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Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha and NonViolent Resistance

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MAHATMA GANDHI'S SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENTS

DAVID M. TRABOULAY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In my hometown of San Fernando, Trinidad, in the old administrative center called Harris Promenade, there is an impressive statue of Mahatma Gandhi striding forward with his head high looking towards the sea. I became interested in Gandhi as a boy, as, indeed, did all Indians of Trinidad. The descendants of nineteenth century indentured immigrants from India organized the movement to erect a statue of Gandhi to commemorate the achievements of Indians in Trinidad. West Indians of Indian and African ancestry experienced the bitterness of indentured servitude and slavery but by the 1950s had happily achieved advancement socially, economically, and politically, and in 1962 Trinidad won its independence from Great Britain. The statue of Gandhi signified not only the achievement of independence in India and Trinidad, but also the particular achievements of former indentured laborers.

I have taught a course on Modern India at the City University of New York every year since 1981 and always placed Gandhi’s Satyagraha struggle at the center of the course. There were times when I was amazed how interested my American students were in the figure of Gandhi. When I asked them why, they often replied that it was because Gandhi was like them. Stunned because students today seem skeptical about idealism of any kind, I learned that they were very interested in Gandhi’s early life and his
autobiography where he described his anxieties and fears as a young man. In other words, they were able to see Gandhi as human. If they were doubtful about the universal application of nonviolence, they remained firm in their respect for Gandhi as a human figure. There was yet another source that drove this work apart from the obvious interest in nonviolent solutions to political conflict. As a descendant of indentured Indians in Trinidad, I came to see how much Gandhi’s life and Truth-force were influenced by his experience with indentured Indians in South Africa. If Satyagraha has become an enduring movement for all peoples, the children of indentured Indians everywhere have every right to feel pride.

As a US Fulbright visiting Professor to Delhi University, India, in 1993 and during my recent visit in 1998, I had the good fortune to meet many scholars and friends who encouraged me to dare to attempt another work on Gandhi. I know well the many outstanding studies of Gandhi, but I am hopeful that the perspective of a descendant of indentured laborers in the Americas will bring some fresh interest and insight. I am indebted to many people who were unfailing in their encouragement. Sarah-Rachel Walters, whose love for and interest in Gandhiji is great, read and commented on all the revisions; Arun Kumar, Harold Sirisena, Dr. Sadrul Khan, Dr. Tashi Tsering, and Michael Mohammed willingly gave their comments and advice; my nieces, Gayle Bickram, Charlene Mohammed, Marcia Abdool, Suzanne Bridgemohansingh, and Nicole Traboulay encouraged me constantly, especially when I considered giving up the project. Finally, I must give thanks to the thousands of my students at the College of Staten Island and the City University of New York who for over thirty five years persuaded me that the study of Gandhi was both inspirational and useful.
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CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE

I worship God as Truth only. I have not found Him, but I am seeking after Him...as long as I have not realized his Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield.

M. K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, p. 11

In the context of one of the most destructive periods of world history during the first half of the 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi was able to practice ideals of service to humanity and so give hope to all human beings that it is always possible to live a life according to the highest principles and to engage in politics while insisting on its ethical grounding. When asked during the last year of his life what message he wanted to leave to posterity, he replied that his life was his message. What he meant was that he wanted to be judged by his actions. Gandhi certainly was not arguing that thought was insignificant to his life. On the contrary, he always found the time to meditate on his experience and ideas. At no time was his mind frozen and inflexible and he claimed for himself the right to change his opinion and judgment in light of new knowledge and insight. What he wanted, most of all, was to put into practice what he found useful in
uplifting and advancing human beings and reforming unjust social and political practices. It was not accidental that he entitled his autobiography “experiments with truth.”

Gandhi is remembered most for his nonviolent struggle against British imperialism and as a seminal figure in the fight against colonialism. The study of Gandhi’s movement continues to illuminate the early challenge to the notion of empire and underlines how important India’s freedom movement was to anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa. It also pays tribute to a remarkable person who, unlike leaders like Hitler and Stalin who inflicted terror on humanity, gave hope to the world of the 20th century. But does Gandhi’s Satyagraha movement have any significance for the world of the 21st century? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela have acknowledged Gandhi’s influence in their political struggles against racism and apartheid. They were attracted in large part by Gandhi’s commitment to the use of nonviolent means to achieve his political ends. Nonviolence for Gandhi, however, was much more than an instrument in the struggle against injustice. As he conceived and developed Satyagraha or Truth-force, Gandhi made nonviolence the foundation for his method of engaging everyone in the pursuit of truth, whether the objective was individual or community development, or resistance against oppressive rule. Satyagraha came to cover a broad canvas of human aspiration.

Gandhi struggled to find answers to questions that were to be binding on all human beings, beyond nation, religion, gender and race. Controversy often surrounded him, but he was willing to pay the price of controversy and misunderstanding for his principled commitment to a political style that encouraged openness and thinking out publicly his inner feelings and doubts. His humanism drove him to work tirelessly for the
equality of all and he found his inspiration in the struggles he shared with his comrades and in his inner religious vision which, one should add, had little to do with formal religion. He often said that if he were a dictator, he would separate religion and the state. This critique of communalism and the mix of religion and politics became more poignant as the conflict between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs raged in the 1940s and threatened to destroy India. What Gandhi hoped to find in his search for the Truth was an understanding of reality that would inspire people to a life of service. He placed the principles of inclusiveness and respect for diversity at the center of his movement because he assumed that they were integral to his notion of Truth. As was often the case, he found the validation for his principles in his experiences with the despised poor men and women with whom he identified. In the struggle for justice for the oppressed, he came to understand the significance of nonviolent means in resolving conflict in a humane way: “In his own mind there was then only one unfailing solution to the problem – to adopt a means which was in a sense itself the end, which would generate qualities that would effectively transform any situation. Nonviolent striving after truth, Satyagraha, was just such a means.”

The search for Truth within the discipline of religion can sometimes lead to self-righteousness and the presentation of Truth as dogma, a mode of operation that can bring intolerance and divisiveness to social and political struggles. In Gandhi’s understanding of religion and Truth, he genuinely found it difficult to find an absolute answer to his questions and, therefore, was never a fundamentalist at any time in his life. In large part this was the fruit of his experience with different religious cultures from his early childhood in Gujarat, his higher education in London, and his life in South Africa.
concluded that all religions possessed the truth, but partially, and needed to be constantly reformed and enriched in the light of experience and interaction with other traditions and modernity. As he constructed his *Satyagraha* movement, he made diversity an important pillar of his Truth-force. What helped his understanding of Truth to take shape was the Jain teaching of the many-sided character of truth which said that everyone saw the truth of a situation from his particular angle of vision. From this view of the relative character of Truth came his idea that religious and social reform was an indispensable function of all religions.²

Gandhi found the principal source of his idea of nonviolence in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain teaching of *Ahimsa*, and also in Christianity, especially in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Gandhi’s definition of nonviolence signified not only not harming others physically, but also not violating their essence and respecting the truth in them. Nonviolence also embraced the larger notion of love and compassion. As an instrument in political struggles, *Satyagraha* meant the readiness to suffer injury, but not to inflict injury. Since there was no way to ascertain the absolute truth, no one was competent to punish. The use of coercion might produce calm and a truce in political conflict, but voluntary self-suffering had the power to transform a situation from confrontation to one where mutual trust and the courage to change one’s attitude would be dominant.

In *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence*, Erik Erikson, a disciple of Freud, brought the method of Western psychoanalysis to the understanding of what Gandhi meant by Truth. He had no doubt about the significance of Gandhi’s Truth in the “future which will pit man’s naked humanity against the cold power of super
machineries.” He formed this conclusion about Satyagraha: “Gandhi’s way…is that of a double conversion: the hateful person, by containing his egotistic hate and by learning to love the opponent as human, will confront the opponent with an enveloping technique that will force, or rather permit, him to regain his latent capacity to trust and love. In all these and other varieties of confrontation, the emphasis is not so much (or not entirely) on the power to be gained as on the cure of an unbearable inner condition.” As Jawaharlal Nehru asserted in the exhaustive study of Gandhi by D. G. Tendulkar, Gandhi’s Truth was “a truth applicable to all countries and to humanity as a whole…He told us to shed fear and hatred and of unity and equality and brotherhood, and of raising those who had been suppressed, and of the dignity of labour…”

In the same way that he labored to reinterpret traditional terms and notions, and coined new words to define and make clearer projects and experiments, he made the notion of Swaraj or “Self-Rule” central to the meaning of Satyagraha. Gandhi used the term not only to mean India’s struggle for freedom from British rule, but also in the religious sense of freedom from illusion and ignorance. He expanded his definition of freedom to include a positive and creative side to freedom. On the personal level, positive freedom comes with the development of self-knowledge and self-discipline; on the community and national levels, equality, human dignity, civic participation, tolerance and respect for diversity were the goals of a truly free society. In his analysis of Gandhi’s values of “nonviolence and tolerance, truth and truthfulness, truth and openness,” Dennis Dalton cited the sentiments of Sissela Bok to illustrate the relationship between freedom, trust, and a sense of responsibility:
Along with nonviolence, the most important observance for Gandhi was a concern for truthfulness and truth. And fidelity – to his vows in their own right, to his ideals and thus to himself, to his obligations to others – was for him what held all the observances together and bound him to them in turn. Through making and holding such vows, he trained himself to become someone who could trust himself and who could be trusted by others. Finally, Gandhi rejected secrecy in his dealings with supporters and with those who opposed him.6

Even Gandhi’s admirers found some of his ideas enigmatic and eccentric. None was more baffling to them than his critique of modern industrial civilization in Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule. The prevailing wisdom from both the Western liberal tradition as well as Marxism implied that no bridge could be built between a society’s traditions and modernity. Marx himself had argued that imperialism would at least serve the function of destroying India’s backward and irrational traditions. Gandhi took issue with this view of development. It is ironic that almost a century later, in a world where modern industrial capitalism and technology are dominant, Gandhi’s critique has been taken seriously.7 His effective use of India’s traditions for modern purposes like organizing the Indian masses to fight injustice, removing inequality, and constructing a modern state showed that, indeed, a society’s traditions could be marshaled in the service of modernity. Gandhi was also acutely aware that what most people understood by modernization was really Westernization. He could not accept this version of modernity because he felt that India’s rich inheritance of religious, artistic, linguistic, ethnic, and historical traditions were more than adequate to inspire Indians to construct an authentic Indian personality as well as to lay the foundation of a more humane society.8

On the issue of identity and courage, Gandhi was, of course, aware that racism was a part of the structure of the modern imperial system. He could not accept the
defense of imperialism that it was bringing material progress to India when British rulers treated Indians as socially inferior. To repair the wounds of Indian self-esteem, Gandhi consciously chose as his model for defining courage the ancient Indian traditional ideal of *Ahimsa* or nonviolence and love, celebrated in the teachings of *Dharma* of Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu traditions. He found the source of this ideal not in the caste-bound Orthodox Hindu tradition but in the more popular and democratic Hindu religious movements known as *Bhakti* which emphasized devotion to God and service to humanity. In particular, he found the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad Gita* a treasure-trove of ideas about compassion and service to the poor. But Gandhi interpreted these texts to affirm the call to be active in the defense and service of the poor and oppressed. For Gandhi, then, the courage to be true to one’s conscience meant the preparation and readiness to serve others. This definition of courage was vital to the construction of *Satyagraha*. Gandhi rejected the idea of indifference to the concerns of others, and reinterpreted the traditional notion of non-attachment to mean to run along with life rather than running away from life. As Gandhi repeated often, *Satyagraha* was not passive but active courage. The project of building an egalitarian and humane society which was the purpose behind his constructive program was, perhaps, the most significant objective of the nonviolent movement. At a more radical level and utilized only when other nonviolent measures did not work, self-suffering was practiced as an active instrument of resistance and not passive at all. As Stanley Wolpert saw it, the key to understanding Gandhi’s self-suffering was his passion to experience the sorrow and pain of India’s poorest people. The courage implicit in *Satyagraha* was the willingness to do what was morally right. When Dr. Sushila Nayar, Gandhi’s disciple and personal physician, received the news of
Gandhi’s assassination while she was tending the refugees at a camp in the Punjab, she broke down with sadness and depression. She received a fitting consolation when she was reminded that her sense of duty and devotion to serve others was the greatest gift of thanks she could have given to Gandhi.

**EARLY LIFE IN GUJARAT**

Born in Porbandar, a small town in West India, Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948) was the son of Karamchand and Putlibai Gandhi. The family was well-to-do and owned homes in Porbandar, Rajkot, and Kutiana, Princely States, where his father often served as prime minister to one of the local princes. The state of Porbandar lies on the Arabian sea and was a center of trade with the rest of India as well as with Persia, Arabia, and Africa. It is not surprising that this commercial state should be the home of the Gandhi family who belonged to the *Bania* sub-caste of the Vaishya or merchant caste. There were innumerable religious sects in his home town which adopted a mixture of beliefs and practices of the different religions. His mother was Hindu but practiced many Jain beliefs. Her family descended from the Pranami sect which sought to unify Hinduism and Islam. Mohandas’s early scholastic education was not remarkable. At 13, he married Kasturbai, herself a thirteen year old. The marriage was an arranged one. Gandhi himself commented on his fears and anxieties that attended his early childhood and young adulthood, attributed in large part to his insecurity and weak self-esteem that made him rebel briefly against his Hindu upbringing. He ate meat, and even smoked because he thought that was the way to become strong and confident. His marriage did not seem to help in this because Kasturbai had a mind of her own often causing him fits.
of jealousy. His rebellion did not last long. Mohandas took an interest in Buddhism and Jain, and nursed his father during the last years of his illness. When his father died in 1885, the time had come to think about his professional education. He was interested in medicine but he knew that his father would have objected because of the dissection of bodies. Mohandas never lost his interest in medicine. His interest in nutrition and health foods was almost an obsession throughout his life. He always remarked that he was a “quack”; it seemed that he took some pride in this. He and his family made the decision to study law in England. In 1888 his first son, Harilal, was born. In September of that year he sailed for England excited and anxious. What were his thoughts when he looked back on this early phase of his life? When Gandhi wrote *An Autobiography*, in 1927, he was in his fifties and the leader of the Indian nationalist movement. His *Satyagraha* movement was already used successfully in South Africa and India. As we read his understanding of the narrative of his early life, there was little doubt that he selected those reminiscences that seemed to have some relation to his own development and the development of *Satyagraha*.

He said that his father was a truthful, brave and generous man who, despite his lack of a formal education, had a successful career in government with a reputation for being incorruptible and impartial. Gandhi added that his father left the family little property when he died. When Gandhi wrote about his mother, however, he was almost reverential, and it was clear how deep the relation between mother and son was:

The outstanding impression my mother has left on my memory is that of saintliness. She was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayers. Going to Haveli – the Vaishnava temple – was one of her daily duties. As far as my memory can go back, I do not remember her having missed the Chaturmas.11 She would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching.
Extremely shy, he said that his books and school lessons were his sole companion as he avoided all company. “To be at school at the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as the school closed – that was my daily habit. I literally ran back, because I could not bear to talk to anybody. I was even afraid lest anyone should poke fun at me.” He confessed that he did not enjoy reading beyond his school texts, but he made a point of reading the assignments because he was afraid of being criticized by his teacher as much as he disliked deceiving him. The result of his lack of enthusiasm for school meant that while he duly did his homework, he took little interest in the reading material. But this attitude changed when his eyes fell on a book purchased by his father about Shravana’s devotion to his parents. He said that he could not put it down, so keenly did he read it. He recalled a performance of the play by a group of itinerant players and commented how moved he was when he saw Shravana carrying his blind parents on a pilgrimage.

As he described the circumstances of his marriage at the age of thirteen to Kasturbai, he did not hide his criticism of the tradition of child marriages. He stated that he could see no moral argument for such a “preposterously early marriage.”¹² The parents of the bride and groom did not think of the wishes or welfare of the married couple. It was purely a question of their convenience and money. Gandhi recalled that at the age of thirteen the wedding meant little to him other than good clothes, drum beating, processions, a lavish dinner, and a strange girl to play with. He wondered why Hindus wasted so much time and money over it. Gandhi should have known that weddings in all traditions the world over are lavish rituals. Still, the simplicity and beauty of the weddings that he and Kasturbai organized for their sons Manilal, Ramdas, and Devadas
showed that it was still possible to preserve the beauty and poignancy of marriage 
without coming to financial ruin. He said that devotion to his parents was still paramount 
at first but soon the passions of the flesh came to pull at him no less than filial piety. 

He remembered the little booklets that were given to the married couple with 
advice about conjugal love, the importance of thrift, and, above all, the duty of remaining 
faithful to each other. But he confessed that he became a jealous husband, ever 
demanding that Kasturbai remember her vows of faithfulness to him. He knew that he 
had no reason to doubt her fidelity and was sure that it was more his sensual passion that 
caused his jealousy. He was suspicious of her movements, and demanded that she get his 
permission to go out. Kasturbai saw this restraint as a kind of imprisonment and there 
were bitter quarrels between them. Sometimes they refused to speak to each other. But 
Gandhi cautioned the readers that they should understand that they were still children, 
and that his intolerance was based on love, but still wrong: “I wanted to make my wife 
an ideal wife. My ambition was to make her live a pure life, learn what I learnt, and 
identify her life and thought with mine.” He expressed regret that he was not able to 
educate Kasturbai. When he “awoke from the sleep of lust,” he became active in public 
life and did not have the time to teach her or to provide private tutors. Only with 
difficulty could Kasturbai write simple letters in Gujarati. Gandhi blamed himself for 
this, acknowledging that had his love for her been “untainted with lust,” she would have 
conquered her dislike for bookish learning.

Gandhi missed a year of school when he got married. He did well at 
school, winning prizes and scholarships, and was liked by his teachers. He said that he 
did not have a high regard for his ability and was shocked when he won scholastic
awards. The content of his character was more meaningful to him and every blemish “drew tears from his eyes.” Because of his shyness, he did not take part in any formal physical activity and did not like cricket or football. He later came to see that physical training had as much right to be a part of the curriculum as mental training. He loved to walk and felt that it had helped to keep him physically fit. The major reason why he could not participate in sports or gymnastics at school was because he had to hurry home after school to nurse his ailing father. Reflecting on his early education, he urged the encouragement of children to paint flowers, birds, and other beautiful objects of nature, and to practice good handwriting. He said that he was completely at sea because instruction was in English. He still learned to see the beauty in mathematics and was grateful for the rudimentary knowledge of Sanskrit that he learned. He came to the realization that Indian curricula of higher learning should include the study of Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and English in addition to the vernacular language.  

Gandhi then went on to tell the story of his friendship with Sheikh Mehtab at high school, which he called a tragedy. This friendship lasted well into his South African experience when Gandhi encouraged him to come to South Africa, and was terminated only when Gandhi found out that he brought prostitutes into his house. It was Sheikh Mehtab who encouraged Gandhi to eat meat and even to go to a brothel. Gandhi included this story to illustrate his doubts about his own courage. Since he interpreted his shyness as weakness, he said that he was attracted by Sheikh Mehtab’s physical strength. Like a growing number of Indians in late nineteenth century India, meat-eating and martial ability were considered to be key elements of British imperialism.

This friend’s exploits cast a spell over me. He could run long distances and extraordinarily fast. He was an adept in high and long jumping. He could put up
with any amount of corporal punishment…Moreover, I was a coward. I used to be haunted by the fear of thieves, ghosts, and serpents. I did not dare to stir out of doors at night. Darkness was a terror to me. It was almost impossible for me to sleep in the dark, as I would imagine ghosts coming from one direction, thieves from another, and serpents from a third. I could not therefore bear to sleep without a light in the room.

As Vaisnava Hindus, Gandhi’s family did not eat meat. Jainism was also strong in Gujarat and Gandhi said that his mother was deeply influenced by Jain teachers. The abhorrence of meat-eating that existed in Gujarat among the Jains and Vaishnavas were to be seen nowhere else in India, Gandhi said. He knew that the moment his parents came to know of his having eaten meat, they would be shocked to death. Gandhi gave this rationalization for his action: “I wished to be strong and daring and wanted my countrymen also to be such, so that we might defeat the English and make India free. The word Swaraj I had not yet heard. But I knew what freedom meant.”

When at a lonely spot by the river he ate goat’s meat, he was overcome by revulsion: “A horrible nightmare haunted me. Every time I dropped off to sleep, it would seem as though a live goat were bleating inside me and I would jump up full of remorse.” He overcame his initial nausea as his friend dressed up his meat dishes. “I got over my dislike for bread, forswore my compassion for the goats, and became a relisher of meat-dishes, if not of meat itself. This went on for about a year.”

Continuing the story about his friendship with Sheikh Mehtab, Gandhi painfully described the incident at a brothel. Sheikh Mehtab had arranged everything and paid the bill but Gandhi said that he was “struck blind and dumb in this den of vice.” He sat next to the woman on the bed but could neither say nor do anything. She showered him with abuses as she showed him the door. It was a low point in his life and he felt that his manhood had been injured, and wished to sink into the ground for shame. This incident
made him see that it was undoubtedly the company of Sheikh Mehtab that fanned his jealousy towards his wife. He said that he never forgave himself for his accusations against his wife that were based on false information from his friend. He admitted that this was nothing but violence on his part. Gandhi then shifted the focus of this story to use it for the more general purpose of encouraging tolerance and freedom for Hindu wives:

Perhaps only a Hindu wife would tolerate these hardships, and that is why I have regarded woman as an incarnation of tolerance. A servant wrongly suspected may throw up his job, a son in the same case may leave his father’s roof, and a friend may put an end to the friendship. A wife, if she suspects her husband, will keep quiet, but if her husband suspects her, she is ruined. Where is she to go? A Hindu wife may not seek divorce in a lawcourt. Law has no remedy for her. And I can never forget or forgive myself for having driven my wife to that desperation. The canker of suspicion was rooted out only when I understood Ahimsa (not hurting) in all its bearings. I saw then the glory of Brahmacharya (self-restraint) and realized that the wife is not the husband's bond-slave, but his companion and his helpmate, and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows – as free as the husband to choose her own path.

He became fond of smoking and even stole money from the servants’ pocket to pay for cigarettes. At other times, he and a relative resorted to smoking the stalks of some plants. The ultimate rebellion came when they decided to smoke poisonous seeds and so commit suicide. As Gandhi commented, “it was not as easy to commit suicide as to contemplate it.” He gave up smoking. As for stealing, he wrote a confession to his sick father and vowed not to do so again. Gandhi wrote: “pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down. I also cried. I could see my father’s agony. If I were a painter I could draw a picture of the whole scene today. It is still so vivid in my mind. Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away.”
This was a moving moment for Gandhi. It was, of course, the expression of a father’s love, but later Gandhi understood it as an expression of pure Ahimsa or love. He said that when such Ahimsa became all-embracing, it transformed everything it touched and there was no limit to its power. Gandhi did not expect such sublime forgiveness from his father. He thought that he would be angry, but he was wonderfully peaceful. Gandhi used this story as the referent for a major message about Satyagraha, that “a clean confession, combined with a promise never to commit the sin again, when offered before one who had the right to receive it, was the purest type of repentance. I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me, and increased his affection for me beyond measure.”

Gandhi considered sacred his devotion and duty to his parents who had an enormous influence on his formation. When his father fell gravely ill, he undertook the responsibility of preparing his medicine, dressing the wounds, and massaging his legs although Gandhi was only sixteen. The night his father died Gandhi was in bed with his wife. Afterwards, he was obsessed with guilt over not being present at his father’s bedside. He blamed his sensual lust for what he felt was a lapse of responsibility. He followed the telling of this event with some reflections on his religious development up to his sixteenth birthday. Defining religion as self-realization or knowledge of self, he confessed that he did not have much interest in the temple rituals. What appealed to him, however, was the Ramayana. He remembered that during his father’s illness the Ramayana was read every evening. In addition, he recalled Muslim, Parsee, and Jain friends visiting his father and discussing their respective faiths. “I got an early grounding in toleration for all branches of Hinduism and sister religions. For my father
and mother would visit the Haveli as also Shiva’s and Rama’s temples, and would take or send us youngsters there. Jain monks also would pay frequent visits to my father, and would even go out of their way to accept food from non-Jains. They would have talks with my father on subjects religious and mundane. He had, besides, Musalman and Parsi friends, who explained their own faiths, and he would listen to them always with respect, and often with interest. Being his nurse, I often had a chance to be present at these talks.”

To Gandhi, this was like a school for tolerance. He confessed that Christianity was the exception. He had developed a dislike for it because Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near his high school and pour abuse on Hinduism.

Although he learned to be tolerant, Gandhi felt that he did not yet have a living faith in God. But he was convinced, nevertheless, that morality was the basis of things and that truth was the substance of all morality: “Truth became my sole objective. It began to grow in magnitude everyday, and my definition of it also has been ever widening. A Gujarati didactic stanza likewise gripped my mind and heart. Its precept – return good for evil – became my guiding principle:

But the truly noble know all men as one,
And return with gladness good for evil done.”

Gandhi passed the matriculation examination in 1887 and enrolled in Samaldas college in Bhavnagar. He did not take much interest in his studies and returned home. An old friend of his family, Mavji Dave, persuaded him that he should go to England and become a barrister. When Gandhi expressed an interest in medicine, he was reminded that his father and the Vaishnava religion to which his family belonged did not look with favor on the dissection of dead bodies. Nevertheless, he was excited to be going to England to study law. His son, Harilal, was born a few months before he left. He
received the blessings of his mother and family, but he still experienced some problems from his caste association. The Gandhis belonged to the Modh Bania sub-caste whose members told him that it was prohibited to travel overseas. Gandhi trumped up enough courage to tell them that in his opinion this was not so, and that he had made a vow to his mother not to eat meat, drink alcohol, or to be unfaithful to his wife. At the tender age of eighteen, Gandhi left for England.

YOUNG GANDHI IN ENGLAND

The image of Gandhi in England will be distorted if we see him as the mature, ascetic, self-assured person who had successfully located his identity in an Indian personality. We are tempted to see his attempts to become a British gentleman as a caricature, a Kathiawad country-bumpkin aping his British masters. When Gandhi narrated that on arrival in London he bought a top hat, silk shirts, and a Bond Street suit, we must not imagine that this was unusual. It was a common practice for people from the colonies to imitate European manners and customs when they came to the metropolitan capitals.

His experience in London was an important stage in his spiritual journey. He met Madame H.P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant, theosophists, who were knowledgeable in Indian philosophical traditions and activists in the Indian nationalist movement; he met non-conformists and vegetarian Evangelical Christians who were to influence him in their criticism of industrial civilization. His vegetarianism became a source of joy as he lived a frugal existence as a student. It would be wrong to say that he was influenced only by British non-conformist culture. He had a deep and abiding respect for British
Yet it is true to say that a British or Anglo-Indian perspective on questions of identity and politics began to give way to an essentially Indian perspective, though this, too, was shaped by his experience of England and British culture. Gandhi studied law at the prestigious Inner Temple and London University and also took courses in French, Latin, physics and chemistry.

As Gandhi recalled his voyage to England, he remembered his shyness and general awkwardness as he encountered English culture: “I had to frame every sentence in my mind, before I could bring it out. I was innocent of the use of knives and forks and had not the boldness to inquire what dishes on the menu were free of meat. I therefore never took meals at table but always had them in my cabin, and they consisted principally of sweets and fruits which I had brought with me.” Although he had letters of introduction to important Indians in London, like Dr. P.J. Mehta, Prince Ranjitisinhji, Dalpatram Shukla, and Dadabhai Naoroji, he was filled with great anxiety in those early days: “I would continually think of my home and country. My mother’s love always haunted me. At night the tears would stream down my cheeks, and home memories of all sorts made sleep out of the question. ..Everything was strange – the people, their ways, even their dwellings.”

The matter of diet created all kinds of anxiety for him. In India, he had rebelled against his family traditions and had eaten meat. His vow to his mother that he would not eat meat in England increased this tension that he brought with him to England. When he moved from Victoria hotel to a boarding house, he seemed more comfortable. He said he found Jeremy Bentham’s *Theory of Utility* difficult to understand but was happy to become interested in reading newspapers regularly. But the question of his proper diet
remained his main concern at this time. He did not “relish boiled vegetables cooked without salt and condiments.” His landlady was at a loss to know what to prepare. He had oatmeal porridge for breakfast, but starved for lunch and dinner. He often had spinach, bread and jam for lunch and dinner. His friend pleaded with him to eat meat: “Had you been my own brother, I would have sent you packing. What is the value of a vow made before an illiterate mother, and in ignorance of conditions here? It is no vow at all...It is pure superstition to stick to such a promise.” Gandhi resolved his problem in a rational way and in the process finally overcame the ambiguity and tension that he had felt in India. He found a vegetarian restaurant, read Salt’s *Plea for Vegetarianism*, as well as other books on the subject. Health considerations were his primary motive, he said, although, later, religion became its justification. Once, when Gandhi inquired of the waiter at the Holborn restaurant, one of the main restaurants in London, whether the soup was vegetarian, his friend found his scrupulosity intolerable: “You are too clumsy for decent society...If you cannot behave yourself, you had better go.” Gandhi recalled with humor that he was delighted to leave and found a vegetarian restaurant more to his liking. He did not want to embarrass his friend further, he said, and he assured him that he would make up for his vegetarianism by being polished in other areas and so be fit for polite society: “And for this purpose I undertook the all too impossible task of becoming an English gentleman.” For three months he tried to assume the manners and dress of the British upper-class. He changed his Bombay-cut clothes for a Bond-street evening suit and a “chimney-pot hat.”

I wasted ten minutes every day before a huge mirror, watching myself arranging my tie and parting my hair in the correct fashion...I was told it was necessary for me to take lessons in dancing, French and elocution...I thought I should learn to play the violin in order to cultivate an ear for Western music.
He enrolled in classes to learn these novelties which were considered the marks of a gentleman. He gave up the classes in dancing and the violin, but it was only long after, almost at the end of his South African experience, that he gave up his “punctiliousness in dress.” The thought of his brother’s sacrifice to send him money whenever he asked for it made him feel guilty. He realized that many of his Indian fellow students who seemed extravagant were on scholarships. He read books on simple living, bought a stove, and began cooking his breakfast at home. Gandhi boasted that he kept careful accounts of his expenses and acknowledged how useful this practice was later in his life when he had to manage a political revolution in addition to sustaining his Ashram. He often walked to school instead of taking the bus, confessing later that he was certain that these walks of eight to ten miles and a frugal life helped to make his experience of England free from major illness and give him a fairly strong body.

Gandhi’s association with the vegetarian community of London helped him to overcome his initial anxiety in England. The opportunity to investigate rationally and scientifically practices and ideas that he had received from his own Gujarati tradition as well as the friendship of this community were not unimportant in shaping his notion of truth. Like his Sindhi friend, many saw his interests in traditional medicine and diet as superstition. But, for Gandhi, beliefs, whether traditional or modern, should be examined rationally, scientifically, and ethically. He was impressed that the writers had arrived at the conclusion that “man’s supremacy over the lower animals meant not that the former should prey upon the latter, but that the higher should protect the lower, and that there should be mutual aid between the two as between man and man.”
He founded his own vegetarian society in his own locality in Bayswater which he said gave him good training in organizing and managing movements. He invited Sir Edwin Arnold, an eminent scholar of Asia and a vegetarian, to be its vice-president, and Dr Oldfield, the editor of the magazine *The Vegetarian*, as president. Gandhi was secretary. The society folded after a few months because Gandhi left the locality. But he was elected to the Executive Committee of the Vegetarian Society. It must have been with confidence and a great deal of humor that Gandhi invited his friends to his farewell party at the same Holborn restaurant where some three years earlier he had suffered embarrassment.

Gandhi’s years as a student in London were not only about studying and obeying his parents’ wishes. He found the time to enjoy himself, passing himself off as a bachelor in order to socialize with women. Like Gandhi, many Indian young men who were students in England were married as children. Their desire for companionship made them hide the fact that they were married. Gandhi recalled his friendship with an elderly woman who invited him to dinner at her house in London every Sunday. She introduced him to several young ladies. He confided that this social gathering was at first very trying as it was difficult for him to start a conversation or even make jokes. In time he learned to look forward to her dinner parties on Sundays. When he thought that his friend was trying to make a match for him, he felt guilty and wrote a letter to her, confessing that he was already married and the father of a son. She replied that she was grateful for knowing the truth and certainly expected him to continue to come to Sunday dinners. Gandhi saw in her response another confirmation of his belief that the truth enhanced respect, dignity, and friendship.\(^{17}\)
It was in England that Gandhi began the serious study of religions. In his second year he met Theosophists who invited him to read and study Sir Edwin Arnold’s *The Song Celestial*, a translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It became a major source of inspiration for him throughout his life, and he even wrote a commentary on the Gita. He read another of Sir Edwin Arnold’s books, *The Light of Asia*, on Buddhism, and was introduced to Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant who had recently joined the Theosophical Society. He said that Madame Blavatsky’s *Key to Theosophy* stimulated in him “the desire to read books on Hinduism, and disabused me of the notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism was rife with superstition.” Encouraged to read the Bible, he was fascinated by the New Testament:

> But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the Gita. The verses ‘But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy cloak let him have thy cloak too,’ delighted me beyond measure…My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the Gita, the *Light of Asia*, and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.

His interest in religion led him to study Carlyle’s *Heroes and Hero-Worship* which gave him an awareness of the ethical teaching of the Prophet Mohammed.

Gandhi went to Paris for seven days during the great Exhibition of 1890 where the Eiffel Tower was the showpiece. The Eiffel Tower, he said, drew praise as well as criticism, and he recalled that Tolstoy had disparaged it, calling it a monument to man’s folly, not his wisdom. It was not “the fashions and frivolity of Paris” that attracted Gandhi, but the ancient churches:

> Their grandeur and their peacefulness are unforgettable. The wonderful construction of Notre Dame and the elaborate decoration of the interior with its
beautiful sculptures cannot be forgotten. I felt then that those who expended millions on such divine cathedrals could not but have the love of God in their hearts…A man would forget the outside noise and bustle as soon as he entered one of these churches. His manner would change, he would behave with dignity and reverence as he passed someone kneeling before the image of the Virgin. The feeling I had then has since been growing on me, that all this kneeling and prayer could not be mere superstition; the devout souls kneeling before the Virgin could not be worshipping mere marble. They were fired with genuine devotion and they worshipped not stone, but the divinity of which it was symbolic. I have an impression that I felt then that by this worship they were not detracting from, but increasing the glory of God.\textsuperscript{18}

Gandhi was called to the Bar on June 10, 1891, enrolled in the High Court the following day, and sailed for home on June 12\textsuperscript{th}. He summed up his legal studies in this way: “It was easy to be called, but it was difficult to practice at the bar. I had read the laws, but not learnt how to practice law…Besides, I had learnt nothing at all of Hindu and Mahomedan Law, I had not even learnt how to draft a plaint, and felt completely at sea…I had serious misgivings as to whether I should be able even to earn a living by the profession.”\textsuperscript{19}
CHAPTER 2

SOUTH AFRICA AND THE MAKING OF
SATYAGRAHA (1893-1914)

I have begun to call the Indian movement ‘Satyagraha,’ that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence.  M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 102.

On June 12, 1891, Gandhi left England for home with mixed feelings.  He was looking forward to meeting his family again but he was also sad because he liked London with its parks, vegetarian restaurants, and museums, and, most of all, he would miss his friends.  Great sadness was in store for him on his return home because his family did not tell him that his mother had died.  It was a small consolation when they told him that she was alive, however, on her death-bed when news of his success at the bar exams reached.  One can understand Gandhi’s shock and grief, especially because he was emotionally close to her.  He constantly referred to his indebtedness for her part in shaping his character and relation to the world.

During this period of grief he considered himself fortunate to have met Rajchandra, the son-in-law of the brother of his close friend, Dr. P.J. Mehta.  Rajchandra was both a businessman and a poet who was renowned for having a prodigious memory.  A follower of the Jain religion, he had the reputation of being very knowledgeable about many religious scriptures.  Gandhi confessed that Rajchandra, Ruskin, and Tolstoy influenced him greatly and, of the three, Rajchandra was the most influential.  He turned for solace to Rajchandra and found in him a model.  Rajchandra regarded all his activity as a means to the cultivation of self-discipline and attainment of spiritual liberation.  Dressed in a dhoti and an old cloak and turban, Rajchandra was indifferent to material pleasures.  Gandhi said that he combined spiritual and practical wisdom in an almost perfect manner and thus became his inspiration.  Rajchandra imparted to Gandhi his insights on Hindu, Muslim, and Zoroastrian religions.  Insisting that he did not consider
any religion superior or inferior, he said that his own spiritual emphasis was on ethical conduct. First, he explained the Jain view of man and the world. From a religious angle, Jain was pluralistic and dialectical since it considered all religions as paths to the truth. For followers of Jain, *Ahimsa* did not mean merely abstention from violence but universal love resulting from the recognition of the oneness of life and the kinship of all living beings. One could not be indifferent to suffering. In its conception of universal love, Jain included not only human beings but also sub-human creation, including plant life. Philosophically, Jain taught that truth was manifold and that every proposition was true, but only from a particular angle. All views were partial. To comprehend reality, therefore, all views must be examined. Since reality was multi-faceted and constantly changing, it followed that no statement could hold good at all times and in all ways and in all places. This was the source for Gandhi’s acceptance that all religions were equally true from their respective standpoints. The notion that all truth was relative to our standpoint became the basis of *Satyagraha*. Rajchandra died at the age of thirty three.

Although he was a London-educated lawyer, Gandhi could not find regular work and left for Bombay to gain experience at the High Court. He was hired by one Mamibai in a small claims case but when the time came to cross-examine the plaintiff’s witness he was overcome by fear and could not ask any questions. Ashamed of his incompetence, he went back home demoralized. He eventually began to draft memorials and petitions and earned some 300 rupees a month. One more humiliation was in store for him. His brother, Laxmidas, was secretary to Prince Rana Bhavsingh, who had removed some jewels from the state’s treasury. Someone told the British Political Agent that Laxmidas had put the Prince up to this. Laxmidas asked Gandhi, who had met the Agent in England, to say a few good words on his behalf. When Gandhi spoke to the Agent, he was asked summarily to leave the room. Gandhi felt humiliated and was furious. It added to the disgust and frustration he felt in the eighteen months since he returned to India. Fortunately, his brother heard of a Muslim Indian business firm in South Africa which needed a barrister for an important case. In the demoralized state he was in, Gandhi was happy to take the offer.

In April 1893 Gandhi set sail for South Africa. The Union of South Africa was not yet born. Cape Province was a self-governing British colony; Natal was a British
Crown Colony; and Transvaal and the Orange Free State were independent Boer states. Cecil Rhodes was the Premier of Cape Province, and Paul Kruger was the President of the Transvaal. The Dutch or Afrikaners whom the British called Boers or farmers settled in and dominated Cape Province in the seventeenth century. But the British annexed the Cape in 1815. Mistrustful of British commercial civilization, the Boers made their “Great Trek” in the 1830s and founded two independent republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State.

Gandhi was met by friends of his employer, Dada Abdulla Seth, a Gujarati merchant from Porbandar who ran a shipping line between India and South Africa and did extensive business in Natal and Transvaal. Wearing a turban when he was introduced to Durban court, the Judge ordered him to remove his turban. Gandhi refused and walked out. He soon learned that Indians were considered and treated as indentured servants, ‘coolies’ and Samis. Indians had come as contracted indentured laborers for five years. Small traders followed them. As their businesses began to grow, they hired Parsis and educated Indians as clerks. When the contract of their indentureship ended, many of the freed indentured Indians settled in South Africa and farmed fruit and vegetables.

Gandhi experienced the harshness of anti-Indian sentiment a week after he arrived in South Africa. Traveling to Pretoria on a first class ticket which he had booked in advance, around 9 at night, as the train reached Maritzburg, a passenger complained that “a dark-skinned man was in the first class carriage.” When the train official told him to go to the van compartment, Gandhi refused. He was subsequently thrown off the train and his luggage pitched out. It was winter in South Africa and the night was bitterly cold. Numb in mind and body, he sat and shivered the whole night, debating whether to return to India or fight for his rights. Years later, Gandhi would remember that night as “the most creative experience of his life” and wrote that active nonviolence began from that date. This personal experience of racial discrimination was the touchstone that led to his involvement in the struggle for civil rights. As he investigated the condition of Indians in South Africa, he came to see how entrenched the system of discrimination actually was.

Under the law of 1885 and amended in 1886 every Indian who settled in the Transvaal was required to register by paying a poll tax of 3 pounds. Indians did not have
the right to vote and could not own any immovable property except in places set apart for them. The gold mining laws of Johannesburg prevented them from taking out mining licenses and made it a criminal offense to possess or sell “native” gold. Laws that imposed discrimination against African Blacks were applied to all people of color. Article 9 of the constitution of 1848 stated that “no equality between white and black shall be recognized in Church or State.” People of color were forbidden to use the sidewalks under pain of flogging. This was how Sir Joseph Benjamin Robinson, a tycoon of Transvaal, defended this law:

“It is essential to the continued supremacy of the Europeans in South Africa that they should retain that instinctive pride of race which has always kept the Caucasian master of the Ethiopian. The colonists in South Africa and the white residents of the Transvaal, living as many of them do among the half-subdued races feel the necessity of rejecting the “man and a brother” theory in regard to the Kaffir…Colored races do not understand the policy of liberty, equality, fraternity. They understand that the conqueror must be master, that the strong must keep the weak in subjection, that the inferior race must bow to the superior…These natives have lost their respect for the Caucasians and act as if they are the equal to the white man.”

Accustomed to go for a walk every evening along President Street, Gandhi was pushed off the sidewalk and kicked into the street by the police on duty. Michael Coates, Gandhi’s missionary friend and an attorney, saw what happened and offered to be a witness. Gandhi declined to bring charges as he did not want to bring a case to court for a personal grievance.

The case that brought Gandhi to South Africa involved Dada Abdulla and another Indian merchant from Porbandar, Seth Tyabji, over the fraudulence of promissory notes. Gandhi assisted Dada Abdulla’s attorney, Mr Baker. The case helped him to overcome his previous timidity and insecurity in legal matters. He said that his work in this case taught him many important lessons. First, he learned the importance of facts for “facts mean truth and once we adhere to the truth the law comes to our aid naturally.” He came to espouse the view that no matter how prejudicial a fact might be to a case, he would never ignore it. Law was for Gandhi a system of codified ethics, not to “make white appear black and black white,” and was the means to enthrone justice, not to entangle justice in the net of law. As the case dragged on, Gandhi proposed arbitration.
Although the arbitrator ruled in favor of his client, Gandhi was able to persuade Dada Abdulla to allow payments over a long period. Reflecting on this later, he said that it taught him the significance of compromise in bringing people together.

As Gandhi’s reputation as a man of principle and humanity spread, his Christian friends tried to persuade him to become a Christian. These Christians were different from the missionaries in India who propagated their teaching by denigrating Hinduism. Gandhi genuinely admired these men, among whom was the attorney, Mr. Baker. As 1893 drew to a close they invited him to attend a convention of Christians. Gandhi trusted their good intentions and felt that they loved him. But while he admired them and their religion, and felt that Jesus was a wonderful example, he could not accept that Christianity was the only path to salvation. It was a matter of conviction for Gandhi that people of all religions were capable of as high a degree of moral and spiritual perfection as Christians. Where would one place, he asked, the all-encompassing compassion of Buddha? Still troubled as he debated with his evangelical Christian friends, Gandhi wrote to Edward Maitland, founder of the Esoteric Christian Union, whom he had met earlier. He read the books that Maitland sent him: *The New Interpretation of the Bible* and *The Perfect Way or The Finding of Christ*. In these books Maitland argued that the Gospel narratives must be viewed as teachings of eternal truths, not as historical texts, and so must be interpreted allegorically. Self-denial, a life in tune with nature, and vegetarianism constituted the path to the perfection of Christ. As far as Gandhi was concerned, Maitland’s ideas seemed perfectly consistent with Hinduism. Gandhi found resonant Maitland’s commentary on the statement that God created man in his image: “…in his own image – male and female-…in order to be made in the image of God, the individual must comprise within himself the qualities – masculine and feminine – of existence and be spiritually both man and woman.” Years later Gandhi described himself as “half a woman.” In describing his vow of *Brahmacharya* or sexual abstinence, he said that it should represent not the innocence of a child but the wisdom of an adult who had full knowledge and understanding of sexual pleasure. Paradoxically, Edward Maitland’s writings on Christianity helped Gandhi understand better such Hindu notions as rebirth, the identity of God and the individual soul, and self-realization. Maitland’s emphasis on a “reasoned faith” gave Gandhi an interpretive instrument to unlock the
wisdom of the Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. He corresponded regularly with Maitland and became an enthusiast of the Esoteric Christian Union, describing it as "a system of religion which teaches universality...In that system there is no reviling Mohammed or Buddha…It reconciles the other religions with Christianity which, in the opinion of the authors, is nothing but one mode (among many) of the presentation of the same eternal truth." Through the encouragement of his Muslim friends like Dada Abdulla Seth Gandhi read the Koran and other Islamic writings. But it was Leo Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You* which overwhelmed him: “Before the independent thinking, profound morality, and the truthfulness of this book, all the books…pale into insignificance.” 5 Although Gandhi did not become a Christian, as his Christian friends expected, he acknowledged that he was in their debt for their education, kindness, and solicitude.

**INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 forced plantation owners to look for cheap labor from India and China. They found a source in contracted indentured Indian labor. By 1837 some 20,000 Indian emigrants were recruited for Mauritius. Soon a steady stream was pouring into Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica. Not to be outdone, the French recruited in 1849 some 23,000 Indians from South India for their colony of Reunion. The sugar cane industry came to be almost wholly dependent on Indian labor and in the main brought prosperity to Mauritius, Guyana, Trinidad, Fiji, and East Africa. When the colony of Natal was settled in 1850, it was decided to build its economy around the growing of sugar. The first group of 150 Indian indentured laborers arrived in Natal in 1860. Sugar and Indian labor laid the foundation of the prosperity of Natal.

Indian laborers were contracted to work for approved masters initially for three years. In addition to his upkeep, the employer had to pay a wage which started at 10 shillings a month for the first year and rose to 12 shillings a month in the third. After three years, the laborer was required to re-indenture for a fourth year or two additional years if he wished. He had the right to sign up for another five years, after which he was
entitled to a return passage to India or, in place of this, a grant of Crown land equivalent in value to the free passage.

By the 1880s the population of Natal was: 470,000 Zulus; 45,000 Europeans; and 46,000 Indians, of whom some 25,000 were ex-indentured and free. Some Indians set up shops or grew vegetables and fruits; others made their way to the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Many like Dada Abdulla Seth became prosperous and drew the envy of European settlers. As anti-Indian prejudice grew, Europeans made petitions to expel Indians and to prohibit their commerce. Indians were accused of introducing “leprosy, syphilis, and like loathsome diseases, engendered by the filthy habits and immoral practices of these people.” When Indians complained to President Kruger, he responded: “You are the descendants of Ishmael and therefore from your very birth bound to slave for the descendants of Esau. As the descendants of Esau we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must rest content with what rights we grant to you.”

In the Orange Free State, Indians could not remain for more than two months. Indian residents had to pay a poll-tax of 10 pounds annually or a fine of 25 pounds for non-payment. The Labor Commission report of 1885 established in Natal to investigate the situation of Indians said that European opinion was against the presence of Indians as competitors. In 1891 an act was passed forbidding the acquisition of land by ex-Indentured Indians. When self-government was given to Natal in July 1893, a number of Indians qualified for the franchise, but they were denied the right to vote.

Indians were demeaned for their race, religion, and color. They were invariably described as “the dirt of Asia”, “parasites”, “pigs”, “a thing black and lean and a long way from clean which they call the accursed Hindoo”, “chockful of vice and lives upon rice”. The laws that excluded Indians in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were held up as models for treating Indians in all South Africa. The Natal Advertiser wrote:

> These wily Asiatics…have also driven out the small European trader...The place he once occupied is now taken by these wretched Asiatics who live a semi-barbaric life, spend nothing, send all their savings to Calcutta and go insolvent when they please…With respect to these ‘Indian traders’ there should be no hesitancy shown and no quarter given. They must be expelled, if possible, and if
that cannot be effected forthwith, then at least they can be taxed as not to make it
worth their while to remain longer in the colony.\footnote{8}

It was a common belief that Indians were willing to pocket these insults as long as
they were permitted to make money. Once the legal case that brought him to South
Africa was resolved, Gandhi was drawn into the larger context of South African history.
His experience of discrimination on the train to Pretoria and his achievement of
compromise in the Dada Abdulla case gave him the courage to contest the discriminatory
practices of South African laws and customs. Gandhi responded to the \textit{Natal Enquirer}’s
charges, the first by an Indian in South Africa. He contended that Indians were law-
abiding and hardly meddled in politics. Not a single Indian was ever charged with
robbery or any heinous crimes. He continued:

> But they spend nothing, says the leading article under discussion. Don’t they? I
> suppose they live on air or sentiments…It is to be presumed that they pay nothing
> for shop rents, taxes, butcher’s bills, grocer’s bills, clerk’s salaries, etc. etc. One
> would like to belong to such a blessed class of traders…It seems, on the whole,
> that their simplicity, their total abstinence of intoxicants, their peaceful and above
> all their businesslike and frugal habits, which should serve as a recommendation,
> are really at the bottom of all this contempt and hatred of the poor Indian traders.
> And they are British subjects. Is this Christian-like…Is this civilization?\footnote{9}

Following the elections of 1893, Sir John Robinson was invited to form the Natal
government. He immediately proposed that the period of Indian indentureship be
increased from 5 years to an indefinite period and, if they refused, Indians should be
forced to return home. In moving the second reading of the Franchise Bill against
Indians on June 21, 1894, Sir John Robinson remarked:

> He thought he might lay it down as an axiom that the franchise right was a race
> privilege. It was the most precious inheritance of an emancipated race and the
> product of civilization among Caucasian races, and especially the Anglo-Saxon.
> The Asiatic could not be considered as an offshoot of the soil or an offspring of
> the races that had undertaken the duty of colonizing South Africa…The men who
> had occupied and colonized South Africa…were determined to affix and impress
> upon South Africa in the future the character and institutions of a Christian and
> European civilization. And if this continent were to be properly reclaimed from
> barbarism… it would only be through the recognition of these principles.\footnote{10}

Gandhi was at his farewell party when he read another racist article in the \textit{Natal Mercury}:
The Asiatic comes of a race impregnated with an effete civilization with not an atom of knowledge of the principles or traditions of representative government. As regards his instinct and training he is a political infant of the most backward type from whom it is an injustice to expect that he should...have any sympathy with our political aspirations. He thinks differently and reasons in a plane unknown to European logic.  

These sentiments about the inferiority of Indians were articulated in support of a policy of denying the franchise to qualified Indians. Indians had nursed these insults before Gandhi persuaded them to challenge these charges. He collected a petition of some ten thousand signatures and sent it to the colonial secretary. He sent copies to his friends in England. It was the first time that the people in England became aware of the injustice meted out to Indians in South Africa. Gandhi had given the Indian community hope that they could fight injustice. He was persuaded to stay and promised legal work so that his family could be secure.

The instrument that was launched on August 22, 1894 to fight for Indian rights was the Natal Indian Congress, founded surely in imitation of the Indian National Congress, with Gandhi as honorary secretary. As one examines the objectives of the Natal Congress, one can see already some of the main lines of the later Satyagraha struggle. In the face of calculated attempts by his opponents to demean Indians, Gandhi preferred a conciliatory approach to his struggle. It is true that at this stage he still held hopes that British justice would rectify the social and political condition of Indians. Even after he came to reject British imperialism, he still had faith that human beings, however powerful and oppressive they were, could be persuaded to compromise and negotiate justice in the interest of all. Among the objectives of the Natal Congress were: To bring about a better understanding and to promote friendliness between Europeans and Indians; to provide information about India and Indians by writing to newspapers, pamphlets, and lectures; to educate Indians about Indian history and traditions; to investigate Indian grievances and to resort to all constitutional methods to remove them; to inquire into the condition of indentured Indians and assist them in their special hardships; to help the poor and needy in all reasonable ways; and generally to do everything possible to improve the condition of Indians morally, socially, intellectually, and politically.
Under Gandhi’s leadership, South African Indians felt inspired to be active politically. An Indian Educational Association was founded under the auspices of the Natal Congress. It brought Indians from all sectors together and prepared them for service to the community. The members met frequently to give lectures or read papers. In the process, Gandhi developed a keen instinct for politics which caused the legal establishment to try to prevent him from practicing law in Natal. He wrote an open letter to the Natal Legislative Council on the Indian question. It was clear, he said, that the Indian was despised in South Africa. If it was because of the color of his skin, then his condition was hopeless because he could never be white. If it was because of ignorance, then there was hope. He reminded them that the success of the Indian trader was based on industry, skill, thrift, and frugal habits. To the charge that the Indian was unsanitary, he answered that the personal habits of Indians as a race were not dirty and that those whose habits were unsanitary were not beyond reform. To the accusation that Indians came from an inferior racial stock, he cited European scholars like Max Muller and Schopenhauer to show that Indian achievements in world literature, law, mathematics, science, religion and grammar were renowned.

Gandhi questioned whether Indians in South Africa were treated in the best traditions of British justice:

The man in the street hates him, curses him, spits upon him and often pushes him off the footpath…The tramcars are not for Indians. The railway officials may treat Indians as beasts. No matter how clean, his very sight is such an offence to every white man in the Colony that he would object to sit, even for a short time, in the same compartment with the Indian. The hotels shut their doors against them. I know of instances of respectable Indians having been denied a night’s lodging in an hotel. Even the public baths are not for the Indians.

Of course Gandhi had himself suffered these indignities. He quoted Lord Macaulay on the ideal of British justice: “We are free, we are civilized to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilization.” But he asked how could this ideal have any reality when indentured Indians were brought to South Africa on starvation wages and under bondage. When they showed the least signs
of liberty, Europeans wished to send them back home. Reminding them that they were Christian, he said that “Christ taught us to love our enemies and to give our cloak to the one who wants the coat.” Reaffirming his faith in British freedom and democracy, he called upon all Europeans to reflect on the discriminatory laws against Indians. The publication of this “Open Letter” won Gandhi many friends and sympathy for his cause. A respondent wrote to Gandhi praising him for his letter and admitted that India was indeed the cradle of civilization but reminded him that India’s caste system treated its lower castes inhumanely. Gandhi said that the letter moved him and set in motion his passion to abolish untouchability.

Gandhi’s circle of friends in South Africa were for the most part Indian traders and clerks. He soon came to take up the struggle for justice for indentured laborers and said that his meeting with the South Indian laborer, Balasundaran, was a moment of truth for him. As Gandhi himself admitted, “service of the poor had been my heart’s desire, and it has always thrown me amongst the poor and enabled me to identify myself with them.” Balasundaram approached him in torn clothes, head-gear in hand, two front teeth broken and his mouth bleeding. He had clearly been beaten by his master. Gandhi took up his case. He remembered that Sir William Hunter had described indentured labor as almost as bad as slavery in that the indentured laborer was the property of his master. The judge transferred Balasundaram’s contract to another European with a more humane reputation. Gandhi commented that Balasundaram’s case brought him in touch with indentured Indians and won him the hearts of families of indentured laborers. Indeed, although the Natal Congress was founded in imitation of the Indian Congress, there was one major difference. Where the Indian Congress was essentially an elitist organization until Gandhi made it an organization for the masses, the Natal Congress attracted the poorer Indians because of the trust Gandhi inspired among indentured Indians like Balasundaram. It was no less true that the masses of indentured laborers inspired Gandhi with their courage and dignity.

Gandhi’s home was a semi-detached house facing Durban Bay. Harry Escombe, the Attorney General, lived next to him, and Dada Abdulla’s store was in the same street. As he studied the indenture law, the more he was convinced of its effect of degrading the person. He was aware that the recurring famines were the causes of this system of cheap
labor. From recruitment to labor on the plantation the experience was bitter. Emigration agents went into villages where crops had failed and places of pilgrimage to lure the poor to recruiting depots. Men, women, and children were crammed together below deck in special quarters partitioned by steel wire in the “coolie ships”. All kinds of diseases took a heavy toll. Those who died were simply thrown into the sea. In South Africa, if a laborer was found one mile from his employer’s residence, he was liable to be arrested. Wages were deducted for absence due to illness. Their work routine began at 4 in the morning and continued until 7 at night.

Gandhi had gone to South Africa simply to take up a job and earn a living. But service to the community came to dominate his life. His brief experience as a lawyer and his friendship with Indians and Europeans had taught him the significance of truth and honesty in politics. As lawyer and secretary of the Natal Congress, he used constitutional means to secure the repeal of unjust legislation.

THE INFLUENCE OF LEO TOLSTOY

Gandhi’s bookcase in his home in Durban contained several works of the great Russian novelist, Leo Tolstoy. A friend from London sent him a copy of Tolstoy’s *The Kingdom of God is Within You* in which Tolstoy argued that the essence of Christianity was universal love and nonviolence. Gandhi said that he was going through a period of skepticism about violence but Tolstoy’s ideas filled him with hope. There followed correspondence between both men and a mutual respect developed. Gandhi confessed that Tolstoy’s influence was second only to Rajchandra. He also read Tolstoy’s *What Shall We Do, The Gospels in Brief*, and *The Four Gospels Harmonized and Translated*. The narrative of Tolstoy’s life and intellectual development in many ways paralleled that of Gandhi.

Born in 1828, Tolstoy came to question his earlier life as a soldier and even his fame as a great European novelist. As spiritual matters came to dominate his life, he sought the friendship of ordinary people and began to question the Christianity taught by the established Russian Orthodox Church. His *Confession*, completed between 1879 and 1888, revealed his innermost meditations at that time. This work has some parallels with
Gandhi’s *Autobiography*. Tolstoy confessed that he was moved by the misery in the slums of Moscow when he worked with the Census Commission in 1881 and asked what right the few had to enjoy the luxuries of life while so many were condemned to live in poverty without hope of improving their condition. This experience taught him to work with the poor and teach them by example how to live a simple, happy, and contented life by hard work. He felt that science had lost its direction when it focused only on knowledge and not on what was good for man. For Tolstoy, service to humanity was the heart of spirituality which he considered to be a genuine force for good in the world. He affirmed that the only undoubted sign of spirituality was renunciation and self-sacrifice.

After his conversion, Tolstoy dressed and lived as a peasant. He swept and cleaned his own room and emptied his own chamber-pot. He often traveled third class on the train. On the occasion of the centenary of Tolstoy’s birth in 1928 Gandhi wrote that what impressed him most was that Tolstoy was able to practice what he taught and his radical commitment to the pursuit of the truth: “He was the most truthful man of his age. He never tried to hide the truth or tone it down but set it before the world in its entirety without equivocation or compromise.” When Gandhi founded his Ashram, Phoenix Farm, in 1904, his inspiration was drawn in large part from the ideals of Tolstoy. What he learned most of all was the relation between Christ’s teaching and nonviolence. Tolstoy’s emphasis on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and his notion of passive resistance confirmed Gandhi’s insights about nonviolence.

In June 1896 Gandhi took a leave of absence and returned to India with the promise that he would return with his wife and family. In three years he had undergone an almost incredible transformation. The bumbling, insecure, English-educated lawyer had become a moral giant taking on the might of the powerful British and Boer political systems. Even before he had formulated *Satyagraha*, he had developed the main lines of his political philosophy which sought to combine the struggle against an unjust political system with a social movement to remove injustice within his Indian community, all the while insisting on the development of the ideal of social responsibility by the moral individual. Although the discrimination he experienced was racial and cultural, he defended his Indian community without demonizing his opponents. In telling his story and the story of Indians he was careful to present the Other as human beings. The
humiliation of being thrown off the train at Maritzburg because no colored people could travel first-class was the catalyst for Gandhi’s political transformation. But Gandhi made it a point to record that on the last stage of his journey to Pretoria he again occupied the first class carriage. This time when the guard came to remove him, an English passenger in his compartment chided the guard: “What do you mean by troubling the gentleman? Don’t you see he has a first-class ticket? I don’t mind in the least his travelling with me.”

On another occasion, when he was kicked off the sidewalk, his English friend, Mr. Coates, offered to be a witness. Gandhi’s purpose was clearly to demonstrate that there were Europeans who were sensitive to the claims of justice for Indians, and that no one should fall into the trap of demonizing any person because of their race, color, or religion.

His ideal of community insisted on respect for diversity and the cultivation of inclusiveness. These ideals emerged not from some philosophical discourse but from the concrete relations of the participants in the struggle. Of course, Gandhi’s warm family experience in Gujarat and his student years in London prepared him for living in a multicultural community. With such a view of community, conflict can only be resolved satisfactorily through dialogue and peacefully. The Mexican poet, Octavio Paz, who praised the nonviolent movements of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., quoted the ancient Roman emperor and philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, in support of dialogue: “The moment dawn breaks, one ought to say to oneself: I shall today meet a man who is imprudent, one who is ungrateful, one who is treacherous, one who is violent…I am intimately acquainted with him; he is one of my kind, not through blood or family, but because both of us partake in reason and both of us are particles of divinity. We were born to work together, as do feet and hands, eyes and eyelids, upper teeth and lower.” Paz concluded that “dialogue is but one of the forms, perhaps the highest, of cosmic sympathy.”

This celebration of dialogue and negotiation describes faithfully Gandhi’s political development as he returned home in the summer of 1896.
HOME AGAIN AND RETURN TO SOUTH AFRICA

Not only did Gandhi return home to bring his wife and family back to South Africa but he hoped to travel around India to make them aware of the grievances that Indians in South Africa were suffering. He continued to insist that British rule was beneficial to Indians and that discrimination in South Africa was an aberration. That certainly was the spirit in which he wrote the study called ‘The Green Pamphlet’ describing the discrimination against Indians in South Africa. His activity in South Africa was followed with interest in India and he was able to meet important Indian nationalist leaders like Justice Ranade and Pherozeshah Mehta, both heroes to the young Gandhi. In Poona he met perhaps the most famous Indian nationalists at the time, Lokamanya Tilak and Professor Gokhale. For Gandhi, “Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had seemed to me like the Himalayas, the Lokamanya like the ocean. But Gokhale was as the Ganges.” The affectionate welcome that Gokhale gave him won his heart. In the future he would consider Professor Gokhale his political teacher. As interest in the South African situation increased, a second edition of “The Green Pamphlet” was published. In Calcutta he met Surendranath Banerji, “the idol of Bengal” and Mr. Saunders, editor of The Englishman. Mr. Saunders placed his office and paper at Gandhi’s disposal. In explaining why they became friends, Gandhi wrote that Mr. Saunders liked his “freedom from exaggeration and devotion to truth.” It was the same quality that Professor Gokhale saw and admired: “But what you have told me has stirred me deeply. I like your idea of seeking the co-operation of all parties.”

Gandhi spoke against the 3 pound poll tax on indentured Indians and the beatings that they sometimes received from their masters. Reuter’s summary of his speeches, however, exaggerated Gandhi’s criticism and inflamed South Africans with anger. Gandhi said that he had deliberately described the conditions in South Africa less forcibly than the facts warranted without the slightest exaggeration. When he left Bombay in
November 1896 with his wife, two sons, and his widowed sister’s son on the S.S. Courland, he had no idea of the troubles in store for him. As the Courland and the Naderi approached the port of Durban with some 800 passengers, a large demonstration of armed white South Africans were waiting. At Mr. Escombe’s instigation, the state quarantined the ships for twenty three days, hoping to dissuade the passengers from landing. Gandhi said that he knew that the protests were directed at him because Natal Europeans had accused him of unfairly condemning them.

While waiting for the quarantine to be lifted, Gandhi gave talks on Western Civilization and the grievances of Indians. He received a sympathetic hearing from the captain and others. When asked by the captain how he would stand by his principle of nonviolence if the white protesters carried out their threat, Gandhi responded: “I hope God will give me the courage and the sense to forgive them and to refrain from bringing them to law. I have no anger against them. I am only sorry for their ignorance and their narrowness. I know that they sincerely believe that what they are doing today is right and proper. I have no reason therefore to be angry with them.”

When the passengers were allowed to go ashore, Mr. Escombe sent word to the captain that Gandhi’s life was in danger and that he should leave when it was dark. Gandhi sent his wife and family to the home of his friend, Parsi Rustomji. Mr. Laughton, counsel for Dada Abdulla, came up and said that they should leave because he saw no reason why Gandhi should enter the city like a thief. As they walked down one street, the mob recognized Gandhi and began to chase him. Mr. Laughton stopped a rickshaw. It was the first time that Gandhi rode in a rickshaw. The crowd threatened to smash the rickshaw. They pushed Mr. Laughton away and began to stone Gandhi; they threw down his turban, slapped him in the face, and kicked him.

The wife of the Durban Superintendent of Police, Mr. Alexander, happened to be coming in the opposite direction. She at once recognized him, opened her umbrella over him to ward off the rocks, and escorted him to the police station. Gandhi thanked the police and Mrs. Alexander. He reached Parsi Rustomji’s house where his family was. But a huge mob appeared outside the house and threatened to burn the house down if Gandhi was not handed over to him. When he heard what was happening, Mr. Alexander persuaded a subordinate to dress like an Indian trader and go to Rustomji’s home to warn
Gandhi that the crowd was bent on burning down the house and that he should disguise himself as an Indian constable and make his way with his subordinate through the mob. While the Superintendent of Police was distracting the crowd by entertaining them with songs and conversation, Gandhi reached the police station safely. When Mr. Alexander told the crowd that Gandhi was no longer in the house, they formed a committee which entered the house to verify this. They dispersed when they did not find Gandhi.

After three or four days, Gandhi returned to his home at Beach Grove. He told Mr. Escombe that he would not prosecute his assailants and sent letters of thanks and gifts to Mr. and Mrs. Alexander. The Alexanders became close friends of Gandhi. In 1899, as he was going to his office, Gandhi encountered Mr. Escombe who was one of those who encouraged the riot. Mr. Escombe came over and said to him: “Mr. Gandhi, I have long wished to tell you something that has lain on my mind. I am extremely sorry for what happened to you during the demonstration at the Point on your landing in Durban. I had never realized there was so much Christian charity locked up in the Indian breast.” Later that day Gandhi learned that Harry Escombe had died.

THE BOER WAR (1899-1902)

The relief and gratitude of some Europeans that Gandhi was not lynched and was unwilling to prosecute his assailants did not mean that they wanted to end their discrimination against Indians. Among the disabilities Indians faced in Natal were these. They could not go out after 9 p.m. without a pass; they were liable to be arrested at any time unless they could show a pass that they were free Indians; Indian servants had to be registered as “others belonging to the uncivilized races of Asia”; when an indentured Indian became free, he had to return to India, his passage being paid for him, or pay an annual poll-tax of 3 pounds; to be entitled to the franchise, they had to prove that they belonged to a country “possessing elective representative institutions founded on the Parliamentary Franchise”; Government High Schools barred Indians, notwithstanding their abilities or character. No sooner than Natal received self-government than its first Prime Minister, Sir John Robinson, introduced legislation to deprive qualified Indians of
their right to vote. An anti-Asiatic and European Protection Association was formed to devise ways to prevent Asians from acquiring land. In the Orange Free State, Indians were forced to leave the colony in 1890 without being paid any compensation. There was one important progressive step for the Indian community. In 1898 Gandhi persuaded one of his co-workers, V. Madanjit, to buy a second-hand printing press. So was born the International Printing Press which was of inestimable value in making public the injustice done to the Indian community in South Africa. It prepared the way for the creation of Indian Opinion, a newspaper Gandhi founded to articulate their grievances and educate the public.

Indian rights were placed on the back burner as the winds of war between Boer and Briton gathered strength. The failure of Jameson’s raid in 1895 and the resignation of Cecil Rhodes did not end the dream of British imperialists of establishing a South African Federation under British supremacy. Paul Kruger’s hatred of the British and their political ambition made war inevitable. In 1897 the new British High Commissioner, Alfred Milner, took office. An ardent imperialist, he and Cecil Rhodes had come under the influence of John Ruskin as undergraduates at Oxford University. Milner was resolved to crush the Afrikaners. On October 12, 1899, war commenced. On the one hand, it was a war fought between two ideologies: one imperialist and expansionist, the other trying to preserve its unique way of life. But more perceptive critics saw the cause as greed for the gold of the Transvaal. By 1887 the gold mines of the Witwatersrand of Transvaal were producing 27.6% of the world’s gold. It was a bitter war. Jan Smuts, an associate of Kruger, warned that it would be “a fight that would stagger humanity.”

The question that faced Gandhi was what should be the response of Indians to the declaration of war. Should they support the British or not? He was aware of the responses of the various British parties. The Conservative Party supported the war for human rights considerations; the Liberal party, after initially questioning the morality of the war, supported the war; the Labor Party and socialists generally opposed the war, but Fabian Socialists like George Bernard Shaw, H.G.Wells, Sydney and Beatrice Webb saw the war as a righteous one. Shaw wrote that a great imperial power had to govern in the interest of civilization, to which James Ramsay McDonald, spokesman of the
Independent Labor Party, commented sarcastically that, “Never has a militant and exploiting internationalism received such a brilliant defense.”

Some Indians felt that this was a good opportunity to support the British and change their view of Indians that they had come to South Africa merely to make money. Others argued that the racial discrimination was so severe against them that they had every right not to support the war. Gandhi’s line of argument was based on his understanding of the relation between rights and responsibilities. He acknowledged that it was as British subjects that Indians had demanded their rights. Indians were proud of their British citizenship and it would be “unbecoming to our dignity as a nation to look on with folded hands at a time when ruin stared the British in the face.” It was a position that Indian nationalists shared, declaring that support for Britain in the war was a means to advance their claims of freedom and welfare. Yet, Gandhi admitted that in his opinion justice was on the side of the Boers. But how could he square his support for the British with the acknowledgement that justice was on the side of the Boers? He argued that although the authorities might not always be right, not every single subject should hope to enforce his private opinion in all cases. As long as subjects owed allegiance to the State, it was their duty to accommodate themselves to acts of State. However, if there were people or groups who opposed the war on moral grounds, they had every right to dissuade the government from pursuing its course, even at the risk of their lives. As far as Indians were concerned, he said that there was no such moral crisis. Their duty when the war broke out was to give their assistance.

It seemed that at this stage he had faith that the British imperial system would give India and Indians freedom and rights. But, was nonviolent resistance dependent on confidence in British rule to resolve conflict? Gandhi had not yet developed his method of Satyagraha. But from the beginning of his political activism Gandhi had insisted on nonviolence. He was willing to negotiate and compromise on other objectives but not on the imperative of nonviolence. Looking back on his response to the Boer War years after when he had come to conclude that the system of British imperial rule was unjust and would not grant freedom to India, Gandhi maintained that his decision at that time was right. He said that he was faithful to the truth as he saw it then. His conception of the truth did not allow him to judge the events of 1899 by his own state of mind in 1939.
Gandhi wrote to the government offering the services of Indians and suggesting that they form an Indian Ambulance Corps, an initiative that was at first rejected, but later approved. Eleven hundred Indians of all religions and classes, including some three or four hundred indentured Indians, left for the front. As the British suffered reverses at the beginning of the war, there were many wounded. Indians risked their lives bringing the soldiers to medical care. Gandhi was in charge of one of the groups of stretcher bearers. Seasoned veterans came to respect and praise the Indian Ambulance Corps, especially their actions at Spion Kop where the British forces under Buller were in retreat. The correspondent of the Illustrated Star wrote:

I came across Gandhi in the early morning sitting by the roadside – eating a regulation Army biscuit. Every man in General Buller’s force was dull and depressed, and damnation was heartily invoked on everything. But Gandhi was stoical in his bearing, cheerful, and confident in his conversation, and had a kindly eye…I saw the man and his small undisciplined corps on many a field of battle during the Natal campaign. When succour was to be rendered they were there.

The soldierly qualities of discipline, courage, duty, and the capacity to bear great hardships impressed Gandhi. He was proud of the heroism of the ambulance corps and felt that it brought a deeper solidarity between all Indians: “I got into closer touch with the indentured Indians. There came a greater awakening amongst them, and the feeling that Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Tamils, Gujaratis, and Sindhis were all Indians and children of the same motherland took deep root amongst them. Everyone believed that the Indians’ grievances were sure to be redressed. At the moment the white man’s attitude seemed to be distinctly changed. The relations formed with the whites during the war were of the sweetest.”

The Indian Ambulance Corps was disbanded in February 1900 after the relief of Ladysmith.

By September 1900 the tide of the war seemed to have turned. Both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State had been defeated and annexed by the British. But the British should have remembered Jan Smuts’ prophecy that the war would “stagger humanity”. Determined to struggle to the end to preserve their long tradition and way of life, the Boers changed their tactics to guerrilla war. Urged and led by men like Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, the Boers harried the British. Though beaten, they refused to surrender. Lord Kitchener and the British Generals resorted to indiscriminate farm-
burning and devastation of property. Crops were burnt and buildings gutted. Over a million men were sent to prisoner of war camps; Boer women and children were placed in concentration camps where about 30,000 died of malnutrition and disease. These atrocities raised indignation in England. The story of these horrors was recorded by a friend of Gandhi, Emily Hobhouse, who went to South Africa as delegate to the Distress Fund for South African women and children. Henry Campbell-Bannerman, leader of the House of Commons in 1898, was so affected by her report that he gave this speech on June 14, 1901:

What was this policy of unconditional surrender? It was that, now that we had got the men we had been fighting against down, we should punish them as severely as possible, devastate their country, burn their homes, break up their very instruments of agriculture and destroy the machinery by which food was produced...a phrase often used was that ‘war is war’, but when one came to ask about it, one was told that no war is going on, that it was not war. When was war not a war? When it was carried on by methods of barbarism on South Africa.22

Jan Smuts and the Boer leaders had no intention of surrendering. Their exploits were the stuff of legend and shook the confidence of the British. Lord Milner wanted unconditional surrender; Lord Kitchener wanted to return to India where he felt more at home and so was prepared for peace. British and Boer leaders finally agreed to negotiations and on May 31, 1902, the Treaty of Vereeniging brought the war to an end. Gandhi had observed closely how the British and Boer fought. He said afterwards: “Do not pick a quarrel with the English, but if you have to, then, give them fight with all your strength. They despise an opponent who proves himself weak, but they respect him if he shows his mettle even in defeat.” From the Boers he learned the significance of suffering in war. They “staggered humanity” by their suffering and won the respect of their opponents. Gandhi observed that it was not the capacity to inflict suffering but demonstration of the capacity to suffer that was the measure of heroism. It was a lesson he felt that Indians should learn23.

Lord Milner, Governor and High Commissioner of a united South Africa, appointed a committee to examine the laws that were not in keeping with the spirit of the British constitution. The committee prepared a list of anti-Indian acts. Asians could not vote; nor could they own land outside the locations reserved for them. When these laws passed into the hands of the Asiatic department, they were enforced strictly. British
traders felt that if Indians could travel to the Transvaal at will they would suffer great loss. Gandhi saw through the specious arguments that Europeans advanced for supporting what was really a selfish, materialistic interest. Some like Jan Smuts defended the racial policies in this way:

South Africa is a representative of Western civilization while India is the centre of Oriental culture. Thinkers of the present generation hold that these two civilizations cannot go together...The problem is simply one of preserving one’s civilization, that is of enjoying the supreme right of self-preservation and discharging the corresponding duty...The Indians are disliked in South Africa for their simplicity, patience, perseverance, frugality, and otherworldliness. Westerners are enterprising, impatient, engrossed in multiplying their material wants and in satisfying them, fond of good cheer, anxious to save physical labour and prodigal in habits.  

What Smuts was saying was that civilizational differences were the causes of discrimination against Indians. Gandhi found this argument absurd. It was more likely that Lord Milner found a policy of accommodation towards the Boers more useful to his interests than ending the discrimination against Indians. British administrators sought to prevent fresh Indian immigration into the Transvaal and issued permits. Indians certainly did not want to flood the Transvaal with their kin and agreed to re-register with the expectation that new restrictions would not be imposed on them. The Indian community looked forward to a period of comparative peace.

**TOWARDS SATYAGRAHA**

Around 1900 Gandhi’s life began to assume greater simplicity. Indeed, at all times one could see him wrestling with the demands of the private and public, the spiritual and the political. His professional life as a lawyer was not entirely satisfying and he wanted to give more of his time to public service. Self-sacrifice and self-reliance now became his watchwords. When a leper came to his door, he offered him shelter, dressed his wounds, and looked after him. He worked as a nurse for two hours every morning at a hospital before going to his regular work. He learned the patient’s complaints, placing the facts before the physician, and dispensed the prescriptions. All this helped him to know indentured Indians even better. The experience in the hospital also helped him to
look after his children, two of whom were born in South Africa. Kasturbai and he had decided that they wanted the best medical assistance at the time of her delivery, but they could not be sure that they would. So Gandhi read Dr. Tribhuvandas’ book, _Ma-ne Shikhaman_ (Advice to a Mother). With this knowledge he nursed both sons who were born in South Africa. They did get a nurse, but for Kasturbai.

To cut back on household expenses, he bought a book on washing, studied the art and taught it to his wife. He recalled that the first time he starched his collar he put too much and did not use a hot iron. His shirt was so messy that when he went to work his fellow barristers laughed at him. He wrote proudly and with humor that he improved his ironing so much so that Professor Gokhale praised him for ironing his scarf when he visited Tolstoy Farm. When a barber in Pretoria refused to cut his hair, he bought a pair of clippers and learned to cut his own hair. This also brought ridicule from his colleagues who asked: “What’s wrong with your hair, Gandhi? Rats have been at it?”

Gandhi believed that education should prepare people for service to the community and ethics. What better way to learn this than from the school of experience and contact with parents. He did not allow his sons to go to public school because he felt that education conducted in English alone was inadequate for Indians. At the school he opened for the children at his Ashram, students learnt both English and Gujarati.

Gandhi sensed that his sons were disappointed at not being given the opportunity to go to public school. Harilal, his eldest son, eventually rebelled against his father and entered a public school in India. Although his other sons dutifully followed him, Gandhi was aware that “whenever they come across an M.A. or a B.A. or even a matriculate, they seem to feel the handicap of a want of school education.” He admitted that he had not given them a literary education and wondered whether he had done his duty as a father: “What harm had there been, if I had given my boys an academical education? What right had I thus to clip their wings? Why should I have come in the way of their taking degrees and choosing their own careers?” He acknowledged that his sons had good reason for a grievance against him. While Harilal upbraided him in private and public, the others forgave him. Gandhi regretted that he was not an ideal father and confessed that he sacrificed their literary education for what “I genuinely, though maybe wrongly, believed to be service to the community.”
Throughout Gandhi’s life he was in contact with people from different religions and communities. He said that he made no distinction between “relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Muslims, Parsis, Christians, or Jews.” His office clerks often stayed at his home in Durban. Each room had chamber-pots and everyone was expected to clean them. Kasturbai could not bear to have Gandhi clean the chamber-pots and neither could she. In 1898, when she displayed her repugnance, he shouted at her, caught her by the hand, and took her to the gate. Brought to his sense of shame, he apologized. Gandhi was in doubt whether to accept the many gifts, gold, silver, and diamonds, that his family received in gratitude for the wonderful service of Indians in the Boer War. It offended his idea of the bond between service and selflessness. He persuaded his children to accept his decision that they could not accept the gifts but would create a trust with the gifts to be used by the community. Kasturbai complained bitterly and accused him of trying to make the boys monks. Gandhi said that he finally “extorted” consent from her. Why did he write about these personal events? Gandhi found experience to be an important teacher whose lessons helped to transform one’s life for the better. The spirit of questioning one’s actions and self-criticism were essential to his notion of personal autonomy and liberty. For Gandhi’s part, service to the community should come before personal considerations. But he also tried to articulate the dissident voices of his family, and insisted that Kasturbai had a mind of her own and became his true friend. He remembered how faithful a nurse she was in all his illnesses and how he valued her as a “helpmate, a comrade, and a partner.” Writing years afterwards, he said that he felt that theirs was “a life of contentment, happiness, and progress.”

In 1901 Gandhi, his wife, and four children sailed for India. After leaving his family at their ancestral home, he left for Bombay on his way to Calcutta to attend the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress. This was the first time that he had attended a Congress meeting. If this was the cream of Indian nationalism, he was disappointed. He remembered being saddened by seeing the practice of untouchability at the annual Congress meeting, the citadel of India’s freedom movement, where there was a separate kitchen walled in by wicker-work for South Indian delegates who belonged to the class of untouchables. It pained him to think how pervasive this might be in the
larger community. He described also the unsanitary condition of the facilities. When he saw that the delegates refused to take responsibility for cleaning their own waste and referred it to “the volunteers,” saying that it was the work of scavengers, he asked for a broom and cleaned the latrine. At 11 at night he was finally invited to present his resolution on South Africa. He spoke for five minutes and drew applause three times. He met all the Congress leaders and decided to stay in Calcutta for a month. He recalled attending Lord Curzon’s Durbar and being irritated at the sight of Indian Princes, favorites of Lord Curzon, bedecked in their silk pyjamas, pearl necklaces round their necks, bracelets around their wrists, diamond tassels on their turban, and sword with golden hilts at their waists. For Gandhi, this was simply “gilded slavery.”

Professor Gokhale invited him to stay at his home in Calcutta. The month in Calcutta with Gokhale was important to him. He learned about Indian politics and Bengali culture. He said that Gokhale treated him like a “younger brother.” It was almost like hero-worship: “To see Gokhale at work was as much a joy as an education. He never wasted a minute. His private relations and friendship were all for public good. All his talks had reference only to the good of the country and were absolutely free from any trace of untruth or insincerity.” 27 Gandhi got to know intimately the Bengali culture of Calcutta. He visited the headquarters of the Brahmo Samaj, the reformed Hindu movement initiated by Rammohun Roy, and listened to fine Bengali music for which he developed a passion. He walked to Belur Math, the place of Sri Ramakrishna’s mission, and met Sister Nivedita. Swami Vivekananda was ill at the time and was staying at his Calcutta home. He visited the temple of Kali and found the sacrifice of sheep unbearable. A quick visit to Burma to visit the Golden Pagoda brought his visit to Calcutta to an end. He informed Gokhale that he would leave for Rajkot by train travelling by third class because it would allow him to know intimately the experience of the poor who had to travel third class.

Gandhi returned to Rajkot on February 26, 1902 and opened his practice there. He immersed himself in the study of the Ramayana which had been his grandfather’s and father’s favorite book. He placed a wooden cot in the backyard and for three hours a day, from lunch to 4 p.m., he read from the Ramayana completing it in one week. Then he would go on his evening walk accompanied by the children of the Gandhi family.
Gandhi was thinking of staying longer in Rajkot but friends persuaded him to open a practice in Bombay. No sooner had he set up chambers in Bombay than his son Manilal had a severe attack of typhoid and pneumonia. The physician was called in and said that medicine would have little effect but recommended eggs and chicken broth. Gandhi told him that as a matter of religion they did not eat meat or eggs, to which the Parsi doctor told him not to be so hard on his son. Manilal asked him to try his hydropathic treatment. He gave Manilal hip baths and fed him lemon juice mixed with water for three days. But the fever persisted, going up to 104 degrees. What right did parents have to inflict their fads on their children, he asked? He decided to try a wet sheet pack. He wetted a sheet, wrung the water out, wrapped it about Manilal, keeping only his head out, and covered him with two blankets. Perspiration streamed down Manilal’s face. Miraculously, the fever broke. Gandhi wrote: “Father and son fell asleep in the same bed.” He kept him on a diet of diluted milk and lemon juice for 40 days. Gandhi was settling down in his practice when word came from Natal that he should return. He had promised his friends in South Africa that if they needed him he would return. Leaving his wife and children in India, he set out for South Africa in late November 1902. He was mindful of the anxieties that such constant relocation had on his family.

RETURN TO SOUTH AFRICA

After a year learning about Indian politics and reacquainting himself with India and his family, he returned to the turbulence of politics in South Africa. The Indian question had become more serious. Whereas Indians were recruited exclusively for agricultural work before the Boer war, there was now an acute shortage of labor in the mines after the war. The number of Indians working in the mines consequently increased. The Natal government decided to recruit more indentured labor from India. The tax on ex-indentured laborers who stayed in the colony as free men was deemed insufficient to prevent them from settling in South Africa. The authorities decided therefore to expand the tax to include the children of ex-indentured Indians who stayed on. It was after the second reading of the Bill appeared on April 10, 1902 that Gandhi’s friends realized the seriousness of the situation and asked him to return. Gandhi was
livid. He wondered why the white settlers were so ruthless. The settlers very well knew that without Indian labor there would have been no prosperity and without an Indian army in 1899 the British might well have been less successful. The reward for these services, he said sarcastically, was an annual tax of 3 pounds on children of indentured Indians. During the same session the Natal Parliament passed the Land Acquisition Act of 1902, enabling the governor to purchase or expropriate land deemed suitable for the “benevolent settlement of persons of European descent” or “for public purposes.” In addition to efforts to prevent Indians from purchasing land to which they were entitled, they were now threatened with the seizure of land they had already purchased.

More disappointing news lay in store. Gandhi found that the solidarity that he had created in founding the Natal Congress had become unraveled by divisions between immigrant Indians and those who were born in South Africa, Muslims and Christians, free Indians and indentured Indians. Equally disturbing was the recognition that members of the Natal Congress no longer placed the issue of the poor, the sick, and the indentured at the center of their program.

Lord Milner had achieved his dream of being governor of a united South Africa under British hegemony. To develop South Africa as a land of progress, he brought in outstanding young university graduates from England, called Milner’s Kindergarten. His post-war Indian policy clearly indicated that he was trying to win the Boers over to his side by confirming the discriminatory legislation against Indians. One might add that the legislation was directed against all people of color because in 1902 the African Peoples Organization was founded, and in 1912 the African National Congress. Nelson Mandela affirmed that Gandhi and the Natal Congress had influenced these African associations.29 The main features of Milner’s Indian policy were: All Asians whether old or new residents were required to take out certificates of registration, renewable annually at a fee of 3 pounds. Those who were registered, unless living on the premises of an European employer, had to reside and carry on their business in special quarters of town. Asians possessing a certain degree of education and civilized habits of life were to be exempted from registration. This was the situation that confronted Gandhi when he returned to South Africa.
He prepared a deputation to present Indian grievances in both Natal and Transvaal provinces. But the Asiatic Department which was created by the government to advocate Indian interests was simply window-dressing for the government’s racial policies. When representation was made to Joseph Chamberlain who had just arrived from India to win the hearts of British and Boers, his advice to an Indian deputation was to try their best “to placate the Europeans, if you wish to live in their midst.” The inhospitable and humiliating response to their pleas made some Indians taunt Gandhi with the remark that that was the thanks he got for helping in the war.

An outbreak of the black plague in Transvaal enabled Gandhi to reach out once more to the poor among the Indians and rebuild their solidarity. It broke out in a mine in Johannesburg and spread to locations designated for Indians. Gandhi organized a group of Indians to assist and formed a temporary hospital to care for the sick and dying. He wrote a stinging letter to the press holding the municipal authorities responsible for the outbreak of the plague. This letter brought him the attention of Henry Polak, Rev. Joseph Doke, and Albert West who became close friends and vital members of his movement. As a climate of fear pervaded the Indian community, Gandhi and his friends gave whatever help they could.

PHOENIX FARM

The re-establishment of his bond with needy Indians during the plague and his acquaintance with some European friends helped him to overcome his disappointment at the state of affairs when he returned to South Africa. His spiritual interests became even more significant for him. If on previous occasions the challenge of Christianity was the spark for his religious reflections, he was now firm in his commitment to Hindu spirituality, a version of Hinduism that he insisted must be open to scrutiny by reason and conscience. He formed a group that met regularly to study the Bhagavad Gita, which he said became “an infallible guide of conduct” and his “dictionary of daily reference.” Drawing reference to the notions of non-possession and equability that he found in the Gita, he interpreted the first as encouraging the notion of trusteeship which meant for him that one’s relation to property should be as trustees for the good of the community, not as
private property. He was glad to find that equanimity towards friend and foe was considered a virtue because he had received so many insults and humiliations in his life. But how could one achieve this? He was convinced that it could come only by an effort to transform one’s heart and mind. He wrote his brother that he should not expect more savings because in the future his savings would be directed for the benefit of the community. He told him, too, that his meaning of family had widened as his ideals of sacrifice and simplicity were becoming more entrenched in his daily life.

As Gandhi reflected on the significance of \textit{Ahimsa} or nonviolence in Indian civilization, he began to see its usefulness for social and political action. Deliberating on the issue of ethical responsibility for action, he felt that on the question of injustice we should “hate the sin, not the sinner.” For his part, the tendency to demonize people and not unjust systems was one reason why the poison of hatred continued to spread. He became clearer in his understanding and firmer in conviction that nonviolence was the foundation of the search for truth, adding the warning that while it was the right thing to resist an unjust system, “to resist and attack its author is tantamount to resisting and attacking oneself. For we are all tarred with the same brush, and are children of one and the same Creator.”

Gandhi used effectively his newspaper, \textit{Indian Opinion}, and persuaded his friends Henry Polak and Albert West to manage it. As vegetarians, West, Polak, and Gandhi met often for dinner at a vegetarian restaurant and shared ideas about the simple life. As Gandhi set out one day for Natal, Polak gave him a copy of John Ruskin’s \textit{Unto This Last}. Gandhi said that he could not put it down and acknowledged that the book radicalized him. He later translated it into Gujarati and called it \textit{Sarvodaya} (The Welfare of All). He summarized the teachings of the book in this way; that the good of the individual was contained in the good of the community; that a lawyer’s work had the same value as the barber’s in that all had the same right to earn their livelihood from their work; and that the life of labor was the life worth living, in particular the life of the peasant and craftsman. \textit{Sarvodaya} became the basis of Gandhian socialism and an important ideal of \textit{Satyagraha}.

It was 1904 and Gandhi immediately set to work to put Ruskin’s ideas in practice. He proposed to Albert West that they buy a farm and transfer \textit{Indian Opinion} there.
From the very beginning Gandhi had a keen sense of the importance of a newspaper and the significance of the profession of journalism:

The newspaper is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within.

They purchased 100 acres of land at Phoenix, 14 miles from Durban in Natal. It had orange and mango trees, and overgrown grass all over. Parsi Rustomji placed at Gandhi’s disposal some Indian carpenters and masons to build a shed for the printing press. Gandhi regretted that he could spend only brief periods at the farm. He said that his original idea was to retire from his legal practice and live on Phoenix farm where he would earn his livelihood by manual work. When Gandhi returned to Johannesburg, Henry Polak was so delighted by the news about Phoenix farm and the impact that Ruskin’s book had that he resigned his position as sub-editor at the newspaper, the *Critic*, and joined Gandhi’s family. He sent for his fiancee who was living in England and they were married in Johannesburg. Mrs. Polak was a Christian by birth and Henry Polak a Jew. Gandhi said that their common religion was “the religion of ethics.” Phoenix farm developed into a little village and became their common home. Gandhi commented that his was a heterogeneous family where people of all kinds and temperaments were freely admitted. He also brought his home in Johannesburg in line with the simplicity recommended by Ruskin. They began to make their own unleavened whole meal bread at home, and Gandhi bought a hand-mill to grind the flour.

