

## THE EARLY GANDHI ON NATIONALISM

H. PAUL LE MAIRE, S.J.

IN 1919 ON HIS RETURN TRIP FROM ENGLAND TO SOUTH AFRICA, Gandhi wrote a small book called *Hind Swaraj*. First published in Gujarati, Gandhi's native tongue, and then in English under the title *Indian Home Rule*,<sup>1</sup> it presents his ideas on a wide variety of subjects, the most important of which are his formula for achieving India's independence, the superiority of Indian civilization over its Western counterpart and the meaning of true home rule.

Since there is in general little acquaintance with the fascinating story of the twenty-one years (1892-1914) that Gandhi spent in South Africa from the age of twenty-four to forty-five, we must first of all sketch briefly the history of these years in order to set the stage for a detailed analysis and critique of *Hind Swaraj*. It should also be noted that these early South African years are of overwhelming significance in the development of Gandhi's thought and personality. For when he left South Africa in 1914 shortly before the beginning of World War I, he left as a religiously mature man ready to participate in the massive struggle for Indian independence with the weapon of *satyagraha* that he had developed on a small scale in South Africa. Finally, while it will be obvious that Gandhi's early ideas on nationalism do not allow of wide-scale application to the Philippine scene, still, I believe, an acquaintance with the Gandhian spirit—the spirit of truth, love, freedom and courage—behind these ideas can contribute to the growth of a genuine nationalism in the Philippines.

### BACKGROUND

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was admitted to the bar in London on June 10, 1891, at the age of twenty-two. He left immediately for India where he intended to begin his career as a lawyer, but he soon discovered to his severe disappointment that this was more easily imagined than realized. His greatest obstacles were an acute shyness that tended to make him speechless before a crowd and a delicate sense of honesty that made it impossible

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<sup>1</sup> "This was originally written in Gujarati during Gandhiji's return journey from England on the *Kildonan Castle* and published in *Indian Opinion*, the first twelve chapters on 11-12-1909 and the rest on 18-12-1909. Issued as a booklet in January 1910, it was proscribed in India by the Government of Bombay on March 24, 1910 . . . This hastened Gandhiji's decision to publish the English translation . . . This was issued by the International Printing Press, Phoenix, with a foreword by Gandhiji dated March 20, 1910 and also the English translation of the Gujarati foreword dated November 22, 1909." The text published in *CW* 10 is that of the Revised New Edition published in 1939 by the Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad. *CW* 10, p. 6.

for him to participate in anything that smacked of intrigue.<sup>2</sup> Finally, however, through the services of his older brother, Gandhi was offered a job for a year in South Africa. He was to serve as half-clerk, half-lawyer in the employ of Abdulla and Company, which had an important case pending in the city of Pretoria in the Transvaal.<sup>3</sup> When Gandhi landed in South Africa in April 1893, he had intended to stay only for one year; he was to stay for twenty-one, finally leaving in 1914 at the successful conclusion of the great *satyagraha* struggle that obtained recognition of a few of the basic rights of the South African Indians.

Gandhi had not been in South Africa much over a week when he had a very painful experience of the type of problem his countrymen had to face.<sup>4</sup> On his way from Durban in Natal to Pretoria in the Transvaal, he came face to face with the spectre of race prejudice. He was seated alone in a compartment when a white man boarded the train at Maritzburg, the Natal capital, and entered Gandhi's compartment. As soon as he caught sight of Gandhi the colored man, he called the conductor who informed Gandhi that he would have to ride in the baggage compartment. Gandhi refused to budge. He was then thrown off the train and left shivering with cold and humiliation on the platform of the Maritzburg station. Gandhi was tempted to turn around and start the journey back to his homeland, but he felt that this would be an act of cowardice on his part and no solution to the problem of racial prejudice.<sup>5</sup>

Gandhi was instrumental in bringing to a successful conclusion after a year of hard work the law suit for which he had come to South Africa. He was on the point of beginning the return journey to India in 1894 when the Natal Legislature proposed a bill that, if passed, would deprive the Indians of the very limited franchise right they were enjoying. A group of Natal merchants persuaded him to stay and help them fight for their rights. Gandhi agreed to remain in South Africa and remain he did for another twenty years.<sup>6</sup>

To trace the details of Gandhi's efforts in South Africa during the ensuing twenty years on behalf of the Indian community would carry us be-

<sup>2</sup> *Aut.*, pp. 78 ss.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>4</sup> Towards the year 1860, Indians had begun to migrate from their homeland to South Africa at the request of the European settlers who lacked the manpower necessary to cultivate their vast holdings of land suitable for the growing of tea, coffee and sugar. According to the agreement with the Indian government, the Indian laborer was to sign up for a period of five years of indentured labor. At the end of that period he was entitled either to free passage home or the right to settle in the new land. By 1890, nearly 40,000 Indians had arrived as "indentured laborers" and in their wake came the Indian merchants to minister to their needs. At the end of the five-year period, a considerable proportion of these laborers decided to remain in this new land of opportunity. Some became farmers; others merchants; and many raised themselves from the status of laborers to that of owners of land and houses. It was especially the new Indian trading class that began to offer stiff competition to the white trader. Thus began the persecution of the Indian in South Africa.

<sup>5</sup> *Aut.*, pp. 91 ss.

