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Editorial

IT IS NOW MORE than a year since the Hamas launched an attack on Israel. The military action by Israel since then is not showing any sign of abating and has now extended to Hezbollah in Lebanon and even Iran. Military action alone may not yield results in Gaza, the West Bank, or Lebanon. Military reoccupation of Gaza and continued occupation of the West Bank may not destroy popular pressure for independence. Instead, the lack of any prospect for a Palestinian political future is more likely to lead to Hamas 2.0 and more West Bank violence. And before thinking of reoccupying southern Lebanon, Netanyahu should have recalled that the very rise of Hezbollah is due to Israeli occupation from 1982 to 2000.

The Middle East and the surrounding regions' inherent characteristics indicate a propensity for ongoing conflict. Therefore, military action that has no end in sight will only foment new insurgencies. The Taliban could not be driven out of Afghanistan despite the US's twenty-year war on terrorism. Taking down a national government is easier than taking down a movement like Hamas and Hezbollah. Although Israel's brutal tactics to dismantle Hamas have reduced the organization's fighting strength, they have also caused a humanitarian crisis, killed innocent children and other noncombatants, and planted the seeds for future terrorist groups.

Long-standing discussions about a potential two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians are pointless now that a sizable portion of one such state has been reduced to little more than rubble. Additionally, ending the two-state solution would result in an unending civil war inside Greater Israel. Although nationalist norms may justify retaliation for the October 7 massacre, a cease-fire and the release of the remaining hostages are long overdue to put an end to the indiscriminate carnage in Gaza.

But what has been particularly notable in the last year is its attack on the UN system: Israel has attacked UNRWA, a UN agency that India supports, on purpose and accused it of having ties to Hamas.

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Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu called the UN General Assembly an "anti-Semitic" swamp during the assembly. Israel's venom towards the UN is also uncalled for. The UN still commands the respect of a large number of people across the world. The targeting of the UN offices in Lebanon and the moratorium imposed on the secretary general from entering Israel are uncalled for. India, on its part, should use its goodwill with the Israelis to desist from attempts to marginalize the UN, which amounts to paying no heed to international public opinion. Meanwhile, The UN Special Committee to look into Israel's war in Gaza says it is comparable to genocide, with mass civilian deaths and dangerous conditions purposefully placed on Palestinians.

Trump's incoming administration is expected to vigorously defend Israeli interests and potentially reinstate sanctions on Iran, which were suspended under the 2015 nuclear deal. So, the prospects for peace and stability in the Middle East will not be bright in the near future.

This journal issue has five articles, two book reviews, and the annual Gandhi Peace Foundation lecture. The first article delves into the archives of the *Eastern Miscellany* to look at the special issue on the Chinese commemoration of Mahatma Gandhi. The second article looks at the daily diary of Mahadev Desai to gain insights into Gandhi's life and work. The third article explores the possibility of generating transformational leadership and peacebuilding competencies among high school students. The next article is on transformational leadership at the level of village panchayats in Tamil Nadu. The fifth article tries to identify the extent of Irish influence on Gandhi and his anti-colonial strategies. The final article is by Antonino Drago on the travels of Lanza del Vasto.

JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU
Chief Editor



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China Commemorates Mahatma Gandhi: Special Issue of the *Eastern Miscellany*, May 1984

Prashant Kaushik

ABSTRACT

Mahatma Gandhi was a widely discussed and debated figure in 20th-century China. The Eastern Miscellany magazine, published by the Commercial Press from 1904 to 1948, led this discourse on Gandhi in China. It brought out two special issues on Gandhi. This article delves into the archives of the Eastern Miscellany to look at the second special issue commemorating Mahatma Gandhi. First, it explains how the issue described the grief felt at Gandhi's assassination. Second, it highlights how the Chinese commentators wrote about Gandhi's political contribution, methods of non-violence and continuous search for truth. Third, it describes the views expressed by Chinese on Gandhi's association with Western scholars and intellectuals. Fourth, it provides a glimpse into the first-person accounts of Gandhi's funeral in Delhi written by Chinese people. Before concluding, it focuses on various memorial meetings held across China and messages given by Chinese leaders.

Key words: *Eastern Miscellany, Mahatma Gandhi, China, demise, humanity.*

Introduction

THE ARTICLE EXPLORES the history of Mahatma Gandhi's political life in China, focusing on the archives of the renowned Chinese magazine, the Eastern Miscellany. Despite the tumultuous period of China's history, Gandhi remained a perennial theme of discussion and debate in China. The interest in writing about Gandhi in China gained momentum following India's independence in the 1920s and 30s. However, his assassination in 1948 brought this trend to an abrupt halt. The Eastern Miscellany took the lead in commemorating Gandhi's

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life and achievements by bringing out a special issue on him in May 1948. The special issue, titled *Zhuidao Gandi zhuanhao*, featured thirteen articles covering Gandhi's life, political activities, career, ideas, beliefs, influence, and first-person accounts from Chinese dignitaries attending his funeral. This was the second special issue dedicated to Gandhi after the special series of articles published under the title "Gandhi and New India" in 1922.

Gandhi's Assassination

Reverberations of the gunshots that killed Mahatma Gandhi were also felt in China. Reporting about Gandhi's assassination, the *Eastern Miscellany* mentioned that Gandhi made unremitting efforts to realize the great mission of India's independence, which turned into reality on August 15 1947.¹ Calling Gandhi "the embodiment of India's spirit" ("*Gandi wei Yindu jingshen de huashen*") who strictly observed non-violence throughout his life, but yet died a violent death, Bai Bu considered Gandhi's assassination "the biggest tragedy of present-day India" which also portended the violent tendencies of the world.² He buttressed his point by quoting Bernard Shaw's deep sigh: "It (Gandhi's assassination) shows how dangerous it is to be too good".

Zeyan Wu was among the first to write a detailed obituary of Gandhi in the columns of the *Eastern Miscellany*.³ Wu said there are two types of politicians in the world: one driven by power politics and the other who are idealists. The former manoeuvre among various political groupings doesn't spare any means to attain political objectives. The latter have a steadfast ideal, are not seduced by benefits and power, cannot be coerced, hold fast to the steadfast principle, and are not willing to sacrifice their ideal for the practical considerations of gains and losses. Mahatma Gandhi, Wu said, undoubtedly belonged to the idealist category of politicians. He not only sacrificed his life striving for the liberation of India, but he also cherished an even loftier ideal of realizing *satyagraha*.⁴ As Gandhi put it, he wanted to spread the gospel of love to replace hate, change cruelty and violence by sacrificing himself, and resist the force of savagery using spiritual force. He never deviated from this fundamental concept in the struggle throughout his life. Wu insisted that irrespective of the success or failure of Gandhi's hard work, this ideal of love will exist forever. At the same time, this ideal made him one of the greatest persons in history, and he will be perpetually revered and respected by those with human values.

While Wu saw Gandhi's idealism and greatness as eternal, he also suggested that in a world that only looks at power and struggle as the fundamental laws of life, the prospects for Gandhi's thoughts

looked gloomy, which his assassination also demonstrated. A kind and benevolent person like Gandhi himself, Wu lamented, could not avoid becoming the target of hatred and enmity, and extremists of all hues commonly saw Gandhi as the target for elimination. The thing that these extremists wanted to eliminate was not the seventy-eight-year-old body of Gandhi but his immortal spirit and ideal.

In talking about Gandhi's life in England, Wu mentioned that while studying in England, besides qualifying as a barrister, Gandhi was also influenced by three beliefs he carried with him throughout his life: nationalism, democratic politics, and Christian ideals. In reality, Wu said that Gandhi's life afterward was a manifestation of the cementing of these beliefs in the background of Indian history. Commenting on Gandhi's role in the Indian Independence Movement, Wu ascribed the status of "spiritual leader" of the movement to him. Gandhi's hard work turned the Indian National Congress into the leading organization of a mass movement from a mere debating society. Wu asserted that though Gandhi had been killed, his greatness was eternal; time would make Gandhi's contribution and value even more precise and evident.

Wu saw Gandhi as a product of Indian thought, and his life illuminated India and the world. His opposition to Western civilization also had things that cannot be accepted easily. But his basic spirit consisted of search for truth, *satyagraha*, opposition to violence, tolerance, and self-discipline nearing asceticism. Gandhi attached importance to goal and likewise laid stress on methods. To substantiate this point Wu quoted from Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India*: "I have been attracted by Gandhiji's stress on right means and I think one of his greatest contributions to our public life has been, this emphasis."⁵ Wu also quoted from Will Durant's *The Case for India* to buttress his argument: "Perhaps Gandhi will fail, as saints are like to fail in this very Darwinian world. But how could we accept life if it did not, now and then, fling into the face of successes some failure like this?"⁶

Gandhi's Life and Political Activities

Liusheng Xue began his detailed account of Gandhi's life with Albert Einstein's famous message at the time of Gandhi's demise.⁷ Xue called Gandhi's life an inspiring story of individual struggle and, at the same time, the story of a nation's struggle. Xue mentioned that the Indian independence movement, which started forging ahead at the time of Gandhi's birth culminated in the independence of India just five and a half months before Gandhi's demise. It appeared to Xue that Gandhi was born to make India independent and died to complete that mission.

Xue presented a detailed account of Gandhi's childhood, writing

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about Gandhi's family background and early marriage. Xue mentioned that once Gandhi wrote a letter to his father admitting to stealing some gold, Gandhi's father couldn't hold back his tears on reading about his son's honesty; Xue mentioned that from then onwards, Gandhi became aware that love is a more powerful force that convinces people than violence.⁸ Xue further wrote about the period Gandhi spent in England for studies and narrated Gandhi's activities in South Africa: the beginning of the movement against the British, the first *satyagraha*⁹ against the Black Act (Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act, 1907), support of the overseas Chinese led by Mr. Quinn (Guan Jun)¹⁰, and Gandhi's first fast as a penance for the immoral behaviour of the inhabitants of the Tolstoy Farm, 1913 among others.

Gandhi's speech against untouchability at Mayavaram after reaching India in May 1915,¹¹ the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement by breaking the salt law were major events that Xue recollected in his article. Xue wrote that Gandhi strongly disapproved of the British police firing at innocent Chinese students in Shanghai on May 30, 1925.¹² At that time, Gandhi wanted to go to China at the invitation of the Chinese students and wished the Chinese to adopt his methods of passive resistance to oppose British imperialism, but Gandhi could not visit China. Xue vividly mentioned events like Gandhi's participation in the Round Table Conference following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Gandhi's opposition to the provision for separate electorates for the depressed classes and subsequent fast unto death, the first attempt made on Gandhi's life on June 25, 1934, by throwing a bomb on his car, among others.

Xue followed the comprehensive account of Gandhi's political life and career with some assessment. Xue said that Gandhi completed his mission of attaining independence for India by going to prison, fasting, and waging a struggle. He called Gandhi's demise a huge loss not only for India but also for the entire humanity. Gandhi's non-violent non-cooperation movement attained freedom for India, thus marking a brilliant achievement for small and weak nations. Gandhi was a saviour of the world and stood for *satyagraha* and peace. "Although he has died, his lofty spirit will exist eternally in the mortal world." At the same time, Xue called Gandhi's demise "a tragedy of humanity". Gandhi opposed violence throughout his life but died a violent death; he stood for forgiving all his enemies, even ready to forgive his assassins, but some people could not forgive him and were ready to take his life. Such was the tragedy of Gandhi as an individual and the entire humanity.

Xue posed the question: Isn't this world lingering in a steadily

worsening situation where people are killing each other? That is why, Xue said, Gandhi's death should be taken as a wake-up call by the entire humanity, and the historical tragedy of people killing each other should be stopped. Xue, therefore, found commemorating Gandhi's death even more relevant.

Gandhi's Search for Truth, Non-violence, and his Asceticism

Yasheng Xu discussed Gandhi's clothing, food habits, abstinence, prohibition, fasting, going to jail, and practice of silence as prayer, truth, and non-violence to shed light on the non-political aspects of Gandhi's life and could not stop himself from equating Gandhi with Buddha.¹³ Xu mentioned that in India, upper classes and intellectuals regarded Gandhi as a human being, a revolutionary leader, and the Father of the Nation. Still, the masses and common people considered Gandhi a God, the eleventh incarnation of the preserver God *Vishnu Narayan*. Gandhi, for Indian people, Xu emphasised, was both God and man at the same time.

Regarding Gandhi's education and upbringing, Xu commented that although Gandhi received a European education, being born and raised in a family that believed in Hinduism, Gandhi was immensely influenced by Hindu beliefs. Seeing Gandhi as a seeker of truth, Xu said Gandhi followed the Buddhist spirit of seeking the truth and asceticism. He founded *Satyagraha Ashram* to seek the truth, and his asceticism was also a way of seeking the truth. Those who did not know him considered him an ascetic or a beggar after looking at his photograph or meeting him for the first time. There was hardly any difference between a Gandhi wearing a loincloth and holding a stick and an ascetic or a beggar. But his half-naked body, wrote Xu, was full of a great spirit and a strong willpower.

Xu emphasised that Gandhi's great spirit originated from submission to the truth and from his asceticism. On discovering the truth, he was ready to make any sacrifice to carry it forward; such was his perseverance that he did not even worry about putting his life in danger for the truth. Xu argued that Gandhi's asceticism originated from his continuous search for truth and subserving to truth. Truth, Xu said, was like an inspection machine of an ordnance factory. To ensure accuracy, every bullet and gun produced in an ordnance factory must undergo strict inspection before being sent to the frontline for use. Similarly, every action of an exponent of non-violence must pass through the test of truth; otherwise, he might hesitate to move forward and might cravenly cling to his life instead of braving death and thus might end up resorting to violence. So, non-violence must accompany truth, and the two must move together;

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if non-violence lacks truth, then it shall no longer remain non-violence.

Deliberating on Gandhi's non-violence, Xu said that Gandhi equated non-violence with enduring spiritual and physical pain. He did not consider it passive but regarded it as the most active force in the world and the highest law. For Gandhi, it was really like: "If, on self-examination, I find that I am upright, I will go forward against thousands and tens of thousands."¹⁴ Xu said this was Gandhi's real spirit of non-violence. However, the truth which Gandhi talked about was not devoid of change. Gandhi never acknowledged the so-called "Gandhism".¹⁵ Xu argued that the continuous search for truth created Gandhi's greatness and motivated his sacrificial struggle. In the end, he sacrificed everything, including his life, for the truth and his mission. In other words, Xu said that Gandhi liberated India and humanity by seeking truth and non-violence.

While expounding Gandhi's views on food, Xu mentioned that Gandhi once wrote a book titled *Guide to Health and Niti Dharma-Ethical Religion*¹⁶ in which he advocated that everyone must only eat fruits and vegetables. Such an emphasis on vegetarianism, argued Xu, had its roots in Buddhism and Hinduism. Gandhi believed that humans are superior to wild animals, so why can not human food be different from wild animals? Gandhi believed one can derive enough nutrition by eating vegetables, fruits, and nuts to keep oneself healthy.

Gandhi's clothing, Xu mentioned, was so simple that it could not get any simpler. He only wore a self-woven loincloth on his waist. He used to do spinning for at least an hour every day. Moreover, Gandhi always set an example by his actions. His boycott of British cloth and advocacy of spinning wheel made him a member of the peasant community. This was the reason the Indian peasantry adhered to Gandhi's appeals and was always ready to undergo hardships, even to go to prison on Gandhi's call.

Buddhism preaches sitting quietly in meditation to purify the self and seek the truth. Gandhi also inherited this method, according to Xu. Gandhi observed a day of silence once every week, on that day, he did not utter even a single word but carried out his daily activities as usual. Gandhi's silence and Buddhist meditation, Xu said, had similar effects, as both helped a person concentrate all the energy on pondering over a question and reach a balanced decision after thorough consideration.

Gandhi believed in extreme abstinence. Xu mentioned that Gandhi had strong sexual passions in his youth, but by the time he was thirty-one years old, he started practicing abstinence. He strongly opposed drinking and found it even worse than stealing and prostitution because it was "the parent of both".¹⁷ Gandhi believed that drinking

is not only an addiction but also a moral problem. Gandhi had devised a prohibition plan, which involved surveying the tobacco and liquor shops, issuing permits to them, and asking them to stop dealing in liquor and tobacco or turn into cold drinks or food store. Gandhi advocated that the government must also use all the taxes collected from selling tobacco and wines for their complete prohibition. Gandhi organized groups of Indian women to picket liquor shops. He advocated for workers to be provided with proper recreation places so they do not indulge in drinking. Gandhi's strong stance for complete prohibition, argued Xu, reflected the influence of traditional Indian doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism on him.

Highlighting the significance of fasting for Gandhi, Xu said Gandhi not only used fasting as a tool in his struggle but also as a tool to cleanse his soul.¹⁸ Xu argued that the practice of fasting was very old; Jesus Christ, Prophet Muhammad, and Shakyamuni Buddha all practiced fasting to purify themselves. Betraying a deeper understanding of Indian culture, Xu mentioned according to the ancient epics in India *Ramachandra* fasted while praying to the sea to give a path to his monkey army to go to Lanka; *Parvati* also fasted to attain *Mahadev*. Gandhi said that fasting had become part of his life and was a must for anyone seeking the truth. Gandhi believed that fasting cannot be practiced by everyone and everywhere. If fasting lacks conviction, then the outcome could be abominable. The misuse of this divine weapon by an untrained person could prove dangerous. At the same time, fasting can not be used against tyrants to change them because a tyrant would get outraged and think that the person on fast is not obeying his order. Fasting can only be practiced against someone who loves you; for instance, a son can convince his father to stop drinking by going on fast. Xu quoted Gandhi as saying: "*I can't practice fast against General Dyer, because not only that he doesn't love me but sees me as his enemy.*" Gandhi admitted that fasting was the last weapon for a believer in non-violence. Complete fast was a kind of self-sacrifice and like a real prayer to God. Gandhi believed that orderly fasting could make one healthier because the body could remove many impurities while fasting.

Gandhi, argued Xu, not only used fasting to punish himself but also to purify and strengthen his willpower. In the beginning, fasting meant reducing Gandhi's food intake; instead of eating meals, he ate only one meal a day and could continue fasting for as long as two months. Later, he practised fasting without eating food and only drinking warm water. Gandhi went on fast seventeen times in his life; the longest was for twenty-one days. Sometimes, he was ready to fast unto death but was saved by his comrades, but his spirit moved

countless people. Gandhi knew that “life” and “death” were the same things in front of God. This belief, said Xu, was the fountainhead of Gandhi’s power to wage sacrificial struggle and the cusp of his religion and philosophy.

Mentioning that Shakyamuni Buddha had said, “If I don’t go to hell (to save the humanity), who will?”¹⁹ Xu argued that Gandhi possessed the spirit of going to hell (prison) to save humanity. Every time Gandhi led the revolution from the front and was always ready to go to prison. Gandhi’s spirit was to go to jail, and he always admitted to the crime in front of the judge and asked for the harshest punishment. Such spirit of going to jail, Xu contended, needed to be carried right till the very end; readiness to face pain and torture needed strong determination and will power. Xu said that Shakyamuni was determined to attain enlightenment and wanted to save the world after becoming enlightened. Equating Gandhi with Buddha, Xu argued, Shakyamuni did not attain enlightenment for individual *nirvana*, (similarly) Gandhi’s going to prison was also for the masses.

Shakyamuni was always ready to sacrifice himself to save the humanity. Gandhi, Xu said, possessed the Buddhist spirit of saving the world. Gandhi often said that he opposed British rule in India, but he was the best friend of the British people. He equally loved Britishers and Indians. This was the reason that Gandhi was opposed to the idea of attacking Britishers when they faced hardships. He proved it by organizing the ambulance corps during the Boer War (1899-1902) and the Zulu Rebellion (1906) in South Africa. Xu said that Gandhi’s spirit of loving the enemy, or in other words, loving humanity, was as great as that of Shakyamuni Buddha. Since Gandhi loved humanity, Xu argued, he did not hesitate to sacrifice himself to save humanity. But before saving the humanity, he saw the misery of Indians under the British rule. Gandhi could not help but first save the Indians, and he chose the method of going to prison to do that and was jailed seventeen times.²⁰

Gandhi’s ascetic spirit also encompassed the spirit of a religionist. Gandhi said, “...for me there are no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.”²¹ Hence, Xu contended that Gandhi’s achievements were not so much political success as religious success and not so much religious success as the success of his practice of doing what he preached. Gandhi dared to speak out and practice what he spoke; he could bear hardships and stand hard work which others could not bear, endure the oppression others could not endure, and take blame which others could not take; therefore, he achieved what others could not achieve. He made the people who cherished the truth in the world believe that he was the

Christ reborn and Shakyamuni incarnate.

To highlight the relevance of Gandhi, Xu said that humanity at large had not attained liberation yet, and the question facing humanity was whether to continue to obdurately exterminate itself or be awakened after listening to Gandhi's feeble voice and liberate itself through non-violence. The issue was not just of the success or failure of Gandhism but whether humanity could be saved or not. Xu said whether humanity was willing to practice the truth of non-violence discovered by Gandhi the way he practiced it, with the spirit of sacrificing everything to relieve itself from misfortune and to form an ideal, peaceful world, will depend on the hard work of believers of Gandhi and other peace-loving people.

Gandhi and the West

Gandhi had spent his formative years in England and regularly interacted with intellectuals, journalists, and public figures from the Western world. The significance of Western ideas in shaping Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts and reactions in the West to his demise was also reported in the *Eastern Miscellany*.

Bernard Shaw's deep sigh ("It (Gandhi's assassination) shows how dangerous it is to be too good") and Albert Einstein's message found mention in *The Eastern Miscellany*.²² Bai Bu translated excerpts from Edgar Snow's "*The Message of Gandhi*" for Chinese readers.²³ Bu argued in another write-up that although Gandhi's thoughts were formed in the background of Indian traditions, he also embraced Western ideas. Besides Christianity, mentioned Bu, Gandhi was profoundly influenced by Leo Tolstoy, a Russian writer, and thinker, John Ruskin, a British writer and art critic, and Henry David Thoreau, an American philosopher.²⁴ Bu's point was further buttressed by Liuli Mi's translation of Leo Tolstoy's letters to Gandhi, in which Tolstoy had lauded Gandhi's efforts in Transvaal and expressed support for his ideas.²⁵

Jiazhen Wang adopted a global approach and looked at how the Western media reacted to Gandhi's demise.²⁶ Wang included translations of articles written by Guy Wint and editorials from *The Manchester Guardian*, editorials from the *New York Times*, *The Nation* (a weekly magazine in the US), and *The Economist*, and an article written by Kingsley Martin, the editor of the *New Statesman*. Wang contended that Gandhi's assassination caused widespread grief in the entire world. Gandhi was great not just because he was the leader of the Indian Independence Movement but also because, under his leadership, the Indian National Congress became a leading organization of a mass movement from a mere debating society, and

he made India attain independence without much bloodshed. These were very rare historical achievements. But what touched people the most, said Wang, was Gandhi's search for truth and idealism to resist violence. Not everybody agreed with his political views and social ideas. Still, most people believed his idealism was the most effective alternative to the present world marred by power politics. To buttress his point and owing to familiarity, Wang mentioned about Edgar Snow. Snow's book *People on Our Side* (1944) was full of veiled criticism of Gandhi, but Snow's appraisal of Gandhi underwent tremendous change later, and he also started praising Gandhi after truly understanding him. Snow admitted that his earlier understanding of Gandhi was biased and incorrect.²⁷

Gandhi's Funeral: First-Person Accounts

Several first-person accounts were written by Chinese people who attended Mahatma Gandhi's funeral in Delhi. Jialun Luo, the first ambassador of the Republic of China to India, presented one such vivid account.²⁸ Luo exclaimed that a good person like Gandhi died such a tragic death; he wrote, seeing this, it was difficult to believe that God blessed the good and punished the evil. Luo lamented the fact that Gandhi, the "prophet of non-violence" (*fei baoli zhuyi de xianzhizhe*), who devoted all his life and efforts to saving Indians, strangely enough, died a violent death and that too through the hands of a fellow Indian.

Luo underscored the significance of his participation in the funeral along with Lord Mountbatten because he was the only foreign ambassador present at Rajghat at that time. He wrote about the national gloom following Gandhi's assassination. He mentioned the participation of a group of overseas Chinese from Delhi in the procession leading to the river Yamuna, holding the banner mentioning "*Gandhiji Amar Rahen! Gandhiji Jindabad!*" ("*Gandi jingshen busi*"). Luo called Gandhi's demise an irrecoverable loss for India as well as a major loss for world peace. The effect of Gandhi's demise on the prospects of India's politics and society, said Luo, would perhaps only become visible in the future.

Wenkai Mi, who was posted at the Chinese embassy as secretary, also wrote a first-person account of participating in the funeral of Mahatma Gandhi along with Ambassador Jialun Luo and Counsellor Shuyao Qian.²⁹ Mi also wrote about the immersion of Gandhi's ashes in rivers all over India and the banning of *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* and *Hindu Mahasabha*. Mi Wenkai reported that while immersing Gandhi's ashes in the river Ganga at Allahabad, Jawaharlal Nehru said that Gandhi must not be seen as a God. Mi said since Indians had

already started looking at Gandhi as an incarnation of Jesus Christ and Buddha, Nehru wanted to pull them out of such a religious abyss.

The question of “how should we look at Gandhi?” according to Mi, was best answered in the Chinese translation of the title “*Mahatma*” given to Gandhi by Tagore. The Chinese equivalent of “*Mahatma*” was “*sheng xiong*”³⁰ Gandhi, said Mi, was a saint with a hero’s bearing. He lived a strictly disciplined life and was strict with himself but forgave others. He convinced Indians with his spirit of benevolence and peace, and his high morals were enough to serve as lessons for the coming generations. He did not take the path of bloodshed, but dauntlessly waged a non-violent struggle to liberate India. He was also the only hero in the history who did not use any weapon. He was a “saint” and a “hero” at the same time. Wenkai Mi, quoted from *The Analects of Confucius*, contends that Gandhi possessed a broad mind and vigorous endurance; death put an end to his course, but not before he fulfilled the heroic mission of India’s independence.

Wenkai Mi put the time he spent in India, first studying and later working at the Chinese embassy, to good use. He saw many variations in the chronology of Gandhi’s life published in India and China, so he tirelessly collated information from four different chronologies of Gandhi’s life, his biography, and his autobiography to prepare a brief chronology for the *Eastern Miscellany*.³¹ Mi highlighted Gandhi’s cooperation with the overseas Chinese in South Africa (1907) in the chronology. Wenkai Mi and Liusen Xue also co-authored Gandhi’s biography.³²

Mourning Gandhi in China

Gandhi’s death was mourned all over China, so much so that the *Eastern Miscellany* specially reported condolence messages sent by the Chinese leaders to India and various memorial meetings held in mourning of Gandhi. A collection of Gandhi’s quotations on his fundamental beliefs and ideas, as well as views on non-violence, religion and morality, and women’s issues, was also published to bring Gandhi’s thoughts closer to Chinese readership.³³

The write-up detailing the mourning of Gandhi’s demise in China began by mentioning that Gandhi was regarded as the Father of the Nation in India and that his spirit of non-violence and truth was venerated worldwide.³⁴ The commentary mentioned that Gandhi and other Indian leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru always sympathized with the cause of nation-building in China; China always supported the independence of India and rejoiced when India attained it. In such a bonhomie between the two nations, the news of Gandhi’s demise naturally led to a feeling of immense grief among the Chinese government and the common public.

