

ENDS AND MEANS IN POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

When one turns to a study of political thought of our times, one is likely to get struck with a singular fact about it : there seems to be an eclipse of the great debates over political ends, the ultimate values that ought to be cherished, and the vision of ideal society with regard to ends-goals. I do not believe that this is due to an acceptance of the philosophical view that values are in the last resort beyond the scope of rational discussion. It seems to me that the lack of it may be due to the fact that such debates are no more considered to be crucial or even important. After all, since ancient times the men of vision from Plato to Marx and Gandhi have dealt with the question of political ends and have woven wonderful dreams of ideal societies. Perhaps then as far as the ends, the ultimate values that get realised in the ideal society of our heart are concerned, there is a general consensus amongst the dominant ideologies. It may be ventured that there is a general picture of the ideal society which carries a more or less universal appeal. This is the society of true actualization of equality, freedom, respect for the dignity and person of man. In it are all gulfs between man and man bridged, and true fraternity realized. There is now a growing feeling that such gulfs and hatred, fear, violence of man against man will remain as long as society is divided between the rich and the poor, the oppressor and the oppressed, the exploiters and the exploited. Thus, it is the stateless, class-less society of Marx, the non violent society of Gandhi which picture on ideal society. And of course equality, freedom, fraternity, respect for dignity of man are claimed to be the inspiring ideals of western liberal democracies.

If the ideals and 'vision' are professedly common, our attention must now be focussed on the steps that we must take to bring ourselves nearer to them, on a discussion of the adequacy and validity of the means recommended and employed. But I think in this very respect have the political idealists and men of vision, by and large, failed us. The concern over means in a proper framework on means—ends relationships has remained one of the most neglected area of the picture builders, indeed if not of political

thought in general. In the absence of any clear, definite and workable philosophy of social action by which the ideals may be realized in practice, grand utopias have been left hanging in the air, beautiful to contemplate but lacking in dynamicity and potency of practicability. In others, even while the necessity of means and practical methods was recognised, arising out of a fundamental mistakes in the understanding of the ends means relationship, the methods that were adopted so vitiated the actual practice that was carried on for ends' sake that the stated ends were transformed beyond recognition. The failure lies in ignoring the fact that means—ends form part of a continuum, the dichotomy between them being a product of abstraction. In practice, means and ends, are in-separably linked to each other. As Dewey maintained, ends in view is itself a means, namely a procedural means. He also warned that "only a recognition in both theory and practice that ends are of the nature of hypotheses which have to be tried out in practice as means could alter mistaken notions of dealing with social issues."¹ The fact is that in the vast complex network of multi dimensional and inter twining relations and forces that we call the social nexus, no action can be counted to produce just a single effect, the one intended by the actor. Rather, it sets in motion, so to say wheels within wheels to produce multiple consequences : some foreseen, others unforeseen, some desired others neither desired nor desirable. Keeping in mind the plural effects that flow from them, one will reject as incorrect a merely instrumental view of actions as means. Rather shall we feel compelled to recognise that they are creators also. The idea that ends justify means could have gained currency only because this dynamic and pluralist-consequences aspect of actions was ignored, and attention fastened so much upon some single end or consequence which is liked that all other undesired and undesirable consequences are blotted from perception. This pernicious doctrine used so often in politics lends itself to encourage in sincerity and in Dewey's words "puts a pseudo-stamp of moral justification upon success at any price."² Giving up the purely instrumental view of means and "ends justify means" notion leads to a recognition of the necessity of purity of means, as also of the inadmissibility of violence-based methods to effect social change and usher in the ideal society. For as ends do not justify means, not even the

vision of a utopia in the offing can justify the large scale suffering, misery and privations as well as the eclipse of moral values that necessarily occur in violent revolutions and war.