<sup>6</sup> *Aut.*, pp. 115 ss.

yond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that between 1894 and 1906, the Indian situation progressively deteriorated until in 1906 the Transvaal government proposed a bill that the Indian community felt was an insult and an act of gross injustice against them. Contending that there was a large flow of illegal Indian immigrants from Natal into the Transvaal, the government advocated a system of compulsory registration of all Indians including complete finger-printing. This proposal and the subsequent passage of the bill resulted in the birth of the *satyagraha* movement.<sup>7</sup>

The following year, the Transvaal government put the finishing touches on its anti-Indian program by passing another bill which prohibited the entry of any new Indian immigrants into the Transvaal.<sup>8</sup> The life of the Indian had, in Gandhi's own words, become a dog's life.<sup>9</sup>

It was to protest these two actions on the part of the Transvaal government that Gandhi left for the second time in his South African career for England in 1909 on the occasion of the unification of the four South African colonies into the Union of South Africa. During these four months that Gandhi spent in London, he began to make more explicit reference in his writings to the connection he saw between the *satyagraha* struggle going on in South Africa and the growing movement for India's independence. This impetus to broaden his horizons may have come from Gandhi's contact during these months in London with a group of young Indian patriots who were seeking India's independence by means of the sword and the gun. On his return trip to South Africa, Gandhi penned his answer to these young anarchists in the form of his little book, *Hind Swaraj*. It was Gandhi's first attempt to apply the principles of *satyagraha* that he was developing in South Africa and using to obtain redress for a small handful of Indians to the human and political problems of the teeming millions of India.

#### HIND SWARAJ

. . . *Hind Swaraj* is a compendious political manifesto. It ranges over a wide field; it discusses "Home Rule," the mainspring of the British authority in India, of the nationalist discontent, the balance sheet of British rule in India, the nature of parliamentary system of government, the curse of industrial and materialistic civilization of the West, the Hindu-Muslim problem, and the comparative efficacy of 'brute force' and passive resistance.<sup>10</sup>

*Hind Swaraj* is a small book full of strong feeling and little subtlety that could have been written only by a man like Gandhi. He castigates with a passion, hitherto kept hidden, western civilization and the British rule that

<sup>7</sup> *Satyagraha* means literally "the force born of truth and love." For Gandhi's own history of this movement see, *Satyagraha in South Africa: for a full development of Gandhi's thought and action in South Africa*, see H. Paul Le Maire, S.J., *Lé développement de la pensée politico-religieuse de Mahatma Gandhi dans le contexte des années 1893-1914 en Afrique du Sud*. (Starasbourg, 1968; unpublished doctorate thesis).

<sup>8</sup> See *Sat*, pp. 96-101; 206-207.

<sup>9</sup> *Aut*, p. 218.

<sup>10</sup> B.R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1958), p. 124.

brought that civilization to India. As a result of this scathing criticism, the Indian government proscribed the book in March 1910, much to Gandhi's surprise.<sup>11</sup> This only served, however, to hasten his efforts to bring out the English translation.

In its own non-violent way, *Hind Swaraj* is a violent attack not only against British presence in India, but the goals it has sought by that presence. Yet at the same time, it is a compendium of everything that Gandhi had stood for up to that time in his South African enterprise. While he criticizes western civilization and British rule, he blames neither for foreign rule in India. The fault lies with the Indian himself; he has allowed himself to be enslaved.

The book is written in the form of a dialogue between the editor of *Indian Opinion*,<sup>12</sup> Gandhi himself, and an imaginary reader. The greater part of the book is negative in its approach, devoted to exposing the sins of the West, but beneath this critical façade, which risks deceiving the superficial reader, lie the great principles of Gandhi's life, applied now to his beloved home land. Neither violence, the path chosen by the extremists, nor petitioning of the government and continued British presence for the time being, the path chosen by the moderates, will bring independence to India; only the principles of *satyagraha* can unlock the door to true liberty.

## THE NEGATIVE PART

### CRITICISM OF THE WEST

What does Gandhi find wrong with the civilization developed in the West? Fundamentally, it is a civilization that is amoral and areligious in that it has sought to make bodily comfort the be-all and end-all of life. Because the European today lives in a better house than he did a hundred years ago, he considers himself to be more civilized. When a non-western people adopt European dress, they are thought to have been civilized.

. . . Formerly, in Europe, people ploughed their lands mainly by manual labour. Now, one man can plough a vast tract by means of steam engines and can thus amass great wealth. This is called a sign of civilization. Formerly, only a few men wrote valuable books. Now, anybody writes and prints anything he likes and poisons people's minds. Formerly, men travelled in wagons. Now, they fly through the air in trains at the rate of four hundred and more miles per day. This is considered the height of civilization . . . Formerly, men worked in the open air only as much as they liked. Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines. . . Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy. There are now diseases

<sup>11</sup> *IO*, 2-4-1910; *CW* 10, p. 189.

<sup>12</sup> Gandhi took over the newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, in 1903 and used it as a vehicle for his ideas and as a means of promoting unity among the South African Indians until his departure from South Africa in 1914. See also, *Sat*, pp. 141-144; *Aut*, pp. 238-240.

of which people never dreamt before, and an army of doctors is engaged in finding out their cures, and so hospitals have increased. . . . This civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion. . . . Some even consider it to be a superstitious growth. . . . Civilization seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so.<sup>13</sup>

The salient points of Gandhi's criticism of the West are found in this paragraph. What is most to be deplored is that as a result of western civilization, India is fast losing its religious sense.<sup>14</sup> Gandhi then picks up various facets of this civilization and launches into a diatribe against railroads, doctors and lawyers, and finally machinery, all hallmarks of this civilization that is costing India its soul. Railroads have helped to spread plague and famine; the former, by enabling people to move about more easily; the latter by encouraging them to sell their grain and not keep enough for emergencies. Rogues visit the holy places of India by means of the railroads to practice their roguery.

