

**ScienzaePace**

Rivista del Centro Interdisciplinare Scienze per la Pace - Università di Pisa

ISSN 2039-1749

**Gandhi's innovation and legacy.  
*Hind Swaraj* as a source of a new political theory  
and a new model of development**

**by Antonino Drago**  
*CISP - University of Pisa*

***Working Papers***

n. 9. – marzo 2012





## **Gandhi's innovation and legacy**

### ***Hind Swaraj* as a source of a new political theory and a new model of development**

**Antonino Drago**

CISP - University of Pisa

[drago@unina.it](mailto:drago@unina.it)

ABSTRACT - The present paper suggests that Gandhi's innovative life represents the beginnings of three reforms, of religious tradition, ethics and politics. Their common historical novelty was their universal nature. These reforms became apparent in their prosecutions by mainly his Western disciple, Lanza del Vasto, who promoted them from a mostly subjective representation to a structural representation. Two guide-lines in all these reforms are recognised; in the case of the political reform they define one out four models of development, i.e. the basic notion of the political theory of non-violence. The lack of these theoretical notions in Gandhi's thinking gives reason of his drastic attitude in depicting through *Hind Swaraj* Western civilisation as a merely evil civilisation as well as some other points of the above mentioned reforms that are still unachieved.

#### **1. Three Gandhi's reforms: religiosity, ethics and politics**

In retrospect, it is easy now recognise that Gandhi's innovative life promoted an impressive alternative to the negative historical trends of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In my opinion, this alternative resulted from his having begun *three kinds of reforms*; the reform of religious tradition, the reform of ethics and the reform of politics.

This term "reform", for instance the reform of the religious tradition, has not to be intended, as in the past, as a discovery of a new religion; nor as a separation from the past tradition in order to found a new religion; but as a re-shaping an old religious tradition by giving a primary role to what previously was considered

as secondary. In other terms, Gandhi's reform changed what played a foundational role in the religious attitude without excluding old tenets or including new ones. In this sense, the nature of a reform was at the same time conservative and completely new in the history of mankind. By conciliating continuity with revolution an entire re-formulation of a previously well-settled religious system resulted<sup>1</sup>.

After having experienced the Western civilization in London and having studied Western right, Gandhi saw under a new light his traditional civilisation. First of all his religion was scrutinised by him in order to discover what is essential. He found out it in a popular mantra: "All we see in this Universe is pervaded by God. Renounce it and enjoy it. Do not long for wealth or others' goods"<sup>2</sup>. This one may be intended as representing the following *two guide-lines*, to recognise that the whole reality is directly organised by God and to work ever more on oneself in the aim of a self-purification; or even to recognise that the reality is organised as an unity and to listen the infinitely little voice addressing a man to the (infinite) Truth-God.

Moreover, in Gandhi's view, a religion is true when it is testified in social life. The religious work for a self-realization through a self-purification has to clarify the basic ethical motivation for eliciting an infinite service to the others. Hence, he maintained that ethics, rather to be a specific application of religion, is the main part of the adhesion to a religion.

This *religious reform* was universal with respect to *i*) all men, because even a Western man could adhere to such guide-lines, *ii*) all religions, because Gandhi intended his religion as what "transcends Hinduism"<sup>3</sup>, and *iii*) all social institutions, because his faith was independent from any authoritative institutions (both the weak ones of Hindu religion and the very powerful ones of the Western people).

---

<sup>1</sup> In Western Christian tradition a similar reform was performed by St. Francis, but with little social consequences, even on the Church's structures.

<sup>2</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 30 Jan. 1937, pp. 33-37. See also *ibidem*, 26 Dec. 1936 p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers. Life and Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi as Told in His Own Words*, Unesco, Lausanne, 1958, ch. 2, sect. 2.

Let us now consider *Gandhi's ethics reform*. From the traditional Hindu ethics Gandhi retained only those duties which were in agreement with his reason, educated to assume the universal Western law and informed by his little voice. He focussed his attention on what also his mother suggested to him, i.e. an infinite respect for life. Hence, he rejected some evidently violent customs of the tradition (window sacrifice, intouchability, etc.).

Moreover, his scrupulous attention to the violent consequences of his actions led him to overcome the characteristic bound of the ethics in all traditional civilisations, i.e. to be short-range. By questioning all his own acts in terms of their constructive and destructive consequences even in distant space and time and by assessing all events occurring in modern society on the basis of the violence resulting on all men, Gandhi enlarged his awareness on the social implications of his behaviour. The resulting ethics widened traditional awareness of only personal evil and good to the awareness of all social qualifications of an ethical issue. Owing to this attitude of Gandhi's ethics, Indian people rightly qualified him as a true *Mahatma* (great soul).

Furthermore, Gandhi not only embraced the old teaching of *ahimsa*, but promoted it to play the role of basic principle in his ethical system.

In the history of non-violent ethics, Gandhi's elaboration of this notion constituted a decisive advancement with respect to Tolstoy's ethical principle: "Do not resist evil" (actually a Gospel's teaching, Mt 5, 39), which suggests a merely passive attitude (since the three previous words, 'not', 'resist', 'evil', taken together, are equivalent to a simply negative word, e.g. "resistance"). Rather, Gandhi intended the word "non-violence" as suggesting that a reaction to the evil may be a good and fruitful move, provided that one pays much attention to find out the more suitable mode of reacting.

