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Editorial

THESE ARE DIFFICULT times for the country and the world at large. Covid-19 has created a panic like situation and feelings of vulnerability among people exist across the globe. Even countries that understandably had good health systems in place find themselves in disarray. While China has been able to contain it with drastic measures, the European countries, unused to such measures given their libertarian values, have found the virus spreading like wildfire, overwhelming the capacity of their national systems. While the WHO was in the forefront of attempts to contain such pandemics in the past, it cannot do anything other than provide advisories given the enormity of the problem at hand. Not only has the pandemic affected the livelihood of people and economies of all countries, it has made people conscious of health as a security issue that needs greater attention than what governments have accorded it so far. Rich countries that saw pandemics as a problem of the developing countries have suddenly realized how unprepared they were when Covid-19 struck their own citizens with a vengeance.

The spread of the virus, to a great extent, is one of the deleterious effects of globalization. While international response to Covid-19 outbreak is slow due to lack of capacity and resources, the ground level responses are primarily confined to national governments. How well the world will cope with the pandemic is now dependent on the measures taken by individual countries and mutual learning from good practices. India, with a fragile health system, insufficient resources, lack of testing facilities and a huge population have gone for a lock down to prevent a community spread of the virus. While this is a welcome development, sensitivity to the impact of such measures on the poor and migrant workers, who earn their living on a daily basis, also needs to be reckoned, so also the plight of animals dependent on humans. Health expenditure in India as a share of per capita GDP is less than 4 percent and is way behind the requirement. This is an opportune moment for the country to redefine its priorities

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and invest more in the health sector.

The outbreak of Covid-19 will be a turning point in human history. It has challenged the world order and many of its underlying assumptions. It has brought in greater uncertainty in the lives of people. The call of the UN Secretary General to use the occasion to end all wars or declare a ceasefire is timely. The response to Covid-19 has also highlighted the importance of nation states and federal units within them. All responses are bound to be of a local nature. This explains the speed with which individual states in India sealed the borders. States that are dependent on goods produced elsewhere realize how vulnerable they are. This is likely to motivate countries to increasingly practise self-reliance. Gandhian ideas are likely to be revisited. Creating a non-exploitative and compassionate world is the need of the hour.

This issue of the journal has four articles in the main section, one in the notes and comments section, three book reviews and a news item. The first article by Ravi Mishra looks at Gandhi's approach to religion. Thomas Weber examines the aphorisms relating to Gandhi that have become popular, their veracity and the contexts in which they emerged. Bindu Mohanty compares social practices of citizenship attributed to Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo. Vishnu Varatharajan traces the evolution of Satyagraha in South Africa. Peter Gonsalves writes about the high estimation that Pope John Paul II had for Gandhi and his ideas on peaceful social change.

JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU
Editor



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Gandhi and Religion

Ravi K Mishra

ABSTRACT

Of all the important leaders of the modern world, Gandhi was arguably the most concerned with religion, defining it and engaging with it in multiple ways, from the particular to the universal. A deeply devout man, he engaged with all major religions in the long course of his life. His formulation of Hinduism is often understood without taking into account its peculiarities and nuances and his use of symbols derived from Hinduism is often held responsible for giving a religious colour to the freedom struggle. Similarly, Gandhi's lifelong engagement with Islam and Christianity is generally sought to be incorporated in a contemporary framework of universalism and pluralism that fails to fully grapple with the complexities and ambiguities of his approaches towards religions other than his own. This paper seeks to bring out the relatively neglected aspects of Gandhi's engagement with Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity and argues that in its philosophical underpinnings as well as its sense of ethics and morality Gandhi's universal religion was derived largely from Hinduism, even though he often presented it in broader terms. It further argues that Gandhi was throughout informed by the idea of equality of all religions which not only made him work for unity between religions but also caused many controversies and conflicts with the followers of Islam and Christianity and occasionally with his own co-religionists.+

Keywords: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Ramarajya, Conversion,

I

GANDHI'S EXTENSIVE USE of religion in his personal as well as public life sets him apart from most of his contemporary political figures, who generally sought to separate religion from politics and keep it in an exclusively private domain, if at all. For Gandhi, all

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religions were equal in the sense that they all lead to the same divine truth. Attempting to deal with Gandhi's engagement with religion in a comprehensive manner, this paper is divided into three broad sections. The first section focuses upon Gandhi's understanding and practice of Hinduism in itself as well as in relation with other religions. The second and third sections dealing respectively with Islam and Christianity seek to understand Gandhi's positions on crucial issues like the infallibility of scriptures, the status of prophets, the Islamic legal practices, Pan-Islamism, missionary activities and conversion within a framework of the idea of equality of all religions which alone explains the complexities of Gandhi's interventions in the domain of Hinduism as well as Islam and Christianity.

II

As mentioned above, Hinduism as Gandhi defined and understood it provided the framework for his broader understanding of religion even as it enabled him to engage with other religious traditions in a meaningful manner. In a statement given during his stay in South Africa, Gandhi thus sought to define Hinduism:

Hinduism, in its general spirit, is a religion which everybody would find acceptable. It is essentially an ethical religion. From this point of view, it may be said that all religions are equally true, since there can be no religion divorced from ethics.¹

After his return to India, Gandhi plunged himself in the Hindu reform movement and often described himself as an orthodox Hindu who believed in all the essentials of Hinduism. To that extent, he identified himself with what could be said to be popular Hinduism. However, he had his own peculiar understanding of what 'orthodox' Hinduism meant. Addressing a gathering of Sri Lankan Hindus at Jaffna, he said:

If orthodox Hinduism means dining or not dining with this or that man, and touching this man and not touching that man or in quarrelling with Mussalmans or Christians, then I am certainly not an orthodox Hindu. But if orthodox Hinduism can mean an incessant search after what Hinduism can possibly be, if orthodox Hinduism can mean an incessant striving to live Hinduism to the best of one's lights, then I claim to be an orthodox Hindu.²

It is clear that Gandhi's interpretation of what constitutes 'orthodox' Hinduism was radically different from most other views

on it. His position *vis-à-vis* issues like inter-dining and untouchability was admittedly in the nature of a reiteration of views expressed by other Hindu reformers. But what separates Gandhi from the rest of the reformers is his emphasis on being an 'orthodox' Hindu. This was, in a sense, Gandhi's way of acquiring legitimacy for his reform movement; for it was bound to strike a familiar chord even in his opponents within the Hindu fold. If Gandhi was indeed an 'orthodox' Hindu, no one would imagine his work being detrimental to the cause of Hinduism. This, however, was not as simple as that. Despite these views of Gandhi, considerable sections among the Hindus either remained apprehensive of his work or bitterly opposed it.³ The opposition that Gandhi had to encounter during the entire period of the movement was quite considerable. In fact, it sometimes degenerated into physical attacks on him.

The attitudes and positions adopted by Gandhi towards Hinduism may have constituted a powerful attack on many aspects of what others could have called 'orthodox' Hinduism. However, his involvement in the cow-protection or "cow-service work", as he put it, was resonant with popular Hinduism. The same could be said with regard to his views on idol worship. Unlike many other Hindu reformers, for example Dayananda, Gandhi did not look down upon it; nor did he think that it was inferior to other common forms of worship. Thus, he did not share the Semitic aversion to idol worship. Answering the questions raised by an iconoclastic schoolmaster, he said:

It is not necessary for any Hindu to go to the temple to worship (the image of) Ramchandra. But it is for him who cannot contemplate his Rama without looking at his image in a temple. It may be unfortunate, but it is true that his Rama resides in the temple as nowhere else. I would not disturb that simple faith.⁴

For Gandhi, therefore, 'faith' was more important than the form of worship. This is in consonance with his ardent belief that there are different paths leading to the same truth. Since all paths lead to the same truth, image worship is as good as any other form of worship. It follows from this that those who practised other forms of worship were in no way superior to the idol worshippers, nor was it permissible for them to convert the latter to their own fold. Thus, Gandhi's views on image worship were indirectly related to the whole issue of proselytization. Moreover, his defence of popular Hinduism clearly reflects his evaluation and acceptance of Hinduism on its own terms, and not in comparison with the Semitic traditions. Gandhi's

acceptance of what may be described as essentials of Hinduism is reflected in his deep faith in the Karma theory and rebirth. He went so far as to say:

I, for one, would not call a man a Hindu, if he does not believe in reincarnation... Don't you see that every moment millions of beings are born and millions die? That itself suggests that there is reincarnation.⁵

In 1926, when Swami Shraddhanand,⁶ was assassinated by Abdul Rashid, there were accusations raised in certain quarters against Gandhi of soft-peddling the issue with an eye to keep the Muslims in good humour. Gandhi rebutted these accusations and made it clear that he held Shraddhanand in great esteem and that he regarded his assassination as a tragedy. At the Gauhati Session of the Congress in 1926, he said:

... This was no ordinary death, that I should not weep over it. Unbearable as it is, my heart refuses to grieve; it rather prays that all of us may be granted such a death.⁷

Thus, as far as Gandhi was concerned, the assassination had made Shraddhanand a great martyr whose example was to be cherished and even emulated by others. 'All men, of course, must die but of what worth is their dying? In India and wherever there are Hindus and Mussalmans, the death of Swamiji before his time will produce an effect different from what would have been produced if Swamiji had died a natural death'.⁸ He wholeheartedly recognized the work done by Shraddhanand for the reform and rejuvenation of Hinduism, and, at the same time, his contribution to the cause of the country as a whole. In fact, Gandhi put himself, in a certain sense, in the league of people like Shraddhanand, when speaking about the latter's assassination at the Gauhati Congress. He asserted:

I am a Hindu by birth, and I find peace in the Hindu religion. Whenever peace seemed to elude me, it was in the Hindu religion that I found it. I studied other religions also, and I decided that whatever its defects and drawbacks, Hinduism alone could be the religion for me. That is what I feel and that is why I call myself a Sanatani Hindu.⁹

This assertion on the part of Gandhi regarding his strong affiliation to Hinduism, made as it was in the midst of the controversy over the death of a recognized Hindu leader, could not but be an expression of solidarity for those who worked for the reform and rejuvenation of Hinduism. Significantly enough, the resolution on

Shraddhanand's murder at the Gauhati Congress was moved by Gandhi himself. It read:

This Congress expresses its horror and indignation at the cowardly and treacherous murder of Swami Shraddhanand, and places on record its sense of irreparable loss the nation has sustained by the tragic death of a brave and noble patriot who dedicated his life and his great gifts to the service of his country and of his faith and espoused with fearless devotion the cause of the lowly, the fallen and the weak.¹⁰

This resolution, even though it could not be said to be tantamount to Gandhi's personal views in a strict sense, obviously contained views with which Gandhi largely agreed. The recognition of the services rendered by an Arya Samaj leader to the cause of the nation was significant, in as much it was an expression of a willingness on the part of Gandhi and Congress leaders to acknowledge that there was no basic contradiction between the activities aiming at regeneration of Hinduism, on the one hand, and those aiming at national independence, on the other. Furthermore, an explicit recognition of Shraddhanand's services to his 'faith' would not have been possible in the absence of a general belief in Gandhi and other leaders that activities leading to the regeneration of Hinduism were very much within the arena of legitimate religio-cultural domain.

In his own speech, Gandhi went a step further and described Shraddhanand as the 'hero of heroes'.¹¹ To his mind, the latter only demonstrated the greatness of Hinduism when he allowed his assassin Abdul Rashid to enter his room, even though he was too weak to talk to him¹². In the same Congress session, Gandhi also put up a strong defence of Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lajpat Rai. In a statement that deserves to be fully quoted, he emphatically rejected the insinuation that they were the enemies of Islam, and admonished those who were in the habit of spewing venom against them:

Many Mussalmans believe that Lalaji and Malaviyaji are sworn enemies of Islam, as was Swamiji in their opinion. On the other hand, many Hindus regard Sir Abdul Rahim and other Mussalmans as the enemies of Hinduism. To my mind both are wholly wrong. Swamiji was no enemy of Islam, nor are Lalaji and Malaviyaji. Lalaji and Malaviyaji have a right to express their opinions freely, and even if we disagree with them, no one may excite feelings of hatred against them. And yet, what do we see today? There are few Mussalman papers today which do not use foul language against these patriots. Now I ask in all humility, what is the wrong they have done? We may not see eye to eye with them in their methods of work. But I am sure it is his great service that has earned for Malaviyaji the name, Bharat Bhushan. Lalaji too has a great record of

service... If Maulana Mohammed Ali says that although he has respect for Gandhi, he holds that the faith of a Mussalman who believes in the Quran is greater than the faith of Gandhi, why should we be angry? Do not some Christian clergymen say that a Christian regularly going to Church and serving Jesus is better than a Hindu however pious he may be?¹³

In spite of this unambiguous expression of his views in favour of Shraddhanand, the controversy regarding the issue refused to die. In response to his article *Swamiji the Martyr*, Gandhi received a letter from an admirer criticizing his views on the subject and published it in *Young India* while giving his clarification. The important point here is that this correspondent regarded Gandhi as a 'saint who has entered politics in fulfilment of your mission' and therefore objects to his claim made in the above-mentioned article that Islam is a religion of peace, considering it to be a falsehood which should not have been uttered by a saint-politician. The letter further accused Gandhi of not considering the murder as 'inhuman, barbarous and cruel' and of being partial towards the Muslims.¹⁴ In reply to this letter, Gandhi made it clear that he regarded the murder of Shraddhanand as 'inhuman, and cruel'.¹⁵ However, he asserted that he felt 'pity for the murderer even as I felt for General Dyer'. Regarding his failure to press for the prosecution of Abdul Rashid, Gandhi reminded the correspondent that he had not demanded the prosecution even of General Dyer. Thus, it was merely a manifestation of his general policy not to hate the sinner but the sin. However, Gandhi put it in an unequivocal manner that he did hold the Maulvis and some Muslim newspapers responsible for inciting the murder because Abdul Rashid was in his opinion 'a victim of foul irreligious propaganda in the name of religion'.¹⁶ Gandhi asserted:

But I do regard Islam to be a religion of peace in the same sense as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism are. No doubt there are differences in degree, but the object of these religions is peace. I know the passages from the Koran that can be quoted to the contrary. But so is it possible to quote passages from the Vedas to the contrary.¹⁷

Gandhi's association with Hindu leaders like Shraddhanand, Malaviya and Lajpat Rai was often portrayed in the Muslim League circles as evidence of his being a purely Hindu leader working against the interests of Muslims. However, Gandhi refused to change his position *vis-à-vis* Malaviya and Lajpat Rai. Speaking at the 1927 Session of the I.N.C., Gandhi made the following comment on Malaviya:

My Mussalman friends have always belittled my faith in his bonafides and nationalism as against communalism. I have never been able to suspect either even where I have not been able to share his views on Hindu-Muslim questions.¹⁸

Thus, Gandhi did not see any inherent contradiction in Malaviya's position. He expressed similar views in 1928 on the death of Lala Lajpat Rai. As he put it:

His (Lajpat Rai's) desire to purify and strengthen Hinduism must not be confounded with hatred of Mussalmans or Islam. He was sincerely desirous of promoting and achieving Hindu-Muslim unity.¹⁹

It is clear from the above statement that Gandhi did not see any problem not only in the work carried out to achieve the 'purification' of Hinduism but also in the work meant to 'strengthen' Hinduism. At least in the life and activities of Lajpat Rai, he did not see any basic contradiction between the work calculated to consolidate the Hindu community and the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity. Service to Hindu society was of great value in Gandhi's estimate. This point is further corroborated by what he said at an Arya Samaj gathering in Rangoon, 'What is controversial in the Arya Samaj will be forgotten in the course of time, but its services and those of Rishi Dayananda to Hindu society will be ever remembered.'²⁰

Gandhi was, therefore, not unaware of the fact that many activities of the Arya Samaj were considered to be rather controversial. However, he regarded the contribution of the Samaj to the reformation and strengthening of Hinduism as more important than the controversial aspects of its work. Gandhi's criticism, if any, of the Arya Samaj was, therefore, not targeted against its organisation and activities as a whole. He only pointed out some problems associated with it, but defended the Samaj against external attacks. For example, he had severely criticised a pamphlet *Rangila Rasul*, written by an Arya Samajist, Rajpal, in which the author had portrayed Prophet Mohammed in negative light.²¹ He called upon the Samaj not to encourage such writings. This created resentment among certain sections of Hindus who accused him of being partial towards the Muslims. Later on, a book *Swami Dayananda: A Critical Study of His Life and Teachings* by F.K. Durrani was published, and Gandhi was called upon by a correspondent to express his opinion about it. The book contained polemical material about the Arya Samaj and Dayanand and declared that the Muslims were a 'conquering force' who must raise their numerical strength because India could rise to power and glory only under the banner of Islam.²² Gandhi condemned the book

and called it 'vicious' and 'libellous.'²³ He rejected the author's contention that the book was not meant to do personal slander against Dayanand, and insisted that it was malicious in nature.²⁴

Gandhi defended the Samaj from other kinds of attacks, too, and acted as a mediator between different Hindu organizations and sects. When a Sanatani newspaper carried an article on Dayanand considered to be derogatory by the Arya Samaj and the matter was brought to his attention, Gandhi condemned it and called upon the Hindu Mahasabha to stop the publication of such papers.²⁵

The preceding account shows quite clearly that Gandhi did not regard the so-called Hindu organizations as untouchables. Instead, he had a highly nuanced approach towards their leaders and activities. As the leader of the national movement, he could not possibly have completely ignored or opposed the activities of the Hindu Sanghathanist movement,²⁶ which had both points of convergence and departure with his own worldview and activities. The two travelled together up to a certain point but not the whole way due to the very nature of his political and religious philosophy that was not shared by the Sanghathanist movement. Chief among these concerns was evidently Gandhi's emphasis upon the equality of all religions and upon strict non-violence to be employed to attain the goal of reforming and regenerating Hinduism. However, differences apart, Gandhi's firm belief that the goals and activities of institutions like the Arya Samaj and other Hindu organizations constituted a legitimate arena of public activity is of enormous significance.

III

Apart from his unflinching faith in Ahimsa, what distinguishes Gandhi from other great personalities of the modern world is the fact that he was a deeply religious man who argued that there can be no politics without religion in the sense of morality. Not only in his life but also in his death, Gandhi displayed his firm faith in providence when he refused to allow personal security despite a bomb attack and intelligence reports about other imminent attempts on his life, and paid the price by sacrificing his life to an assassin's bullets, dying with the name of Ram on his lips. Gandhi's political language was replete with religious idioms and symbolisms which in the opinion of some later critics had an alienating effect on the Muslims and Christians even as they led to widespread awakening among the rural masses because of their powerful connect with the rural masses largely comprising of Hindus. The most important religious idiom employed by Gandhi was doubtless Ramarajya, which had been in common use

in much of India in the sense of ideal rule. This paper, therefore, seeks to examine the meanings of Ramarajya in Gandhi's thought.²⁷

An excursion into the layered meanings of Gandhi's Ramarajya raises many pertinent questions. What did Ramarajya mean to Gandhi and what was its significance? Was it simply employed as a metaphor, as is sometimes claimed? Was it used by him because of the fact that it was a theme deeply embedded in the common cultural outlook of North India? Was it a deliberate attempt at appealing to the religious and cultural memories of the masses? Did the use of Ramarajya by Gandhi unintentionally alienate the Muslims from the national movement and give it a religious colouring? These are some of the questions that are sought to be addressed in the following discussion.

The term appears for the first time in a note published in *Navjivan* wherein in Gandhi's response to the remarks of a journalist critical of the British parliamentary system, Gandhi described Ramarajya as the only ideal alternative system.²⁸ Disagreeing with the journalist's remarks of 'whom the people approve' as the answer to his question 'But where do we find Rama?'²⁹, he does not consider those elected as truly representing the voice of the people, because in that case, the British parliamentary system should not have been defective. As all systems are bound to have flaws and be defective in one or the other way, Gandhi's focus is on men rather than the system itself, because according to him, "good men can transform a bad system into a good one- like the wise housewife who transforms dust into grains."³⁰ It could be argued that in a subtle way Gandhi rejects the parliamentary system as it prevailed in England and other countries in his day and embraces Ramarajya as the organic alternative "which will yield maximum benefit to India."³¹ Speaking on the princely states, Gandhi says:

My ideal of Indian states is that of *Ramarajya*. Rama taking his cue from a washer man's remark and in order to satisfy his subjects abandoned Sita who was dear to him as life itself and was a very incarnation of Purity... He lent splendour to his throne by his popular administration and proved that *Ramarajya* was the acme of swaraj. Rama did not need the very imperfect modern instrument of ascertaining public opinion by counting votes. He had captivated the hearts of the people. He knew public opinion by intuition as it were. The subjects of Rama were supremely happy."³²

Ram's taking his cue from the remark of a washerman is taken by Gandhi as an ideal king's responsiveness to the people's voice – an opinion that differs so much from the current feminist opinions in which Ram's abandoning of Sita in response to the washerman's

comments is viewed in a highly negative light. That Ramarajya was also a metaphor for good rule is clearly established by his statement:

Such *Ramarajya* is possible even today. The race of Rama is not extinct. In modern times the first Caliphs may be said to have established *Ramarajya*. Abubaker and Hazrat Umar collected revenue running into crores and yet personally they were as good as fakirs. They received not a pie from the Public Treasury. They were ever watchful to see that the people got justice. It was their principle that one may not play false even with the enemy but must deal justly with him.³³

As is evident from the above statements, Gandhi sees Ramarajya as a Hindu concept with universal applicability. In fact, he sees the idea being realized by the early Caliphs, who are described in the Islamic tradition as the *Al-Khulafa u ar-Rashdun* (the righteous Caliphs).

The invocation of the metaphor of Ramarajya by Gandhi was less about appealing to the religious sentiments of the populace and more about ethics and morality. Ramarajya was thus a call to the rulers as well as the ruled for exercising self-restraint, to follow one's duties, and to be ready for self-sacrifice. One of the most important reasons for the invocation of Ramarajya as a civilizational motif by Gandhi was that Rama was seen as the ideal ruler by the masses. Extolled for his sense of self-restraint, sacrifice, and duty as a man as well as a ruler, Rama of the masses has all the qualities of an ideal man, a man who is all powerful and invested with the best qualities in every sense, yet out of self-restraint he is completely disciplined and does not have indulgence of any kind. Rama made sacrifices at every stage of his life for the upholding of principles.

Therefore, in invoking Ramarajya, Gandhi was using a metaphor which was deeply rooted in the societal consciousness while simultaneously broadening its meaning. Evidently, the most important aspect of Ramarajya as an idea is its vision of moral uprightness of the individual and the society. Since Ramarajya presents itself as a moral idea within the indigenous civilizational framework of India, Gandhi's use of the metaphor was quite clearly meant to pose a civilizational challenge to the West in whose imagination and articulation the 'East' was the domain of chaos, disorder, and corruption as well as to impart dignity to the Indian people by invoking Indian symbols, civilization and culture, while simultaneously giving a new meaning to them.

Gandhi's concept of Ramarajya as the vision of an ideal socio-political system was closely similar to its expression in *Ramacharitamanas* – the immortal Hindi version of the story of Rama written by Tulsidas in the 16th century – which, along with its surrounding myths and folklores, had a profound influence on the masses, thereby making it

an ideal motif to be employed judiciously in the general political discourse. Invoking Ramarajya helped Gandhi, a great admirer of Tulsidas, to effectively appeal to the masses and establish a connect with them, while simultaneously vouching for the morals and ethics of the motif in tune with his own ideas about an ideal society.

As pointed out earlier, Gandhi was a strong advocate of sacrifice and self-restraint, and emphasized the execution of one's duties rather than demand for one's rights. It is evident that Gandhi's idea of sacrifice is in harmony with the Indian civilizational legacy, and that Ramarajya is a visualization of that legacy at the popular level at least in northern India. In the Indic civilization, indulgence of the self has not been looked down upon per se, but at the end more importance has been given to sacrifice and self-restraint, which have generally been regarded as essential for the evolution of the soul force. So, Gandhi's call for Ramarajya served all his purposes and made for an excellent political tool.