The imaginary reader objects that holy men can also take advantage of the railroads to propagate good. Gandhi retorts:

Good travels at a snail's pace—it can, therefore, have little to do with the railways. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time. But evil has wings. To build a house takes time. Its destruction takes none. So the railways can become a distributing agency for the evil one only. It may be a debatable matter whether railways spread famines, but it is beyond dispute that they propagate evil.<sup>15</sup>

According to the reader, however, the railroads have helped to awaken a spirit of national unity among the masses of India. No, Gandhi replies, despite what the English say, India was one nation before their arrival.

. . . One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. . . . I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another's language and there was no aloofness between them. What do you think could have been the intention of those farseeing ancestors of ours who established Setubandha (Rameshwar) in the South, Jagannah in the East and Hardwar in the North as places of pilgrimage. . . . They knew that worship of God could have been performed just as well at home. . . . But they saw that India was one undivided land so made by nature. Arguing thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world. . . . It was after the advent of the railways that we began to believe in distinctions. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Whether Gandhi's historical point of view regarding the past unity of India is accurate or not is of little importance. History did not much interest

<sup>13</sup> *IHR, CW* 10, pp. 19-21.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> *Loc. cit.*

him. Therefore, this paragraph represents not so much a reflection on the past as a projection for the future. Like the microcosm in South Africa, the macrocosm in India was torn in pieces by religious and regional strife. Religious, linguistic and cultural unity were lacking in India and yet Gandhi dreamed of building one nation out of all this diversity. He could only achieve this by instilling in the millions of India the feeling that they belonged to a nation that had been one and was intended by nature to be one. The obstacles to national unity were formidable; yet the greatness of Gandhi's vision consisted in the fact that he could imagine a truly pluralistic society emerging in India as a result of bringing to the fore all that was best in the Indian culture of the past.

For Gandhi, God in the construction of man's body set a natural limit to his locomotive abilities, but man then proceeded to overstep that limit. God intended that man should serve only his immediate neighbors, but through means such as the railroad man has wrongly come to imagine that he must serve the whole world. As a result, he comes into contact with varying patterns of thought and different religions and ends up in a state of utter confusion.<sup>17</sup>

#### LAWYERS

Gandhi's own profession next comes under fire from his pen. Lawyers have enslaved India by encouraging quarrels among people for their own profit. They have tightened the English grip on the body politic of India in the sense that England could not rule India without the courts and if it were not for the existence of lawyers, there would be no courts. English rule would disintegrate in a day, if Indian lawyers were to give up their profession.<sup>18</sup>

#### DOCTORS

The medical profession fares no better at Gandhi's hand than the legal. Its very root is immoral. If I overeat, I become sick. Instead of letting me suffer for my over-indulgence, the doctor gives me some pills. This encourages me to go out and repeat my sin. As a result a man's mind is continually being weakened and he eventually loses control over it. Doctors, moreover, violate Hindu and Islamic religious principles by prescribing medicines that contain animal fat or alcohol.<sup>19</sup>

#### MACHINERY

One thing above all, however, symbolizes western civilization and that is machinery. Gandhi has in mind here particularly the weaving mills which,

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-34.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

he feels, have impoverished the masses by destroying Indian handicraft. The mill workers of Bombay have been reduced to a state of virtual slavery. An Indian industrialist, moreover, who has become rich through these factories will find it hard to muster sufficient courage to oppose British rule, since his interests are so intimately bound up with the continuance of that rule.

Gandhi, however, is practical enough to realize that he cannot erase the pages of history and remove existing factories from the landscape of India, but he voices an urgent plea from his heart and suggests a substitute:

. . . It would be too much to expect them [the millowners] to give up their mills, but we may implore them not to increase them . . . They can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred handlooms and they can buy out the cloth that may be thus woven. . . .<sup>20</sup>

This is Gandhi's first mention of *swadeshi*—the exclusive use of goods, especially cloth, made in India. It would become one of the principal goals of his work in India after 1914.

To the objection that the elimination of all machinery from India would necessitate the importing of many products, Gandhi replies that India did without these goods in the past and as long as they cannot be made without machinery, Indians must do without them in the future. Even printing presses should eventually be eliminated, for all “. . . machinery is bad.”<sup>21</sup>

#### POSITIVE DOCTRINE

The apparent naiveté of this booklet may so blind or irritate the occidental reader that he misses Gandhi's positive program for securing genuine independence for India. This is far more significant than his exaggerated criticism of western civilization and its trappings. First of all, Gandhi preaches the same message to the mainland Indians as he has been doing to those of South Africa. The cause of all their difficulties is to be laid at their own doorstep and not at England's “. . . The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They were not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them. . . .”<sup>22</sup> By not being able to resist the temptation of English gold, the Indian has gradually lost his manliness and the ability to solve the problems of his own country. For himself, Gandhi would prefer to suffer violence at Indian hands “. . . than that someone else should protect us from it and thus render us effeminate. . . .”<sup>23</sup>

#### TRUE HOME RULE

Gandhi's formula for true home rule in India is the same *satyagraha* formula he has been proposing for the development of an Indian community in South Africa: freedom and brotherhood.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>21</sup> *Cf. Ibid.*, pp. 57-60.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

## MORAL FREEDOM

Gandhi is quick to point out that the civilization that has been developed in India over the course of many centuries is second to none since, unlike western civilization, it is based upon religion and morality.

. . . Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means "good conduct."<sup>24</sup>

If this definition be correct, then India . . . has nothing to learn from anybody else, and this is as it should be. . . .

. . . The tendency of the Indian civilization is to liberate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God . . .<sup>25</sup>

But what has happened to enslave India under English rule? Some Indians have not lived up to the moral ideals of their civilization and in that manner have enslaved themselves. Fortunately, however, this is true only of a small part of India—that part that has been contaminated by the West. The secret, therefore, for realizing the independence of India is to be found precisely in personal freedom:

. . . If we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of Swaraj. It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. . . . Do not consider this Swaraj to be like a dream. There is no idea of sitting still. The Swaraj that I wish to picture is such that, after we have once realized it, we shall endeavor to the end of our lifetime to persuade others to do likewise. But such Swaraj has to be experienced, by each one for himself. One drowning man will never save another. Slave yourselves, it would be mere pretension to think of freeing others. . . .<sup>26</sup>

The formula for Indian independence is a simple one: India will be free once the Indian frees himself from the shackles of the West and lives according to the moral ideal of Indian civilization: a simple, unpretentious life in small villages; faithfulness to the use of the plow; and the elimination of competition and machinery.<sup>27</sup> This is freedom; this is true home rule.

## BROTHERHOOD

There still remains, however, a formidable obstacle to the independence of India. How can India ever be one nation when it is divided into people of so many different religions: Hindus and Muslims, Parsis and Christians? To this Gandhi replies that the true spirit of nationalism demands that we show respect and tolerance for other religions

<sup>24</sup> "Literally, 'This is the meaning of *su*, that is good *dharo* [way of life].'" Footnote, *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.



India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation; they merge in it. A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it. That country must have a faculty for such assimilation. India has ever been such a country. In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals; but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If they do, they are not fit to be considered a nation. If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dreamland. The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen, and they will have to live in unity, if only for their own interest. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms; nor was it ever been so in India.

. . . Should we not remember that many Hindus and Mahomedans own the same ancestors and the same blood runs through their veins? Do people become enemies because they change their religion? Is the God of the Mahomedan different from the God of the Hindu? Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? . . . 28

The spirit of tolerance is characteristic of the Hindu religion and for Gandhi one of its most beautiful aspects. Dogmatic questions regarding the theological truth of various religions interested him not at all. If a man lives according to the moral principles of his religion, he will reach the goal set forth by every religion. The killing of cows, however, had always been a sensitive bone of contention between Hindu and Mahomedan and had caused much shedding of blood in the past. Gandhi is to be admired for his spirit of tolerance, but the reader wants to know how he can expect Hindu and Mahomedan to live amicably together as one nation when the former believes the cow to be sacred and the latter does not.

. . . just as I respect the cow, so do I respect my fellow-man . . . Am I, then, to fight with or kill a Mahomedan in order to save a cow? In doing so, I become an enemy of the Mahomedan as well as of the cow. Therefore, the only method I know of protecting the cow is that I should approach my Mahomedan brother and urge him for the sake of the country [for India, being an agricultural country, is dependent on the cow] to join me in protecting her. If he would not listen to me I should let the cow go for the simple reason that the matter is beyond my ability. If I were overfull of pity for the cow, I should sacrifice my life to save her but not take my brother's. This, I hold, is the law of our religion.

When men become obstinate, it is a difficult thing. If I pull one way, my Moslem brother will pull another. If I put on superior airs, he will return the compliment. If I bow to him gently, he will do it much more so; and if he does not, I shall not be considered to have done wrong in having bowed. . . .

What am I to do when a blood-brother is on the point of killing a cow? Am I to kill him, or to fall down at his feet and implore him? If you admit that I should adopt the latter course, I must do the same to my Moslem brother.

Lastly, if it be true that the Hindus believe in the doctrine of non-killing

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

and the Mahomedans do not, what pray, is the duty of the former? It is not written that a follower of the religion of Ahimsa (non-killing) may kill a fellow-man. . . . In order to save one being, he may not kill another. He can only plead—therein lies his sole duty.

. . . Am I to dislike a Mahomedan because there are passages in the Koran I do not understand or like? It takes two to make a quarrel. . . . If everyone will try to understand the core of his own religion and adhere to it, and will not allow false teachers to dictate to him, there will be no room left for quarrelling.<sup>29</sup>

It should be clear by this point that *Indian Home Rule* is consistent with Gandhi's over-all pattern of thought. It represents a distillation of fifteen years of experience and writing in South Africa, now brought to bear upon the problem of his homeland. When will the Indians of South Africa achieve the recognition of their rights? When they show themselves worthy of it. When will India be independent? When the Indian assumes the responsibilities of freedom and lives up to the demands of his cultural heritage. Hindu-Mahomedan relations posed a more serious problem in India than it did in South Africa, but Gandhi's answer is substantially the same. Religious quarrels are without any sense at all and contradict the very essence of the reality of religion, since every religion preaches brotherhood and love for one another.

