GANDHI MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

THE DUAL CULTURES OF INDEPENDENT INDIA

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I

A social anthropologist cannot but be aware that there are a myriad cultures in India, the term culture being used to mean a distinct way of life: Each tribe, sub-caste, sect, let alone religion, has a culture of its own which marks it off from the others. There are, in addition, regional cultures, the region for this purpose being a small group of neighbouring villages which share a distinct cultural pattern and which is marked off from other similar regions. There are literally hundreds of such relatively homogeneous regions in India, and the culture of each of them cuts across caste and class. Finally, the traditionally highest and lowest groups in the caste system have each their own cultural uniformities which ignore, to some extent, spatial divisions.

In short, the complexity of India's cultural situation baffles analysis in simple and neat terms. The honest scholar finds that it is difficult to list clearly the differences between groups and categories for the reason that rarely are the differences in the kind of elements that go to form each culture but in the patterns into which these elements are woven, and in the emphasis placed on the various elements which make up the patterns. In short, the differences are of emphasis, nuance, form and pattern while the elements remain more or less the same. And as already stated, the various patterns criss-cross each other making the whole bewilderingly complex. In contrast, the Indian culture of our public speakers and of the Indian Tourism Development Corporation is an amazingly simple, and of course, marvellous phenomenon.

My emphasis on the complexity and diversity of Indian culture ought not to be taken to mean that uniformities do not exist even though they may not be such as to please politicians and reformers. To mention an obvious example; while caste is divisive when viewed in the context of the State and country, at least two thirds of the population, especially villagers, are guided by caste rules in their day-to-day life, and this gives them all, paradoxically, a common cultural idiom. Anthropologists hesitate to mention this fact as they do not wish to be dubbed reactionaries by urban, middle class and "progressive" intellectuals. This is part of a widespread ostrich-like attitude on their part which refuses to recognise the existence of unpleasant facts.

My aim in this lecture, however, is not to attempt a characterisation of Indian culture but to highlight only one feature of it which is crucial for my purpose. I have in mind certain broad uniformities which are emerging in response to the

forces unleashed under British rule and independence. These uniformities are gaining strength, and even today the sharpness and clarity of their emergence varies from one part of the country to another. Their emergence does not mean, however, that there are no other contrary tendencies especially at the State and local levels.

Looking at the country as a whole, I see the emergence of what I may call broadly, dual cultures, and the dynamics of the relationship between each of them is likely to have profound consequences for the Indian economy, polity, society and worldview. The dual cultures are each based on the urban middle class and the rural poor respectively. The country's officials, specialists in various fields, and other professionals are largely recruited from the urban middle class. The latter in turn draws heavily on the high and middle castes and the top layer of the minority groups. This is a gross over-simplification but it is necessary for expository purposes. It is an articulate and influential class, and while it is in the last analysis subordinate to the political elite, in practice it is a more egalitarian relation, the politicians being dependent on the professionals for providing continuity to the administration, and for the special and expensive skills without which no modern government, especially that of a huge country like India, can be run.

The better-off groups from the higher and middle castes predominate in the urban middle class while all those living in villages, excepting for middle and big landowners, a few well-off traders and artisans, and households supported by urban members with salaries, constitute the rural poor. They use the regional language exclusively just as multilinguism and the use of English are characteristic of the middle class. But the rural poor have votes and the politicians have to woo them. Nobody can doubt, after the last elections, that they can decide the fate of political parties.

In between the two classes is a third interest group which occupies a strategic position in the emerging social structure of independent India : I refer to the landowning families from the dominant and high castes. They are among the greatest beneficiaries from independence. They are politically powerful, especially at the State level, and they have used their power to strengthen themselves economically. They have a fair representation in the bureaucracy and the professions, though the quantum of their representation varies from State to State. The partiality of this class for large, sprawling families enables them to operate in both rural and urban areas, using their urban contacts to exploit better their rural opportunities and *vice versa,* just as they use their political power to gain access to wealth, education and the professions. They are the oppressors and exploiters of harijans, landless labourers and the other rural poor. They have used their power at the State level to delay and sabotage land reforms.

The ambitions of this class are to join the urban middle class while at the same time retaining their dominant position in the rural areas. They are only too keenly aware that representation in the bureaucracy and professions mean influence if not power, and all rural folk are fascinated with the picture of officials sitting on comfortable chairs before large tables adorned by telephones and files while whirring fans make the weather bearable. A peon hangs about to answer the slightest summons of the official. They love to contrast the above picture with that of a sweating cultivator driving his plough bullocks on a hot afternoon and the totally chancy character of his income.

