

BOOK REVIEWS

Vishwanath Prasad Varma

Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase. 2 vols.

By PYARELAL

(Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1956–58.) Pp. 750; 887.

Economic and Industrial Life and Relations. 3 vols.

Compiled and edited by V. B. KHER

(Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1957.) Pp. cxii+156; 347; 250.

Towards Non-violent Socialism

By M. K. GANDHI. Edited by BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

(Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1951.) Pp. 165.

Sarvodaya

By M. K. GANDHI. Edited by BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

(Ahmadabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1954.) Pp. 200.

Gandhi as a Political Thinker

By BISHAN SARUP SHARMA

(Allahabad: Indian Press, 1956.) Pp. 164.

Although the first significant book published in 1909 (a biography by on the life and ideas of Mahatma Reverend Doke), it is only since 1920 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was that a vast literature has grown up

about the activities and thoughts of the great leader. Following his tragic martyrdom, which deeply touched the feelings and emotions of mankind, a renewed interest has been shown in the world-moving consequences and implications of the momentous ideas embodied in the personality of Gandhi.

The history of Gandhological¹ literature can be divided into three phases. The first phase begins about 1920. In this phase interest was mainly concentrated on the holy life of the Mahatma and a number of eulogistic books were written comparing the Mahatma to Buddha, Jesus Christ, St. Paul, and St. Francis. René Fülöp-Miller in his *Lenin and Gandhi* interpreted these two great leaders as symbols of protest against Western civilization. Perhaps the greatest production of this period is Romain Rolland's *Mahatma Gandhi*. Other works also appeared, pointing out the eccentricities of Gandhi's life—for example, *The Little Brown Man*. The publication of Gandhi's *Autobiography or My Experiments with Truth* provided interesting and profound material for the psychological study of his personality. Having at times a biblical ring, this book is more revealing than Tolstoi's *Confessions*,

1. I make a distinction between Gandhology and Gandhism. "Gandhism" is a term of limited import and refers to the ideas of Gandhi. "Gandhology," on the other hand, includes a study of his life as well as of his ideas. A similar distinction has been made between Buddhology and Buddhism or between Marxology and Marxism.

although not shockingly so as the *Confessions* of Rousseau.

In the second phase of Gandhological literature, beginning about 1930, interest was mainly concentrated on Gandhi's political ideas. His application of the perennially venerated concepts of truth and non-violence to politics appeared fascinating. C. F. Andrews' *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas* is a significant production of this period. The tributes offered to Gandhi on his seventieth birthday and collected by Radhakrishnan in *Mahatma Gandhi*, which he edited, form an important study of Gandhi's political ideas and techniques.

In the third phase, beginning with 1940, interest is also focused on his economic philosophy. The Indian national movement had by now assumed a strong foundation and had necessarily become keener in its search for solutions to the pressing economic problems. This made imperative a clarification of Gandhi's ideas on the dominant economic issues.

This threefold periodization of Gandhological literature is not intended to convey something absolute. It is a generalized assessment for the purpose of relative emphasis and must be considered with one important point in mind. Once a phase has begun, it continues. It does not stop with the beginning of the succeeding phase. For example, after the death of Gandhi the biographical side of Gandhological literature has received intensive attention. D. G.

Tendeulkar has brought out eight volumes of *Mahatma* in more than four thousand pages. Other leaders and persons associated with Gandhi are bringing out volumes containing their reminiscences. Gandhi's hitherto unpublished letters are also being collected and gradually published.

Among the volumes selected here for review, the two by Pyarelal are biographical. Sharma's book pertains to the field of political theory, and the volumes edited by Kher and Kumarappa bring out significant selections from Gandhi's writings in the fields of sociology and economics. This would indicate that the phases of Gandhological literature, once begun, continue, although the emphasis may shift in some other direction.

Pyarelal's two volumes are written in a forceful and lucid style. He has a mastery over English prose as well as a rich vocabulary. His objectivity and immense command of facts place him in the category of the great biographers of the world. In reading these books, I am reminded of Morley's *Life of Gladstone*.

