

GANDHISM—AND AFTER

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[This and the succeeding article illustrate the reciprocal attraction and repulsion of Oriental and Occidental thought, which have been accentuated by the critical re-examination of the very foundations of our social institutions and religious beliefs induced by the shock of the war.]

From *The Hindustan Review*, March

(HINDU PRO-ENGLISH POLITICAL AND LITERARY MONTHLY)

THE fact that the Indian National Congress has in its two consecutive sessions adopted Gandhi's programme of Non-co-operation as an effective weapon to paralyze the present government in order to force it to concede the coveted Swaraj (Self-Government,) and the fact that his programme has captivated the masses who have successfully picketed voters at the recent Council elections, brings his resolution within the domain of practical politics. It is, therefore, necessary to examine what was his *motif* in counselling this form of non-co-operation and what it will mean to those who servilely follow it.

These two questions cannot be considered apart, for Gandhi has again and again made it clear that those who follow him must not shudder at the consequence, but what is it, do they for one moment realize? Gandhi promises Swaraj to us all if we loyally execute his programme. Let us assume that we have done so—that the Government is in fact paralyzed and that we obtain Swaraj upon our own terms. Let us also assume that out of gratitude to Gandhi for his signal service in removing our yoke we give him the *carte blanche* to fashion our constitution. What kind of Swaraj will Gandhi give us and what lives shall we have to lead under his Swaraj? A veritable dog's life,

for listen to this. Gandhi is a sworn enemy of all civilization and all comforts which it brings. He is against railways, motor cars, aeroplanes and all modern facilities for inter-communication, post offices, telegraphs, and last but not least, lawyers, doctors and hospitals.

Let me give you his own words culled from his "Indian Home Rule," a brochure in which he pictures the Swaraj he intends to give India. Ten days before the last Congress met he published it in the press that the picture he has drawn in this pamphlet is the true picture of his dream of Home Rule for India for which he is striving. And this is what he says as regards civilization and its various adjuncts:—

Civilization.—"The true inwardness of the evils of civilization you will understand with difficulty. Doctors assure us that a consumptive clings to life even when he is about to die. . . civilization is such a disease and we have to be very wary." "Civilization is like a mouse gnawing while it is soothing us." "Civilization is a disease and the English people are at present afflicted by it. It is eating into the vitals of the English nation. It must be shunned."

Railways.—"Railways are a most dangerous institution. Man has there thoroughly gone further away from

his Maker." "If we did not rush about from place to place by means of Railways and such other maddening conveniences, much of the confusion that arises would be obviated. Our difficulties are of our own creation. God set a limit to man's locomotive ambition in the construction of his body. Man immediately proceeded to discover means of overriding the limit." "Good travels at a snail's pace—it can therefore have little to do with the Railways. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time. But evil has wings. To build a house takes time. Its destruction takes none. So the Railways can become a distributing agency for the evil one only. It may be a debatable matter whether Railways spread famines, but it is beyond dispute that they propagate evil."

Hospitals.—"Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. Men take less care of their bodies and immorality increases."

Doctors.—"Doctors have almost unhinged us. Sometimes I think that quacks are better than highly qualified doctors. Let us consider: the business of a doctor is to take care of the body, or properly speaking not even that. Their business is really to rid the body of diseases that may afflict it. How do these diseases arise? Surely by our negligence or indulgence. I overeat, I have indigestion. I go to a doctor, he gives me medicine, I am cured. I overeat again, and I take his pills again. Had I not taken the pills in the first instance, I would have suffered the punishment deserved by me, and I would not have overeaten again. The doctor intervened and helped me to indulge myself. My body thereby certainly felt more at

ease, but my mind became weakened. A continuance of a course of medicine must, therefore, result in loss of control over the mind." "The fact remains that the doctors induce us to indulge, and the result is that we have become deprived of self-control and have become effeminate. In these circumstances, we are unfit to serve the country. To study European medicine is to deepen our slavery." "I have indulged in vice, I contract a disease, a doctor cures me, the odds are that I shall repeat the vice. Had the doctor not intervened, nature would have done its work, and I would have acquired mastery over myself, would have been free from vice and would have been happy"—and died.