Gandhi saw the Indian women as the appropriate site for the realization of a Ramarajya because of his belief that women naturally had a much higher sense of sacrifice and self-restraint. According to him public life could be led only by those "who are pure in body and mind"³⁴, he concluded that Ramarajya could be established "only when there is likelihood of a Sita arising"³⁵. Thus, not only did Gandhi use Ramarajya as a popular motif to strike an emotional chord with Indian women which would help him mobilize them *en masse*, but he also had a profound understanding of family dynamics and the processes of character building during childhood. As he put it:

We never say Rama-Sita but Sita-Rama, not Krishna-Radha, but Radha-Krishna. It is thus that we tutor even the parrot. The reason why we think of Sita's name first is that, without virtuous women, there can be no virtuous men. A child will take after the mother, not the father. It is the mother who holds its reins.³⁶

Thus Gandhi believed that it would be possible to prepare a new generation of pure minds only if women imparted the right morals to their children and raise a set of pure souls who would take up the mantle of reform in public life. What is in contention here is not whether his belief is correct or not. In fact, from the contemporary feminist perspective, it would seem to be putting the burden of child rearing exclusively on women. What matters more for this analysis is that Gandhi's belief in the power of womanhood in building human character fits very well within his concept of Ramarajya:

As long as women whose body and mind tend in one direction- i.e.,

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towards the path of virtue- do not come into public life and purify it, we are not likely to attain *Ramarajya* or swaraj. Even if we did, I would have no use for that kind of swaraj to which such women have not made their full contribution. One could well stretch oneself on the ground in obeisance to a woman of purity of mind and heart. I should like such women to take part in public life.³⁷

He goes on to describe the characteristic features of such virtuous women. According to him, the 'finest sign of purity of mind is to go and work for khadi'³⁸ among the poor and encourage the well-to-do to spin on charkha and adopt khadi. Moving on, 'the second sign of virtue is service to *Antyajas*'³⁹ and the last is 'furtherance of friendship with the Muslims'⁴⁰. Gandhi held that the rendering of the three above-mentioned activities would be sufficient to regard a woman as having fully participated in public life.⁴¹ In mentioning that, 'for Sita, what cloth her country produced was quite enough for her decoration', Gandhi was demanding the same attitude on part of the Indian women using the motif of Sita to shape up the ethics of femininity as a contributor to the struggle against the British as well as to lead women towards a moral reformation through self-restraint and giving up of petty material possessions. Thus, addressing a crowd at Nandigama, Gandhi said:

Women also should take part in the attainment of swaraj and self-purification like the men. I do not speak of swaraj but of *Ramarajya*. If there is no Sita there is no *Ramarajya*. If you want *Ramarajya* all of you should become Sitas. History said that Sita wore khaddar and used only national things. It is on account of that purity that Ravana could not even touch Sita. Sita entered fire, but was safe. Hindu ladies can become so pure if they try.⁴²

Sita (read, women), for Gandhi, was indeed the soul of *Ramarajya*, which had highly complex and multi-layered meanings for him, assuming different forms at the social, political, cultural, moral, ethical and philosophical planes.⁴³ At a philosophical level, *Ramarajya* and the rule of dharma constituted his swaraj.⁴⁴ The rule of dharma demanded *tapascharya*, which meant "self-purification, knowledge of the *atman* and its realization".⁴⁵ Gandhi had a strong conviction that through the practice of *tapascharya*, we could purify our hearts and actions and then we would be able to establish *Ramarajya*. At a socio-political level, *Ramarajya* meant the setting up and realization of certain objectives which would ultimately cure the society of its ills. In a speech delivered at the Marwari Agrawal Sabha in Bhagalpur, Gandhi identified the removal of animosity between various castes and the

springing up of several sub-castes, child-widow remarriage, cow protection and the propagation of Hindi and Devanagari characters as the objectives to be achieved in order to move towards Ramarajya and to establish the rule of dharma.⁴⁶ In another speech at Wardha, he mentioned a triple programme of establishing Hindi-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, and making the middle classes “understand the gospel of swadeshi” as the means to attaining Ramarajya.⁴⁷ A very significant observation was made by Gandhi in one of his talks with the ashram women:

This (Hind Swaraj) is not a mere political book. I have used the language of politics, but I have really tried to offer a glimpse of dharma. What is the meaning of ‘Hind Swaraj’? It means rule of dharma or *Ramarajya*. I have addressed as many meetings of women as of men. At women’s meetings I have always used the word *Ramarajya* in place of swaraj.⁴⁸

Gandhi’s response to a question⁴⁹ succinctly sums up his idea of Ramarajya: “I defined swaraj as Ramraj as I often do because it is a graphic description for a moral government based upon truth and non-violence, in other words universal religion.”⁵⁰ As an ethical value, Gandhi saw the coming together of an understanding of one’s duty and its observance thereof as the dawn of the era of Ramarajya.⁵¹ Ramarajya, for Gandhi, was “true swaraj”.⁵² He demonstrated time and again that his Ramarajya had a unique conception of universalism which went beyond the conventional boundaries of religion. At an address in Porbandar, he observed:

It is *Khuda’s* injunction, it is said in the Vedas and in the Bible, that all men are brothers. All religions proclaim that the world is held together by the chain of love, and learned students of Shashtras tell us that, without this chain, the atoms would fall apart, that water would lack the property of existing as liquid and each drop would exist by itself. If the same chain, likewise, did not bind human beings to one another, we would all be dead. We should, therefore, have such a chain to bind us if we want swaraj or *Ramarajya*. That chain of love is nothing but the thread of hand-spun yarn.⁵³

In another instance, while critiquing the conception of swaraj in a letter sent to him, Gandhi explained his own understanding of swaraj and summed it up as Ramarajya, following which he stated that lest it be misinterpreted by the Muslim brethren and others, he called it “the rule of dharma” too.⁵⁴ Gandhi was extremely cautious about the use of a term such as Ramarajya (which on the face of it was loaded with religious connotations) and made sure to clarify it being used by

him in the right context for attaining a just objective. This is evidenced in the following instance:

No matter in how many ways swaraj may have been defined, no matter how many interpretations I myself may have given it, to me its only meaning which is eternally valid is Ramarajya. If the word Ramarajya offends anyone, then I shall call it 'Dharmarajya'... It should be remembered that in order to establish Ramarajya no learning is necessary. The necessary talent is found in all – men and women, young and old, and in people of all religions.⁵⁵

Gandhi even attempted to accommodate the legal rights of minority groups, especially Muslims, into his worldview of Ramarajya. Thus Ramarajya, which was essentially a conception of a duty-driven society, made space for the incorporation of certain fundamental rights, such as those protecting the culture, language and scripts of the minority.⁵⁶ Gandhi once “religiously translated” Ramarajya as “Kingdom of God on Earth”⁵⁷, which once again showed how he inter-linked the concept across religious schools of thoughts, by finding a parallel of this supposedly Hindu motif in an almost identical Christian concept. When directly confronted with the question as to why there was the chant of *Ramanama* in his daily prayer meetings which had Muslims as well, and accused of having the establishment of Ramarajya meaning Hindu raj as one of his most important objectives, Gandhi responded thus:

As to the use of the phrase ‘*Rama-Rajya*’, why should it offend after my having defined its meaning many times? It is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I visit the Frontier Province or address predominantly Muslim audiences I would express my meaning to them by calling it Khudai Raj, while to a Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on Earth. Any other mode would, for me, be self-suppression and hypocrisy.⁵⁸

In a speech at a prayer meeting in Haimchar, Gandhi further clarified his ideas:

Let no one commit the mistake of thinking that *Ramarajya* meant a rule of the Hindus. My Rama is another name for *Khuda* or God. I want *Khudai Raj*, which is the same thing as the Kingdom of God on Earth. The rule of the first four Caliphs was somewhat comparable to it. The establishment of such a *rajya* would not only mean welfare of the whole of the Indian people but of the whole world.⁵⁹

IV

Having analysed Gandhi's engagement with Hinduism, particularly his relations with those who may be described as Hindu leaders, and his conception of Ramarajya, this paper now moves on to Gandhi's understanding of Islam and his interactions with it, including with pan-Islamism. The syncretic background of Gandhi's early life, reflected both in the social and cultural world of the coastal areas of Gujarat and in the fact that his mother belonged to the Pranami sect is well-known. On his return to India after more than twenty years of intense political work in which he had been closely associated with Indian Muslims, Gandhi pushed himself into the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements. His support to the Khilafat movement was criticized by a majority of his political friends and associates, who regarded Khilafat an irrelevant issue for India or a digression; many regarded it as potentially dangerous in that it could lead to the rise of fanaticism and pan-Islamism. However, Gandhi justified his support for Khilafat on the grounds that the Allies had broken a solemn pledge given by the British Prime Minister during the war of keeping Turkey and that for the sake of developing Hindu-Muslim unity in the cause of the freedom struggle it was essential for the Hindus to lend support to the Muslims as their brethren without actually going into whether their demand was justified or not. For Gandhi, it was enough that sections of Indian Muslims felt strongly about the disintegration of Turkey. He argued:

What is the Muslim demand? The Khilafat means the Turkish Empire. Its authority should remain substantially what it was at the commencement of the War. The Allies may demand any guarantees they choose for the protection of the interests of the non-Muslim subjects of the Empire. Turkish rule, however, should be preserved. Likewise, the Khalifa's control over Arabia which is called Jazirat-ul-Arab and over other holy places of Islam should be maintained.⁶⁰

The issue of the relationship between Hinduism and Islam again came to the fore because of his insistence on Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1920, Gandhi, commenting on the medieval period of Indian history, said:

The pre-British period was not a period of slavery. We had some sort of Swaraj under the Mughal rule. In Akbar's time, the birth of a Pratap was possible. In Aurangzeb's time, a Shivaji could flourish.⁶¹

Gandhi's involvement with the Khilafat Movement was looked

upon with disfavour by certain sections among the Hindus who believed that Gandhi was consciously or unconsciously consolidating the pan-Islamic feelings among the Indian Muslims. In response to these charges, Gandhi said:

Let Hindus not be frightened by Pan-Islamism. It is not, it need not be, anti-Indian or anti-Hindu. Mussalmans must wish well to every Mussalman state and even assist any such state, if it is undeservedly in peril. And Hindus, if they are true friends of Mussalmans, cannot but share the latter's feelings.⁶²

In the wake of the Hindu-Muslim riots in 1923, Gandhi was again charged with having consolidated the Muslim community. The Moplah rebellion involving a large number of Hindus being killed or converted to Islam was by far the most serious challenge to Gandhi's religious philosophy. He thus commented:

A verbal disapproval by the Mussalmans of Moplah madness is no test of Mussalman friendship. The Mussalman must naturally feel the shame and humiliation of Moplah conduct about forcible conversions and looting, and they must work away so silently and effectively that such things might become impossible even on the part of the most fanatical among them.⁶³

It is clear from the above statement that Gandhi did call a spade a spade. Just as he would have blamed the Hindus for such an act, he blamed the Moplahs, too. In fact, he went a step further, and asked Hindus not to be 'cowards' and the Muslims not to be 'cruel'.⁶⁴ He thus admonished the Hindus:

He who cannot safeguard his dharma is not worthy of it. Those who were forcibly converted, why did they submit to force? Why did they not give up their lives? Or, why did they not fight and beat back the enemy, or die fighting?⁶⁵

Thus, as Gandhi often said, retaliation was preferable to what he regarded as cowardice of the Hindus attacked by the Moplahs. Moreover, he severely criticized Maulana Hasrat Mohani for defending the actions of the Moplahs in the name of religion. He said, 'That is no doubt a travesty of religion and morality. But to do irreligion for the sake of religion is the religious creed of the Maulana.'⁶⁶ However, he still asserted that 'no religion in this world has spread through the use of force' and that 'the history of Muslim empires which is taught to us contains much exaggeration'.⁶⁷ Not only did Gandhi condemn the forcible conversion of the Hindus in

Malabar but he also argued that 'those Hindus who have been forcibly converted to Islam ought not to be looked upon as Muslims or regarded as defiled; they have every right to be counted as Hindus. They stand in no need of going through purificatory rites at all'.⁶⁸

Around this time Gandhi published in *Young India* a letter from a friend who had developed doubts about the idea of Hindu-Muslim unity as a result of Moplah rebellion. He rhetorically asked Gandhi if it was not true that Hindus had 'often been given the choice between Islam and the sword'.⁶⁹ In response to this, Gandhi argued: 'There is nothing in Koran to warrant the use of force for conversion. The holy book says in the clearest language possible, "There is no compulsion in religion". The Prophet's whole life is a repudiation of compulsion in religion'.⁷⁰

Here Gandhi clearly supports a certain view popular among those followers of Islam who draw upon the Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad to argue that Islam does not believe in forcible conversion. Gandhi's position is not that forced conversions have never happened in history but that such conversions are not supported by the holy book and its enlightened followers. In a speech at a public meeting in Surat in 1924, Gandhi said: "After thirty years of experience and reflection I have come to realize that there is no way but non-violence to protect our religion and our country. One who draws the sword perishes by it. No religion can or any time will endure on the strength of the sword. Islam has survived on the strength of the fakirs and Hinduism on that of the *tapasvis*."⁷¹

In February 1925, Gandhi wrote an article titled *Stoning to Death* in *Young India* in which he strongly criticized incidents of stoning *Ahmadiyas* to death which had happened in Kabul. The article drew mixed response from the Ulema and the Muslim intelligentsia in general. While some of them were highly critical of Gandhi's position in this regard, others expressed agreement with him. Expressing his feelings of 'mingled amazement and pain' Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, President of the Punjab Khilafat Committee, strongly questioned Gandhi's argument that 'this particular form of penalty cannot be defended on the mere ground of its mention in the Koran' and that every formula of every religion has in this age of reason to submit to the acid test of reason and universal justice if it is to ask for universal assent'.⁷² Though an admirer of Gandhi who 'always paid unstinted homage' and saw him as 'one of the few men who are making modern history' the Maulana considered it his sacred duty to point out 'that by challenging the right of the Koran to regulate the lives of its followers in its own way' Gandhi had shaken the belief of his Muslim admirers in him.⁷³

In the face of this criticism coming from a learned Muslim admirer Gandhi remained completely unfazed. Pointing out to the fact that different interpretations of the Koran have always existed, he went on to argue that 'even the teachings of the Koran themselves cannot be exempt from criticism'.⁷⁴ He further asserted:

Every true scripture only gains by criticism. After all we have no other guide but our reason to tell us what may be regarded as revealed and what may not be. The early Mussalmans accepted Islam not because they knew it to be revealed but because it appealed to their virgin reason. I fully understand the Maulana's statement that error is a relative term. But we know as a matter of fact that some things are universally accepted as errors. Death by torture is, I expect, such an error.⁷⁵

It is evident from preceding discussion that at least at this stage of his political career, Gandhi was articulating a kind of reformist universal morality for both Hindus and Muslims. His categorical position that no scripture is beyond criticism is a strong affirmation of his faith in not only reason but also in the ability of all societies to evolve in accordance with time. Moreover, Gandhi claimed that the 'Maulana has betrayed intolerance of criticism by a non-Muslim of anything relating to Islam.'⁷⁶ Therefore, it could be argued that as a leader trying to establish Hindu-Muslim unity and to defend the interests of Muslims wherever they were unjustly threatened, Gandhi unequivocally claimed for himself the right to offer friendly criticism or advice to the followers of Islam – a position that became weaker as he faced more and more opposition from the Muslim intelligentsia, especially the Maulanas and Maulvis associated with the Muslim League.

The debate about stoning to death of *Ahmadiyas* in Kabul continued to rage. Sections of the Ulema now came in support of Gandhi, who wrote another article in *Young India* in which he cited another letter by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan saying that Gandhi's 'categorical denunciation, therefore, of a peculiar aspect of the penal provisions of the *Shariat* was most unexpected' and that in the eyes of the Muslims it was clearly 'an uncalled for interference in an affair which concerns themselves alone'.⁷⁷ In the same article, Gandhi published two letters from Maulana M. Safdar of Sialkot and Khwaja Kamaluddin asserting that there was nothing in the Koran in support of stoning to death for apostasy, which was the charge against the *Ahmadiyas*. Maulana Safdar argued that in the Koran 'Rajam (stoning to death) is mentioned only in the course of references to the ancient history and is not at all enjoined by the Koran as a punishment.'⁷⁸ Similarly, Kamaluddin asserted that 'apostasy occurred in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet

in many cases, but no punishment was awarded to anyone solely for it'.⁷⁹ In order to make his position very clear, Gandhi asserted:

In my writing about Islam I take the same care of its prestige that I do of Hinduism. I apply the same method of interpretation to it that I apply to Hinduism. I no more defend on the mere ground of authority a single text in the Hindu scriptures than I can defend one from the Koran. Everything has to submit to the test of reason. Islam appeals to people because it also appeals to reason.⁸⁰

It is evident that at this time Gandhi was willing to act as a reformer for both Hinduism and Islam and was even-handed in his criticism of whatever failed to satisfy his reason and sense of universal morality and that he was able to elicit some support from the Ulema, a situation that would be completely reversed once the Pakistan movement gained ground. Notwithstanding the fact that he was prepared to subject Islamic doctrine and practice to a critical enquiry as also the fact that Gandhi positioned himself strongly within the Hindu cultural fold, accusations of partiality towards the Muslims continued to be levelled against him. He tried to explain his position thus:

About Christianity and Islam, I do not claim to know as well as I claim to know Hinduism. Christians and Muslims, no matter how open I may be, are likely to misunderstand me, but there is no such possibility in Hinduism, and I have no fear of being misunderstood by my Hindu people ... Even as a skillful surgeon knowing his patient and knowing his defects ruthlessly uses the knife to cure the wound, as a reformer, claiming to be saturated at least as well as the tallest among the Hindus, it would be totally wrong, if I out of false courtesy and false tenderness do not put emphasis upon defects and weaknesses that are ruining Hinduism.⁸¹

As a Hindu, therefore, Gandhi could, in a sense, take his 'Hindu people' for granted, but not so the people belonging to other faiths. However, he continued his efforts at solving Hindu-Muslim problems on the basis of mutual cooperation, and held both the communities equally responsible for the sectarian strife. Whenever there was an attempt at putting all the blame on the Hindus and Hinduism, he tried to counter it. In 1928, Maulana Shaukat Ali delivered a speech at Kanpur, in which he called the Hindus 'slaves', and made other charges against them.⁸² Gandhi wrote to him, disapproving his action:

I would go all the way with you in accusing the Hindu of his many misdeeds; but I am unable to hold with you that he has been ever the

aggressor, ever the tyrant, and his Muslim brother always the injured victim ... I simply want to tell you that, in my opinion, all your incitement is wrong, your judgement is one sided and that the Mussalman is equally guilty with the Hindu, if not, on the whole, more so.⁸³

Thus, Gandhi did not hesitate in pointing out that it was 'one-sided' to blame the Hindus alone for the strife. This approach continued to inform his attitude. He blamed both the Hindus and Muslims for the Kanpur riots (1931), though he asserted that 'greater shame overtakes me when I find Hindus perpetrating butchery'.⁸⁴ So, just as he expected the Muslims to feel ashamed of the Moplah violence, he felt greater shame at the violence committed by the Hindus. Gandhi, therefore, recognized the religio-cultural boundaries and shaped his behaviour accordingly. At the Karachi Session of the Congress (1931), he said:

I am sure that the Islamic and Aryan cultures are not mutually exclusive and fundamentally different. But I must recognize that Mussalmans look upon Islamic culture as distinctive from Aryan.⁸⁵

That Gandhi regarded the Indian Muslims, in a sense, as a part of the Islamic world is clear from the above statement. What is more important is that he did not see it as a problem. On his way to London for attending the second Round Table Conference in 1931, Gandhi had a stopover at Aden. Addressing a gathering there, he said 'I want the Arabs of Arabia to come to our rescue and help to bring about a condition of things when the Mussalmans would consider it a point of honour to help the Hindu and vice-versa.' 'This great peninsula,' he added, 'the birthplace of Mohammed and of Islam, can help to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem.'⁸⁶

Gandhi's faith in the equality of all religions and his recognition of religio-cultural boundaries went hand in hand. A 'great Muslim' wrote to him raising certain issues. He asked:

Then, do you cherish their (Muslims') culture as you would cherish your own Hindu culture.⁸⁷

To this, Gandhi replied:

Of course I do. I cannot do otherwise, for I believe Islam and other great religions to be as true as my own. India is the richer for the cultures that Islam and Christianity brought with them.⁸⁸

In response to another question whether he, like Akbar, 'aimed

at fusing all religions into one and producing a new-faith,'⁸⁹ Gandhi said:

I do not know what Akbar dreamt. I do not aim at any fusion. Each religion has its own contribution to make to human evolution. I regard the great faiths of the world as so many branches of a tree, each distinct from the other, though having the same source.⁹⁰

The rise of Muslim separatism in the 1930s resulted in a dramatic shrinking of space for dialogue between Gandhi and the Muslim interlocutors. The League propaganda against him became increasingly vicious and personalized, because he was seen as the principal barrier to their demand for a separate country just as he exemplified the best in Hinduism. An M.A. from Aligarh Muslim University wrote a letter to Gandhi claiming that Muslims had always been a separate nation and that all religious communities constitute separate nations. The letter drew a categorical response from Gandhi: "there may be arguable grounds for arguing that Muslims in India are a separate nation. But I have never heard it said that there are as many nations as there are religions on earth. If there are, it would follow that a man changes his nationality when he changes his faith".⁹¹ Not only this, in one of the rare examples of drawing upon history to substantiate his positions, Gandhi argued:

I must deny that the Muslim dynasties divided India into two nations. Akbar's example is irrelevant. He aimed at a fusion of religions. It was a dream not to be realized. But the other Muslim emperors and kings surely regarded India as one indivisible whole.⁹²

In 1939-40, Jinnah repeatedly called upon Gandhi to admit that the Congress was a Hindu organization and that he himself was a representative of the Hindus.⁹³ It was only then that the League could come to an understanding with the Congress. In response, Gandhi denied that the Congress was a Hindu organization. About himself, he asserted, 'I am proud of being a Hindu, but I have never gone to anybody as a Hindu to secure Hindu-Muslim unity. My Hinduism demands no pacts.'⁹⁴

The Ahmedabad and Dacca riots (1941) once more saw Gandhi criticize the actions of the rioters, especially the Muslims, as they were reported to have taken the lead and indulged in large-scale violence. As Gandhi put it:

From the accounts received it seems that Muslim fanatics from Dacca and Ahmedabad did their worst in inflicting damage on Hindu property

by looting and burning with a deliberation that showed premeditation. Hindus, instead of boldly standing up and facing the mischief-makers, fled in their thousands from the danger zone. And where they did not, they were as barbarous as the assailants.⁹⁵

The expression of these views by Gandhi led to a lot of resentment in certain Muslim circles. However, Gandhi stuck to his position. He was, in a way, aware of the fact that despite his best efforts to project himself as a sincere friend and well-wisher of the Muslims, he had failed to do so. His speech at Bombay on 8th August, 1942, on the eve of the Quit India Movement, besides admitting his failure, mentioned one of the grounds for his support to the *Khilafat* Movement which was often cited as an example of Gandhi's tilt towards the Muslims. He said:

Had I any axe to grind in the Khilafat Movement. True, I did in my heart of hearts cherish a hope that it might enable me to save the cow. I am a worshipper of the cow. I believe the cow and myself to be the creation of the same God, and I am prepared to sacrifice my life in order to save the cow.⁹⁶

Gandhi's right to speak on Islam and Muslims was fiercely questioned in the heat of the partition debate in 1946-47. During his visit to Bengal to contain violence there, Gandhi had made some comments against the Muslim purdah system as it was practised in Bengal. In one of his public meetings, a Maulvi expressed his displeasure at Gandhi meddling into the affairs of the Muslims. Gandhi stuck to his view against the purdah, and asserted that it had little to do with Koran.⁹⁷

V

The last section of this paper deals with Gandhi's understanding of Jesus Christ and his engagement with missionaries and conversion. It is a well-known fact that Gandhi had great admiration for the personal character of Jesus and that he regarded the Sermon on the Mount as the core of Christianity as a religion. Great as Gandhi's admiration was for Jesus, he was dismissive of Christian claims to the supremacy of Jesus over other religious teachers. In a letter to Alastair Macrae he asserted, 'Whilst I regard Jesus to be one of the greatest religious teachers, I do not believe in his exclusive divinity.'⁹⁸ Elsewhere, he said, 'I consider him (Christ) as a historical person—one of the greatest among the teachers of mankind.'⁹⁹ In 1937, in the course of a discussion with an Indian Christian missionary, Gandhi

was asked whether or not he believed in the perfection of human nature and the attainment of that perfection by Jesus.¹⁰⁰ To this, he replied, 'I believe in the perfectibility of human nature. Jesus came as near to perfection as possible. To say that he was perfect is to deny God's superiority to man.'¹⁰¹ A few years later, Gandhi came into contact with a woman missionary, Emily Kinnaird, who, like other missionaries, believed that Christ was the only son of God. Thereupon, Gandhi said:

With you, Jesus was the only begotten son of God. With me he was a son of God, no matter how much purer than us all, but every one of us is a son of God, and capable of doing what Christ did, if we but endeavour to express the divine in us.¹⁰²

Whereas Gandhi's belief in the equality of all religions was central to his approach towards conversion, the missionaries could never have conceded that all religions are equal, for that would have demolished the whole edifice of their belief system, which held Christianity to be the only true religion. Their attachment to the Bible was too strong to allow them to believe that there could be other, equally rich sources of spiritual knowledge. While discussing the merits of preaching with some women missionaries, Gandhi was asked which 'book' they should recommend, if someone insisted upon it. Gandhi's reply is highly instructive. He said:

You will then say, 'Yes, for me there is the Bible.' If they were to ask me, I would present to some the Quran, to some the Gita, to some the Bible and to some Tulsidas's Ramayana. I am like a wise doctor prescribing what is necessary for each patient.¹⁰³

The ladies, however, expressed their inability 'in getting much from the Gita'. Thereupon, Gandhi told them that he did not find any difficulty in getting much either from the Bible or from the Koran.¹⁰⁴ In another discussion, a woman missionary asked Gandhi, 'But if I have something medically and spiritually which I can give them, how can I keep it?' Gandhi's reply is truly representative of his belief that all religions are true and, hence, equal. As he put it:

There is a way out of the difficulty. You must feel that what you possess your patient can also possess but through a different route. You will say to yourself, 'I have come through this route, you may come through a different route.' Why should you want him to pass through your university only?¹⁰⁵

As there were different paths to the divine truth, a change of religion was in no way useful or permissible, even if the teachings of a religion other than one's own were found to be instrumental in changing the course of one's life. Thus, on being asked by C. F. Andrews, 'If the Oxford Group people change the life of your son and he felt like being converted, what would you say?' Gandhi replied, 'I would say that the Oxford Group may change the lives of as many as they want to, but not their religion.'¹⁰⁶ Thus, Gandhi ruled out conversion on grounds of any kind.

Gandhi approached the whole question of missionary propaganda and conversion from the point of view that a change of faith was not simply an act of individual volition, but was a complete negation of the very spirit of religion, which, according to him, consisted of the inherent equality of all religions in the sense that they are all equally true, and that they all lead to the same divine truth. If all religions are equal, therefore, conversion from one faith to another is not only redundant and inane, but also positively harmful, both for the individual and the society in which it takes place.

In 1929, a famous missionary Dr. John Mott interviewed Gandhi. One of the questions asked by him was: "what then is the contribution of Christianity to the national life of India? I mean the influence of Christ as apart from Christianity, for I am afraid there is a wide gulf separating the two at present."¹⁰⁷ Gandhi's reply is symptomatic of his assessment of Christianity as it was practised in India:

Aye, there is the rub. It is not possible to consider the teaching of a religious teacher apart from the lives of his followers. Unfortunately, Christianity in India has been inextricably mixed up for the last one hundred and fifty years with the British rule. It appears to us as synonymous with materialistic civilization and imperialistic exploitation by the stronger white races of the weaker races of the world. Its contribution to India, therefore, has been largely of a negative character.

The hills of India, inhabited mostly by tribals, had traditionally provided Christian missionaries a rich catchment area. Describing the tribals as 'animists' and exploiting the lack of organised religious structures amongst them, the missionaries had converted large numbers. While doing this, they constantly emphasised the enlightening effects of Christianity on these people.¹⁰⁸ Highly critical of this approach, Gandhi, during the course of a discussion with a Christian missionary, said:

What have I to take to the aborigines and the Assamese Hillmen except to go in my nakedness to them? Rather than ask them to join my prayer,

I would join their prayer. We were strangers to this sort of classification—‘animists’, ‘aborigines’, etc., but we have learnt it from English rulers.¹⁰⁹

In another discussion with missionaries in which he was asked if animistic beliefs should not be ‘corrected’, Gandhi replied: “Well, we have been working amongst the so called ‘untouchables’ and backward classes, and we have never bothered ourselves with their beliefs, animistic or otherwise. Superstition and undesirable things go as soon as we begin to live the correct life. I concern myself not with their belief but with asking them to do the right thing. As soon as they do it, their belief rights itself.” Therefore, Gandhi saw ulterior motives behind the labelling of tribals as ‘animists’, etc. What corroborates this view is his discussion in 1938 with a missionary Chesterman in which the latter asked Gandhi whether his objection to conversion applied to areas such as the Kond hills, where the ‘aboriginal races’ were ‘animists’.¹¹⁰ To this Gandhi replied, ‘It does apply, because I know that in spite of being described as animists, these tribes have from times immemorial been absorbed in Hinduism.’¹¹¹

Besides its implications for the conceptual frameworks of social anthropology, Gandhi’s critical approach towards categories such as animist, aborigine, etc., is reflective of his deep awareness of the ways and means employed by the missionaries to gain converts. It is significant that Gandhi regarded the tribals as part of broader Hindu society and culture. His notion of the Hindu religio-cultural fold, therefore, extended to those located, arguably, at the very margins of that fold, a fact for which Gandhi was at the time, and has ever since, been denounced by those claiming to speak for them.