These books provide strikingly contrary impressions of the sublime and the pathetic and reveal the great stature of Gandhi's prophetic personality. The absolute sincerity with which Gandhi attempted to handle the raging and bitter communal questions is moving. His devotion to truth and to non-violence was stupendous. His spirit of self-immolation is revealed in his lonely marches in Noakhali in Bengal (*The Bare-*

footed Pilgrim, Vol. I, chap. xix, pp. 487-508) and in his tour of the riot-affected areas of Bihar, his majestic, divine faith revealing itself in ever brighter colors. But the last days of Gandhi have a pathetic aspect of the forlorn prophet (II, 649). Either because of the persistent eruption in his mind of the conception of detachment (*anasakti*) taught in the *Bhagavadgita* or because of physical frailty brought about by advancing age, Gandhi loses his grip over the fluctuating dynamics of the political scene. In that volume, pages 288-89, there is an illustration beneath which is quoted a line from Gandhi: "Who listens to me today?" These twofold currents of the exalted and the sublime dimensions of a God-intoxicated prophetic personality and the voluntary or necessary decline of his hold on the actual concrete processes of political decision-making in the crucial years 1945-48 are the dominating themes of this biography.

Pyarelal's first volume contains a chapter (xxiii, pp. 569-605) on *Brahmacarta*, or Gandhi's concept of continence or self-restraint. The experiment that Gandhi is credited with for the testing of his control of sensual passions is peculiar. Admirers and believers will hail it as one of the supreme tests of self-control, while the research student imbued with the "devastating" ideas of psychology and psychoanalysis will find in it some interesting material for his "case study."

The quotation from Gandhi re-

produced on page 715 of the second volume will conclusively refute the insinuation prevalent in some circles that the fast undertaken by Gandhi in January, 1948, was aimed indirectly against the policy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, then home minister of the Indian government.

The author's two volumes contain fifty-three chapters. The historian of this period would be aided in his study of the work if each chapter contained in its subtitle an indication of the time (the number of months and days) with which it deals. In his choice of titles for the chapters, Pyarelal has elected to be poetic and sentimental rather than factual and concrete. For the historian who may want to consult these big tomes on specific points such chapters headings as "Bitter and Sweet," "The Slow Leaven," "Blood and Tears," or "Triumph and Tragedy" offer no easy clue to what they may be expected to contain.

This painstaking labor constitutes a welcome and immensely significant addition to the literature of Gandhology. It is marked by an extensive collection of facts and details as well as by systematic handling of them. The profound veneration of the author for Gandhi adds a sweet note to this narrative of over fifteen hundred pages.

Economic and Industrial Life and Relations, edited by V. B. Kher, reveals in its three volumes the integral approach of Gandhi toward economics. He did not view economic prob-

lems as isolated departments of man's activity. To him a moral, simple, and devout life was central and hence, along with Ruskin and Tolstoj, he sponsored a psychological approach to economics. He adhered absolutely to the cardinal concepts of truth, non-violence, and non-accumulation and wanted to make them the criteria of economic action. There is, however, a pronounced realism in Gandhi's economic ideas. He regarded the village as the center of Indian organization. His opposition to large-scale nationalization, capitalism, urbanization, and the craze for laborsaving devices is not the outburst of a patriarchal agrarian reaction but is rooted in the keen perception that the only way to harness the huge Indian manpower characterized by an accelerated rate of the growth of population and the slender economic resources of the country was to strengthen cottage industries and *Khadi*. Gandhi's economic radicalism is also brought out in these volumes in his championship of the concept of equality of ways for the lawyer, the doctor, and the scavenger. He is trenchant in his stand on the mounting unemployment. He was keen on mitigating the evils of an increasingly disproportionate and hierarchical economic structure—hence the old moral concept of trusteeship receives an enlarged application, and Gandhi is said to have sponsored the idea of even having the state enter the picture should there be no voluntary acceptance of

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the concept of trusteeship (I, 125–26).

The entire work shows a painstaking and judicious selection of materials, the first volume containing an informative and well-arranged summary of Gandhi's economic ideas. These volumes will serve as a mine of rich materials for the student of Gandhian sociology and economics.

The title of the book edited by Bharatan Kumarappa, *Towards Non-violent Socialism*, may give a false perspective to Gandhi's economic ideas. Both socialism and Gandhism want to establish a society oriented to economic equality. But the transcendental, ascetic, and moral approach of Gandhi has little in common with the dominantly materialistic and secularistic ideal of modern socialism which accepts the cult of the accentuation of production. In a vague and loose sense Gandhi's social and economic ideas may be comprehended under the rubric of *non-violent socialism*, but from an accurate and theoretical standpoint the title is a misnomer. It would imply that the difference between Gandhism and socialism is only with reference to the technique of non-violence, and that otherwise they are generally similar. The dominantly societarian character of socialism would repel the individualist and prophetic soul of Gandhi. The merit of this book lies, however, in bringing together for the general reader as well as for the advanced student of Gandhology materials which were

so long hidden in the various weeklies which he edited in the course of his long political career.