While Gandhi believed with all his heart that both in South Africa and India the personal reform of the individual Indian and the general reform of the Indian community were the most important steps to be taken toward the achievement of their goals, he also realized that these alone were not sufficient. The Indian extremists proposed force of arms to attain independence for India; the moderates, petitioning of the government; and Gandhi, soul force or *satyagraha*.

#### SOUL FORCE

The reader proposes that India resort to arms to drive out the English. Gandhi retorts that if they do that, they will get precisely what the English got and that they do not want. An Indian government based upon the use of force is not different from an English one based on the same foundation. If the means chosen to attain a particular end are evil, then the end itself participates in the evilness of the means.

. . . Your belief that there is no connection between the means and the end is a great mistake. . . . Your reasoning is the same as saying that we can get a rose through planting a noxious weed. If I want to cross the ocean, I can do so only by means of a vessel; if I were to use a cart for that purpose, both the cart and I would soon find the bottom. . . . If I want to deprive you of your watch, I shall certainly have to fight for it; if I want to buy your watch, I shall

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

have to pay you for it; and, if I want a gift, I shall have to plead for it; and, according to the means I employ, the watch is stolen property, my own property, or a donation. Thus we see three different results from three different means. . . .<sup>30</sup>

#### SOUL FORCE AND GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

The imaginary reader is attracted by Gandhi's doctrine of soul force or *satyagraha*, but he wonders whether it is really capable of securing the liberty of a whole nation. Therefore, he asks whether there is any historical evidence to support Gandhi's claim for the power of soul force. This was an objection that Gandhi had to face continually in the South African *satyagraha* campaign. *Satyagraha* was a new doctrine as far as its application to political conflicts was concerned. Could any historical precedent be found for it? Gandhi admits that none can be found, but he explains this historical lacuna through his own philosophy of history.

The poet Tulsidas has said: "Of religion, pity, or love, is the root, as egotism of the body. Therefore, we should not abandon pity so long as we are alive." This appears to me to be a scientific truth. I believe in it as much as I believe in two and two being four. The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth. . . . The universe would disappear without the existence of that force. But you ask for historical evidence. It is, therefore, necessary to know what history means. The Gujarati equivalent means: "It so happened." If that is the meaning of history, it is possible to give copious evidence. But, if it means the doings of kings and emperors, there can be no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance in such history. . . .

History . . . is a record of the wars of the world . . . and if this were all that had hapapened in the world, it would have ended long ago. . . .

The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love. Therefore, the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on.

Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the existence of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not and cannot take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. . . . History . . . is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.<sup>31</sup>

Gandhi's insight is brilliant, his goal majestic. "Love is what makes the world go round." Love, Gandhi says, is and has been the guiding norm for millions of individuals in the course of history for determining their personal relations with one another, but this world record of love does not make for very interesting reading. Therefore, historians have not bothered to set it down on paper. But, Gandhi says, despite this lack of historical evidence, what is to prevent mankind from taking this guiding norm of love

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

that has determined personal relations throughout history and making it the determining norm for relations among nations and communities of peoples? The answer is nothing.

Herein lies Gandhi's unique contribution to Christianity. Christianity has developed a double morality in regard to violence. Christ's command to love especially our enemies has not been extended beyond the sphere of private relations. While Christianity has always deplored the use of violence among private individuals, it has countenanced and even encouraged it under certain conditions to settle disputes among nations under the rubric of "the just war." Gandhi, on the other hand, was willing to tolerate, but not countenance violence, since he never lost sight of his goal—the elimination of all violence and the substitution of the force of love. This, he proposed, not merely as a goal for private individuals, but for all peoples and nations. He envisaged a point in history where the force of love would be recognized as the only legitimate means for settling differences on a personal, national and international level. There is no doubt that this is implied in the teaching of Christ, but Gandhi's contribution to Christianity is that he made this ideal explicit and brought it to the attention of the Christian world.

#### PERSONAL JUDGMENT AND THE LAWS OF THE STATE

Unfortunately Gandhi does not give any further development of his philosophy of history. He is side-tracked by his imaginary reader into an exposé of *satyagraha* as the only means of attaining independence for India. In *Indian Home Rule*, he stresses the right of the individual *satyagrahi* to determine the justice of a particular law; this right is based on the fact that, if the *satyagrahi* is wrong in his personal judgment, he causes suffering only to his own person and harms no one else.

Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. . . . No man can claim that he is absolutely in the right or that a particular thing is wrong because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgment. It is therefore meet that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequences whatever it may be. . . .

A man who has realized his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else. Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him. Even the Government does not expect any such thing from us. They do not say: "You must do such and such a thing," but they say: "If you do not do it, we will punish you." We are sunk so low that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. . . .

It is a superstition and ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority. Many examples can be given in which acts of majorities will be found to have been wrong and those of minorities to have been right. All

reforms owe their origin to the initiation of minorities in opposition to majorities. . . . So long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist. . . .<sup>32</sup>

### SELF-DISCIPLINE

It is not clear whether Gandhi realized how close his politico-religious attitude towards government came to bordering on a philosophy of anarchy. Certainly he believed in a severe curtailment of the power of the State, since for him the only life worthy of a human being must be one founded not on compulsion, but on freedom of decision. Man is deprived of that freedom of decision when he is required to submit his personal judgment to the will of the majority.