When the Zulu rebellion broke out in Natal in 1906, Gandhi’s sympathy was with the Zulus but he remained loyal to the British Empire and volunteered an Indian Ambulance Corps. A party of twenty-four, the Indian Corps provided valuable service to both British and Zulu wounded. White soldiers tried to dissuade Indians from attending the Zulus and poured “unspeakable abuse on the Zulus.” Gandhi said that the Zulus looked on the Indians as a godsend. As if to remind himself that others in South Africa were being treated worse than Indians, he made a point of drawing attention to the fact that the Zulus in their care were not wounded in battle but were taken prisoner as suspects
and flogged. Gandhi remarked that the Zulu rebellion brought home to him the horrors of war more than the Boer War did. The sound of exploding rifles in innocent hamlets filled him with dread and sadness.

In the closing days of the Zulu war Gandhi decided to take the vow of *Brahmacharya*, self-restraint or sexual abstinence. He thought that in this way he would be able to serve the community fully. It was no coincidence that this momentous decision in his personal life came just before he embarked on the radical stage of his struggle for justice for Indians.

**SATYAGRAHA**

No sooner had the Zulu war come to an end than the Transvaal British government published its Indian Ordinance. It stated that every Indian, man, woman, or child above the age of eight, entitled to reside in the Transvaal, had to register his name with the Registrar of Asiatics. Failure to do this could lead to imprisonment, fines, and deportation. Parents could file for their children but they had to bring them in for fingerprinting. The ordinance gave police the right to enter private homes to inspect certificates. Gandhi confessed that he had never seen such legislation in any country that considered itself free, and felt that resisting it was a matter of life and death for Indians.

As after the Boer War, Gandhi and the Indian community of South Africa had hoped that praise for the loyalty and service would result in the relaxation of anti-Indian discrimination. But he was again disappointed as the discriminatory legislation became even more severe. More moderate responses like petitions and legal challenges did not seem to be effective. But how could he combine his abiding commitment to nonviolence and civil disobedience? Indeed, it could be said that he had been preparing for this moment since he was thrown from the train at Maritzburg for traveling first class, two weeks after he arrived in South Africa in 1893. On September 11, 1906, Gandhi launched his first *Satyagraha* movement at the old Empire theatre in Johannesburg when he organized a mass meeting of some 3,000 Indians, calling for the withdrawal of the ordinance that required that Indians be fingerprinted and carry identification cards. He charged that such legislation was evil and to accept it was cowardice. In urging Indians
to boycott registration, he asked them to look inwards and to listen to the inner voice of their conscience to determine whether they had the courage to stand up to the government, and then take a solemn oath to resist and stand the consequences.  

Excitement filled the air and pledges of resistance were made.

Gandhi felt that something new was being established. Initially, he called the movement “Passive Resistance,” but he found it unsatisfactory because what was taking place was hardly passive and he did not want this struggle to be known by an English name. The character of the struggle was discussed in Indian Opinion and he sought a more appropriate term for this movement by establishing a competition. It was Maganlal Gandhi who suggested the name Sadagraha (firmness in a good cause). The son of one of Gandhi’s relatives, Maganlal became one of his most devoted followers. Gandhi changed it to Satyagraha or Truth Force (Satya means Truth and Agraha, Firmness).  

The name Satyagraha captured the traditional Indian notion of Ahimsa which meant nonviolence, love, and Truth, as well as the moral courage of Socrates, Wat Tyler, Martin Luther, John Bunyan, Galileo, and Henry David Thoreau, whose treatise on civil disobedience left a deep influence on Gandhi. He often referred to these historical figures. What they had in common was their willingness to suffer and risk death by resisting and speaking the truth to an unjust power.

When the council refused to withdraw the Ordinance, the Indian community decided that Gandhi and Haji Ally, president of the Hamidya Islamic Society of Johannesburg, should go to England to present how strongly they opposed the Ordinance. No sooner had they arrived on October 20, 1906, than Gandhi began lobbying Indian and English friends and politicians to persuade the authorities to veto the Ordinance. It became an important feature of every Satyagraha campaign to call upon friends, public figures, and newspapers, to present and publicize their perspective on an issue. Gandhi met Lord Elgin, colonial secretary of state, held a meeting of sympathetic representatives of the Liberal, Labor, and Nationalist Parties, and was even granted an audience with Winston Churchill, then colonial undersecretary, but could not persuade him to change his position that white and colored sectors should be kept apart. Gandhi found a more receptive ear in John Morley, secretary of state for India, who was able to persuade Lord Elgin, Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, and the cabinet to veto the
Ordinance. Before returning to South Africa he encouraged his friends to form a permanent committee of friends of South African Indians.

The London triumph of Gandhi and Haji Ally was short-lived. On January 1, 1907, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were granted self-government, and in March, Louis Botha was elected Prime Minister, and Jan Smuts became his chief assistant. The Asiatic Ordinance Bill was rushed through on March 21 and passed. On June 30, at a gathering of some 2,000 Indians, Gandhi urged Indians not to obey the new Act, which was to be enforced starting on July 1, 1907. There were speeches. William Hosken, a Johannesburg magnate, came as a representative of General Botha and told the audience that Indians should prove their loyalty and love by submitting to the law. He promised that they could trust General Smuts to look into the matter fairly, and warned that failure to comply would bring the heavy hand of the government and deportation. The threats were of no avail. Although the deadline was extended to November 30, only 511 persons out of 13,000 registered.

Some Europeans in England and South Africa seemed interested in the Indian movement. The same William Hosken organized a meeting and told the audience that the Transvaal Indians had organized passive resistance after trying all other means of securing redress. In his turn, Gandhi said that he preferred to call his movement “soul force” rather than “passive resistance.” Explaining why, he recalled that “passive resistance” was used by the non-conformists in England and the Suffragette movement. Gandhi said that he admired their movement but, as he understood it, the Suffragette movement did not reject the use of force. Satyagraha or Soul Force was against the use of force as a matter of principle:

[T]here never was the slightest thought given to the possibility or otherwise of offering armed resistance. Satyagraha is soul force pure and simple, and whenever and to whatever extent there is room for the use of arms or physical force or brute force, there and to that extent there is so much less possibility for soul force.36

What Gandhi was trying to do was to show the difference between Satyagraha and those movements which used nonviolence for strategic reasons rather than as a matter of principle.
When Gandhi learned that the authorities were planning to arrest the civil resisters, he called a meeting that evening, December 27, at which he described the Asiatic Act and the Immigration Restriction Act passed that morning as savage acts of a government that called itself Christian, and reiterated that the legislation was unacceptable. The following day, December 28, he was arrested, tried, found guilty of not having a registration certificate, and ordered to leave South Africa. Gandhi refused to obey the order. On January 10, 1908 he pleaded guilty to the charge of disobeying the order to leave the Transvaal and was sentenced to two months imprisonment. His supporters marched with black flags and were beaten by the police. Some 155 civil resisters courted imprisonment. Gandhi used the time in jail to catch up with his reading and said that he read Thomas Carlyle’s essays on Robert Burns, Dr. Johnson, and Walter Scott, Bacon’s Essays, the writings of Tolstoy, Ruskin and Socrates. He had begun translating a book by Carlyle and another by Ruskin into Gujarati. He studied the Gita and the Koran in the mornings; in the evenings he taught the Bible to a Chinese Christian.

Stung by protests in India and England against Gandhi’s imprisonment, General Smuts sent Albert Cartwright, editor of the Transvaal Leader, to negotiate a settlement. If Indians registered voluntarily, the government promised to repeal the Black Act. Gandhi was taken to General Smuts where they discussed the settlement. After accepting it, Gandhi was told that he and the other Indians who were arrested were free. He borrowed some money from General Smuts’ secretary to catch the train to Johannesburg where he called a large meeting shortly after midnight. He asked Indians to register voluntarily to show that they did not intend to bring a single Indian into the Transvaal surreptitiously by fraud. Some objected vehemently but Gandhi assured them that he would defend all those who did not want to be finger-printed. On February 10, 1908, as he left his office, eight Pathans, led by the robust Mr. Mir Alam, attacked Gandhi with a heavy stick and blows. Rev. Doke, his wife, and daughter tended to Gandhi until he recovered. Although Gandhi called the Attorney General to say that he did not hold Mr. Alam responsible and that they should release him, Mir Alam was sentenced to three months’ hard labor. After the Indian community supported him by registering voluntarily, Gandhi called on the government to fulfill their part of the bargain by repealing the Black Act.
Not only did General Smuts break his agreement with Gandhi but took steps to add a more draconian law for the registration of Asians. General Smuts declared that he made “no promise to Mr. Gandhi” that the act would be repealed. Smuts warned that those who had not registered after July 9 would be forced to register or expelled. Gandhi felt betrayed. After all some 7,000 out of 9,000 Indians had voluntarily registered. Some of Gandhi’s supporters chided him for being too credulous. Accepting responsibility for what happened because he had “too great a faith in the honesty and integrity of General Smuts,” Gandhi told the Transvaal government that if the Asiatic Act was not repealed, and the government’s decision on the matter not communicated by a specific date, Indians would burn their certificates and take the consequences. On Sunday, August 16, 1908, a public meeting was called on the grounds of Hamidya Mosque in Johannesburg and a huge cauldron placed next to the meeting. The government sent a message that they were unable to change their policy. Mir Alam who had just been released from jail came forward to announce that he had done Gandhi wrong, and gave his certificate to be burned. 2,000 certificates were burned; a second meeting was held on August 23 and more certificates burned. The reporter of the London Daily Mail compared the burning of the certificates to the Boston Tea Party. On October 15, Gandhi was arrested and sentenced to two months in prison with hard labor.

Nationalists in India took notice of this repression and expressed their anger. Coming on the heels of the partition of Bengal in 1905, events in South Africa seemed to herald a climate of oppression in India and South Africa. Despite their arrests, however, the Satyagrahis did not lose hope. There were momentary lulls but certainly no decline in courage and purpose. In February 1909, Gandhi was again arrested and jailed for 3 months for not producing his registration certificate. He said that this time he studied about thirty books, including works by Mazzini, Emerson, and Thoreau. On his release he learned that the government was sending General Botha and General Smuts to London. Gandhi advised that an Indian deputation be sent to present an Indian perspective of the struggle. Arriving in London on July 10, Gandhi and his friends made little impression on the British bureaucrats. Gandhi quipped that he found the whole affair tiresome: “The more I see of them, the more I am tired of calling on persons considered to be great.” He stayed for four months in London. Dressed like an English gentleman, he
loved to invite friends over at lunch-time for a simple meal consisting of oranges, apples, bananas, grapes, and unshelled peanuts. There was, of course, tea and toast for those who wanted it.

Gandhi’s visit to England coincided with the rise of violent political activity by Indian nationalists. On July 1, 1909, in London, Madanlal Dhingra murdered Sir Curzon Wyllie, an assistant to Lord Morley and a friend of India. At his trial he stated that he shed English blood as revenge for the inhuman hangings and deportations of patriotic Indian youths. He concluded his speech with these words which left a deep impression on Winston Churchill: “My only prayer to God is may I be born of the same Mother [India], and may I re-die in the same sacred cause till the cause is successful and she stands free for the food of humanity and to the glory of God.” Gandhi considered the assassination to be a terrible tragedy. He met many Indian young men who advocated violence to win India’s freedom. Debating with them about the merits of their methods, Gandhi said that he admired their bravery but contended that they were misguided, declaring that Dhingra was a patriot but his love was blind. One of the high points of this stay in London was his correspondence with Leo Tolstoy, especially this letter from him:

I have just received your most interesting letter, which has given me great pleasure. God help our dear brothers and co-workers in the Transvaal, the same struggle of the tender against the harsh, of meekness and love against pride and violence, is every year making itself more and more felt among us here also, especially in one of the very sharpest of the conflicts of the religious law with the worldly laws in refusals to military service. Such refusals are becoming ever more frequent. I greet you fraternally and am glad to have intercourse with you.38

Before leaving London, Gandhi wrote to Lord Ampthill warning him that supporters of violence were gaining ground in India and that repression would not be able to contain it. He found the issue of violence and modern industrial civilization so pressing that on the return trip to South Africa he wrote Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule, explaining his views on modernity, imperialism, and violence.

TOLSTOY FARM
Hind Swaraj was written to demonstrate the efficacy of Satyagraha as an alternative to violent resistance. Gandhi sent a copy to Tolstoy who replied that he had read it with great interest. Nonviolent resistance was important, he said, not only for India but also for the whole world. Returning to South Africa, Gandhi was concerned about the means to upkeep the families who were active in the Satyagraha struggle. The families of jailed Satyagrahis were given a monthly allowance. It was difficult to determine the proper amount for each family. He decided that it would be better if all the families could live in one place and be a kind of cooperative commonwealth. His friend, the architect Herman Kallenbach, bought a farm of some 1100 acres and donated it to the movement. It had about one thousand fruit trees and a house at the foot of a hill. It was twenty one miles from Johannesburg and two miles from the nearest railway station. Gandhi named it Tolstoy ashram, the second of his model communities where he put into practice his ideals of social transformation. They built homes and invited the families of Satyagrahis to settle there. Kallenbach designed the buildings. A Gujarati carpenter volunteered his services and brought other carpenters to work while the settlers provided the unskilled work. Young and old had to assist in gardening and to tend the fruit trees and everyone was expected to go on errands to Johannesburg. If they went on community business, they could go by train but third class; if they went for private reasons, they walked. The settlers were a diverse group coming from all regions, castes, and religions. Gandhi allowed the eating of meat because there were Muslims and Christians in his Ashram. But his Muslim and Christian friends gave him permission to have a purely vegetarian kitchen. The common pots were cleaned by different parties in turn. No one asked for meat during the long stay at Tolstoy Farm.

Everyone adhered strictly to the rules of sanitation. In spite of the large number of people on the farm, it was spotless. All rubbish was buried in trenches sunk for that purpose. No water could be thrown on the roads; waste water was collected in buckets and used to water the trees. Leavings of food and vegetable refuse were used as manure. A square pit one foot and a half deep was sunk near the house to receive the night soil, which was fully covered with the excavated earth.

To make the farm self-supporting, they introduced small crafts. Herman Kallenbach went to a nearby Catholic Trappist monastery where he learned how to make
sandals. He taught Gandhi and others to make sandals. Kallenbach also taught carpentry which enabled members to make whatever tables and benches that they needed.

A school was started with Gandhi and Kallenbach as teachers. Classes began after midday because they had to work on the farm during the morning. Gandhi wrote affectionately that both masters and students were so tired that they had to put water on their eyes to keep awake. The classes on religions were given by Gandhi who made it a rule that Muslim students would read the Koran, and Parsis, the Avesta. He wrote out the teachings of Hinduism. Boys and girls were taught together. Gandhi confessed that the school was the most difficult project, but he was not disheartened: “The children were saved from the infection of intolerance, and learnt to view one another’s religions and customs with a large-hearted charity. They learnt to live together like blood-brothers. They imbibed the lessons of mutual service, courtesy, and industry.” For bed, everyone received two blankets, one for spreading on the floor and the other for covering purposes, and a wooden pillow. No one had a cot. Gandhi slept in an open veranda on the floor, and the boys and girls would spread themselves around him.

Gandhi and Tolstoy exchanged several letters. Tolstoy had written a “letter to a Hindu revolutionary” in 1908 advising him that violence would bring enslavement, not freedom. Indeed Tolstoy was taking a keen interest in the Satyagraha movement in the Transvaal. He wrote a long letter to Gandhi which was not received until a few weeks before Tolstoy’s death on November 20, 1910. He told Gandhi that he felt his own death approaching and he wanted to tell others clearly that for him “passive resistance” was nothing else than the teaching of love. This love was the highest and only law of human life, and all peoples knew this in the depth of their souls. All traditions proclaimed this law of love – the Indian, the Chinese, Hebrew, Greek, Roman. It was certainly expressed by Christ, he maintained, who said: “In love alone is all the law and the prophets.” This law had been corrupted by worldly interests and the use of force was justified to protect these interests: “The whole Christian civilization, so brilliant outwardly, grew up on this self-evident and strange misunderstanding and contradiction, sometimes conscious but mostly unconscious.” Continuing, Tolstoy asserted that while we might glorify the achievements of modern civilization like aviation or the productions of art, we must be mindful of “increasing crime, unemployment, the growing insane luxury of the rich and
misery of the poor, the alarmingly increasing number of suicides.” Only by acknowledging the law of love and denying violence could there be a beginning of the solution to these issues. Tolstoy then commended Gandhi for the work he was doing in the Transvaal as being “the most essential work, the most important of all the work now being done in the world.” When Tolstoy died, the editorial in *Indian Opinion* said:

> Of the late Count Tolstoy, we can only write with reverence. He was to us more than one of the greatest men of the age. We have endeavoured, so far as possible, to follow his teaching. The end of his bodily life but put the final touch to the work of humanity that he, in his inimitable manner, inaugurated. Tolstoy is not dead; he lives through the lives of his innumerable followers throughout the world. We firmly believe that, as time rolls on, his teaching will more and more permeate mankind. Though a devout Christian, he truly interpreted not only Christianity, but he likewise gave a realistic presentation of the substance underlying the great world religions, and he has shown how present-day civilization, based as it is on brute force, is a negative of divinity in man and how, before man can realize his manhood, he must substitute brute force by love in all his actions in the daily work of life...[I]t must be a matter of great encouragement and melancholy satisfaction to Indian passive resisters that the sage of Yasnaya Polyana considered the Transvaal struggle to be one of world-wide importance. 39

Tolstoy farm was not only the political center for the *Satyagraha* struggle to obtain human and civil rights for Indians, but also a center of individual and community development where the community practiced a life of service and self-discipline to achieve personal freedom and a sense of community. Gandhi wondered whether the struggle would have endured for eight years without Tolstoy Farm.

**SATYAGRAHA; THE LAST PHASE**

On his return to South Africa, Gandhi addressed another large assembly at the mosque in Johannesburg asserting that the struggle was for all India and the Empire. He was surprised that that they were not arrested when he, Manilal, and some supporters crossed into the Transvaal from Natal on December 22, and again in March 1910. Now that Gandhi and his Satyagraha movement were followed on the world political stage, the government did not want to add to Gandhi’s heroic stature by arresting him again. The most significant event of 1910 was the creation of the Union of South Africa on June 1, 1910, joining the Transvaal, Orange Free State, Natal, and the Cape of Good Hope.
Louis Botha was elected its first Prime Minister which he held until 1919. Jan Smuts remained the most powerful political official of the government and eventually succeeded Botha as Prime Minister. In March 1911 Smuts presented a new Asiatic Bill before parliament to replace the old 1907 Act. Gandhi was hopeful that the intent was to repeal all the discriminatory regulations against Indians. But when the Bill was presented for its first reading in February 1912, Gandhi was convinced that it was more an Asian Exclusion Bill, and began preparations for the resumption of Satyagraha. He wrote to Gokhale informing him of his plans to resume his campaign. Hoping to defuse the tense situation, Gokhale decided to visit South Africa. Gandhi was excited that Professor Gokhale was going to visit South Africa and could not hide his joy that Gokhale was coming to Tolstoy Farm. Gokhale was the first Indian leader to visit South Africa and had taken a keen interest in Indian affairs in South Africa.

Gokhale arrived in Capetown on Oct. 22, 1912 and stayed until November 17. The Union government placed the railway at his disposal as he traveled around the country. After meeting General Botha and General Smuts who promised to remove the discriminatory legislation against Indians, Gokhale stayed at Tolstoy Farm for three days. He slept on a cot in Herman Kallenbach’s room and Gandhi cooked for him. On his return to India, Gokhale reported:

Only those who have come in personal contact with Mr. Gandhi as he is now, can realize the wonderful personality of the man. He is without doubt the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. Nay, more, he has in him the marvelous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs…The Indian cause in South Africa has really been built up by Mr. Gandhi. Without self, and without stain, he has fought his great fight for this country during a period now of twenty years and India owes an immense debt of gratitude to him. He has sacrificed himself utterly in the service of the cause. He had a splendid practice at the bar, making as much as five to six thousand pounds a year…But he has given all that up and he lives now on three pounds a month like the poorest man in the street. One most striking fact about him is that though he has waged this great struggle so ceaselessly, his mind is absolutely free from all bitterness against Europeans.
But the promises to rectify the social situation were false. The racial
discrimination raised its ugly head once more. The three pound poll-tax remained. But
what raised passions again was the decision of the Supreme Court on March 14, 1913 not
to recognize the marriage of Hassan Esop. He had married Bai Mariam in India in 1908
and brought her to South Africa in 1912. The court ordered that she be deported. Gandhi
wrote the court asking that legislation be introduced to recognize the validity of Indian
marriages. On March 30 a mass meeting was held at the Hamidia Islamic Society’s Hall
in Johannesburg to protest Justice Searle’s decision and it was decided to resume the
Satyagraha campaign.

For the first time Gandhi invited the women in Tolstoy Farm to participate in the
protests. Gandhi warned them of the difficulties but they were glad to be part of the
campaign. One was pregnant and six had babies in their arms. Gandhi’s plan was that
they would enter Natal from the Transvaal. If they were not arrested for not carrying a
permit, they would proceed to Newcastle, the mining center of Natal, when he would call
on the indentured laborers who worked in the mines to go on strike. The Transvaal
sisters were not arrested. Gandhi then decided to call on his experienced Satyagraha
stalwarts from Phoenix Farm, his co-workers and relatives. Sixteen members of the
Phoenix party including Kasturbai Gandhi were arrested as they crossed into the
Transvaal and were sentenced to three months with hard labor. The Transvaal sisters
proceeded to Newcastle where they inspired the Indian mineworkers to go on strike.
They were arrested and sentenced also to 3 months with hard labor and were kept in the
same prison as the Phoenix party.

That the South African authorities had jailed Indian women aroused nationalists
in India. Prison conditions were bad. Gandhi lauded the heroism of Valliamma R.
Munuswami Mudaliar, a young woman of sixteen from Johannesburg. Released from
prison with a fever and with her body emaciated, she died a few days afterwards. When
asked on her release whether she was sorry that she courted imprisonment, she replied
that she was prepared to go to jail again. Gandhi eulogized Valliamma and the women
resisters in this way:

The name of Valliamma will live in the history of South African Satyagraha as
long as India lives. It was an absolutely pure sacrifice that was offered by these
sisters, who were innocent of legal technicalities, and many of whom had no idea
of country, their patriotism being based only upon faith. Some of them were illiterate and could not read the papers. But they knew that a mortal blow was being aimed at Indians’ honor.\(^{40}\)

When the laborers at the mines put down their tools and went on strike, Gandhi left for Newcastle. Utterly dependent on the mine owners for their lodging, lights, and even water, the mine workers suffered greatly. They were denied the amenities they had received. Their clothes and household possessions were thrown away. Some were even beaten. But this did not crush their spirit. Since the weather was good, they were housed in the open air. Indian traders of Newcastle supplied cooking pots and bags of rice, vegetables, and dal. Not all were willing to go to jail but all wanted to help the cause. Gandhi’s army consisted of some five thousand men and women. It was some 36 miles from Newcastle to the border of the Transvaal. He felt that it was now time to march to the Transvaal and court imprisonment. Those who could not walk through disability were allowed to go by train. Gandhi and the rest would walk.

On October 28, 1913 The Great March commenced by rail and road. Two women grimly reached the border town of Charlestown but their children had died, one by exposure and the other by drowning as her mother was crossing a stream. Gandhi contacted the government and informed them that if they repealed the poll-tax they would call off the strike and allow the indentured mine laborers to return to the mines. They received no news for a week. Arrangements were made so that the marchers would make their way to Tolstoy Farm, marching twenty miles a day for eight days, if they were not arrested. Gandhi made another call to General Smuts proposing a settlement but Smuts would not budge. On November 6, 2,037 men, 127 women, and 57 children offered prayers and set out. The police surrounded them but had no intention of arresting them. Two days before, the Europeans of Volkstrust had called a meeting to denounce the Indians and to make all kinds of threats. Herman Kallenbach attended the meeting hoping to reason with the Europeans but a pugilist challenged him to a fight. Kallenbach, an athlete as well as an architect, responded:

As I have accepted the religion of peace, I may not accept the challenge. Let him who will come and do his worst with me. But I will continue to claim a hearing at this meeting. You have invited all Europeans to attend, and I am here to inform you that not
all Europeans are ready as you are to lay violent hands upon innocent men. There is one European who would like to inform you that the charges you level at the Indians are false. The Indians do not want what you imagine them to do. The Indians are not out to challenge your position as rulers. They do not wish to fight with you or to fill the country. They only seek justice pure and simple. They propose to enter the Transvaal not with a view to settle there, but only as an effective demonstration against the unjust tax which is levied upon them. They are brave men. They will not injure you in person or in property, they will not fight with you, but enter the Transvaal they will, even in the face of your gunfire. They are not the men to beat a retreat from the fear of your bullets or your spears. They propose to melt, and I know they will melt, your hearts by self-suffering.

The marchers made stops at different villages. Soon the nonviolent challenge of the marchers unnerved the authorities so seriously that they arrested Gandhi, Polak, and Kallenbach. The arrest of their leaders did not daunt the resistance. When 20,000 laborers went on strike, mounted military policemen attacked the marchers and fired on them. When the government removed Gandhi to the jail where Kallenbach and Polak were kept, Gandhi commented that they spent a few happy days in jail. But it was his meeting with the 75 year old Harbatsingh that left an indelible impression on him. Harbatsingh had completed his indenture many years before but when he heard that Gandhi was arrested he joined the march into the Transvaal in his enthusiasm. Asked why he risked imprisonment since he did not ask any old people to join the campaign, Harbatsingh replied: “How could I help it when you, your wife, and even your boys went to jail for our sake?” Harbatsingh died in jail on January 5, 1914. Gandhi said that he bent his head in reverence before this illiterate sage.

Gandhi was removed to Bloemfontein where no one could see him. In the meantime, the government forced the laborers to return to the mines. Those who refused were brutally whipped. News of all these events were sent to Gokhale in India who got up from his sickbed and spread the news throughout India. In a speech on December 13, 1913, the viceroy Lord Hardinge said that he whole-heartedly defended the action of the Satyagrahis and supported their civil disobedience against unjust and invidious
legislation. Indian laborers who were more numerous on the north and south coasts of Natal joined the strike. As thousands more went on strike, the government responded with “blood and iron.” Mounted military policemen chased the strikers to bring them back to work; they opened fire killing some and wounded many. Gandhi felt such sympathy with those who were killed that he never wore Western dress again, preferring the simple clothes of an indentured laborer. In the north, many laborers came out in Verulam. General Lukin was about to open fire when Sorabji, the son of Gandhi’s friend Parsi Rustomji, seized the reins of the general’s horse exclaiming, “you must not open firing. I undertake to induce my people peacefully to return to work.” Gandhi commented that a number of murders was prevented by the courage and kindness of 18 year old Sorabji.

Gandhi, Kallenbach, and Polak were in jail but this did not undermine the Satyagraha struggle, contrary to the expectations of the Union government. Although all but two of the Phoenix Farm members were jailed, Sonia Schlesin, a Scottish woman who had worked for Gandhi as a typist, continued to organize the Transvaal accounts and the coming and going of the marchers. Gandhi praised her contributions by recalling what Gokhale had said about her when he was leaving South Africa: “I was simply astonished how she had sacrificed her all for the Indian cause without expecting any reward.” Albert West looked after the English section of Indian Opinion and the correspondence with Gokhale. He too was arrested arbitrarily. But the repressive policies of the government could not break the resolve and courage of the Satyagrahis. World opinion had turned against the South African government. The sympathy of Indian leaders and even Viceroy Hardinge for the Indian cause was growing. General Smuts looked for a way out of the predicament. He was prepared to repeal the poll-tax and other anti-Indian legislation and named a commission consisting of three European to draw up recommendations.

Indians refused to accept this commission until the Satyagrahi prisoners were released and an Indian appointed to serve on the commission. They also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Gandhi, Kallenbach, and Polak who were released after serving imprisonment for six weeks. Gandhi met for the first time an English Christian minister, Charles Andrews, and Pearson. He later called them “two
noble Englishmen” for their work for India. They were friends of Gokhale and the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Gandhi wrote General Smuts reiterating Indian objections to the commission and demanding the release of the Satyagrahi prisoners. Upon Smuts’ refusal, Gandhi called for the resumption of the Satyagraha march from Durban on January 1, 1914. Gokhale immediately cabled Gandhi asking him not to do so as it might undermine the support of enlightened English leaders like Lord Hardinge. Andrews counseled moderation. But Gandhi held firm and wrote Gokhale explaining his position. He said that it pained him to go against the advice of Gokhale and he certainly wanted the support of Lord Hardinge but Indians had agreed on the matter and had pledged to carry out the march.

When Gandhi learned that the European employees of the Union railways had struck, he decided to postpone his march because he said that the Indian struggle was differently conceived from the European strikers. It made a deep impression on Europeans in South Africa and England. Gandhi quoted General Smuts’s secretary as saying, “I do not like your people and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands on you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry.” This was not the first time that such respect was shown to the adversary in a conflict. Earlier, when the Indian laborers in the north went on strike, the planters would have suffered great losses if the cut cane was not brought to the mill. Twelve hundred Indians went back to work. When this part of their work was finished they returned to their comrades in the strike.

The atmosphere was now favorable for a settlement. Gandhi went to Pretoria to meet General Smuts who told him that the government had agreed to Indian demands and that the commission report was simply a formality. In spite of Smuts’ betrayal of trust in 1908, Gandhi was inclined to view his recommendations favorably. On January 21, 1914, a provisional agreement was reached, and the bills abolishing the poll-tax and legalizing in South Africa all marriages deemed legal in India were passed on June 26, 1914. The Indian Relief Act closed this chapter of the Satyagraha struggle.
On July 18, 1914, Gandhi sailed for England to meet Gokhale who was ailing. He was looking forward to returning home and serving India under Gokhale’s guidance. But he had regrets leaving South Africa where he spent twenty one years, “sharing to the full in the sweets and bitters of human experience” and where he realized his “vocation in life.” Earlier that day, he and Kasturbai were given a farewell reception in the Town Hall of Durban. Congratulations were sent by the Bishop of Natal, General Botha and General Smuts.

On the morning of July 14, 1914, as officials celebrated Gandhi’s achievements and said goodbye to him and his family, Gandhi paid tribute to his followers, including his European supporters, but reserved the highest praise for the courage and sacrifice of the Satyagrahis like Valiamma and Harbatsingh. He said that although they were poor, indentured laborers, Satyagraha had transformed them into extraordinary human beings.
CHAPTER 3

PREPARING THE GROUND FOR SATYAGRAHA IN INDIA

The world outside Champaran was not known to them. And yet they received me as though we had been 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.


Accompanied by Kasturbai and Herman Kallenbach, Gandhi left South Africa for London on July 18, 1914 to meet Gokhale, who was ailing in London. They arrived on August 6, two days after Great Britain had joined France and Russia in declaring war against Germany and Austria-Hungary. Gokhale meanwhile was in Paris for health reasons and was not certain when he would return to London. Gandhi was given a reception by his friends, Ananda K.Coomaraswamy, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Everyone was interested in how the war would affect the issue of Home Rule for India. Gandhi consulted the Indian students and organized a meeting of Indian residents in England and Ireland to discuss what position they should take. Although some suggested that they should use the situation of the war to press for Indian freedom, Gandhi persuaded the majority that England’s adversity was not the time to assert India’s political demands but that they should demonstrate their loyalty to the empire. They communicated to the Secretary of State their desire to assist in whatever humble a manner to the war effort.

Gandhi and eighty Indians took a six weeks’ first aid course; Indian women volunteers, among them Kasturbai and Sarojini Naidu, made clothes for the soldiers.

Gokhale returned to London in October and had long talks about the war with Gandhi and Kallenbach. The illness of Kasturbai and Gandhi, who had developed pleurisy, caused increasing concern. Frequent relapses convinced British officials as well as Gandhi that to return home to India was the best hope for a cure. Sadly, Kallenbach, his German Jewish friend and comrade in South Africa, was not allowed to accompany him to India.¹
A large crowd met Gandhi and Kasturbai on their arrival in Bombay on January 9, 1915. Three days later, a huge reception of some eight hundred guests was given in his honor at the magnificent home of Jehangir Petit. It was of course a gathering of the Bombay elite. Dressed in his Kathiawadi cloak, turban, and dhoti, all made with Indian mill cloth, Gandhi said that he felt more at home among the poor indentured Indians of South Africa, who were the true heroes of India. Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was present at the reception given by the Gujarati community and gave a short speech in English. Gandhi then went to Poona where Gokhale and the Servants of India Society lavished praise on him. Gokhale urged him to join the Society but acknowledged that there were differences between Gandhi and the Society. Some members raised their eyebrows when Gandhi cleaned the latrines of the Society’s colony.

Gandhi confessed to Gokhale that he thought that it was more important for him to establish an Ashram for his Phoenix Farm family, preferably in Gujarat. Gokhale was enthusiastic over the project and promised to offer the necessary funds to establish the Ashram. Before Gandhi left to visit his family in Rajkot and Porbandar, Gokhale organized a party for him making sure that there was plenty of Gandhi’s favorite food, fruits and nuts.

Feted and honored by the Indian elites, Gandhi felt that their world could not be the India of the masses. His South African experience among poor, indentured laborers had transformed his life. It was not long before he was travelling third class, dressed now in shirt, dhoti, and Kashmiri cap. At an intermediate railway station on his way to Rajkot he met Motilal, a tailor by profession and public worker, who asked him to take up the case of third class passengers who were subjected to humiliating and insulting hardships.
as a result of a cordon at Viramgam because of an epidemic. Gandhi said that he first thought that Motilal was an impetuous youth but came to see that he was an example of a life dedicated to Satyagraha virtues. A master tailor, he worked an hour a day to earn enough to meet his needs and gave the rest of his time to public service. Motilal spent several days every month at the ashram teaching tailoring and doing some of the tailoring tasks. When still in the prime of his life Motilal died, Gandhi was saddened when Motilal died still in the prime of his life, and recalled his moral excellence and deep sense of social responsibility.

An investigation into the treatment of third class passengers confirmed Motilal’s accusations. Gandhi found that officials treated them like sheep and refused to listen to complaints from the poor. He felt that there would not be any change until the educated and people of some affluence voluntarily traveled third class and fought for an end to the injustice meted to the poor.

Gandhi wrote to the British authorities in Bombay and even the private Secretary of Lord Willingdon, presenting the evidence of the injustice done daily to railway passengers by the cordon. They were all sympathetic but referred the matter to the Central Government. Only in 1917 was the cordon at Viramgam removed. Gandhi saw this event as the advent of Satyagraha in India. He remembered that the Secretary of the Bombay Government had chided him for mentioning the word Satyagraha and said that they would not yield to “threats,” to which Gandhi replied:

This was no threat. It was educating the people. It is my duty to place before the people all the legitimate remedies for grievances. A nation that wants to come into its own ought to know all the ways and means to freedom. Usually they include violence as the last remedy. Satyagraha, on the other hand, is an absolutely nonviolent weapon. I regard it as my duty to explain its practice and
its limitations. I have no doubt that the British Government is a powerful Government, but I have no doubt also that Satyagraha is a sovereign remedy.

Gandhi and Kasturbai then traveled to Shantiniketan to meet his friends and students from Phoenix ashram in South Africa. The poet Rabindranath Tagore had generously invited the community to stay at his school until they found an Ashram of their own. Tagore was on a tour at the time and had hoped to return in time to greet them. Gandhi felt at home in Shantiniketan. He met old and new friends who would later be his comrades, men like Kaka Kalelkar, Chintaman Shastri, Charles Freer Andrews, and William Pearson. As a lesson in self-help, he urged the students and teachers to cook their own food. He gave a lively picture of the activity in the school where, under the direction of the energetic Pearson, some students cut the vegetables, some were cleaning the grain, and others were in the kitchen making sure that everything was clean. While all this was taking place, some students played on the sitar. Gandhi admitted that the food was simple – rice, dhal, vegetables, and wheat flour, all cooked at the same time in a steam cooker. This happy moment came to an end after only two days when news reached that Gokhale had died. As a symbol of mourning and respect for his “hero”, Gandhi decided to remain barefoot for a year. He recalled his pledge to Gokhale to travel around India to learn about the actual condition of India and to express no opinion on public questions for one year. Gandhi remembered, too, that Gokhale had humorously told him that such an experience would cure him of some of his ideas in Hind Swaraj.

Gandhi, Kasturbai, and Maganlal went to Poona for funeral ceremonies. Thinking that Gokhale would have been happy if he joined the Servants of India Society, he applied for membership but withdrew his application when he saw the reluctance of some
members to accept him. He then set out on his trip around India, traveling third class. In Calcutta he met Tagore when he visited Shantiniketan on March 6 on his way to attend the Kumbha Mela, a religious festival that took place in Haridwar every twelve years.

He painted a fascinating picture of this pilgrimage to several places on the river Ganges with the majestic Himalayas in the background. He said that he bowed his head in “reverence to our ancestors for their sense of the beautiful in Nature, and for their foresight in investing beautiful manifestations of nature with a religious significance.” On the other hand, he said that the visit pained him, because these places were more like centers of “hypocrisy and slovenliness” than piety. He described the swarm of holy men or sadhus as seeming “to have been born to enjoy the good things of life.” He went as a pilgrim as did hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to achieve moral merit and self-purification but he was skeptical whether “this kind of faith uplifts the soul.” Many of the pilgrims knew about his exploits in South Africa and sought his blessing which he said embarrassed him and gave him no pleasure. He said that it upset him to see how people dirtied the roads and desecrated the fair banks of the Ganges at such beautiful places of nature as Haridwar and Rishikesh.

As he returned from his bath in the Ganges at Rishikesh, some monks asked him why he did not have the shikha or tuft of hair on the head and was not wearing the sacred thread around his neck, the two external symbols of Hinduism. Gandhi replied that he had given up wearing the shikha when he went to England because he did not want to feel ashamed for fear that the English would laugh at him. On the matter of the sacred thread, he answered that he had worn it once but now rejected this symbol on principle since the lower castes were forbidden to wear it. He was willing to consider having the
shikha if it was a symbol of spiritual regeneration. The right to wear the sacred thread “can come only after Hinduism has purged itself of untouchability, has removed all distinctions of superiority and inferiority, and shed a host of other evils and shams that have become rampant in it.”

His arrival in Madras in April brought an enthusiastic reception, especially from the Indian South African League. Gandhi’s response to their adulation was to remind them of the courage of the young teenage indentured Indians like Valiamma who was reduced to skin and bone in prison and who died shortly after she was released. It was not he who inspired them, he said: “It was they, the simple-minded folk, who worked away in faith, never expecting the slightest reward, who inspired me to the proper level, and who compelled me by their great faith, by their great trust in the great God to do the work that I was able to do.” He reminded the audience that it was not only the Hindus who struggled, but “there were Muslims, Parsis and Christians, and almost every part of India was represented in the struggle.” When he addressed the Madras YMCA, he urged the students to look upon their education not merely as the means to become a Government employee or a clerk in a commercial office but to develop within themselves moral self-rule. He reminded them that the Great War raging in Europe was an illustration of the consequences of modern civilization and warned them of their attraction to it and pleaded with them to reject violence:

But you, the student world, have to beware, lest mentally or morally you give one thought of approval to this kind of terrorism…Terrorize yourself; search within; by all means resist tyranny wherever you find it; by all means resist encroachment upon your liberty, but not by shedding the blood of the tyrant. That is not what is taught by our religion. Our religion is based on Ahimsa (nonviolence), which in its active form is nothing but love, love not only to our neighbors, not only to our friends, but love even to those who may be our enemies.
He explained that he still believed that the British government would grant justice and equality to Indians but by no means did he believe that Indians belonged to a subject race. He asked the students to follow the lesson of the supremacy of duty over rights, and, in encouraging them not to divorce politics from ethics, exhorted them to remember the message of Gokhale which was to spiritualize the political life and the political institutions of India.

Although friends wanted him to place his ashram in Haridwar, Calcutta, and at Rajkot, Gandhi established his Satyagraha ashram in Ahmedabad in 1915. It was an ancient center of handloom weaving and Gandhi knew that its traditions would fit the revival of the hand-spinning cottage industry that he hoped would inspire the swadeshi program he had planned. He expected that the city’s wealthy citizens would not be niggardly in giving funds to support the ashram, a rented one-storied bungalow in Kochrab, a small village near Ahmedabad. Organized like the one in South Africa, it comprised 25 men and women, thirteen of whom were Tamils from South India, and the rest from all over India. They shared their meals in a common kitchen and pledged to live like a family. Gandhi called the community “Satyagraha Ashram”, conveying both its goal and method of service. From the outset he made it clear that he had in mind inviting untouchables to join their community. Members took the vow of truth, nonviolence, celibacy, not to steal, and to live a simple life by not possessing more than what one needed.

Shortly after its establishment, Gandhi welcomed an untouchable family who asked to join them. The family consisted of Dudabhai, his wife Danibehn, and their baby daughter Lakshmi. But their presence was not accepted easily by the friends who helped
the ashram. When the man in charge of the water lift, fearing that water from their bucket would pollute him, harassed Dudabhai, Gandhi urged everyone to put up with the abuse and continue drawing water. Monetary help stopped and rumors spread that there would be a boycott of the Ashram. When Maganlal Gandhi announced that they had no money, Gandhi felt that the time had come to move the Ashram to where the untouchables lived in the city. Then, unexpectedly, a car pulled up and a man asked Gandhi if he would accept a donation. Gandhi agreed and the following day the man gave Gandhi 13,000 rupees to cover the expenses of the ashram for a year. The anonymous donor was Ambalal Sarabhai, a mill owner. Despite his happiness over resolving the financial difficulties, Gandhi said that the monetary storm did not unsettle him as much as the internal storm. It seemed that some members, including Kasturbai, did not like the presence of untouchables. Puzzled as to what to do, Gandhi asked Dudabhai and Danibehn to put up with the minor insults. He considered it of the utmost importance that members should overcome their prejudice and become a model for all India. Therefore the presence of Dudabhai and his family was necessary as a valuable lesson. In addition, the knowledge that orthodox Hindus were contributing to the financial upkeep of the ashram gave him hope that the foundation of the institution of untouchability was being shaken.

Weaving was the major activity of the ashram. Gandhi admitted that it was difficult at first inasmuch as all of them belonged to the liberal professions or business and did not have any experience as artisans except Maganlal who was sent to Madras for six months to learn more about weaving. At first they wove only khadi. When Maganlal and others returned they began to weave broader and finer cloth by establishing
fly-shuttle looms of the Madras type. They sold the pieces they made in the local market thereby improving the economy. While Gandhi worked four hours a day at weaving, other members worked for eight hours.

As the work of weaving was becoming more sophisticated, the handloom was introduced. Describing how this developed, Gandhi said that he was fortunate to meet the enterprising widow, Gangabehn Majumdar, who worked among the suppressed classes tirelessly and had long overcome her prejudice against untouchables. Gandhi spoke to her about his plans for the spinning-wheel. They were both aware that they were now abandoned as useless in the imperial modern economy. Gangabehn found spinning wheels in Vijapur in Baroda and persuaded owners to agree to resume spinning if they could be provided with a regular supply of slivers and a market for their yarn. Through the enterprise of Gangabehn who got Umar Sobani to supply slivers from his mill and weavers to spin the yarn spun in Vijapur, the project got under way. While this was taking place in Vijapur, the spinning-wheel was taking firm root in the ashram. Wheels and their accessories began to be manufactured in the ashram. Although the khadi was course, Gandhi did not hesitate to recommend it to his friends. This was how the khadi movement got started. Gandhi said that he valued this form of Swadeshi because it was the way to provide work for the “semi-starved, semi-employed women of India.” In the middle of 1917 plague broke out forcing Gandhi and his friends to leave Kochrab and build a new ashram on vacant land he bought on the bank of the Sabarmati river.

In February 1916 the political moratorium that he had promised Gokhale came to an end and Gandhi accepted an invitation to attend the opening of the Benares Hindu
University, where the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, came to lay the foundation stone as well as eminent officials and bejeweled Indian princes. In his speech, Gandhi told the students that his discourse would raise ideas that were on his mind and it was better to approach his address as a case of “thinking aloud.” He urged the students to be proud of the traditional civilizations of India and respect the use of vernacular languages, and not use English slavishly and follow only an English education. He told the students that he was interested in what they and the masses of Indians had to say on the issue of self-government. Gandhi raised the passions of the audience when he said that he lamented that the rich princes did not see the connection between their wealth and the poverty of the masses. He warned the princes that “there is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewelry and hold it in trust for your countrymen.” Addressing the students, he stated that the responsibility of the British for the violence arising from the partition of Bengal was not justification for terrorism. At this juncture, Annie Besant, the Irishwoman who had become an ardent Indian nationalist, became angry and demanded that Gandhi end his speech. Continuing in the tumult of the moment, Gandhi explained to the students that his purpose was to purge the political climate of suspicion and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and love where differences would be respected. On the issue of self-government, he stated that in his opinion the British would never grant it, offering the Boer War as an illustration; it must be taken. Disorder broke out again as members of the platform party found Gandhi’s speech too provocative and began to leave, including the chairman.

