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# **GANDHI AFTER GANDHI**

**THE RELEVANCE OF THE MAHATMA'S LEGACY IN  
TODAY'S WORLD**

Edited by  
Marzia Casolari



# Gandhi After Gandhi

Writing about Gandhi without being obvious is always difficult. Numerous books and articles are published every year, especially across the anniversaries of his birth and death. The judicious scholar believes that writing something new on this iconic figure is almost impossible.

However, in the difficult times when this book was conceived, at the peak of what presumably can be considered as the worst humanitarian disaster of the 21st century, the Gandhian legacy has become more topical than ever. Gandhi's thought and experience regarding laws and economy, and his views on secularism or on the tremendous effects of the colonial rule in India and beyond provide the opportunity to reflect on persistently manipulated constitutions and violated human rights, the crisis of secularism and the demand of a sustainable, environment-friendly economy.

This book aims not only to offer new insights into Gandhi's experience and legacy but also to prove how Gandhian values are relevant to the present and can provide explanations and solutions for present challenges. *Gandhi After Gandhi* will appeal to researchers and students alike interested in Indian culture and political thinking and Indian history since independence.

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The Relevance of the Mahatma's Legacy  
in Today's World

**Edited by**  
**Marzia Casolari**

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# Acknowledgements

This volume is a selection of essays originally prepared for the International Conference “Gandhi After Gandhi”, held in Turin on 2–3 December 2019. The idea to talk about Gandhi from an innovative (and provoking) perspective grew out from conversations and exchanges with my soulmate, Delfo, and some colleagues from the University of Turin.

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# Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
CBD	Central Business District, Johannesburg
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
MIA	Montgomery Improvement Association
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
PCF	French Communist Party
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association



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# Introduction

This book is a collection of contributions from the international conference “Gandhi After Gandhi”, which took place in Turin in early December 2019 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Mahatma’s birth.

The idea to organise a conference on Gandhi grew out when my soul-mate gave me an old article from an Italian newspaper about Martin Buber’s reaction and reply to Gandhi’s famous article, *The Jews*, published in November 1938. Then I collated Buber’s letter to the Mahatma against the latter’s article and I discovered that the core issue of Gandhi’s discourse was the Palestine question. Although *The Jews* is a very well known, much debated and controversial article, I discovered that Gandhi’s attitude about the Palestine question is not much studied. This happened in early 2019. I realised that it was the right time to assess the relevance of Gandhi’s legacy, 150 years after his birth.

I discussed the idea to organise a conference on Gandhi on the 150th anniversary of his birth with a small group of colleagues at the University of Turin. We asked ourselves if it was worth debating about Gandhi, if it was possible to say something new, original and, possibly, provocative on Gandhi, when every year, especially across the Mahatma’s birth and death anniversaries, tens of books are published and conferences are organised. Has really everything been said already on Gandhi?

We took up the challenge and discovered that a prolific and emblematic figure like Gandhi is still offering new cues. Although many aspects regarding Gandhi’s life, ideas and political experience are still debated, on several issues the final word has not yet been said.

Introducing new visions on Gandhi and his legacy was not an easy task, if we think about the immense literature on this topic. Just to mention the most recent or important works, in 2019 the Indian government published *Gandhi 150*<sup>1</sup> to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Gandhi’s birth. The book focuses on the idea of *karyanjali* or “action” as reflected by several fields: literatures, arts, environment, religion and economics. However, the book does not take into consideration Gandhi’s political thinking, the historical dimension of his action, the nuances of his political position or his legacy.

## 2 Introduction

Most books focus on history of Gandhi and India, or on Gandhi's impact on Indian history like Ramachandra Guha's illuminating "trilogy" *India After Gandhi*, *Gandhi Before India* and *The Years That Changed the World 1915–48* has a biographical approach.<sup>2</sup> Guha's masterly work, *India After Gandhi*, is a history of post-independence years through Gandhi's legacy, where a little space is given to the Mahatma as a political leader and thinker, since he was assassinated in 1948. Conversely, *Gandhi Before India* is a careful and detailed biography of the Mahatma or rather a history of pre-independence India through the Mahatma's life. Actually, the title of this book is modelled on the titles of Ramachandra Guha's books.

The majority of the publications still concentrate on biographical aspects and Gandhian values, like *Why Gandhi Still Matters: An Appraisal of the Mahatma's Legacy*, published by the Mahatma's grandson, Rajmohan Gandhi, in 2017.<sup>3</sup> It traces Gandhi's biography without overcoming the typical areas of Gandhian studies, namely non-violence, the Mahatma's strategies of fighting for freedom, his commitment to democracy and secularism and his opposition to caste discrimination.

There is persistent and widespread tendency to study Gandhi from a philosophical perspective: *Gandhi Reconsidered* is a collection of essays written by five eminent scholars (Irfan Habib, Sukumar Muralidharan, Kumkum Sangari, Bipan Chandra and Ravinder Kumar), based mainly on theoretical aspects and Gandhian philosophy. Although this text dates back to 2004, due to the high standard of its contributors, it remains an important source of knowledge about the impact of Gandhian thought and values on the construction of contemporary India.<sup>4</sup> *The Global Gandhi: Essays in Comparative Philosophy* by Ramin Jahanbegloo<sup>5</sup> (Routledge 2018) exceeds the perspective of Gandhian thought as a branch of Indian moral and political philosophy, it is rather a reassessment of Gandhi's thought, beyond the spiritual quest: this book likens Gandhi as a political philosopher to the most important western thinkers of his times.

Joseph Lelyveld's *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*<sup>6</sup> is perhaps the most provocative book on Gandhi of all time: it describes in the most controversial way Gandhi's tie with his friend and soulmate Hermann Kallenbach in South Africa, describing it as a homosexual affair. However, the gossipy attitude of this book is hardly acceptable. Always on the relationship between Gandhi and Kallenbach but of a totally different calibre is Shimon Lev's *Soulmates: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach*,<sup>7</sup> an illuminating book that goes far beyond the personal ties between the two men and traces not only their political activities in South Africa, but especially Gandhi's connections with the Zionist circles.

Some of these books may provide the guiding thread of most essays published in this volume, and they also offer interesting insights into the Mahatma's history and on Indian history in Gandhi's times but do not invigorate much the discourse about Gandhi. This volume aims to overcome the perspective of Gandhi's commemoration, the historical reconstruction

or the hermeneutical endeavour of Gandhian thought and principles: it is an attempt to trace possible original aspects of Gandhi's experience and legacy and to relate them to the challenges of the present. It underlines, for instance, the importance of constitutionalism as against today's widespread attempts to tear up constitutions in several countries in the world, or analyses the key role of sustainable economy and environment in Gandhi's ethical and political perspective in the light of today's environmental concerns. Some chapters point out how the Gandhian legacy regarding human rights and equality in Africa and the United States is now challenged by the never-ending racial issue in America. Meaningfully, this book does not treat at all Gandhian pacifism, since it is an overused, predictable subject associated with Gandhi: all authors chose to treat a variety of least studied, unusual, in some cases unprecedented aspects.

Matters which seem to be consigned to the past, like the Hindu–Muslim unity advocated by Gandhi as the main solution against the partition of India, his views on the partition of Palestine or the Palestine issue as such are in fact very timely, since they can provide not only an explanation but also a solution to the long-lasting consequences of these events, with strong connections with the present time. Connecting Gandhi's age with subsequent historical periods, up to the present, has the intent to prove that Gandhi's legacy, for good or ill, is still alive and it does make sense to continue to search and write on this iconic figure.

The main themes of our book are represented by what can be defined the “pillars” of Gandhi's discourse and action, namely freedom and civil rights promotion (with a specific reference to Africa and the United States); the pursuit of the unity, either the Hindu–Muslim unity or the unity of the country; secularism; sustainable economy and grass-root movements.

This volume has a multidisciplinary character, reflecting the contributors' expertise, spanning from laws, history, political science, economy, literature and education. It develops around two macro themes: one is Gandhi's legacy as reflected in Laws, human rights and freedom movements and in economic, educational and environmental issues; the other one is a historical investigation on Gandhi's views and attitude towards the two main problems of his times, namely the divisive effect of British colonial policy in India, and secularism.

The chapters are distributed among three parts: the first focusses on laws, rights and Gandhian freedom and civil rights movements following in Gandhi's footsteps, across Africa and in the United States; the second is an original historical insight into the two crucial issues Gandhi challenged in his political life: the Hindu/Muslim unity and the partition of India (compared here with his views on Palestine's partition) and secularism; the third part deals with the relevance of Gandhian economics for the present time, and it includes a case study, the *Nai Talim*, as an example of education for a better awareness of economic and environmental implications of the daily life.

This scheme reflects the time frame of Gandhi's path, which spanned from his first experiences as a lawyer and a precursor of human rights advocacy,



#### 4 Introduction

to his political engagement and battles and his ‘cultural revolution’, to his involvement, again as a forerunner, in environment and sustainable economy.

The aim to offer new hints on Gandhi and Gandhian legacy of the conference that inspired this book and of the book as such is represented not just by the selection of hardly available unprecedented details on Gandhian history, politics, heritage or activism but also by the interpretative paradigms used by the scholars who contributed to this volume, in some cases with a provocative intention. The relationship between Gandhi and Laws, for instance, is not studied, as in most other works on Gandhi, from the point of view of his biography as a lawyer, but from the perspective of constitutionalism as the guiding principle of freedom struggles in the Gandhian manner, beyond the Mahatma and India. Gandhi was, first of all, a lawyer and a Laws scholar, but this aspect is generally neglected by the existing literature.

Similarly, in this book, Gandhi’s secularism (and non-violence) is not analysed, as in most of existing works, according to his approach to religion, but from the point of view of the *brahmacharya* (abstinence, celibacy), his controversial and much debated experiments with sexuality, that the author explains as a form of political resistance. The essay “Rethinking Gandhi’s Secularism” is perhaps the most original (and provocative); it is a unique work, based on a robust historical research.

One of the two chapters on Gandhi’s positions on India’s partition is an unprecedented comparison between Palestine’s and India’s divides from his perspective: based mainly on the Mahatma’s Collected Works and not on abstract speculations, this essay discloses Gandhi’s knowledge of the events in the Middle East and Palestine. By comparing his attitude towards British policies in Palestine and India, it is possible to dispel the historic doubt about Gandhi’s responsibilities in India’s partition and prove that he opposed it from its inception, much before 1947. The two chapters on Gandhi’s attitude to Hindu–Muslim unity and India’s partition are opposite from each other, proving how controversial is the issue of Gandhi’s role in avoiding or favouring India’s partition. Also, this issue reflects the controversy still going on in India among Gandhi’s supporters and critics.

Finally, the discourse on Gandhian economy and education to sustainable economy and respect for the environment is absolutely topical today when we face the worst ever threat to human safety and crisis of global economy, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

All the issues addressed by this book are reflected in the present: the Constitutional discourse is very actual in today’s, where Constitutions are often violated. Racial controversies are bursting in the United States, and the Arab-Israeli conflict is still alive and unsolved. Achieving sustainable economy and education to gain an improved living is the problem of the day, and therefore alternative economic patterns are strongly required. Rereading Gandhi may provide the tools to tackle these problems and, probably, find the solutions.

**Notes**

- 1 Rajan Welukar (ed.), *Gandhi @ 150, Celebrating the Mahatma' Relevance Today*, Jaico Publishing House, Mumbai, 2019.
- 2 Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, HarperCollins, New York, 2007; *Gandhi Before India*, Penguin, London, 2013; *The Years That Changed the World 1915–1948*, Penguin, London, 2018.
- 3 Rajmohan Gandhi, *Why Gandhi Still Matters: An Appraisal of the Mahatma's Legacy*, Aleph Book Company, New Delhi, 2017.
- 4 Irfan Habib (et al.), *Towards a Secular & Modern India: Gandhi Reconsidered*, Sahmat, New Delhi, 2004.
- 5 Ramin Jahanbegloo, *The Global Gandhi: Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2018.
- 6 Joseph Lelyveld, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2011.
- 7 Shimn Lev, *Soulmates: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach*, Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, 2012.



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**Part I**

# **Gandhi, laws and civil rights**

Gandhian legacy in Africa and the  
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# 1 Gandhi and the culture of constitutionalism

*Pratyush Kumar*

The reverence towards Gandhi all over the world rests on the mostly unconscious view that he alone among the statesmen of our morally decadent times represented a higher level of human relations towards which we must strive with all our strength. We must learn that a bearable future for humanity is only possible when decisions even in the international world are based on right and law instead of on naked power as they have been up to now.

Albert Einstein<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

The historical–political, very real Gandhi was turned into a myth, father of the newly formed republic, put on the wall and the currency notes of the country, and thus post-assassination he became the spiritual-emperor giving legitimacy to the Nehru–Gandhi family unrelated to him biologically. The more time elapsed, the more obscure he was made, the more his spilled blood was turned into the anointing symbol of the rule of Nehru–Gandhi family. To redeem and make Gandhi relevant in our present times, it is essential to separate him from turning into a family borough or perhaps even as a national symbol. In the past century-and-a-quarter, we have seen how he is relevant not just for India but has inspired peaceful, non-violent, non-denominationally religious assertions of truth across the world. The message of a frail man of a short frame, the proverbially “half-naked fakir”, standing against the biggest empire with brute force and immense capacity for physical harm we have known in recent history, does not get lost on human history. Gandhi himself never promoted his own family members even to the point of alienating and estranging his eldest son<sup>2</sup> and stifling that of others by controlling every aspect of their lives.<sup>3</sup> He was the spiritual Guru of the freedom movement, but in his own conduct, he was republican in his manners and largely democratic in his spirit. The incident of the election of Subhas Chandra Bose as the president of the Indian National Congress against his wishes and then Bose’s forced resignation and ultimate eviction from the party which he headed is squarely blamed on Mahatma Gandhi. Despite, and perhaps because of the few obstinacies and what might be seen

as peculiarities in politics, that Gandhi is a moral politician in a Kantian sense rather than a political moralist. The gist of the Kantian moral politician is provided by Norberto Bobbio in which Gandhi fits perfectly well,

In the appendix of that golden book *Perpetual Peace*, Kant distinguishes the political moralist, whom he censures, from the moral politician whom he praises. A moral politician is someone who does not subject morals to the demands of politics. Instead, he interprets the principles of political caution in a way that allows them to coexist with morals.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi, the “moral exemplar” as pointed out by Einstein in the quote above, stands out in stark contrast among his contemporaries as a statesman politician leading his people when there were the likes of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Salazar, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Hirohito and even Churchill. There *was* no match and there *is* no match even in our contemporary times. Gandhi as the moral politician practised and encouraged his followers to practice “meekness” which became embedded in India’s constitutional culture through his active non-violent political process. Meekness in constitutional culture has been an Italian contribution which makes it interesting and comparable to Gandhian political process. Meekness was coupled with mercy or forgiveness as part of his political practice in life reflecting itself on India’s constitutional culture.

### **Gandhian constitutionalism**

The political process/es are linked with the making of the constitution but more importantly framing the culture of constitutionalism, and if there is a constituent assembly or a written constitution, it determines its constitutional culture. Peter Häberle writes of the link between the two as,

The political process is not removed from the constitution, but in fact an integral part of its life and functional sphere, a “heart” in the truest sense of the word: akin to a pump. It achieves movement, innovations, changes, but also “affirmations” that form more than mere “objective material” for (later) constitutional interpretation; they are a part of constitutional interpretation because, within their framework, public realities are created and noticeably changed. The discretion afforded to the legislator as a constitutional interpreter may qualitatively differ from the leeway of a constitutional judge in the interpretation process, as the discretion is limited in an entirely different way, but this does not inevitably equate to a significant qualitative difference. *The political process is not a constitution-free zone; it pre-formulates topics, sets developments into motion which remain constitutionally relevant even where a constitutional-judicial interpreter later holds that the legislature*

*is charged to settle this question within the boundaries of constitutional alternatives (with emphasis added).*<sup>5</sup>

This Häberlean analysis fits well in Gandhian politics and the shaping of India's democratic constitutional culture. The Gandhian political process constituted by the "public participants" and "subjects" (subjects, and not yet citizens of the empire) was at the very least "pre-interpreters" (*Vorinterpreteten*) about to become the "productive powers of interpretation" (*interpretatorische Produktivkräfte*) of colonial and post-colonial constitutional culture.<sup>6</sup> Despite the colonial norm governing Indians, as "addressee of norms", they indirectly became its interpreters.<sup>7</sup> This "interpretation" was being spearheaded by the Gandhian political process. Such constitutional interpretation as part of the constitutional culture based on "open society" is not confined to a "'guild' of functional-legally designated state interpreters" but also to "the imagination and creative power of the 'non-guild' interpreters".<sup>8</sup>

The Gandhian imprint is extant on the debates of the Constituent Assembly of India, which framed the Indian Constitution. Most of the members of the Constituent Assembly were either trained into the school of politics by Gandhi or were his students, followers, colleagues or those directly influenced by him. Most of what scholars identify as Gandhian ideas like village republics, trusteeship model and the like did not find their place in the Constitution as he would have wanted them to be, but the very deliberative process of constitution making had his imprint. It was democratic, dignified, inclusive and detailed and deliberative.

### **The influence of the South African experience on Gandhi's constitutionalism**

The Gandhian vision for the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly or, indeed, the constitutionalism or the culture of constitutionalism can be traced back to his activities in South Africa. He had initially gone to South Africa on a case in 1893 which was supposed to be a brief respite for the briefless barrister. Suffering racial prejudice and violence personally and witnessing the despicable conditions of the Indian indentured workers, he stayed on. The blatantly prejudicial and discriminatory laws were a cruel joke on "British constitutionalism" for the early Gandhi. With the abolition of slavery, the British needed hard-working, sincere and disciplined workforce, and they found Indians most suitable for it. They started the process of "indentured workers" in semi-slavery conditions<sup>9</sup> who were "collected" through agents mostly in the poor districts of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madras province, by selling them dreams of a great life and prosperity ahead. Once in South Africa, they were left stranded in miserable working conditions and much less pay as promised. They were also followed by some wealthy Indian merchants and their Indian clerks and assistants.



For the next two decades, Gandhi continued the *satyagraha* in South Africa. In hindsight, it could be seen to be only marginally successful due to the great odds faced by a small, impoverished minority railed against among the most racist, violent and pernicious political systems having tacit support of mother England for political expediency.

A delegation from Natal went to India to demand either compulsory indenture (in other words semi-slavery) or compulsory repatriation of all Indian labourers or compulsory poll tax of an exorbitant 25 pounds per head.<sup>10</sup> The Government of India agreed to a tax of 3 pounds per head on the family of an ex-indentured labourer who was merely exercising his right to settle in Natal in terms of the agreement which had governed his emigration from India.<sup>11</sup> It was a crippling tax on poor indentured workers with wages between 10 and 12 shillings a month to pay 3 pounds for every man, woman and child above the age of eight.<sup>12</sup> Besides the 3 pounds tax, a bill disenfranchising the Indians (with a provision for forced deportations) was passed by the Natal Legislature.<sup>13</sup> Similar, or sometimes even worse, laws were in force in Transvaal and Orange Free State.<sup>14</sup> Gandhi had raised the Indian Ambulance Corps of 1100 Indians to assist medically the British army in the Boer War in 1899 as a “British citizen” or “citizen of the British Empire”. After the war

the British Government appointed committee had to scan the Boer statute-book, and to repeal the laws which were repugnant to the spirit of the British Constitution and inconsistent with the liberty of Queen Victoria’s subjects. The committee interpreted the liberty of the subject as the liberty of the white subject; the Indians thus remained outside the pale of the reformed code. In fact, all the anti-Indian laws of the Boer regime were compiled in a handy manual.<sup>15</sup>

Through his political activism, Gandhi was creating “an open society of constitutional interpreters”,<sup>16</sup> first in South Africa and then in India. In the initial stages, when he claimed equal subjection as equal citizens of the British Empire based on the self-image of British Constitutionalism, Queen Victoria’s Declaration of 1858 and the hallowed British “Rule of Law” of indentured Indian labourers and Indian businessmen in South Africa, he was just about setting up the constitutional culture in the empire and, by implication, in “mother England” itself.

The Gandhian political action included, first, to develop a spirit of solidarity amongst the diverse and heterogeneous Indian population.<sup>17</sup> Second, it included making the Indian community, the saner European public opinion and the Natal Government aware of the disenfranchising measure (all Indians, “Asiatics” were to be disenfranchised overnight by a legislation).<sup>18</sup> Lastly, it was to give the widest publicity to the “unconstitutional” legislation in India and Great Britain.<sup>19</sup> This laid the groundwork of a spirit

of “constitutionalism” amongst the Indian community in South Africa and then, indeed, again in India. In England itself, it gave a thrust to non-discrimination and a spirit of promotion of equal citizenship rights as a necessary condition precedent of legitimate constitutionalism or even British constitutionalism.

Sadly, even the Supreme Court in South Africa was complicit in what would be considered illegitimate constitutionalism or bad constitutionalism today (and in its times by saner elements) when it held void all marriages not solemnised according to Christian rites and registered by the Registrar of Marriages: Hindu, Muslim and Parsi marriages thus became illegal and their children illegitimate.<sup>20</sup>

It was through Gandhi’s non-violent and peaceful political process of *satyagraha* that the 3 pounds tax on ex-indentured labourers was abolished; marriages performed according to Indian rites were legalised, and a domicile certificate bearing the holder’s thumb imprint was to be sufficient evidence of the right to enter the Union of South Africa. Other discriminatory laws like the Gold law,<sup>21</sup> the trade licensing laws,<sup>22</sup> the ghetto “locations”,<sup>23</sup> the restrictions on inter-provincial migration and the bar on purchase of landed property remained for a long time to come (till the end of the 20th century). It required another remarkable leader in the image of Gandhi, like Nelson Mandela, who widened the political process through an awakening of “blacks” in solidarity with all oppressed sections of South African society, to bring about a “culture of constitutionalism” in a Häberlean sense in South Africa.

### **Champanan satyagraha in India**

After Gandhi’s final return to India in 1915, his first successful *satyagraha* was launched in Champaran in Bihar in 1918. Unlike the future massmovements of non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience, the Champaran *satyagraha* was a very constitutional act of recording the grievances of poor farmers, who were forced to plant indigo by the British planters, through an oppressive legal regime that ultimately led to their abject conditions.<sup>24</sup> Gandhi writes,

The Champaran tenant was bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as the *tinkathia* system, as three kathas out of twenty (which make one acre) had to be planted with indigo.<sup>25</sup>

Even this constitutional exercise of recording the grievances of poor peasants met with stiff opposition and threats of violence. A notice was served against Gandhiji under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code to leave Champaran, to which he replied, “he did not propose to comply with it and leave till his inquiry was finished”.<sup>26</sup> He received summons for trial the very

next day for disobeying the order to leave Champaran, he pleaded guilty, and in his brief statement read,

With the permission of the Court I would like to make a brief statement showing why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order passed under Section 144 of Cr.P.C. In my humble opinion it is a question of difference of opinion between the Local Administration and myself. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the ryots, who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the Administration and the planters. I have no other motive, and I cannot believe that my coming can in any way disturb public peace and cause loss of life. [...] As a law-abiding citizen my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. [...] It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living, the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience. I venture to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me, but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience.<sup>27</sup>

The judgement was postponed because the government wanted to avoid civil unrest.

This disciplined, constitutional-legal way of non-violent, civil disobedience paid so handsomely that the Lieutenant Governor of the State of Bihar, Sir Edward Gait, ordered the case to be withdrawn against Gandhi even before he could appear before the Magistrate the next time and the Collector wrote to him saying that he was “at liberty to conduct the proposed inquiry” and that he could count on whatever help he needed from the officials.<sup>28</sup> Gandhi examined 7,000 *raiya*s (peasant-tenants).<sup>29</sup>

### **Swaraj, Hind Swaraj and parliamentary Swaraj**

The 1920 Constitution of the Congress Party was framed almost singlehandedly by Gandhi. He followed the procedure of constitution-making, by ensuring the formation of a committee representative of the most important leaders of the Congress at that moment. According to his want, he kept all of them apprised of the details of the draft and in the end came up with a unanimous report which he “regarded with a certain measure of pride” and which, according to him, marked his “real entrance into the Congress politics”.<sup>30</sup>

Arvind Elangovan drawing from Granville Austin writes, “The idea of a Constituent Assembly, where Indians would come together and frame a constitution, had already been expressed by Gandhi in a nascent form as early as 1922”.<sup>31</sup> This is, of course, with respect to the idea of a formal Constituent Assembly to frame the Constitution of a new Republic. As far as Gandhi’s political and constitutional imagination is concerned, it was an “alternative” to the existing legal–political order expressed emphatically in his *Hind Swaraj*, written in an epiphanic moment, way back in 1909 (before plunging into India’s struggle for independence).

Without ever disowning the idea of *swaraj*<sup>32</sup> expressed in *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi was thinking aloud to himself in *Young India* in the early 1921; when the Non-Cooperation Movement was still ongoing, he had this to say on parliamentary *swaraj*,

But I would warn the reader against thinking that I am today aiming at the *swaraj* described therein [in *Hind Swaraj*]. I know that India is not ripe for it. It may seem an impertinence to say so. But such is my conviction. I am individually working for the self-rule pictured therein. But today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of Parliamentary *Swaraj* in accordance with the wishes of the people of India.<sup>33</sup>

He later went on to add a note in 1924, “It must be remembered that it is not Indian Home Rule depicted in that book [in *Hind Swaraj*] that I am placing before India. I am placing before the nation parliamentary, that is, democratic *swaraj*.”<sup>34</sup>

B.R. Nanda writes,

The ideals of *Hind Swaraj* became almost exclusively the personal ideals of Gandhi and his closest associates. The railways, hospitals, schools, factories, the parliamentary institutions and the paraphernalia of Western civilization which he denounced, have come to stay, and to prosper. Even in his lifetime he continued to tolerate them as a necessary evil. ‘India is not ripe for it’, he admitted. In fact, this part of his philosophy struck his own followers either too far ahead, or perhaps behind the times.<sup>35</sup>

Taking a lead from Alasdair MacIntyre’s “epistemological crisis” and “epistemological break”, Ananya Vajpeyi writes thus of *Hind Swaraj*,

Gandhi’s was the crucial breakthrough, and the reason for this is that his manifesto took as its subject the meaning of the one category that was already very important at the time and would only become even more so, in fact, would become central in the coming decades (viz., *swaraj*). *Hind Swaraj* is Gandhi’s meditation on India’s self and India’s sovereignty, without which it is not possible to imagine how he would have gone on to lead India to freedom from colonial rule....In twenty cryptic

chapters, Gandhi races through his preoccupations, which would soon be shared by all of India – Self and Other, East and West, true civilization and consumer capitalism, violence and non-violence, cowardice and courage, colonial reliance and swadeshi self-reliance, nature and culture, Britain and India, craft and technology, truth and lies, freedom and subjugation. The text is brief but the magnitude of its epistemological departure from nationalist politics as it had been lurching along in the preceding two or three decades is so patent and so enormous that it pushed a foundering political tradition over a nearly insurmountable hump, and launched it into futurity.<sup>36</sup>

*Hind Swaraj* always resonated through Gandhi's idea of constitutionalism even in the practical parliamentary *swaraj* that was to be achieved. Writing in 1927,

I shall not be satisfied with any constitution that we may get from the British Parliament unless it leaves that power with us also. So that if we choose to declare independence we could do so. Do not impair the effect that the word carries. Do not limit its interpretation. Who knows, somebody may give us a still better definition. The potency of the word increases because it is undefined and is, I would say, undefinable.<sup>37</sup>

Writing on the necessity of a Constituent Assembly in 1939, he writes,

The Constituent Assembly will represent all communities in their exact proportion. Except it there is no other way of doing full justice to rival claims. Without it there can be no finality to communal and other claims. Again, the Constituent Assembly alone can produce a constitution indigenous to the country and truly and fully representing the will of the people. Undoubtedly such a constitution will not be ideal, but it will be real, however imperfect it may be in the estimation of the theorists or legal luminaries. Self-government to be self-government has merely to reflect the will of the people who are to govern themselves. If they are not prepared for it, they will make a hash of it. I can conceive the possibility of a people fitting themselves for right government through a series of wrong experiments, but I cannot conceive a people governing themselves rightly through a government imposed from without, even as the fabled jackdaw could not walk like a peacock with feathers borrowed from his elegant companion. A diseased person has a prospect of getting well by personal effort. He cannot borrow health from others.<sup>38</sup>

Writing with a resigned exasperation at the broken Hindu–Muslim solidarity, Jinnah's<sup>39</sup> obstinacy (playing into the hands of colonial regime and an excessive personal political ambition) at creating a Muslim State – the

land of the pure (Pak-sthan) through his sectarian organisation of Muslim League and the impending partition of the country,

I am free to confess that a Constituent Assembly is the logical outcome of parliamentary activity. The labour of the late Deshbandhu Chit-taranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru opened my eyes to the fact that the parliamentary programme had a place in the national activity for independence. I strove hard against it. It is certainly inconsistent with pure non-co-operation. But pure non-co-operation never had the field. What came into being also waned. Had there been universal non-co-operation of the non-violent type in the Congress ranks, there would have been no parliamentary programme.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

These are some preliminary ideas primarily dealing with facts from history and Gandhian political process to understand his conception of constitutionalism. Gandhi's ideas and 'political processes' led to the deepening of ideas of democracy during the period of India's struggle for independence. It reflected on India's constitution-making process and its practice thenceforth. Public accountability and frugality in public office (important for environmental jurisprudence among others); separation of powers; rule of law; constitutional review, not just judicial review; balancing and proportionality; and liberal constitutionalism based on an open society (as far as it can get) all have a distinct Gandhian signature on it. In this work, Gandhian political process in the early phase and aspects of the constitution-making process have been preliminarily covered.

## Notes

- 1 PAREKH, B., 'Einstein on Gandhi's Non-Violence' in PAREKH, B., *Debating India: Essays of Indian Political Discourse*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 236.
- 2 The full-length biography of Harilal Gandhi is now available. He is often referred as "Gandhi's lost son", who was quite promising in his early years but his personality and professional ambitions got crushed under the weight of the exceptional man that his parents were. In many ways he paid the price for being the son of the Mahatma, the great soul, which is true of many of Mahatma Gandhi's closest relatives and political companions. See: DALAL, C.B., SUHRUD, T., *Harilal Gandhi: A Life*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2007.
- 3 Gandhi's second son, Manilal who had the mettle in him to come unto his own, was 'crushed' by the discipline imposed by his father and a fixed regimen imposed down to the last detail. Manilal had many traits of his great father but lacked the skill, education and independent spirit also because of his father. Despite many odds, he created a niche for himself and ran 'Indian Opinion' (journal started by Gandhi) from 1920 until his death in 1956 taking up causes against the apartheid regime on the side of Africans, championing the cause of independence of India and highlighting the condition of Indians in South Africa.

See: MESTHRIE, U.D., *Gandhi's Prisoner? The Life of Gandhi's Son Manilal*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004.

- 4 BOBBIO, N., Ethics and Politics in BOBBIO, N., *In Praise of Meekness: Essays on Ethics and Politics*, Polity, 2000, p. 48.

Nell'appendice a quell'aureo libro che è *Per la pace perpetua*, distingue il moralista politico che condanna dal politico morale che esalta. Il politico morale è colui che non subordina la morale alle esigenze della politica ma interpreta i principi della prudenza politica in modo da farli coesistere con la morale.

cf. BOBBIO, N., *Elogio Della Mitezza: E Altri Scritti Morali*, Rome: Linea d'ombra Edizioni, 1994, p. 77

- 5 HÄBERLE, P., ““The open society of constitutional interpreters” – A contribution to a pluralistic and “procedural” constitutional interpretation”, (translated from German by Stefan Theil, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Bonavero Institute, Oxford University) in KOTZUR, M. (ed.), *Peter Häberle on Constitutional Theory: Constitution as Culture and the Open Society of Constitutional Interpreters*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018, p. 139.
- 6 Ibid at p. 131.
- 7 Ibid at pp. 131–132.
- 8 Ibid at p. 144.
- 9 “The first shipload of ‘indentured labourers’ from India arrived in Durban in November 1860. By 1890 nearly 40,000 Indians had been imported as indentured labourers. Theirs was, to use Sir W.W. Hunter’s phrase, a condition of semi-slavery. Not all employers were cruel, but it was difficult to change employers on the plea of ill-treatment, and if a labourer did not renew his ‘indenture’ after five years, he was hemmed in by all sorts of restrictions. Nevertheless, many of these labourers already cut off from their roots in India, preferred to settle in Natal. They bought small plots of land, grew vegetables, made a decent living and educated their children. This excited the jealousy of the European traders who began to agitate for the repatriation of every Indian labourer who did not renew his term. In other words, the Indian was wanted in Natal as a slave or not at all.”  
cf. NANDA, B.R., *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 47.
- 10 NANDA, B.R., *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 47–48.
- 11 Ibid at p. 48.
- 12 Ibid at p. 48.
- 13 Ibid at pp. 48–49.
- 14 Ibid at pp. 49–50.
- 15 Ibid at pp. 58–61.
- 16 This is the title of Peter Häberle’s article and a theme on which he is the authority in the world with massive tomes like the “*Doctrine of Constitution as Science of Culture*” (*Verfassungslehre als Kulturwissenschaft*, 1982, 1998); “*The Cooperative Constitutional State – from Culture and as Culture: preliminary studies on a universal Constitutional Doctrine*” (*Der kooperative Verfassungsstaat – aus Kultur und als Kultur: Vorstudien zu einer universalen Verfassungslehre*, 2013) to name just a few. See: Häberle, P., ““The open society of constitutional interpreters” – A contribution to a pluralistic and “procedural” constitutional interpretation”, (translated from German by Stefan Theil, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Bonavero Institute, Oxford University) in Kotzur, M. (ed.), *Peter Häberle on Constitutional Theory: Constitution as Culture and the Open Society of Constitutional Interpreters*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2018, pp. 129–165.



- 17 NANDA, B.R., *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 42–43.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid at p. 112.
- 21 Indians and ‘coloured’ people were restricted from occupation of land where gold deposits were supposed to exist and public digging was done by ‘whites’. Indians could not engage in mining. Cf. The Precious Base Metals Act (Gold Law) of 1908. Transvaal; <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/anti-indian-legislation-1800s-1959> (last accessed: Oct. 10, 2020).
- 22 The Indian workers, who with their hard labour, had freed themselves of the contracts of indentured workers or when their contracts had expired, did not have the freedom to trade. The Indian traders who had come to trade in British Africa were subjected to onerous restrictions despite being ‘citizens of the empire’. For example: The Orange Free State Act 29, cf. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/anti-indian-legislation-1800s-1959> (last accessed: Oct. 10, 2020).
- 23 The Indians and coloured people were condemned to live in specified ghettos by discriminatory laws which restricted Indians to being just ‘indentured workers’ and not into a professional and trading class to which they would transform naturally by the dint of their hard work and cultural convictions. It was in keeping with the general apartheid and racist nature of South African government. cf. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/anti-indian-legislation-1800s-1959> (last accessed: Oct. 10, 2020).
- 24 “Indigo cultivation in Champaran began in 1830 and reached a peak in terms of area under cultivation in 1899–1900 when 38,849 hectares of land was under indigo cultivation. The same was 8662 and 10,683 for the years 1916–17 and 1917–18. See: POUCHEPADASS, J., *Champaran and Gandhi: Planters, Peasants and Gandhian Politics*, translated from the French by WALKER, J., New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 236–37, Table A. [] In 1917 the district of Champaran contained 2,846 villages, of which three-fourths were held by three landholders, who had obtained their rights under Permanent Settlement in 1793. These were the Bettiah Estate, the Ramnagar Estate and the Madhuban Estate, of which the Bettiah Estate had 1,719 villages. Of the total number of villages held by the estate only 283 were under their direct management, while the rest were under lease to European planters and Indian peasants. See: MISHRA, B.B., *Select Documents on Mahatma Gandhi’s Movement in Champaran, 1917–18*, Government of Bihar, 1963, p. 6.” Cf. GANDHI, M.K., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Critical Edition; Translated by: DESAI, M.; Foreword: NANDY, A.; Introduced with notes by: SUHRUD, T.), Penguin, 2018, n. 169, p. 622.
- 25 GANDHI, M.K., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Critical Edition; Translated by: DESAI, M.; Foreword: NANDY, A.; Introduced with notes by: SUHRUD, T.), Penguin, 2018, p. 622.

“The system (tinkathia) came into being in 1868. The planters had two options regarding the method of indigo cultivation: either have it cultivated by a tenant on a certain portion of their holding (asamivar system) or cultivate it himself (zirat system). Tinkathia was part of the asamivar system.” Cf. GANDHI, M.K., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Critical Edition; Translated by: DESAI, M.; Foreword: NANDY, A.; Introduced with notes by: SUHRUD, T.), Penguin, 2018, n. 170, pp. 622–623.
- 26 GANDHI, M.K., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Critical Edition; Translated by: DESAI, M.; Foreword: NANDY, A.; Introduced with notes by: SUHRUD, T.), Penguin, 2018, p. 634.



- “Out of sense of public responsibility, I feel it my duty to say that I am unable to leave this district, but if it so pleases the authorities, I shall submit to the order, viz, suffering the penalty of disobedience.” He was issued summons on 17 April, under Section 188, Indian Penal Code. Cf. GANDHI, M.K., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Critical Edition; Translated by: DESAI, M.; Foreword: NANDY, A.; Introduced with notes by: SUHRUD, T.), Penguin, 2018, n. 212, p. 634.
- 27 GANDHI, M.K., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Critical Edition; Translated by: DESAI, M.; Foreword: NANDY, A.; Introduced with notes by: SUHRUD, T.), Penguin, 2018, pp. 637–638.
- 28 Ibid at p. 639.
- 29 MISHRA, B.B., *Select Documents on Mahatma Gandhi’s Movement in Champaran, 1917–18*, Government of Bihar, 1963, p. 653. The entire compendium of testimonies is being compiled and edited by Tridip Suhrud.
- 30 My other aptitude which the Congress could utilize was as a draftsman. The Congress leaders had found that I had a faculty for condensed expression, which I had acquired by long practice. The then existing constitution of the Congress was Gokhale’s legacy. He had framed a few rules which served as a basis for running the Congress machinery. [...] But everybody had now come to feel that these rules were no longer adequate for the ever-increasing business of the Congress. [...] I undertook the responsibility of framing a constitution on one condition. I saw that there were two leaders, viz., the Lokmanya (Bal Gangadhar Tilak) and the Deshbandhu (Chittaranjan Das) who had the greatest hold on the public. I requested that they, as the representatives of the people, should be associated with me on the Committee for framing the constitution. But since it was obvious that they would not have the time personally to participate in the constitution-making work, I suggested that two persons enjoying their confidence should be appointed along with me on the Constitution Committee, and that the number of its personnel should be limited to three. This suggestion was accepted by the late Lokmanya and the late Deshbandhu, who suggested the names of Sjts. Kelkar (Narasimha Chintaman Kelkar) and I.B. Sen (Indu Bhushan Sen) respectively as their proxies. The Constitution Committee could not even once come together, but we were able to consult with each other by correspondence, and in the end presented a unanimous report. I regard this constitution with a certain measure of pride. I hold that, if we could fully work out this constitution, the mere fact of working it out would bring us swaraj. With the assumption of this responsibility I may be said to have made my real entrance into the Congress politics.” Cf. GANDHI, M.K., *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Critical Edition; Translated by: DESAI, M.; Foreword: NANDY, A.; Introduced with notes by: SUHRUD, T.), Penguin, 2018, pp. 745–747.
- 31 ELANGO VAN, A., *Norms and Politics: Sir Benegal Narsing Rau in the Making of the Indian Constitution, 1935–50*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 84–85.
- 32 “Swaraj literally means “self-rule”: the rule of the self, or the rule over the self. Both the subject and the object of “rule” (raj) is the “self” (swa)...Other prominent synonyms of swaraj, like swadhinata (literally, “the state of being under one’s own control”) and swatantrata (literally, “the state of being in charge of oneself”), and its close relative swadeshi (literally, “indigenous”, “belonging to one’s own country”), tellingly share the reflexive particle “swa” that points back to the speaker, positing a self to whom this sovereignty belongs and over whom this sovereignty is exercised.” cf. VAJPEYI, A., *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012, pp. 1–2.

- 33 Young India, Jan. 26, 1921, cf. BROWN, J.M., *Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 149.
- 34 Navajivan, Aug. 10, 1924; Young India, Aug. 14, 1924, cf. BROWN, J.M., *Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 149.
- 35 NANDA, B.R., *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 124–125.
- 36 VAJPEYI, A., *Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012, pp. 5–6.
- 37 Speech at Congress session, Gauhati. The Searchlight, Jan. 2, 1927. cf. BROWN, J.M., *Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008, pp. 150–151.
- 38 'The Only Way'. Harijan, Nov. 25, 1939. cf. BROWN, J.M., *Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008, pp. 155–156.
- 39 It is very interesting to observe how Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his personal life and conduct was non-sectarian and perhaps far too anglicised but eventually led a sectarian party of Muslim League leading to the partition of the Indian sub-continent and formation of a sectarian state of Pakistan.
- 40 'A Tragic Phenomenon'. Harijan, July 28, 1946. cf. BROWN, J.M., *Mahatma Gandhi: The Essential Writings*, Oxford World's Classics, 2008, p. 157.