As is universally recognised, the removal of Untouchability was one of the most important endeavours undertaken by Gandhi. It is quite significant that he regarded it as an internal affair of the Hindu community and turned down, or at least discouraged, offers of help made by Christian missionaries. In the course of the anti-Untouchability campaign in the late 1920s, Dr. John Mott, a missionary, asked him, ‘Where do you find your friends? Do you get the backing of the Mussalmans and the Christians in this work?’ To this, Gandhi replied, ‘The Mussalmans and the Christians can from the very nature of work render little help in this matter. The removal of untouchability is purely a question of the purification of Hinduism. This can only be effected from within.’¹¹²

Moreover, Gandhi rejected the idea that the conversion effected by the missionaries in different ways led to any kind of ‘spiritual transformation’.¹¹³ Discussing this issue with Mott, Gandhi asserted that conversion was not helpful for spiritual upliftment, because ‘the

deepest spiritual truths are always unutterable. That light to which you refer transcends speech. It can be felt only through the inner experience.'¹¹⁴

For him, conversion, therefore, was not at all a religious act; nor did it enhance one's religious merit in any way. Not satisfied, Mott further said, 'But even God sometimes speaks through His prophets.'¹¹⁵ To this Gandhi replied, 'Yes, but the prophets speak not through the tongue but through their lives.'¹¹⁶

Gandhi's visit to London, in 1931 had created much interest in missionary circles. He was invited to speak at the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland. On this occasion, Rev. C. E. Wilson of the Baptist Missionary Society asked Gandhi how he could deny the missionaries their right to spread the message of truth and seek disciples, as religion is primarily a matter of learning.¹¹⁷ Gandhi's reply is clearly an expression of his general approach to the religious question: the equality of all religions. As he put it:

I know what God wishes for me, but I am not so presumptuous as to believe that I know what God wishes for others....I do not say 'no religious teaching'; bring up a man to the highest light his own faith has to give him.¹¹⁸

In response to a question by another missionary as to whether he (Gandhi) would be appreciative if the former went to India and opened a school in a south Indian village, Gandhi maintained that he might do so, but on the condition that he would not convert people there to Christianity.¹¹⁹

One can see here the unequivocal enunciation of many aspects of Gandhi's attitude towards conversion and missionary work. He completely disagreed with the missionaries' belief that they alone possessed the spiritual insight or knowledge which could put people on the right path. As all religions, according to Gandhi, lead to the same destination, the same divine truth, the religion possessed by one man was as good as that possessed by another. Thus, Gandhi's objections to conversion were not concerned with the social implications of conversion alone; he had a fundamental problem with the very idea of conversion. Moreover, he believed that the service rendered by missionaries was vitiated by ulterior motives. It is interesting to note that the Conference very rightly concluded:

Mr. Gandhi was not desirous merely that the missionaries should be courteous and self-effacing, and should identify themselves with the

people of the country, but was opposed to something which was fundamental to Christianity.¹²⁰

And, indeed, Gandhi was opposed to the claims to a monopoly of truth and spiritual superiority made by organised Christianity, which believed that people belonging to other faiths were groping in the dark, and must be shown the 'light', without which they could not possibly be 'saved'. Gandhi's position in this regard was deeply rooted in what many might call an aspect of Hindu religious and cultural ethos, which traditionally believed in a multiplicity of ways, and held that all religions of the world lead to the same truth.

Among the most important reasons for Gandhi's opposition to proselytization was perhaps his belief that the vast masses of people in the country were too 'ignorant' to comprehend the myriad implications of conversion. Thus, his opposition to conversion was not an expression of concern only for those groups within Hinduism which were arguably more vulnerable from his point of view, but also extended to the whole of the Hindu cultural fold. When an Indian Christian missionary asked him whether he would allow propaganda among non-Harijans, who were presumably not 'ignorant' like the majority of Harijans, Gandhi thus responded:¹²¹

I have the same objection because the vast masses of people of India would not understand the pros and cons of Christianity better than a cow....Try to preach the principles of Christianity to my wife. She can understand them no better than my cow. I can understand because of the training I have received.¹²²

Gandhi's views on the 'ignorance' of people, as mentioned here, might be construed by some as resulting from a patronising approach. This would, however, be far from the truth. In denying that the masses had the ability to appreciate the implications of conversion, he was not really questioning the individual's right to choose one's own path, but trying to address the problems associated with the exercise of this individual choice in the given context. In any case, in Gandhi's conception, since all religions are equal, no good could possibly come out of converting from one faith to another. If only people realised that all religions are equal and lead to the same truth they would not be tempted to get converted, but would rather improve their adherence to the essential teachings of their own faith. Thus, Gandhi's objections to conversion were prompted by genuine concerns and not by dogmatism, intolerance or a false sense of Hindu superiority.

VI

This paper has argued that Gandhi's firm conviction in the equality of all religions in the sense that they are all true and are really different paths to the same divine destination provided the template for his work within Hinduism as well as for his intensive engagements with Islam and Christianity. His agency for the reform of Hindu society was derived largely from the fact he was a manifestly devout Hindu who, in fact, claimed to be a *Sanatani*. His reformist work within Hinduism and his views on Islam and Muslims often drew criticism from those who believed that he was too harsh on Hindus.

As argued in this paper, Gandhi subjected Islam and Christianity also to criticism from his moral and ethical perspective, wherever he saw the need to do so, his views on the punishment of stoning of death of apostates as practiced in parts of Islamic world and his critique of missionary activities in India being the prime examples discussed here. That he was not as harsh on them as on Hinduism was mainly due to the fact that being a Hindu himself he was rightly guarded in his criticism of other religions. His relations with Hindu organizations and their leaders were close, notwithstanding the fact that he often disagreed with them on the question of Hindu reform as well as Hindu-Muslim relations. His political language was full of Hindu symbolisms and concepts, which were, however, interpreted in broader terms. Thus the Ramarajya of Gandhi's conception was the ideal rule of a legendary king in India whose memory resonated with the masses. In Gandhi's imagination, it was the culmination of an ethical and moral rule that helped create an ideal society. Given the ethical meaning of Ramarajya in Gandhi's politics, it is hard to see how it could have alienated Muslims or other communities from the national movement.

Gandhi's lifelong dialogue with Christian missionaries revolved around the issue of conversion on which he widely disagreed with them, pointing out how conversion from one religion to another was in fact the very antithesis of true religion. Missionary propaganda then as now generally seeks to argue that Christianity alone is the true religion. Thus, the missionaries could not have come to an agreement with Gandhi on the issue of proselytisation. Had they agreed to give up conversion, they would not have remained missionaries. Gandhi's understanding of Hinduism, and of religion as such, and his profound faith in the equality of all religions made it impossible for him to appreciate, or even condone, missionary propaganda. He firmly believed that all religions are true, and, therefore, conversion was out of question. In addition, he was

severely critical of the methods employed by missionaries.

Thus it is evident that Gandhi's religion, inclusive and syncretic as it was, derived largely from his conception of Hinduism and its moral and ethical code, which Gandhi sought to define and redefine according to his own preferences. Moreover, Gandhi's tolerant and peaceful Hinduism did not exist in isolation. It presumed tolerance in other religions too. His emphasis on the equality of all religions implied that if Hinduism was and continues to be tolerant and peaceful, other traditions like Islam and Christianity must also be so. The fact that he did not so frequently call upon people belonging to non-Hindu traditions to be tolerant is only a reflection of his being an outsider to those traditions, a fact that limited Gandhi's space for intervention. Nevertheless, his insistence that Islam is a religion of peace,¹²³ and that Christianity in India must be based on the Sermon on the Mount, rather than proselytization,¹²⁴ was in an oblique way a call to the Muslims and Christians to be tolerant, just as his lifelong campaign within Hinduism had done.

Notes and References

1. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1958), Vol. 9, p. 98.
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, pp. 334-35. This speech was made in 1927 during a visit to Ceylon by Gandhi. At the same meeting, Gandhi insisted that the Ceylonese Hindus and Buddhists are co-religionists, and criticized those Hindus who took pride for having driven Buddhism out of India, *ibid.*, p. 335. Gandhi also contended that the Buddha did not abolish Varnashrama, *ibid.*, p. 336.
3. This theme cannot be worked out here in detail. See Ramchandran, G. and T.K. Mahadevan (eds.) *Quest for Gandhi* (Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1970) and R.K. Prabhu and U.R. Rao (eds.) *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1967).
4. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 54, p. 111. This correspondence took place in March-April, 1933.
5. Quoted in Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi's Religious Thought* (London: MacMillan Press, 1983), p.25.
6. Vikas Pathak makes an important distinction between Shradhdhanand and Lajpat Rai, putting the former in the category of Hindu nationalism and the latter within the category of composite nationalism. See Vikas Pathak *Contesting Nationalisms: Hinduism, Secularism and Untouchability in Colonial Punjab, 1880-1930*, Delhi: Primus, 2018), pp. 45-133.
7. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 32, p. 451. This he said at the Gauhati Session of the Congress in December, 1926. In the same

speech, he also said:

And when I look at this matter from the Mussalmans' viewpoint, things are different. This deed was done through the hand of a Mussalman. Entering the house under the pretext of having a religious discussion with Swamiji, he committed this monstrous act, *ibid.*, p. 452.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 452. The rest of this quotation reads:

Many Sanatanists feel exasperated by this claim of mine and say: How can this man who has come back from England with all these new-fangled ideas be a Hindu? But this does not weaken my claim to being a Hindu; and Hinduism tells me to abide in friendship with all. So I have to think of the viewpoint of the Mussalmans also.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 459. Speaking on this occasion, Gandhi dwelt upon how Shraddhanand was a true Hindu. He said:

Do you know the liberality of the Arya Samaj?

He once asked me. Do you know how Maharshi Dayanand forgave the man who poisoned him?

I knew it. How could I be ignorant of it, knowing as I did that the Maharshi had before him the example of Yudhisthira and the teaching of the Gita and the Upanishads? But Shraddhananda, in his overflowing reverence for the Maharshi dilated upon his forgiveness. I tell you, the disciple had no less of that noble quality than the great Master. *Ibid.*, p. 461.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 460.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, p. 586. This letter read:

Do you feel, Mahatmaji, that the murder of Swamiji was an inhuman, barbarous and cruel act of a Muslim ruffian and that the entire Muslim community should be ashamed of it? Why do you refuse to characterize it as such? Instead of condemning the deed and the doer, and those who are responsible for this act (those who describe Hindu leaders as Kafirs – the hot-headed Muslim propagandists and the mad Muslim priests) you have begun to defend the murderer and hold an apology for the community. You never defended Dyer. Is not a European a brother, too? You say further Islam means peace. Is this truth? Islam as taught by the 'Koran' and practised by the Muslims ever since its birth never meant peace; what makes you write a thing so patently wrong? Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity of course teach peace, but not Islam. *Ibid.*, pp. 586-7.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 587.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 587-88. Gandhi, however, insisted that Islam is a religion of peace. Then, he went on to say:

I have given my opinion that followers of Islam are too free with the sword. But that is not due to the teaching of the Koran. That is due, in my opinion, to the environment in which Islam was born.

Christianity has a bloody record against it not because Jesus was found wanting but because the environment in which it spread was not responsive to his lofty teaching.

17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 436. Gandhi made this comment in the context of the resolution passed by the I.N. C. to stop cow-slaughter and music before the mosques by mutual consent. In any such effort, he insisted, if there be one Hindu who can guarantee such protection on behalf of the Hindus, it is Malaviyaji". See Chaturvedi, Sitaram, *Madan Mohan Malaviya* (Delhi : Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1972).
19. *Ibid.*, Vol. 38, p. 79. Gandhi was also involved in collections for the proposed Lajpat Rai Memorial, *ibid.*, pp. 97-8.
20. *Shuddhi* (conversion or re-conversion) was one such controversial aspect of the work carried out by the Arya Samaj. Gandhi's approach to it was rather complex. During the Harijan movement, a correspondent wrote to him suggesting that the Harijans could enter the Serinagpattam Temple after performing *shuddhi*. Gandhi replied to this:
Requiring 'shuddhi' for the Harijans is to grant that they are not Hindus, but then our whole movement is based on the principle that Harijan community is an important section of the Hindu society.
Ibid., Vol. 54, p. 126. However, he assured the correspondent that he would not oppose such a *shuddhi*, even though he could not support it. Gandhi's views regarding *shuddhi* of people belonging to other communities are not available.
21. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4 I, p. 225. This pamphlet, *Rangila Rasul*, literally 'The Dissolute Prophet', had questioned the moral character of Prophet Mohammed and Islam as a whole.
22. *Ibid.* For a detailed discussion on Islam, see W. Montgomery Watt, *What is Islam?* (London: Longman, 1968), and A J Arberry, *Aspects of Islamic Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2013).
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
26. The Hindu Sanghathanist Movement included bodies like The Hindu Mahasabha, The Arya Samaj, etc. For further information, see John Zavos, *Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000). Also see Christophe Jafferlot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics (1925 to the 1990s)* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1999).
27. Considerable amount of secondary work exists on Gandhi's Ramarajya. Margaret Chatterjee sees Gandhi's Ramarajya as a 'vision of a new society, the establishment of which is not possible 'without both human effort and divine grace' according to Gandhi. Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi's Religious Thought*, op, cit., p. 39. Jordens focuses on *Varnashrama dharma* as being an indispensable part of Gandhi's

Ramarajya. J.T.F. Jordens, *Gandhi's Religion: A Homespun Shawl* (Wiltshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), p. 106. Partha Chatterjee perceives Gandhi's Ramarajya as a Utopia, 'a patriarchy in which the ruler, by his moral quality and habitual adherence to truth, always expresses the collective will'. He argues that it's essentially a 'critique of all that is morally reprehensible in the economic and political organization of civil society'. A. Raghuramaraju (ed.), *Debating Gandhi: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 83. In fact, many scholars have argued along similar lines, interpreting Ramarajya as a utopia, but which aspect of the utopia is emphasized upon varies a lot. Thus, in contrast to Partha Chatterjee's views, Jordens focuses on *Varnashrama dharma* as being an indispensable part of Gandhi's Ramarajya. J.T.F. Jordens, *op.cit.*, p. 106. Thomas Weber finds the panchayat system to be that indispensable part of Ramarajya, where he sees Gandhi far more concerned with the freedom and happiness of the citizens than of the state'. See Thomas Weber, *The Mahatma, His Philosophy and His Legacy* (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2018), p. 178.

Lastly, work has been done to examine the claim that it was a narrow religious concept that undermined the unity of the national movement, with the conclusion that Ramarajya was an idea of universal appeal and applicability which did not, and could not have, alienated the non-Hindus from the national movement. See Parmeshwari Dayal, *Gandhian Theory of Social Reconstruction* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2006), p. 237.

28. *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 34.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 558. The above remarks were made by Gandhi as a part of his presidential address at the Third Kathiawar Political Conference held at Bhavnagar on January 8, 1925.
33. *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, pp. 558-9. It should be noted that Gandhi made these statements when he was serving as the President of the National Congress, which shows that early on, Gandhi made sure that Ramarajya as an idea appealed to all sections of the society, and not just the Hindu masses.
34. *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 2.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 4.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Collected Works*, Vol. 40, p. 221.
43. *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, p. 295.

44. *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, p. 287.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, pp. 279-283.
47. *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, p. 441.
48. *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, p. 489.
49. *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 9. The question posed before Gandhi was, "What was your object of defining swaraj as Ramraj in your recent speech at Banaras?". It should be noted that the question might have been motivated by suspicions against Gandhi for invoking Hindu ideas and motifs deliberately. This is plausible because the next question that followed did mention anxiety amongst Muslims due to Gandhi collecting money for the Shraddhanand Fund.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
52. *Ibid.*, Vol. 35, p. 419.
53. *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, p. 173.
54. *Ibid.*, Vol. 42, pp. 22-3.
55. *Ibid.*, Vol. 43, pp. 112-3.
56. *Collected Works*, Vol. 45, p. 372. The observations were made while delivering a speech on fundamental rights (in moving a resolution on the same) at the Karachi Congress session on March 31, 1931.
57. *Ibid.*, Vol. 80, p. 300. He also referred to it similarly elsewhere; see Vol. 84, p. 80.
58. *Ibid.*, Vol. 85, p. 135.
59. *Ibid.*, Vol. 87, p. 23.
60. *Collected Works*, Vol. 17, p. 2.
61. *Ibid.*, Vol. 19, p. 477.
62. *Ibid.*, Vol. 20, p. 291.
63. K.N. Panikkar, *Culture and Consciousness in Modern India* (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1990), p. 25. Interestingly, Panikkar cites it as a case of Gandhi 'drawing' a 'communal line'.
64. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 23, pp. 81-82.
65. *Ibid.*, Vol. 21, p. 202.
66. *Ibid.*, Vol. 22, p. 267. However, Gandhi insisted that the Hindus must not act in a similar manner. He said: "Does a Hindu love his religion or country more than he loves himself? If he does, it follows that he must not quarrel with an ignorant Muslim who neither knows country nor religion." *Ibid.* p. 269. He also maintained: "We must not blame the Mussalmans as a whole, nor must we blame the Maulana as a Mussalman." *Ibid.*, p. 268.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
68. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
71. *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 93-94.
72. *Ibid.*, Vol. 26, pp. 225-26.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*
76. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 412.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 414.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*, p. 415.
81. *Ibid.*, Vol. 34, p. 537. These comments were made by Gandhi in 1927 in a speech at Kumbakonam.
82. *Ibid.*, Vol. 36, p. 129.
83. *Ibid.* In the same letter, Gandhi told Shaukat Ali that his claim that the Muslims had contributed Rs. 20 lakhs to the Tilak Swaraj Fund was wrong. He asserted that the Muslims had not contributed even two lakhs, and that there were 'audited accounts' to show this, *ibid.*, pp. 129-30. On the other hand, continued Gandhi, Hindus had contributed generously to the Khilafat agitation, *ibid.*
84. *Ibid.*, Vol. 44, pp. 372-73.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 372.
86. *Ibid.*, Vol. 47, p. 390.
87. *Ibid.*, Vol. 68, p. 323.
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*
91. *Collected Works*, Vol. 70, p. 334.
92. *Ibid.*
93. *Ibid.*, Vol. 71, p. 371.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*, Vol. 73, p. 26. Gandhi was so concerned about these riots and the Muslim reaction to his comments that he wrote a letter to Shuaib Qureshi, in which he said:
I assume that you have seen my statements on the riots. They have come in for much hostile criticism on the part of the Muslim correspondents. I would like your reaction to my statements. My remark that in Dacca and Ahmedabad the start was made by the Muslim 'goondas' has been specially resented. I wonder what you have to say to that remark. What disturbs me most are the indecent stabbings and the like, *ibid.*, p. 105.
96. *Ibid.*, Vol. 76, p. 386. In the same speech. Gandhi made a strong plea for Hindu-Muslim unity and single nationhood. He said:
Millions of Mussalmans in this country come from the Hindu stock. How can their homeland be any other than India? My eldest son embraced Islam some years back. What would his homeland be – Porbandar or the Punjab? I ask the Mussalmans : 'If India is not your homeland, what other country do you belong to? In what separate homeland would you place my son who embraced Islam', *ibid.*
97. *Collected Works*, Vol 86, p. 418.
98. *Ibid.*, Vol. 55, p. 260. Written in 1933, this letter to Alastari Macrae

clarifies Gandhi's position on fasting, as there was some confusion over the source from which Gandhi learnt it. As Gandhi said: 'Whilst I regard Jesus to be one of the greatest religious teachers, I do not believe in his exclusive divinity. You will be surprised to know that my belief in fasting as a form of intense prayer, developed before I knew anything of the teachings of Jesus. But when I came to read the Bible, the Quran and other scriptures, my position was further fortified by the knowledge that they advocated fasting as a help to heartfelt prayer and communion with God (*ibid.*: 26).

99. *Ibid.*, Vol. 58, p. 402.
100. *Collected Works*, Vol. 65, p. 82.
101. *Ibid.*
102. *Ibid.*, Vol. 72, pp. 297–98.
103. *Ibid.*, Vol. 60, pp. 325–26.
104. *Ibid.*
105. *Ibid.*, Vol. 63, pp. 90–91. In the same discussion, the woman missionary said that she wanted others to pass through her university because of her partiality towards her alma mater. Gandhi said: 'There is my difficulty. Because you adore your mother, you cannot wish that all the rest were your mother's children.' The lady called it a 'physical impossibility'. Gandhi retorted by saying that this (conversion) was a 'spiritual impossibility'.
106. *Collected Works*, Vol. 64, p. 19.
107. *Ibid.*, Vol. 40, pp. 58–59.
108. For the impact of Christianity on tribals, see K. N. Sahay, *Under the Shadow of the Cross: A Study of Nature and Processes of Christianization among the Oraons of Central India* (Calcutta: Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology, 1976).
109. *Ibid.*, p. 462. Gandhi made this comment while discussing fellowship with the members of the Council of International Federation and their friends at his ashram in 1928. He added, 'As regarding taking our message to the aborigines, I do not think I should go and give my message out of my own wisdom. Do it in all humility, it is said. Well, I have been an unfortunate witness of arrogance often going in the garb of humility.'
110. *Collected Works*, Vol. 68, p. 422.
111. *Ibid.* In this discussion with Dr. Chesterman (held on 13 February 1939), Gandhi said, 'They [tribals] are, like the indigenous medicine, of the soil and their roots lie deep there. But you can only endorse this, if you feel that Hinduism is as true as Christianity. I hold that all religions are true but imperfect in as much as they are presented through human agency and bear the impress of the imperfections and frailties of the human beings. My quarrel with missionaries is that they think that no religion other than Christianity is true.'
112. *Collected Works*, Vol. 40, p. 59.
113. *Ibid.*
114. *Ibid.*, p. 60. In the course of the discussion, Gandhi said, 'I was taken

to a Christian village. Instead of meeting among the converts that frankness which one associates with a spiritual transformation, I found an air of evasiveness about them. They were afraid to talk. This struck me as a change not for the better but for the worse.'

115. *Ibid.*
116. *Ibid.*
117. *Collected Works*, Vol. 48, p. 125.
118. *Ibid.*, pp. 125–26.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 126. This inquiry was made by Rev. W. H. G. Holmes, who had earlier visited India and seen the conditions of Untouchables in south India and now wanted to open a school there. To his inquiry, Gandhi replied, 'Yes, I would, on one condition, that you would teach them the religion of their fathers through the religion they have got. Don't say to them: "The only way to know the Father is our way." God is father to the untouchable, to all of us, but a father who appears to you in another garb. Show the "untouchable" the Father as he appears in his surroundings' (*ibid.*: 127).
120. *Collected Works*, Vol. 46, pp. 127–28.
121. *Collected Works*, Vol. 65, p. 80.
122. *Ibid.*
123. *Ibid.*, Vol. 32, p. 588. Gandhi made this comment in the wake of the controversy regarding Swami Shraddhanand's assassination. He is reported to have conceded that there may be aberrations to the generally peaceful nature of Islam, but such aberrations can be found in Hinduism, too. He agreed that there are passages in the Quran which may be quoted to portray Islam as a violent religion. But the Vedas, too, contain imprecations against the *Anaryas*. Further, Gandhi argued that the Hindu treatment of the untouchables was also contrary to peace. However, he did admit; "... Followers of Islam are too free with the sword. But this is due to the environment in which Islam was born". *Ibid.* Also see, B.R. Nanda *Gandhi; Pan -Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).
124. See, Gandhi, M.K., *What Jesus Means to Me*, Compiled by R.K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1959).

RAVI K MISHRA is Deputy Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti Bhavan, Teen Murti Marg, New Delhi 110011. Email: ravikmishrain@gmail.com



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If Gandhi Didn't Say It, He Should Have

Thomas Weber

ABSTRACT

A great many well-known inspirational quotations that appear on T-shirts and bumper stickers, and are repeated in well-meaning speeches, are credited to Mahatma Gandhi. However, there is a question as to the validity of attributing some of the most common "Gandhi quotations" actually to Gandhi. Here I examine the provenance of the ten best known and most reproduced ones. From this examination we can conclude that almost none of these well known "quotations" are authentic occurrences of Gandhi's words. Nevertheless they are often in tune with Gandhi's spirit and message, and therefore it is not a total mystery as to why the words may have been put in his mouth. In short, if he did not utter these aphorisms or a close approximation of them, he could have done so and perhaps should have.

Key words: Mahatma Gandhi, Quotations, Aphorisms, Collected Works, Civilisation

Introduction

IN THE PRE-DIGITAL age, one day to the page desk calendars were common. For those with desk jobs it became something of a morning ritual to flip over yesterday's page to the current day and read the inspirational quote that graced the bottom of the sheet. The most common author of the presented aphorisms was "anonymous", Mahatma Gandhi ranked pretty highly among the rest. Now, books containing pithy inspirational quotations from well-known religious and political figures abound,¹ as do bumper stickers making

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environmental or peace-related statements, and there seems to be a craze for re-tweeting life-affirming messages sent by friends, and again those attributed to Gandhi feature large. This comes, of course, as no surprise given what we know of the saintly political figure. Now, these Gandhian aphorisms appear on plaques on the plinths of the ever increasing number of statues of the Mahatma that are being erected around the world, and even in movies.² And with his 150th birth anniversary it seems that it is almost essential for the numerous speeches commemorating the occasion to include at least one pithy saying of the Mahatma's. However, there is a question as to the validity of attributing some of the most common "Gandhi quotations" actually to Gandhi. Here I want to look at the provenance of the ten best known and most reproduced ones.³ These, in no particular order, are:

"Be the Change You Wish to See in the World."

"He Who Eats and Doesn't Work, Eats Stolen Food."

"The Greatness of a Nation and its Moral Progress can be Judged by the Way its Animals are Treated."

"Live as if You Were to Die Tomorrow. Learn as if You Were to Live Forever."

"An Eye For an Eye Will Make the Whole World Blind."

"First They Ignore You, Then They Laugh at You, Then They Fight You, Then You Win."

"The World Has Enough for Every Man's Need but Not for Every Man's Greed."

"What do I Think of Western Civilization? I Think it Would be a Very Good Idea."

"Live Simply so that Others May Simply Live."

And what are known as "Gandhi's Seven Social Sins."

Be the Change

If the 100 volumes of Gandhi's *Collected Works*⁴ do not contain a given quotation attributed to him, it does not necessarily mean that Gandhi did not write it somewhere (as presumably many of his letters did not make it into the collection), or, more likely, that he did not say it to someone when his trusty secretaries were not around to record it. "[You/We Must] Be the Change You/We Want [Wish] to See in the World" is probably the best known quotation credited to Gandhi. However, it is nowhere in the *Collected Works*. Its provenance must be sought elsewhere.

One can view the Gandhi of the Dandi Salt March as providing a "living sermon" as to how lives should be lived, about the connections

between reforming society and individual self-reformation.⁵ The two were linked: reform yourself and you have started to reform the world, work to reform the world nonviolently and you will have reformed yourself. In his early seminal work, *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi spelled out this interplay between society and the individual when he commented that once a person stops regarding themselves as a slave, they cease to be one: "If we become free, India is free. ... It is Swaraj [freedom] when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. ... such Swaraj has to be experienced, by each for himself".⁶ This expresses the sentiments of the quote attributed to Gandhi, but it does not contain any of its words. The nearest we come to it is in a 1913 article on snake bites where Gandhi writes that:

All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.⁷

The commonly known quotation has been reproduced on bumper stickers, T-shirts, coffee mugs, and repeated countless times in various speeches and writings. It was featured in Al Gore's 1992 book, *Earth in the Balance*,⁸ and, given the popularity of that book, from there it went viral. Gore had taken it from Craig Schindler and Gary Lapid's 1989 book *The Great Turning* where it was placed as a header, attributed to Gandhi, to a chapter entitled "Living with Change."⁹ Where these authors had taken this quotation from is unknown, however it has been reported that it was published as a Gandhi quotation in a Santa Fe newspaper article honouring senior citizens in 1987.¹⁰

It seems that the earliest version, "Be the Change You Want to See Happen", without being attributed to Gandhi, comes from the work and writings of then New York high school teacher and founder of The Love Project, Arleen Lorrance in her short 1972 book *The Love Project*. There she wrote that "We would be the change we wanted to see happen rather than trying to get others to change."¹¹ Soon after, in an explanation of the Project, Lorrance wrote that "One way to start a preventative program is to-be-the change you wish to see happen. That is the essence and substance of the single and successful endeavour of The Love Project."¹²

Keith Akers, an investigator of the provenance of the quotation, informs us that,

At the time, Lorrance had no knowledge that the saying had come from

Gandhi. “I didn’t receive **The Love Principles** *from* anyone but rather I connected directly with the source of all wisdom that is available to us when we become conscious and function as light-filled-beings.” Later she heard that the quote was from Gandhi and she didn’t question it or investigate. “My immediate reaction was, if Gandhi had said this, then I, having directly registered this truth was in good company indeed.”¹³

For many years she had no idea of any Gandhi connection to the words she had been using, and categorically denies that she got the quotation from Gandhi and has since accepted that the quotation originated with her.¹⁴

However, there is also another, more directly Gandhi-related trail that is worth following. The “Be the Change” quotation has also been attributed to Gandhi’s United States resident grandson, Arun Gandhi, who appears to have used this exact statement in interviews in 2001 and 2002, claiming that he personally heard his grandfather make this statement and possibly its popularity comes from Arun’s use of the sentence.¹⁵ Later, according to his M.K.Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, it was admitted that this quote “has not been traced in Gandhi’s writings, but ‘the Gandhi family states that M.K.Gandhi was known to say this verse many times in his lifetime and believes it to be original with him.’”¹⁶ Arun has explained that he spoke Gujarati with his grandfather who, when speaking of the deeper meanings of peace, had told him what could be translated into English as “unless we change our habits there will be no peace.”¹⁷ The question of whether in his use of the sentence Arun Gandhi is quoting or paraphrasing remains unclear, and not all of the family agree that the words in contention are “original with him.”