On getting the news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, President Chiang Kai-shek, Premier Zhang Qun, and foreign minister Wang Shijie conveyed their condolences to the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. President Chiang and the first lady called Gandhi a "holy warrior" who advocated non-violence and considered his death a "global tragedy".

Wu Tiesheng, Head of the National Diplomacy Association, said in his condolence message to Nehru: "Mahatma Gandhi not only fought for the human rights of the Indians, but also fought for the freedom, tolerance, fraternity and peace of the humanity."

Dai Jitao, Head of the Examination Yuan, who deeply revered Gandhi and always kept his teaching in mind, wrote: "A great saint was born in an ancient country (India), he sacrificed his life for healing the world and saving humanity, it is a pity that people's hearts have not been changed yet and the country is not stable yet, alas, Mahatma Gandhi has left us, dedicating his everything."

Yu Youren, Head of the Control Yuan said: "Such a benevolent person like Gandhi has been brutally killed in broad daylight. I feel pity for the world humanity. Tagore said that Gandhi was another name for sacrifice, and dedication was the essence of Gandhi's spirit; people identified him as the saint of sacrifice. Gandhi's spirit will illuminate the world and enlighten the people seeking freedom, independence, and democracy. The adherents of Gandhi will protect India's future."

Dong Xianguang, Head of News Office shared deep sorrow and grief of the Chinese government on receiving the sad news of Gandhi's death with the journalists. He called Gandhi's demise a "big blow" for India. Gandhi was the "creator of India's freedom." If India had not seen a wise leader full of spirit of dedication like Gandhi, India's political achievements would have certainly fallen short of today. Gandhi was the symbol of the highest ideals of the Indian nation. Gandhi died while leading the last struggle for the unity of the masses. His spirit of sacrifice for his nation and people has set the greatest example for humanity. Every Chinese was grieved on receiving the news of Gandhi's death. He was a great Asian, and his ideals will forever shine brightly.

Various Chinese magazines and newspapers expressed grief at the news of Gandhi's death. The obituary published in the *Ta Kung Pao* newspaper under the title "Crying for Gandhi! Pitying the World!" ("*Ku Gandi! Bei renshi!*") clearly displayed the grief felt by the Chinese people. It was widely published in major publications in China, including the *Eastern Miscellany*.³⁵ This obituary called the news of Gandhi's assassination "a bolt from the blue" (*yi sheng qingtian pili*)

and praised Gandhi for undergoing numerous hardships for his country and people despite being born into a wealthy family. Gandhi was never afraid of death, and his death would forever illuminate the world. The obituary made an appeal to stop rampant violence in the world.

Indians living in Beijing along with the Indian students at the Peking University held a memorial service on January 31, 1948. Hu Shi, president of Peking University, also participated in the service. Commending Gandhi's personality, conduct, and writings, Hu Shi said that Gandhi set high morals by convincing people through his morality, made outstanding contributions by establishing a new India, and has left many famous writings which can well serve as maxims for the future generations.

China India Association, Shanghai, also held a memorial service on February 13, 1948. Participants included Qingling Song and Huiqing Yan. Yan lauded Gandhi's spirit and mentioned that greats like Socrates, Abraham Lincoln, and Yue Fei³⁶ were all assassinated. Only the weak resort to violent means to assassinate the great immortals, but the influence of great personalities becomes more profound and far-reaching after their deaths. Just as the death of Confucius and Jesus Christ was actually not an end but the beginning of an even grander reality. Yan said Gandhi set the highest standards of human behaviour and morality and was venerated by the masses.

Conclusion

The *Eastern Miscellany* highlighted Gandhi's greatness as a seeker of truth, preacher of love, exponent of non-violence, creator of Indian independence, and eternity of his beliefs were common themes highlighted in various articles, commentaries, and obituaries written after his demise through its special volume. The fact that Mahatma Gandhi was the only global personality in the world to whom the *Eastern Miscellany* dedicated two special issues (1922 and 1948) itself vouched for the significance that was attached to Gandhi and his ideas in China. Gandhi was called an incarnation of Sakyamuni Buddha, Jesus Christ, *Vishnu Narayan*, and saviour of the world who stood for *satyagraha* and peace. It was emphasized that Gandhi liberated India and humanity by seeking the truth and non-violence. Gandhi's assassination was variously called "the biggest tragedy of present-day India", "a huge loss for the entire humanity" and a tragedy of humanity. Chinese commentators made appeals to put an end to the tragedy of people killing each other in the wake of Gandhi's assassination, thus highlighting the significance of non-violence preached by Gandhi.

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Notes and References

1. These days the morning prayers are a much smaller affair as they are held at 4.30 a.m. when there are no tourists. The handful of faithful ashramites and occasional Ashram guest sit in the dark on the veranda of Gandhi's hut, Bapu Kuti, leaning against the wall or the wooden pillars, at times fighting to stay awake, for a less lively version of the evening prayers.
1. Material on Modern History (1948), "Mahatma Gandhi Assassinated" (*Yindu Shengxiong Gandi yuci shishi*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.3, 1948, p.58.
2. Bai Bu, "Mahatma Gandhi Assassinated" (*Shengxiong Gandi yuci shishi*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.2, 1948, p. 62.
3. Zeyan Wu, "Mourning Gandhi" (*Dao Gandi*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.3, 1948, pp.13-15.
4. Zeyan Wu translates *Satyagraha* as "ai dao" (literally: "path of love"). *Satyagraha* was translated as "zhenli bachi" and "Satya Movement" (*zhenli yundong*) in earlier writings in the *Eastern Miscellany*.
5. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 28-9.
6. Will Durant, *The Case for India* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1930), p. 118. In fact, Wu Zeyan has borrowed a lot from Durant, especially "Chapter Two: Gandhi", *The Case for India*, pp.57-118, in order to write about Gandhi.
7. Liusheng Xue, "Life of Gandhi" (*Gandi de yisheng*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, pp.1-13."A leader of his people, unsupported by only outward authority; a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior. Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe

that such one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.”——
— Albert Einstein

8. M. K Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navjivan Publishing House,1925), p.34. Accessed 20 June 2023, URL: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/autobio/autobio.htm> .
9. Xue calls it the First Non-Cooperation Movement.
10. Notably, Gandhi’s association with the overseas Chinese was mentioned for the first time in *The Eastern Miscellany* only after his death.
11. *“In so far as I have been able to study Hinduism outside India, I have felt that it is no part of real Hinduism to have in its hold a mass of people whom I would call “untouchables”. If it was proved to me that this is an essential part of Hinduism, I for one would declare myself an open rebel against Hinduism itself.”* CWMG (1964), Vol. 13 pp. 69-71.
12. On 30 May 1930, an unarmed crowd consisting of workers and students marched in Shanghai to protest against exploitation and an earlier shooting of Chinese workers by Japanese factory guards at a Japanese-owned cotton mill on 15 May 1930. The British police force in the Foreign Concession area suddenly opened fire at the unarmed crowd, killing around a dozen protestors and injuring many. As news of the tragedy spread across China, a series of further demonstrations and strikes broke out. An ‘Avenge the Shame’ movement sprang up and protest banners bearing slogans like ‘Down with Imperialism’ and ‘Abolish the Unequal Treaties’ were unfurled. Foreign nationals and premises were attacked. Large scale riots took place at Guangzhou and Shanghai. 30 May Incident, as it came to be widely known, badly shook Chinese and foreign authorities.
13. Yasheng Xu , *“Gandhi’s Asceticism and Non-violence”* (*Gandi de kuxing yu feibaoli*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, pp. 14-18.
14. Yasheng Xu quotes from Mencius. *“zi fan’er suo, sui qian wan ren wu wang yi”* English translation from Legge, James (?), *The Four Books*, The Commercial Press, China, p.526. Accessed 10 March 2024, URL: www.archive.org.
15. Xu quotes Gandhi. *“There is no such thing as ‘Gandhism,’ and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems...The opinions I have formed and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change them tomorrow. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and non-violence...In fact it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence....all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said.*

You will not call it Gandhism, there is no 'ism' about it. And no elaborate literature and propaganda is needed about it. CWMG (1975), Vol. 62, pp. 223-229. Also seen in Beckerlegge, Gwilym ed. (1998), *The World Religions Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 304-5.

16. Gandhi later refined this book into *Key to Health* during his imprisonment in the Aga Khan Palace in Pune, August 1942.
17. *"I hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps even prostitution. Is it not often the parent of both?"* CWMG (1966), Vol.20, p.191.
18. Yasheng Xu has distinguished between "hunger-strike" (translated as "jue shi") and "fast" (translated as "zhai jie"). This article has used "fast" as the standard term because Gandhi has defined his practice as such. "All About the Fast" CWMG (1973), Vol 55, pp.254-258. "Ethics of Fasting" CWMG (1973), Vol 55, pp.344-346.
19. The character "yu" in Chinese is common to both the "Hell" ("di yu") and prison ("jian yu").
20. Yasheng Xu enumerates Gandhi's jail terms wrongly. Gandhi was arrested six times in South Africa and twice he was released on bail. In India, Gandhi was arrested six times of which he served jail sentences five times. Accessed 11 May 2015, URL: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/arrestofmahatma.htm>.
21. CWMG (1967), Vol.23, p.349.
22. See Bai Bu, "Gandhi Assassinated". Zeyan Wu (1948), "Mourning Gandhi". Liusheng Xue (1948), "Gandhi's Life".
23. Bai Bu, "Edgar Snow on Gandhi" (*Sinuo lun Gandi*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, p. 22.
24. Bai Bu, "Three Western Philosophers Who Influenced Gandhi" (Yingxiang Gandi sixiang de san xizhe), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, p.30.
25. Liuli Mi, "Tolstoy's Letter to Gandhi" (*Tuoersitai gei Gandi de xin*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, pp.35-36.
A Letter to a Hindu: The Subjection of India – Its Cause and Cure" by Leo Tolstoy. Accessed 12 May 2015, URL: <http://www.nonresistance.org/tolstoy.html>.
26. Jiazhen Wang, "The West Discusses Gandhi" (*Xifang shijie dui Gandi de pinglun*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, pp.37-43.
27. Edgar Snow, "The Message of Gandhi". First published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on 27 March 1948. Accessed 13 May 2023, URL: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/snow.htm>.
28. Jialun Luo , "Paying Last Respects to Gandhi" (*Shengxiong zheng guo ji*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44, No.5 1948, pp. 19-22. For English translation of the account see: Prashant Kaushik (2016) translation. Luo Jialun (1948) "Paying Last Respects to Mahatma Gandhi" in Deepak, B.R. and Tripathi, D.P. ed. *India and Taiwan - From Benign Neglect to Pragmatism* (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2016), pp.112-119. For a detailed discussion of Ambassador Luo's tenure in India see Tien-Sze Fang, "An Assessment of Ambassador Luo

- Jialun's Mission to India: 1947-9", *China Report* 50:3,2014, pp. 189-201.
29. Wenkai Mi, "Funeral of Mahatma Gandhi" (*Shengxiong Gandi zangli ji*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44, No.5, 1948, pp. 23-25.
 30. In Chinese, "sheng" means "sage" or "saint" and "xiong" means "hero".
 31. Wenkai Mi, "A Brief Chronology of Gandhi's Life" (*Gandi jianyao nianpu*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, pp. 26-30.
 32. Wenkai Mi and Liusen Xue, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography (Shengxiong Gandi zhuan)* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1948), p. 212.
 33. Zeyan Wu, "Gandhi's Wise Words" (*Gandi jia yan chao*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, pp. 31-34.
 34. "Notes on Mourning over Gandhi's Demise in China" (*Wo guo gedi zhuidao Gandi shishi zaji*), *The Eastern Miscellany*, Vol.44 No.5, 1948, pp.44-45.
 35. The editorial is also available in the online archives of the *Ta Kung Pao*. Accessed 15 May 2023, URL: http://202.55.1.83/history/history_news.asp?news_id=130762. It was written by Xiao Qian (1910-1999), a renowned Chinese journalist and translator. Accessed 15 May 2023, URL: http://news.xinhuanet.com/book/2010-04/08/content_13319617_6.htm.
 36. Yue Fei, a renowned army general during the Southern Song dynasty, fought against Jin Dynasty and Nvzhen invaders. He advocated for attacking Nvzhen to recover lost territory. However, his influence frightened the Song emperor, leading to his execution in 1142. Today, Yue Fei is considered the epitome of patriotism in China.

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Mahadev Desai's *Day-to-Day with Gandhi*: A Study

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ABSTRACT

Mahadev Desai was Gandhi's secretary from 1917 to 1942. He kept a diary where he wrote Gandhi's speeches, interviews, conversations and activities. Hence, it is an authentic record of Gandhi's life. Many of his statements and activities would have been forgotten had Desai not recorded them. The entries also provide the background to them. Desai wrote the Diary in Gujarati, which was subsequently translated into both Hindi and English. It is in nine volumes whose study is indispensable to understanding Gandhi's personality. Hence, it occupies a unique place not only in Gandhian studies but also in the works in Indian languages translated into English.

Key words: *Untouchability, Khadi, fasts, diary, humour*

I. Introduction

MAHADEV DESAI WAS a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. He joined Gandhi in 1917 as his secretary and passed away in 1942 suddenly from a heart attack. Gandhi wrote of him, "A self-willed friend, brother, son or secretary often fails at the critical moment. Mahadev is all these four rolled into one."¹ Desai wrote his *Diary*, which revolves around Gandhi. It is a record of Gandhi's activities and associated events in nine volumes spanning from November 1917 to March 1927, except from 13th February 1921 to 17th January 1924. This gap of nearly three years was probably because either the *Diary* was not written or, if written, it was lost. In addition, he had suffered from typhoid. Desai was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 100/- or, in default, one month more of it. The original *Diary* was in Gujarati. Desai did not live long enough

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to edit the *Diary* himself. Narharibhai Parikh took up the responsibility but died mid-way. Chandulal Bhagubhai Dalal edited the remaining volumes. They were first translated into Hindi and then in English by Hemantkumar Nilkanth. He did it with the view that the reader may not necessarily be a scholar but a layman. Explaining his effort, he says, "I can only say I have tried to follow the well-known Shakespearean advice *"to thine own self be true."*² Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi is the publisher whose note claims, "There is no other Diary in history of this kind except that of Bosswel, the learned English writer, who has noted the events of Dr. Johnson's life in his Diary. But the difference between these two diaries lies in the difference of the life of Gandhiji and that of Dr. Johnson."³ It may be added here that in 1791, Bosswel published *Life of Samuel Johnson*, incorporating his conversations and sketching his personal and intimate portrait. It is considered to be the greatest biography in the English Language.

Gandhi and Mahadev were complimentary to each other from the start. In 1915, when Gandhi returned from South Africa, he yearned for a round-the-clock ally who would be accomplished, faithful, and truthful. On his part, Mahadev, who was a sensitive man with a flair for friendship and literary gifts in both English and Gujarati, longed for a chance to serve a man worth serving. Thus, their desires were complementary. It was in fitness of things that Mahadev became his secretary. Rajmohan Gandhi writes, "It is true that Mahadev Desai often took Gandhi's dictation – in his life and on his notebooks. His diaries recorded Gandhi's doings, conversations, political parleys, ethical dilemmas. Sometimes his articles and briefings interpreted Gandhi's mind better than Gandhi's own pen or tongue." He continues, "Waking up before Gandhi in pre-dawn darkness, and going to sleep long after his master, he lived Gandhi's day thrice over – first in an attempt to anticipate it, next in spending it alongside Gandhi, and finally in recording it into his Diary. He therefore was Gandhi's aide, secretary and interpreter, but this "correct" description excludes the independent mind, conscience and pen that Desai supplied and Gandhi relied upon." Gandhi had remarked in 1917, "I have got in you the man I wanted – the man to whom I can entrust all my work some day and be at ease."⁴ Narayan Desai continued that in Sabarmati Ashram, "On the one hand there was a constant conflict in Mahadev's mind and on the other Gandhiji felt that he had found in Mahadev the very person he was searching for to help him in his work.... It was love at first sight for each one, but the declaration of it was yet to come."⁵

II. Survey of contents:

The *Diary* has invaluable information which was hitherto unpublished.

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The first entry in the *Diary* in Volume I is dated 13th November 1917. It is an extract of Gandhi's letter to Esther Ferring from Denmark to the effect that her love for the Ashram would be a source of strength to the Ashramites. The last entry in the *Diary* in volume IX is dated 17th March 1927. In the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Gurukul Kangri, Hardwar, Gandhi, and other national leaders were invited. Gandhi delivered a speech and requested Madan Mohan Malaviya to open the Khadi exhibition. Malaviya did what was needed by delivering a speech. Desai concludes by writing, "From the time when Malaviyaji gave his blessings to Khadi, a new age may be said to have dawned.... Gandhiji took his leave with the request to push his new work (of) Khadi during these days."⁶ Appendices follow it. Different volumes of the *Diary* contain Gandhi's speeches, conversations, interviews given to people, question-answer sessions, incidents of his life, letters as well as their background, etc., except volume VIII, which largely has articles published in *Young India*. *The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Government of India), though more exhaustive and complete, appeared much later and over a period of time. Interestingly, parts of *The Collected Works* contain materials borrowed from this *Diary*.

In this study, we have refrained from duplicating what the *Collected works* already have. We have sought to highlight different kinds of information as well as the anecdotes of Gandhi's life selectively as the *Diary* is a vast gold mine of them, and owing to the constraints of space, it is impossible to cover everything.

The *Diary* is not simply an eulogy of a follower of his master. The entry dated 21st March 1918 in the *Diary* contains a mild criticism of Gandhi, "When once Bapu begins to praise a man, because he appreciates him, he does not stint in pouring out all his love and regard for him. He does not then care to see whether that man really deserves all that love and esteem.... But may not this practice of Bapu harm the man himself? And when such exaggerated remarks are made before a large crowd and in the very presence of the persons praised, some of them feel embarrassed, some think that there is no meaning in them and some, I know, feel even insulted."⁷ Another aspect of Gandhi's character was his love for the common people. After his return from South Africa, Desai notes, "This being his first visit to Bombay, Gandhiji did not stint in giving an appointment to any and every person or institution that wanted it. He even tried to visit as many places as he could. For different purposes, there were different functions. All of these he attended and addressing audiences of varying characters, he gave his message in forms suitable to the audience he addressed."⁸ Gandhi referred to the Gita in his speeches and writings

without acknowledging it, and Desai put these references in context.

For example, at the Kathiawar Political Conference, Bhavanagar, in January 1925, Gandhi said, "Adharma stalks in India and *dharma* can be re-established by only one means – the spinning wheel." Desai clarifies that the allusion here is to the famous verse of Gita, "Whenever Right (dharma) declines and wrong (adharma) prevails, then O Bharata, I come, to birth to establish Right" (*Gita* IV-7).⁹ Desai further recollects, "At Patna railway station a stranger of ordinary means fanned him for long who then fell asleep in the train. The stranger got down at his destination without taking with him his thin cotton mattress, as Bapuji's feet lay on it, ... lest Bapuji might wake up...." When Gandhi woke up, he was deeply concerned about him. At Mughalsarai station, when a Marwari was getting down, he asked for the mattress that Gandhi did not need in any way. But the latter retorted, "Never. The mattress shall be sent back to the owner."¹⁰

Gandhi's commitment to ahimsa was complete. On 12th April 1918, he remarked, "What a glorious opportunity this (Satyagraha), if the Germans landed on our shore! They would be unwilling to fight with us, because we are unarmed, and we would refuse to obey their orders!"¹¹ His love for untouchables matched his love for non-violence. Meeting them during his tours was always on the agenda. At Porbandar, he visited the quarters of antyaja, a socially backward tribe. The weavers of Chhaya (Porbandar district) brought their blankets for him. Gandhi became emotional and said, "Is it right to accept a gift from my own children?... When everyone deserts me and nobody cares to give me anything, I shall come running to you and tell you, 'Please give me food and clothing.' The untouchables took it(?) back only when even their hard pressure failed to change Gandhiji's mind."¹²

When Dudabhai, an untouchable, was admitted to Sabarmati Ashram, it evoked strong opposition. Local supporters of the Ashram withdrew their help. Even Kasturba and his nephew (Ashram manager) opposed it. There was "real domestic trouble." But his "firmness coupled with persuasion quelled the outer and inner storms."¹³ Dudabhai hailed from Devrajiya village. When Gandhi passed by it, he stopped his motor car to see the dilapidated walls of his house.¹⁴ In 1925, Gandhi laid the foundation of a school in Kotda (Gujarat) after he was assured that there would not be a caste bar there.¹⁵ When he went to Bhujpur, the elders refused to give him a public address as they considered him to be a blood brother of untouchables. Undeterred, he went to their quarters and heard their woes. Then he travelled to Mundra where he was given a grand reception and carried in a procession to the school of the untouchable

children. But in the public meeting held in the evening, not a single caste Hindu sat among the untouchables. The incident tore the heart of Gandhi and Desai recounts, "From every word that Gandhiji spoke at Mundra, his anguish was dripping out like drops of blood."¹⁶ There are too many such incidents quoted by Desai to show Gandhi's deep love for the untouchables.

In his efforts to eliminate untouchability, Gandhi's followers emulated him. Desai writes that Jamnalal Bajaj declared open to the untouchables five wells belonging to him, three of his ginning factories, and two of his gardens. Instead of claiming credit for this, he modestly remarked: "There's nothing to shout in what I did. I should have done it long ago!" He wished to throw open to the untouchables the doors of the Laxmi Narayan Temple built by his ancestors, but he was helpless as it was managed by the trustees who disagreed with his proposal.¹⁷

His love for Khadi is well-known. Desai discloses that on one occasion, he was reconciled to the use of non-khadi cloth for inevitable reasons. When he was hospitalized in early 1924, Desai narrates, "... insistence (on providing Khadi in the hospital) would put the surgeons and doctors in a fix, even make any treatment impossible. And in how many articles could he ask for the use of Khadi? Should he ask for Khadi bandages and gauzes to dress his wound? For Khadi sheets and Khadi coverings for Khadi mattresses? But Bapu put the surgeons and nurses at ease. He wore the hospital clothes, covered himself with the hospital sheet and accepted whatever could be given him in the hospital."¹⁸

Often, when Gandhi talked to people or even made speeches, he continued to do spinning. In his Ashrams of both Sabarmati and Wardha, the number of yarns spun by each inmate were recorded every evening.¹⁹ His followers emulated him in promoting spinning. At the instance of Jamnalal Bajaj, the Municipality of Wardha passed a resolution to introduce takli-spinning for half an hour in its schools and to buy only Khadi for all its cloth needs.²⁰

Gandhi did what he deemed necessary, even at the cost of personal discomfort. In August 1918, he faced severe health problems. Desai wrote, "After 'the Times of India' report, 'He can still do recruiting work' was read to him, he began to dictate letters: A long telegram to the Viceroy, a letter to the Private Secretary to the Governor of Bombay, a letter to the Collector and some others."²¹ Gandhi led the freedom struggle in India, and salt was an integral part of it even before he launched the salt satyagraha in 1930. On 21st January, 1919, he was operated upon for piles in Bombay. Although he was in delirium, Desai says that his outburst was touching, "These two things

are a 'must' for the Government. It has but to annul the Salt Tax and nationalize the milk industry. It passes my understanding how such a cruel tax as this on salt was meekly accepted by the people. The whole country could have been inflamed to revolt against the Government at the time the law was passed. How could there be a tax on salt so indispensable to human life?"²²

Desai gives a graphic account of Gandhi's train journeys on the eve of the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22). He writes, "Everything went on smoothly upto Bhusawal.... But from midnight onwards, we had to face loud and disturbing noises at many stations. At Hoshangabad particularly... the people made the station resound with vehement cries of "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-jai" and "Allaho Akbar." The cries awakened Gandhiji also. This exuberance continued through all stations – Gwalior, Bhopal, Jhansi, Agra, Mathura, etc., - till we reached Meerut the next night"²³ When the meeting took place in Amritsar, Desai gave summaries of the speeches of leaders and then recounts, "Gandhiji 'rose' next. What I mean by 'rose' is not that he stood up for his speech but that he was seated in a chair raised on a table, which itself was placed on the dais."²⁴ In 1920 Gandhi visited Poona. Desai recollects, "The whole of Poona was bursting with joy on the 5th November. As our route was blocked by mammoth crowds, there was not much to say in favour of order and discipline, but it was clear that the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds.... For, Tukaram Maharaj has left the word that that is the real Divali and that the real Dussera, when a saint visits the home. Throughout our trip this one and the same verse could be heard from the lips of many a devout Maharashtrian lady. We saw that no other region was more conscious than Maharashtra of the fact that this was a truly religious fight."²⁵ Desai adds, "A ladies' meeting was held at the Kirlosker Theatre on the 6th afternoon. All the space on the ground floor as well as on the two galleries above was filled with women. Hardly an inch of space was left vacant. Like a sea at the sight of the full moon, women had flooded the theatre to overflowing. Women of all ages and all communities – Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and others – were present"²⁶

The visit to Belgaum was memorable. In Desai's words, "The women's meeting was held at 7 p.m. in the courtyard of the Maruti Temple. Not only the expansive courtyard, but even the interior parts of the temple were overflowing with women. It was because the women themselves had insisted on inviting Maulana Shaikat Ali to come into the holy precincts of the temple, that he was sitting close by the side of Gandhiji." A woman in dirty rags came and put Rs. ten on his feet, saying, "Please accept this present from an indigent

widow." Thereafter, "... there was the same rain of ornaments here as at Poona." All the same, Desai narrates one incident, "Gandhiji never fails to tell the donor that he wants any ornament only on condition that the donor entirely gives up the use of that particular kind of ornament, so as to make the donor perform an act of real renunciation. When a sister came in the evening and took off three ornaments, Gandhiji repeated his condition. The sister was not prepared to give up wearing forever one of the three ornaments she was offering. So she at once took back that particular ornament." Desai comments, "What an example of transparent self-honesty that!"²⁷ Women poured ornaments before Kasturba too. Desai recounts that a woman put a gold necklace round Kasturba's neck and was about to adorn her wrists with gold bracelets. Kasturba took it off, adding that the ornaments Gandhi asked for were for Swaraj? The woman laid the necklace at Gandhi's feet, but insisted that the bracelets were for Kasturba, which she refused with the result that the bracelets were taken back. This was in Jharia on 5th February, 1921.²⁸ Desai writes, in Patna, "A bag filled with ornaments big and small, was emptied at his feet! Such deep faith, seen everywhere, has amazed me."²⁹ When Kasturba went to the Ganga River for a bath, the loose coins the women had tied in knots at the end of their sarees were laid at her feet. Desai says the climax was reached when an older woman in rags came up and laid one whole rupee at her feet. Kasturba asked her, "Sister, what are you?" "A milk-woman", she replied. "That one rupee has come", a bystander interrupted, "from hard-earned savings – from the retail sale of milk."³⁰