Lawyers and Law Courts.—"Lawyers are men who have little to do. Lazy people, in order to indulge in luxuries take up such professions. This is a true statement. Any other argument is a mere pretension." "If people were to settle their own quarrels, a third party would not be able to exercise any authority over them. Truly, men were less unmanly when they settled their disputes either by fighting or by asking their relatives to decide upon them. They became more unmanly and cowardly when they resorted to Courts of Law." "My firm opinion is that the lawyers have enslaved India, and they have accentuated the Hindu-Mahomedan dissensions, and have confirmed English authority." "Railways, lawyers and doctors have impoverished the country, so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined."

Parliament.—"That which you consider to be the mother of Parliaments is like a sterile woman, and a prostitute. Both these are harsh terms, but

fit the case. That Parliament has not yet of its own accord done a single good thing, hence I have compared it to a sterile woman... It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time." "It is a superstition and an ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority." "If the money and the time wasted by the Parliament were entrusted to a few good men, the English nation would be occupying to-day a much higher platform. The Parliament is simply a costly toy of the nation." "If India copies England it is my firm conviction that she will be ruined."

Mills and Machinery.—According to Gandhi there can be no Swaraj so long as the hum of the mills is heard. "We cannot condemn mill owners; we can but pity them. It would be too much to expect them to give up their mills; but we may implore them not to increase them." "Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes... I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery." "Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization, it represents a great sin." "Machinery is enslaving and demoralizing. It was not that we did not know to invent machinery; but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They therefore, after due deliberation, decided that we should do what we could with our hands and feet."

English Language.—Another thing that Gandhi cannot tolerate is the English language, the language of Burke and Macaulay which is the true mother of the Indian Renaissance and a language in which Gandhi is

able to reach his audience of all races. Conscious of this infirmity Gandhi leaves himself a loophole by tolerating one "who will only on rare occasions make use of the English language."

Gandhi writes of the Post Office telegraphs, aeroplanes and all modern conveniences in the same strain. Civilization is accursed and so are all its adjuncts. So are large cities. "They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance, and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be a gang of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them, and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages. The common people lived independently and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home Rule."

This is then Gandhi's Swaraj. No railways, no tramcars, no telegraphs, no post offices, no machinery, no courts, no laws, no hospitals, no doctors, no towns, no army, no weapon not even a stick and no "cursed modern civilization."

Gandhi makes no secret of driving the English out of India not because they are English—he is a cosmopolitan—but because they have brought into this country their accursed civilization. "I bear no enmity towards the English, but I do towards their civilization." He does not want them all the more because they might arm the people and protect them against foreign aggression; for "to arm India on a large scale is to Europeanize it. Then her condition will be just as pitiable as that of Europe... But the fact is that the Indian nation will not adopt arms and it is well that it does not." This is then the Gandhian

Utopia, the mahatmic millenium, placed before us: Destroy all the work and traces of modern civilization, destroy all towns, shun all industries, tear up your railways and tramcars, demolish your factories, impale your doctors and lawyers, retire into the wilderness of your home and there use your "hands and feet" and receive and live on the one product of husbandry.

Two questions arise in this connection. Is this bucolic life now possible, and if possible is it desirable? Whatever may be your response on the second question there can be no doubt about your reply to the first. India is now exposed to international competition. She can not live just as she chooses but must live the life which her neighbours will let her live. The question whether a life of rustic simplicity is possible may be dismissed as an impossible dream. And it is an ideal which I venture to opine few of my educated countrymen will now care to cherish. Nor do I think many of you do. And it is the final goal, the apex and the summit of Gandhi's teaching.

Gandhi does not dismiss the possibility of a foreign invasion. But his plan for defence is simple. If the enemy opens his fire upon you all you have to do is to tell him not to fire. If he does not desist, then your soul force being spent, you must allow yourself to be enslaved. But don't return shot for a shot, for it is against the Hindu religion to take life. Here are his *ipsissima verba* on the supreme subject of strategy: "If it be true that the Hindus believe in the doctrine of non-killing and the Mahomedans do not, what, I pray, is the duty of the former? It is not written that a follower of the religion of *Ahimsa* (non-killing) may kill a fellow man.

For him the way is straight. 'In order to save one being he may not kill another. He can only plead—his sole duty.'"

"The force of arms is powerless when matched against the force of love or the soul."

There cannot be any doubt that such Swaraj as Gandhi promises would not be worth many moments' purchase.

Brute force should never be used.