Gandhi, however, was far from seeing himself as an anarchist, since anarchy in the final analysis is opposed to the law of love and the freedom of the individual. Therefore, before we accuse him of being an anarchist, as Bose does,<sup>33</sup> we must take into serious consideration what kind of a man he expected the *satyagrahi* to be. He had to be a man of self-control, dedicated to the values of *brahmacharya*,<sup>34</sup> poverty and fearlessness. Only such a man could dare trust his own judgment sufficiently to set himself in opposition to established authority. Gandhi does not hesitate to repeat in *Indian Home Rule*, intended for a wider audience, what he had said in the pages of *Indian Opinion*.

Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness. A man who is unchaste loses stamina, becomes emasculated and cowardly. He whose mind is given over to animal passions is not capable of any great effort. . . . What, then, is a married person to do is the question that arises naturally; and yet it need not. When a husband and wife gratify the passions, it is no less an animal indulgence on that account. Such an indulgence, except for perpetuating the race, is strictly prohibited. But a passive resister has to avoid even that very limited indulgence because he can have no desire for progeny. A married man, therefore, can observe perfect chastity. This subject is not capable of being treated at greater length. Several questions arise: How is one to carry one's wife with one, what are her rights, and other similar questions. Yet those who wish to take part in a great work are bound to solve these puzzles.<sup>35</sup>

Unhappily, Gandhi drops the question of a married man's observance of chastity almost as soon as he picks it up. The married man, who wishes

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>33</sup> Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Studies in Gandhism* (Calcutta: D. M. Library, 1940), p. 49.

<sup>34</sup> "*Bramacharya* means literally conduct that leads one to God. Its technical meaning is self-restraint, particularly mastery over the sexual organ." *Aut*, p. 21. Its nearest equivalent in Western terminology would be a vow of chastity. Gandhi married at the age of thirteen; after a long period of reflection, he finally took the *brahmacharya* vow at the age of thirty-seven in order to be able to devote himself more fully to the service of the community and to realize his true self. See *Aut*, pp. 171-177.

<sup>35</sup> *IHR, CW* 10, p. 52.

to dedicate himself as a *satyagrahi* to the cause of Indian freedom, must give up sexual relations with his wife. Gandhi, however, consistently refuses to go into the subject any further. Why he felt no further treatment of the subject was possible he does not explain, thus depriving us of an invaluable insight into his own mind. Perhaps he thought that marital *brahmacharya* was so personal a thing that each man had to work out a practical plan for securing it according to his own notion of truth. For Gandhi no man can regard himself as being in full possession of the truth; the best he can hope for is a small foot-hold on the path of relative truth leading to absolute truth, which is God. Each man's foot-hold is to be found in a different spot on this path and therefore each man's answer to the problem of marital *brahmacharya* is bound to be different.

Then again, perhaps he had a certain hesitancy in pushing his ideas on this subject to their logical conclusion for fear that he would find that he had lost the path of truth. Gandhi's thought is not systematic and any attempt to systematize it results only in distorting it. He was a man of the given moment in time; his answers to questions were based not on a logical system of thought, but on the exigencies of the present moment. Millie Polak, the wife of his dear friend, Henry, recalls a conversation she had with Gandhi about the year 1905.<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Polak accused Gandhi of holding that child-bearing was wrong. Gandhi denied this, but she pressed home her argument.

"No, you did not say so. But you did say something to the effect that it was pandering to the flesh."

"And is it not?" queried Mr. Gandhi.

Millie denied this and pointed out the very logical conclusion that human life would cease without it.

"Would that be so terrible? But," persisted Mr. Gandhi, "you do believe that people who have a great mission or work to do should not spend their energy and time in caring for a little family, when they are called to a bigger field of work "

Millie agreed with this and Gandhi therefore asked why they were arguing with one another.

"Only that you are still making me feel that you think it to be a higher condition of life to be celibate than to be a parent, and I say that the condition may be a difference of kind and not of degree."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The Polaks lived with Gandhi in Johannesburg in the months immediately preceding his move to the Phoenix Settlement in 1906. Millie Polak says in the preface that her purpose in writing this book is simply to describe what Gandhi was like as a man and what living under the same roof with such an extraordinary person was like. To her, he was not first of all a Mahatma or a saint or a politician, but a great and loving being. Millie Graham Polak, *Mr. Gandhi: The Man* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1931), pp. 13-14.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

Millie's comments, following this conversation, on Gandhi's attitude toward parenthood are striking in that they carry to a conclusion his position on celibacy, a conclusion that we do not find expressed in Gandhi's own writings.

This question of 'to be or not to be' a parent was one frequently discussed. Mr. Gandhi was reaching the point where he began to think that it would be better for the world, and probably for God, if mankind ceased to produce itself. . . .<sup>38</sup>

After discussing the question of *brahmacharya* in *Indian Home Rule*, Gandhi goes on to reiterate his position on poverty. Those who have money are not expected to throw it away, but they must adopt an attitude of indifference towards it.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, the *satyagrahi* must be a man of fearlessness. ". . . Those alone can follow the path of passive resistance who are free from fear, whether as to their possessions, false honor, their relatives, the government, bodily injuries or death."<sup>40</sup>

Thus, it becomes clear that *satyagraha* was much more than a political weapon; it was a religious way of life and only the man who lived that *satyagraha* way of life could wield the *satyagraha* weapon. Those who miss the interiority of Gandhi's movement and limit themselves to using *satyagraha* only in the political arena, will eventually end up at least as partial anarchists. The man of courage, poverty and *brahmacharya* is the only man who can be trusted to handle the power of *satyagraha*. If a man is not willing first to reform his life, he cannot be trusted with *satyagraha*.