When Gandhi moved on the roads, again, there were frenzied crowds to greet him. While he was going to Delhi in February 1921, "...From Jumma Masjid, especially, for about two and a half miles, till Chandni Chowk was reached, there was hardly an inch of space left vacant by this sea of humanity. Even buildings, three or four storeys high, resembled beehives more than clusters of men. And it was not only men, but women also, who had gathered in countless numbers. Naturally, all vehicular traffic was closed and so the streets were filled with nothing but crowds of men and women and that, too, under a fairly hot sun." Not surprising then, "This is a reception unprecedented in the annals of Delhi", said many of the spectators.³¹ The same story was repeated when Gandhi went to Simla in May 1921 to meet the Viceroy Reading. "Villagers living at the foot of the hill used to come all the day through, while Government servants would come from their offices in the mornings and evenings. And there was not a single group of Government servants which came to Gandhiji empty-handed – without their small collection for the Swaraj Fund. During the time

when Gandhiji was having his talk with the Viceroy, invariably these Government servants of the Secretariat would collect in their hundreds outside the Viceregal Lodge and would be seen waiting for Gandhiji's *darshan*."³²

In February 1921 Gandhi left Patna for Gorakhpur. "At every station peasants with long long lathis and torches in their hands would come to us and raise cries loud enough to split the very drums of our ears." Desai continues, "At many stations, I would get down on the platform and fall at the feet of the people. They would then recede for a little while, but the moment I stepped up into my compartment, they would rush to our door and start their deafening cries. And if even this did not satisfy them, hundreds of men would, as soon as the train started, get on to the footboards and keep standing outside. At some places, imagining that their combined strength would be able to stop the train from starting, they would even enter into a kind of tug-of-war with it."³³ Desai adds, "Many of these do not even know how their 'Mahatma Gandhi' looks. A few of them thrust themselves into our compartment, and began to bawl out, "Who is Mahatma Gandhiji?" I got desperate and said "I". They were satisfied, bowed down to me and left the compartment!"³⁴

They arrived in Batni, and the train reached at midnight instead of 11.00 p.m. Desai continues, "As the people could not have the *darshan*, they got furious and stood, inspite of all our earnest pleading between the railway line in front of the engine. Cries of, "We won't allow the train to start till we have the *darshan*" came out from many lips."³⁵ After crossing Batni, "Any sleep for Gandhiji in the midst of this uproar was out of question.... At last even Gandhiji's endurance and tolerance were exhausted and he got up at one station when it was 1.30 a.m. He began to entreat the people "Please go away. Why do you harass us at this dark hour?" He was answered only by sky-rending shouts of victory to him!... Never before had I seen Gandhiji in a state of rage and I was literally trembling. At last he beat his forehead with his hands in desperation and said, "I, fall at your feet. Please be good enough to move away." That was the height of the people's love-mad insolence. Only after Gandhiji beat his forehead thrice, did the people get quiet at least there."³⁶

The Provincial Political Conference of the United Provinces was held in Moradabad in October 1920. Desai quotes from the summaries of what the different leaders spoke about, including the mother of Maulana Shaukat Ali. She arrived on the platform covered with a veil. Her son stood to repeat loudly what she would speak. He repeated her first sentence: "It is not within the pale of veiled ladies to attend such gatherings; but the time has now come when not only

old ladies like myself but even young girls will take part in them." Desai says, "The people acclaimed this sentence with loud cheers. As if the applause infused spirit into her voice, she herself began to speak loudly. She must have spoken for hardly two or three minutes but her short speech electrified the whole audience."³⁷

Hindu-Muslim conflict led to Gandhiji's fast (September 18-October 8, 1924), and it brought about reconciliation between the two communities. Desai gives an account of how it ended. C.F. Andrews sang the hymn *When I Survey the Wonderous Cross*. Wrote Desai, "For a while, as the song was being sung, every one experienced perfect unison between the sufferings on the Cross and those on the fasting bed, between the love and tears of Jesus and the love and tears of Bapu, and one could see many eyes streaming with tears." Hakim Ajmal Khan spoke, "May you recoup your health and be at peace and may God bring your fast to a glorious fulfilment." To this Maulana Azad added, "I have full faith that the hearts of Hindus and Muslims are going to be united and that too within a very short time." After a few moments of silence, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari offered Gandhi a glass of orange juice, which he drank and broke the fast. Desai triumphantly writes, "And every sip of his brought fresh life, so to say, in the bodies of even those who used to eat their fill everyday during the fast; and all of them felt the thrill of enjoying the happy end of a long fast."³⁸

Gandhi had, what Desai calls, a sense of tactful humour. While the subjects committee of the Congress met in Belgaum with Gandhi in the chair, Dr. Paranjpe spoke when a person asked, "Is this all in order?" Gandhi laughed and said, "But the fault is mine. I was myself not in order, when I allowed him to speak." As Madan Mohan Malaviya was to speak briefly on the Hindu-Muslim riots in Kohat, he objected, "But I can't cut it short. I shall have to deliver a long speech." Gandhi retorted, "But you forget, I am there as President to stop you." When Mohammad Ali made a long speech, Gandhi left his own seat, got a table put on the rostrum, and sat on that table throughout the whole session."³⁹ On another occasion a lawyer fell down from a moving train but escaped unhurt. He thanked Gandhi, who joked, "Why not say it was exactly my presence that brought about this accident? But for it, there would have been none!"⁴⁰ Many more examples of Gandhi's jocular statements can be quoted from these volumes.

III. Concluding remarks:

Among the books of vernacular languages translated into English, the *Diary* has a unique place. It is a useful supplement to the *Collected works*. It provides the requisite background to the speeches and

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activities of Gandhi. Narayan Desai writes, "The very relation that Mahadev cultivated with Gandhiji, erased the traditional idea of a secretary. The relationship was that of a devotee, which had at the end resulted in similarity and unison. And so they were like one soul in two bodies." He added, "Actually 'secretary' is a word of the elite, it does not suit Gandhiji's ascetic culture. Only the word 'devotee' suits Mahadev." The field of work for Gandhi's secretary was not limited to the office, and the office also was not limited to any one field. His office moved about with Gandhi and his range of activity did not end with papers, files and accounts. Narayan wrote, "It was a path of penance. And moving on that path was like walking on a sword's edge. Mahadev repeatedly said that to become an intimate close to Gandhiji was as difficult as living on the mouth of a volcano."⁴¹

As Gandhi's secretary, Mahadev was present when visitors came. At times, he had to deal with angry visitors. If he was certain that they would waste Gandhi's time, the unpleasant task of refusing them permission to meet him devolved on him. One such visitor threatened to shoot Mahadev.⁴² The *Diary* principally contains the notes of the talks, letters, and speeches. He prepared the notes on the spot. Often when he did not have paper, he wrote notes on the margins of the newspapers or on rough papers. At times, he even jotted words on his nails and later wrote. He rarely wrote notes from memory.⁴³ This proves the authenticity of the *Diary*.

Mahadev also handled his mail. Narayan Desai adds, "The mail contained a lot of variety – variety of languages, subjects and styles. There would be the most serious questions with serious discussions about spiritual matters, there would be political documents about the burning political questions of the nation, and there would be vicious, dirty matter abusing Gandhiji." He adds, "Beginning with post-cards with one or two lines, there could be lengthy letters of 80 to 100 pages. There could be letters from the crazy, the wise, and the over-wise" Mahadev's first job was to classify these letters after a quick review. Some letters had to be given to Gandhiji, to some letters he himself would reply after discussion with Gandhiji. Mahadev himself responded to numerous letters. Before responding to certain letters, it would be necessary to conduct an inquiry elsewhere. Some required telegram responses, while others had to be sent the same day, even with a late fee. Abuse-related letters were disposed of in the waste-paper basket, particularly since the authors failed to include their names and addresses. Mahadev was skilled at reading Sarojini Naidu's and other people's unreadable handwriting. Gandhi gave him these letters, asking him to read them. Mahadev's strength in telegraphic language was its brevity, which he learnt from Gandhi. In many

telegrams, Gandhi just added one word, 'love.'⁴⁴ However, this meant an increase in the telegram cost by an anna.

Gandhi and Mahadev wrote articles that they showed to each other. This prevented the repetition of any subject. They did it during the tours also. The task normally went to Mahadev if an article had to be written after studying a subject. They discussed the language, style, thought, and matter and then made alterations.⁴⁵ The viceroys regarded Mahadev as Gandhi's emissary. Sometimes, he negotiated with Indian politicians on Gandhi's behalf. When men like Sardar Patel and Rajaji argued with Gandhi, Mahadev felt free to choose the side until Gandhi made his final decision, which he accepted.⁴⁶

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Generating Transformational Leadership and Peace Building Competencies among High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the transformational leadership and peacebuilding competencies of 70 high school students in Kerala, focusing on the role of peer influence in enhancing these competencies. The research aims to develop a robust assessment framework that evaluates and informs the enhancement of these competencies among students. The students are conceptualized as “peace cadets” and trained in transformational principles such as self-awareness, spontaneity, vision, value adherence, and addressing peace-related challenges. The study contributes to the field by introducing a model for assessing and enhancing these competencies, establishing a solid foundation for evidence-based interventions. The research aims to equip students with the skills necessary to become effective agents of positive societal change.

Key words: *Peacebuilding, Transformational Leadership, Peacebuilding Competences, Peace Cadets, Peer Influence*

1. Introduction

IN THE DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE of education, the imperative for transformational leadership takes on a heightened significance, especially in high school settings where the foundations for future leadership are laid. This study endeavours to intricately explore the concept of empowering leaders in high schools, focusing keenly on the intersection between transformational leadership and the

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acquisition of peacebuilding competencies among students. Transformational leadership emerges as a vital skill set for current school leaders to foster adaptability and success in the face of ongoing transformation.¹

High schools stand as crucibles of academic learning, personal growth, and character development. This research seeks to unravel the complex dynamics at play when it comes to empowering leadership within these environments. Specifically, the study aims to shed light on how key elements of transformational leadership, such as inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, contribute to nurturing competencies vital for fostering a culture of peace among high school students.

Beyond theoretical exploration, this research holds practical implications for educators, school administrators, and policymakers. Understanding the tangible impact of empowering leadership on peace building in high schools has the potential to reshape educational practices and policies. By delving into the nuances of how students are inspired, influenced, intellectually stimulated, and individually supported, this study aims to provide actionable insights for creating and sustaining positive learning environments that not only promote academic excellence but also cultivate the leadership skills necessary for building a more harmonious and inclusive society.

Adding a perspective on the 5th pillar of education, which emphasizes learning to transform oneself and society, is relevant in this context. Acknowledging the transformative power of education in shaping individuals and society aligns with the overarching goals of this study. The study seeks to underscore the importance of incorporating self-transformation and societal transformation within the framework of empowering leadership, recognizing that educational practices should not only impart knowledge but also instill the capacity for positive change. This resonates with the broader aspiration of creating well-rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also equipped to contribute meaningfully to the transformation of society towards harmony and well-being.

2. What does this study address?

1. How do high school students perceive and demonstrate transformational leadership competencies before and after the intervention?
2. What is the impact of the try-out intervention on the peacebuilding competencies of high school students?
3. How does peer influence contribute to developing

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transformational leadership and peacebuilding competencies among high school students?

4. To what extent does the Peace Cadet's Peacebuilding Transformation Model contribute to positive changes in attitudes, behaviours, and goal transformation among high school students?

3. What Peacebuilding Theories Say?

Peacebuilding aims to transform conflicts constructively, going beyond simple problem-solving. It involves addressing core issues, strategic thinking, and altering interaction methods to create a sustainable peace environment. This process includes envisioning a peaceful future, conducting comprehensive needs assessments, and implementing cohesive peace plans.²

Galtung's work *Peace by Peaceful Means* emphasizes the importance of analysing the roots and consequences of violence and peace. He suggests a framework using different spaces, which include nature, person, society, world, culture, and time. Additionally, Galtung introduces the concept of distinguishing between intra-system dynamics (within a specific entity) and inter-system dynamics (between different entities). By combining these various spaces and the intra/inter-system distinction, Galtung identifies a total of 12 factors: intra-nature, intra-person, intra-society, intra-world, intra-culture, intra-time, inter-nature, inter-person, inter-society, inter-world, inter-culture, and inter-time, out of which he distinguishes between nature, actor, structure, culture, time, violence or peace.³

According to Galtung, violence encompasses any preventable insult to basic human needs and, in a broader sense, to the well-being of sentient beings capable of experiencing pain and enjoying well-being. These basic needs, which have been determined through discussions across various regions, include survival (negation: death, mortality), wellness (negation: misery, morbidity), freedom (negation: repression), identity, and meaning (negation: alienation).⁴

Galtung begins by asking what transpired before the intended harm and aggression towards fellow human beings to comprehend the origins of violence better. Before the outward manifestation of aggression, there often lies an inner sentiment of hatred, gnawing away at one's core, directed at some 'Other,' or even towards oneself. The answer to this question lies in the concept of polarization, a process that dehumanizes the 'Other,' gradually eroding our capacity for empathy and understanding.⁵

So, what comes before polarization? It is typically some form of

frustration. And where does this frustration originate? It usually stems from a blocked goal. To be more specific, it arises when both the 'Self' and the 'Other' pursue fundamentally incompatible goals. This, in essence, defines conflict – not just a conflict between goals but also a conflict between the carriers of those goals, the 'Self' and the 'Other.' To be more precise, this is an untransformed conflict, a problematic relationship rather than a problematic individual, whether it be a person, a nation, or a state.⁶

Untransformed conflict is akin to a festering wound, whether it is visible on the surface or buried deep within, in the realms of one's personality, structure, or culture. The capacity and intent to resolve, transform, and mitigate conflicts are crucial in peace studies. This division of prevention into eliminating the sources of conflict and strengthening the capacity for self-healing expands the perspective.

To grasp the nature of conflict arising from incompatible and contradictory goals, it is imperative to delve into the genesis of these conflicting goals. Galtung categorizes these origins into three broad categories: Nature, Culture, and Structure. Nature encompasses inherent needs and the external environment. Culture resides within individuals as internalized values and norms, while structure surrounds society as institutionalized systems with both positive and negative consequences. Goals can be understood as induced by structure, acting as interests, transmitted by culture as values, and rooted in nature as the fundamental need for survival. Additionally, one must consider the private goals of individual actors in this complex web of causality.⁷

The conflict is a triadic construct. Focus on only one of the three, and the significance of that one will probably also be lost:

- Attitudes and Assumptions (A): These are one's thoughts and feelings about the conflict, which can be positive or negative.
- Behavior (B): This is how one acts in response to the conflict, which can be either constructive or destructive.
- Contradiction (C): incompatible goal-states in a goal-seeking system. This is the actual problem or disagreement causing the conflict, often related to something one wants but cannot have.

At the manifest, empirical, and observed level, conflict participants can only experience and observe behavior called B. Both A and C are at the latent, theoretical, and inferred level. The three together add up to the conflict triangle. Sometimes, conflicts can start in different ways. The important thing to remember is that conflicts can be complex, and understanding all three aspects—attitudes, behavior,

and contradiction—is essential to resolving them.⁸

According to Lederach, conflict transformation is a constructive social change, the “building of right relationships and social structures through a radical respect for human rights and non-violence as a way of life”.⁹

The local population and cultural context are the most effective foundation for ensuring long-term peace.¹⁰ As conceptualized by Lederach, conflict transformation involves a multi-faceted approach to understanding and addressing social conflicts. Lederach suggests three lenses: one for the immediate situation, another for deeper relational patterns, and a third for a conceptual framework linking both perspectives. Emphasizing conflict as a normal aspect of human relationships, this approach seeks to navigate personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions.¹¹ The core principles include recognizing conflict as a catalyst for growth, fostering constructive change processes, and enhancing justice while minimizing violence. Lederach’s framework involves inquiries into the presenting situation, envisioning a preferred future, and developing change processes. Personal practices, such as seeing conflicts as windows and integrating multiple time frames, are vital.¹²

Kurt Lewin’s field theory encompasses several key components that collectively explain the dynamics of human behaviour within their life space, which explains conflict. Life space, the psychological and biological environment at a given moment, includes external factors like persons and events and internal factors such as needs and thoughts. Regions within the life space represent present or potential activities, and locomotion signifies changes in an individual’s location over time. Barriers hinder locomotion, and valence determines the attractiveness or repulsiveness of a region. Goals are regions with positive valence and forces, categorized as driving, restraining, and resultant influence locomotion. The field of force describes the constellation of forces in a given region, and the gradient of the force field reflects the rate of change in force strength at different distances.¹³ In essence, Lewin’s field theory provides a nuanced understanding of human behaviour, emphasizing the interplay between internal and external factors, valence, and the complex forces influencing an individual’s actions within their life space.¹⁴

4. How Peacebuilding Works?

Peacebuilding, as outlined by Reychler and Langer, involves the constructive transformation of conflicts, addressing core issues, and altering interaction methods for sustainable peace.¹⁵ Galtung’s framework, emphasizing various spaces and intra/inter-system

dynamics, identifies factors contributing to violence or peace rooted in basic human needs. Galtung's insights into the origins of violence highlight polarization, frustration, and untransformed conflict arising from incompatible goals. Furthermore, the triadic construct of conflict, encompassing attitudes, behaviour, and contradiction, provides a comprehensive understanding.¹⁶ Lederach extends the concept of conflict transformation, viewing it as a multi-faceted approach that recognizes conflict as normal in human relationships. His three lenses and core principles align with Galtung's framework, emphasizing growth, constructive change, justice enhancement, and violence minimization. In synthesis, conflict transformation is fundamentally about changing conflicting attitudes and relationships, addressing underlying causes and fostering positive social change for peacebuilding.¹⁷

5. How to Transform Oneself and Others?

The UNESCO's fifth education pillar, "Learning to Transform Oneself and Society," emphasizes the critical role of education in equipping individuals and groups with knowledge, skills, and values for creating lasting positive change in organizations, communities, and societies.¹⁸ This approach is essential for fostering innovation, social cohesion, and overall societal development through the transformational power of education. A comprehensive examination of peacebuilding, transformational leadership, and peer influence theories provides a nuanced understanding of the strategies involved in self and collective transformation. Shifting attitudes emerge as a crucial element in successfully transforming conflicts, with transformational leadership's guidance amplifying followers' motivations and ethical principles.¹⁹ The application of transformational principles introduces specific processes that contribute to the overall transformative journey.²⁰ Notably, peer influence is pivotal in this transformation, facilitating one-on-one interactions that make the process feasible and accessible for individuals and groups seeking positive change. This multi-faceted theoretical analysis contributes valuable insights to the complex personal and collective transformation task.

6. Why Transformational Leadership?

Transformational leadership is a dynamic concept rooted in history, characterized by specific attributes, influenced by notable contributors, and centered on humanity. Its versatility spans various leadership styles, proving valuable for motivating individuals, cultivating shared vision, and navigating the evolving dynamics of modern leader-follower relationships.²¹

Research indicates that transformational leaders can transform an organization's approach to people and culture.²² Transformational leaders can assess their followers' skills based on individual abilities, concurrently anticipating and forecasting heightened responsibilities for the followers.²³

Transformational leadership in schools, emerging from instructional models in the 1980s, has evolved into a predominant approach characterized by ethical and moral dimensions. Recognized for its impact on overall school performance, it encompasses diverse dimensions, empowers the school community, and extends to valuable applications in classrooms and broader societal contexts.²⁴

The theory of transformational leadership elucidates the leadership methods essential for driving change. Key factors defining successful transformational leadership include individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.²⁵ Transformational leaders deeply affect the emotional behaviours of their followers.²⁶

The key factors of transformational leadership focus on the 4Is: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. Idealized behaviour, comprising idealized attributes and behaviours, emphasizes leaders as role models who build confidence and trust, which is crucial for organizational goal alignment. Idealized influence, categorized as attributed and behavioural, establishes leaders as ethical role models, instilling pride and gaining respect. Inspirational motivation involves leaders articulating a compelling vision, setting high standards, and fostering optimism to motivate and inspire followers. Intellectual stimulation emphasizes leaders challenging assumptions, promoting creative thinking, and encouraging innovation among followers. Lastly, Individualized Consideration underscores leaders attending to individual needs, acting as mentors, and recognizing each follower's unique contributions. These 4Is collectively characterize transformational leadership, fostering organizational development, satisfaction, and, as suggested, contributing to peacebuilding efforts. The text emphasizes the significance of these leadership attributes in influencing followers and achieving positive outcomes in various contexts, including conflict resolution and settlement strategies.²⁷

7. What Sets Peace Cadets Apart as Leaders?

Cadets of Peace is an initiative of *Bethlehem Educational Research Foundation* (Global Organization of Educational Researchers), *Peace and Harmony Foundation* (NGO working for peace initiatives in Kerala, South India)²⁸, FCC (Franciscan Clarist Congregation), and *Peace*

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Channel (NGO working for peace initiatives in Nagaland, North East India)²⁹ to professionally train peace activists working with different organizations and institutions at different levels to be transformational leaders of peace building in their respective realms.

Peace Cadets are the trained peace activists under the initiative and are working as volunteers of peace, building peace in conflicting situations and to transform themselves and society by taking responsible actions.

Peace Cadets are sensitized peace activists characterized by *sense of responsibility, commitment, sense of belongingness, a sense of caring, and compassion* towards peace issues of the immediate surroundings and the World.

Peace Cadets are transformational leaders of peace, trained to transform themselves and society by adopting principles of transformation, viz. *self-awareness, spontaneity, being vision and valued, making positive use of adversity, field independence, asking why, humility, compassion, celebrating diversity, holism, reframing and sense of vocation* for solving peace issues.

Peace Cadets act as catalysts to attain a '**Cultural Transformation**' of Society from an *Insensitive Culture to a Culture of Sensitivity, from a Spiritually Dumb Culture to a Spiritually Intelligent Culture* through **Education and Training**.

8. Peace Cadets Intervention Model

The Peace Cadet's Peacebuilding Transformation Model represents a comprehensive framework utilized by transformational leaders, known as Peace Cadets, who possess advanced competencies in peacebuilding. This model aims to illuminate their multi-faceted approach to fostering sustainable peace, integrating conflict and goal transformation, specifically emphasizing the intra-personal and inter-personal spaces of transformation.

Peace Cadets are transformational leaders equipped with specialized competencies in peacebuilding. These competencies encompass a range of skills and knowledge that enable them to navigate complex conflict scenarios effectively and facilitate positive transformations within individuals and communities.

The model encompasses two primary components: Conflict Transformation and Goal Transformation.

Conflict Transformation: This aspect involves addressing conflicts at various levels, including attitudes, behavior, and contradictions. Peace Cadets tailor interventions to transform intra-personal conflicts (within individuals) and inter-personal conflicts (between individuals).

Goal Transformation: The focus is on transforming individual and

collective goals. Peace Cadets facilitate changes in needs, interests, and values, contributing to a more harmonious and cooperative environment.

Conflict Transformation

Peace Cadets delve into the intricacies of attitudes, behavior, and contradictions within the realm of conflict transformation. Efforts are directed towards transforming intra-personal attitudes and behaviors and addressing interpersonal contradictions through personalized interventions. The goal is to foster positive shifts in individual and collective behaviors and perceptions.

Goal Transformation

Goal transformation involves reshaping needs, interests, and values at the intra-personal and inter-personal levels. Peace Cadets facilitate shifts in intra-personal needs, interests, and values while addressing inter-personal disparities through personalized strategies. The aim is to align individual and collective goals with the broader objective of fostering peace.

9. Where to interfere?

The model recognizes and addresses two fundamental spaces of transformation – intra-personal and inter-personal.

Intra-Personal: This space involves understanding and transforming conflicts within individuals, encompassing personal attitudes, motives, and morals.

Inter-Personal: Addressing conflicts between individuals, including considerations of relationships and communication patterns involving attitudes, motives, and morals.

Peace Cadet's Peacebuilding Transformation Model provides a comprehensive and adaptive guide for transformational leaders engaged in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. By addressing both intra-personal and inter-personal spaces and integrating conflict and goal transformations, Peace Cadets contribute significantly to fostering sustainable peace within individuals and society.

10. Methodology

The methodology aims to holistically explore the interconnected realms of transformational leadership and peacebuilding competencies among high school students. The mixed-methods approach facilitates a nuanced understanding, combining theoretical insights with practical observations to evaluate the intervention's impact comprehensively.

11. Research Design

Employing a mixed-methods research design, this study integrates a

thorough theoretical analysis with a try-out intervention. The theoretical component involves an extensive literature review on peacebuilding, conflict transformation, transformational leadership, and peer influence, shaping a robust conceptual framework. The intervention encompasses a pre- and post-assessment design to measure the program's impact on students.

Methods

An extensive literature review was conducted to explore and synthesize academic works on peacebuilding, conflict transformation, transformational leadership, and peer influence. This comprehensive review encompassed seminal and contemporary scholarly articles, books, and research papers across relevant disciplines. The objective was to establish a robust foundation of theoretical knowledge, identify gaps in existing literature, and inform the subsequent phases of the research.

Drawing from the insights garnered during the literature review, a comprehensive conceptual framework was meticulously developed. This framework served as a theoretical underpinning guiding the entire intervention. Key theories from the literature review were synthesized to construct a cohesive and nuanced understanding of the interplay between peacebuilding, conflict transformation, transformational leadership, and peer influence. The conceptual framework provided a structured roadmap for the design and implementation of the intervention, ensuring alignment with established theories and best practices in the field.

This methodological approach ensured that the intervention was informed by a thorough understanding of existing scholarship and strategically positioned within the theoretical landscape. The literature review and conceptual framework collectively laid the groundwork for the subsequent stages of the research, facilitating a seamless integration of theoretical insights into the practical dimensions of the intervention.

Try-out Intervention

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure the deliberate selection of 70 high school students that aligned with predetermined criteria. The criteria encompassed diverse demographics, including age, gender, socio-economic background, and academic performance. This method sought to construct a representative sample of 70 students reflective of the multi-faceted characteristics inherent in the high school student populace. Collaboration with educational institutions facilitated the identification and recruiting of participants who met

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the stipulated criteria.

Intervention Design

The intervention design was intended to foster conflict transformation and transformational leadership skills among the selected 70 high school students. The structured program consisted of workshops, group activities, and mentoring sessions, each with specific methods and assessment tools.

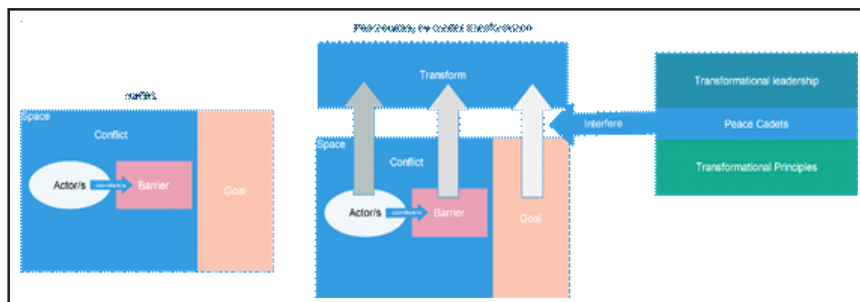
Programme Timeline

Ensuring a structured and time-bound intervention was the objective of the program timeline. The intervention spanned 4 days, with regular progress reviews and adjustments based on participant and mentor feedback. Assessment tools included the timely completion of program milestones and continuous feedback from participants and mentors.