Criss-crossing the length and breadth of India during the first year of his return to India gave Gandhi a measure of confidence in his understanding of the political and
social situation in India. He was respected by the Indian political elite but it was more his sense that he was supported by the masses of Indian peasants that gave him the courage and confidence to speak out against injustice. The enthusiastic receptions that he received from the Indian elite were expected because they knew about the events in South Africa. What was surprising was how well the masses of Indian peasants and poor were aware of Gandhi’s achievements.

Gandhi was not yet the dominant figure in the nationalist politics of India which was divided bitterly between moderate and radical factions. But new forces were coming into play. Hindu-Muslim relations were beginning to improve. The Muslim League adopted a new constitution that sought to promote loyalty to the British Crown among Indians, protection of the rights of Muslims, and the attainment of self-government suitable to India. New Muslim leaders were arising. Abul Kalam Azad, the young scholar who was born in Mecca in 1888, launched his journal, Al Hilal. Among the Pathans, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan became an influential figure in education. At the Muslim League session of 1914 the groundwork was established for a better working relation between Congress and the Muslim League.

In 1916 Bal Tilak, Annie Besant, and Mohammed Ali Jinnah were the shining lights of the Indian political stage. Tilak and Besant again raised the old idea of a Home Rule League. Mohammed Ali Jinnah, president-elect of the Muslim League, chaired the Congress party provincial meeting in Ahmedabad in 1916. There was now a willingness to forge a compromise between Hindus and Muslims, moderates and radicals. This spirit of reconciliation led the members of Congress and the Muslim League to come to an agreement known as the “Lucknow Pact.” Among the resolutions of the Pact were: The provinces should be freed from central control; four-fifths of the central and provincial legislature should be elected; foreign affairs and defense should be left to the central government; and India should have the same status as the Dominions in the Empire. When asked if Congress had given away too much to the Muslim League, Tilak replied:

I would not care if the rights of self-government are granted to the Muslim community only. I would not care if they are granted to the Rajputs. I would not care if
they are granted to the lower classes of the Hindu population. Then the fight will not be triangular, as at present it is.

The cordial relations between Hindus and Muslims at Lucknow were illuminated by Mohammed Ali Jinnah’s remark that the “All India Muslim League stands abreast of the Indian National Congress and is ready to participate in any patriotic efforts for the advancement of the country as a whole.”

CHAMPARAN

It was at the Lucknow Congress meeting that Gandhi met Mr. Rajkumar Shukla from Champaran in North West Bihar. Shukla informed him of the unjust conditions of the peasants on the indigo plantations in the villages of Champaran and asked him to assist them. For two years Gandhi had observed the condition of India in his frequent travels and had given many lectures and speeches. He now became more active in local labor struggles.

On April 10, 1917, Gandhi and Shukla arrived in Patna station on their way to Champaran. Situated in the North West of Bihar at the foot of the Himalayas, Champaran had two towns – Motihari and Bettiah, and 2,841 villages which dotted the landscape. Indigo cultivation, dominated by British planters, was the mainstay of the economy under a system of labor called the tinkathia system whereby a tenant was expected by law to plant indigo for his landlord three out of twenty parts of his land. In Patna Gandhi met Mazharal Haq, a friend when he was a student in London and a former President of the Muslim League. At Muzaffarpur he met J.B. Kripalani, Professor of Muzaffarpur Government College, and Rajendra Prasad. Mahadev Desai, who would
become Gandhi’s secretary and translator, also joined him in Champaran. They became his close friends and comrades in his Satyagraha campaigns. Young and idealistic, they shared Gandhi’s concern for the abandoned and the poor and saw in Gandhi’s movement the opportunity to serve humanity.

Gandhi’s investigation of the indigo workers’ plight convinced him that the tinkathia system was oppressive and must be abolished. Doubting that recourse to the courts would do much good, he preferred to document the grievances of the peasants to build a case for the removal of the system. He asked his friends who were lawyers to assist him in recording the depositions of the tenants and to translate documents. When the Planters Association and the District Commissioner objected to his visit to Bihar, Gandhi informed them that the people of Champaran had asked him to see with his own eyes the misery arising from the unjust relations between planters and poor tenants. He visited neighboring villages where the desperate condition of the peasants, women, and children moved him: “The world outside Champaran was not known to them. And yet they received me as though we had been 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.”

On April 15, he left by train for Motihari and was greeted by large crowds at every station. Riding on an elephant in Motihari to visit the villages, he received an order to leave Champaran by the next available train to which Gandhi refused but said that he was ready to suffer the penalty of disobedience. The attention of people throughout India was drawn to Champaran. Charles Andrews joined Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad was asked to come with volunteers. Large numbers of peasants were emboldened and came
to Motihari to have their statements recorded. At noon on April 18, as Gandhi entered the court fully expecting to be sentenced to jail, thousands of villagers assembled in the court compound. Reading a statement pleading guilty to disobeying the order to leave Champaran, Gandhi said that he had come with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service to the tenants who said that they were suffering a grave injustice. Investigating the issue for himself, he claimed that he was a law-abiding citizen, but could not follow the law out of a sense of duty to the peasants of Champaran and fidelity to the voice of his conscience. He said that he was prepared to suffer the penalty for disobeying the law. When the magistrate informed him that he would pass sentence on April 21 but would allow him release on a bail of 100 rupees, Gandhi said that he could not offer bail. He was, nevertheless, released on his own recognizance. On April 20, the case against Gandhi was withdrawn, and he was informed that he could continue his inquiry.

Thousands of tenants came to give their depositions, openly expressing their grievances. When more volunteers arrived, the British planters tried to get the authorities to stop the inquiry and get his assistants to leave Champaran. Gandhi presented a report on the grievances of the tenants to the authorities, who included the district officers, the secretary of the Planters’ Association as well as the Indian leaders. The report was based on the statements of some 4,000 tenants after careful cross-examination, visits to several villages, and the examination of many court judgments. Gandhi argued that the peasants of Champaran had always fought against the tinkathia system but submitted only when coerced. When synthetic indigo was introduced and the price of indigo fell, the British planters found ways to pass their losses onto the peasant cultivators. When
the peasants could not find cash, hand-notes and mortgage deeds were demanded as payment bearing annual interest at twelve percent. Under the system, tenants used their best land for the landlord’s crops and there was little time to grow their own crops. Planters seized their tenants’ carts to transport crops to the factories without giving adequate compensation. They demanded labor but paid meager wages; they forced young boys to work against their will. Sometimes they took away peasants’ ploughs for days for factory lands without considering that the peasants needed them to cultivate their own lands. When the peasants refused to comply, landlords imposed heavy and illegal fines:

Among the other methods adopted to bend the ryots (peasants) to their will, the planters have impounded the ryots’ cattle, posted peons in their houses, withdrawn from them barbers’, dhobis’ (laundurers), carpenters’ and smiths’ services, have prevented the use of village wells and pasture lands by ploughing up the pathway and the lands just in front of or behind their homesteads, have brought or promoted civil suits or criminal complaints against them and resorted to actual physical force and wrongful confinements.  

Gandhi concluded his report by expressing the hope that “as Englishmen born to enjoy the fullest personal liberty and freedom, [they] will not be grudging the ryots of Champaran the same measure of liberty and freedom.” The Planters did not take this lying down. They accused the peasants of setting fire to the Olaha factory and made every effort to hinder the work of the inquiry. More than 8,000 tenants had given statements. The government announced that it was creating a Commission of Inquiry and promised to present its findings within three months. Gandhi, a member of the Commission, presented to the Committee the statements of the tenants as well as pertinent judgments of the court. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the peasants. More importantly, they recommended that the tinkathia system be abolished.
The government accepted almost all the recommendations of the Inquiry Committee. When the Champaran Agrarian Act was passed on November 29, Gandhi said that the planters’ rule in Champaran had now come to an end and that the peasants, previously crushed, could now hold their heads high. The stain of indigo could now be washed away. For Gandhi, the Champaran struggle had demonstrated that the “disinterested service of the people in any sphere ultimately helps the people politically.”

The Satyagraha campaign did not end only with political victory. Gandhi wanted the victory to lead to measures to improve the lives of the villages. Three village schools for children under the age of 12 were established. The children were to receive an all-round education, a good knowledge of Hindi and Urdu, arithmetic, geography, history, elementary scientific principles, and some industrial training. Gandhi wanted teachers to have an influence on adults also and asked them to find ways to change the practice of purdah (seclusion of women). He hoped that the women of Champaran would come to realize the harm that the system of purdah did to their health and how it deprived them of helping their families and villages. Adults were also taught hygiene and the advantages of cooperative work for the promotion of communal welfare such as the making of village roads and the sinking of wells.

At the Barharwa school, where some 140 students attended, students were taught weaving and were shown how to keep their huts, wells, roads and villages clean. In Bhitharwa, Dr. Deva gave lessons in elementary medicine and hygiene. The villagers provided the teachers with board, lodging and grain. Gandhi admitted that teaching sanitation was difficult. But he and his supporters set the example by sweeping the roads, cleaning out the wells, and filling up the pools. He was taught a lesson in humility when
he asked Kasturbai why the village women did not wash their dresses. Kasturbai related to him the reply to that question by one woman: “Look now, there is no box or cupboard here containing other clothes. The sari I am wearing is the only one I have. How am I to wash it? Tell Mahatmaji to get me another sari, and I shall then promise to bathe and put on clean clothes every day.”

Gandhi had asked the planters for their cooperation but they chose to put obstacles. They demanded that schools had to be opened away from the factories. When Bhithwara school was set on fire soon after it opened, workers refused to be intimidated and carried bricks and other construction materials on their heads and rebuilt the school. Gandhi said that he learned the mission of his life at Champaran and that he had forged a weapon “by which India could be made free.” Champaran was the scene of his first civil disobedience campaign in India and showed that an essentially local issue could have national resonance. It demonstrated, too, that Satyagraha as an instrument to fight against injustice when regular avenues of redress were denied could be utilized effectively in India. In Champaran the method of Satyagraha was demonstrated clearly. There was an investigation and scrutiny into the facts of the case which were then presented at public meetings with demands for redress of injustice. But the clarity with which the facts were examined could not explain fully the strength and power of the Satyagraha movement. Gandhi’s leadership awakened in the masses a sense of hope in their own possibilities of transforming their own lives and community.

THE MILL-STRIKE AT AHMEDABAD
In February 1918, Gandhi received an urgent letter from his friend Anasuya Sarabhai asking him to intercede on behalf of the mill-workers of Ahmedabad in their conflict with the owners. The constructive program at Champaran was not yet completed when he hurried to Ahmedabad. There were good reasons why this conflict took on such significance for Gandhi. Ahmedabad was his home and he was proud of his Gujarati language and culture. Since Satyagraha had proved to be an effective instrument in the essentially peasant struggle in rural Champaran, he was anxious to test it in an unusual industrial conflict in Ahmedabad.

The conflict was unusual because the leaders of the mill-owners association and the mill-hands union were respectively Ambalal Sarabhai and Anasuya Sarabhai, his sister, who were both intimate friends of Gandhi. It was Ambalal, an industrialist, who was the anonymous donor when funds dried up after an untouchable family was admitted to the ashram. Admired by many for his progressive attitudes to social relations, he considered his wife Saraladevi his social equal and took her along with him to parties and permitted his children to socialize and mix freely whenever they invited friends to their home. Ambalal said that what drew him to Gandhi was their mutual desire to abolish caste and other inequalities in India and to end British rule over India.

Anasuya was already engaged at ten years old when her mother died at the age of 27. She dutifully married the man her parents chose for her, but the marriage turned out to be unhappy. Ambalal and Anasuya cared for and protected each other. When Anasuya’s husband was abusive, Ambalal would go and bring her to his home. Since divorce would have ruined the reputation of the family, she gave up married life and allowed her husband the freedom to live as he wanted. She looked after Ambalal’s house.
until he got married and then went to England to study medicine. The sight of a bloody
calf’s head in a butcher’s shop dissuaded her from pursuing that profession. On her
return to India, she decided to give her life to serve workers, especially women. She
founded a school for workers’ children in 1914, holding classes for children who worked
in the factories as well those who were too young to work. Night classes were held for
adult workers. She recalled her horror at seeing babies sleeping between machines
breathing dust and fluff. The workers considered her as their “mother” and by 1917
Anasuya Sarabhai was Ahmedabad’s first labor leader.

The heavy monsoon rains of 1917 created the conditions for the spread of the
plague virus. The dreaded disease peaked in November when there were some 550
deaths. Only 10% of those who contacted the virus survived. Health professionals tried
their best to inoculate the population and to disinfect the environment. Since the city
could accommodate only 26 patients in its hospital for infectious diseases, Ambalal
Sarabhai gave up his mansion in Mirzapur so that it could serve as a plague hospital,
requesting the physician, Dr. Tankaravilla, not to spare any money to help anyone in need
and insisting that the hospital should be open to all, regardless of caste or religious
considerations.

Schools and most public institutions were closed during the plague epidemic. By
way of inducing the mill-hands to stay on the job, the owners had been giving the
weavers a bonus to remain on the job. This “plague bonus” was not offered to about 500
warpers in the textile mills who demanded an allowance of 25%. Anasuya felt that their
demand was justified. When the workers made her their leader by acclamation, and
threatened to strike, the owners asked Ambalal to discipline his sister. This was the situation when Anasuya wrote to Gandhi appealing for assistance.

The situation worsened when the plague was over as the mill-owners announced that they were withdrawing the bonus even though prices for commodities were rising. Ambalal met Gandhi in Bombay to inform him of the worsening situation and asked him to intervene. But Gandhi was already planning to test the usefulness of Satyagraha in industrial labor conflicts. He and Anasuya were fortunate to have as assistants Shankerlal Banker, Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai. Shankerlal combined expertise in business and organizational efficiency with a passion to serve the poor. Gandhi drew on his expert knowledge of the textile industry in Bombay. It was during the Ahmedabad campaign that Gandhi came to admire and like Patel, while Mahadev Desai chronicled the Ahmedabad Satyagraha campaign and became his trusted secretary. In February, Gandhi learned that the mill-owners were planning a lock-out. The hardliners among the owners formed an association and named Ambalal their leader. Indian mill-owners had made huge profits during the war, but their success depended on a stable and steady work force. It was, therefore, not easy to understand Ambalal’s tough stand. Nothing in his life indicated that he would defend the interests of the owners. From his sister’s support for the workers, he could well understand that the workers were developing a new consciousness and, perhaps, this consciousness posed a threat to the new and, in his view, vital industrial economic order. Ambalal reserved his most bitter criticism for Shankerlal’s Gandhian views. He contended that philanthropy and love of humanity were not the motives behind running a business, but simply a desire for profit which was based on the law of supply and demand. Employment and conditions of employment
were based on that principle. He castigated Shankerlal’s position as “impossible, unachievable, visionary, and utopian.” The dispute was referred to arbitration but before it commenced its work the mill-owners announced a lockout on February 22 saying that those workers who had accepted a 20% increase would be invited back.

Gandhi had made up his mind that a 35% increase was fair. Every morning and evening Anasuya, Shankerlal, and Chhaganlal, Gandhi’s nephew, would visit the workers in their quarters giving advice, recommending where to find temporary employment, or sending medical help. They would then report to Gandhi on the hardships of the workers and the responses of the community to the lockout. To fill the workers with hope and solidarity, Gandhi organized a meeting every evening under a Bubul tree on the banks of the Sabarmati river. A leaflet was handed out and read in silence before Gandhi explained the text, educating the workers about a variety of Gandhian themes. Then they would march through the streets, shouting “Ek Tek” “Keep your pledge” and improvising songs.

On February 26, the fifth day of the lockout, he gave out the first leaflet in which he told the workers that their demand for a 35% increase was reasonable, and reminded them of their pledge that they would not resume work until they secured the requested increase, and their actions would remain peaceful and nonviolent. He cautioned them to remain firm in their pledge if the lockout drags out for a long time. Ambalal and the mill-owners also held their meetings in the afternoon after which Ambalal would come to his sister’s home or drive out to the ashram to share a meal with Anasuya and Gandhi and discuss developments. This was an unusual industrial action that was ambiguous because the conflict did not have the sharp edges that attended most
industrial confrontations between workers and management. Among the early themes Gandhi discussed in this struggle that lasted three weeks were the importance of courage and self-suffering for their cause, understood not only as economic but also moral in the sense of recognizing their own dignity as human beings. He said that he was aware that many Indians considered some occupations degrading, but he declared that they were wrong. All jobs, whether “weaving cloth, breaking stones, sawing or splitting wood, or working on a farm,” were honourable.15

Referring to the fears of employers in the fifth and sixth leaflets that if they agreed to workers’ demands they would be subjected to endless and unjustified demands, he stressed that it was far more likely that workers would become vindictive if they continued to be suppressed. He feared that the resolution of conflict between employer and worker in the modern system of work had changed from the traditional ways. There was too little friendship between owners and workers. What Gandhi wanted to communicate was the importance of the sense of family and “fellow-feeling” that he thought was vital to the world of work. The example was of course an idealized version of reality, but this was not the point he was making. Where the sense of family existed in any community there was no need for arbitration. Both sides would amicably resolve their conflicts. On the other hand, he lamented that the modern industrial system seemed to be no different from that of the war that was then taking place in Europe, where all means were considered proper to defeat the enemy, even inflicting injury on civilians. Wars in the past largely bypassed civilians, but he lamented that winning the conflict had become more important than reconciling the opponent. His own commentary on employers ganging up on workers was that they were “raising an army of elephants
against ants.” In the past employers would not use the situation where workers were starving as an opportunity for victory. For Gandhi, “that action alone is just which does not harm either party to a dispute.”

In the seventh and eight leaflets Gandhi told the story of Satyagraha in South Africa. The theme he selected for this narrative was “pure justice.” To underline the lesson that in a dispute workers must also consider the interests of employers, he recalled how he called off the Satyagraha campaign when the European railroad workers went on strike because they wanted to exploit the strike by Indian workers for their own interest. Gandhi said that the Satyagraha campaign in South Africa was about justice, “pure and simple.” The Satyagrahis did not want to spite the government. Although the South African government ruled “not by right of love, but by force of fear,” the Satyagraha campaign sought to show people “a better and more expeditious way of righting wrongs.” He recalled once again the heroic stories of 75 year old Harbatsingh and 16 year old Valiamma, who marched with thousands, and died for the cause of justice. He cited the businessman Ahmed Mahomed Cachalia who sacrificed his business and went to prison several times. Gandhi pointed out that these Satyagrahis did not have to risk their lives, because the unjust tax laws did not apply to them. Theirs was a struggle for “pure justice.”

From the tenor of the ninth and tenth leaflets, it was clear that the lock-out was beginning to have a demoralizing effect on the workers. Rumors spread that the lock-out would be ended if the workers accepted 20% increase. Some workers were beginning to grumble that they had no food and had no means to pay the rent. The eleventh leaflet on
March 12 confirmed that the employers had ended the lockout and offered 20% increase to those who returned to their jobs.

In the twelfth leaflet, Gandhi announced that the workers’ strike had commenced, telling the workers that the only way to improve their condition was to keep their pledge and remain firm. He was saddened further when Chhaganlal brought back a report that the effects of the lockout and strike were devastating on the poorer sections of the city. Workers and their families complained to Chhaganlal that they were starving while Gandhi and Anasuya were driving in a car and eating elegant food.

It was then that Gandhi announced in the fourteenth leaflet a fast to the death, the first of seventeen fasts that he undertook in his life. He said that he could not bear the workers breaking their pledge and vowed not to eat any food or use a car until the workers got a 35% increase. His friends and comrades were shocked. Anasuya and others wanted to join him in fasting but Gandhi did not allow it, saying that “fasting was my business.” The spirits of the workers revived, responding enthusiastically to the suggestion that they could work in the ashram, especially in laying the foundation for the weaving school. In this new mood of optimism, Anasuya herself with a basket on her head, a steady stream of workers issued forth with baskets of sand on their heads from the river up to the ashram.

Ambalal saw the fast as coercion and accused Gandhi of changing the premise of the dispute but, nevertheless, offered to grant the 35% increase to prevent Gandhi from risking his health by fasting. Admitting in the fifteenth letter that there was an element of coercion in his fast, Gandhi, in rejecting the owners’ offer, asked the readers to understand his motives. The fast was not undertaken to influence the employers. To grant a favor out of pity would bring ridicule on the workers. What he desired was to show the workers the significance and usefulness of remaining steadfast in their pledge. In his own mind Gandhi was aware that the instrument of the fast in this situation was problematic. Weakened not only physically by the fast but also emotionally by the
ambivalence that he sensed, he admitted with sadness on March 18 at a prayer meeting that his weakened condition left the mill-owners no freedom.

Shankerlal presented the sixteenth leaflet in which Gandhi said humbly that the workers should know that he was fully aware that he had not done any manual work nor suffered the miseries the workers suffered but they should be confident that he stood ready to help according to his capacity. In a thoughtful moment, Gandhi recalled the writings of Thoreau and wondered about his own insignificance: “When I compare my state with that of these illuminated souls, I am such a mere pygmy that I don’t know what to say.”

In his Autobiography, written some years later, Gandhi commented that, since he had a cordial relation with the mill-owners, he should not have fasted against them but allowed them to be influenced by the strike alone. But he insisted that, as representative of the workers, his concern was for the workers who were wavering in their pledge. That was why at the moment it seemed that his duty was to undertake the fast.

After three days the mill-owners agreed to arbitration and the strike was called off. Gandhi wrote that the hearts of the owners were touched. Negotiations were held at Anasuya’s home and a settlement was reached on March 19: “On the first day, an increase of 35 per cent will be given in keeping with our pledge; on the second day, we get 20 per cent in keeping with the mill-owners. From the third day till the date of the arbitrator’s award, an increase of 27 1/2 per cent will be paid and subsequently, if the arbitrator decides on 35 per cent, the mill-owners will give us 7 1/2 per cent more and, if he decides on 20 per cent, we shall refund 7 ½ per cent.” Gandhi said that he had taken
part in many conflicts but he had never experienced one like the mill-strike at Ahmedabad where there was so little ill-will or bitterness, for which he credited Ambalal and Anasuya Sarabhai. The workers felt that a parade was in order. They put Gandhi, Anasuya, and Ambalal in a carriage and wended their way through the streets and back to the Bubul tree now called the Ek Tek tree. They gave a red silk sari to Anasuya. The mill-owners in their joy brought huge amounts of sweets for the workers to celebrate the happy outcome. Unfortunately and comically, there was a scramble for the sweets. Initially believing that it was the workers who were guilty of this indiscipline, Gandhi was relieved when he learned that the beggars of Ahmedabad had got word of the distribution of sweets and were entirely responsible for the disorder. A more orderly celebration was held the following day at Ambalal’s home. Commenting on this in his Autobiography, Gandhi admitted that it was a humorous sidelight to a remarkable event but used the matter of the beggars and the sweets to assert that the grinding poverty in the country was driving more and more people to become beggars, whose struggle for basic necessities made them insensible to decency and self-respect. He said that the solution was work, not charity, and for those who had jobs, a decent wage.

KHEDA

Kheda district was not far from Ahmedabad. Its villages were also affected by the monsoon rains of 1917 and many were reduced to near-famine conditions. The land revenue law had stipulated that the land tax was abrogated when the annual crop was 25 per cent less than normal. As president of the Gujarat council, which served to advise
government about the hardships of peasants in times of crisis, Gandhi advised the peasants of Kheda in January 1918 to suspend payment of the land tax until the government investigated the matter, which was already investigated by officials of the Servants of India Society. Their report confirmed that the peasants were experiencing hardships, but the commissioner rejected the report.

Gandhi visited over fifty villages, interviewed the villagers, and interrogated them just as he had done in Champaran. He concluded that the average crop was indeed less than normal and recommended that an independent commission of inquiry be appointed. The government rejected the suggestion and again applied coercive measures to collect the revenues. Setting up headquarters at Nadiad Ananthashram and joined by Kheda volunteers as well as his friends, Vallabhbhai Patel, Shankerlal Banker, Anasuya Sarabhai, Indulal Yajnik, and Mahadev Desai, Gandhi advised the peasants of Kheda to launch _Satyagraha_ on March 22, 1918.20 As evidence of their resolve not to pay the full or remaining revenue for the year, the peasants of Kheda said that they were prepared to have their lands confiscated than compromise their self-respect or taint their justifiable claims by voluntary payment. Although there were wealthy farmers in the villages who could have paid the tax, Gandhi felt that their solidarity was necessary to help the poorer peasants to overcome their fear and not sell their necessities or incur debts to pay the tax.

The experience of _Satyagraha_ was foremost a political education for its supporters, an experience that was meant to awaken the desire to serve humanity. Although Bombay merchants contributed to the campaign, Gandhi felt that money was the least thing that they needed. He could not say whether the volunteers accepted everything about _Satyagraha_ but he felt that their lives were changed. Volunteers went
from village to village explaining to the farmers the principles of *Satyagraha*. Gandhi hoped to instill in the volunteers the courage to overcome their fear of officials who were “not the masters but the servants of the people, inasmuch as they received their salaries from the taxpayer.” At the same time he wanted them to develop “an inborn gentleness and desire to do the opponent good” and not return their insults. The government became more repressive. They sold peasants’ cattle, seized their movable property, and issued penalties, like confiscating standing crops. These policies were calculated to inspire terror in the hearts of the peasants. Gandhi did not think that the seizure of standing crops was morally justified. He considered it looting by the government and advised Mohanlal Pandya and eight others to remove the onion crop from a field that was wrongly seized. Pandya and his eight colleagues were duly arrested, convicted, and imprisoned. This act strengthened the hearts of the peasants who were beginning to waver. A large crowd formed a procession to accompany the convicts to the jail, calling Mohanlal Pandya “honored thief.”

After almost four months struggle, the campaign came to a surprising end. The Government agreed that if the wealthier farmers paid their dues, the poorer ones would be exempted. Meetings were held to celebrate their victory and honor Gandhi who was not entirely pleased at the outcome. He said that he was happy that *Satyagraha* had made the peasants stronger but he could not claim that the government officials had come to respect them. Displaying neither grace nor generosity of spirit, the officials reacted with arrogance since they knew that they lost very little in giving an exemption to the poorest farmers while continuing to get large revenues from the wealthy farmers. The poor were granted suspension of their dues but did not really get the benefit of this policy in that
they did not get the right to determine who was considered poor. But the poor peasants, nevertheless, considered this no small achievement because they demonstrated the courage to resist injustice. Gandhi was hopeful that the Kheda Satyagraha had marked the beginning of an awakening among the peasants of Gujarat and the beginning of their true political education. In addition, he was confident that the Satyagraha campaigns would teach those who worked for the community to establish a close relationship with the actual life of the peasants, to identify themselves with the masses and find in the struggle their “proper sphere of work, their capacity for sacrifice.” The lesson of Satyagraha was that “the salvation of the people depends upon themselves, upon their capacity for suffering and sacrifice.”

RECRUITING AGENT FOR WORLD WAR I

At the end of April, 1918, Gandhi received an invitation from the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, to attend a War conference in Delhi. Gandhi accepted but complained about the exclusion from the conference of Tilak, Annie Besant, and the Ali brothers, who were then in jail. Tilak was the dominating figure at the annual Congress meeting in Calcutta in December 1917. His party had five hundred delegates at the convention and he brought with him a petition signed by a million people demanding Home Rule. Renouncing the Presidency of Congress, he supported the candidacy of Annie Besant, a move that was welcomed by the poet Tagore whose play, The Post Office, was staged during the convention and attended by Tilak, Mrs. Besant, and Gandhi. The Congress passed a resolution to express to the King “their deep loyalty and profound attachment to
the throne, their unswerving allegiance to the British connection, and their firm resolve to stand by the empire at all hazards and at all costs.”

At the War Conference, the Viceroy pleaded with Gandhi to support the resolution encouraging the recruitment of Indian troops for the war, arguing that if he agreed that the empire had been a power for good, he should support the British. Speaking in Hindi, Gandhi spoke one sentence: “With a full sense of my responsibility I beg to support the resolution.” After the conference, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy to give him a more coherent understanding of his position. Gandhi said that he recognized that Indians should give unequivocal support to the empire if they aspired to be equal partners, but stressed that their support was based on the expectation that the government would carry out the main reforms of the Congress-Muslim League proposals.

Once again Gandhi was confronted by the apparent contradiction between criticizing the abuses of British Imperialism on the one hand and supporting its ideals on the other. In pledging his loyalty to Britain during the war, he reminded the Viceroy of his role in the Boer and Zulu wars in South Africa and his support for the current war when he was in England in 1915. However, Gandhi was quick to condemn Lord Willingdon, Governor of Bombay, who denounced Tilak and supporters of Home Rule at a War Conference in Bombay, prompting Jinnah and other Indian nationalists to walk out with Tilak.

Although Gandhi’s support for Great Britain in the Great War was understandable and consistent with his policies in the British wars in South Africa, his reasons for agreeing to be a recruiting agent in India were difficult to comprehend. He issued an
appeal to the people of Kheda and Gujarat to volunteer to join the army, using language that was puzzling:

If we want to learn the use of arms with the greatest possible dispatch, it is our duty to enlist ourselves in the army. There can be no friendship between the brave and the effeminate. We are regarded as a cowardly people. If we want to become free from the reproach, we should learn the use of arms. The easiest and straightest way, therefore, to win Swaraj is to participate in the defense of the empire.”

Gandhi called on the people of Kheda to join the army in the thousands. But the response of the peasants of Kheda to his recruitment campaign was utterly different from the Satyagraha experience. Not only did they reject his call for recruits but they were even unwilling to grant him a cart for hire. Gandhi and Patel had to conduct their campaigns on foot, trudging about 20 miles a day. The very peasants who celebrated their victory with Gandhi now admonished him: “You are a votary of Ahimsa, how can you ask us to take up arms? What good has government done for India to deserve your co-operation?”

Gandhi anxiously wrote to Annie Besant to ask why her newspaper, New India, had not openly demanded recruitment, reiterating his analysis that support for recruitment would mean more or less passage of the Congress-Muslim League agreement, an argument that he also made to Jinnah. This then was Gandhi’s reasoning for being a recruiting agent. He obviously hoped that support for Great Britain in the war would make them more receptive to granting nationalist demands as represented in the Lucknow agreement.

The recruitment campaign almost ruined his health. Eating a steady diet of groundnuts, bananas, and lemons, he developed dysentery and was in severe pain. He
was removed first to Ambalal’s home and then to Sabarmati Ashram where he was advised to take meat broth and eggs, but he stubbornly refused. Thinking that he was about to die, he sent for Anasuya who brought Dr. Kanuga who assured him that he was suffering from a nervous breakdown and that he was in no danger of dying. This diagnosis did not relieve him of his fears of dying and he devoted long hours listening to the *Gita*. When Vallabhbhai Patel brought the news that Germany was defeated and recruitment was no longer necessary, Gandhi was relieved, but his illness continued. In mid-December he went to Bombay for medical treatment where Kasturbai convinced him that his vow against the drinking of milk was only against cow’s milk and buffalo’s milk, not goat’s milk. Recovering slowly, he underwent surgery to remove painful boils. While convalescing, he learned to spin, remarking, “The wheel hummed merrily and had no small share in restoring me to health.”

Gandhi’s explanation of his support for Britain in the war as the way to expedite greater autonomy and reforms for India was not unreasonable. He knew well how cleverly the British had divided and undermined the nationalist movement after the emergence of radical forces following the partition of Bengal in 1905 and how tenaciously they clung to domination over India. If he was following a political strategy that suggested that the British would be willing to give up their rule over India, he forgot or ignored his own experience in South Africa where, despite supporting the British side in the Boer and Zulu wars, the British were as unprepared as the Dutch in lifting oppressive laws against Indians. He probably feared that the political forces represented by Tilak, Annie Besant, and Jinnah would fare no better than the earlier radical extremists. At the same time, there was nothing in recent Indian history to persuade him
that the British were prepared to act honorably to reward India with Home Rule for its support in the war. Indeed, reforms always seemed to be offered as the way to break any emerging Indian solidarity.

Gandhi’s policies seemed perplexing to some, including the peasants of Kheda who wondered: Was he not a votary of _Ahimsa_? How could he square his advocacy of a politics of love and nonviolence with such a seemingly enthusiastic cry for recruitment of soldiers? Did his “nervous breakdown” reflect the conflict that was going on in his own mind? Reflecting on this event many years afterwards when he had come to reject British imperialism as a force for the good of India, Gandhi said that, “had I been the nonviolent rebel that I am today, I should certainly not have helped but through every effort open to nonviolence I should have attempted to defeat its purpose.” He explained that his motives were mixed. As an individual he was opposed to war but he had then “no status for offering nonviolent resistance.” Gandhi continued:

Nonviolent resistance can only follow some real disinterested service, some heart expression of love…I do not sit in judgement upon the world for its many misdeeds. Being imperfect myself and needing toleration and charity, I tolerate the world’s imperfections till I find or create an opportunity for fruitful [demands]. I felt that if by sufficient service I could attain the power and the confidence to resist the empire’s wars and its warlike preparations, it would be a good thing for me who was seeking to enforce non-violence in my own life to test the extent of which it was possible among the masses…My opposition to and disbelief in war was as strong then as it is today. But we have to recognize that there are many things which we do although we may be against doing them. I am as much opposed to taking the life of the lowest creature alive as I am to war. But I continually take such life hoping some day to attain the ability to do without this fratricide. To entitle me, in spite of it, to be called a votary of nonviolence, my attempt must be honest, strenuous, and unceasing…The fact is that the path to duty is not always easy to discern amidst claims seeming to conflict one with the other.
As we examine the contradictions of Gandhi’s decisions in the Great War, and our own doubts about his explanations, it must be remembered that it was Gandhi who told the world that a physician had diagnosed his long illness as a nervous breakdown, and that the peasants of Kheda had viewed his recruitment for the war and commitment to Ahimsa as inconsistent; it was Gandhi who described his guilt at undertaking the fast in Ahmedabad and wondered whether it might be coercive. Gandhi was aware of the ambiguities in the determination of the truth of some situations and yet acknowledged the responsibility to make decisions which he confessed were fallible. In a letter to Charles Andrews of July 29, 1918, he said that war would always take place and there was no possibility that the human nature of all humanity could be transformed. Explaining his distinction between real Ahimsa and perfect Ahimsa, he said that, in the first, a person might be justified in striking down a wrongdoer to defend his wife and family; in the second, he would not strike him but intervene to receive his blows. When he encouraged Indians to become soldiers, he said that he intended that they should learn to be courageous. It was only as one developed courage that it was possible to choose nonviolence over brute force.

When he addressed the students at Benares Hindu University in 1916, Gandhi said that his speech was essentially revelations of “his thinking aloud.” Gandhi invited others, friends and opponents, at critical moments in the teeth of Satyagraha struggles to see his inner struggles and his human difficulties in getting a clear picture of the way to the truth of an issue. There were many inner conflicts which he was aware of and which sometimes saddened him, but they helped him to become more confident and stronger. The quintessential Gandhian humor was always a sign that he had recovered from a
setback or a disappointment. Four years of travel and struggle in India, coming on the heels of his South African experience, had now prepared him to go on the national political stage of India as a major player.
CHAPTER 4

TRUTH FORCE VERSUS BRUTE FORCE: THE ROWLATT ACTS

SATYAGRAHA AND THE MASSACRE AT AMRITSAR

*Satyagraha* has therefore been described as a coin, on whose face you read love and on the reverse you read Truth. It is a coin current everywhere and has indefinable value.


[It] is in vain to expect justice from a race so blind and drunk with the arrogance of power, the bitter prejudice of race and creed and color, and betraying such an abysmal ignorance of Indian conditions, opinion, sentiment, and aspirations.

Sarojini Naidu to M.K. Gandhi, July 15, 1920

Gandhi’s first all-India *Satyagraha* campaign against the continuation of the emergency laws during the Great War embodied in the Rowlatt Acts of 1919 was of special significance in India’s struggle for independence. Traditionally presented as representing the political transformation of Gandhi from loyalist to the British Empire to rebel, the event was the first serious challenge to British rule in the twentieth century.¹ The transition from loyal recruiter for the British war effort to non-cooperation seemed sudden and extreme unless one finds the seeds of non-cooperation in the *Satyagraha* movement in South Africa.² The events of 1918 and 1919 were, nevertheless, serious enough to explain the extreme turn in Gandhi’s politics. Recovering from dysentery in late 1918 and early 1919, he pondered deeply about the complexity of nonviolence.

His understanding of his role as recruiter for the British was that if India hoped to enjoy the rights and benefits of British rule it had to demonstrate its loyalty. In his mind, freedom for India depended on support for the British in the war, which was ostensibly
being fought for freedom.\textsuperscript{3} Although he had also come to understand the complexity of \textit{Satyagraha}, he was still troubled by his apparent contradictions and sought to define his movement more clearly. He had no doubt that nonviolence was based on courage, but he wanted to know why supporters wavered at crucial moments in a campaign or why nonviolent campaigns could become violent. As he looked back on his experience of the campaigns in Champaran, Ahmedabad, and Kheda, he confessed that \textit{Satyagraha} could also be considered as a weapon of the weak. Gandhi said that it was more effective as the weapon of the morally strong and courageous. As he put it, only those who were strong enough to use violence could renounce violence.

\section*{INDIA AND WORLD WAR I}

When Britain declared war against Germany on August 4, 1914, the response from Indian nationalists was enthusiastic because they expected that their support would advance their claims for increasing self-government. An Indian expeditionary Force reached the Western front as early as the first German assault at Ypres.\textsuperscript{4} Gandhi himself had organized a Field Ambulance Training Corps as his contribution to the war.\textsuperscript{5} Tilak, who was released in 1914 after six years of imprisonment in exile, also pledged his support for Britain. As the war dragged on, putting paid to the hopes of a quick victory, the human and economic costs to Indians became clear. The loss of the German market which was the second largest market for Indian goods like cotton, jute, and oil seeds led to food shortages and high prices. When the German cruiser, the \textit{Emden}, sank twelve British freighters in the Bay of Bengal and bombed Madras in September 1914, some Indians thought that they would be invaded by the Germans. Muslim Indian fears were
added to the growing anxiety when Ottoman Turkey joined the Central Powers in November, 1914 because the Sultan as Caliph was also the leader of the Muslim community. Muslim Indian ambivalence towards Britain grew more serious when the British, fearing German designs on the Persian Gulf, decided to invade Mesopotamia.

Twenty-nine thousand Indian troops were sent to patrol the Suez canal to ensure the security of Egypt from an attack by Turkey. Thousands of Indians died in the abortive invasion of Mesopotamia in late 1915 and 1916. During the war more than a million Indians served in the army and their blood spilled in the soil of Europe, Africa, and the Near East. Those who survived brought back stories of life in Europe and elsewhere, about the lives of peasants in Europe and how they were treated as equals. Their experience changed their outlook on life.

On the political front the statesmanship of Jinnah and Tilak was responsible for the reconciliation of the differences between the Muslim League and Congress in the Lucknow Pact of 1916, and between the political moderates and radicals. They reached an agreement that they would seek self-government by strictly constitutional means. On the British side, Lord Montagu was made Secretary of State for India and announced in Parliament on August 20, 1917 that he was determined to institute self-governing institutions so that Indians could participate more widely in government. He traveled through India making it known that he would introduce reforms. The political stage was changing, however. Tilak, Jinnah, and Annie Besant were at the center of Indian nationalist politics, to be sure, but Gandhi had already captured the attention of the people of India with his successful Satyagraha struggles in Champaran and Ahmedabad.
The Montagu-Chelmsford Report came out in July, 1918 and immediately drew a storm of protest. The report introduced the notion of dyarchy in Indian politics whereby local government councils would be controlled by Indians and some areas of provincial government but there was to be no transfer of authority at the central government. As happened so often in the past, the proposal proved to be divisive. The carefully cultivated unity between Indian moderates and radicals began to unravel. A special Congress meeting in August 1918 demanded that nothing less than self-government within the empire was acceptable. The resolution affirmed that Indians were fit for responsible government, and insisted on the declaration of the rights of the people of India as British citizens. It went on to list these rights: All Indian subjects, naturalized or resident in India, were equal before the law; no Indian should suffer the loss of their liberty, life, property, free speech or writing, or the right of association, except under sentence of lawful and open trial; Indians were entitled to bear arms subject to the purchase of a license as in Great Britain; the press should be free and no license or security should be demanded; corporal punishment should not be inflicted on Indian subjects except under conditions that applied to all other British subjects. There was surprising unanimity at the Congress meeting. The moderate nationalists did not attend the Congress meeting and held their own convention in Bombay in November, 1918 at which they declared that the reforms constituted an improvement on the current conditions and recommended some minor changes. Both Tilak and Annie Besant had Home Rule movements of their own and sent delegations to Britain to counter anti-Indian propaganda. Tilak was very much in the minds of the British authorities when they
appointed a special committee under Mr. Justice Rowlatt to recommend legislation against sedition. The Sedition Committee Report appeared within one week after the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. Reforms and repression were the British response to the desire for self-government. Although he was in England, Tilak was elected president of the annual Congress meeting to be held in Delhi in December, 1918. When it convened, it addressed first the Rowlatt Report. Drawing on the pronouncements of President Wilson, Mr. Lloyd George, and other representatives at the Paris Peace Conference to the effect that the principle of self-determination was important for the future of peace in the world, Congress passed a resolution proclaiming self-determination. As an application of this principle, it demanded the removal of all hindrances to free speech and the repeal of all laws restricting the free discussion of political questions, and the abolition of laws giving the executive the power to arrest, detain, or imprison any British subject in India. When this resolution was passed Gandhi was still ill and bed-ridden, and Tilak was in England.7

THE ROWLATT SATYAGRAHA

The beginning of 1919 saw India gripped with anxiety. Twelve million people had died in the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919. High prices hit peasants and industrial workers hard. There was an outbreak of labor strikes. Muslim Indians were outraged by the British treatment of the defeated Turkish Caliph. Congress nationalists were distressed by the broken promises for reform. It was in this tense political climate that the Rowlatt Bills appeared in February 1919. Gandhi happened to have read the report while he was recovering from illness and proposed resistance. A group consisting of
Vallabhbhai Patel, Mrs. Naidu, B.G. Horniman, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*, Umar Sobani, Shankarlal Banker, and Indulal Yajnik met at Sabarmati ashram and signed a *Satyagraha* pledge on February 24, 1919. The pledge stated that both Bills were “unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals.” Members declared that if the Bills became law they would refuse to obey them and would struggle to have them withdrawn, promising as well to “faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person, or property.” Gandhi called the Bills a symptom of a “deep-seated disease” and instituted a *Satyagraha* Council in Bombay to co-ordinate the movement. Meetings were held everywhere and large numbers of people signed the pledge of civil disobedience. One of the first directives of the committee was that the law regarding prohibited literature and the registration of newspapers should be disobeyed. The committee decided to sell some of Gandhi’s books which were banned by the government, among which were *Hind Swaraj*, *Sarvodaya or Universal Dawn* (*a paraphrase of John Ruskin’s Unto This Last*), *The Story of a Satyagrahi* (*a paraphrase of the Defense and Death of Socrates* by Plato), and *The Life and Address of Mustafa Kemal Pasha*. Gandhi and others wrote to the viceroy to ask him to withdraw the Rowlatt Bills, but to no avail. Gandhi was present in the central legislature when the Bills were presented before becoming law. The Indian representatives in the legislature were united in opposing the Bills. Jinnah denounced some of the provisions of the Bills and moved that they be deferred for six months; Srinivasa Sastri’s speech left a lasting impression:

A bad law once passed is not always used against the bad. In times of panic, to which all alien governments are unfortunately far too liable, I have known governments to lose their heads. The possession in the hands of the executive of powers of this drastic nature will not hurt only the wicked; and there will be such
a lowering of spirit that all talk of responsible government will be mere mockery. You may enlarge the councils but the men that will fill the councils will be toadies, timid men, and the bureaucracy will reign unchecked under the outward forms of democratic government.\(^\text{10}\)

Although he had not fully recovered from his illness, Gandhi accepted an invitation from Rajagopalachari to come to Madras. He was uncertain as to how to offer civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Bills if they were passed into law. After the second Bill was published as an Act, moderate and radical Indian leaders were stunned. These laws against sedition were meant to keep in place the emergency powers of the government following the expiration of the Defense of India Act when World War I came to an end. They allowed the authorities to imprison and intern revolutionary suspects without open trial. The Rowlatt Acts caused as much anger and hostility as the partition of Bengal in 1905. Indian leaders were of one mind in condemning these “Black Acts” as repressive, denying fundamental rights to Indians, and like a stab in the back. Gandhi revealed his plan to Rajagopalachari:

The idea came to me last night in a dream, that we should call upon the country to observe a general harta. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight…Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on that day and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer.

At a large meeting on Madras beach, seated on a chair, he had Mahadev Desai read his speech, inviting all men and women to resist the Rowlatt Acts through Satyagraha. He told the audience that in obedience to the law of love one should not return hatred for hatred, violence for violence, but good for evil. Self-suffering was more likely to win reforms, not the infliction of suffering on opponents. On March 23 he called on Indians to mobilize in their thousands and fixed the day for the harta as March 30, later changed to April 6, 1919. Markets and business places were to be closed except
where necessary in the public interest, and public meetings were to be held in all parts of India, including villages. Gandhi traveled to South India to rally the people. Still weak, he could barely read his speeches. He reminded South Indians of the courage of South Indians in South Africa and asked them to follow in their footsteps.