## 2 Gandhi and Pan-Africanism (1919–45)

*Chiara Corazza*

In the first half of the 20th century, W.E.B. Du Bois, and other intellectuals involved in the Pan-Africanist debate, gave visibility to Gandhi and encouraged his struggle for India's freedom against British imperialism.

Nevertheless, as Desai and Vahed demonstrated, Gandhi's South African years made it complicated to envisage a solidarity among non-white people against racism that was, in reality, fractured by – in Du Bois's words – “a colour line within a colour line,” separating Gandhi's front line of struggle together with the Indian migrants, from the native South Africans' side.<sup>1</sup>

Gandhi followed a separatist line, often using discriminatory, paternalistic and racist words when referring to South African natives – whom he called “raw Kaffirs” and “simple Negroes.”<sup>2</sup> As Marika Sherwood highlighted, it is a matter of not only what Gandhi wrote about Africans but also what he did not write.<sup>3</sup> The lives and experiences of illustrious Afro-diasporic and African intellectuals were played out in the same scenario as Gandhi. Henry Sylvester Williams – the “father” of modern Pan-Africanism – became the second nonwhite attorney in South Africa after Gandhi. According to Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, when Williams applied to become an attorney of the Cape Town Court, he must have been aware of Gandhi's admission as an attorney of the Supreme Court of Natal. Alfred Mangena and Pixley Seme's law partnership was located in Johannesburg, just across the road from Gandhi's law office in Rissik Street. John L. Dube, founder of the African National Native Congress, took part in Du Bois's Pan-Africanist Congresses. In 1901, Dube, following the model of Booker T. Washington's Institute, set up the Ohlange Institute in Inanda, Durban. Only two years later, Gandhi founded his Phoenix farm nearby.<sup>4</sup> Even so, only few references to Dube emerge in Gandhi's writings.<sup>5</sup> Sol T. Plaatje was another important native South African leader, a contemporary of Gandhi. He travelled across the Atlantic, encountering the support of Pan-Africanist leaders such as Garvey and Du Bois. However, in South Africa, Plaatje and Gandhi made no explicit acknowledgment of each other's presence, nor any reference to the example or the political movement of the other.<sup>6</sup>

According to Hofmeyr, Gandhi's loyalism and separatist policy, and his “racially toned” discourse, should be related to the specific historical

framework of “imperial race-making in which ideas about race do not emerge solely from Europe, but are constructed by a range of intellectual players and groups across the empire.”<sup>7</sup> Desai and Vahed asserted that Gandhi’s separatist strategy was close to the segregationism that would constitute the structure and foundations of the emerging South African state.<sup>8</sup> In fact, Gandhi believed in the righteousness of a separate policy for Indians and Africans, also several years after his experience in South Africa, when addressed by Howard Thurman’s African-American delegation.<sup>9</sup>

Despite this, in the decades following his experience in South Africa, Gandhi’s anticolonial movement in India acquired widespread notoriety and meaningful symbolic value for oppressed nonwhite people. Recent mass demonstrations against Gandhi have proved that the constructed “sainted leader’s” image has been permanently tainted.<sup>10</sup> However, in 1945, during the fifth Pan-African Congress in Manchester, future African leaders had praised Gandhi’s non-violence. Some years after the 1945 Congress, Kwame Nkrumah asserted that his own Positive Action was inspired by Gandhi’s tactics. Therefore, it becomes clear how much Gandhi’s fortune has deeply changed in about half a century within the black political discourse.

By scrutinising the periodical print cultures intertwined with Pan-Africanism, this analysis reconstructs how Pan-Africanism interpreted Gandhi’s example in the first half of the 20th century and tries to answer the question about why Pan-Africanists foregrounded Gandhi’s movement, whereas they glossed over his racial discrimination during his South African years.

### **The “river” of Pan-Africanism**

The 1919 Pan-African Congress was organised by Du Bois as a reaction to the refusal to “have Africa in some way voice its complaints to the world during the Peace Conference at Versailles.”<sup>11</sup> Du Bois offered an insightful Pan-Africanist reading of the conflict, finding its roots in the European powers’ aims on Africa.<sup>12</sup>

African-American and African veterans felt resentment about the “blood debt” the colonial powers owed them and introduced a new black radicalism within the Pan-Africanist debate. In the late 1920s, a new Marxist-influenced Pan-Africanism emerged, with an internationalist perspective. As Hakim Adi wrote, Pan-Africanism was “one river with many streams and currents”<sup>13</sup> and included diverse and opposing views.

Between 1919 and 1945, Du Bois organised five Pan African Congresses. Meanwhile, African-American and Afro-French journals like *The Crisis*, *Negro World*, *Le Libéré*, *Les Continents* and *La Race Nègre* gradually made the Pan-Africanist debate visible and extended it to the Atlantic world.

This Pan-Africanist “river” connecting both sides of the Black Atlantic showed interest in India’s struggle for independence and was seemingly captivated by Gandhi’s personality.<sup>14</sup>

In *Pan-Africanism or Communism?*, George Padmore recognised Du Bois's central role in the Pan-Africanism of the first half of the 20th century.<sup>15</sup> In 1945, the fifth Pan-African Congress, pragmatically oriented to African liberation struggles, discussed "the applicability of Gandhian non-violent, non-co-operative techniques to the African situation"<sup>16</sup> and contributed to defining the "programme of Positive Action, based on the Gandhist technique of non-violent non-co-operation."<sup>17</sup> "Weapons" like "the strike and the boycott" adopted by Gandhi, and then by Kwame Nkrumah, were said to be "invincible."<sup>18</sup>

Padmore reported Nkrumah's radiophonic discourse to encourage "Africans in other parts of the Continent to follow the footsteps of the Gold Coast along the road of non-violent revolution."<sup>19</sup> According to Padmore, Nkrumah's movement was "the first victory for the ideology of Pan-Africanism [that] proved definitely the effectiveness of [...] non-violent methods."<sup>20</sup> As Padmore wrote:

[Nkrumah] called upon the supporters of the Convention People's Party to register their protest in the form of a non-violent, non-co-operation campaign backed by Positive Action. The satyagraha methods introduced into Indian politics by Mahatma Gandhi had been discussed at the Fifth Pan-African Congress and endorsed as the only effective means of making alien rulers respect the wishes of an unarmed subject people.<sup>21</sup>

Apparently, Padmore fell into contradiction when praising both Mau Mau revolutionaries and Gandhian non-violence.<sup>22</sup> Hence, we should read a precise aim between the lines of Padmore's references to the Indian leader. The fifth Pan-African congress was held when Gandhi's anticolonial movement was experiencing its heyday, boosting colonised peoples' hopes that a white power could be overthrown. Padmore was writing in the years when, in the wake of India's independence, Kwame Nkrumah's Positive Action was inspiring Pan-Africanists. In light of this, references to Gandhi's non-violence were part of a pragmatic calculus within Padmore's Pan-Africanist rhetoric,<sup>23</sup> albeit Gandhi's nationalism and Gandhi's critique of modern civilisation were incongruent with Padmore's ideas.<sup>24</sup> Gandhi's movement was chosen as a model for representing the Pan-Africanist struggle, inspired by a tactical interpretation of Gandhian non-violence. This is an example of selective reading and we will notice this in the use of Gandhi's example that we find in the Pan-Africanist debate between 1919 and 1945.

### **Gandhi and Garveyism**

The first African-American intellectual who mentioned Gandhi in his speeches was presumably Hubert Harrison.<sup>25</sup> Even though he supported armed self-defence, Harrison spoke about Gandhi as "the greatest, most

unselfish and powerful leader in the modern world.”<sup>26</sup> Harrison’s interest in Gandhi should be dated back to *New Negro*’s first issue, where he related Gandhi’s swadeshi movement to an internationalism that unified all non-white people’s struggles.<sup>27</sup>

Marcus Garvey, the founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), was more than influenced by Hubert Harrison.<sup>28</sup> In Harrison’s words, “Garvey appropriated every feature that was worthwhile in his movement,”<sup>29</sup> and it is plausible to think that Garvey adopted also Harrison’s references to Gandhi in his speeches.<sup>30</sup> On several occasions, Garvey reported Gandhi’s experience and India’s freedom movement to strengthen his argumentation on the unity of “all Negroes.”<sup>31</sup> He linked India’s anti-colonial movement to the African Americans’ “destiny” of “a free and redeemed Africa.”<sup>32</sup> What emerges in Garvey’s speeches is the representation of Gandhi as a “sainted leader,” which reflected the style used by other Western followers of Gandhi.<sup>33</sup>

The *Negro World* covered Gandhi’s arrest in March, 1922, and published Gandhi’s speech delivered before being sentenced.<sup>34</sup> Garvey referred to him as “one of the noblest characters” of the present time.<sup>35</sup> At the New York UNIA congress, he declared:

India has a great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who has been arrested for supporting the cause of 380 million Indians – the cause of his country’s freedom. He was arrested by a foreign government that [is trying] to destroy the freedom of 380 million people. For twenty-five years Gandhi has been agitating the cause of his countrymen [...]. Gandhi’s arrest is nothing unexpected [...]. Leadership means sacrifice; leadership means martyrdom.<sup>36</sup>

In 1922, Garvey invited Haridas Muzumdar, an Indian member of the non-co-operation movement to occasionally give a speech on Gandhi.<sup>37</sup> At the UNIA conventions, Muzumdar’s voice from India was presumably useful to Garvey for highlighting the link between the Gandhian mass movement and Garveyism.

Garvey addressed an open letter to the “nonviolence leader” in which he expressed his solidarity: “Please accept the best wishes of 400,000,000 Negroes through us, their representatives, for the rapid emancipation of India from foreign oppression. You can count on us for any help we can give.”<sup>38</sup>

Gandhi, in May 1926, thanked Garvey’s wife, for sending him the volume *Philosophy and Opinions* by Marcus Garvey.<sup>39</sup> According to Robert Hill, Garvey’s choice of the title was oriented to associating himself with Gandhi’s personality and highlighting the connection between Gandhi’s and African-diasporic people’s struggles.<sup>40</sup>

Garvey admired Gandhi as a great leader, yet this did not prevent him from renouncing his call for an armed struggle, nor abandoning his militant tone.<sup>41</sup> In Garvey’s political rhetoric, Gandhi was exalted as a model

of leadership, his struggle as a model of mass movement. Nonetheless, Garvey's solidarity was more based on a plan of nationalist ideas and common experience of defiance of the white establishment.

### Gandhi and Francophone Pan-Africanism

Among the bilingual African-French journals active in the 1920s, *Le Libéré* and *Les Continents* paid attention to the Gandhian experiments. The director, Kojo Tovalou Houénou from Dahomey, was known to be as the African French Garvey.<sup>42</sup> Founder of the *Ligue Universelle pour la Défense de la Race Noire*, Houénou attended the UNIA congresses in Chicago and Philadelphia in 1924, and for this reason he was persecuted in France.<sup>43</sup> Articles published in his journal gave different perspectives on Gandhi, from sacral evocations of a Saint to the deconstruction of the same aura of sanctity.

The future is prefigured in a prophetic and diasporic fashion in the article *En lisant Gandhi*, written by Houénou's main collaborator, René Maran:

Et il en sera ainsi jusqu'à l'heure où un nouveau Gandhi pourra joindre en faisceau toutes ces forces éparses. Car toutes ces races soumises à un destin obscur, auront un jour ou l'autre le Gandhi qui leur est dû. Leur salut est dans le gandhisme intégral. Seule la méthode de non-coopération parviendra à réduire l'orgueil de l'Européen, à le mener à composition.<sup>44</sup>

Gandhi is depicted as a Saint in the article *Figures D'Asie*, presumably written by the same Maran: "Si Gandhi est dieu, [Romain Rolland] c'est à force d'être apôtre."<sup>45</sup>

The article goes on describing Gandhi's exceptional qualities:

L'Inde l'a surnommé Mahatma la Grande Âme [...]. L'esprit seul est maître, la souffrance seule est souveraine, et par trois fois il vient de le prouver en figeant l'Inde entière dans la non-coopération. Il abomine la violence, il exécra la démagogie, 'Non-violence oppose toute la force de l'âme à la volonté du tyran.' Un seul homme peut ainsi défier un empire et provoquer sa chute [...]. Et où puise-t-il tant de surhumaine et généreuse révolte? Dans sa souffrance, la *grande loi* [...].<sup>46</sup>

*Les Continents* updated its readers on the events in India, expressing solidarity for Gandhi's politics and fasts.<sup>47</sup>

In this same journal, the Indian nationalist Tristao de Braganza Cunha outlined the Indian leader in a more pragmatic way:

Une curieuse déformation due sans doute à l'éloignement veut que celui qui a conçu la tactique de la Désobéissance Civile soit un mystique et un utopiste. [...] Ce n'est que la lecture superficielle de ses écrits que



peuvent faire croire, à cause des fréquents arguments d'ordre religieux, qu'il est un apôtre religieux agissant en vue de grande bulle humanitaire. [...] La Non-Violence [...] dont la légende s'est emparée pour faire de Gandhi un nouveau Christ ou un Bouddha n'est d'après son propre aveu, qu'une forme de tactique imposé aux Indous par la dure nécessité des circonstances. Elle est un moyen de lutte accessible aux peuples désarmés pour se défendre contre la puissance des armes de leurs dominateurs.<sup>48</sup>

Lamine Senghor, French Pan-African intellectual, promoted a more radical view. Founder of the *Comité de défense de la race nègre*, Senghor attended the League against Imperialism in Brussels, in which Jawaharlal Nehru took part as the Indian Congress spokesperson and to which Gandhi sent a solidarity message.<sup>49</sup> Inspired by Marcus Garvey, Lamine Senghor had a different vision about Gandhian non-violence. He expressed a complete refusal of Gandhi's example, as totally unfeasible in the French colonies. He wrote: "Nous nous souviendrons toujours qu'un Mahatma Gandhi n'aurait jamais le droit à la vie libre dans une colonie française."<sup>50</sup>

Close to the French Communist Party (PCF), the periodical *Le Paria* criticised Gandhi's methods for being too bland, his non-violence a synonym of resignation. In the article "La Leçon du Gandhisme," Gandhi's tactics are described as founded on a "principe abstraite."<sup>51</sup> The non-violent methods are mostly criticised because considered inefficacious if compared to direct-action: "La politique de Gandhi [...] a permis aux Anglais de renforcer leur puissance impérialiste."<sup>52</sup> "L'erreur politique de Gandhi se répare maintenant par la seule manière d'obtenir la libération d'un pays asservi: la lutte armée."<sup>53</sup>

Thus, in the late 1920s, the African French journals gave visibility to Gandhi both as a model and as anti-model, and mirrored the American Pan-Africanist discourse on Gandhi, in a multifaceted debate. This was possible also because the African French intellectuals were interpreters of Pan-Africanism, and there was a fruitful dialogue between the two sides of the Atlantic.<sup>54</sup>

### **Gandhi and Du Bois's Pan-Afro-Asianism**

Du Bois's life-long attention to Asia, as confirmed by a number of writings on China, India and Japan, is part of his Pan-Africanist world view.<sup>55</sup> Wilson Jeremiah Moses stated that Du Bois "perceived the geographic centrality of Africa as both a doorway to and a barrier between the Atlantic, and the Indian Oceans."<sup>56</sup> Du Bois's writings on Asia must be related to his Pan-Africanist engagement, in an internationalist perspective that envisioned a world-scale liberation for all nonwhite peoples.<sup>57</sup>

Du Bois was in contact with Indian intellectuals linked to India's anti-colonial movement, such as Sarojini Naidu, Lal Lajpat Rai and Gandhi who



was, according to Bill Mullen, “the international leader of the 20th century with whom Du Bois felt the closest kinship.”<sup>58</sup>

Du Bois published several articles in which he emphasised Gandhi’s exceptionality and high morality. For example, he wrote:

India has been called a land of Saints, the home of religions [...]; she produces in our own time a man who from sheer impeccability of character, and extraordinary personality, and from loftiness and originality of doctrine and ideas, takes rank at once among the great men of the world whose mark is high enough to make for them a permanent niche in the repository of the benefactors of mankind. No man [...] can fail to take notice of this exceptional soul [...] destined to make a significant contribution to the very human effort [...] to get himself out of the encircling gloom into the promised land.<sup>59</sup>

According to Du Bois, Gandhi was “destined to perennial glory.”<sup>60</sup> He used biblical terms, writing: “Behold a man who has the great ancient India at his feet [...] a man who professes to love his enemies,”<sup>61</sup> and he also wrote: “The Saint, or Mahatma (Gandhi) has India at his feet.”<sup>62</sup>

Du Bois absorbed the trope of a “sainted Gandhi” in the typical wait for a “black messiah” in the African-American jeremiad.<sup>63</sup> His tactical construction of Gandhi as a “sainted leader,” and his “racial romanticised” picture of a spiritual-oriented India and Gandhi’s superior morality sought to subvert the dominant Western discourse. Mullen coined the concept of “Afro-Orientalism” in order to describe Du Bois’s intellectual – though romanticised – interest in Asia. Afro-Orientalism is a “counter-discourse to modernity”<sup>64</sup> that should be read through the lens of Gayatri Spivak’s notion of strategic essentialism because it strategically adopts the Western concepts of race and ethnicity to foster a discourse with which to oppose the Western hegemonic one.<sup>65</sup>

### **The colour line within the colour line**

In 1931, the *Negro Worker* published the article “Who is this Gandhi?,” written by the Indian revolutionary Shapurji Saklatvala. Delegate of the Communist Party of Great Britain at the Second Pan-African Congress in Paris,<sup>66</sup> Saklatvala dismantled the “bourgeois construction” of a “divine being,” overtly denouncing Gandhi’s separatist policy in South Africa:

[Gandhi] never made the slightest attempt socially and politically to unite the Negroes and the Indians together for the overthrow of the white man’s tyranny. He cultivated a separatist mentality among the Indian based on religious superstition [...], he sang songs of praise for the British Empire, and [...] left the poor Negroes alone. [...] He ignored the fact that South Africa belongs to the negroes [...].<sup>67</sup>

Gandhi's experience in South Africa was known among some thinkers involved in the earlier Pan-Africanist debate, like Henry S. Williams and John Dube. During the following decades, it is plausible that Gandhi's racial discrimination in South Africa was acknowledged among a wider group of African and Afro-descendant intellectuals.<sup>68</sup> Even though Du Bois did not directly address Gandhi's racism, he was up to date about the argument used by several Indian intellectuals to emphasise their "Aryan descentance" in order to distinguish themselves from the "negro race,"<sup>69</sup> which was the same one adopted by Gandhi.<sup>70</sup> On the contrary, Du Bois addressed Indian readers' attention to the global struggle that divided humanity along the "colour line" and gave a more elastic and political meaning to the category of "blackness."<sup>71</sup> White supremacy was the common enemy that divided nonwhite peoples scattered all over the world, and India's struggle for independence was chosen a symbol of this "clash of colour." The "perpendicular fissure" that divided the world into a "white and black hemisphere"<sup>72</sup> extended the latter to African and Asian peoples. From this perspective we should read Du Bois's writings on Gandhi and Asia, with which he bridged all nonwhite peoples' aims, whose non-whiteness was the metonymy standing for a common front against white supremacism.

Du Bois believed that a solidarity against racism, colonialism and imperialism was stronger than particularism. Moreover, he was convinced of the great symbolic value of interweaving African Americans' and Africans' fights for freedom with Gandhi's anti-colonial movement.

Hence, W.E.B. Du Bois proposed the example of Gandhi to the readers of the NAACP press, and Marcus Garvey expressed his admiration for the leader of non-violence in his speeches at the UNIA conventions. Black journals on both sides of the Atlantic have brought to their readers' attention the successes and limits of the Gandhian movement, and they have consequently presented a mixed and ambivalent reception of the Gandhian model. The various expressions of Pan-Africanism gave different interpretations to Gandhi's thoughts and deeds. The creation of a parallelism between white supremacy in the US and British Imperialism helped highlight Gandhi's leadership as a model. Furthermore, it enabled black intellectuals to trace a link that connected African Americans, African-French people and Africans, and more extensively, also all the non-white peoples subjugated by white supremacy, according to Du Bois's "colour line." Gandhi was used as a strategic symbol that strengthened the black political discourse. African and African-diasporic intellectuals were certainly aware of the internal fractures and divisions that complicated the global frame: Dubosian and Garveyite pan-Africanisms were opposed to each other, whereas a Communist-oriented Pan-Africanism made its way, dialoguing with the Communist International, and the League against Imperialism.<sup>73</sup> In this complex framework of hierarchies, idiosyncrasies but also solidarities, the differences and similarities in the use of Gandhi as a political trope highlighted multifaceted perspectives. Gandhi is represented as a saint, or

a model of leadership, his non-violence is exalted as well as his virtues. Less frequently, his tactics are considered pragmatic and transferrable; few references not critical of his separatist policy were made to Gandhi's experience in South Africa. The crossroad of Gandhi's, John L. Dube's and Henry Sylvester Williams's South Africa, where the Black Atlantic and the Indian Ocean intersect, was the site where "alternative discourses emerged, leading to the creation of alternative modernities"<sup>74</sup> that the pan-Africanist debate, in the following decades, would have contributed to shape. Rather than pointing a spotlight on Gandhi's racism, which may have resulted counter-productive in a Pan-Africanist debate, black intellectuals preferred to gloss over his separatist policy in South Africa and consider him as a "brother of colour" who demonstrated that white supremacy can be subverted. Gandhi had shown the weaknesses of the white establishment in India and had shaken the basis of Imperialism. On the other hand, the construction of his exceptionality and "sanctity" had furnished a counter-narrative, which subverted the white man's burden narrative – the white moral imperative of civilisation. Through the prism of a strategic essentialism, Gandhi's example, with his non-violent principle, could be used to tactically demonstrate the moral superiority of colonised peoples. It follows that Gandhi was used as a "trope" to carve out a Pan-Africanist discourse in a global defiance against the white establishment.

## Notes

- 1 William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *Dark Princess. A Romance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16. See also Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, *The South African Gandhi. Stretcher-Bearer of Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).
- 2 See, for example, Gandhi's "Speech at Public Meeting in Bombay," September 26, 1896, occasion in which he asserted that whites in Natal wanted to "degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness," in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* [CWMG] Vol. 1 (New Delhi: Publication Division Government of India, 1999), 410.
- 3 In Sherwood's words: "Gandhi's attitude towards Africans is further demonstrated in his *Autobiography*: about half of the 454 pages of his deal with South Africa, but Africans are only mentioned three times." Marika Sherwood, *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa, and the African Diaspora* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 139; Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography. The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (London: Penguin, 1982). Isabel Hofmeyr and Joseph Lelyveld also confirm that Gandhi rarely mentioned the names of native South Africans. See Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press. Experiments in Slow Reading* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), and Joseph Lelyveld, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).
- 4 Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, *The Land Is Ours. South Africa's First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism* (Cape Town: Penguin Books, 2018), 70.

- 5 In *Indian Opinion* (September 2, 1905), Gandhi wrote that Dube was “an African whom one should know.” Years later, in 1912, Gandhi published an extract of Dube’s speech, in *Indian Opinion*, February 10, 1912. In Gandhi’s writings, we can find some quotations about Booker T. Washington, the African-American President of Tuskegee College, Alabama. See for example the long article “From Slave to College President,” *Indian Opinion*, September 10, 1903, in CWMG, Vol. 3, 237–40.
- 6 See Desai-Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, 303.
- 7 Hofmeyr, *Gandhi’s Printing Press*, 11.
- 8 See Desai-Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, 303–4.
- 9 See M. Desai, “With Our Negro Guests,” *Harijan*, 4, March 14, 1936, in Walter Fluker, ed. *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman*, Vol. 1. *My People Need Me*, June 1918–March 1936 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 332–7.
- 10 In 2018, protests demanded the removal of “racist Gandhi’s” statues at the University of Ghana, and in 2019 similar demands were manifested in the streets of Manchester. Michael Safi, “Statue of ‘racist’ Gandhi removed from University of Ghana,” *The Guardian*, December 14, 2018; Maya Wolfe-Robinson, “Manchester Council Urged to Reject Statue of ‘Anti-Black Racist’ Gandhi,” *The Guardian*, October 17, 2019.
- 11 Du Bois, *Dusk of a Dawn* (Milwood: Kraus-Thomson, 1989), 261. On that same occasion, even Gandhi could not take part, because Satyendra Prasanno Sinha and the Maharaja of Bikanir were delegated to represent India, but were not recognized by Gandhi, nor Tilak. In March 1919, the Raj approved the Rowlatt Act, to which Gandhi reacted with his non-cooperation campaign.
- 12 See Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism. A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); Kwadwo Pobi-Asamani, *W.E.B. Du Bois: His Contribution to Pan-Africanism* (San Bernardino, CA: The Borgo, 1994); W. Rucker, “A Negro Nation Within the Nation?: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Creation of a Revolutionary Pan-Africanist Tradition, 1903–1947,” *The Black Scholar*, 32, No. 3/4, 2002, 37–46; Wilson J. Moses, “Africa and Pan-Africanism in the Thought of Du Bois,” in S. Zamir (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to W.E.B. Du Bois* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 117–30.
- 13 Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 4.
- 14 See Anil Naurya, *The African Element in Gandhi* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2006); Id., “Gandhi and West Africa. Exploring the Affinities,” *The Wire*, November 5, 2016; Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer, *Guns and Gandhi in Africa. Pan African Insights on Nonviolence, Armed Struggle and Liberation in Africa* (Trenton and Asmara: Africa World Press, 2000).
- 15 Padmore recognized Du Bois’s “devotion and sacrifice [...] for the organization of five international congresses and for formulating their programmes and strategy along the path of non-violent Positive Action.”, see George Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa* (London: Dobson, 1985), 118.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 150.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 151.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*, 185.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 178.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 177.
- 22 For example, Padmore wrote: “the delegates believe in peace [...] Yet if the Western world is still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom, even if force

- destroys them and the world [...]. We will fight in every way we can for freedom, democracy and social betterment,” *Pan-Africanism or Communism?*, 170. See also Leslie James, *George Padmore and Decolonization from Below. Pan-Africanism, the Cold War, and the End of Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
- 23 See Padmore, *How Britain Rules Africa* (London: Wishart Books, 1936), 362.
- 24 George Shepperson and St. Clare Drake, “The Fifth Pan-African Conference, 1945, and the All African Peoples Congress, 1958,” *Contributions in Black Studies*, 8, No. 1, 1986, 36–66.
- 25 See Surdashaan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet. The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), and Vijay Prashad, “Black Gandhi,” *Social Scientist*, 37, No. 1/2, (January – February 2009), 3–20.
- 26 Hubert Harrison, “The Brown Man Leads the Way,” *Negro World*, 11 (October 29, 1921), 8.
- 27 Harrison, “Our Larger Duty,” *New Negro*, 3 (August 1919), 5.
- 28 Jeffrey B. Perry, *Hubert Harrison. The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883–1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
- 29 Hubert Harrison, “Marcus Garvey at the Bar of United States of Justice,” *Associated Negro Press* (July 1923) in Perry, ed. *A Hubert Harrison Reader* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 197.
- 30 Edmund David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1974); Adi, *Pan-Africanism*.
- 31 Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 29.
- 32 Marcus Garvey, “Speech,” January 8, 1922, in Robert A. Hill, ed. *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. IV (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 338.
- 33 One of the first biographies of Gandhi was written by Romain Rolland, first published in three parts in *Europe* between March and May 1923, and in a unique volume the following year. See Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1924), translated into English by C. P. Groth, see *Mahatma Gandhi: The Man Who Became One with the Universal Being* (New York: Verso, 1924). This was a seminal work for many who adopted the same religious tones to highlight Gandhi’s spirituality. John Haynes Holmes was one of the first (white) Americans who spoke about Gandhi in his sermons, and it is likely that it was during Holmes’s sermons that Du Bois heard about Gandhi for the first time. See John Haynes Holmes, “Mahatma Gandhi: Who Is the Greatest Man in the World Today?” *The Community Pulpit*, April 10, 1921, in Haridas Muzumdar, ed. *The Enduring Greatness of Gandhi. An American Estimate. Being the Sermons of Dr John Haynes Holmes and Dr Donald S. Harrington* (Amhedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1982); Enuga Sreenivasulu Reddy, ed. *Mahatma Gandhi. Letters to Americans* (New York: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1998).
- 34 Convention Reports, New York, August 16, 1922, Garvey, “Speech,” *Negro World*, May 6, 1922, in Hill ed. *The Marcus Garvey*, 891.
- 35 Garvey, “Speech,” March 12, 1922, in Hill. ed. *The Marcus Garvey*, 567.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Muzumdar, “Gandhi the Apostle of Freedom,” *Negro World*, May 6, 1922.
- 38 Garvey, “Letter to Mahatma Gandhi,” *Negro World*, August 9, 1924.
- 39 Gandhi to Amy Ashwood Garvey, May 12, 1926, in Reddy, ed. *Letters to Americans*, 218.
- 40 Robert Hill, Introduction to *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 10 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), lxxxiii.

- 41 For example, Garvey wrote: “You will realize that liberty and democracy are very expensive things, and you have to give life for it. And if we Negroes think that we can get all these things without the shedding of blood for them we are making a dreadful mistake. You are not going to get anything unless you organize to fight for it [...] to get liberty you have to shed some blood for it. [T]hat blood we are preparing to shed one day on the African battlefield, because it is the determination of the New Negro to re-possess himself of that country that God gave his forefathers,” in Garvey, “The New Negro and the U.N.I.A. (1919),” *Newport News*, October 25, 1919, in Henry Louis Gates Jr. – Gene Andrew Jarrett, ed. *The New Negro. Readings on Race, Representation, and African American Culture, 1892–1938* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 92–3.
- 42 David Murphy, “Tirailleur, facteur, anticolonialiste: la courte vie militante de Lamine Senghor (1924–1927),” *Cahiers d’Histoire. Revue d’Histoire Critique*, 126, 2015, 55–72. For an overall reconstruction of Gandhi’s influence in France, see Marie-France Latronche, *L’Influence de Gandhi en France. De 1919 à nos jours* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), and Anil Nauriya, “Freedom, Race, and Francophonie: Gandhi and the Construction of Peoplehood,” *Identity, Culture, and Politics*, 10, No. 2, 2009, 78–95.
- 43 “Au Congrès de l’U.N.A.I.,” *Les Continents*, September 15, 1924.
- 44 “En lisant Gandhi,” *Le Libéré. Tribune du Peuple Malgache*, January 15, 1924.
- 45 “Figures D’Asie,” *Les Continents*, May 15, 1925, 2.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 47 “Ghandi a Terminer Son Jeune,” *Les Continents*, October 15, 1925 (It is not unusual to see the misspelling of Gandhi’s name, which is an index of the slightly superficial knowledge of Gandhi and the Gandhian movement, especially in the 1920s). See also “Gandhi Adhère Dans l’Inde au Mouvement Séparatiste,” *Les Continents*, November 15, 1925. “Asie. Le mouvement Gandhiste,” *Les Continents*, July 15, 1924.
- 48 Tristao de Braganza Cunha, “Vers l’Independence de l’Inde,” *Les Continents*, June 15, 1924. It was very likely Cunha provided Romain Rolland with the details about Gandhi’s movement for his biography.
- 49 Lamine Senghor, *La Violation d’un pays et Autres Écrits Anticolonialistes* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2012); Fredrick Petersson, “La Ligue Anti-Impérialiste: Un Espace Transnational Restreint, 1927–1937,” *Monde(s)*, 2, No. 10, 2016, 129–50.
- 50 Senghor “La Générosité Française sous la III<sup>e</sup> République,” *La Race Nègre*, September, 1927.
- 51 “La Leçon du Gandhisme,” *Le Paria*, March–April, 1924.
- 52 “Gandhi Felicité,” *Le Paria*, May–June, 1924.
- 53 A. K. Fauladi, “Un Grand Révolutionnaire Hindou, M. N. Roy,” *Le Paria*, April–May, 1925.
- 54 See Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora. Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
- 55 See Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson, ed. *W.E.B. Du Bois on Asia. Crossing the World Color Line* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005). See also Du Bois, “Gandhi and India,” *The Crisis*, March 1922; *Id.*, “Nerhu,” *Phylon*, 4, No. 1 (1943), 89–91; *Id.*, “Gandhi and American Negroes,” *Gandhi Marg*, 1, No. 3, July 1957; *Id.*, “India,” *Freedomways*, 5, No. 1, Winter 1965.
- 56 Moses, “Africa and Pan-Africanism,” 118.
- 57 Mullen and Watson (ed.) *Du Bois on Asia*.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 59 Du Bois, “Gandhi and India,” *The Crisis*, 5, March 1922, 203–5.



- 60 Ibid., 205.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 David Howard-Pitney, *African American Jeremiad Rev: Appeals for Justice in America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2005).
- 64 Bill Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
- 65 Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism*, 12. On Spivak's notion of strategic essentialism, see Gayatri C. Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution," interview with E. Gross, *Thesis Eleven*, 10/11, November-March, 1984–1985, 183, and Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. Ed. by Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- 66 Adi, *Pan-Africanism*, 51.
- 67 Shapurji Saklatvala, "Who Is This Gandhi?," *Labour Monthly*, 12, No. 7, July 1930. Re-published in *The Negro Worker*, 1, No. 3, March 1931, 4–6.
- 68 It is meaningful to recall here that Howard Thurman's first question to Gandhi addressed the issue of Gandhi's exclusion of African natives from his struggle in South Africa, see Fluker, ed. *The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman*, 332–7.
- 69 See Du Bois, "The Clash of Colour. Indians and American Negroes," *The Aryan Path*, March 8, 1936, 111–15.
- 70 See for example Gandhi's *Open Letter to the Hon. Members of the Hon. Legislative Council*, Durban, December 19, 1984, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 1. Electronic book (New Delhi: Publications Division Government of India, 1999), 192–3. See also Desai and Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*.
- 71 Du Bois wrote: "[India] has long wished to regard herself as 'Aryan' rather than 'coloured' and to think of herself as much nearer physically and spiritually to Germany and England than to Africa, China, or the South Seas. And yet the history of the modern world shows the futility of this thought. European exploitation desires the Black slave, the Chinese coolie and the Indian labourer for the same ends and the same purposes, and calls them all 'niggers.' [...] The problem of the Negroes thus remains a part of the worldwide clash of colour. So, too, the problem of the Indians can never be simply a problem of autonomy in the British Commonwealth of Nations. They must always stand as representatives of the coloured races – of the yellow and black people as well as the brown – of the majority of mankind, and together with the Negroes they must face the insistent problem of the assumption of the white peoples of Europe that they have a right to dominate the world and especially so to organize it politically and industrially as to make most men their slaves and servants" Du Bois, "The Clash of Colour," 115.
- 72 Du Bois, "The Afro-American," *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 2, No. 1, 2010, 2.
- 73 See Adi, *West Africans in Britain: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism, 1900–1960* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998); Id., *Pan-Africanism and Communism: the Communist International, Africa, and the Diaspora, 1919–1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013); Fabian Krautwald, Thomas Lindner, and Sakiko Nakao, "Fighting Marginality: The Global Moment of 1917–1919 and the Re-Imagination of Belonging," *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, 18, 2018.
- 74 Rachel Matteau Matsha, "Mapping an Interoceanic Landscape: Dube and Gandhi in Early 20th Century Durban, South Africa," *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 27, No. 2, 2014, 239.

### 3 Gandhi's Legacy in South Africa through literature and arts

*Carmen Concilio*

The present contribution aims at winding Gandhi's South African years backwards, by looking at both literary and artistic representations of Gandhi's legacy, while moving back to his early years in the country, as if through an inverted telescope.

To begin with, it is worth noting that in his latest novel, *Quichotte* (2019), Salman Rushdie writes about "Indian immigrants – many of them familiar with white British racism in South Africa."<sup>1</sup> This is more or less what 24-year-old Gandhi experienced when he first arrived in Durban, Natal, South Africa, in 1893.

On 27 May 2019, artist Ravi Agarwal was a guest at the University of Turin to present his own exhibition *Ecologies of Loss*, and he mentioned a previous work of his own, included in the 2011 New Delhi Exhibition on "Tolstoy Farm: Archives of Utopia," featuring paintings, mixed media art, photos, videos and installations by 17 Indian artists, all meant to celebrate the centenary of the Gandhian institution (1910–14), as well as Gandhi's ideals and principles. This exhibition shows to what an extent the memory and the legacy of the Mahatma Gandhi is still alive in India.

Ravi Agarwal showed a picture of what remains of Tolstoy Farm today: "The farm outside Johannesburg is today a part of a brick-making company and is lying unused."<sup>2</sup> One more reference to Gandhi is to be found in 2006 when Ivan Vladislavić wrote his non-fiction *Portrait with Keys. The City of Johannesburg Unlocked*, recording his *flanerie(s)* in the streets of the city and pointing out how Gandhi's house was contested between two street addresses<sup>3</sup>:

For years, we knew the double-storey at the bottom of Albemarle Street as the Gandhi House. In the decade before the Great War, we'd been told, Gandhi lived here with his family. Now the house has lost its claim on history (but not its plaque from the National Monuments Council). An enterprising researcher, with nothing to gain by this unmasking except the truth, has shown that Gandhi did not live here after all, but up the road at No. 11. One of Gandhi descendants, who visited the house as a child, has provided confirmation. The people at No. 11 should have the plaque moved to their wall.<sup>4</sup>



This anecdote, trivial and ironic as it is, shows post-apartheid South Africa at work with its historic memories and its renewed care for monumental heritage. Indeed, Gandhi shared a house on Albermarle Street with the Polaks, a married couple of very close friends, before moving to another house, known as “the Kraal.”<sup>5</sup> It was originally designed and built by the German architect Hermann Kallenbach as a domestic home. There, Gandhi had lived with his best friends, Hermann Kallenbach, with whom he created “a two-men ashram,” and also with a married couple, the Polaks, in 1908–09, after the first *satyagraha* of 1906–07.<sup>6</sup> In 2011, the house was bought by a French enterprise and was transformed into both a museum – which includes commemorative documentation on Gandhi’s spiritual and intellectual life, in India and South Africa – and a luxury guesthouse, in Orchards, Johannesburg, under the name of Satyagraha House.

A Gandhi statue which “in Pietermaritzburg commemorates the May 1893 incident when he was thrown off the train *en route* to Pretoria”<sup>7</sup> has been uncovered in 1993 by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a hundred years after the event took place. Moreover, the central Johannesburg area, the CBD, where he regularly appeared in court, has been called – since 2002 – Gandhi square and a Gandhi statue has been unveiled there, too.

The history of and the cultural matrix behind new museums and memorials in post-apartheid South Africa related to the figure of the Mahatma Gandhi would deserve a study of their own. All mentioned examples testify South Africa’s need to look for exemplary models in leaders who could stand out as symbolising and promoting peace and non-violence.

Moreover, it is Gandhi’s spiritual and ethical heritage that is at stake here. Thus, in order to assess Gandhi’s moral legacy in South Africa, the best thing to do is to turn to Nelson Mandela’s biography *Long Walk to Freedom*, published in 1994. In that text, the first instance of Gandhi’s relevance is related to the Asiatic Land Tenure Act that the Jan Smuts’ United Party government passed in 1946. To such restrictions on movement, trade, residence and right to buy property and the possibility to be represented in Parliament by token white surrogates, the Indian community led by Dr. Dadoo, president of the Transvaal Indian Congress, responded by rejecting this law, known as “Ghetto Act,” and as a “grave insult to the Indian community.” They also opposed its representation as “a spurious offer of a sham franchise.”<sup>8</sup> Nelson Mandela writes in admiration:

The Indian community was outraged and launched a concerted two-year campaign of passive resistance to oppose the measures. Led by Dr Dadoo and Dr G.M. Naicker, president of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), the Indian community conducted a mass campaign that impressed us with its organization and dedication. Housewives, priests, doctors, lawyers, traders, students and workers took their place in the front lines of the protest. For two years people suspended their lives to take up the battle. Mass rallies were held; land reserved for whites was

occupied and picketed. No fewer than 2,000 volunteers went to jail, and Dr Dadoo and Dr Naicker were sentenced to six months' hard labour.<sup>9</sup>

Nelson Mandela goes on: "we in the Youth League and the ANC had witnessed the Indian people register an extraordinary protest against colour oppression in a way that Africans and the ANC had not."<sup>10</sup> All this to the point that the Indian community was taken as a model: "The Indian campaign harkened back the 1913 passive resistance campaign in which Mahatma Gandhi led a tumultuous procession of Indians crossing illegally from Natal to the Transvaal. That was history: this campaign was taking place before my own eyes."<sup>11</sup>

A second step in which Gandhi and Gandhian principles were evoked was the moment Apartheid gave way to the promulgation of racial laws: The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949; The Immorality Act, The Population and Registration Act, labelling all South Africans in terms of race and colour and finally The Group Areas Act (1950), introduced by the then Prime Minister Malan as "'The very essence of Apartheid' – requiring separate urban areas for each racial group. In the past, whites took land by force; now they secured it by legislation."<sup>12</sup> Nelson Mandela records in his autobiography:

At the ANC annual conference in Bloemfontein, the organization adopted the league's Programme of action, which called for boycotts, strikes, stay-at-homes, passive resistance, protest demonstrations and other forms of mass action. [...] We explained the time had come for mass action along the lines of Gandhi's non-violent protests in India and the 1946 passive resistance campaign, [...] The ANC leaders, we said, had to be willing to violate the law and if necessary go to prison for their beliefs as Gandhi had.<sup>13</sup>

Later, in 1950, The Suppression of Communism Act was passed together with two more laws, recognised as the "cornerstones of Apartheid": The Population Registration Act and The Group Areas Act. In 1952, the ANC launched a Campaign for Defiance of Unjust Laws.<sup>14</sup> The ANC wrote a petition to Dr Malan, affirming "ANC had exhausted every constitutional means at our disposal to achieve our legitimate rights," adding: "we demanded the repeal of the six 'unjust laws' by 29 February 1952, or else we would take extra-constitutional action."<sup>15</sup> Dr. Malan answered that "whites had an inherent right to take measures to preserve their own identity as a separate community" and threatened violent actions against the riotous. Once again, the ANC's call to action took inspiration from Gandhi:

We also discussed whether the campaign should follow the Gandhian principles of non-violence of what the Mahatma called *satyagraha*, a non-violence that seeks to conquer through conversion. Some argued

for non-violence on purely ethical grounds, saying it was morally superior to any other method. This idea was strongly affirmed by Manilal Gandhi, the Mahatma's son and the editor of the newspaper *Indian Opinion*, who was a prominent member of the SAIC. With his gentle demeanour, Gandhi seemed the very personification of non-violence, and he insisted that the campaign be run along identical lines to that of his father's in India.<sup>16</sup>

Chief Luthuli, president of the Natal ANC, and Dr. Naicker, president of the Natal Indian Congress, both committed themselves to the campaign in a public rally in Durban.<sup>17</sup> In spite of all this, of all actions and commitments, Nelson Mandela soon lost hopes:

A police state did not seem far off.