Overall Assessment

The overall assessment phase focused on evaluating the cumulative impact of the intervention. Pre and post-intervention surveys were employed to assess changes in attitudes and skills. A comparative analysis of participants’ initial and final assessments provided quantitative data, while qualitative feedback sessions and the review of reflective journals offered deeper insights into the participants’ transformative journey. This multi-faceted assessment approach aimed to measure the effectiveness of the intervention comprehensively.

This detailed intervention design ensured a multi-faceted approach to skill development, encompassing theoretical understanding, practical application, and personalized mentorship. Rigorous assessment tools were strategically integrated to measure the programme’s effectiveness in achieving its objectives.



Data Collection Tools

Questionnaires

Administer pre and post-intervention questionnaires to assess students' baseline knowledge and attitudes, tracking changes after the program.

Descriptive Feedbacks

Collect qualitative feedback through open-ended questions, reflective journals, and focus group discussions, capturing nuanced experiences and perceptions.

12. Data Analysis

The study used descriptive statistics to analyze questionnaire data, comparing pre and post-intervention results to discern student knowledge and attitude shifts. Additionally, thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data from descriptive feedback and focus group discussions, unveiling themes that provide insights into the impact on students' perceptions and attitudes.

The pre and post-intervention data analysis revealed a significant positive shift in high school students' perceptions and demonstrations of transformational leadership competencies. Initially, students exhibited varying degrees of awareness and engagement with leadership qualities. Following the Peace Cadet's Peacebuilding intervention, a noticeable enhancement emerged in their self-reported understanding and manifestation of transformational leadership attributes. Quoted student feedback underscored this transformative journey, such as one student expressing, "The program shifted my awareness of leadership potential."

Students articulated an increased self-awareness, acknowledging a heightened understanding of their leadership potential and the consequential impact they could have on others. The qualitative analysis brought forth narratives indicating a tangible improvement in communication skills. Students expressed a newfound ability to inspire and motivate their peers, with one student noting, "The intervention shifted my communication skills; now I can inspire others effectively." This emphasized a positive evolution in their communication acumen and an enhanced belief in their capacity to lead and contribute positively to their school environment.

The impact of the intervention on the peacebuilding competencies of high school students was profound, with observable positive changes in attitudes, behaviors, and goal transformation. The intervention catalyzed a shift in conflict attitudes, steering students

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from confrontational approaches towards more collaborative strategies. Feedback included statements like, “The program shifted my approach to conflicts; now I seek collaborative solutions.” Additionally, students demonstrated a contemplative reconsideration of motives and morals, with feedback indicating greater empathy, tolerance, and a commitment to fostering peace within their school community.

Peer influence emerged as a pivotal factor in the development of transformational leadership and peacebuilding competencies. The intervention facilitated an environment conducive to peer learning, with students deriving motivation and insights from each other’s experiences. Students expressed mutual inspiration, creating a peer-supported framework for growth and positive transformation. A student shared, “My motives shifted as my peers inspired me; now, I am more committed to peacebuilding.”

The Peace Cadet’s Peacebuilding Transformation Model significantly contributed to positive changes in attitudes, behaviors, and goal transformation among high school students. The intervention precipitated an attitudinal shift, with students displaying more positive and constructive outlooks, fostering a culture of understanding and cooperation. Observable changes in behavior included heightened collaboration, empathy, and a proactive approach to conflict resolution. Students reported a profound reevaluation of personal and academic goals, aligning them with the principles of peacebuilding and positive leadership. Student feedback came thus: “The program shifted my goals; now, I strive for harmony and positive leadership.”

In conclusion, the intervention induced positive transformations at an individual level and created a ripple effect within the high school community, fostering a harmonious and collectively empowered environment. Including student feedback through quotations within the analysis adds credibility and highlights the nuanced and transformative impact of the Peace Cadet’s Peacebuilding programme on high school students.

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Transformational leaders at the Grassroots

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the case of a village panchayat in Tamil Nadu where the president displayed transformational leadership. Adopting a narrative approach, the paper identifies the different interventions undertaken, strategies employed by the president, and the elements of transformational leadership visible in his style of functioning and initiatives undertaken. His leadership and the transformational change he brought to the village demonstrate the importance of trust, talent, and commitment to grassroots transformation. The paper suggests many such transformational leaders exist in Tamil Nadu village panchayats.

Key words: Transformational Leadership, Gram Panchayats, Tamil Nadu, CSR and NRI Funds, Gram sabha

Introduction

CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH HAS been carried out on decentralization of power in India in the last three decades¹. The focus was on the powers conferred, financial resources devolved, and functionaries transferred to the local governments. It is a truism that all three governments draw powers from the same constitution. Yet the local governments have not been treated as governance entities, and they are constrained by the bureaucracy of the state governments² barring Kerala, to some extent³. Media have shown some interest in some states and brought to light the exemplary performance of the panchayats and their leaders. One could see a new phenomenon in the dynamics of governance witnessed by the author in leadership. It is not the power, the functionaries, or the finance; it is the men or

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women who are at the helm of affairs who matter. So, a new focus has been given at a limited level to leadership and its implications for grassroots governance⁴.

Theoretical Framework

Numerous approaches and frameworks are available for studying leadership.⁵ Regarding transformational activities at the grassroots, the framework and theories on leadership are insufficient. At the beginning of the 21st century, scholars have made several attempts to evolve an appropriate theory on leadership for development and change. The new framework has been termed transformational leadership⁶. Transformational leadership ideas were drawn from the approaches and activities of M.K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela. A transformational leader transforms the self and the followers, enabling them to develop their potential to engage in transformative activities at various levels. The connection between the leaders and followers is moral and emotional. Transformational leaders present themselves as role models, and they create a new consciousness among the followers. The leadership journey takes place at two different levels. The transformational leader is conscious of transforming his consciousness and its level along with activities carried out in the society.

Transformational leadership works on four basic principles. They are a, the idealized influence of the leader's charisma; b, inspirational motivation; c, intellectual stimulation, and d, individualized conscientization. Transformational leadership believes in the capacity of ordinary people and works with them by listening to their views and opinions and building on the followers' views to work on fundamental change⁷. In simple terms, transformational leaders will have a broader, deeper, attractive, implementable, easily understandable, believable, realistic, and futuristic vision⁸. The vision is put in such a way that the followers will be emotionally drawn towards the leader. Transformational leaders will enable followers to build trust in their leadership by seeing their selfless activities. The leaders are creative and can fuse a sense of self-regard in themselves and a regard for the followers⁹. This framework can be used to study the political and social leaders involved in transformational activities. But now it is being used to study leadership in the companies also¹⁰. Since the local governments are involved in basic transformative activities, this framework is used in this study to understand the leadership patterns and quality of the leaders.

Methodology

The paper uses a qualitative methodology to study transformational leadership at the Gram Panchayat level. It examines Muthukkappati Gram Panchayat, led by a Dalit youth, and its activities. The team visited the village, interviewed various stakeholders, and visited development projects. They also drew vital statistics from the panchayat's perspective plan, collaborating with a civil society organization.

Context

Arul Rajesh, a diploma holder influenced by Subhas Chandra Bose, contested the councilor position in the 2011 Local Body election in Nammakkal district. Despite the defeat, he continued his social service through friends in Muthukapatti Gram Panchayat areas. Muthukapatti is known for its notorious activities, including caste rivalry and exploitation of natural resources. Rajesh, a youth, worked as an office bearer for the youth wing of the Indian National Congress. He believed that Gram Panchayat was the best place to work with the community and make a transformation. Rajesh prepared a strategic vision to build harmony among communities through youth groups. His continuous social service activities, particularly obtaining old age pensions, earned him a name among the communities in Muthukkappati Gram Panchayat areas.

Arul Rajesh's clean habits and political orientation strengthened his community bonds. Youth from different caste groups influenced the community's perception of him as a leader. Rajesh emphasized that division based on caste and political affiliation hinders government benefits and self-dignity. His core argument with people is that "Keep your caste with family and cultural activities and in the same way keep your political affiliation wherever election comes to elect MLA or MP, but when there is a village work, it is common to all. Individual benefits through the Government's schemes will come to your doorstep. Hence, you come out from your caste and political affiliation on panchayat activities; we can develop the panchayat as a model".

Muthukapatti Gram panchayat has a population of 6972 with 2311 households. Of the households, 610 are scheduled caste, and 40 are scheduled tribes. The households keep 1749 milch animals, 3764 birds, and 2536 goats. Anthodaya families constitute 135. Twenty-five families do not have toilet facilities. There are 203 anemia-affected adolescent girls and four malnourished children. Two hundred thirty-two individuals are getting old age pensions, and 174 differently-abled

persons are getting government assistance through the schemes. In this village panchayat, 290 households have land. The panchayat has got common lands to the tune of 116 hectares. The panchayat has vibrant self-help groups and savings of Rs.30,45,342.00.

Narratives

Arul Rajesh emphasized the importance of peace and harmony among caste groups for development. He understood the deep psychology of the people and communicated his narrative through dialogues with different caste groups. He realized that people wanted peace, but nobody took the initiative due to wealth-making and poverty struggles. He also developed the narrative of Panchayat as the people's government, aiming to make it corruption-free and cooperative. He refused to spend money on elections and did not belittle the people by giving money for votes. To earn the people's trust, he worked with friends from other castes and targeted a wealthy segment of the panchayat area who wanted peace and considered him a suitable candidate.

The candidate communicated that he was not representative of his caste and worked closely with the youth of all caste groups. He did not use shortcut methods to win the election and relied on the youth and community to build trust. He prioritized building peace and solidarity among communities over winning the election. He did not seek money to build infrastructure, as other Gram Panchayat presidents did. His objective was to change the people's consciousness and address animosity in the village.

The village's development is hindered by dominant families' encroachment of common properties. The village administrative officer was contacted to identify the properties and learn about India's New Panchayati Raj system. As the president, he visited the area and reiterated his promises, building trust with the people. He emphasized the illegal water-drawing activities and the need to stop them. He informed the families of the water-draining activities and raised questions in the Gram Sabha, leading to a resolution to remove the encroachment. He mobilized people to act against encroachment and procedurally followed rules to remove the encroachment. His actions focused on building trust and addressing the issues within the village.

The water mafia group faced resistance from encroachers, so the president prepared the people to face the challenges. He met with Parliament and Legislative Assembly members to understand local political transformative activities. The president approached the District Collector to inspect the panchayat and strategically elected a person from a dominant community as vice president. The president

and vice president were honest and integrity-minded, interacting with ward members from all communities. The panchayat president ran the administration transparently, involving all ward members in decision-making and professional responses. He also carried out development activities and image-building activities through his peer group.

Breakthrough

Arul Rajesh's administration successfully removed encroachment in rural areas with the help of villagers and the revenue administration. With the support of political parties and revenue administration, he successfully thwarted the encroacher's design and created a well to supply drinking water. The well was operational quickly, and Rajesh communicated his views through social media. People of all caste groups supported the Gram Panchayat, and NRIs in North America started supporting the panchayat's development activities. Rajesh emerged as a change-maker, attracting financial support for innovative development activities.

The president established a trust for village development in the panchayat, gaining support from all caste groups. With a large amount of NRIs, he created the trust, putting representatives from all caste groups as trustees. This act enhanced trust in the panchayat and its leaders. The communities control the trust, while the panchayats are under state government control. This clear design ensures trust in the panchayat and enhances its effectiveness.

Arul aimed to profitably engage the poor and marginalized by starting a waste management unit in a village. He discovered an encroachment on a large area previously used for a blue metal quarry. The owner was found to be illegally operating the business, and the man was able to remove the encroachment. The village now owns the land, and a modernized waste management plant has been established. The village's cleanliness has been improved, and the president has encouraged active participation from the panchayat ward members. Trust and ward members work collaboratively to provide funds and support for development activities. The panchayat president encourages everyone to take responsibility for their village's development.

The waste management system was established in dump yards, creating a nursery and pandemic management protocol. The panchayat ward members were involved in COVID-19 management activities, including face mask distribution, daily provisions, and vaccination. No deaths were reported, and the panchayat successfully organized a vaccination camp. The panchayat's commitment to CSR and NRI

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funds was demonstrated through the deposit of funds in a village trust managed by trustees. The panchayat demonstrated that money can flow like water when dedicated leaders are in place.

The village panchayat president and vice president's honesty and integrity have made ward members dedicated and honest. This honesty encourages participation in village development activities. The panchayat's allocation of money is based on the needs of the people, with no practice of dividing funds equally among wards. Members and Gram Sabha have accepted this approach. One Union councilor noted that the Muthukapatti village panchayat attracted him to work with it due to its unity, dedication, and honesty, resulting in the expenditure of all allocated funds.

The Panchayat president is committed to improving the quality of public institutions, including schools, health centers, cooperatives, and distribution systems, which are meant for the poor. To achieve this, he has started incentivizing staff in these institutions, recognizing their outstanding contributions and providing extracurricular activities. The expenditure for these programmes is met from the trust account, and school enrollment has increased. Panchayats have also actively supported self-help group members from all caste groups to produce consumer goods. Training programs have improved their skills, and they have started producing eateries. The president has rented out a panchayat building to sell their products, avoiding discrimination among groups. Additionally, the government has provided a loan waiver of nine crore rupees to poor families in the village, mainly women from self-help groups, for livelihood and economic activities. This initiative has significantly increased the quality of services and goods provided to the poor.

Other Initiatives

MGNREGA, a corruption-ridden rural development scheme in India, has succeeded in Muthukapatti village panchayat by creating tangible assets. The panchayat president emphasized that the money spent is the people's money, and the asset created is for the whole village. The panchayat has faced opposition from liquor shops and has shifted two shops to other locations. As rural transformative works continue, more visitors visit the panchayat and extend support for its activities. Mission Sammirthi, a civil society organization, has helped the panchayat prepare a perspective development plan, including assessing and estimating existing infrastructure. The plan also incorporates components for women, children, and Dalit development. The plan is a vision document with activities for each year from 2022-23 to 2027-2028, aiming to generate revenue and make the panchayat self-reliant.

During a meeting with Gram Sabha members, it was observed that people were well aware of the panchayat area and had their own communication channels to send problems and issues to the panchayat leader. This communication gap between the people and the leader has led to trust building, the responsiveness of elected representatives, and no corruption in the panchayat administration. The panchayat president's transparent administration has made it more people-centric, making it more responsive and effective in addressing the community's needs.

America Selvam, a US citizen, acknowledged the transformation of the village known for caste rivalry into a model village panchayat. He praised Arul Rajesh's efforts to create peace and enable conditions for the people, despite the latter's challenges. He showed that a competent, honest, sincere, and dedicated leader can transform a village by making activities people-centric rather than leader-centric. Elected representatives' honesty and integrity contribute to the panchayats' development activities, and peace and communal harmony can inspire people to participate in public activities and take ownership of institutions. Understanding the psychology of rural people is essential before attending to their needs. Mobilization and participation are both science and art, and Arul Rajesh's creative and innovative activities have enthused the people and enabled them to be ready for participation. Rajesh also brought opinion makers and public intellectuals to interact with the people, allowing them to understand the potential of the panchayat. He prepared the people to build a vision through the village development plan and conducted Gram Sabha not as a ritual but as a powerful instrument for the empowerment of the poor and marginalized. Arul Rajesh's leadership and the transformational change he brought to the village demonstrate the importance of trust, talent, and commitment in grassroots transformation. A large number of such trained volunteers were produced here and worked in different parts of Tamil Nadu¹¹. Thus, transformational leaders are in the rural areas with powers devolved by the constitution and powers given by the people where they work. Such leaders work in large numbers in Tamil Nadu in panchayats and civil society organizations.

Conclusion

The literature on decentralization and devolution of powers has not adequately addressed the role of leadership in the transformative process of communities in rural areas. This study focuses on transformational leadership, a new framework that examines local government institutions using a case study method. The Gram

panchayat president demonstrated transformational leadership through honesty, integrity, and probity, earning the people's trust. He engaged people in the development activities of the panchayat, transforming their consciousness from conflict to peace and development. The president's honesty and commitment to participation in the panchayat's activities have earned him trust and led to the state government allowing it as a model for other panchayats. His vision for village development was based on active participation and collective leadership, and his engagement with people inculcated principles of truth, transparency, and accountability. In India, a communitarian society, people must be engaged in governance and development in their own way. State-centric development activities have kept people from governance and oriented them as beneficiaries. Local governments should now focus on involving people as stakeholders and participants in development and governance. The president prepared himself as a transformed individual, drawing support from all groups and creating development aspirations for all community segments. He created a separate trust to manage funds from CSR and NRIs, and continued his activities by borrowing money from the public. The panchayat has been made a model training centre, and the question is how to replicate this model elsewhere. Specific training on transformational leadership can be incorporated into training institutions and policies. By making these panchayats model training centers, an alternative paradigm of governance and development emerges through transformational leadership.

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To Hate or Love an Opponent: Gandhi and the Irish models of anti-colonial resistance (1907-1932)

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ABSTRACT

The story of Ireland's centuries-long freedom struggle, with its two seemingly opposing traditions of moderate constitutionalism and militant physical force separatism, was always regarded as a model as much to avoid as to emulate by Indian nationalists, including Gandhi. This article focuses on Gandhi's rhetoric and his dilemma regarding the adoption of the Irish Models of anti-colonial resistance, such as Arthur Griffith's Sinn Feinism, Charles Stewart Parnell's No-rent campaign, and Obstructionist tactics and Terence MacSwiney's hunger strike as a political weapon in the Indian milieu. This article also tries to determine whether Gandhi's philosophy of loving the opponent, practicing non-violence, and refraining from political coercion, as befitting a true satyagrahi, determined his attitude towards the Irish models. In the larger context, it tries to establish the extent of Irish influence on Gandhi and his anti-colonial strategies. Doses of Irish history have been entwined for better comprehension.

Key words: *Sinn Fein, Ahimsa, Obstructionism, Parnell, Hunger-strike*

Introduction

THE STORY OF Ireland's centuries-long struggle for the freedom of its people from English colonial rule was a subject of much interest to Indian nationalists. With its two seemingly opposing traditions of moderate constitutionalism and militant physical force separatism, Nationalism, as revealed by Ireland, was always regarded as a model as much to avoid as to emulate. Irish nationalism attained a force and significance for many Indian nationalists that transcended personal contacts,¹ and Gandhi who decisively stamped his influence on Indian

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nationalism, was no exception. This article focuses primarily on Gandhi's rhetoric on the emulation of the Irish models of anti-colonial resistance in India's freedom struggle, such as Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Fein* model, Charles Stewart Parnell's models of No-Rent Campaign and Obstructionist tactics in the British Parliament, and Terence MacSwiney's model of Hunger Strike as a political weapon. It traces Gandhi's first reference to Ireland's *Sinn Fein* agitation in his fight for justice in South Africa in 1907. It alludes to Gandhi's opinions about the changing nature of *Sinn Fein* when it turned violent. Gandhi's feelings regarding adopting Parnellism and Irish Obstructionist tactics in the Legislature are considered. Attention is also paid to hunger strikes as a weapon of political coercion, as exemplified by the Irish hunger striker Terence MacSwiney to Gandhi's own fast unto death in 1932. These themes account for the three sections that this article is divided into.

Born as a result of eight hundred years of political suppression and economic exploitation by English rulers, it was the policy of religious persecution pursued towards the Irish Catholics that added fuel to the flames of Irish nationalism. Passive resistance and civil disobedience were supplemented by outbreaks of violence characterized by hatred and vengeance. The latter was in sharp contrast to Gandhi's philosophy of ahimsa (non-violence) and satyagraha (truth force or soul surgery). Gandhi preached that suffering was the badge of the human race, not the sword. He hoped that the *satyagrahis* love of the opponent and self-imposed suffering would defuse feelings of anger and hatred and bring his opponents to the negotiating table. Gandhi's weapon was unique in the world's armoury as it could win without killing.² His was a transformative love encompassed all from a wealthy man to the Untouchable and the British tyrant. As Gandhi toyed and debated with the Irish models, he was left in a conundrum regarding their adoption in the Indian context. This article addresses the question as to whether Gandhi's philosophy of loving the opponent by following a path of non-violence and refraining from political coercion, as befitted a true *satyagrahi* was the key underlying factor that determined his attitude towards the Irish models. In the larger context, it tries to ascertain the extent of the Irish influence on Gandhi and his anti-colonial strategies. Throughout the article, aspects of Irish history are entwined for a better comprehension.

***Sinn Feinism* : Passive Resistance, Violent Resistance and Gandhi**

Gandhi's first introduction to Ireland's *Sinn Fein* Movement began in South Africa, where he was subject to racial discrimination along with

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other Indians. Gandhi refused to retaliate, determined to turn the other cheek around as had been preached by Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount. He was also filled with the idea of suffering love as depicted in the image of Christ's crucifixion. The *Sinn Fein* movement, Gandhi felt translated into Gujarati, meant India's *Swadeshi* movement. It was growing stronger daily with its chief weapon of passive resistance. Gandhi was aware that Irishmen had favoured violence before the advent of the *Sinn Fein* movement, as Irish tenants had resorted to violence against their British landlords. However, through the resounding cry of *Swadeshi* or *Sinn Fein* it had been decided to educate the people to gradually withdraw the Irish Members from the British Parliament, refraining from taking disputes between Irish parties to the law courts established in Ireland and boycotting British goods even at the cost of hardship to themselves.³ There was also a boycott of civil services and a refusal to pay taxes. It was indeed 'to make England take one hand from Ireland's throat and the other out of Ireland's pocket.'⁴

The chief exponent of the *Sinn Fein* ideas was Arthur Griffith (1871-1921), a printer and writer in South Africa from 1896 to 1898, who supported the Boers, unlike Gandhi. Griffith argued that as it was impossible to wage a physical war with Ireland in the present, the only way to undo the union with Great Britain without recourse to violence was through self-reliance (as the name *Sinn Fein*- 'ourselves' suggests). He exhorted Irishmen to cut their alcohol consumption by half. He wanted Ireland to exist as a separate co-equal kingdom with Britain having a common monarch like Austria-Hungary. By withdrawing cooperation from British institutions while asserting Irish autonomy in every sphere of life, nationalists could bring about a counter-state. Griffith's paper *United Irishman* ((1899) accepted Henry Grattan's cry, "Live Ireland-perish the Empire."⁵ *Sinn Fein* ideas that anticipated devices of anti-colonialism were purely propagandist in nature, as nobody in Ireland was willing to support an economic war against Britain. Gandhi categorically understood that without any violent struggle taking place, the British would ultimately be obliged, or might agree, to grant Home Rule to Ireland, or would quit Ireland, and the Irish people would have an independent government.⁶

Inspired by the *Sinn Feiners* ⁷, Gandhi organized a Passive Resistance Association in South Africa that pledged to defy the obnoxious Asiatic Registration Act, which required all Indians, including children, to register or be subject to punishment. The Indian word *satyagraha* replaced the phrase passive resistance and proved to be a felicitous expression symbolizing Gandhi's life-long search for truth in its perfection.⁸ Gandhi's reading of Henry Thoreau convinced

him that citizens had the right to defy unjust laws. According to Gandhi, a *satyagrahi* was never to take advantage of his opponent, not hate him but win him over with love and patience. He was to quietly accept a physical assault on his person and the confiscation of his property. Accordingly, peaceful picketing was carried out at all government registration centres. Hardly five percent of the Indians registered, although authorities went on to extend the last date.⁹ When General Smuts, even after assuring Gandhi that the Registration Act would be repealed if the Indians registered voluntarily, went back on his word. Gandhi led the Indians in publicly consigning their dog's collar/ registration certificates to flames. The Indians bravely courted arrest and accepted whatever punishments were meted out to them. In 1911, a provisional settlement was made, and the *Satyagraha* campaign was temporarily suspended. Gandhi once again resorted to passive resistance when the Supreme Court ruled that only Christian marriages in South Africa were legal. Many women and children marched from Natal to Transvaal and vice-versa, defying the Immigrations Regulation Act of 1913 that forbade such a course without a permit. Newspapers in India and Britain covered Gandhi's strategies in South Africa extensively. He was already a popular figure when he returned to India in 1915.

More than a year later, on 24 April 1916, news of the Easter Rising in Ireland reached India but did not have any immediate repercussions. It was planned by the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which was a revolutionary society within the nationalist organization called Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army. The British government dubbed the Rising as the *Sinn Fein* Rebellion, and Griffith was arrested because it was held that his propaganda had fostered the nationalist frame of mind that made the rebellion possible. It was ruthlessly crushed, and sixteen of its leaders executed. On a wave of nationalist upsurge, the reorganized *Sinn Fein* Party won a resounding victory in the Elections of 1918. The *Dail Eireann* or the provisional Irish government of *Sinn Fein* was formed as Irish MPs refused to sit at Westminster. The memory of the martyred heroes of 1916 triggered the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), a guerilla warfare that led to unprecedented violence committed both by the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and British forces. The IRA was the physical wing of the political *Sinn Fein* Party. Griffith, acting head of the *Dail Eireann*, at this juncture, raised no objections to using physical force against the British. When the IRA killed British policemen or soldiers, the latter took revenge. They burned creameries, looted and burned towns, and inflicted general brutality on the populace.¹⁰ The *Sinn Fein* Party was forced to negotiate a truce, and the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in

December 1921. Freedom came to Ireland with Partition, which divided the island into the Catholic South (Irish Free State) and a Protestant North that was still under British rule. From June 1922-May 1923, Ireland was engulfed in the flames of a Civil War between the pro-treaty and anti-treaty factions. Griffith's words proved prophetic. Though he had never actually opposed physical force on general principles, he felt that the weakness and the danger of the physical force policy lay in the fact that the Irish could always turn around and use it on themselves.¹¹ These developments impacted Gandhi, who, from 1919, was confronted with a violent *Sinn Fein*, leading to the question of the extent of the appropriation of *Sinn Fein* methods in India's struggle for *Swaraj*.

