. MASANI**

1. There are certain characters too big and rugged to fit into the position of the head of a Cabinet responsible to Parliament. Gandhiji was one of them. He held certain basic political beliefs that might have come in the way of his functioning as chief executive in a parliamentary democracy. That being so, his record as Prime Minister of India might have been a somewhat mixed one.

2. Gandhiji undoubtedly had a very severe standard of ethics to be observed by himself and those intimately connected with him. In so far as others, however, were concerned, he was amazingly liberal and accommodating. He rarely imposed his own standard of morals on those who did not share it with him.

3. In certain ways, Gandhiji's concept of social ethics does seem to be at variance with that of a constantly rising material standard of life. Yet, in some ways, he was ahead of his time. An example of this is to be found in his theory of Trusteeship, his belief that those who work a factory or machine are its real owners, and his constant insistence that "that government is best which governs the least". These are fundamental truths that are likely to thrive for a long, long time to come.

4. Not at all. Those who claim to be Gandhiji's chosen disciples have, with rare exceptions like Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, done everything to ignore Gandhiji's teachings. It is not without justice that that perceptive writer, V. S. Naipaul, has, in his record of a recent visit to India entitled *An Area of Darkness*, made the caustic comment that the fact that Gandhiji's writings are still immediately relevant to India, like an up-to-date guide book, is the measure of the failure of India since his death to accept his message. "It is as if, in England, Florence Nightingale had become a saint, honoured by statues everywhere, her name on every lip; and the hospitals had remained as she had described them," acidly observes Mr. Naipaul.

5. The philosophy of non-violence is as relevant or irrelevant in the context of the bow and arrow as of the nuclear bomb. Gandhiji's concept of non-violence was not that of a total or absolute pacifist. Thus, he justified as non-violent in spirit the heroic armed resistance put up by Poland in 1939 to Hitler's hordes on the one side and those of Stalin on the other.

by **G. L. MEHTA**

1. This is not only a hypothetical question but one that is also in the realm of improbability. Gandhiji would never have agreed to be a Prime Minister. He was neither interested in power politics—and all politics are ultimately equations of power—nor in the mechanics of politics. He ran efficiently organisations he was interested in such as for khadi, village industries, Harijan uplift. But he left almost entirely the running of the Indian National Congress to those whom he trusted—principally to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. It is also necessary in this context to define what Gandhiji's basic political beliefs were: at times they verged on what might be called philosophical anarchism, for instance "that government is best which governs the least"; though he would not have presumably opposed the concept of a welfare state provided it did not stifle individual freedom and initiative. But men such as Gandhiji are concerned with the deeper things of life, with the spirit of man, with the meaning and values of life—not with administration and laws.

2. The answer is yes and no. Some of Gandhiji's principles—personal rectitude, integrity, a spirit of service, tolerance, compassion—are ethical, and unless men and women sincerely endeavour to practise them, no decent social order is possible. But it is pertinent to mention in this connection that Gandhiji was always keenly conscious of himself falling below his own standards. Some of his fasts were in the nature of penance for his own shortcomings, or atonement for his inability to influence people whom he loved and who did not follow his exhortations for maintenance of non-violence or communal harmony. It is evident, therefore, that even during his lifetime some of his elementary precepts (if they can be so described) were not observed—not merely by the mass of the people but even by those who called themselves his followers.

It should be added that some of Gandhiji's principles—vows of poverty, continence, abstinence—were not and are not easy to practise by the mass of people. Hypocrisy is the tribute that imperfect men pay to austere morality. And where too severe a demand is made on human nature—and for long—the

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Gandhiji should, within the shortest possible time, disregard his teachings and his moral ideas.

5. The need for non-violence today is more intense than at any time in the past. In the past the consequences of violence, though vast, could yet be measured; though terrible they could yet be circumscribed. But the use of nuclear energy is more terrible in both the immediate and the ultimate consequences. If nuclear weapons are used, there will be virtually the end of the present world, and the world that may succeed will be crippled, mutilated and a helpless victim of circumstances. Man veritably is the maker and destroyer of his destiny. Non-violence, therefore, is the way to life and violence is the way to death. It is obvious that humanity is interested in living and, therefore, must accept the philosophy of non-violence in an active way.

by JAINENDRA KUMAR



WORLD PACIFISTS' CONFERENCE AT SEVAGRAM

1. The question is idle. Gandhi would never have suffered to be Prime Minister. The job would have taken him away from Man and wed him to Country. He was too sincere and too practical to sacrifice the concrete for the abstract.

He could, however, have been an equally dependable counsellor to the Prime Ministers of two mutually warring countries!

Such a person can be more useful to the politics of the day than any Prime Minister can.

2. Nothing is restricted to the person. The moral sense is ingrained in every heart. The Mahatma's appeal for the people lay in the moral challenge that his personality constituted for them. This evoked sacrifice and drew out the best in them. The moral urge is contagious; it sets off a chain-reaction and can inspire mass action.

3. Non-possession and self-embraced poverty are the inevitable fruits of inner fulfilment. As impositions they are no good. The notions of progress and prosperity become obtuse by the qualification of the word "modern". Real progress and prosperity cannot but rise above the lust for possessions.

4. In profession only. In action not at all.

5. The nuclear threat invalidates the methods of violence on an international plane. Non-violent resistant action is the only alternative left to nations and humanity.

Mankind, equipped with its scientific achievements, is about to take wings. Possessions can only hamper man's mobility and speed.

by UMASHANKAR JOSHI

1. Prime Minister or no Prime Minister, a Gandhi is always to be looked for in the thick of the battle.

On August 15, 1947, Gandhiji found the essence of independence somehow missing and was called upon to dedicate his life to struggling for it. He had said, as early as 1921, "I am individually working for the self-rule pictured therein (in Hind Swaraj). But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary Swaraj, in accordance with the wishes of the people of India." As an individual, he was enjoying *swa-raj*, self-rule, even during the days of British rule; but even though at long last his corporate activity resulted in attaining Parliamentary Swaraj, he was not under any illusions. He realised that non-violence was resorted to by the people as well as by most of his associates mainly as a technique of political pressure.

Had he lived longer and found conditions in India unbearable, certainly he would not have remained a mere witness. However, one would have liked to think of him not as a satyagrahi fighting against "independent"

India, but rather as the practical politician that he always was, shouldering the responsibilities of Prime Ministership.

Gandhiji had a great capacity for compromise and he attached little importance to being rigidly consistent. I do not think he would have had to compromise his basic political beliefs as a Prime Minister. I do not think even Jawaharlalji had to do so. The limitation of the latter was that he could not draw the very best out of everybody and put it to general use, which Gandhiji could in an enormous measure. This would have stood him in good stead had he been forced by circumstances to become Prime Minister.

2. Yes, it is too severe to be acquired by the whole people at a given time. But the possibilities shown by such a man do work as a hope for and a challenge to other men and women through the ages. One good thing about Gandhiji is that there are no miracles about him. The miracle of miracles that Gandhiji's life emphasises is that any manikin can flower into a mahatma, if with unswerving faith and indefatigable will he experiments with truth and non-violence.

3. Technology has not been able to eradicate pauperism from vast areas of our planet. State ownership of means of production has ended up in a kind of exploitation and rule of fear.

It is true that technology has come to stay. The question is: Will it allow its inventor, man, also to stay, to co-exist? If the answer is to be yes, then man will have to evolve through some sort of spiritual self-discipline a technique of becoming the master and not the victim of technology.

Not the pursuit of the mad urge to go on ever raising the standard of living, but the willingness to get an optimum standard for each member of humanity and the readiness to use no more than is necessary for realising one's personality and efficiently serving one's fellow beings (i.e., poverty), and the holding of the surplus as a trust (i.e., non-possession) seems to be the only way to live at peace with the machine.

So, even though, the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty seems to be in conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity, it points in the direction of the only possible way by which the present-day technological civilisation can survive.

4. Independent India has upheld the teachings of Gandhiji mainly in two spheres: (1) Women have continued to play an important and vital role in the social and political field. (2) In international matters, Independent India has contributed considerably towards the lessening of the tensions of the cold war, even at the cost of being misunderstood by her

friends and being treacherously attacked by one of her neighbours.