News about the postponement of the hartal until April 6 reached Delhi late, and so demonstrations took place on March 30. Solidarity and unity between Hindus and Muslims pleased the organizers as speeches were given in temples and mosques in support of the campaign. Dressed in his orange cloak, Swami Shraddanand, leader of the Hindu reform group Arya Samaj, spoke at the Jumma Masjid, the largest mosque in India. As the demonstrators marched along the Chandni Chowk, the main street in Old Delhi, the troops lost their nerve and opened fire at the crowd killing nine demonstrators, five Hindus and four Muslims. An urgent appeal was made to Gandhi, who promised to go to Delhi after the hartal on April 6. On the morning of April 6, thousands joined Gandhi at Chowpati Beach, Bombay.\(^\text{11}\) After a bath in the sea, the procession moved slowly to the Madhav Baug Temple for prayers where Gandhi spoke to the crowd denouncing the violence by the military in Delhi and praising the courage of the demonstrators.

On April 8, he set out for Delhi and Amritsar accompanied by Mahadev Desai. Arriving at the small railway station of Palwal on April 9, he was served with a written order which prohibited him from entering Delhi and the Punjab because the authorities feared that it would lead to violent protests. When he refused to leave the train, he was taken out under police custody and placed in a train coming from Delhi, changing trains twice before he arrived in Bombay on April 11. At Palwal, he asked Mahadev Desai to
convey to his supporters the necessity of nonviolence. He said that he hoped that there would be no resentment nor undue anger at his arrest, and reminded them that violence against the English would undermine the campaign, and to preserve Hindu-Muslim unity at all times. He called for unity of all Indians:

I hope that the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, Jews, and all who are born in India or who made India their land of adoption will fully participate in these national observances, and I hope too that women will take therein as full a share as the men.12

But news of Gandhi’s arrest and rumors that Anasuya was arrested caused violence to break out in several towns in Gujarat, the most serious in Ahmedabad, and Amritsar in the Punjab.

When Gandhi arrived in Bombay his supporters were overjoyed. Cries of “Bande Mataram” and “Allah-O-Akbar” filled the air. As the crowds marched towards Crawford Market, they were confronted by mounted police who charged at the marchers, badly mauling and trampling some. Gandhi proceeded to the District Commissioner of Police, Mr. Griffith, demanding to know why the police unleashed this attack. Mr. Griffith acknowledged that Gandhi had followed faithfully his principle of nonviolence but said that he could not trust his supporters to be peaceful, informing him of the violent clashes in Ahmedabad and Amritsar.

Gandhi called a meeting at Chowpati Beach where he addressed a large crowd of his supporters. He said that he had heard that they threw stones in Bombay and that some Englishmen were injured. He reminded them that Englishmen were also their brothers and warned that if the movement could not be conducted without the slightest violence, Satyagraha would have to be abandoned. In Ahmedabad serious clashes broke out between protesters and the police. Gandhi arrived in Ahmedabad on April 13 and,
addressing a huge meeting the following day near the ashram, he said that the violent acts had filled him with shame:

I have said times without number that Satyagraha admits of no violence, no pillage, no incendiarism; and still in the name of Satyagraha we burnt down buildings, forcibly captured weapons, extorted money, stopped trains, cut off telegraph wires, killed innocent people, and plundered shops and private houses…These deeds have not benefited the people in any way. They have done nothing but harm.

He declared his unhappiness at the violence prevailing in the city and felt that it had damaged the credibility of his movement. Urging those who carried out violent acts to acknowledge and confess their crimes, Gandhi pleaded with them to surrender their weapons and give some material assistance to the families of the victims. Even those who did not participate in the mob violence were criticized for not trying to stop the lawlessness of the mob. Gandhi said that they had the responsibility to try to save the innocent and also to protect the buildings. As an act of contrition for the harm that the demonstrations caused, he announced that he would undertake a penitential fast for three days. The disturbances came to an end in Ahmedabad and martial law was lifted.\(^{13}\)

Gandhi left for Nadiad, a small town in the district of Kheda, and came to realize that violence had spread to the small towns. He declared a suspension of Satyagraha saying that it was a “Himalayan miscalculation” to call for civil disobedience before the people were trained to practice it. Years later, reflecting on what he meant by “Himalayan miscalculation,” he argued that an indispensable part of training for civil disobedience was prior respectful obedience to the laws of the state:

A Satyagrahi obeys the laws of society intelligently and of his own free will, because he considers it to be his sacred duty to do so. It is only when a person has thus obeyed the laws of society scrupulously that he is in a position to judge as to which particular rules are good and just and which are unjust and iniquitous.
Only then does the right accrue to him of the civil disobedience of certain laws in well-defined circumstances.\textsuperscript{14}

Admitting that he had called for civil disobedience before the people had learned its deeper implications, he said that in the future he would organize a group of disciplined and pure-hearted volunteers who understood the strict conditions of \textit{Satyagraha} to teach and lead the people.

**THE MASSACRE AT AMRITSAR**

Gandhi was unaware of the developments in the Punjab when he confessed to his “Himalayan miscalculation.” But while he was criticizing his movement for departing from the principle of nonviolence, the government unleashed a policy of repression in the Punjab with naked ruthlessness.\textsuperscript{15} At the \textit{hartal} protests on March 30 and April 6 in Lahore and Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikhs, there was no evidence of the fury that would overcome the Punjab one week later.

The demonstrations passed peacefully and there was surprising unity and friendship between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Led by two prominent Indian leaders of Amritsar, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, a Muslim lawyer, and Dr. Satyapal, a Hindu physician, Muslims joined Hindus on April 9 in celebrating the Ram Naumi festival. It was more like a carnival atmosphere than a political protest. The unity and amity between Hindus and Muslims, nevertheless, alarmed Anglo-Indians and Sir Michael O’Dwyer, lieutenant-governor of the Punjab.\textsuperscript{16} He interpreted the \textit{hartal} as disloyalty and was determined that “public order that was maintained so successfully during the war shall not be disturbed in time of peace.”\textsuperscript{17} He ordered armed police and soldiers on the streets of Lahore and Amritsar and, when he heard that Gandhi was planning to visit Delhi and
Lahore, he promptly issued an order banning him from visiting the Punjab, and persuaded the government to ban him from entering Delhi. O’Dwyer had hoped to seize Gandhi when the train crossed into the Punjab and exile him to Burma, but the Viceroy advised against this and ordered, instead, that Gandhi be taken in custody and sent back to Bombay.

An hour after learning of Gandhi’s arrest, the shops and markets in Lahore closed. Observing that demonstrators were marching towards the European quarter, the governor ordered the police and soldiers to stop them. The students who led the demonstration explained that the demonstration was peaceful and they wanted to show their displeasure at the arrest of Gandhi. Without further ado, the police opened fire killing eight people.

In the tense political climate, O’Dwyer withdrew the police and called on the local community to maintain order. When, at a packed meeting of angry townspeople at Badshahi mosque, the community elected a committee comprising Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, O’Dwyer called in the army. Colonel Frank Johnson marched to the Badshahi mosque and ordered his troops to open fire on the crowd. Ten were killed and twenty-seven wounded.

In Amritsar the joyful atmosphere of the Ram Naumi festival made the British officials nervous. Deputy Commissioner Miles Irving had already requested troop reinforcements and asked Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Smith to see Governor O’Dwyer about the situation. Convinced that the Satyagraha movement was a revolutionary conspiracy like the Great Rebellion of 1857, O’Dwyer sent orders for Irving to arrest Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. When they were arrested on April 10 and taken to the hill station of Dharmsala, a hundred miles away, a huge crowd advanced towards Irving’s
home, demanding to know why their leaders were arrested. The crowd grew to about 40,000. Stones were thrown and a full-scale riot ensued. Five Europeans and more than twentyfive Indians were killed.

The European community was especially enraged by the attack on the missionary English woman, Miss Marcia Sherwood. A medical missionary, she had worked in Amritsar for some fifteen years and was superintendent for five schools for girls. When she heard of the riot, she hurried on her bicycle to secure the schools and make sure that the girls went safely home. She rode into a mob of demonstrators who knocked her down and beat her up. She was saved by a Hindu shopkeeper who picked her up from the street and hid her in his home.

All was quiet the next day, April 11. That night Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer arrived and persuaded Irving to give him control of the city.\textsuperscript{18} On April 12 and the morning of April 13 a proclamation was read banning all public meetings, but no steps were taken to post it on walls. General Dyer learned of a meeting to be held at the dusty park of Jallianwalla Bagh at 4.30 that evening. The meeting had already started when General Dyer arrived in an armored car followed by fifty Gurkha and Baluchi soldiers armed with rifles, and another group of forty Gurkhas with knives. There was another armored car. Leaving the armored cars outside since the entrances to the park were not wide enough, General Dyer entered the park and without any warning ordered his troops to fire at the thick of the crowd, even as they ran to the narrow exits and tried to scale the walls. The firing continued for ten minutes. 1,650 rounds were fired, killing 379 and wounding 1,137.\textsuperscript{19}
Nor was that enough for General Dyer. He ordered that all who used the street where Miss Sherwood was assaulted had to crawl on their bellies. Those who refused were flogged as well as Indians who did not salute British officers. An entire Indian wedding party was flogged. Thousands of students were forced to march for sixteen miles in the scorching heat. Two days after the massacre, Dyer imposed martial law and the strictest censorship of news. Nevertheless, word spread fast in the Punjab about the atrocities. At Gujranwala, a small town about 36 miles from Amritsar, crowds stoned a train, and set fire to bridges, the telegraph office and post office, and fired on the superintendent of police. O'Dwyer sent three Royal Air Force planes under the command of Captain Carberry, each armed with a machine gun carrying ten 20 pound bombs. The bombs were dropped on innocent people and even a Sikh High School. The official toll of casualties was 11 killed and 27 wounded. Carberry claimed that he could see from an altitude of 200 feet and he saw nobody who was innocent. When asked why he machine-gunned crowds which were dispersing, he replied that he was doing this in the interests of Indians. He wanted to produce a moral effect on them. How ironical it was that the Punjab which had sent so many of its sons to fight for Britain should so soon feel the heavy hand of British repression.

While speaking of ironies, one recalls the letter the poet Rabindranath Tagore sent to Gandhi on April 12 cautioning him about the potential for violence in Satyagraha. It serves as a thoughtful, if unintended, commentary on the massacre at Amritsar:

Power in all its forms is irrational – it is like the horse that drags the carriage blindfold. The moral element in it is only represented in the man who drives the horse. Passive resistance is a force which is not necessarily moral in itself; it can be used against truth as well as for it. The danger inherent in all force grows stronger when it is likely to gain success, for then it becomes temptation...In this crisis you, as a great leader of men, have stood among us to proclaim your faith in
the ideal which you know to be that of India – the ideal which is both against the cowardliness of hidden revenge, and the cowed submissiveness of the terror-stricken. You have said, as Lord Buddha has done in his time and for all time to come, ‘Conquer anger by power of non-anger and evil by power of good.’ This power of good must prove its truth and strength by its fearlessness, by its refusal to accept any imposition which depends for its success upon its power to produce frightfulness and is not ashamed to use its machine of destruction to terrorize a population completely disarmed. We must know that moral conquest does not consist in success, that failure does not deprive it of its dignity and worth. Those who believe in spirituality know that to stand against wrong which has overwhelming material power behind it is victory itself – it is the victory of the active faith in the ideal in the teeth of evident defeat. I have always felt, and said accordingly, that the great gift of freedom can never come to a people through charity. We must win it before we can own it. India’s opportunity for winning it will come to her when she can prove that she is morally superior to the people who rule by their strength of conquest. She must willingly accept her penance of suffering, the suffering which is the crown of the great. Armed with her utter faith in goodness, she must stand unabashed before the arrogance that scoffs at the power of spirit.21

There was general anger in India at the cruelty meted out in the Punjab. Some leaders at the All India Congress Committee urged Gandhi to proceed to the Punjab without getting permission, but he declined because he did not think he could bring peace to the tense and troubled situation. On May 11, he wrote the Viceroy, assuring him that he was on the side of preserving peace, but he reminded him that the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Acts was the key to real peace and cooperation. Rabindranath Tagore spoke for all Indians when he renounced his knighthood:

The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent or remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organization for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification. The accounts of the insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the gagged silence, reaching every corner of India, and the universal agony of indignation roused in the hearts of the people has been ignored by our rulers – possibly congratulating themselves for imparting what they imagine as salutary lessons…The time has come when badges of honor make our
shame glaring in the incongruous context of humiliation, and I, for my part, wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those countrymen who, for their so-called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings.22

Repression and martial law continued until May. Benjamin Guy Horniman, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* and a critic of British rule in India, published a report that was smuggled out of the Punjab, for which he was deported to England and his newspaper suspended on the charge of undermining public safety. In England Horniman wrote of O’Dwyer’s policies of concealment and censorship, the crawling order, the arbitrary rule of Colonel Johnson in Lahore who personally tried 277 cases of sedition and convicted 201, and the bizarre punishments that were inflicted by officers. Indians were painted with whitewash; Women claimed that the civil administrator, Mr. Bosworth Smith, had ripped off their veils, then spat at them calling them “flies, bitches, she-asses, and swine.”23 Horniman urged the Secretary of State for India, Lord Montagu, to investigate the troubles in the Punjab because Britain’s reputation as a just society was at stake.

The reports made Montagu angry at the way martial law was imposed, and he was bitter that he was not fully informed about what was happening. His view of the excessive cruelty in the Punjab was that it was foolish to use repression in governing an empire. He had little doubt that the underlying cause of tension in both India and Ireland was the iron-fisted policies of the government: “…intimidation of witnesses, partial justice, exists in Ireland, where not only are judges sometimes partial, but juries may be partial and intimidated too. And yet the hardest-handed controller of law and order in Ireland has never been able to maintain anything comparable to the Rowlatt Act.”24 Although Montagu seemed persuaded that there must be an inquiry into the allegations of
brutality in the Punjab, his knowledge that Anglo-Indians were firmly behind General Dyer made him think twice.

Dyer was already lionized as “the Saviour of the Punjab” and “the Savior of India.” He and his supporters had even arranged that he and Captain Briggs, his Brigade Major, would be made honorary Sikhs at the Golden Temple at Amritsar, thereby confirming the legend that Dyer had saved the Punjab, an opportunistic and cynical move that fooled no one. Sikhs denounced Arur Singh, the manager of the Golden Temple, as a puppet. In England influential politicians were coming to the defense of Major O’Dwyer and General Dyer because they saw force as a legitimate and necessary way to defend the empire.

TRIALS FOR SEDITION

Dismissing civil courts, summary courts were established which made flogging the punishment of choice for less serious crime. In Lahore, for example, 85 people were flogged. For serious cases, Martial Law Commissions were established where the Penal Code was the following: Wars against the king shall warrant death, exile and imprisonment for life, and loss of all property. Of 852 accused, 108 were sentenced to death, 264 to exile for life and forfeiture of property, and the remainder for varying lengths of time in prison.²⁵

The government was hoping to prove in the trial of Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal that there was in fact a revolution brewing which would justify the extreme action it took. But both were under detention during the riots of April 10 and the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh. However, the Viceroy agreed to O’Dwyer’s request that the martial law decree be backdated to March 30 instead of April 13. The leaders were now to be
tried in camera before Martial Law Commissioners which comprised of two members sitting with a High Court Judge. At such a trial, no record of the evidence presented needed to be taken and there could be no appeal of the decision. The accused were denied counsel of their choice because of the ban on lawyers outside the Punjab. The prosecution claimed that the accused were plotting a conspiracy to overthrow the government and to abolish the Rowlatt Acts, and used the fact of Hindu-Muslim solidarity in the demonstrations as evidence that there was a conspiracy against the government. The defense counsel questioned the jurisdiction of the trial since martial law actually became effective on April 14, days after the arrest of the accused, but his plea was ignored. The defense then called many witnesses to testify to the character of the accused, including Gandhi, but the Judge ruled that Gandhi could not answer questions about the objectives of the *Satyagraha* movement.

The prosecution’s case turned essentially on the evidence of Hans Raj, one of the defendants who agreed to give evidence for the state in return for a pardon. In his testimony he incriminated the accused as plotting a violent conspiracy under the cover of the *Satyagraha* movement. All the accused denied his charges as pure invention. The trial dragged on for twenty days and, on July 5, Mr. Justice Broadway declared his judgment in support of Major O’Dwyer’s version of the events, relying exclusively on Hans Raj’s testimony although there was no supporting evidence to corroborate what Hans Raj said. Hans Raj was given his promised pardon, paid a large sum of money, and removed to Mesopotamia. Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal were sentenced to exile for life with the loss of all property. Another defendant, Dr. Muhammad Bashir, who had not attended the Jallianwala Bagh meeting but had treated some of the wounded, was
sentenced to death. The severe sentences caused consternation among Indians for whom the trial was a farce. Gandhi demanded a public inquiry into the events in the Punjab and the trial. Contacted to help the appeals of the condemned Indians, Pandit Motilal Nehru asked Viceroy Chelmsford for a stay of execution, but he preferred to wash his hands and to placate the Europeans in India. Rebuffed, Motilal Nehru then contacted the eminent British lawyer, Sir John Simon, who recommended an appeal to the Privy Council. Lord Montagu cabled the Viceroy expressing his doubts about the legality of the martial law trial. The executions were stayed, pending the results of the appeal. Anti-British sentiment reached a new high in India. Even the Privy Council in London expressed their anger at the inefficient manner in which the Government of India submitted the necessary papers, ruling that all the sentences were to be reviewed, and that two High Court judges, one European and the other Indian, were to be appointed to review the cases. Moreover, the British Government as well as King George V were looking for ways to end the bitterness caused by the events in the Punjab, and on December 23, 1919, issued a proclamation of amnesty. Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal were released immediately. The conclusion of the judges appointed to review the cases found the trials questionable, the charge of conspiracy not substantial, and the evidence of Hans Raj worthless. One footnote to the trial was the allegation, reported by B.G. Horniman, that Hans Raj had actually conspired with O’Dwyer to convene the meeting at Jallianwalla Bagh thereby creating in calculated fashion the condition for General Dyer’s actions.

THE HUNTER COMMISSION
When the issue of an inquiry into the events in the Punjab was first raised in May, Lord Montagu and the British Parliament knew little about what happened. They presumed that the authorities in the Punjab had acted within the law and that Indian passion would soon subside. As Montagu learned more about what happened, there was no way he could avoid calling for an inquiry. Lord Chelmsford was understandably reluctant because Governor O’Dwyer and General Dyer were enormously popular among the European community in India. Although the Viceroy had sent back reports to Parliament and the King praising the courage of O’Dwyer, Lord Montagu could not ignore the issue because Gandhi and the Indian nationalists pursued the matter with the utmost seriousness. The All-India Congress Committee meeting in Allahabad in June recommended the establishment of a committee to investigate the atrocities in the Punjab. At the same time, Gandhi felt that it was best to suspend civil disobedience because the governor of Bombay had warned him of the threat of violence if civil disobedience was resumed. Following consultations with his supporters, he suspended civil resistance after the governor gave his assurance that the government planned to appoint an impartial commission of inquiry to investigate the atrocities in the Punjab. Offering an olive branch to the governor in confessing that Satyagraha did not seek to embarrass the government, he, nevertheless, captured the mood of India when he warned: “If my occasional resistance be a lighted match, the Rowlatt legislation and the persistence in retaining it on the statute book is a thousand matches scattered throughout India. The only way to avoid civil resistance altogether is to withdraw that legislation.” As the Secretary of State and Viceroy tried to reach agreement about the character and objective of the inquiry, members of Congress announced that they were going ahead with their
own inquiry that would embrace not only the investigation of the events in the Punjab but also O’Dwyer’s tenure of office in the Punjab.

In the meantime, General Dyer had completed his report in defense of his actions, asserting that he was faced with a huge crowd who were bent on sedition:

The responsibility was very great. If I fired I must fire with good effect, a small amount of firing would be a criminal act of folly. I had the choice of carrying out a very distasteful and horrible duty or of neglecting to do my duty, of suppressing disorder or of becoming responsible for all future bloodshed...It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect, from a military point of view, not only on those who were present but more specifically throughout the Punjab.28

General Dyer explained why he did not tend the wounded in this way:

By the time I had completely dispersed the crowd my ammunition was running short. I returned to the Ram Bagh without counting or inspecting the casualties. The crowd was free now to ask for medical aid, but this they avoided doing lest they themselves be proved to have attended the assembly. They asked me if they might bury their dead, and to this I consented.

General Dyer had hoped that the matter would end with his report. The government announced its intention of presenting an Indemnity Bill to protect from civil suits officers who had acted in good faith, an action that Indians saw as an attempt to undermine the Commission of Inquiry, and to protect Dyer and other officers from impeachment. The Indemnity Bill poisoned the atmosphere even more virulently.

On October 11, the Punjab Government submitted its report, defending its conduct in light of an alleged conspiracy to create a widespread revolt. The report was sent to the Hunter Committee which was due to begin its deliberations in Delhi on October 29. In early November, the Committee moved to Lahore in the Punjab.29 Dyer
appeared self-confident when called to give testimony. But as he was peppered with questions from members of the committee, he seemed to lose any understanding of the context of the questioning. Only arrogance and, perhaps, moral blindness can explain his confession of the naked display of power at Amritsar. To the question whether he wanted to strike terror as the way to preserve British rule in India, he replied that he did not think that there was any danger to British rule but he wanted to teach a lesson which might prevent further “bloodshed, more looting, more lost lives,” contending that his actions saved lives and property: “It was a merciful act but at the same time it was a horrible act and it took a lot of doing.” When asked whether he took measures to help the wounded, he replied: “No, certainly not. It was not my job. But the hospitals were open and the medical officers were there. The wounded only had to apply for help.” As General Dyer and other officers boarded the night train from Lahore to Jullundur via Delhi on November 19 after completing their testimony, the young Jawaharlal Nehru was occupying the top berth of their sleeping compartment. Jawaharlal Nehru recalled listening to their conversation of how they taught “the bloody browns a lesson.” He remembered a man in pyjamas with pink stripes and a dressing gown whom he later identified as General Dyer, boasting that he could have reduced Amritsar to ashes but had taken pity on it. Like so many Indian nationalists, the callousness of General Dyer seared Nehru’s soul and made his relation to British civilization, once filled with admiration, now ambiguous.

Sir Michael O’Dwyer returned to India to give evidence before the Hunter Commission but it took a month before he was called on January 15, 1920. On December 23, 1919, the London Daily Express came out with the story of the massacre at
Amritsar which said that O’Dwyer had saved British India from a revolution. Quoting large extracts from General Dyer’s evidence, it told the story of the rioting in Amritsar and the assault on Miss Sherwood. O’Dwyer pitched his evidence to appeal to the European members of the committee since he did not expect the Indian members to have sympathy for his line of argument. He insisted that there was a conspiracy to bring down the British Government in India, placing the blame on Gandhi and his Satyagraha movement. When Lord Hunter reminded him that there was a difference between a protest and a revolution, O’Dwyer replied that “these people do not always reason far ahead,” and insisted that the Punjab was in a state of open rebellion.

As the interviews came to an end, members of the committee went to Agra to discuss and write their report. There were differences between the European and Indian members, and it became impossible to reach a consensus. The Indian members composed a minority report. Unwilling to present too harsh a document that would antagonize Anglo-Indians, Lord Hunter presented the Report of his Committee to the government on March 8.

Earlier, the Report of the Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress was completed on February 20. The committee interviewed 1,700 witnesses and published only those statements that were checked and validated. They also availed themselves of the evidence given to the Hunter Committee. No one disputed the findings of the Congress Report, but the Government of India and Anglo-Indians found it unacceptable. British authorities were relieved that the newspapers in England ignored it.

The Government accepted the majority report and not the minority report, which they found too similar in tone to the Congress report. Although the majority report severely criticized General Dyer and censured him for firing without warning, it praised Governor O’Dwyer for his decisiveness and courage, mildly criticizing him for giving General
Dyer unqualified approval before learning more about the situation. Censured by the Hunter Committee and relieved of his command, General Dyer and his wife sailed for England.  

Interviewed on his arrival by a reporter from the *Daily Mail*, General Dyer dismissed the Hunter Committee Report as biased and ignorant. Although the public clamored for the publication of the Hunter report and showed great interest in the figure of General Dyer, they were, in general, divided on what they thought of Dyer’s actions in the Punjab. There were those who felt that the Hunter Report was too lenient and were looking for legal ways to bring more charges against him, while others like Sir Michael O'Dwyer felt that he should be reinstated, knowing that he could count on the influential *Morning Post* to propagate his views as well as the legal expertise of Sir Edward Carson. In reviving the case of General Dyer, O’Dwyer was hoping to place at the center of political debate the issue of how the business of empire should be conducted. First, Field-Marshall Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and other officers of the Army Council demanded that the Cabinet give General Dyer the right of reply and full access to the Hunter Report. Dyer’s statement was presented by his legal advisers on July 3, giving a detailed explanation of his version of events in the Punjab, but the Army Council endorsed the Hunter Report that he should be relieved of his command.

The case of General Dyer was debated in the House of Commons on July 8, 1920 in the presence of Sir Michael O’Dwyer and General Dyer, and generated considerable public interest. Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War, did not want to present General Dyer’s statement at the Army Council before the debate, but it was leaked to the newspapers. In addition, Sir Michael O’Dwyer had sent a detailed criticism of the Hunter Committee Report to the newspapers. These revelations were bound to make the debate
acrimonious. Speaking in support of Dyer, Sir Edward Carson asked whether General Dyer ever had a fair trial. He chided Montagu’s known contempt for Dyer’s action and argued that only the man on the spot could know what amount of force should be used, and that rebellion was in fact a declaration of war. Winston Churchill rose to defend the government’s action against General Dyer, calling his action monstrous and “unprecedented in the history of the British Empire.” When a vote was taken, the Government’s decision to relieve General Dyer of his command was victorious by only a narrow margin.

On the day of the House of Commons debate, at the prompting of Sir Michael O’Dwyer and Sir Edward Carson, the Morning Post announced that it was launching a fund for General Dyer. The response was spectacular in England and in India. The fund reached twenty six thousand, three hundred and seventeen pounds, four shillings and ten pence. Among the many great and ordinary contributions was ten pounds from Rudyard Kipling, poet laureate of India. Now a wealthy man, General Dyer interpreted this display of generosity as support for his conduct at Amritsar. The debate then shifted to the House of Lords where stalwart imperialists rose to debate whether General Dyer was unjustly treated. Lord Birkenhead and Viscount Milner argued that General Dyer made an error of judgment and it would be disastrous for the Empire if his conduct was approved, a view supported by Lord Curzon who stated that if Dyer’s doctrine of terror was applied in Ireland, Scotland, or England, no government would survive. Nevertheless, the motion that General Dyer was unjustly treated won by a majority of forty three. Although the vote in the House of Lords could not reverse the Government’s decision, it was interpreted as vindication of General Dyer.
This victory did not dampen O’Dwyer’s crusade for the exoneration of Dyer and himself. He continued to vilify Lord Montagu for years despite Montagu’s repeated attempts at reconciliation. The final public act in the drama took place in 1922. Sir Sankaran Nair had published *Gandhi and Anarchy*, which criticized Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement. Much of the material for the book was given to Sankaran Nair by the government with the intention of embarrassing and undermining Gandhi’s movement. Nair was the first Indian to be appointed to the Viceroy’s Executive Council but resigned after martial law was declared in the Punjab. He was later appointed to the Council of the Secretary of State in London. O’Dwyer was informed by a friend in India that the book was critical of his administration of the Punjab and jumped at this opportunity to revive the issue of General Dyer once more. He brought a libel action against Nair demanding that he withdraw the book, make a public apology, and donate one thousand pounds to charities of O’Dwyer’s choice. O’Dwyer refused to listen to appeals to drop the lawsuit. What was at stake, he said, was his and General Dyer’s reputation. Once more the events of April 13, 1919 were replayed. When Justice McCardie began his summation after twenty five days of testimony, he made no bones about his preference for the testimony of the Europeans. In closing, he advised the jury that in his opinion General Dyer had acted correctly and was wrongly punished by the Secretary of State, Lord Montagu. After their first deliberations they informed the judge that they could not reach agreement. When the lawyers agreed to abide by a majority vote, the jury came back with a vote of eleven to one in support of Sir Michael O’Dwyer on all points. The lone dissenting vote came from Harold Laski, lecturer at the London School of Economics and Politics and an admirer of Gandhi. Indians were aghast at the
verdict. Victory for Sir Michael O’Dwyer and General Dyer was ironic. They had argued that they wanted to teach a salutary lesson to all India. The lesson was about the power of the British Raj, not justice, power unrestrained by notions of humanity. At least that was how many Indians interpreted the lesson.

THE PUNJAB REVISITED; THE CONGRESS REPORT ON THE MASSACRE

The Congress Report on the massacre at Amritsar, published on March 25, 1920, helps to explain why Gandhi changed his mind from cooperating with the Government to non-cooperation. The Congress Inquiry had widened its investigation to include the disturbances in the Punjab under the administration of Sir Michael O’Dwyer. Since the incident at Jallianwalla Bagh of April 13, 1919, the British authorities had defended their actions as a justifiable attempt to put down a rebellion.

From the beginning of the Report Gandhi asserted that there was no evidence of any conspiracy to topple the government, arguing that it was the character of British rule in the Punjab under Sir Michael O’Dwyer, what Gandhi termed “O’Dwyerism,” that was responsible for the reign of terror in the Punjab. For Gandhi, the Punjab was a microcosm of British rule in India generally. Describing the significance of the Punjab in Indian civilization, Gandhi noted that it was here that the ancient Aryans first chanted the hymns of the Vedas and the battles in the Mahabharata took place. The Punjab was also the place where illustrious invaders like King Osiris of Egypt, Queen Semiramis of Assyria, and Alexander tried to establish their dominance over India.
Inhabited by Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus, the Punjab supplied the “flower of the Indian army.” He reminded readers that its contribution to the British Indian army in the recent Great War was the largest of any Indian province, quoting Sir Michael O’Dwyer’s speech on April 7, 1918 that the Punjab had contributed between 1917 and 1918 more than a quarter of a million men. Of 355,000 men from the Punjab, 170,000 were Muslim, 90,000 Hindus, 90,000 Sikhs, and 4,000 Christians, combatants drawn mostly from the rural villages.

O’Dwyer called the hartal against the Rowlatt Acts childish which had appeal only for the ignorant and credulous, and promised “a day of reckoning.” Addressing Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh representatives of the military on April 10, O’Dwyer urged them to take a stand against those who resisted the Rowlatt Acts passed to maintain order and protect property. In presenting this picture of O’Dwyer, Gandhi was restating the theme of the British affection for Indian military groups, and contempt for the educated Indian middle-classes. Gandhi said that no sooner was O’Dwyer appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab in 1913 than he announced that the primary obligation of the government was to secure life and property and less about the movement towards self-government. When the Defense of India Act was introduced at the outbreak of war in Europe to prevent sedition, O’Dwyer used his emergency powers to prevent Bipin Chandra Pal, a Bengali nationalist leader, and Bal Tilak from entering the province. He forbade the circulation of nationalist newspapers in the Punjab and imprisoned hundreds of men, making no distinction between nationalist and constitutional groups like the Home Rule League and revolutionary movements like the Ghadar Party. He had a visceral dislike for educated and professional Indians and tried to create divisions.
between them and the masses. Deriding the work of Indian nationalists, O’Dwyer quoted Edmund Burke:

Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate cries, while thousands of great cattle, who repose beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew their cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field.32

Indeed, he belittled the political classes throughout India. On the other hand, O’Dwyer praised the Punjabi masses and used the number of recruits and financial contributions in the war as his evidence of their loyalty.

But Gandhi wondered how this implied generosity and willingness to sacrifice themselves squared with the huge protests in the Punjab and even the fury of the masses. Gandhi did not oppose the policy of recruitment of soldiers and collection of money for the war effort. He himself actively participated in recruitment in Gujarat because he felt then that Indians had a responsibility to the Empire in its moment of dire necessity. But what he found in his investigation was that the recruitment and monetary loans were attended generally by a campaign of corruption and coercion. The argument that Gandhi was now raising was a devastating one and, as he understood it, was the reason why there was such fierce opposition to British policies in the Punjab. He said that the evidence his committee collected proved conclusively that O’Dwyer’s methods of recruitment went beyond the line of moral or social pressure. Gandhi stressed the principle that the sacredness of individual liberty was more important than duty to the Empire. That was why he was condemning the practice of compulsion that O’Dwyer used in fixing quotas for each district. In May 1918 when 200,000 men were required for the regular army, Sir Michael O’Dwyer gave the government the power to enforce the quotas. People in the districts were ill-treated and sometimes tortured when they objected to enlisting in the
army. In one district the Special Tribunal reported that men were forced to stand naked in the presence of their women; the houses of those who refused were looted. Over-zealous recruiters encouraged bribes to get out of conscription. In the district of Multan, recruitment in 1917 was 1 in 586 of the male population; in November 1918 it was 1 in 93. The Commissioner deplored the fact that the leading men of the district coerced men of the lower classes to enlist thereby creating disturbances in the village. In the district of Gujranwala, people were “abused, beaten, and told to bring more recruits.” The evidence showed that O’Dwyer’s administration was from the beginning the rule of an iron fist. When demonstrations were called in April 1919, the Punjab rallied in solidarity as their answer to the Governor’s attempt to once more crush their spirit.

The minds of the people of the Punjab were already hostile to Sir Michael O’Dwyer when the Rowlatt Acts were imposed in 1919. At the same time, violence was almost non-existent at the time of the passing of the Acts. The revolutionary movements that stemmed from the partition of the Bengal in 1905 had already come to an end. In the Punjab, the resentment over the ill-treatment of several hundreds of Sikh emigrants to Canada, and their internment in Calcutta when they returned to India had ended. The passage of the Defense of India Act during the Great War was understandable when the military forces were on the battlefields of France and Mesopotamia, but although the government promised that the emergency powers would not be used to stifle peaceful political activity, Mrs. Annie Besant, leader of the Home Rule Movement, and her associates, were interned under the Defense of India Act in 1917. When the war came to an end, it was expected that the emergency legislation would be lifted in view of India’s
contribution to the war effort, the proposed political reforms that were to be introduced, and the general peaceful condition of India.

In passing the Rowlatt Acts which continued the emergency legislation of the Defense of India Act, the government argued that such powers were necessary to suppress revolutionary violence and preserve stability. Gandhi answered this by referring to Mr. Sastri’s speech before the Imperial Legislative Council on February 7, 1919 when the Rowlatt Bills were brought for debate and enactment. Mr. Sastri contended that anarchy thrived in a climate where the will of the people was ignored, and suggested that political amelioration and not repression was the cure for revolutionary violence. Gandhi then examined the content of the Rowlatt laws. The first Act gave the government the right to call a speedy trial if an offence was considered revolutionary, among which were sedition, rioting with deadly weapons, promoting class conflict, the use of dangerous weapons, and extortion by violence. Such a broad definition meant that too severe a criticism of government, religious riots, and even extortion for private purposes could be considered as revolutionary. “Speedy” trials in these cases meant that they were to be conducted expeditiously without the right of appeal and might take place in camera. The accused was permitted only one adjournment, at most for fourteen days, and judgment in such trials was final, subject neither to appeal nor revision. The second part of the Rowlatt Acts dealt with preventive measures and authorized government to use “all means reasonably necessary to enforce compliance with its order.” Mere suspicion of revolutionary activity allowed an officer to bring charges against even law-abiding, respectable Indians. Gandhi commented that if this was prevention, it was worse than the disease in that it was such extreme measures that led to the call for revolution.
Judicial officers could direct a police officer to arrest without warrant any suspected person, and intern him for two years without trial. As Gandhi understood the legislation, it was not difficult “to picture to oneself a reign, not of law and order, but of organized terror and disorder.” In his mind, the Rowlatt Acts were “wholly unjustified” and made little sense on the eve of liberal reforms, and in a political climate where revolutionary activity was rare.

Gandhi devoted an entire chapter in the Report to explaining Satyagraha. He had launched Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Acts, but acknowledged that the movement was not well understood. Repeating that it meant truth-force, he said that the pursuit of truth in the context of political conflict was necessarily tied to nonviolence. What appeared to be true to one side might be considered an error to the opponent, and, therefore, an antagonist must be persuaded to consider a different point of view by patience and sympathy. As he said on countless occasions, truth could be vindicated only by self-suffering, not by the infliction of suffering on others.

Gandhi gave examples of the courage of those who practiced Satyagraha; the Hebrew Prophet Daniel disregarded the laws of the Medes and Persians and willingly suffered the punishment for his disobedience; Socrates taught what he considered to be the truth to Athenian youth and bravely accepted the punishment of death; Prahlad refused to follow the orders of his father and endured the tortures inflicted by his father; Mirabai, the medieval Indian poetess, followed her own conscience and quietly bore the injuries of her husband, content to live in separation from him. Offering another lesson, Gandhi said that none of these people bore any ill-will to their persecutors. Daniel and
Socrates were considered model citizens of their states; Prahlad, a model son, and Mirabai, a model wife.

Gandhi understood *Satyagraha* as an extension of the rule of domestic life to the political. Conflicts in families were resolved by the law of love. The injured member of a family frequently preferred to refrain from retaliation and to repress his anger for the common welfare of the family. It was this law of love which governed the family in the civilized world, and was necessary also in national and international affairs. What Gandhi was attempting to conceptualize was the notion of the universal character of *Satyagraha*. It solved conflicts by reconciling opposing contestants, not dividing them:

This law of love is nothing but a law of truth. Without truth there is no love; without truth it may be affection, as for one’s country, to the injury of others; or infatuation, as of a young man for a girl; or love may be unreasoning and blind, as of ignorant parents for their children. Love transcends all animality and is never partial. *Satyagraha* has therefore been described as a coin, on whose face you read love and on the reverse you read truth. It is a coin current everywhere and has indefinable value.  

Gandhi felt that the Rowlatt Acts imposed too many and too severe restrictions on Indian liberty and had to be resisted. He asked Indians to suspend work, fast, and offer prayers on April 6, 1919. Gandhi did not agree that *Satyagraha* was the cause of the outbreak of violence in the Punjab: “It is my deliberate conviction that but for *Satyagraha* India would have witnessed scenes more terrible than it has passed through.” Asking himself again whether *Satyagraha* was the cause of the murders, arson, and pillage that took place in the Punjab, Gandhi declared that he could not see how a general teaching of love, truth, and nonviolence could be responsible for violence, but was willing to admit that the notion of civil disobedience could be misunderstood. He confessed that he was always cautious in advocating nonviolent civil disobedience. Civil
resistance should be encouraged only when the ground was prepared for self-suffering. 

Acknowledging that there was a world of difference between calling a hartal and preaching civil disobedience, Gandhi admitted that he might have called for civil disobedience prematurely.

To the discontent over the methods of recruiting soldiers and raising war loans was added the economic recession and high prices following the war. The call for a hartal in protest against the Rowlatt Acts gave the people in the Punjab the opportunity to show their unhappiness with Sir Michael O’Dwyer’s iron rule. The hartal was observed on March 30 in some cities in India, including Amritsar, and also on April 6. Coinciding with the celebration of Baisakhi, the Hindu New Year, and the Hindu festival of Ramnaumi on April 9, the protest drew large and impressive crowds. Hindus and Muslims fraternized with each other in a significant expression of solidarity. In Sir Michael O’Dwyer’s mind, he could not ignore this massive display of Hindu-Muslim unity and was determined to crush the movement. He chose to interpret the hartal as a conspiracy to overthrow British rule and a case of “waging war” against the king and the Government.

In Amritsar, O’Dwyer kept an eye on the local leaders, Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew, against whom he issued a proclamation forbidding them from speaking in public, Dr. Satyapal on March 29 and Dr. Kitchlew on April 3. In Gandhi’s eyes these prohibitions were unnecessary and harsh. When Dr. Kitchlew spoke to the crowd of 35,000 people on March 30, he urged them to be peaceful. When Punjabi Muslims decided to join Hindus in celebrating the festival of Ramnaumi on April 9, O’Dwyer was
enraged, and gave the order to deport Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew on the night of April 9 and served the following day.

As soon as rumors spread about their arrest and deportation, crowds marched to the Deputy Commissioner’s house to demand the release of their leaders, but they were stopped by a military force and picket. When the marchers pushed over the picket, the military opened fire wounding and killing some of the marchers. The sight of the wounded and dead being carried on stretchers further angered the previously peaceful crowd. A large crowd gathered again at the carriage over-bridge and the foot-bridge, this time carrying sticks and pieces of wood. Local lawyers offered their services to the Deputy Commissioner to calm the situation, among whom was Maqbool Mahmood who tried to reason with the crowd. Some persons threw sticks at the soldiers who immediately opened fire into the crowd killing twenty and wounding several. Mr. Maqbool Mahmood went to the Civil Hospital and brought Dr. Dhanpat Rai to tend to the wounded. When the stretchers arrived, Mr. Ploomer, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, sent them away saying that the people should make their own arrangements. Some of the wounded were taken to Dr. Kidar Nath’s home which was next to the Municipal Hospital. The Congress Report stated that when Dr. Mrs. Easdon saw the wounded, she was reputed to have said that Hindus and Muslims got what they deserved. When word of this got out, the crowd, now turned into a mob, searched for her, but, hidden by Mrs. Benjamin, she escaped. With their fury increasing, the mob attacked the Alliance Bank killing the manager. They killed Sergeant Rowland, the Cantonment electrician, at Rigo bridge, and set fire to the Town Hall, the Post Office, the Mission Hall, and part of the Bhagtanwalla Railway station. Miss Sherwood, an Englishwoman who worked at the local mission school, was knocked down from her bicycle and brutally beaten until she was rescued by the father of one of her Indian pupils.

The Report stressed that there was no violence until the military had opened fire at the over-bridge, and criticized the soldiers for firing at the crowd and ignoring all the intermediate stages of warning used in emergency situations in all civilized countries. There was no “parleying, no humouring, and no use of milder force.” While they deplored the deportation of Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew as unjustifiable and considered the absence of ambulance arrangements for the wounded Indians inhumane, “nothing,” the report stated, “can be held to justify the wanton destruction by the mob of the innocent lives and properties.”

Troop reinforcements arrived at 11 p.m. on April 10. The following day the city was turned over to the full control of the military with the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor Sir Michael O’Dwyer. Funeral processions were allowed but had to end at 2 p.m. The water supply and the electric connections were turned off for three or four days by the authorities. The next morning General Dyer arrived and established his headquarters at Ram Bagh. His first action was to arrest twelve persons without any provocation.

On April 12, Hans Raj held a meeting at Dhab Khatikan at which he announced that the popular lawyer Lala Kanhya Lal had called a meeting at Jallianwalla Bagh for
April 13. Lal Kanhya Lal denied that he ever agreed to preside at this meeting and that his name was used to attract a large crowd for that meeting. At 9.30 a.m. on April 13, General Dyer entered the city and had an interpreter read out a proclamation in Punjabi and Urdu in many parts of the city which said: “No procession of any kind is permitted to parade the city or any part of the city, or outside of it any time. Any procession or gathering of 4 men will be looked upon and treated as an unlawful assembly and dispersed by force of arms, if necessary.” General Dyer admitted that the proclamation was not read in many parts of the city. At 12.45 he was informed that a meeting was to be held at Jallianwalla Bagh at 4.30 p.m. but did nothing to prevent it. He got definite information that the meeting was being held at 4 p.m. and marched to Jallianwalla Bagh with two armored vehicles, 25 Gurkhas and 25 Sikhs armed with rifles, and 40 Gurkhas armed with *kukris*.\(^{40}\) The main entrance was too narrow for the armored cars to pass through. There were 4 or 5 other narrow passages where it was possible to exit.

According to witnesses, Hans Raj was addressing the crowd of some 20,000 when Dyer arrived. A plane was hovering over the meeting. There were many boys and children in the audience which was peaceful and unarmed. Witnesses said that they saw members of the Government Secret Service in the audience, two of whom were seen talking to Hans Raj. As soon as General Dyer deployed his soldiers, he gave the signal to open fire. 1,650 rounds of ammunition were fired into the crowd. He stopped firing only because the ammunition was exhausted. General Dyer admitted at the Hunter Committee that if he could have taken the armored cars into the Bagh he would have done so and opened fire with them. He said that from time to time he checked the fire in order to direct it to where the crowds were thickest. When asked whether he considered arrangements for
the wounded, General Dyer replied that that was not his duty. An eyewitness, Lal Girdhari Lal, who lived in one of the houses overlooking the Bagh, recorded this:

I saw hundreds of persons killed on the spot…The worst part of the whole thing was that firing was directed towards the gates through which the people were running out…Blood was pouring in profusion. Even those who lay flat on the ground were shot…No arrangements were made by the authorities to look after the dead or wounded…I then gave water to the wounded and rendered such assistance as was possible…I went round the whole place and saw almost every body lying there. There were heaps of them at different places…The dead bodies were of grown-up people and young boys also. Some had their heads cut open, others had eyes shot, and nose, chest, arms, or legs shattered…Many amongst the wounded, who managed to run from the Garden, succumbed to injuries on the way and lay dead in the streets.41

How could one explain this event? Why did it happen? Gandhi recalled that, at the Hunter Committee inquiry, Mr. Justice Rankin called it “frighfulness.” Enraged to the point of irrationality by the events of April 10, the British authorities embarked upon a policy of terror. In his testimony, Mr. Muhammad Sadiq said that he went to see the authorities on April 11 and found them in an angry mood: “The impression I got from the talk I had with them was that, as Europeans had been murdered, their blood could not remain unavenged.” Another witness, Dr. Balmokand, Sub-Assistant Surgeon, heard Colonel Smith remark on April 11 that “General Dyer was coming and he would bombard the city. He drew diagrams and showed us how the city would be shelled and how it would be razed to the ground in half an hour.”