Political ideologies that give a cavalier treatment to the question of means and take a purely instrumental view of them recommend use of violence in revolution as means. But this is really a weakness in the theory which lends itself to being seized by the tyrant and dictator for committing in-human acts of barbarism and negating the very values which are involved as ends to justify such acts as means. For example, the Marxist ideology seems to have floundered on this. In the name of brotherhood of mankind and of class-less society which is yet unborn, class-hatred is sown and fanned. In the name of the truly free society core all freedoms ruthlessly suppressed and for the sake of true equality and fraternity extermination of thousands is justified. Thus, lay the vision of the classless stateless ideal society embroiled in and shattered by violence as the absolute and all-pervasive rule of the more equal among equals tightened its noose and ruthlessly stifled the cry for freedom and dignity. The fact is that unless the means employed are themselves in the image of the ends and reflect them, we can hardly escape the pernicious denial of life now 'for the sake of' and in the waiting for the good life to come. No doubt the hope offered by these who could destroy all that is of value in and for man for the sake of a rosy future is a vain hope and the waiting a futile waiting as that of the tramps, waiting for Godot, whose message at the end of each day of waiting is, "Mr. Godot cannot come today, but will surely come tomorrow."

If violent revolutions suffer from such defects, the frequent use of war—the other major conventional instrument of effecting political control and resolving conflict—can be seen in no better light. For in war in an even greater degree than in revolutions prevail falsehood, deception and trickery as all scruples and concern for rights and wrongs, justice and injustice are thrown to the winds. Nothing matters except victory. It breeds and flourishes on fear, rage, resentment and hatred. The outcome of the struggle bears no relation to the rights or wrongs of the case and generally provides no constructive or durable resolution of the conflict. The defeated party lies low for a while nurturing deep resentment, hurt

pride and revengefulness, waiting for an opportunity to overcome his humiliation. Violence is infectious and sets in motion a vicious circle, giving a setback to man's search for the good life.

II

The crucial question then in social and political philosophy is that of a discovery and use of a method which reflects and is in the image of the perennial aspirations of man—a method which bridging the artificial gap created between means and ends, considers them to be convertible. In the devising and effective use of such a method lie the unique contribution and challenge of Gandhi. There is no confusion in Gandhi's thought on the question of ends—means inseparability and the need for an uncompromising stand on the purity of means. "The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree."³ He insisted that if one takes care of the means the end will take care of itself. "Means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life."⁴ "I feel that our progress towards the goal will be in exact proportion to the purity of our means."⁵

If this is so and the baneful effects of violence in subverting the political ends are kept in view, it follows for Gandhi that violence must be banished as the legitimate method of social change and resolution of conflicts. This line of thought, he took to its logical conclusion and showed the way to social reconstruction through truth and non violence. Through his constructive programme, he recommended a decentralized society of small, relatively simple and self sufficient villages which creates the right kind of socio-political, economic, moral climate for a life of peace, harmony, brotherhood, freedom and respect for persons and minimization of injustice and conflicts. But conflicts cannot be ruled out and in Satyagraha, he gave a truth seeking, truth making, non violent method of resolving them.

The spirit of Satyagraha is in a fundamental way different from the methods based on violence and those followed in majority rule democracies. It is a method that aims at an agreed settlement and not just a victory for oneself or one's side. In its practice the rightness and wrongness, the justice and injustice of the case are

never lost sight of, the ultimate values of freedom, respect and love for the person are to be adhered to throughout. "The appeal is never to his (opponent's) fear; it is, must be, always to his heart, the Satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce the wrong doer"⁶ and while the Satyagrahi must attack what he believes to be wrong and unjust, he is forbidden to attack men. The respect and dignity of the individual must never be sacrificed in the heat of the conflict. "We must therefore, be over courteous and patient with those who do not see eye to eye with us. We must resolutely refuse to consider our opponents as enemies of the country."⁷ To pass through the hard crust of rationalizations and closedness of the opponent, the dynamics of self suffering are to be applied. Suffering opens the eye of understanding. Through personal conscious suffering, moral persuasion, ahimsa, love of the opponent, Satyagraha is rendered an active creative instrument of social change in the service of humanity. It alters social relationships without harming men.

Indeed, there was such an acute awareness in Gandhi of the dangers of the distorting influence of ego centred impulses in man that he regarded as a precondition a constant practice of ruthless-self examination with a view to purge oneself of love of comfort and attachment of any sort. Talking in the traditional religious idiom, he enjoined upon his followers the necessity of observing the five vows of *ahimsa*, *satya*, *ashteya*, *brahmcharya* and *aparigraha* and warned them against the gravity of involvement in satyagraha without the requisite self knowledge and self control by saying that, "unless you impose on yourselves the five vows, you may not embark on the experiment at all".⁸

Thus combining in its dynamic character the universal love and the passionate concern of the sage and the humanist with the activist's impatience and commitment to combat wrong and in justice, wielded by men who cherish above all total honesty to others and to themselves, satyagraha is altogether a new and wonderful thing in the history of social thought. As a constructive, creative, non-violent technique of social change it challenges the habitual ways of man's thinking with respect to the necessity of coercion in social, political life as based on an uncritical acceptance of violence and a failure of creative imagination. Its challenge extends not only to Marxism, Fascism and other

deologies which accept violence and suppression of humanity and freedom either as justified in itself or as temporary means, but also to what may be described as western type liberal democracies which accept and, defend the so called 'legitimate' uses of violence.