This innovative notion of non-violence led him not to obey some precepts drawn directly from God's will (extracted from the sacred texts) or, in more modest terms, drawn from a supposed universal 'natural law', but to experience a lot of "experiments with the Truth" for solving social problems. The Gandhi's genius was to shape through these experiments an ethical system of a new kind, which

is centred on the problem of how overcome all kinds of conflict and whose new method of their resolution was addressed by the non-violence.

In the application of this method Gandhi choose, rather than to increase the institutional or destructive tools (arms) to the point of becoming insensitive to people, to ever increase the personal interrelationships. Hence, he was involved in a continuous search<sup>4</sup> for constructing, by arousing the infinite potentialities in the other, a common appraisal of the *Satya*. Indeed, the resolution of the conflicts through common agreements was considered by Gandhi as the main work for preserving and even improving the good organisation of human life. The first conflict in society is that for justice, whose solution requires (according to the well-known Tolstoy's teaching) the "bread work" and more in general the mass hand work.

In conclusion, also his ethics reform followed *two guide-lines*; to not seek his own self-realisation independently from the others, but to increase the mutual cooperation for improving the brotherhood in a society; and in the interpersonal relationships to not appeal to infinitary tools (God, institutions, absolute principles, arms) in order to subjugate the other, but to ever more construct in all kinds of conflicts non-violent resolutions based upon the *Satya*.

His searching attitude, together with the operative method of non-violence leading to overcome the different experiences and viewpoints, addressed his ethics to an alternative goal to the Western goal of attaining, through the obedience to a hierarchical system of obligations, as much as possible God, the goal to cumulate so much experiences *to be universal* under the three following aspects, i.e. all men, all different religions and all social structures of society<sup>5</sup>.

In Western civilisation the ethics is confined to a part only of the personal behaviour, the other part conforming to the (often compulsory) behaviours

---

<sup>4</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *All Men are Brothers*, op. cit., ch. 2, sect. 2, pp. 69 and 77.

<sup>5</sup> I refer to the celebrated J. Galtung's distinction among direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence; the latter one is the violence perpetrated by social institutions. In the following, I will mean the cultural violence as not only the violence of supporting in cultural terms the structural violence, but also as the violence of monopolising the truth in the people minds.

suggested by the specific institutions of the sectors of a society; e.g. the defensive national institution obliges the citizens to a stiffly compulsory behaviour; the political institution obliges a politician to abandon his personal ethics, On this point Gandhi made a crucial move; he extended his renewed ethics to all social institutions, even those presented by Western civilisation as resulted from a unavoidable progress. He dared to extend his ethics not only to the collective defence by substituting non-violence for the arms, but also to the political tradition, which (in the West) may be characterised as follows: 1) separation of political life from ethics; 2) organisation of the social life through ever more institutions; 3) infinite growth in social power.

His *political reform* joined political life to ethics according to the following two guide-lines; instead to organise the social life through ever more institutions, to promote always grass roots movements (*Swaraaj*) even for accomplishing the apparently impossible political task of freeing India from the British Empire; and instead to search an infinite growth in social power, to elicit the infinite social potentialities of a man (*Swadeshi*), i.e. the witness, the conscientious objection, the civil disobedience, a re-constructive program for a new society with respect to all social structures. In such a way he inaugurated among the people a non-Machiavellian politics, which in fact resulted to be efficacious even when it faced the highest powers.

## **2. The continuation and improvement of Gandhi's reforms in Western countries**

These reforms passed unrecognised by the academic world because *i*) they were brought about in a periphery country of the World by a simple layman, acting from below of the pyramid of the institutional power; *ii*) they have been illustrated in a random way by his writings; *iii*) in the West the more influential teachers of non-violence ignored his religious attitude and hence his first reform<sup>6</sup>. But these reforms are apparent when we comparatively analyse,

<sup>6</sup> In particular, in order to interpret the history of non-violence, Gene Sharp applied formal sociology only. On this point are useful the papers by T. Weber, "Nonviolence is Who? Gene Sharp and Gandhi", *Peace and Change*, 28, 2003, pp. 250-270 and B. Martin, "Dilemmas on promoting Nonviolence", *Gandhi Marg*, 31, 2009, pp. 429-453.

through the following **Table 1**, all subsequent teachers of non-violence, that have been influenced by Gandhi's life.

Reform of religious traditions	Reform of ethics	Change of the kind of civilisation	New model of development
<u>L. Tolstoy</u> (Orthodox)	M.K. Gandhi	Gandhi	(Gandhi)
<u>M.K. Gandhi</u> (Induist)	(Capitini) D. Dolci	(Capitini)	
<u>A. Capitini</u> (reform of religion)	Lanza del Vasto	Lanza del Vasto	Lanza del Vasto
<u>Lanza del Vasto</u> (Catholic)	Vinobha D. Milani		
G. La Pira (Catholic)	J.-M. Muller	J.-M. Muller	Galtung
<u>M.L. King</u> (Baptist)			
<u>Tich Nat Hahn</u> (Buddhist)			
J. Galtung (Cosmology)			
Bishop A. Bello (Catholic)			
Dalai Lama (Buddhist)			

*Legenda:* Point-wise underlined: the first teacher in his religion or confession. In round brackets ( ): incomplete reform.

**Table 1: The development of non-violence through the motivations of the major teachers**

In particular, the major continuation and improvement of Gandhi's reforms came from Lanza del Vasto (LdV), who was his disciple in 1936-37, was called by him *Shantidas* (Peace servant) and then came back in Europe to found Gandhian-like communities.