The people of Amritsar buried or cremated their dead on April 14. At 5 p.m. General Dyer went to the Police Station where local residents, lawyers, and merchants had gathered. In a fit of anger General Dyer gave a speech in Urdu: “…If you want peace, then obey my orders and open all your shops; else I will shoot…For me the battle-field of France or Amritsar is the same.” Miles Irving, the Deputy Commissioner, also
warned: “You have committed a bad act in killing the English. The revenge will be taken upon you and your children.” Martial law was proclaimed on April 15 and continued until June 9.

This was how the Congress report described the terror the people of Amritsar experienced during this period:

“The street in which Miss Sherwood was assaulted was set apart for flogging people and for making those who passed through it crawl on their bellies. All were made to salaam, in theory English officers only, but in practice every Englishman, on pain of being arrested and suffering indignities. Flogging was administered publicly and otherwise, even for trivialities. All the lawyers of the town were made special constables without cause; and made to work like ordinary coolies. Indiscriminate arrests were effected of persons, irrespective of status, and during detention, they were subjected to humiliations, discomforts and indescribable tortures for the purpose of extorting confession or evidence, or for the purpose of merely humiliating them. Special Tribunals were formed for trying offences, which resulted in gross injustice, in the name of law, leaving the aggrieved parties without a right of appeal.”

It was difficult for Gandhi to conceal his anguish as he recorded the testimony of those who suffered from these arbitrary laws. The “crawling order” was in force for eight days. The lane was about 150 yards long and thickly populated with two-storied buildings on either side. In the middle of the lane was constructed a flogging booth. Inhabitants of the lane had to crawl on their bellies if they wanted to buy food or get medical care. They had to crawl “like reptiles” using only their bellies and arms. If they raised their knees they would be hit with rifle-butts. General Dyer gave as his reason for this rule: “I felt women have been beaten. We look upon women as sacred.”

Mr. Lala Megha Mal, a cloth merchant, gave this testimony:

My house is in Kutcha Kurichan (an alley from the crawling lane) and my shop is in Guru Bazaar. On the very first day soldiers were posted in Kutcha Kurichan; I was stopped by the soldiers when I was returning home at about 5 p.m., and I was ordered to creep on my belly. I however ran away, and kept away till after the soldiers had left. That day I came home at 9 p.m. and found my wife laid up with fever. There was no water in the house to be given to her, and no doctor and no medicine. I had to fetch water myself late in the night. For the
seven days following, my wife had to be without any treatment, as no doctor would like to creep on his belly.

In this lane was a Jain Mandir, where Mr. Lala Rallya Ram had his home. He stated: “While I was crawling, they kicked me with their boots and also gave me blows with the butt-ends of their rifles.” Those who had to attend the temple were made to crawl. Lala Devi Das, a banker, tried to go on his hands and knees but was threatened with a bayonet to go on his belly. Kahan Chand, blind for 20 years, was forced to crawl. While the crawling order was enforced, sacred pigeons and birds were shot. The Pinjarapole, a Jain sacred house for the care of animals at one end of the lane, was defiled. The wells in the lane were polluted by the soldiers easing themselves near them.

People were whipped and arrested for not standing up while salaaming British officers. Flogging was nothing but torture. General Dyer had six boys who were suspected of assaulting Miss Sherwood flogged in the booth on crawling lane. Each had his hands fastened to the triangle and received 30 stripes. Sundar Singh said that he became senseless after the fourth lash, but after some water was poured into his mouth by a soldier, he regained consciousness. Flogging was then resumed. He lost his consciousness for the second time but the flogging never ceased till he was given 30 stripes. He was taken off the flogging-post bleeding and quite unconscious. A campaign was started to force people to give false testimony against those accused of taking part in the disturbances. Sometimes the arrested were detained for two weeks. Maqbool Mahmood, who had risked his life to bring peace to the crowd at the over-bridge on April 10, was arrested and threatened if he did not identify the murderers of the two Englishmen, Robinson and Rowland. Dr. Kidar Nath Bhandari, 62 years old, who had assisted the wounded on the night of April 10, was imprisoned with his assistant.
when he refused to give the names of those who had attacked Mrs. Easdon. He was
denied food offered by a friend and a change of clothes. He was told by a police officer
that he was suffering for nothing, and that if he mentioned a few names of persons who
were in the crowd he would be released at once. Mohammed Akram was sentenced to
death for the attempt to assault Mrs. Easdon, a sentence that was commuted to 5 years
rigorous imprisonment. His father, Mohammed Amin, a distinguished lawyer, who
professed to have been a friend of Mrs. Easdon, sent a document to the authorities
arguing that his son was innocent of the charges against him. He, his son, and brother
were arrested and placed in a dirty cell. They were kept handcuffed in their cells in pairs
and had to walk that way when they went to the latrines. Mrs. Nelly Benjamin, Sub-
Assistant Surgeon, who helped Mrs. Easdon escape the mob, was threatened with arrest if
she did not name Mohammed Amin among those she saw in the crowd. When she
declined, they offered her a reward to support the story of Mrs. Easdon which she also
refused. One of the worst cases of torture was experienced by Mr. Gholam Jilani, an
Imam of a Masjid. He had taken a prominent part in the Ramnaumi festival of April 9.
Several witnesses saw the tortures that were directed against the Imam. Among the
witnesses was Haji Shamsuddin:

They drove a stick into his anus. Also, he was in a most pitiable condition. I saw
his urine and excreta coming out. All of us, who were outside, were told by the
police that those who did not give evidence would be treated like that.44

The Report then examined the disturbances in Lahore, the capital city of the
Punjab. Thousands, including women and children, participated in the hartic of April 6,
and a peaceful situation remained until April 10 when the Civil and Military Gazette
announced that Gandhi was arrested. Three or four hundred students decided to march to
the Mall and then to Government House to demand Gandhi’s release. A party of police tried to stop the march but, as the students continued, the order to fire was given and two or three students were killed and more wounded. As was the case at Amritsar, the crowd was unarmed and the intermediate steps were not taken. Again, no steps were taken to care for the wounded and the dead. The Government was uncompromising and proclaimed Martial Law.

Colonel Johnson, who had built his reputation in Africa and who was in command of Lahore between April 15 and May 29, 1919, stated that Martial Law was necessary to prevent the spread of rebellion, although he could not provide evidence of complicity between leaders in Lahore and the rest of the country or even Amritsar. His ferocity could not be controlled. He declared that if anyone fired on his troops he would make all who lived within 100 yards of the attack responsible and give them one hour before demolishing their homes. He seized and detained 800 tongas, later reduced to 200, and all the motor cars belonging to Indians during the period of Martial Law. He constituted Summary Courts and personally tried 277 cases of which 201 received convictions. The maximum sentence was 2 years imprisonment, 30 stripes, and a fine of 1,000 rupees. Asked by the Hunter Committee whether the punishments had a serious medical effect, he replied that they did not because it was “the kindliest method of punishment.” When Mr. Justice Rankin questioned why whipping was necessary in minor offenses, Colonel Johnson replied that jail would not affect Indians very much: “The jail is an extraordinarily comfortable place from the general standard of households in the city.” One whipping, he said, was worth 1,000 soldiers. There were indiscriminate arrests. Mr. Manohar Lal, a graduate of the Punjab and Cambridge University, was given
two minutes to take leave of his family before his arrest. He learned that his house was searched after his arrest. His invalid wife and children had to seek shelter in the servants’ quarters. Mr. Manohar Lal was arrested because he was a trustee of the Tribune, an independent newspaper. Colonel Johnson placed notices on the doors of “evilly disposed persons” and warned of arrest if the notices were defaced. At Sanatan Dharma College a notice was placed on the outer wall of the college. When it was found torn, all the 500 male students were arrested and had to march 3 miles in the hot summer sun to the Fort carrying their bedding on their shoulders or heads. When told that some students had insulted English ladies, a charge that could not be verified, Johnson asked the principal to punish the students. He found the punishments trivial and threatened that unless the punishments were severe he would prevent the students from attending the examinations. Eleven hundred students were punished in this way. He introduced an order making it a crime for more than two Indians to walk abreast. A marriage party was arrested because they were more than ten. The marriage party and the bridegroom were arrested and the priest and others were flogged. When asked about this incident at the Hunter Committee Inquiry, Colonel Johnson said that that was one incident that caused him regret. The Report concluded that at Lahore martial law was “totally uncalled for, was unduly prolonged, and was ruthlessly and inhumanly administered.”

Investigating the disturbances in other smaller towns in the Punjab, the Report found a similar pattern. Demonstrations against the Rowlatt Acts were peaceful until news spread about the arrests of Gandhi, Dr. Satyapal, and Dr. Kitchlew. As the crowds marched to the Police Commissioner to demand the release of the leaders, the police immediately opened fire which incensed the marchers. People were killed on both sides.
After the initial outburst, there was no more violence on the part of the demonstrators. It seemed clear that the violence was not calculated nor a part of any rebellion, but rather the response to the arrests of their leaders and the police firing on them.

At Kasur, the whole town except women and children were made to go to the railway station for identification where they had to sit bareheaded in the sun. Its purpose was to humiliate the whole town and strike terror. On one occasion prostitutes were invited to witness a flogging. Sentries shot two men, one of whom was found to be dumb. Gandhi commented that they were quick to fire their guns because neither they nor the authorities considered Indian life to be sacred. “Fancy punishments” were most common in Kasur. Captain Doveton used to make Indians “mark time and climb ladders.” Some holy men were whitewashed. People who did not salaam every white man were made to rub their noses on the ground if they were not flogged. 18 men received the death penalty. Fortunately, Pandit Motilal Nehru persuaded the Secretary of State for India to suspend the death sentences.

Gujrunwalla is a small town of 30,000 people situated about 45 miles from Lahore. The Baisakhi celebrations left everyone in a holiday mood until April 14, when a train brought news of what had happened at Amritsar. A mob threw stones at the train and set fire to the Gurukul bridge and then proceeded to the Kachi bridge. The Superintendent of Police, Mr. Herron, tried to disperse the crowd by firing into the crowd, causing casualties. The mob destroyed the Church, the Post Office, the Court House, and the railway station. The police were onlookers and made no attempt to stop the arson. When Deputy District Commissioner O'Brien returned to the scene after asking for assistance from the authorities, the fury of the mob had stopped. But the planes which
were sent still dropped bombs on innocent people, and on the Khalsa Boarding House for Students. When he gave testimony before the Hunter Committee, Captain Carberry said that his orders were to disperse the crowds coming and going. When asked why he was firing machine-guns and bombs indiscriminately against people who were running back to their village, he replied that he was not firing indiscriminately since he could see very well from a height of 200 feet. To the question why there was further need to kill them, came the answer “to do more damage.” Continuing, he said: “I was trying to do it in their interest. I also realized that if I tried to kill people, they would not gather again and do damage.” Sir Michael O’Dwyer approved of the policy of using planes to bomb crowds. Not a single European life was lost in Gujrunwalla. Martial law was proclaimed on April 16, and the people of Gujrunwalla were subjected to arrests, humiliations without number, and floggings.

At Wazirabad, 20 miles from Gujrunwalla, after a mob burnt the house of Rev. Bailey, a popular and innocent missionary, Colonel O Brien declared Martial Law, allowing him to make arrests with the flimsiest of evidence. If an Indian did not salaam a European by mistake or oversight, he had his turban taken off his head and tied around his neck. He was then dragged to the camp by the military to be flogged. The troops demanded indemnity from Wazirabad and collected some 67,000 rupees. Sardar Jamiat Singh, a respectable Sikh leader who had done valuable work in the Great War, had his home confiscated, and the four women in his household who observed purdah were forced to leave. On April 18, soldiers surrounded the small village of Nizamabad, a mile from Waziaab, and proceeded to loot the shops, took out flour, ghee, molasses, and made the villagers carry these goods to the train. A young man, Muhammad Ramzan,
accidentally crossed the soldiers’ cordon while grazing his goats and was shot dead. Two or three British soldiers tied the dead body with his turban, dragged it and left it by the pond near the village. Almost everywhere suffered intimidation of witnesses, corruption, and Government terrorism. Gandhi saw that men like Colonel O Brien were bent on teaching “a severe lesson to people, who had for the first time in their lives begun to realize national consciousness and to interest themselves in public affairs.” In Hafizabad, Lala Rup Chand Chopra, a graduate of Oxford University who had lived in England for 13 years and served in the Indian Ambulance Corps in the War, related how Colonel O Brien issued a proclamation by beat of a drum that every turban-wearer had to appear the next morning and, if absent, would be shot. People were made to sit all day in the open. Respectable people were made to march through the streets and were deliberately humiliated. During the martial law period in the small village of Manianwala, Commissioner Bosworth Smith gathered all the men in the village at his bungalow which was some miles from the village. He then rode back to the village and ordered all the women to come out of their houses, striking some with sticks. He beat some with his stick, spat at them, and used the foulest language. Gurdevi, the aged widow of Mangal Jat, gave this testimony and said that he hit her twice and spat in her face. He “forcibly bared the faces of all the women, and brushed aside their veils with his own stick. He called them “she-asses, bitches, flies, and swine.”

Having reviewed the events in the Punjab of April 1919, Gandhi said that his report could not do justice to the tragedy in the Punjab. They simply could not condense adequately the enormity of the “persecution, corruption and disregard for human feelings” that came out of the evidence. Nevertheless, they were able to come to the
conclusion that the measures taken by the authorities to suppress the disturbances were far in excess of what was reasonable. The disorders that the authorities used to justify their actions were incendiaryism in isolated places, murders of four Europeans, cutting of telegraph wires, burning of one or two bridges, and a derailment. The disturbances were not widespread. The masses of peasantry took no part in the violence. The evidence before the Congress Committee as well as the Hunter Committee showed that only a small fraction of the populace took part in the disturbances.

Why did a people, generally peaceful, find itself in the position of burning property and committing murder? Gandhi answered that it was Sir Michael O’Dwyer who provoked the fury of the people by his high-handed rule since he became Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. His humiliation of the educated classes, his coercive methods of getting recruits and loans for the war, his suppression of the Press, his arrests of Indian leaders, and, above all, the massacre at Amritsar created a climate of mistrust which turned into a torrent of fury.

Was India in a state of rebellion beyond the control of the civil authority? The evidence showed that there was no cause to introduce martial law. Even Colonel O’Brien admitted that he did not have the evidence to support the theory of a rebellion. The prolongation of martial law for two months was totally unjustified, and the actions taken under martial law were a disgrace to any civilized society. Jallianwala Bagh was a slaughter of innocents. The doctrine of “frightfulness” introduced so forcefully by General Dyer was approved by Lieutenant-Governor O’Dwyer for two months. Gandhi stated that they had endeavored to follow the facts and, if anything, had understated the case against the Government of the Punjab. He cautioned the Government of India that
if they wanted the political reforms to be successful, officials who did wrong should be
brought to justice. He recommended this not out of a spirit of vindictiveness but from the
belief that the spirit of the country should be purified of corruption and injustice. The
Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, came in for his share of criticism from the report for ignoring
telegrams and letters from the people, and choosing to endorse the inhumane policies in
the Punjab. Gandhi did not mince words when he said that Lord Chelmsford was
incapable of holding the office of Viceroy and should be recalled.

In conclusion, the Congress Report put forward measures that needed to be
implemented:

a) Repeal of the Rowlatt Act.
c) Relieving General Dyer, Col. Johnson, Col. O’Brien, Mr. Bosworth Smith, Rai Sahib
Sri Ram Sud and Malik Sahib Khan, of any responsibility under the Crown.
d) Local inquiry into corrupt practices of minor officials.
e) Recall of the Excellency the Viceroy.
f) Refund of the fines collected from people who were convicted by the Special
   Tribunals and Summary Courts; remission of all indemnity imposed on affected
cities.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE HUNTER COMMISSION

The Hunter Committee Report was completed in the first week of March 1920
and presented to the Viceroy on behalf of the Government of India in the form of a
majority and minority report. The majority report was signed by Lord Hunter and the
European members of the committee; the minority report by the Indian members. The
Viceroy’s report to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Montagu, summed up the findings of the two reports and indicated that the minority report was unacceptable. On General Dyer’s actions at Jallianwalla Bagh, the majority report found that General Dyer committed a grave error but that he acted in good faith. His defense of imparting a moral lesson was, it said, a mistaken sense of duty. The minority report criticized General Dyer severely. It was immaterial whether General Dyer thought that he was doing the right thing. They described his action as inhumane. They attributed his conduct to “a fixed idea that India must be ruled by force.” The Government of India agreed with the majority report that General Dyer should have given warning before opening fire and that continued firing after the dispersal of the crowd was indefensible. All the same they were convinced that General Dyer acted honestly in the belief that he was doing the right thing.

The Government was in agreement with the majority report on the events at Gujranwala which stated that Mr. Herron’s action in firing on the mob was “entirely approved” and that the decision to use bomb-carrying aeroplanes was justified. The bombing of the Khalsa High School was indefensible but they affirmed that Mr. Carberry should not be blamed. The fault lay in the instructions he was given. As to the causes of the disturbances, the government accepted the view of the majority who blamed the unrest on the demand by movements like the Home Rule League for self-government. Supporting the necessity of continuing the restrictions of the Defense of India Act, they argued that the agitation against the Rowlatt Acts through the Satyagraha movement was the main reason for the disturbances. The minority stated that it was an exaggeration to say that the protest would have developed into a revolution, and they blamed Sir Michael O’Dwyer’s attitude towards the educated classes as one of the main causes of the
outbreak of violence. For the majority and the government, martial law was necessary. The excesses stemmed from inadequate instructions to the officers in charge. The minority rejected this, arguing that martial law was unnecessary because order was restored everywhere before the imposition of martial law. The Viceroy’s Report whitewashed the part played by O Dwyer who was praised for quelling the dangerous insurrection. On General Dyer, the report was apologetic in its criticism: “We are satisfied that it was bona fide and dictated by a stern though misconceived sense of duty.” 48
CHAPTER 5
NON-COOPERATION AND THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

[At the Khilafat Conference] All agreed that Islam did not forbid its followers from following nonviolence as a policy, that while they were pledged to that policy they were bound faithfully to carry it out. In my resolution, non-cooperation was motivated only with a view to obtaining redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs.


Although the campaign to repeal the Rowlatt Acts and the massacre at Amritsar occupied the center of interest in India in 1919, Gandhi was well aware of the anxiety of Muslim Indians about the fate of the Caliph in Turkey following the defeat of the Ottoman empire and the Central Powers in World War I. He saw this as another opportunity to promote solidarity between Hindus and Muslims. He was heartened by the display of unity between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs during the protests in the Punjab. After all, Hindu-Muslim unity was a central feature of his idea of Indian nationalism, and an important objective of Satyagraha. Indians did not need reminding how Hindu-Muslim unity had terrified the British in the Great Rebellion of 1857 and the resistance following the 1905 partition of Bengal.

The Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Acts was the first time that the Indian masses were mobilized for the national cause, and Gandhi seized the opportunity to bring Muslim leaders and masses into the Satyagraha movement.¹ But while the Khilafat issue was understandably a concern for Muslims, it was not clear why it should have been a major issue of Indian nationalism. Bal Tilak and Pandit Malaviya did not share Gandhi’s view of its significance. Gandhi felt the need to integrate Muslims within the nationalist movement, and to support their issues as a way to show that Hindus shared
Muslim anxiety about a significant feature of Muslim identity. As it turned out, the display of solidarity between Hindus and Muslims on the Khilafat issue not only broadened the support of the masses against British rule in India in the agitation against the Rowlatt Acts and the non-cooperation campaigns, but it offered an example of solidarity which later campaigns found elusive.

The Caliph, successor to the Prophet Mohammed, was both the spiritual and temporal leader of Sunni Muslims. Loyalty to the Caliph was an important element in some Muslim leaders notion of a Pan-Islamic community of believers, whose anxiety grew steadily from the Balkan wars of 1911 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914, and then to the calamitous defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1919. The issue of the fate of the Caliph (Khalifat), by raising the importance of Muslim identity and at the same time linking it with Indian nationalism, helped to establish a mass movement among Indian Muslims and bring the Muslim masses into the mainstream of nationalist politics.

The political forces that contributed to the Khilafat movement in 1919 grew out of the development of Muslim educational institutions. The best known Muslim educational institution was Aligarh College, founded by Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) in 1875. Sir Sayyid had advocated Western learning as the way to reform Islam, and loyalty to the British Empire. Later, younger graduates began to suggest different policies. Among them were Mohammed Ali and his brother Shaukat Ali who became leaders of the Khilafat movement. In 1906, members of the Aligarh establishment led by the Aga Khan met Lord Minto at Simla and petitioned the Viceroy for reserved seats for Muslims in the reformed Legislative Councils as well as on government services and local governing bodies. That very year the Muslim League was founded. Elected its
permanent President, the Aga Khan pledged loyalty to the British Empire, but Mohammed Ali and other younger Muslim intellectuals who attended the inaugural meeting of the Muslim League were already suggesting a different role for the League. Unlike the Aga Khan, Mohammed Ali felt that the Muslim League should promote the integration of India, not its fragmentation, stating that Congress and the League were like two trees growing on either side of the road: “Their trunks stood apart, but their roots were fixed in the same soil.” Other Aligarh supporters who became intermediaries between Western-educated and the traditional Islamic scholars were Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, who received his medical training in England. The Balkan Wars of 1911-12 drew sustained interest from Indian Muslims who read with concern the stories appearing in the Urdu press of a Christian conspiracy against the Ottoman Empire. Muhammad and Shaukat Ali collected subscriptions for a Red Crescent Mission to go to Turkey. Muhammad founded an English weekly newspaper, *Comrade*, and urged Great Britain to form an alliance with Muslim kingdoms. In 1912 the young scholar and journalist, Abul Kalam Azad, launched *Al Hilal*, an Urdu newspaper, specializing in Islamic reform and knowledge about Turkey and the Middle East. Abul Kalam had read the works of Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, including his commentary on the Quran which was criticized by the Ulema. He was also familiar with the works of the Egyptian reformer, Muhammad Abduh, which made him knowledgeable about the religious reforms taking place in the Arab world. Although he questioned the value of traditional education, he remained faithful to his vocation as an Islamic scholar by his passion for Islam and Islamic reform.
The Dar al-Ulum, Deoband, exercised great influence among traditional Islamic schools. Founded in Deoband, Uttar Pradesh, to carry on the reforms of the 18th century Islamic reformer, Shah Wahiullah, Deoband advocated reform of the traditional Islamic curriculum and social reform. In their role as spiritual guides and teachers, they had an influence which extended beyond the Madrasas or traditional Islamic schools.

The third important Islamic educational institution was the Firangi Mahal, one of the most important centers of Islamic learning in India, founded in Lucknow during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707). Maulana Abul Bari was the chief figure at Firangi Mahal in the early 20th century. A member of the Ulema and a Sufi, he had a passion to spread knowledge of Islam in the community, and had many disciples. On his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1910-11, he visited Turkey and came to appreciate the greatness of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic civilization. With the onset of the Turkish wars, he collected funds for relief of the wounded in Turkey, and it was in this capacity that he met the Ali brothers and Dr. Ansari who were impressed with his activity to bring about Muslim unity in India by providing relief for Turkey. The essentially pro-British leadership of the Muslim community began to give way to younger men who were especially interested in Islamic identity and solidarity in India and, also, sympathetic to Indian nationalism. Even the Aga Khan, elected permanent President of the Muslim League, found the new voices too extreme and resigned in 1913. Muhammad Ali persuaded Mohammed Ali Jinnah to join the Muslim League at its session in 1913 by convincing him that it would not conflict with his loyalty to the Congress Party.

Anti-British sentiment increased as World War I began in 1914. In an article in Comrade, Muhammad Ali discussed the reasons for Turkish grievances against Great
Britain but said that he still hoped that the Turks would remain neutral. When war broke out between Britain and Turkey, the government closed down his newspaper and interned the Ali brothers, Abul Kalam Azad, and other Islamic writers, Hasrat Mohani and Zafar Ali Khan. Although the British promised not to attack the Muslim holy places in Arabia and Mesopotamia and to allow the annual Haj pilgrimage to continue, Muslim leaders became increasingly skeptical of British promises.5

In India, Hindus and Muslims were building a relationship which promised a united front in the struggle for political reforms. Starting in 1912 with an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League, this cooperation matured with the Lucknow Pact in 1916, which presented a joint program of constitutional reforms. Pleased with the cooperation between Congress and the Muslim League, and Jinnah’s role in this development, Muhammad and Shaukat Ali began to correspond with Gandhi. They had read with interest of his achievements in South Africa and took notice of his speech in 1915 in which he said that politics should not be divorced from religion. Gandhi’s ethical stand on politics and his ability to attract a mass audience appealed to them.

While the fate of the Caliph and the Ottoman Empire filled Indian Muslims with anxiety, the Arab revolt of 1916 shocked them because it seemed like a betrayal of Islamic brotherhood. When, in the fall of 1917, Annie Besant, President of the Home Rule League, was interned, Jinnah became President of the Bombay Home Rule League with the support of the Muslim League. Confronted by the emergence of Hindu-Muslim solidarity, Lord Montagu announced that the policy of the British government would henceforth be the gradual development of self-governing institutions.6
The outbreak of communal riots in late 1917 and 1918, and the defeat of Turkey made Muslims in India feel that Islam was in danger outside and inside. At the Muslim League’s annual meeting in December 1918, Dr. Ansari urged the government to respect Muslim holy places and to withdraw all armed forces from the Hijaz, Damascus, Baghdad, Najaf, and Kerbala. Anti-British sentiments reached a peak. Now that the war was over, Muhammad and Shaukat Ali wrote the government demanding their release, but to no avail in light of the agitation against the Rowlatt Acts.

The Khilafat issue drew the interest of a wide cross-section of Muslims. For the growing Islamic reform movements, the Khilafat issue was a fight to preserve Islamic justice and law, while the Muslim masses saw it simply as the defense of their religion. What was clear, however, was that the policy of loyalty to the British Empire as it was initiated by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the late nineteenth century had now eroded. Gandhi now saw the possibility of the Muslim masses joining the struggle for Indian self-rule.

In March 1918, Maulana Abdul Bari met Gandhi at Dr. Ansari’s home to ask him to help get the release of the Ali brothers, and took the opportunity to explain to Gandhi Muslim grievances over the Khilafat issue. When his letter to the Viceroy did not bring success, Gandhi wrote to Muhammad Ali, confessing that the situation presented a unique opportunity for Hindu-Muslim solidarity: “In the proper solution of the Mahomedan question lies the realization of swarajya (Freedom).” When he called for a Satyagraha campaign after the Rowlatt Acts were passed on March 18, 1919, Gandhi traveled to Lucknow to ask Abdul Bari for his support. The result was that Hindus and
Muslims marched as brothers in solidarity during the *Satyagraha* movement throughout India with the cry, “Hindu-Musulman ki jai!” (Victory to Hindu-Muslim unity).

A broad representation of Muslim leaders attended the All-India Muslim Conference in September 1919 and called for a special Khilafat Day on October 17, 1919 when there would be prayers, fasting, a *hartal*, and public meetings. It was a great success and drew a crowd of some 50,000 people. At a joint Hindu-Muslim conference the following day, Gandhi, the presiding officer, declared that Hindus supported Muslims on the Khilafat question because it was a just cause. A joyous mood prevailed when the Congress, the Muslim League and the Khilafat Committee met in Amritsar in December, 1919. Muhammad and Shaukat Ali, and Dr. Kitchlew were all released in time to attend the meetings. Indeed, one of the highlights of the Congress session was a speech by Muhammad Ali in which he said that he would rather return to prison than see India in chains to British imperialism.

**NON-COOPERATION**

In early January 1920, Muhammad and Shaukat Ali toured India to drum up support and raise funds for the Khilafat issue. Released from internment, Maulana Azad went to Delhi where the Khilafat meeting was held, and met Gandhi for the first time. In response to the request from Muslim leaders that the Caliphate remain intact and the lands of the Ottoman Empire not be divided, the Viceroy sent a deputation under the leadership of Muhammad Ali to London. Recalling that moment in the Khilafat movement, Maulana Azad said that some of the Muslim leaders who gathered in Delhi
did not think that sending a deputation was enough and preferred to apply direct
pressure. When the discussion at Hakim Ajmal Khan’s home could not reach a solution
after six hours, Gandhi proposed that a sub-committee of two or three be formed to
continue the discussion with him. They proceeded to Principal Rudra’s home where,
after discussing the issue for another three hours, they decided on non-cooperation.
Maulana Azad said that, when Gandhi presented a detailed program, he had no difficulty
in agreeing with him in every detail. In London, the Muslim deputation told the Prime
Minister of their fears over the Khilafat question. They said that although they did not
support the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, they felt that they could persuade
their fellow Muslim Arabs of the importance of Muslim unity. At the All-India Khilafat
Conference in mid-February, the issue seemed to be heading in a more radical direction.
Maulana Abdul Bari and his allies nudged the conference to take a more extreme policy
by announcing that it was, from a religious point of view, unlawful for Muslims to serve
in the British Indian army and proposed issuing a fatwa about this. The Conference
issued a manifesto and a constitution declaring its mission to preserve the Khilafat at the
center of the Muslim world, to work for Indian self-rule, and to work for the religious,
social, and economic advancement of Muslims.

In a statement of March 10, Gandhi presented his plan of action calling for
nonviolent non-cooperation. He said that the Khilafat had become “the question of
questions,” but insisted that the struggle be carried out nonviolently, claiming that the
power that was generated for a nation that rejected violence was irresistible. Nonviolent
non-cooperation was the only alternative. Khilafat Day on March 19 was another great
success. Gandhi moved a motion in four parts asking the British Government to reach an
honorable settlement consistent with the just religious sentiments of the Muslims of India. The second part warned of withdrawal of cooperation if a satisfactory agreement could not be reached. The third part asked supporters not to use violence in deeds as well as words because violence would bring harm to their sacred cause. He said that the resolution of non-cooperation was a joint transaction between Hindus, Muslims, and others to whom the land of India was their mother country, and “it commits the joint movement to a policy of nonviolence.” He said that he recognized that Muslims had special Koranic obligations to enforce justice, if nonviolent non-cooperation failed.

Gandhi continued:

I hope it is unnecessary to show why it is obligatory on Hindus to march side by side with their Muslim countrymen. So long as the means and the end are honorable, I can imagine no better cement for perpetually binding us both than our complete association with Muslims. But in a cause so sacred as this, there can be, there should be no violence either of speech or of deed. We must conquer not by hate but by love. I admit the difficulty of loving the unjust, but victory consists not in marching along a smooth surface but in conquering obstacles, in resolute and undaunted way. And in a just and sacred cause, firmness of purpose and unconquerable will are the least qualities required of us. Moreover, violence can only damage this great cause.\(^\text{10}\)

Recognizing the possibility of a violent and bloody revolution, he called on the British to understand that feelings on the Khilafat question ran high. He concluded with the hope that the British would not respond with “thoughtless and angry repression.” The program of non-cooperation included the following: Titles were to be renounced; resignation from government jobs; resignation from the police and the military; and nonpayment of taxes.

The political climate became more tense when the Congress Report on the massacre at Amritsar was published on March 25. To commemorate the massacre, April 6 to April 13 was observed as National Week. The publication of the government’s
response to the Hunter Commission Report in May was denounced throughout India as a whitewash of the atrocities in the Punjab. To add fuel to the fire, the publication of the terms of the Treaty of Sevres in May 1920 realized the worst fears of Indian Muslims. Not only was the Arab world severed from the Ottoman Empire, but Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia were placed under French and British mandates; while Eastern Thrace and Izmir were ceded to Greece, and the Dodecanese Islands to Italy.

The All-India Khilafat Committee met in Bombay on May 28 and adopted Gandhi’s non-cooperation policy. Two days later, at the Congress Committee meeting at Benares, Gandhi proposed non-cooperation without delay, but the committee wanted wider deliberation and proposed a special session later in the year in Calcutta to decide on non-cooperation. Bal Tilak did not attend the Benares meeting, but his reservations about non-cooperation were well known. He was in favor of supporting the reforms. Yet, he informed the committee that he would obey the decision of Congress and do nothing to hinder the progress of the non-cooperation movement. At a joint Hindu-Muslim conference in Allahabad on June 1, most representatives approved of the principle of non-cooperation but were cautious about the practical difficulties of implementing it. Mrs. Besant and Tej Bahadur Sapru argued against non-cooperation. However, the Khilafat committee was more eager for the policy to begin and voted unanimously for non-cooperation. The depth of religious feeling surrounding the Khilafat question was illustrated by the development of the hijrat movement. Rural populations in Sindh and the North West Frontier had heard in their mosques from their religious leaders that Islam was in danger in British India, and began in the summer of 1920 a migration or hijrat to Afghanistan, considered a friendly Muslim country. More
than 30,000 Muslims made the journey to Afghanistan until the Government of Afghanistan advised against it.

Gandhi tried to prepare the people for the struggle that was about to begin. In an essay on suffering, he told readers that no country had achieved freedom without suffering: “Progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone by the sufferer. The purer the suffering, the greater the progress. Hence did the sacrifice of Jesus suffice to free a sorrowing world.” Referring to the massacre at Amritsar, he said that the “frightfulness” at Amritsar drew attention away from the barbarism of Lahore, where the attempt was made to emasculate a people with pitiless cruelties. Quoting Thoreau, Gandhi declared: “Possession of power and riches is a crime under an unjust government, poverty in that case is a virtue.”

On August 1, as preparations were underway for the campaign to begin, news came that Bal Tilak had died at the age of 64, plunging the whole nation into mourning. Bal Tilak was as popular among the people in 1920 as he was in 1896, when he proposed a no-tax campaign and raised the cry of swaraj. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru joined the massive funeral procession; Gandhi, saddened that his “bulwark” had gone, lifted one end of the bier, followed in turn by Shaukat Ali and Dr. Kitchlew.

When the non-cooperation campaign began, Gandhi returned the medals he had received for his humanitarian work in South Africa, as part of his protest against the British government’s handling of the Khilafat question and the atrocities in the Punjab. He reiterated that the policies of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Michael O’Dwyer, were responsible for the outbreak of violence in the Punjab. Admitting that the excesses by the demonstrators were inexcusable, he insisted that the punitive measures undertaken by
government officials were “out of all proportion to the crime of the people and amounted to wanton cruelty and inhumanity almost unparalleled in modern times.” He also told the Viceroy that the debate in Parliament in London, especially in the House of Lords, which exonerated General Dyer, embittered all Indians. In explaining why he decided to commence non-cooperation before Congress had given its approval, Gandhi said it was a matter of conscience for him. He said that he was aware that some were reluctant to go along because they feared that it would lead to violence. In an article entitled “The Doctrine of the Sword” explaining again his understanding of nonviolence, he wrote that where the choice was between cowardice and violence to redress injustice, he would choose violence. He illustrated this with the example of his son asking him what he should have done as a dutiful son when he was attacked by the mob in South Africa in 1908. He said that he told him that it was his duty to defend him even by violence. That was why he took part in the Boer War, the Zulu War, and recruited soldiers in World War I. But, he restated why nonviolence was superior to violence and forgiveness more courageous than punishment:

Nonviolence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means putting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honor, his religion, his soul, and lay the foundation for that empire’s fall or its regeneration.

Gandhi, Shaukat Ali, Maulana Azad and other leaders toured India to ask Indians to support non-cooperation, drawing large crowds from the Punjab to Madras. In the meantime, students began withdrawing from schools, and government-officers and lawyers left their jobs. A special session of Congress was scheduled for September in Calcutta to decide on non-cooperation. Gandhi and Shaukat Ali drew up the resolution
which recommended the following: Surrender of titles and honorary offices; refusal to attend government functions; gradual withdrawal of children from schools; gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and the establishment of private arbitration courts; refusal by the military, clerical, and laboring classes to serve in Mesopotamia; withdrawal of candidates for election to the reformed councils; and the boycott of foreign goods, to which was added the goal of self-government. Before voting, Gandhi asked the audience to show respect and tolerance to those who disagreed with the resolution: “Unless we are able to evolve a spirit of mutual toleration for diametrically opposite views, non-cooperation is an impossibility.” The resolution was adopted on September 9 by a vote of 1,855 to 873. All Muslim members except Jinnah voted for the motion.

Gandhi wrote several articles to clarify for the people important notions about nonviolence and self-rule. Swaraj or self-rule, for example, did not mean simply removing the British as rulers and replacing them with Indians. He thought that the British imperial system had become corrupt and inhumane and therefore must be replaced by a system that demonstrated responsibility to human, material, and spiritual development:

Has a single Englishman suffered the extreme penalty of the law or anything like it for brutal murders in India? Let no one suppose that these things would be changed when Indian judges and Indian prosecutors take the place of Englishmen. Englishmen are not by nature corrupt. Indians are not necessarily angels. Both succumb to their environment...What I am attacking is the system. I have no quarrel with the Englishmen as such.

He said that he would find equally intolerable a government of Indians that was conducted like the current British government of India. To achieve responsible self-rule, he said that Indians should have confidence in their dignity and see themselves as the equals of the English. This self-esteem must be transformed into self-reliance. Only in
this way could they begin to wean themselves from their dependence on the British for internal and external security, for the settlement of religious conflicts, for their education, and their daily needs. Gandhi felt that the current feeling of helplessness contributed to the arrogance of the British who hectored them that they would become fit for self-rule only gradually. He called on the British to remember that he was loyal to the British Empire for twenty-nine years under some conditions that would have turned another person into a rebel. But the events following 1919 had broken his spirit of loyalty. He now saw British rule as a system that drained Indian resources for the benefit of the British in utter disregard for impoverished Indians.

Once more he traveled over India with the Ali brothers explaining and urging the proposals of non-cooperation. In encouraging the withdrawal of students from government schools, he said that he was mindful of the danger of neglect of education. In defense, he asked whether it was not better that their children receive their education in a free atmosphere, even if in humble cottages or under trees and under teachers who would inspire their students with the spirit of freedom. In November he founded the National University of Gujarat in Ahmedabad to foster a new cultural ideal:

A systematic study of Asiatic culture is no less essential than the study of the Western sciences. The vast treasures of Sanskrit and Arabic, Persian and Pali and Magadhi have to be ransacked to discover wherein lies the source of strength for the nation. The ideal is not merely to feed on or repeat the ancient cultures, but to build a new culture based on the traditions of the past and enriched by the experiences of later times. The ideal is a synthesis of the different cultures that have come to stay in India, that have influenced Indian life, and that, in their turn, have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil.13

Earlier, on October 29, Muhammad Ali announced the opening of the Jamia Millia Islamia, an independent Muslim University. He had tried to reform Aligarh College but the trustees caved in to British demands that it should retain its British
connection. It was hoped that the new University would combine an English education with traditional Islamic learning. The mobilization of the students in support of non-cooperation was assisted in great measure by men like Maulana Azad and Maulana Abdul Bari who worked tirelessly to rally Muslims to the cause of non-cooperation.

The unrest worried the British Crown and the Duke of Connaught was sent in January, 1921, to open the new legislative councils and, hopefully, calm the situation. Gandhi wrote the Duke assuring him that they were not at war with individual Englishmen. They were determined, however, to do battle with the system that produced O’Dwyerism and Dyerism in the Punjab. He felt that the Duke had come to India not to abolish Dyerism, but to sustain it, asserting that Indians wanted friendship with the British but a friendship of equals, in theory and practice.

Bengal was the first province to have large numbers of students withdraw from their schools. A National College opened on February 4, and in the next four months National Colleges were opened in Patna, Aligarh, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Benares, and Delhi. Distinguished lawyers like Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and C. Rajagopalachari resigned their lucrative positions to serve the people. Subhas Chandra Bose resigned from the Indian Civil Service to become Principal of the National College in Calcutta. Hindus and Muslims fraternized frequently and openly, and it was wonderful to see Orthodox Hindus invite Muslim leaders to dine with them while Muslims gave up the sacrifice of cows on Baqr Id.

As in so many previous critical situations, the government decided on a policy of repression to destroy the movement. In the Northwest Frontier Province, Abdul Ghaffar Khan who was doing educational and social reform work there was arrested and
sentenced to three years imprisonment. Repression inflamed Indian passions, but Gandhi
did not lose sight of his ideal. Aware that a struggle aroused and fed by passions
produced defiance rather than resistance, he tried to place reason and persuasion at the
center of his Satyagraha campaign by insisting on nonviolence, claiming the moral high
ground by basing his resistance on the principles of equality and coexistence with the
British, and, importantly, being willing to be critical of some of the customs and practices
of his own people and society. It was the measure of the man that such a political and
moral approach did not cause him to lose the support of the masses of Indians. Despite
the political crisis that Indian nationalism faced, Gandhi did not let up work on his
constructive program, deciding to mount criticism against the practice of untouchability.
He used old themes and narratives, some drawn from his own life, to make Indians
change their hearts and respect untouchables as equals. He told the story of how he told
his mother that she was wrong to ask him to ritually purify himself if he touched Uka, an
untouchable boy who cleaned the latrines. Insisting that the Hindu scriptures did not
sanction untouchability, he, nevertheless, wavered between Hinduism and conversion to
Christianity until he became confident that Hinduism could reform its cruel customs. He
said that freedom for India was impossible as long as untouchability was considered a
part of Hinduism. He cited again the story of Yudhishthira in the Mahabharata who
would not enter heaven without his dog and asked how could the descendants of
Yudhishthira obtain swaraj without the untouchables.

Starting in Bengal, discontent among workers spread. Indeed, there were some
400 strikes in 1921, and some railway officers were killed. Gandhi was quick to
denounce the violence, reminding his followers that non-cooperation should be
nonviolent. The truth was that the non-cooperation campaign unexpectedly became interwoven with labor disputes and class conflict. In the face of famine conditions and high prices, peasant movements joined the non-cooperation movement for their own objectives, actions that gave the demonstrations more power but also made them more prone to violence. To give one example, in January, 1921, a mob surrounded an estate in Rai Bareilly demanding an end to evictions. When the police were called in, the police fired on the mob, inflicting many casualties.

In the middle of May, 1921, the new Viceroy, Lord Reading, met with Gandhi in Simla to discuss the crisis. Gandhi emphasized that his campaign was nonviolent, but Lord Reading showed him the speech that Muhammad Ali had made in Madras to the effect that he would support the Amir of Afghanistan if he invaded India, and also past speeches that seemed to be inconsistent with a pledge of nonviolence. The Viceroy agreed not to prosecute Muhammad Ali if he made a public apology and promised not to indulge in such extreme speeches in the future. Unhappily, the apology appeared in the press soon after, to the delight of the Viceroy and the consternation of Muslims. Gandhi explained that he did so only to preserve the character and good faith of Muhammad Ali. For his part, in later speeches, Muhammad Ali said that his apology was offered not to the government but to his comrades in the non-cooperation campaign. Stating that Muslims would be faithful to nonviolence, he said that he would encourage resignation from the army whether Congress supported civil disobedience or not.

Moving back and forth between political resistance and his constructive social program, despite the growing tension, Gandhi stressed the theme of unity amidst the diversity of India, and sought the integration not only of different religions, races, castes,
and parties but also the suppressed classes. The issue of women’s equality and advancement was important to his idea of a constructive program. He advised women that they should cease seeing themselves as the objects of men’s desire and to demand to be equal partners with men, exhorting them to enter public life and assume the risks of standing up for their principles.

As an example of the possibility of social and psychological transformation and empowerment, he described meeting the prostitutes of Cocanada in Andhra Province and at Barisal who had written to him asking for a meeting to discuss their welfare. They had become members of Congress and subscribed to the swaraj fund. Gandhi said that the two hours he spent with them was a treasure:

Some of them were between twenty and thirty, and two or three were girls below twelve. That these women should have considered their lot to be beyond repair, was like a stab in the living flesh. And yet they were intelligent and modest. Their talk was dignified, their answers were clean and straight. And for the moment their determination was as firm as that of any satyagrahi.¹⁵

He then addressed men on the topic of women:

Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the better half of humanity, the female sex, not the weaker sex. It is the nobler of the two, for it is even today the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humility, faith, and knowledge…In a self-respecting India, is not every woman’s virtue as much every man’s concern as his own sister’s? Swaraj means the ability to regard every inhabitant of India as our brother and sister.

Gandhi spoke about the significance of also protecting the cow. His understanding of this issue was part of his vision of truth that appealed to human beings to extend love to all beings and to realize that relation to the world with compassion was a vital part of self-realization:

Cow protection to me is one of the most wonderful phenomena in the human evolution. It takes the human being beyond his species. The cow to me means
the entire sub-human world. Man through the cow is enjoined to realize his identity with all that lives…The cow was in India the best companion. She was the giver of plenty. Not only did she give milk, but she also made agriculture possible. The cow is a poem on pity. One reads pity in the gentle animal. She is the mother to millions of Indian mankind. Protection of the cow means protection of the whole dumb creation of God.

It was, however, impossible to keep politics out of the picture for too long. The Khilafat Committee met in Karachi in July under the presidency of Muhammad Ali and passed a resolution to the effect that it was unlawful for Muslims to continue in the British army or to induce others to join the army. When Congress met in Bombay two weeks later, civil disobedience was on every one’s mind. Gandhi advised caution because civil disobedience was effective in a calm atmosphere: “Disobedience to be civil has to be open and nonviolent. Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion.” On July 31, at Umar Sobani’s yard at Parel in Bombay, Gandhi lit a bonfire of foreign cloth, including the finest saris, shirts, and jackets. The following day he addressed a crowd on the sands of Chowpati beach:

Untouchability of foreign cloth must be held to be a duty of every Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Sikh, Parsi, Christian, Jew and all other religious communities which have made India their home. Let it be a common necessary factor for all Indian creeds. Untouchability of foreign cloth is as much a virtue with all of us as untouchability of the suppressed classes must be a sin with every devout Hindu…yesterday’s outward fire is symbol of the inner fire that should burn up all our weaknesses of the head or the heart.