5. If any philosophy has a relevance in the present context of the nuclear threat, it is that of non-violence. The present-day balance of fear saps the energy of mankind. If ever that fear is dissipated, it will be due to the presence of persons and communities who have the courage to live in accordance with the principle of love, in other words who are prepared to live up to the philosophy of non-violence—for non-violence means fearlessness born of self-sacrifice. This may require a heavy toll of human lives, though not as heavy as would be taken by a war between two nuclear powers. The only escape from the dilemma of having to choose between a nuclear war and the balance of fear seems to be through non-violence.

by K. S. KARANTH

1. Gandhiji was a practical man. His stature would have commanded the mute allegiance of his Cabinet, for very few would have said no to him, even if they felt otherwise. As a cautious person, who always carried the burden of the masses, in the real sense of the term, he would never have landed the country in the present economic, so-called socialistic mess. His administration would have been better, but not spectacular at all.

2. Yes, his sense of personal morals was really very high. People feared him, because he lived the way he preached. This would have toned up people's morals to a great extent.

3. Modern notions of progress and prosperity are solely concerned with the material well-being of the people. Gandhiji's social ethics were concerned with spiritual well-being. But I never felt that he wanted the people of India to be poor or remain poor, nor did he hate the rich because they happened to be so.

4. Independent India, has not seriously bothered to uphold his teachings. People have just worshipped him and forgotten him. Those who quote him most are today using his words as a cloak.

5. Non-violence has no relevance to atomic warfare, or even to the use of conventional weapons. The very existence of governments is maintained by a coercive machinery. Statesmen who talk of non-violence in international defence or offence just do not know what they are talking about and what their responsibilities are.

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by A. A. A. FYZEE

1. Personally, I do not believe that Gandhiji could have been a successful Prime Minister of this country after Independence, without compromising his essential principles.

How, for instance, could he agree to (a) a Defence Force equipped with modern arms; or (b) a secret intelligence service; or (c) the rapid industrialisation of the country?

2. Yes—and no.

Yes, because in the case of the great moral teachers of the world, we must assume that few can ever come up to their ideals. The Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad—and even Plato—seem, in the totality of their precepts, to be beyond the reach of the common run of humanity. A test, which I consider the true historical test, is: How far have the adherents of a religious ideal been able to understand and

follow the teachings of their faith? Judged by this standard, practically all the world religions have failed, for only a minority have been true to their faith. But it may justly be said that the majority have at least accepted the ideal and tried to live up to it to some extent.

3. In my opinion, they do. But it is possible to argue that there is an outward rule and an inward norm in each of his principles. This I believe to be true. The inward norm can be followed with considerable success, without fully coming up to the absolute rule.

For instance, Gandhiji said that truth and non-violence constitute the highest religion. Now, even if we cannot achieve absolute non-violence or complete truth, the conscious effort on the part of a nation to follow the path of truth and non-violence, as far as possible, is a noble purpose. The principle of self-sacrifice, for instance, is absolutely true, if it is followed in the right context.

4. Independent India has largely failed to uphold the teaching of Gandhi. The worst feature of our national life is to justify our actions and take the name of Gandhi for our own selfish purposes and for outward show.

5. Non-violence cannot be followed by a modern state in the twentieth century. We can only accept it as an ideal. The ideal is to avoid violence as far as possible, to accept the principles of joint consultation and international arbitration, and, above all, to stop loud and insincere talk.

This would be in consonance with the teaching of Gandhi.

by GANGADHAR GADGIL

1. Gandhiji was in a sense a political anarchist and he was basically opposed to the use of violence as a means of national defence and of maintenance of law and order. Gandhiji had an extraordinary genius for bringing the apparently impossible into the realm of social reality. Yet even as a leader of our movement for independence he had to make many compromises. That he did not like these compromises is clear from the fact that in later years he ceased to be even a four-anna member of the Congress Party. It seems to me inevitable therefore that he could not have functioned as a Prime Minister without doing serious violence either to his political beliefs or to our political stability.

by N. V. GADGIL

1. Gandhiji would have found it extremely difficult to implement all his ideals into actual experience and either he would have resigned and given up the job or he would have compromised, as he well knew that the life-blood of politics is compromise. In fact, in his speech before the Second Round Table Conference, in 1931, he pleaded that he was quite satisfied with the substance of independence. But he would not have compromised on basic principles, although he knew that politics means what is possible, how and when.

2. I do not think that Mahatma's moral standard of personal conduct was too high to be realised. Any person who is honestly keen on attaining that high standard can certainly do it. This of course relates to personal conduct and has no reference to whatever he does in a wider context, where the ultimate interest of the community often requires some slight compromise for the time being.

3. Gandhiji's philosophy of non-possession and poverty does to some extent conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity. I do not think that Gandhiji was for absolute poverty; what he was for was that whatever was produced by the community and whatever was distributed in the community should reach the last man in a fair measure and in a fair way. It is true that he stood for simplicity, but simplicity is not against abundance or against a high standard of life. Simplicity, as I understand it, is a virtue of the mind and it relates to one's ideas about life and conduct and is to be understood in a relative way.

4. Independent India has for all practical purposes repudiated Gandhiji much sooner than Peter repudiated Christ three times before the cock crew. All over India today there is a complete lack of moral character both among the rulers and the ruled. It is a sad commentary that a country which produced



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The use of force to quieten an angry, unruly or violent crowd, or to defend our frontiers, is violence, even if it is considered unavoidable in the interests of human society as a whole. Gandhiji would not have consented to do this himself, even though he approved of it as the lesser evil when the Government of India sent troops to Kashmir for its defence against Pakistani aggression. He himself could not be a party to it. It was for this reason that he differed from the Working Committee in 1940 when the latter agreed to join the Allies in the last War if freedom was given to India. Gandhiji had, therefore, decided not to hold any office in the Government. Saints do not assume political power, though they check social and economic ills and guide the destiny of the country they live in through their moral influence with Governments and the people.

In my view, therefore, Gandhiji would not have agreed to be the Prime Minister of India. If, however, he had agreed to compromise his belief in non-violence and become the Prime Minister, he would have become an ideal Prime Minister of India, because no one knew India, the Indian people and their problems with their remedies better than he. He understood the mind of the Indian people, who had infinite trust in his leadership. Gandhiji could mobilise the masses to action, which is absolutely essential for speedy national reconstruction. His appeal was to the heart and he spoke the language of the masses. The remedies he would have suggested for the cure of our social, economic, political and moral ills, though revolutionary, would have been simple and suited to the genius of the land.

Many of the intellectuals in this country too followed him—even if they sometimes differed from him over some issues—because they knew that Gandhiji's understanding of India and her problems was superior to theirs. Gandhiji's magnanimity was so great that he won over many opponents and pacified the enemies of the cause he espoused. He himself had no personal enemies.

2. Gandhiji's keen sense of personal morals was severe for the common people. Every human being has the potentiality to rise to the highest spiritual level, provided he is determined to make the necessary effort. The capacity of the Soul in man is the same in every individual. Gandhiji himself started life as an ordinary child, but his faith in God and Truth and his strength of will took him to greater heights step by step. If a person pursues his quest with the determination of Gandhiji, he can certainly attain his moral stature. Gandhiji, however, did not expect the ordinary human being to possess the same keen sense of morality that he had and he had infinite patience and tolerance in his attitude to others. He thus lifted everybody to a higher level by his contact. He however expected the

leaders of society in every sphere to make the fullest effort to acquire the keenest sense of personal morals, if they wanted really to serve the people, so as to bring happiness to them.

I believe individuals can acquire the moral sense and stature of Gandhiji, though groups and societies cannot do so in the same measure. Theoretically, it is not impossible for all men to acquire Gandhiji's moral stature, but in reality only a few individuals can succeed in this.

3. It would appear superficially that there is conflict between Gandhiji's social ethics of *aparigraha* (non-possession) and poverty, on the one hand, and modern notions of prosperity and progress, on the other. Gandhiji believed that *aparigraha* and voluntary poverty were essential for the moral growth of man if he wanted to rise to the highest level of human development. He believed that man can become happy and contented by living a simple and moral life. His simplicity, however, did not mean poverty. He wanted that everyone should have all the nourishing food that he requires to maintain a healthy body, proper clothing, housing and adequate education for his children. He wanted equal opportunity and equal status for every human being.