The rich landowners are eager to become part of the urban middle class, the parasites whom they love to criticise. Educated members of the dominant castes prefer to socialise with their urban peers and ignore, as far as possible, their links with their rural relatives. Rural relations are many—stranded and sticky unlike urban ones which can be snapped without much difficulty. Rural relatives are often seen as an embarrassment and nuisance, and as obstacles to one's upward mobility. Urban life and amenities, including entertainment, make life interesting particularly for the womenfolk who find village life a drudge. A State cabinet minister told me some time ago that he might settle down in his natal village after retiring from politics but his womenfolk would not, "not even if I gave them a Mercedes Benz."

The overall hierarchy that then emerges includes the urban middle class and the rural poor with the richer section of the dominant landowning castes occupying a crucial position between the two. They have links with the urban middle class, and their aspirations are to be part of them but they are also aware that their rural base is essential to them.

The emulation of the urban middle class by the richer members of the dominant rural castes has certain economic and political consequences. As already mentioned, professional members of the urban middle class have an active role in policy formulation and implementation, and their ideas and beliefs about rural people, in particular the rural poor, are therefore important. Specifically, some time-honoured myths which the urban middle class entertain about peasant agriculture and behaviour need to be destroyed if planning has to be based on rural realities. The sum and substance of these myths is that the peasant is irrational, and that his economic behaviour is inefficient, and on occasion, even wasteful. He is a slave to custom and this makes him resist new ideas which are to his advantage. Indeed, he is the despair of those who want to do good to him.

It is regrettable that the urban middle class should entertain such myths but what is worse is that the recruits to that class from the dominant rural castes,

do nothing to combat them. I am now speaking in broad generalities ignoring exceptions. Why do they play such a role ? The reasons can only be guessed at. The first one appears to be that they are so overwhelmed by the attributes of the class that they are joining or trying to join, that it does not occur to them to question its attitudes and views. The second is more sinister viz., the interest of the rural landowners from the dominant castes are opposed to those of the poor including the Scheduled Castes. Any improvement in the economic and social position of the rural poor and low castes, is therefore viewed by the rich landowners as posing a threat to their own supremacy. When I say this, I am not giving vent to a fevered imagination. I heard a rich and powerful village leader denounce the idea of developing the local school as he thought that education only taught impertinence to the poor, and the same man wanted one of his tenants, a first-rate agriculturist, to have a string of sons, uninterrupted by daughters, as they would become skilled labourers who could be employed on his land.

In other words, Indian villages have ceased to be communities and have become instead battlegrounds for the rich and poor to fight each other. It is in the interests of the former not to present a favourable picture of the latter.

II

The ignorance of the urban middle class about rural life, agriculture and values would not have mattered much but for the fact mentioned earlier viz., officials at various levels and a variety of specialists hail largely from it, and have an important say in decisions which affect villagers.

If the truth were to be told, it is the middle class which appears to be unable to educate itself out of ill-founded assumptions and beliefs about peasantry. But before I consider it, a word on the sources of middle class ignorance and arrogance towards villagers, may not be out of place. The first source is, as could be expected, caste. The traditional attitude of the high castes was generally one of arrogance towards the lower. Along with the arrogance went ignorance of the institutions, customs, habits and beliefs of the lower castes. Naturally, they did not think it worth their while to learn about the culture of the lower castes, except for individual eccentrics. But that did not prevent them from condemning such habits of the lower castes as meat-eating

and liquor-drinking. Indeed, consistent condemnation of such habits over the centuries has made the lower castes defensive about them. Needless to say, it did not occur to the high castes that they should try and see the situation from the point of view of those desperately poor people. The Kannada film *Chomana Dudi* gives a brilliant insight into the world of the harijan, landless labourers of South Kanara, and shows how liquor offers at least a temporary escape from horror that is their life. To say this is not to defend drinking but to point out its organic relationship to encompassing social and economic conditions.

A second source of arrogance is landownership. Landownership not only means economic security to the owner but confers on him power over the poor, comprising tenants, servants, labourers, and members of the artisan and servicing castes. Since there is a considerable amount of overlap between landownership and high caste status on the one hand, and landless labour and lower castes on the other, differences in land status were frequently reinforced by caste difference and *vice versa*. Such overlap did also occur in other contexts contributing to the impregnable character of the rural hierarchy.