Arun’s younger cousin, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, expressed his disappointment that people kept linking Gandhi’s name to quotes he never uttered or wrote. In a speech at the University of Hyderabad in October 2017, he noted that “For example ‘Be the change you want to see, Enough for everyone’s need not everyone’s greed, An eye for an eye will end up making the whole world blind, Western civilization is a good idea’ were not Gandhi’s words.”¹⁸ Emphasising the point that “Be the change you want to see” is not a Gandhi quote, he notes further that when talking about the commonly known Gandhi quotations, he needs to say things he finds hard “because it invariably causes disappointment and almost a hurt sense of disbelief” when he points out that they were not in fact Gandhi’s words.¹⁹

He Who Eats

Gandhi often voiced the injunction that “he who eats and doesn’t

work, eats stolen food,” or some close variation. For example in a speech at the Madras YMCA on 16 February 1916 concerning the vows of his newly founded ashram in Ahmedabad, he said:

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are thieving.²⁰

During the Salt March, when he was angered by the luxuries offered to him and his fellow marchers, in a powerful introspective speech he added that “to live above the means befitting a poor country is to live on stolen food.”²¹

Given this, there is no doubt that he did employ the aphorism. However, he is quite up front that he did not coin the sentence - he was quoting from the Hindu sacred text, the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Gandhi first mentions this injunction in a letter to a friend written in London when he was on his way back to India following his South Africa years. The Great War had broken out not long before and he was pondering what his duty was in the circumstances:

Brothers, husbands and sons have gone, rightly or wrongly, to get themselves killed, leaving behind weeping sisters, wives and mothers. Thousands have already been killed. And am I, doing nothing, to continue enjoying myself eating my food? The *Gita* says that he who eats without performing *yajna* [sacrifice] is a thief. In the present situation here sacrifice meant, and means, self-sacrifice. I saw, therefore, that I too must perform *yajna*. I myself could not shoot but could nurse the wounded.²²

He repeats the sentiment in a speech in May 1918, applying it to the need for self-sacrifice in the nascent struggle for self-government.²³ Three years later, in an article on *swadeshi* (self-sufficiency) he noted that “by giving up our age-old crafts of spinning and weaving, we have actually become beggars and, if we do not take heed, will become worse still. Finally, according to the principle that he who eats without having performed a sacrifice is a thief, we shall have proved ourselves thieves.”²⁴ He goes on repeating this sentiment throughout his life, generally specifically referencing the *Gita* as the source, for example “‘He who eats without labour eats sin, is verily a thief.’ This is the literal meaning of a verse in the Bhagavad Gita.”²⁵ And often he points

to the verses in question: "The cause of the inequalities we see in the world, of the contrasts of wealth and poverty, lies in the fact that we have forgotten the law of life. That law is the law of 'bread labour'. On the authority of Chapter III of the *Gita*, I call it *yajna*. The *Gita* says that he who eats without performing *yajna* is a thief and sinner."²⁶

In other words, at least at first blush, it would appear that the well-known quotation, while often voiced by Gandhi, should be attributed to the *Bhagavad Gita* rather than to him. However, it is not that simple. Gandhi's own translation of verse 12 of Chapter III of the *Gita* is given as "Cherished with sacrifice, the gods will bestow on you the desired boons. He who enjoys their gifts without rendering aught unto them is verily a thief."²⁷ This is in keeping with the other well-known English translations of the *Gita* – none of them talk about eating or food being stolen (although the next verse does mention the wicked who only cook for themselves eating sin). Verse 14 he translates as "From food springs all life, from rain is born food; from sacrifice comes rain and sacrifice is the result of action." He comments that here the theory of bodily-labour, that Tolstoy called bread-labour, becomes "Yajna or sacrifice, when performed selflessly for others."²⁸

In short, this aphorism bucks the trend: instead of something being attributed to Gandhi when it should not be, here we have a saying directly created by Gandhi that he attributes to another source, made possible for him through his very liberal and idiosyncratic translation of parts of Chapter III of the *Gita*. He reads the text as the gods referred to being the whole "creation of God" adding that "The service of all created beings is the service of the gods and the same is sacrifice", which in turn "is but the repayment of our debt to Nature and God".²⁹ His thinking is further spelled out in the published letters that he wrote to the residents of his Sabarmati Ashram while he was in Yeravda Central Prison in Poona (Pune) following his arrest in 1930 after the Salt March to Dandi. In one of the letters he states explicitly that the "principle has been set forth in Chapter III of the *Gita* where we are told that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean bread labour."³⁰ Not long afterwards, he describes sacrifice, *yajna*, as "an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring a return for it", and adds that "therefore, says the *Gita*, he who eats without offering *yajna* eats stolen food."³¹

He further comments that the body "has been given us only in order that we may serve all creation with it. And, therefore, says the *Gita*, he who eats without offering *yajna* eats stolen food."³² No other translation of the relevant passage in the *Gita* even remotely approximates the words Gandhi reads into it. And Gandhi knows it:

writing about these verses, he admits that “I know full well that the meaning I have read into them will not be found in any of the commentaries on the book.”³³ Nevertheless, he insists that his interpretation is correct as verses 12 and 13 of chapter III of the Gita in their definition of yajna are “capable of only one meaning.”³⁴ At least, that is the case for him.

The Greatness of a Nation

Animal rights activists regularly employ the quotation, attributed to Gandhi, that “The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”³⁵ Some years ago, the Australian author and academic, Philip Johnson, who writes on animals and theological matters, attempted to track down the origin of the quotation in Gandhi’s writings. He was unable to do so. At the head of a blog, titled “Mahatma Gandhi Hoax Quote”, he chronicled his search. On the lengthy, articulate and rancour-free blog postings that followed his summary, many contributors thanked him for setting the record straight and saving them from doing the work he had already done. Although examples were given where the quote had appeared, nobody could find where it originated. Johnson ended up concluding that “Its actual origin may be something that was ‘invented’ in the 1960s or afterwards by a zealous well-meaning advocate for animal rights who has attributed it to Gandhi to lend it greater authority and credibility.”³⁶

Johnson is quite correct that Gandhi’s *Collected Works* do not contain the quotation, or even anything vaguely similar. Some sources say that the passage, or close variations of it dealing with society’s weakest members, the old or prisoners, was uttered by Gandhi in a speech in 1931, generally without providing a more precise date or place where the speech was delivered. However, some sources cite Gandhi as having made the statement in an address to the London Vegetarian Society on 20 November 1931. That speech was eventually published after his death in his paper *Harijan* on 20 February 1949 under the title “The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism.” However, neither the often cited quotation, nor anything closely resembling it, appears in the printed version of the speech. Further, a detailed examination of all the Mahatma’s recorded speeches for that year does not turn up any other likely basis for the aphorism. Other sources put it as part of a longer quotation about animal sacrifice and protecting helpless creatures. That quotation is in Gandhi’s *Autobiography*, but is not preceded by anything to do with greatness of nations or moral progress.³⁷

In a 1910 letter concerning indentured Indians in South Africa,

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Gandhi mentions the term “the greatness of a nation” but only in relation to an argument about whether or not it was promoted by competitive industrialism.³⁸ Years later in an interview he gave in London, answering a question concerning the portrayal of Indian “treatment of animals” as depicted in Katherine Mayo’s British imperialism championing book *Mother India*, Gandhi talked about his treatment of animals, but never used that phrase.³⁹ None of his several references to “moral progress” refer to animals. In a lengthy article on the treatment of ailing animals and pest animals, Gandhi tackles the moral issues involved but does not mention anything vaguely resembling the attributed quotation.⁴⁰

However, Gandhi does make several related statements. For example: “The more helpless the lower life, the greater should be our pity”;⁴¹ we shall “realise in the fullness of time that our dominion over the lower order of creation is not for their slaughter, but for their benefit equally with ours. For I am certain that they are endowed with a soul as that I am”;⁴² “It is an arrogant assumption to say that human beings are lords and masters of the lower creation. On the contrary, being endowed with greater things in life, they are trustees of the lower animal kingdom”;⁴³ “If our sense of right and wrong had not become blunt, we would recognise that animals had rights, no less than men. This education of the heart is the proper function of humanitarian leagues”;⁴⁴ “I do believe that all God’s creatures have the right to live as much as we have”;⁴⁵ and “I hold that, the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man.”⁴⁶ Similar sentiments, but very different words.

Interestingly, following the Boer War of 1899-1902, in 1905 a memorial bronze statue was erected by public subscription in Port Elizabeth in South Africa to honour the horses that had been killed or injured in battle. The memorial consists of the life size figure of a horse about to drink from a bucket held by a kneeling soldier. The stone base of the statue carries an inscription that states:

The Greatness of a Nation
Consists Not So Much on the Number of its People
or on the Extent of its territory
As in the Extent and Justice of its Compassion

Here there is a similarity of words and, given that the memorial was to horses, sentiments. Further, this was a time when Gandhi, an avid reader of newspapers who had led an Indian ambulance corps during the hostilities, was resident in South Africa. Consequently, it is not unreasonable to conjecture whether he would have known

about the erection of the memorial. Unfortunately, there is nothing in his preserved writings suggesting this, and nothing to indicate how it could have travelled from early in the last century South Africa to its almost household status of more recent times.

An almost identical version of the quotation by the German theologian David Strauss, was published in English in 1873. In a book titled *The Old and the New*, Strauss notes that "The manner in which a nation in the aggregate treats animals, is one chief means of its real civilization."⁴⁷ This appeared when Gandhi was only four years old.

Very similar quotations are common and have many variants that have nothing to do with animals. Instead, they point to the greatness of nations or civilisations being measured by the way they treat their weakest members and even prisoners.⁴⁸ While they are often still attributed to Gandhi, verifiable non-Gandhi sources can also be found. For example, the American novelist Pearl Buck wrote that "Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members."⁴⁹ Further, then British Home Secretary, Winston Churchill stated in a House of Commons speech in 1910 that "the mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilization of any country."⁵⁰ Many similar such statements, by others than Gandhi, can be found where the greatness of a country has become linked with the test of civilization.

It seems that quite a few people had ideas about what defined a great nation or a superior civilisation and made their thoughts public. Often these varying aphorisms were mashed together and confused versions were attributed to people who may have said something similar. Gandhi had again become a repository for all sorts of good sentiments.

Live as if you Were to Die Tomorrow

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever" and its alternatively quoted reverse "Learn as if you were to live forever. Live as if you were to die tomorrow" certainly sound like the sort of thing one would expect Mahatma Gandhi to say. However, while there are some phrases along these lines that can be attributed to Gandhi, the exact sentences are nowhere to be found in his *Collected Works*. In a 1932 letter to a correspondent who was reading too many religious texts and brooding, Gandhi's advice was to "Live as if you had never read anything. Whatever you have digested and assimilated will of itself bear fruit as action."⁵¹ In a consolation letter to friends whose mother had recently died, Gandhi tells them that

"Some die today, others will die tomorrow. What is there to grieve about it? You must become wise."⁵² These letters are very far removed from the well-known quotation both in wording and sentiment.

So, where could this Gandhi-attributed quotation have come from? A quick internet search will turn up hundreds of examples of this "Gandhi quotation" – none of them with an indication of where or why he had spoken or written it. A few web sites question the attribution of it to Gandhi and some of them give alternative possible sources that are far older than Gandhi. For example, some claim that among the sayings of the prophet Muhammad, we find the injunction to "Live [or pray] for your afterlife as is you will die tomorrow, study [or pray] as if you were to live forever."⁵³ This is often repeated in old Islamic texts and Gandhi is bound to have heard it from his Muslim friends. The Fifth and Sixth Century Spanish archbishop, Isidore of Seville, reportedly instructed his flock to "Study as if you were to live forever. Live as if you were to die tomorrow."⁵⁴ Several internet blogs discussing the provenance of the original Latin version of the quotation, "*Disce ut semper victurus. Vive ut cras moriturus*", inform us that it was a common inscription on sundials from Saint Isidore's lifetime onwards (and is now the motto of many educational institutions). And, Desiderius Erasmus, the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Dutch scholar and theologian is reported as having exhorted people to "live as if you are to die tomorrow, study as if you were to live forever."⁵⁵

These are sentiments one can easily imagine the Mahatma expressing, although we have no concrete record of him ever having done so. Gandhi's well-known grandson, the scholar and politician Rajmohan Gandhi, tells us that Gandhi lived by this aphorism but makes absolutely no claim that his grandfather originated the term – he merely states that his grandfather subscribed "to the view that a man should live thinking he might die tomorrow but learn as if he would live forever."⁵⁶ Still, observing the T-shirts and printed posters that carry this "quotation from Gandhi", myth surrounding its attribution to its famous modern author appears to have morphed into fact.

An Eye for an Eye

The first half of the aphorism, "an eye for an eye leaves [will make] the whole world blind" comes from the Old Testament of the Bible. In *Exodus* (21:23-25) we are told that "And if any mischief follow, then thou should give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." This is repeated in *Leviticus* (24:19-20), where it is stated

that “If a man causes a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he had caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.” In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi tells us how little interest or understanding he had when he read the Old Testament while he was in London as a young law student.⁵⁷

The law of retaliation (*lex talionis*) propounded in these Old Testament verses did not appeal to Gandhi at all:

The principle of tit for tat is based on the assumption that the other party is deterred from doing injustice when we have the ability and the will to pay him back in his own coin. This does indeed happen sometimes. It is well known, however, that the total result does not advance the cause of justice; for, countless men have acted on the age-old principle of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye, but injustice has not yet disappeared.⁵⁸

He saw that Christianity was a religion of peace, however “The Old Testament which is part of Christian teaching is full of blood and thunder.”⁵⁹ Towards the end of his life, during the bloody partition of India, he was still asking “What do you gain by taking an eye for an eye?”⁶⁰

However, the New Testament had made a different impression on him, especially the Sermon on the Mount “which went straight to my heart.”⁶¹ The relevant passage (Matthew, 5:38-40) reads:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Gandhi elaborates to a shipboard audience as he sailed to London for the Second Round Table Conference to discuss India's future:

Of all the things I read what remained with me for ever was that Jesus came almost to give a new law—though He of course had said He had not come to give a new law, but tack something on to the Old Mosaic law. Well, He changed it so that it became a new law—not an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, but to be ready to receive two blows when one was given, and to go two miles when you were asked to go one.⁶²

And this brings us to the second half of the quotation, the part that makes it so quotable, the part that has justified its attribution to Gandhi. While he echoed the sentiments, did he actually say anything about taking an eye for an eye leaving the whole world blind?

While there is no reference to this part of the aphorism in Gandhi's *Collected Works*, there are some major sources that do seem to link it to Gandhi, but do not actually put the words into his mouth. For example, Gandhi's best known biographer, Louis Fischer, in his 1947 book comparing Gandhi with Stalin, informs the reader that "The shreds of individuality cannot be sewed together with a bayonet; nor can democracy be restored according to the Biblical injunction of an 'eye for an eye,' which, in the end, would make everybody blind."⁶³ This book was not so well known that it would have been the source for the attribution to Gandhi. However, Fischer's seminal 1950 biography, the first to be published after Gandhi's death was (and still is) the best-known telling of the life of the Mahatma, could possibly, with some confusion, be the place from where the attributed quotation went viral. There, explaining the meaning of *satyagraha*, Gandhi's truth-seeking nonviolent activism, Fischer repeats his assessment from his previous book: "Satyagraha is the exact opposite of the policy of an-eye-for-an-eye-for-an-eye-for-an-eye which ends in making everybody blind."⁶⁴ It is not unlikely that not overly careful readings of this text could generate the interpretation that this was a quotation from Gandhi.

In America, Martin Luther King, Jr., while not attributing it to Gandhi, also repeats the aphorism: "Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in the destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love."⁶⁵ Although Gandhi is not mentioned in relation to this quote, it is clear that King, who was greatly influenced by Gandhi, is here providing a Gandhian approach to conflict. This, along with Fischer's book, may have been an avenue for the popularisation of the Gandhi-attributed aphorism.⁶⁶ However, there is an even more likely suspect.

Although it took many years full of setbacks to get the movie made,⁶⁷ when it finally hit the cinemas Richard Attenborough's epic film *Gandhi* was a phenomenal success around the world, again making "Gandhi" a household name. The film, which bordered on the hagiographical, was dubbed "the movie that became a movement." As one reviewer pointed out a year after the film's release, it had become one of the most widely seen films in history and formed part of a renaissance of interest in Gandhi.⁶⁸ About half-way through the three hour movie, following a scene depicting the murder of police in the town of Chauri Chaura in 1922, in a meeting of the nationalist Congress leadership, Gandhi suggests that the otherwise successful non-cooperation campaign against the British rulers should be called

off because of the violence. The Muslim leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah angrily protests that “after what they did at the massacre⁶⁹ it’s only and eye for an eye.” Gandhi responds that “an eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” In other words, it is not Mahatma Gandhi who is responsible for the well-known aphorism that is attributed to him – it is the script writers and Ben Kingsley, the actor who so wonderfully portrayed Gandhi in Attenborough’s movie, who are the source.⁷⁰

First They Ignore You

Various famous people, especially American politicians, including Donald Trump on his Instagram photo sharing social media post during his 2016 presidential campaign, have employed the quotation “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win” and attributed it to Gandhi.⁷¹ However, there is nothing even vaguely resembling this four-part sentence in Gandhi’s *Collected Works*. Only the last part is recorded as having been said by him in an interview during the Second World War where he spoke about nonviolent national defence: “In a non-violent struggle there are two alternatives: either the enemy comes to terms with you, then you win without blood; or the enemy annihilates you.”⁷² At other times, he made statements that echoed other parts of the quotation: “It will be admitted that non-co-operation has passed the stage of ridicule. Whether it will now be met by repression or respect remains to be seen. ... But the testing time has now arrived. In a civilized country when ridicule fails to kill a movement it begins to command respect.”⁷³ And, “Ridicule is like repression. Both give place to respect when they fail to produce the intended effect.”⁷⁴ None of these, however, has enough similarity to enable it to be considered as the source of the attributed quotation.

Where then could it have come from? The quotation is almost a shorthand summary of Gandhi’s *satyagraha* and in particular his celebrated Salt March to Dandi. At first the British authorities ignored the march, hoping that it would fizzle out, and then they made fun of the event, trying to ridicule Gandhi. When they realised that the March was resonating with the masses, the British took draconian measures to stop the momentum of the campaign, and in the end they had to negotiate with Gandhi and the nationalists on equal terms.⁷⁵ However, Gandhi never summed up either *satyagraha* or his most famous campaign in words that resembled the attributed quote.

The provenance seems to go back to a 1917 article titled “The Accident Prevention Problem in the Small Shop” by the safety engineer E.B.Morgan, published in the American journal *Safety Engineering*.

There, Morgan noted that a new idea had to go through three stages: "First, it is ridiculed; second, it is subject to argument; third, it is accepted."⁷⁶ From an article in an obscure trade journal, on 5 May of the following year in a speech at the convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America the quotation went public. The American union leader, Nicholas Klein is reported as having said: "And, my friends, in this story you have a history of this entire movement. First they ignore you. Then they ridicule you. And then they attack you and want to burn you. And then they build monuments to you. And that is what is going to happen to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America."⁷⁷ This speech was made well before Gandhi became a household figure, and certainly before his words started being quoted in the West.

How this quotation became attributed to Gandhi is uncertain. However, Don Evon summarises the situation thus: "The misattributed quote, then, is most likely a combination of Klein's 1914 [sic] speech combined with an attempt to summarise Gandhi's nonviolent doctrine and philosophy."⁷⁸ He and Barry Popik, another quote detective, believe that Gandhi's name has been associated with the quotation at least since 1982 when an article in *WIN* magazine by the Workshop of Nonviolence Institute reported that "Gandhi once observed that every movement goes through four stages: First they ignore you; then they abuse you; then they crack down on you and then you win."⁷⁹ As the great Indian writer Salman Rushdie remarked, "Sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts."⁸⁰ Or, as an observant writer in the journal *Manas* once noted: "thoughtful men often observe that myth contains more truth than history, since myths provide summations of meaning that are easily lost in the foliage of historical fact."⁸¹ A Gandhi myth is now a generally accepted Gandhi fact.

The World Has Enough

As with several of the other well-known Gandhian dictums, the one that states that "The Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed" (and its many variants) is not anywhere in Gandhi's *Collected Works*. However, it is quoted in the last volume of the mammoth biography of the Mahatma written by his personal secretary Pyarelal. In a section of the work looking at Gandhi's economic ideas and his thoughts about spiritual relationships that humans have with nature, he says that the

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed," said Gandhiji. So long as we cooperate with the cycle of

life, the soil renews its fertility indefinitely and provides health, recreation, sustenance and peace to those who depend on it. But when the “predatory” attitude prevails, nature’s balance is upset and there is an all-round biological deterioration.

Pyarelal was meticulous in taking down the words spoken by his master; however, this section sounds more as if it he was pontificating in a Gandhian way about ecological matters rather than recording anything that Gandhi had said. In fact, although the quotation attributed to Gandhi certainly does have a “Gandhian flavour” paraphrasing his reading of the *Gita*, and Pyarelal is certainly competent to make such judgements, there is nothing overly similar in the *Collected Works*, and Pyarelal gives no source for this quotation. In Gandhi’s published works, the nearest we come to this statement is: “The man who takes for himself only enough to satisfy the needs customary in his society and spends the rest for social service becomes a trustee.”⁸³ And:

As for Nature, anyone who has eyes can see, that it always observes the principle that I have stated. For instance, if it has implanted in its creation the instinct for food it also produces enough food to satisfy that instinct from day to day. But it does not produce a jot more. That is Nature’s way. But man, blinded by his selfish greed, grabs and consumes more than his requirements in defiance of Nature’s principle, in defiance of the elementary and immutable moralities of non-stealing and non-possession of other’s property and thus brings down no end of misery upon himself and his fellow-creatures.⁸⁴

Of course, Pyarelal could have heard Gandhi make this statement countless times. Perhaps Gandhi simply did not do so in speeches that were recorded and published. And, interestingly, its provenance has not been researched by seekers of misattributed quotations, rather it has been seemingly universally accepted as Gandhi’s. Pyarelal’s attestation seems to have been considered enough. Nevertheless, Gopalkrishna Gandhi explicitly denies that his grandfather uttered this sentence. In short, while the evidence that Gandhi actually said what has been reported is hearsay, one can choose to accept Pyarelal’s attribution as there is no concrete ground for disproving the provenance he has provided it with, or can choose to remain sceptical.

Western Civilisation

“Gandhi quotations” are mostly printed, or posted on line, without any source being listed other than that the words belonged to Mahatma Gandhi. Serious books of quotations give a reference as to where the

quotation came from. For example, the well respected *Yale Book of Quotations* carries the attributed to Gandhi response of "It would be a good idea" when he was asked what he thought of Western civilisation.⁸⁵ It gives as the source p.275 of John G.Kirk's 1968 book *America Now*.⁸⁶ However, Kirk's book is an edited volume and the quotation is in the final sentence of the chapter by William Jovanovich, but Jovanovich does not give a source.⁸⁷ The *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations* is perhaps a little more thorough. It has Gandhi responding "That would be a good idea" to a question about his thoughts on modern (rather than Western) civilisation. This was supposedly said while he was "visiting England in 1930." A source for the quotation is given: E.F.Schumacher's book *Good Work*.⁸⁸ While Schumacher, the author of the phrase "small is beautiful", could be considered a Gandhian,⁸⁹ he did not actually hear Gandhi make this statement. He informs his reader that:

"Recently I saw a film of Gandhi when he came to England in 1930 [in fact it was in September 1931]. He disembarked in Southampton [it was Folkstone] and on the gangway he was already overwhelmed by journalists asking questions. One of them asked, "Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of modern civilization?" and Mr. Gandhi said, "That would be a good idea."⁹⁰ Looking through archival newsreel footage, I have not been able to find this exchange. Interestingly, none of those who walked down that gangway with him mention Gandhi saying anything like this – and if he had, they would surely have noted it.⁹¹ And it is not present in any of the major Gandhi biographies or in James Hunt's definitive investigation of Gandhi's several visits to London.⁹²

Gandhi had a great deal to say about the problems of Western/modern civilization, and his *Collected Works* contain hundreds of references to the terms, especially in his South Africa years. For example, "The true remedy lies, in my humble opinion, in England discarding modern civilization which is en-souled by this spirit of selfishness and materialism, is vain and purpose-less and is a negation of the spirit of Christianity";⁹³ "It is not due to any peculiar fault of the English people, but the condition is due to modern civilization. It is a civilization only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day";⁹⁴ and,

But I want you and myself this evening to distinguish between the two. I want to make it clear that I am no hater of the West. I am thankful to the West for many a thing I have learnt from Western literature. But I am here to confess to you that I am thankful to modern civilization for teaching me that, if I want India to rise to its fullest height, I must tell my countrymen frankly that, after years and years of experience of modern civilization, I

have learnt one lesson from it, and that is, that we must shun it at all costs. What is that modern civilization? It is the worship of the material, it is the worship of the brute in us—it is unadulterated materialism, and *modern* civilization is nothing if it does not think at every step of the triumph of *material* civilization.⁹⁵

In short, modern civilization is bad and ancient civilization is good. However, this quotation seems to be saying something else, that the West is uncivilized. Gandhi says repeatedly that it does have a civilization, not that it should get one; however it is a modern one that is corrupt, materialistic and imperialistic. The quotation is also very time and space specific and at the time of his arrival in London he did not mention the topic at all and there is no mention of anything being a “good idea” around this time either. So where did this joking accusation come from?

The most thorough research on the topic is by the on-line *Quote Investigator* website, a site that “records the investigatory work of Garson O’Toole who diligently seeks the truth about quotations.”⁹⁶ In an excellent summary of possible sources, *Quote investigator* reports that the saying originated in a documentary titled *The Italians*, broadcast as a CBS News Special in January 1967, and from there it started appearing regularly in written sources, starting with the *Reader’s Digest* later that year.⁹⁷

Interestingly, *Quote Investigator* adds that many years before the Gandhi-attributed saying surfaced, in 1923 “the humor magazine *Life* printed the following anonymous filler item: ‘What’s your opinion of civilization? It’s a good idea. Somebody ought to start it.’”

It would be intriguing to know more about how this statement made it into a documentary about Italians, but, as it stands, it seems that this “Gandhi quotation” is also apocryphal.

