

# THE PLACE OF ETHICAL VALUES END THE RELATIONSHIP OF MEANS AND ENDS IN THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF GANDHI and MACHIAVELLI

par

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Having pondered for some time about the best means to be used to attain the desired end, and after a hundred years of Gandhi's death one comes to a point of reconsidering his philosophy, of comparing it with a seemingly incompatible point of view, that of Machiavelli's, and of reconciling it with the existing realities.

With this objective in mind, it would be rather interesting to launch into a survey of relevant works and to come to a reconciliation.

So let us try to find the truth in their own words: "There are two methods of attaining the desired end: truthful and truthless... in the path of Satyagraha there is always unflinching adherence to truth. It is never to be forsaken on any account, not even for the sake of one's country... He (Satyagraha) conquers the enemy by force of soul which is love"<sup>1</sup>. This is the path followed by Gandhi and in this classification he seems to have placed Machiavelli in the Truthless, for he asks, "why should a nation's cause be considered right and another's wrong... The strong are often seen preying upon the weak... The wielder of brute force does not scruple about the means to be used. He does not question the propriety

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1) Gandhi, Mahatma, Life Writings and Speeches. With a forward by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Ganesh and Co. Madras s. 320.

of means, if he can somehow achieve his purpose"<sup>2</sup>. Machiavelli says in answer to this that the one who "uses force and severity is more praiseworthy"<sup>3</sup>, and "that for the purpose of saving one's country no propositions ought to be rejected"<sup>4</sup>, agreeing with Legate Lentulus on the subject. He also says that the one who wants to secure himself against enemies should be "victorious either by force or fraud, to make himself loved or feared by the people"<sup>5</sup>.

Whereas love is the most important aspect of human life for Gandhi, Machiavelli says the question is "whether it is better to be loved than feared or feared than loved... It would be desirable to be both, but since that is difficult, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved"<sup>6</sup>.

History gives the famous words, "the end justifies the means" to Machiavelli, whereas the centre of Gandhi's system related to his general doctrine of means and ends is that the "means must be harmonious with the ends; good ends can not be obtained by bad means. The truth therefore must rule all along the line and any deviation from it will impair the purity of Satyagrah"<sup>7</sup>.

Both Machiavelli and Gandhi were patriots. Their aims were, in one case the unification of Italy and in the other "self-rule" of India, respectively; but whereas Machiavelli talked mostly on behalf of the Prince, advising him to use any possible means to achieve unification, Gandhi spoke on behalf of the people to enlighten them and to bring them liberty. He says, "that his patriotism is for (him) a stage in his journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. "Thus it will be seen that for me there are not politics devoid of religion."<sup>8</sup>

2) op. cit. pp. 322.

3) Machiavelli, N. *The Prince and the Discourses*. With an introduction by Max Lerner. N. Y. 1940 pp. 480.

4) op. cit. pp. 527.

5) Machiavelli, N. *The Prince*. edited by T. G. Bergin N. Y. 1947 pp. 22.

6) op. cit. pp. 48.

7) Sheean, V. *Mahatma Gandhi, A Great Life in Brief*. N. Y. 1955 pp. 104

8) Andrews, C. F. *Mahatma Gandhi, His Own Story*. N. Y. pp. 357.

Gandhi could not speak as a Prince, he has "never known how to keep anyone as a servant"<sup>9</sup> even. When Machiavelli speaks on behalf of the people, it is to point out to them national liberation, democracy and patriotism, but his advice would be on the grounds of "imperative of military power in ensuring survival... against glorifying humility, pacifism and the weaker virtues... (which)... dulled the fighting edge of a State"<sup>10</sup>. Use "ruthless measures when necessary"<sup>11</sup>. He would say "nothing happens except by way of power",<sup>12</sup> whereas Gandhi would say reasonableness and truth's force are the factors that makes things work. One can see also that the "definition of Man for Machiavelli is purely physical"<sup>13</sup> whereas Gandhi's Man is spiritual, a striving for purification, because he says that "experiments are spiritual or rather moral, for, the essence of religion is morality"<sup>14</sup> and for Gandhi, religion is most important even when he is striving in the political field—as we have seen<sup>15</sup>—and "he has been concerned not merely with political and social aims, but with moral and spiritual ideals. More truly than he himself realized for a time, he was moving under the impulse of his essential nature, on the religious plane"<sup>16</sup>, and "Machiavelli was utterly secular in his thinking"<sup>17</sup>.

Machiavelli's common meaning "for democrats and dictators alike is that whatever your ends... you must rest your power ultimately on a cohesive principle"<sup>18</sup>. He would consider Gandhi an unarmed prophet and he says that "unarmed prophets have always been destroyed, whereas armed prophets have succeeded,"<sup>19</sup> but

9) Gandhi, M. Gandhi's Autobiography - The Story of my Experiments with Truth. Washington 1948 pp. 201.

10) Lerner, Max, introduction... op. cit. pp. XXXVII.

11) Ibid.

12) Santillana, de Giorgio, selected with an introduction and commentary. The Age of Adventure, The Renaissance of Philosophers. N. Y. 1956 pp. 106.

13) Ibid.

14) Gandhi, M. Autobiography.... op. cit. pp. 5.

15) Ibid.

16) Andrews, C. F. op. cit. pp. 23.

17) Lerner, M. intro.. op. cit. pp. XXXVIII.

18) op. cit. pp. XLIII.