This nationalist rhetoric seemed inflammatory, but Gandhi took seriously the call to boycott foreign clothes and encourage the manufacture and use of local cloth or khadi which became the heart of the new nationalist or swadeshi program. Such a movement had been used before following the partition of Bengal in 1905. Gandhi was mindful of the criticism of swadeshi, in particular the excessive hardships it had placed on the most
needy people. That was why \textit{khadi} and the spinning wheel were so significant to his re-conception of \textit{swadeshi}:

the sacred \textit{khadi} reminiscent not of sweated labor or the enforced idleness and pauperism of India’s millions, but of the reviving poetry of the home life and of the incoming prosperity of the poorest toiler.

Gandhi’s friend, Charles Andrews, did not agree with this policy. He could not see how it could be a sin to wear the noble work of foreign brothers and sisters. Gandhi replied that he was referring to foreign cloth, and not all foreign things. He reminded him that Kathiawad “untouchable” weavers had to give up their traditional crafts because of competition from British-made clothes and become sweepers in Bombay, leading to increasing misery for them. The encouragement and protection of \textit{khadi} was one way to give the people the means to live decently and develop self-esteem:

There is an art that kills and an art that gives life. The fine fabric that we have imported from the West or the Far East has literally killed millions of our brothers and sisters and delivered thousands of our dear sisters to a life of sham. True art must be evidence of happiness, contentment and purity of its authors.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{THE GANDHI-TAGORE DEBATE}

Between 1919 and 1925, at the time of one of the most critical periods of the struggle for Indian self-government, Gandhi and Tagore engaged in a public debate over Gandhi’s methods for achieving \textit{swaraj}, namely the boycott and burning of foreign cloth.\textsuperscript{17} Despite the seriousness of the political situation, Gandhi and Tagore considered it legitimate to provide space for criticism and debate. On April 12, 1919, one day before the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, Tagore wrote to Gandhi cautioning him that power in all its forms was irrational and that “resistance, like all forms of power, could be used
against truth as well as for it.” The next two years filled Tagore with anxiety. Gandhi’s call for non-cooperation had inspired Indians with high expectations. Tagore wrote three letters to Gandhi and an article entitled “The Call to Truth,” which expressed his fears about non-cooperation. He acknowledged that he had sensed in Gandhi “truth at last.” This truth, he said, was not as a “quotation from a book,” but was a living force making visible the power of truth. However, he could not accept Gandhi’s idea of non-cooperation.

It would be a mistake to view the Tagore-Gandhi debate as merely a dispute over tactics. Its significance arose from their concern for the idea of freedom for India. For Tagore, political independence through non-cooperation would serve to enhance “national egoism.” By affirming the political form of the “Nation” as the final objective, the non-cooperation movement, he argued, threatened to subvert the harmony between the inner and outer life of human beings. He insisted that man’s uniqueness resided in the power of his inner freedom to refuse to accept “the rule of things” as they happened to be. The spirit was the driving force of freedom, “from the obvious to the hidden, from the easy to the difficult, from parasitism to self-determination, from the slavery to his passions to the mastery of himself.” Tagore criticized the burning of foreign cloth and the call to use the charkha (spinning wheel) as senseless rites. The regimentation and mass hysteria involved in organizing non-cooperation produced demagoguery, not reason and truth. He reminded Gandhi that the eternal call of India was: “Let all seekers after Truth come from all sides.”

Affectionately calling Tagore “The Great Sentinel,” Gandhi responded that he did not understand swaraj to mean political independence alone, but had emphasized
throughout his political career the importance of individual freedom as well. The poet lived in a magnificent world of ideas, Gandhi commented, and had the gift of making “his Gopis (milkmaids) dance” to the rhythm of his songs. But his own humble talents gave him no choice but to work with flawed and fragile creations. He never intended, he said, that the charkha should be the True God but wanted to show the significance of work in the everyday struggles of life of millions of Indians. To Tagore’s criticism that non-cooperation was “pure negation,” Gandhi answered that Satyagraha was the only choice to a cycle of violence and revenge. He reaffirmed his belief that freedom and self-determination could have meaning only in relation to the soul and the human intellect. The majesty of the poet could see Truth and Beauty like “Solomon arrayed in all his glory.” He admitted that he preferred the simile of the “lilies of the field” because it conveyed the sense of the force of natural beauty and the difficulty of sustaining truth in everyday life. The beauty of the “lilies of the field” depends upon constant cultivation, sowing and weeding. Non-cooperation was conceived, Gandhi suggested, as preparing the ground for the quality of freedom they both wanted for India.

THE MOPLAH REBELLION

In August, a serious communal rebellion took place in Malabar that would shake the foundations of Hindu-Muslim unity. It was fundamentally a social phenomenon. But the peasants who were demanding a reform of tenantry from the Hindu landlords were Muslims, called Moplahs. When a rumor spread that the Malabar police had desecrated a mosque in searching for three suspects in a burglary, a mob of some 3000 Moplahs surrounded the soldiers who had to flee. Soon all Malabar was in flames. Martial law had to be in effect for six months, and harsh government policy only added to the horror.
In one instance, one hundred Moplah prisoners were herded into a boxcar to be transported to jail and sixty-four died from asphyxiation. Economic hardship resulting from famine conditions was the main cause which the government exacerbated by not introducing any reforms. It was politically in the government’s interest to cry that the cause was religious fanaticism. Gandhi and Muhammad Ali appealed to the Moplahs to end the violence.

The increasing anxiety of the Government over the popularity of the non-cooperation movement did not allow them to see that the campaign was being seriously undermined by the rebellion. They decided to introduce the full force of repression. Muhammad and Shaukat Ali and their colleagues were arrested and imprisoned for allegedly seditious speeches at the Khilafat Conference in Karachi in July. Gandhi appealed for calm and urged Muslims to continue the work on swadeshi. At their trial in Karachi, Muhammad and Shaukat Ali and the other accused were sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment. Congress ratified the Bombay manifesto authorizing every province, on its own responsibility, to commence civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. Gandhi moved a resolution that civil disobedience would commence in Bardoli, a village in the district of Surat in Gujarat. Others like Hasrat Mohani wanted the civil disobedience campaign to take place in several centers to ensure that the authorities could not concentrate their repression in one place. But Gandhi refused to budge from his proposal because he felt that in Bardoli he would be able to control the campaign and make sure it was nonviolent. He pleaded that “mass civil disobedience was like an earthquake, a sort of a general upheaval,” but it must be conducted in a climate of discipline and peacefully. If undertaken “in a spirit of bravado or of insolence, or in a mood of angry excitement, resentment or retaliation, then the disobedience instead of being civil would become criminal.” The high standards of conduct required meant
that not everyone could take part in civil disobedience. Maulana Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan were able to persuade the extremists on the Khilafat committee that civil disobedience was a matter for all Indians, not just Muslims. Gandhi announced that he wanted to launch civil disobedience in Bardoli on November 23.

When he learned that the Prince of Wales was going to visit India on November 17, Gandhi called for a boycott of the official welcome and a hartal, which was observed throughout India and generally peacefully. In Bombay, however, some elements in the crowd broke away while Gandhi was speaking and proceeded to indulge in an orgy of violence. They singled out Parsis, Christians, and Anglo-Indians for attack because they had joined in the welcome of the Prince. The police opened fire and there were many deaths. Four policemen were beaten to death. Sightseers were beaten and their foreign garments seized and burnt. When Gandhi heard about the rioting, he immediately went to stop the riot. He saw for himself the frenzy of the crowd. He sprinkled water on the faces of the policemen and waited with them until arrangements were made to take them to the hospital. The violence continued until late at night in all parts of the city. The following morning Parsis, Jews, and Anglo-Indians were armed and ready to strike back. Grief-stricken and remorseful, he ordered that the civil disobedience planned for Bardoli be suspended: “If today I had stayed at Ahmedabad, I might have easily belittled the happenings in Bombay and paid little attention to them. But the terrible scenes that I have seen enacted before my own eyes, could not possibly be put aside.” He commenced a fast on November 19 to persuade the non-cooperators to make peace with the cooperators:

The Swaraj that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils. The Hindu-Muslim unity has been a menace to the handful of Parsis,
Christians, and Jews. The non-violence of the non-cooperators has been worse than the violence of cooperators. For, with non-violence on our lips, we have terrorized those who have differed from us, and in so doing we have denied our God. There is only one God for us all, whether we find Him through the Koran, the Zend-Avesta, the Talmud, or the Gita. And He is God of Truth and Love….I invite every Hindu and Muslim citizen to retire to his home, ask God for forgiveness, and to befriend the injured communities from the depth of his heart.20

Calm was restored and Gandhi broke his fast on November 22. But the government then embarked on its policy of massive repression. The major leaders were arrested and imprisoned. Among them were Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, the son of Pandit Malaviya, C.R. Das, Maulana Azad, Lala Lajpat Rai, Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. Thousands of others were put in prison. Once again the government made no distinction between the innocent and the guilty. The policy of naked force saw innocent people with Gandhi caps or khadi dress insulted, humiliated, and stripped. Khilafat and Congress centers were destroyed as were the records of the National schools; crops and property were looted by the police; and there were cases where women’s jewelry were forcibly taken. At the same time, the drive to recruit volunteers for civil disobedience intensified and attracted thousands of recruits.

Although most of the leaders were in jail, when Congress met in Ahmedabad at the end of December, the mood was enthusiastic. On the exhibition grounds there were art exhibits and music concerts. Six thousand delegates voted in favor of the resolution calling for aggressive civil disobedience against the edicts enacted by the government, for nonviolence, for continuance of public meetings despite the prohibition, and for Indians to join the volunteer corps and be willing peacefully to invite arrest. In the absence of the other leaders, Gandhi was given sole executive authority. To critics like Annie Besant who chided him with being unable to deliver self-rule in one year, Gandhi responded that
people’s expectations seemed to flow from their belief that he was a perfect man.
Nothing could be further from the truth, he said: “To find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one’s destiny, to become perfect. I am painfully conscious of my imperfections, and therein lies all the strength I possess, because it is a rare thing for a man to know his own limitations.” What he hoped for was that the seed of freedom would be planted in India for “Hindus to discard the error of untouchability, for Hindus and Muslims to shed enmity and accept heart friendship as an eternal factor of national life, for all to adopt the charkha as the only universal means of attaining India’s economic salvation and finally for all to believe that India’s freedom lies through nonviolence, and no other method.”

Two weeks later, Gandhi was pulled in two directions. One group, which included Jinnah and Pandit Malaviya, wanted accommodation with the British and suggested a round-table conference; the other sentiment, expressed by Maulana Abdul Bari and Maulana Hasrat Mohani, wanted immediate civil disobedience. Letters from Mahadev Desai informed Gandhi that the leaders were being treated horribly in jail. They were insulted, flogged, and given hard labor. Starvation or dog-food was their lot. They had no covering for the winter except lice-laden, blood-tattered remains of common criminals who had previously occupied the cells. Gandhi wrote: “Jallianwala Bagh though atrocious was the cleanest demonstration of the Government intentions and it gave us the needed shock. What is now going on is being done inside the cold prison walls or in little unknown villages and, therefore, has no theatrical value.”

On January 5, 1922, Gandhi announced that the struggle to restore the rights of free speech and free association should continue, and that they should even be prepared to die. Yet, he cautioned that every possible provision be made against an outbreak of
violence. On January 14, Jinnah and Malaviya convened an All-Parties Conference under the chairmanship of Sir Sankaran Nair to discuss accommodation with the government. Gandhi demanded that the proposal to postpone the civil disobedience should include as a condition the release of the Ali brothers. The government did not accept these conditions. On January 29, 1922, at a meeting of 4000 people from Bardoli, including 500 women, it was decided to launch civil disobedience. Gandhi was convinced that the people of Bardoli had the discipline to practice civil disobedience nonviolently.

On February 1, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy, stating the goals of civil disobedience, and protesting the extreme use of force by the police, to which a reply came that it was justifiable use of force. Gandhi sent back a rejoinder, citing as examples of police brutality the shootings in Calcutta, forcible dispersal of meetings in Dacca and Aligarh, assaults on innocent volunteers in Lahore, Jullundur, and Dehra Dun, looting of villages in Bihar, burning of papers belonging to Congress at Sonepur, and midnight searches and arrests in Congress and Khilafat offices.

On the morning of February 8, 1922, however, newspapers carried the story that twenty two police constables were burnt alive and hacked to death by a mob at Chauri Chaura, a village in Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh province. Gandhi immediately cancelled the civil disobedience campaign. Gandhi did not change his mind when he learned what happened at Chauri Chaura, that the marchers were provoked and abused by the police who had given their word that they would not molest the demonstrators. When the marchers returned, obviously angry, the police opened fire. When their ammunition
was exhausted, they ran into the station. The mob then set fire to the station, and hacked the policemen to death when they came out.

Congress and Khilafat leaders condemned Gandhi’s decision to call off civil disobedience. Motilal and Jawarhalal Nehru were angry; Maulana Abdul Bari called Gandhi a paralytic whose limbs were not in control while his mind was active. In his reply to Nehru, Gandhi said that he understood Nehru’s anger, but defended his decision by explaining that, if he had not suspended civil disobedience, they would have been leading a violent revolution, not a nonviolent one. There were more rumblings of protest within Congress and Khilafat committees. Dr. Moonje and J.M. Sengupta moved a resolution to annul the decision to suspend civil disobedience, and to censure Gandhi. Presiding over the meeting, Gandhi permitted those supporting Dr. Moonje to speak and asked those opposing the resolution to remain silent. Dr. Moonje’s resolution was defeated. But Gandhi was aware that the sentiments of the country were not behind him at that moment, but he defended his action as being morally right:

This is a new kind of struggle. Those who have faith in methods of peace must search their hearts. They will have to devote themselves exclusively to propagate nonviolence. This struggle is intended not to spread hatred but to end it. It is not intended to create barriers between people but to bring them together. It is not one in which we may use a combination of means, but is one in which we have to use discrimination and distinguish between right and wrong. I am certainly the one most responsible for the crime of the people of Gorakhpur district, but every genuine non-cooperator is also responsible for it. All of us should be in mourning for it.22

THE GREAT TRIAL
On the night of Friday, March 10, Gandhi was arrested together with Shankarlal Banker and taken to Sabarmati prison. Kasturbai was allowed to accompany him to the gates of the prison.

The trial began on March 18 before Judge Broomfield, the District Judge. Gandhi was charged with seditious utterances in three articles which he had written in Young India, to which Gandhi pleaded guilty. Shankarlal Banker also pleaded guilty but, since he only published the articles and had not written them, he received a substantial fine and one year’s imprisonment. Gandhi then asked to make a statement. He said that he endorsed what the prosecutor said about his responsibility in the violence in Bombay and Chauri Chaura as it was impossible for him to dissociate himself from those excesses and not to have known the consequences of his actions. He said that he knew the risk and, if set free, he would do the same. But he confessed that he wanted to avoid violence because nonviolence was the first article of his faith and the last article of his creed. Explaining his actions, he said that he had to choose between submitting to a system that he thought had done irreparable harm to his country, and the fury of his people when they heard the truth of what had happened. Therefore, he knew that the Judge had no alternative but to apply the severest penalty.

Then he read out his statement. He took pains to describe how he changed from being a loyalist and cooperator with the British Empire to a non-cooperator. He reminded the Judge that he was loyal to the government for twenty nine years and his service to the Empire during times of crisis was considered exemplary. But, the cruelties practiced and defended by the government from the Rowlatt Acts to the Khilafat question had made him change utterly his political point of view from loyalist to an anti-
imperialist. This transformation made him revise his understanding of British rule in India, which has made India more helpless than ever before:

She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British advent, India spun and wove in her millions of cottages, just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India’s existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses. Little do the town dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for the exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures, can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiased examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten the condemned men were totally innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of one hundred justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the courts of India…In my humble opinion, non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good. But in the past, non-cooperation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavoring to show to my countrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil, and that as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence.

Judge Broomfield then gave his verdict. He said that he considered his predicament difficult and that he could not ignore the fact that Gandhi was in a different category from any person he had ever tried or was likely to try in the future: “It would be impossible to ignore the fact that in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life.” He said that he was aware that he had preached nonviolence and “that you have on many occasions, as I am willing
to believe, done much to prevent violence.” However, having regard to Gandhi’s political teaching, he could not understand how Gandhi could not see that violence was inevitable. He sentenced him to two years in prison for each offence, making it six years imprisonment, adding that “if the course of events in India should make it possible for the Government to reduce the period and release you, no one will be better pleased.” On March 20, 1922, Gandhi and Shankarlal Banker were escorted to a special train which took them to Yeravda prison near Poona.

The end of the civil disobedience campaign and Gandhi’s imprisonment all but delivered the death-blow to the alliance between Congress and the Khilafat Committee. The Khilafat question effectively came to an end when in November 1922 the Turkish National Assembly abolished the Ottoman Sultanate, and separated the spiritual powers of the Khilafat from the temporal power of the state. On March 1, 1924, the Turkish National Assembly voted to depose the Caliph and abolish the Caliphate.
CHAPTER 6

THE MAKING OF THE SALT MARCH, 1930, AND ITS AFTERMATH

That year, 1930, was full of dramatic situations and inspiring happenings; What surprised most was the amazing power of Gandhiji to inspire and enthuse a whole people. There was something almost hypnotic about it, and we remembered the words used by Gokhale about him: how he had the power of making heroes out of clay.


While Gandhi was in jail the political situation was beginning to change. Some members of Congress felt that non-cooperation should be abandoned. On their release from detention, Motilal Nehru and other Congress leaders favored a policy of contesting the elections for the various legislative councils, if only to boycott the proceedings. In January 1923, they formed the Swaraj party with C.R. Das as President and Motilal Nehru as Secretary. Other Congress leaders like Rajagopalachari argued for the continuation of the policy of non-cooperation. The Swaraj Party captured the majority of seats in many provinces and just under half the elected seats in the Central Legislative Council, thereby occupying the stage as the main actors in the post-non-cooperation period. But, from the beginning, there were warning signs about how the venture into party politics within the imperial system would preserve Hindu-Muslim unity, a major feature of the non-cooperation campaign. In November, 1922, the new leader of the Turks, Mustafa Kemal, deposed the Sultan, bringing to an end the temporal power of the Caliph. Ominously, as the Khilafat issue crumbled for Indian Muslims, religious sectarian rioting once more raised its ugly head.
In January 1924, Gandhi developed appendicitis and was transferred to Sassoon Hospital in Poona. Released from prison, he spent his convalescence in Juhu Beach, Bombay. Advised to take a rest from work, he, nevertheless, insisted on taking control of his two weekly newspapers, *Young India* and *Navajivan*. The *Young India* edition of May 29 was devoted to the issue of Hindu-Muslim conflict. Since Hindu-Muslim unity was one of the main pillars of *Satyagraha*, Gandhi was anxious to heal the conflicts and differences that were emerging. He said that he was aware that some sectors of Hindu and Muslim sentiment blamed him for his stance on the Khilafat issue. Hindus blamed him because the Khilafat movement had awakened Muslims politically; Muslims blamed Gandhi because the Khilafat movement diverted them from entering the councils to seek the advancement of their specific interests. Gandhi defended his commitment to the Khilafat policy, saying that he was unrepentant about his role in awakening the masses and working for Hindu-Muslim unity. He asked his critics to remember that the heart of the campaign was nonviolence. Training in nonviolence was a necessary part of the inclusion of the masses in the struggles against British imperialism and social injustice. Reluctant to dwell on his critics, he exhorted Indians to adopt nonviolence as their creed, calling it the indispensable condition for resolving conflicts between religions and races.

At the Congress Committee meeting in Ahmedabad Gandhi presented four resolutions hoping to determine how much support there was for his old program of boycotting government law courts, schools, titles, and legislative bodies, and encouraging *khadi*, spinning, and nonviolence. Members of the Swaraj party were incensed. When Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das walked out of the meeting with 50 supporters on the spinning resolution, Gandhi had to negotiate with them on a
compromise resolution for the motion to pass. More serious in Gandhi’s eyes was that the resolution offering regrets for the murder of Mr. Day by Gopinath Saha won with a majority of only eight votes. The collapse of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements led many young nationalists to espouse violent means. In Bengal, Gopinath Saha had tried to kill the police commissioner of Calcutta, Charles Tegart, but killed instead a British businessman, Ernest Day. Gandhi interpreted the bare majority as an attack against nonviolence, and wept publicly, saying that he felt defeated and humbled.

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad saw his face and urged him to speak, but Gandhi broke down in tears. He said that he was saddened not because anyone had done him a wrong but because he sensed that the creed of nonviolence did not have a deep foundation within Congress, and he now had doubts about his own leadership of the movement.

Declaring that he was only chastened, not disheartened, he informed Congress that he intended to focus his attention and energy on Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, and the expansion of the khadi movement. Lamenting the divisions within Congress, he urged all the political groups within Congress to find the lowest common measure to cooperate to advance the cause of the masses of Indians, to “share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their needs.” At that moment he said that he felt like Margaret in Goethe’s Faust who went to the spinning wheel to find her peace.2

FASTING AGAINST HINDU-MUSLIM RIOTS OF 1924

Gandhi’s commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity was soon tested when riots broke out. In Kohat on the North-West Frontier, 36 people were killed and 145 were wounded,
forcing Hindus to evacuate Kohat. It seemed that the cause was the publication of a
scandalous book on the life of the prophet Mohammed by a Hindu author who was
eventually murdered. When Gandhi heard the news, it so pained him that he resolved to
undertake a fast for 21 days, taking only water. He said that he hoped the fast would be a
prayer to Hindus and Muslims not to commit suicide. He invited the heads of all
communities, including Englishmen, to meet to end the conflict. Recalling that two years
earlier Hindus and Muslims were fraternizing in a common cause, he said that he saw
signs of communal conflict earlier in Bombay and Chauri Chaura. He undertook the fast
at the home of Muhammad Ali in Delhi to prove to Muslims that he loved them as well as
he loved Hindus. His fast, he said, was the prayer of a bleeding heart for forgiveness.

As a Muslim, Shaukat Ali comforted Gandhi with the assurance that he had done much to reduce the poison of hatred in men’s minds. Aware that his friends were concerned for his health if he fasted, Gandhi
confided to Shaukat Ali that fasting was also a means of purifying and strengthening
oneself, and he reminded him that the Prophet Mohammed often prayed and fasted,
receiving God’s revelations in times of fasting and prayer.
Motilal Nehru organized a unity conference in Delhi on September 26 at which some 300 delegates from different religious denominations were present. Among them were Bishop Westcott, the Anglican Bishop of Calcutta, Mrs. Annie Besant, Shaukat Ali, Ajmal Khan, Swami Shraddhanand, and Pandit Malaviya. The passage of two resolutions affirming tolerance and respect for all religions, and condemning all forms of religious coercion warmed Gandhi’s heart. He broke his fast and organized a ceremony to celebrate religious unity.

PROPAGATING THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM

In 1925 Gandhi devoted his time to touring the country to spread the message of his constructive program which included spinning, the removal of untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, and the need for nonviolence in resolving conflict. Careful not to take a political position that would make more serious the differences in the Congress Party, he supported the Swarajists as that seemed to be the way to preserve the unity of Congress. In spite of his reservations about his own influence, he was able to place his constructive program at the center of Congress policy. Spinning became not only a requirement for Congress membership, but it was also a national project. To forestall criticism of spinning as anachronistic, he made it a point to explain constantly that it was his way of trying to resolve the massive problems of unemployment and misery in India with the expectation that the climate of respect for manual work would encourage the idle and starving to take to the spinning wheel.
Enthusiastic crowds greeted him everywhere as he visited the villages in Kathiawad, Central India, Bengal, Malabar, and Travancore. When the untouchable villagers in Kathiawad complained that caste Hindus did not allow them to use the village wells, only the cattle troughs, and that they were too poor to dig their own wells, Gandhi promised to see to it that they got clean water to drink, to bathe, and wash. After orthodox Hindus in Mangrol made untouchables sit in a separate corner to listen to his speech, Gandhi insisted that caste Hindus leave the room than accept this arrangement.

As he made his way South to Travancore in March, he realized how deeply the practice of untouchability had penetrated. He took a keen interest in the Satyagraha struggle in Vykom which had been going on for a year. The roads converging on temples were declared off-limits to untouchables whose very shadow was thought to pollute temple-goers. Yet, without the work of untouchables, the village economy would collapse in a day. The immediate aim of the Vykom Satyagraha was not temple entry but the opening of rights of access to the roads around the temple. Gandhi encouraged the Satyagrahis because he knew that the state politicians and police supported the Orthodox Hindu community.

Visiting Vykom, he explained how he understood their struggle, and told them that the opening of the roads was a small fight in a great battle to remove the evil of untouchability from the body of Hinduism. Yet, it was a struggle that required sacrifice and a strict commitment to nonviolence, advising them to show no bitterness to their antagonists, but to offer love and give them credit for honesty of purpose. He said that he knew how difficult this would be, as he himself found the intentions of the Orthodox purely selfish. But he asked rhetorically, who was to determine what was selfish or what
was selfless? “Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world will disappear, if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint.”

The struggle went on for several months until the government relented and opened the roads on three sides of the temple.

Gandhi crisscrossed the villages of Bengal in May and was surprised by the popularity of spinning, observing that schoolchildren were spinning in the courtyard of their school. The enthusiasm of the students made him happy because they were the future of India. When a student at a school in Chittagong questioned whether spinning was a waste of time, Gandhi answered that spinning was not only about increase of production, but also served to establish a bond with the masses and fellowship among Indians. In East Bengal, he lamented the absence of the Ali brothers who would have helped him to reach the Muslim heart, hinting at the coldness that had emerged in their friendship, but his heart was warmed at the sight of a 7 year old girl and an 80 year old woman spinning, and, at Noakhali, old prostitutes supporting themselves by spinning.

He looked forward with great interest to his visit with the Tagores in Shantiniketan, and, during three pleasant days, conversed at length with Rabindranath who was eager to know at first hand about the constructive program. Borodada, the poet’s elder brother, told Gandhi that he reminded him of Lord Buddha and that his actions lifted his gloom, giving hope that truth would conquer ignorance. The revered Bengali nationalist leader, C.R. Das, “Deshbandu,” as he was affectionately called, invited Gandhi to spend 5 days in Darjeeling at his home, a visit that Gandhi said enabled him to know and admire him as a close friend. Gandhi could not help but observe that all the women in Deshbandu’s household were busy spinning.
Gandhi broke down in tears when he learned that Deshbandu Das died on June 16. At the funeral procession in Calcutta, Gandhi and Maulana Azad carried the bier. An All-India Deshbandu Memorial Fund was established to propagate the spinning wheel and khadi.

Speaking before the Rotary Club of Calcutta, a largely European Club, on the significance of the spinning wheel, Gandhi reminded the audience that the product of the mills could hardly be expected to satisfy the demand of seven hundred thousand villages in India, and he disclosed that one tenth of the population lived on one meal a day consisting of dry bread and dirty salt, and did not earn more than three rupees a month per person. Therefore, if they earned by spinning five or six rupees a month, it amounted to an improvement in their condition, not to mention the fact that the riches derived from spinning would not fill the pockets of the wealthy but would go to the starving millions. When asked why the spinning wheel was in disuse if it had been of such importance in Indian civilization, Gandhi was quick to explain that the spinning industry was killed in India by British textiles favored by British imperial rule. He emphasized, however, that although he had attacked the British imperial system in India as corrupt, yet he did not hate English people. He said that he could even say that he loved them:

If I am true to myself, if I am true to mankind, if I am true to humanity, I must understand all the faults that human flesh is heir to. I must understand the weakness of my opponents, their vices, and yet in spite of them, not hate but love them...Suffering is the secret. Hatred is not essential for nationalism. Race hatred will kill the real national spirit. Let us understand what nationalism is. We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others, not so as to degrade other countries...I want the freedom of my country, so that the other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country might be utilized for the benefit of mankind.4
When the British librarian of the Imperial Library suggested that the claim of political equality and freedom was itself conducive to race hatred since Indians were incapable of governing themselves, Gandhi quickly replied that such a sentiment was typical of the prejudice of racial superiority, declaring that the notion that the British were born to rule the world was nothing but conceit.

Although the project of popularizing spinning was remarkably successful, there were critics, most notably that of Rabindranath Tagore. The poet thought that it connoted too negative an image of India. Gandhi welcomed the criticism and felt that their friendship deepened because of it. Their differences of opinion were published and debate was encouraged. Gandhi answered the poet’s criticism in a long article in *Young India*. Gandhi contended that the constructive program was reasonable and progressive, conceived as one way of getting the idle and starving millions rooted in their society, to persuade them to take responsibility for their own upliftment, and so make possible realistic programs to eradicate malaria, to improve sanitation in villages, to revive institutions for the settlement of disputes, to improve methods of breeding of cattle, and other social and economic projects.\(^5\)

As 1925 drew to a close, there were two momentous events. Gandhi began writing his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. There was wide interest in it as *Young India* featured one chapter a week, and continued for three years. It appeared in book form in two volumes, the first in 1927 and the second in 1929. The second major event was that Mrs. Naidu became the first Indian woman to preside over the annual Congress on December 26, 1925. She had worked with Gandhi for ten years...
and it made him proud to see that his work for the advancement of women in India had reached such a hopeful stage.\textsuperscript{6}

Gandhi decided to withdraw from political activity and stop traveling around the country for one year, taking the advice of Dr. Ansari to avoid as much physical and mental work as possible to recover his health. But it was difficult for Congress to allow Gandhi the sabbatical from the political center of activity. In March 1926, the fragile unity of Congress seemed to be unraveling, as communal politics began to raise its head. The All-India Hindu Mahasabha passed a resolution saying that they would pursue policies to protect its special interests. An Independent Party was formed in April to challenge the Swaraj party. Muhammad Ali responded to the Hindu Mahasabha resolution by declaring that it was the duty of Muslims to convert non-Muslims to Islam, and he was waiting for the day to convert Gandhi to Islam. Shaukat Ali advised Muslims to retaliate in kind against Hindus if they were attacked. However, Dr. Ansari and Maulana Azad refused to get into the mud of communal politics. As happened so often when the unity of Congress was threatened, Mrs. Naidu, Motilal Nehru and other members of the Swaraj Party came to Sabarmati ashram in April to ask Gandhi’s help in healing the discord. In 1926 there were 23 Hindu-Muslim riots. On his way to the annual Congress meeting Gandhi learned that Swami Shraddhanand was assassinated by a Muslim. Shocked, Gandhi remembered the Swami as a courageous reformer and supporter during the Rowlatt Acts \textit{Satyagraha}. He prayed that Hindus would show restraint and not blame the whole Muslim community.

Following the Gauhati Congress meeting, he embarked on another tour to raise funds for his constructive program. He commenced his Bihar tour on January 11, 1927,
and spoke to large gatherings, including women’s groups. He advised women to
challenge the idea of purdah:

What we are doing to our women and what we are doing to the untouchables recoils upon our heads with a force a thousand times multiplied. It partly accounts for our weakness, indecision, narrowness, and helplessness. Let us then tear down the purdah with one mighty effort.  

He traveled the length and breadth of India, catching a few hours of sleep here and there on the train, and seizing every opportunity to encourage social reforms when traditional practices seemed oppressive. In Mysore he declared that untouchability was not sanctioned by the Vedas and Upanishads and that his “Hindu soul rises up in revolt against such an abomination.” When he was told that menial castes did not have the right to learn Sanskrit and to read the Vedas, he responded that he did not think that there was scriptural authority for this belief but, even if there was, they should not kill the spirit of their religion by a literal interpretation of a text.

He spoke out against child-marriages and asked youths not to marry before they reached sixteen. He considered the condition of contemporary Hindu widows simply scandalous since many girls were married before they reached 13 years and became widows at 15. Proposing measures for reform, Gandhi suggested that a girl who was given in marriage for financial reasons without her consent should not be considered married, and should be allowed to remarry, if she was widowed. Those widows who found the ideal of pure widowhood difficult had as much a right to remarry as widowers.

His speech at Ernakulam in Cochin in mid-October summed up the urgency of his message of social and religious reform:

In fair weather a captain would be justified in leisurely sailing along at a moderate pace and feeling that in the time to come he will reach the goal. But our barque of Hinduism is today sailing in essentially foul and stormy weather. If we want to
overtake the storm which is about to burst on us, we must take bolder risks and sail full steam ahead. It is impossible to wait and weigh in gold scales the sentiments of prejudice and superstition that have gathered round the priests who are considered to be the custodians of Hinduism. In the face of the evil which every one seems to recognize, it is not possible to wait till the superstitions and prejudices have given way.

What Gandhi the reformer was interested in was the content of freedom for India. He envisioned the renewal of India that would reform its oppressive social practices and allow to shine its humane traditional ideals as the way to build a progressive future.

THE SIMON COMMISSION

Although Gandhi’s activities in 1927 were focused on social reforms, his political influence on Congress remained significant, as both older and younger Indian leaders admired Gandhi and were inspired by Satyagraha. It was remarkable that the urbane, sophisticated, secular, and elite Nehru family from Allahabad was drawn to the radical, peasant-based, politics of Gandhi. Educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge University where he received a degree in natural sciences, Jawaharlal studied law at the Inner Temple, London, returning to India in 1912. He met Gandhi at the Lucknow Congress in 1916, and was impressed with his achievements in South Africa. But it was after the Satyagraha campaigns between 1919 and 1922 that he was converted to the ideals of Gandhi. Secretary to the Indian National Congress from 1923 to 1925, Jawaharlal’s experience of working in rural India and witnessing the poverty as well as the humanity of the masses shaped his political destiny in the direction of Gandhi. Although there were differences between them, a bond of sympathy developed between Gandhi and Jawaharlal like between a father and son.
When Gandhi returned to Delhi in November, he learned that the new Viceroy, Lord Irwin, had invited him and other Indians to meet him at which he announced that the British Government had appointed a Parliamentary Commission headed by Lord Simon to determine whether India was ready for further reforms. Nationalist disappointment over the issue of the Simon Commission placed Gandhi on the political stage as the major player again. When the 1919 reforms were put in place, it was stipulated that there would be a review in ten years. Anxious to prevent a possible Labor Party government from making its own appointments, the Conservative government decided in late 1927 to advance the date of the commission and appoint an all-white committee headed by Sir John Simon. Interpreting this action as an insult and betrayal of the promise to increase Indian participation in government, a wide cross-section of Indian political opinion agreed to boycott the Simon Commission because they felt that they would ignore Indian criticism of the 1919 reforms.

Reforms were necessary because a growing number of nationalist politicians saw the 1919 system as ineffective. Provincial governors, for example, still had great power to override the work of Indian legislators. On matters of budget and finance, the amount of spending on government institutions like education was actually decreasing. All this added to the growing disenchantment with the British government. But the prospect of disunity made Indian nationalists fearful of challenging the British Raj. Motilal Nehru and the moderate T.B. Sapru convened an All Parties Conference and proposed that they draft an alternative constitutional plan.

Presented in August 1928 as the Nehru Report, it conceived of India as a federation of British India and the Princely States, enjoying the same status as the white
Dominion States of the British Empire. It departed radically from the 1919 system by
giving power to the central government and making it responsible to the electorate. It
granted Muslims and other minorities religious freedom, and offered to create new
provinces in Sind and the Northwest Frontier where Muslims were in the majority, but
recommended the abolition of separate electorates. Criticism of the Report reflected the
prevailing divisions within Congress. Orthodox Hindus and Muslim associations
predictably opposed it as well as younger radical Indians like Jawarhalal Nehru and
Subhas Chandra Bose who favored total independence. Motilal Nehru pleaded with
Gandhi to attend the annual Congress meeting in Calcutta in December, 1928 because he
felt that Gandhi was the best person to heal the different factions. Gandhi’s role as
conciliator was one of the keys to understand why he played such a central role in the
nationalist movement.

Despite generational and ideological differences with his colleagues, he was able
to win their respect and support even when he was an old man. He had made the
Congress party a mass movement and it was generally felt that the destiny of India was
linked to its fortunes. There were periods when Gandhi was able to divert his activity
from the nationalist level to the domestic issues of social reform, even welcomed it when
Congress preferred other voices. But, at critical moments in India’s struggle for freedom,
members turned to him to hold the movement together and to advance the cause of
independence from Great Britain. Sometimes his colleagues described his actions in
Congress as dictatorial, but it was, on the whole, truer to say that his role was to serve
rather than to dictate. Firm on his constructive program and convinced about the
necessary of nonviolence, he was willing to negotiate on the issue of what kind of system India should follow.

THE BARDOLI SATYAGRAHA

The Bardoli Satyagraha between February and August 1928 impressed Gandhi immensely. The meaning of its success was not lost on him as he recalled how he had called off the campaign in 1922 when violence erupted at Chauri Chaura, effectively putting an end to the first All India non-cooperation Satyagraha. Gandhi’s role in 1928 was more to record the struggle as he was still recovering from illness. He asked Sardar Patel to lead the campaign.  

The immediate cause of the Bardoli nonviolent campaign was the government’s decision to raise the land tax by 22%, an amount that the villagers found excessive. The Bardoli peasants decided to withhold payment of the new tax assessment until the government was prepared to accept the old assessment or appoint an impartial commission of inquiry to settle the question. Patel organized sixteen camps throughout Bardoli under the leadership of 250 volunteers.

The government sent in gangs to terrorize the villagers: they seized private properties and auctioned them, and took away buffaloes. The volunteers were arrested and imprisoned for long terms. However, under the fearless leadership of Patel, the peasants remained defiant and nonviolent in the face of great provocation, refusing to leave their land and continuing to sow their crops. When the government demanded the immediate payment of the revised assessment pending an inquiry, Patel issued counter-demands, that all Satyagrahi prisoners be released, that all lands forfeited and sold be
returned to their owners, that fair compensation be given for seized movable property, and that all punishments be remitted. He said that if the government agreed to do this, he would accept an official inquiry provided that it would be open and impartial.

After announcing that they were going to set up an inquiry, the government released the prisoners and restored the lands that they had seized. Summing up the results of their inquiry, Judge Broomfield and Judge Maxwell criticized the revenue officials who made the revised assessment, and recommended an increase of 5.7% instead of 22%. Although not all were satisfied, the villagers of Bardoli were willing to comply with the decision especially because they considered the acceptance of the principle of independent inquiry in conflicts as of great significance. In his articles in *Young India*, Gandhi explained that although Bardoli was a local *Satyagraha* campaign, the victory had meaning for all India and showed how freedom could be achieved. He hoped that all Indians took notice of the examples of communal unity, and the dedication of the villagers to the principle of the common welfare of all classes. Perhaps, the most splendid lesson of all was the discipline of the Satyagrahis in preserving their commitment to nonviolence in the face of extreme repression. For Gandhi, the memory of the horror of Chauri Chaura could now be closed. Bardoli gave him renewed hope that *Satyagraha* could be effective at the national level.

**THE NEHRU REPORT: DOMINION OR INDEPENDENCE**

The Nehru Report was received with enthusiasm at the All-Parties conference in Lucknow held in August, 1928. What was most impressive was the mature manner
Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru had handled the difficult issue of minorities, especially the Muslim minority. It rejected the principle of separate electorates established by previous British administrations as having failed to bring about better relations between the two communities. In recommending joint or mixed electorates as the basis for responsible government, they proposed that the only communal safeguard should be a reservation of seats for Muslims only when they were in a minority, the number to be determined in proportion to the size of the population. Dr. Ansari was praised for his work to allay the fears of Muslim delegates. The Hindu and Sikh delegates were carried along by the generally happy mood.

However, no such feeling attended the work of the Simon Commission. Since Congress had pledged to boycott the Commission, they were greeted with hostility wherever they went. The police opened fire in Madras, killing and injuring a number of people; in Calcutta, fights broke out between students and police; in Lucknow, Jawaharlal Nehru was beaten by the police; worst of all, in Lahore, Lala Lajpat Rai, the eminent 64 year old nationalist, was beaten by a British officer while standing by the roadside in front of demonstrators, and died on November 17. Government violence, and the death of Lajpat Rai in particular, served to encourage the revolutionary sentiment of younger nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, who were attracted by the revolutionary movements in the Soviet Union, China, and Turkey. The political climate was so charged with tension that it seemed that another major struggle was about to burst open between the British and Indian nationalists. In Lahore, Mr. Saunders, the Assistant Superintendent, was assassinated in retaliation for the death of Lajpat Rai. Bhagat Singh was suspected as the assassin but escaped. When Congress convened in
Calcutta in late December 1928, it was clear that it was not going to be a case of business as usual, and that Gandhi would have to play a major role, if only as a conciliator.

When Gandhi moved a motion at the committee stage to accept the Nehru report, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bose, and Srinivas Iyengar declared that they could not accept Dominion status. Gandhi argued with them saying that there was really no fundamental difference between Dominion status and Independence, but he amended his earlier resolution once more to say that if the British did not accept the Nehru Report by December 30, 1929, he would commence nonviolent non-cooperation. Although the militant position of the young nationalists was the main feature of the Calcutta Congress, the strong opposition of Muslim groups to the Nehru Report was perhaps its most ominous consequence. The Ali brothers did not attend the Congress nor Muslim League meetings. Shaukat Ali declared that he had taken a pledge not to participate in any mixed gathering of Hindus and Muslims.

As Gandhi looked back at 1928, it must have filled him with sadness at the loss of Deshbandu Das, Swami Shraddanand, and Lala Lajpat Rai, ardent nationalists who had struggled shoulder to shoulder with him. The death of Maganlal Gandhi, the grandson of an uncle, touched him deeply. Maganlal was with him since 1904. His father had sent him to South Africa with Gandhi to find his fortune, but he came to be Gandhi’s most fervent follower. He mastered the art of printing and spinning and was at the forefront of both the political and constructive sides of Satyagraha:

He was my hands, my feet and eyes. The world knows so little of how much my so-called greatness depends upon the incessant toil and drudgery of silent, devoted, able, and pure workers, men as well as women. And among them, Maganlal was to me the greatest, the best and the purest…And but for a living faith in God, I should become a raving maniac for the loss of one who was dearer to me than my sons, who never once deceived me or failed me, who was a
personification of industry, who was the watchdog of the ashram in all its aspects—material, moral and spiritual. His life is an inspiration for me, a standing demonstration of the efficacy and the supremacy of the moral law. In his own life he proved for me, not for a few days, not for a few months, but for twenty-four long years—now, alas, all too short—that service of the country, service of humanity, and self-realization or knowledge of God are synonymous terms.

Gandhi broke down in tears whenever he heard of the loss of his friends. Although he sought self-realization and detachment through activity, his sadness showed that he remained emotionally rooted in the ups and downs of his humanity. His happiest moment of that year must have come at the end of January when he married his third son, Ramdas, and his bride. He said that he was moved to tears when he thought of Ramdas and his last son, Devadas, who were brought up under his care. Ramdas was then thirty and his bride, seventeen. On the morning before the ceremony, the bride and groom fasted, cleaned the well-basin and cowshed, and watered the trees to show their symbolic identification with all of nature. Dressed in white khadi, they took the vow in the presence of elders to be faithful and to dedicate themselves to lives of service. There was no music nor drum-beating, as in Hindu weddings. Gandhi blessed them, and addressing the couple, he asked Ramdas to guard his wife’s honor and not be her master, but her true friend, and to hold her body and soul as sacred, as she should his.

1929 saw an upsurge of radical activity. Some fifty thousand marched into the Congress pavilion, saluted the flag, carrying a resolution demanding immediate independence. On March 20, 1929, the government decided that it was time to crack down on the labor movement, and arrested thirty-six of its leaders, accusing half of them of being communists. Commenting on the arrests, Gandhi felt that its purpose was to strike terror, not to end communism. Past experience taught him to recognize the symptoms of the periodic display of state power and lawlessness under the guise of law.
When he returned from Burma on March 24, he urged the boycott of foreign cloth. In Calcutta, a huge pile was collected and burnt, an act that brought arrest for Gandhi and four others. Huge bonfires of foreign clothes were lit all over India on the day of his trial. Repression made the political climate heavy with revolutionary rhetoric. In April two bombs were thrown from the visitors gallery in the legislative council in Delhi. No one was hurt, but Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt were arrested. Tried in Delhi, they were sentenced to exile for life.10

There was a resurgence of revolutionary activity in Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and the Punjab, which led the police to suspect a widespread conspiracy. Bhagat Singh, Dutt, and Jatin Das went on a hunger strike for two months to protest their treatment as political prisoners. When Jatin Das died, half a million people demonstrated in Calcutta, and there were huge processions to commemorate his patriotism all over India.

As more experienced Congress members like Sardar Patel tried to convince him to run again for Congress President, Gandhi argued with them that it was time for young Indians to take up the mantle of leadership, and recommended Jawaharlal Nehru for president of the next Congress. Declaring that the past year was the year of the awakening of Indian youth in that they had played the most significant role in derailing the Simon Commission, Gandhi felt that it was time to give young leaders the opportunity to make their mark, confessing that he himself did not know what to do to solve the Hindu-Muslim conflict. The Nehru Report seemed to alienate Muslim leadership further. In July, Mrs. Naidu arranged a meeting between Gandhi, Jinnah, and the Ali brothers to iron out their disagreements, but nothing came from these conversations.

