

M. K. GANDHI AND THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE IN INDIA.

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ANYONE who wishes to understand the ethical and philosophical basis of the struggle for Independence that is going on in India, led by Mahatma M. K. Gandhi, should carefully study the following teachings of Buddha :

“I teach the not bringing about of all those conditions of heart which are evil and not good. . . . However, I teach Simha, the doing of such actions as are righteous, by deed, by word, and by thought. I teach the bringing about of all those conditions of heart which are good and not evil. . . . I proclaim the annihilation of egotism, of lust, of ill-will, of delusion. . . . However, I do not proclaim the annihilation of forbearance, of love, of charity, and of truth. . . .”

“He who deserves punishment must be punished, and he who is worthy of favor must be favored. Yet at the same time he teaches us to do no injury to any living being but to be full of love and kindness. . . . These injunctions are not contradictory, for whosoever must be punished must be punished for the crimes which he has committed. He suffers his injury not through the ill-will of the judge but on account of his evil-doing. . . .”

“The Tathagata teaches that all warfare in which man tries to slay his brother is lamentable, but he does not teach that those who go to war in a righteous cause after having exhausted all means to preserve peace are blameworthy. . . . He must be blamed who is the cause of war. . . .”

“The doctrine of the conquest of self, O Simha, is not taught to destroy the souls of men, but to preserve them. . . . He who conquered self is more fit to live, to be successful, and to gain victories than he who is the slave of self. . . . He who harbors in his heart love of truth will live and not die, for he has drunk the

water of immortality. Struggle, then, O General, courageously and fight your battles vigorously, but be a soldier of truth and Tathagata will bless you".¹

Mahatma Gandhi is not a Buddhist by faith. He is a Jain by birth and by faith, and he believes that all religions lead to the same goal. Fundamentally he is a product of various spiritual influences. All India has been enriched by the ethical teachings of Buddha. Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, Confucianism, and other religions have absorbed much of the truth taught by Buddhism, as truth is no religion's monopoly.

"Be a soldier of Truth" is the spirit of Buddha's teaching and we find that Mahatma Gandhi is teaching the same doctrine when he calls upon the Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Parsees, Sikhs, and others to take the vow of "Satyagraha", which means "Hold fast to the Truth". Gandhi preaches that you should not only know that you are standing on the ground of truth, but should stay by it, suffer for it, and never surrender yourself to any force so long as you are true. Here he again is doing what the ancient sages of India advised regarding Politics. For them Politics could never be separated from ethics, and Politics was known to be "Rajaharam" or righteous guide in the science of ruling.

Gandhi like the sages of the past, including Buddha, preaches love, but he emphasizes that Truth must be upheld and the offenders must be punished. So Gandhi demands from the Government of India that those who were responsible for the wholesale human slaughter at Amritsar, those who lied to the Indian people and the world regarding the war aims of the British Government, must be punished and the wrong done to the people and to the world at large be rectified. Gandhi demands these with no spirit of hatred to the culprits but with a feeling of love for humanity. He declares to the English people and to the world in his simple and prophetic way that he has no hatred against any person, but if he had the power he would destroy the Satanic (unrighteous) rule of Britain in India.

Gandhi's method of warfare is peculiarly strong because he supplies his soldiers with a philosophy which makes him and them prepared for all forms of sufferings for a righteous cause. They face the consequences with conscious determination to uphold the truth and the cause of righteousness. Gandhi has proclaimed Non-co-operation against the Government and is asking the people to

¹ *The Gospel of Buddha* by Paul Carus, pp. 125-129.

build up their own government without fearing any consequence or adopting any violence. But Gandhi is not afraid of a war if that is to come. He does not advocate bloodshed but he sees that there may be blood shed to uphold the cause of righteousness, so he proclaimed the other day:

“The time is coming soon when I may have to order you to disobey all state-made laws even if it means pools of blood.”