*LdV's religious reform* started from the highest conflict as possible, the eternal conflict between Evil and Good. By following Gandhi's universal attitude with

respect to all religions, he appealed to the sacred Texts of all the great religions; under their light he re-visited the Western ones. He was capable to suggest new interpretations of three texts of them; a Jewish sacred Text (the Original sin in Genesis 3; i.e. the coming into being of the inclination to evil in each person) and two Christian Texts: *Apocalypse* 13 (i.e. the evil organising a society as a totalitarian power structure), and the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5, 1-10; the conversion-liberation from both personal and social evils)<sup>7</sup>.

These three sacred texts were considered by LdV as *universal* in nature. For instance, the first text is shared by three great religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Moreover, LdV interpreted this text in the same way previously Gandhi had intended the Hindu teaching of the *avidya*: “God endowed man with intellect that he might know his Maker. Man abused it so that he might forget his Maker.”<sup>8</sup> LdV added that the nature of this abuse is the diverting the intellect from the contemplation to the calculus on the others and/or the entire world for satisfying egoist interests. LdV maintained that the religious teaching of escaping from the Original sin consists in what all great religions have ever thought, i.e. a personal conversion<sup>9</sup>, to be attained through a work on oneself aimed to the detachment from the egoistic pulses. He stressed also that this teaching corresponds to the Hindu teaching of working on oneself for escaping from Ignorance<sup>10</sup>.

He moreover added that this sin is not at the origin of mankind's times but at the origin of each society, which in fact mediates at a low level the interests of all the adherents, and hence charges the resulting collective sufferance on the weakest ones. Hence LdV adds - in agreement with Gandhi's life - that the complete teaching to be drawn from this text is the need of a conversion from the specific society which one belongs to.

---

<sup>7</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Les Quatre Fléaux* (1959), Rocher, Monaco, 1993<sup>4</sup>, chapters I and V. Excerpts can be read in *Make Straight the Way of the Lord. An Anthology of the Philosophical Writings*, Knopf, New York, 1974.

<sup>8</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, (1909), Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, p. 42. LdV's interpretation is mainly in *Les Quatre Fléaux*, op. cit., ch. I, sections 4-19, mainly sect. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Gandhi ever opposed inter-religious conversions, not the conversion to oneself's religious tradition.

<sup>10</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Approches à la Vie Intérieure* (1962), Rocher, Monaco, 1992, pp. 30 and 32.

This conversion, according to LdV's interpretation of the second sacred text, may be a dramatic move. *Apocalypse* 13 represents a society which is structured in social institutions oppressing the populace and even their spiritual life. At present each great religion should be suggest a text warning its believers from the religious persecution (such as the persecution of all religions under the URSS regime, and, in our times, the persecution suffered by Buddhists in Tibet and Myanmar). In fact, Gandhi recalled a similar teaching: "According to the teaching of Mahommed this [Western civilisation] would be considered a Satanic Civilization. Hinduism calls it the Black Age"<sup>11</sup>.

The religious teaching drawn by LdV from this second text was the need to convert oneself also from the most oppressive social structures, even when they present themselves as being unavoidable for the survival in the social life. Hence, to the traditional notion of a private conversion LdV added the conversion from even the worst social institutions.

The deep and universal teaching of the third sacred text, i.e. the Sermon on the Mount – a Christian text loved by Gandhi too –, was interpreted by LdV as the best representation of the non-violent attitude, i.e. both to accept the intelligent sufferance and to fight for peace and justice even against the most oppressive social institutions, in order to constructively establish an ever new brotherhood as a "God's kingdom" on the Earth.

This new religiosity followed two similar guide-lines to Gandhi's religious reform; i.e. to solve conflicts in order to build a brotherly unity in both the human relationships and in society, and to incessantly work for the knowledge of oneself.

In the extent LdV's interpretations were universal with respect to all religious traditions, his religious reform for the first time invited each religion to apply its sacred texts to all social institutions in the society. The example of LdV's well-defined theological interpretation of the social events of even modern and contemporary times decisively promoted a social interpretation of sacred Texts

---

<sup>11</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, op. cit, end of ch. 6. LdV reiterated this harsh appraisal when wrote the sect. 19: "The sacrilege of the West", of the ch. I of *Les Quatre Fléaux*, op. cit.

of all religions, enabling religions to achieve a wise appraisal on even the society of modern times.

Let us now consider the *ethics reforms* suggested by the Western non-violent teachers who sought religious reforms. Their common attitude may be characterized in the following way. While in the past a religion exhorted a man to love first of all God and/or his own unity in order to eventually achieve a transcendental life, the non-violent teachers, under Gandhi's influence, maintained that a religion concerns at the same time an inner life and an active participation to social life, including the struggle against those social institutions negatively influencing spiritual life. In short, also these teachers attributed more importance to the ethical commitment, than to the intellectual adhesion to the tenets of religions<sup>12</sup>.

In this framework LdV's contribution, although presented by him too in a non-systematic way, played a decisive role. By means of the first two above-mentioned sacred texts concerning the evil in respectively a single man and in society, LdV renewed the ethical criticism in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* to the main institutions of Western civilisation, strongly influencing the behaviours of the populace<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, by means of the third sacred text he founded in ethical terms the - unknown in the West - notion of a non-violent man as a converted man from the structures of evil, even those constructed as social institutions<sup>14</sup>. It is not surprising that a LdV's definition of the non-violent tools was "the lever for the conversion"<sup>15</sup> of the other or the social institution, but also of oneself, because in a conflict the truth may be obscure to the non-violent man too.