I began to suspect that both legal and extra-constitutional protests would soon be impossible. In India, Gandhi had been dealing with a foreign power that ultimately was more realistic and far-sighted. That was not the case with the Afrikaners in South Africa. Non-violent passive resistance is effective as long as your opposition adheres to the same rules as you do. But if peaceful protest is met with violence, its efficacy is at an end.<sup>18</sup>

It must have been with a sunken heart that Nelson Mandela started cherishing the idea of an armed struggle<sup>19</sup> to the point of asking Walter Sisulu, on his trip abroad, to visit the People's Republic of China in the hope to obtain weapons for the liberation movement. His premonitions came true. He paid with imprisonment. While Chief Luthuli was assigned the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1960 for his non-violent commitment in the fight against Apartheid, Mandela had decided pragmatically that in case of failure of diplomatic and pacifist actions the armed struggle would be inevitable:

We took up the attitude that we would stick to non-violence only insofar as the conditions permitted that. Once the conditions were against that we would automatically abandon non-violence and use the methods which were dictated by the conditions. That was our approach. Our approach was to empower the organization to be *effective* in its leadership. And if the adoption of non-violence gave it that effectiveness, that efficiency, we would pursue non-violence. But if the condition shows that non-violence was not effective, we would use other means.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in spite of an ideological adhesion in principles, Mandela showed also a certain pragmatic distance from Gandhi's teachings. His last mention of Gandhi in his autobiography occurs with reference to Robben Island, his prison, where he and his companions launched a hunger strike, claiming "as

political prisoners we saw protest to alter prison conditions as an extension of the anti-apartheid struggle.”<sup>21</sup> Nelson Mandela writes:

I have always favoured a more active, militant style of protest such as work strikes, go-slow strikes, or refusing to clean up; actions that punished the authorities, not ourselves. [...] The advocates of hunger strikes argued that it was a traditionally accepted form of protest that had been waged all over the world by such prominent leaders as Mahatma Gandhi. Once the decision was taken, however, I would support it as wholeheartedly as any of its advocates.<sup>22</sup>

All the scholars who have tackled Gandhi's legacy in South Africa have appealed to Nelson Mandela's own assessments of the achievements of the man who had preceded him in South Africa's mobilisation of masses before World War I and who was still actively inspiring a parallel, successful liberation struggle in India till 1948, the year of his murder. Therefore I, too, had to start from here, from Nelson Mandela's words on how Gandhi had inspired him and his movement, the ANC, in the worst years of Apartheid.

It is nevertheless extremely relevant that in 2008, the most prominent among the African intellectuals of our time, Achille Mbembe co-edited a volume dedicated to *Johannesburg. The Elusive Metropolis*, hosting a chapter written by Jonathan Hyslop and entitled “Gandhi, Mandela and the African Modern.”<sup>23</sup> This is revealing in illustrating how the city of Johannesburg has been crucial to both Gandhi himself and his legacy.

In more detail, Hyslop attributes to Johannesburg the capacity to conflate both nationalism and cosmopolitanism in Gandhi's views, to the extent that “all the decisive developments in Gandhi's thought and politics took place in the metropolitan context of Johannesburg, between the end of that war and the beginning of the First World War.”<sup>24</sup> If in Natal, in the previous years, Gandhi was the spokesperson of an elite of Muslim merchants, in Johannesburg, he was surrounded by a mixed group of liberals: Henry Salomon Leon Polak from England, Hermann Kallenbach from Germany and his young white secretary Sonia Schlesin. His first 1906 campaign was promoted by a Muslim organisation that was, however, able to “reach out to Christians, Parsis and Hindus,”<sup>25</sup> in order to fight for the right to vote for Indians. This was the germ of what later would become properly *satyagraha* and included an oath to go to jail rather than surrender to unjust laws. This philosophy was based on the search for truth, based on rigid moral rectitude, and non-violent manifestations.

Another major impulse to Gandhi's philosophy came from a wave of Theosophism, which swept through Johannesburg as well as through London and Chicago in the early 20th century. Thanks to discussions with local theosophists, Gandhi took to studying the Hindu sacred texts, *The Bhagavad Gita*, that together with Ruskin's criticism of Western industrialism and

Tolstoyan principles helped Gandhi formulate and develop a philosophy of *satyagraha and ahimsa*.

Several scholars are keen to admit that South Africa gave more to Gandhi than Gandhi did to the country. South Africa provided fertile ground and traineeship to a young and inexperienced Gandhi, preparing him for spiritual and political leadership. In the words of the white liberal writer Alan Paton, “Gandhi’s twenty-one years in our country was an apprenticeship for the stupendous task he was to set himself, and that was nothing less than the liberation of India.”<sup>26</sup>

When Gandhi aged 24 arrived in South Africa, he met several humiliations: as a practicing lawyer, he was asked to take his turban off his head before the court, which he refused to do<sup>27</sup>; he was expelled from a train carriage when travelling first class with white people<sup>28</sup>; he was made to dangerously hang out of a coach for he was not allowed to sit inside with whites<sup>29</sup>; he had to ask special permission to dine in a hotel in the same dining room with whites.<sup>30</sup> But these were just anecdotal episodes that he stoically lived through.

Gandhi could not believe that those he called “British Indians,” that is to say citizens of the British Crown, could be mistreated like that. One of the political shortcomings that most critics and opponents accuse him of is his incapacity to match the situation of the African disempowered blacks and the South African Indians. When Claude Markovits wrote his essay *The Un-Gandhian Gandhi* in 2003,<sup>31</sup> he claimed that Gandhi’s South African years were a sort of black hole. Markovits probably referred not so much to factual reports about those years, for Gandhi’s own biography had circulated and had been translated in many languages. A proof is the Italian biographical edition of *Gandhi*, by Clemente Fusero (1968),<sup>32</sup> who dedicated half his volume to Gandhi’s juvenile years in South Africa. He, too, claimed a lack of attention by some biographers precisely on this phase of the Mahatma’s life. Most probably, Markovitz also referred to a lack of scholarly critical work of assessment of those years in Gandhi’s life and formation.

Much more recently, in 2015, the acclaimed Indian scholar and historian Ramachandra Guha wrote a 600-page study on *Gandhi Before India* that certainly fills in that gap, with a partisan view of Gandhi as pioneer promoter of the anti-apartheid struggle. Synchronous with this publication, South African scholars Aswhin Desai and Goolam Vahed also dedicated a study to *The South African Gandhi* (2016) in order to balance traditional positions of hagiographic exaltation of the figure of Gandhi with critical views of his South African years.

Undoubtedly, Gandhi was fighting for the rights of a small elite of Indian merchants in the province of Natal, being totally blind to the sufferings of black South Africans:

Gandhi stated that whites in Natal desired to ‘degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is

to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness.<sup>33</sup>

The use of terms such as “British Indians” for Indians and “Kaffirs” for Africans is already a sign of Gandhi's loyalty to the British Empire and his racialising of black people in South Africa. Further proof is another claim Gandhi made in his *Green Pamphlet*:

Indians are classed with the natives of South Africa-Kaffir races. For example, Indians had to use the same entrance as Africans at the post office in Durban. ‘We felt the indignity too much and... petitioned the authorities to do away with the invidious distinction and they have now provided three separate entrances for natives, Asiatics and Europeans.’ Gandhi was irate that ‘the sons of this land of light [India] are despised as coolies and treated as Kaffirs.’<sup>34</sup>

It is well known that in South Africa, the Public Work Department had decreed that with regard to public buildings, such as post offices and police stations, “the ‘white’ entrance was given prominence on the front façade, whereas the smaller ‘non-white’ entrance was located around the side.”<sup>35</sup> It is true, however, that commercial buildings did not have a double entrance, while most of the English banks did not bother to segregate public areas, at least until the 1960s. On the contrary, the Boer branches of the Volkskas were fitted with a “single large door, hinged on a central pivot. The door could be swung open to create two unequally sized entrances, each barricaded from the other by the massive expanse of the door itself, while the same bank clerks moved back and forth between the two sides.”<sup>36</sup>

Apparently, in his young age and in his early years in South Africa, Gandhi was race blind, so to speak. He was concentrating on the emancipation of the Indian community but was separating the rights of the Indians from the rights of the Africans. Writing a letter to the Natal Parliament, he mentioned the Aryan origin of Indian people. One must admit that at that time, such an affirmation was far less scandalous than it became under Nazism:

I venture to point out that both the English and the Indians spring from a common stock, called the Indo-Aryan.... The Indian is being dragged down to the position of a raw Kaffir.... The Indians were, and are, in no way inferior to their Anglo-Saxon brethren, if I may venture to use the word, in the various departments of life – industrial, intellectual, political, etc.<sup>37</sup>

Desai and Vahed claim that “The Gandhian vision sought to embrace diasporic Indians and claimed affinity with Europeans as (civilised) Aryans and imperial citizens. This vision was conspicuous in its exclusion of Africans.”<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, there is little evidence of Gandhi's acknowledgement of John Dube's activity. Dube had been the African leader of the South African Native National Congress since 1912. Ramachandra Guha claims that Gandhi wrote in admiration on *Indian Opinion*, the Journal he founded and financed in Phoenix, Durban, that "John Dube had acquired 300 acres of land quite close to Phoenix, where 'he imparts education to his brethren, teaching them various trades and crafts and preparing them for the battle of life'."<sup>39</sup>

Most importantly, Guha also admits that

the endorsement of Gandhi's movement by the African educator John L. Dube [...] writing anonymously in his newspaper *Llanga Lase Natal*, Dube praised 'the courageous manner in which the Indians are acting in the Transvaal.' [...] This assessment was wise, and the sentiments uncommonly generous. Dube's own Inanda settlement lay in close proximity to Gandhi's Phoenix Farm. This, and his own big-heartedness, may have led him to forgive or forget the Indians' characteristic tendency to distinguish their cause from that of the 'Kaffirs', whom they thought less civilized than themselves.<sup>40</sup>

In spite of the fact that professor Guha claims that "Gandhi was the only Indian in Durban who bridged the gap between the races,"<sup>41</sup> to the two South African scholars this seems dismissive towards the Africans, and only includes communion with the whites. Gandhi wrote: "About the mixing of the Kaffirs with the Indians, I must confess I feel most strongly. I think it is very unfair to the Indian population...."<sup>42</sup>

When Gandhi's followers proposed him to modify his terminology using the term "Indians," instead of "British Indians," and suggested he should promote common cause with Africans and Coloreds, Gandhi insisted that his resolution be passed without amendment. He even claimed "However much one may sympathise with the Bantus, Indians cannot make common cause with them."<sup>43</sup>

In the end, Gandhi did change his language towards Africans, for example, avoiding the use of "Kaffir" ("following contemporary usage" – writes Guha),<sup>44</sup> towards the end of his South African stay. A commentator claims that: "... he was regressive. Gandhi's blanking of Africans is the black hole at the heart of his saintly mythology."<sup>45</sup>

The conclusion of the two South African scholars is not dismissive of Gandhi's career in South Africa, as Ramachandra Guha writes: "in so far as it was Gandhi who led the first protests against the racial laws, he should really be recognised as being among Apartheid's first opponents"<sup>46</sup>; and Mandela writes "Gandhi taught that the destiny of the Indian community was inseparable from that of the oppressed African majority."<sup>47</sup> Yet, Gandhi believed "in the purity of race as we think they [the whites] do" and that "the white race of South Africa should be the predominating race."<sup>48</sup> And



this makes it difficult to consider Gandhi as the first anti-apartheid fighter. Gandhi's ideas of racial separation and social hierarchies was very much in line with the segregationist laws in South Africa. The liberation movements that followed were not so much inspired by Gandhi, but were subverting Gandhi's ideas, for they fought for the complete destruction of Apartheid and very much in favour of a non-racial society. The South African regime was extremely violent and the reaction soon came from the Umkonto we Sizwe, the Spear of the Nation, the armed branch of the ANC and its fighters.

It is easy nowadays to detect faults and flaws in Gandhi's thinking, yet assessing both his deeds and his inheritance is quite daring. The trace he left is indelible and we all owe much to his teachings and his exemplary existence. It is, therefore, easy to share the same feeling that Desai and Vahed had in completing their study, saying that it is with reluctance that we let go of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>49</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Salman Rushdie, *Quichotte*, Random House, New York, 2019, p. 26.
- 2 [www.raviagarwal.com/2018/01/24/2011-tolstoy-farm](http://www.raviagarwal.com/2018/01/24/2011-tolstoy-farm). (Accessed October 12, 2019).
- 3 "Gandhi rented a house in Albemarle Street, in the east of Johannesburg district of Troyeville, to accommodate the whole family. The two-storey house was spacious, with eight rooms, balconies and a garden." Ramachandra, Guha, *Gandhi Before India*, Random House, New York, 2013, p. 179.
- 4 Ivan, Vladislavić, *Portrait with Keys. The City of Johannesburg Unlocked*, Umuzi, Cape Town, 2006, p. 148.
- 5 Shimon, Lev, "Soulmates: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach." In *India and Lithuania. A Personal Bond*, edited by Laimonas Talat Kelpša, The Lithuanian Embassy, New Delhi, Vilnius, 2017, pp. 37–52.
- 6 <http://www.satyagrahahouse.com/en/Travel-Johannesburg>. (Accessed October 12, 2019).  
Cfr. also: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21681392.2020.1751669?scroll=top&needAccess=true>. (Accessed October 12, 2019).
- 7 The episode is mentioned in Mohandas K., Gandhi, *An Autobiography. Or the Story of my Experiments with Truth*, Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad, 1927, p. 93; and it is also mentioned in Aswhin, Desai, and Goolam Vahed, *The South African Gandhi: Stretcher-Bearer of Empire*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2016, p. 24.
- 8 Nelson, Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Abacus, London, 1994, p. 118.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 130.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 142.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 147.  
Cfr. also Uma Dhupella-Mesthrie, *Gandhi's Prisoner?: The Life of Gandhi's Son Manilal*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2004.
- 17 Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, *ibid.*, p. 147.



- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 183.
- 19 Nelson, Mandela, *Conversations with Myself*, Foreword by President Barack Obama, Blackwell, Auckland, 2010, pp. 52–53.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 53 (author’s emphasis).
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 502.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 503.
- 23 Jonathan, Hyslop, “Gandhi, Mandela, and the African Modern.” In *Johannesburg. The Elusive Metropolis*, edited by Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall, Duke University Press, Durham, 2008, pp. 119–136.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- 26 Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 28, n. 2.
- 27 M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 89.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- 31 Claude, Markovits, *The Un-Gandhian Gandhi. The Life and Afterlife of the Mahatma*, Anthem Press, London, 2003.
- 32 Clemente, Fusero, *Gandhi*, Dall’Oglio Editore, Milan, 1968.
- 33 Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (CWMG), The Publications Division, Ahmedabad, 1964, vol. 1, p. 410, (hence CWMG). Cfr. also *Natal Advertiser* June 4, 1896, quoted in Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 37.
- 34 M.K. Gandhi, “The Green Pamphlet: The Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa: An Appeal to the Indian Public” Rajkot, Kathiawar, 1986, pp. 8–20. Quoted in Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 42.
- 35 Ivan, Vladislavić, and Judin Hilton (eds.), *Blank: Architecture, Apartheid and After*, NUI Publishers, Rotterdam, 1999, p. 142.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 CWMG, vol. 1, pp. 192–193. Quoted by Desai and Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 44.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- 39 R. Guha, *Gandhi Before India*, p. 180.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 267.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 42 CWMG, vol. 3, p. 429. Cfr. Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 77.
- 43 Cfr. *The Hindu*, July 9, 1939, and CWMG, vol. 76, pp. 97–98. Cfr. also R. Guha also acknowledges that what was missing in Gandhi’s editorials “was any mention of the largest section of the population of South Africa – the African themselves.” (Guha 2013, 158) Moreover, in response to the idea according to which “the Indian is not on a level with the kaffir; he belongs to a higher class. The Indian trader is almost as advanced as ourselves” Guha stresses how “These views on the hierarchy of civilizations were conventional – Gandhi shared them too (at the time)” (Guha 2013, 176). Finally, Guha speaks of an evolution, for Gandhi in the “praise of Dube revealed a certain broadening of the mind, for Africans” (Guha 2013, 181), till when Gandhi wrote ““The negroes alone are the original inhabitants of this land’, [...] The formulation was striking, as well as new [...] he had progressed considerably from the unsympathetic and hostile attitude towards Africans” (Guha 2013, 395). In 1911, *Indian Opinion* published news about “a new body called the South African Native National Congress. [...] Dube was elected its first president.” R. Guha, *Gandhi Before India*, p. 427.
- Cfr. Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 303.
- 44 R. Guha, *Gandhi Before India*, p. 181.
- 45 Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 304.

46 R. Guha, *Gandhi Before India*, p. 12.

47 Nelson, Mandela, "Address by President Nelson Mandela at the Chief Albert Luthuli Centenary Celebration, April 25, 1998." <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/speech-president-mandela-chief-albert-luthuli-centenary-celebration-25-april-1998-kwadukuza> (Accessed October 12, 2019). Cfr. Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 23.

48 Cfr. M.K. Gandhi, *Indian Opinion*, September 24, 1903; CWMG, vol. 3, p. 255. Quoted in Desai, Vahed, *The South African Gandhi*, p. 97.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 306.

## 4 “Stride toward Freedom”

### Martin Luther King, the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Gandhian lesson

*Andrea Carosso*

It is widely known that, in the second half of the 20th century, the Civil Rights Movement to end racial segregation in the United States strongly relied on methods of political action inspired by the principles of non-violence that Mohandas Gandhi had practiced earlier in the 20th century to address racial segregation in South Africa and colonial domination in India. After World War II, the Civil Rights Movement took on new momentum in the United States as many African American war veterans returned from Europe with a new sense of entitlement to basic rights, bolstered by the more equal treatment they had received from Europeans they met while stationed abroad.<sup>1</sup> This time, the resolve to end racial segregation that W.E.B. DuBois had expressed laconically in a *Crisis* editorial at the end of the First World War – “We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting” – acquired a whole new meaning, especially in the South of the United States, where the NAACP (the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People – America’s largest civil rights organisation) and other militant conglomerates began the practical work of challenging white supremacy and dismantling racial segregation. In the 1950s, African American Christian churches rose at the forefront of the struggle, as religious leaders began to embrace the so-called Social Gospel, a doctrine placing social justice at the centre of church action.

Because racial segregation in the South of the United States rested, unlike in the North, on a complex of laws that excluded African Americans from basic civil rights such as voting and participating in civic life, activists aimed at dismantling the legal foundations of segregation. In the 1950s, the NAACP brought a series of test legal cases all the way to the Federal Supreme Court in Washington aimed at forcing Southern states to dismantle the system of separation that had regulated race relations in the nation since the abolition of slavery in 1863. The first breakthrough came in 1954 when the US Supreme Court ruled on the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case, decreeing the end, at least in principle, to school segregation in America.

The second major episode in the Civil Rights Movement struggle came in the following year, 1955, as the NAACP and its legal teams rallied around a situation that had evolved in Montgomery, Alabama. One of the most

prominent and active slave-trading states in America in the 18th and the early 19th centuries, as well as a focal point of racism and racial oppression. During the Civil Rights years, Alabama became a symbol of the Southern states’ unwillingness to compromise, let alone give up, on their racial past – a position well summarised in a speech Governor George Wallace would deliver in 1963, where he infamously stated: “I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever.”<sup>2</sup>

Events in Montgomery began to unfold on 01 December 1955 when an African American seamstress and former NAACP activist, Rosa Parks, while riding a public bus home from work, was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger. White seating priority in public transportation was a fact of everyday life in the U.S. South at the time. In fact, all public facilities in the South (schools, hospitals, restaurants, hotels, taxi cabs – the list is almost endless) were rigidly separated by race. There were schools for whites and schools for blacks. Hospitals for whites and black hospitals. White taxi companies and black ones as well as segregated restaurants and segregated railway cars. Public transit buses posed a delicate problem: because it would have not been economically viable to have segregated bus companies (city public transportation was mostly subsidised by revenue from black passengers, who constituted the majority of all passengers), race segregation in transportation worked in other, arguably even more humiliating ways for blacks: in Montgomery, black people had to pay their bus fares at the front of the bus, then exit and get back on at the back; it was not unusual for drivers, some of whom were often abusive on black passengers (referring to them as “niggers,” “black cows” and “black apes”) to pull off before a black passenger had managed to re-board the bus at the rear after paying at the front.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, when all “whites only” seats at the front were full, white passengers had the right to demand that blacks in the next rows give up their seats. On that early December day in 1955, when the bus driver requested that Parks give up her seat to a white passenger, the woman refused to move. The police were called, she was dragged off the bus, arrested and fined – the first time in the city’s history that black person had been charged with violating the city’s segregation laws. The black community was outraged and decided it was time to fight back.

A one-day boycott of the buses was organised: as approximately 40,000 African Americans did not ride the bus system on 5 December, black leaders met to form the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and chose as its leader the 26-year-old pastor of Montgomery’s Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, a man virtually unknown at the time outside his congregation, by the name of Martin Luther King, Jr. Escalating to days, weeks and months, what came to be known as the Montgomery Bus Boycott saw the city’s entire black community refusing to ride city buses and either walk for miles to work each day, or get about via ingenious methods of ride sharing, while demanding for the complete abolition of segregation on city transportation. Meanwhile,

amidst white segregation rallies, church bombings and other racial incidents (including the expulsion, on racial grounds, of the first black student at the University of Alabama, Autherine Lucy), King and his associates were arrested multiple times for provoking racial unrest in the city. Finally, on 20 December 1956, one year and four weeks after the boycott had begun, as the local bus company was approaching bankruptcy for lack of revenues and the white opposition front had slowly been broken by the non-violent nature of the confrontation by the protesters, the State of Alabama finally agreed to desegregate the buses. A first major victory, the Montgomery boycott catapulted King to the forefront of the Civil Rights struggle.

Writing an assessment of the Montgomery campaign in his 1958 political autobiography *Stride Towards Freedom*, King discusses how in the 13-month Montgomery protest “the philosophy of non-violence played such a positive role,”<sup>4</sup> leading the black population of Montgomery to see that, in the long run, “it is more honourable to walk in dignity than ride in humiliation” (STF 161). For King, pacifism was not a naturally chosen strategy: he came to it through a long and tortuous path he called his “intellectual pilgrimage to non-violence” (STF 87), which began in the late 1940s when he was an undergraduate student at Morehouse College in Atlanta, a historically black institution. President of Morehouse during King’s years was Benjamin Mays, a highly influential African-American theologian whose work focused on notions of non-violence and civil resistance – beliefs inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, whom Mays had met in India in 1936–37.<sup>5</sup> At Morehouse, King read Henry David Thoreau’s essay “Resistance to Civil Government,” commonly known as “Civil Disobedience.” More a call to radical self-reliance than a pacifist manifesto, “Resistance to Civil Government,” written in 1849, focused on the need to prioritise one’s conscience over the dictates of the law and argued that individuals should not permit governments to overrule or silence their sense of justice – an idea that King later came to see as “related” to what blacks were doing in Montgomery. As he wrote in his account, the Montgomery boycott amounted to saying to the white community: “We can no longer lend our cooperation to an evil system” (STF 39).

King’s first exposure to pacifism proper happened when, after Morehouse, he was a student at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, between 1948 and 1951: first during a talk by Dr. A.J. Muste, a clergyman and political activist, who left him “deeply moved” but “far from convinced” of the political efficacy of non-violence: “I felt that while war could never be a positive or absolute good, it could serve as a negative good in the sense of preventing the spread and growth of an evil force,” writes King with obvious reference to WWII (STF 83); and then at a lecture by Howard University president Mordecai Johnson on Gandhi, which led him to further probe non-violence as a political action tool:

Like most people – wrote King – I had heard of Gandhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by

his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. I was particularly moved by the Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts. The whole concept of ‘Satya/graha’ (*Satya* is truth which equals love, and *agraha* is force; ‘Satyagraha,’ therefore, means truth-force or love-force) was profoundly significant to me.

(STF 84)

His reading of Gandhi happened at a time when King had come to a crucial spiritual impasse, leading him to question the validity of the Christian concept of love, especially in terms of its effectiveness in addressing large social issues such as racism. In *Strive towards Freedom*, he recalls having concluded that

the ethics of Jesus were only effective in individual relationships. The ‘turn the other cheek’ philosophy and the ‘love your enemies’ philosophy [are] only valid [...] when individuals were in conflict with other individuals; when racial groups and nations were in conflict a more realistic approach seemed necessary.

(84)

Gandhi provided King with the key to reconciling Christian ethics with social change:

Gandhi – wrote King – was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love for Gandhi was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation.

(STF 84)

It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and non-violence that King discovered the method for social reform that he had been seeking.

As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform.

[...]

I found that the nonviolent resistance philosophy of Gandhi [...] was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.

(STF 84, 85)

It was at this stage in his education, circa 1950, that King was also introduced to the ideas of Reinhold Niebuhr, arguably America’s foremost theologian of the first half of the 20th century and an outspoken critic of pacifism. While in seminary, King read his very influential *Moral Man and*

*Immoral Society*, originally published in 1932, where Niebuhr had argued that no steady advance of reason or goodwill, no Social Gospel or Marxism, could ever counter the prevalence of evil on every level in society.<sup>6</sup> Niebuhr, therefore, was sceptical of the possibility of achieving civil rights for blacks in America by peaceful means:

However large the number of individual white men who [...] will identify themselves completely with the Negro cause – wrote Niebuhr – the white race in America will not admit the Negro to equal rights if it is not forced to do so.<sup>7</sup>

In particular, Niebuhr criticised the widespread understanding of pacifism as based on three familiar words from the *Sermon on the Mount* in the Christian Gospels, “Resist not evil,” that the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, in his late-life pacifist manifesto *The Kingdom of God Is Within You* (1894), had interpreted as meaning “never resist, never oppose violence; or, in other words, never do anything contrary to the law of love”<sup>8</sup> – an interpretation that had a profound influence on young Mohandas Gandhi when he was a student in England and that came to define his Satyagraha philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Gandhi’s approach, Niebuhr believed, did not avoid the corruption of the world. Gandhi’s political action based on strikes, marches, boycotts and demonstrations were all – from Niebuhr’s perspective – forms of coercion, which, though non-violent, were contrary to the explicit meaning of “Resist not evil.” Niebuhr applauded Gandhi’s resolve, but at the same time chastised the sentimental interpretations that placed Gandhians above common ethics.<sup>10</sup>

Niebuhr’s book came as a shock for King. At first, he wrote,

Niebuhr’s critique of pacifism left me in a state of confusion. As I continued to read, however, I came to see more and more the shortcomings of his position. For instance, many of his statements revealed that he interpreted pacifism as a sort of passive nonresistance to evil expressing naive trust in the power of love.

But – retorted King – this was “a serious distortion. My study of Gandhi convinced me that true pacifism is not non-resistance to evil, but non-violent resistance to evil.” Between the two positions – concluded King – “there is a world of difference,” since true pacifism is not “unrealistic submission to evil power,” but rather “a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love” (STF 86).

In Montgomery, King had become persuaded that the key to the campaign, and the anti-segregation struggle in general, was winning over the white community to the cause. King came to understand that non-violent resistance was the only weapon to allow the forces of reason within the

white community to gradually embrace, or at least not be entirely hostile to, the cause of civil rights for blacks:

it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it – wrote King – since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring about a transformation and change of heart (STF 86)

The non-violent Montgomery Bus Boycott aimed precisely at seeing that the white community, long led or intimidated by a few extremists, would finally turn in disgust on the perpetrators of crime in the name of segregation. Seeking to build his support among whites as well as blacks, King stressed that his “pilgrimage to non-violence” had culminated in “a positive social philosophy” emphasising “that non-violent resistance was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their quest for social justice.”

As Clayborne Carson observes in his introduction to *Strive towards Freedom*, contemporaneous documentary evidence from the boycott reinforces King’s suggestion that his Gandhian convictions coalesced for the first time in Montgomery. When he spoke on the first day of the protest, King’s rejection of violence was rooted in Christian rather than Gandhian precepts: “We believe in the teachings of Jesus. The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. That’s all.” Boycott participants were at first unfamiliar with expressions such as “non-violent resistance, non-cooperation, and passive resistance.” Instead, he wrote, “the phrase most often heard was ‘Christian love’” (STF 71). It was the Sermon on the Mount, rather than a doctrine of passive resistance, that, according to Carson, initially inspired the Negroes of Montgomery to social action. But both during and after the Montgomery campaign, King’s understanding of Gandhian ideas – also strengthened by his extensive contacts with numerous other Gandhians, such as Bayard Rustin, then affiliated with the War Resisters League, Glenn Smiley, who was sent by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) to Montgomery, and Harris Wofford, a white recent graduate of Howard University’s Law School who with his wife, Clare Wofford, authors of *India Afire* (1951) – were the key to the significant victories that also propelled King to national prominence.

Following the success of the Bus Boycott, King sought out ways to spread the Montgomery model throughout the South. In early 1957, while trying to persuade James Lawson, a savvy student of unarmed resistance who had spent several years in India, to quit his studies and join the cause, King is reported by his biographer Taylor Branch as saying: “We need you now [...] We don’t have any Negro leadership in the South that understands non-violence.”<sup>11</sup> In time, Martin Luther King Jr. would come to embrace strategic non-violence in its most robust and radical form, a stance which would



lead to the Civil Rights Movement's most decisive non-violent action confrontations: Project-C in Birmingham, Alabama of 1963, when the SCLC organised a series of sit-ins and marches intended to provoke mass arrests, and draw the world's attention to racial segregation in the South; and the Montgomery-Selma March for voting rights of 1965.

In 1955 and 1956, the Montgomery Bus Boycott revealed the existence of a "new negro in the South"<sup>12</sup> opened the way for a new course of non-violent action that proved crucial to building up to the legal achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, which included Civil Rights Act, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act one year later. Those victories were grounded in M.L. King's realisation that the success of Gandhi's strategy of non-violence could have application under completely different political and social contexts. Just as Gandhi's attitude towards the racist South African government had been governed by his sincere commitment to British liberalism,<sup>13</sup> King's action against racism and discrimination of any kind was directed by a conviction that these were incongruent with the fundamental liberal tenets of American democracy. The outcomes, however, were far from assured and would require the long-term approach. As the Civil Rights Movement adopted Gandhi's vision, it soon realised that "The simple choice of non-violent action as the technique of struggle," he explained, "does not and cannot guarantee victory, especially on a short-term basis."<sup>14</sup> When the bus boycotters took to walking and riding in shared cars and cabs for 381 days in Montgomery in 1955–56, they knew the road to freedom would be long and hard. But as one elderly woman summed it up for the rest, when asked after several weeks of walking whether she was tired, she answered, "My feets is tired, but my soul is at rest" (in STF xxx).

## Notes

- 1 Christopher S. Parker, 2009. *Fighting for Democracy: Black Veterans and the Struggle against White Supremacy in the Postwar South*. Princeton Studies in American Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 127–32.
- 2 Craig Swanson, 2014. *Selma Campaign: Martin Luther King Jr., Jimmie Lee Jackson, and The Defining Struggle of the Civil Rights Era*. Bloomington, IN: Archway Publishing, chapter 12.
- 3 Robert J. Walker. 2007. *Let My People Go! The Miracle of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*. Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, pp. 135–6.
- 4 Martin Luther King and Clayborne Carson. 2010. *Stride toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. The King Legacy Series. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, pp. 89–90. Henceforth cited as STF.
- 5 Marian Wright Edelman. 2000. *Lanterns: A Memoir of Mentors*. New York: Perennial, pp. 27–9. I owe these crucial references to Dr. Mays' role and M. Edelman's book to my friend and colleague Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson (University of Augsburg), whom I thank dearly for sharing her expertise on the Civil Rights Movement in the US with me.
- 6 Rufus Burrow. 2014. *Extremist for Love: Martin Luther King Jr., Man of Ideas and Nonviolent Social Action*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, pp. 104–7.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

- 8 Taylor Branch. 2007. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954–63*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 85.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 T. Branch, *Parting the Waters*, cit., p. 205.
- 12 Martin Luther King, Clayborne Carson, Peter Holloran, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell. 1992. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Berkeley: University of California Press, vol. III, p. 283.
- 13 Bidyut Chakrabarty. 2013. *Confluence of Thought: Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Oxford University Press, p. 80.
- 14 Mark Engler. 2016. *This Is an Uprising: How Nonviolent Revolt Is Shaping the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Nation Books, p. 26.

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## **Part II**

# **Gandhi's political views and experience in a historical perspective**



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## 5 The Mahatma and the Muslims. Gandhi's role in making India's partition inevitable

*Michelguglielmo Torri*

### **Introduction**

The two most important developments in the history of South Asia during the 20th century were India's independence and partition. Gandhi played a crucial role in both of them, but whereas Gandhi's role concerning his contribution to India's independence has been studied in-depth, the same does not apply as far as his role in India's partition is concerned. In this latter case, the focus of the analysis has been concentrated mainly on the Mahatma's efforts at trying to contain the massacres that accompanied the partition of India. However, Gandhi's role in India's partition was much more relevant and more extended in time than his action, in the period between mid-1946 and his death, as a one-man non-violent army trying to bring some sanity in a country torn apart by communal violence. In fact, to understand Gandhi's role in India's partition, it is necessary to review his relation with the Indian Muslim community since his return to India in 1915, after some 20 years in South Africa, and up to his tragic death on 30 January 1948.

### **From Gandhi's return to India to the morrow of the non-cooperation movement**

When Gandhi appeared on the Indian national stage, Hindu-Muslim tension was both new from an historical viewpoint and old politically speaking. In other words, in India, Hindus and Muslims had lived side by side for centuries, without any major conflict developing among them.<sup>1</sup> With the beginning of the 20th century, however, things had changed. Even before Gandhi finally came back to India in 1915, relations between Hindus and Indian Muslims had already become tense. This situation was the end result of several factors, which differed in the various parts of India. Possibly, the most important one was that, by and large, in any province with a sizeable number of Muslims, the bulk of the Muslim community belonged to well-defined social classes, while the bulk of the Hindu community belonged to different social classes, and the classes made up of Muslims and those made up of Hindus were characterised by starkly different or opposite

class interests. These different and often opposite class interests were articulated and de facto strengthened through religious watchwords and slogans.<sup>2</sup>

Indian politicians of every shade were well aware of the fact that a solution of the Hindu–Muslim tensions was a sine qua non for a successful advancement on the path to increasing self-government. Many were also aware, or became aware, of the fact that at the heart of Hindu–Muslim tensions there were less religious differences than different socio-economic and political interests. Hence, particularly in the second decade of the 20th century, some of the main Indian politicians came together and elaborated and subscribed a pact. The Lucknow pact of December 1916 grounded the alliance between Hindus and Muslims on the acknowledgement of the different political and socio-economic interests of the two communities and the concession of political guarantees to the weaker community in each province (independently from the fact that it was Muslim or Hindu).<sup>3</sup>

The Lucknow pact had several weak points and was criticised by sectors of both communities, but it made possible for Hindus and Muslims – or, rather, for the parties which represented those communities – to present a united front vis-à-vis the British for some years.

Things, however, changed once Gandhi first started to emerge as a key Congress politician and then became the unchallenged leader of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi – who when returned to India in 1915 was fully aware of the importance to patch up the division between Hindus and Muslims – was convinced that politics was an extension of morality and morality was an extension of religion. Accordingly, he discarded the approach which had resulted in the Lucknow pact, based on the acknowledgement of the different socio-economic interests of the two communities and a consequent redistribution of political power. Rather, the Mahatma chose an approach based on the acknowledgement of the religious differences between the two communities and the effort of each of them to adopt policies in favour of the religious interests and/or respectful of the religious sensitivities of the other community. Putting it differently, Gandhi discarded the pragmatic approach to Hindu–Muslim differences in favour of a moral–religious approach.<sup>4</sup>

The result was that Gandhi was able to build an alliance with some young Muslim politicians then on the rise, in particular the Ali Brothers (Mohammed and Shaukat) who, differently from the majority of the Muslim politicians hitherto active, based their political approach on the espousal of religion-tinged goals. The new alliance was based on the acceptance on the part of Gandhi of the most important of these religion-tinged objectives, namely the defence of the integrity of the pre-World War Ottoman Empire. This political stance was justified on the basis of an Islamic approach to the problem. The Ottoman sultan was at the same time the secular ruler of the Turkish people and the calif, namely the world leader of Sunni Islam. In his first capacity – as ruler of the Turkish people – the Ottoman monarch was entitled to exercise his sway on Turkish lands: in the second capacity,

he had the right to govern and protect the holy places of Islam, in particular Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. In other words, the sultan/calif was the legitimate ruler of areas which coincided with the Ottoman Empire on the eve of WW1.<sup>5</sup>

This was a political theory that had been crafted (as far as the Caliphate part is concerned) rather recently by Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909). It was repudiated first by the Arabs (during WW1) and then by the Turks. However, Indian Muslims enthusiastically espoused it and kept to it much longer than Arabs and Turks. Defending the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, as it existed before WW1, was a cause that gradually conquered and mobilised the vast majority of the Indian Muslim community. The Khilafat cause, as it came to be known, was based on a peculiar interpretation of the Islamic religion and was espoused by the Indian Muslims for religious reasons.

Gandhi founded his alliance with the Ali Brothers on the espousal of the Khilafat cause. He did so less for opportunistic reasons than because of his sincere belief that an alliance between Hindus and Muslims could be based only on the reciprocal acknowledgement of the religious differences between the two communities and the respectful acceptance of these differences. This acceptance was not simple toleration for the existing differences, but an active stand aimed at protecting the religious sensitivities of the other community. The Hindus had no particular interest in maintaining the integrity of the pre-WW1 Ottoman Empire. They, nevertheless, were ready to mount a political struggle aimed at obtaining it because that was important from a religious point of view for the Muslims. Reciprocally, the Ali Brothers and their followers, in order to protect Hindu religious sensitivities, would campaign for an end to cow slaughtering.