He knows that there will be need of sacrifice for the cause of liberty, and he will make the sacrifice; but he sees as did the great Gautama Buddha. “He must be blamed who is the cause or war,” when he says:

“The responsibility for anarchy, if it does overtake, will rest with the Indian government and those who support it, in spite of its wrongs, not upon those who refuse to perform the impossible task of making people forget vital wrongs and try to direct their anger into a proper channel. . . . We are not going to tamper with the masses. They are indeed our sheet anchor. We shall continue patiently to educate them politically, till they are ready for safe action. There need be no mistake about our goal. As soon as we feel reasonably sure of non-violence continuing among them in spite of provoking executions, we shall certainly call upon the Sepoy (Indian soldier) to lay down his arms and the peasantry to suspend payment of taxes. We are hoping that the time may never have to come. We shall leave no stone unturned to avert such a serious task. But we shall not flinch when the moment comes and the need arises”.

Followers of Gandhi are performing their tasks with religious scrupulousness. They are engaged not only in boycotting English goods, English courts, and the Government in general, but also in the task of National purification, by boycotting the liquor and drugs of India. Here again Mahatma Gandhi is acting like Buddha, who enjoined his disciples not to use any drinks nor drugs. He is also following in the footsteps of Gautama Buddha when he urges the Indian nation to purge itself of the curse of untouchability among castes and pleads for the oppressed, the disinherited, and the poor of all lands.

THE SPIRIT OF THE FOLLOWERS OF MAHATMA GANDHI.

Mahatma Gandhi advises his followers to boldly oppose the present Satanic government of Britain in India, but not to use force. The followers of Mahatma Gandhi are commonly known in

India as Non-co-operators. They must not co-operate with the Government. They must not even defend themselves before a British court of justice. The British Government has begun to arrest the prominent followers of Mahatma Gandhi on the charge of spreading disaffection against the established Government. On the 25th of July, District Magistrate K. N. Knox of Allahabad issued a notice under Section 112, Criminal Procedure Code of India, against Srijut Ranga Iyer, the editor and publisher of the *Independent*, to appear before the Court of the District Magistrate and show reasons why he should not be required to enter into a bond for Rs 10,000, and also give security by the bond of two sureties in the sum of ten thousand rupees each for his good behavior for the term of one year. The editor was charged with spreading disaffection against the British Government in India.

Instead of defending himself, Mr. Iyer made the following statement:

"I plead guilty to the charge of spreading disaffection. I have no affection for the present system of government. That, however, does not mean that I have got any ill-will against the Europeans, or Indians who happen to be in the Government. I consider it a sacred duty to change the present system of administration. I want the present system of administration to be removed root and branch, and a system created responsible to the people of India; but this object I have always maintained should be achieved by non-violent efforts. My religious teachers teach Ahimaga (not harming anybody). The National Congress of which I am a member has stipulated that we should be non-violent in method. I have to be true to my religion, to my conscience, and to the Congress. I have only to add that I am ready to deliver my body to the present Government and by so doing to contribute my little share to prevent their great endeavor to crush the Nation's soul".

On July 26th Swami Krishananda, a prominent non-co-operator and a leader of the liquor shop picketing movement, was arrested and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. The accused made no defence and said that he was a non-co-operator.

Because of the persecution of innocent patriots, Indian police officers are resigning from the British Government service. When Mr. Maulana Sherwani, a Mohammedan non-co-operator was sentenced to imprisonment, Mr. Syed Mohammed Riza, Sub-inspector Criminal Investigation, Department of the British Indian Police, resigned his office with the following declaration:

“Maulana Sherwani’s arrest and the charge brought against him and his conviction on the evidence produced against him, have convinced even a sinner like myself that no justice can be expected from the British court and that the whole bureaucracy is working against Islam and India. My conscience compels me now to give up the Government service in order that I may serve my country and my religion. . . . I hope that you will accept my resignation as Police Sub-inspector as soon as you can and allow me to serve my God and my country.”