In addition, through Apocalypse 13 LdV criticised the most important product of this civilisation. According to him, the first Beast described by Apocalypse 13

---

<sup>12</sup> This ethical orientation can be shared even by a person not believing in God, provided that he believes in the essentially infinite potentialities of all men. Also for this reason non-violence pertains – as LdV puts it in *L'arche avait pour Voilure une vVgne*, Denoel, Paris, 1978, ch. VI - to a pre-religious world.

<sup>13</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Les Quatre Fléaux*, op. cit., chapters II-IV.

<sup>14</sup> Through such a conversion "In the inner world as well as in the outside world all has to be put upside down", *ibidem*, p. 287.

<sup>15</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Approches de la Vie Intérieure*, op. cit., pp. 249-250. I translate the French word « de » by « for » because I interpret it as a LdV's Italianism.

represents the social institution of modern Science; it is the most representative of present times Evil, because its intellectual force constrains the populace to misdirected behaviours<sup>16</sup>.

In fact, Science leads, through unquestionable scientific doctrines and seemingly unavoidable technological goods, mankind to confound welfare with spiritual slavery; in such a way it obstructs them to achieve a spiritual wisdom on the Western kind of life and finally it helps them to slip in a spiritual death. In such a way since some centuries Science upset, through the “modernity imperative”, all (religious) traditions. LdV emphasised the final negative result of the new historical perspective created by Science; he vividly illustrated its main scientific achievement in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the nuclear Bomb; which means the capability of destroying even the material life of the entire mankind.

By following a hint suggested by the text he recognised the cipher of Science’s power upon populace in its promising an infinite expansion of human capabilities. One may add that Science promises also to lead, through a great number of scientific institutions, to a perfect, apparently divine organisation of the social life, in opposition to the potentiality to construct God’s kingdom on the Earth.

LdV suggested that the way out this structural and intellectual evil is to turn over these Western mythical trends through a radical conversion in order to follow, even when living inside the Western civilisation, Gandhi’s example of life<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Among the legion of interpretations of *Apocalypse* 13, LdV’s is an essentially modern one for two reasons; first, because he does not see in the two Beasts historical men, but social institutions; second, because he sees the institutions of the modern times only; indeed, LdV sees in the “666”, put at the end of the text, a notion which pertains to the mathematics of modern times only, an infinite series “666...”. This series gives the cipher of the Science’s power; Science offers an unlimited expansion of human capabilities (recall that 6 is the number of a man), but without allowing to achieve the 7, which is the number of the spiritual man. In other terms, LdV mastered modern mathematics to support a crucial teaching concerning the spiritual life in modern society.

<sup>17</sup> “A long and deep reflection led the wise [Gandhi] to discard our civilisation which is centralised, urbanised, mechanised. / About this point we follow him faithfully and even in *Les Quatre Fléaux* we extend the criticism of the [Western] social system relying upon profit and competition, and on the prostitution of science to technique. We take up again his so much ridiculed philosophy of the spinning-wheel...”, Lanza del Vasto, *De quel droit...*, op. cit., p. 188.

because it is the best instantiation in his times of the Sermon on the Mount<sup>18</sup>. The rejection of machines and rather the custom of hand work were the natural consequences of this suggestion.

Hence, LdV improved Gandhi's criticism in *Hind Swaraj* to the highest level of the spiritual and ethical thinking so that he was capable to criticise the highest intellectual structure in the West, i.e. Science. As a consequence, LdV's opposition to Western civilisation cannot be more accused of being backward, inasmuch as it ignores the nature of the modern times; his intellectual foundation of non-violence succeeded to overcome the most authoritative of the intellectual institutions in all times, the Science of Western civilisation. As a consequence he promoted a new spiritual and ethical life which eventually is emancipated<sup>19</sup> from that Science which substantiates the modernity.

In summary, his ethics reform followed the two guide-lines, to suggest the non-violence of the Sermon on Mount as the general method for solving all conflicts, even those presented by the sacred texts, in order to build as much as possible a God's kingdom on the Earth, and to incessantly work on oneself and on the Nature through hand work.

### **3. A non-violent political theory: The notions of two options and four models of development**

Living in Western society, LdV pursued two political aims: to introduce seeds of Gandhian politics and to decisively improve Gandhi's teachings in theoretical politics:

“The great difference [between our - doctrine and practice of - non-violence and Gandhi's] is that Gandhi, and evenly M.L. King and Cesar Chavez, did not chose their struggles, they chose their arms... The aim of our groups and our communities [is], before to do something, to do

---

<sup>18</sup> By paraphrasing it LdV composed “A Christian Prayer for Gandhi” (*L'Arche avait pour Voilure une Vigne*, Denoel, Paris, 1978, 242-243). See also the poetry “Gandhi, Great Soul” (1936) in Lanza del Vasto, *Le Chiffre des Choses*, Denoel, Paris, 1953, p. 95-97 (actually, it is a reduced version).

<sup>19</sup> I listened the words “emancipation from the Western science” from by R. Panikkar.

men... It was not before than seven years of communitarian life that we venture ourselves in the first civic action.... Our civic actions were attempts, experiences, exercises... By having the freedom to choose our actions and by attributing to them a not decisive role, we could apply ourselves to prepare, beyond the civic actions, even the [final] aim of all them ... which is that of constituting such a human community that if it is widened worldwide, then war, rebellion, misery and servitude would disappear. (Lanza del Vasto, "De quel droit nous appelons-nous Gandhiens?" (1975), in pp. 185-186"" (orig. 1975) in Lanza del Vasto:, (Monaco : du Rocher, 1993)).