Live Simply

Another familiar succinct Gandhi “quotation” that regularly appears on coffee mugs and T-shirts, and is a favourite of aid agencies, requests the more fortunate to “live simply so that others may simply live.” While there are times when Gandhi exhorted his followers to live simply⁹⁸ and times when he told them how they should “simply live” their lives,⁹⁹ nowhere in his *Collected Works* do the two phrases appear in the one sentence. However, several economic quotations from Gandhi say things with a very similar meaning and quite early in his public life he wrote that “there is no morality in my living a simple and unpretentious life if I have not the means to live otherwise. But plain, simple living would be moral if, though wealthy, I think of

all the want and misery in the world about me—and feel that I ought to live a plain, simple life and not one of ease and luxury.”¹⁰⁰

The origins of the actual aphorism seem to have been lost. Although at times Mother Teresa is mentioned, generally, in about equal share, it is attributed to either Mahatma Gandhi or to the New York Catholic socialite Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821), who became the first American-born saint. It is often reported that she uttered the sentence during a speech she made in Baltimore, however there appears to be no reliable reference as to when she might have said this to back up the claim that she was the author.¹⁰¹ In short, there is no concrete evidence that it was said by either Gandhi or Seton.

Barry Popit traced the origins of the quotation only as far back as October 1974 to a speech on world hunger at a Leadership Conference of Women Religious in Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Indiana by the Franciscan nun Sister Joan Pauls from the Milwaukee Justice and Peace Center.¹⁰²

When examining this quotation, an astute observer noted that “on the Internet pretty much every pithy quote is eventually attributed to Gandhi.”¹⁰³ Nevertheless, whoever this quotation can be attributed to, it is a fair summation of the practical (as opposed to the spiritual) aspects of Gandhian economics.¹⁰⁴

Seven Social Sins

Several years ago, the last time that I had visited Gandhi’s Sevagram Ashram, I took careful note of the flaking tin billboard that was erected next to Gandhi’s hut. It contained a list of what has become known as Gandhi’s *Seven Social Sins*:

Politics without principles
Wealth without work
Pleasure without conscience
Knowledge without character
Commerce without morality
Science without humanity
Worship without sacrifice

The Mahatma’s grandson Arun Gandhi states that “The seven blunders of the world (aka the Seven Social Sins) is a list that my Grandfather gave to me, written on a piece of paper, on our final day together, shortly before his assassination in 1948.”¹⁰⁵ This of course may well be the case, but it does not demonstrate that Gandhi was the author of the “sins”. In fact, even though many believe that the words are Gandhi’s, they are not, and there is no mystery as to their provenance. A “fair friend” in 1925 sent him some “crisp sayings” by

English socialist author Dan Griffiths on crime and morality. Gandhi notes that the “same fair friend wants readers of *Young India* to know, if they do not already, the following seven social sins”, which were then listed in a report in his newspaper. Gandhi adds that, “Naturally, the friend does not want the readers to know these things merely through the intellect but to know them through the heart so as to avoid them.”¹⁰⁶ The friend had presumably taken the list from a well advertised sermon, titled “Evils of World are Outlined: Canon of Westminster Abbey Names 7 Cardinal Crimes of Modern Society”, delivered by the famous Anglican preacher Frederick Lewis Donaldson, on 20 March 1925.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

I have not presented any content or style analysis of the above quotations to determine the degree to which they were written in the manner of Gandhi, or the extent to which Gandhi would have written on the given topic if he had chosen to do so, or whether sentiments expressed in the quotations were totally congruent with Gandhi’s philosophy as Gandhi scholars have interpreted it.¹⁰⁸ My interest has been merely in the provenance of the currently best-known and most reproduced (mis)quotations attributed to the Mahatma. (And if Gandhi can be treated in such a way, one can only speculate about the veracity of other well-known “facts” and “quotations.”¹⁰⁹) Interestingly, while most of the familiar aphorisms attributed to Gandhi discussed above were not actually coined by him, the only one that he should take credit for he insists he lifted straight from the *Bhagavad Gita* – an interpretation no other *Gita* scholar holds.

The attribution of these quotations to Gandhi is relatively recent. Except for the “Seven Social Sins” and versions of “He Who Eats”, they are not reproduced in his *Collected Works*, nor are they included in the seven quotations from Gandhi in *FPA’s Book of Quotations*,¹¹⁰ a major source published just a few years after Gandhi’s death when he was still a household name. By way of contrast, a recent book of unattributed “Gandhi quotations” reproduces several of them: “first they ignore you”, “be the change”, “live as if you were to die tomorrow”, “an eye for an eye”, “live simply so that others may simply live”, and “the earth provides enough” (here it finishes with “not even one man’s greed”).¹¹¹

Another even more recent collection of quotations, while it includes quotations about the “greatness of a nation”, the world having “enough for everyone’s need”, about living simply, and the “seven social sins” as being Gandhi’s, it concludes with a selection of “Great

but Wrongly Attributed Mahatma Gandhi Quotes” which includes an “eye for an eye”, “first they ignore you”, Western civilisation being a “good idea”, “live as if you were to die tomorrow”, and “be the change”.¹¹² Perhaps slowly revisionist examinations of these aphorisms will provide more accurate accounts of Gandhi’s actual words.

In short, we can conclude that almost none of the above “quotations” are authentic occurrences of Gandhi’s words. They came later and now some are being unattributed by more careful quotation compilers. Nevertheless they are often in tune with Gandhi’s spirit and message, and therefore it is not a total mystery as to why the words may have been put in his mouth. Gandhi was aware of this situation, noting that “often my articles suffer from condensation.”¹¹³ Words like his, but not quite his words. In short, if he did not utter the above aphorisms or a close approximation of them, he could have done so and perhaps should have.

Acknowledgement

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Notes and References

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2. In the 2012 American movie *Won't Back Down*, starring Viola Davis and Maggie Gyllenhaal, the “Be the Change” adage, with an attribution to Gandhi, is expressed twice.
3. For a good summary of some of the best known “Gandhi quotations” that should not be attributed to the Mahatma, see Matt Novak, “7 Gandhi Quotes that are Totally Fake”, <http://www.gizmodo.com.au/2015/07/7-gandhi-quotes-that-are-totally-fake/>, accessed 22 July 2019; and “Mahatma Gandhi, Quotes, Disputed/Misattributed”, http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi#Disputed, accessed on 25 July 2019.
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5. See Thomas Weber, *On the Salt March: The Historiography of Mahatma Gandhi's March to Dandi* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2009), p.531.
6. M.K.Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (revised edition), (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1939), p.65.
7. “General Knowledge About Health [XXXII], 12 Accidents: Snake-Bite”, *Indian Opinion*, 9 August 1913.

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11. Arleen Lorrance, *The Love Project* (New York: LP Publications, 1972), p.13.
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13. Keith Akers, "'Be the Change' – where did this saying come from?" available at <http://www.compasionatespirit.com/upblog/2012/08/14/be-the-change>, accessed on 20 July 2019.
14. Arleen Lorrance, "Who Said 'Be the Change'", available at <http://www.consciousnesswork.com/who-said-be-the-change.htm>, accessed 20 July 2019.
15. Arun Gandhi uses this sentence often, as a title for seminars and talks and has recently published a short book for young children with this as the title. See Arun Gandhi, Bethany Hegadus and Evan Turk (illustrator), *Be the Change: A Grandfather Gandhi Story* (New York: Atheneum, 2016).
16. See Fred Shapiro (ed.), *Yale Book of Quotations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p.299.
17. Personal communication from Arun Gandhi, 20 August 2019.
18. See "Be the Change You Want to See Not Mahatma's Quote?", *The Hans India*, 6 October 2017, available at <http://thehansindia.com/posts/index/Telangana/2017-10-06/Be-the-change-you-want-to-see-not-Mahatmas-quote/331279>, accessed 20 July 2019.
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21. "Turning the Searchlight Inward", *Young India*, 1 April 1930.
22. Letter to Praggi Desai, 15 November 1914.
23. "Speech at Sandesar", 16 May 1918.
24. "Pitfalls in Swadeshi", *Navajivan*, 6 October 1921.
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26. "Speech on Birth Centenary of Tolstoy, 10 September 1928",

- Navajivan*, 16 September 1928. See also, letter to Narandas Gandhi, 14/16 September 1930, and several other letters and articles on the theme.
27. Mahadev Desai, *The Gospel of Selfless Action or The Gita According to Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1946), p.176.
 28. Desai, *The Gospel of Selfless Action*, p.178.
 29. Desai, *The Gospel of Selfless Action*, p.176.
 30. Letter to Narandas Gandhi, 14/16 September 1930.
 31. Letter to Narandas Gandhi, 16/21 October 1930.
 32. M.K.Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1932), p.35.
 33. "My Notes: Message of the Spinning-Wheel in the 'Gita'", *Navajivan*, 32 October 1921.
 34. "Notes: Necessity of Bodily Labour", *Young India*, 15 October 1925.
 35. For example, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) features the quotation with an attribution to Gandhi prominently on its web page. See <http://www.peta.org/features/gandhi/>, accessed on 22 July 2019.
 36. See Philip Johnson, "Mahatma Gandhi Hoax Quote Greatness of a Nation and its Moral progress can be Judged by the way its animals are treated", available at <http://animalsmattertogod.com/2013/09/13/mahatma-gandhi-hoax-quote-greatness-of-a-nation-and-its-moral-progess-can-be-judged-by-the-way-its-animals-are-treated>, accessed on 22 July 2019.
 37. See M.K.Gandhi, *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* trans. Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1940), p.172.
 38. "Letter to Mr. Tatham", *Indian Opinion*, 12 March 1910.
 39. "Interview to Evelyn Wrench", *The Spectator*, 24 October 1931.
 40. See "The Fiery Ordeal", *Young India*, 4 October 1928.
 41. Letter to C.F.Andrews, 2 March 1921.
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 50. Winston Churchill, Home Office Supply (Report), 19 Parliamentary

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 54. Rarely are we given an exact reference for the quote in Isidore's work, however occasionally we are informed that it is contained in his landmark encyclopedia *The Etymologies*. See for example, Robert Abrante, "Live as if you were to die tomorrow – Learn as if you were to live forever", <https://ethology.eu/live-as-if-you-were-to-die-tomorrow-learn-as-if-you-were-to-live-forever/>, accessed on 24 July 2019. However, it does not appear to be anywhere in that work. See Stephen A.Barney, W.J.Lewis, J.A.Beach and Oliver Berghof, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
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 62. "Talk on Board S.S.'Pilsna'", *Young India*, 25 December 1931.
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 66. See Fred Shapiro (ed.), *Yale Book of Quotations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p.270, where it is reported that "The Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence states that the Gandhi family believes it is an authentic Gandhi quotation, but no example of its use by the Indian leader has ever been discovered."
 67. For the making of the film, see Richard Attenborough, *In Search of Gandhi* (London: The Bodley Head, 1982).
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70. For a summary of the "eye for an eye" quote attribution, see Quote Investigator, "An Eye for an Eye Will Make the Whole World Blind", available at <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/12/27/eye-for-an-eye-blind/>, accessed on 27 July 2019. Interestingly, Attenborough does not include this "quote", or indeed any of the other misattributed quotations discussed here, in his selection of Gandhi quotations. See Richard Attenborough, *The Words of Gandhi*, (New York: Newmarket, 1982).
 71. See C. Eugene Emery Jr., "Donald Trump falls for phoney Gandhi quote: 'First they ignore you, then they laugh at you ...'", available at <http://politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/mar/03/donald-trump/donald-trump-falls-phoney-gandhi-quote/>, accessed on 28 July 2019.
 72. "Interview to Eve Curie", *Harijan*, 19 April 1942.
 73. "From Ridicule To - ?", *Young India*, 20 October 1920.
 74. "Ridicule Replacing Repression", *Young India*, 1 September 1920.
 75. See generally Weber, *On the Salt March*, especially pp.464-472, 538.
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93. Letter to Lord Amphill, 30 October 1909.
94. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p.34.
95. "Speech at Mirzapur Park, Calcutta", *Young India*, 2 February 1921.
96. See <http://quoteinvestigator.com/about/>, accessed on 30 July 2019.
97. "What Do You Think of Western Civilization?" "I Think it Would Be a Good Idea", <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/04/23/good-idea/>, accessed on 30 July 2019.
98. See for example his 26 May 1941 letter to Amrita Lal Chatterjee, where he tells his correspondent to "live simply like others".
99. See for example his 29 May 1943 talk with Mirabehn, where he tells her to simply live her life among those who have an underdeveloped idea of God.
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102. Barry Popik, "Live Simply so that Others May Simply Live", available at http://barrypopik.com/index.php/new_york_city/entry/live_simply_so_that_others_may_simply_live/, accessed on 3 September 2019.
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 108. See Brian Morton, "Faker Words Were Never Spoken", *The New York Times*, 19 August 2011, where he notes that the "Be the Change" quotation could imply that personal transformation is enough to change the world. He suggests that, "In fact, for Gandhi, the struggle to bring about a better world involved not only stringent self-denial and rigorous adherence to the philosophy of nonviolence; it also involved a steady awareness that one person, alone, can't change anything, an awareness that unjust authority can be overturned only by great numbers of people working together with discipline and persistence."
 109. For a detailed investigation of how, in the case of Gandhi, a chain of slightly altered previous statements can eventually totally transform an occurrence to something completely different, see Thomas Weber, "Rauwolfia: Gandhi's Favourite Tranquiliser?", *South Asia*, 2018, vol.41, no.3, pp.567-578; and Thomas Weber, "Historiography and the Dandi March: The Other Myths of Gandhi's Salt March", *Gandhi Marg*, 1986, vol.8, no.8, pp.457-476.
 110. Franklin Pierce Adams, *FPA's Book of Quotations* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1952).
 111. Gandhi, *365 Quotes by Mahatma Gandhi*.
 112. Nico Neruda (ed.), *Mahatma Gandhi: 365 Selected Quotes on Love, Life, and Truth*, independently published, available as an Amazon eBook, 2019, p.78.
 113. "Notes: Copyright", *Harijan*, 15 June 1940.

THOMAS WEBER is an Honorary Associate in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, La Trobe University. His most recent Gandhi-related books include *The Mahatma, His Philosophy and His Legacy*; *Gandhi at First Sight*; and *Going Native: Gandhi's Relationship with Western Women*. His email is t.weber@latrobe.edu.au



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Social Practices of Citizenship: Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo

Bindu Mohanty

ABSTRACT

Globalization and postmodernism require us to go beyond the conventional understanding of citizenship as a relationship between individuals and public institutions in nation-states. This paper views citizenship not as legally institutionalized relations but as constantly evolving socio-cultural practices by citizens. It does so, firstly, by examining the practices of Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo in claiming civil rights, as colonized subjects, from British authorities. Secondly, it documents social practices of citizens in Ekta Parishad and Auroville and analyzes how such practices enhance our understanding of the notion of cosmopolitan citizenship. Ekta Parishad and Auroville are two radically different forms of ongoing social experiments in India, and yet each is shaped by the visionary thought and radical practices of Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo, respectively.

Keywords: Cosmopolitan Citizenship, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Ekta Parishad, Auroville

GLOBALIZATION AND POSTMODERNISM, the hallmarks of our era, call for a re-examination of the notion of citizenship as a legally institutionalized relationship between an individual and the nation-state to which she belongs. This notion of citizenship is derived chiefly from the establishment of the nation-state in the modern era and is defined by the rights and responsibilities assigned to individuals under the authority of the nation-state. The modern concept of citizenship, which views citizenship as a right and not a privilege,

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was further informed by European Enlightenment ideas about rationality, equality, and liberty of every individual.¹ In theory, a nation-state creates a sense of inclusion and belonging among its citizens by granting them civil, political, and social rights. In practice, however, and increasingly so with the differentiation of postmodernism, individuals and groups have struggled with the authority of nation-states to claim their rights based upon their differentiated identity—such as sexual identity, ethnic identity, or diasporic, ecological, technological, or cosmopolitan identities. New identities and claims to belonging are also made by individuals, in our globalized world, with the rise of new forms of international government regimes, such as that of the European Union, and new global alliances based on values such as cosmopolitan citizenship.

A philosophical notion of a cosmopolitan citizenship, which transcends national identities and individuals' obligations to nation-states, has haunted the imagination of humanity since ancient times and has been more systematically developed in the West. In Western thought, such a vision dates back to the pronouncements of being a citizen of the world by Diogenes, a Greek philosopher of 400 BCE, is developed by the Stoics, promoted in the 18th century by Enlightenment thinkers, especially Kant, and is part of the theoretical discourse from the late 20th century onwards, particularly due to the seminal works of Nussbaum (1994), Derrida (1997) and Appiah (1997 and 2006).² As cosmopolitanism implies belonging to a global community with a shared morality, cosmopolitan citizenship is also regarded by social activists as being key to a just world order based on universal human rights.³ The concept of cosmopolitan citizenship, however, is still largely a theoretical construct, and this paper seeks to expand this concept by examining citizenship practices of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) in colonized India as well as the practices of their followers in contemporary India.

In India, decolonization accelerated the process of social evolution to foist a democratic nation-state onto a population largely informed by a feudalistic and caste-ridden mindset. This resulted in the fact, as Kothari (1986) points out, that citizenship in India is enacted in highly unequal ways, and often the government itself is seen not as the guarantor of rights but as a tyrant who, consciously or unconsciously, oppresses poor, marginalized communities by obstructing their just claims to rights.⁴ Democratic rights have been further undermined by neoliberalism in India. Citizens' rights are always embedded within national policies, which in turn are derived from ideologies, such as socialism or capitalism, of the nation-states. But since 1980s, neoliberal economic globalization unleashed by

international organizations, namely the World Bank and World Trade Organization, has increasingly eroded the powers of nation-states and the rights of its citizens by promoting free market capitalism and the consequent privatization of common resources as capital.⁵

Thus, the modern notion of citizenship is increasingly contested in a globalizing, postmodern world and needs to be expanded to include socio-cultural practices by citizens to claim rights and recognition. Instead of seeking to understand citizenship primarily in terms of legally institutionalized relations, it is, as Conway says, “more fruitful to think of citizenship as an ensemble of uneven and conflict-ridden processes, constituted by practices”.⁶ In this regard, the theoretical concept of cosmopolitan citizenship does not have any legal or institutional standing, and yet this concept is strengthened by the intermingling of cultures due to globalization, the spread of ideas due to information technology, and by actual lived practices of common people who subscribe to universal values and human rights. In this context, Mukherjee and Rath highlight the work of thinkers, including Sri Aurobindo, who sought to envision and “realize cosmopolitanism in palpable realities of human spaces”.⁷ Other writers such as Balarin (2011) and Koyama (2016) deconstruct the concept of cosmopolitan or global citizenship⁸ as being a privileged and hegemonic Western undertaking. They argue that implicit assumptions of the agency and autonomy of a global citizen marginalizes well over half of the world’s population, mostly in the Global South, who are “institutionally and structurally excluded from participating safely as citizens”⁹ within their nation states. Koyama thus advocates expanding the Westernized notion of global citizenship by recognizing and supporting people’s struggles for basic human rights. An edited collection of essays on cosmopolitanism by Giri (2018) similarly balances Westernized perspectives on the issue by viewing cosmopolitization as an ongoing process and examining contemporary multidimensional efforts that seek to transform the self by the inclusion of the other.¹⁰ I add to this growing body of work on alternate readings of cosmopolitan citizenship in two ways: Firstly, I examine Mahatma Gandhi’s and Sri Aurobindo’s struggles for India’s liberation as enactments of citizenship while recognizing, as pointed out by Rösch (2018) and Mukherjee and Rath (2015), that the cosmopolitan outlook of these two thinkers are grounded in universal spiritual values;¹¹ Secondly, I document and analyze socio-cultural practices of citizenship in two very different organizations in India, namely Ekta Parishad and Auroville, which explicitly draw their inspiration from the vision and practices of Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo respectively.

In this regard, Rösch (2018) invites us to view the social action of Mahatma Gandhi as cosmopolitanism¹², but he does not examine Gandhi's legacy in informing the outlook and action of Gandhian institutes such as that of Ekta Parishad as I do. Mukherjee and Rath (2015) allude to Auroville as Sri Aurobindo's "conception of a cosmopolis—a city that is a microcosmic representation of the world,"¹³ but their work examines the cosmopolitanism in Sri Aurobindo's thought and is not informed by the lived experience of Aurovilians, i.e., the residents of Auroville. This paper adds to Mukherjee's and Rath's work by examining social practices of Aurovilians as "citizens" of a cosmopolis, particularly with reference to their experiments in alternative forms of governance and economy. It thus contributes to studies on the legacies of Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo but also informs citizenship studies in general and cosmopolitan citizenship in particular by examining how the ideas and values of these two thinkers are put into practice by citizens.

Mahatma Gandhi and Ekta Parishad

Many modern thinkers, for example Tharoor (1997), point out that Mahatma Gandhi's values of non-violence are impractical against authoritarian regimes, and his principles of development of self-sufficiency and self-rule in villages are obsolete in an inter-dependent world. While there may be some truth to such critiques of Gandhian thought, it would be wrong to believe, as Tharoor does, that Gandhi did not leave a lasting legacy as can be seen in the example of Ekta Parishad, a mass movement in India that effectively uses Gandhian tools and principles to claim basic social rights for India's poorest citizens.¹⁴

The tools and principles of non-violent civil disobedience that Gandhi successfully used to claim civil, political, and social rights for Indians from British colonial rulers were developed over the course of his lifetime. Gandhi's first achievement in claiming civil rights for Indians using non-violent methods was in 1917 and is known as the Champaran agitation. The Champaran agitation pitted the local peasantry against British landlords, and Gandhi's methods succeeded in winning concessions from the authorities. It was in Champaran that Gandhi developed his principles of working for the revitalization of villages with village people, educating them, creating awareness against discriminatory cultural practices, and training volunteers. He also had Indian lawyers document the atrocities inflicted on the villagers. As we will see, all these practices have now been adapted by Ekta Parishad for present-day times.

Gandhi's unique form of non-violent protest was termed by him

as *Satyagraha* (translated as “Truth-Force”), and the term gained currency in 1919 in the movement against the Rowlatt Act, which severely limited the civil liberties of Indians. *Satyagraha* implies “insistence on truth” or the use of one’s individual will to adhere to truth. For Gandhi, *Satyagraha* was not passive resistance, but required great will and courage. *Satyagraha* was a spiritual path leading to Truth, and Gandhi believed that the practice of non-violence or *Ahimsa* was essential to this quest. Adherence to truth (*Satya*) and non-violence (*Ahimsa*) are fundamental practices in many spiritual traditions of India, such as the *yamas* (practices) enjoined by Patañjali (ca 400 CE), and by drawing on such traditions Gandhi was effectively integrating spirituality, social development, and politics. Gandhi rejected the idea of gaining India’s freedom and rights for its citizens by “any means necessary” as the philosophy of *Satyagraha* does not separate the means from the ends. As Carr-Harris explains, Gandhian practices were designed to “strengthen non-violence as attitudes in people and in the society,” and “to increase respect for all persons (whether they were friend or foe) and to see the enemy as a system and not people”.¹⁵ Such Gandhian practices can thus be viewed as a radical example of cosmopolitan citizenship where even in the struggle for one’s rights as a citizen, one embodies the universal value of respect for the other. In terms of actual strategies and tools for non-violent civil disobedience, Gandhi successfully mobilized the masses to organize *hartals* or strikes with the goal of satisfying a demand, *padayatras* or long marches by foot and also undertook personal hunger-fasts. The terminology of non-violent civil disobedience and these specific tools are commonly used in India today by both politicians and lay citizens alike, though more often than not, without adherence to the spiritual practices that Gandhi enjoined on his followers. To me, using Gandhi’s tools of civil disobedience without adopting his value of universal respect, does not represent an embodied practice of cosmopolitan citizenship.

Of all the institutions who claim to have inherited Gandhi’s legacy, Ekta Parishad is unique, given its size, its socio-cultural practices in securing basic rights, and in its adherence to a moral dictum that individual inner practices are as important as the external struggles against authorities. Like Gandhi, Ekta Parishad holds that to end injustice, “both people and institutions must evolve new values and behaviour.”¹⁶

Ekta Parishad, which translates to “United Forum,” was founded in 1990 in Madhya Pradesh by a Gandhian activist Rajagopal¹⁷ (1948-) to claim land rights for India’s marginalized communities. His first experience of using non-violent methods for social gains was in 1970s

where he negotiated the peaceful surrender of notorious armed bandits of Chambal valley in Madhya Pradesh. This experience revealed to him that due to the prevalence of feudalistic practices, millions of rural Indians live as poor, marginalized citizens without any recourse to basic human and social rights to livelihood. For Rajagopal, alienation from the land is the main cause of the abject poverty in rural areas. An estimated 56.4% of rural households own no land and yet are largely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.¹⁸ Without legal claims to the lands, they are socially vulnerable, economically insecure and live as marginalized citizens.

Mahatma Gandhi claimed rights from British authorities as a colonized subject. In doing so he was, in effect, appealing to the ethics of the British and their principles of natural justice. Rajagopal stands on even stronger moral ground, for he and his followers claim their rights and seek to redress their grievances as free citizens in a democratic nation-state. Like Gandhi, Rajagopal also realized that to claim rights from an indifferent centralized government, there needs to be a successful large-scale mobilization of the people at the grassroots level.¹⁹ Thus he re-invented Gandhian values and tools to contest and claim civil rights from state and central governments of India. Today, Ekta Parishad is a network of approximately 11,000 community-based organizations and thousands of individuals currently working in ten states of India for the livelihood rights of indigent marginalized communities, such as tribals, Dalits, nomadic communities, landless agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers. Its stated aim is “to see India’s poorest people gain control over livelihood resources, especially land, water and forest”.²⁰

Rajagopal’s focus on natural resources, especially land, to demand social equity and livelihood rights for marginalized citizens has historical connotations in the development of nation-states and citizens’ rights. Until the early 20th century, in Britain, Australia, and Canada citizenship rights were bestowed only to residents who held land as private property, and even then, the latter two settler societies did not recognize indigenous tribes as citizens.²¹ Also, with the evolution of human societies, land use and management practices changed over the course of time. For most of human history, land and natural resources were held in common and sustainably used. But as hunter-gatherer societies developed into agricultural societies, a powerful minority started the feudalistic practice of privatizing land, rendering the majority as landless peasants. This practice of unjust expropriation and privatization of land continued with industrialization, colonization, and neoliberal globalization, duly backed by political ideologies and institutionalized legal mechanisms.

All over the world, land reforms for greater social equity have been largely unsuccessful due to inherent institutional and political biases favouring the dominant classes.²² But, independent of their achievements, Ekta Parishad's struggle for social equity is a practice of cosmopolitan citizenship as it is rooted in the universal values of solidarity, respect for the other, and justice.

Ekta Parishad takes as its core principle Gandhi's dictum that India lives in its villages, and nation-building should start at the grassroots with the political, social, and economic revitalization of villages. To that end, Ekta Parishad's activists work towards building community-based governance (*gram swaraj*), local self-reliance (*gram swawlabhan*), and responsible government (*jawabdehsarkar*) but with the awareness that self-reliant rural communities can be established only through redistribution of wealth and social equity.²³ The work of Ekta Parishad in educating villagers for responsible governance and a self-reliant economy exemplifies a form of citizenship education. There is thus a clear lineage of how Gandhi's cosmopolitan outlook and values are being passed to successive generations through what can be termed a structured, grassroots approach to global citizenship education. Some of the Gandhian strategies and tools for resistance that Rajagopal studied and Ekta Parishad adopted are documented below.

Strategies of mass campaigns, non-violent struggles and dialogues: Ekta Parishad engages in openly-defiant but non-violent struggles (*ahimasaksangharsh*) to campaign for the rights for disenfranchised citizens.²⁴ Just as Gandhi's acts of mass civil disobedience were undertaken to get the British authorities to dialogue about citizens' rights, so also Ekta Parishad deliberately uses dialogue for political action. As their website states: "On one side we have dialogue and on the other side struggle. Yet both are interlinked".²⁵ Rajagopal is well aware of the need for the Gandhian tool of mobilization of the masses in his campaigns, for it is only the presence of sheer numbers of people that bring political leaders to the table for negotiations for redressing wrongs.