Sketches by Feliks Topolski

The ideal of Sarvodaya can be achieved only when individuals live not for themselves but for society and do not spend on themselves more than is necessary, while earning as much as they are capable of doing without exploiting anybody else or the weaker section, and using their surplus wealth for the good of society. This is what he meant by the ideal of Sarvodaya, so far as I am able to understand it. He however knew that this ideal cannot be reached soon, or even in the near future, but he wanted that human society should evolve in such a manner as to make the reaching of this ideal possible. He therefore laid stress on evolution and change in society by non-violent means, and not by force. Democracy comes nearest to the use of non-violent means for the evolution of society. Gandhiji did not want everybody to take the vow of non-possession. He wanted the leaders of society to do so in order that the masses might be served by them in the best possible way, and that they might also follow them, in so far as that is possible and lies within their capacity.

He did not oppose modern machines and industrialisation, as such, and did not want to revert to the simplicity of the past, when no

machines had been discovered. He knew that that was not a feasible proposition. He only wanted that machines should not mechanise the human mind and should not involve the exploitation of human beings. I therefore am of the opinion that the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics did not conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity. It however did conflict with the notions of some intellectuals who do not lay as much stress on the spiritual evolution of man as on his material advancement. Gandhiji wanted the spiritual qualities of man to be developed along with the development of material life. If stress is laid only on material development and enjoyment, man will lose the finer qualities that he is endowed with and will go to his doom, for in the absence of a spiritual foundation material possessions will lead to the temptations of luxury and carnal enjoyments and will destroy him as also the whole civilisation based on such notions. This is what has happened in the past with many civilisations.

4. While one may say that Independent India has not upheld all the teachings of Gandhiji, it will be wrong to say that these teachings have been discarded altogether since his demise. Gandhiji's ideal of freedom and democracy and self-rule have been adopted in our concepts of democracy and democratic decentralisation through Panchayati Raj. We are also making an earnest effort to give equality of opportunity and human status to all through our concept of Socialism, thus preparing human society to work for the Sarvodaya ideal. In international relations, we have implemented Gandhiji's principles of non-violence by adopting non-alignment in our foreign policy and by our determination to resolve international disputes by peaceful means and negotiations. This would not, however, mean that if we fail to persuade China to vacate her aggression against India, we should remain content with their present possession and not expel them by force of arms from our territory. This only shows the limitations within which the Gandhian way can be followed by us. While there is no limit to an individual's evolution to the highest morality, there is a limit beyond which the morality of a society cannot develop. The moral behaviour of an individual can reach perfection, while that of a whole society will remain imperfect.

We have not only been unable to imbibe the spirit of Gandhian simplicity in our life, so far as the Government and individuals in the Government are concerned, but also this ideal of human character has been neglected in our zeal for achieving economic prosperity quickly. We have been losing sight of our moral foundations. This certainly is a departure from the Gandhian philosophy and way of life. While the Government has been supporting khadi and village industries, Gandhiji's stress on enforcing Prohibition, adopting Basic Education and employing Hindi as the common language of India has been neglected. These are essential ingredients of the Gandhian way of life. The influence of Gandhiji on this country has been so deep and fundamental that it will go on influencing us more and more as we become stronger and shed fear from our individual lives. The country has acknowledged him unanimously and voluntarily as the Father of the Nation and will not cease to be influenced by him as time progresses.

5. The philosophy of non-violence has greater relevance today than ever before, in the context of the nuclear threat. The philosophy of non-violence means that no disputes or quarrels should be resolved by violence and that they should be resolved by peaceful negotiations and agreements. The nuclear threat today is such that it is frightening every nation and is forcing all the peoples of the world to believe in peace and disarmament, for the sake of human survival and progress. The nuclear threat can be avoided only if the major nations who have powerful armies and nuclear weapons agree not to go to war and to resolve their disputes only by peaceful negotiations. Peace is desired today not because of the love of it or belief in non-violence, but because people are terrified of the consequences of nuclear war. Even so, the desire for peace, whatever the motive for it, is itself enough to induce people to come to peaceful agreements. If this happens, the translation of fear into a courageous belief in peace will take place. There is no solution for the present-day fear of the world except the non-violent one.

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The Gandhian Way: Replies To The Editor's Questionnaire

by **GEORGE BARKER**

1. I rather suspect that if Mahatma Gandhi had not "compromised on his own basic political beliefs" he might have survived as a Mahatma but not as a Prime Minister.

2. It seems unlikely to me that there could ever be five hundred million Gandhijis.

3. The question in fact asks if "poverty" conflicts with "prosperity": it therefore answers itself.

4. More than one had thought likely and less than one had hoped.

5. The philosophy of non-violence has about as much "relevance" in the light of the nuclear threat as the toeless sloth demanding that all other animals in the circus should start loving one another.

by **HEM BARUA**

1. Unless he be a dictator or a bureaucrat of the deepest dye, no administrator, much less the Prime Minister of a country with democracy as its goal, can ever afford to be a steel-frame man. We must not forget that Gandhiji was a "practical idealist", capable of exact responses to situations that confronted him or the country. To quote him: "I deny being a visionary. I am of the earth, earthy. I have lived in the world with my eyes open." True it is that Gandhiji had a vision of his own, call it a basic philosophy if you like, but where is the patriot living for his country who does not have one?

There are people who say that Gandhiji's philosophy, basic or otherwise, would have paralysed action in the man if he were our Prime Minister. Let me here tell the story of a donkey who read Greek philosophy and was so much saturated in it that philosophy made him inert. Once he happened to find himself on the apex of an isosceles triangle, whence he spied twin tufts of grass at the two angles of the base. He was hungry and wanted to come

down for the grass. But he became so confused as to which side of the triangle offered the quickest route that he could not come to a decision and ultimately starved to death on his apex.

Do you think that Gandhiji as our Prime Minister would have conducted the nation's affairs in the way that the philosopher-donkey conducted his? A man like Gandhiji, who had gone through the "most fiery ordeals that have fallen to the lot of man", would never have allowed philosophy to paralyse action. Nobody has ever accused him of being a Hamlet, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought".

I was astounded to read the following statement of Gandhiji's made on Sept. 26, 1947, at a prayer meeting in Delhi: "If Pakistan persistently refuses to see its proved error and continues to minimise it, the Indian Government will have to go to war against it." This language of war may sound out of character in Gandhiji's mouth, but then, should we forget that his philosophy of non-violence was never circumscribed by any steel-frame rigidity!

Again, there are people who say that had Gandhiji been our Prime Minister, there would have been no industrial progress and India would have reverted back to the "mud age". The fallacy of such a position can be proved by what Gandhiji himself has said about machinery: "What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. I want to save time and labour not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philosophy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might."

Here there is the plea both for socialism and a rational use of machinery and for industrial progress. I do not find anything, either in the man or his philosophy, that would have deterred Gandhiji from functioning effectively as India's Prime Minister.

2. Gandhiji did not formulate anything new about personal morals, beyond what is already available in India's culture and religion. What Gandhiji did was to give a renewed emphasis to what is basic in our culture.

Whatever that be, moral virtues such as truth, non-violence, non-stealing, sexual discipline—faith in which, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, is faith in God—have failed to evoke any collective social response in the country. Implementation of these basic virtues *en masse* is not possible of achievement. Gandhiji understood these limitations and that was why his emphasis was primarily on the individual. This is what he once said: "I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent."

3. Gandhiji's social ethics, based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty, conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity only apparently. Gandhiji believed in economic progress, and what appalled him most was the country's phenomenal poverty. This is what he said once: "India is Britain's dependency and Britain must drain her dependency dry." For a nation thus dispossessed by alien rulers to be seized of a restless spirit to move forward and advance economically is natural, and Gandhiji, instead of disapproving of this idea, would have blessed it with all his mind and heart.

Gandhiji knew that an individual here or an individual there may have the drive to "non-possess", but that for an entire nation to be inspired by such a discipline is not possible. Speaking about a song-bird, Gandhiji once said that what it really needed was "invigorating food" so as to sing. That illustrates Gandhiji's attitude to the problem of poverty.