1917 and 1918 witnessed Gandhi's involvement in the local grievances of mill workers and peasants, such as in Ahmedabad, Champaran, and Kheda, where he put to test his ideas of ahimsa, *satyagraha*, and fasting and met with success. However, the *hartals* he called on 30 March 1919 and 10 April 1919 to protest against the repressive Rowlatt bills ended in violence. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (13 April 1919) and the publication of the Hunter Committee Report in May 1920, which was an eyewash, turned Gandhi from an Empire loyalist to an impeccable foe of British rule in India. He embarked on a policy of non-violent civil resistance that exuded a feeling of moral superiority and wrong-footed the British. Faced with non-violence, they were left in a quandary, as their counter-violence merely revealed their rule's moral bankruptcy.¹² Gandhi appealed for *Swaraj* or freedom from all ties with Britain. Like Griffith, the basic premise that delineated his programme was that the very existence of British rule in India rested on the co-operation of numerous Indians, which, if withdrawn, could bring the entire machinery of British rule to a standstill. To excited delegates who met at the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Amritsar in December 1919, Gandhi admonished, "I say, do not return madness with madness, but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours."¹³

Before Gandhi could officially spell out his program, he had to rush to Dagshai prison where he spent one night with Irish soldiers from the Connaught Rangers Regiment.¹⁴ This Irish Regiment stationed at Jullunder, notorious for its fighting skills, general indiscipline, and racism, refused work on 28 June 1920 as a protest against the activities of the British Army in Ireland. The soldiers deposited their arms in one of the barracks and placed a guard in charge. No action could be taken against them by the army as the soldiers *had not risen in arms but in peace*.¹⁵ *Sinn Fein* flags (not made in India) were hoisted in the barracks at Jullundur, a *Sinn Fein* pamphlet had to be removed from

the regimental library, and Irish soldiers wore *Sinn Fein* rosettes. That evening Sinn Fein songs were sung in the barracks until midnight. Stephen Lally, one of Hawes's comrades at Jullundur, claimed that Gandhi sent a telegram to the mutineers stating that due to divisions within the Indian nationalist movement, no help would be forthcoming.¹⁶ The mutiny spread to Solon, 240 km away from Jullundur, where on 30 June 1920, the mutineers led by James Joseph Daly handed in their arms. But on the evening of 1 July, some thirty members of the Company attempted to recapture them from the armoury. The guards opened fire, killing two men and wounding another. The soldiers were arrested and sent to the Dagshai prison, where Daly was executed on 20 November 1920. It is said that Winston Churchill, the Defense Secretary, did not like the visit of the Mahatma to Dagshai, and hence, there was strong action against the Irish mutineers to set an example for any Indians so inclined.¹⁷ What is amazing is that this mutiny is not mentioned in any of the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, who happened to be a prolific writer. Nor was it covered by any Indian newspapers then, though the British and Irish radical press gave it some mileage. However, *The Independent Hindustan*, a publication of the *Ghadar* Party in America, approved of the mutiny, thus capturing the complexity of the Indo-Irish relationship.¹⁸

Gandhi adopted the Non-Co-operation resolution on 1 September 1920. It involved resignation from government services, boycott of schools and colleges, foreign cloth, law courts, non-payment of taxes, boycott of councils, and refusal to serve in the armed forces. It had much in it for the Indian advocates of *Sinn Fein* before it assumed a violent form. In formulating his Non-Co-operation Resolution, Gandhi admitted to Fenner Brockway, a British journalist and passionate Socialist, that his reading of Arthur Griffith greatly influenced him.¹⁹ Non-co-operation was Gandhi's answer to those who argued that only violence would move the Raj.²⁰ For the British government, Gandhi's turn to non-co-operation posed a seemingly intractable dilemma, a baffling novelty,²¹ as earlier Moderates had either been conciliated or disregarded and terrorists clapped into jail. So how did one tackle peaceful demonstrators who were taught to love their enemies and endure whatever punishments were meted out to them?

The most important symbol of non-co-operation, which Gandhi adopted in India, unlike Ireland, was the spinning wheel, which he presented to the country with the 'fullest confidence.' Gandhi felt that the English tyrant was obdurate, a multi-headed monster who refused to be killed; and could not be paid in his own coin, for he had left none for the Indians to pay him with.²² Hence, Gandhi had a coin

that was not cast in the mint of the Englishman and which he could not steal; it was superior to any the latter had yet produced. Hence, *khadi* and the *charkha* or spinning wheel became the symbols of the non-co-operation movement. An integral part of it was the burning of foreign cloth, which symbolized economic domination by foreign masters and was a badge of Western identity. To burn it was to 'purge' or 'purify' oneself of all this.²³ Gandhi disagreed with many Hindus who argued that the throwing of bombs led to the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1905 or that the assassination act of Dhingra made him a martyr. In his words, "Through the method of violence and bloodshed, the people can get nothing in a big country like India; likewise, no power in the world can rule over such a vast country as ours if there is peaceful non-co-operation."²⁴

Gandhi had by now discovered that the doctrine of the sword already contaminated passive resistance in Ireland. He opined that some people cited the example of the *Sinn Fein* movement in Ireland and said that non-cooperation and assassinations went on simultaneously there. It was open knowledge that a good many people in India read with interest accounts of murder in Ireland. He was aware that the *Sinn Feiners* openly practised murder and other forms of violence to free their country from the English connection; to them, every assassin and incendiary was considered a hero.²⁵ As Gandhi feared such a result, he embarked on the active and open preaching of non-violent non-co-operation, which prevented murders and assassinations in the land.²⁶ Gandhi felt that there was an important difference between Ireland and 'us'. India could easily achieve its objectives through non-violent non-co-operation. If violence broke out, non-cooperation would stop at that very moment.

Gandhi did not despise the Irish example; he was always hard-pressed to point out its inadequacies and dangers. He found that *Sinn Fein's* resort to force in every sphere and form reflected frightfulness not unlike that of General Dyer at Amritsar. If Ireland might regain her freedom that way, India could not for a century because her people (were) not built in the manner of other nations.²⁷ Violence in the Indian context was simply not practical, said Gandhi. Therefore, *Sinn Fein* Ireland in 1920 was Gandhi's classic model of 'brute force', a model he was determined India had to avoid at all costs. Ireland had, in despair, taken to the method of violence, which was a mistake. Unhappy about this, Gandhi was quick to point out that his non-co-operation had no similarity with the non-co-operation movement of Ireland, though the motive was nearly the same. The use of the sword, or force or abuse against an opponent was morally equally culpable, and they all amounted to violence. In India, they

could not use any of these devices, for it was against the nature and religion of Indians to abuse an opponent.²⁸ Gandhi wished that the struggle for Irish independence had ended without violence. Amidst all the violence, he paid tribute to Arthur Griffith, “the architect of non-co-operation with the English in Ireland in his own preparation of India’s plan for non-co-operation.”²⁹

The magic of non-violence seemed to work the miracle he had hoped for and claimed for.³⁰ Things went smoothly for a while as Gandhian non-co-operators took cudgels against the British government by boycotting foreign cloth, picketing shops selling foreign cloth and liquor, and making bonfires of it. Students left schools and colleges, and many lawyers gave up their practice. Gandhi stressed that instead of repeating Irish history, non-cooperators were learning from the living example of Ireland the art of spilling their own blood without spilling that of their opponents. In fact, it was not the blood that the Irishmen had taken which had given them what appeared to be their liberty, but the gallons of blood that they had willingly given themselves. It was not the fear of losing more lives that compelled a reluctant offer from England, but it was the shame of the further imposition of agony upon a people who loved liberty above everything else. Gandhi felt the magnitude of the Irish sacrifice had been the deciding factor in Ireland gaining its freedom in 1921. England had yielded when she could no longer bear the sight of blood pouring out of thousands of Irish arteries. Gandhi knew it was not legal subtleties, discussions on academic justice, or resolutions of councils and assemblies that would give Indians what they wanted. He advised that Indians should “have to stagger humanity even as ... Ireland has been obliged to.”³¹

Gandhi’s noble and unique ideas of anti-colonial resistance earned him praise and admiration in different parts of the world, from the most radical to the most conservative. In fact, Professor Kosambi wrote from Cambridge, Massachusetts, that from the time of the Boston Tea Party and the Battle of Bunker Hill up to the Sinn Fein Movement of Ireland, all the nations on earth had employed force as the only weapon to liberate themselves from domestic and foreign tyranny: but it was left to India under Gandhi’s leadership to discover a new means for freedom which is, as the Nation (New York) puts it “a secret not learned in centuries of warfare.”³² The incident of Chauri Chaura on 5 February 1922 put the clock back. Gandhi reacted by suspending Non-Co-operation indefinitely on 12 February 1922. Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy reacted by remarking in the House of Commons on 14 February 1922 that it was fortunate that Gandhi led the agitation and not by a de Valera.³³

Gandhi was arrested along with other leaders on 18 March 1922. He felt Indians would have to return to their moorings before they could go straight ahead again. Despite his warnings, the Indians seemed to follow the Irish course slavishly and wished “heaven help them.” The aura of the Irish model receded into the background for a while for the majority of the Congressmen following the violence associated with the Irish Civil War. Ireland torn apart became a “tragic lesson” to all those who wanted to follow the Irish model. After his release from prison on 5 February 1924, Gandhi became pessimistic regarding the famous triple boycott against British courts, schools, and Councils. He turned to Ireland and said he would organize panchayats or courts of arbitration, resembling *Sinn Fein* Tribunals, by which suits would be settled outside the King’s writ.³⁴ Incidentally, Arthur Griffith had wanted the Irishmen to boycott English Courts of Law and submit their differences to Irish Courts of Arbitration to save “an enormous sum of money which was utilized to keep up a corrupt Judicial System.”³⁵ The setting up of Courts of Law and Arbitration Courts by the *Dail Eireann*, had been highly successful in peacefully transferring land and suppressing unlawful invasions of property in Ireland’s bucolic landscape.

Parnellism: Land War, Obstructionism in Councils and Gandhi

Soon after the adoption of the Non-co-operation resolution, Motilal Ghose, the editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, implored Gandhi to think of a common cry for the masses that would appeal to their heart directly such as police *zulum* or the pitiless character of police administration. He cited the case of Ireland, where the Irish leaders failed to rouse the Irish masses till Parnell raised the cry of land, which affected every Irishman so that it became a common grievance, and the Land League that was formed became the nucleus of the Irish nationality.³⁶ Gandhi had reservations and replied that he would think the matter over. On 21 October 1879, Michael Davitt founded the Irish National Land League. Under the presidentship of Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891), in 1881, the League called for a campaign of passive resistance of small tenant farmers by withholding rents to British absentee landlords. It demanded the creation of peasant proprietorship and the entire abolition of the landlord system. Prompted by bad harvests, starvation, deaths, and evictions, the Land War (1879-1882) began with frequent violent confrontations between peasants and police. Parnell openly preached ‘social ostracism’ that comprised a boycott of men who took over the farms of others and English land agents who sought eviction or carried out eviction orders, such as Captain Charles Boycott. The outrages carried out by Irish

peasants, such as moonlighting, maiming of cattle, and attacks on land agents, saw a rapid fall in evictions.

Parnell's other method, which became a subject of debate before implementing the non-co-operation movement, was his policy of obstructionism. Vithalbai Patel wanted to substitute the method of opposition to government purely and simply within constitutional limits, meaning a policy of Irish obstructionism.³⁷ Incidentally, Parnell and Joseph Gillis Biggar began a systematic campaign of wrecking government legislation from 1877, which came to be known as Obstructionist tactics. They destroyed several bills by talking them out and moving amendments.³⁸ In one instance, they forced the House of Commons to sit continuously for forty-five hours, a sitting unparalleled in parliamentary history. C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru opined that Council entry was to be sought, not so much to leave the seats vacant, as to use them to apply pressure best calculated to give the office to popular will. Gandhi believed that 'the disciplined obstruction of the Irish members made practically no impression upon the House of Commons, as the Irishmen did not get the Home Rule they wanted.'³⁹ He reiterated that "Ireland gained absolutely nothing through the policy of harassment and obstruction," even though it had an able leader like Parnell to fight for it.⁴⁰ The Irish Home Rule Bill (that demanded that Ireland be allowed to manage her internal affairs and leave external affairs and trade to Westminster) could not be passed during Parnell's lifetime in 1886. Gandhi further contended that the situation created by the government (in India) had become so intolerable that the only course left open to a self-respecting person was non-co-operation i.e., complete abstention.⁴¹ Entry into the Councils was tantamount to participation in violence as Councils were established by a government that was based on violence.⁴² Gandhi failed to see the point of entering the Councils merely to stage a walkout. Gandhi made it clear that Irish obstructionist tactics were totally inconsistent with the true spirit of non-co-operation. He said the boycott of Councils demoralized most of those who went there.⁴³

Once the Non-Co-operation Movement was suspended, Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das felt that now was the opportunity to utilize their legal and constitutional talents in opposing government resolutions through council entry. They established the Swarajya Party in 1923. In a special September session of the Indian National Congress in Delhi in 1923, Das's scheme was given tacit assent by Gandhiji, lodged in the Poona Jail, and received unqualified support from Congress.⁴⁴ Gandhi accepted council entry as a settled fact, a necessary evil, and devoted his efforts to securing co-operation between the two camps—non-changers and Pro-changers. The Swarajya Party remained a

separate organization within the Congress. It pledged to achieve the objects to which the Mahatma had deep linkage, although at the cost of a certain deviation from his policy. In the Belgaum session of the Indian National Congress (1924) over which Gandhi presided, once again, Gandhi pointed out that he did not share the Swarajya Party's view about Council entry. However, he acknowledged that the Swarajya Party represented, if not a majority, at least a strong and growing minority in Congress and so must be given financial and executive authority and responsibility in the framing and prosecuting of their policy.⁴⁵ The Swarajya Party aimed to bring deadlock to the legislature and overthrow the dyarchy in the provinces through their obstruction method. This was reflected in refusing supplies and rejecting budgets proposed by the government from 1924 to 1930. Among its achievements were the reduction of the tax on salt, abolition of cotton excise duty, and import duty on sulfur. It successfully opposed all proposals for additional taxation and "unpopular legislation;" and was compared to the *Sinn Fein* Party of Ireland by *Capital* of Calcutta, the organ of British commercial interests.⁴⁶

In 1930, Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience Movement by using his unique technique of breaking the salt law (Dandi Satyagraha, 12 March- 6 April) by picking up salt from the seashore. This was followed by a boycott of foreign cloth and picketing of liquor shops and opium dens. Attacks were made on all symbols of government authority such as the railway stations, law courts, police stations, and municipal buildings;⁴⁷ and *social boycott* of detractors (in this case, merchants and dealers who had flouted the foreign cloth boycott) was analogous to what happened in Ireland several years ago. In 1931, while attending the Second Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi thought it would be a tragedy not to visit Ireland. He was delighted when the *Fianna Fail* (Republican Party) in Ireland invited Gandhi to visit Dublin. Arrangements were made to take care of his few personal wants, and the friends who were keen to extend the invitation to him were anxious that all sections of the community, representing all classes, would join in making the reception a national rather than a sectional reception.⁴⁸ To the disappointment of his eager Irish admirers, Gandhi had to drop his contemplated visit to Ireland due to 'peremptory summons' from India, where he returned in December 1931 and was almost immediately arrested.

Terence MacSwiney: Mastering Hunger as a Political Weapon and Gandhi

Terence MacSwiney (born in Cork on 28 March 1879) was an Irish playwright, author, and politician. He was one of the founders of the

Cork Brigade of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 and was President of the Cork branch of *Sinn Fein*. During the Easter Rising in April 1916, he did not actively engage his forces in Cork and Kerry. Following the rising, he served two prison terms, one in 1916 and the other in 1917. In November 1917, he was arrested in Cork for wearing an Irish Volunteers uniform. Inspired by the example of Thomas Ashe, he went on a hunger strike three days before his release. He was elected as *Sinn Fein* representative of Cork in the *Dail Eireann* in the 1918 general elections and became Lord Mayor of Cork in March 1920 following the murder of his friend Tomas MacCurtain. In his inaugural speech, MacSwiney remarked, "It is not they who can inflict the most, but they who can suffer the most, who will conquer."⁴⁹ On 12 August, 1920, Terence MacSwiney and many others were arrested at City Hall, Cork, for possessing seditious articles, documents, and a cipher key. MacSwiney never engaged in violent activities. Following his prosecution, MacSwiney declared at the court that he had decided the term of his detention and would be free, alive or dead, within a month.⁵⁰ The British government in 1920 was determined that if any prisoner persisted in his hunger strike, he would be allowed to die otherwise, the army and police in Ireland would be encouraged to revolt.

MacSwiney's gradual progress towards death became an important world event. MacSwiney led a spiritual life throughout his hunger strike while Irish men and women kneeled in prayer for him in the churches and streets of Cork. MacSwiney took daily communion and read from the Bible while citing scripture and invoking Christ's example in his public statements.⁵¹ MacSwiney's doctrine was 'triumph through endurance.' Towards the end, MacSwiney developed scurvy but refused to drink fruit juice. He fell into a delirium and slipped into unconsciousness before death overtook him. His body was sent to Cork for the burial, where thousands of mourners paid their respect.

As news filtered to India regarding MacSwiney's martyrdom, a meeting over which Gandhi presided was held one evening on the Sabarmati sands to express sorrow over MacSwiney's death. His martyrdom was cited as inspirational by Gandhi, who paid 'high tribute' to his 'noble qualities' of having died 'not believing in violence.'⁵² Gandhi argued that rather than the violence the British could counter in kind, "it is the magnitude of the Irish sacrifice which has been the deciding factor." He admired Terence MacSwiney but felt it was wrong on MacSwiney's part to resort to fast to secure his release. Interestingly, Gandhi did not publish a poem composed by a brave Irish girl, eulogizing MacSwiney, which Gandhi had received from Sarojini Naidu, as he felt that this fasting would set a bad

example.⁵³ Gandhi often found hunger-strikers to be morally wanting because they were motivated to fast for material or self-centered ends, such as access to media, political prisoner status, or release.⁵⁴ He did not justify the hunger strike in an ethical sense. For Gandhi, his fasts were acts of self-suffering and self-purification and meant self-denial and not means of coercion. They aimed to remove any hint of malice in him and convert the feeling into love. Fasting meant deliberate pain for the greater good. It was meant to encourage discipline among his followers and purge them of all negative emotions like aggressiveness, selfishness, and sensory impulses. Also, fasting could be resorted to against a person whom one loved for a change of heart and not against a tyrant, unlike the Irish hunger-strikers who mastered hunger as a political weapon against a tyrannical British government. Like Terence MacSwiney, Gandhi's fasts involved praying and meditation.

Some years later, the question of MacSwiney cropped up again in a diatribe between the anonymous revolutionary and Gandhi in the summer of 1925. One of the questions posed by the revolutionary was based on an earlier description by Gandhi of Terence MacSwiney as a "spotless lamb" who, in reality, was to the last an advocate of conspiracy, bloodshed, and terrorism, and maintained his ideas expressed in his famous book *Principles of Freedom*.⁵⁵ Incidentally, the *Principles of Freedom* is a collection of his writings on various themes MacSwiney contributed to the newspaper *Irish Freedom* during 1911-1912. A perusal of the book shows that some of MacSwiney's thoughts had similarities to Gandhi's philosophy. In one of the chapters titled Moral Force, MacSwiney writes, "Call it what we will, moral courage, moral strength, moral force; we all recognize the great virtue of mind and heart that keeps a man unconquerable above every power of brute strength....."⁵⁶ Gandhi's belief in *satyagraha* (truth force) based on the superior moral power of the protester comes very near to this.

Another instance is when MacSwiney's writes, "...retaliation is the vicious resource of the tyrant and the slave; that magnanimity is the splendour of manhood; and he will remember that he strikes not at his enemy's life, but at his misdeed, that in destroying the misdeed, he makes not only for his freedom but even for the enemy's regeneration."⁵⁷ It is well known that Gandhi's non-co-operation was not directed against any individual but rather the brutal and oppressive colonial system. Through love and self-suffering, Gandhi hoped to change his opponent's heart. *Satyagraha* won not by defeating but by winning over the enemy.

The revolutionary demanded an explanation from Gandhi that if he called Terence MacSwiney a "spotless lamb", would he be ready

to use the same term for the revolutionary Gopinath Shaha. Gandhi apologized as he did not know enough of MacSwiney's life to give an opinion. However, if what the revolutionary alleged about the Irishman as being an advocate of "conspiracy, bloodshed and terrorism" was true, then he had the same objections as advanced in his booklet, *Indian Home Rule*. Gandhi further said that MacSwiney's fast was an error and that Gandhi did not justify fasting. The revolutionary most probably had read MacSwiney's book thoroughly, unlike Gandhi as in one portion of the book, MacSwiney expressed his feelings regarding the independence of a nation which was crucial and so justified war, "that must be faced and blood must be shed, as a terrible necessity ... as freedom must be had at any cost of suffering; the soul is greater than the body....And he must make no peace till freedom is assured, for the moral plague that eats up a people whose independence is lost is more calamitous than any physical rending of limb and limb."⁵⁸ Thus, it is apparent that MacSwiney was not a violent man, but he advocated war as a last resort for securing freedom. His lofty ideals of moral force and regeneration of the enemy through love must have endeared him to Gandhi.

Throughout his lifetime, Gandhi observed eighteen fasts between February 1914 and January 1948. During this period, fast became a central weapon in Gandhi's attempts to represent the trials of the idealized Indian nation upon his person, a confrontational practice complementing his more mundane dietary "experiments with truth" publicized in his various writings.⁵⁹ In his lifetime, Gandhi undertook four fasts unto death (in 1918, 1932, 1947 and 1948). Both MacSwiney's hunger strike and Gandhi's fast did not threaten others with personal harm. Even though in 1920 Gandhi did not support MacSwiney's hunger strike, he embarked on a fast unto death bordering on a hunger strike in 1932 as a weapon of coercion, something he would vehemently deny. Gandhi reflected on the differences between hunger-striking and his practice of public fasting. If hunger-striking was understood as a political weapon, he envisioned fasting as a bodily epistemology, a way of knowing and perceiving.⁶⁰ By the supreme exercise of self-denial, Gandhi's fast was the ultimate test of the *satyagrahis*. The borderline between a fast and a hunger strike is blurred. Fasting is often used to make a political statement, to protest, or to bring awareness to a cause. A hunger strike is a method of non-violent resistance in which participants fast as an act of political protest, or to provoke feelings of guilt, or to achieve a goal such as a policy of change.

Gandhi embarked on a fast in 1932 for about six days, as the British Prime Minister granted separate electorates to the untouchables

in addition to the right to contest seats in the general constituencies in the Communal Award of 1932. Gandhi wondered if the Government would release him and let him die outside prison, or “perhaps they will let me die in jail, as in the case of Terence MacSwiney.”⁶¹ On 18 August 1932, Gandhi wrote to the Premier that the only way he could resist the Prime Minister’s decision after that was by declaring “a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind save water with or without salt and soda.”⁶² The ‘untouchable’ leader Babasaheb Ambedkar condemned the fast as a ‘political stunt’, and ‘a vile and wicked act.’⁶³ Gandhi made it clear that the fast was not meant to coerce the British but to sting the Hindu conscience and inspire action.⁶⁴

The fast commenced in Yeravda prison at noon on 20 September. Gandhi sipped water mixed with a little salt intermittently, unlike Terence MacSwiney. His blood pressure went up. Songs were sung. Prayers said. As his health went downhill, the prison doctor reported that Gandhi, who had no fat in his body, might suffer from paralysis as his muscles could suffer a possible attack. This fast definitely exerted considerable pressure on his intended targets, Ambedkar and the British government, who did not want to have Gandhi’s death on their consciences. The demand for a separate electorate was dropped with the Yeravda Agreement on 26 September 1932; in return, the ‘untouchables’ received far more reserved seats than the Award had granted. The fast was broken by drinking orange juice an hour after Gandhi received the document.

Terence MacSwiney and Gandhi’s mastering of hunger invoked feelings of anxiety, anger, and despair among their countrymen, which were triggered by their self-imposed suffering and acted as weapons in the redressal of political grievances. The provenance of both forms can be traced to ancient Ireland and India, where, as an ascetic act, saints brought pressure to bear upon kings and Gods and influenced their followers. It is quite evident that Gandhi’s fast of 1932 was an act of opposition to the colonial government as well as to the leaders of the depressed classes. As an Untouchable by birth, Ambedkar resented what he experienced of Gandhi’s paternalistic manner, and during the 1930s, he became increasingly critical of Gandhi’s whole approach to the issue, feeling that it provided no adequate means for the successful assertion of his community.⁶⁵ There is no doubt that Gandhi’s fasting unto death in 1932 bore similarity to the hunger strike in its visceral and emotional communicative power, like in Ireland.

Conclusion

Thus, Gandhi’s ideas regarding the adoption of the Irish models

changed over time. He was greatly influenced by the creed of self-reliance and non-violence, as propagated by Arthur Griffith's *Sinn Fein* Policy. But, with the unfolding of events in Ireland with the rather violent Irish War of Independence (1919-1921), sanctioned by the *Sinn Fein* Party, and the Irish Civil War (1922-1923), Gandhi was filled with revulsion. *Sinn Fein* had become identified with violence and bloodshed, attempting to gain its end by terrorism. It spelled destruction, a cry far from its constructive agenda. Gandhi was against adopting Parnell's land war, identified with violence. Parnell's no-rent campaign could not be implemented in the Indian context, as it would have meant alienating the rich and middle-class peasants/landlords who formed the bulwark of the nationalist struggle. Gandhi had to accept council entry and obstructionism after the abrupt withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement. In 1920, he could not support MacSwiney's means to an end, but he contradicted himself with his own 'coercive' fast in 1932.

Unlike most of the earliest politicians who wanted hegemony of a nationalist ideology built on ideas borrowed from the West, Gandhi argued that the ideology must be rooted in India and its ancient civilization.⁶⁶ Gandhi had great reverence for the indomitable spirit of the Irish people. However, as Ireland's role as a model of European nationalism was fraught with complexities, Gandhi felt it was absolutely implausible, unsuitable, and illogical to emulate the Irish models in India, a "country so vast, so hopelessly divided and with the masses so deeply sunk in pauperism and so fearlessly terror-stricken."⁶⁷ But the 1942 Quit India Movement that earned the label of a violent rebellion clearly indicated that the Irish example was not a fading memory but very much alive in the minds of some Indians. It is interesting to note that on 2 August 1942, in an article written by Mahadev Desai, which had appeared in the *Harijan*,⁶⁸ Desai hoped that the Indians might improve upon the Irish example by using less violence and attaining quicker and fuller success. Consequently, the Quit India Movement witnessed a large swathe of governmental property such as railway and police stations, post offices; telephone and telegraph wires, government buildings, and bridges being attacked damaged, and destroyed; sabotage and killing of police officials and informers reminiscent of the Irish War of Independence. Thus, no matter how hard Gandhi tried, one of the profound ironies of Gandhi's non-violent tactics was this essential and symbiotic relationship with violence.⁶⁹

Gandhi did magnificent work in the movement that won India independence, but he never succeeded in winning the Indian people to non-violence.⁷⁰ When freedom came to India in 1947, it left Gandhi

cold as he felt that “our way was non-violent only superficially: our hearts were violent...the violence nursed within has broken out in a way least expected. Heaven knows where it will lead us.”⁷¹ Ironically, Eamon de Valera thought quite differently when he greeted the birth of the new India in 1947. He remarked to Sir Benegal Narsing Rau, Indian Constituent Assembly’s constitutional adviser, “I used to think that Mahatma Gandhi’s creed of non-violence was a mistake, but now when I contrast the way wherein your country has achieved its freedom with that of other countries, I think you had divine guidance.”⁷² This was the greatest compliment an Irish revolutionary could have paid to Mahatma Gandhi.

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But what did Lanza Del Vasto see in Gandhi? The Two Dichotomies of his Conversion to Non-Violence

Antonino Drago

ABSTRACT

Among the many journeys to India in search of spiritual enlightenment, Lanza del Vasto's journey in 1937-38 was one of the most famous. He was motivated by his conviction that only Gandhi could solve the recurrent scourge of wars. His sojourn there and his acceptance as a disciple brought about a conversion to Gandhi's non-violence that was so deep that it transformed his fundamental beliefs and values that were derived from his cultural and spiritual background, even that of Western civilization - although he maintained his Catholic faith; however, inspired by the teaching of non-violence he reformed his religiosity just as Gandhi had reformed his Hindu religiosity. Eventually, the question in the title is answered: Lanza del Vasto implicitly saw a radical change in his life according to the choices on two dichotomies that were alternatives to those of the negative social institutions of Western civilization, first the modern war.