Padayatra as the main tool of non-violent protest: The *padayatra* or march by foot is Ekta Parishad's main tool for protests.²⁶ Democracies all over the world allow groups of people to stage non-violent protests, and marches with placards and slogans are one of the most common forms of such protests. What is different about the marches or *padayatras* in India is the length of the march, which can be hundreds of kilometres and the number of marchers, which can count up to thousands. Moreover, the *padayatra* has a cultural and historical significance that is unique to India, given its historical tradition of

ambulatory pilgrimages, the famous Dandi march of Mahatma Gandhi and that of Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982) for *bhoodan* (the land gift movement). *Padayatras* by Ekta Parishad are supplemented by mass awareness campaigns about the government's indifference to citizens' rights in the form of public rallies, education of the masses during the march about their rights, and local documentation of infringement of citizenship rights.²⁷

From its first state-wide *padayatra* in Madhya Pradesh in 1999-2000 to recent national campaigns, Ekta Parishad has organized scores of *padayatras* and gained considerable victories in instituting land reforms and claiming citizens' rights to land. Its first national *padayatra* in 2007 was undertaken by 25,000 landless people from fifteen states in India and also included sympathetic friends from nineteen other countries, and it resulted in significant progress towards land reform policies.²⁸

Training citizens for civil duties: Just as Gandhi understood the need for educating and training his followers to practice *satyagraha*, so too Rajagopal is aware that the Ekta Parishad movement can only succeed by empowering people at the grassroots level through continual training.²⁹ Central to Rajagopal's achievements in this regard are enjoining privileged rural middle-class youth to work with the landless poor and focusing on women as activists. This is another commendable example of the practice of global citizenship education by Ekta Parishad where economic and gender differences are overcome in service of a larger goal for the universal human right to livelihood.

Citizenship practices: responsibilities and rights: Along with rights, citizenship also connotes responsibilities or obligations to the nation-state. Ekta Parishad members enjoin upon themselves the responsibility of ensuring social equity in a democratic state. Ekta Parishad members, following Gandhi, view social equity as a spiritual principle, along with the practices of truth, non-violence, and simple living that they enjoin upon themselves. I recommend that the theoretical concept of cosmopolitan citizenship be enriched by taking into account the socio-spiritual practices of Ekta Parishad members.

On occasion, Ekta Parishad's efforts to claim rights for disenfranchised citizens can go beyond national borders, as was evidenced by its participation at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai, India, 2004. Conway views WSF as a "comprehensive, cross-cultural, political space" that gives rise to "new paradigms of citizenship"³⁰ by bringing together activists against neoliberal globalization and documents the participation of Ekta Parishad members at this international event. By their participation in this worldwide movement against neoliberal capitalism, Ekta Parishad

enacts “responsibilities” most correlated to a global sense of citizenship, in that it expresses its solidarity with an international community for a shared cause.

Ekta Parishad’s international character can also be gauged from the support of Ekta Parishad organizations in Europe who are sympathetic to its cause.³¹ At the heart of such international sympathy is the simple fact that Ekta Parishad’s claim for rights is in consonance with basic human rights and their non-violent practices in resonance with universal values. This international layering of Ekta Parishad organizations is evidence of the social practice of cosmopolitan citizenship—of people linking together across national borders for rights-based development. As Linklater states: “The universal human rights culture is deemed to be evidence of the emerging law of world citizens; cosmopolitan citizenship is thought to be exemplified by the increasing global role of INGOs [International non-governmental organizations] and by efforts to promote the democratisation of world politics”.³² In the next section, we will examine another form of cosmopolitan citizenship informed by Sri Aurobindo’s political and philosophical thought, and again as with Ekta Parishad given a living form through the praxis of a community and supported by international organizations.

Sri Aurobindo and Auroville

Indian thought infuses social and moral notions of cosmopolitan citizenship developed in the West with a spiritual understanding of human unity as connoted by the adage *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, which means “the entire world is my family.” This saying, inscribed on the entrance hall of the Parliament building of India, has widespread cultural acceptance in this country. The term is first used in an ancient Vedic scripture called *Maha Upanishad*³³ where it is associated with *Brahman*, the ultimate spiritual reality in Hindu cosmology.³⁴ The phrase then gained currency in Indian thought, sometime between 500 CE and 1000 CE, when an influential Hindu scripture, the *Bhagvat Purana*, propagated this concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* by describing it as the “loftiest Vedantic thought”.³⁵ Sri Aurobindo, given his familiarity with Indian scriptures, was undoubtedly shaped by this spiritual heritage in his political and spiritual thought. The concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* finds contemporary expression in the charter of the city of Auroville, which declares it as a site for a “living embodiment of an actual human unity”.³⁶ As explicitly stated by Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual collaborator, the Mother, née Mirra Alfassa (1878-1972), both the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and the neighbouring town of Auroville were established to give “a concrete

form to Sri Aurobindo's vision".³⁷ Founded in 1968, Auroville, described as a "universal town" by its founder, the Mother,³⁸ was conceived as an urban experiment in human unity comprising people from all the nations of the world.

The Mother's reference to Auroville as a "universal town" explicitly expands the definition of cosmopolitanism. A cosmopolis is generally seen as a socio-political construct while a universal town has the connotations of an urban human habitat in consonance with the numinous evolving dynamics of the universe. Based on the evolutionary spiritual path of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga that views the universal or cosmopolitan principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity as qualities of the soul,³⁹ Auroville seeks to embody human unity in diversity. A key public message of Sri Aurobindo, on the event of India's independence, was about his hope for a world union for all mankind.⁴⁰ Auroville is thus the living legacy of Sri Aurobindo's thought: It is a polity that at once includes and transcends contemporary socio-political notions of cosmopolitan citizenship by underpinning these notions with a spiritual idea of an actual human unity, that is to say the experience of oneness with the other while differentiating the other from the self.

A revolutionary thinker, a political firebrand, a brilliant writer, and a unique genius who flawlessly integrated the spiritual and the social, Sri Aurobindo openly galvanized the political struggle for India's freedom from 1905 to 1910. He was the first freedom fighter to demand complete freedom for India and its recognition as an independent nation-state. Before Sri Aurobindo, India's freedom struggle was mostly an emaciated movement of the privileged elite who were members of the Indian National Congress. Sri Aurobindo was the first to appreciate the role of the proletariat and to awaken the power of the masses, encouraging them with his radical and inspiring articles to revolt against the British. On the one hand, Gandhi drew on Indian spiritual traditions to insist on non-violence as a spiritual imperative; on the other hand, Sri Aurobindo drew from the same spiritual heritage of India to promulgate an idea of spiritual nationalism that proclaimed India itself as a divinity, evoked warrior goddesses from Tantric traditions of India to help in the fight against the British, and spiritually justified the use of force in this political struggle. As a colonized subject making claims for civil, social, and political rights, Sri Aurobindo propagated "a radical political discourse of embodied spirituality, heroic sacrifice and transformative violence".⁴¹ By doing so, Sri Aurobindo was again drawing on a historic tradition in India of warrior ascetics, such as the *astra-dhari* (arms wielding) branch of Nath Jogis in the medieval era and the

nomadic Hindu sanyasis and Muslim fakirs in 18th century Bengal who challenged the British by inciting the peasants to rebel. Sri Aurobindo was politically active in the years when Gandhi was still in South Africa, and Karan Singh states that it was the former and not the latter who first propagated the ideas of an educational, economic, and judicial boycott against the practices of India's colonial rulers to achieve *swadesh* or independence.⁴²

While some tend to create a false dichotomy in Sri Aurobindo's extraordinary life by viewing Aurobindo Ghose the political firebrand as a separate persona from Sri Aurobindo the mystic, others like Alex Wolfers point out that for Sri Aurobindo the political was always the spiritual.⁴³ As with Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo's political engagement, his integration of the spiritual and the political, and the effect of his actions, especially his writings, in creating awareness among the masses to demand civil rights and liberty from their colonial rulers, are all forms of active personal practices in citizenship. These force us, firstly, to revise our concepts on cosmopolitanism by recognizing that a cosmopolitan outlook can also be born out of embodied spirituality, and, secondly, to accept that citizenship education can take many different forms outside of formal education.

Even after he retired from active political engagement to focus on his spiritual work, Sri Aurobindo maintained a keen interest in national and international politics, closely following India's independence movement and the 2nd World War, and writing about the possibilities of a world union in socio-political essays. Throughout the course of his life and on the basis of his evolving experiences, Sri Aurobindo revised and elaborated his body of work on the philosophy and practice of Integral Yoga. After his death, the Mother carried forward this spiritual undertaking in founding Auroville as an urban experimentation of the practice of Integral Yoga.⁴⁴ Here it is important to specify that Integral Yoga is not a spiritual path that is imposed upon the Aurovilians, but its spiritual ideals and universal values definitely shape the collective life of this growing international town.

Background and context of Auroville: Auroville is perhaps the only expression of an intentional cosmopolis in the world today, given the international diversity of over 3,000 residents from almost sixty nation states ("Census" 2019) who have purposely chosen to join the project, and who thus arguably have a global outlook. An estimated 1,000 students, interns, and volunteers annually, on the basis of their work in Auroville, also participates in the Auroville experiment. Auroville is situated in rural Tamil Nadu, surrounded by several villages with a combined population of approximately 40,000 people, which directly

or indirectly also interact with Auroville on a daily basis. Interestingly, while in other parts of the world the claim to cosmopolitan citizenship has not been institutionalized but merely proposed by individual thinkers, philosophers, and social movements, the concept of Auroville is recognized and endorsed by international bodies, including the United Nations and UNESCO and the Government of India. Auroville has hosted important world leaders who have endorsed this experimental international community as a successful model of global diversity and harmony. Auroville's cosmopolitanism is also supported through an active worldwide network of friends of Auroville and Auroville International centres that provide information about Auroville.

Governance: In many ways, the present-day reality of Auroville is quite different from that envisioned by the Mother. In a text titled *A Dream*, viewed as representing her ideal conception of Auroville, the Mother states: "There should be somewhere upon earth a place that no nation could claim as its sole property, a place where all human beings of goodwill, sincere in their aspiration, could live freely as citizens of the world".⁴⁵ The statement implies that the Mother envisaged complete autonomy for Auroville, akin to an independent city-state; in reality, however, Auroville does not have any political autonomy and is legally accountable to the Government of India as per the Auroville Foundation Act.⁴⁶ Visas granted to foreign Aurovilians may be denied or recalled by the Government of India, and foreign Aurovilians have no legal right to contest the government's decisions. The living example of Auroville as a fledgling experimental cosmopolis, in principle open to subjects of all nations, but in practice, by virtue of its location, subject to the nation-state of India, deserves further study on appropriate political structures needed to support cosmopolitan citizenship as a socio-political right.

In the management of their internal affairs, however, Aurovilians, enjoy a great deal of freedom. Within Auroville, autonomous "working groups" have been instituted by community members to govern the town on a day-to-day basis. These groups are mostly peer-based in their organizational structure and participatory in their processes. Auroville does not have laws or law-enforcement mechanisms, and in their absence, governance is based on guidelines and policies that have been adopted by the community. Governance, however, depends on the goodwill and cooperation of the residents, for there are practically no collective structures to enforce decisions. In some ways, the participatory democratic manner of taking decisions allows for ownership of the decision by all and thus helps in adherence to the community's guidelines. At the time of the writing of this paper,

Auroville's efforts at a participatory democracy were being furthered by initial explorations of holding "Citizens' Assemblies" to inform and support the working-groups in their decision-making powers.⁴⁷ Citizens' Assemblies mark a shift from participatory democracy toward deliberative democracy and have been adopted in a few different countries.⁴⁸ Deliberative Global Citizens' Assemblies, in Florida's view, would help in global governance by imparting a structure to cosmopolitan citizenship and democratising world politics. Despite the statistically insignificant size of its polity compared to the global population, by virtue of its experimentation in governance, Auroville contributes to our understanding of the possibilities of cosmopolitan governance.

Economy: The cosmopolitan ideal of social equity perforce needs to be founded on an economy designed for equitable sharing of wealth and resources. Furthermore, in the ideal spiritual society envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, economics—the means of production of wealth and its distribution—is viewed in terms of spiritual values rather than of material necessities. For Auroville, the Mother desired that money be a medium of exchange only with the outside world. Within Auroville, she wished to have a flexible system in which residents would not be taxed but voluntarily "contribute to the collective welfare in work, kind or money." In turn, they would have their basic needs met by the community. From the very beginning, the Mother set up a collective distribution system for goods that provided Aurovilians with basic necessities.

Since its inception in 1968, Auroville has experimented and continues to experiment with a number of different economic models to promote an equitable distribution of wealth. These include stores that seek to cooperatively distribute groceries and clothing, an outlet for borrowing tools and other objects, a farmers' cooperative for marketing farm produce, community-supported agriculture, and goods and services that are not priced but offered on the basis of a gift economy. In her study of the Auroville's cooperative store for groceries, Clarence-Smith concludes "the citizenship exhibited by Aurovilians to be not only 'active' but 'conscious' in that it intentionally seeks to embody the ideal society."⁴⁹ While in its entirety, Auroville's economy has yet to fully manifest the spiritual ideals envisioned by the Mother, Auroville's macroeconomic structure is nonetheless a far cry from a mainstream commercialized society that seeks to monetize all transactions and prices goods and services on market values. For example, in mainstream society, based on capitalist and patriarchal assumptions, some forms of work, such as domestic services, are grossly underpaid while others (e.g., information

technology services) are well paid. In Auroville, all forms of work are sought to be equally valued, as evidenced by a standardized stipend for members active throughout various sectors of activity. Similarly, income-generating units in Auroville (a wide assortment of enterprises in diverse sectors such as hospitality, clothing, sustainable products and services, food, and handicrafts) are required to donate one-third of their profits to a common fund. The common fund partially or fully supports many basic community services, including education and health. Lastly, the immovable assets of Auroville, largely built through personal resources, especially in the early years, are collectively managed by the community and held in trust by the Auroville Foundation.

As Auroville is not yet the self-supporting township the Mother hoped it to be, its economic base is inextricably linked to the regional, national and global economy. Nevertheless, Auroville's shared economy stands as a bulwark against the imperialism of neoliberal capitalism. The socio-economic practices of Aurovilians stand testimony to the cosmopolitan value of social equity, and Auroville is a significant, though not perfect, example of an egalitarian society.

Practicing cosmopolitanism: Based on my lived experience in Auroville, I would say Aurovilians' understanding of cosmopolitanism is first and foremost spiritual, and not socio-political: human unity is viewed in spiritual terms rather than a cosmopolitan value that needs to be embodied in socio-political structures. Thus, most Aurovilians enact their global citizenship by dedicating themselves to the experiment of realising a cosmopolitan spiritual utopia, and not as political activists who champion universal human rights or seek to transform national political communities to embrace the ideal of human unity. That said, many actively engage in contemporary global discussions viewing Auroville's development and that of the world as being part of the same evolutionary drive of the universe identified by Sri Aurobindo. My observations outlined here would benefit from more in-depth qualitative research and further investigation of the interface between cosmopolitanism and universal spiritual values.

Some Aurovilians do strongly identify with cosmopolitan values of social equity and natural justice and engage in activist projects to promote these beyond the Auroville context, for example in sustainable development projects in India and a few other countries, notably in Africa. There are programmes for rural development in terms of economic empowerment, women's empowerment, education, and development of needed infrastructure that help thousands of rural poor, primarily in Auroville's immediate bioregion. Successful

rural development programmes include active citizenship education in which the local populace is trained to claim their promised rights from the government.

If cosmopolitanism is defined simply as a locality where people of diverse socio-cultural backgrounds live interact with each other, then Auroville definitely qualifies as a cosmopolis. As most Aurovilians live in an expatriate situation in India and do not identify strongly with the countries of their origin, it could be argued that Aurovilians, by their very lived practice, implicitly subscribe to “a post-national conception of citizenship which rests on notions of individual personhood rather than on any particular cultural identity”.⁵⁰ But here too, one does not escape the socio-political realities of the world: Auroville’s demographic data reveals prevalent global socio-economic and political inequalities. Most of the foreign residents hail from the wealthier countries of Europe and North America, and there is little representation from the countries of the Global South where many simply do not have the economic or social privilege to travel and live in a foreign country or even to own a passport (“Census 2019). Such people, marginalized by prevalent notions of cosmopolitanism, are part of what Balarin refers to as the “hidden other”⁵¹ of global citizenship.

Within Auroville, there is a wide spectrum of participation in the civil life of the community, which probably is shaped by socio-economic standing, age, class, caste, race and nationality. While some actively engage as “citizens of Auroville” by taking part in collective decision-making forums, there is also a significant number who do not attend these, due to lack of time, feeling overwhelmed by the number of decisions that need to be taken and the community’s lengthy participatory processes, or for other personal reasons. These observations are only cursory and warrant further research and validation in the context of citizenship studies and social psychology in order to better understand the various limiting factors for individuals’ practices of embodying participatory, democratic and cosmopolitan forms of citizenship.

In terms of citizenship education, at present, newcomers at the time of joining Auroville, go through a mentorship and a week-long program designed to educate them on the spiritual ideals of Auroville. But other than that, based on Sri Aurobindo’s concepts about the autonomy and conscious agency of the individual self, Aurovilians have the freedom to decide for themselves how they embody the values of Auroville. While from the spiritual perspective of Integral Yoga, such freedom may be seen as being a paramount necessity, in the lived reality of Auroville, there is occasional socio-cultural

resentment due to the perception that a number of Aurovilian do not live up to the values of Auroville. My observations here again point to the need for further investigation on the gap between theory and practice of cosmopolitan citizenship and how best to bridge this gap with effective educational citizenship practices for adults. All in all, just as much Sri Aurobindo's vision positing a posthuman evolutionary stage for the human species⁵² transcends current notions of cosmopolitan citizenship, so also Auroville, in its ideals and in its lived reality, represents and transcends the contemporary discourse on cosmopolitan citizenship.

Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi are esteemed for their decisive role in the birth of India as a nation-state. It could well be said that Sri Aurobindo participated in the conception of independent India, Mahatma Gandhi in its active birthing. Both the conception and the birth were accompanied by revolutionary individual acts of these two leaders to claim citizenship rights for Indians, who were then colonized subjects. Both drew from their own spiritual practices and Indian spiritual thought to chart alternate pathways for themselves and their followers—pathways that can be viewed as practices of cosmopolitan citizenship. In this regard, it would be pertinent to academically examine the significance of embodied spiritual practices for cosmopolitan enactments of citizenship. Both men, in their own unique ways, were trail-blazers who left a lasting legacy, as evidenced by the communitarian practices of Ekta Parishad and Auroville.

My analysis of the social practices of Ekta Parishad and ethnographic observations of Auroville reveal key points of consideration for further developing the concept of cosmopolitan citizenship. Notably, the citizenship practices and citizenship education by Ekta Parishad indicates the need for researching lived practices of citizens in the Global South as they challenge prevalent and implicit assumptions that "citizen identities are neutral and transferable to any local, national or global context",⁵³ while the demographic composition of Auroville points to the need to address the challenge of the "hidden other" in cosmopolitan citizenship. Further research into the governance, individual practices, and social psychology of Auroville would also add normative value to cosmopolitan studies in terms of suggesting appropriate forms for citizenship education and political structures for the embodiment of cosmopolitan ideals. Last but not least, as indicated by the widely divergent communitarian practices of Ekta Parishad and Auroville, I recommend viewing cosmopolitanism not as a uniform creed but as a plural

construct that allows for a number of different but complementary practices of citizenship.

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BINDU MOHANTY holds a Ph.D from California Institute of Integral Studies focusing on Comparative Studies in Integral Yoga and Transpersonal Theories and an MA in English Literature from University of Kentucky. A writer and teacher, she has lived in Auroville since 1994. Her current research interests include interpersonal dynamics and social evolution.

Email: bindumohanty@yahoo.co.in



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The Evolution of *Satyagraha*: Mahatma Gandhi's nurturing of Truth-force in South Africa

Vishnu Varatharajan

ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi's political activity was deeply appreciated by people across the world even before the Salt March of 1930 that elevated Gandhi and the Indian Independence movement to global prominence. Gandhi slowly nurtured satyagraha into an ingenious and original philosophy, and opened multiple dimensions – as a political expression, as a weapon, or even as a way of life. Satyagraha acquired more meaning over time that was deeply rooted in Gandhi's cultural-religious expression as well as his external reading. As Gandhi gained more and more experience as a leader of the masses, involving in the civil resistance campaigns in South Africa, his conception of satyagraha also slowly shaped into a more profound and complex idea. This essay tracks this course, about how Gandhi's satyagraha slowly came into what it was. For specificity, it tracks the nurturing of satyagraha between 1908 and 1914, when Gandhi was in South Africa.

Keywords: Truth-force, Political Programme, Indian Opinion, Soldiers of Truth, Passive Resistance

Introduction

MAHATMA GANDHI'S POLITICAL activity was deeply appreciated by people across the world even before the Salt March of 1930 that elevated Gandhi and the Indian Independence movement

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to global prominence. Many political activists like Carl von Ossietzky were closely following Gandhi's activities. In October, 1929, von Ossietzky wrote in his magazine *Die Weltbühne*¹, "Gandhi is not a political person in the European sense. He is more. He is the secret power that dominates everyone without office and party... ..India is fortunate that his new law is not imposed on him by a dictator, does not boast in the relentless command of an Asian Napoleon, but is proclaimed by the gentle voice of Mahatma Gandhi [In German]"². Gandhi initially labelled his concept under passive resistance, but in 1908, he coined the term *satyagraha* to denote it thereafter. But over the years, the term *satyagraha* became more than just passive resistance, as Gandhi slowly nurtured *satyagraha* into an ingenious and original philosophy, and opened multiple dimensions – as a political expression, as a weapon, or even as a way of life. *Satyagraha* acquired more meaning over time that was deeply rooted in Gandhi's cultural-religious expression as well as his external reading. It became an untranslatable standalone Gujarati word³. As Gandhi gained more and more epistemic knowledge, reading and wide experience as a leader of the masses, involving in the civil resistance campaigns in South Africa, his conception of *satyagraha* also slowly shaped into a more profound and complex idea over the course of time. This essay explains this course, about how Gandhi's *satyagraha* slowly came into what it was. For specificity, it tracks the nurturing of *satyagraha* between 1908 and 1914, when Gandhi was in South Africa.

Part I - Humble beginnings

The process of finding a Gujarati equivalent for passive resistance began in 1908, in South Africa. *Satyagraha*'s origins can be traced back to Gandhi's speech in 1906 at Empire Theatre, Johannesburg, where he explained the concept of passive resistance to the audience. But, the true origin of *satyagraha* should be pegged at 1908, since in between the years, his specific readings of Socrates, Gita, Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin had significant influence on the foundation of his civil resistance programme that was distinct from what he proposed in 1906. Gandhi was the founder of 'The Indian Opinion', a newspaper that was started in 1903. In January 1908, he announced a contest to his readers, asking them to find a Gujarati term for passive resistance⁴. It was Maganlal Gandhi – the grandson of Gandhi's uncle – who suggested a word similar to *satyagraha*. He translated passive resistance as *sadagraha*, which roughly means "firmness to being good". Gandhi modified the term to *satyagraha*, which, though similar in context, elevated its quality by emphasizing on "firmness to being truthful". Thus, when the word *satyagraha* was born, the element of truthfulness

was also simultaneously associated with it. It is then that the term *satyagraha* was coined, and the person who performed *satyagraha* became a *satyagrahi*. *Satyagraha*, the noun, was a political activity, and *satyagrahi*, a moral-political identity.

Gandhi had been already mobilizing Indians against the Asiatic Registration Act⁵ that was drafted in 1906. After the term *satyagraha* was coined as an alternative for passive resistance, Gandhi improvised the already practiced rules of the resistance in Transvaal, South Africa. His editorials and letters concerning the subject in a way became a codification of the rules of *satyagraha*. The initial two humble rules⁶ stressed that it should be used on proper occasions, and that the people should remain united. Gandhi did not elaborate or define what ‘proper occasion’ was, at that time. Second it acknowledged the limits of *satyagraha*, that it cannot be used at all times. Gandhi’s caution that people could misunderstand *satyagraha* and dilute its ingenuity made him write so many columns on this subject, even for trivial matters, thoroughly explaining and reiterating the concept. He did not want *satyagraha* to be used in an unorganized manner that could end up creating confusion and chaos, or even turn violent. Owing to its nascency, he also explained its limits with an example that if the Government did not allow Indians to acquire land, *satyagraha* would not be helpful, but that if a draconian law forbade them to walk on a certain pathway, or prevented them to carry on their trade, *satyagraha* could then be used.

With these two simple rules, Gandhi also attached a condition for *satyagraha* – that everyone should be collectively prepared to accept hardships. Gandhi constructed an analogy that they had done good spade-work, like clearing of the grounds and digging the foundations, and that it remained to be seen what kind of superstructure they could build with the success. In fact, the first deficiency that Gandhi identified in *satyagraha* in practice was the circumvention of inconvenience, when he found out that some of the Indians in prison got extra food than others. Therefore, subjecting oneself to hardship, suffering or inconvenience became an essential condition to *satyagraha*. “Let us see whether or not we are capable of these”⁷, he wrote.

While Gandhi laid down the rules of *satyagraha*, he did not want to thrust *satyagraha* as some kind of a bitter experience, though he did repeatedly warn that suffering follows. Instead, he in parallel tried to uncover its “beauty”⁸. He encouraged the people by assuring that the Government would further be disgraced by *satyagraha*, and in that measure, people would gain more strength. Such an initiative rested “with the Indians instead of with the Government”, Gandhi clarified. He constructed his political philosophy with this burden of

moral responsibility as one of its core foundations. "A satyagraha campaign depends on the satyagrahi, not on others"⁹, he later wrote.

For Gandhi, *satyagraha* campaign was not just a means to an end, but also a penance to win increased respect for themselves. He urged the Indians to have *satyagraha* as a common practice. By saying "common practice"¹⁰, he did not mean to advocate it to be the first resort as a method of resistance, but rather as a truthful way of life. Gandhi took efforts to repeatedly explain the concept of civil resistance to people, because of the amount of discipline it required. He explained to the people case by case, on whether in this particular instant, going to jail is necessary, or that just paying the fine would be enough. Gandhi being a trained Barrister, he was able to guide people on the consequences of breaking the law. "It does require us to pledge our life [to the cause]. It can be resorted to only for the common good, not for mere self-advancement"¹¹, he wrote. Gandhi was also convinced that legality does not always side with the morality, and even advocated people to stop requiring the services of the courts in certain cases by that point of time¹².

Gandhi explained to the people that *satyagraha* could be used against their own society also¹³, and not just against a Government, since a society could also happen to be as unjust as the Government. He referred to many prominent personalities in history to substantiate his stand. For instance, he brought in Henry Thoreau's stand against the slave-trade in the United States, and educated his readers about the life and times of Thoreau¹⁴. Gandhi, then in his late 30's, tried to seek legitimacy to his methods by pinpointing that his proposition was not completely new, but had already been tested in the past. He finally urged the Indians to live and die like Socrates, who according to him also adopted *satyagraha* against his own people as a result of which "...Greeks became a great people"¹⁵. Gandhi simply tried to impart a roadmap of struggle on the minds of the people. It was a conventional 'Point A to Point B' map – Point A as the problem, point B as the solution, but *satyagraha* as the only path, a path that required a lot of explanations.