To think that he wanted to make us a nation of Hardwar sannyasins is not correct.

4. By reducing Gandhiji to a slogan, the magic of which has much diminished by dull repetition, free India has now joined the company of Nathuram Godse. When we were engaged in the fight for freedom, Gandhiji gave the nation a basic idealism and raised politics to an ethical plane. That is how he could say: "Politics is a noble art which every citizen should cultivate." Can we say so of politics today? Have we not completely debased it?

As early as 1947, Gandhiji could visualise the shape of things to come in free India, when he said: "My fear is that the freedom we have won we shall not know how to preserve." Even so, I have grave doubts if Gandhiji could foresee that the citadel of free India which he tried to build up so meticulously would one day become a mansion for blackmarketeers, profiteers and corrupt politicians. It is unfortunate, but true, that India has in the most vulgar way consigned Gandhiji to the dustbin of history.

5. If you go deeply into the problem, the choice between non-violence and the nuclear threat is a grim alternative between total preservation and total annihilation, between civilisation and barbarism. Judging from the currents of political thought in advanced nuclear States at present, my own conclusion is: the more affluent a society is, the more cautious it becomes in the use of nuclear weapons.

Whatever that may be, in the context of the massive destruction made possible by nuclear devices, non-violence has a relevance, provided it can emerge as a world philosophy. What alternative is there, in fact, to deter mass-annihilation by nuclear weapons except the mobilisation of man's conscience for self-preservation and peace?

Non-violence appears anachronistic in the context of the developing nuclear threat, but still, basically, non-violence is the only international sanction that can be expected to preserve world peace and make our planet safe for the human race and all its precious possessions.

by **MORARJI DESAI**

THE EDITOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How, in your opinion, would Gandhiji have fared as the Prime Minister of India, without compromising his own basic political beliefs?

2. Is the Mahatma's keen sense of personal morals too severe to be ever acquired by the people?

3. Does the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics, based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty, conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity?

4. How far do you think Independent India has upheld the teachings of Gandhiji?

5. What is the relevance of the philosophy of non-violence in the context of the nuclear threat?

1. It is very difficult to define the political beliefs of Mahatma Gandhi, because he never divided his life into political or other compartments. He believed in the democratic way of life politically and in developing a Sarvodaya society. To him Life was one single entity and it was governed by fundamental values of Truth and Non-violence. Activity in all spheres of life was governed by these basic values, about which he would never have compromised.

He could never have compromised as regards the use of non-violent means in all actions. No democratic government would like to order the firing on a crowd or on individuals, but it has to do so on occasion in the larger interests of human society, when crowds or individuals become violent and destroy or threaten to destroy human life and property. Human beings as they are are not perfect and sometimes lose their senses in emotional heat or excitement. They have to be brought round by the use of force when other persuasive methods fail. Those who implement laws have also their limitations and are not able to control angry crowds by moral force. When there is an invasion from outside and our territorial integrity is in danger, we have to send our troops in self-defence. We have to maintain an army for such an eventuality, so long as all the nations of the world have not developed the requisite faith in non-violent methods and peace.

Beauty Treatment

(by D. I. CHANTHAMIAN)



January 31, 1965



AT A SIVA-KALI TEMPLE, VARANASI.

his host, and I know that extending hospitality to him—and the large party with which he invariably travelled—was a fairly expensive business. A poor man, for instance, could not possibly afford to have three seers of goat's milk and out-of-season fruits from day to day. Persons who are supposed to be rich do not really spend all the money on themselves. They are rich because they have a large amount of money at their disposal to spend, and also have a large retinue about them which they maintain. Mahatma Gandhi too had plenty of money at his disposal and also a large number of persons who were always about him. Even apart from his tours, office establishment, hospitality, etc., they cost a lot of money, whoever may have found it for him. The so-called rich man may be such because he works hard to gather his wealth. Mahatma Gandhi may have been afforded all the resources he needed, by others. Personally, doubtless, he lived a very simple life—which was not necessarily inexpensive.

I know myself how very careful he was about the absolute cleanliness of even the scanty garments that he wore. I remember, for instance, that one day during the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations of 1931, he took his meal after having with meticulous care put on his dhoti and wrapper to go to the Viceroy's House. A very tiny drop of some liquid that he was taking fell on a part of his garment. A microscope would have been required to see the spot. Still, Gandhi was so self-conscious that he changed the wrapper before he went out. Even a rich man could not have been more fastidious. I however do not think that his ideas of non-possession and poverty, such as they were, would conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity. National progress and national prosperity do not depend on a few men in a country being very rich. If Gandhi's ideals were followed and propertied persons held their wealth in trust, as he wanted and as he himself did, we could have all the progress and all the prosperity that we want.

Simple living and poverty are very different things. Our own ancient ideal, which Gandhi seems to have unconsciously followed, was that the personal life of an individual should be simple, however learned or powerful or wealthy he might be. This prevents one from being the subject of jealousy on the part of others; and it is this demon that has to be avoided, and is the cause of all the trouble in the world. If only we took to the ideal of a simple life for everybody, whatever his position may be, then we would have all the progress and prosperity that we desire without the class conflicts and clashes that we witness today. It is ostentation—the desire to show oneself off as superior to others—that is the cause of mischief, not an individual's being rich in knowledge or power or wealth—the three great incentives to

ambition, which different persons follow according to their differing tastes and temperaments, and which, if paraded, arouse envy and bitterness in others.

4. Independent India has not upheld the teachings of Gandhiji in anything. Our leaders all invoke the name of Gandhiji and ask only others to follow Gandhiji's teachings, while they do not think that they have any need to do the same themselves. The worst feature of modern India is that those who have been nearest to Gandhiji or are constantly referring to him have taken to ostentation and very high living, maybe without realising what they are doing. In practical administration, many things have to be done which would invariably go counter to the teachings of Gandhiji. For instance, a murderer has to be hanged; and the President or the Prime Minister cannot go on an indefinite fast for every murder that takes place—and there are thirty to sixty in every district in the land every year. So many of the teachings of Gandhiji cannot be implemented by those in charge of the country's governance; but what they can do and do not do is to avoid ostentation, and try to live as they preach that others should. This means simplicity—and not necessarily poverty or even excessive economy.

5. In this very practical world, the practical needs of life cannot be neglected. In some situations in private life, violence may be successfully met by non-violence; but in the matter of threats of foreign invasion, a country has to be prepared to meet such threats as best it can, by every means, violent or otherwise, at its command. Still, so far as the actual conditions of our country are concerned, I have very grave doubts if we with our very limited resources can ever be militarily prepared to meet foreign attacks from powerful nations successfully. We have therefore to avoid all threats and pompous talk ourselves.

It is just impossible for every nation in the world today—so many of them being small and weak—to think of being able to meet violent foreign aggression with its own military strength. The security of the nations lies in careful diplomacy and in being able to prove, as Switzerland and Sweden, for instance, are able to do, that their being left in safety to enjoy their independence is good not only for themselves but for the world as well. I think we too can do the same; and to that extent the philosophy of non-violence is relevant in the context of the nuclear threat.

Let us not forget that if four hundred and forty million people like ourselves were really imbued with the genuine sense of patriotism which we so woefully lack, and were accordingly prepared to give our all for the safety and liberty of our land, no one would dare to lift his covetous eyes on us. We should be for ever safe and free, and would truly implement our philosophy of non-violence. We should then only need—as in any case we shall—a very strong, widespread police force for internal security and to keep anti-social elements in check.

by ARNOLD TOYNBEE

Politics being what they are (i.e. being the slum area of social life), I suppose Mahatma Gandhi would have had to compromise with his own basic beliefs to some extent if he had undertaken to be Prime Minister, but I am sure he would have compromised less than most people. He would have done at least as well as Asoka did after Asoka had repented of his war against Kalinga.

2. The saints' high standards are contagious. Their example helps a few people to rise nearly to their level, and helps many people to rise by at least a few degrees.

3. Mahatma Gandhi's social ethics are in line with the past spiritual experience of the human race at all times and places, and for this reason I believe that they are "the wave of the future". Though more material prosperity is needed today by the depressed three-quarters of mankind, a modicum of material prosperity is merely an enabling condition for spiritual progress. Material progress as an end in itself is already proving unsatisfying for the minority that has attained it.