Key words: Conversion, Catholicism, Gandhi, Non-Violence, Lanza del Vasto

1. The travelers search for spiritual enlightenment

BEFORE TACKLING THE question in the title, I will make some preliminary observations concerning the following subjects: journeys to India that result in conversion, Lanza del Vasto's (LdV) journey to India, his vision of Gandhi's personality, his conversion to Gandhi's non-violence and the nature of LdV's motivation to found his life anew. They will all elucidate LdV's subsequent reform of Christian religiosity and his application of non-violence to the Western context.

A journey can have the most varied purposes. One of the most

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interesting purposes is to connect the external journey to distant and fascinating places with an inner journey that leads to the discovery of unexpected openings in life, leading to a decision to completely change a person's direction in life. This can be called a journey of conversion.

For many Westerners, a journey to India represented the possibility of entering a fascinating "other" society rich in five millennia of spiritual experiences. The purpose of their journeys was to transcend, or deny, or abandon, or rediscover Western society. There were many such journeys in the last century. Among the many travelers, I remember those I know: some monks (Bede Griffith, Monchanin, etc.), Madeleine Slade (daughter of an English admiral; she chose to live in the service of Gandhi), the mathematician André Weil, the cybernetic Norbert Wiener, the Beatles, the journalist Tiziano Terziani (plus the planned, but not carried out, journeys by the pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer¹ and the catholic Ernesto Buonaiuti).

Such a traveller left his place in society and the civilization in which he was born to enter a completely new world. During his conversion process, the native people became an *ecclesia* (= religious community), his meetings with masters (some masters are sought after because they are famous, others are unexpected masters) a receive divine grace, his prayers, his intense hope of finding answers to his problems, the performing ritual exercises his frequent trips within the great territory of India to meet important people and the inner discoveries his numerous visits to unknown and fascinating places.

2. Lanza del Vasto's early life

After graduating in philosophy, Lanza del Vasto (LdV) (1901-1981) did not choose any particular social role. Poet and artist, he went from one job to another without committing himself to anyone, or to any of the various women he knew, or to a definite project. In the 1930s, he took a number of important decisions: to be a vegetarian, out of the horror he had always felt at the killing of animals, to be anti-fascist because of the vulgar arrogance exhibited by fascist dictatorship, and anti-militarist because he was always opposed to the killing of another human being (to the point of declaring in a letter to his mother his choice to be a conscientious objector even at the cost of being executed by the Army)².

As an anti-militarist, he watched the preparations for a new, second world war helplessly. The philosopher Hegel taught that war must cleanse humanity of decadent peoples so that the Absolute Spirit can direct history with only the strongest ones. In the 1930s, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein exchanged letters on the problem of why there have always been wars throughout mankind's history, but they

did not come to the same conclusions.³ For LdV, it was a crucial problem because he realized that, although he was a cultured philosopher and anti-militarist, he had no answers. Finally, he decided to go to India to obtain an answer from Gandhi, who he considered the only person in world that could solve the recurrent scourge of wars and become one of his many disciples. He was the only Western disciple – apart from Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn) - and the only Catholic disciple of Gandhi.

3. The experiences of conversion in India recounted by Hermann Hesse and Lanza del Vasto

Among the many travel experiences, some have been narrated in detail by the travelers themselves. The most famous are: 1) Hermann Hesse's journey to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1911; it inspired him to write the book *Siddhartha* in 1922, which sold millions of copies; 2) LdV's journey to India (1937-38), recounted in the book *Pelèrinage aux sources*, published in France in 1943 (hundreds of thousands of copies, translated into seven languages, four publishers in Italy). These two books tell of journeys leading to the most profound conversions. The title of the first book, *Siddhartha*, means having made (= *artha*) an adventurous journey that has reached a goal (= *siddha*); Hesse conceived it as an interpretation of Buddha's conversion through the personal life of one of many potential Buddhas. The second book deals with a journey motivated by the desire to avert an imminent world war by discovering the source of a millenary spiritual life, which Gandhi renewed at that time. Unlike Hesse, LdV's journey was real. He travelled throughout India (including a pilgrimage on foot to the sources of the Ganges); he became his disciple. But after some months, he felt a call to return to Europe with a mission to fulfill: to teach non-violence, and he found Gandhian communities.

In the following section, we will examine only the second book.

Tab. 1: OBJECTIVE PRESENTATION OF PILGRIMAGE
TO THE SOURCES BY LANZA DEL VASTO (1943)

A look at the editions of the book	
<i>1st edition</i>	1943
<i>Language</i>	French, later translated into seven languages
<i>Number of copies</i>	Hundreds of thousands
<i>Index</i>	8 chapters of approx. 35 pages in each one

A look at the objective content of the book	
<i>Type of story</i>	A life experience
<i>Date of the journey</i>	1937-38
<i>Duration</i>	Two years
<i>Topic</i>	Quest to become a disciple of Gandhi
<i>Protagonists</i>	LdV, Gandhi and the various masters, plus the Indian people
<i>Path</i>	(See next map of trips, even on foot, aimed at various destinations)
<i>Environment</i>	Popular places, Gandhi communities and those of other masters, Himalayas
<i>Another world</i>	Gandhi and India as anti-Western civilization

4. Lanza del Vasto's motivation for going to India

Forty years later, LdV presented his trip as follows (the translations below from the French are mine):

When, in the autumn of 1936, I left for India, I was not looking for India. Unlike many others, I did not feel a particular attraction for its famous spirituality, for the many profusions and confusions I saw in it.[...]

LdV had a degree in philosophy, but he could not answer a problem that tormented him:

War is a scourge made by the hand of man: how is it that the hand of man cannot prevent itself from waging it?...

... What if they called me back now for the war in Abyssinia [= Ethiopia, which Italy wanted to conquer in order to have one more colony in Africa]? [...] My answer is absolutely no! [...] But, my] escape is not an answer to the question, no remedy for evil [...] what I seek in vain is *a doctrine of just Peace* [...]

What is missing is a method [...] a new way, a humane way of resolving human conflicts.

Who practices it and who teaches it? - Only one, Gandhi. [...] It is he who achieves the completion of Christ's teaching on this point.⁴

After his departure from Europe, during the ship voyage he writes the following words in his diary:

45. They believe that I am going to India for adventure, but I am trying to get out of the adventure [of past my life], to proceed in the truth. *I go to this*

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unknown land as a returning home. Great maternal and vegetal land.

I return to the sources of our eternity.

49. Pilgrim yes, but I'm not going to Jerusalem. There is only the desert there. The voice crying in the desert [of Saint John Baptizer] is silent. There is only a tomb [of Jesus] there, where the remains of my Lord are not. My Lord left nothing on earth. He's entirely gone to heaven. From there he pours rain and sun on the good and the bad, reigns over the continents, sees all races in the same way.

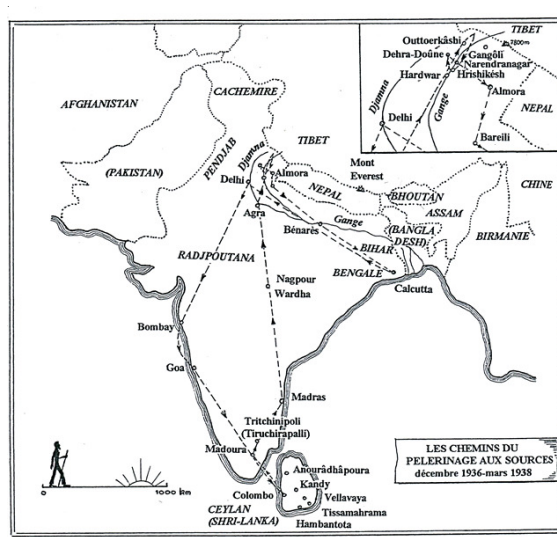
My Lord said, "Let the dead bury the dead." My Lord said, "The Spirit blows where it wills." I turned to the side where I thought it was blowing. Where my faith obliged me, where my thoughts showed me, very clearly, that it was blowing.

I go to Wardhâ, to Gandhi's. My Lord said, "All who cry out Lord, Lord" will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever hears my word and does it, he is my brother and my house

The one I will follow resembles my Lord in everything. He wears only a cloak and does not wear money on his belt. He doesn't care what he will eat tomorrow and what clothes he will wear. He suffered tribulations from hunger and thirst for justice. He turned his left cheek as they struck his right cheek. He came to serve, like my Lord. I am grateful to him for not using my Lord's name to have authority over men.⁵

5. Lanza del Vasto's journey in India

Map of LdV's journey to India⁶



His biographer points to these main events of his journey:

In India [...] the itinerary will become a fifteen-month pilgrimage, almost in the most material sense of the term, if pilgrimage, *per-egrinare* [in Latin] means rural itinerary, through fields and countryside ...

It took no less than an excursion to the end of the world, a journey to seven thousand meters above sea level and a crossing of an entire continent, struggling evangelically under Gandhi's leadership, to get an answer [to his] prayer [for his own conversion]. It will be a fulfillment and above all a redemption....

But the pilgrimage will have several stages: the successful encounter with the world of India, almost another planet, from his arrival in January 1937. He becomes a disciple of Gandhi at the end of January 1937. The *coup de grace* [of his conversion] at Easter: April 1937. In June 1937 he has a vision near the headwaters of the sacred river. From July 1937 to February 1938: Initiation into the [at that time] secret disciplines of yoga.

A simple but significant stage in Egypt on April 2, 1938. And then the march in the desert of Syria: November 1938. Jerusalem and Bethlehem: Christmas 1938. Lake Tiberias: January 1939. Finally, a retreat on Mount Athos: Easter 1939. But three months later, after two and a half years of almost incessant travel for this new "man walking in the wind", the outbreak [in Italy, June 10th 1940] of war!

There is nothing inhuman about this man; he will never want to be "too human" and it is this that will give the captivating and surprising charm to the stories of his journey. In India as elsewhere ... he approaches his neighbour *man to man*, with friendship, openness of mind and heart. A Christian, he will cast a loving, understanding, unprejudiced gaze on the Hindu world: the original attitude of this pilgrim is a charity of intelligence, lucid but benevolent, almost unique of its kind. Twenty-thirty years in advance, Lanza is the precursor of many future ecumenisms and dialogues.⁷

Table 2: LANZA DEL VASTO'S EXPERIENCE OF CONVERSION

<i>Stages of the spiritual path</i>	Due to a theft suffered dispossession of goods, life with yoga masters, community life with Gandhi, a call to a mission (to found Western communities)
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<i>Link travel-conversion</i>	Gandhian village life (= best social life), Journey to the Himalayas (leading him to a complete Christian conversion). Return to the West for a social application
<i>Masters</i>	Gandhi and other Indian masters
<i>Episodes of his conversion</i>	Gandhi's dialogues/conversations of mutual acquaintance – A call during the pilgrimage to the Himalayas – Conversation with Gandhi about his return to the West
<i>Conversion</i>	In the year 1924 “from the head up”; in the year 1937: “from the head down”; he found the sources of the spiritual life
<i>Faith/society</i>	Project of applying his renewed faith to build Gandhian communities within Western society
<i>Conclusion of the travel / conversion</i>	Return in Europe with a mission to be accomplished
<i>Purpose of the book</i>	To enable Westerners share Gandhi's revolutionary experience in order to found Gandhian communities
<i>Ultimate purpose</i>	Re-foundation of Christianity in the light of Gandhi's non-violence

6. Lanza del Vasto's conversion

A conversion is, first of all, a personal event, but it is also a pilot experience for others and becomes a testament to a religious reform that, if subsequently shared by many, may develop into a historical reform and a well-established religion, also influencing religious and, more generally, social institutions. Hence, the importance of a conversion goes beyond a single person. The following section will examine a personal conversion that broadens to social consequences.

LdV's conversion took place within his own religion, Catholicism, but he was inspired by the reform of the Hindu religion initiated by

Gandhi, as he describes in the book *Return to the Source*. During his journey in India, he followed the best spiritual Hindu teachers of his time; under their teachings, he understood his religion in a universal way. In particular, LdV became a disciple of Gandhi (who called him *Shantidas* or peace servant), and then, in agreement with what he learned about non-violence from his teacher, he initiated a process of conversion that consisted in a re-discovery of the original Christianity, by going beyond the many deviations that it had undergone during its two thousand year history.

A description of LdV's conversion is difficult because it occurred outside the initiation rites of any religious group. First, let us attempt this description by defining the cultural framework in which it took place, a religion.

It is an extremely difficult problem to define a religion. I define it in a way that is as broad as possible so that it even represents a mere spirituality: the "*I-world-God* relationships".

Now let us focus our attention on the notion of "conversion". This word also has a variety of meanings. One may define it as a determined choice that resolves a profound and radical conflict within oneself. However, the conflict has now, in turn, to be defined. Galtung has defined a conflict as the conjunction of three dimensions of human experience: Assumptions (or principles), objective Behaviour, and inner Contradiction.⁸ I apply this definition by stating that a conversion is caused by (others' or his own) behaviour B (in the case of LdV: the whole experience of the journey in India), which generates such strong emotions that it generates an inner contradiction, C; which the person solves by radically changing the deep motivations A of his life.

Gandhi converted himself from both his traditional religiosity and the Western world, which he had identified himself with at the beginning of his studies in London. Some Hindu teachers and Christian friends certainly inspired him, and it was occasioned in his life as a lawyer in South Africa when he was a victim of bloody offenses and physical aggression (C). He did not want to modify the basic contents of the Hindu religion but assigned a primary value to one of its teachings, non-violence, which became his fundamental motivation (A); it then worked as an enlightening guide for radically renewing, through his "experiments with the Truth" (B), traditional religiosity so deeply as to include social and political involvement. In such a way, he performed a personal conversion which suggested a *complete reform of his Hindu religiosity not only at a personal but at a social-political level*.

His sense of impotence characterized LdV's conversion in the face of the contemporary rush of Western countries towards a new World

War (C); his extraordinary experiences during his journey in India and his discipleship with Gandhi (B) led him to espouse Gandhi's non-violent philosophy (A), leading him to accomplish a deep renewal of both his religiosity and his entire social life.

7. But what did Lanza del Vasto recount of his meeting with Gandhi?

One can list all LdV's descriptions of Gandhi's personality to answer this question.⁹ But he never gives a precise and clear answer (just as he did not succeed in establishing a single definition of non-violence, although he has tried dozens of times, also rejecting his previous definitions.¹⁰

However, in one of his books, he gives an important suggestion. Addressing his mother, who shortly before she had confided to him that in her youth she too had had the desire to go to India, he sums up his journey-conversion in these terms:

That trip was like a great love.
O mother, my mother! How poor were our great dreams compared to the beauties, the greatneses that I have seen!
And how great was the encounter with the truth, in comparison with the beauty and grandeur of the banks and landscapes, jungles and peoples, rivers and festivals, temples and peaks!
I expected a lot from Gandhi, I found more. The thought, like the dream, was surpassed.
A way out of misery, abuse, servitude, revolt and war;
justice as mathematical and musical exactness in acts;
unity of life in simplicity;
the whiteness of the wise: the inside as well as the outside;
non-violence or rejection of all that disturbs the harmonious order of things.
And then I met India and its inner life that I was not looking for, on the banks of the Ganges and on the paths of the Himalayas:
self-knowledge, self-possession: the conditions for giving of self self-giving and loving one's neighbour as oneself;
inner unity: condition for faith or knowledge of the One.
all this helped me powerfully to complete my conversion to Christian Catholicism.¹¹

The reader of this declaration understands that these words circumscribe the entire message received by LdV from Gandhi, but the reader also understands that LdV expressed it enthusiastically more than after a mature reflection. From this description, it is not easy to extract a simple formula because *i*) LdV indicates several (13) characteristic features; *ii*) they include a repetition (third and

penultimate ones); *iii*) it is not clear whether each feature represents what Gandhi suggested to him and led him to his conversion or what is a universal teaching.

However, one obtains a first answer by selecting the six most pertinent words representing aspects of Gandhi's life: "self-knowledge...", "inner unity...", "unity of life in simplicity", "non-violence". "justice as exactness in acts", "way out of the scourges"; and then, making some minor changes in the terms, their overall meaning is made clearer.

"Self-knowledge, inner unity, simplicity, non-violence, justice, a way out of social scourges".

We have now obtained a synthetic formula of what LdV saw in Gandhi.

8. Intuition of two basic dimensions by both Lanza del Vasto and Gandhi

However, this list of six aspects raises a crucial problem. They represent Gandhi's reform of Hindu religiosity, which resulted from his conversion. But, how to define Gandhi's personal conversion? What *intellectual categories* can we employ to define it? No traditional Western ones are possible, because Gandhi's religion and civilization were radically different; moreover, the basis of his conversion, non-violence, had no corresponding concept in Western culture; and finally, his non-violence led him to connect religiosity with social and political life, whereas in the West such a connection had ceased to exist for several centuries with the separation of Church and State. Hence, what categories are suitable for defining a conversion that embraces both the inner aspects of his life and social and political aspects?

We find an answer in three LdV's texts, written after his meeting with Gandhi (and not in a poem that he wrote on Gandhi before his trip in India; see fn. no. 1). In his first work in 1950 he states:

The divine character of intelligence [of life] is marked by the notions of *Infinity* and *Perfection* [of the *organization*]¹²

About this point he wrote even more clearly in 1954; there, he described the goal of a total conversion:

And knowledge [of life], although fallen [owing to original sin], preserves the two signs of its divine dignity.

The "Cord of Truth" (to speak as the *Gita*) is stretched between two poles: And the one is *Unity* [i.e. organization¹³ achieving its best result].

The other is *Infinity*.

Every operation and every affirmation of Knowledge is not without them.

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From them Knowledge derives its value. However, they are never objects of knowledge; the former is previous the known, whereas the latter remains beyond it. It cannot be said either of Unity or Infinity that they are known.¹⁴

In sum, since they precede knowledge [of life], both are its categories.

Fourteen years later he stated the same in lucid terms:

What is true for Creation [which produces an organization from nothing] is also true for Infinity. Both are truths which impose themselves on reason, because the opposite relationship is impossible. They are not drawn from the senses, or from experience, or from reasoning, but they impose themselves on reason. However - and here begins the mystery - they are not possessed and understood by the understanding, but it is the understanding which is possessed and understood by them.¹⁵

All the above shows that LdV identified two basic categories for the knowledge of life: to work for systematizing a totality into one and to strive to achieve a distant goal. LdV conceived them as the highest expression of human life: the “divine character of intelligence [of life]” in “its capacity to search for Truth”, or the “divine dignity of knowledge [of life]” enjoyed by each person. Let us remark that “organization” and “infinity” are mutually independent; I therefore call them the two distinct dimensions of life.

Did Gandhi share these two categories? Certainly yes. In the previous list of six aspects which LdV saw in Gandhi “unity of life” occurs twice: “inner unity...”, “unity of life in simplicity”.

These words represent the care with which Gandhi organized his own life in a unified way, even when involved in political affairs.

The striving towards infinity also played a crucial role in Gandhi’s life. First of all his search for God as infinite Being. But he, too, lived the experience of infinity. Let us recall that Truth represented, for Gandhi, the highest expression of human life. After having said for a long time that “God is Truth”, he recognized that it was better to say, “The [*infinite* search for the] Truth is God”.¹⁶

Now we can more accurately characterize the essential contents of the six aspects of Gandhi’s reform described by LdV’s previous quotation. By suitably inserting the names of the dimensions in LdV’s words in the above list the formula is clearer than LdV’s original one:

[*organization* of the] inner unity, [*infinite* search for full] self-knowledge, simplicity [in all organizations], [*infinite* search for] non-violence, justice [of the social *organization*], a way out of [the *organization* of] social scourges.

This addition also shows that the original six aspects represent articulations of the above two dimensions. This fact indicates that conversely the two dimensions, *infinity* and *organization*, constitute a synthetic formula of what LdV wrote to his mother concerning Gandhi's personal conversion and social reform. It also pertains to the profound level of understanding of what LdV's saw when he met Gandhi.

9. A conversion generating a new human life

Yet, one may ask: Was this formula an intellectual way of understanding the world, or does it truly represent the deep life motivations of both men?

Let us recall that Gandhi opposed as a simple man relying on his spirituality and his interpersonal relationships an Empire that seemed to have pursued infinite growth at the level of conquered populations, British citizen's wealth, intellectual culture, and scientific knowledge. He also devoted his life to achieving a new *organization* of social life. In South Africa, he founded the community "Tolstoy's Farm". In India, his non-violent resolution of many local conflicts led him to *re-organize* the whole of associative life into communitarian villages since they are more capable of implementing the values of peace and justice. He wanted to organize a human group in such a way as to prevent violence and conflicts (i.e., those events which destroy any human organization), and finally to constitute a fraternal and just society (and also establish a harmonious relationship with nature). As his ideal organization of society, he deliberately chose the one devalued by the Western with its belief in progress, the village, i.e., the organization based on the minimum of formal economy, bureaucracy, and technology. His political thinking attributed to the self-reliant communities the basic role for organizing a non-violent society; he taught that only through them could India achieve true independence.

About LdV's conversion, let us observe that in the latter quotation, he declared that the two dimensions for characterizing human dignity persisted, notwithstanding that man had committed the original sin. It is a remarkable fact that both Gandhi and LdV believed in original sin as a correct explanation of the origin of evil in the world.¹⁷ The common meaning that both attributed to this sin is the pursuit of a project to achieve *actual infinity* (AI) through mythical growth (Gandhi: to overcome all personal limits; LdV: to become like God) and introducing *in an authoritarian manner* one's own *organization* (AO) by disobeying the divine *organization* (Gandhi: that of the human body; LdV that of the Earthly paradise). These choices regarding the two dimensions, infinity and organization, are exactly opposite to the

choices of Gandhi's reform: he *organized* his life to solving its crucial *problems* (PO); the basic one was how to achieve *swaraj*, political independence. Moreover, he directed his search for *infinity* to achieve positive *relationships* not only with God, but also with both his own person (through the work to improve himself) and all other *persons* (IP), i.e. brotherhood even during a conflict, which he, therefore, wanted to resolve without resorting to offensive means, but with an infinite trust in the good nature of others; that is, in a non-violent way. Gandhi fully understood Western civilization's structural violence through the two dimensions and oriented his ethics towards founding a renewed life based on alternative choices.

To sum up the above, the two dimensions, infinity, and organization, represent in human life, on the one hand, the good and, on the other hand, the evil choices; the two choices regarding these dimensions determine a person's ethics. Therefore, they represent *two dichotomies*, upon which one has to make two choices.

In sum, Gandhi's choices regarding the two dichotomies – the opposite ones to the choices indicated by original sin - determined his deep motivations. The nature of these alternative choices explains *why Gandhi's motivations represented a complete alternative to the evil in his contemporary World, in particular in Europe in the various unprecedented dictatorships (Communist, Fascist, Nazi, Francoist) and its rush towards a second world war.*

In the West, there was no answer to these political problems. It is precisely Gandhi's experience of successful resolution of great social evils, even wars, that led LdV to go to India to obtain from him an answer to his crucial question (i.e., why Western peoples are continually drawn into wars, even world wars, despite being well aware that the war they were unleashed is a terrible scourge for the people).

Gandhi's clarification of the choices and their alternative evil choices led LdV to the realization that each dimension splits into two clear-cut choices. Actually, from Gandhi's reform, he learnt - for the first time - the exact difference between good and evil both at a personal and social level, without the confusion present in Western society where love for Jesus coexisted with wars of religion within Christianity, love for God as the Father of all men with indifference to social and World distressing problems, Christian love for one's enemy with the rigorous obedience to kill strangers at the command of states that wage war, the valorization of poverty with the dedication of Catholic capitalists to the growth of their capitals; in other words, a religion where is dominant a dogmatism without charity, religious nationalism and a capitalist life supported by an ascetic effort. From

these inappropriate relationships of everyone living in society, the basic motivations inevitably originate a general clash and then breaks out a war.

As a particular pair of choices regarding the two dichotomies, he recognized the pair of dominant choices that led to WW2: *i*) to *organize* people to obey dictatorial institutions and leaders (e.g. Hitler) and *ii*) to drag them towards *infinite* objectives of an absolutist or mythical nature (i.e. the supremacy of Arian race). Gandhi's pair of opposite choices manifested the nature of these evil choices: *i*) to *organize* a self-reliant society, giving priority to personal ethics instead of obligations imposed by authoritarian social structures, and *ii*) to exalt the *infinite* potentialities of human beings in the resolution of conflicts through non-violent means. Therefore, in his meeting, Gandhi LdV implicitly understood that as a Westerner, he had to convert himself totally to Gandhi's positive choices regarding the two dichotomies.

This interpretation of what LdV received from Gandhi is confirmed by the more important consequences of LdV's conversion. On his return to the West, at first (1946-1948) LdV began to practice, personally and with friends, the positive choices of Gandhi's non-violence. With weekly commentaries on the Gospels he founded the notion of non-violence for the first time in the West: it was understood as the old, but very seldom applied, Christian teaching of loving one's enemies.¹⁸ Actually, this kind of Christian attitude was not entirely new in Western history; within Catholicism, we find it already in Francis of Assisi, but also among non-Catholics, it was also professed by certain minority Christian confessions (e.g., Waldensians, Mennonites, Quakers, etc.). However, it was LdV alone who renewed in our much more advanced times this minority Christian tradition and he was the first to equate this kind of love with Gandhian eastern non-violence, and, last but not least, to found it in detailed terms on a sacred text of Western religion, i.e., the Gospels.

In 1948, he founded a community similar to the Gandhian ones, the "Community of the Ark". The seven vows pronounced by its Companions¹⁹ disentangle the positive choices upon the two dichotomies in personal commitments within the community life. By putting some specifications in terms of organization and infinity between square brackets, I make their connections with the two positive choices apparent.

Work [of the *infinite* search] on oneself, manual work [in favour of a better *organization* of social life] and for the [*organization* of both the order and the] communitarian Feast. *Obedience* [to the head of the communitarian *organization*]. *Responsibility and co-responsibility* [of the community *organization*]. *Purity* [as an *infinite* search for it].

Poverty [as an *infinite* search for simplicity]. *Truth* [as an *infinite* search for truthfulness]. *Non-violence* [as an *infinite* quest for innocence from the world's evils in order to harm no one, as well as an infinite strive for a better general *organization*]. Notice that the first vow (work) includes three commitments and the last one (non-violence) two commitments; in total, the commitments of the personal life within the community are ten; it is remarkable that each dichotomy is disentangled in the same number (five) of commitments.

This interpretation of the vows of the Community of the Ark shows that they correspond to Gandhi's choices on the two dimensions, which were alternatives to the negative choices that were predominant in Western society. This correspondence shows that LdV interiorized Gandhi's teachings and employed them to design in detail a new society in a non-violent Gandhian sense.

Since the Middle Ages, the development of Western spirituality has remained separate from that of Eastern spirituality, so they are two independent processes. For the first time, the meeting of LdV with Gandhi in 1937 joined these spiritualities on their common basic, positive two choices plus the commitment to the new discovery, non-violence. Previously, Western (politics) and Eastern politics had become increasingly separate, developing along two independent historical lines. Through the meeting of Gandhi and LdV, these lines joined together in the common policies of re-building society through communities aimed at solving the infinite number of conflicts humanity has to deal with.