Gandhi believed that there is no situation however complex and intricate, that lies beyond the scope of a constructive resolution by satyagraha. In view of the ends-means discussion and the subversive effect of violence for the cherished values of man, Gandhi's claim deserves serious attention and the method of satyagraha a fuller trial. In the full sense in which Gandhi sketched it, it cannot be said that it has been given a run even in India, the land of its birth. But the Gandhian method is new and bold and revolutionary and relentless in its demands of self control and subjugation of the lust for possessions and power. And it is much easier to settle in for the more 'realistic' method of social change through the structuring of social and political machinery and institutional devices. After all, the latter has been given a long try in the West and has been considered to hold promise for ushering in the ideal society of equality, freedom, fraternity, respect for human dignity and freedom in India also. However, the liberal democratic method with its emphasis on machinery, procedures and all too contrived institutional devices, with its assumption of broad agreement among the people and its hopes of the accepted procedures as adequate for a sound resolution of conflict can not deliver the goods.

If we take a close look at the way the system works we find that even when it is said to be working in a 'successful' manner, it can hardly be the harbinger of the ideal society. Bartering, horse-trading, lobbying, influence of big money, pressure tactics exaggerated claims and party politics—not to speak of wide spread corruption and misuse of power—these have come to be recognised and accepted as the general features of the system. The original issues and their intrinsic merits and demerits are shelved to the background, the decisions are generally taken by a small coterie of the chosen ones, the partymen obey unthinkingly and the opposition makes it its duty to oppose the government policy on every issue. If there was any question of regard for truth, integrity,

honesty, justice, realization of fraternity through a cooperative effort to bring genuine consensus, it gets lost in the heat of the machiavellian battle for power. While the majority acts on the wishes of their leaders and so has taken no real part in decisions, the minority feels neglected, unlistened to and nurtures grudges and resentment against what it regards as the tyranny and insensitivity of the majority. And if we keep in view the further fact mentioned above about it that in case of non-solution of conflicts through the accepted procedures and methods, the state as well as the citizenry has no resort but coercion and violence, the inadequacy of the democratic method vis-a-vis Gandhian satyagraha is made even clearer. Indeed the political experience of mankind only vindicates Gandhi's insight that the roots of all inequality, injustice repression, violence and exploitation, lie ultimately in the minds of men. Unless the heart is purified so that deep brotherly love, respect for other human beings and adherence to basic ethical norms of conduct become deeply ingrained in the mental-make-up, institutions and mechanical make-shifts and external devices are bound to remain contrived, artificial and in the long run ineffective. In communistic countries where the power is centered in a few hands if not in the hands of a single Big Brother, the hatred and violence of heart found expression in mass executions, and in torturing the 'enemies of the people.' The absolutist tyranny which is highly intolerant of any dissent or criticism gets established. The secret police is everywhere, the Big Brother is watching all, and in lieu of the promised land, men find themselves living under the cold and dark shadow of terror.

It seems to me then that Gandhism has definite claims of superiority over other ideologies. Further, a culture is not merely an aggregate of disjointed ideas about art, politics, social relations, morals, education and religion. Rather they are all integrated, organically inter-linked imbedded in a millien, a 'weltanschauung', a world-view. The significance of this truth for political life is that forms of politics which have germinated in, grown and developed in an alien soil can not be just lifted and grafted on to the culture and way of life of a people. If we do so the results are likely to be bewilderment and lack of direction in addition to a sense of estrangement in the ordinary people and absence of any idealism with a consequent fall to hypocrisy and irresponsibility on the

part of the elite. This points to a pressing need for developing political ideas and programmes in and for India, keeping the Indian conditions in mind and embodying the noble elements of the Indian tradition. Gandhi explicitly said that, "I would accept (foreign ideologies) only to the extent that I can assimilate them and adopt them to Indian scene."⁹ Sadly aware of the dazzlement caused in the minds of his westernised colleagues by the models of India's rulers, he cautioned, "Let us not be obsessed with catch-words and seductive slogans imported from the west. Have we not our distinct eastern tradition? Let us study our eastern institutions in the spirit of scientific inquiry and we shall evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism than the world has yet dreamed of."¹⁰