For reasons that need not to detain us here, the Ali Brothers were able to elbow out the pre-existing Muslim leadership, mobilising broad swathes of the Indian Muslim community. They and their followers played a key role first in making Gandhi's conquest of the leadership of the nationalist movement possible, and, then in making the non-cooperation movement the biggest challenge hitherto mounted against British colonial power in India.<sup>6</sup>

By the beginning of 1922, the non-cooperation movement lay in ruins, comprehensively defeated by the British strategy of "soft repression", conceived by Lord Chelmsford (viceroy 1916–21) and implemented also by his successor, Lord Reading.<sup>7</sup> Once non-cooperation was over, two crucially important political developments took place. The first was the disappearance of the main plank on which the Gandhian-sponsored Hindu–Muslim alliance had been based, namely the joint struggle in favour of the Caliphate. This happened because the new Turkish leader, Kemal Ataturk, first deposed the last sultan (Mehmet VI, 1 November 1922) and then had the caliphate formally abolished by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (3 March 1924).<sup>8</sup>



The second key development, which had already taken place during the non-cooperation movement, had become increasingly conspicuous after its failure. It was what Jawaharlal Nehru dubbed “the spiritualization of politics”, namely the increasing political importance of religious identities.<sup>9</sup> The strength of the first non-cooperation movement was the result of the Gandhian-sponsored alliance between the Hindus and the Muslims, considered as two separate communities, defined on the basis of different religious affiliations. Religious watchwords and slogans had become increasingly important during the non-cooperation movement, highlighting not what united the whole Indian people (colonial exploitation and the need to put an end to it) but what divided them (the different religious identities). These differences could be somewhat reconciled while the cause of the caliphate was standing. When the caliphate disappeared, many Hindus and Muslims reached the conclusion that there was nothing keeping them together. In fact, after the failure of the non-cooperation movement, the relation between Hindus and Muslims spectacularly worsened, and communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims rapidly grew in number and importance.<sup>10</sup>

### **The dog that did not bark: Gandhi’s (non) role in the Hindu–Muslim negotiations of the 1920s–30s**

At the end of the day, the Gandhi-sponsored religion-based attempt at Hindu–Muslim rapprochement ended up in failure, leaving the political landscape in ruins. In the post non-cooperation years, many Indian politicians, both Hindu and Muslim, saw the way out from the existing political impasse in resuscitating the approach that had led to the 1916 Lucknow Pact. In other words, they tried to find a common ground, acknowledging the different socio-economic positions of the two communities and allowing a political compensation for the weaker one. This attempt was made both more complicated and easier by the fact that the relative strength of the two communities varied in the different provinces. It was more complicated because no uniform formula was readily available at the all-India level; it was made easier because one community, treating with generosity the other community where the latter was weaker, could legitimately expect an analogous generosity where the situation was the other way around.<sup>11</sup>

In the 15 years following the failure of the non-cooperation movement, a great deal of time and energy was spent by several of the most eminent Indian politicians, both Hindu and Muslim, in trying to find a common political platform on which to unite the two main Indian communities.<sup>12</sup> Here, however, we have a situation analogous to the one described by Arthur Conan Doyle in one of his Sherlock Holmes short stories. In *The Adventure of Silver Blaze*, while enquiring into the disappearance of the eponymous race horse, Sherlock Holmes draws the attention of the detective with whom he is then working to the “curious incident of the dog in the night-time”.

The detective answers: "The dog did nothing in the night-time". To which Holmes replies: "That was the curious incident".

Leaving metaphors aside, the "curious incident" in the complex and unhappy story of the negotiations aimed at renewing the Hindu-Muslim alliance was the fact that Gandhi did not play any significant role. Here, a reflection is in order. Differently from what had happened in the second decade of the century, when analogous negotiations had ended with the agreement embodied in the Lucknow Pact, the negotiations in the 1920s and 1930s ended up in utter failure. Both in the 1910s and in the 1920s/1930s, reaching an agreement was made difficult by several factors, the most important of which was the opposition of Hindu communal forces, which, in fact, were very strong inside the Indian National Congress.<sup>13</sup> In 1917, however, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, at the time the most eminent and popular among the Congress leaders, and a man sympathetic with the positions of Hindu communalism, put on the balance all his political weight and influence in order to convince the leaders of the Hindu communal grouping to accept the Lucknow Pact.<sup>14</sup> When the post non-cooperation negotiations started, Tilak was not around anymore, as he passed away on 1 August 1920. Also, Gandhi was out of the way for some time, as he was in prison between 1922 and 1924. However, in 1924, he was released and gradually became politically active once again. No doubt, in spite of the failure of the non-cooperation movement, he remained by far the most influential Indian politician. He was equally respected by the Left of the Congress and by the Right, including the leaders of the communal grouping (who, in some cases, were the same men that, bending under Tilak's influence, had accepted the Lucknow Pact). I have few doubts that Gandhi, had so decided, could have successfully played the same role played by Tilak, making a new Hindu-Muslim agreement, on the lines of the Lucknow Pact, once again possible. However, Gandhi chose not to do that and did not move a finger to strengthen the hand of those politicians, both Hindus and Muslims, who were struggling to reach a new entente between the two communities.

Why did Gandhi behave like that? Additional research is necessary to give a final answer to this question. But, in my opinion, two complementary hypotheses can be made. The first is that Gandhi – coherently with his stand in the period 1915–22, did not like the idea of an agreement based on a secular appraisal of the socio-economic needs of the two communities and the consequent allocation of political power which would protect the weaker of the two communities. His ideal remained an agreement taking into account the religious differences between the two communities and aimed at meeting the reciprocal religious sensitivities.<sup>15</sup> Apart from this, an additional hypothesis can be formulated. This second – and in my view, complementary hypothesis – is that Gandhi's understanding of the political parties or movements other than the Congress had radically changed since the early 1920s. As already recalled, during the non-cooperation movement of 1920–22, Gandhi, as head of the Congress, had strictly cooperated with

the Khilafat Movement. Nonetheless, later in the 1920s and 1930s, he gradually and firmly espoused the idea that the only legitimate nationalist organisation in India was the Congress. This was a political position that Gandhi made explicit during the civil disobedience movement of 1930–33 when he took part in the second Round Table Conference in London (7 September 1931 to 1 December 1931). There the Mahatma claimed that the only legitimate representative of the whole Indian people was the Congress.<sup>16</sup> This was a position from which logically descended that all other self-styled nationalist organisations were illegitimate. As such, any alliance with them could not but be morally wrong.

### **“Crying out to god for light”: Gandhi’s role in the final parting of ways between the Congress and Jinnah**

If it is true that Gandhi did not play any role in the Hindu–Muslim negotiations of the 1920s and 1930s, it is also true that there was an attempt to involve him in these negotiations in 1937. This happened soon after that year provincial elections when there was the attempt to build a post-electoral alliance between the Congress and the All-India Muslim League. We cannot dwell at any length with these negotiations. It suffices to point out that when the negotiations hanged in the balance, and the building of a Congress-Muslim League alliance was still in the realm of concrete possibilities, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, turned to Gandhi to have his help in clinching the alliance. At the time, Gandhi had officially withdrawn from active politics, but in practice, he remained the ultimate political authority in the Congress. Gandhi’s answer, however, was negative. The Mahatma replied to Jinnah’s appeal with a message in which, among other things, he wrote,

I wish I could do something but I am utterly helpless. My faith in unity [between Hindus and Muslims] is as bright as ever; only I see no daylight out of the impenetrable darkness and, in such distress, I cry out to God for light.<sup>17</sup>

By declaring himself “utterly helpless”, Gandhi left the field clear for the Congress hawks who, as the price for the Hindu–Muslim alliance, demanded the disbanding of the All-India Muslim League. The negotiation failed – and it could not have been otherwise. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, up to that point, had constantly strived to build a Hindu–Muslim alliance, considering it the sine qua non for reaching Indian independence. The events of 1937, however, convinced him that the Congress was utterly unwilling to strike a fair deal with the Indian Muslims. Up to the failed negotiation of 1937, Jinnah’s political lodestar had been the necessity to renew the Lucknow Pact and build a solid alliance with the Congress. After the failure of the 1937 negotiation, his lodestar became the

all-out struggle against the Congress. That was a crucial turning point in the history of India, which opened the road that 10 years later would lead to the creation of Pakistan.

Now, in evaluating Gandhi's role in the 1937, the question to be asked is: was Gandhi really helpless, as he declared, or, rather, was he unwilling to help Jinnah?

Gandhi was the man who, some 12 months after refusing his help to Jinnah, saw his leadership on the Congress challenged by one of the young lions of the Congress Left, Subhas Chandra Bose. It was a challenge that Gandhi accepted and ended with such a total rout for Bose that he was expelled from the Congress.<sup>18</sup> It is difficult to think that, a few months before the struggle with Bose began, Gandhi was not in the position to impose his will on the Congress and broker a fair deal between it and the Muslim League. The inescapable conclusion is that Gandhi did not intervene in the 1937 Congress-Muslim League negotiation because he fully shared the political objectives of the Congress hawks, namely destroying the Muslim League and rendering Jinnah politically irrelevant.

### **Dead set against the creation of a binational state: Gandhi and the Cabinet Mission Plan**

The events of 1937 signed the final parting of the ways between Jinnah and the Muslim League on the one hand and Gandhi and the Congress on the other. Differently put, the 1937 events opened the road which would eventually lead to the partition of India. However, there was still a moment in which keeping India united, although as a binational state bound by a weak centre, still appeared to be in the realm of concrete possibilities. This moment was created by the British Cabinet mission of 1946, which arrived in India on 24 March, and was made up by Sir Stafford Cripps – who, de facto, acted as its leader – Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Albert Victor Alexander. When in India, the mission was integrated by the viceroy, Lord Wavell. The objectives of the Cabinet Mission were two: (a) setting out the guidelines to be followed in framing the constitution of independent India and (b) helping in the formation of an interim government which, with the exception of the viceroy and the commander in chief, would completely be made up of Indians and would lead India to independence. Attaining both goals was made difficult by the extreme tension and reciprocal distrust which had come into being between the Congress and the Muslim League since 1937.<sup>19</sup>

After consulting the more representative Indian politicians, the Quartet came up with two plans on 9 April. Plan A, which was slightly modified in the following months, basically provided for the grouping of the Indian provinces in two main blocks, one made up of Hindu majority provinces and one made up of Muslim majority provinces. The different blocks would be kept together by a Federal Centre, where the different blocks would be equally represented and which would be in charge of foreign policy, defence

and communications. In order to realise this scheme, the Constituent Assembly, once elected, would divide in separate sections. Each section would approve the constitution for the provinces belonging to the relevant block. Then the representatives would come together to approve the constitution for the whole of India. However, any decision changing either the limited powers of the centre or the allocation of powers between Hindus and Muslims, “shall require a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two communities”.<sup>20</sup>

Conversely, Plan B envisaged the division of India in two independent states, one made up of all districts with a Hindu majority and the other made up of all districts with a Muslim majority. Plan B, being based on the allocation of districts rather than provinces, implied the partition of the two Muslim majority provinces – Punjab and Bengal – whose Hindu majority districts would be transferred to the Hindu majority new nation. The Quartet preferred plan A, but had plan A been turned down by the Indian parties, plan B would be implemented. This position was espoused by the British Cabinet on 11 April 1946.<sup>21</sup>

The negotiations related to the Cabinet Mission and their ultimate failure, which made partition inevitable, are a very complex topic which cannot be discussed here. Our only goal is to highlight Gandhi’s role in the negotiation.

Gandhi was dead set against the creation of a binational state. He effectively sabotaged the possibility of its creation intervening on the problem of how the proceedings of the Constitutional assembly would take place. According to Gandhi, the general constitution for the whole of India should be decided before the provincial and block constitutions were discussed. Accepting Gandhi’s position meant that the moulding of the provincial and block constitutions would be subordinate to the national constitution. But, because the Congress had the absolute majority of the delegates in the Constituent Assembly, this would mean that the Congress would be at liberty to mould the constitution without taking into account the requirements of the Muslim League. Gandhi’s proposal was unacceptable for the Muslim League, but, unfortunately, it was the position finally adopted by the Congress.

The second problem was the formation of the interim government. This is another complex topic which cannot be satisfactorily examined here. Once again, we will dwell on it only from the viewpoint of Gandhi’s role. One of the difficulties which hampered the formation of the interim government was related to Jinnah’s request that among the Congress-elected representatives in the interim government there would be no Muslims. This request was based on the claim that the Muslim League was the sole representative of the Indian Muslims. In turn, this was a claim which was justified by the results of the central and provincial elections of 1945–46. In the election to the Central Assembly, Jinnah’s party had won all the Muslim seats and 90% of the Muslim vote, while in the provincial elections, it won 97% of the

Muslim reserved seats that is 425 out of the 492, and the 74.7% of the popular vote.<sup>22</sup>

Initially, the Congress Working Committee, namely the “High Command” of the Indian National Congress, was inclined to accept Jinnah’s request. But Gandhi made use of all his influence to convince it otherwise. While doing so, Gandhi wrote to the viceroy (13 June 1946), asking him to choose the members of the interim government either among the candidates designated by the Indian National Congress or those designated by the Muslim League. Otherwise, in Gandhi’s opinion, the viceroy would “never succeed in riding two [horses] at the same time”.<sup>23</sup> Of course, given the different political weight between the Congress and the League, this was tantamount to asking Wavell to form the government with only Congress nominees.

This was unacceptable to Wavell, who turned Gandhi’s proposal down. Meanwhile, Gandhi eventually succeeded in convincing the Congress Working Committee to insert a Muslim (Dr. Zakir Hussain) in the list of its candidates. This finally put an end to the attempt to create an interim government where the Congress and the League could loyally cooperate. First a caretaker government was created, made up of British officials. Then, this was succeeded by a government made up of Congress nominees only (August 1946). Finally, mainly thanks to Wavell’s moral suasion on both Jinnah and the Congress leaders, some members of the Muslim League were admitted in the interim government (October 1946). By then, however, the situation on the ground had completely gone out of control and the “low-intensity war” that would accompany and follow partition had already begun. Moreover, the level of distrust between the Congress and the Muslim League had reached such a level that the representatives of the two parties present in the interim government, far from cooperating, engaged in an acrimonious and continuous mutual contestation, which made difficult even the most insignificant decisions.<sup>24</sup> This blocked any role of the government in a moment in which large parts of India were engulfed in a bloody sectarian conflict, which had been triggered by the Muslim League sponsored “Direct Action Day” of 16 August 1946.<sup>25</sup>

Here, two questions are in order. The first is: why did Gandhi so proactively sabotage the acceptance of the binational state? The second is: why did Gandhi try his best to prevent the formation of an interim government on a basis of parity or quasi-parity between the Muslim League and the Congress? My own impression is that Gandhi, as a convinced proponent of a united India, saw in the binational state something which could weaken or put at risk this unity. Along this line of reasoning, he saw the Muslim League as the political force behind the attempt at weakening Indian unity. Hence, the Mahatma’s effort at making the Muslim League politically irrelevant. In other words, Gandhi did not have sufficient political acumen to realise that, in the 1940s, the project of a binational state was absolutely the last possibility to keep India united. Also, he seems to have been unable to



realise that the strength of the Muslim League was squarely grounded on the solid support of some 90% of the Indian Muslims. Trying to marginalise the Muslim League only strengthened the belief of the Muslim Indians that no fair political deal could be expected from the Congress and that the Congress – in spite of the presence of some Muslims in its leadership – was a pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim party.<sup>26</sup>

In the closing months of 1946 and up to his assassination at the hands of a Hindu fanatic on 30 January 1948, Gandhi was increasingly engaged in trying to douse the fires of communal massacres, caused by the start of the low intensity, but extremely destructive, communal war that preceded, accompanied and followed the partition of India. It is my contention that the Mahatma's non-violent struggle against the extreme and brutal inter-communal violence taking place at the ground level, eventually opened his eyes on the reality of the political situation. It was then that, at long last, the fact dawned on Gandhi that the policy against the binational state and the Muslim League, which he had hitherto promoted, far from preserving the unity of India, had powerfully contributed to make the destruction of Indian unity inevitable. This brought Gandhi to make a desperate attempt to avert partition by acknowledging a central political role to Jinnah.

### **Trying to save India's unity and failing: the Gandhi plan of April 1947**

Lord Mountbatten, the last British viceroy of India, arrived in New Delhi on 22 February 1947, with the task to put an end to the British colonial empire in India "no later than June 1948". He had no knowledge of the Indian situation, but he quickly and efficiently remedied its ignorance by thoroughly taking stock of the political situation, also through a series of interviews with all the main Indian politicians. On 1 April 1947, Mountbatten had his second meeting with Gandhi. It was during this meeting that the Mahatma proposed that Jinnah should be invited to form a government. At first sight this can appear as a reiteration in a slightly different form of the proposal made by Gandhi the year before to Wavell. However, the political meaning of the April 1947 proposal was quite different from the one characterising the June 1946 proposal. In fact, as noted above, the June 1946 proposal was only a transparent ploy to make Wavell understand that a Congress government was the only possible way out of the existing political impasse. In April 1947, Gandhi's plan was quite different. According to the Mahatma, Jinnah would be put in charge of forming the new government as he thought best, as "the members may be all Muslims, or all non-Muslims or both".<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Gandhi assured Mountbatten that the Congress would fully cooperate with Jinnah and his government, as he (Gandhi) would make use of all his influence to bring the Congress leadership in line with this strategy. In exchange, the League's representatives should join the Constituent Assembly, which they had decided to boycott. Gandhi also offered the guarantee that

the Congress dominated Assembly “shall never use that majority against the League policy”.<sup>28</sup>

Lord Mountbatten considered “Gandhi’s proposals and outlook [...] far-fetched but potentially feasible”.<sup>29</sup> However, Mountbatten soon realised that the Congress leadership, in particular Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, who, in the preceding months had emerged as the duumvirate leading the Congress, had no intention to accept Gandhi’s proposal. In fact, in the period of time stretching from the Muslim League joining the interim government (26 October 1946) to the arrival in Delhi of Lord Mountbatten (22 February 1947), many of the Congress leaders, particularly Nehru and Patel, had become convinced of the necessity to get rid of Jinnah and the League by getting rid of the Muslim majority areas. In other words, the Congress leadership – although without the concurrence of either Gandhi or the most important Muslim Congress leader, Maulana Kalam Azad – had decided to accept the partition of India allowing Jinnah to have his own Pakistan although the “truncated” version, namely without the eastern part of the Punjab and the western part, including Calcutta, of Bengal.<sup>30</sup>

The Congress position on the Gandhi Plan was anticipated by Nehru the day itself in which Gandhi made his proposal to the viceroy. Nevertheless, in the following days, Mountbatten seriously examined the feasibility of the Gandhi Plan although, still waiting for the Congress to officially espouse (or disown) it, he did not inform Jinnah of it. Eventually, on 12 April, the viceroy received a letter from Gandhi, informing him that the plan had not been accepted by the Congress and that he (the Mahatma) had withdrawn from any future negotiations.<sup>31</sup> This was the admission, as clear as possible, that Gandhi was now politically impotent, while the real power inside the Congress was in the hands of the Nehru-Patel duo.

Of course, one can wonder why Gandhi did not challenge his two pupils (Nehru and Patel), forcing them to accept his plan. The most credible answer is that trying to do that would open a major crisis inside the Congress and maybe split it in a moment in which the whole of India was sinking into anarchy. Although disliking the political path chosen by the Congress, Gandhi realised that a strong Congress was one of the few keystones still standing in an India sinking into anarchy. Weakening the Congress, far from improving the political situation, would only worsen it.

### **Dying heroically and saving his own soul, but not the unity of India**

In the last dramatic months of his life, the Mahatma truly lived through his “finest hour”.<sup>32</sup> With his presence in some of the epicentres of communal violence, in Bihar, Bengal and Delhi, he played a key role in containing the ongoing communal slaughter. “I want to fight it out with my life. – he declared to a Muslim leaguer – I would not allow the Muslims to crawl in the streets in India. They must walk with self-respect”.<sup>33</sup> Eventually, on the



evening of 30 January 1948, while in Delhi and on the way to his usual place of prayer, he was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic.

As I myself have noted elsewhere,<sup>34</sup> if one looks closely at Gandhi's statements during the last months of his life, it becomes clear that the 77-year-old Mahatma, though still active and bold in his actions, was nevertheless a profoundly disillusioned man as he contemplated the failure of what had always been his main objective: the creation of a non-violent India. There is no doubt that at that point he longed for death and possibly foresaw something similar to what actually happened.

Creating a non-violent India, given the powerful under-currents of violence characterising such a complex and diverse society as the Indian, one was possibly beyond the pale of human possibilities. But keeping India united was something possible as late as the day before 7 July 1946 when Nehru, as the new elected Congress President and with the full concurrence of the whole Congress Leadership, excluding Azad and including Gandhi, squarely rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan.<sup>35</sup> Being unable to prevent partition or, rather, actively working, although without realising it, to make it inevitable was Gandhi's Himalayan political blunder. Eventually, the Mahatma, in front of the tragedy which was coming into being, among other reasons because of his own misguided policies, tried to find a last-minute remedy when proposing the April 1 Plan. By then, however, it was too late. The Mahatma went on trying to salvage all what was possible to salvage through his selfless and fearless work at the grass root level, in the areas most ravaged by communal violence, which resulted in his own assassination. This, I think, saved numerous lives and, equally important, saved his own soul. But some 70 years after his death, the malign consequences of his mistakes are still with us.

### **Drawing the morale of a rather sad story, hopefully recounted sine ira et studio (without anger and partiality)**

At the end of the day, a moral can be drawn from the story recounted so far. Gandhi was a highly moral man, whose lodestar in politics was morality and who strived to act morally. Not always did he succeed in acting morally, but certainly most of the times he succeeded in doing it. As certainly, he was a much more moral man than the greater part of his companions, allies and adversaries. Morality, however, is not a valid substitute for good politics. As far as the Muslim question is concerned, Gandhi strictly acted according to his own perception of morality. In doing so, he piled political mistakes upon political mistakes and powerfully contributed to one of the most terrifying man-made tragedy in the history of modern and contemporary South Asia.

Once all this has been said, let me point out that Gandhi was by no means the only responsible of that awful tragedy that was India's partition. But this article is not a discussion of the responsibilities of the "Guilty Men of Indian Partition" (to make use of Rammanohar Lohia's definition), but

only of Gandhi's responsibility. It has been an enquiry made necessary by the lack of any appraisal of Gandhi's role in partition going beyond the hagiographical portrait of the non-violent warrior fighting single-handedly against communal mass murder. To repeat the words of the Latin historian Gaius Asinius Pollio, when discussing the life of Cicero, "Since no mortal is ever gifted of a perfect virtue by Fate, to judge a man one must observe his behaviour and his prevailing thoughts".<sup>36</sup> This is what I have tried to do. And, doing that, I have strived to conform to the indications of the greatest among the Latin historians, Cornelius Tacitus. Accordingly, I have tried to assess Gandhi's role "without anger and partiality, from any motives of which I am far removed".<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

- 1 I am aware that there is an influential school of thought, according to which the Hindu–Muslim conflict is the leitmotif of Indian history. I have extensively contested this interpretation in my *Storia dell'India*, Bari: Laterza 2000, of which a much expanded and updated English version will be published by Manohar (New Delhi). I have recently discussed this problem (in English), taking the cue from Christopher Bayly's standing on it. See Michelguglielmo Torri, "India from the Precolonial to the Colonial Era: The Shaping of the Indian Middle Class and the Roots of Communalism. Thinking back on C.A. Bayly's *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*", in Maurizio Griffo and Teodoro Tagliaferri (eds.), *From the History of Empire to World History. The Historiographical Itinerary of Christopher A. Bayly*, Napoli: Federico II University Press – fedOA Press, 2019, in particular pp. 56–60.
- 2 The bulk of the Muslim community lived in Bengal, the United Provinces and Punjab. Much of the necessary data on the different class structure of the community in these three areas are available in 26 volume *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*. All volumes are available in the Internet. A sociological study of the Indian Muslim community in colonial India does not exist, but information on the subject and the usage of religious watchwords and slogans to either mask or strengthen class interests is scattered in many monographs and academic articles. See, e.g. for a general overview: Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968; P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972; John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, and Anil Seal (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation. Essays on Indian Politics 1870 to 1940*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973. On the situation in Bengal, see, e.g. W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, Edinburgh: Murray and Gibb, 1871 (a minor classic which, in spite of the title, is really focused on Bengal and which is available on the internet); J. H. Broomfield, *Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968; John R. McLane, *The 1905 Partition of Bengal and the New Communalism*, in Alexander Lipski (ed.), *Bengal East & West*, South Asia Series, Occasional Papers # 13, Michigan: Michigan State University, 1970. On the United Provinces, see, e.g. Paul R. Brass, 'Muslim Separatism in United Provinces: Social Context and Political Strategy before Partition', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 5, No. 3/5, Annual Number, January 1970, pp. 167–186; Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims. The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974; C.A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*.

- North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 (1<sup>a</sup> ed. 1983); Lance Brennan, 'The Illusion of Security: The Background to Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1984, pp. 237–272. On the Punjab see, e.g. Sukhdev Singh Sohal, 'Patterns of Political Mobilization in the Colonial Punjab (1901–07)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 50, Golden Jubilee Session, 1989, pp. 462–473; Iftikhar H. Malik, 'Identity Formation and Muslim Party Politics in the Punjab, 1897–1936: A Retrospective Analysis', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, May 1995, pp. 293–323; K. L. Tuteja, 'Muslim Communitarian Consciousness in Punjab in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1995, Vol. 56, 1995, pp. 614–626; Chanda Chatterjee, 'The Agrarian Roots Of Communalism: Punjab 1880–1947', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 56, 1995, pp. 611–613; Ayesha Jalal, 'Nation, Reason and Religion: Punjab's Role in the Partition of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 33, No. 32, 8–14 August 1998, pp. 2183–2190; Chanda Chatterjee, 'The Congress in Retreat: Punjab 1919–40', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 61, Part One, Millennium Issue, 2000–01, pp. 710–713; Robert Ivermee, 'Shari'at and Muslim Community in Colonial Punjab, 1865–85', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 4, July 2014, pp. 1068–95; Naseer Ahmad Mir, 'Landholding Communities in Punjab', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 78, 2017, pp. 340–350.
- 3 H.F. Owen, 'Negotiating the Lucknow Pact', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, May 1972, pp. 566–590.
  - 4 This claim is proven, either explicitly or, more often, implicitly by all the many biographies of Gandhi and monographic studies of his activities in the period 1915–20. See, e.g. B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi. A Biography*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1958; Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power. Indian Politics 1915–22*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974 (1st edition 1972); Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi. Prisoner of Hope*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992 (1st British edition 1989); Joseph Lelyveld, *Great Soul. Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*, New Delhi: Harpers Collins Publishers India, 2011; Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World, 1914–48*, London: Allen Lane, 2018.
  - 5 The discussion of the Gandhi-Ali brothers alliance, the Khilafat movement and its role in the non-cooperation movement of 1920–22 is largely based on three sources: (a) the official annalistic history of India (*Statements exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India during the year ...*); (b) another official (and confidential) history, namely P.C. Bamford, *Histories of the Non-Co-operation movement and Khilafat Movements*, Delhi: Government of India Press, 1925; (c) H.N. Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register*, for the years 1919–22, which I consulted in the microfiche edition by the Inter Documentation Company Microeditions, Zug, Switzerland.
  - 6 Those who can read Italian will find a detailed analysis of this development in Michelguglielmo Torri, *Dalla collaborazione alla rivoluzione non violenta*, Torino: Einaudi, 1975. Monographs dealing with the Khilafat movement and its role in making Gandhi's rise to power and the non-cooperation movement possible are: Albert Christiaan Niemeijer, *The Khilafat Movement in India 1919–24*, The Hague: Brill, 1972 (which is also freely downloadable on the internet); and Gail Minault, *Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. It is also of interest Gail Minault's review of Niemeijer's monograph and other works on the Muslim in British India in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 81, No. 3, June 1976, pp. 645–647.

- 7 D.A. Low, 'The Government of India and the First Non-Co-operation Movement, 1920-2', in Ravinder Kumar (ed.), *Essays on Gandhian Politics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, pp. 298–323.
- 8 E.g. Raj Kumar Trivedi, 'Mustafa Kemal and the Indian Khilafat Movement (to 1924)', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 42, 1981, pp. 458–467; Michelangelo Guida, 'Seyyid Bey and the Abolition of the Caliphate', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2, March 2008, pp. 275–289; Fabio L. Grassi, *Atatürk*, Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009 (1st edition 2008), pp. 276–280.
- 9 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Towards Freedom. The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1967 (1st edition, London: The Bodley Head Ltd, 1936), p. 72.
- 10 E.g. Mushirul Hasan, 'Communalism in the Provinces: A Case Study of Bengal and the Punjab, 1922–26', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 15, No. 33, 16 August 1980, pp. 1395–1406.
- 11 Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1979, p. 267.
- 12 Among the over-abundant scholarly analyses of this topic and period, this author has found particularly useful the following ones (quoted in order of publication): B.N. Pandey, *The Break-up of British India*, London: MacMillan, 1969; Uma Kaura, *Muslim and Indian Nationalism*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1977; Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*.
- 13 E.g. Richard Gordon, 'The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress, 1915 to 1926', *Modern Asian Studies*, 1975, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1975, pp. 145–203; Mushirul Hasan, 'Communal and Revivalist Trends in Congress', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 8, No. 7, February 1980, pp. 52–66. Of course, much of the influence of the Hindu communal forces in the Congress was a direct consequence of the fact that they clearly and openly articulated the communal ideology which was tacitly shared by a large section of the Congress' rank and file and some of its leaders. On this see, e.g. Abhay Datar, 'The Lucknow Pact of 1916: A Second Look at the Congress-Muslim League Agreement', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 47, No. 10, 10 March 2012, pp. 65–69.
- 14 On this we have the testimony of Motilal Ghosh, the editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika. See Bapu Motilal Ghosh, *Prelude*, pp. LXXXIII–LXXXV, in Datto Appajee Tulzapurkar and Aandra Vinayak Patwardhan, *A Step in the Steamer*, Bombay: National Bureau, 1916. A copy of this work – although reproduced with an overabundance of spelling mistakes – can be accessed online at the URL [https://archive.org/stream/stepinsteamer00ghos/stepinsteamer00ghos\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/stepinsteamer00ghos/stepinsteamer00ghos_djvu.txt).
- 15 As shown above, this had been the lodestar of Gandhi's political approach to the Muslim question since his return to India in 1915. As we shall see below, it changed only in 1947; by then, unfortunately, it was too late.
- 16 See, e.g. Gandhi's concluding speech at the Round Table Conference, whose text is available, e.g. in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi: The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Vol. XLVIII (1931–32), 1971, pp. 356–368 (where the speech is dated 1 December 1931), and *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, edited by Shriman Narayan, Navajivan Publishing House: Ahmedabad, 1968, Vol. V – *The Voice of Truth*, pp. 35–49 (where the speech is dated 30 November 1931).
- 17 Quoted in Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 150.
- 18 On the Gandhi-Bose conflict, see Michelguglielmo Torri, *Regime coloniale, intellettuale e notabili in India*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1996, pp. 238–241, and the bibliography there quoted.

- 19 The following reconstruction of the Cabinet Mission's failed attempt to foster the birth of an independent India that would remain united is mainly based on the work listed below. They are quoted in alphabetical order. Among them, in this author's opinion, by far the most illuminating is Wavell's journal. Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Hyderabad: Orient Longman, of which both the first edition of 1959 and the 1988, including new material, but lacking at least one crucial passage, present in the previous version, have been consulted; Giorgio Borsa, 'Le trattative per l'indipendenza dell'India', *Il Politico*, Vol. XXII, No. 3, 1958, pp. 406–445; Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman. Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; A. G. Noorani, *The Cabinet Mission and its Aftermath*, in C. H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India. Policies and Perspectives 1935–47*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970; Jaswant Singh, *Jinnah. India-Partition-Independence*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2009; Wavell [Archibald Percival, 1st Earl Wavell], *The Viceroy's Journal*, ed. Penderel Moon, Delhi: Oxford University Press; Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*; Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight. The Last Years of the British Empire in India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (first edition 2006).
- 20 Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 478, § 19 (VII).
- 21 Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 184–185.
- 22 Kuwajima Sho, *Muslims, Nationalism and the Partition: 1946 Provincial Elections in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1998, pp. 221 (table VI), 224–232.
- 23 Wavell, *The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 293.
- 24 For an excellent analysis of the (non) working of the interim government see Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, 'Liaquat Ali Khan's Budget of 1947–48: The Tryst with Destiny', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 16, No. 181–182, June–July 1988, pp. 77–89.
- 25 On the "Direct Action Day", which is usually considered the event which started the widespread violence that preceded, accompanied and followed the partition, see Francis Toker, *While Memory Serves*, London: Cassell, 1950 (also available on the internet); Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–47*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1996 (1st British edition: Cambridge, 1994), Ch. 6; Nakazato Nariaki, 'The Politics of a Partition Riot: Calcutta in August 1946', in Sato Tsugitaka (ed.), *Muslim Societies: Historical and Comparative Aspects*, London: Routledge, 2004, Ch. 6. More generally, on the massacres which accompanied and followed partition see Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962; G. D. Khosla, *Stern Reckoning. A Survey of the Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989; and Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition*, New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2007.
- 26 After the 1937 province elections and the refusal on the part of the Congress to come to an alliance with the Muslim League, that the Congress, in spite of the presence of some Muslims in its leadership, was a pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim party became a deeply-held conviction on the part of Jinnah and a recurring theme of the anti-Congress propaganda on the part of the Muslim League. Any biography of Jinnah or monograph focussed on the last ten years of British India are replete with examples of this development.
- 27 Annex 1 to Viceroy's Conference Paper no. 22 – Viceroy's Personal Report no. 2, 9th April 1947: Outline of a scheme for an Interim Government pending transfer of power (drafted by Ismay in consultation with Gandhi), *Lord Mountbatten's papers* (University of Southampton), quoted in Laura Dolci, "A Question of How and When": *Lord Mountbatten e il processo di indipendenza in India*, Tesi di

Laurea, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche “Cesare Alfieri”, Dipartimento di Studi sullo Stato, Anno Accademico 1993/94.

28 *Ibid.*

29 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, New York: Atheneum, 1986, p. 57.

30 On the timing of the decision of Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel to get rid of the Muslim League, by allowing Jinnah to have his Pakistan, although in the “truncated” form excluding East Punjab and West Bengal plus Calcutta, see V. P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957, pp. 358–359, and Rammanohar Lohia, *Guilty Men of India's Partition*, Hyderabad: Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyalaya Nyas, 1970, pp. 27–28.

31 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 61.

32 Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*, Delhi: MacMillan India Limited, 1983, p. 437.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Michelguglielmo Torri, *Storia dell'India*, pp. 620–621.

35 S. M. Burke and Salim Al-Din Quraishi, *The British Raj in India. An Historical Review*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 448–450, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom. An Autobiographical Narrative*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1959, p. 155.

36 “Sed quando mortalium nulli uirtus perfecta contigit, qua maior pars uitae atque ingenii stetit, ea iudicandum de homine est.” Quoted in Seneca, *Suasoriae*, 6, p. 24.

37 “Sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo.” Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales*, 1, 1.



## 6 Partitions and beyond

### Gandhi's views on Palestine's and India's divides

*Marzia Casolari*

For Delfo

#### **Introduction**

Gandhi's views on politics related to Palestine's partition in a comparative perspective with India's partition are a relatively neglected topic although Gandhi's personality and experience have been studied from any possible angle.

Very few scholars observed the connections between the two partitions, notwithstanding the blatant affinity between them. Gandhi did: he perceived the divisive activity of the British Empire as early as the 1920s and realised the dangers posed for the future of India by the Mandates on the Middle East.

In spite of an amount of meaningful records on the Palestine question in Gandhi's Collected Works, this topic remains largely unstudied. Most scholars focused on the famous letter from Martin Buber to Gandhi in reply to the latter's article "The Jews", published in the *Harijan* on 26 November 1938. However, the Mahatma's views regarding the Palestine question and the creation of the State of Israel were much more articulate than those expressed in that article.

Palestine's and India's partitions mirror each other since many processes that determined the partition of Palestine recurred in India's partition and vice versa: since Gandhi was aware of this intimate connection, a better knowledge of Gandhi's views on Palestine's partition sheds new light on his approach to India's partition as well.

#### **The prelude to Palestine's and India's partitions: Gandhi's visions and concerns**

Gandhi's attention for Palestine dates back to the treaties that between 1920 and 1923 reshaped the Middle East: with resolution of 25 April 1920, the San Remo Conference paved the way to the Treaty of Sevres and the creation of the French mandate for Syria and British mandates for Palestine and

Mesopotamia, with the endorsement of the League of Nations. Strangely, Gandhi did not comment on the Balfour declaration that was the prelude to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. He perceived the divisive effects of the British and French policy in the Middle East and its potential impact on Indian politics, especially on Hindu–Muslim unity, and suspected a possible replication in India of the British policy in Palestine.

Gandhi's opinions and actions connected to the Middle East and Palestine follow a specific chronology, that is not just a mere sequence of dates, but is strictly linked to the events.

Between the 1920s and 1947, India was the country with the largest Muslim population in the world and certainly the uproar arisen in the prospect of a Middle East fragmented and subjected to the French and British colonial rule had an impact on India: Gandhi was aware and concerned about it.

The 1920 *satyagraha* and its association with the Khilafat movement are commonly explained as Gandhi's pragmatic political project aiming to prevent the alienation of Indian Muslims and to promote the Hindu–Muslim unity within the Indian national movement, in order to reinforce the struggle against the colonisers.

However, a careful reading of Gandhi's works of the early 1920s discloses two important aspects. First, Gandhi's concern was not just the elimination of the Caliphate and the enforcement of a colonial rule on the Middle East, but it was the introduction of an alien element represented by the Jewish immigration to Palestine. Therefore, Gandhi was concerned not just about the reshaping of the Middle East, but about a possible Palestine's break up, after the introduction of an explosive communal element.

Second, Gandhi was aware that the territorial partitions implemented by the mandates in the Middle East were essentially connected with the land in a geographical and geopolitical sense and, only as a consequence, with the communities living on that land. Therefore, Gandhi related the mandates to the British promises of a land to the Jews, contained in the Balfour declaration of 1917.

Gandhi's first reference to Palestine is in his article "The Khilafat" published in *Young India* on 23 March 1921:

The most thorny part of the question is, therefore, Palestine. Britain has made promises to the Zionists. The latter have, naturally, a sacred sentiment about the place. The Jews, it is contended, must remain a homeless wandering race unless they have obtained possession of Palestine. I do not propose to examine the soundness or otherwise of the doctrine underlying the proposition. All I contend is that they cannot possess Palestine through a trick or a moral breach. Palestine was not a stake in the War. The British Government could not dare have asked a single Muslim soldier to wrest control of Palestine from fellow-Muslims and give it to the Jews. Palestine, as a place of Jewish worship, is a sentiment to be respected and the Jews would have a just cause of complaint



against Mussulman idealists if they were to prevent Jews from offering worship as freely as themselves.<sup>1</sup>

In this script, Gandhi seems to refer, if not precisely to the Balfour declaration, to the resolutions adopted after the First World War, above all the Treaty of Sevres and the Mandate on Palestine. Right from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–20, Palestine was in the forefront: the draft resolutions submitted by the World Zionist Organisation to the Conference demanded the recognition of “the historic title of the Jewish people to Palestine and the Right of the Jews to reconstitute in Palestine their National Home”.<sup>2</sup> This demand echoed the Balfour Declaration that on 2 November 1917 had promised, “a national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine.

The Palestine Mandate enforced the “declaration originally made on 2 November 1917” (the Balfour declaration) and transposed in its preamble and in Article 2 the request made by the Zionists in Paris that “The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home”.<sup>3</sup>

The Mandate defined and divided the populations living in Palestine along religious lines, as the British did in India. Ultimately, in Palestine, the mandatory power applied administrative practices and political strategies developed in India, where Hindus and Muslims were systematically divided. The Mandate defined only the Jews as a “nation” and it provided only “the establishment of the Jewish national home”, but not of an Arab national home, whereas other autochthonous groups were considered as “unnamed religious communities”. Only the Jews were entitled to negotiate with the Mandatory about the steps to be taken to accomplish the process leading to the foundation of the Jewish home (Art. 4).<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi did not underestimate the importance of religious communities and advocated the solution of the internationalisation of Palestine that should be open to Jews and Christians wanting to perform “all their religious rites” there.<sup>5</sup>

From the first phases of the fragmentation of the Middle East, begun with the elimination of the Caliphate, Gandhi’s concern was not only its harmful effect on the Muslim masses of India, but it was the disruptive effect of the elimination of the Caliphate over the Middle Eastern territories as such. When in the article “The Khilafat” Gandhi referred to the “Jazirut-ul-Arab”, the “Island of Arabia”, he defined in territorial, and not metaphysical terms, the specific geographic space including “Mesopotamia, Syria, and Palestine”. Gandhi underlined the spiritual side of the Caliphate issue, recognising the “spiritual sovereignty of the Caliph” and envisaging the return of the “Jazirut-ul-Arab” to the Muslims (and not the Arabs), but he stressed also the importance of maintaining “the temporal power of Turkey”.<sup>6</sup> He, therefore, took into consideration both the spiritual and political aspects of the problem.

Besides being a spiritual guide and a political leader, Gandhi was a lawyer and a Laws scholar; therefore, he had a particular sensitivity for legal aspects and certainly a knowledge of international law as well. Even when cloaked in philosophical or spiritual shadows, Gandhi's words had often a sharp political meaning. It is evident that Gandhi did not ignore the negotiations and the treaties formulated after the First World War.

Gandhi's knowledge of the treaties and the Balfour declaration is proved by his frequent expressions like "the gift by the Allies of Palestine to the Jews",<sup>7</sup> or sentences like "The most thorny part of the question is, therefore, Palestine, Britain has made promises to the Zionists" and "By no canon of ethics or war, therefore, can Palestine be given to the Jews as a result of the War".<sup>8</sup> Although they are not mentioned, the reference to the Balfour declaration and the subsequent developments up to the Treaty of Sevres is evident. Moreover, an explicit reference to the treaty is contained in an interview to "The Daily Herald" of 16 March 1921: when the journalist asked Gandhi's opinion about "the proposed revision of the Treaty of Sevres", the Mahatma answered that its aim was "pacifying the Turks", but not Indian Muslims, who would never have tolerated that the holy places of Islam would be under "direct or indirect" foreign influence and claimed the "total abrogation" of French and British mandates.<sup>9</sup>

### **Indian nationalism, Zionism and the Palestine question**

There is no mention, in Gandhi's Collected Works, of the May Day 1921 riots erupted in Tel Aviv in the wake of the entrance of 10,000 Jewish immigrants in Palestine between 1919 and 1921.<sup>10</sup> His next reference to the Palestine question is an interview to "The Jewish Chronicle" of the beginning of October 1931, when Gandhi was in London to attend the second Round Table Conference, between September and December 1931.<sup>11</sup> Jewish and Zionist circles, in Europe and elsewhere, were eager to obtain a sympathetic opinion of the Mahatma regarding Zionist claims in Palestine. The Mahatma began the interview by declaring all his sympathies to the Jews:

I have a world of friends among the Jews. In South Africa I was surrounded by the Jews, and I have had a Jewish shorthand writer who was regarded more as a member of the family.<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi specified that he studied the Jewish religion, although "as much as a layman can", and described the rituals he attended with his Jewish friends. About the issue of the Jews as the "Chosen People", Gandhi gave a non-committal opinion saying that, ultimately, "all people consider themselves to be chosen".