4. Independent India has, I should judge, behaved too much like other independent national states and I believe Mahatma Gandhi would have found some mutually acceptable settlement for the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. I believe that he, too, would have brought an end to Portuguese rule in Goa, but I think he would have managed to deal with this in the way in which he dealt with British rule in the rest of India. I think he would also have made it difficult for China to come to blows with India.

5. The philosophy of non-violence is going to be mankind's only alternative to self-destruction in the Nuclear Age (which is going to be with us, from now onwards, as long as we continue to exist).

by BADR-UD-DIN TYABJI

1. Gandhiji would have fared well as Prime Minister of India. He had an uncanny gift of spotting talent and character, the prime quality required in a person occupying this high office. There would have been no question of his compromising his own political beliefs. He would have died—as in fact he did—rather than compromise them; therefore, he would certainly not have compromised them as Prime Minister. I believe that had he become Prime Minister of India immediately after Independence, he might have surmounted the greatest single impediment to our moral and material progress which has bedevilled the sub-continent, namely the relations between India and Pakistan. I am sure that his political and economic philosophy would have developed along with the development of the country on the lines set out broadly in his moral concept of society. I see no reason for believing that his philosophy would not have kept pace with the social and economic needs of the Indian people. His was an essentially pragmatic mind, which, though adamant on questions involving moral principles and standards of personal behaviour, was amazingly elastic in interpreting their application to the needs of the particular national issues confronting him.

2. The Mahatma's standards of personal morals are obviously too high for rigid application to ordinary people; but as an ideal they are no more severe or unattainable than those prescribed by most religions. The main point about them was that they were applied to and practised by him himself; and that was the reason for their widespread appeal to his contemporaries, and to the Indian people generally. It was the direct inspiration from a teacher who practised what he preached.

3. I do not think that the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics "based on the fundamentals of non-possession or poverty" (which I myself would define as non-attachment) conflicts with modern notions of progress and prosperity. I do not really think that there is anything "modern" about the notion of progress and prosperity. It is a basic human desire. Man has tried to progress and prosper since the beginning of time, sometimes with less success and sometimes perhaps with too much. Neither are Gandhiji's non-attachment ethics intrinsically new. They have been preached by great religious leaders throughout history. He is a modern Prophet because he was born in our times; and his impact on us was great, because we saw him living and practising his philosophy in our own midst.

4. Independent India has upheld the teachings of Gandhiji to a great extent, particularly in her foreign policy. Internally, the success has not been so great, because the main problem of the sub-continent, namely the relations between its three lacerated, amputated parts, has so far not been soved; and the methods for solving it as advocated by Gandhiji have proved too difficult for his successors to pursue consistently.

5. The philosophy of non-violence is not affected by the development of nuclear arms. Nuclear arms are only another method for annihilating human values. In essence they are no more and no less ethical—only more effective—than any other method of extinguishing such values. Therefore, non-violence is as relevant to them as it is to any other threat of violence against them.

The Gandhian Way (CONTINUED)

by BERTRAND RUSSELL

1. It is difficult to predict how Gandhi would have fared as Prime Minister of India. His views on local village development would have made rapid industrial progress difficult. I think he would have solved the conflict with Pakistan amicably, avoided the dispute about boundaries with China, and granted to the Nagas their rightful demands for independence.

2. I do not approve of Gandhi's views on sex, which I think superstitious and harmful. The association of sex with sin is responsible for much suffering in the world.

3. There is a conflict between Gandhi's views on the virtue of poverty and the necessity to improve the standard of living of India's masses. I doubt, however, that Gandhi wished to impose his views regarding the non-possession of goods on people. Opposition to avarice can be beneficial, but India's main problems are not those of avarice and greed on the part of many; on the contrary, the main problem for India is the greed of the few and the mass misery.

4. Independent India has treated Gandhi as a saint and ignored all of his teachings. Gandhi's emphasis on hygiene has not been continued. His opposition to resort to force has been abandoned with regard to Goa, Nagaland, Pakistan and China.

5. The relevance of non-violence to the danger of nuclear war is that in the age of technological advance the use of national force is no longer a tolerable means of pursuing any national aim. Non-violence is essential to the world if it is to survive. I do not feel that non-violence is possible in every situation but I do think that the arms race between the great powers teaches us that only non-violent methods of solving differences will permit the survival of mankind.

by Dr. SAMPURNANAND

1. It is difficult to answer this question. We know after all that Gandhiji had a very resilient mind, and his advice that even violent resistance is preferable to cowardice is well known. He might have disclosed in his conduct of business an adaptability of which few people would probably have thought him capable. My own feeling, however, is that Gandhiji would have been to some extent a misfit as Prime Minister. His natural role was that of a teacher, but it is certain that if he had had an active hand in shaping the country's policies, many things would have not been as we have them today. Our Constitution offers a glaring example of this. Instead of being the scissors-and-paste business that it is, it would have been an organic entity based on a definite philosophy of life.

2. Yes and no. The Mahatma's sense of personal morality was no more and no less severe than what one would associate with the names of other great teachers, the Buddha and the Christ, for example. Such men place before humanity an ideal, and the very effort to achieve that ideal ennobles and purifies.

3. Yes, although I would not say that Gandhi's social ethics are "based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty". In my opinion, "non-acquisition" would be a better expression. The values for which Gandhiji stood are expressed by the words *asteya* and *aparigraha*, which are as old as Hindu philosophy and emphasised by the Buddha as well. In the old scale of values, *artha* (wealth, pos-

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session of wealth) comes far below *dharma*. Progress, as understood in India, stood not for economic prosperity but for moral and spiritual worth, and a man was valued not for what he had amassed but for what he had given up.

4. No attempt, in my opinion, has been made even to propagate the teachings of Gandhiji, much less to uphold those teachings. We have reduced his teachings to a set of religious aphorisms, to be recited as something too sacred for an effort to be made to translate them into action.

5. The nuclear threat is not so much a threat in itself as a symbol of a philosophy of life that threatens to engulf mankind. This philosophy is based upon the notion that ambition, the capacity to acquire possessions, the will and the ability to beat down one's competitors, are signs of strong and desirable traits of character both in the individual and the group. People may not express their ideas in these forthright and crude terms, but the notion is there all the same. So long as that notion persists, the nuclear threat or some-



SCENE AT VARANASI

thing even more dangerous will always be with us and non-violence will have no relevance in such a milieu. It is only when the idea of the inter-dependence of man and man is adopted as a basic principle of life that non-violence can have room for play. I am firmly convinced that the old Vedic idea of the *Virat Purusha* is the one living principle which should be adopted as a guiding philosophy of life by all countries, irrespective of their religious or other beliefs. It preaches that all things, living and non-living, are organically connected with one another as parts of the body of the *Virat Purusha*, the Cosmic Person.

by SRI PRAKASA

1. One would very seriously doubt if Gandhiji could have successfully carried on the duties and responsibilities of the Prime Ministership of India even for a single day. Uncompromising idealists find it almost impossible to manage the day-to-day work of the world with the clashes and conflicts incidental to the limitations of the ingrained human nature of the ordinary men and women with whom they are unavoidably brought into touch in the practical concerns of life. It is well known that Mahatma Gandhi found it difficult even to manage his Ashram, where too he found his idealisms being not unoften violated on the sly even by those who were nearest to him. He had, I fear, to shut his eyes sometimes or to adopt the attitude of the escapist. Being only human, he had his partialities for some fellow workers closely connected with him in the country's public life; and it is well known that when Swaraj came and these persons were installed in office, Mahatmajai could not carry them with himself. They found him and his views impractical and impossible of implementation. As he pathetically told me: "No one listens to me now. What am I to say and to whom am I to say it?" That is why idealists detach themselves from the world; and while they preach their idealisms to an admiring world, for which they are applauded not only by their contemporaries but also by the generations that follow, they have very little effect on practical life.