#### CONCLUSION: ANARCHY, PREFERRED TO FOREIGN RULE

In the course of *Indian Home Rule*, Gandhi has shown that he is neither a member of the extremist nor the moderate party in India. The conclusion, therefore, that the imaginary reader draws is that Gandhi would work for the formation of a third party to bring about Indian independence. Gandhi replies that he is not thinking at all along those lines; he would serve both the moderates and the extremists and point out to both where he thinks they have gone astray. To the extremists he repeats what he had said before: true home rule is unattainable by means of violence. To the moderates: mere petitioning of the English government is inadequate and is a confession of Indian inferiority.<sup>41</sup> He continues his speech to the moderates.

". . . To say that British rule is indispensable is almost a denial of the Godhead. We cannot say that anybody or anything is indispensable except God . . .

"If the English vacated India, bag and baggage, it must not be supposed

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>39</sup> *IHR*, *CW* 10, p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

that she would be widowed. It is possible that those who are forced to observe peace under their pressure would fight after their withdrawal. There can be no advantage in suppressing an eruption; it must have its vent. If, therefore, before we can remain at peace, we must fight amongst ourselves, it is better that we do so. There is no occasion for a third party to protect the weak. It is this so-called protection which has unnerved us. Such protection can only make the weak weaker. Unless we realize this, we cannot have Home Rule. I would paraphrase the thought of an English divine and say that anarchy under Home Rule were better than orderly foreign rule. . . .<sup>42</sup>

Gandhi says very simply that indigenous violence is preferable to foreign rule if a choice must be made between the two. For a man who had dedicated all of his adult life to the cause of non-violence, this seems to represent a large inconsistency in his thought that not even a change in circumstances can justify. This is not at all true. It would be much more accurate to say that Gandhi's dedication was to the interior development and formation of the Indian in the ways of liberty and brotherhood rather than to the propagation of the doctrine of non-violence. But even this does not do justice to his thought. First of all, *satyagraha* is not a doctrine that can be imposed upon a person from without; it must be accepted through an interior understanding of the values at stake, for the *satyagrahi* is one who appreciates, first of all in his heart and then in his actions, the supreme values of love and brotherhood.

Secondly, a man does not become a *satyagrahi* in the twinkling of an eye, as Gandhi had learned from past personal experience. Like any interior formation, it requires a certain amount of time to imbibe the ways of truth, liberty and love. British presence in India, however, prevents the Indian from achieving the mature responsibility that Gandhi expects from him as a human being and the son of a great civilization. Therefore, English rule must go even if it brings in its wake storms of anarchy and violence, for Gandhi is convinced that they will only be temporary. Once the Indian becomes the master of his own destiny, he will revert to the age-old values inherent in Indian culture and become a man of *satyagraha*, i.e. a man dedicated to liberty, truth and love.

Foreign rule in Gandhi's mind suppresses violence through coercion. This is a mark that the people over whom this foreign rule is being exercised are weak and unmanly. Gandhi wants to suppress violence by instilling in the hearts of the Indian the interior conviction that violence is opposed to truth and love. To achieve this, the Indian must be free of foreign rule.

#### THE ENGLISH

What then is to become of the English in India? Gandhi proposes a unique solution that must have mystified both the English and the Indians.

<sup>42</sup> *Loc. cit.*



To them I would respectfully say: "I admit you are my rulers. . . I have no objection to your remaining in my country, but although you are the rulers, you will have to remain as servants of the people. It is not we who have to do as you wish, but it is you who have to do as we wish . . . Your function will be, if you so wish, to police India; you must abandon the idea of deriving any commercial benefit from us. . . You must not do anything that is contrary to our religions. It is your duty as rulers that for the sake of the Hindus you should eschew beef, and for the sake of Mohamedans you should avoid bacon and ham . . . We consider your schools and law courts to be useless. We want our own ancient schools and courts to be restored. The common language of India is not English but Hindi. You should, therefore, learn it. We can hold communication with you only in our national language.

"We cannot tolerate the idea of your spending money on railways and the military . . . We do not need any European cloth. We shall manage with articles produced and manufactured at home. You may not keep one eye on Manchester and the other on India. We can work together only if our interests are identical."<sup>43</sup>

#### SUMMARY

On the last page of his booklet, Gandhi repeats his main points in a four sentence summary:

1. Real home-rule is self-rule or self-control.
2. The way to it is passive resistance: that is soul-force or love-force.
3. In order to exert this force, Swadeshi in every sense is necessary.
4. What we want to do should be done, not . . . because we want to retaliate but because it is our duty to do so . . .<sup>44</sup>

#### CRITIQUE

When Gopal Krishna Gokhale,<sup>45</sup> Gandhi's father and teacher in the field of politics,

. . . read the book in 1912 he thought it crude and predicted that Gandhi himself would destroy it after spending a year in India. Gandhi did not destroy the book. In 1921 he wrote in *Young India* that he withdrew nothing except one word and that in deference to a lady friend! . . .<sup>46</sup>

What are we to think of this book? Was Gokhale right? That it lacks subtlety and balance, that it lacks precision of expression gauged to winning others over to Gandhi's point of view seems to be without doubt. This distinguishes it from the twelve volumes of Gandhi's writings that date

<sup>43</sup> *IHR, CW* 10, p. 61.