If a robber forcibly snatches your goods and you are left alive, tell him not to do it again. The moment he has heard this homily he will prostrate before you and give up robbery. If the robber murders you, you are of course dead and the robber loses his chastening sermon. All this reads like nursery tale; but I have quoted Gandhi's own words to show that he seriously put them forward as his original contribution to the art of Government. But Gandhi dismisses from view the notorious incident in the history of India that, before the establishment of *Pax Britannica*, the country was the scene of internecine wars and disturbances and that with the withdrawal of the British without preparing the people to preserve peace and defend themselves against internal strife and foreign aggression the country will once more be the bear garden of inter-racial feuds and foreign aggressions, wiping out in less time than it takes to think the splendid machinery which with all its faults holds India immune from external aggression.

You will thus see that Tolstoyism is not a form of asceticism as we Hindus understand it here. For asceticism is a form of life adopted to attain spirituality. Nihilism is a social order, a form of life adopted for its own sake. It has no ulterior aim in view. Asceticism is a war on carnal desires—the subjugation

of passion, an avenue to higher life here and hereafter. Nihilism is a war on organized society which we popularly call civilization. It has no ulterior goal. The one ennobles life and is intended to elevate one from the pale of sin and suffering. The other is intended to destroy the charm and pleasure of existence and reduces the sufferer to a savage. It is the answer to the question who is happier—the civilized man of the town or the savage beast of the forest? We say the civilized man, the Nihilist says the savage.

This is then the pith and marrow of the Nihilist doctrine and Gandhi is its disciple. Let me quote you his own words: "Under it (*i. e.* civilization) the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day." "A man labouring under the bane of civilization is like a dreaming man." "We are so much beset by the disease of civilization that we cannot altogether do without English education." It is not a question of what I mean... A great English writer has written a work called, "Civilization: its cause and cure." Therein he has called it a disease.

Gandhi contrasts our ancient civilization with the modern Western civilization much to the detriment of the latter. He pines for the return of the former but I can only regard this as a pose, for I do not think that there is anything to contrast in the two civilizations which do not differ in kind and only differ in degree. Moreover if I have understood him aright, Gandhi is opposed to civilization as such and not merely to the modern materialism of the West.

If this be his intention, how are we to combat it? Surely not by soul force.

Some of you will rub your eyes

and wonder whether any man with any claim to sanity could picture to you a life for so impossible an ideal, so absurd. But unfortunately this is not Gandhi's original idea. It is but an echo of the life depicted by Count Tolstoy, the Russian Nihilist, of whom Gandhi is a disciple.

Let me then give you in a few words the essence of Tolstoyism, for if you understand Tolstoy you will understand Gandhi.

As Gandhi is a disciple of Tolstoy, so Tolstoy was the disciple of Rousseau, who pleaded for the simplicity of life according to Nature. What is this life? It is the life which both Rousseau and Tolstoy described and it is the life which Gandhi is himself striving to live and asking his followers to follow. Let me describe the Tolstoyan cult:

The life of this great Russian Savant may be said to divide itself into three chapters. Born in the purple Tolstoy led the life of a young man about town while a student of the University of Kazan, which imparted no education and exercised no control over its pupils. Disgusted of this life Tolstoy repaired to his estate and began to lead the life of a simple peasant. He imbibed the social philosophy of Rousseau and wished to put in practice the Kindergarten system to which Frobel the great German educationist was devoting all his energies. Tolstoy believed in no disciple. "The student," said he, "must have the right to refuse those forms of education which do not satisfy his instincts. Freedom is the only criterion. We of the older generation do not and cannot know what is necessary for the younger." He opened a school to give effect to this view, but the school soon ceased to exist, the young students being

free to choose the amusements of the playground to the curriculum of the school. Tolstoy gave up educating the young as a bad job and next turned his attention to the improvement of the peasantry. He denounced all culture as the enemy of happiness and wrote a book "*The Cossacks*" to prove the superiority of "the life of a beast of the field." But within the domain of his own family life he did not put into practice this doctrine in its entirety. He employed English and German governesses to teach his thirteen children, whose offences were however punished by a strict "boycott" of the offender until he or she repented. Though the enemy of culture, Tolstoy did not cease to exercise his pen. But his pen was the pen of a novelist and the world he depicted and imagined lived only in his fancy. The various phases of his mind he well describes in his autobiographical sketch "*My Confessions*." At one time his leading idea was that "the object of life should be the happiness of one's family and oneself. I lived by this rule up to a few years ago... Then a strange state of despair, a longing came over me. I had moments of doubt and despondency. Life as it were had come to a standstill; I neither knew how to live nor what to do. I wandered about aimlessly, a prey to low spirits. For a time this mood passed away and I took up the daily duties of life. Then again these misgivings became more frequent and more acute. The same questions were always thrusting themselves on my mind—why? and wherefore? and whither?" He took to the study of Schopenhauer—the philosopher of pessimism, which increased his doubts and despondency till he could exclaim, "How often have I not envied the unlettered peasant