Regarding Zionism, the Mahatma expressed his appreciation of spiritual Zionism and not of the political one. The Jews should realise that Jerusalem "is within"<sup>13</sup> "in their heart, not on the map".<sup>14</sup>

Zionism meaning reoccupation of Palestine has no attraction for me. I can understand the longing of a Jew to return to Palestine, and he can do so if he can without the help of bayonets, whether his own or those of Britain. In that event he would go to Palestine peacefully and in perfect friendliness with the Arabs.

[...]

The real Jerusalem is the spiritual Jerusalem. Thus he can realize this Zionism in any part of the world.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, the Jews' return to Palestine could not be taken for granted, they should feel at home anywhere, especially in their native countries. Gandhi further clarified this point some years later.

The Mahatma went on to explain the difference between the criticism of political Zionism and antisemitism, which he defined "a remnant of barbarism".<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi gave this interview shortly after the riots over Jerusalem's Western Wall in 1928–29. Among the main causes of the revolts, there was the British failure to establish a legislative council, an institution that had been introduced in India ten years earlier.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the failure of the British policy in Palestine and the incapacity to reach an agreement reflected the failure of the Round Table Conference over rivalries between Indian leaders and brought forth once more the incapacity of the British politicians to bring about an agreeable constitutional set up for India.

Events in Palestine continued to have a remarkable impact on Indian Muslims: the 1929 riots provoked a new round of protests in support of the Arabs and, in April 1930, an all India Muslim Conference was held in Bombay, followed by an intense anti-Zionist publicity in the press and by a "Palestine Day" attended by approximately 10,000 people. Afterwards "Palestine Days" became an annual event in several Indian towns.<sup>18</sup>

At the end of the 1931 interview, Gandhi added he had "read so much about the Holy Land" that he would love to visit it. The occasion came in 1937, in the midst of the Arab revolt of 1936–39, when Gandhi's long-life friend and "soulmate" Hermann Kallenbach visited him in India, on behalf of the Jewish Agency.<sup>19</sup> The latter and Gandhi had a common concern: the position of Indian Muslims regarding Palestine and Israel. With approximately 70 million Muslims, in 1937, India had the largest Muslim population in the world. Such massive population had a remarkable political weight and its reactions could be worrying. Gandhi feared that troubles in Palestine could affect the ever more deteriorated harmony between Hindus and Muslims that he strenuously continued to uphold. On the opposite, Zionists were concerned about the possible repercussions of the Indian Muslims' protests on the Arabs in Palestine. When in 1936 the revolt broke out in Palestine, pro-Arab protests in India reached the peak while Nehru publicly spoke in favour of the Arabs. The situation in Palestine was strikingly similar to the Indian one, where the features of a future Indian state were under discussion, from

the constitutional point of view and regarding the minorities representation and the structure of a possible federal state. In Palestine, the revolt broke out when the House of Lords, the House of Commons and Zionist leaders opposed the attempts of several British High Commissioners to establish a joint Arab-Jewish legislative assembly. Similar to the Muslim League in India, the Zionists opposed the proportional representation within the legislative assembly, considering that, since the Jews amounted to 29% of the population, they would never obtain a fair political representation.<sup>20</sup>

The Jewish Agency sought the support of prominent Indian leaders in order to promote the Zionist cause in India and soothe the anti-Jewish feelings of Indian Muslims. The head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, Moshe Shertok, who was considering the idea of getting in contact with Indian leaders since 1933, in 1936 decided to send emissaries to India. He selected Immanuel Olsvanger, a German Doctor of Philology and a Sanskrit scholar, who had spent some time in South Africa, where he collaborated with Zionist international organisations. Olsvanger came up with the name of Kallenbach and suggested to ask him to go to India as well. Kallenbach accepted, but due to important business in London, he could not leave for India immediately and it was decided he would join Olsvanger in October 1936. The choice of the moment was not casual: the Zionist mission to India took place between the first phase of the Arab Revolt, which lasted from mid-April to the early November 1936, the appointment of the Palestine Royal Commission, commonly known as Peel Commission, and the release of its report in July 1937.

Olsvanger arrived in Bombay in August 1936. Some exponents of the Zionist Foundation Fund and Sarojini Naidu helped him to come in contact with Indian political figures. His first meeting was with Jawaharlal Nehru, with whom he met twice and exchanged several letters. The Zionist efforts to win the sympathy of Indian leaders was thwarted by the moment: with the Arab revolt at its peak, it was extremely difficult to obtain the consensus of Indian politicians for the Zionist cause. Nehru expressed his sharp criticism of the Zionist policy in Palestine. When Olsvanger tried to associate Arab nationalism with Nazism, arguing that they shared the same anti-Jewish interests, Nehru compared Zionist policy in Palestine to British imperialism and expressed the sympathies of Indian nationalism for the Arab national movement in Palestine “because this movement is directed against British imperialism”. Indian leaders, he asserted, were trying to explain to the Muslims

that the fight in Palestine is not one between Jews and Arabs, but between both and British Imperialism, and that they should not protest against the Jews but against the British Government, who hinders the development of peaceful relations.<sup>21</sup>

Nehru related Arab and Indian national struggle to the broader world situation where national movements were engaged against imperialism.

Ultimately, Nehru's views were very similar to Gandhi's, only expressed in more pragmatic words, according to his ideological background.

Olsvanger found Nehru "ill-informed on Zionism",<sup>22</sup> but was even more disappointed by the meeting with Gandhi that lasted only 20 minutes and originated a misunderstanding on the term Zionist associated to Kallenbach. Olsvanger was biased against Gandhi, whom he considered "a sham saint" and defined him a "laemmel", literally a young lamb in Yiddish, to mean a "simpleton".<sup>23</sup>

While Olsvanger was in India, the support to the Arabs of Palestine escalated: Indian politicians not only strived to preserve the Hindu-Muslim unity<sup>24</sup> but also grasped the similarity between the effects of the British colonial policy in Palestine and India and could not but sympathise with the Arab cause. In November 1936 took place an All Muslim Conference on Palestine, which passed resolutions threatening to boycott British goods and non-cooperation with the government, if Britain failed to satisfy Arab demands in Palestine.<sup>25</sup>

Olsvanger left to Palestine in November 1936 when the Arab Higher Committee called off the riots. The relief of the tensions in Palestine was timely, since the original plan according to which Kallenbach should join Olsvanger in Bombay did not materialise, due to his protracted engagements in London. With a calmer political situation in India, there could be more room for negotiations. Kallenbach arrived on 20 May 1937 and reunited with Gandhi after 23 years of separation: the friendship between the two men began during the Mahatma's stay in South Africa, between 1893 and 1914. A brilliant and athletic German architect and businessman, Kallenbach became one of Gandhi's closest followers and main financiers: he helped the Mahatma to organise his South African *satyagrahas*, to which he actively took part, and donated to the Indian resisters the farm that became the Tolstoy *ashram* in Johannesburg surroundings. Here, the two friends lived together for about two years between 1912 and 1914. Just after the outbreak of the First World War Gandhi and Kallenbach were supposed to move together to India. They left the Cape by sea. They had a stopover in London as war was declared and Kallenbach was detained as an enemy alien in the Isle of Man, while Gandhi continued on his way to India. They did not meet again until 1937.<sup>26</sup> Kallenbach was a non-practising Jew, well connected to the Zionist circles, although he belonged to the moderate wing.

Kallenbach remained six weeks with Gandhi with the purpose to improve the Mahatma's knowledge of Zionism: he brought several pamphlets and had long discussions with his friend and other Indian leaders. It cannot be said that Gandhi changed his views substantially during Kallenbach's stay in India, he just accepted in principle the legitimacy of the Jewish aspiration to a home Palestine but continued to refuse the Zionist reliance on British assistance and assert that the fulfilment of Jewish aspirations was

subordinated to Arab approval. According to Kallenbach's notes, Gandhi declared:

Neither the Mandate nor the Balfour Declaration can therefore be used in support of sustaining Jewish immigration into Palestine, in the teeth of Arab opposition. In my opinion the Jews should disclaim any intention of realizing their aspiration under the protection of arms and should rely wholly on the goodwill of Arabs.

No exception can possibly be taken to the natural desire of the Jews to find a home in Palestine. But they must wait for its fulfilment till Arab opinion is ripe for it. And the best way to enlist that opinion is to rely wholly upon the moral justice of the desire and therefore the moral sense of the Arabs and the Islamic world.

What about the Jews who have already settled in Palestine? Under the moral or ethical conception they would be governed by the same considerations as are applicable to newcomers. But I have little doubt that immediately the support of physical force is disclaimed, and the Jewish colony begins to depend upon the goodwill of the Arab population, their position would be safe. But this, at best, is a surmise. My opinion is based purely on ethical considerations, and is independent of results. I have no shadow of doubt that the existing position is untenable.<sup>27</sup>

In a letter of 4 July, Kallenbach informed Weizman of the possibility to involve Gandhi and Indian leaders in an attempt of reconciliation in Palestine:

Both think<sup>28</sup> that by direct conversation between Arabs and Jews only, will it be possible to reach an understanding and they believe the time is ripe now for such conversations. They are willing to assist to bring about these conversations, when called upon to do so, so is Mahatma Gandhi. The Mohammedan population of India, being 70,000,000, is by far the most important in the world. The intervention of some of their leaders with a view to reach conciliation, may have far reaching results. What do you think about it?<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime, Gandhi had read the Peel Report released on 7 July 1937, which recommended the partition of Palestine. He wrote to Kallenbach:

I have read the Palestine report. It makes sad reading but the Commission could not do anything more. It almost admits the critical blunder – a promise to the Arabs and a contrary one to the Jews. Breach of promise becomes inevitable. I am more than ever convinced that the only proper and dignified solution is the one I have suggested, now more so than before. My solution admits of no half measures. If the Jews will

rely wholly on Arab goodwill, they must once and for all renounce British protection. I wonder if they will adopt the heroic remedy.<sup>30</sup>

It was impossible to ignore the potential dangers that the British policy in Palestine could represent to India, where a similar solution was likely to be brought about. In spite of the efforts made by Kallenbach and the Jewish Agency to change Gandhi's opinions on the Palestine question, the Mahatma remained adamant in his views.<sup>31</sup> However, after the publication of the Peel report and after reading the literature Kallenbach had handed over to him, Gandhi felt the urgency to bring about a settlement in Palestine and, apparently, he intended to involve Kallenbach in this task:

[...] And if it is true a settlement between the Jews and the Arabs ought not to be difficult. I quite clearly see that if you are to play any part in bringing about an honourable settlement, your place is in India. It might be that you might have to go at times to South Africa. You might have to go frequently to Palestine but much of the work lies in India as I visualise the development of the settlement talks.<sup>32</sup>

This passage is Gandhi's most controversial sentence on the Palestine question. It reveals the Mahatma's intention to take action and help Arab and Jews to sit at the negotiating table and avoid partition. At this delicate stage, Gandhi did not make his offer publicly: a possible failure of the operation would have terrible consequences, both in India and in Palestine. The other reason for Gandhi's caution was the fear of British censorship; hence in writing, he avoided to be too explicit and preferred to treat the matter face to face.

Gandhi's intention was to send his closest associate and friend Rev. Charles Freer Andrews to Palestine as a peacemaker. Besides being a political activist, well connected also with the Zionist circles, Andrews had met Kallenbach in South Africa in 1932 and 1934 and the two became friends. Andrew wished to go to Palestine for a long time. He was the right person to persuade Arab and Jews to meet and negotiate. His long permanence in India and his acquaintance with Indian politics allowed Rev. Andrews to represent the concerns and convey the influence of India's 70 million Muslims. Kallenbach was ready to economically sponsor the initiative.<sup>33</sup> However, the pressure of events in Palestine, where the rebellion broke in September 1937, and the worsening of the situation in India and at the international level across the Second World War prevented Andrews to go to Palestine. In March 1940, according to a letter he wrote to Kallenbach, Andrews was still intentioned to go, but unfortunately, he died short after.<sup>34</sup>

Kallenbach returned to India from February to May 1939: this was the last time he and Gandhi stayed together. With the outbreak of the war and Kallenbach death, in 1945, they did not meet anymore.



### **The Peel Commission, the Peel Report and their aftermath: lessons for India**

The Peel Commission was appointed and started to investigate in May 1937, with the task being to hear the testimonies from the Arabs and the Jews, after the 1936 Great Revolt. The Zionists demanded unlimited immigration and the right to purchase land, whereas Haj Amin, chairman of the Arab Higher Committee and Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, claimed that Palestine be declared an Arab independent state from which were excluded some 400,000 Jews who had migrated since the First World War. He reversed the position adopted in 1935 when accepted the British Mandate and the Jewish community. Arab and Jew demands were irreconcilable and the Commission came to the conclusion that the Mandate was unviable. It contained an inherent contradiction: on the one hand, the Mandate had to secure the migration of “as may Jews into Palestine as the National Home can provide with the livelihood and protect them when admitted from Arab attacks”. On the other hand, the Jewish statehood could not be imposed on an unwilling Arab population since the Mandate was supposed to protect both Arab and Jewish interests. Above all, it could not “both concede the Arab claim to self-government and secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home”.<sup>35</sup> The Peel Commission decided that the only possible solution was the partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states.

In India, a similar situation was coming up: in both countries, the claim of self-government by the majority was irreconcilable with a demand of statehood by a minority. At the 1937 provincial elections in India, the Congress emerged as the only party with a national dimension, whereas the Muslim League did not obtain the majority in Muslim majority provinces and was excluded from coalition with the Congress in those Hindu majority provinces where the Congress had not been able to obtain the absolute majority. The Congress main goal was self-rule while, since 1937, the Muslim League began to pursue the statehood, the creation of a Muslim national home.<sup>36</sup>

Lord William Peel had been Secretary of State for India from 1922 to 1924 and in 1928–29, and as a member of the conservative delegation, he took part in the first and second session of the Round Table Conference, organised by the British and Indian Government in three sessions from 1930 to 1932, to define constitutional reforms for India and review the Government of India Act of 1919. The Conference not only failed to solve the representation problem but, in 1932, produced the Communal Award, which implemented the separate electorates introduced by the Government of India Act of 1919, nurturing in this way the inter-communal and inter-caste strife. Finally, the Conference generated the Government of India Act of 1935 which drafted schemes of federation and constitution which were never applied and contained too many safeguards, designed to preserve the dominance of the British rulers and their capacity to intervene when the position of the Raj was under threat. In a certain sense, the Round Table Conference and



the subsequent Government of India Act paved the way to India's partition and all related problems.

Many members of the Palestine Royal Commission and architects of the so-called Peel Report were connected to India as well. Among others, Laurie Hammond had been Governor of Assam from 1927 to 1929, while Douglas G. Harris, before being appointed as an irrigation adviser in Palestine, had been consulting engineer to the government of India and chief adviser to the government of India and provincial governments on irrigation matters. He was assigned as a special adviser to the Palestine Royal Commission and, together with Reginald Coupland, he had been the main advocate of Palestine's partition.<sup>37</sup> Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford from 1920 to 1948, Reginald Coupland seems to have been the most influential member of the Peel Commission: he wrote the majority of the report and was a strong supporter of Palestine's partition. Apparently, it was Coupland who suggested to Weizmann partition as the most viable solution, during one of the Commission's secret meetings.<sup>38</sup> In 1942, Coupland was a member of the Cripps Mission, and in the same year, he authored the book *The Cripps Mission and The Indian Problem 1833–1935*.<sup>39</sup> His diary of 1941–42 largely inspired the thought and action of Stafford Cripps.<sup>40</sup>

Not surprisingly, Gandhi strongly opposed the 1942 Cripps Mission, and when Sir Cripps submitted his proposal to Indian leaders, Gandhi was the only one who sensed the possible disruptive effect of the so-called provincial option contained in Cripps proposal, which allowed any province of a future Indian Union to secede. Gandhi might have remembered what happened in Palestine a few years earlier.

Shortly after the conclusion of the Peel Commission's works, the international situation changed and Palestine gained a relevant geopolitical importance that led British military planners and politicians to retain rather than give up Britain's mandatory role and to reverse their attitude towards the Jews and the Arabs.<sup>41</sup> Especially with the approach of the Second World War, Britain needed the support of Arabs and Muslims, whose alienation in the Middle East would affect the relationships with Muslims in India and within the Indian army as well.

The complex course of events which went through the creation of the Palestine Partition Commission or Woodhead Commission, appointed by Churchill in January 1938, the publication of a first White Paper in November, the subsequent St. James Conference and the publication of a second White Paper on 17 May 1939 led the British government to reject the partition and propose the creation of a unitary state in Palestine with an Arab majority, subject the acceptance of a restricted Jewish immigration for a limited period. The 1939 White Paper reconsidered Britain's mandatory role and foreshadowed an independent Palestine with an Arab majority within ten years, where the Jews should amount to no more than one-third of the population. However, both sides rejected the White Paper: the Jews considered it a breach of the Balfour declaration, while the Arabs repudiated it

because immediate independence and a halt to Jewish immigration were not included. Moreover, the several safeguards in favour of the British position in Palestine laid down by the proposal contributed to make it unacceptable.<sup>42</sup>

It is important to underline here two aspects. The first is that the British politicians and experts manipulated the partition issue according to Britain's interests and not for the sake of peace and stability in the Middle East. Ultimately, the British pursued the maintenance of the *status quo* in Palestine.

Second, it should be pointed out that after leading the Palestine Partition Commission, Sir John Woodhead became Indian Civil Servant and Governor of Bengal in June–November 1939, and in 1943–44, he headed the Famine Enquiry Commission, also known as Woodhead Commission, appointed to investigate the 1943 Bengal famine.

### **“Palestine belongs to the Arabs”**

Gandhi's expressed his sharpest criticism of the British (and French) politics in 1938, concurrently with the publication of the White Paper of November 1938. His famous and much discussed article, “The Jews”,<sup>43</sup> was published in the *Harijan* on 26 November, two weeks after the Crystals' Night, the notorious breakdown of Jewish properties, premises, synagogues and cemeteries all over Germany.

“Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French”: this famous sentence is generally considered as the evidence of Gandhi's uncontroversial support to the Arabs. Nowadays, it is written on the separation wall in Palestine, besides Gandhi's portraits.

In this article, the Mahatma expressed his sympathy for the Jews but, he pointed out, “my sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice”. He questioned the Jews' right to settle in Palestine, because

It is wrong or inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely, it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.

Regarding the Jews' return to the promised land,

And now a word to the Jews in Palestine. I have no doubt that they are going about in the wrong way. The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb. They can settle in

Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs. They should seek to convert the Arab heart.

After suggesting the Jews to offer *satyagraha* to the Arabs and sacrifice themselves in the name of the peace, Gandhi added:

There are hundreds of ways of reasoning with the Arabs, if they will only discard the help of the British bayonet. As it is, they are co-sharers with the British in despoiling a people who have done no wrong to them.

If Gandhi's views on the geopolitical implications of the Jews' return to Palestine were very lucid, the rest of the article is rather wandering. The most controversial part is where Gandhi the methods to resist the Nazi violence. Gandhi did not underestimate the scale of the Nazi violence, as "the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history", and predicted that in case of war it could increase to the point to "result in a general massacre of the Jews", but suggested that "the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering", because even the massacre "could be turned into a day of thanksgiving". After comparing the situation of the Jews in Germany with that of the Indians in South Africa, Gandhi came to the conclusion that "the Jews of Germany can offer *satyagraha* under infinitely better auspices than the Indians in South Africa".

Gandhi's article stirred the Zionist circles. Among a number of public reactions, it is worthwhile here to mention the responses of Martin Buber and Judah L. Magnes,<sup>44</sup> which were published in 1939 by the Bond Group of Jerusalem in the pamphlet *Two Letters to Gandhi*. While Gandhi's analysis was political, the two intellectuals replied in spiritual and metaphysical terms. Although both of them were moderate Zionists who favoured the dialogue with the Arabs and supported the creation of a binational state, they referred to the divine right of the Jews to live in Palestine and did not recognise the Arabs' exclusive right to own their land.<sup>45</sup>

Gandhi replied to Zionist and Jewish criticism with the article "Some questions answered", written on 9 December 1938 and published in the *Harijan* on 17 December.<sup>46</sup> Although in his reply Gandhi referred to two "friends", they were not Buber and Magnes, who sent their two letters together to Gandhi's *ashram* in Seagon on 9 March 1939. Gandhi never replied to them.<sup>47</sup>

In his reply of December 1938 to these two unidentified friends, the Mahatma did not apologise or justify his statements nor changed his opinions:

The two critics suggest that in presenting non-violence to the Jews as a remedy against the wrong done to them I have suggested nothing new, and that they have been practicing non-violence for the past two thousand years. Obviously, so far as these critics are concerned, I did not make my meaning clear. The Jews, so far as I know, have never practised

non-violence as an article of faith or even as a deliberate policy. Indeed, it is a stigma against them that their ancestors crucified Jesus. Are they not supposed to believe in eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth? Have they no violence in their hearts for their oppressors? [...] Their non-violence, if it may be so called, is of the helpless and the weak.<sup>48</sup>

The publication of “The Jews” was followed by an intense correspondence with various Zionist personalities, which focussed only on Gandhi’s disputable reference to *satyagraha* and non-violence but did not mention to Palestine.

Above all, it is worth mentioning the article “The Jewish Question”, published in the *Harijan* on 27 May 1939.<sup>49</sup> Gandhi wrote it in response to Hayim Greenberg, editor of the *Jewish Frontier* in the United States, a Zionist with socialist leanings and his admirer. In principle, Greenberg agreed with Gandhi’s idea of *satyagraha* and admitted, as stated by Gandhi, that German Jews “cannot resort to passive resistance because they lack the heroism, the faith and the specific imaginative powers which alone can stimulate such heroism”.<sup>50</sup> Regarding Palestine, Greenberg used a different argument from Buber and Magnes. He justified the Jews’ right to enter into Palestine on the basis of the well-known theory of the “barren land”, according to which at the time of the first inflows of Jewish immigration Palestine was an empty, unexploited wasteland.<sup>51</sup>

The country is underpopulated and inadequately cultivated; it contains room for several times the number of people that now reside in it. For Jews Palestine is the cradle and the “laboratory” of their civilisation and their spiritual bond with the country was not broken at any time during their history. For the Arabs Palestine is, in a certain sense, an “accidental” geographical unit for which they do not even have a name. To these day Palestine is only “South Syria” to the Arabs.<sup>52</sup>

In his reply to Greenberg, Gandhi did not mention the Palestine question, an attitude that he maintained also in his subsequent writings: he kept silent on the issue until 1946. The controversy with Greenberg focussed on non-violence as a means to oppose Nazism

Gandhi admitted that he wrote “The Jews” “at the pressing request of Jewish friends and correspondents” who expected him to make a statement in favour of the Jews, but he clarified that he “could not do so in any other manner”. In spite of the critiques after the publication of the article, Gandhi remained firm in his convictions: “I must say that I see no reason to change the opinion I expressed in my article”.<sup>53</sup>

In his answer to Gandhi, Greenberg had argued also that the Mahatma’s position regarding the Palestine question “was influenced by the anti-Zionist propaganda being conducted among fanatic Pan-Islamists”. Greenberg furthermore implied that Gandhi was “misguided into supporting the agitation

for the re-establishment of the Khalifate”; he “was wrong then”; therefore, “he is also mistaken in the present instance, and the source of these mistakes seems to be the same”.<sup>54</sup>

Gandhi denied to be partial to the Arabs for the sake of Hindu–Muslim unity, since he pursued the truth, even at the cost of India’s deliverance.

As far as the Khilafat was concerned, Gandhi pointed out:

Even at this distance of time I have no regret whatsoever for having taken up the Khilafat cause. I know that my persistence does not prove the correctness of my attitude.<sup>55</sup>

Gandhi intentionally refrained from mentioning Palestine since December 1938: in the transcription of a conversation with a group of missionaries published in *Harijan* on 24 December 1938<sup>56</sup> and in another article published in the same magazine on 27 May 1939<sup>57</sup> (the same date of “The Jewish Question”), he focused only on the Jews’ position in Germany and the appropriateness of *satyagraha* to oppose Nazism.

The Mahatma returned to the Palestine question only in 1946, with the article “Jews and Palestine”, published in *Harijan* on 21 July 1946.<sup>58</sup> From this document, it is possible to confirm that Gandhi purposely avoided to address the issue, as he declared at the beginning of the article: “Hitherto I have refrained practically from saying anything in public regarding the Jew–Arab controversy. I have done so for good reasons”. Gandhi’s silence was due to the intention to avoid the polemics caused by his declarations and any manipulation of his words by the Zionists. Although silent, Gandhi did not lose interest in the question. He reiterated his views regarding the enormity of the persecutions against the Jews but reiterated his views regarding the Jews’ return to Palestine:

But, in my opinion, they have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism. Their citizenship of the world should have and would have made them honoured guests of any country.

[...]

No wonder that my sympathy goes out to the Jews in their unenviably sad plight. But one would have thought adversity would teach them lessons of peace. Why should they depend upon American money or British arms for forcing themselves on an unwelcome land? Why should they resort to terrorism to make good their forcible landing in Palestine?

Gandhi remained firm on his positions up to end: in the imminence of India’s partition, on 12 April 1947, he stated “The Arabs are a great people with a great history and therefore if they provide refuge for the Jews without the mediation of any nation, it will be in their tradition of generosity”.<sup>59</sup>

A few weeks later, he drew a clear parallel between the situation in India and Palestine in an interview to Reuter delivered on 5 May 1947,<sup>60</sup> in the imminence of India's partition. When asked if India's partition was unavoidable, Gandhi replied that he did not think so and to the question whether Britain should remain in India until the Hindu–Muslim controversy was resolved, possibly by June 1948, he replied that the British should leave India immediately. In sight of independence, the presence “of the British power and British arms” would be more harmful than useful, because wherever there was a risk of communal strife, the various groups would resort “to the great British machine” for military assistance against each other.

To the question “What is the solution to Palestine problem?” Gandhi answered that it had become an almost insoluble problem that the Jews should not adopt terrorism against the Arabs, but meet them, “make friends with them, and not depend on British aid or American aid or any aid”.

Gandhi's views on Palestine mirrored Nehru's ideas on the issue, as expressed in *Eighteen Months in India*.<sup>61</sup> Here, Nehru described in much more explicit terms than those used by Gandhi and through a very articulate analysis the intimate connection between the situation in India and Palestine. Though different in language and style, Gandhi's and Nehru's views on Palestine and on the relationship between India and Palestine as subjects to British imperialism were echoed by the Congress favourable attitude to the Arabs, as well as on Indian vote against Palestine's partition at the UN on 29 November 1947.<sup>62</sup>

### **India's and Palestine's partitions compared**

The partitions of Palestine and India reflect each other in several ways. The study of Gandhi's writings on Palestine allows to analyse in depth the early history of Palestine's partition which, as correctly pointed out by Penny Sinanoglou, “is a comparatively neglected topic in the otherwise extensive literature on the British mandate”.<sup>63</sup> The British failed attempts, at the end of the 1920s and in 1936, to institute a united legislative council and a legislative assembly in Palestine was inspired by the similarly failing legislative councils established in India in 1919. Gandhi, who was right in the midst of politics throughout the 1920s and 1930s, was well informed about the Middle Eastern politics and knew perfectly British political practices: he was in a position to perceive the similarity between the situation in Palestine and India and to identify British responsibilities in those failures. The similarity between India and Palestine was remarkable in administrative and political terms: in both cases, the British officials had to lay the basis for self-governing bodies (in India, in particular, this problem became impellent after 1942) and, at the same time, “safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants [...] irrespective of race or religion”.<sup>64</sup> In both cases, the institution of a representative government was subordinated to the majority rule, a system that raised enormous tensions and conflicts

between majorities and minorities, either in Palestine or in India. Gandhi was aware of the intrinsic contradiction of a representative self-government based on the majority rule in a multicultural context and believed that the British interference in India and the Middle East was the main cause of this contradiction, with all its consequences.

Gandhi upheld his criticism of the British colonial policy and perceived the connection between the British policy in the Middle East and in India since the times of the institution of the Mandate. In the interview “The Meaning of Swaraj” published in “Young India” on 6 April 1921, regarding self-rule, Gandhi declared that he was “satisfied with full responsible Government on Dominion lines if the Khilafat” issue was “redressed”. Indeed, India could not “remain within the Empire [...] for full responsible Government will have no meaning for India [...] if she cannot secure a settlement of the Khilafat terms. England then becomes ‘an enemy country for India’”.<sup>65</sup> In other terms, although the Khilafat issue was not directly connected with self-rule, the Hindu–Muslim harmony was the precondition for the attainment of the *swaraj*: since Gandhi rightly perceived the Indian political situation as part of the wider framework of the British empire, he believed that this harmony could not be reached if the Muslims plunged into helplessness, despair and unrest for the loss of their religious guide in Constantinople. The British would be held responsible for this additional side effect of their colonial policy.

Either in Palestine or in India, the British divisive policy leveraged the communities, in order to exploit the strengths and weaknesses of each. In both cases, the British administrators flattered the minorities, probably to compensate them for the inconvenience of the majority rule: in Palestine, the Zionist Executive was a self-selecting body, out of British control. Unlike the Arabs, the Zionists had a direct interaction with the British officials; moreover, the mandatory authorities allowed the Jews to be represented by a High Commissioner since 1 July 1920. This officer had the power to select the members of a hypothetical Arab Agency, which did not materialise because of Arabs’ refusal to cooperate in such conditions.<sup>66</sup> In the same period, in India, the Montagu–Chelmsford reforms of 1919 which, among other, introduced the separate electorates according to the principle of communal representation, triggered an increasing animosity between the Congress, that aimed to represent all Indians, irrespective of their creed, and the Muslim League that embodied the interests of the Muslim minority.

As already pointed out, several prominent members of the Palestine Royal Commission, above all Lord Peel, either held a position in the colonial administration in India before being appointed to Palestine or the opposite. Gandhi got to know closely especially Lord Peel when he took part in the Round Table Conference in London; he, therefore, knew these officers, their approach and practices and he most probably could foresee their moves, in Palestine or in India.

For the above-mentioned reasons, events in Palestine, which predated the Indian ones by decades, enabled Gandhi to foreshadow a similar fate for



India: no wonder, therefore, if in 1942 he was one of the few leaders, perhaps the only one, who perceived the deceiving nature of the so-called provincial option contained in the Cripps proposal. Gandhi “was conscious that the real consequence of the Cripps offer was India’s ‘vivisection’”.<sup>67</sup> He was also right in ascribing the responsibility of the conflicts in Palestine to the British rather than to the Jews or the Arabs, in particular to Douglas Harris, Reginald Coupland and Lewis Andrews.<sup>68</sup>

In both India and Palestine, partition was the easiest solution to the many questions arising from the issue of representative government: “who was to be represented? Which groups [...] had legitimate claims to nationality and by extension to sovereignty? [...] To whom was power to be transferred and how?”<sup>69</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The scope of this essay is not to give a definite answer to the complex and thorny question of Gandhi’s role and (possible) responsibilities in India’s partition. It is rather to highlight the similarities between two earth-shaking events, which have many aspects in common, far beyond the coincidence of dates. The purpose is to analyse these common features in a comparative perspective, through the vision of a privileged witness like Gandhi. Events in Palestine and India reflect each other in several ways: facts in Palestine predated by years or decades of similar developments that took place in India and vice versa. Gandhi followed carefully the developments in Palestine and was, therefore, able to predict the British moves in India, according to the policies adopted in the British Mandate. Gandhi and Nehru were perhaps the two only Indian leaders who clearly perceived India as part of the British Empire and had it clear in their mind that whatever happened in other British possessions had an effect on India.

It is almost a commonplace nowadays to blame Gandhi for not doing enough for avoiding India’s partition or even for favouring it. He is criticised for remaining aloof during the troublesome negotiations which took place between the 1946 Cabinet Mission and India’s independence and ultimately led to India’s partition. However, pointing to Gandhi as the main, if not the only responsible of India’s partition is not correct, because that responsibility was shared among other members of the Congress: it was Nehru and not Gandhi to squarely refuse, in 1946, the solution of a federation with a loose centre endorsed by Jinnah.

Regarding Gandhi’s non-committal attitude between 1946 and India’s independence, it should be pointed out that Gandhi may have chosen to remain aloof, in order to avoid a conflict within the Congress in that delicate moment. Moreover, in those days, Gandhi was marginalised within his own party. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) of the early March 1947, for instance, passed the resolution for the partition of Punjab, while Gandhi was touring Bihar in order to restore peace in the province shaken by



large-scale violence. Moreover, the CWC endorsed the partition on 3 June 1947 when Gandhi was observing his day of silence.

Gandhi is also blamed to actively oppose the partition at a late stage. Regarding this aspect, it should be considered that Gandhi's concern about the harmony between Hindus and Muslims dates back to the 1920s: at that time, he was already conscious that the Hind-Muslim unity was the main condition for the unity of the future independent India as well. He, therefore, decided to merge his first *satyagraha* in India with the Khilafat movement.

Moreover, Gandhi and other Congress leaders believed that Pakistan would not survive long and it would reunify with India. In the weeks immediately prior to the partition, Gandhi was convinced that the sooner the British would leave India, the sooner the Congress and the Muslim League would have overcome the rift and avoid the partition. Even under this respect, we can trace a continuity with Gandhi's views in the 1920s: this persuasion, indeed, reflects Gandhi's persuasion in the 1920s when he asserted that Arabs and Jews in Palestine should settle their disputes without British interference.

In his attempt to avoid the partition, Gandhi faced two hindrances, the British and the Congress. Once the British withdrew, Gandhi must have assumed to have a greater scope for action and he might have considered it worthwhile to try to reconcile with Pakistan and perhaps even endeavour to reunify India. Probably, this was the scope of the visit to Pakistan he planned in September 1947, with the consent of Jinnah and the support of three Parsi emissaries and of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, who had been Chief Minister of Bengal in 1946 and subsequently became prime minister of Pakistan.<sup>70</sup>

Gandhi publicly declared his intention to visit Pakistan at a prayer meeting on 23 September 1947:

I want to go to the Punjab. I want to go to Lahore. I do not want to go with any police or military escort. I want to go alone, depending only on God, I want to go with faith and trust on the Muslims there. Let them kill me if they want.<sup>71</sup>

Gandhi was planning to settle down in Lahore for some time along with 50 Punjabi refugee families living in Purana Qila camp in Delhi and to visit Lahore, Rawalpindi and Noakhali. He was expected to arrive in Pakistan on 8 or 9 February 1948; he was assassinated on 30 January.<sup>72</sup>

Regarding the second hindrance, namely the Congress as the main barrier to his plans to overcome the partition, Gandhi had the intention to dismantle the party, as stated in his notes on 29 January 1948:

Though split into two, India having attained political independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e., as a propaganda vehicle and

parliamentary machine has outlived its use. [...] The struggle for the ascendancy of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons, the A. I. C. C. resolves to disband the existing Congress organisation and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh.<sup>73</sup>

The Mahatma remains an iconic figure, who is either glorified or demonised. He may have done some mistakes, however, in a difficult situation, where it was almost impossible to avoid failures.

Additional research is required to find an answer to unanswered questions regarding India's partitions and the role played by Indian leaders, in order to avoid simplistic conclusion and obtain a final, unbiased knowledge of the facts.

## Notes

- 1 Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (hence CWMG), The Publications Division, Ahmedabad, 1964, Vol. 19, pp. 471–2. Similar concepts were expressed in the interview “The Meaning of Swaraj”, *Young India*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1921, *ibid.*, p. 530.
- 2 Statement of the Zionist Organisation regarding Palestine, United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/2D1C045FBC3F12688525704B006F29CC>.
- 3 League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, World Digital Library (WDL) <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/11572/>.
- 4 Penny Sinanoglou, ‘British Plans for the Partition of Palestine, 1929–1938’, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (March 2009), p. 132.
- 5 CWMG, Vol. 19, pp. 442–4 and 472. The internationalisation of Palestine was also one of the recommendations of the de Bunsen Committee: Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Bedford/St. Martin's, Boston-New York, 2004, p. 59.
- 6 CWMG, Vol. 19, pp. 471–2.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 444.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 472.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 444.
- 10 C.D. Smith, *Palestine*, p. 109.
- 11 CWMG, Vol. 48, pp. 105–6. The record does not provide the exact date of the interview, but only the reference “Before October 2, 1931”. See also Simone Panter-Brick, ‘Gandhi's Views on the Resolution of the Conflict in Palestine: A Note’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, p. 128.

The time gap of ten years between the Mahatma's statements on Palestine apparently contradicts his strong commitment for the Palestinian cause and is in contrast with the strong involvement of Indian politicians for the Palestine question. The Collected Works are the main, if not the only primary sources reflecting Gandhi's attitude towards the Middle East and Palestine before 1947, but the collection shows several loopholes regarding these subjects, as far as both, chronology and consistency of concepts are concerned. This aspect corroborates the theory according to which Gandhi's personal secretary Pyarelal, who sorted the Mahatma's records, destroyed most papers referring to Palestine and Israel.

In his book *Mahatma Gandhi and His Apostles* (Viking, New York, 1977), Ved Mehta reports that Pyarelal revealed to have destroyed Gandhi's papers regarding the Palestine question because it was a very sensitive issue: on the issue see Simone Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and the Middle East: Jews, Arabs and Imperial Interests*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2008, pp. 16–18.

The study of Gandhi's views on the Middle East and the Palestine question requires a careful examination of the details of this fragmented picture. Although the comparatively few references to the Middle East and Palestine in the Mahatma's Collected Works are interspersed by several years, the meaningfulness of these references is such to provide a precise overview of his perception of the issues regarding the Middle East and Palestine.

- 12 The reference is to a small group of European Jews who lived in South Africa and collaborated with Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns, above all Hermann Kallenbach, who will be mentioned more extensively further on, and Henry Pollack. The "Jewish shorthand" was Sonja Schlesin, Gandhi's secretary in South Africa: George Paxton, *Sonja Schlesin: Gandhi's South African Secretary*, Pax Books, Glasgow, 2006.
- 13 CWMG, Vol. 48, pp. 105–6.
- 14 S. Panter-Brick, 'Gandhi's Views', p. 128.
- 15 CWMG, Vol. 48, p. 106.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Regarding the causes of the 1928–1929 Arab revolts and the subsequent investigations carried out by the British authorities, see C.D. Smith, *Palestine*, pp. 126–30.
- 18 Gideon Shimoni, 'Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy towards Israel', *Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems*, No. 22, 1977, p. 27. Shimoni's booklet is largely based on papers from the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem.
- 19 The Jewish Agency was established in 1929 to replace the Palestine Zionist Executive, founded in 1921 as a development of the Zionist Commission of Palestine, created in 1918. It was granted a status of a semi-independent body by the Foreign Office and tasked with the facilitation of Jewish immigration and the protection of Jewish interests in Palestine. Both were headed by Chaim Weizmann who, in 1929, supplanted the Zionist Executive with the Jewish Agency. The new body had its headquarters in Jerusalem and a branch in London, directed by Weizmann: C.D. Smith, *Palestine*, pp. 105–6 and 113.
- 20 Laila Parsons, 'The Secret Testimony of the Peel Commission (Part I): Underbelly of the Empire', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XLIX, No. 1, 2019, p. 7. The economic causes described by Charles D. Smith, namely the repercussions of the 1930 great depression combined with the increasing Jewish immigration to Palestine provoked by Nazi and Fascist persecutions in Europe, with the increasing purchase of land by Jewish immigrants and the discriminatory standards affecting Arab labour contributed to the eruption of the Arab uprisings. Besides these factors, the two communities had engaged over the years into an arms race that ended up into open violence. Started as a general strike, the turmoil turned into armed revolt. Apart from the intervention of the British troops, the mediation of the surrounding Arab states helped to reach a peaceful, although temporary settlement. C.D. Smith, *Palestine*, pp. 130–5.
- 21 G. Shimoni, 'Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews', p. 30.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid., p. 31.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.

