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Mr. M.R. Masani's Answers to Questions

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

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

Ans: 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. 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?

Ans: In ^{certain} some 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", in his belief that those who work a factory or machine were its real owners, and his constant insistence that "that Government is best that governs the least". These are fundamental truths that are likely to thrive for a long, long time to come.

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

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

Ans: 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 one side and those of Stalin on the other.