his lack of learning!... I say let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand. Instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand and one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and entirely miss his port, by dead reckoning; and he must be a great navigator indeed, who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one, instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion." Tolstoy hated towns and town life with its artificiality, the competition of capitalists and merchants, the curse of inequality. Money was an evil, wealth was a sin: "what makes a man good in his having but few wants." In his *Kreutzer Sonata* Tolstoy denounces marriage, which can only be condoned if spiritual sympathy exists, and then only as the means to the continuance of the race; otherwise it is a breach of true morality. Music is a debasing art. Much of this is however recanted in his *Sequel*, in which he confesses that great ideals are always unattainable. It will thus be seen what an apt pupil Gandhi is of his *guru* Count Tolstoy, whose letter to him he recommends his readers to read. The Tolstoyan republic is the Gandhian republic—a republic in which every man lives in the state of nature "as a happy wild beast in the forest."

Such being Gandhi's ideal of social order, let us now examine his latest Non-co-operation programme.

I say latest, because I shall not advert to its immediate precursors, to his passive resistance and Satyagraha movements, the epitaph upon whose

tombs was inscribed by their author in one word—suspended.

Gandhi's scheme of Non-co-operation is directed to paralyzing the present Government with a view to wresting from it further concessions in the direction of *Swaraj*. I have already explained what kind of *Swaraj* Gandhi has in store for us. Even assuming that it is the *Swaraj* the country is hungering for, those who want it now can have it by repairing to the nearest village, as Tolstoy did; but why should they infect the entire nation with their virus of Nihilism? Gandhi would say that his simple life is so good for the nation that he cannot bear to enjoy it alone. But in that case is he not misleading the whole country by trying to destroy the existing Government, when he might more directly appeal to the masses to adopt the Tolstoyan mode of life by abandoning all the adjuncts of modern civilization. Why make it a political question? Live and let live is a salutary rule which Gandhi will concede in the abstract; but if so why should he not go to the people and say that he loathes the British Government not because it is British but because it is a Government first and British afterwards, and not indeed because it is British but because it is so civilized?

I have no doubt that if Gandhi had preached his cult in this nakedness he would not have secured a single sane follower.

He has therefore given this occidental creed an oriental garb; and when he pleads for the simplicity of life he preaches it as an economic problem, and while he denounces the "Satanic Government" he forgets to connect it with what he conceives to be its Satanic misdeeds, *viz.*, all

the modern conveniences of civilization.

Gandhi is leading the nation blindfolded to an appointed goal. Gandhi would reply that he makes no secret of his creed; and he who runs may read his "Indian Home Rule," in which he portrays the *Swaraj* he has in view for India. This is perfectly true. But how many of those who throw their caps into the air and shout "Gandhiji Ki Jai" have read his Thesis, and how many even of those who acclaimed his scheme in the last two sessions of the congress connected his resolution with his social doctrine? How many anywhere I ask recognize the iconoclast of modern progress, the Messiah of rustic simplicity? How many again I ask of these who renounce their living and join the ever growing chorus of Non-co-operators realize the true meaning of his mission, the *raison d'être* of his teaching?

At the special session of the Calcutta Congress the resolution in favour of Non-co-operation was carried by those who fanned the flame of popular resentment against the Punjab atrocities and Khilafat wrong. Not one of those who voted for the resolution ever so much as hinted at the blow he was unconsciously aiming at our economic political life—our steady progress in the direction of Self-Government of the people by the people for the people. How many then realized that Gandhi is not a believer in the Parliamentary form of Government or any organized Government at all? And how many again of the vaunted twenty odd thousand delegates who voted for the reaffirmance of that resolution are convinced disciples of political Nihilism? But yet the resolution was never intended to ensure the change of

Government to popular Government of a Parliamentary form, nor will it ever achieve that purpose.