Part II – Transforming people's psyche

One of the strengths of Gandhi during that crucial point of his formative years was his ability to use rhetoric. To achieve evoking a sense of resistance among the people, his text was as simple as possible in order to reach as many Indians. How exactly did Gandhi view *satyagraha* in the beginning, and what it was to him, could be perceived by looking at some of the attributes that he used to describe it. Gandhi used the term 'weapon of *satyagraha*'¹⁶ at the end of February 1908 in

the same column where he referred to Thoreau as mentioned above. To Gandhi, *satyagraha* was not the opposite of war, but just that there would be no physical force involved in that war. Gandhi tried to change the psyche of the people, and their very fundamental understanding of struggle. At this point, he started separating war and physical force. He tried to make people rethink about how *satyagraha* need not be associated with cowardice. He wrote a lot about situations where people end up contradicting their own brethren, as he himself personally faced this problem when he started getting physically assaulted by some Indians who didn't believe in his methods¹⁷.

The term that conveyed Gandhi's passive resistance needed to be as accurate as possible for that transformation to happen, and therefore Gandhi still considered alternate names for *satyagraha*, whether any other word described it better¹⁸. There was a suggestion, the word *Pratyupaya*, which meant counter-measure. Gandhi rejected it as it did not explain the use of physical force. Gandhi wanted a term which not only denoted passive resistance, but also made one ponder about the relationship between resistance and force – the force being truth-force – as an alternative to physical force. Two months after Gandhi coined his new term for his passive resistance against the Transvaal Government, Mr. Shakir Ali, the then secretary of the London Indian Society wrote a letter to Gandhi¹⁹, mentioning the passive resistance campaign as *satyagraha* movement. The word started gaining acceptance from influential people as Gandhi also kept on shaping *satyagraha* as a sophisticated tool and added value to it by appropriate choice of words. His most prominent verb associated with *satyagraha* was resort. "Resort to *satyagraha*"²⁰, he wrote, assuring it won't fail them. By the end of March 1908, the word passive resistance started to become seldom used as the meaning of *satyagraha* began to evolve.

It is during this time that the British suffragette movement was also happening, and though Gandhi was critical of various aspects of the movement, he kept comparing the movement with his *satyagraha*. He referred to that movement to motivate his people into resorting to *satyagraha*²¹, and when they committed themselves to it, Gandhi felt the need to recognize them in order to influence further more people into following it²². At the end of April, he educated people about the Chinese boycott of Japanese goods in the early 20th century and how it changed the way the Japanese Government dealt with China²³.

Gandhi's writings concerning *satyagraha* during this point reveals that his semantics to describe his civil resistance programme had

similarities to that of a conventional army. He called the resistance as a battle, and that the sword of *satyagraha* would never rust²⁴. He used terms such as the “power of the satyagrahic gun”, assuming the role of a general in command of an army of *satyagrahis*. Yet, *satyagraha* and armed resistance were poles apart in inspiration and method.

Similar to any battle – and that *satyagraha* had become analogous to it – ceasefire would be a natural condition. If then, the question would be when to resume *satyagraha* during the accounts of failure of settling disputes. Gandhi wanted to acknowledge the practical difficulties that were faced by the opponents in solving the dispute, and gave more focus to their intentions. Truth became the deciding criteria²⁵. Gandhi was at this point confident that those who understood the meaning of *satyagraha* would know the answer to the question of resumption from within, that the fight would be resumed when the opposition party had proved untrue to its word. It could be argued that this is almost the same case in many forms of resistance, but the difference is that *satyagraha* placed trust and pleaded on the humanity of the opposition without completely polarizing the communities under conflict, or targeting the individual agents of systemic oppression to be hated upon. Because, Gandhi held that these individual agents of violence 1) were also capable of reason and 2) also had the legitimate authority to initiate systemic reformation. In short, Gandhi’s programme provided more opportunities for his enemies to correct their mistakes, than any other forms of resistance.

Part III – Soldiers of Truth

Gandhi named the above mentioned column that referred to Thoreau as the ‘Secret of satyagraha’. According to him, a *satyagrahi* enjoyed a degree of freedom that was not possible for others²⁶ because an ideal *satyagrahi* would not succumb to fear. Ideal, because the basic challenge to *satyagraha* came in the form of fear. Gandhi repeatedly stressed the need to be fearless about everything, including the violence to the *satyagrahi*’s family²⁷. Gandhi was in the borderline of stripping away one of the most essential human conditions – fear. Gandhi’s approach to this condition of fear makes one ponder on whether Gandhi tried to create an army of soldiers of truth, as an anti-thesis to an army of killing soldiers who themselves are victims of obeying the commands that expect them to be amoral machines. Though Gandhi was very critical of army in the conventional sense of militarism, the writings of Gandhi suggests that *satyagraha* is indeed also a state of war, just not in the traditional sense but in the capacity of a modern, innovative and efficient method of non-violent equivalent to warfare. “This war through satyagraha is no less of a war than those fought with [gun

and] powder... ..The sword of satyagraha is far superior to the steel sword. Truth and justice provide its point..."²⁸, he wrote. "Beauty, because satyagraha can be waged continuously"²⁹ was his statement. Though Gandhi proclaimed the struggle as a state of war, *satyagraha* is not a substitute to warfare, rather an equivalent to warfare, since there are structural and ethical differences between them.

By the middle of 1908, Gandhi started to use the word liberally in a normalized sense. He no more tried to define *satyagraha*, and his writings became more fluid with casual references, assuming that people would thereby understand what he meant, without much explanation. But, Gandhi did not stop emphasizing the importance of truth and unity, as the movement grew forward. "In satyagraha, unity is imperative. Every Indian must, therefore, don armour in order to join the battle"³⁰, Gandhi wrote. To him, "...in satyagraha, it must be remembered, truth must not be forsaken"³¹.

Gandhi had a very unique understanding about conflict and peace. He did not see them as dichotomous positions as it is seen conventionally. To him, conflict and peace had clear overlaps that had internal exclusivities at times, but definitely not polar opposites. He held that *satyagraha* was a form of warfare that can be waged continuously without the exhaustion of material resources. He expanded the rules of *satyagraha* based on specific cases, and introduced three fundamental rules to be followed during a *satyagraha*:

1. Those who were prepared to go to Jail were advised not to depend upon a lawyer.
2. Those who were prepared to go to Jail irrespective of their status, were advised not to give much thought about what others would do outside. Trust was an important bonding agent in *satyagraha*.
3. There could be a situation when abiding to an unfair law becomes the only way to escape punishment. *Satyagrahis* were advised to accept the punishment rather than abide to that law.

A *satyagraha* campaign is an umbrella term, as there can be many forms of protest within *satyagraha*. Until then, going to jail was seen as the most effective and paramount form of *satyagraha*³². Gandhi's logic was that jail, as an institution of the State, restricted the movement and expression of people by arresting them through the agency of the police, by the rule of law. But, if the law is unfair, then such an arrest would be immoral irrespective of its legal legitimacy. Also, restricting the motion and expression of an individual by such an immoral law would be a questionable act. Therefore, Gandhi ingeniously urged his *satyagrahis* to occupy and fill up the jails. Filling up this State institution achieves two things. One, it ridicules the imaginary power of the jail that it draws from its intimidatory image, and two, it

humiliates the State by explicitly exposing its immorality. Taking these into account, Gandhi stressed that there would be a need to go to jail multiple times, as it was the “most effective means of fighting political disabilities”³³. When Gandhi was arrested for the third time in 1909, he spent three months in Volksrust jail. After coming out, he wrote that he was a better *satyagrahi* then than he was three months back. “For all this, thanks are due to the local (the Transvaal) Government”³⁴, he wrote.

Part IV – Qualities and components

Gandhi’s perception of *satyagraha* gradually evolved with its meaning, becoming more and more complex over time. *Satyagraha* was not only waged, but in the context of sacrifice, it also became a service that was offered³⁵. “The key [to the situation] is with us. *Satyagraha* is all that is required of us”³⁶, wrote Gandhi. He had to repeatedly assert to the people that *satyagraha* sustained through moral upper hand. Then, a question would arise: From where does a person acquire this morality? It is a very complex question, but for Gandhi, religion was the answer. Gandhi gave high emphasis to religion as a catalyst for truth, and therefore, devotion to God became an element of *satyagraha*³⁷ which in a way also made it sacrosanct. While speaking of hardships and duties, he also in parallel kept on emphasizing the beauty of it. He laid down five qualities for a *satyagrahi*, which when dutifully followed, *satyagraha* could “blossom forth into perfect beauty and achieve success that would evoke the admiration of all the world”³⁸:

1. Remaining truthful
2. Trust in God
3. Courage till the dying moment
4. Ready to sacrifice money, property and life in the service of the community
5. Entirely honest, fearless, pure, courteous and modest

He especially elaborated the first quality – remaining truthful. For Gandhi, truth was violated not only with lies or silence. Gandhi held that the very act of violence was also a violation of truth – the truth that human beings are capable of being and doing good. Upholding that ultimate truth was paramount to Gandhi while offering *satyagraha*. In the process of achieving the local demand, Gandhi cautioned not to abandon the larger truth about humanity. In order to protect that truth, Gandhi insisted that *satyagraha* also consisted in enduring any suffering for its sake, no matter if the person died in the process. “We should do no harm to anyone, for by harming others we violate truth”³⁹, he wrote.

The next attribute that Gandhi focused was the success and failure

of a resistance movement. With an example⁴⁰, Gandhi asserted that there was no complete failure in *satyagraha*. For instance, a man aimed at seizing the property of another by killing him, failed in his task and ended up not killing him or seizing the property. This failure would evoke frustration in him, but that since he committed a criminal offense, he also had to face a criminal punishment, since harm was done to the morale and peace of the community. This frustration of failure could also arise during *satyagraha*, but according to Gandhi, there would be a choice where that frustration need not be arisen. The Transvaal agitation that demanded the repeal of Asian registration act though was not a complete success, Gandhi proclaimed that the *satyagrahis* were still victorious or were closer to victory, because the very act of *satyagraha* would still have caused positive consequences, and also would have done the community no harm. In this sense, *satyagraha* became an education for Gandhi. He did acknowledge that the time taken for sensing success is more in *satyagraha*, but insisted that the rule of three should be followed without any dilution for guaranteed success⁴¹. George Orwell studied these and put forth his critique on Gandhi in 1949⁴².

The next component that was added to *satyagraha* was abstaining from alcoholic drinks. Gandhi felt that it not only was against religion, but also a “debilitating effect on both body and mind”⁴³. He felt that lack of control or progressive decline in control over the body and mind would weaken the conviction and firmness one could have over *satyagraha*. Throughout 1908, when the concept of *satyagraha* was slowly developed and nurtured, he also observed the intersectionality that existed within the *satyagrahis*, and noted that the majority of the masses were poor. Influenced by the writings of Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi was convinced that wealth obstructed truth. “The rich find the burden of their wealth too heavy; they are not able to carry the burden of truth”⁴⁴, wrote Gandhi, and invited them to embrace poverty.

Gandhi at this point had constructed a distinguishable civil resistance method called *satyagraha*, which started to mean more than passive resistance. Influenced by John Ruskin⁴⁵, he introduced the term *soul-force*⁴⁶ into his writings, and urged the humanity that whatever it built or created, soul-force must be its foundation. Naturally, *satyagraha* which was a mode of fighting also depended on such soul-force. One of the attributes of exhibiting soul-force is to look beyond the blurry line of the polarizing “us vs them” narrative. Gandhi was against the white Supremacy of the Transvaal government, but that did not turn into hatred towards the white-skinned people. In fact, Gandhi’s notion of a perfect *satyagraha* was demonstrated by a white man named Mr. Green, who refused to pay an unjust tax. Gandhi

immediately took him as an example and appreciated that that was "...satyagraha in the truest sense of the term"⁴⁷. It was the act that was important and not who performed the act. This is an ingenious, revolutionary, and humane position during a time of rationalized total war, where civilians were also targeted along with the State and its institutions. Gandhi's inclusivity, in this way, shook the very foundation of identity-based violent conflicts. Gandhi received appreciation and sympathy for his cause from two South African women - including Olive Schreiner, an anti-war campaigner and author - to which he wrote, "The satyagraha movement had won a place in their hearts"⁴⁸. The conventional "us vs them" narrative was not so rigid in Gandhi's *satyagraha* as he simultaneously called to conduct *satyagraha* against the ill-practices of the community itself. Gandhi firmly believed that anything that hampered the unity of the community should be opposed even if many within the community upheld it. An example would be the discrimination based on Caste. Gandhi urged the Indians to resort to *satyagraha* against their caste and their family in order to abolish the discriminatory behaviour of the community⁴⁹. He introduced new thinkers and thoughts to the readers and reinterpreted the texts as reflections of *satyagraha*. He quoted John Ruskin, Henry Thoreau, the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita – to name a few – to justify and legitimate *satyagraha* as a harmless universal principle⁵⁰. He evoked the imagery of religious mythologies to rally people behind *satyagraha*. By interpreting Prahlad⁵¹ as a *satyagrahi*⁵², he attempted to infuse *satyagraha* as a part of their religious culture⁵³, so that they could relate with *satyagraha* even more. This was during 1909 and 1910. This was during the same time that Gandhi's correspondence with Leo Tolstoy began⁵⁴, and Tolstoy greatly appreciated the philosophy of *satyagraha*. His correspondence with Tolstoy⁵⁵, though brief but deep, was a significant chapter in his experience and growth as a political philosopher⁵⁶.

Gandhi made the *satyagraha* campaigns as definitive events, thus making it possible to be considered as units of history. For instance, in 1909, the *satyagraha* that happened in Krugersdorp became Krugersdorp Satyagraha. The next year in 1910, the *satyagraha* that happened in Transvaal became Transvaal Satyagraha. This connotation followed until the very end of Gandhi's life. Gandhi thus familiarized the term *satyagraha* as an independent sophisticated word.

Part V – The establishment of *satyagraha*

At this point, the principles of *satyagraha* were well established, but sacrificing one's life was still a question that was raised often. Gandhi tried to explain that in case of conflicts where death is inevitable, death by *satyagraha* was far valuable to the cause than death by violence.

He wrote, "...dying in the attempt to kill another does not require even a hundredth part of the fortitude and courage implicit in the suffering that a satyagrahi goes through, in the slow, prolonged torture that he calmly endures in facing a bullet without firing one in return. No one wields a sword strong enough to bear down the force of satyagraha; on the contrary, a man brandishing a sword of steel has to give ground when confronted by a sword sharper than his. That is the reason why the story of a satyagrahi is read with a feeling of reverence. One who is not strong enough to practise satyagraha is naturally tempted to resort to brute force, which is, in comparison, quite easy to employ"⁵⁷.

Gandhi warned his people that *satyagraha* would test the *satyagrahis* on their level of conviction, thus propounding that the only test of *satyagraha* was to believe that as long as "at least one person remains to continue satyagraha, we may rest confident that victory will be ours"⁵⁸. Gandhi did acknowledge the importance of numbers, but since the weapon here was truth and soul-force, he believed that even one lone person had the ability to win over an army of the opponents. However, *satyagraha* was always the last step in Gandhi's resistance strategy. In 1910, he laid down four steps for effective dissent⁵⁹:

1. That people from different regions should present a united front;

2. That the leaders of different regions must not take steps independently without consulting one another.

3. That meetings needed to be held in every town and city, passing resolutions that expressed the will of the people or the community. Those resolutions were to be forwarded to the government along with a petition directly addressed to the parliament⁶⁰ of the governments involved, from local to imperial including the Indian parliament.

4. That *satyagraha* needed to be resorted to when no development happened through the previous steps.

Satyagraha involved subjecting oneself to suffering, but Gandhi also publicized the inhumanity that followed to *satyagrahis* while enduring the suffering⁶¹. Use of media was a paramount tool in a successful *satyagraha*. This is where George Orwell posed a critique on *satyagraha*, that it was not truth alone that led to the victory. "In a totalitarian state where the media is controlled and censored, his actions wouldn't have been a public sensation at all. No one would have heard of them. Thus, it wasn't non-violence alone that gave Gandhi leverage. It was the coverage they received in the press"⁶², wrote Orwell. The effectiveness of *satyagraha* indeed depends to some degree on the opponent's capacity to value truth – the truth that all

human beings are born equal and free. In this age of social media and internet crackdown, new innovative and adaptive methods of *satyagraha* and other forms of passive resistance need to be reinvented or documented in order to counter the contemporary authoritarian and neo-imperial challenges, and the relative universality in *satyagraha* need to be charted so that it could be efficiently adapted or emulated by modern civil resistance movements against the various dynamics of power. Gandhi's *satyagraha* is significant in the sense that there is much to learn, like rethinking the very concept of resistance and dialogue.

Gandhi kept on repeating that *satyagraha* was universal and infallible, since he believed that all human beings possessed soul and the capacity to be and do good, with whom one could reason with and persuade. The first recognition to *satyagraha* from an official of the State came in 1911 from the Royal Highness the Duke⁶³. Commenting that Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, a member from Pretoria East, Transvaal, was afraid about *satyagraha* spreading to the whole of South Africa, Gandhi added that no member of parliament were able to speak anything against *satyagraha*, that they were afraid of it, yet unable to find reasons to fight against it⁶⁴.

Gandhi was very much impressed by the progress of his movement, and at the end of 1913 wrote that the *satyagraha* movement had hardly a parallel in history⁶⁵. He wrote in 1914, "...every time the Government went back on its word, it was obliged to yield more to us"⁶⁶. Shortly before departing to India, Gandhi spoke at a meeting in Durban, and advised to "turn to *satyagraha* instead of looking for leaders"⁶⁷. His idea of *satyagraha* becoming a spiritual guide indicate that truth-force was of paramount importance to him than the image of individual leaders. After leaving South Africa, Gandhi wrote a letter from the ship, "We are travelling third class, Mr. Kallenbach (Hermann Kallenbach), my wife and I. This is my first experience of a voyage to England in this class. Of first class I have had experience on several occasions. I must say that we are happier in third class than we could have been in first. There are no attendants here keeping constant watch on us. We feel no pricking of conscience that we are living in special style, segregated from the poor"⁶⁸. Renouncing privileges and breaking the socially constructed segregations were part of Gandhi's experiments with Truth. Reflecting upon the *satyagrahas* that happened until that point, he remarked, "I never dreamt that 20,000 poor Indians would arise and make their own and their country's name immortal"⁶⁹.

These were the evolutions that Gandhi introduced in his political programme and philosophy during his days in South Africa. The evolution continues further during Gandhi's years in India. He prepared a draft constitution⁷⁰ for his then new Ashram in India, the

fundamental principles of which were derived from the rich experiments that Gandhi conducted in South Africa. He wrote a letter from Lahore in January 1920 to an unidentified person, explaining the distinction between *satyagraha* and Passive Resistance. Although his justified desire for cultural autonomy comes in between his distinction between the two, it still gives an idea of the direction in which Gandhi set his agenda in motion: "I have drawn the distinction between passive resistance as understood and practised in the West and *satyagraha* before I had evolved the doctrine of the latter to its full logical and spiritual extent. I often used "passive resistance" and "*satyagraha*" as synonymous terms: but as the doctrine of *satyagraha* developed, the expression "passive resistance" ceases even to be synonymous, as passive resistance has admitted of violence as in the case of the suffragettes and has been universally acknowledged to be a weapon of the weak. Moreover, passive resistance does not necessarily involve complete adherence to truth under every circumstance. Therefore it is different from *satyagraha* in three essentials: *Satyagraha* is a weapon of the strong; it admits of no violence under any circumstance whatsoever; and it ever insists upon truth."⁷¹

Acknowledgements

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Notes and References

1. In English: *The World Stage*.
2. German original: "Gandhi ist kein politischer Mensch im europäischen Sinne. Er ist mehr. Er ist die geheime Gewalt, die ohne Amt und Partei doch alle beherrscht... ..Indien ist glücklich zu schätzen, dass ihm sein neues Gesetz nicht von einem Diktator auferlegt wird, nicht in dem unerbittlichen Kommando eines asiatischen Napoleon dröhnt, sondern von der sanften Stimme Mahatma Gandhis verkündet wird". From: "*Mahatma Gandhi*", in: *Weltbühne*, October 8, 1929. Refer: Gandhi Information Center eV.
3. *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* is a German word, an inaccurate

English translation of which would be - 'a feeling of belonging together', or 'the sense of solidarity', or 'a communal spirit'. None of these translations have the capacity to completely reflect the original term, owing to its cultural roots. *Satyagraha* is one such word.

4. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG) vol. 8, (New Delhi, Publications Division, 1958), pp. 22 f.
5. It was one of the pass laws – a component of the apartheid system. On suspicion of unauthorized entry into South Africa, it aimed to segregate the Indians and the Chinese, demanding every male to register and keep a thumb-printed certificate of identity.
6. CWMG, vol. 8, pp. 60 f.
7. Ibid., p. 64.
8. Ibid., p. 71.
9. Ibid., p. 318.
10. Ibid., p. 86.
11. Ibid., p. 87.
12. Ibid., p. 86.
13. Ibid., p. 91
14. Ibid.,
15. Ibid., p. 173.
16. Ibid., p. 91.
17. Ibid., p. 93.
18. Ibid., p. 131.
19. Ibid., p. 133.
20. Ibid., p. 138.
21. Ibid., p. 188.
22. Ibid., p. 194.
23. Ibid., p. 212.
24. Ibid., p. 215.
25. Ibid., pp. 248 f.
26. Ibid., p. 91.
27. Ibid., p. 252.
28. Ibid., p. 324.
29. Ibid., p. 368.
30. Ibid., p. 288.
31. Ibid., p. 274.
32. Fasting had not yet become an organized form of protest in *satyagraha* then. Fasting inside the jail was an ingenious double leap in this evolution. Gandhi's first penitential fasting was in 1913 in Phoenix, South Africa, and his first political fasting was in 1918 in Ahmedabad, India.
33. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 120.
34. Ibid., p. 228.
35. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 482.
36. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 10
37. Ibid., vol. 8, p. 61; p. 87

38. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 41.
39. Ibid., p. 62.
40. Ibid., p. 84.
41. Ibid., p. 90.
42. Elaborated later.
43. CWMG, vol. 9, p. 99.
44. Ibid., p. 114.
45. Gandhi paraphrased Ruskin's '*Unto This Last*' as a series in Indian Opinion. He later published the series as a pamphlet, under the title *Sarvodaya* (Welfare of all).
46. CWMG, vol. 8, p. 258; Ibid., vol. 9, p. 118.
47. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 120.
48. Ibid., p. 270.
49. Ibid., p. 181.
50. Ibid., pp. 181 f.
51. The Hindu mythological story of Prahlad, a young boy who searches for divine truth against his father's wishes and undergo suffering with conviction.
52. Ibid., vol. 10, p. 346.
53. Ibid., vol. 9, p. 199; p. 236.
54. In October, 1909.
55. Read Christian Bartolf, *Letter to a Hindoo: Taraknath Das, Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi* (Berlin: Gandhi-Informationen-Zentrum, 1997. Print).
56. Shortly after Tolstoy died, Gandhi published his photograph in the Indian Opinion along with a short commentary of Tolstoy on *satyagraha*.
57. CWMG, vol. 10, pp. 202 f.
58. CWMG, p. 323.
59. Ibid., p. 358.
60. One of the chief criticisms of George Orwell was on the compatibility of *satyagraha* in a non-parliamentary totalitarian system.
61. CWMG, vol. 10, p. 367.
62. George Orwell, 'Reflections on Gandhi', *Partisan Review* (London: January 1949).
63. CWMG, vol. 10, p. 403.
64. Ibid., p. 472.
65. Ibid., vol. 12, p. 311.
66. Ibid., p. 449.
67. Ibid., p. 471.
68. Ibid., p. 507.
69. Ibid., p. 509.
70. Ibid., vol. 13, p. 91.
71. Ibid., vol. 16, p. 509.

VISHNU VARATHARAJAN is an independent scholar with primary interests in Gandhian thought and Indian nationalist movement. Having obtained a masters degree in Political Science from the University of Madras, India, he was a visiting scholar at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University of Berlin. Prior to that, he was a freelance translator at People's Archive of Rural India, and a student photojournalist at Vikatan group of magazines. Vishnu is a public speaker and columnist with regular appearances on print and electronic media. He is now a corresponding member at Gandhi-Informations-Zentrum, Berlin.
Email - vishnuvaratharajan@gmail.com.

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Notes & Comments

Gandhi: John Paul II's 'Hero of Humanity'

Peter Gonsalves

KAROL WOJTYLA, THE future Pope and Saint, John Paul II¹, had read Mahatma Gandhi's writings and was struck with admiration for him. As a philosopher-theologian and specialist in Christian ethics, he was not afraid to quote Gandhi, as can be seen in his support for *Humane Vitae* below. The article appeared in the *L'Osservatore Romano* on January 5, 1969,² with the following words from Gandhi's *Autobiography*:

I think it is the height of ignorance to believe that the sexual act is an independent function necessary like sleeping or eating. The world depends for its existence on the act of generation, and as the world is the play-ground of God and a reflection of His glory, the act of generation should be controlled for the ordered growth of the world. He who realizes this will control his lust at any cost, equip himself with the knowledge necessary for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of his progeny, and give the benefit of that knowledge to posterity.³

Having written extensively on the 'Theology of the Body', Wojtyla was in awe of Gandhi's resistance to propaganda in favour of artificial methods of birth control on two occasions. He did not succumb, but

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persevered in the conviction that one ought to act with the force of internal effort rather than outward means,⁴ because "Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints."⁵

In 1986, John Paul II made his first visit to India. In deference to the Mahatma, he called it his 'pilgrimage' which he began from the tomb of Gandhi at Raj Ghat, Delhi, on February 1.⁶

My visit to India is a pilgrimage of good will and peace, and the fulfilment of a desire to experience personally the very soul of your country. It is entirely fitting that this pilgrimage should begin here, at Raj Ghat, dedicated to the memory of the illustrious Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation and "apostle of non-violence". The figure of Mahatma Gandhi and the meaning of his life's work have penetrated the *conscience of humanity*. In his famous words, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has expressed the conviction of the whole world: "The light that shone in this country was no ordinary light." Two days ago marked the thirty-eighth anniversary of his death. He who lived by non-violence appeared to be defeated by violence. For a brief moment the light seemed to have gone out. Yet his teachings and the example of his life live on in the minds and hearts of millions of men and women. ... Yes, the light is still shining, and the heritage of Mahatma Gandhi speaks to us still. And today as a pilgrim of peace I have come here to pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi, *hero of humanity*.⁷

Fr. Carlo Torriani, PIME, an eyewitness, testifies:

In the ten days he was there [in India], Pope Wojtyla gave forty-three speeches. In my view, however, the most important part of his visit was the long period of time he spent kneeling in silence before Mahatma Gandhi's mausoleum on his first day in New Delhi. All the speeches he gave in the various cities were prepared beforehand and to some extent taken as a given but there was something extraordinary about this gesture, about a Pope who kneels down before the tomb of a man [...] for more than five minutes breaking with protocol.⁸

Eugene J. Dionne Jr, reporter to the *New York Times*, corroborates by stating that of all the events organized for the Pope's visit to India, "the most important moment took place near the beginning when the Pope, shoeless, knelt in long minutes of prayer before Gandhi's tomb. With the thousands of words the Pope spoke about spiritual brotherhood, his most eloquent statement was: Silence."⁹

The day that followed being a Sunday, John Paul II celebrated solemn high Mass and delivered a sermon on the issue of social inequality: "The Church in India has for many years been making important contributions to the development of this country and to

the alleviation of the problems of the poor.” He cited the work of Mother Teresa as an example and continued:

There is the monumental contribution of Mahatma Gandhi, who helped break down social barriers and divisions and made possible a new era of unity and advancement. “We are all equal. It is the touch of sin that pollutes us and never that of a human being. None are high and none are low for one who would devote his life to service”¹⁰ He stands as a symbol of the highest qualities and values of the Indian people, and is admired in every country of the world.¹¹

After mentioning other noteworthy models for Indians to imitate, he added:

The noble efforts of these great men and women of India, efforts aimed at fostering social liberation and integral human development, are in accord with the spirit of the Gospel. All who have advanced the dignity and freedom of their brothers and sisters are blessed in the eyes of Christ, the King of glory. By their efforts, such people help to bring about a civilisation of love, where the rich willingly share with the poor, where the poor can be free from hunger and want, and where everyone comes to realise that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”.