The "educated" are accorded a high status in rural society, and as recently as 30 or 40 years ago, even a literate who was able to draft IOUs, sale deeds etc., commanded both respect and influence. Since traditionally the Brahmins were the learned caste, an educated man acquired the diacritical attribute of that caste. Even now in the villages an educated member of a family is shown deference and is accorded privileges which are denied to the others. Education is regarded as synonymous not only with knowledge but, quite irrationally, with wide experience of men and affairs. A potent source of the "degree disease" which has afflicted the country stems from the villagers' misplaced respect for learning. Villagers also think that education provides a sure road out of the village and into the city, an escape from having to perform or supervise manual labour, and finally, the means of obtaining a salaried job. But with the high prices which agricultural produce commands today, and the opening up of political and economic opportunities in rural areas, agriculture along modern lines might appear attractive to a few landowners.

Again, urban people consider themselves superior to villagers, but what is surprising is that villagers concede that claim in practice even though they regard them as parasitic on hard-working agriculturists. Villagers, in particular the more urbanised villagers, make deprecating remarks about the backwardness of village life, its narrowness of interests, factionalism, and its lack of entertainment. Such a view was even more widespread thirty years ago when most villagers lacked such amenities as perennial wells, approach roads, elementary medical care, and electricity.

In addition to the difference between high and low castes but linked with it is the arrogance that comes from a Sanskritized life-style. Thus vegetarian and teetotal castes and families consider themselves superior to non-vegetarian and drinking castes. This results in the one-way transfer of food from the superior to the inferior. Even more importantly the sense of superiority expresses itself in intercaste relations in the idiom of purity and impurity, the more Sanskritized caste regarding itself as purer than the less. But purity is a fragile thing and will disappear the moment it comes into contact with an impure or less pure person or object. Thus purity has to be isolated, or kept at a distance from the impure object. The rules of purity and pollution helped to maintain the prescribed social distance between castes. An absurd but true example of the kind of situation was seen when a high caste beggar asked generous donors from the low castes not to touch him while pouring rice or other grain into his bowl.

Unfortunately, the arrogance stemming from a Sanskritized life-style is not confined to small communities but rears its head even at the national level. In this context, it may be remembered that vegetarianism is practised only by a small minority except in such parts of the country as Rajasthan and Gujarat, and teetotalism, however, admirable from many points of view, is again part of the traditional life-style of the higher castes, and sects such as the Jains and Vaishnavas. Millions of people drink liquor as part of their traditional life-style, and even ritual. Government and voluntary agencies have every right to persuade them into teetotalism but I find the self-righteous arrogance of the teetotal vagetarian abhorrent. And all the while educated Hindus boast about the "tolerance" of Hinduism.

We then see that there is more than one source for the arrogance of the urban elite towards the rural poor, and English education if anything has widened the gulf between the two classes. What is ironic is that even those who have only recently graduated from the rural areas into the urban middle class do nothing to combat such arrogance. On the contrary, they acquire the prejudices and the attitude of the latter.

III

It is a commonplace that the pattern of development followed since Independence has benefitted, by and large, the richer sections of the population, big landowners, and traders and industrialists, and the poor have only benefitted, where they have done so, only as the result of a trickling down process. In the

meanwhile the country's population has increased considerably (from about 360 million in 1951 to 548 million in 1971), and no dent has been made on the problem of mass poverty. If anything the problem is worse as a result of population increase. The immense amounts invested in the five year plans, the dams, factories, townships etc., have left the poor more or less where they were before. As Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan stated a few years ago, "Even though this is not the first time that I have taken up intensive village work, I had not buried myself in this manner before in a limited rural area for such highly intensive work for an indefinite period. This has finally given me a unique opportunity to look closely at the reality of village life in these parts. Being a villager myself, I love village life and would any day prefer to live in my own village than, say, Patna or Delhi. But in spite of this partiality, I must confess that the socio economic reality in the village, on close examination, is ugly and distressing in the extreme. My first reactions on coming face to face with reality show how remote and untrue were the brave pronouncements of Delhi or Patna from the actuality at the ground level! High-sounding words, grandiose plans, reforms galore. But somehow they all, or most of them, manage to remain suspended somewhere up in midair. They hardly touch the ground—at least not here. Or touch it very lightly. In the event, what meets the eye is utter poverty, misery, inequality, exploitation, backwardness, stagnation, frustration and loss of hope".*

A consensus is now emerging that our development plans ought to be aimed at benefitting "the weaker sections of the society". In order to do this, agricultural development should be given very high priority, and in addition, a deliberate effort must be made to reach the weaker sections of the population. It is not at all an easy task if our previous experience of development planning is any guide. A strong political will will be needed and several measures may have to be taken simultaneously. Co-operatives meant exclusively for the poor, agro-industries in which preferential employment will be given to the landless and other very poor individuals, and finally, strict implementation of land reform legislation already passed, will all be necessary.