Sarvodaya is a collection of Gandhi's writings pertaining to his concept of a perfect community. Gandhi's *sarvodaya* has its roots in the Vedantic concept of the spiritual unity of existence and the Gita-Buddhistic concept of *sarvabhutahita*, or the good of all living beings. Its wide comprehensive idealism thus is opposed to the Lockean theory of majoritarianism, the Marx-Gumplovicz concept of class and racial struggle, and the Benthamite formula of the greatest good of the greatest number. Just as Plato's ethereal idealism is brought out in the *Republic*, while the *Statesman* and the *Laws* show concessions to the realistic demands of human nature and the social structure, so also in Gandhi there is a realistic theory meant for immediate application in winning India's freedom and for possible application in the near future, as well as a more transcendent theory which postulates a radical transformation of human nature and a more perfect incorporation of the moral techniques in the corporate life of mankind. At a time when the *sarvodaya* movement launched by Vinoba Bhave is advancing in India, the publication of this book is to be welcomed. It will provide a good manual with reference to which the research student of contemporary Indian politics can compare the original Gandhian ideas on *sarvodaya*

with the plans and notions of the leaders of the contemporary movement.

There is some duplication of material in *Sarvodaya*, *Towards Non-violent Socialism*, and *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations*, but this is inevitable because some of their themes are common ones. The student of political theory and social philosophy cannot help feeling that in Gandhi's writings there is an absence of large-scale theoretical generalizations. Gandhi provides empirical suggestions. He did not have either the requisite time or the philosophical competence to work out mature expositions of his sociological, economic, and political ideas and precepts.

Sharma prepared his book *Gandhi as a Political Thinker* for a Doctor's dissertation at the University of London. He tries to compare the ideas of Gandhi with those of the British liberals and to establish points of kinship between Gandhi's ideas and the philosophy of rights and political obligation advocated by a liberal idealist like T. H. Green. Such comparative studies are to be welcomed. While Dhavan's book, *Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (prepared as a Ph.D. dissertation for the Lucknow University), is an intensive study of the ideas of Gandhi on political theory and public administration, Sharma's book is a competent study of a limited problem in Gandhology. It is true that there are points of similarity between the ideas of Gandhi and the British lib-

erals, especially in their grudging attitude toward the spheres of state action, but they emerge from different traditions. Gandhi was more radical and trenchant in his opposition to the state than any British liberal nurtured in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Essentially, Gandhi was a moral prophet who had declared his unequivocal resistance to all concentrations of power, force, and violence. The influence of the individualistic spirit of the old *sannyasin* and the *bhikkhu* tradition of India, mixed with the Protestant individualism of Thoreau and the radical antistatism of Tolstoi, was strongly pronounced in Gandhi, an arch-champion of the moral conscience. Hence, in spite of similarities between Gandhi and Green regarding the existence of a primal spiritual infinite, the necessity of the perfectability of human character, and the justifiability of resistance in some cases, the profound difference between the spirit of the Oxford professor and the mighty moral revolutionary leader of the Non-co-operation movement (1920–22), the Salt Satyagraha (1930–31), and the famous Quit India Movement (1942–44) must be borne in mind. Despite all his limited support to not only the right but the duty of justified resistance, Green remained a reformist and a supporter of capitalism and unequal distribution of property as the necessary concomitant to the different requirements for the objectification of personality. Gandhi, on the

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other hand, had the spirit of the persistent rebel and the lone sojourner on what he considered to be the path to truth. Hence Sharma's conclusions have to be taken with a degree of caution and should be integrated with a more comprehensive approach to the diverse phases and aspects of the political philosophy of Gandhi. The author, however, is to be congratulated for his keen grasp of the problems of modern political philosophy and his scholarly handling of the theme of the thesis.

In view of the growing interest in the world in Gandhi's ideas, it is essential that a major work should

appear on Gandhi's thought which should elaborate the philosophical and sociological foundations of his ideas as well as their concrete and hypothetical implications for man and society. It can be hoped that books like D. M. Datta's *Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, B. S. Sharma's *Gandhi as a Political Thinker*, Patel's *Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, and the earlier books of C. F. Andrews, Shridhanani, Kripalani, Sitaramayya, Dhavan, Catlin, and others will provide the strong and necessary foundations for a major systematic book on Gandhism.