About the latter aim, he remarked that in Western civilisation Science is a highly sophisticated and unlimited institution, so that people is unable to understand its great power in addressing mankind's life; hence people are unable to be independent from it. Moreover, Western people do not doubt its ethical innocence, whereas the Science, by monopolising the truth, informs all other institutions, even the most negative ones, and covers their power decisions through its "rationality". As a result, it is the most powerful social institution.

Through his interpretation of the above sacred texts LdV overcame this hard obstacle to a non-violent politics and moreover he obtained the tools for analysing in details all the institutions of Western society as founded upon a scientific rationality<sup>20</sup>. In particular, he devoted one out of five chapters of the above-mentioned book to illustrate the Western economy system; which is motivated to organise the life of society not for mutual solidarity, but for mutual exploitation, although covered by formal rules governed by "scientific" laws. Moreover, he devoted a long chapter to analyse Western political institutions; their common motivation is to grow up in the social power, being this motivation covered by the rationality of the balance of the resulting social powers.

Whereas Gandhi succeeded to analyse the dominant political structure of his times, i.e. the British Empire, LdV succeeded to analyse the subsequent political structure, i.e. the two Blocks, East/West, dominating the entire World. In order to suggest a political answer to them, LdV widened his analysis to the general history of all the experienced political structures. In this framework he

---

<sup>20</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Les Quatre Fléaux*, op. cit., chapters II-IV.

moved from Gandhi's general category of a civilisation to a more specific political category, i.e. the "sovereignty", intended by him as the dominant political institution in a given society. He recognised four kinds of sovereignty, i.e. "the religious Sect, the Nation, the Faction or political Party" and that sovereignty making easier the exercise of non-violence; this one is the tribe, or the community, or the Gandhian village<sup>21</sup>. He indicated that the development of Gandhian communities, capable to fight social struggles for changing Western society, constitutes the third political way with respect to the dichotomic confrontation East vs. West.

LdV's notion of four sovereignties anticipated the subsequent Galtung's notion of four models of development (MoDVs), obtained by the latter one by crossing two dichotomic variables; i.e. individualism / collectivism; [the search for] vertical inequality / [the search for] horizontal equality<sup>22</sup>. These ones are social variables but he expressed them by means of subjective terms. By putting them in structural terms, they are the social organisation allowing the highest freedom to the individuals vs. the self-reliant organisation aimed to solve a general problem (e.g. justice); and the hard development - in the West called "the progress" - for increasing the objective goods, and the soft development (e.g. that based on both non-violence and cooperation in the collective defense, or that based on the soft sources of energy). All that constitutes two dichotomic options on social structures, i.e. the option on two kinds of social organisation and the option on two kinds of development<sup>23</sup>.

Remarkably, they generalise in structural social terms, i.e. as choices on two basic social institutions, the guide-lines of previous two reforms. *Viceversa*, these guide-lines prepared the two social options. A table summarises all these

---

<sup>21</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Les Quatre Fléaux*, op. cit., ch. iv, sect. 60, p. 240.

<sup>22</sup> J. Galtung, *Ideology and Methodology*, Eijlers, Copenhagen, 1976, sect. I, 2. The notion of "models of development" is illustrated and also varied in *There are Alternatives!*, Pluto, London, 1986. Also LdV characterised his four sovereignties by crossing two variables, but he also expressed them in subjective terms and moreover in a less accurate way than Galtung's. Rather it is remarkable that LdV first made use of a wind-rose for illustrating the quadripartite new intellectual picture of the entire reality (*La Trinité Spirituelle*, Denoel, Paris, 1971, pp. 180-181).

<sup>23</sup> A. Drago, "The birth of non-violence as a political theory", *Gandhi Marg*, 29, no. 3 Oct.-Nov. 2007, pp. 275-295.

relationships. According to it the religion and the politics are linked together, through the ethics without any solution of continuity; just as in Gandhi's life they were united. This linkage constitutes the mark that Gandhi's non-violence abandoned the Western reason which opposed the politics to the traditional religions and to the traditional ethics.

From the notion of four MoDvs a general political theory of non-violence follows. This theory plainly illustrates the political situation after the year 1989, when the four MoDvs became apparent in the World; the green (Gandhian) model of development burst into the history through those non-violent revolutions in the Eastern countries which led the red model of development (URSS) to collapse; in the same times the yellow model of development, followed by of the Islamic countries, became very important for the World politics.

Their divisions are insuperable, apart personal conversions, owing to the essential differences between the two dichotomic choices on each option. It is the first time that a political theory accepts essential differences, no more forced to an unity or to a dualism leading to a final monism. In this theory of several political actors, mutually interacting, their co-existence is assured by the application of non-violence by at least the green MoDv. As a consequence, the new theory is essentially a pluralist theory of political life.

#### **4. Re-thinking *Hind Swaraj* according to the notion of Model of development**

From the above mentioned political viewpoint the book *Hind Swaraj* represents the birth of the political theory of non-violence inasmuch as: 1) Gandhi brilliantly supported the basic choice for non-violence as a truly political attitude against even the greatest Empire of all times. 2) His basic notion, "civilization", was a (loose) approximation to the notion of MoDv. 3) He characterised the main features of the dominant political structure, the British civilisation, which actually is the blue MoDv. 4) He depicted in a sketchily way an improved Hind civilisation; actually he foresaw the green MoDv. 5) His arguing is structured,

although implicitly only, according to the two options, so much that even the titles of the chapters of *Hind Swaraj* manifest them<sup>24</sup>.