Reliable information about agriculture and rural life in different parts of the country is indispensable for effective planning. A vast amount of information, published and unpublished, is available about rural India but how much of it is reliable and relevant is anybody's guess. But even when the information is "accurate" its social context is usually ignored and unfortunately this robs the information of some of its value.

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* "Jayaprakash Narayan" by Minoo Masani, *Encounter*, Vol.XLV, No.6, December 1975, P.20.

Knowledge of Indian agriculture will not, by itself, enable the planner in Yojana Bhavan or State capitals to place himself in the position of a landless labourer, harijan, or poor member of the artisan and servicing castes. This calls for empathy with the poor, and empathy is a rare virtue anywhere, and particularly in the corridors of power. But what one expects of the planners is to be conversant with the works of those who have acquired the knowledge and empathy, and pay some heed to their insights. I shall now move on to a brief cansideration of the method and techniques for understanding rural life as distinct from merely gathering information about it.

The method I have in mind is "participant observation", and it has been familiar to social anthropologists for sixty years or so. The man who discovered this method was Malinowski. While Malinowski represented a watershed in the field work tradition of anthropology, there have been further refinements in field-work techniques since his days. Anthropologists nowadays pay more attention to quantifying data, use elementary statistical techniques, and resort to what Gluckman calls "situational analysis" and "extended case method", but I shall not comment on these. I shall confine myself to describing briefly, "participant observation".

The anthropologist who wants to study a village (tribe or other group) spends a year or longer, in the community of his choice, as far as possible as an indigene, and using the local language in his dealings with people. It is essential that he does not occupy a position of power or authority over the people he studies, for power isolates, and comes in way of the free flow of information. Even today, after thirty years of familiarity with a host of officials and others concerned with development, and with curious outsiders seeking information on every aspect of their life, villagers are suspicious of outsiders who quiz them. They are apprehensive that the information they give might be used against them in some way or the other. The situation is likely to be much worse when the investigator occupies a position of power or authority. Not only will he not get correct information but everyone will try to make use of him for his own ends.

Anthropologists such as Evans-Pritchard insisted that it was not enough for the anthropologist to be in a position of equality with his people but that he ought to be in an inferior position to them, and even dependent on them for satisfying his basic needs such as food, shelter and friendship. He discouraged his students from going to the field with their wives as he thought that the latter came between their husbands and the peoples they were studying. All learners or students are in an inferior status in relation to their teachers, and the anthropologist who wishes to learn directly from the people ought to be no exception

to the rule. If I may mention my own fieldwork, I found everyone in the village had something to teach me including illiterate boys employed as bonded labourers by the headman. And since my fieldwork was done when I was a bachelor, I was dependent on my villagers for company and friendship.

Needless to say, the anthropologist has to go about his work cautiously especially when he is probing into sensitive areas of their life such as assets and liabilities, debts, loans and savings, relations between different members of the household, sex life, disputes, factionalism, etc. The doubts and suspicions of the villagers must be stilled and their confidence won. This is a major task, for without winning the villagers' confidence, if not friendship, the information that is collected by the fieldworker will not be reliable. Here the fieldworker's personal qualities become most relevant — his helpfulness to people, the way he approaches them, the manner in which he takes rebuffs including insults, sometimes from people in humble positions, his success in avoiding being drawn into factional quarrels, etc. A crucial element in the fieldworker's personality is his sensitivity to people. He must not only catch the nuances in language and idiom but understand "body language" — smile, wink, grimace, gesture or annoyance, and even silence. His sensitivity guarantees that he will be able to empathise with people in different positions, patron and client, trader and customer, high and low caste, and so on. The researcher should be able to put himself in the shoes of different types of people though there are obviously limits to this. In fieldwork, the personality and sensitivity of the researcher are crucial. A certain amount of luck is also needed.