- 26 On Gandhi-Kallenbach friendship, see *ibid.* and S. Panter-Brick, 'Gandhi's Views', pp. 32–7; Isa Sarid and Christian Bartolf, *Hermann Kallenbach: Mahatma Gandhi's Friend in South Africa: A Concise Biography*, Gandhi-Informationen Zentrum, 1997. Above all, Shimon Lev, *Soulmates: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach*, Orient BlackSwan, Hyderabad, 2012.
- 27 S. Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and the Middle East*, pp. 62–3 and G. Shimoni, 'Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews', p. 33, quoting *Kallenbach Papers* and Zionist Central Archives (CZA) S. 25.3587, "Statement given by Mahatma Gandhi to Mr. Kallenbach on Zionism in July 1937".
- 28 According to Simone Panter-Bricks, with the word "both" Kallenbach referred to Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad, although there is no mention of these two leaders among the CZA papers.
- 29 S. Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and the Middle East*, pp. 63–4, G. Shimoni, 'Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews', p. 33: both scholars quote Kallenbach to Weizmann, from Wardha, 4.7.1937. Panter-Brick's and Shimoni's reconstructions differ considerably. Panter-Brick describes Gandhi's willingness "to assist" as a proper offer of mediation, although secret, and conditional to the Jewish renunciation of British protection, whereas, according to the papers, Gandhi's words appear rather as simple remarks and recommendations. Panter-Brick refers to the records of the CZA as unpublished before her works: Gandhi's offer "remained a well-kept secret for half a century, until the archives of the Central Zionist Agency in Jerusalem were opened to the public and a bunch of Gandhi's letters came fortuitously to be auctioned in South Africa": S. Panter-Brick, 'Gandhi's Views', p. 129; Simone Panter-Brick, 'Gandhi's Dream of Hindu-Muslim Unity and Its Two Offshoots in the Middle East', *Durham Anthropology Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2009, p. 62. A lengthy description of the facts related to Gandhi's offer of mediation is in S. Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and the Middle East*, pp. 53–65, but unfortunately most of her account is not based on records. Panter-Brick's remarks regarding the originality of the CZA documents do not seem to be correct, as these papers are quoted by Shimoni in his booklet of 1977: her quotations fully resume Shimoni's work.
- 30 G. Shimoni, *ibid.*, p. 34, quoting *Kallenbach Papers*, Gandhi to Kallenbach, 20.7.1937.
- 31 Kallenbach asked the Jewish Agency to prepare a detailed memorandum which should explain in details the historical and spiritual background and the present rationale of the Jewish demand of Palestine. The memorandum arrived at the end of August 1937: *ibid.*, pp. 33–5.
- 32 *Kallenbach Papers*, Gandhi to Kallenbach, 28.8.1937, *ibid.*, p. 35.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 37. What Panter-Brick seems to describe as Gandhi's last attempt to act in Palestine through the Italian philosopher and Gandhi's follower Giuseppe Giovanni Lanza del Vasto in 1938 appears inconsistent. Lanza del Vasto did not have the necessary authoritativeness to initiate a mediation. S. Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and the Middle East*, pp. 56–7.
- 35 Palestine Royal (Peel) Commission Report, July 1937, full text contained in C.D. Smith, *Palestine*, pp. 153–7; regarding the work of the Peel Commission, pp. 135–9.
- 36 It is not clear if in this phase Muhammad Ali Jinnah, president of the Muslim League, disillusioned by the viability of the unity with the Congress, pursued the idea of a separate state for the Muslims or of a Muslim nation within an Indian federal state.
- 37 Laila Parsons, 'The Secret Testimony of the Peel Commission (Part II): Partition', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XLIX, No. 2, 2020, pp. 13–19; P. Sinanoglou, 'British Plans', pp. 131 and 145–6.

- 38 L. Parsons, *ibid.*, pp. 9–19 and P. Sinanoglou, *ibid.*, p. 134. On Coupland's real responsibilities in drafting the report, see Arie M. Dubnov, 'The Architect of Two Partitions or a Federalist Daydreamer? The Curious Case of Reginald Coupland', in: Arie M. Dubnov and Laura Robson (eds.), *Partitions. A Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Territorial Separatism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2019, pp. 73–8. According to Dubnov's detailed portrait of Reginald Coupland and reconstruction of his role in the Peel Commission, as a strenuous supporter of federalism within the British Commonwealth, Coupland did not advocate Palestine partition. However, when the Peel Mission reached Palestine, the situation was very tense and the idea of territorial division as the best solution to communal strife had grown so significantly, that any other settlement would have been impracticable. Moreover, Coupland had a poor knowledge of Palestine. For this reason he finally endorsed partition and turned to be its strongest supporter.
- 39 The book was published by Oxford University Press. He wrote also *The Constitutional Problem in India*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1944 and *India: A Re-Statement*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1945.
- 40 Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, *Recording the Progress of Indian History: Symposia Papers of the Indian History Congress, 1992–2010*, Primus Books, New Delhi, 2012, p. 510.
- 41 After the occupation of Abyssinia, Italy had the virtual capacity to control the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. In case of war, the British would require to transfer troops overland, from India and Iraq to Egypt from Palestine. Finally, the construction of the Haifa harbour in 1933 and the pipeline connecting British oil fields to Haifa in 1935, in competition with a similar French pipeline that ended at the port of Tripoli in Lebanon, added to the importance of Palestine for British strategic and defence requirements. Due to the British air bases on its territory, Palestine was a crucial link in Britain's system of imperial air defence connecting Egypt, Africa, Iraq, India and the Far East. Against this background, peace in Palestine and the support of the neighbouring Arab country were essential for British military security, whereas the hostility of the Arab countries, would strengthen Italian and German position, already encouraged by intense propaganda activities. C.D. Smith, *Palestine*, pp. 139–40.
- 42 For the details of the long negotiations started with the appointment of the Woodhead Commission and ended with the 1939 White Paper, see *ibid.*, pp. 140–2.
- 43 CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 137–41.
- 44 Judah Leon Magnes was an American Jew and a rabbi, member of the moderate side of the Zionist movement and a peace activist. As Buber and other moderate Zionists, he was in favour of the harmony and the peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs. He had been the first chancellor of the Hebrew University in 1925 and its President from 1935 to 1948.
- 45 G. Shimoni, 'Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews', pp. 40–6.
- 46 CWMG, Vol. 68 pp. 191–3.
- 47 It is doubtful whether Gandhi has ever received Buber's and Magnes' letters. A second copy of the letters was sent by Magnes on 26 April 1939, but apparently they went astray and it was only in June 1939 that Gandhi's secretary, Pyarelal, reply to Magnes, thanking for the letter of 9 March and confirming that it had been received in Segaoon, but pointed out that he did not when Gandhi would have been able to reply, because he was "so hard pressed with his work": G. Shimoni, 'Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews', p. 47. Did Gandhi ever see the letters, or have they been removed by his secretary? This question remains unanswered.
- 48 CWMG, Vol. 68, p. 191.
- 49 CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 289–91.

- 50 “An answer to Gandhi”, *Jewish Frontier*, March 1939, in Mark Raider (ed.), *The Essential Hayim Greenberg. Essays and Addresses on Jewish Culture, Socialism, and Zionism*, University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2017, pp. 128–35.
- 51 Against this theory, that represents one of the main pillars of the Jewish discourse in favour of a massive colonisation of Palestine, see Ilan Pappé, *Ten Myths About Israel. The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford, 2006. In “A letter to Gandhi” of 1937, Greenberg went so far as to say that Palestine had fallen into a state of miserable decay after the Jewish diaspora: “In Palestine, too, there once existed a higher state of civilisation than we found when our generation began to return”. After enumerating all improvements made by the Jewish settlers, from irrigation, to cultivation, wells excavation, malaria eradication and so on, Greenberg dared define the Arabs “enemies of my people”. In spite of his adherence to moderate Zionism, Greenberg was strongly biased against the Arabs.
- 52 H. Greenberg, “An Answer to Gandhi”.
- 53 CWMG, Vol. 69, p. 290.
- 54 H. Greenberg, “An answer to Gandhi”.
- 55 CWMG, Vol. 69, p. 291.
- 56 “Discussion with Christian Missionaries”, CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 201–7.
- 57 CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 291–2, referring to the conversation with the missionaries. The script is classified as “Withdrawn”.
- 58 CWMG, Vol. 84, pp. 440–1.
- 59 Message for Arabs, 12 April 1947, published by *The Hindu*, 1 May 1947, CWMG, Vol. 87, p. 262.
- 60 ‘An interview to Reuter’, CWMG, Vol. 87, pp. 415–17. The interview was published by the *The Hindu* of 18 May 1947 and *Harijan* of 18 May 1947, under the title “Quit Now”.
- 61 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Eighteen Months in India 1936–1937*, Kitabistan, Allahabad-London, 1938, pp. 127–39.
- 62 On the background of the Indian vote at the UN, see Rami Ginat, ‘India and the Palestine Question: The Emergence of the Asia-Arab Block and India’s Quest for Hegemony in the Post-Colonial Third World’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 6, pp. 189–218. Interestingly, during the works of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, Nehru proposed the creation of a federal state in Palestine as an intermediate step towards the creation of a completely unified nation.
- 63 P. Sinanoglou, ‘British Plans’, p. 133.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- 65 CWMG, Vol. 19, p. 529.
- 66 C.D. Smith, *Palestine*, pp. 108–10 and 117–18.
- 67 Marzia Casolari, *The British Strategic Imperative in South Asia and Its Role in India’s Partition*, «QuadRi» Quaderni di Ricognizioni, Torino, 2017, p. 12.
- 68 Leila Parsons, ‘The Secret Testimony of the Peel Commission (Part II)’, pp. 13–20.
- 69 Penny Sinanoglou, ‘British Plans’, p. 135.
- 70 Rajmohan Gandhi, ‘What If Gandhi Had Lived On?’, *Outlook*, 23 August 2004.
- 71 CWMG, Vol. 89, p. 225.
- 72 R. Gandhi, ‘What If Gandhi’.
- 73 CDMG, Vol. 90, Draft Constitution of Congress, 29 January 1948, pp. 526–7.



## 7 Rethinking Gandhi's secularism

How did Gandhi's *Brahmacarya* relate to his last political vision?<sup>1</sup>

*Eijiro Hazama*

### Introduction<sup>2</sup>

Contemporary secularism in India is being placed in increasing jeopardy today as the right-wing Hindu nationalist party, vociferously portraying itself as the champion of “true” secularism, continuously expands its political dominance.<sup>3</sup> In response to this situation, Ashis Nandy has proposed an “anti-secularist manifesto”.<sup>4</sup> Within it, he overtly denounces “the modern ideology of secularism”, which is essentially alien to India, as the primary cause of the present communal tension.<sup>5</sup> In opposition, leading scholars represented by Rajeev Bhargava have squarely countered his arguments, stating that the religious plurality of India cannot be guaranteed without an adequate vindication of the “distinctive” characteristics of secularism “originally” developed in postcolonial India.<sup>6</sup> Yet, despite this explicit divergence in opinions, the opponents of secularism, such as Nandy and Madan, and its supporters, such as Bhargava and Pantham, strikingly appear to harbour the same thread of hope. They both believe that Gandhian *sarva dharma sambhāva* (equal respect for all religions), whether construed as a form of “principled distance” or “religious tolerance”, may provide a viable solution to overturn the calamitous status quo. They almost all connect Gandhi not only with Kabir, Dadu, and other pre-modern *nirguna bhaktas* but also with Ashoka's and Akbar's purportedly “secular” pluralistic policies in an apparent desire to uphold Gandhism as a plausible ideal.<sup>7</sup>

The above associations, however, are nostalgic and may require reconfiguration, particularly when we are faced with the complexity that surrounds Gandhi's most fundamental subject – his experiments with *brahmacarya* (sexual continence, celibacy, asceticism) in his closing years. Although Nirmar Kumar Bose, Gandhi's close secretary and an acclaimed anthropologist, once claimed that the experiments entailed “the story of the most important phase in his [=Gandhi's] political career”,<sup>8</sup> the relationship between the experiments and his political actions has been barely studied, aside from insufficient considerations of rampant “gossip”. Yet, it was precisely during this phase of life that Gandhi expeditiously developed his clear-cut vision

for the creation of a *secular* state and urged people to nourish their spirit of communal harmony.<sup>9</sup>

From the 1940s onwards, Gandhi, anticipating the tragedy of Partition, began to emphasize the need to ensure the separation of the state and religion.<sup>10</sup> At no other moment did he more openly insist that religion should be treated as “a purely personal matter”.<sup>11</sup> His statements must have yielded an uneasy feeling among those accustomed to his well-aided slogan of “no politics without religion”.<sup>12</sup> Some scholars such as Bipan Chandra, Kumkum Sangari, and Akeel Bilgrami have emphasized how Gandhi's political stance during his last years testifies to a substantial “change” or temporal peculiarity in his political thought.<sup>13</sup> *Per contra*, just a month prior to Partition, Gandhi abruptly published five-consecutive articles in his weekly journal *Harijanbandhu*,<sup>14</sup> elaborating at the greatest length on his unwavering religious conviction regarding the necessity of observing *brahmacarya*. This was in the same journal where he had just pronounced his vision of a secular Independent India. Bose reported how readers of the journal were utterly flabbergasted by Gandhi's seemingly contradictory actions and wondered why he felt the need to reveal such a personal view of sexuality in the midst of the political turmoil.<sup>15</sup> The publication was intimately related to Gandhi's “controversial” preceding experiments with *brahmacarya* in Noakhali, where he attempted to sleep naked with his naked “grandniece” (his first cousin twice removed), Manubahen Jaysukhlāl Gāndhī (hereafter, Manu).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the very period when Gandhi most lucidly envisioned secular postcolonial India was simultaneously the time when he, with an exceptional ardor, expounded upon the significance of *brahmacarya*.

As far as I can see, no scholarly work to date has squarely confronted this paradoxical phenomenon in Gandhi's religious politics. The above-mentioned discussions by Chandra, Sangari, and Bilgrami have only highlighted Gandhi's political discourse, entirely disregarding his concurrent experiments with *brahmacarya*. On the other hand, those few works by Eric Erikson, Sudhir Kakar, Vinay Lal, and Veena Howard, which have provided some psycho-analytical or hermeneutic analyses of Gandhi's *brahmacarya* during his last years, paid no heed to his political insistence on secularism.<sup>17</sup> There has been scarcely any attention given to the conceptual tie between his last experiments and political thought.<sup>18</sup>

In light of this, the current paper seeks to analyse the mutual connection between Gandhi's experiments with *brahmacarya* and his principle of secularism. In so doing, it will utilize primary historical materials written in the three languages, Gujarati, Hindi, and English with which Gandhi possessed a distinct command. In accordance with his multi-lingual policy,<sup>19</sup> Gandhi capitalized upon English and Hindi (Hindustani) for political negotiations within India and with the British, while he preferring his mother tongue, Gujarati, when it came to addressing intimate issues concerning religion, spirituality, and sexuality.<sup>20</sup> A cross-linguistic perusal is, therefore,



indispensable when it comes to interrogating documents written by Gandhi and his associates. Without reading all three languages, the underlying link between his religion and politics remains inaccessible.

I will first examine Gandhi's experiments with *brahmacarya* by reading articles published in the *Harijanbandhu* and Manu's diaries.<sup>21</sup> By so doing, I will bring to light the rationale behind Gandhi's sudden publication and the metaphysical connotations encapsulated in the articles. Secondly, I will, in turn, contemplate how the ideas behind Gandhi's experiments related to his contemporaneous insistence on the principle of secularism. Subsequent to completing these explorations, I will argue that Gandhi's idea of secularism was a unique creation that resists generalization and dogmatization. The core reason for this is that the ultimate arbiter behind the principle, which determined the boundaries between secularity and religiosity, morality and immorality, and violence and non-violence in the political sphere, was solely Gandhi's transcendental self or "intuition".

### **The experiments with *Brahmacarya***

From 8 June to 6 July 1947, Gandhi published a series of articles on his experiments with *brahmacarya* in his weekly journal *Harijanbandhu*. These articles contained the culmination of knowledge gathered over the course of four decades, following his vow of *brahmacarya* in late July 1906, just seven weeks prior to the commencement of the first *satyāgraha* campaign in South Africa. This section will thoroughly interrogate their contents. Yet, in order to adequately understand them, it is first essential to examine Gandhi's "experiments" with Manu in Noakhali, conducted from December 1946 to February 1947. Gandhi referred to these as "*mahāyajña* (the great sacrifice)", distinguishing them from all his previously undertaken experiments.<sup>22</sup> His *Harijanbandhu* articles were based upon this experience of the *mahāyajña*.<sup>23</sup> I will primarily use Manu's Gujarati diaries (particularly, her *Eklo Jāne Re: Gāndhījīnī Noākālīnī Dharmyātrānī Dāyarī* [hereafter, *GNDD*], written between 4 November 1946 and 4 March 1947)<sup>24</sup> to unearth the substance of the experiments.

### ***The mahāyajña***

Soon after the announcement of the "Direct Action Day" in August 1946, came the massive communal uproar in Calcutta that resulted in the deaths of 5000 people within four days and sparked off further religious strife in the surrounding regions. In October 1946, Gandhi, who was then staying in Delhi, decided to set out for Noakhali in eastern Bengal, one of the centres of the communal turmoil, to call for restoring peace. Gandhi reached Noakhali the next month after a short stay in Calcutta. In this district, while laboriously encouraging reconciliation during the daytime, Gandhi simultaneously undertook his *brahmacarya* experiments with Manu after work.

Gandhi seems to have carried out the experiments throughout his three-month stay in Noakhali except during the last one week.<sup>25</sup>

According to Manu's diary, Gandhi first began to correspond with Manu, who was then staying in Gujarat, on 28 October 1946, regarding his peace mission.<sup>26</sup> This was at the time when Gandhi left Delhi for Calcutta. Then, in a letter written on 1 December, Manu asked to join Gandhi's tour in Noakhali in strong terms.<sup>27</sup> Gandhi sent back his letter of acceptance,<sup>28</sup> and on 19 December 1946, Manu arrived in Noakhali with her father Jay-sukhulāl Gāndhī.<sup>29</sup>

On the night of Manu's arrival, Gandhi stayed alone with Manu in his hut (*jhūmpadī*). Manu wrote in *GNDD* that around the midnight, Gandhi, sleeping next to Manu, told her, that "you [Manu] should understand properly your *dharm*". Gandhi recommended that she consult with her father whether she should remain at Noakhali. Then, they slept and woke up at 3:30 a.m. After finishing his morning prayer, Gandhi asked Manu once again for her decision. Manu responded: "I am ready to undertake whatever hardship or trial until I die. I have complete faith (*sampūrṇ śraddhā*) and trust (*viśvās*) in you".<sup>30</sup>

After spending three weeks working for the peace mission in Noakhali, on 10 January 1947, Gandhi gave Manu an exceptionally long talk on *brahmacarya* for 40 minutes subsequent to his morning prayer. During this period, Gandhi consistently woke up around 4 a.m. and diligently worked for an average of 20 hours every day. On such busy days, no longer talk was recorded in the diary. In the talk, Gandhi told Manu that "today's talk is pivotal (*pāyānī*) for your life-formation (*jīvandhadṭarnā*)".<sup>31</sup> He further explained that "to observe *brahmacarya* means to become detached from sexual passion (*nirvikār*)".<sup>32</sup> At the end of the talk, Gandhi finally told Manu that "[a]lthough [I am a] male (*puruṣ*), I have become your mother/ma (*mā*)".<sup>33</sup>

The next night, Manu wrote in *GNDD* that she received an affectionate bodily touch from Gandhi:

Bāpjī [=Gandhi] laid down on the bed (*pathārī*) at 10:30 [p.m.]. I rubbed oil on his head, pressed his legs, and bowed down (*praṇām karyā*) as usual. *He caressed me with his hand, [his touch] filled with parental affection (Temṇe vātsalyabharyā hathe mane pampālī)*. I could not exactly recall when I had fallen asleep. [Emphasis added]<sup>34</sup>

Barring this reference, Manu does not record Gandhi's close physical interaction with her in bed. Indeed, Manu was required to show Gandhi every entry she recorded in her diary and these were then signed and authenticated by him. There is, thus, a considerable limit placed on our access to the whole picture of the experiments. The word "*vātsalya*" (*vātsalyabharyā*) used by Manu above, for instance, is a lexical choice that very much obscures sexual implication. It primarily means "affection" or "love" towards one's offspring or junior.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the contents of the diary and a number of Gandhi's

private letters sent to his associates appear to show that Gandhi had certain physical interactions with Manu, while they were both being naked.<sup>36</sup>

Although the specific nature of their physical interaction is unknown, we are still able to acknowledge the following two purposes of the Noakhali experiments.<sup>37</sup> First, Gandhi attempted to attain, what he called, “unique/non-separable personality (*anokhuṃ vyaktitva*)”<sup>38</sup> during the *mahāyajña*. This concept of “unique/non-separable personality” indicates the condition of “*ūrdhvaretā* (the one whose *vīrya* [semen/vital energy/vitality] is retained upward)” by achieving the perfect “*vīryasaṅgrah* (accumulation of *vīrya*)”.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, two weeks after his departure from Noakhali, Gandhi revealed in his “entirely private”<sup>40</sup> conversation with Swami Ananda and Kedarnath in Bihar, which lasted for two days, that his concept of *brahmacarya* was “deeply influenced” by “the Tantra school”. He then mentioned that he had read works by Sir. John Woodroffe, a founding father of the modern Tantric scholarship, during his incarceration period.<sup>41</sup> It is confirmed in Gandhi’s Gujarati diary that he had read Woodroffe’s *Shakti and Shakta*, which elaborates on the Śākta Tantrism, during the period between 23 and 30 in December 1923.<sup>42</sup> Second, Gandhi further believed that the success of the experiments would cause a positive cosmological effect of *śakti* on communal conflicts. Stated in another way, Gandhi had a firm belief in the unique metaphysics of the cosmic body and thought that if he could perfectly “purify (*śuddh karvuṃ*)” his “sexual passion/disorder (*vikār*)”<sup>43</sup> in his body and mind or successfully “transform (*parivartan*)” his “*vīrya* (semen, vital energy, vitality)” inside his body so that the cognitive distinction between the bipolar sexes could be eliminated,<sup>44</sup> the conflict or animosity in the physical world (*jagat*) would be resolved. Such ideas on the cosmic body can be commonly found in Indian traditional mythology,<sup>45</sup> but none of Gandhi’s contemporary Congress leaders dared to put them into practice in the political sphere.<sup>46</sup> Gandhi, based upon his own experience, almost solitarily believed that the communal violence in the physical world as fundamentally a reflection of the passion inside his body and mind.<sup>47</sup> According to Manu’s diary and Gandhi’s writings, Gandhi aimed to bring peace to the ongoing communal disturbance by conquering his sexual desire. He carried out the experiments in the utmost meticulous manner, for he considered that “[even] a little dirt (*meluṃ*) [in their minds]” was not permitted.<sup>48</sup> The experiments were recognized by them as “the initiation of self-sacrifice (*svārpaṇṇī dīkṣā*)”<sup>49</sup> or “intensely difficult test (*ākṛī parīkṣā*)”.<sup>50</sup>

Indeed, it appears to us to be astonishingly that a 77-year-old man was still experiencing and deeply afflicted by his vigorous sexual desire.<sup>51</sup> Although it may be difficult for many of us to empathize with his awareness of this perceived physio-spiritual crisis, I believe that we are too quick to judge his experiments as merely “strangest” or pathological.<sup>52</sup> By doing so, we are at risk of unconsciously projecting our contemporary cognitive frameworks. The subject should remain open to recurring interpretations and continuing analyses.<sup>53</sup>

### *The contents of the articles*

On 2 March 1947, Gandhi and Manu left Noakhali, moving ahead to Bihar where large riots were also taking place. While staying in Bihar, Gandhi had the above-mentioned “entirely private” conversation with Swami Ananda and Kedarnath. After spending one month in Bihar, they, in turn, set off for Delhi. They again came back to Bihar and Calcutta for the relief work and eventually returned to Delhi and stayed until his assassination. During his last days in Delhi, Gandhi published his five consecutive articles on *brahmacarya* in *Harijanbandhu*.

It should be noted here that Gandhi, possibly intentionally, avoided using the word “Tantra” in his articles. Additionally, there was no reference to the name of Manu either. It appears that Gandhi was keen to be cautious when publicly sharing his experiments with Manu. He had already risked his relationship with core members of the *Harijan* journal, such as Narahari Parekh and Kishorlal Mashruwala, as well as with eminent associates such as Nehru, V. Patel, Vinova Bhave, and Parashruram over his experiments; they had been shocked and bitterly resentful upon hearing about them.<sup>54</sup> Despite the fact that Gandhi discreetly circumvented Manu’s personal name and the term Tantra, which was widely conceived of as “the most primitive, idolatrous, and immoral side of the Indian mind” by his contemporary middle-class intellectuals at that time,<sup>55</sup> he endeavoured to convey the authentic meaning of *brahmacarya* to the maximum permitted level. Despite these limitations, it is still doubtless that these articles are the most reliable historical materials concerning the exact nature of Gandhi’s *brahmacarya*.

To begin with, in the first of the five consecutive articles entitled “How Did I Start? (*Mem kem sarū karyum?*)”,<sup>56</sup> Gandhi articulated the reason for the inception of his writing. Gandhi described that he was working under the guidance of “god (*īśvar*)”. Further, he mentioned that he was well aware of being liable to be condemned as “mad (*gāṇḍpaṇ*)” by writing upon such a subject for the journal. He, however, justified his action by saying that such criticism was only derived from a “secular perspective (*laukik daṣṭie*)”. He contended that the subject of *brahmacarya* was related to the “eternal element of life (*jīvan-  
num śāśvat aṅg*)” which was, in the truest sense, beneficial for people attached to “non-eternal (*aśāśvatno*) [things]”. He, then, moved on to recount the chief meaning of *brahmacarya*. According to him, “what leads us to *brahm* [*brahman*] is *brahmacarya*”. He additionally enunciated that the one who had attained such a condition was considered as “*sthītprajña* (the one whose wisdom is steadily established)”, as illustrated in *Bhagavad Gītā*. Moreover, Gandhi connected the argument of *sthītprajña* with *ūrdhvaretā* as follows:

My conception of *brahmacārī* [=practitioner of *brahmacarya*] is naturally healthy, he does not have headaches, [he] naturally lives long, his reason (*buddhi*) is bright, and he does not become sluggish and fatigued with [his] physical and mental works, and his outward neatness is the

reflection of his inward [condition]. In such a *brahmacārī*, all the qualities of *sthitprajña* (*sthitprajñanām badhām lakṣaṇ*) are equipped.

How do we doubt that the one whose *vīrya* became steady (*sthirvīrya*), [that is to say, the one who] became *ūrdhvaretā* acquires the above quality? It will never be possible without [attaining] the natural accumulation (*sahaj saṅgrah*) of *vīrya*, which entails *śakti* that can cause a life (*jīva*) in himself. [If] there is such a *śakti* in one drop (*bund*) of [*vīrya*], how can we measure the magnitude of *śakti* when the accumulation of a few drops of *vīrya* took place?<sup>57</sup>

Gandhi also elaborated on the meaning of *brahmacarya* in relation to Patañjali's *yamas* and his own 11 vows (*ekādaś vrat*) and finally stated in the concluding part that "only by becoming such, the definition of *brahmacarya* can be perfectly determined".

What should be noted here is that the concept of *ūrdhvaretā* illustrated by him during his last years entails an essential difference in meaning from his past understanding of *brahmacarya*. In the second article published the following week, entitled "The Fences of *Brahmacarya* (*Brahmacarya vād*)",<sup>58</sup> Gandhi referred to the austral ideas of *brahmacarya* originally taught by Śrīmad Rāj-candra, a Jain ascetic, who influenced Gandhi immensely during his sojourn in South Africa.<sup>59</sup> Gandhi overtly criticized his ideas as a "wrong (*kr̥trim*)" conception. This indicates that Gandhi's concept of *brahmacarya* in his last years inhered "a new way of thinking" as Bose pertinently pointed out.<sup>60</sup>

In the subsequent third article, "Where and Who Is God? (*Īśvar kayāṃ ne koṇ?*)",<sup>61</sup> Gandhi again wrote that "the definition of *brahmacarya*" was "the necessary practice to reach *brahm*". Here, he equated the concept of "*brahm*" not only with "god (*īśvar*)" but also with the concept of "*śakti* (spiritual or/and sexual energy)" as follows:

As a matter of fact, god is a *śakti*, and the essence/principle (*tattva*). It is a pure conscience (*śuddha caitanya*), and is omnipresent (*sarvavyāpak*). [.....]

We give a name "god (*īśvar*)" to [such] a great *śakti* with life (*cetanmay mahā śakti*), and there is a law to use it. But, it is clear like a [light of] lump that in search of it, much strenuous efforts are indispensable. The law in one word is *brahmacarya*. [.....]

The meaning of *brahmacarya* today is to control sexual organs (*jan-nendriya saṃyam*).<sup>62</sup>

Gandhi's fourth article, "the sign of the spiritual practice of name-intoning (*Nāmsādhanānām cihn*)",<sup>63</sup> expounded upon the concept of *śakti* in relation to the *vīryasaṅgrah* as follows:

Just as pure blood (*lohi*) is essential for the growth of body (*śarīrupuṣṭi*), *śakti* of pure *vīrya* (*vīryaśakti*) is essential for the growth of soul (*ātmanī*)

*puṣṭi*). I call this divine *śakti* (*divya śakti*). Such a *śakti* can recover (*maṭāḍī*) looseness (*śithilatā*) of all the sensual organs (*indriyo*). [.....] This observance (*niyam*) should be adapted to all [people] including young, old, women, and men.<sup>64</sup>

In the last article entitled “A Confusion (*Ek mūñjhavn*)”,<sup>65</sup> he drew attention to a need for “caution”, stating that “if a spiritual practitioner (*sādhak*) who has no confidence in his [mental purification] sees others [=true practitioners of *brahmacarya*] and imitates [them], [he] must be defeated”. He went on to opine that:

They [=the true practitioners of *brahmacarya*] will never feel being polluted (*dūṣit*) by touching [women] (*sparśmātra*). By doing so, [they] will not fear (*bhay*) that any impurity (*doṣ*) may occur. They see inside of all the women a supreme god (*parmeśvar*) as they [also] see in themselves.

To consider that such a case [=condition] cannot take place since we do not know [the firsthand knowledge of the condition, ] means the lack of humility, and [indicates] a disregard for the glory of *brahmacarya*. It is equally wrong to measure the *śakti* of perfect *brahmacarya* (*pūrṇ brahmacaryanī śakti*) by our [own] criteria, as we considered that god does not exist since we have not encountered god face to face (*tīśvar sākṣātkār*) or met who has encountered.<sup>66</sup>

As has been observed thus far, Gandhi publicized his straightforward views on the concept of *brahmacarya* in the five series of articles on in his journal. He elaborated on the meaning of *brahmacarya* in relation to the various religious concepts such as *vīryasaṅgrah*, *divya śakti*, *ūrdhvaretā*, and *siddhi*, which are somewhat reminiscent of the Śaktic cosmology in Woodroffe's works.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, Gandhi reiterated that the observance of *brahmacarya* was beneficial and practical for all people regardless of their age or sex. Now, the following unavoidable question must spring to our minds. That is, why did Gandhi, though the articles were published on the verge of Partition, make no reference to the urgent political issue of communal violence? The only possible reason for this is that Gandhi simply believed that *brahmacarya* as the “eternal element of life” was the most important subject for the whole of humanity. He honestly expected to resolve communal disintegration by purifying the mind and body of the individual.

Issues with this reasoning follow. In spite of Gandhi's concrete conviction that the subject of *brahmacarya* was universally relevant for all the people, as we have seen in the articles, Gandhi capitalized upon a great deal of concepts tilting towards a particular religious framework. More striking is that Gandhi openly permitted using various “Hindu” concepts not only in his Gujarati and Hindi articles (*Harrijansevak*) but also in their English translated texts. More than a few words such as “*brahmacarya*”, “*mahayagya*”, “*urdhvareta*”, “*sthitaprajna*”, “Brahman”, and “Ramanama” recur in his



English articles in italicized or capitalized roman letters.<sup>68</sup> Gandhi's blatant use of Hindu terms may have sounded exclusive to certain groups of Muslims<sup>69</sup> and Dalit leaders.<sup>70</sup> The metaphysical framework shown in his articles was nothing like his previous abstract universalist idea of "the religion resides in all religions (*dharmmām je dharm rahyo che*)" expressed in *Hind Svarāj*.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, when Gandhi addressed the subject of sexuality, the vocabularies were replete with male-centred or phallocentric conceptions derived from his philosophy of *vīrya* where there was little space for women.<sup>72</sup>

Needless to say, *Harijanbandhu* and *Harijan* were not government-run presses, but Gandhi's own journals. Therefore, we may be able to defend Gandhi's freedom to express his personal religious views in these publications. Yet, these journals, whose predecessors *Navjīvan* and *Young India* first launched during the First Non-Cooperation Movement, had a strong public influence, to the extent that Bose referred the journals as "intensely political".<sup>73</sup> It is not difficult to imagine the extent to which readers of the journals were perplexed when Gandhi suddenly voiced for his private religious concerns in the same journal where he had been insisting upon the separation between religion and the state.

In the next section, I will consider how Gandhi's ideas on *brahmacharya* internally related to his public statements on secularism in his last years.

### **The relationship with the principle of secularism**

Initially, I would like to outline how Gandhi concretely articulated his idea of the secularism during his last years. Prior to Partition, Gandhi first explained his view in a conversation with an anonymous Christian missionary; the recorded conversation was published in the *Harijan* of 22 September 1946.<sup>74</sup> During the discussion, the missionary questioned Gandhi about his view pertaining to the relationship between religion and the state in postcolonial India. Gandhi plainly answered as follows:

If I were a dictator, religion and State would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it. The State would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern!

*You must watch my life, how I live, eat, sit, talk, behave in general. The sum total of all those in me is my religion.* [Emphasis added]

Before taking account into the above statement, it is important to confirm the historical context of the conversation. The article was published a month subsequent to the "Direct Action Day" as well as around the time when Gandhi first corresponded with Manu regarding the peace mission. When arguing about the secularity of the state, Gandhi was surely paying heed to



the ongoing communal uproar exacerbated by separationist Muslims and right-wing Hindu nationalists.

In this respect, Ashis Nandy's analysis, though historically sophisticated, provides a curious interpretation. According to Nandy, right-wing Hindu nationalists were not essentially "believer[s]" of Hinduism. They were only "ideologues" who officially used religion for a certain political end. Hence, Hindu ideologues were publicly "believer[s]", but privately "non-believer[s]". Nandy diagnosed Jinnah in the same manner.<sup>75</sup> Contrary to this, Gandhi was, for Nandy, both privately and publicly a believer.<sup>76</sup> However, this interpretation was not accurate at least with regard to the last years of Gandhi's life. During these years, Gandhi railed against the political use of religion by assuring the state's secularity (thus, publicly a "non-believer"), while he was emphasizing the importance of religion in a personal plane (thus, privately a "believer"). Consequently, Gandhi's position during his last years appears, at the first brush, analogous to Nehruvianism.<sup>77</sup> Yet, when we read carefully Gandhi's words in the last, emphasized part of the quoted lines above, it becomes clear that it is inappropriate to regard Gandhi's stance as Nehruvian. Previous studies on Gandhi's secularism only cited the former unemphasised lines of the above quote,<sup>78</sup> concluding that Gandhi's approach "changed" into a Nehruvian one in his last years. The emphasized words unmistakably echo the words uttered during Gandhi's *mahāyajña* where he intended to attain his "unique/non-separable personality": "[t]he result reflects the mental condition (*mānsik vātāvaraṇ*) of the person. Even if a person does not speak, what personal quality he/she possesses is recognized by the habits of sleeping, eating, and behaving".<sup>79</sup> Along with his insistence on the secularity of the state, Gandhi invariably affirmed the importance of cultivating one's daily religious spirit where he/she voluntarily follows his/her "conscience (*antarātmā*)", "command of god (*īśvar kā ādeś*)", or "supreme self (*paramātmā*)".<sup>80</sup> Gandhi called the latter idea "individual religion (*vyaktigat dharm*)" or "personal religion (*nijā dharm*)". Hence, the assurance of the state's secularity and the positive cultivation of one's individual/personal religion were indissoluble in his project.

Gandhi's sensitive acknowledgement of the concept of individual religion was carefully expressed in the rest of his conversation. The missionary, following their above-quoted discussion, asked Gandhi "which movement, e.g., women's, political, scientific or religious, would have had the most far-reaching influence in the world of tomorrow and would be considered 50 years hence as having had the greatest impact on world affairs as a whole and for the greatest good of mankind". Then Gandhi "said it was wrong to bracket religious movement with the rest", and answered:

It is the religious movement that will dominate the future. It would do so today but it does not, for religion has been reduced to a Saturday or a Sunday affair; it has to be lived every moment of one's life. *Such religion, when it comes, will dominate the world.* [Emphasis added]<sup>81</sup>

Gandhi, while ostensibly insisting on the importance of the state's secularity, was, in fact, holding onto a staunch underlying conviction that one's individual religion had the potential to expand its moral and spiritual influence in the socio-political sphere so that religion might eventually "dominate the [secular] world". In other words, Gandhi's purported principle of secularism contained the implicit apparatus to deconstruct secularism itself.

After the conversation with the missionary, Gandhi left for Noakhali via Calcutta, where he undertook the *mahāyājñā* for three months. Subsequent to the experiments, Gandhi stayed in Bihar and returned to Delhi in April 1947. Two months later, he finally published his articles in the *Harijan-bandhu* as we have seen in the previous section. After publishing the articles, he again began to earnestly reiterate the principle of secularism and the demand to cultivate one's individual religion.<sup>82</sup>

It should be pointed out that it was Gandhi himself who most painstakingly attempted to exemplify his ideal of individual religion. He, for instance, repeatedly undertook public fasts alongside his experiments with *brahmacarya* during his closing years.<sup>83</sup> According to his convictions concerning the religious metaphysics of the cosmic body, as described in the previous section, he believed that there was a spirituo-humoural interdependency between individual bodies and the physical world. By indefatigably putting his religious faith into practice, that is to say, by "purifying" his heart and mind via his personal experiments with *brahmacarya* and public fasts, Gandhi expected his spiritual energy to spread into the socio-political sphere in a bottom-up process. For Gandhi, such a method was the only proper strategy to resolve the continuing communal disturbance "non-violently" and to protect people's plural religious identities.<sup>84</sup> Yet, it is highly questionable whether Gandhi's approach was undertaken "non-violently" or in a bottom-up manner. As already pointed out, Gandhi's vehicles for conveying his beliefs were articles dominated by male-centred Hindu concepts. For some, though not entire, Muslims, Dalits, and women, Gandhi's promotion of individual religion was no more than a top-down imposition. Presumably, Gandhi considered his contemporary situation as the supreme emergency. On the verge of Partition, Gandhi may have felt the inevitable need to undertake exceptional measures to release his personal religious faith without making the necessary public concessions.<sup>85</sup>

It should also be noted that Gandhi's decision to initiate the *mahāyājñā* in his last years was somewhat incompatible with his basic moral principle. More often than not, Gandhi confirmed that religion, morality, and reason were, albeit admitting certain exceptional cases,<sup>86</sup> inseparable.<sup>87</sup> Yet, the decision to undertake the experiments and publish his views on them in a political journal may hardly be deemed as a rationally or morally legitimisable action; it was indubitably the exceptional case in an extreme sense. Gandhi radically went ahead with his experiments despite the fervent opposition and criticisms from his close associates. Therefore, Gandhi's ideas cannot be understood within a framework of generally acceptable universalistic

morality such as “religious tolerance” or “*sarva dharma sambhāva*” as discussed in many past scholarly works. If his experiments with *brahmacarya* could be regarded by Gandhi as “non-violent”, it only means that all the cognitive boundaries between non-violence and violence, morality and immorality, and religion and reason were fundamentally drawn by Gandhi’s own solipsistic “intuition (*antarprerṇā*)” whose nature was ever-inaccessible to others.<sup>88</sup>

It is interesting to acknowledge that whenever Gandhi was criticized by people for his “inconsistency” in his political views, he benignantly appeased them, expressing his hearty support for the Emersonian contradiction.

Some others have also written much in the same fashion [about Gandhi’s inconsistency]. I must admit my many inconsistencies. But since I am called “Mahatma”, I might well endorse Emerson’s saying that “foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds”. There is, I fancy, a method in my inconsistencies. In my opinion there is a consistency running through my seeming inconsistencies, as in nature there is a unity running through seeming diversity.<sup>89</sup>

Thence, it is apparent that the fundamental core of Gandhi’s religious politics was nothing but his transcendental self-transcendental of *both* the secular and the religious in general sense.<sup>90</sup> What was ultimately required of people was whether they “believed” or “did not believe” Gandhi.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have thoroughly examined the entangled relationship between Gandhi’s idea of secularism and his experiments with *brahmacarya* in his last years. By so doing, I have shown that the former idea was paradoxical in its nature since it contained the implicit apparatus to deconstruct secularism itself. Despite the fact that he publicly insisted on the rigorous necessity of the secularity of the state, Gandhi intrinsically cherished his ideal of the inside-out paradigm. He believed that one’s individual religion, as exemplified in his experiments with *brahmacarya* and public facts, would fully expand its moral and spiritual impacts into the socio-public spheres so that the religion could eventually wield a potential to “dominate the [secular] world”. Gandhi’s position consequently resembles neither the Nehruvian nor the theocratic-nationalist ideologies rife in his time.