In retrospect, it is now easy to recognise that, in opposition to the dominant MoDv, Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* was *the seminal work for founding the new model of the development*<sup>25</sup>. What in previous times had been considered as a merely traditional state of nature, through *Hind Swaraj* was for the first time qualified as the ground for an entirely new MoDv, the green one.

But admittedly, Gandhi's illustration of this new political theory was an incomplete one.

1) His severe criticism of the entire Western civilisation (included the Parliament, the medicine, the technology, etc.) was conducted more from a traditional ethical viewpoint than from a political viewpoint.

2) In the text of *Hind Swaraj*, the inadequate words "passive resistance" often occur. Moreover, in the word "non-violence" Gandhi noticed the first negation only; hence for a long time he tried to substitute this word with the affirmative word *satyagraha*, but the previous word only was retained by the people in the World. He did not see that non-violence is actually a double negation, since the word "violence" is a clear negative word<sup>26</sup>. Since non-violence lacks an equivalent positive word, it does not mean an object, or an order, or an authoritative law; it cannot be assumed as an absolute principle either; it is only a suggestion for avoiding absurdities – or, in ethical terms, evils; hence, it is a research principle, mainly for discovering how to solve a conflict by avoiding to do violence on the opponent. All that is in agreement with Gandhi's non-violent attitude, but it was not rationalised by him at this intellectual level.

---

<sup>24</sup> A. Drago, "*Hind Swaraj*: The Birth of a Universal Ethics in Structural Terms", in K.J. Silby (ed.), *Hind Swaraj Centenary* (in print). Moreover, Gandhi consistently argued through double negated sentences and *ad absurdum* arguments.

<sup>25</sup> In my opinion, it is the merit of LdV to have emphasised this Gandhi's attitude in his "Preface to the French edition (1957) of *Hind Swaraj*", *Gandhi Marg*, 31, no. 2 July-Sept. 2009, pp. 261-275.

<sup>26</sup> The celebrated book on linguistics by L.R. Horn, *The Natural History of Negation*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 84, takes in consideration just the word *ahimsa* as an example of a double negation.

3) He was unable to define in accurate terms the two guide-lines of his reforms, although they correspond to the substantial meanings of his two basic words, *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi*. According to what the previous point illustrated, they had to be defined in a consistent way with non-violence by means of double negations: *Swaraj* = non-dependence (which is the same of “independence”, although the latter word a little obscures its nature of a double negation); *Swadeshi* = developing relationships with beings not far from usual life.

4) Although he contrasted the Indian villages to the social organisations of Western enormous society, he left unachieved a definition of what constitutes an alternative organisation of a social aggregation.

5) Although in *Hind Swaraj* he radically criticised the notion of Western progress, he did not conceive, in alternative to it, a well-defined notion of alternative social development. Although after having published *Hind Swaraj* his political activity produced several instantiations of it (e.g. *khadi*, *Nai talim*, parallel market of hand-crafted objects, etc.), Gandhi suggested no more than mere hints for both purging and improving the traditional kind of Hind development; so that he did not consistently conceive a well defined option on the social development.

6) He was capable to illustrate and support the co-existence of no more than the different religions and ethics; he did not recognise the co-existence of the different MoDVs; in other words, he did not take in account really all men in a society; although was very attentive to the out-caste men, he did not was aware that some people, say Mohammedans, were supporting a different MoDv.

We know that the very non-violent attitude is an essentially pluralist one; even when fighting a different MoDv, a non-violent man does it through non-violence, included the intellectual non-violence. Instead Gandhi, when writing *Hind Swaraj*, denounced the magnificent, but “immoral” Western civilisation in such rough terms to induce the reader to think that in a short time it will disappear for leaving room to Gandhi’s MoDv only. He looked at the Western MoDv with the same ethical radicalism of a child. That agrees with Gandhi’s appraisal on his

book: an "... incredibly simple book,..."<sup>27</sup>, "In my opinion, it is a book which can be put in the hands of a child"<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, at this time Gandhi was a child in theoretical terms, since his life span was inside the period of the historical beginnings of the non-violent theory of the MoDvs.

For this reason he, although his political action was open to all kinds of pluralisms, considered positively his own MoDv only and so he failed to recognise in politics the co-existence of the (four) MoDvs. As a consequence, he did not see which part of the blue MoDv will survive to an ethical reform; nor he foresaw the politics to be carried out by the non-violent people when a government of the independent India could deviate from his model; nor he considered in the future politics of independent India a political pluralism, owing to the presence of also the different Islamic MoDv. Gandhi's dream of preserving after the independence the political unity of Muslims and Hindu populace relied upon religious convictions, not upon cogent political arguments. In fact, after the independence the Muslims founded a separate State, the Pakistan. Just through this act of separation, the yellow MoDv started to differentiate itself from both the just rising green model of Gandhi and the blue MoDv which the new State of India progressively adhered to. Correctly Gandhi's appraisal on this separation was of his own failure (he wrote of "bankruptcy"<sup>29</sup>), not of the non-violence; his failure was caused by his ignoring that the Islamic people followed an essentially different MoDv.

## **5. Re-thinking LdV's political reform according to the notion of model of development**

The previous analysis suggests a characterisation of Gandhi's legacy through the improvements that the Western disciple LdV added to it. The former one was the first to achieve a complete reform of his religious tradition in universal terms with respect to all the great religious traditions. The latter one, by lucidly addressing three sacred texts to promote a new ethical attitude, founded in

---

<sup>27</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Collected Works* (CWMG), vol. 70, p. 242.