Jesus and the Buddha alike told their followers that they had nothing to do with the world, and that their teachings were for those who had left the world behind. Gandhiji unfortunately felt to the last that he might be of some help to his country in the solution of her problems, and so he kept on meeting those in power and giving them his counsel, which was not heeded and obviously could not be heeded. He could not have been the Prime Minister of India without compromising his own basic political beliefs. It is clear he was not prepared to do so himself, even if he could suffer it in others; and so he did not become the Prime Minister of India, though any office in Swaraj was in his hands without the asking.

2. It is rather difficult, even for those who were very near to Mahatma Gandhi, to say exactly what was his conception in the matter of personal morals. There is certainly a legend regarding what that was—truth, non-violence, celibacy, etc.—but if the legend is to be regarded as fact, then it will be difficult to understand his undoubted friendship and intimate association with large numbers of persons who lagged far behind the standards of this legend, and made no secret of it either. There is, however, no doubt that what was generally regarded as his sense of personal morals was not only too severe but almost impossible of implementation by the general run of human beings, regard being had to human nature and man's ordinary urges and ambitions. Extremism in anything is dangerous, for when the unattainable goal is not reached, the fall is terrific. If we look at what is happening around us in the country today, it should not be difficult to appreciate what I am venturing to say.

3. I do not think the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics was based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty. I also do not think he himself lived like a poor man. I have been

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life as no other person before or after him in this country. He firmly believed that the speed of the fleet was the speed of the last boat. He wanted the common man to possess good housing, a remunerative occupation, good health, good education; in fact, everything needed for prosperity and progress. But, for him, progress and prosperity could not be confined to any section or group but were for the masses. However, all progress and prosperity had to be consistent with social morality, as laid down by the declared will of the people. He was all for scientific experimentation, but science too, he would have insisted, must develop in harmony with spirituality.

4. Independent India has not upheld the teachings of Gandhiji properly or fully. Except in regard to Independent India's firm policy of peace and non-alignment in the international field and half-hearted and timid programmes of justice for the common man inside India, we have largely betrayed Gandhiji. We have betrayed him in the matters of Prohibition, caste and Untouchability, of communalism, of Basic Education and of going all out for such weaker sections of the people as the landless labourers, village artisans and the peasants. We have talked much about village reconstruction, but done little for it yet. The villager is almost as much disinherited today in this country as before.

5. In the context of the nuclear threat in the world today, the relevance of Gandhiji and non-violence has become far more insistent than ever before. The only alternative to non-violence is the total suicide of mankind through self-destructive violence. Nothing is less relevant today than violence, which is outmoded, discredited and proved to be of no validity at all in the nuclear age. The nuclear threat poses only one choice, back to non-violence or forward to annihilation. It is not merely Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence but his method of drawing tremendous power for effective social action from collective non-violence which is the crux of the matter. India has very nearly forgotten this lesson that Gandhiji taught. Today what faces mankind is equally the terrible irrelevance of violence and the imperative relevance of non-violence.

by **B. SHIVA RAO**

1. To be an unqualified success as the leader of the administration in a country of the size of India, with all its complex economic and social problems, it is essential to have certain qualities: such as drive, imagination, a clear vision of domestic needs and of trends in international relations. Not everyone, however eminent in his own field or fields, would necessarily be a success as India's Prime Minister in the world of today. Gandhiji's unique gifts enabled him to lead the freedom movement. But he did not possess the knowledge and the resilience in an adequate measure to tackle problems in the field of international relations. Even in the domestic field his uncompromising views on issues like Prohibition would have landed any Government of which he was the head in grave difficulties. I cannot see Gandhiji being a successful Prime Minister of India in the 20th century.

2. Gandhiji's code of personal morals was built on a scale of values appropriate for a man of his outlook; but it could not be practised by the common people, for the primary reason that one's daily life must necessarily be a series of compromises (even without lowering ethical standards), while Gandhiji did not subscribe to the doctrine of compromise. "Too severe" is not the appropriate phrase; I would say, "too individualistic".

3. Gandhiji's social ethics rested on the too facile assumption that rich individuals would regard themselves as trustees who acquired and held their wealth on behalf of the poor. A modern welfare state, on the other hand, makes no such assumption. It considers it legitimate and equitable to devise a system of taxation which will compel the prosperous to contribute a substantial share of their wealth to the nation's exchequer for the benefit of the poorer sections of the people.



AT SONEGAON AIRPORT

4. I must say, very little. Gandhiji would have condemned deviations from standards of integrity in public life and in administration without hesitation or delay. Many of those in power and authority today would have been in enforced retirement had he been alive or had his teachings been regarded with genuine respect.

5. Non-violence in the sense in which Gandhiji preached it would be impracticable; but India lags sadly behind many other countries in vigour and earnestness in upholding disarmament. With our defence expenditure nearing Rs. 1,000 crores a year, what moral force can there be in our producing mere formulae for phased disarmament at Geneva or New York? We preach to other nations what we are not willing to practise ourselves. Militarism is being infused to a dangerous extent into the blood of our youth through various Government-subsidised organisations. We should do everything in our power to make friends across our frontiers. Nationalism in many parts of the world is a discredited, out-of-date creed: in India we make a fetish of it. The real answer to the nuclear threat is a bold plea for disarmament, complete and universal. Independent India in 1947, because she won her freedom through friendly negotiations with the ruling power, was in a position to offer to a war-weary world a new technique for settling international conflicts. Today we can win such a position for India only by keeping out of the crazy race for weapons of human destruction on an unprecedented scale.

by **M. CHALAPATHI RAO**

1. Gandhi would have been an impossible Prime Minister except in the India of his dreams; that India is an idea, a vision and a goal. If he had agreed to be Prime Minister, he would have gone on a fast till he died or would have been shot dead. India might have been the better for it, but he would not have been Prime Minister for long.

2. Gandhi's moral standards, though high, were unattainable for the people but not for some people. The world is never ready or even safe for its Gandhis; yet, but for them, it would be a poorer world and would perish like Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. There is no conflict. By non-possession, he did not mean renunciation, and by poverty, which he did not want to remain, he meant simple living. There will be need for the spirit of contentment and for self-denial even in the new society, in which there would be no distinction between the class of possessors and the class of non-possessors and between rich and poor.

4. Independent India has kept Gandhiji alive in some measure, by keeping alive the values he stood for. There would not be such

a wholesale sense of concern about corruption but for the regard still maintained for Gandhiji's standards.

5. Gandhi wanted the non-violence of the strong, not of the weak. He did not condone cowardice in the name of non-violence. The nuclear weapon is different from other weapons, and the non-violence of the kind he advocated would mean that India should not be frightened by nuclear threats but must work for the elimination of such threats by mobilising moral pressure. Non-violence would work for non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and for general and complete disarmament.

by **Sir HERBERT READ**

1. I do not think Gandhiji could have accepted a position of power within the structure of the state without compromising his basic political beliefs. These beliefs conflict with the financial and industrial aims of the centralised modern state, which seeks to resolve its problems by competitive strife with other states. Gandhiji was a distributivist, and realised that the monolithic structure of the modern state must be broken down into small groups united by mutual aid and brotherly love.

2. The personal morals of a saintly man like the Mahatma can serve only as an example to the people at large. Only a few can follow where he leads, but these few can in their turn become exemplars, and in this manner a new spiritual enlightenment can spread throughout the world.

3. Yes; in so far as modern notions of progress are selfish and acquisitive (and such notions characterise even the so-called Communist parties) they conflict with Gandhiji's social ethics. The welfare state, which is the prevailing ideal of "progress" in the West, is a mirage that materialises into houses and schools, hospitals and playing-fields, but remains a spiritual desert. The opposing ideals of non-possession and poverty do not necessarily imply deprivation and suffering. Socrates expressed the true nature of this ideal in his prayer to Beloved Pan: *Grant me to be beautiful in the inner man, and all I have of outer things to be at peace with those within. May I count the wise man only rich. And may my store of gold be such as none but the good can bear.*

4. I am not sufficiently informed to answer this question.

5. The philosophy of non-violence is the only philosophy relevant to the nuclear threat. Only in so far as that philosophy prevails throughout the world will the great powers abandon their armaments.