Nevertheless, the contents of the published articles on *brahmacarya* reveal problematic points regarding the allegedly “non-violent” correlation between his statements on secularism and the so-called bottom-up nature of his individual religion. As has been observed, the articles on *brahmacarya* published in the political journal just before Partition were replete with various phallogocentric conceptions of Hinduism.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, by anticipating the supreme emergency prior to Partition, Gandhi resolved to unravel,

though there were certain reservations, his most intimate religious beliefs before the public. This decision and the language of its execution can hardly be seen as “non-violent” for certain groups of Muslims, Dalits, and women at his time. It clearly shows that the ultimate arbiter behind Gandhi’s religio-political actions was nothing but his moment-to-moment “intuition” or transcendental self. This governing force was largely alien to the broadly embraceable notions of “religious tolerance” or “*sarva dharma sambhāva*” that many scholars have sought to uphold as the bedrock principle of Gandhian philosophy. Gandhi’s sophistic intuition, which unequivocally rejects generalization and dogmatization, was perhaps *too secular* for mainstream secularisms, but *too religious* for the prevalent institutionalized religions and cannot be replicated.<sup>92</sup> Bose once contended that Gandhi’s ideas in his last years encapsulated “the most important” phase of his intellectual development. This was plausibly because these ideas most evidently embodied the idiosyncratic characteristics of Gandhi’s religious politics—the “contradiction”. The convergence of the convoluted considerations revolving around his experiments with *brahmacarya*, the publication of his articles, and his promotion of the principle of political secularism serves as the best indicator of the very essence of Gandhi’s thought.

## Notes

- 1 I presented this paper at the “Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s 150th Birth Anniversary Conference: Gandhi after Gandhi” held at the University of Turin, Italy on 3 December 2019. The argument was developed from my previous articles, “The Paradox of Gandhian Secularism: The Metaphysical Implication behind ‘Gandhi’s Individualization of Religion,’” *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 5 (September 2017): 1394–438 and “The Making of a Globalized Hindu: The Unknown Genealogy of Gandhi’s Concept of *Brahmacarya*,” *Global Intellectual History* (October 2019): 1–20. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Peter van der Veer for kindly reading the draft and providing me many valuable comments, particularly on Gandhi’s idea of the cosmic body. I also would like to show my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Riho Isaka and Mr. Pratyush Kumar for generously sharing their expertise.
- 2 In this article, I use the abbreviations for the following materials by M. K. Gandhi: *GA* for *Gāndhījīno Akṣardeh: Mahātmā Gāndhīnām Lakhāṇo, Bhāṣaṇo, Patro Vagereno Saṅgrah*, 82 vols (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1967–92); [Gujarati]; *SGV* for *Sampūrṇ Gāndhī Vāṅmay*, 97 vols (Naī Dillī: Prakāśan Vibhāg, Sūcanā aur Prasāraṇ Mantrālay, Bhārat Sarkār, 1958–94) [Hindi]; *CWMG* for *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 100 vols (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1956–94) [English]; *AK* for *Satyanā Prayogo athvā Āmakathā* (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1947) [Gujarati]; *AC* for *Ārogyanī Cāvī* (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1948) [Gujarati]. In this paper, all the translations of the quoted lines from Gujarati and Hindi original texts are mine.
- 3 This recognition is widely shared and differently interpreted by various scholars. See Partha Chatterjee, “Secularism and Tolerance,” in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 345–79; Peter van der Veer, *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular*

- in *China and India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 157–67; Stanley J. Tambiah, “The Crisis of Secularism in India,” in *Secularism*, ed. Bhargava, 418–453; Anuradha Dingwaney and Rajeswari S. Rajan, eds., *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Jagdish Bhagwati, “Secularism in India: Why Is It Imperilled?,” *The Future of Secularism*, ed. T. N. Srinivasan (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11–19; Javed Masjeed, “The Crisis of Secularism in India,” *Modern Intellectual History* 7, no. 3 (November, 2010): 653–66.
- 4 Ashis Nandy, “An Anti-Secularist Manifesto,” *India International Centre Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 35–64. See also, Ashis Nandy, “The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Toleration,” in *Secularism*, ed. Bhargava, 321–44; “Closing the Debate on Secularism: A Personal Statement,” in *Crisis of Secularism*, ed. Needham and Rajan, 107–17. The similar line of argument can be found in T. M. Madan, “Secularism in Its Place,” in *Secularism*, ed. Bhargava, 297–320.
  - 5 Peter van der Veer, however, argues that Nandy’s “clear-cut distinction between an unadulterated culture (to be found in rural areas) and a Westernized reformist ideology (to be found in the cities)” is no more than “a romantic simplification.” Nandy provides the same line of reasoning for the distinction between “religious ideology” and “secularism”. Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 198–9. See also, Arjun Appadurai, “Is Homo Hierarchicus?,” *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 4 (November, 1986): 749; Thomas Pantham, “Indian Secularism,” 28–40; Bilgrami, “Secularism, Nationalism, and Modernity,” in *Secularism*, ed. Bhargava, 380–402; Vikash N. Pandey, “State and Civil Society: Reframing the Question in the Indian Context,” *Sociological Bulletin* 48, no. 1&2 (March, 1999): 47–54.
  - 6 Rajeev Bhargava, “What Is Secularism For?,” in *Secularism*, ed. Bhargava, 486–542; “The Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism,” in *Future of Secularism*, ed. Srinivasan, 20–59; “The ‘Secular Ideal’ before Secularism: A Preliminary Sketch,” in *Comparative Secularism in a Global Age*, eds. Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth S. Hurd, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 159–80. See also, Thomas Pantham, “Indian Secularism and Its Critics: Some Reflections,” *The Review Politics* 59, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 523–40; Romila Thapar, “Is Secularism Alien to Indian Civilization?” in *Future of Secularism*, ed. Srinivasan, 83–113.
  - 7 Nandy, “Politics of Secularism,” 337; “Anti-Secularist Manifesto,” 47–52; “Closing the Debate,” 114–5; T. N. Madan, “Indian Secularism: A Religio-Secular Ideal,” in *Comparative Secularism*, eds. Cady and Hurd, 186–7; Pantham, “Indian Secularism,” 530–1, 538–40. Rajeev Bhargava does not mention the name of Gandhi. Yet, he highly evaluates the ideas of Ashoka, Akbar, and other *nirguna bhaktas* as well as the principle of *sarva dharma sambhava*. See, Bhargava, “Distinctiveness of Indian Secularism,” 160, 164, 170–5; “Secular Ideal,” 49–50. At any rate, it is surprising that none of them refers to the fundamental historical fact that all these allegedly “non-violent” rulers in the pre-modern era established or maintained their rules by military powers.
  - 8 N. K. Bose, *My Days with Gandhi* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1974), vi.
  - 9 Gandhi himself did not use the word ‘secularism’. Yet, during the 1940s, the word ‘secular’ often appears in contexts where he insists on the separation between the state and religion. The word “*sekular*” even appears in Devanāgarī letters in Gandhi’s Hindi text (*SGV*, Vol. 90, 121).
  - 10 For instance, he said: “If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it” (*Harijan*, 22 September 1946); “Religion is no test of nationality but a personal matter between man and God.” (*Harijan*, 29 June

- 1947); “Religion was a personal matter and if we succeeded in confining it to the personal plane, all would be well in our political life” (*Harijan*, 31 August 1947); “Religion is a personal affair of each individual, it must not be mixed up with politics or national affairs” (*Harijan*, 7 December 1947). See also *Harijan*, 8 June 1940; *Harijan*, 9 August 1942; *Harijan*, 20 October 1946.
- 11 *Harijan*, 16 March 1947; 7 September 1947.
  - 12 *Young India*, 27 November 1924. See also, *AK*, p. 529. Ajay Skaria provides an insightful reading of Gandhi’s idea of theological secularism. “‘No Politics without Religion’: Of Secularism and Gandhi,” in *Political Hinduism: The Religious Imagination in Public Spheres*, ed. Vinay Lal (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009), 173–210. However, I argued about the limitation of his discussion in Hazama, “Paradox of Gandhian Secularism,” 1394–438.
  - 13 Bipan Chandra, “Gandhiji, Secularism and Communalism,” *Social Scientist* 32, no. 1/2 (February, 2004): 3–29; Kumkum Sangari, “A Narrative of Restoration: Gandhi’s Last Years and Nehruvian Secularism,” *Social Scientist* 30, no. 3/4 (March–April, 2002): 3–33. See also, Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 349, note 11.
  - 14 The articles are the following: “*Meṃ kem śarū karyuṃ?*” (“How Did I Start?”) in the *Harijanbandhu* of 8 June 1947; “*Brahmacarya vād*” (“The Fence of *Brahmacarya*”) in the *Harijanbandhu* of 15 June 1947; “*Īśvar kayāṃ ne ko?*” (“Where and Who Is God?”) in the *Harijanbandhu* of 22 June 1947; “*Nāmsādhanānām cihūn*” (“The Sign of the Spiritual Practice of Name-intoning”) in the *Harijanbandhu* of 29 June 1947; and “*Ek mūñjhvaṇ*” (“A Confusion”) in the *Harijanbandhu* of 6 July 1947.
  - 15 Bose, *My Days*, 163.
  - 16 Her birthdate is unknown. She passed away in 1969. According [M. K.] Gandhi’s letter dated on 1 February 1947, Manu was 19 years old then. She was the daughter of Jaysukhlāl Gāndhī who was the son of the elder brother of Gandhi’s father. Therefore, strictly speaking, Manu was *not* a “granddaughter”, but the first cousin twice removed. However, since Gandhi often expressed with much affection that Manu *could* be regarded as “my granddaughter” (*SGV*, Vol. 86, 544), a plethora of scholars wrongly recognized Manu as Gandhi’s granddaughter. Besides, the fact that the name of the daughter of Gandhi’s son Harilāl Gāndhī was also “Manu” may have caused more confusions in the previous works. Yet I have confirmed that Manubahen Jaysukhlāl Gāndhī’s exact blood relationship with Gandhi was the first cousin twice removed by consulting with Professor Tridip Suhrud via email correspondence on 15 May 2019.
  - 17 Eric Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: Norton, 1969); Sudhir Kakar, *Intimate Relations: Exploring Indian Sexuality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 85–128; Vinay Lal, “Nakedness, Nonviolence, and Brahmacharya: Gandhi’s Experiments in Celibate Sexuality,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 1/2 (January–April, 2000), 105–36; Veena Howard, *Gandhi’s Ascetic Activism: Renunciation and Social Action* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2013), 123–61.
  - 18 Joseph Alter and Bhikhu Parekh have exceptionally tried to explore the relationship between Gandhi’s sexuality and his politics. However, the major part of Alter’s argument was focusing on Gandhi’s South African years. He scarcely analyzed Gandhi’s last years. See, Joseph S. Alter, *Gandhi’s Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). With regard to Bhikhu Parekh’s work, there is no reference to Gandhi’s political vision of secularism. See, Bhikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition, and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi’s Political Discourse* (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), 191–227.



- 19 For Gandhi's multi-lingual policy, it is important to know how he acknowledged the relationship between not only Gujarati and English, but also Gujarati and Hindi (Hindustani). Riho Isaka, "M. K. Gandhi and the Problem of Language in India," *Odyseus* 5 (2000): 132–45; Robert D. King, *Nehru and the Language Politics of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- 20 C. N. Patel, *Mahatma Gandhi in His Gujarati Writings* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1981), 1. Also see S. Khilnani, "Gandhi and Nehru: The Use of English," in *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*, ed. A. K. Mehrotra (New Delhi: Permanent Black), 136.
- 21 The following diaries by Manu, which were written from the period of the *mahāyajña*, are available in Gujarati. Manubahen Gāndhī, *Eklo Jāne Re: Gāndhījīnī Noākālīnī Dharmyātrānī Dāyarī* [hereafter *GNDD*] (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1954) [the diary between 4 November 1946 and 4 March 1947]; *Bihārī Komī Āgamām* (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1956) [the diary between 7 March and 24 May 1947]; *Bihār pachī Dilhī* (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1961) [the diary between 25 May and 30 July 1947]; *Kalkattāno Camtkār* (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1956) [the diary between 1 August and 8 September, 1947]; *Dilhīmam Gāndhījī*, vol. 1, (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1964) [the diary between 9 September and 30 November 1948]; *Dilhīmam Gāndhījī*, vol. 2 (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1966) [the diary between 1 December 1947 and 30 January 1948].
- Manu's diary written earlier phase (1943–1944) have been now translated into English by Tridip Suhrud and published (Manubahen Gandhi, *The Diary of Manu Gandhi: 1943–1944*, trans. and ed. Tridip Suhrud [New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019]). However, the later years of the diaries, which cover the period of the *mahāyajña*, are not yet published.
- 22 *Harijanbandhu*, 9 June 1947. See also, Bose, *My Days*, 176–8.
- 23 Two weeks before the publication of the five articles, Gandhi wrote in a private letter that how he sought to present his knowledge acquired from the *mahāyajña*: "I have become a mother/ma (*mā*) to that girl [Manu]. And spending my time in fulfilling the purpose, I wish [to reveal] one great ethical mystery (*ek mahān naitik rahasya*) to the whole world—similar to truth (*satya*), nonviolence (*ahimsā*), and so on, which I have shown. [...] Therefore, god (*Īśvar*) on the right opportunity has given me the means (*sādhan*) by which I can present before the world (*samsār*) that if people develop motherly perspective (*mātrdrṣṭi*) in their mind, the emancipation (*uddhār*) of humanity may take place" (Manubahen Gāndhī, *Bihār pachī Dilhī*, 371). Before this, during his 1942 incarceration, Gandhi had also alluded to his future plan for *brahmacarya*: "Some of my experiments [with *brahmacarya*] have not reached the condition sufficient to present before the society. If I earned my satisfactory success, I am hoping to present them before society. It is because by [announcing] that success, perfect *brahmacarya* (*pūrṇ brahmacarya*) would probably become relatively easy [for each practitioner]" (*AC*, 38).
- 24 See footnote 22 for all the related diaries.
- 25 Gandhi had intermittently carried out his experiments even after leaving Noakhali. He temporarily suspended the experiments during the last one week of his stay in Noakhali. However, he restarted them in Bihar and continued them until 26 February 1947. He again suspended the experiments for three months, before relaunching them until his assassination.
- 26 Gandhi and Manu's intimate personal relationship had developed the year before the death of Gandhi's wife Kasturbā in February 1944. During Kasturbā's final days, she requested that Manu take care of her health. Since Manu, Kasturbā, and Gandhi spent daily life together, Manu was devoted to both Kasturbā and Gandhi. Gāndhī Manubahen, *Bāpu Mārī Mā*, (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1949), 3–8.



- 27 *GNDD*, 4.
- 28 *GNDD*, 5.
- 29 *GNDD*, 6–7.
- 30 *GNDD*, 11.
- 31 *GNDD*, 75.
- 32 *GNDD*, 73.
- 33 *GNDD*, 75.
- 34 *GNDD*, 79.
- 35 Pāṇḍuraṅṅ Gaṇeś Deśpāṇḍe, ed. *Gujarātī-Āṅgrejī Koś* (Amdāvād: Yunivarsiṭī Granthnirmān Borḍ, Gujarāt Rājya, 2002) [Gujarati], 801.
- 36 *SGV* Vol. 86, 474, 475, 514, 519–20, 533, 544–5; *CWMG*, Vol. 97, 153.
- 37 Undeniably, whether Gandhi’s experiments with Manu should be construed as “instrumental” or not is solely a debatable subject. While many scholars critically examined that Gandhi “used” Manu as an “instrument” to fulfill his religious ideal (for example, Bose, *My Days*, 150; Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World, 1914–1948* [London: Penguin, 2019]), Veena Howard exceptionally highlighted the importance of the Gujarati term “*bhāgīdār*” used for Manu in Gandhi’s experiments. The term literally means “shareholder” or ‘participant,’ implying not simply a passive participant or a devotee.” Howard insisted that “Manu [was] not seen as an instrument” in Gandhi’s experiments. Instead, the experiments can be better interpreted as “joined endeavor[s]” (Veena Howard, “Rethinking Gandhi’s Celibacy: Ascetic Power and Women’s Empowerment,” *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 81 no. 1 [January, 2013], 155–6. See also, Hazama, “Paradox of Gandhian Secularism,” 1424–5).
- 38 *GNDD*, 157. The Gujarati word “*anokhum*” has meanings of “altogether different”, “uncommon”, and “extraordinary”. However, interestingly, the word also has the opposite meanings of “not separate”, and “joint”. G. Deśpāṇḍe, *Gujarātī-Āṅgrejī Koś*, 37. The concept of “*anokhum vyaktitva*” implicates Gandhi’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta where the ultimate singularity (*ātmā*) and the whole universe (*brahm*) are fundamentally one and inseparable.
- 39 For instance, Gandhi most clearly explains this concern in *AC* as follows: “Such a *brahmacarya* [who attains natural *vīryasaṅgrah*] will not be polluted by staying with women or by physical interactions with them. For such a *brahmacārī* (practitioner of *brahmacarya*), the distinction between man and woman disappears. [.....] His sexual organ (*jannēndriyē*) will also change to a different form. [.....] He becomes a neutral person (*napuṃsak*) not because of the loss of his *vīrya* (*vīryahīn*), but by his transformation of *vīrya* (*vīryaṇuṃ parivartan*), he looks like a neutral person. [.....] The gender neutrality (*napuṃsaktva*) of the one who burned out his passion (*ras*) and became *ūrdhvaṛetā*, is totally different type (*sāv juduṃ j che*), and it is what is expected for all” (*AC*, 36–40).
- 40 Bose, *My Days*, 149.
- 41 Gandhi confessed as follows: “Even today, so far as the people in general are concerned, I am putting before them for practice what you call my old ideas. At the same time, for myself, as I have said, I have been deeply influenced by modern thought. Even amongst us there is the Tantra school, which has influenced Western savants like Justice Sir John Woodroffe. I read his works in Yeravada prison. You have all been brought up in the orthodox tradition. According to my definition, you cannot be regarded as true Brahmacharis’ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Vol. 1 (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1956); *CWMG*, Vol. 87, 91.
- 42 *GA*, Vol. 23, 177. Here, Gandhi wrote the title wrongly as “*Shakta and Shakti* [śākta ne śakti],” however.
- 43 In later years, Gandhi more frequently used the Gujarati word “*vikār*” than “*viṣaynī icchā* (sexual desire)” or “*kām* (erotic desire)” to explain his sexual

passion. Interestingly, the word *vikār* means not only “passion” or “physical or mental deterioration,” but also “disorder” or a “change of nature”. Deśpāṇḍe, *Gujarātī-Āṅgrejī Koś*, 808; M. B. Belsare, *Etymological Gujarati-English Dictionary* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1981), 1055.

44 See footnote 40.

45 See the chapter two (40–82) and five (141–71) in Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva* (London: Oxford University Press). See also Peter van der Veer, *Gods on Earth: The Management of Religious Experience and Identity in a North Indian Pilgrimage Centre* (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 66–182.

46 For the conceptual relationship between Gandhi’s *brahmacharya* and Indian traditional mythology. See Parekh, *Colonialism*, pp. 202–6; Lal, “Nakedness,” 130–3; Howard, *Gandhi’s Ascetic Activism*, 159. For how Gandhi developed his idea of the cosmic body, see Hazama, “Paradox of Gandhian Secularism,” 1412–7.

47 *GNDD*, 8, 49, 114, 161; Gāndhī Manubahen, *Kalkattāno Camtkār*, 46, 49. Gandhi first specifically expressed his understanding of the cosmic body in the Gujarati column of the *Indian Opinion* of 9 August 1913 as follows: “As long as there is a struggle between tiger and sheep inside our body, why do we wonder there is such a struggle inside this world-body (*jagad-śarīr*) [=cosmic body]. We exist as a mirror of the physical world (*jagad*). All the dispositions (*bhāv*) of the physical world are occurring within our body-world (*śarīr-jagad*) [=cosmic body]. It is apparent that if it [=the condition of cosmic body] changes, the dispositions of the physical world (*jagad*) also change. [.....] It is a great illusion (*mahāmāyā*) of god (*īśvar*)”. However, the fundamental difference between Gandhi’s earlier and later (from the mid-1920s onwards) ideas of the cosmic body was that the latter only incorporated the feminine and the Tantric ideas of *śakti*. See, Hazama, “The Paradox of Gandhian Secularism,” 1407–12.

48 *GNDD*, 8.

49 *GNDD*, 7.

50 *GNDD*, 83.

51 Erik Erikson pertinently points out that “by having women near him [Gandhi] at night he was testing his ability *not* to become aroused. This implied, of course, proving to himself by implication that he *could* be [emphasis original]”. Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth*, 404.

52 Ramachandra Guha, for instance, argues that “Gandhi was conducting the strangest of his experiments with (as he had it) ‘truth.’ The goal of the experiments was his old, continuing, obsession with Brahmacharya—the instruments, his grand-niece Manu” (Guha, *Gandhi*). Moreover, Ashis Nandy diagnoses that Gandhi’s concerns on sexuality was a product of the “mid-Victorian puritanism” and calls it “almost panicky fear” (Ashis Nandy, *Traditions, Tyranny, and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* [New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987], 159). Despite the indubitable fact that Gandhi’s perception of sexuality was partly derived from the mid- and the late-Victorian morality, we should also be attentive to how complex cultural ambiance distinct in Gujarat since the pre-modern era such as Svāmīnārāyaṇ, Praṇāmī, Vallabhācārya, and Jainism influenced Gandhi’s view.

53 I am sincerely hoping that Tridip Suhrud will complete his English translation of Manu’s diaries including the period of the *mahāyājña* and beyond in the future so that many scholars will be able to engage in this project. See footnote 22.

54 *CWMG*, Vol. 86, 451–2, note1; *CWMG*, Vol. 87, 152; *Harijan*, 1 December 1946; Bose, *My Days*, 158. See also, Parekh, *Colonialism*, 212–3; Guha, *Gandhi*.

55 H. B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 134.

- 56 *Harijanbandhu*, 8 June 1947.
- 57 *Harijanbandhu*, 8 June 1947.
- 58 *Harijanbandhu*, 15 June 1947.
- 59 Hazama, "Paradox of Gandhian Secularism," 1407–12; "Globalized Hindu," 2–6.
- 60 Bose noticed that Gandhi's experiments with Manu potentially subsumed Gandhi's "new way of thinking": "But because I thought Gandhiji was of the old conservative type of Brahmachari, which he is perhaps everywhere taken to be, therefore he should, out of respect for public opinion, not allow Manu to sleep in the same bed with him until he had tried enough to educate the public into *his new way of thinking*, or the public had got all the facts about him and clearly expressed disapproval [emphasis added]" (*N. K. Bose Papers*, Group 14: Correspondence. New Delhi: National Archives of India, S. No. 68). For more specific differences between Gandhi's ideas in his earlier and later years, see, Hazama, "Paradox of Gandhian Secularism," 1394–438; "Globalized Hindu," 1–20.
- 61 *Harijanbandhu*, 22 June 1947.
- 62 *Harijanbandhu*, 22 June 1947.
- 63 *Harijanbandhu*, 29 June 1947.
- 64 *Harijanbandhu*, 29 June 1947.
- 65 *Harijanbandhu*, 6 July 1947.
- 66 *Harijanbandhu*, 6 July 1947.
- 67 Hazama, "Paradox of Gandhian Secularism," 1414–7.
- 68 *Harijan*, 6 June 1947; 22 June 1947; 29 June 1947; 7 July 1947.
- 69 In this respect, Dennis Dalton argues: "To the extent that Gandhi's ideas and leadership may be held responsible for the partition of India, it appears with hindsight that the strength of his Hindu symbols, so evident in his ingenious use of language, proved also a weakness when it came to recruiting Muslims. It spoke to them of a Hindu Raj, as Shaukat Ali claimed, that would enforce perpetual domination of Muslims as second-class citizens. Gandhi's passionate reassurances and actions failed to persuade them otherwise" (Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2012], 121). For similar lines of critical considerations on Gandhi's use of Hindu concepts, see Peter van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, 95; *Imperial Encounter: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 126–7; William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 176–8; Thomas Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 45; Parekh, *Colonialism*, 189–90. It is also curious to point out that the value of celibacy is, more often than not, highly evaluated among contemporary right-wing Hindu politicians. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Joseph Alter, "Celibacy, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Gender into Nationalism in North India," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (February, 1994), 45–66. Gāndhī, *Dilhīmaṃ Gāndhījī*, Vol. 2, 331 (originally spoken in Hindi but recorded in Gujarati letters).
- 70 B. R. Ambedkar, for instance, severely denounced Gandhi's religious politics as "caste Hindu domination" or "caste Hindu tyranny". B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 22–3.
- 71 M. K. Gāndhī, *Hind Svarājya* (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1979) [Gujarati], 81.
- 72 Gandhi, however, seems to have believed that women's bodies also contained "vīrya", but he never explained what it exactly meant. For the both negative and positive feminist readings of Gandhi, see Vinay Lal, "The Gandhi Everyone

- Loves to Hate," *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 40 (October 4, 2008): 59–60.
- 73 Bose, *My Days*, 163.
- 74 Gandhi gradually began to voice for the significance of a religiously plural society from 1940 onwards. His first reference to the words "a secular State" appeared in the *Harijan* of 25 January 1946. Nonetheless, in this phase, he did not write anything about the role of one's individual religion.
- 75 Nandy, "Anti-Secularist Manifest," 35–40. How Hindu nationalists utilized religions for their pragmatic ends, see Rekha Datta, "Hindu Nationalism or Pragmatic Party Politics? A Study of India's Hindu Party," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 12, no. 4 (Summer, 1999): 573–88.
- 76 Nandy, "Anti-Secularist Manifest," 37.
- 77 Surely, Nandy's interpretation of Nehru's political stance as an anti-religious modernist ideology is too short-sighted. "Nehru's position was," argues Peter van der Veer, "that the state should not attempt to make India a mono-cultural society in which the minorities would feel alienated." van der Veer, *Modern Spirit of Asia*, 161. Here, I use the "Nehruvian" categorization to primarily indicate religious neutrality (*dharmanirapekṣatā*; literally "religious indifference") of the state rather than anti-religious ideology.
- 78 Chandra, "Gandhiji, Secularism," 11; Skaria, "'No Politics without Religion,'" 174.
- 79 *GNDD*, 114.
- 80 *GNDD*, 15, 161; *SGV*, Vol. 90, 26; Gāndhī, *Dilhīmaṃ Gāndhījī*, Vol. 2, 331 (originally spoken in Hindi but recorded in Gujarati letters); Gāndhī, *Kalkattāno Camtkār*, 53–54; *CWMG*, Vol. 89, 56–57.
- 81 *Harijan*, 22 September 1946.
- 82 *Harijan*, 29 June 1947; 3 August 1947; 31 August 1947; *SGV*, Vol. 90, 26.
- 83 The fast was undertaken from 1 to 4 September 1947, in Calcutta. Then the next fast took place from 13 to 18 January, 1948, in Delhi. For a more specific background of the fasts, see Hazama, "Paradox of Gandhian Secularism," 1434–7.
- 84 Gāndhī, *Dilhīmaṃ Gāndhījī*, Vol. 1, 276; *Dilhīmaṃ Gāndhījī*, Vol. 2, 277; Bose, *My Days*, 156–7.
- 85 Gāndhī, *Dilhīmaṃ Gāndhījī*, Vol. 2, 331 (originally spoken in Hindi but recorded in Gujarati letters).
- 86 Mahādev Desāī, *Mahādevbhāīnī Dāyarī*, Vol. 1 (Amdāvād: Navjīvan, 1948) [Gujarati], 137; Desāī, *Mahādevbhāīnī Dāyarī*, Vol. 2, 60; Desāī, *Mahādevbhāīnī Dāyarī*, Vol. 3, 49–50.
- 87 *Indian Opinion*, 19 January 1907; 25 December 1909; 1 January 1910; *AK*, 6–7; *Young India*, 19 January 1921; 26 February 1925; 5 March 1925; 26 March 1925; 21 July 1925; 20 October 1927; *Harijan*, 5 December 1936; 25 January 1942; *SGV* vo. 84, 442.
- 88 Most decisively, Gandhi talked about his unprecedented mystical experience of "prernā" took place before his 21-day fast conducted in May 1933. See, *Harijanbandhu*, 9 July 1833; *GA*, Vol. 67, 75; Vol. 68, 172. For his view of intuition/inspiration/prernā, see also, *GA*, Vol. 55, 258; Vol. 81, 136; Manubahen Gandhi, *Bihār pachī Dilhī*, 68.
- 89 *Young India*, 13 February 1920. See also *Indian Opinion*, 4 June 1903; *Young India*, 26 March 1931; *Harijan*, 27 August 1938.
- 90 To me, it seems not uncommon for a rationalist or secularist thinker to connect their reasoning to trans-rational or metaphysical thinking, and vice versa (for example, see Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* [London: George Allen, 1917]). The theme of "inconsistency" in this respect perhaps can be further developed by looking into Richard Poirier's work on Ralph Waldo Emerson (Richard Poirier, *The Renewal of Literature: Emersonian Reflections* [New Haven, CT:

Yale University Press, 1987)). It is intriguing that Gauri Viswanathan saw in Edward Said's "secular criticism" an "Emersonian contradiction" over the issues revolving around secularism and mysticism (Gauri Viswanathan, "Legacies: Intention and Method," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 83, no. 1 [Winter, 2014]: 5–6). Indeed, Said was much inspired by Poirier in his later years. There is a great deal of discussion in depth in Yoshiaki Mihara's critical annotations on Viswanathan's works regarding the subject (Guari Viswanathan, *Iginōshitate toshiteno Shūkyō* [in Japanese], ed. and trans. Yoshiaki Mihara, Akio Tanabe, et al. [Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō], 26–8). In relation to this point, I see Charles Taylor's distinction between "buffered self" and "porous self" as not convincing (Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press], 37–8, 300–1; for the critical consideration on this, see Peter van der Veer, "The Secular in India and China," in *The Secular in South, East, and Southeast Asia*, eds. Kenneth Dean and Peter van der Veer [Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019] 41–5). The subject of "inconsistency" in self-identification, which is undoubtedly "porous" in its nature, is a prevalent and essential phenomenon in colonial as well as postcolonial India that should be explored further.

- 91 However, it should be noted that Gandhi's concept of "Hinduism" or his metaphysics of the cosmic body was in many respects different from the prevalent Hindu nationalist discourses of his age. This was partly because, unlike his contemporary middle-class elite Hindus such as Vivekananda and Tilak, only Gandhi spent a lengthy time in South Africa before he led the Independence Movement in India. During his sojourn in South Africa, Gandhi was deeply influenced by the ideas of spiritual anarchism and transnational democracy upheld by peripheral modern western thinkers such as Tolstoy, Edward Carpenter, and American transcendentalists. For the eclectic genealogy of Gandhi's global-contextual thought, see Hazama, "Globalized Hindu," 1–20.

- 92 See footnote 90.

## **Part III**

# **Gandhian economy and grassroots experiences**



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# 8 Gandhi's visionary critique of industrialisation and Western civilisation in the light of India's globalised economy today

*Jagyoseni Mandal*

## **Introduction**

Seventy-four years since the independence of India, Mahatma Gandhi still looms large on the Indian horizon. The Mahatma is considered as the nationalist leader who has been one of the most (if not the most) instrumental figures that brought independence to India from the British rule by propagating non-violent civil disobedience and radically altering Indian political discourses. David Hardiman writes that Gandhi has been understood in many ways since his death in 1948, and although his reputation has fluctuated, regard for him and his ideas has in general increased over time.<sup>1</sup> In India, arguably, Gandhi after his death is an even more important public figure than Gandhi when he was alive.<sup>2</sup> On the father of the nation who more often than not has been raised to the status of a saint and endowed with an 'unassailable spiritual authority',<sup>3</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru had commented, 'with all his greatness and his contradictions and power of moving the masses, he is above the usual standards. One cannot measure him or judge him as we would others.'<sup>4</sup> The range of writing on Gandhi, his ideas and his political significance, is immense which makes it very difficult to write anything new about Gandhi.<sup>5</sup> Yet, Gandhi needs to be read in the context of his own writings and his ideas need to be re-evaluated especially when India too is integrated into the larger globalised capitalist economy. Where does India stand today with respect to Gandhi's visions for the country? This paper seeks to re-evaluate 'digital' India as we experience it today, in the light of Gandhi's vision as argued by the Mahatma in Hind Swaraj regarding industrial civilisation. Gandhi had written Hind Swaraj while on a ship between London and Cape Town.<sup>6</sup> His views on industrialisation in Hind Swaraj were also reiterated in later formulations.

## **The curse of industrialisation and quest for a sustainable society: Gandhi's vision and philosophy**

Gandhi was a critic of modern civilisation as it emerged in the West and as it was imported to India in the wake of colonial rule. He attacked the

very notions of modernity and progress and challenged the central claim that modern civilisation was a leveller in which the productive capacities of human labour rose exponentially, creating increased wealth and prosperity for all and hence increased leisure, comfort, health and happiness. Far from attaining these objectives, modern civilisation, Gandhi argued, contributed to unbridled competition among human beings and thereby the evils of poverty, disease, war and suffering. It is precise because modern civilisation 'looks at man as a limitless consumer and thus sets out to open the flood-gates of industrial production that it also becomes the source of inequality, oppression and violence on a scale hitherto unknown to human history'.<sup>7</sup> The keyword here is, modernisation 'as it manifested in the west'. Gandhi was not opposed to modernity, but his idea of modernity was different from what was defined by the Western civilisation. This antipathy towards modern civilisation and industrialisation ran hand in hand with the nationalist movement. Because of the movement itself, perhaps Gandhi needed to use statements like the centralised method of production stands 'condemned' in this country. It is not surprising that Gandhi's political ideals were woven around the economic problems that were then of great public concern. According to Gandhi, such production methods, despite their capacity to produce, were incapable of finding employment for as large a number of persons as they needed to provide for.<sup>8</sup> The aim of Gandhi's vision was if one borrows the expression from Asish Nandy to recover 'the self under colonialism'.<sup>9</sup>

Gandhi was thoroughly convinced that industrialisation as it manifested in the West would have a devastating effect in India. Gandhi wrote,

It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared ... Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the Indian gates, Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin.<sup>10</sup>

Gandhi developed his own theory of trusteeship as an alternative to doctrines of socialism and communism. Ajit Kr. Dasgupta points out that the two words are used more or less interchangeably in Gandhi's writings. Both started becoming popular in India, following the Russian revolution of 1917. The doctrines of socialism and communism, according to Gandhi, had brought to the forefront the question of what 'our' attitude towards the wealthy should be.<sup>11</sup> Gandhi disagreed with the socialist doctrine which according to him essentially meant that the property of the rich princes, millionaires, big industrialists and landlords should be confiscated and they should forcibly be made to earn their livelihood as workers. He instead opined that all that one could legitimately expect of the wealthy was to hold their riches in trust and use them for the service of society as a whole rather

than solely for their own private profit. This involved both the management of existing economic resources and responsibility for their growth and development in the public interest. For doing this, they were entitled to a commission which would, on the one hand, provide them with a reasonable standard of living and, on the other hand, have some correspondence with the nature and extent of the services they rendered.<sup>12</sup> However, this contradicts the popular belief that Gandhi was in staunch opposition of industrialisation. In reality, Gandhi was only opposed to large-scale industrialisation which according to him was 'making man as a part of mechanised work'. Gandhi's opposition against industrialisation should be clubbed with his fight against the British imperial rule. Industrialisation was not the stepping stone that would 'civilise' a country and its people and was only an idea betrayed by the reality of imperialism. In the year 1925, Gandhi wrote in *Young India* that his faith in human nature doesn't make him turn a blind eye to the historical fact that the fall of the Roman, Greek, Babylonian and Egyptian empires is proof that nations fall because of 'misdeeds'. He said that he even hoped for Europe that on account of her fine and scientific intellect the European empire will realise this obvious historical truth and retrace her steps from what Gandhi terms as demoralising industrialism. Thus, industrialism was the curse for mankind that depended entirely on one's capacity to exploit foreign markets that were open and in the absence of competitors. It was explicit in the very pre-requisites needed in industrialism that it was not sustainable for mankind and that exploitation of one nation by another could not go on for all time.<sup>13</sup> The alternative to industrialism would 'not necessarily be a return to the old absolute simplicity. But it will have to be a reorganisation in which village life will predominate, and in which brute and material force will be subordinated to the spiritual force'.<sup>14</sup>

For Gandhi, India's future lay in its village economy. As 70% of the people lived in villages in India, Gandhi emphasised that every village should be self-sustaining. The real India lived in her villages and the villages were the bloodline of the country. However, he was not advocating the creation of an agricultural or a purely handicraft-oriented society.<sup>15</sup> Gandhi's thoughts dealt with the real world, in fact, it dealt with the reality of the world that was to come even years after his demise, which shows the contemporaneity of the Mahatma, the very reason for which there is a need to go back to reading Gandhi and perhaps re-read him.

For Gandhi, India's future also lay in its Charka and Khadi. Spinning the Charka was for him many things: a breaking down of the barriers (so integral to the caste system) between mental and manual labour; a demonstration of self-reliance at the most basic, or individual, level; a renewal of indigenous skills and techniques that had atrophied or been destroyed under colonialism. Social reform, personal uplift, economic self-sufficiency, national pride: the making of khadi symbolised, and contributed, to all these. Gandhi left his sickbed to open the national Khadi Exhibition in Bangalore on 3 July 1927. 'I stand before you as a self-chosen representative

of the dumb, semi-starved ... millions of India', he told the wealthy thousands gathered outside the beautiful exhibit stalls displaying a rich variety of handmade goods.

Every pice you contribute to the support of khadi, every yard of khadi you buy, means so much concrete sympathy ... for these millions ... Fifty-thousand spinners worked during the year. ... These spinners, before they took to hand-spinning had not other earnings or occupation. ... The very fact that fifty thousand women were eager to do this work for what may appear to us to be a miserable wage should be sufficient workable demonstration that hands pinning is not an uneconomic, profitless ... proposition ... God willing, at no distant time we shall find our villages, which at the present moment seem to be crumbling to ruins, becoming hives of honest and patient industry .... In the work of God, as I venture to suggest it is, the harvest is indeed rich.<sup>16</sup>

There is an underlying principle that is in the interstices of Gandhian philosophy: the principle of ethics and morality. The increasing lack of this, in my opinion, has led us to face the present scenario where society (not only Indian) is engulfed by violence, greed, power conflicts. Gandhi was not against 'progress' or 'modernity', in fact, he was the 'the first environmentalist'<sup>17</sup> as Ramachandra Guha calls Gandhi because Gandhi raised his concerns about the environment at a time when there were no serious debates on ecological conservation making him the first environmental activist of his kind. Even the fact that Gandhi was an advocate of Khadi which was a natural textile and that he was against synthetic and industrial textiles, is not just a way of political mobilisation, it was also environmental engagement. Post-Independent India saw the Chipko movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Gandhi's importance for the ecology movement has probably, however, lain most strongly in its use of non-violent forms of resistance.<sup>18</sup> Chipko became well known throughout the world as an example of Gandhian environmental action, with the image of women embracing trees becoming an icon of the environmental movement as a whole. Chipko gave rise to a series of protests since that time in which activists have embraced trees or established tree houses, so as to prevent commercial felling operations.<sup>19</sup> The strongest grounds for this struggle are neither environmental nor religious (though both are important in their different ways), but those of the rights of citizens to a livelihood, a decent standard of living and freedom from arbitrary acts of state coercion. All of these basic rights are violated most blatantly by the Narmada project. The struggle began as a local demand for social justice, but in the process, it expanded to providing a fulcrum for a critique of a whole system of rule which was prepared to ride roughshod over the basic needs of one section of the population for the sake of development projects which enrich those who are already well off.<sup>20</sup> It is

undeniable that for large numbers of people in countries across the world who had been colonised or tyrannised by authoritarian regimes or racist rulers, Gandhi became a figure who symbolised and stood for the assertion of the oppressed.<sup>21</sup>

For Gandhi environment and economy went together – in order to progress towards a sustainable environment, it was important to make a sustainable economy. Feeding people without destroying the environment, development and environment went hand in hand for Gandhi. It won't be over simplification to say that in Gandhi's vision, if the environment was protected, the people wouldn't go hungry and, thus, it will protect the society. Because if the people, the individuals that make up the society are protected, the society as a whole goes one step ahead in becoming a sustainable one. Because if one takes away the individual from the society, the society ceases to exist. One needs to wonder in awe that this was almost a century back from today when sustainability hadn't become the talk of the day. Even though Gandhi didn't use the term, 'sustainability', he preached and propagated it years before 'sustainability' became a fashionable word. His vocabulary might have been different, but his ideas were pioneering. They were as modern as they could be and bear testament to the fact that Gandhi's definition of modernity was different from the definition of modernity imported from the West.