Let me recapitulate the various steps in the progress of the fieldworker. Generally he begins as an outsider who finds the behaviour and attitudes of the villagers difficult to understand, if not bewildering, but as he mixes with them and takes part in their day-to-day activities he finds them less and less bewildering till he realises one day that given the circumstances, environmental and social, the villagers' reactions appear rational. It is relevant to point out in this connection that the conception of rationality which seems to be common among middle class intellectuals, is very odd, to say the least. Rationality cannot be viewed except in the context of the position which an individual occupies in the economic and social structure, the values which he socially inherits as a member of a culture and sub-culture, and the manner in which his culture defines for him any situation which he may have to handle. His culture and sub-culture have ensured the survival of his group and to expect an individual in a traditional society to set aside all his customary norms and to behave as an academic in his laboratory or class room expects him to do, is absurd. Thieving for instance, is irrational for a man who earns enough but for a starving man it is rational in the sense that it gets him into a jail where he is fed and clothed.

When the fieldworker perceives the rationality of the behaviour of the people he is living with and studying, he realises, as a corollary of that perception, that the ideas, beliefs and values which were instilled into him from his earliest years were parochial in the sense that they were the inherited "property" of a particular social class or caste. The process by which a fieldworker simultaneously realises the "rationality" of the behaviour and norms of the group he is studying, and the "subjectivity" of his own inherited norms, I call "twice-bornness". Such a realisation may be followed by a change in his attitude to his inherited norms.

The fieldworker perceives the rationality of the behaviour of the people he is studying not as a result of protracted ratiocination but of living among them and participating in their activities. It usually comes about insensibly, taking him unawares as it were. But it happens only when the fieldworker, besides being well trained in his discipline, is sensitive, and has reaches of empathy. He has to internalise the viewpoint of his people. This suggests the possibility that social knowledge is not of the same kind as that in the physical and natural sciences. At least, the fieldwork part is not.

But "twice-bornness" is only a phase, and a partisan one at that. The fieldworker, excited by his discovery of the rationality in the behaviour of his people becomes their staunch advocate, and in so doing he moves from his earlier urban and middle class subjectivity to a different type of subjectivity. But after he leaves the village and gets back to his university or institute and starts writing up his notes, he begins to acquire, slowly and painfully, some psychological distance from them. In a good university department of anthropology or sociology there will be several fieldworkers each of whom will be to some extent a partisan of the people he studied, and the older members at least will be able to appreciate how such partisanships arise. Seminars and discussions in the department teach the anthropologist the painful lesson that his people are only one of many, and that their institutions have to be compared and contrasted with other peoples' in order to make scientific sense of them. In the process of writing up his material in the framework of the theoretical ideas he has absorbed, he universalises the results of his fieldwork. The achieving of some distance from his pople is a new point in his career and it may be termed "thrice-bornness".

Anthropologists are agreed that the traditional agriculture of peasants and even primitive peoples is not the haphazard and unskilled affair that it seems to be to the casual observer but a highly skilled enterprise into which has gone the experience and knowledge of centuries if not millenea. My observations of the agriculture of Indian peasants, clearly those of an amateur, leads me to support the general conclusion of anthropologists. Peasant agriculture seems to be not

only an expert activity but represents a complex and sensitive adaptation to a particular environment, taking note of factors such as the pitiful resources of the cultivator, uncertain rainfall, and frequently, a poor and overworked soil. There are also other constraints on productivity, including those stemming from the economic and social framework of agriculture, but I have no time to deal with them.

But all the skill and intelligence of the Indian peasant do not alter the fact that his agriculture, indeed his entire life, is largely a part of what may be described as a culture that existed before modern science and technology came into their own. It is only during the last thirty years or so, that a section of rich peasants and that too in irrigated areas, have become familiar with the use of fertilisers, pesticides, and hybrid varieties of food and commercial crops. In contrast to this small segment of prosperous and scientific agriculturists, the majority of the peasantry, and in particular, those living in the non-irrigated areas, continue to practise more or less traditional agriculture which appears even more inefficient than before in contrast to the agriculture of rich peasants.