19) Santillana, G. op. cit. pp. 106.

the unbelievable success of Gandhi shows that this is not the truth at all, and it also shows that the saying "he who builds on people builds on sand"<sup>20</sup>, or "on mud"<sup>21</sup>, is false.

Ethical concepts are supreme with Gandhi as his emphasis in his autobiography "my experience has shown me that we win justice by rendering justice to the other party"<sup>22</sup>, indicates. He has studied Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' and found that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all, all work is valuable and that a life of labour is worth living; and he reduces these principles to practice. In practicing what he believed he uses the way of "Satyagraha" (passive resistance), the word being too narrowly construed... that it (passive resistance) was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it would be characterized by hatred and that it would finally manifest itself in violence",<sup>23</sup> but, "as the name implies, Satyagraha (truth-force or soul-force) is an insistence on truth, which dynamically expressed, means love : and by law of love we are required not to return hatred and violence for violence, but to return good for evil"<sup>24</sup>. He also uses the way of Ahimsa, which means non-killing and there is "no room for violence even for the sake of your own country..."<sup>25</sup> "The duty of Ahimsa is to stop the war. He who is not equal to that duty, he who has no power of resisting war, may take part in war, and yet whole-heartedly try to free himself, his nation and the world from war"<sup>26</sup>. But he also says that, "when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advice violence... but I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment",<sup>27</sup>; Machiavelli says that "the chief cause of the loss of States in the contempt of this act (war)". The Prince should

20) Bergin, T. G. op. cit. pp. 28.

21) Lerner, M. op. cit. pp. 38.

22) Gandhi, M. *Autobiography...* op. cit. pp. 225.

23) op. cit. pp. 389.

24) Gandhi, M. *Life, Writings...* op. cit. pp. 346. (there is a resemblance to the Christian Doctrine.

25) op. cit. pp. 156.

26) Gandhi, M. *Autobiography...* pp. 428.

27) Hill, Norman, *International Relations, Documents and Readings*, N. Y. 1950, pp. 318.

"never let his thoughts to stray from exercise of war, and in peace he ought to practice it more than in war."<sup>28</sup>

Although Machiavelli has been mostly judged on his "The Prince", he has not written this book in sincerity but to present something to the Prince that would please him and show him the technique of a successful prince. For although one sees similar ideas of his in "the Discourses", it is also obvious that he prefers people to the Prince in that "people are guilty of fewer excesses than the Prince and that the errors of the people are of less importance and therefore more easily remedied"<sup>29</sup>. Machiavelli might not have been critical of Gandhi; his has also been 'a' means to achieve his end, for "in the actions of men... the end justifies the means... and the means will always be judged honorable and praised by everyone"<sup>30</sup>. But after the achieved success Machiavelli's men pass from the state of civil organisation to absolutism. Although some feel "that Machiavelli's government is not so much in need of a revision as idealists might wish"<sup>31</sup>, since Gandhi is an idealist, he would not approve of this judgement at all. But since "Machiavelli rejects metaphysics, theology, idealism"<sup>32</sup> in complete contrast to Gandhi, it would seem difficult to reconcile these two on these subjects.

Machiavelli has shown the reality of his views through examples in history and we know the success of Gandhi's through his own experience. For our modern civilisations the concept of the people, the joint force of the people for the just cause and the attempt to bring international cooperation and understanding can be achieved with the joint methods of Gandhi and Machiavelli, a survey of the world through the eyes of Gandhi-Machiavelli.

As we have already seen, it is better to be both loved and feared but it much safer to be feared, says Machiavelli, because he could not trust people. We have also noted that in a choice between

28) *op. cit.* pp. 312.

29) Lerner, M., *Discourses.. op. cit.* Part LVIII pp. 265.

30) Lerner, M., *Prince.. op. cit.* pp. 66.

31) Bergin, T. G., *op. cit.* introduction. pp. XII.

32) Lerner, M., *op. cit.* introduction. pp. XXXI.

cowardice and violence, Gandhi advises violence although he believes non-violence to be infinitely superior. Again the reason is, he has realised his absolute idealism in contrast to the undesirable crude reality of the world.

Therefore one can say that if the situation is such that one can not resist war and is employed in one (i.e. The Prince through the unification process), then he should not be a coward and be violent but also try not to use this war as a means, but aim at freeing himself, his nation and the world from war (as desired by Gandhi). That is, the Prince who can not employ Ahimsa, has to bestow freedom and welfare to his people (his aim) after establishing the unification (the means) and thus be loved by them rather than feared.

Truth, justice, non-violence are essential, whereas the weakness of Gandhi, such as relying on the good will, positivity and utter cooperation of the people for the same cause can be replaced by the more realistic attitude of Machiavelli towards use of power and centralized force. In footing with this Gandhi seems to have noticed his utter idealism in his last days, as he says, "Mind you, no ordinary government can get along without the use of force"<sup>33</sup>. He says that we must try to dissuade the government from pursuing such a course (war), but "our ordinary duty as subjects, is not to enter into the merits of the war, but when the war has actually broken out, to render such assistance as we possibly can",<sup>34</sup> to establish peace and non-violence as a consequence.

To exert cohesion through love, to secure order and unity through non-violence should be "the" ends and means aimed for. This then can be called an attempt at the reconciliation of these two philosophies.

33) Sheean, V. op. cit. pp. 38.

34) Andrews, C. F. op. cit. pp. 165.