When talking to the huge crowd gathered in Cochin, Kerala, he said:

As citizens of India, a vast country with many languages, customs, and religions, you certainly realise the essential importance of a true spirit of reconciliation and communal peace. This is the spirit that you find in the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.¹²

To the representatives of the different religious and cultural traditions of India, the Pope explained:

India has so much to offer to the world in the task of understanding man and the truth of his existence. And what she offers specifically is a noble spiritual vision of man – man, a pilgrim of the Absolute, travelling towards a goal, seeking the face of God. Did not Mahatma Gandhi put it this way: “What I want to achieve – what I have been striving and pining to achieve... is self-realization – to see God face to face. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal.” [...] [These] very words used by Mahatma Gandhi about his own spiritual quest echo the words quoted by Saint Paul when he explained that God is not far from each of us: “In him we live and move and have our being.”¹³

One needs to be reminded that these effusive statements in praise of Gandhi were not simply a communication ploy to win the hearts of his Indian audience while basking in the warmth of their hospitality. John Paul II was at that very moment highly engaged in the work of liberating his own country through a nonviolent Movement called *Solidarność* (Solidarity) that was patterned on Gandhi's *Satyagraha* (Truth-force).¹⁴ Thanks to this choice, Poland won freedom in 1989, barely nine years after the Movement began, and three years after the pope's visit to India. Indeed, the 'pilgrimage' to India was a prayer for the liberation of his own people! In retrospect, Lech Walesa, the leader of the Movement admitted: "We failed when we tried to combat Communism with weapons, but when we took up Mahatma Gandhi's tactics and strategy, we emerged winners! Truly, the whole world should be a disciple of Gandhi."¹⁵

Jonathan Kwitny's extensively researched eight-year study on John Paul II confirms that "On the evidence, the cold war was won [...] by a nonviolent mass movement, like those of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., led by a man whose religious office has precluded him from talking about it openly."¹⁶ In interviews he conducted, colleagues reveal how the Pope "guided them into a major hunger strike" and how "he handed out envelopes of cash to sustain their work. Time and again, as pope, he singlehandedly rescued the revolution he begat, often in dramatic private confrontations".¹⁷

Moreover, with the accession of John Paul II, the Church officially proclaimed itself as the 'guardian' of human freedom in the struggle against authoritarianism. His first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, denounced violations of human rights¹⁸ – the condition and basis for the true dignity of the human person. Political analyst, Samuel P. Huntington demonstrates how "John Paul II seemed to have a way of showing up in full pontifical majesty at critical points in democratization processes."¹⁹ Although the purpose of his visits were always said to be pastoral, "their effects were almost invariably political."²⁰

For instance, when confronting the Dictator Augusto Pinochet in Chile in 1987, the Pope spelled out the relation of democracy to his mission: "I am not the evangelizer of democracy; I am the evangelizer of the Gospel. To the Gospel message, of course, belong all the problems of human rights; and, if democracy means human rights, it also belongs to the message of the Church."²¹

In his 1991 encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, he elaborately defended democracy as the form of government most conducive to justice and the mission of the church.

The power of truth leads us to recognize with Mahatma Gandhi the dignity, equality and fraternal solidarity of all human beings, and it prompts us to reject every form of discrimination. It shows us once again the need for mutual understanding acceptance and collaboration between religious groups in the pluralist society of modern India and throughout the world.²²

On his return flight to India, John Paul II confessed to journalists: "I learned a great deal from him and I am not ashamed to say it. [...] I think Gandhi is still alive. Not only is he still alive, he is still necessary to us, to our West. He was never a Christian and never claimed to be [one] but I learned a great deal from him. Christians can learn to be Christian from him. The fact I have quoted him in my homilies should tell you something."²³

Back in St. Peter's Square for the general audience that followed his return to Rome, the Pope elaborated on the importance of his pilgrimage to India and explicitly commended Gandhi's relevance for a just and peaceful world. "The Father of Indian independence points the way to all who – for the most noble ideals – seek to separate the fight for justice from every form of hate."²⁴

On assessing the impact of his visit, some Vatican officials and Indian Catholic leaders felt that the Pope's speeches seemed cautious. When asked why he had not criticized the Indian Government's birth control policies or been stronger in his attacks on the caste system, he replied: "I was not there to criticize. I was there to evangelize. And I evangelized. Exactly that. I have evangelized the Indian people *through the words of Mahatma Gandhi*."²⁵

Notes and References

1. Pope John Paul II, born Karol Jozef Wojtyla (1920-2005), was elected head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State in 1978. He was declared a Saint on April 27, 2014.
2. Karol Wojtyla, "La verità dell'*Humanae vitae*" in *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 5, 1969, pp. 1-2.
3. M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2005), p. 188.
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PETER GONSALVES, Ph.D, teaches the Sciences of Social Communication at Salesian University, Rome. He is the author of the Gandhian trilogy: *Clothing for Liberation* (SAGE 2010), *Khadi: Gandhi's Mega Symbol of Subversion* (SAGE 2012) and *Gandhi and the Popes: from Pius XI to Francis* (Peter Lang, 2015). He may be contacted at <www.petergonsalves.in> or <gonsalves.p@gmail.com>

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Book Reviews

Siby K. Joseph, *GANDHI IN SOUTH AFRICA: A RACIST OR A LIBERATOR?* Wardha: Institute of Gandhian Studies, 2019. Pages 111 including Appendix. No index.

Noam Chomski once said, “It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies.”¹ An intellectual, who is committed for the cause of a peaceful co-existence, can never sit peacefully at the face of lies dancing on the tenanted truth/s and threatening the peace of all. S/he would spend sleepless nights and days struggling to expose those celebrated lies and to speak out the distorted truths. And finally, when the truth is told, s/he would find solace in the innermost shrine of his/her being, witnessing to the enlightenment among the multitudes who embrace the redeemed truths and discard the unmasked lies. This must be the experience of Dr. Siby K. Joseph, the Dean of Studies and Research, Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, after the completion of his momentous book, *Gandhi in South Africa: A Racist or A Liberator?*, a work that redeems Mahatma Gandhi from the distorted images by unraveling the truths and exposing the lies about Mahatma.

This book is a result of a committedly engaged study reflecting on Gandhi’s approach to caste and race in South Africa. The book introduces the readers the conviction of the author, which emerges out of an immersed study into the life and works of Gandhi, that ‘Gandhi was neither a casteist nor a racist’ (p.17). The hope by which the book is written is to help the readers in dispelling their doubts about Gandhi being a racist and to promote further research on this area of study.

Ela Gandhi, the granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi and a former Member of Parliament in South Africa, writes a very fitting, profound and thought provoking Foreword to this book. She holds that ‘truth can be distorted by the way in which it is presented or by giving a one-sided version, or by being simply untruthful.’ With this she

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expresses her concern on the distorted truths in relation to the life and works of Gandhi. She firmly believes that 'a person who advocated love of all life cannot be racist.'

In the introductory chapter, the author carefully problematizes and critically disenfranchises few influential voices that vehemently strive to prove that Gandhi was a casteist and a racist. Three such major voices and contexts are: 1. Booker prize-winning author and a very influential liberal activist of our time Arundati Roy who violently argues that Gandhi was a racist and even demands the renaming of all the institutions named after Gandhi. 2. Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, professors at the University of Johannesburg and the University of KwaZulu Natal, who argue that Gandhi was an ardent racist who thought Africans were "Kaffirs". 3. The misconceptions about Gandhi's approach to race and racial discrimination that further fueled the controversies around the unveiling of a statue of Gandhi in the University of Ghana's Legon campus and the construction of a Gandhi bust in Malawi. This chapter briefly puts forward the larger debate surrounded by all these three intertwined events and opinions highlighting both pro and contra opinions on Gandhi. On the one hand, there were activists like Kambewa Mpambira of Malawi and researchers like Obadele Kambon of Ghana who vehemently argued supporting the notion that Gandhi was a racist. On the other hand, there were also worldwide responses to such a grave allegation against Gandhi mainly from Robert Mkwezalamba, Bright Kampaundi Chodzi, Gopalkrishna Gandhi, Ramachandra Guha, Rajmohan Gandhi and others. By introducing such a wide range of debate, the chapter displays how all these developments created unease about Gandhi's approach to these issues among general readers who have not studied Gandhi systematically and in detail. Therefore, the author strongly feels that "[i]n this context, it is necessary to revisit Gandhi's approach to race and racial discrimination and his fight for dignity of people of Indian origin in South Africa" (p. 28).

The following chapters in the book attempt to study the above mentioned opinions and contexts in detail, particularly in the light of the major writings as well as actions of Gandhi in South Africa. The author shows how the opinions against Gandhi were cropped up either by misquoting Gandhi or by taking his writings out of the context. Responding to Arundati Roy's allegations against Gandhi, the second chapter shows how Roy speaks either without evidences or skillfully culling out passages from Gandhi's writings taking them out of their contexts in order to prove her opinions that Gandhi was a racist, that he was against indentured labourers and that he distanced himself from the *coolies*. Relocating such misquoted passages from

Gandhi's writings in their right historical context, the author displays very clearly the follies of the most popular 'liberal' writer and activist of our time and shows how Gandhi broke caste, religious and racial borders and boundaries and went much beyond such barriers. This chapter revisits also Gandhi's actions in South Africa and argues that any evaluation of Gandhi must consider not only his writings but also his actions in order to get a holistic picture of Gandhi's attitude towards any sort of discrimination. It shows how Gandhi questioned the British policy of discriminating people on the basis of the colour of their skin. "He even went to the extent of discussing the idea of commingling of all races [already] in 1908 which was revolutionary at that time" (p. 49).

Revisiting Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed's allegations against Gandhi as an upholder of Aryan race superiority and thus dehumanizer of African race, the author goes back in the third chapter to the writings and statements of Gandhi that they were referring to. Placing Gandhi's analogy of Aryan race theory in its socio-political historical context, the book argues that Gandhi was not in favor of claiming any sort of benefit on racial grounds or Aryan lineage. He in no way glorifies Aryan bloodline; on the contrary, he describes Aryans as *colonizers* (p. 55). Gandhi used this theory to remind the British that 'Indians were in no way inferior to Anglo Saxon brethren' (p. 56) and not to place the Brown over the Black. The author also revisits Gandhi's use of the term *kaffir* for the black Africans (for which Gandhi was criticized fervently) and shows clearly that Gandhi was just using the language of his time and that he did not mean any ill will to the Africans by using the term. Moreover, the book shows how Gandhi derived inspiration from the sufferings of the Africans, especially of Zulus, for his *Satyagraha* movement. After his return from South Africa, even while fighting for the freedom of India, Gandhi was concerned about the problems of Blacks in Africa and America. "Thus his fight in the ultimate analysis was not merely for the freedom of India but also of Africa, and America" (p. 64).

The third context, mentioned in the introduction, is addressed in the fourth chapter: the opposition to the installation of Gandhi statue in Ghana and to the installation of Gandhi bust in Malawi. In the first case, six citations were made from the works of Gandhi whereas in the second case, three arguments were made against Gandhi again citing some statements of Gandhi in order to show that he had contempt for the black African race. The author once again very committedly argues and shows how these citations were taken out of context and ascribed unintended meanings to them. He passionately relocates the cited statements in their right historical contexts and

shows the readers how distorted judgements were drawn against Gandhi by adopting a reductionist approach.

The fifth chapter brings the quotations of Gandhi which Obadele Kambon used to show that Gandhi was a thorough going racist. Those quotations are juxtaposed with the relevant texts from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* in order to help the readers to understand the context of Gandhi's statements and to know better the meaning of citations which appear offensive at the first sight. Along with that, the author brings in the statements of L. W. Ritch and Mahomed Khan which were presented by the petitioners as Gandhi's own. As the author clearly mentions, "The primary aim of giving the relevant text of his citations is not to tell that Gandhi was perfect, error-free or a Mahatma... [The] author would like to suggest that a historical person should be evaluated from the view points and practices of his time, not those of our time. In addition, an ever evolving person like Gandhi should be assessed on the basis of the totality of his positions on race, caste, equality and liberty when they took firm shape" (p. 99).

The book ends with the full text of Gandhi's written *Statement in the Great Trial of 1922* as a fitting appendix. This, along with all the other citations to Gandhi's works in the book, enables the readers to see on their own, without being influenced by any secondary readings and perspectives, that how Gandhi went far beyond his time in his approach to the issues related to race, caste, colour and creed in comparison to his contemporaries. As Ela Gandhi rightly asserts, 'this book helps to clarify one point very clearly and that is that one cannot make conclusions based on quotes, stated out of context.'

However, it is quite evident that in our much polarized contemporary context, prejudiced conclusions are easily drawn to establish and celebrate bundles of lies. It is doubly disturbing when the so called champions of liberalism become the rigorous proponents of such untruths. That is why, perhaps, the Latin American proverb says, "liberals are fascists on vacation." This book reminds us the need to qualify our contextual criticism of history and historical personalities which does not come from a deep sense of commitment to the wellbeing of all but from a prejudiced egoistic opinion. Dr. Siby K. Joseph needs to be congratulated and appreciated for this enthusiastically engaged and decisively daring tribute to *Mahatma* and hence unveiling a number of distorted and disfigured truths in the history. Hence, the present book is a must-read for both the admirers and the critics of Gandhi. And above all, it is a must-read for those who really care for the past, present and future of a borderless society for which Gandhi stood, strived and even surrendered his life.

Notes and References

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GLADSON JATHANNA
The Pacific Theological College
78, Vuya Road, Nasese,
Suva, Fiji Islands.
Email: gladjathanna@gmail.com

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The Gandhi Peace Foundation (G.P.F.) was born in the late 1950s when an escalating nuclear arms race threatened human civilisation. Never before, or after, did peace seem so precarious or so elusive. Though time passed, the threat continues.

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Jankidevi Bajaj, *My Life's Journey: An Autobiography* Translated by Sudeepta Vyas, Jaico Pubilshing house, Mumbai, 2019, pp. 380 + xx. Price Rs. 499/-

Jankidevi Bajaj wrote her Autobiography originally in Hindi with the title *Meri Jeevan Yatra* with a preface from none other than Acharya Vinoba Bhave. Vinoba wrote this Preface on 30th January 1956 from Pochampalli, (presently in the State of Telagana) where he had started the historic Bhoodan Movement in April 1951. The date of penning down this Preface was also significant because it was on this day Mahatma Gandhi was martyred in 1948. Autobiography of Jankidevi Bajaj not only throws light on her life and work but also of Jamnalal Bajaj, who was regarded as the fifth son of Mahatma. In the process of the narration of her life, she tells us the story of India's historic struggle for freedom from the point of an insider in a simple, lucid and straight forward manner. All impressions in the book were mainly from the experiences of her involvement in the freedom struggle. That is why Acharya Vinoba Bhave wrote : " Jankidevi has acquired all her knowledge through experience. She did not have much formal education and therefore, her story is told in a simple and uncomplicated language. It was narrated rather than written and hence it has the quality of a tale" Further he wrote, "The child in Jankidevi has never left her. Which is why she never hesitates to speak her mind. Her speeches were effective entirely due to this reason" To speak whatever comes in one's mind needs extraordinary courage and it becomes a truthful tale. There is not even a single attempt to project her contribution in the narrative. That is why Vinoba Bhave added in his Preface an incident, which had happened during the *Bhoodan Yajna* to illustrate the personality of Jankidevi Bajaj. He wrote that even at the age of 62 her "mind is agile and insists on sprinting." Jankidevi Bajaj updated her narration in the second edition of *Meri Jeevan Yatra* published in 1965.

Sudeepta Vyas has given a new life to the story by translating the book into English. The publication of translation of Jankidevi Bajaj's autobiography in English coincided with her 125th birth anniversary. Mukul Upadhyaya made the story more complete by adding a small write-up further updating her journey of life, not known to many. He completed his update with the mention of her book *Janki Sahasranaam*, which talks about thousand men and women from all age groups, faiths, castes, vocations, social standing and viewpoints. This really portrays the unique personality of Jankidevi Bajaj and how she could relate herself to people from different walks of life. *Janki Sahasranaam* was prepared by Jankidevi Bajaj as per the suggestion of

Vinoba Bhave.

The new translated volume in English carries a Foreword from Rahul Bajaj, Head of Bajaj Group. In his Foreword, he says that if his grandmother was alive today she would have taught us a thing or two about life to live it to its fullest capacity. He wrote further: "She would have scoffed at the race for social recognition on social media and got us to focus on a simple formula for success –plenty of hard work and some sacrifice. She became the nation's role model by being bold, yet courteous; committed to her cause but connected to her people and influencing people by walking the talk." His foreword succinctly summarizes the message of Jankidevi Bajaj's life for everyone and also for the younger generation.

Anyone who reads this English rendering will not feel that it is a translation. The translator has enriched it without diluting her unique way of narration. In Rahul Bajaj's words, it is a contemporary adaptation. She kept the flavor of the Jankidevi's original language intact by using Hindi words and a glossary at the end for those who are not familiar with the language. The book carries an index of persons and their brief life sketches with whom she was associated along with their contributions to the causes which were close to the heart of Jankidevi. That adds value to the book as it will be of great use for readers to understand such galaxy of people. The Bajaj Family tree given at the end of the book enables the readers to link it with members of the present generation of this illustrious family. It also contains a number of photographs, which give a glimpse of her life through pictures.

This book consists of forty-five chapters and an epilogue. Jankidevi Bajaj starts narration of her story by telling about her family background, parents, marriage with Jamnalal Bajaj, which changed her personal life, including giving up ornaments, removal of ghunghat (veil) and her initiation to *Khadi* and spinning and bonfire of foreign clothes. She also refers to various incidents concerning Flag Satyagraha, life at Sabarmati Ashram, Salt Satyagraha, Sevagram phase of Gandhi, *Go Seva*, demise of her husband, Quit India Movement, Gandhi's martyrdom, Vinoba's influence, her involvement in *Koopdaan* movement and the story behind conferment of Padma Vibhushan to her. In addition, she also talks about her children - their lives and many interesting stories.

If one starts reading this book, one will continue till the end. It tells us her saga of sacrifice, devotion, determination and non-attachment. This book will definitely inspire people from different walks of life and especially the younger generation. Jankidevi Bajaj's life remains as a role model to emulate for those who really want to

bring revolutionary changes in their lives and society.

SIBY K. JOSEPH

Dean of Studies and Research
Institute of Gandhian Studies,
Gopuri, Wardha – 442 001 (Maharashtra)
E-mail: skjigs@gmail.com

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Book Reviews

Karthik D.: Nishikant Kolge, Gandhi Against Caste

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221 & 223 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi-110 002

Phones: +91-11-23237491/93, Fax: +91 +11-23236734

E-mail: gpf18@rediffmail.com, gandhipacefoundation18@yahoo.co.in

Siby K. Joseph, *Kasturba Gandhi: An Embodiment of Empowerment*, Mumbai :Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, 2020 , pp.152.

Siby Joseph's book on "Kasturba Gandhi: An Embodiment of Empowerment" has great significance in that it was published synchronizing with the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Siby Joseph is to be congratulated for writing this book tracing the life of Kastur Ba, the *Dharampatni* of Mahatma Gandhi, who in her own humble, modest way, complemented Gandhi in all his political activities with dignity and sacrificing spirit. Her unflinching devotion to Gandhi as helpmate and advisor to her husband is self-revealing, which is reflecting the bond of unblemished respect, love and self sacrifice to her loving husband Gandhi. The inseparable companionship between Kasturba and Gandhi is unique. More so, Ba complemented Gandhi in his *Satyagraha* movement by 'proving her mettle through her active involvement in the constructive work.' Ba's involvement in the routine activities 'into a larger social action and understanding the harsh realities prevailing in the Indian villages', is revealed by Siby who in his characteristic way spelt out the multifaceted image of Ba, a model of Indian womanhood.

Siby Joseph deserves all praise for his insight to spell out Ba's life journey as 'true Hindu wife who mostly lived under the shadow of Gandhi.' It is stupendous to compare Ba with Gandhi, who as life partners, lived together, worked together, harmonising the integral relationship in their trials and tribulations of life. She retained her indispensable outlook both in terms of thinking and action, ... Thus Ba became a source of inspiration to thousands of men and women who put everything at stake in the fight for India's independence', as rightly observed by Siby Joseph.

Siby, in his inimitable style of writing, demonstrates high degree of clarity and precision, which is an eye-opener to the future generation of scholars, who would endeavour to either understand or tread the path of Mahatma Gandhi and Ba.

In essence, the title of this book on Kasturba Gandhi – An Embodiment of Empowerment is most apt and relevant.

The cover jacket with Ba's photo is most appealing , so also the contents of the book. The book includes Appendices which add to its richness.

I congratulate Dr. Siby K Joseph, Dean of Studies and Research, Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha for taking upon himself the task of writing the book on Kasturba Gandhi as a tribute to Kasturba on the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba, who are exemplars of all that is noble in life.

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This book on Kasturba Gandhi will open up new vistas of understanding the inseparable companionship of Kausturba and Mahatma Gandhi. I have great pleasure in recommending the book for those who are interested in upholding the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba.

T S DEVADOSS

Former Professor and Director
Dr. Radhakrishnan Institute for
Advanced Study in Philosophy
University of Madras, Chennai
Residence: 3E, Owner's court,
Monthieth Lane, Egmore,
Chennai-600008



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News

Remembering Gandhi at Jalgaon

J.N. Sinha

SITTING ON THE picturesque Jain Hill in the outskirts of Jalgaon in Maharashtra, Gandhi Teerth is a sprawling campus dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy in every possible manner. It is spread over an extensive hillock endowed with diverse flora and fauna, and hemmed by beautiful hills from all sides. Of the many organisations it hosts, the Gandhi Research Foundation (GRF) is dedicated to research and training in the philosophy and vision of the Mahatma.

This was the site of an interesting meet on Gandhi on 23-24 August 2019 that brought us to this hill from all over the country. It was a joint venture of the GRF and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla, to contemplate on “How Gandhi Matters” in our troubled times. Ramachandra Guha, noted historian and intellectual, delivered the keynote address, historian Sudhir Chandra of the JNU presented the valedictory speech, and political scientist MP Singh, IIAS National Fellow and the co-convener of the meet, enlivened the discussion with scholarly comments. Gita Dharampal, Dean (Research), GRF and once the head of History, Heidelberg University, Germany, and Vidya Krishnamurthi, GRF Research Coordinator, remained on toes to make the event a success.

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None of the participants disagreed that Gandhi mattered more today than ever in the past; but how to follow him is the crucial question. They reasoned out, but most seemed to be baffled by the rat-race and aggressive competition for the growth-fired development drive—something Gandhi did not approve of. Gita Dharampal has an illustrious lineage of a noted Gandhian, her father, Dharampal, being an alternative historian of Indian indigenous science; no wonder, Gandhism is her life mission. Ramachandra Guha is a keen chronicler of India before and after Gandhi, with an eye on environment and many things Gandhi was concerned with. The participants belonged to different disciplines, but Gandhi had brought them to this remote hillock in search of an alternative way of development. But did he elude them between despair and hope?

Outside the convention hall, however, there was a most vibrant scenario of hope. The sprawling estate is a telling example of how an individual endeavour can realise the dreams of the Mahatma at this remote place now known as Gandhi Teerth. The GRF is a part of it. The rest of the estate hosts also some industries based on Gandhian philosophy, including the ones connected with solar energy, drip-irrigation, agriculture and dairy farming, and projects addressing public health, education etc. The entire establishment is self-sustained in terms of food, water and such needs as energy. Waste and water are recycled, modern fertilisers and pesticides are kept at bay, and all effort is made to live in harmony with nature.

With these activities and many more, the centre has an ongoing intensive outreach program in the neighbouring villages, so that young workers can train in and practice innovatively the Gandhian philosophy in the rural areas. This is part of a nationwide rural initiative called BaBapu150 to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi, and his wife Kasturba by bringing about Gram Swaraj in 150 villages in 14 states of India.

The GRF has a state-of-the art library, an archive, a digitization and document preservation department, a khadi unit, and a museum, housed in a magnificent building, pristine in simplicity and exceptionally elegant in design. Its design, layout and its artefacts exude the best of art and aesthetics, which the Mahatma would have liked. It has won several prizes for its architectural and sculptural excellence. The museum must be the best of its kind on Gandhi in the country; and the towering statue of Bapu in the forefront of the structure, with a boy and a girl hugging him, emits the wholesome spirit of renascent India, brimming with love for all on this planet. This is pleasantly different from the view of the Mahatma of the yore—in short *dhoti* (loincloth) and a *lathi* (club) in hand, hard-faced and

alone, marching on his mission. Here is the Father of the Nation now, having his children in his lap and mutely smiling into a new century!

Rows of small cottages erected on the campus to accommodate the visitors remind one of the ancient hermitages. A little farther, large and fully equipped convention halls have been built up to meet the requirements of our time. An expansive lake in a corner, and flowers and trees everywhere lining the footpaths gradually merge into the wilderness of the landscape. Indeed, this is the abode of Gandhi in the 21st century.

Despite the fact that the centre is not very old, it is attracting visitors from all over the world. I met students from Europe, others from different parts of the country. They have come to know about the life and thoughts of Gandhi; many are doing regular courses in Gandhian philosophy. Every day, people in hundreds visit Gandhi Teerth, with curiosity and reverence for Gandhiji. I met one Vishnu Das from Tripura, a PG Diploma student at the centre, who is determined to take the Mahatma to the disturbed life of the Northeast and is already very much on the Gandhian path. I wish people will support him. There must be many more like him. Everyone here is different from their generation elsewhere. They are soft spoken, gentle and helpful; and they are punctual, sincere and mindful. The Dean of Academics, John Chelladurai, was exacting, and working with clockwork precision. It was all inspiring.

The whole campus is an example of action and innovation (*experiment* in Gandhi's words) towards realising Gandhi's dreams—with reasonable adaptations in the changing times but never sacrificing his basics—*satya* and *ahimsa*, self-help, frugality, prudence, and love for all—humans, non-humans and nature.

This had all begun in the 1960s when Bhawarlal Jain conceived the vision of improving the welfare of farmers. He gave up his option of joining the civil service and decided to promote Gandhian philosophy of *Sarvodaya* through wide-scale developments in irrigation, agriculture, sustainable energy and food processing. Difficulties did not fail to trouble him but he stood firm, toiled and surpassed them. Gandhi Teerth was inaugurated by the President of India, Mrs Pratibha Patil in 2012, and has been visited by many celebrities in the past. Happily, the patrons continue to do their best and Mahatma's inspiration is gathering support from far and wide. The hundreds of visitors thronging Gandhi Teerth show that it is flourishing.

J N SINHA is a former Associate Professor of History, University of Delhi, New Delhi. Email: jnsinha@rediffmail.com / Mob: 9810949638. Mailing Address: 38 Uttaranchal Apts., 5- IP Extn., Delhi 110092

Information for Authors

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Examples

Books: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p.23.

Articles: Ramashray Roy, "Parameters of Participation", *Gandhi Marg*, 12, 3(October-December 1990), p.276.

Chapters within Books: Pearl S. Buck, "A Way of Living", in S. Radhakrishnan, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1956), p.51.

Internet Citations: Apart from name of author and article, include also the URL and date of download. For example: www.un.org accessed on 10 May 2006.

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