(Please Turn Over)

The Gandhian Way (CONTINUED)

THE EDITOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How, in your opinion, would Gandhiji have fared as the Prime Minister of India, without compromising his own basic political beliefs?
2. Is the Mahatma's keen sense of personal morals too severe to be ever acquired by the people?
3. Does the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics, based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty, conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity?
4. How far do you think Independent India has upheld the teachings of Gandhiji?
5. What is the relevance of the philosophy of non-violence in the context of the nuclear threat?

contrary, basically a Hindu visionary. Christ, after all, was a Jewish visionary. Obviously, no normal person can measure up to what Gandhiji advocated, any more than they can stand up to what Christ advocated. In any case, Gandhiji's Hinduism had nothing to do with orthodox Hinduism. Of course, Christ's teaching had nothing to do with orthodox Judaism.

3. The question seems to me to answer itself.

4. How can India have upheld pacifism when it attacks Goa? And defends itself against China? What many people hold against India is the glib preaching of pacifism when it is obviously politically impossible for the country to have such a policy. The hypocrisy of politicians who travel abroad, realising and capitalising on the fact that they are from Gandhiji's country, seems to me despicable. Gandhiji, I suppose, would not have been as easily deluded as Nehru. He would perhaps (though he was as much a fool as any other great prophet) not have appointed certain types of people to responsible posts.

5. None at all.

It appears to me that Gandhiji was a great man and a saint. It also appears to me that there is nobody else in India who is like him or is likely to be like him, and that therefore people there ought to realise that they are not a nation of political saints, but like any other errant and silly nation. Mr. Shastri seems to me a good and at least an efficient man: which is why I think it as silly to ask people questions about Gandhiji in the context of modern India as it would have been to ask Doubting Thomas questions about Christ when he was stranded (doubtless happily eating idlis) on the shores of Madras.

by M. MUJEEB

1. I find it very difficult to imagine Gandhiji as Prime Minister and I am positive that he would never have accepted the position. But if he had, he would have challenged the existing system in principle and in detail: the grading, the salaries, the protocol, the conventions and the procedures. There would have been resistance, sabotage and chaos.

2. Moral judgements are always absolute. Even if Gandhiji did not claim to have attained perfection, he was too much under the influence of the old principle of basing purity of mind on a denial and suppression of man's physical nature. What we need is balance and harmony. But this balance and harmony can-

not be attained if we dispense with all standards. But here, again, one must emphasise that setting too high a standard can be ultimately as bad as having no standards at all.

3. I think it a calamity that modern notions of progress and prosperity have completely obliterated in our minds the elementary fact that a planned economy must have non-possession and "poverty" as its basis. Socialism is a system of utilisation without possession and, correctly understood, poverty in this context would mean reducing all our wants in the common interest. Unless we do this, each citizen of our state will think that it is the function of the state to ensure the highest standard of living for him personally. The ultimate aim of state policy will thus degenerate into notions of immediate benefit. If we do not take a very superficial view of things, we must realise that we must give up what are called modern notions of progress and prosperity and concentrate on essentials. This means work irrespective of wages and the attainment of socially beneficial ends irrespective of any immediate loss or relinquishment of material goods.

4. Independent India has done little, if anything at all, to uphold the teachings of Gandhiji. Rather, it has intensified the hypocrisy from which we suffer.

5. The philosophy of non-violence is a purely personal philosophy. It becomes social if the number of individuals who believe in non-violence is large enough to be effective. Non-violence cannot, in the nature of things, be imposed, but if those who believe in it are able to interpret it in a reasonable way to resolve the problems that arise, it is undoubtedly the best corrective to the predisposition to violence from which most human beings suffer. I do not think the production of nuclear weapons requires us to consider the revision or modification of the concept of non-violence. The destructiveness of the nuclear weapons and the possibility of those who use them suffering as much as those against whom they are used is, surely, a new and very strong argument in favour of non-violence.

by E. V. RAMASAMI NAICKER

1. The political beliefs of Mr. Gandhi may be sweet-sounding to the ears of the masses, but they are of no avail. Therefore Mr. Gandhi would not have accepted the Prime Ministership. If he had accepted it, his tenure of office as Prime Minister would have ended in confusion.

2. Nobody can follow the so-called keen sense of personal morals of Mr. Gandhi, because of its impracticability.

3. I must say that he kept himself secluded from the people, displaying himself as a divine personality; and hence the austerity which he adopted cannot be upheld by men of progressive policies.

4. Our Independent India has not upheld any of his teachings. But the people at the helm of affairs of the Government take advantage of the name of Mr. Gandhi.

5. In the context of the nuclear threat, the philosophy of non-violence savours of cowardice.

by AMRITA PRITAM

1. Gandhiji was a saint-politician. Viewing him as the Prime Minister of India, I feel his assuming the supreme charge of the affairs of the nation would have been an experiment to be watched with interest. Like all experiments, it would have ended in failure or success, total or partial, but it would have been a failure or success quite different from what success and failure generally is.

2. The Mahatma's sense of personal morals was no different from his sense of pub-

lic morals. In my opinion, the question of his sense being acquired by the people does not arise. A sense of morals tends to be exclusive and personal and every individual cultivates and acquires it according to the compulsion of his inner being.

3. The essence of Gandhiji's social ethics appears to be in conflict with modern notions of progress and prosperity, though it should not be so. The Mahatma's concepts were dynamic and their interpretation and the actions resulting from it were always attuned to particular phases of time. I am sure he would have interpreted his concepts somewhat differently in the context of changed circumstances.

4. The Mahatma's teachings today are like a place of pilgrimage no more visited by or open to pilgrims.

5. The possibility of violence in the context of the nuclear threat has made violence absolutely irrelevant. Violence of such dimensions can only be met with non-violence, pure and persistent.

by G. RAMACHANDRAN

1. To begin with, Gandhiji would never have accepted the place of Prime Minister of India. But the question is not whether he would or would not have accepted the Prime Ministership. The question is whether he would have compromised on his own basic political beliefs if he had accepted the prime ministership. A very clear answer can be given. Mahatma Gandhi did not live and work in this country with his head in the clouds. He kept his feet firmly on the earth and was a hard realist. He had repeatedly said that his immediate objective was the freedom of India and that that freedom should take the shape of a full-fledged parliamentary democracy. There is no doubt that he had his distant goal. He would not, however, have created any impossible situation in the name of that distant goal. He would have gone on step by step, taking the millions of the people with him at every forward move. He would have been uncompromising over basic moral issues, but in the political field he would always have remained a practical realist. After all, what were his basic political beliefs? He wanted democracy, he wanted adult franchise; he might have plumped for indirect elections in this vast India of ours, but there is nothing impractical about indirect elections. He wanted the least in society to have the same status in his democracy as the biggest and the most advanced. That was his concept of Sarvodaya. This too is not against democracy, but fully in line with it. He would never have permitted pomp and show, inefficiency, waste, or corruption in the administration. This also would be in line with the best democratic traditions.

2. Mahatma Gandhi's keen sense of personal morals related primarily to himself and the chief human instruments he chose. He was relentless with himself and those close to him, thus setting an unflinching example to the rest. With others he allowed a margin for human frailties. He took all men and women at their word, but sought ceaselessly to pull them up. He built up all-India organisations like the Charkha Sangh, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Kasturba Trust, the Go Seva Sangh, the Village Industries Association, the Hindustani Prachar Sabha and so forth. These were vast organisations employing thousands of full-time paid workers. Inspection, audit and control were at the highest level. But he always worked through the common available human material, making workers more efficient and honest at every step. Even in the Congress, he proved that his own sense of personal morals did not come in the way of using every type of available human material, giving each his or her own suitable place. He was a genius in picking workers and utilising them at the right points.

3. Gandhiji's social ethics, based on the fundamentals of non-possession and poverty, never came into conflict with the notions of national progress and prosperity. Non-possession was for the servants of society, in order to serve better; poverty was voluntary and undertaken by the servants of society, for the same purpose. Gandhiji was not asking for non-possession and poverty for the people. In fact, he fought poverty at the lowest level of Indian

divergence between profession and practice becomes wider.

3. I must confess I cannot conceive of a society where the majority of people honestly adopt non-possession and poverty. After all, what matters is not what we say but what we do. There is, therefore, hardly any risk of what is called "the essence of Gandhiji's social ethics" actually conflicting with modern notions of progress and prosperity. It is not necessary to be a Marxian to recognise that material advancement is a rooted desire of most human beings.