<sup>44</sup> *IHR, CW* 10, p. 64.

<sup>45</sup> ". . . Indian statesman: President, Indian National Congress, 1905; founded the Servants of India Society, 1905; member, Bombay Legislature and Viceroy's Legislative Council, 1902-15; member, Indian Public Services Commission, 1912-15." *CW* 11, p. 46. Gandhi says of Gokhale, ". . . In the sphere of politics the place that Gokhale occupied in my heart during his lifetime and occupies even now was and is absolutely unique." *Aut.*, p. 148.

<sup>46</sup> Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

from the South African period. It almost seems in *Indian Home Rule* as if Gandhi, no longer in control of his pen, is swept along by the swell of his own convictions into a whirlpool of exaggerated expression.

Therefore, we must try to make more precise Gandhi's basic ideas by sweeping away a bit of the passion, especially in the negative part of the book where he criticizes so strongly doctors, lawyers, railroads and machinery. Since a complete assessment of Gandhi's thought on these subjects would carry us beyond the limit of this article and into the Indian period of his life, we must content ourselves with a general approach to Gandhi's indictment of Western civilization.

. . . Nothing in all Gandhi's teaching has been more misunderstood or more misinterpreted than his attitude to machinery. To say that he is opposed to all machinery is simply not true. What Gandhi regards as anti-social is the type of machinery which by displacing human labor increases unemployment, and in *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1908 [sic], he states this view clearly.<sup>47</sup>

This statement, however, does not represent Gandhi's total thesis. Why in *Indian Home Rule* is Gandhi opposed to lawyers, doctors, railroads and machinery? For the simple reason that *at this particular moment* in time they are destroying India and the Indian way of life. They are destroying the religious and cultural values of what Gandhi considers to be the greatest civilization the world has ever seen. He never says that they are evil in themselves; in fact even to speak in these terms is to impose a non-Gandhian category upon his thought.

The developments of Western civilization are not for India at this particular time. If this is true, it is no distortion of Gandhi's thought to say that he would admit some sort of future reconciliation between modern progress and Indian values. The point, however, is that the time is not ripe for such a reconciliation, because first of all India must get a firm grip on herself and go back to her ancient religious and cultural values. Liberty and brotherhood must first be developed in the hearts of the Indian masses. Once this is accomplished, then Gandhi would be willing to discuss the introduction of carefully chosen segments of modern progress into his homeland. Gandhi never says this explicitly, but it seems to be implied not only in his book, but more especially in his attitude of remarkable tolerance towards everything and everyone with which he came into contact.

Those who interpret Gandhi as being totally opposed to what the West has to offer do not fully appreciate the pragmatic tenor of his thought. Gandhi is a pragmatist; he claims no eternal value for his ideas. He proposes a solution to meet an *ad hoc* need. In the actual circumstances of India, he is opposed to railways and machinery, but it is very much in accord with his thought to say that in other circumstances he would adopt another point of view.

<sup>47</sup> F. R. Moraes, "Gandhi the Humanist," *Gandhiji: His Life and Work* (Editor: D. G. Tendulkar; Bombay; Karnatak Publishing House, 1944), p. 26.

No matter how we interpret, however, the negative aspects of his book, the lasting value of the positive side remains. Gandhi's outstanding contribution, developed during his years in South Africa, is his attempt to extend to the domain of politics the love that exists in the domain of personal relations. He was convinced that once the Indian was freed of foreign rule, he would learn the ways of true liberty and brotherhood. If this did not happen immediately after the departure of the English and a certain period of anarchy ensued, Gandhi would have tolerated this. His South African experience had taught him the value of time.

It is important to note his position on violence in this book, since it is the first time we see so clearly that freedom to develop oneself as a person is highest in the Gandhian hierarchy of values. Even non-violence is subordinated to that, since a man really cannot be non-violent unless he has the freedom to choose it. Therefore, violence may be temporarily tolerated by a *satyagrahi* for the sake of personal freedom and the development of true non-violence based on love in the hearts of the Indian masses.

#### CONCLUSION

This is the perspective, I believe, from which Gandhi viewed his little book and it explains why he was so fully convinced that the message contained in those sixty short pages was one of lasting value. If the essential message of *Indian Home Rule*—respect for the person, love, liberty, brotherhood, a return to the culture of India—were followed, then just as day follows night the country he loved so much would rediscover its true self and begin to create its own future.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

*Aut*—Gandhi, M. K., *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the Gujarati by Mahadev Desai. London: Jonathan Cape, 1966. 420 pp.

*CW*—Gandhi, M. K., *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. General Editor, Shri Jairamdas Doulatram. Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. Volumes I to XII contain the writings of Gandhi composed during the years he spent in South Africa. These volumes were published between 1958 and 1964.

*IHR*—Gandhi, M. K., *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. The two editions in Gujarati and in English were published in 1910. *CW* 10, pp. 6-68.

*IO*—*Indian Opinion*: Gandhi edited and wrote for this newspaper between 1903 and 1914.

*Sat*—Gandhi, M. K., *Satyagraha in South Africa*. Translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindhi Desai. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1928. 348 pp.