However, Gandhi did not have enough time to put all his 'economic' ideas into a book, and it was Vinoba Bhave who took the responsibility into his own hands. Bhave, who was almost Gandhi's alter ego, enunciated Mahatma Gandhi's *Bhoodana–Gramadana–Gramaswaraj–Sarvodaya* System which according to him offers the best, lasting, equitable solutions to the problems of humankind and is alone capable of creating a sustainable social order or the Economy of Performance. Gandhi was against large scale encompassing industrialisation; however, it cannot be denied that Gandhi even was in favour of sustainable industrialisation. Gandhi's opposition to large-scale industrialisation can thus be viewed in the context of environmental protection. Pollution caused by giant industrial plants is hazardous to the entire ecosystem.<sup>22</sup>

### **Politics and criticisms: looking further into the Gandhian economic model**

By now, it has hopefully been established in this paper that interpreting Gandhi's views in a linear fashion will be unjust to the author and will be historical interpretation at its worst. Gandhi himself writes,

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things.<sup>23</sup>

He also says, *‘My language is aphoristic, it lacks precision. It is therefore open to several interpretations.’*<sup>24</sup>

In the September 1925 issue of *Modern Review*, Tagore wrote his views on the Charkha and Swaraj and one statement from it, *‘It is not enough to say: Let them spin’*, had gained much currency ever since. ‘There are many who assert and some who believe’, wrote Tagore in his essay on ‘The Cult of the Charkha’ in 1925, ‘that *swaraj* can be attained by the charkha; but I have yet to meet a person who has a clear idea of the process’.<sup>25</sup> Gandhi replied,

that the fact is that the Poet's criticism is a poetic license and he who takes it literally is in danger of finding himself in an awkward corner... He thinks for instance that I want everybody to spin the whole of his or her time to the exclusion of all other activity; that is to say that I want the Poet to forsake his muse, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief and the doctor his lancet. So far is this from truth that I have asked no one to abandon his calling, but on the contrary to adorn it by giving every day only thirty minutes to spinning as sacrifice for the whole nation. I have indeed asked the famishing to spin for a living and the half-starved farmer to spin during his leisure hours to supplement his slender resources. If the Poet spun half an hour daily his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now.<sup>26</sup>

Tagore was deploring the Indian propensity for symbolic action. But he had failed to take Gandhi's measure. Spinning was no mere symbol to him but a supreme example of that desireless action which was the route to liberation. Sufficiently collectivised and coordinated, spinning would generate the spiritual force which would propel Indians – and ultimately all humanity – towards union with God. Swaraj would be arrived at on the way.

Perhaps, it is now important to mention here that this paper considers the west and the modern as two separate discursive categories and problematises them in order to inquire further into Gandhi's visions. It is important to understand that Gandhi's critique of the Western civilisation should not be equated with his critique of the modern civilisation.

Dipesh Chakraborty commented,

Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, perhaps the two finest products of the Indo-British cultural encounter, emerged as major critical voices from outside the West. Both Tagore and Gandhi were universalist in their orientation. Profoundly committed to the welfare of Indians, they were not nationalist in any narrow sense.<sup>27</sup>

It is, in fact, common to knowledge that Gandhi's thoughts were hugely influenced by some great Western thinkers most importantly Tolstoy and Ruskin.

Ruskin's *Unto the Last*, an attack on modern political economy and its distorted ideas of wealth and value, had an immense critical influence on Gandhi's mind and his philosophies. He commented that he was 'determined to change my life in accordance with its ideals'. He saw the solution to his immediate problem: a hand press operated by volunteers as part of a simple life of labour. However, the hand press idea turned out to be impractical for producing a newspaper and was abandoned. An engine was acquired, which then broke down. What raises a question on the practicality of Gandhi's idea was that four women were needed to be employed to turn the handle.<sup>28</sup>

As it has been argued that Indian modernity has been first and foremost political in nature and only then economic, and, indeed, some aspects of Gandhian economic thought were defined and articulated first as a political weapon against the economic domination of Lancashire, with precedents in the Swadeshi movement following the first partition of Bengal in 1905. As Benjamin Zachariah writes, Gandhian economic thought can be defined as a decentralised, village-based economic order which was as self-sufficient as possible, of rural small-scale agriculture, and industries which employed low technology – "but the neatness and consistency of this position is more the contribution of later writers than of Gandhi himself. Gandhi's several versions of his anti-machinery doctrine show that they were modified over the years to accommodate the use of some machinery. In 1924, Gandhi claimed he was not against all machinery but was against the 'craze' for labour-saving devices while men went about unemployed. He called the Singer sewing machine 'one of the few useful things ever invented'; when it was pointed out to him that these machines had to be made in factories with power-driven machinery, Gandhi replied that this was true, but he was 'socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalised, State controlled'.<sup>29</sup>

Was Gandhian economic thought an alternative to capitalism? It is often argued that the Marwari magnate G.D. Birla was his principal financial backer and indispensable supporter of the Sabarmati ashram and that he found himself being driven to Birla House, to whose comforts he had to reconcile himself. This argument is valid; however, it needs to be understood that Gandhi's idea of the role of the wealthy was that of trusteeship as has been discussed before. That is, the rich would hold their wealth in trust for society in general, for which they would be expected, according to Gandhi's argument, to feel a moral responsibility. Taking this into cognisance, it is difficult to construct of 'Gandhian economic thought' the alternative to capitalism which many of its supporters claim for it.<sup>30</sup> There has been criticism of Gandhi's theory of trusteeship as well. David Hardimann writes that there is no escaping the fact, however, that the faith that Gandhi placed in capitalist entrepreneurs as a class was largely misplaced. Only a few exceptional businessmen of the day, like Jamnalal Bajaj and J.R.D. Tata, may be said to have approached such an ideal. The large majority continued to do everything they could to drive down wages and keep the working



classes in their place by denying them basic welfare provisions. This was the case even in Ahmedabad, where the few mill owners who subscribed to Gandhian principles were in continuing conflict with the majority who did not.<sup>31</sup> Even though whether Gandhian economic thought was an alternative to capitalism is debatable, it is true that all his economic formulations were the result of his intimate understanding of the condition of India's toiling peasants, factory workers and the common man and woman.<sup>32</sup>

'Gandhian economic thought' must, therefore, be recognised as a gradual and retrospective creation. It is true that his alternative revolves around his concern for providing profitable employment to all those who are capable. Not only would industrialism undermine the foundation of India's village economy, it 'will also lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in'. This is why it becomes imperative to reflect on the relevance of Gandhi's visions with respect to India's current economic and political scenario because even after almost 70 years after India's independence, India continues to live in its villages while being integrated into the global capitalist economy.

The opposition to the machine stems from his genuine concern for providing 'profitable employment' to all. He, thus, argued on another occasion, 'We should not use machinery for producing things which we can produce without its aid and have got the capacity to do so. As machinery makes you its slave, we want to be independent and self-supporting; so we should not take the help of machinery when we can do without it. We want to make our villages free and self-sufficient and through them achieve our goal – liberty – and also protect it. I have no interest in the machine nor [do] I oppose it. If I can produce my things myself, I become my master and so need no machinery'.<sup>33</sup>

Thus to Gandhi, national security could only be assured if there was human security.

A mediation between Gandhian concept of economy and the challenges of globalisation can be represented by the industrialisation models based on small- and medium-sized firms clustered in industrial districts, possibly intermingled with social cohesion and integrated with a sound welfare system. The economic model of the region Emilia-Romagna in Italy can be a fitting example. It is the result of a decades-long process of industrialisation, culminated in the early 1980s, improved in the following years and continuously updated, to the point that Alberto Rivaldi<sup>34</sup> writes that 20 years after, the Emilian economy seems to have been able to regenerate its competitive advantage in the face of the challenges of globalisation and ICT revolution. As a result of important changes involving both the industrial structure and socio-political context, 20 years after, the Emilian economy seems to have been able to regenerate its competitive advantage in the face of the challenges of globalisation and ICT revolution. In terms of industrial structure, selective restructuring of local industry led to a reduction in the number of manufacturing firms and employment; the

emergence of new hierarchies; the rise of lead firms; a differentiation in the evolution path of the various districts; an intermingling of old and new technical competencies. Business associations progressively shifted towards a market-driven, neo-liberal approach. While in the socio-political context, newer contradictions emerged. The fading of traditional social identities eroded the cohesion of the regional society, while business associations were increasingly involved in both formulating and managing industrial policies. As a result, these shifted towards a market-driven approach, focused on more structured firms rather than industrial districts. The balance between industry and agriculture in this area represents another crucial aspect. In spite of Rivaldi's warning that the limits involved in this model of governance risk to undermine the region's capacity to undertake an effective industrial policy for artisan and smaller firms, which would need it the most to upgrade their technological and organisational capabilities, and, more generally, proactive and path-shaping policy formulations,<sup>35</sup> this region has acceptably overcome the most acute economic crisis of 2008 and is resisting the economic backlashes of the COVID-19 emergency. In my opinion, the Emilian Model of 1980 Italy, somehow, resounds Gandhi's own concept of industrialisation, reflected by Gujarati family-owned factories of the 20th century, surrounded by a certain scale of philanthropic welfare. A combination between industry, agriculture and welfare and a renewed attention to environmental issues proves that this model can be a sustainable possibility.

### **Of relevance and contemporaneity: Gandhi today**

Raghuram Rajan points out that,

Surging markets, enabled by the liberalization and integration that was necessary to reignite growth, and fuelled by technological change and lower trade costs, have increased the potential for competition everywhere. These act as sources of the imbalances we face today. This has in turn created groups of winners and losers in every country. As a few large firms dominate each industry, the potential for monopolization is increasing, while the independence of the private sector from the state is at risk. Technology rolls on, threatening to automate many more jobs, while not yet producing the growth that will help address society's difficulties.<sup>36</sup>

Rajan argues that

inclusive localism may contain many of the answers large diverse nations need, where localism means returning power back to the people in globalised markets. Independent India, it has been shown, has always attempted to gain the most a combination of market forces and an appropriate role for the government what is called a mixed economy.<sup>37</sup>

After India's independence in 1947 and the 1950s represented a relatively optimistic and ambitious phase for the country in establishing a national system for agricultural finance. The newly inaugurated regime shared the developmental goals of promoting growth without exploitation, and creating grassroots-level savings and credit institutions to serve farmers. However, ever since developmental economists have long noted the complexity of providing effective rural credit delivery in large, agrarian countries such as India and China. Establishing and maintaining a network of rural financial institutions is expensive, and managing their operations is difficult in the absence of proper training, monitoring, and incentive structures. The operational challenges of rural financial intermediation are compounded by state development strategies that promote industrialization and urbanization at the expense of agricultural production. At the macro level, the notorious scissors gap between agriculture and industry redistributes savings from rural to urban areas, thereby limiting the relative supply of rural credit.<sup>38</sup>

While debates and studies with respect to global capitalism and rural economy are endless and dynamic, in order to analyse the impact and relevance of Gandhian economic thought in today's India, in my opinion, it will be most pertinent if we assess the relevance of it in a post-COVID world. The epidemic has exposed us to an unprecedented crisis and encouraged the need to look for solutions as well. The world after the epidemic is admittedly different from the world before it. The iniquitous development model of global capitalist economy that leads to the birth of insensitive governance institutions and sometimes a destructive relationship between the planet and its ecology needs to change. To Gandhi, villages were the basic units of social organisation. Therefore, the villages should be self-sufficient in the matters of their vital requirements. Today, the whole world is struggling to procure basic goods and necessary medical equipment, and hardly, a few countries have the stock.<sup>39</sup> Any crisis be it a pandemic or a war teaches us the lesson of self-sufficiency. Since Gandhi's principle had stressed on self-reliance at the local level, its necessity cannot be denied irrespective of its short comings.

As the world partially de-globalises, countries are going for self-sufficiency. In a post-COVID world, economic ideas must have an ethical quotient that Gandhi always propagated. The way the world economy is crumbling and inequities rising, we may find some answers to our current situation in his ideas.<sup>40</sup> Gandhi and his legacy also speak directly to the question of environmental sustainability. That quintessentially Gandhian question of the limit to human consumption has never been more relevant than today. Back in 1928, Gandhi had warned about the unsustainability, on the global scale, of Western patterns of production and consumption. *God forbid that India should ever take to industrialisation after the manner of the West*, he had said. At the same time, Gandhi had an intuitive understanding of the global limits to resource-intensive, energy-intensive industrialisation and was keen to

enhance human productivity and was happy to use modern science towards that end. Most importantly, Gandhi wished to free the people of India from poverty, ill health, illiteracy and the lack of dignified employment.<sup>41</sup> This paper had tried to take into account Gandhi's views and what people are saying in accordance or against it at his time and at a later time. Today, when human civilisation is faced with an unprecedented crisis, Gandhi's views transcend time: even though they were about the colonial times, they are relevant even now because of the fact that India's poor have only become poorer in all these years and at the heart of Gandhi's ideas lay the well-being and dignity of *daridranarayana*. For Gandhi, there had to be a concept of 'enough'. It can't be that there are people at one side of consumption who go starving for days and on the other side people are overfed. It is this idea that any human being has the right to the resources that are enough for them to survive that lies at the heart of Gandhi's ideas, makes it important that one remembers Gandhi in a world that faces new crisis and tries to find ways to come out of it every single day.

Global economic output is expected to contract by 4.9% in 2020 owing to the COVID-19 lockdown, which impacted millions of inter-state migrant workers, the bulwark of India's economy. Many of them have been forced to return home to their villages in poor and less developed states, to face an uncertain future. On 13 May, 2020, the government announced Rs 20-lakh-crore (\$266 billion) stimulus package to revive the economy and its various sectors. Jean Drèze is one of the architects of the rural jobs programme or the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGN-REGA) development economist and social activist. He pointed out that what is needed is not just a stimulus but also immediate relief for vulnerable households. Drèze addressed that putting money in the hands of poor people facilitates the revival of the economy by fortifying consumer demand and helps to tilt the composition of the gross domestic product (GDP) towards goods and services that are consumed by the working class. Drèze suggested that the government needs to put more food or cash in the hands of the poor and emphasised the need for more enlightened health policies.<sup>42</sup>

## **Conclusion**

It now seems that it is a good idea to consider that a localised economy is achievable. For Gandhi, going back to small-scale economy, making village economy sustainable does not necessarily mean oversimplification. It is not possible to escape globalisation, but it is possible to globally adopt a localised economy. Gandhi's life and work have taught us that globalisation and a localised economy do not necessarily have to lie in opposition to one another. A localised, community-based economy can be an answer to the economic distress provoked by crises and globalisation.

Despite his opposition to industrialisation on a mass scale, Gandhi recognised that a moderate amount of industrialisation was necessary for a nation's

survival.<sup>43</sup> The difference between the economic situation in Gandhi's times and the present is that economy can now hold the hands of improved technologies which, if wisely used, can increase the production, improve the workers' conditions and, possibly, be environmentally sustainable.

What is important to remember is that Gandhi did not oppose capitalist ownership and operations but not a sole concern with profits. It is this humanitarian aspect that is at the core of Gandhi's principles that makes him so relevant even to this day. As E.F. Schumacher writes, 'Gandhi enunciated his economic position in the language of the people, rather than that of academic economists. And so the economists never noticed that he was, in fact, a very great economist in his own right.'<sup>44</sup>

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## 9 *A Nayi, Nai Talim*

### Reinventing Gandhian Education for today and tomorrow: a case study of the Ragi Project, Bangalore, India

*Pallavi Varma Patil and Roshni Ravi*

#### **Introduction**

It is easy to lose hope in the future. The 20th-century growth model is no longer viable as is evident from the spiralling climate crisis. At the time of writing this paper, the atmospheric carbon dioxide reading is a record high of 417 ppm.<sup>1</sup> The current COVID-19 outbreak (and prediction of more such pandemics) is a grim sign of humanity's distorted relationship with nature.<sup>2</sup> Scientific data related to the breaching of four of the nine planetary boundaries<sup>3</sup> puts a dent on the aspirations and chase for unfettered economic growth and increasing material wealth. In reality, it is and always has been a dance of death resulting in several crises that we encounter today – extreme inequality, rising populism, degrading of our natural environments and violence and injustice of various kinds. Mahatma Gandhi warned of such a fate for India and the world when he wrote, “...like the proverbial moth (India) will burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more furiously”.<sup>4</sup>

But as educators who actually and directly work with the future – that is, the children – how does one afford to lose hope? A new kind of education with a new set of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values is urgently needed to live lightly on this planet and in harmony with one another. A radical transformation of society towards a saner world and future that works for all has to be fueled by a radical new kind of education. It was this perspective and a sense of urgency that motivated us, the authors, to explore the alternative world view and approach of Gandhian education.

To understand Gandhi's educational ideas in a perspective, it is perhaps best to remember John Dewey's quote: *We will know what type of education to provide, if we know what type of society we want.* Gandhi's vision of a good life and a good society is encapsulated in his socio-economic-political vision that he termed Swaraj. All through his life, Gandhi advocated for and experimented with moving towards this Swaraj – by imagining, creating, and nurturing just, equitable, healthy, happy, creative, peaceful, self-sufficient, self-governing, eco-sustainable, non-exploitative communities. *Nai Talim* (also known as Basic Education) was an education that was meant to be a *Spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences.*<sup>5</sup> It was meant to be an education *for Swaraj.*<sup>6</sup>



Right from the beginning when Gandhi first elaborated on his core ideas of *Nai Talim* to a select gathering of educationists at Wardha in October 1937, he made a distinction between “education through work” and “education alongside work” (such as vocational education or activity-based learning).

What I am going to place before you today is not about a vocation that is going to be imparted alongside education. Now, I wish to say that whatever is taught to children, all of it should be taught necessarily through the medium of a trade or a handicraft.<sup>7</sup>

The old idea was to add a handicraft to the ordinary curriculum of education followed in the schools. That is to say, the craft was to be taken in hand wholly separately from education. To me that seems a fatal mistake. The teacher must learn the craft and correlate his knowledge to the craft, so that he will impart all that knowledge to his pupils through the medium of the particular craft that he chooses.<sup>8</sup>

The absolute core principle in *Nai Talim* was, therefore, of **correlation** between the practice of “work” (a trade or a handicraft) and the teaching of school subjects. The Zakir Hussain Committee appointed after the 1937 Wardha Conference expanded the idea of work to include various other kinds such as gardening/agriculture/pottery/carpentry as well as incorporate the school’s socio-cultural milieu in work. “Work” in a Gandhian Education framework was different from “Labour”: it was designed to be productive, socially useful, rich in educational possibilities, means for joyful learning, and prove useful in solving real-life problems.

The Ragi Project – a Gandhian education initiative that we describe in this paper – was designed keeping these two key principles in mind. One, the choice of productive work had to bring in the many elements of a Gandhian education framework and two, as far as possible, the productive work activities had to be correlated with age-appropriate subject-based learning.

Nothing better than the theme of food could have suited the two core principles outlined above. Food is a versatile theme. It is pedagogically rich, evocative, and central to life. It also plays a subversive political agenda as it provides a lens to view a wide range of interlinked contemporary global challenges. Therefore, productive work based on the theme of food held immense potential to experiment with few Gandhian alternatives. These included small-scale ecological food production, sustainable food consumption, seed and food sharing and exchanging practices, and sustainable food disposal. In addition, it provided a powerful conduit to examine the complex societal relationships India has with its food choices.<sup>9</sup> But most importantly, the theme of food communicated the idea of agency – the school community experienced through direct action that one could reclaim control over their own nutrition and health in small achievable ways.

Since the school was located in a peri-urban location of Bangalore, we had access to a two-acre vacant farmland at walking distance from the school. Thus, the first choice of productive work was to farm on the available

land and not just restrict to the school's kitchen garden space. The teachers spearheading the project consciously chose to farm the millet *Ragi* (Finger Millet). One reason was its close connect to the state of Karnataka's identity – it was a regional food item but also richly connected to its food practices, literature, and folklore.

Finger Millet is a popular crop amongst small-scale and rain-fed farming practices as it requires little or no chemical input and no additional irrigation. It is also resilient to pests and can be stored for an extended time without the use of pesticides. As a coarse grain with high levels of starch, calcium, and iron, it scores high on nutrition. Despite these ecological and nutritional qualities of Ragi, it is perceived to be a poor person or a peasant food item and has been replaced by wheat and rice in many households across Karnataka as well as other parts of India. Growing, cooking, and eating Ragi were, therefore, a way to champion the cause of ecological food production and consumption.

### **The Ragi Project**

In January 2017, a collaborative two-year project between a group of social science teachers at Poorna Learning Centre and the Gandhian education group at Azim Premji University was initiated. Poorna Learning Centre is an alternative school in North Bengaluru with a diverse student and teacher community. Many of its students and teachers come from farming backgrounds. The school is built on key ecological values with a belief in hands-on approach to learning. The school maintains a small vegetable garden and composts its food waste. By rotation, one day a week, children and teachers of a select class cook a healthy, fresh, and nutritious lunch meal for the entire school. Azim Premji University has a small group of practitioner faculty that teach courses and mentor projects around alternatives based on the ideology of Gandhi and Tagore. One of the courses is titled, “*Nai Talim* for today and tomorrow”. The group has introduced a framework through its teaching and practice to redefine productive work in Gandhian Education for contemporary times (Ref: Annexure 1). The group received a practice grant from the University to experiment with this framework and carry out The Ragi Project as an action research project. The school gave us two hours every Wednesday from its timetable. While the initial efforts to farm were undertaken by children and teachers of Grades 4–5–6 by the end of the farming cycle, the whole school had got involved participating in myriad activities around growing, cooking, and consuming food.

Many hands-on activities at the farm were undertaken. This included digging and ploughing the land, marking plots, testing soil nutrition, preparing a nursery bed in school, transplanting, enriching farm with organic compost, setting up drip irrigation, mulching of plants, and finally harvesting. Other related activities included foraging for edible weeds on the farm, observing the biodiversity on the farm, and practising mindfulness amidst nature (Figure 1).

Inside the school premises, children cooked Ragi-based dishes in the school kitchen and designed various visual and performing arts projects around the theme of farming and food. Inside the classrooms, teachers used farm-based activities as a context to create new lesson plans and their associated assessments. School field trips during the Ragi Project involved visiting organic farms and a local Ragi flour mill in the neighbourhood; a city museum for historical agricultural tools; and an insectarium to learn about entomology. The farming theme allowed for several interconnections between environment, social science, and science teachers who together discussed the politics of small-scale farming, set up interviews with local farmers, worked with available indigenous knowledge around the school community, and discussed the challenges in rain-fed farming using experiential knowledge of students involved with the farm. In the next academic year, the 2018–19 cycle, the farming and school gardening group learnt permaculture techniques and intensive organic farming. They grew another millet, Jowar, (Sorghum) and organic vegetables to use in the school meals. Again, the teachers experimented with co-relating gardening and farming skills with learnings in language, mathematics, social science, civic engagement, and science. And continued to create contextual and relevant lesson plans and assessments.

### **From farm to plate via the classroom**

The teachers encouraged children to describe what they observed during their weekly farm visits – observations of the farm space as well as the farm process. These were then mapped onto language competencies for middle school in the three languages (*Kannada, Hindi, and English*) taught and spoken at school. The children’s writing and grammar skills included documenting the journey of seed to sapling to harvest-ready crop, describing the edible and non-edible weeds that were found on the farm, and description of the ecology of the farm. Farming and culture related poetry and texts for reading and comprehension were also integrated in the language curriculum. In **science**, the children learnt new content around plant growth using regenerative agriculture techniques, seeds and genes, insects, and pests (especially the role of earthworms and bees for soil and plant health). Concepts such as germination rates, soil nutrition, and decomposition in compost, food chain, nitrogen-fixing legumes were also introduced. At the farm and in the classrooms, the children learnt the skills to observe, measure, record, and reflect on the process (Figure 3). In **mathematics**, the children learnt standard and non-standard methods to measure land. They learnt data handling using customised surveys around food choices, ratio and proportions while preparing compost, and basic arithmetic while working with ingredient amounts in recipes (Figure 4). In **social science**, the children paid close attention to the landscape around them. They learnt how to draw a map of the farm and learnt the concept of scale. Students were introduced to a few cultural practices related to farming, the role of scarecrows on a farm, and

the benefits of seasonal farming. They discussed harvest festivals and folklore around nature and food. Class debates encouraged children to contrast their methods of farming with industrial farming practices.

Farm activities challenged the conventional learning hierarchies and interactions in the classroom. Students, who didn't particularly enjoy conventional classroom teaching, easily shared their inter-generational, oral, and traditional skills and knowledge they had imbibed in their farms through their families with links in their villages. A ten-year-old student animatedly demonstrated how to carry a pot of water on the hip without spilling a drop of water, another child excitedly held up a dung beetle, and yet another shared with his classmates his knowledge of locating wild edibles on the farm. Hitherto excluded forms of knowledge from school curricula such as oral histories and personal narratives of farmers, and the farming community could find space inside a traditional classroom.

Ragi, thus, became an entry point for discussions on language, on food choices, on local culture, as well as on severe ecological issues such as water shortage. *The millet Ragi was the catalyst that changed the colour and flavour of classroom discussions, infusing them with personal anecdotes and fantastic stories* (Teacher 4).

In the arts, teachers encouraged various crafts around the theme of food, taught relevant songs, folk tales, discussed proverbs, and encouraged local theatre bringing in agrarian folk cultures surrounding the farming of Ragi (Figure 5).

Ragi was also cause for celebration and joy. The Ragi farm after the school's three-week mid-term break was green and unrecognisable to children who weren't able to visit the farm for a few weeks. *It looks like a mini forest!* exclaimed one child seeing the farm on her return. That year, the local harvest festival – *Sankranti*<sup>10</sup> – was special for the school and was celebrated with the school community's first harvest of Ragi.

During the term of the project, the school kitchen was used extensively to experiment with new recipes to encourage children to eat Ragi in various forms. Every grade decided to make one Ragi-based dish as part of their weekly community lunch menu. The experiments in the kitchen were exciting and enjoyable for children. Children, parents, and teachers came up with new recipe ideas as well as revived forgotten regional recipes. At the end, the school community brought out a recipe book based on the millet dishes tried at school. The children recorded and illustrated some of the recipes that were tried out in the school kitchen (Figure 2).

### **Teachers and Schools of the future**

School spaces find it difficult to provide for such Gandhian education initiatives due to their existing constraints imposed by subject divisions, school timetables, and daily learning routines. The school, Poorna Learning Centre, managed to do so because of its existing institutional ethos of flexible teaching – learning and assessments. This was an enabling environment

where the teachers found it easy to include real-life farming-related experiences in the curriculum.

However, that did not mean it was easy for the teachers anchoring the project. They had to themselves learn new skills of ecological farming and create new age appropriate content. The teachers also got involved in the manual farm work and one of the earliest rules made by the participating group was: *No task was to be given to children if it did not have an equal participation from the teacher*. The manual workload went hand in hand with creating new food-related lesson plans and worksheets. They also spent the effort to curate books and relevant films and media content. Issues around politics, power, and social justice that are relegated to textbook chapters were now being brought alive because of children's personal experiences of farming, consuming, and handling food wastage.

The teachers were both facilitators and learners in this process and this helped in breaking down some hierarchies in a school learning space. Walking out of the school space to work on the farm provided space for spontaneous conversations and collaborative learning. The teachers brought their personal and political selves to the classroom and the farm and the impact was visible in small ways their own choices transformed around food.

Therefore, one very big factor behind the success of The Ragi Project was the role played by teachers through their consistent and deep involvement. Their willingness to work together as a group, work towards learning new skills and innovate with new content, as well as ensure that children were learning organically from multiple sources shaped this project.

What motivated them to undertake this project? For some, it was the ideology and principles of Gandhian education that held an appeal,

help bring our fragmented identities together- we finally have the opportunities and the space to do what we are meant to do-work with our bodies. The kind of work and knowledge that doesn't find any legitimacy or value in modern schools becomes part of the conversation.

(Teacher 1)

For others, it enabled contextual and relevant activity-based learning in a very organic way,

I got two platforms to experiment and try different thing: Soil as a platform for me, just like classroom.

(Teacher 2)

For some, it was a means to teach current realities:

This is a good opportunity to teach children the value of the food, the effort that goes into farming and growing food, to address food wastage so that they are aware and appreciative of the process.

(Teacher 3)

And for others, it gave them a platform to combine personal and professional values:

This project was an opportunity to grow and learn. I wanted to do something different, something that would hopefully inform my classroom practice and my identity as a teacher and as a person negotiating the ecological challenges in the world today.

(Teacher 4)

E.W. Aryanayakam,<sup>11</sup> recognising the immense role that teachers play in *Nai Talim*, had remarked:

No one has ever claimed that *Nai Talim* is easy. It makes high and continuous demands on physical energy, on mental resourcefulness, on spiritual strength. In many circles of Indian life today it seems like a forlorn hope, like fighting a losing cause. But in one place the real *Nai Talim* teacher will find reassurance and reward, and that is in the response of children to the natural human interest and the stimulus and delight of such a way of learning. Let the challenge and the opportunities of such days spur us to fresh efforts.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

The Ragi Project enabled a different kind of teaching and learning which was joyful and rewarding for the learning community. The productive work of farming and growing food helped in concretising abstract concepts. Lessons around sensitivity to nature-soil, use of groundwater, biodiversity were better than the closed world of environment education through school textbooks. Having participated in this kind of manual labour ourselves, we all learnt and valued the effort involved in growing food. A significant learning was around collaborations – sharing workload, co-creating learning resources, and encouraging each other. The Ragi Project gave its participants a first-hand experience of what it meant to work with each other for the benefit of everyone involved. Thus, in a LIMITED but significant way enabled reflection on the Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya.

Gandhi's legacy – his vision of Swaraj and its associated *Nai Talim* has always been imagined in the space of rural regeneration. However, The Ragi Project demonstrated that it is possible to imagine and work towards a Gandhian urban regeneration.

In India, there are approximately 7500 small towns that have a population below 100,000. Where not only land is easily available, but its communities continue to have active ties to farming practices. Even in a peri-urban area with limited land, a school community in Bangalore could demonstrate that farming can be a strong productive activity in a new, reimagined *Nai*, *Nai*

*Talim*. We can only imagine the possibilities in schools in smaller towns where both land and farming expertise are available.

*The authors are thankful to Sujit Sinha for his comments on the draft paper. They also acknowledge the immense contribution of Poorna Learning Centre, its students, and teachers especially Vasantha, Ashwini, Vanita, Sammitha, and Jalaja.*

## Notes

- 1 Eleanor Imster, “Rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere continues unabated”. Earthsky, June 9, 2020, <https://earthsky.org/earth/rising-carbon-dioxide-co2-record-high-june2020>.
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- 5 M.K. Gandhi, “Harijan, 9 October 1937”, in *India of My Dreams*, ed. R.K. Prabhu (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1947), p. 184.
- 6 Marjorie Sykes, *The Story of Nai Talim: Fifty Years of Education at Sevagram, 1937–1987: A Record of Reflections* (Sevagram, Wardha: Nai Talim Samiti, 1988), p. 25.
- 7 M.K. Gandhi, “Speech at the Wardha Conference on 22 October 1937”, in *Gandhiji’s Experiments in Education*, T.S. Avinashilingam (Delhi: Ministry of Education, 1960).
- 8 M.K. Gandhi, *Basic Education* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1956), p. 73.
- 9 By the year 2017, when The Ragi Project was initiated, politics around food choices especially around eating beef had taken an ugly turn and persecution of minorities in the name of cow vigilantism was on the rise. “Protests held across India after attacks against Muslims”. Reuters. 28 June 2017. When the first set of interested teachers met in January 2017 to discuss whether a food related action project could be piloted, they expressed their discontentment in being advised by the school management not to cook non-vegetarian meals inside the school kitchen. The teachers were therefore also looking for ways to encourage dialogue around diverse food choices within the school community.
- 10 Sankranti is a winter harvest festival celebrated in different forms across India.
- 11 E.W. Aryanayakam was the head of Hindustani Talimi Sangh and the principal of the first *Nai Talim* school, Anand Niketan at Sevagram.
- 12 E.W. Aryanayakam, *The Story of Twelve Years* (Sevagram, Wardha: Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1950).





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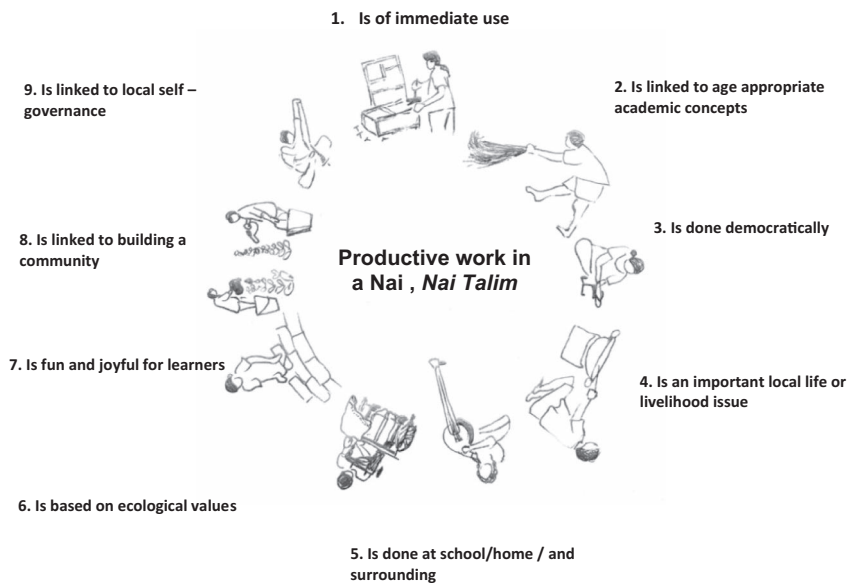
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# Appendix 1

## *Nayi, Nai Talim*

A nine point framework of reimagining productive work in a *Nayi, Nai Talim* (New kind of *Nai Talim*) in contemporary times (developed by Pallavi Varma Patil and Sujit Sinha, Azim Premji University)





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## Appendix 2

# The Ragi Project in pictures

*Figure 1* Farm-Based Activities.



Figure 2 Cooking Activities.



Figure 3 Language, Science and Ecology Lessons.



Figure 4 Math and Data Handling Lessons.

Name: HANISHA	Group: Alpha			Date:
	Hal f	Doubled	Triple	
<b>RAGI CARROT CAKE</b>				
<b>Ingredients:</b>				
Ragi Flour 1 cup	$\frac{1}{2}$	2	3	
Whole Wheat Flour 1 cup	$\frac{1}{2}$	2	3	
Cocoa Powder $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{1}{4}$	1	$\frac{3}{4}$	
Grated Carrots 2	1	4	6	
Chopped Almonds or Walnuts 8	4	8	24	
Powdered Sugar $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	$\frac{3}{4}$	3	4	
Baking powder 1 pinch	$\frac{1}{2}$ Pinch	2 Pinch	3 pinch	
Butter 100 gms	50 gms	200 gms	300 gms	
Egg 1	$\frac{1}{2}$	2	3	
1 drop Vanilla Essence	1/2 drop	2	3	

**Method:**  
 Mix Ragi flour, wheat flour, cocoa powder, baking powder and chopped nuts in a bowl. Mix butter and powdered sugar till they combine well. Next, add one egg, carrots and a drop of vanilla essence and mix well.  
 Fold in the dry mixture slowly and transfer into a greased baking tray.  
 Bake at 170 °C for 15-20 mins.  
 Do the toothpick test!

If the quantity of ragi flour is halved, doubled or tripled, find change in the quantity of the rest of the ingredients to make perfect cake.










Figure 5 Art Related to Food and Farming.





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# Epilogue

## Gandhi's legacy and the historical gaze

*Mario Prayer*

Dealing with Gandhi's legacy requires a keen appreciation of historical commonalities as well as of cultural-political specificity. The Mahatma has long been, and still is, an object of study in several disciplines ranging from history to political science to economics to pedagogy to philosophy. Scholars from different countries, in different periods, have debated on his significance not only for India of his times but also for mankind in general, and there seems to be still much scope for exploration and interpretation concerning elements of his personality along with their impact. The sum total of these multi-disciplinary interventions, with their focus and basic assumptions changing over time, builds up a varied range of prisms throwing meaningful light on a crucial phase in the history of contemporary India and the world.

In this collection of essays, certain old debates about Mahatma Gandhi's 'true' nature – such as whether he was a saint or an astute/disastrous politician, and a practical idealist or an impractical utopist – are no longer placed at the centre of scholarly attention. Till not long ago, attempts at evaluation of the Mahatma's historical significance have largely aimed at singling out some particular definitions as hermeneutical keys enabling to bring the many aspects of his ideas, experiences and programmes within one all-encompassing scheme. This has happened despite the fact that Gandhi himself never claimed any consistency in the expression of his views – quite to the contrary, he always stressed the work-in-progress character of his 'experiments'. It has also been recognized how problematic the application of straightforward western definitions to the Indian social and cultural environment can be. Moreover, the notion that the recognition of coexistence of multiple meanings might serve historians better in their endeavour to make sense of the recent Indian past is perhaps one of the by-products of the recent interest for the international side of India's freedom struggle and the awareness of the deep and diverse links it had developed with various countries particularly during and after the inter-war period.

What has replaced this search for unilateral definitions is an interesting study in contrast and comparison between India and other countries, combined with a new reading of Gandhi's relevance in his times and later.

From the international perspective, it is fascinating to note how Gandhi has been seen as an innovative thinker in relation to some of the worst crises affecting humanity – be it the escalation of large-scale conflicts threatening nuclear disaster, or pollution and the depletion of the planet’s resources for industrial and commercial purposes, or again, the dehumanizing effect of political economies based on mass consumption, and currently the climate emergency approaching a point of no return. In all these cases, Gandhi’s ideas have offered a series of indications, both ethical and practical, for a fundamental re-thinking of development and progress schemes and for the recovery of the lost balance between human life and nature. Gandhi’s image is, in this sense, that of a universal teacher endowed with a prophetic appreciation of the dangers lying ahead on the path laid down by unregulated industrial modernity.

Along with this universal appeal, there have been many specific traits that have made his example and thoughts relevant for different communities in various periods. Here, one has to refer, first and foremost, to Gandhi’s contribution to India’s independence movement. Even if perceptions from outside often do not correspond to the complexity of the nationalist movement and the changing role the Mahatma played in it from the 1920s onward, the fact that a poor colony like India was able to challenge and ultimately defeat the might of the British Empire did offer other oppressed countries and communities around the world an inspiration and a reason for hope. The fact that India struggled for freedom by non-violent means added in many ways to the idealization of the movement. On the one hand, non-violence represented the basic moral stand against armed control and injustice, and on the other hand, it offered an example where a defenceless people could achieve political goals by solely relying on inner force and without foreign help. This did not fail to impress freedom fighters of all hues around the globe at least until the early decade after World War II, from Nelson Mandela to Ernesto Che Guevara.

This ethical component was also important for those Christian, and particularly Catholic communities which came to recognize in Gandhi’s ‘teachings’ a message which was in consonance with their own ideals and beliefs. In a country like post-war Italy, Gandhi was projected as a new apostle of peace and a new St Francis by a cohort of Catholic writers and activists, both mainstream and dissenters, in their effort to counter the decline of religiosity in the West. In the United States, Catholic leaders of movements for social emancipation and the eradication of poverty found in Gandhi’s erstwhile campaigns useful clues to devise a viable and morally acceptable plan of action.

An interesting case is represented by African countries, and particularly South Africa, where Gandhi’s emergence as a public figure had created a special link with India. The positive attitude of front-ranking leaders of Nelson Mandela’s stature clearly shows that here, too Gandhi’s non-violent methods could provide a reference model for local communities in their

unequal fight against racial discrimination. Gandhi's remarks on the indigent people as *kaffirs* who had to be kept separated from Indians were, in the initial period, largely ignored as the anti-imperialist, anti-establishment dimension of his figure generally prevailed. Later, when it became clear that non-violence was not yielding the expected political advance in the face of harsh repression, and with India's independence receding into the background of collective memory, Gandhi began to be scaled down from an idealized symbol to the real historical figure and questioned for his ideas on racial separation. This points to the importance of the political productivity of non-violence among communities where it was considered as a mere tactical device rather than a fundamental moral choice, whereas elsewhere, as mentioned above, non-violence retained its universal, timeless validity.

Looking at the Indian situation, a reconsideration of the social, political and philosophical dimensions of Gandhi's last years, as well as of their close interrelation with the world scenario, promises ample scope for scholarly advance. Here, the crucial point of departure from previous analyses seems to be the use of hermeneutic tools specifically tuned to situations in India – from the knowledge of Indian languages and their differentiated use to an awareness of the multiple voices, events and projections that crafted politics at the daily level, even in distant yet deeply related contexts. At times, it is the capacity to delve deeper into the layers of historical possibilities that helps bring out the wider resonance of particular moments. In Gandhi's case, this can mean a new perception of his political engagement, even in the final phase when he had largely lost control over the Congress party. The essays in this volume offer intriguing examples of this with regard to India's culture of constitutionalism, the intermingling of religion and secularism in the Mahatma's idea of the state, and the clear perception of the close link between contemporary events in Palestine and India resulting in a prophetic view of the damaging effects of colonialism in both cases. The presence in India of a large Muslim community was not only a fundamental fact of domestic society and politics but also featured prominently in the country's profile, thereby conditioning its international relations.

On these epistemological premises, a new history can be built which divests itself of all the evident and hidden constraints that have for long limited its development. By renouncing definitions and choices derived from one specific historical experience and embracing pluralism as a core value, this 'new deal' may be able to correlate the local, the international and the universal in a dialogue of specificities. Approached with this new historical gaze, Gandhi's legacy may bring together disciplines, ideas, worlds.



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