<sup>28</sup> D.G. Tedulkar, *Mahatma*, Govt. of India Publ. Division, New Delhi, 1969, vol. I, p. 109.

<sup>29</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 29 Jun. 1947.

theoretical terms non-violence and, as a consequence, achieved a new ethics which is universal in terms of the social and political structures of modern society, even the highest ones, i.e. Science and Technology; hence he was capable to promote this ethics to the new politics of the four MoDvs. More in general, we can say that *LdV brought Gandhi's three reforms up to a level of the theorisation on the social structures*, a level which Gandhi explored only on one occasion (*Hind Swaraj*) and moreover in a hurry.

From the even more advanced viewpoint of the non-violent political theory which is characterised by the basic notion of the four MoDvs, we can evaluate in retrospect the radical attitude of LdV in the book *Les Quatre Fléaux*. Although often reasoning in a consistent way through double negations, also he did not see the second negation in the word non-violence. For a long time he looked for a definition of this word; eventually he suggested three definitions, without explaining why three and which mutual relationships they enjoy<sup>30</sup>.

LdV's was capable to theorize on social structures; in this framework he defined in theoretical terms the alternative organisation of society, i.e. the communitarian life (he formulated even a detailed constitution of his Ark community). But about the other option he devoted much space for criticising Science and Technology without however achieving a definition of what is acceptable by the alternative MoDv. His communities reject as much technologies as possible, but without a borderline between good and evil technologies.

LdV introduced a notion (sovereignty) which is a close anticipation of the notion of a MoDv. By analysing the dramatic confrontation of the two MoDvs, USA and URSS, and by suggesting as a third political way the Gandhian communities he lucidly recognised the pluralist interaction among three out the four MoDvs. Moreover, he recognised that in a usual society all the four MoDvs co-exist<sup>31</sup>, but he did not reflected upon the pluralist political scenario of the four MoDvs (which in fact appeared in the World in the year 1989, eight years after his death).

---

<sup>30</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Technique de la Non-violence* (1971), Gallimard, Paris, 1988, pt. II.

<sup>31</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Les Quatre Fléaux*, op. cit., ch. iv, no. 60, p. 240.

Surely, both Gandhi and LdV dealt with the extreme evil of degenerated MoDvs (respectively, a harsh colonialism on a lot of people and two political Blocks, a liberal one and a socialist one, dominating together all people in the World). Facing to these extreme forms of MoDvs, it is understandable that these teachers emphasised their own choices as crude ethical rejections of the extreme politics of the dominant MoDvs. Hence, both teachers, more than develop political arguments, depicted their own choices as the only good choices, and the opposite choices as objective evil; as a consequence, both invited their readers to choose an objective good against an objective evil.

These shortcomings led also LdV to present his proposals of a new MoDv as the appeal to join an exclusive society composed by some elected men, in the aim to support the true novelty of his historical times, instead to join a group capable of preserving the pluralist character of the entire society by solving in a non-violent way the inevitable political conflicts among the four MoDvs. All that shows that a non-violent political theory was not definitely achieved by LdV too.

## **6. The influence of Gandhi's and Lanza del Vasto's reforms on the main World institutions**

Let us ask how much the above two teachers of non-violence influenced, in spite of their above listed failures, the political structures in the World.

One can see a positive influence of Gandhi's and LdV's religious reforms on all the religions in the World; at present time, peaceful relationships are cultivated by all religions in the World in the aim to seek universality. Moreover, LdV developed a Gandhi's hint of a "Common ground of all great religions"<sup>32</sup>, including in it oneself conversion, brotherhood and non-violence. He maintained that only when the great religions will recognise this common ground of their mutually irreducible systems, will improve the inter-religious relationships of a mere praying all together, by establishing solid interrelationships and efficacious mutual collaborations.

---

<sup>32</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *All Men are Brother*, op. cit., ch. 2, sect. 105. Lanza del Vasto, *L'Arche avait une Vigne pour Voilure*, op. cit., ch. VI.

However, already at present time all the great religious traditions are maturing a new attitude, just in the direction of the reform indicated by both teachers, i.e. to emphasise its respective ethics till to promote a better World. Even the UN in 2008 succeeded to organise a Conference of all religions (Madrid 2008) for contributing to a common cooperation to the resolutions of the World political problems.

Among the various religious structures let us consider the more powerful religious institution in the World, i.e. the Catholic Church, which in the West is the more ancient and the more stiff Church. Few years after LdV's theorisation an unexpected Council (Vatican II 1962-1965) re-oriented to an ethical direction (the "pastoral" one) the Catholic Church.

However, it acknowledged little of the above illustrated religious and ethical reforms, although LdV attempted to directly change its attitude about the subjects of peace and non-violence. In 1963 he fasted forty days for asking from the Pope four innovations, in particular the condemnation of nuclear bombs; just at the end of this fast, some days before the official emission, he received a undersigned copy of Pope's Encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* which answered LdV's demands, but in a partial way only<sup>33</sup>.

The final resolutions of the Council included some favourable words fro the non-violence (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 80), but did not accept LdV's reform owing to his condemnation of modern science and technology. Whereas before the Council Vatican II this Church tenaciously resisted them in all possible ways, after it abruptly changed attitude towards them by accepting them without hesitations (except for abortion, artificial human reproduction, euthanasia, etc.).