But two points should be made here: first, Gandhiji did not preach the virtues of poverty to the poor—on the contrary, his passionate desire was to seek to lift the burden of toil and drudgery from the backs of the poor and improve their lot; and second, in stressing that man does not live by bread alone and that beyond a point (which, of course, is not easy to define) material possessions and multiplication of useless wants and production of luxuries do not lead to individual happiness or social harmony. It is a truth which both capitalism and Marxism usually ignore but which poses a challenge to the affluent societies of the West and the drab societies of Communist countries.

4. In one respect, Gandhiji's mission was accomplished with the achievement of India's independence. However, Gandhiji's teachings have had an impact on the Constitution of India, on the attitude and approach of the ruling party and on Governmental policies and measures. His deep conviction about the need of a secular state was something which Jawaharlal Nehru profoundly shared and honestly endeavoured to practise. In this, as in other spheres, we have failed in many respects, but it is all to the good that we have a worthy goal to achieve, a standard by which we can and should judge ourselves. Article 17 of the Constitution of India by which "Untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form forbidden implements one of Gandhiji's fundamental teachings. So, too, the introduction and enforcement of Prohibition is in pursuance of Gandhiji's programme. On the balance, this may have done more harm than good—not merely financially but in terms of morality—but the fact remains that—to answer the question—this is one of the spheres in which Gandhiji's teaching has been upheld by Independent India. So, too, his belief in khadi and village industries has found a response in the programme of organising and assisting hand spinning and weaving as well as developing many rural industries. Again, there may be a difference of opinion on the economic viability of such programmes, but Gandhiji's emphasis on the importance of employment in a predominantly agricultural country with a vast rural population has, to some extent at any rate, influenced Government thinking and action. Similarly, Gandhiji's ideas about labour organisation have guided some trade union leaders. His ideas of Basic Education have had some effect on education.

It may also be argued that the principle of non-alignment at its best has been a translation into terms of an international policy of Gandhiji's devotion to peace and harmony. But Gandhiji would not have approved of some facets of the "un-neutral neutrality" practised by our Government, which has frequently been selective in its condemnation of aggression and biased in its attitudes and has declined to judge between right and wrong. It is difficult (and perhaps, futile) to say how Gandhiji would have viewed military action in Goa or the resistance to Chinese aggression. Nevertheless, in so far as there is an endeavour to help forces which seek understanding and adjustment and compromise between nations, it bears some impress of Gandhiji's teachings.

But despite the importance of the state in a country like ours and the impact of Gandhiji on the Government, we should look beyond Governmental institutions, policies and measures to assess Gandhiji's influence. All over the country there are groups of devoted and selfless workers carrying on his work in various spheres, implementing his constructive programmes and seeking to live up to his principles. Acharya Vinoba Bhave is an outstanding example, but there are others less well-known but no less dedicated. Jayaprakash Narayan is another such illustrious figure. In the lives and work of such men and women Gandhiji's ideals endure.

5. When Gandhiji heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima, he said to himself, "Unless now the world adopts non-violence it will spell certain suicide for mankind." This is truer today than when it was 20 years ago, because nuclear weapons have become even more destructive. The manufacture and testing and use of nuclear weapons are not merely technical questions or matters of economic capacity. They are, in a fundamental sense, a moral issue. The philosophy of non-violence has a deep relevance in the context of the nuclear threat. Whether as individuals we may be able to prevent this threat or not, it is the obligation of every civilised state to mobilise all available measures—moral, institutional and human—to widen the test-ban treaty and prevent the production and proliferation of nuclear weapons. This is not a visionary ideal, it is a moral imperative if mankind is to survive.

by K. P. S. MENON

1. I cannot think of Gandhiji as Prime Minister of India any more than I can think of Jesus Christ as the Procurator of Judaea, even after its liberation from the yoke of Rome.

2. Yes. It has been said that there was only one Christian and that he died on the Cross. Similarly, future generations may say that there was only one Gandhian and that he was assassinated at Birla House. But without such figures as Christ and Gandhi, man would have been even more of a beast than he is.

3. Followed literally, Gandhiji's social philosophy would lead society back to the mythical age of innocence, which is said to have existed in primitive times. Followed in spirit, his philosophy would alleviate some of the symptoms of the sickness of our acquisitive society.

4. Independent India has upheld the teachings of Gandhiji to the extent to which Christendom has upheld the teachings of Christ—that is to say, in principle rather than in practice.

5. Even if there were no nuclear threat, the philosophy of non-violence would have no relevance to the policy of national defence. The question whether India should produce a nuclear bomb should be decided not on ethical, but on practical grounds, such as its efficacy, indispensability and its probable effects on the progress of disarmament, on which the future of civilisation ultimately rests.

by HENRY MILLER

1. He would have been an utter failure.
2. Yes!
3. Yes—absolutely!
4. Hardly at all.
5. I haven't the slightest idea.

by MIRA BEHN

1. Gandhiji did not even remain a member of the Congress Party. How much less could he have fitted into a majority-rule hierarchy of Ministers! So the question does not arise.

2. Gandhiji did not expect his severe personal standards to be followed by others, except in rare cases. His human sympathy and understanding were broad and deep.

3. Non-possession and poverty were again a standard he would not put forward for the masses, but simply moderation, because piling up of material goods does not end in happiness.

4. At this distance I cannot comment.

5. The term non-violence is usually misused, the breadth and depth of its meaning being extremely difficult to grasp. In its broad sense it is the only answer to the nuclear threat.

by K. M. MUNSHI

1. Gandhiji was a vast spiritual force. His spiritual dynamism could never have been trapped in a prime ministership, which must necessarily carry with it the responsibility to deal with the practical side of running a vast government with all its incidental activities and manoeuvres.

2. It has been given to few men in history to maintain the standard of spiritual strength which he possessed. It is not possible for ordinary men, however aspiring, to attain the spiritual strength and moral fervour which he possessed. All that the people could have acquired—and did acquire to some extent in his lifetime—was respect for and faith in the ethical and moral values which he stood for.

3. Behind what you call "modern notions of progress and prosperity" lies the urge to continuously raise the standard of living and indulge in hedonism. In my opinion, modern civilisation, in so far as it is based on these factors, is going to crash and possibly lead to a situation, in countries which have built their life on them, when the government will be compelled to adopt coercive measures to repress the acquisitiveness of man and impose upon people, by taxation or otherwise, a grudging austerity.

Gandhiji's social ethics are based on the fundamentals of Indian culture. The principles of non-possession and poverty are designed to prepare man for the voluntary acceptance of a measure of austerity and a spirit of contentment which, while not debarring the benefits and progress resulting from scientific and technological advancement, would not make man look upon material prosperity alone as the goal of life.

4. When Gandhiji was alive, his teachings were accepted on account either of an enthusiastic devotion to his personality, or of the imponderable pressure of worshipful mass opinion. Independent India has strayed away from his teachings; they are now invoked only for propaganda purposes.

5. The philosophy of non-violence must necessarily carry with it a progressive development of individual and society, pledged to righteous living, trusteeship of wealth and a life lived in love. Since Gandhiji's death, the country has swung away from the ethical and spiritual attitude which he had wanted the country to adopt. Once you ignore the ethical and spiritual basis in a world dominated by untruth and violence—in ordinary language, force and fraud—the philosophy of non-violence can only be a slogan, at best an aspiration.

It is necessary that India must exist as a strong nation, and, in the context of the world situation as it is, it cannot possibly pledge itself to adherence to the philosophy of non-violence for all time and in all circumstances.

by DOM MORAES

1. Very badly. It seems to me that a saint is almost necessarily, by the state of his condition, politically an ass. I am absolutely sure that had Gandhi been the Prime Minister of India, he would have had a brilliant phoney reign (rather like Schweitzer's), till real political problems appeared: whereupon I should imagine India would have suffered the incursions of Chinese troops at the same time that Tibet (unnoticed by Nehru, who was not, however much his family may think so, a saint) fell.

2. I think Gandhi disregarded humanity, as, say, the poets understand humanity, in the same way that all the great religious teachers did. If Gandhi was anything, he was a visionary. Also, in spite of his various actions to the

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