Gandhi has persuaded the nation to boycott the Councils, boycott the Courts and boycott all aided schools and colleges. Assume now that all this is possible. Assume again that the Councils are deserted and that the Courts are denuded of their lawyers and litigants. The Government will go on without the one as it went on before the Councils were initiated in this country, and the Courts will continue to administer justice unaided by the salutary influence of counsel; or if the litigants do desert them then they will be closed altogether, while the desertion of schools will only strengthen the financial resources of "the Satanic Government" by setting free the funds now spent on education for any other "nefarious" purposes, it may cherish.

I do not minimize the effect of agitation. I do not underestimate the force of popular opinion. I am not unaware of the power of popular discontent. But what will be the cumulative effect of it all? Suppose the Government resorts to repression. What then? How are the people to retaliate? Gandhi has made it clear enough that he is the apostle of peace. He will not countenance the

use of force. He has warned his people that the sole weapon he will tolerate is the use of spiritual force, and the moment the masses get out of hand he will hie to the Himalayas and there disappear from view. And need the "Mahatmaji" be reminded that it is easy to light a spark in a magazine but difficult to control the explosion? Is he sure that the proletariat to whom he appeals for the use of spirit force are not thirsting for blood? Surely these are considerations not wholly beyond the pale of possibility. The dismal lessons which the previous rehearsals of this creed have taught all nations ought to be a sufficient warning for the future.

Gandhi does not mince his words when he plainly denounces education as an intellectual torment and embarrassment, calls lawyers as pests and parasites and councils, even when improved to the status of parliaments, as prostitutes. His programme is a programme of destruction. If it has any ulterior purpose in view it is to make a clean sweep of all traces of civilization. He has nothing to replace it, for the simple reason that he is convinced that the true life to lead is the life of the unlettered clodhopper. So did Tolstoy from whom I have quoted. He is the master key to modern Gandhism. Let those who follow him beware of the goal.

ASIA AS A TEACHER,

BY ERICH EVERTH

From *Europäische Staats- und Wirtschafts Zeitung*, February 15.

(BERLIN LIBERAL ECONOMIC BI-MONTHLY.)

SINCE the war, the people of Europe have longed for peace, not only political peace, but inner, spiritual peace. Aversion to controversy and abhorrence of violence characterize this new attitude. Our Western world is weary; not weary of life, but of strife and hatred. Indeed, our peculiar society and civilization have been found wanting. They were ceasing to function normally even before this tragedy. However, the result has not been apathy and callousness, but new restlessness and new wants,—‘a fairer vision beckons to another shore.’ People are exploring provinces of the human soul which have remained untouched by Europe’s torment, and seem alien to the typical European. Men are looking to the East unconsciously, and therefore sincerely. It is not a mere fashion. The world of Asia draws us with its promise of something new and something that will liberate. We are learning to love the gentleness and the wisdom and the tenderness of the ancient and lofty culture of the Far East. We can study that culture oblivious of the enmities which divide Western nations. Today, Germany welcomes as a gospel of salvation, as a glad message, the unwarlike doctrines of Far Asia, the pacifist mentality of the Indians and Chinese; and particularly the self-sufficient social repose of the Chinese people, their strong family spirit, their clan ties, their communal industry, their powerful collectivist civilization, their

peaceful domestic history, their long experience with self-government, and their Confucianism—that ideal guide to the conduct of a good citizen. Germany is conscious of a similar outpouring of sympathy toward Holy Russia—not toward the chaotic, barbaric Russia which is now on top, and which has always existed side by side with the other—but toward the Russia of the spirit, of great poets and writers, in whose works the Russian is revealed as the most brotherly man in Europe.

It is true that unflinching champions of ‘pure German instinct,’ of ‘the do and dare spirit,’ condemn such tendencies as ‘a spiritual infection produced by the narcotizing opiate of Asiatic philosophy,’ and predict that they will hasten our decadence. Quite the contrary. From these distant sources we may draw inspiration for a new life. Furthermore, it will profit us now to learn how to accept the inevitable; for we are forced, and shall be forced hereafter, to resign ourselves to many inevitable sorrows and hardships. We must, however, seek for and discover in the spirit of Asia inspirations instead of apathy, regeneration instead of decadence.

Certain blind critics have condemned Goethe because he sought to escape from the anarchy of Napoleonic Europe to a higher realm of repose and order; and found this in the idealism of the Orient, and its patriarchal atmosphere. We understand today