All Christian Protestant confessions, apart some minoritarian ones, already since some centuries have accepted the "modernity". In such a way all Christian confessions disregarded the pivotal issue of LdV's reform of ethics, i.e. the criticism of Science and more in general, the notion of structural sin as well as the consequent notion of structural conversion, which is essential for LdV's

---

<sup>33</sup> See Lanza del Vasto, *Technique de la Non-violence* (1971), Gallimard, Paris, 1988, pt. II sect. 5.

definition of non-violence. It is just for this political reason that Gandhi's reforms and in particular its notion of non-violence seem as ignored by those Western institutions whose motivations are the more close to the basic motivation of non-violence.

But one has to consider that at present all Christian confessions are paying a high cost for their dispensing with a sharp criticism of science. In Catholic Church most people, by considering now exhausted the positive influence of the Council Vatican II, solicit a new Council for impressing a new radical change to the entire Church. More in general, a substantial part of the Christian people is abandoning their confessions for embracing either Eastern religiosities or atheism.

For summarising the present religious situation, the novelty of Gandhi's religious reform is well-known to the Western people too; but Science's monopoly on Truth obstructs the full recognition of this reform by the religious institutions.

Let us now consider the present influence of Gandhi's political reform on the political structures in the World.

In the century in which Gandhi operated, the people in the World confirmed what previously LdV stressed: "The two greatest discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are: the Non-violence and the Bomb"<sup>34</sup>. The statistical analyses of all past revolutions in the last century concluded that one out two non-violent revolutions was successful, whereas one out four violent revolutions was successful<sup>35</sup>. In the shorter period of time 1975-2004 two out three revolutions were non-violent. No more convincing proofs could be offered for proving both the political effectiveness of non-violence in the political life and the interiorization of Gandhi's political reform by the mankind. But at present people have a little power to change World political institutions.

---

<sup>34</sup> Lanza del Vasto, *Les Quatre Fléaux*, op. cit., p. 293.

<sup>35</sup> M.J. Stephan and E. Chenoweth: "[Why Civil Resistance works](#)", *International Security*, 33, 1/2008, pp. 7-44. About a shorter period of time see A. Karatnycky and P. Ackerman, *How Freedom is Won*, Freedom House, New York, 2005.

Gandhi's political victory, i.e. India's liberation, gave an impressive momentum to a Peace politics in the World. In particular, a great number of States founded the ONU, as an attempt for transcending the State system, mainly in the aim of promoting an efficacious Peace politics. The ONU tried to obtain people's consensus by establishing an unprecedented linkage with whatsoever citizen of the World; it offered the civil rights to all men. But these rights are too linked to the Western civilisation; e.g. most of them translate in several positive words the attitude summarised by the double negated word non-violence. As a consequence, the popular basis of UN is weak. Moreover, we well-know that UN decisions are severely bounded by the right of veto enjoyed by the five States only, the superpowers in the World.

Worse, the present political perspective is not a pluralist one; it is still dominated by the blue model (in particular, USA). By disregarding the people of both the green MoDv, as merely utopian ones, and the red MoDv (URSS), as having now exhausted its political alternative, the blue MoDv (USA) sees as different from itself only the yellow MoDv; by qualifying it as a (feudal) civilisation and hence as an enemy of the progressed Western civilisation, the blue MoDv is promoting an universal fight, both at home and worldwide, of the enemy, charged of blind terrorism. Through this unilateral politics, the blue model wants to actually divert the attention of all people from the truly universal need, i.e. to change the present oppressive political situation of 2,000 ethnic groups, which are included inside 200 States only. All these ethnic groups want to leave verticistic State of the Western kind for achieving more representative political institutions.

In fact, in the past the red model wanted, although through a dictatorial transition, to eventually dismiss the historical form of Western State. At present the Islamic populations and more in general the Eastern countries are experiencing new political structures, such to radically change the traditional State.

An even more radical rejection of the traditional State is shared by the people belonging to the green model; at present they are lacking of a representative

State, because they do not recognise one State as fulfilling their political aims<sup>36</sup>. We well know that Gandhi too disagreed with Western State; after having inaugurated by a speech the independent Indian Parliament, he rejected any political charge in the new born State. Moreover, one day before his assassination he wrote a draft of Constitution, lowering all social institutions to the minimal ones<sup>37</sup>; it was never applied and not approached either. The year 1989 confirmed this political failure of the green MoDv; in the World all non-violent revolutions, even those won even ferocious dictatorships, have been followed by no one non-violent government. Hence, we recognise that even at present times the main challenge to the non-violent politics is how improve the little communities till to functionally interrelated, large-scale aggregations of a great number of people.

All that amounts to recognise that, although the Gandhi's tide (of his revolutionary reforms) covered the World shores<sup>38</sup>, his deep prophecy of a historical change in the World is still waiting a full realization, to be accomplished by the lives of no more some isolated, exceptional personalities – as it occurred in the first historical step of the growth of the green MoDv –, but by great populations; that have to discover, beyond how to perform non-violent mass revolutions – as it occurred in the second historical step of the growth of the green MoDv –, how everyday transform in a non-violent way the institutions of the ordinary social life, in particular in the economic structure of the society.

---

<sup>36</sup> It is meaningful that the World meetings called “Porto Alegre” (from the municipality often hosted them) ended when Evo Morales, as the chief of a State, offered to host the next one.

<sup>37</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 15 Feb. 1948.

<sup>38</sup> “As a professional historian, being accustomed to seeing the running flux and reflux of the Spirit's great tides, I illustrate this tide which is rising, from the depth of the East. It will not fall back until it has covered Europe's shores”. R. Rolland, “Preface” to M.K. Gandhi, *La Jeune Inde (1919-1922)*, Stock, Paris, 1924.