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Notes & Comments

Gandhian Notion of Non-Violence and End-of-Life Debate

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Jayanta Krishna Sarmah

Introduction

LEGISLATION ON EUTHANASIA is one of the most controversial ethical issues in contemporary India. Mahatma Gandhi, too, who is a core practitioner of non-violence, reconciled the idea of euthanasia under certain circumstances.¹ Gandhi says, “Human life is created with the image of God, in which God, truth and principle of non-violence are the same things and whether God or Truth can only be realized through non-violence”.² It binds us to one another and God.³ It is not just the absence of violence; instead, a positive state that involves love, even for the wrongdoer.⁴

When Gandhi was asked if it is ever possible to administer violence in a spirit of love, his reply was ‘No. Never.’⁵ In this context, Gandhi may be considered a proponent of the Sanctity of Life (SOL) doctrine, which views human life as sacred God gifted supreme value to be preserved at all cost in the dignified end-of-life choice policy debate.⁶

Gandhi was quite aware of human limitations and imperfections

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in some circumstances.⁷ It may be argued that the one way of reconciling the absolute non-violence notion is by considering human limitations and imperfections, where some amount of violence is necessary and unavoidable. According to Gandhi, in certain circumstances, violence may be administered in a spirit of love or at least compassion, “particularly in case of terminally ill that tried every means and left no other option to recover from that incurable/intolerable disease.”⁸ By considering this fact, it may not be wrong to say Gandhi was also a proponent of the Quality of Life (QOL) doctrine that stresses the quality or worthwhileness of the patient.⁹

Gandhian notion of non-violence may allow for possible permission for euthanasia. Gandhi was very aware that in certain cases, the idea of non-violence can be reconciled in dealing with serious ethical dilemmas. Gandhi admitted that ending or helping to end the life of an animal whose suffering is considered unbearable could be acceptable.¹⁰ This reconciliation or necessity of violence may be helpful in dealing with the contemporary issue of ending the life of the terminally ill in India. More importantly, reconciling the Gandhian notion of non-violence under certain conditions may provide a balanced approach or middle ground between the SOL and QOL debate about dignified end-of-life issues in India.

At this point, it is noteworthy that the primary concern of the Gandhian reconciliation of the notion of non-violence is the relief of unbearable and incurable suffering, which left no other alternatives to recover the same. Gandhi admitted that he could not abide the thought of allowing a rabid dog to die a painful and slow death in which, despite painful and slow death, Gandhi administered assisted dying measures.^{11,12} For instance, protests arose when the news spread that Gandhi killed an ailing calf with a lethal injection in his ashram in Ahmedabad in 1928.¹³ In this way, Gandhi administered non-state-sanctioned active euthanasia already in 1928, in which there was no ‘self-interest’ involved in the decision to kill and left no other option to recover the calf.^{14,15} This fact indicates that Gandhi conscientiously administered violence or gave lethal injection as a last resort to relieve the agony of the ailing calf.

In this backdrop, the state-sanctioned euthanasia debate may be discussed, where the Apex Court judgment of the ‘Right to Die with Dignity’ may be seen as an important reference point, where the right to die with dignity is made a fundamental right and an integral part of the right to a life with dignity under Article 21 of the Indian constitution.¹⁶

In line with the Apex Court judgement, the Indian parliament also brought two bills: the Medical Treatment of Terminally Ill Patients

(Protection of Patients and Medical Practitioners) Bill, 2016,¹⁷ and the Euthanasia (Regulation) Bill, 2019,¹⁸ respectively. These two bills are presented in the Lok Sabha to regulate the matters related to the dignified end of life in India. Despite the efforts of the Government and a private member, Bhartruhari Mahtab, M.P., both bills lapsed. In this situation of incomplete efforts of both the Apex Court and the Indian Parliament, the issues related to dignified end-of-life through euthanasia policy reforms may be considered a complex policy issue in India. Therefore, this paper seeks to contextualise the Gandhian notion of non-violence and reconciliation on the ground of compassion to relieve suffering, which may help in critically analysing the dignified end-of-life choice policy debate in the contemporary Indian context.

Gandhian notion of Non-violence and End-of-Life Debate:

The notion of non-violence is a central idea in Gandhi's thought that not only entails a blanket prohibition to harm, but also encompasses compassion for all living beings in the spirit of love.¹⁹ Gandhi reconciled his idea of non-violence, in which violence and even killing could be unavoidable and acceptable. In this regard, Gandhi referred to cases of extremely incurable and intolerable suffering, where taking a life could be seen as an act of compassion for animals. Gandhi argued that killing a rabid dog could be justified if the dog is killed out of compassion to prevent it from dying a slow death or to prevent such a dog from biting other dogs or infecting humans. Though Gandhi considered the killing of the dog a sin, not killing the dog would be a graver sin, as other lives would be endangered.²⁰ Gandhi constructed a similar argument regarding a man threatening to kill others. Killing such a man could be a necessity to protect one's own life or that of others, where no other solutions are possible.²¹ However, it is worth noting that Gandhi never advocated for human euthanasia to relieve incurable and intolerable pain and suffering.

From a Gandhian point of view, the ending of a terminally ill life can be seen as an act of compassion when life is painful and unbearable; prolonging suffering and slowing death is far more an act of violence.²² In addition, Gandhi's urge for the necessity of violence or killing a living being is acceptable only in the case of extreme uncontrollable suffering at the end of life without having vested interests.²³ Gandhi considered the presence of vested interest in killing the terminally ill as unacceptable, in which financial considerations and the unwillingness to care for the dying living being may be of ultimate calculations or decisions to end the life.²⁴

Gandhi's worldview reflects concern for others, as he was a thinker of Sarvodaya or upliftment/concern for all.²⁵ In this way, Gandhi

postulated the conceptual underpinning of the potential slippery slope or law abuse debate in 1928. Gandhi might be quite aware that the present-day euthanasia law reforms may end the lives of those who are not willing to die or whose pain and suffering can be alleviated through providing good palliative care or through other alternatives. In this regard, Gandhi can be considered a pioneer of palliative care and comprehensive euthanasia regulation, so that euthanasia should not be only the last resort, and at the same time, the law reforms cannot be misused by anyone by any means.

Contemporary Discourse of End-of-Life and Mahatma Gandhi:

The Apex Court judgement of Aruna's case²⁶ allowed passive euthanasia or withdrawal of the life support system for terminally ill patients diagnosed with intolerable pain and suffering in certain circumstances. Subsequently, the Common Cause case²⁷ judgement has declared the 'right to die with dignity' as a fundamental right. More recently, on 20th September 2024, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare proposed a draft bill on passive euthanasia²⁸ to deal with this complex ethical issue in India. Here, in both the judgments, the apex court referred to the compassionate arguments of Gandhi to relieve a human being from unbearable and intolerable pain and suffering. Justice A K Sikri stated that this was probably the first public debate on euthanasia in India²⁹ in which Gandhi administered lethal injection to terminally ill calf in his ashram to relieve pain and suffering.³⁰ Thus, the above discussions indicate that Gandhi dealt with this complex ethical issue from ending a life to a potentially slippery slope or law abuse debate already in 1928. After more than a hundred years of Gandhian analysis, the Indian state is still struggling to come up with a comprehensive regulation on this issue.

It is observed that the Gandhian notion of non-violence and its reconciliation in certain circumstances may have greater relevance in the contemporary debate and discussion on the matter relating to the right to die with dignity in India. His reflections provide a balanced and unique approach, which may help deal with complex end-of-life choice issues. The Gandhian reconciliation to relieve suffering in the spirit of compassion is not different from what we now call euthanasia and assisted dying. At the same time, Gandhi was quite aware of the potential abuse of law reforms and alternatives to euthanasia as a last resort. In this way, we may address certain unanswered questions and dimensions over this complex and contested policy issue in a balanced manner, particularly from a Gandhian analysis.

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Gandhi in His Time and Ours: Reflections on Secularism and Multiculturalism

Akeel Bilgrami

THE CONCEPT OF secularism and the process of secularization can be understood distinctly. "The word secularisation is a social process... of loss of belief in religious doctrines, ceasing to carry out standard rituals, giving up on diets dictated by religion, and so on and so forth. Secularism is a different idea. It's a political doctrine and its main idea is that religion should be kept out of the orbits of politics. So, it's not the name of a social process, it has nothing to do with the waning of religious belief and practices. It's got to do rather with keeping religious practice and doctrine out of direct influence on politics."

Three commitments characterize secularism. "Secularism consists of three commitments: freedom of religious belief and practice, principles enshrined in the Constitution that make no mention of religion (or opposition to religion) such as equality, freedom of speech, gender equality, and the third is the meta-commitment, which says if there is a clash between the first and second commitments, the second commitment must get priority".

In 17th-century Europe, after reformation, with the rise of modern science, the state's legitimacy on the grounds that it was a divinely-legitimated monarchy began to lose its hold. As nation-states evolved, political power became more centralized. The state needed a new legitimacy and was sought not in theology (divine rights) but in political psychology along lines that are now familiar: "Create a feeling for the nation by finding an external enemy within the territory and claiming the nation is not 'their's', it is 'ours'".

Since the state was fused with the nation (with a hyphen, nation-state), this feeling grounded the state's power as well. Since the external enemy was often a religious minority (the Jews, the Irish, Protestants in Catholic countries, Catholics in Protestant countries), this form of nationalism was based on religious majoritarianism. There were religious minoritarian backlashes against such majoritarian

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nationalism, and this gave rise to pervasive religious conflict. It is to repair this damage generated by European nationalism that secularism was formulated as a doctrine, arguing that religion was the problem and should be kept out of direct influence on the polity.

Gandhi saw that secularism was only needed in Europe because of the nationalism that was generated there and claimed that since India had not gone through that nationalism, secularism was not relevant to India. For him, nationalism in India was nothing but anti-imperialism and in fact, 'it would repudiate European forms of nationalisms and it would be inclusive.'

It is for this reason that, for Gandhi, a Western notion of secularism was irrelevant to the Indian question. He was indifferent to secularism because he said India had always been an inclusive society characterized by an unconscious pluralism for centuries. So did Nehru –see especially his *Discovery of India*. This is evident from the lack of rhetoric on secularism during the freedom struggle. A major task of Gandhi, as a national movement leader, was to rally together different religious communities. The effort was to build trust and unity among all religious groups and rally them as a common force against the colonizer.

Gandhi's movements naturally included all sections of society, including religious minorities, especially the Khilafat movement and The Muslim Mass Contact programme. But these mass mobilizations were interspersed with long periods of negotiations of a more deliberative sort. In these, the Muslims felt less of a sense of equal participatory involvement and dominated by Hindu majority presence. And that was the source of the failure of the Congress to avoid partition.

Though partially subdued after partition, Hindu nationalism re-emerged during the final phase of the emergency and gained political legitimacy in the struggles against the authoritarian policies of Indira Gandhi. Hindu right-wing opposed the Centre's authoritarianism, which gave them a moral high ground and legitimacy in electoral politics that they had never had before.

Also, the Mandal Commission gave them additional impetus for mass political action in the direction of Hindu majoritarianism. The Mandal Commission report showed how deeply divided India was by caste. There was an exposure of the divisiveness of Hinduism. In response, the Hindu right made a facade of showing that Hindu religion was united through an urgent cultural and electoral campaign through organizations such as the VHP.

Hence, from the 80s, in the background of the growing involvement of religion, we have been talking much more intensely about secularism

in India because India was now mimicking European nationalism. This shows that the very reason that Gandhi gave for rejecting secularism would now be the *same* reason for him to be deeply committed to secularism. The situation has changed from his time. This nationalistic aspect of European modernity that comes from a certain form of nationalism, which he tried to stave off in India, has surfaced in India, and thus secularism is relevant ever since the 1980s.

Defining “Indian secularism” as “neutral acceptance of all religions” is debatable. It was indeed cultural and religious pluralism that was practiced in India (*Sarva dharma sama bhavana*), and secularism (*mathanirapekshata*) was not a dominant theory in practice. If Gandhi were alive today, he would be advocating secularism in the latter sense, with the same connotation as in Europe, rather than multiculturalism because Hindu nationalism is creating the damage that European nationalism did there. Gandhi, in his time, when the task was to unite Indians against a common enemy, chose multiculturalism rather than secularism. And in our time, Gandhi would have chosen secularism, as majoritarian religious sentiments have become hegemonic. Bilgrami emphasized that it would be wise today to demand simply for the Constitution and what it lays out rather than fantasize about multiculturalism.

Note: It is a summary of the lecture entitled “*Gandhi in his time and ours: Reflections on Secularism and Multiculturalism*” delivered by Akeel Bilgrami, Sidney Morgenbesser Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University, USA. The lecture was delivered as part of the International Distinguished Lecture Series, marking the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Department of Philosophy at Madras Christian College, Chennai, in 2024.

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Book Reviews

M.D.Thomas, *Mission Religious Harmony*, New Delhi: genNEXT Publications, 2024. 324 pp. ISBN: 978-93-5663-423-7 Rs.650.

In an era marked by religious tensions and conflicts, Dr. M.D. Thomas's "*Mission Religious Harmony*" emerges as a beacon of hope and a roadmap for interfaith understanding. This comprehensive work, spanning 17 chapters, offers a nuanced exploration of religious harmony, its challenges, and its potential to transform society. Drawing from his extensive experience as a scholar, educator, and interfaith activist, Dr. Thomas presents a compelling case for the urgent need to foster harmony among religions in our increasingly interconnected world.

The relevance of this book cannot be overstated. In 2018, 28% of countries experienced high or very high social hostilities involving religion, affecting many of the world's most populous nations (Pew Research Center, 2018). The economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2021 was estimated at a staggering \$16.5 trillion, equivalent to 10.9% of the world's GDP. Against this backdrop, Dr. Thomas's work offers a timely and crucial contribution to religious harmony and peace-building discourse.

The book opens by positioning harmony as a central mission in social life, setting the tone for the entire discourse. Dr. Thomas argues that harmony is an ideal and practical necessity for peaceful coexistence. This framing is particularly relevant given the enormous costs of conflict and violence. For instance, the global military expenditure reached \$2.1 trillion in 2021, while internal security spending was estimated at \$4.7 trillion. These figures underscore the potential economic benefits of investing in peace-building and interfaith harmony.

One of the book's strengths is its comprehensive approach to the subject. Dr. Thomas examines religious harmony through various lenses, from the Asian context to universal principles. Chapter 2, "*Religious Harmony in the Asian Context*," provides valuable insights

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into the unique challenges and opportunities for interfaith dialogue in a region known for its religious diversity. This regional focus is balanced by chapters that explore universal themes, such as “Towards Harmony Among Religions” (Chapter 3) and “Universal Fibre in Christianity” (Chapter 6).

The author’s expertise in comparative religion shines through in chapters that draw parallels between different faith traditions. For example, Chapter 7, “Vaishnavism and Christianity - Inclusive Characteristics,” and Chapter 14, “Mysticism in Kabir and Jesus,” demonstrate the common threads that bind seemingly disparate religious traditions. This approach is crucial in breaking down perceived barriers between religions and fostering mutual understanding.

Dr. Thomas also addresses the practical aspects of promoting religious harmony. Chapter 4, “Relations with People of Other Faiths,” offers guidance on building bridges across religious divides, a skill increasingly essential in our globalized world. Similarly, Chapter 10, “Fraternity and Social Friendship - The Mission Harmony,” brings the discussion back to the everyday application of interfaith understanding in creating a more cohesive society.

The book’s emphasis on education as a tool for promoting harmony is particularly noteworthy. Chapters 15 and 16 discuss the role of education in building human beings and the need for value-based education in societal development. This focus on education aligns with research showing that investments in peace-building and conflict prevention are far more cost-effective than dealing with the aftermath of violence. For context, the total cost of violence (\$16.5 trillion) is more than 11 times the amount spent on official development assistance globally (\$138 billion in 2020).

Dr. Thomas’s exploration of the “Interactive Dynamics of Christian Mission” (Chapter 11) and “Christian Contribution to Harmonious Living in India” (Chapter 12) offers a balanced view of how one religion can positively impact a multi-religious society. This nuanced approach is essential in promoting genuine interfaith cooperation, especially in diverse societies like India.

The book concludes with a powerful message in Chapter 17, “*Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*: A ‘Culture of Harmony and Peace’ as Way Forward.” This ancient Sanskrit phrase, meaning “the world is one family,” encapsulates the book’s overarching theme and provides a vision for a more harmonious future. It’s a fitting conclusion that ties together the various strands of thought presented throughout the book.

While “Mission Religious Harmony” is undoubtedly a valuable

contribution to interfaith studies, it's worth noting that the book's academic tone and depth of analysis may be challenging for casual readers. However, this complexity is also one of its strengths, as it provides a rich resource for scholars, religious leaders, and policymakers working in religious harmony and conflict resolution.

In conclusion, Dr. M.D. Thomas's "Mission Religious Harmony" is a timely and important work offering theoretical insights and practical strategies for promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation. In a world where the global peacekeeping budget (\$6.38 billion) is less than 0.04% of the total cost of violence, this book is a powerful reminder of the urgent need for more effective conflict resolution and prevention strategies.

Dr. Thomas has created a compelling case for interfaith understanding and cooperation by weaving together theology, philosophy, history, and practical wisdom. "Mission Religious Harmony" challenges readers to move beyond mere tolerance toward a genuine appreciation of religious diversity. It invites us to see different faiths not as threats but as unique expressions of the human search for meaning and transcendence.

As we grapple with the complex challenges of the 21st century, the message of "Mission Religious Harmony" becomes ever more critical. It offers hope in a fractured world, wisdom in an age of information overload, and a path forward in times of uncertainty. This book is an invaluable resource and a call to action for scholars, religious leaders, policymakers, and anyone interested in building a more peaceful world.

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GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION LIBRARY

GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION houses a library designed as a reference centre for Gandhian Literature/Thought.

The collections are diverse ranging from books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, 240 books written by Gandhiji and more than 100 biographies of Gandhiji by different authors. Currently the library maintains a collections of more than 10,000 books.

“Library is connected to DELNET (Network of Libraries)

Mangesh Venkatesh Nadkarni *Vacanâm_ tam: Nectar of Saying, selected Vacanas of Devotees of Siva, Translated from Kannada into Sanskrit verses and English, Manipal: Manipal Universal Press, 2024, ISBN978-81-971369-4-8, 370 pages. Rs. 600.*

Vacanâm_ tam: Nectar of Sayings, by Mangesh Venkatesh Nadkarni, is a trilingual collection/compilation of 320 selected *Vacanas* (Sayings) of the devotees of Lord Siva of 11th and 12th Century Karnataka, known as *Āva-Āranas*. It is also translated from Kannada into Sanskrit verses and English by Nadkarni. The *Vacanas* selected for translation are also presented in Roman script with diacritical marks for those who know Kannada but are unfamiliar with its script. The unique fact about Nadkarni's translation is that it is not "literal or word-to-word but a 'bhâvânuvâda' – a translation of 'intent' ¹. Nadkarni has brought out the 'intent' while being truthful to the spirit and essence of the *Vacanas*. His selection of *Vacanas* – mainly drawn from Basavanna², Allama Prabhu³ and Akka Mahadevi⁴ (the Trinity of Lingayatism) along with 34 other *Vacanas*, some of them not so well known among the old and young Kannada readers, is noteworthy.

Nadkarni has also made a valuable contribution in the field of social sciences by opening the treasure trove filled with immense insights and perspectives on *Vacanas* through this book. In fact, the intentions of *Vacanas* are centred on three factors - social change, the establishment of egalitarian social practices and spiritual development. All these factors are very much in demand in contemporary India and the world at large. The *Vacanas* or *Vacana* literature, in general, was far ahead of its time in terms of social awareness. The *Vacanas* criticized the caste system and discrimination, condemned and fought against the social evils, and upheld the dignity of women⁵ in family and society. Stressed on the priority of work including utmost regard for manual work (Mahatma Gandhi also believed in dignity of labour and gave respect and importance to manual work – see Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, 1926)⁶, tirade against senseless ritual pollution codes, insisted on equal rights of husband and wife⁷ and advocated charity, in addition to devotion to One God. All these teachings and ideals are pertinent even in today's rapidly fast-paced world. The *Vacanas* are filled with social concerns and crusade against social evils. Students and social science researchers can use the *Vacanas* to understand the social composition, social and class relations, accumulation of capital, labour -producer dynamics, and mode of production that existed in 11th -12th century Karnataka through this literature. It is interesting to note that the composers of *Vacanas* came from deprived backgrounds with little or no education, and they

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successfully captured the issues and problems of their times in a sophisticated fashion. Political economy scholars of both Marxist and non-Marxist traditions can also extract a lot of insights from the *Vacanas*. There is not even an iota of doubt that this book will be a valuable addition to the ever-expanding literature of social sciences in general.

The *Vacanas* impart practical wisdom for living honorably and meaningfully in the present-day world. As India is striving towards the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kudumbakam* (The World is One Family), the principles and philosophies enshrined in the *Vacanas* have immense value in the near future. In Nadkarni's own words, the *Vacanas* are not meant for *Virasaivas* or *Lingayats* alone, "but it is meant for all Indians, even for all humanity". The touch of compassion and humanity found in *Vacanas* can be felt and experienced in Nadkarni's translations. For instance, Nadkarni has quoted an English translation of Basavanna's *Vacana*:

*"What sort of a religion can it be
Without compassion?
Compassion needs must be
Towards all living beings.
Compassion is the root of
All religious faiths"*

Vacanas represent a series of devotional writings that capture Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual essence. Similarly, influence of Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible can also be found in the *Vacanas*. The South African philosophy of *Ubuntu* translates to a "a person is a person because of or through others. It can also be translated as "I am because we are," (Qumbisa et al., 2022, Ngcombo et al., 2024). Similar philosophical ideas are also found in the *Vacanas*. For instance, Nadkarni quotes, Basavanna's *Vacana* 86 (1.1253):

*By giving away everything, I gained the loss of my ego.
I am immersed in happiness without any duality
I am now one with you^s, Oh Kûdala Sangama Deva!*

Just as *Ubuntu* philosophy is based on compassion, dignity, reciprocity, humanity and sharing, these principles are advocated by *Vacanas*. While *Vacanas* aim at spiritual and overall, wellbeing of the people, the *Ubuntu* is primarily used to regulate the social life of South Africans.

Several personal/autobiographical elements are found in Nadkarni's translation of *Vacanas*. For instance, he has dedicated this

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book to Dr. D M Nanjundappa, a renowned economist and planner from Karnataka. Nadkarni, a distinguished economist and profound social sciences scholar, was a doctoral candidate under the guidance of Nanjundappa. In another instance, Nadkarni admits that “*this project of translations of Vacanas has been a labour of love, without seeking or receiving any financial or material support from any institution, and done entirely at my home.*” He also admits the limitations and challenges he had to endure while selecting the *Vacanas* for translation: “*Even in the case of Vacana composers of the Basava era, it was not possible to translate all their Vacanas. Each volume contains over a thousand of Vacanas, some containing more than two thousand. I may have had to take one or two more births to do the task! Because I am 84 years old now (in 2023) and could not plan a very long-term project, I had to be selective. Any selection like this has an element of subjectivity, and I could not help selecting those which appealed to me from the point of devotional fervor, ethics, and social concern they represented.*” All these aspects provide a personal touch to this book.

Nadkarni deserves all praise and courage for venturing into the revolutionary spirit of *Vacanas*, and he has proved that age is no bar for anyone who wants to accomplish something truly. Following the untimely death of Prof. M M Kalburgi, a renowned scholar of *Vacana* literature and a Kannada epigraphist who was involved in translating *Vacana* literature into 22 languages, there has generally been a void and pessimism. This void can be filled with this trilingual edition comprising collections of *Vacana* translations by M V Nadkarni, and it is truly a valuable addition not only to *Vacana* literature but also to the realm of social sciences as a whole.

Notes and References

1. M V. Nadkarni, *Vacnâmrta: Nectar of Sayings*(Manipal: Manipal Universal Press. 2024)
2. Basavanna, a social reformer and poet of the twelfth century, challenged the Brahmanical establishment and opposed the discriminatory traditions by uniting individuals from all castes within his *Anubhava Mantapa* (A debating society that welcomed individuals from all castes). He promoted gender equality by granting women equal standing in his movement.
3. A mystic-saint and a celebrated *Vacana* poet from the 12th century, known for promoting the concept of the unified consciousness of the Self and Shiva in the Kannada language.
4. A notable Kannada poet and a key figure in the 12th-century Lingayatism movement, renowned for her 430 *Vacanas*.
5. Martha C Nussbaum in her *Justice for Animals: Our Collective*

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Responsibility reflects on how women were once treated under law as objects or property controlled and used by men. In today's context, women have attained rights and freedoms that would have been inconceivable centuries ago. With a sense of righteous optimism, Nussbaum remarks that the same progress can be achieved in relation to the rights of animals. Martha Nussbaum, *Justice for Animals: Our Collective Responsibility* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2023).

6. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. (1926). *Dignity of Labour*, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New delhi: Publications division), Volume 31, pp. 381-2.
7. On September 25, 2022, Cuba ratified the most inclusive and progressive family code in the world and one of the unique aspects in the family code is that it insists on equal rights for men and women. It is interesting to note that it took centuries and centuries to accomplish/manifest these gender equality principles by modern nations in the world. See Jos Chathukulam, and Manasi Joseph, 'Cuba Family Code: Towards the Democratization of Family and Society', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 57 (49), 2022.
8. Emphasis added by the reviewer to highlight the connection between Ubuntu philosophy in South Africa and Basavanna's *Vacanas*. See Nolwazi Ngcombo, Sheetal Bhoola, Dasarath Chetty, Jos Chathukulam and John Moolakkattu *Social Cohesion After Looting and Violence: Restoring the Spirit of Ubuntu in the Informal Settlements of Bhambayi*, *South Africa, African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 13 (2), (2024), pp. 97-119.

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Annual Gandhi Lecture

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Prof. Dilip Simeon

The bane of our life is our exclusive provincialism, whereas my province must be co-extensive with the Indian boundary so that ultimately it extends to the boundary of the earth. Else it perishes - Mahatma Gandhi, September 1947

The truth never dies but is made to live as a beggar: Yiddish proverb.

Introduction

THREE THINGS OCCUPIED Mahatma Gandhi all his life: God, truth, and Ahimsa. He did not see them in different compartments but as threads in the fabric of human life. A life spent in pursuit of truth is a philosophical life. His social and political reform efforts do not subtract from his thoughtful character. Gandhi drew his strength from the most noble qualities of ordinary people. He spoke to them in the language of their cherished symbols, legends, and poets – and they, not any political leaders, perceived him as their Mahatma. This, combined with his deep sense of human dignity, constituted his *sthithprajna*, or calmness of soul.

Gandhi was a wise man. I want to try to understand his wisdom. My effort relies a great deal on the scholarship of other people. The mistakes are mine alone.

Gandhi possessed a powerful impulse toward confronting injustice and social evils. He also saw the struggle between good and evil unfolding in every soul – not as a combat between nations and communities. If ours is ‘the age of the intellectual cultivation of political hatreds,’ Gandhi directly opposed this mode of thinking. If politics is defined as ‘the friend-enemy relation,’ Gandhi defined it as founded on friendship and dialogue. If politics are perceived as deceitful by definition, Gandhi insisted on truthful conduct in politics no less than in other spheres of life. An entire tradition of Western political thought, including Machiavelli, Hobbes, French Jacobinism, Carl Schmitt, and Lenin, believed the state to be grounded on originary violence, but Gandhi believed such ideologies and such states were doomed to

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extinction.