A loving study of our own established traditions combined with his vision of the non-violent ideal society led him to the view that small decentralized, more or less self-sufficient village republics provided for India the ideal direction for future. Gandhi has, by and large, not been taken seriously on this, and yet many serious thinkers including economists of professional standing are seriously challenging the western obsession with megasystems of production and distribution in the futile game of creation and satisfaction of endless desires. Partly it is due to the growing ecological sense of the in-practicability of a mindless spending of earth's resources which is implied by the western model and also because bigness and concentration of population in huge metropolitan areas have been found to be the breeding grounds for impersonality, insensitivity, cruelty, violence and a lust to concentrate abstract power. But especially in the context of India and other developing countries some not so run of the mill economists have spelled out "the essential good sense of a third world economic policy that rejected imitation of western models; breakneck urbanization, heavy capital investments, mass production, centralized development planning, and advanced technology."¹¹ On the other hand, pursuing unthinkingly the path of western style headlong development, "poor countries slip, and are pushed into the adoption of production methods and consumption standards which destroy the possibilities of self-reliance and self-help. The results are unintentional neo-colonialism and hopelessness."¹² While there is a growing realization that this "ethnocentric western economics" centered

around the machine and cybernated systems, beset with "the terrible simplicities of quantification must clearly be as devastating for the underdeveloped countries which import its vision of life as for the developed societies which originated it."¹³ Perhaps there is need, especially in the developing countries, for careful thinking and planning keeping in view Gandhi's insights on the subject.

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NOTES

1. John Dewey, *Logic, The Theory of Inquiry* (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1949), p. 497.

2. John Dewey ; *Human Nature and Conduct* (New York, The Modern Library, 1922), p. 231.

3. M. K. Gandhi : *Hind Swaraj* (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1939 edition) p. 71.

4. *Young India*, 26-12-1924.

5. D. G. Tendulkar : *Mahatma*, (Publications Division, Government of India, 1960) Vol. III, p. 216.

6. *Harijan*, 25-3-1939.

7. *Young India*, 29-9-1921.

8. M. K. Gandhi : *Hindu Dharma*, (Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1950), p. 69.

9. *Harijan*, 6-10-1946.

10. Quoted in *Anrit Bazar Patrika*, 5-8-1954.

11. Theodore Roszak in E. F. Schumacher : *Small is Beautiful* (New York etc. Harper and Row, 1973), p. 5.

12. Schumacher : *Small is Beautiful*, p. 6.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

LANGUAGE AS REVELATION

Introduction :

Several years ago I was working as a cognitive psychologist on a Canada Council project aimed at founding a new field of psychological research—"epistemological psychology" as we have called it.¹ The general question upon which we focused was "How does one know?" both philosophically and psychologically. The specific question which has continued to fascinate me is "How do we know via language?" How do both the ordinary words of everyday conversation and the special words of scriptural revelation convey their meaning, their truth to us? In Western philosophy, psychology, and theology, I found this study very difficult to pursue because of the academic alienation which exists between these three disciplines.² In traditional Indian thought, however, I found that there were no brick walls between disciplines and that the question as to how language conveys and reveals word meanings had a long and respected academic parentage. In my study of Indian thought, I was guided by my former teacher, Professor T. R. V. Murti back to the ancient debate between Kumāṛila Bhaṭṭa the Mīmāṃsaka, and Bhartṛhari, the great Grammarian. I found myself particularly drawn to Bhartṛhari's thinking because it spanned the diverse disciplines of philosophy, psychology and theology, and because it has been debated right up to the present day.³ In addition it seemed to relate in a very creative way both to very ancient concepts of language, such as Plato's notion of eternally existing ideas, and to some very modern notions, such as Chomsky's image of innate universal grammatical structures.

Before going further let me pause to say a brief word about the way in which two key words "language" and "revelation" are understood in Indian Hindu or Brāhmanical thought. "*Language*" is used in a rather special sense in Hindu thought. It is always conceived of in terms of speech. Inner thought is