In other words, the majority of Indian peasants have been left out of modern agriculture, or rather, their poverty makes modern agriculture inaccessible to them. Without radical changes in the agrarian economy and society their position is not likely to change. In order to bring about such changes it is essential to start with implementing the land reform measures which are already on the statute books of the various States. Perhaps an even more preliminary task would be to find how far each State has implemented the land reform measures it has incorporated in the statute book. Only when existing land reform measures, whatever they are, have been implemented, can the introduction of new and more radical measures be thought of. But land reforms, however essential, are not enough. Those who have land will have to be supplied with other capital resources. And since there is not enough land to be distributed to everyone, it is necessary also to start agro-industries in which Scheduled Castes, landless labourers and women are given preference in employment. The formation of distinct unions and cooperative societies for each of these three 'weaker sections' is necessary in order to enable them deal with landowners, politicians and middlemen. Party cadres and voluntary agencies have to be involved in helping to strengthen these sections.

IV

There is a sharp break in sequence here, but as Perry Mason would say, I hope to "connect up" later. Mahatma Gandhi was born into the high caste of

Modh Vania in Porbander in Saurashtra. He was a member of the urban middle class, and after finishing high school in Rajkot he went to England to study law. During the course of his study in England he tried for a while to become a brown Englishman but later discarded the attempts as absurd. Nearly three decades later, he became the unquestioned leader of India's freedom movement and the spokesman for her illiterate and poor people. Gandhi not only fought the British rulers and in a novel way, but even in his own country he stood resolutely for protecting the interests of the poor, the harijans and minorities.

Gandhi prepared himself for a life of public service by giving up his wealth and his lucrative legal practice. He returned to India in 1915 after twenty-one years in South Africa. He then travelled all over India, and gradually became involved in the struggles of the poor and oppressed to improve their lot and assert their self-respect as human beings. The technique of satyagraha, individual and mass, which he had evolved in South Africa, he perfected over the years in his various struggles with the British rulers and others. He tried to identify himself in every way with the poor and oppressed. Violating the norms of his caste and class, he insisted, like Chairman Mao in China, on the need for everyone to perform manual labour. Except when he was ill, he spent some time everyday, till the last day of his life, in spinning on the charka. He believed that eating without performing some manual labour amounted to stealing food.

In his deliberate attempt to live like the poor, he wore only a loin cloth and a pair of home-made chappals, and he spent the last 17 years of his life in a small village in an arid part of eastern Maharashtra. He eschewed Western medicines using mudpacks and folk medicines for treating himself and all those who lived with him. Gandhi acquired an intimate knowledge of the conditions under which the very poor, especially in the rural areas, lived. And he spent a good deal of his time and energy in alleviating their misery. He saw in the charka a symbol of the regeneration of the rural economy. He helped to revive other rural crafts also. His aim was both most modest and practical viz., to put a few more paise into the hands of villagers whom he knew to have much of leisure and very little food. It may be recalled that Gandhi did not have the material and moral resources of the government for supporting his ideas and plans. Far from it. Even Indian economists refused to take him seriously—they were preoccupied with Keynes and others—while the communists thought him a crank and reactionary. But he went ahead with his ideas as he knew more than anyone else about the sufferings of poor villagers. One of Gandhi's main aims was to make the people as self-reliant as possible and his ideas were such that they could be taken advantage of by the poorest. There is a telling instance of Gandhi's identification with the poor and the lengths to which he was prepared to go to practise what he preached. During his stay in Sewagram he was once

plagued by mosquitoes and he consulted his doctor as to what he should do. Predictably, the doctor advised him to use a mosquito net but Gandhi refused to accept the advice as a peasant could not afford a mosquito net. Gandhi wanted a remedy which even the poorest could use. The exasperated doctor finally advised him to rub some kerosene on his body before he went to sleep. This Gandhi found acceptable and henceforward he made it a practice to rub a little kerosene on his body before he retired.

Gandhi then was born into the urban middle class and if he had proceeded along "normal" lines, would have become an ornament of that class ending his career as a very rich lawyer or judge. But he forsook his class and its petty concerns to lead his vast country into freedom using methods utterly novel in human history, and to improve the living conditions of the poorest. He was also a champion of equality, the harijans and women being of special concern to him. His most important criterion for judging the value of any plan or project was how it affected the poorest and the most exploited.

Now comes the "connecting up". In the course of working for the upliftment of poor villagers Gandhi adopted, as far as possible to him, their life style. Poverty was a basic condition of their lives and Gandhi accordingly reduced his wants to the minimum. He lived amongst them and worked with and for them. This enlarged and deepened his empathy and he became confident that he understood how the poorest and most oppressed looked at the world. The approach which Gandhi hacked out for himself through years of struggle is somewhat similar to the method of participant observation practised by the anthropologist. Both aim at understanding people and not merely gathering facts about them. Of course, each uses the understanding for his own purpose.