Gandhi's ideas combined moral, theological and political elements. He did not view life as a material exile of the soul but rather as an opportunity to serve people. It could be said that he found his soul in those who suffered the misfortunes of history. This is why he could say of his first meeting with the peasants of Champaran in 1917, a meeting which came after strenuous effort, that the simple rural folk received him as if they were his age-long friends: *it is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, to say that in this meeting with the peasants I was face to face with God, Ahimsa, and Truth.* (*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*; Part 5, Chapter 14).

Four issues concern me here: the problem of anti-colonial strategy in a culturally heterogeneous society, a commitment to truth that is not contaminated by religious or national boundaries, the opaque nature of evil and its incompatibility with the idea of a benevolent God, and the human capacity to turn conscience against itself.

The Sovereignty of Good (the phrase is borrowed from Iris Murdoch)

In September 1947, after his famous Calcutta fast for communal harmony, Gandhi made the following observation: *Good is self-existent, evil is not. It is like a parasite living in and around good. It will die of itself when the support that good gives it is withdrawn.*

This a profound speculation on moral philosophy. We may combine it with his observation in Hind Swaraj: *The force of love is the same as the force of the truth or soul. We have evidence of its working at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force.* He had no great respect for history, which was the story of rupture; rather, he wanted to restore to lived time the legitimacy of real friendship, without which society would have ended long ago.

In Platonic philosophy, the closest icon of the Good is the sun. We cannot look at it directly, but the sun makes sight possible, along with the powers of intelligent discrimination. We cannot contemplate the world's heterogeneity without the sun's light. A silent vision of the good comes *before* contemplation. However, in the Bible's first book, God says 'let there be light' and *sees* that it is good. And the same is repeated for all the things of creation. The vision of goodness is God's, and it comes *after* He has created the world.

Thus, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, goodness is recorded in the act of writing and is relative to the will of God, who creates the cosmos. In the Platonic tradition, the cosmos is eternal and good. Vision and hearing are sufficient for us to witness goodness.

Gandhi's intuition about self-generative goodness was spoken with deep conviction, as was his observation that evil is a parasite that feeds upon the Good. I do not know how he arrived at this conviction, but others have had similar thoughts. Even in the prophetic tradition, evil is seen as privation (*abhaav*), a lack or loss of good, rather than something with a life of its own. A similar comment was made by Hannah Arendt in 1963 when she wrote that evil is without depth; it is only extreme. Only the good has depth; but human evil can 'lay waste the whole world precisely because it spreads like a fungus on the surface.' (*The Jewish Writings*, 471). But it is true that in the early Abrahamic

tradition, some Christian sects believed evil to hold an autonomous status, engaged in a perpetual struggle with God.

Must there be an obstacle between these differing views of good and evil? No, since the prophetic traditions also tell us that the world is good. All metaphysical traditions, religious or not, revere the light: the prophets are those who catch glimpses of the light of goodness. Again, pride (*ahankara*), tyranny, and the will to power are seen as the root of evil across the centuries. Problems arise with the demand for unquestioning obedience to dogma. This is why, in a discussion with journalists in 1936, Gandhi said: *I cannot surrender my reason whilst I subscribe to Divine revelation. And above all, 'the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.' But you must not misunderstand my position. I believe in Faith also, in things where Reason has no place e.g., the existence of God* (CWMG, Vol 64, p. 71)

The Biblical citation about '*the spirit giveth life*' is revealing, for it speaks to the possibility of overcoming evil. There was a difference between evil and the evil-doer; hence, there was always a potential for us to correct ourselves. For Gandhi, the holy spirit was the same as the inner voice, the conscience, which all of us possessed. This was why he placed such importance on reaching the mind through the heart.

Without this appeal to both conscience and reason, we risk ethical fragmentation. When blind faith in a 'national' God becomes the defining belief of a so-called chosen people, it pushes us towards spiritual apartheid. When theology is reduced to orthodoxy, and the believers are kept as armies for political gain, we are on the brink of violence in God's name. What does all this have to do with our theme? Three things:

- One, is uniformity of belief desirable or possible in a political system?
- Two, is nation-worship compatible with religion, or is it a form of atheism?
- Three, can political leaders truthfully claim to speak on God's behalf?

Civil religion and the theological-political problem

This is a theological/political problem: should we be ruled by divine guidance or by unaided human reason? The problem is easily stated: if we are to be ruled by divine wisdom, we must accept that no guidance comes directly from God. As Gandhi observed, holy scriptures come to us via double distillation, first through the prophets and then through their disciples. Hence, we must rely upon our reason to discriminate between various interpretations of the divine message.

If we rely upon human reason alone, we are obliged to conduct a dialogue about the Good. How may we do this? Montesquieu side-stepped the problem by saying the issue of religion versus atheism was less important than the utility of religion, which was necessary to control popular passions. Rousseau developed the same idea in his *The Social Contract*, which contains a chapter on civil religion, where he says legislators should place their recommendations in the mouth of God because people are more likely to believe them. This is a step towards the co-option of religion by politics.

I recently came across the writing of the contemporary philosopher

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William Desmond, who uses the concept of 'the between' to understand the relation of religion to philosophy, the empirical to the transcendent, intuition to analysis, and dialogue to solitary reflection. Plato described humans as neither Gods nor beasts but somewhere between the two, and the same can be said of philosophy. I think this is the best way to understand Gandhi: he accepted the variety of belief systems and negotiated a path to swaraj whereby the potential for conflict could be reduced. The link between religion and politics was a reference to the ethics of public activism. Religion was a source of morality and wisdom; politics was the sphere of social and political responsibility. On the term *Rama-Rajya*, too, he was crystal clear:

I must repeat for the thousandth time that Ramanama is one of the many names for God. The same prayer meetings have recitations from the Koran and the Zend Avesta. Devout Muslims... have never objected to the chant of Ramanama. Ramanama is not an idle chant. It is conceived as a mode of addressing the all-pervasive God known to me, as to millions of Hindus, by the familiar name of Ramanama. 'Nama' at the end of Rama is the most significant part. It means the 'nama' without the Rama of history.... As to the use of the phrase 'Rama-Rajya', why should it offend after my having defined its meaning many times? It is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I... address predominantly Muslim audiences, I would express my meaning to them by calling it Khudai Raj, while to a Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on earth. Any other mode would, for me, be self-suppression and hypocrisy.' (CWMG, Vol 85, p. 135)

For Gandhi, enforcing a uniform civil religion was both hypocritical and impossible. The transformation of popular belief in the successor states of the British Empire has shown the dangers of this utilitarian approach to religion. Today, religion has been overtaken by ideology, and for some of us, it is a means of waging political warfare. The greatest enemies of religion are to be found amongst its own followers.

Once, in the face of hostile sloganeering (*Gandhi-vaad murdabad*) in Bengal in February 1940, Gandhi remarked, "I love to hear the words 'Down with Gandhism'. An 'ism' deserves to be destroyed. It is a useless thing. the real thing is non-violence. It is immortal. It is enough for me if it remains alive. I am eager to see Gandhism wiped out at an earlier date... I have never dreamt of establishing any sect. If any sect is established in my name after my death my soul would cry out in anguish" Gandhi never suggested a doctrine of an imaginary future that required evil deeds to be done in the present. The present and future were fused together; only virtuous deeds in the present would contribute to the world's betterment. This concept of time focusses on presence rather than transience.

Gandhi's theological creativity and the problem of evil

The questions: how should we live? What is good and what is sinful? are common to all communities, even if the answers differ. Theories of evil are as rich as those of the origin of the world. The effort to explain evil while retaining faith in God's goodness is called *theodicy*. Some scholars describe all religions as failed theodicies. Hegel claimed his philosophy to be a theodicy: 'a justification of the ways of God' in human history. However, the history of

the past century and the genocidal events unfolding to this day make it difficult to accept Hegel's theodicy. Max Weber considered the *karma* doctrine the most consistent theodicy, which made our ill-fortune dependent upon past lives, all of which transpired in 'beginningless time'. Retributive justice was placed in creation.

In my view, the problem is not soluble. We humans yearn to understand life and the world. But evil is inscrutable; it overpowers explanations; no theodicy can satisfy our thirst for an explanation for human cruelty and useless suffering. God's power is equally inscrutable: infinite space and eternal time remain beyond our grasp. God is the name of the everlasting mystery of our origins and natures. No telescopes can solve it.

Leszek Kościński (1927-2009) wrote about this theme thus: *to reject the sacred is to reject our own limits. It is also to reject the idea of evil, for the sacred reveals itself through sin, imperfection, and evil; and evil, in turn, can be identified only through the sacred.* To say that evil is a result of pure chance is to say that there is no evil; and therefore, that we have no need of a moral capacity which is already there; imposed on us whether we will it or not. If we believe that society can be improved, it follows that there must always be people who think of the price paid for every step of progress. He concludes: *The order of the sacred is also a sensitivity to evil.* It is less a matter of belief in God and more a matter of self-imposed limits to speech and action. (*Modernity on endless trial*; Chapter 6)

If there is no virtue, there is no law, because everything is permitted. And if everything is permitted, then it does not matter what we do or say. There is no difference between speech and silence. Slavery is freedom, ignorance is knowledge, sophistry is wisdom.

We need a sanctuary of goodness and courage. In Gandhi's case, I would say that his sanctuary was his *sthithprajna*; and for social behaviour, *swaraj*. Attaining it requires control of the will and emotions. This approach is based on the assumption that while God, truth, and goodness are the same; falsehood is a rupture in truth, and evil is a rupture in goodness. This is why good is self-existent, and evil is not. Just as Brahman does not exist in time, but time is within it, the light also contains the darkness. It is for us to use our sight and insight to perceive it.

What we call sacred is the discovery and acceptance of our limits; this is precisely the sense of good and evil that Gandhi wrestled with all his life.

Gandhi tried to resolve the dilemma by focussing on social reform on a daily basis (*rachnatmak karyakram*, or constructive work) and confronting the injustice of colonialism and violence. He knew that violence has a momentum that can overpower our self-control. He attempted to develop the alternative momentum of self-discipline and the fellowship of satyagrahis. He was firm in his determination to prevent violence from poisoning India's liberation. He undertook this task in the most violent decades of world history.

Truth, justice, and ahimsa

Truth may mean different things to scientists, theologians, and linguists, but none can dispose of it, even those who dismiss it as an illusion. In Indic

knowledge, *dharma* combines truth, duty and virtue. Thus, truth had an ethical function for Gandhi, combined with practical wisdom. Colour prejudice, unjust laws and colonial domination were errors in social practice: the simplest example of this reasoning is his refusal to accept the label 'coloured person' to be thrust upon him in a railway carriage reserved for whites. The denial of our common humanity was an untruth; as was the assertion that some of us are superior to others. The struggle against untouchability was a struggle for human unity, a *satyagraha*, an adherence to truth.

The centrality of *ahimsa* and courage in the face of violence was not merely a political tactic. It contains the seed of a distinct moral philosophy. And it is the basis of the dialogue of the in-between zone, the foundation stone of a civil society that can overcome the difference between the natural goodness of the cosmos and the goodness of divine command. We have more control over our immediate practices than over our goals. Impure means, the worst of which was to do violence to others, would poison our goals. Gandhi seemed to assume a homogeneity in religious communities (as in his support for the Khilafat movement), but he was steadfast in his belief in the autonomy of individual conscience.

His evidence to the Hunter Commission of Inquiry into the Jallianwala Bagh massacre shows the importance of non-violence as a means of ensuring that differing opinions did not lead to the disintegration of popular resistance. The evidence also shows his strong disapproval of executive power unchecked by the judiciary, and I would advise our lawyers and judges to read it carefully. (CWMG, V 16, p. 408).

Ahimsa was not a doctrine but a reminder of our limits. The source of these limits may be called God or Creation, but it remains mysterious. What matters is that they are binding on all of us, not just some chosen few: this is the lesson of the hooligans of Calcutta in September 1947, who came to the fasting Mahatma and threw their weapons at his feet. No further proof is needed of the battle between good and evil within every soul.

The problem of violence as original legitimation

In Machiavelli's *Discourses*, we find the following recommendation: *If one wishes that a sect or republic live long, one must bring it back frequently to its beginning.* In his view, all states were founded on terror. The recovery of ancient virtue required the re-imposition of the fear that had made men good at the beginning. This was true not because of their innocence but because they were gripped by fear. The lesson is clear and brutal: there is not Love but Terror at the beginning. Machiavelli's new teaching is based on this alleged insight, which anticipates Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature.

Is violence at the root an unspoken legitimating factor in the evolution of states? Most nation-states have evolved through a process of civil war; extreme violence often formed the backdrop to the establishment of constitutions. The prevalence of political assassination in the successor states of the British Empire points to the stamina of ideologies of inclusion and exclusion. A research project on the history of mass violence has an entry on the Partition of India. The analysis contains the following assessment:

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Violence was not just a marginal phenomenon... It was on the contrary at the very heart of the event. Nor was it merely a consequence of Partition but rather the principal mechanism for creating the conditions for Partition. Violence constituted the moral instrument through which the tension between the pre-Partition local character of identity and its postcolonial territorial and national redefinition was negotiated. Violence operated as the link between the community and its new national territory. That is precisely what gave it its organized and genocidal dimension as it was meant for control of social space so as to cleanse these territories from the presence of other religious communities.' (Lionel Baixas)

The history of our sub-continent shows us that the originary violence has become stabilised: we are forever at war. This is true globally as well. The state's legitimacy is formally certified by the constitution, but informally, it is sought not in the law's name but in the origin's violence. This is why our governments want us to remember the horrors of the origin. That is why horror is sought to be repeated in art, as in the streets. We may now understand the truth of Gandhi's observation in Hind Swaraj: *that which is obtained by force can be retained only as long as the force lasts.*

Sthithprajna

Gandhi approached his conflict-ridden world as a *karmayogi* and a seeker after truth. He approached both the mind of the coloniser and the colonised by 'seeing from within.' This approach underlay his idea of 'heart unity' – something larger than and beyond political or religious doctrines. However, obtaining a glimpse of the other person's heart means that we have the capacity to understand the emotions of others – a capacity that Gandhi insisted was intrinsically human.

Reason has its legitimate place for Gandhi, but a reason that knows its limits. That is why he insisted on the capacity of human beings to interpret scripture. If this is accepted, our responsibility is vast; given the existence of those who insist they can function as the executors of God's will. Such claims cannot be verified, so we must question them.

We have no answer to the mysteries of eternal time and infinite space, so we name the mystery, as in God or Big Bang. This solves nothing. In his reply to the query Is God a Person or a Principle, his response was clear: the divine was inexpressible in language. However, as he wrote in response:

In my view, whether called Rama, Rahman, Ormuzd, God or Krishna, He is that Supreme Power that man is ever trying to find a name for. Man, though imperfect, strives after perfection and in so doing is caught up in the tides of thought... it is immaterial if some worship God as a Person and some others as a Great Power. Both are right, each in his own way. Nobody knows what is intrinsically right and nobody is likely ever to know. The ideal, to be an ideal, must forever remain out of reach. All the other forces are static, while God is the Life Force, immanent and at the same time transcendent.' (CWMG V 85, p. 136. Emphasis mine)

Let us note the use of the word 'immanent' (antarnihit). In the same letter, he referred to it thus: 'man, in praying, worships the Great Power residing within. Only he who knows this may pray. He who does not, need not pray.' The divine impulse was *within* each soul, not external to it. Gandhi believed all humans possessed the impulse to goodness; it was the only means for Indians to evolve a decent civil society. The question of good, evil, truth, and falsehood remain central to human life. All religious traditions have grappled with these questions, and sages across cultures have provided us with their answers. Understanding them despite the distances of time and space indicates that an ethical community built upon mutual respect is possible. It requires an effort to realise this. As he remarked in his prayer meeting in November 1947:

But when someone commits a crime anywhere, I feel I am the culprit. You too should feel the same. If I were to commit any crime you should also think that you too were guilty of it. Let us all merge in each other like drops of ocean. If the drops of ocean remain apart, they would dry up. But when they mingle together in the ocean, they can carry huge ships across their expanse. As with the ocean so with us. After all we also are an ocean of human beings. (CWMG v. 90, p133)

With this, we exit the dogma domain and enter the soul space, which lies between philosophy and theology, theory and life, and ordinary and extraordinary things. Even in dogmatic traditions, the crack in the door through which the unbeliever is invited to become a convert demonstrates the reality of the in-between. Why? Because the believer could not make the invitation unless he believed in the possibility of conversion. What happens between the moment of invitation and the moment of thought? Why should we wish to convert anyone to an ideology or a faith? What is gained by establishing homogeneity or uniformity of belief? Why not improve ourselves before criticising others? What exactly do we want, domination or friendship?

What Gandhi called 'heart unity' was not a theory but the reality of friendly dialogue. If that reality were given stability, it would create the oceanic circle, which, in his words, would extend to the earth's boundary. Without it, the world would perish. This was Gandhi's *sthithprajna*, his serenity.

Gandhi's community

In 1931, Havildar Chander Singh Garhwali refused to open fire on the Khudai Khidmatgar protestors in Peshawar, telling his English officers that it was not the duty of the Indian Army to shoot Indians. For this act of defiance, he spent eleven years in jail.

In 1937, the German businessman John Rabe saved thousands of Chinese lives during the Nanking Massacre by the Japanese Army.

In 1940, a Portuguese diplomat in occupied France named Aristides de Sousa Mendes defied his orders to give thousands of visas to Jews fleeing from the Nazis. He was dismissed from service and denied his pension by the Salazar government.

In 1943 21-year-old student Sophie Scholl and her brother and friends of

the White Rose group were executed by the Gestapo for denouncing Nazi war crimes.

In 1942, Maharaja Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji of Nawanagar, adopted a thousand Polish orphans and looked after them for the duration of the war. They called him their father.

In 1947, Comrade Gehal Singh, a member of the CPI, gave his life for helping thousands of Punjabi Muslims cross the border to Pakistan

Words of humanity, words of courage

What drives such people to stretch out a hand to strangers? We have no answer to this question. We can only repeat and remember their own words.

In 1937, the German priest Pastor Neimoller stood up in his church and declared: *No more are we prepared to remain silent at man's behest when God commands us to speak.* These words caused him to be sent to a concentration camp.

When the Polish social worker Irene Sendler was asked why, despite being tortured by the Gestapo, she rescued hundreds of Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto in 1943, she said *she had no choice.*

The Serbian Protestant priest Tibor Varga looked after scores of Syrian refugees in 2015. When asked for a photograph in front of his church, he gestured to the refugee shelter and replied *this is my church.*

During the same time, Father Stratis Dimou, a Greek Orthodox priest, founded a charity to help refugees and migrants; this was his duty, he said, *for love has no religion.*

Legendary Pakistani social worker Abdul Sattar Edhi (1928-2016) spent his life caring for victims of violence. His last words were *mere mulk ke gharibon ka khayal rakhna*

In 2019, the Sicilian fishermen Carlo and Gaspare Giarratano risked prison to save 50 Libyan refugees from a sinking boat. They said it was their duty, because *no human would turn away.*

In 1968, Daniel and Philip Berrigan (a decorated soldier in the Second World War) were the first Catholic priests to receive jail sentences in America for their opposition to the Vietnam War: they raided a recruitment centre and burnt documents. Their statement read: *'We confront the Catholic Church, other Christian bodies, and the synagogues of America with their silence and cowardice in the face of our country's crimes. Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children, the angering of the orderlies in the front parlour of the charnel house. We could not, so help us God, do otherwise. For we are sick at heart, our hearts give us no rest for thinking of the Land of Burning Children.'*

All these noble souls are living examples of the oceanic circle. Neither religion nor nationality have a place here. They are not remembered much, nor are their stories taught in history lessons. And there are thousands of them whom we do not know.

Gandhi considered history to be a story of rupture, a record of conflict. He said there was no point looking for love and soul-force in history, for *'you cannot expect silver ore in a tin mine.'* He refused to accept the 'laws of history'

or the inevitability of violent conflict. Commenting on questions by a correspondent in America in 1926, he wrote: *If we are to make progress, we must not repeat history but make new history... If we may make new discoveries and inventions in the phenomenal world, must we declare our bankruptcy in the spiritual domain?* (CWMG; V 30, p. 415)

Gandhi rebelled against the tidal wave of history. He confronted it head-on. What do the above examples signify, if not the human capacity, to extend love and friendship to strangers? Is not this capacity an essential means to overcome endless conflict?

The Oceanic Circle

The expanding circle has been an age-old symbol in human culture. The circle marks the true infinity, which has neither beginning nor end. In its mode of outward expansion, it must begin with that which is nearest and grow until it merges with humanity. This is not a dream of imperial domination but of solidarity. This is how Gandhi conceived it:

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. (CWMG v 85, p 33; July 28, 1946)

Gandhi's wisdom signifies an alternative way of addressing the world's problems: from ecological ones to the problem of permanent wars and conflict. He was a patriot, but not a nationalist in the narrow sense: that is the meaning we get from his wish: *'my province must be co-extensive with the Indian boundary so that ultimately it extends to the boundary of the earth. Else it perishes.'* He did not invent the oceanic circle; it had always been there. Gandhi reminded us to look at it again.

Political groups threw away the chances of mutual accommodation in the twilight of British power in India. Gandhi spoke of love and mutual respect amid hatred and carnage. Some were pessimists even when there was hope. Gandhi gave people hope in the midst of despair; he appealed to their better instincts at the worst of times. He did not give humble Indians their dignity; he reminded them of it. He did not give us our capacity for friendship and communal harmony; he reminded us of it. This was the message of his last fast in January 1948. It is a message from a man of extraordinary goodness, strength and courage.

Nearly three thousand years ago, the thinker Heraclitus spoke of the soul thus: *You could not search out the furthest limits of the soul, even if you traversed all of the ways, so unfathomable is its logos.* Gandhi's soul is indeed unfathomable. He resembles the moral pilgrim of Plato's cave, who ascends towards the light in search of knowledge and returns to his fellow human beings to tell them what he has seen. Let us remember that the most important journey for him was the journey within. His fast in Calcutta in 1947 demonstrates his capacity to move the consciences even of persons who had committed violent crimes. As also those of the English and Anglo-Indian policemen who wore black arm bands in solidarity with the British Empires' most steadfast opponent. When the violence began to end, he insisted it was God's work. When pious ladies wished to perform a puja in thanks, he asked them to sell the *saamagri* and distribute the money to the poor. What was his message? They asked: My life is my message, he replied.

Albert Einstein famously said of Gandhi, that generations to come would 'scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.' It is less well-known that a global poll conducted in 2000 by the BBC News website readers voted Mahatma Gandhi the greatest man of the past thousand years.

In October 1947, All-India Radio arranged a special broadcast for his birthday and requested that he listen. He declined, saying he preferred *rentio* (the flat spinning wheel) to radio. The hum of the spinning wheel was sweeter. He heard in it; he said, the '*still sad music of humanity*'. The spinning wheel was a small wooden circle, but the worldwide outpouring of grief upon news of his assassination amplified the sound of the *rentio*.

Gandhi's oceanic circle had embraced the global population.

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Announcement

FROM VOLUME 47, issue Number 1, 2025, Gandhi Marg will adopt the Harvard referencing style. It uses references in two places in a research paper: in the text and a reference list at the end. In general, each author's name in the text must also appear in the reference list, and every work in the reference list must also be referred to in the main text. All the details of the reference are essential, even the full stops and commas. In-text references in Harvard style should give the author's surname and the year of publication. If you quote or paraphrase, you should also provide a page number. Authors can use notes at the end of the article, but sparingly.

Illustrations

Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi may be shortened to CWMG in the in-text reference with volume, and page numbers where one is quoting or paraphrasing from specific pages. Ideally, one should use the Collected Works for originality instead of relying on references to secondary sources drawn from *Young India*, *Indian Opinion*, *Harijan* etc.

In-Text references

Gandhi considered violence 'superior to cowardice' (CWMG 50 : 20)

A more recent study (Chaturvedi 1988) has shown...

Matthews and Jones (1997) have proposed that...

Theory rises out of practice and, once validated, returns to direct or explain the practice (Stevens 1998).

If two or more references by the same author published in the same year are cited, distinguish these by adding a,b,c, etc. after the year: Johnson (1994a) discussed...

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If you want to include two or more references within the same parentheses, use chronological order and separate with commas: ...as discussed by several authors (Gupta 1993, 2003, Sharma 1995, Panigrahi and Jones 1997, Pandey 2004).

Three or more authors. If there are more than two authors, give the surname of the first author followed by et al. Poverty is not correlated with violence (Rana et al. 1997).

If you refer to a source quoted from another source, cite both in the text, but only list the work you read in the bibliography: A study by Shah (1960 cited Parel 1994) showed that...

“Human security is an essential focus of policy” (eds McGrew & Poku 2007, p. 8).

List references to all documents cited in the text under the heading References. They are listed in alphabetical order of authors' names. If you have cited more than one item by a specific author relating to a specific year, they should be listed as a,b,c,d.

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GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION

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

For Gandhi, peace in the ordinary sense was never the first imperative. As a relentless fighter for truth and justice his actions often brought suffering and sacrifice, although he always fought without violence.

The G.P.F. represents an attempt to synthesise the Gandhian imperative of truth, justice and nonviolence with the atomic age imperative of universal peace and human survival. It marks the beginning of a long quest – the quest for peace with justice through nonviolence.

The G.P.F. goes about this task in three convergent ways – through study and research, communication and action.

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The G.P.F. will be happy to begin and continue a dialogue with other individuals, groups and institutions willing to join with it in its quest for peace with justice through nonviolence.

Information for Authors

Gandhi Marg is the premier quarterly journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation having a standing of more than half a century published from New Delhi in the months of March, June, September and December every year. Original contributions on themes of national and international importance falling under the broad area of Gandhian Studies are invited from scholars and practitioners. Articles submitted to Gandhi Marg are refereed. It is presumed that an article submitted to Gandhi Marg is original, and has not been under the consideration of any other journal. In general, the articles should not exceed 8000 words including notes and references. Periodically, we also bring out special issues on selected themes.

We also invite provocative shorter essays (1500-2500 words) for inclusion in the notes and comments section. Review articles assessing a number of recent books on a particular subject and book reviews are also solicited.

All articles should have an abstract of not more than 150 words and five key words. The name of the author, institutional affiliation and complete address including email and telephone/fax should be supplied. A short biographical statement of the author containing information about the area of specialisation and principal publications is also necessary. British spellings should be used throughout the manuscript. All the authors will be informed about the status of the submissions within three months. Author-identifying information including acknowledgement should be placed on the title page and not on any other page.

When an abbreviation is used, it should be spelt out in full the first time. All notes and references should be numbered consecutively and placed at the end of the article rather than on each page. References to books should include author, title (italicised), place of publication, name of publisher, year, pp. (in that order). Place of publication, publisher and year should be within brackets. In subsequent references to the same work, *ibid*, and *op.cit.* can be used. References to articles should include author, title of article in double quote, title of the journal (italicised), number of volume and issue, year of publication, pp. (in that order). All short quotations are to be included in the text with double quotation marks. Longer quotes are to be indented. All quotations should be accompanied by full references.

Examples

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

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

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