As the Lahore Congress approached, not all the developments were gloomy. In the general elections in England, the Labor Party came to power with Ramsay
MacDonald as Prime Minister. The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, was recalled to London for talks with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India. Lord Irwin also met representatives from both the Labor and Conservative Parties. When he returned to India, he issued a statement in October, 1929, announcing that Dominion Status had been implicit in the declaration made by Lord Montagu in 1917, and that there would be a Round Table Conference consisting of representatives from British India and Princely States to discuss reforms, adding that Dominion status was no small measure since Lord Balfour had defined it in 1926 as complete autonomy in domestic and external affairs.\textsuperscript{11} Jawaharlal Nehru was skeptical about this pronouncement, asserting that, when in difficulty, the British looked for moderates and collaborators as the way to undermine and divide the nationalist movement. This was not far from the truth. The moderate political forces looked to Gandhi to decide how they should respond to Lord Irwin’s initiative. But the issue was by no means simple. The door that was opening for cooperation between Great Britain and Indian nationalists soon began to close. At a meeting of the Viceroy, Gandhi, Jinnah, Motilal Nehru, Patel and Tej Bahadur Sapru, Gandhi gave his conditions for cooperating with the Government: Full Dominion status, a predominant representation of Congress members at the Round Table Conference, and amnesty for all political prisoners. The statement was signed by Gandhi, Pandit Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Sapru, Mrs. Besant, Dr. Ansari, and Jawarhalal Nehru who had initially refused. Subhas Bose, Dr. Kitchlew, and Abdul Bari declined.

The October 31 statement of Lord Irwin caused a storm of protest in England. Ramsay MacDonald and Wedgwood Benn tried their best to explain to the Conservative and Liberal Members of Parliament that there was really no change of policy, and
certainly no intention of accelerating Dominion status. Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, assured the members that there would be no amnesty for political prisoners. Gandhi’s friends in London wrote to him asking him for a conciliatory gesture, arguing that the Labor government was in fact a minority government and perceived as weak.

Not surprisingly, the Lahore Congress began in an atmosphere of tension and crisis, especially on the issue of Hindu-Muslim unity. The Ali brothers who had drifted apart from Congress after 1924 attended the conference to remind Gandhi that Muslims would not cooperate with Congress. Mohammed Ali Jinnah proposed that seats be reserved for Muslims in Provincial and Central Legislatures, and that three new Muslim-majority states be established in a future Indian federation, but it did not receive much support from Congress, perhaps a turning point in the relations between Jinnah and Indian nationalists. On the other hand, Abdul Gaffar Khan brought many supporters to Lahore as he was a loyal Gandhi supporter for many years, as had been Dr. Ansari who was not optimistic about hopes for Hindu-Muslim unity. Maulana Azad, however, said that he had no doubt that the Muslim masses would respond favorably to the cry for India’s freedom.

Jawaharlal Nehru succeeded his father as the incoming President, and declared that, as a republican and socialist, independence meant for him complete independence from Great Britain. Gandhi moved the resolution understood by Indians as a declaration of Independence.12

The resolution to launch a campaign of civil disobedience was passed at midnight on December 31, 1929. As 1930 was ushered in, the tricolor flag of Indian
Independence was unfurled to the shouts of “Inquilab Zindabad,” “Long Live Revolution.”

**THE SALT MARCH, 1930**

The emotional high of the closing moments of the Lahore Congress was soon replaced by anxiety about the proper course of action, which Congress left to Gandhi to determine. Recognizing the difficulty of finding an effective plan in light of the disunity among Congress members and the alienation of significant Muslim leaders, Gandhi hoped to forge a plan that would have the effect of unifying and strengthening Congress as the institution that represented all of India. He thought again of Chauri Chaura, and reflected on the consequences if civil disobedience turned violent. Recalling the fears of Dr. Ansari that an outbreak of violence during the civil disobedience campaign would lead to communal riots, Gandhi was understandably anxious. He was convinced that only if they kept the moral high ground by ensuring that the campaign of civil disobedience was nonviolent from beginning to end could they win their freedom from British imperialism. His mind turned to the Satyagraha movements in South Africa and, more recently, in Bardoli, and they gave him hope. Gandhi set January 26, 1930 as Independence Day, which was celebrated with joy throughout India.

As in other Satyagraha struggles, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to inform him that he was prepared to cooperate with the Government if they satisfied eleven needs, among which were fifty percent reduction of land revenue, abolition of the salt tax, and the release of all political prisoners except those condemned for murder.\(^\text{13}\)
On March 2, he sent the Viceroy a letter declaring that he planned to begin civil disobedience by breaking the Salt Act. He gave a long explanation of the reasons that led them to take this action, and pledged that it would be nonviolent.

Why did Gandhi select the salt tax as the issue for the battle for freedom between British imperialism and Indian nationalism? As in so many other conflicts, political symbols were important for Gandhi, for whom the word and the image were useful instruments of a nonviolent struggle. They were important for different audiences, as a way to build solidarity among Indians, and as an instrument to appeal to people who were not Indian but whose minds were open. For all Indians, rich and poor, salt was a basic necessity; that it was taxed by a foreign occupying nation made the cause of Indian independence against British imperialism easy to understand. Gandhi searched for the means to break this unjust law that would allow Indians and people outside of India to see the injustice of the British imperial system and, at the same time, the dignity of Indians deserving of independence. To do this, Gandhi and his supporters knew that the campaign had to be nonviolent. He could not risk another Chauri Chaura and so had to have greater control over the campaign. The Bardoli Satyagraha had taught him that a small campaign could have national resonance.

Gandhi decided to march with members of his Sabarmati ashram to the shore of Dandi on the Bombay coast, a distance of 241 miles, where they would make salt from the sea and sell it, thereby breaking the law. There were many applications to join the march from men as well as women. He decided against women because he feared that the government might respond to the march with cruelty and torture. He selected seventy-eight Satyagrahis who were a mix of people from different Indian states, religions, castes,
and ages. There were two Muslims, one Christian, and two untouchables among the marchers. The youngest was 16; the oldest was Gandhi, 61 years old. At 6.30 in the morning of March 12, Gandhi and 78 of his followers set out on their historic march to the sea. The story of an old man marching 241 miles to make salt attracted the world’s attention. Crowds numbering thousands lined the roads or followed the march, which took almost a month. They marched in the early morning and in the evening, stopping at two villages each day, where Gandhi educated the villagers about his constructive program and social reforms. He insisted that wherever they stopped for the night they would sleep in an open, clean, and sheltered place. He asked for a clean washing-place and the simplest food. Every day he said prayers in the morning, spun for an hour, wrote articles for *Young India*, and prepared his speeches. He addressed massive crowds along the way. At Surat, he spoke to 80,000 people, encouraging them to join the civil disobedience campaign and insisting on nonviolence. They reached Dandi on April 5, the twenty-fourth day of the march. In a solemn ceremony on the morning of April 6, Gandhi said prayers, went with his followers for a bath in the sea, then at 8.30 he bent down and lifted a lump of salt. There were no arrests that day. The government crackdown began the following day. In the meantime, Indian women were impatient to join the struggle. He allowed them to organize to picket the foreign cloth and liquor shops, which were also part of the civil disobedience campaign. Kasturbai led women volunteers in the picketing of liquor shops.¹⁵

The repression was brutal as the police searched everywhere for illicit salt. Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested on April 14. In Calcutta, Madras, and Karachi, the police
fired on demonstrators and charged against them with their metal-tipped lathi sticks. The demonstrators kept their discipline and did not retaliate.

Meetings drew large crowds throughout India. The Salt March Satyagraha had inspired people in the rural villages as well as the towns. Women of all social classes as well as young people joined the movement. The campaign against foreign cloth was very successful. Imports of foreign cloth dropped dramatically in 1930, causing trade in the cities of Amritsar, Delhi, and Bombay to decline. It was no secret that the Viceroy was waiting for the proper moment to arrest Gandhi because he did not want to concede the high moral ground to him. Finally, on May 4, Gandhi was arrested. News of his arrest led to hartals and strikes. Thousands of textile and railway workers went on strike. Police opened fire at demonstrators in Calcutta and Delhi. Repression was particularly severe in the North West Frontier Province where planes and tanks were used. In June, 500 tons of bombs were dropped on the Pathans of the North West Frontier. Abbas Tyabji, former Justice of Baroda, who succeeded Gandhi as head of the civil disobedience campaign, was arrested on May 11 with his followers. Mrs. Naidu now headed the movement and, on May 21, led 2,000 volunteers to the Dharasana salt depot.

The salt depot was walled by barbed-wire and ditches filled with water and guarded by four hundred native police and about six British officers. Gandhi’s son, Manilal, was in the first column of Satyagrahis as they advanced to the depot. An American journalist, Webb Miller, left an account of that day:

Suddenly, at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers, and rained blows on their heads with steel-shod lathis. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ninepins. From where I stood, I heard sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain at every blow.
Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without breaking ranks, silently and doggedly, marched on until struck down…Bodies toppled over in threes and fours, bleeding from great gashes on their scalps. Group after group walked forward, sat down, and submitted being beaten into insensibility without raising an arm to fend off the blows. Finally, the policemen became enraged by the non-resistance, sharing, I suppose, the helpless rage I had felt at the demonstrators for not fighting back. They commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and testicles…\textsuperscript{16}

Miller said that in eighteen years reporting he had never seen such painful scenes. The British government made it difficult for him to get his story out, but when it did, it caused a sensation in newspapers around the world.

Gandhi wrote to members of the ashram that his health was good and that he was recovering from exhaustion. His letters appeared in \textit{Young India} and later in book form with the title, \textit{From Yeravda Mandir}. Although mindful of the grand struggle against British imperialism, he never lost touch with the ordinary, everyday aspects of life. He wrote to the children of the ashram, addressing them as “birds”: “Ordinary birds cannot fly without wings. With wings, of course, all can fly. But if you, without wings, will learn how to fly, then all your troubles will be indeed at an end. And I will teach you. See, I have no wings, yet I come flying to you every day in thought. Look, here is little Vimala, here is Hari, and here is Dharmakumar. And you also can come flying to me in thought…”\textsuperscript{17}

On June 5, as a mark of protest against Gandhi’s imprisonment, there was a mile-long procession in Bombay, led by women and supported by Pathans, Sikhs, and 65,000 workers. Women volunteers, dressed in orange saris, picketed liquor and foreign cloth shops. Kasturbai and Mrs. Motilal Nehru took turns picketing. Hundreds of thousands of
women participated in the campaign, confident that Gandhi and his Satyagraha movement set in motion their journey towards equality.\textsuperscript{18}

There was no let-up in government repression. The British responded by declaring that Congress committees were unlawful, allowing the police to search their headquarters and seize documents. The no-tax campaign brought such extreme repression that almost the entire population of Bardoli migrated to the villages of Baroda where they encamped in tents with their cattle, household furniture, bags of rice, shining pots, and a picture of Mahatma Gandhi.

Despite the crisis, the British government decided to go ahead with the proposed Round Table Conference. The Simon Commission Report was finally presented in the middle of the year but it was not considered seriously at all. The Conference was opened on November 12, 1930 and was presided over by the King of England. Present were 58 politicians from different communities of India and 16 representatives of the Princely States. There was no Congress representation. The proceedings of the Conference finished in January 1931. Indian members proposed a framework of a federation of British India and the Princely States. Winston Churchill was adamant in declaring that the Conservative Party would not be bound by the recommendations of the Conference.

Maulana Muhammad Ali, Gandhi’s former comrade, passed away in London on January 4, 1931. He was at the time of his death writing an appeal to Hindus and Muslims to bury their differences in the interests of Indian nationalism.

Gandhi and members of the Congress Working Committee were released unconditionally on January 25, 1931 with the expectation that the disagreements between Congress and the Government of India could be worked out by discussion. Another friend and comrade, Motilal Nehru, died in Lucknow on February 6. Gandhi said that the
Loss of Motilal was a loss for ever: “Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.”

Discussions between Gandhi and lord Irwin began on February 17. Gandhi made six demands for peace talks to begin; general amnesty; immediate cessation of repression; restitution of all confiscated property; reinstatement of all government servants punished on political grounds; liberty to manufacture salt and picket liquor and foreign cloth shops; and inquiry into the excesses committed by the police. Gandhi stayed at Dr. Ansari’s home and was always in close consultation with Jawaharlal Nehru, Patel, Azad, and other members of the Working Committee. The negotiations lasted until March when an agreement, known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, was reached. Not everyone was happy with the agreement. Jawaharlal Nehru remained committed to the idea of independence; Sardar Patel’s interests were not entirely satisfied when Lord Irwin limited the restoration of lands to Bardoli residents to what had not been sold to a third party; and Winston Churchill showed where he stood towards Gandhi and Indian freedom when he said that he was nauseated by the thought of Gandhi, “a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal Palace.” Churchill would later warn that the loss of India would reduce Britain to a minor power.

The settlement declared that Congress had agreed to discontinue the civil disobedience campaign. In return, the government consented to withdraw the special powers it had assumed to deal with the crisis; it would release all civil disobedience prisoners; forfeited lands would be restored except those that were sold to a third party; officers who had applied for their old posts would be treated with consideration unless
they were already filled; and peaceful picketing would be permitted. There was to be no inquiry into police conduct and the salt laws would not be modified except that, in salt-producing areas, it could be collected for domestic consumption.

After the agreement was signed on March 5 at the Viceroy’s Palace, Lord Irwin proposed that they celebrate the Pact with a cup of tea. As they sipped their tea, Gandhi took out a bag from his shawl and said: “I will put some of this salt into my tea to remind me of the famous Boston Tea Party.” It was said that they joked about Churchill’s comment about the half-naked fakir. Each complimented the other’s sincerity of purpose. Perhaps it was his own deep Anglican Christian devotion that made Lord Irwin sympathetic to Gandhi’s ideal of the role of spirituality in politics.\(^{19}\) Gandhi had apparently forgotten his shawl as he was leaving. Lord Irwin picked it for him, commenting with a smile that Gandhi was too lightly clad to afford to leave his shawl behind, a comment on his dress that was so different in spirit from Churchill’s.

There were meetings afterwards to explain the terms of the agreement. Many questions were raised about why only the civil disobedience political prisoners were released. Gandhi responded that he had pleaded for the release of all political prisoners, and especially for the commutation of death sentences on Bhagat Singh and others, but the Viceroy was adamantly unsympathetic. In Bombay, he told the audience that they should change their attitudes in the new situation. For years they talked only of war and struggle. A Satyagrahi must also be prepared for peace, and now sing a different tune. During civil disobedience, incarceration, direct action, and self-suffering were the methods to be followed. But, in a time of truce, they must be replaced by the methods of negotiation. At another meeting, members of the communist party accused him of
supporting the Indian upper classes in the pact with Lord Irwin. Gandhi did not take this charge lying down:

I made the working men’s cause my own long before any of the young communists here were born. I spent the best part of my time in South Africa working for them. I used to live with them, and shared their joys and sorrows. You must understand why I claim to speak for labor. I expect at least courtesy from you...I am working for winning Swaraj not only for you but those toiling and unemployed millions who don’t get even a square meal a day and have to scratch along with a piece of bread and a pinch of salt. But I don’t want to deceive you. I must warn you that I do not bear any ill to the capitalists. I can think of doing them no harm. But I want, by means of suffering, to awaken them to their sense of duty, I want to melt their hearts and get them to render justice to their less fortunate brethren.\(^\text{20}\)

Gandhi appealed to the charity of Lord Irwin as a “great Christian” on the morning of March 23 to commute the death sentences of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajaguru, but the appeal was turned down. The three were hanged on the night of March 23. The executions soured the atmosphere of the beginning of the Congress meeting in Karachi. As Gandhi approached the Karachi station, there were signs that said, “Down with Gandhi,” and “Long live Bhagat Singh.” The reaction in Calcutta was the most serious of all. There the clash between demonstrators and the police led to the deaths of 141 people, 586 wounded, and 341 arrested. Gandhi issued a statement to the press extolling the courage and bravery of Bhagat Singh, but he said that he preferred the bravery of the meek, the gentle, and the nonviolent. When the Karachi Congress session opened on March 29, Jawaharlal Nehru moved a resolution that was drafted by Gandhi, placing on record Congress admiration for the bravery and sacrifice of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajaguru while dissociating itself from political violence.\(^\text{21}\) Nehru moved the main motion approving the provisional settlement and authorizing Gandhi to represent Congress at the second Round Table Conference. Among the resolutions that
were passed was the one on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy which reflected
the discussions that Gandhi and Jawaharlal had during their morning walks in Delhi at the
time of the Gandhi-Irwin talks in February and March, and their vision of an independent
India, a vision where freedom, equality, respect for tradition and diversity, and a
commitment to distribution of resources were ideals to be pursued by the nation.

THE SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE, LONDON, 1931

Once the misunderstandings between the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, and
Gandhi over the terms of the settlement of March 5 were cleared up, Gandhi hurried to
catch the S. S. Rajputana which sailed for London on August 29. He was made the sole
representative of Congress at the second Round Table Conference. Accompanying him
were his youngest son, Devadas, Pandit Malaviya, Mrs. Naidu as the representative of
Indian women, Mahadev Desai, Pyarelal, Mirabehn, and G.D. Birla. On board, he
occupied a corner on the second class deck. He would get up at 4 in the morning to say
prayers at which Indians and some Europeans attended, and also in the evening. One
evening he explained the significance of prayer which might help in understanding why
he seemed to have such an infinite capacity for hope in politics. He said that he had
experienced many bitter experiences in his public and private life but he was able to
overcome them principally through prayer. He said he initially thought that prayer was
not as important as truth, declaring that he had started out with disbelief in God and
prayer. But, at a late stage in life, he confessed that his faith in God increased and the
yearning for prayer, acknowledging that prayer helped him to keep his peace of mind
even when political and social issues seemed almost without hope. It did not matter for
Gandhi what form prayer took, declaring that there were well-trodden roads by the ancient teachers.

At Marseilles he was met by Madeleine Rolland on behalf of her brother, Romain Rolland, whose book on Gandhi in 1923 had brought his life and work to the attention of Europeans. He was also given an enthusiastic welcome by the students of Marseilles, who hailed him as the spiritual ambassador of India. After disembarking at Folkestone, England, he was taken to the Quaker meeting house in London where he was welcomed by a crowd of about one thousand representatives from the various churches, members of the Labor Party, the trade unions, and women’s organizations. Although Gandhi was invited to stay at a hotel or apartment in the fashionable West End of London, his host Miss Lester, who was his guest in Ahmedabad a few years before, easily persuaded him that he would be more at ease in the working-class neighborhood of the East End where he stayed at Kingsley Hall. Five rooms at the top were reserved for Gandhi and his party. Later, an apartment in Knightsbridge was rented to serve as an office because it was much closer to the hub of activity and meetings. Gandhi preferred to return to Kingsley Hall late at night after work. All varieties of media journalists were interested in meeting him, representatives of film, radio, and the newspapers. The day following his arrival, Miss Lester had arranged with the Columbia Broadcasting System for Gandhi to broadcast a message to America. It was a moment that was rich in irony when Gandhi, the critic of modern technological civilization, paused, took the microphone in his hand, asked softly whether he should talk into it, closed his eyes, bending his head in silence for a brief while, and then spoke for half an hour. He told his American listeners that India’s
struggle for liberty was unparalleled in history in that the means they adopted used “not violence, not bloodshed, not diplomacy…but purely and simply truth and nonviolence.”

No such idealism moved the delegates at the Round Table Conference. Any hopes that the Labor Party might support the Congress point of view were dashed when the Labor Party lost the general elections. Ramsay MacDonald was installed as Prime Minister, but only of a national coalition government where the Conservative Party was dominant. In the economic crisis of the world depression, Winston Churchill set the tone by declaring that the loss of empire would spell disaster for economic recovery. Ramsay MacDonald therefore went along with the prevailing British political tactics of emphasising the divisions of India in order to preserve British rule over India. Among the 112 delegates who attended the Round Table Conference were 20 representatives from Great Britain, 69 from British India, and 23 from the Princely States; Gandhi represented Congress, and Mrs. Naidu, the women of India. The Viceroy selected the representatives of British India and the Princely States. The Federal Structure Committee and the Minorities Committee turned out to be the most important committees. Gandhi was a member of both, and was quick to present the views of Congress, reminding the Conference that Congress represented all sections of India, especially the semi-starved millions in India’s 700,000 villages. He read the Karachi Congress resolution which sought complete independence. As it turned out, the British Government preferred to focus on the minorities issue, claiming that Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Christians, Parsis, and Untouchables should be protected and represented before self-rule could be granted. At the Plenary session of the Conference on November 28, Gandhi began his speech at midnight and spoke for seventy minutes:
The Congress represents the spirit of rebellion. Whilst there is yet a little sand in the glass, I want you to realize what this Congress stands for. You will find me always having the greatest spirit of compromise, if I can but fire you with the spirit that is working in the Congress, that India must have real liberty. Call it by any name you like, a rose will smell as sweet by any other name, but it must be the rose of liberty that I want and not the artificial product. My business is not to throw overboard the slave-holder and tyrant. My philosophy forbids me to do so. A nation of 350 million people does not need the dagger of the assassin, it does not need the poison bowl, it does not need the sword, the spear or the bullet. It needs simply to say “no” and that nation is today learning to say “no”. I do not want to break the bond between England and India, but I do want to transform that bond. I want to transform that slavery into complete freedom for my country.22

Charles Andrews was probably right when he remarked that the Round Table Conference was a “grand failure.” But this was hardly due to Gandhi. The political situation in England and the Indian representation at the conference made it unlikely that Congress’s view of swaraj would be accepted. But, in another way, it was enormously successful. Gandhi stayed in England for three months, explaining the views of Congress and trying to persuade ordinary people as well as scholars from Oxford and Cambridge universities and politicians why Congress should be considered the representative body of a free India. In the process, he presented a persuasive case for Congress in spite of its fortunes at the Round Table Conference. What is more, he charmed the British as a person of principle and humanity, and, above all, he persuaded them to take seriously his nonviolent philosophy of Satyagraha. No less important for him and his movement was the outpouring of affection for him by all classes of British. He was sincere in thanking the British for their kindness at the conclusion of his final speech at the Conference:

No matter what befalls me, no matter what the fortunes may be of this conference, one thing I shall certainly carry with me, that is, that from high to low I have found nothing but the utmost courtesy and the utmost affection. I consider that it was well worth my paying the visit to England in order to find this human affection. It has enhanced, it has deepened my irrepressible faith in human nature that although the Englishmen and Englishwomen have been fed upon lies that I
see so often disfiguring your press, that although in Lancashire, the Lancashire people had perhaps some reason for becoming irritated against me, I found no irritation and no resentment even in the operatives. The operatives, men and women, hugged me. The treated me as one of their own. I shall never forget that.23

In Gandhi’s understanding of Satyagraha, respect and love for an opponent was an important part of the principle. He had done as much as anyone to publicize the cruelties of the British imperial system, but maintained that he had nothing but affection for the British people. The significance of the outpouring of affection for him served to confirm the distinction he made between political systems and people.

Gandhi enjoyed staying in the working-class East End of London. More affluent English people offered their homes to him. But Gandhi was genuinely touched by the warmth of the people who lived at Kingsley Hall and the neighborhood. When he went out for his customary walk at 5:30 in the mornings, people got up early to wave to him. Some parents said that their children wanted to be awakened early to be able to say good morning to him. Many people, including the detectives, Sergeant Rogers and Sergeant Evans, accompanied him on his walks. On one occasion he visited working class tenements and asked the men what they did, how much rent they paid, sanitary facilities, and how their families were treated when they were unemployed. On Saturday nights at Kingsley Hall, whenever he could, he attended the folk dancing. He took the opportunity to visit Lancashire to see for himself the consequences of his boycott of British cloth in India. He spent the weekend there meeting people who were unemployed, listening to their stories. He told them that he was sorry for their unhappiness, and explained why Congress imposed the boycott of foreign cloth. In India, he said, there were not 3 million unemployed as in Britain but 300 million who were starving or half-starved. He said that
at least in Britain he did not see starvation. The most remarkable reception of all was at a
mill where he was taken around by the manager. Gandhi agreed to meet the women mill-
workers. Mirabehn left a memorable description of the scene:

Immediately the machinery was stopped and the building was filled with the
sound of running feet. Across the rooms, along the passages, down the stairs they
went, patter patter patter, and by the time we ourselves got outside, there was a
large crowd of workers waiting. Bapu said a few words, then two of the women
workers suddenly hooked him by the arms, one on each side, and throwing up
their unengaged arms shouted, “Three cheers for Mr. Gandhi, hip, hip-hurrah.”

He said that he was not prepared for such affection and that he would “treasure
the memory of these days to the end of my earthly existence.” He journeyed to Oxford
and Cambridge Universities and the London School of Economics where he held
discussions with several scholars about his movement. Professor Edward Thompson
likened him to Socrates. In London he had warm conversations with George Bernard
Shaw, Charlie Chaplin, Lloyd George, Gilbert Murray, Harold Laski, and his South
African friend and antagonist, General Smuts. He had hoped to meet Winston Churchill,
Lord Rothermere, and Lord Beaverbrook, ardent imperialists, but no invitation came. On
December 5, Gandhi and his party which included Muriel Lester and his two detective
friends boarded the train at Victoria Station for Europe where he was to catch his ship at
Brindisi, Italy. He made sure that he had packed the toy animals, colored candles, and
chalk drawings that the school children at Kingsley Hall had given him for his birthday.

One of the highlights of his trip across Europe was his long-awaited visit to
Switzerland to meet Romain Rolland. He spent five days at Rolland’s home in
Villeneuve where they discussed political affairs in Europe, and matters of religion.
Rolland could not hide his general despair at the state of politics in Europe and said that
the presence of Gandhi seemed to offer a flicker of hope. He took pains to inform him of
the situation in Italy where Gandhi was hoping to meet Mussolini and the Pope. He was introduced to intellectuals and social workers like Pierre Ceresole who had founded the International Voluntary Service for Peace. Albert Einstein looked forward to meeting Gandhi, but had to go to America. Rolland enjoyed the discussions with Gandhi, especially the definition of God as Truth and the relation of art to truth. He was surprised that Gandhi believed in the significance of joy in art, but understood that Gandhi meant that joy did not come without struggle and hardship. Rolland was perceptive in seeing that Gandhi was not in awe of the “sanatorium of intellectuals.” He seemed more delighted when he visited a peasant woman at her weaving loom. He “sat down with her in front of it, to chat and laugh like old pals.” Yet, Rolland was quick to point out that Gandhi was as sharp in his understanding of politics as any intellectual. Where Gandhi was unique was that his politics insisted on revealing everything he thought to everybody and not concealing anything.

Rolland has left a beautiful portrait of their last evening together:

On the last evening, after the prayers, Gandhi requested me to play him a little of Beethoven. He does not know Beethoven, but he knows that Beethoven has been the intermediary between Mira[behn] and me, and consequently between Mira[behn] and himself, and that, in the final count, it is to Beethoven that the gratitude of us all must go. I played him the Andante of the Fifth Symphony. To that I added, ‘Les Champ Elysses’ of Gluck

Prepared by Rolland for his visit to Italy, Gandhi declined the Italian government’s offer to be their guest and stayed at the home of General Moris, a friend of Romain Rolland. His train arrived in Rome on the morning of December 12. The Pope would not see Gandhi, but the Vatican opened the Sistine Chapel for him. He spent two hours in awe at the magnificence of the art. He said that tears came to his eyes as he gazed at the figure of Christ. His joy made him reveal that he enjoyed art but he had to
give up these pleasures because of his political and social commitments. At six in the evening he met briefly with Mussolini. When asked what he thought of the fascist state that Mussolini was building in Italy, Gandhi answered frankly that it was a house of cards. More pleasant was the visit of Tolstoy’s daughter, Signora Albertina, who expressed to Gandhi her father’s deep respect for him and his work.
CHAPTER 7
FASTING AGAINST UNTOUCHABILITY
Freedom without equality for all, irrespective of race or religion, is not worth having.
M.K. Gandhi

The truce that followed the Gandhi-Irwin pact did not last long as the government had begun to crack down on opponents of its policies. In the North-West Frontier Province, the authorities arrested Abdul Ghaffar Khan. After serving an order on Jawaharlal Nehru not to leave Allahabad nor participate in any public meeting, they arrested him two days later. The promised inquiry into the Bardoli land situation was discontinued, and repressive policies resumed in Bengal. On his return to India, Gandhi was quick to see that the Government’s policy had reverted to one of undermining Congress by repression, and commented with not a little sarcasm that the new hard-line measures were “Christmas gifts from Lord Willingdon, our Christian Viceroy.”

The conflicting political moves by the government were perplexing. On the one hand, there was the apparent conciliatory spirit of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the Round Table Conference in London; on the other hand, there were the new repressive ordinances. Neither the Congress nor Gandhi accepted the government’s justification that the severe ordinances were put in place to prevent disorder. Members of Congress proposed a resumption of the civil disobedience campaign. Lord Willingdon saw the Congress Working Committee’s resolutions and Gandhi’s request for an interview as threats and declined to meet with him. Moving swiftly, the Viceroy gave the orders for the arrest and incarceration of Gandhi and Sardar Patel. Nehru was tried and sentenced to two years imprisonment. It was not difficult to see that the Viceroy was in no mood for negotiations and was using his official power to craft a policy that would deny civil liberty for Indians by increasing the power of the magistrates and the police.
It was clear that the fortunes of the Indian freedom movement which had waxed so splendidly during the Salt March Satyagraha campaign were on the wane. The events following the Gandhi-Irwin pact to the Round Table Conference seemed to be an opening to advance the cause of Indian Home Rule, but it was possible that the British authorities used the negotiations to place more obstacles in the way of Home Rule. As the Round Table Conference proceeded, Gandhi had sensed instinctively that the focus on the minorities issue at the conference was meant to undermine the nationalist movement. Gandhi’s perspective on the issue of minorities was given in a lecture at Eton, London, where he was invited to give a “Hindu” view of the question. Gandhi said that he was mindful that members of the audience might one day be Prime Ministers of England, but he wanted to correct the “false history” traditionally imparted to them. The communal question, he said, was of no importance compared with the question of Indian freedom. The truth was for him that British politicians and the British educated classes were unwilling to imagine a free India, and he felt that the issues of minority rights and separate electorates that dominated the discussions were the means to undermine the Congress vision of an independent India. Gandhi had little doubt that the intransigence of the imperial sentiment and the weakness of the Ramsay MacDonald government encouraged the separatist political factions in India.

The extreme ordinances denying civil liberty continued to increase. Congress was declared illegal, as were peasant organizations, youth leagues, student associations, universities, schools, hospitals, swadeshi organizations, and even libraries associated with Congress. In one ordinance, parents and guardians were made responsible for the actions of their children. Homes and money in banks were confiscated, and whipping became a
frequent punishment. It was no wonder that Winston Churchill called the ordinances the most severe since the Great Mutiny of 1857. Although some 80,000 people were arrested, the civil disobedience movement endured.

When he learnt that the Prime Minister was going to announce the creation of a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, Gandhi informed Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, that if the government instituted such a policy, he was going to begin fasting to try to stop what he considered an unjust law. He argued that the social advancement of the Depressed Classes was always an important project for him, but the policy of a separate electorate would divide Hinduism, which made the issue a moral and religious question for him, not a political one. He was certainly not against their representation in the legislatures and was in favor of their franchise as voters, irrespective of education or property qualification. He found intolerable, however, the proposed policy to separate the Depressed Classes from Hinduism. If written into the constitution, it would make their legal status permanent. For Gandhi, the policy was “an injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and do no good to the Depressed Classes.” Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald found Gandhi’s attitude unreasonable. As far as he was concerned, the proposal was but a means to give an exploited minority the opportunity to have their voices heard from their own elected representatives. In the Prime Minister’s mind, the Untouchables would not be separated from the Hindu community in voting. They would vote twice, once as a member of a Depressed Class, and the other as a Hindu. Gandhi’s point of view on the issue was not shared by many leaders of Orthodox Hindu organizations, the Muslim League, the Sikh community, and the Untouchables.
Ramsay MacDonald announced his government’s plan for minority representation, which included separate electorates for Muslims, Sikhs, Europeans, Christians, and the Untouchables. Gandhi immediately informed the Prime Minister that he was beginning a “perpetual fast unto death” on September 20, 1932. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a lawyer and leader of the Untouchables, saw the fast as “a political stunt.” The younger members of Congress, like Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, thought that Gandhi had lost his mind, and felt that the issue of separate electorates for Untouchables diverted political action from civil disobedience and the question of independence for India. Gandhi was not blind to this predicament. At the recent Round Table Conference in London, for example, he had seen how the vision of an independent India under the leadership of the Congress Party enshrined in the Motilal Nehru constitutional proposal and symbolized magnificently in the successful Salt March of 1930 had been derailed by communal and minority issues. Gandhi did not ignore the weight of these issues, but he felt, like the majority of Congress, that an independent India would be able to address them more justly than the British had. In any case, he mistrusted Britain’s avowed intentions to grant self-government to India. Their rhetoric of reforms seemed to him the offering of a carrot when they feared Indian resistance, to be followed predictably by the stick when they thought they had the advantage.

Gandhi’s political vision of an independent India often seemed secondary to specific issues of social reform, in particular the upliftment and advancement of the downtrodden. The abolition of untouchability was a cardinal objective of Satyagraha. He had very modern ideas about social reform, whether they were about untouchables or women, or the poor. But his approach to social reform was designed to work within
India’s traditions to remove injustice, not to declare war on its traditions. He was skeptical of the ability of political and legal establishments to bring genuine reforms. What he proposed was to change people’s hearts and minds by appealing to their reasonableness and searching for the practices and associations that would bring people together. Gandhi himself had criticized severely untouchability, and all forms of social inequality. But his study of India’s history and traditions had revealed to him that India had a rich tradition of social and religious reform from Lord Buddha to his own time. He was always willing to criticize traditions that seemed unjust, and, at the same time, he appealed to other ideals and institutions of tradition for solutions.¹ This was the perspective with which Gandhi examined the issue of untouchability. The younger Indian nationalists were modernists, including Nehru and Bose, and were impatient with Gandhi’s faith in India’s traditions.

The masses did not see the fast as irrational, as they showed concern for Gandhi’s life. The untouchable leader, M.C. Rajah, the Muslim Yakub Hasan, and Rajendra Prasad encouraged their followers not to belittle Gandhi’s action, and made a call to action to save his life. Resolutions were passed demanding that the proposal to create a separate electorate for untouchables be withdrawn. Cables poured in from around the world expressing anxiety and sympathy for Gandhi. Over one hundred Hindu leaders met in Bombay and pledged to work to end untouchability and to save Gandhi’s life by creating the conditions whereby he would end his fast.

Gandhi wrote to Tagore asking for his support for his action: “…If you can bless the effort, I want it. You have been a true friend, because you have been a candid friend, often speaking your thoughts aloud. If your heart approves of the action, I want your
blessing. It will sustain me. I hope I have made myself clear. My love.” Even before
his letter was sent, he received the poet’s telegram pledging his support: “It is worth
sacrificing precious life for the sake of India’s unity and her social integrity. Our
sorrowing hearts will follow your sublime penance with reverence and love.” In a longer
discourse, Tagore wrote:

Let us try to understand the meaning of his message. From the beginning of
human history there has continued the cleavage between classes, those favored by
circumstances exploiting the weakness of others and building the stronghold of
their own pride of superiority upon the humiliation of a large section of the
community. Though the practice has been prevalent for long, yet we must assert
that it is against the true spirit of man. No civilized society can thrive upon
victims whose humanity has been permanently mutilated, whose minds have been
compelled to dwell in the dark. Those whom we keep down inevitably drag us
down, and obstruct our movement in the path of progress. The indignity with
which we burden them grows into an intolerable burden to the whole country; we
insult our own humanity by insulting Man where he is helpless or where he is not
of our own kin…We on our part in India have banished a considerable number of
our own people into a narrow enclosure of insult, branding them with the sign of
permanent degradation. A dungeon does not solely consist of brick and mortar
confine ment, but setting narrow limits to man’s self-respect is a moral prison
more cruel for victims than the physical one and more demoralizing for those who
encourage it passively or with pious fervor. The concrete fact of inequalities
between individuals and races cannot be ignored, but to accept it as absolute and
utilize it is to deprive men of their human rights and comradeship. It is a social
crime that multiplies fast in its heinousness…The signs of such trials are not
lacking in the Western Continents where the chasm between wealth and want is
widening and is darkly nourishing earthquakes in its depth. The moral channels
of communication should never be obstructed if Man must be saved from
degeneracy or destruction…Against that deep-seated moral weakness in our
society Mahatmaji has pronounced his ultimatum, and though it may be our
misfortune to lose him in the battlefield, the fight will be passed on to every one
of us to be carried to the final end. It is the gift of the fight which he is going to
offer to us, and if we do not know how to accept it humbly and yet with proud
determination, if we cheaply dismiss it with some ceremonials to which we are
accustomed and allow the noble life to be wasted, with its great meaning missed,
than our people will passively roll down the slope of degradation to the blankness
of utter futility…

When journalists interviewed Gandhi on the first evening of his fast, he reiterated
his objection to separate electorates for untouchables, saying that he had faith in Hindu
reform movements whose purpose was to change the hearts and minds of Hindus to accept the equality of all human beings. He said that he wanted to eradicate untouchability root and branch, and was searching for an agreement that reached the hearts of Hindus and convince them to embrace untouchables as brothers and sisters. As Gandhi’s blood pressure began to rise, and concern for his health became serious, Hindu leaders feverishly huddled to find a solution and hurried to Yeravda jail to present their ideas to Gandhi.³

It was agreed that the number of seats reserved for the Depressed classes would depend on their proportion of the total Hindu population. This eventually was fixed at 147 (Ramsay MacDonald had proposed 71). Untouchables would vote first in primary elections for a panel of 4 candidates for each reserved seat, and then would vote with the general Hindu population for the final selection. In this way the idea of joint electorates was preserved. There was further debate about how long the separate primaries should continue. Gandhi wanted 5 years and Dr. Ambedkar, 25. They accepted Rajagopalachari’s suggestion that it should be determined in future discussions. On September 24, on the fifth day of the fast, a complete agreement was reached. The resolution drafted by Gandhi read: “This conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth, and those who have been so regarded hitherto, will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and other public institutions. This right will have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the swaraj parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before, to secure by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now
imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.” The text was cabled to Charlie Andrews and Henry Polak in London who immediately sent it for approval to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald.

On September 26, at 5.15 in the afternoon, in the presence of about 200 people, the poet Tagore who had journeyed across India to be at Gandhi’s side, sang a Bengali hymn from his *Gitanjali*:

When my heart is dry and parched,
Come with a merciful shower.
When grace is lost from life, come
With a burst of song.

Everyone then joined in the singing of Gandhi’s favorite hymn, *Vaishnava Jana*, after which Kasturbai handed him a glass of orange juice to break his fast. His six-day fast had dramatized the plight of the Untouchables throughout India as never before. A spirit of reform swept Hindus, and countless resolutions were passed to give access to untouchables to temples, public wells, and other public institutions. There were instances where caste Hindus dined with untouchables. Gandhi issued a statement saying that he hoped that the message of freedom would penetrate every home where untouchables lived and that the trust that was generated by the pact would persuade Hindus and Muslims to try once more to achieve unity. Untouchability Abolition Week was observed from September 27 to October 2. Indian leaders took the occasion to explain the resolutions of the Yeravda pact and urge the abolition of untouchability. There were inter-caste dinners in all Indian cities.
According to the Indian calendar, Gandhi’s sixty-fourth birthday fell on September 27. In celebration of “Mahatmaji’s birthday,” Tagore praised Gandhi saying that his life was “a constant call to us to emancipation in service and self-dedication.” He set the theme for Untouchability Abolition Week by asking everyone to make a determined effort to join Gandhi “in his noble task of removing the burden of ages, the burden of disrespect upon the bent back of those who have been stigmatized for the accident of their birth, and the sinful denial, to a large body of our countrymen, of sympathy which is the birthright of all human beings.” A general feeling of hope was in the air. Shaukat Ali sent a telegram to Gandhi asking him to revive the spirit of unity between Hindus and Muslims. Many Indian leaders saw the significance of this moment and asked the Viceroy to release Gandhi so that he could lead the movement for social reform. Instead, the government withdrew Gandhi’s special privileges of access to interviews and correspondence.

The momentum to have Gandhi released did not slacken. In the councils and the press, advocates of social reform stressed his importance to the campaign against untouchability. The government responded that they could not do so since the civil disobedience campaign was still in force, but were willing, nevertheless, to restore his former privileges. In answer to critics who suggested that his fast was an instrument of coercion, Gandhi answered that the purpose of his fast was to remove untouchability, root and branch. The most important part of the Yeravda pact was to persuade caste Hindus to change their hearts and minds towards the Untouchables, “to embrace the supposed brethren and sisters as their own, whom they have to invite to their temples, their homes, and their schools.”
Some Orthodox Hindu groups like the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha were critical of Gandhi’s attack on untouchability and his version of Hinduism. Gandhi defended his view of Hinduism by emphasizing that for forty years he had sought to live in accordance with the teachings of the Vedas and the Gita. During that time he had studied the Bible, the Koran, the Zend Avesta, and the scriptures of other religions, which illuminated for him many parts of the Hindu sacred books. Asserting that “Hinduism excluded no faith and no teacher,” Gandhi confessed that the study of the lives of Jesus, Mohammed, and Zoroaster enriched his own life, and that, as far as he was concerned, religion was not essentially about outward rituals but more about the inner search for the divine presence and self-realization.

He said that he had no doubt that the social disease of untouchability had sapped the foundation of Indian society, but offered the hope that, if the root of this discrimination was destroyed, people would begin to forget the differences between “caste and caste, religion and religion, and begin to believe that even as all Hindus are one and indivisible, so are Hindus, Musalmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Jews, and Christians, branches of the same parent tree. Though religions are many, religion is one.”

Gandhi preferred to call untouchables Harijans or “Children of God,” and decided to commence his campaign against untouchability by focusing on the issue of temple-entry for Harijans. When Gandhi proposed a fast to highlight this initiative, Dr. Ambedkar, the major spokesman of untouchables, responded that a religious issue was not worth risking one’s life. This was but one of the differences of opinion between the two outstanding defenders of the rights of untouchables. Although Gandhi understood well Dr. Ambedkar’s socio-economic perspective, he disagreed with him, arguing that his
experience of long years working among the Indian masses made him realize how important religion mattered to the downtrodden, and he felt that access to public temples would have a powerful impact on untouchables and caste Hindus alike.

Disputing the argument of those who defended segregation from untouchables because of their unclean occupations like scavenging and tanning, Gandhi answered that mothers and medical doctors were considered sacred occupations but “every mother is a scavenger in regard to her own children, and every student of modern medicine is a tanner inasmuch as he has to dissect and skin human carcasses.” He was sure that welcoming Harijans as brothers and sisters was a sufficient incentive to cleanliness and encouraged teaching them how to clean their villages in a hygienic manner. Experts should teach them the scientific way to construct closets and to dispose night soil. Gandhi declared that there was nothing undignified about scavenging or tanning, and reminded caste Hindus to pay Harijans a decent wage.

Although the campaign against untouchability upstaged the civil disobedience movement, the British government did not change their policy. At another Round Table Conference in London, it was clear that the intent of the Government was to continue to treat Congress as outlaws rather than encourage them to participate in establishing a working system of government. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, an Indian liberal, summed up the mood in India best when he said that in his thirty years of experience as a public figure he had not seen such bitterness and hostility in Indian homes as in the last few months.

When Congress leaders complained that they were confused whether they should support the campaign against untouchability or the civil disobedience struggle, Gandhi
sympathized with their predicament, and encouraged them to make their own choice. He insisted that for him political and social issues were always linked, and admitted that the successes that resulted from the campaign for the Harijans filled him with hope that it was still possible for India to resolve its discriminatory social and cultural practices, although the dizzying ups and downs of the political fortunes of Indian freedom at times saddened him. The question of the character of independent India was very important to Gandhi. As he grew older, and he was now 64 years old, the quality of social and cultural life within India became more significant, and he was happy that the Viceroy supported the Untouchability Abolition Bill.

After the government suspended his newspaper, Young India, Gandhi founded Harijan, an eight-page weekly, to disseminate news and analyses about the campaign against untouchability. The first issue was published in Poona on February 11, 1933. In his article, Gandhi explained that it was an untouchable correspondent who suggested to him the word “Harijan” which meant “man of God.” Affirming that all the religions of the world described God as the friend of the helpless and the weak, he asked who were more helpless in India than the forty million Hindus who were classified as untouchables. Rabindranath Tagore contributed a poem, The Cleanser, while Dr. Ambedkar simply expressed his views on the caste system: “The outcaste is a by-product of the caste system. There will be outcastes as long as there are castes.” Replying to Dr. Ambedkar, Gandhi agreed that untouchability was a monster and must be abolished, but he did not think that it was a consequence of the caste system. At this time, Gandhi still had an idealized notion of the caste system or varna, as he believed it functioned in the past where society was divided into four parts, each complementing the other and where no
one was inferior or superior to the other. He was quick to condemn caste Hindus for not living in accordance with the ideals of their professions, and said that he wished all had volunteered to become members of the lowest caste so that wisdom, power, and wealth would be used for the service of truth and humanity.

Meanwhile, the Yeravda pact ran into severe criticism. Orthodox Hindu leaders founded journals to discredit Gandhi’s campaign. When Dr. Ambedkar began to question the panel system in the Yeravda pact, Gandhi’s mind turned again to fasting. Confident in his use of fasting as a nonviolent method of last resort, he announced that he was commencing a 21 day fast: In giving his reasons for the fast, he wrote:

During all these months since September last, I have been studying the correspondence and literature, and holding prolonged discussions with men and women, learned and ignorant, Harijans and non-Harijans. The evil is far greater than even I had thought it to be. It will not be eradicated by money, external organization and even political power for the Harijans, though all these are necessary. But to be effective, they must follow, or at least accompany, inward organization, inward power, in other words, self-purification. This can only come by fasting and prayer.

His decision to fast now caused consternation among his friends. Mirabehn, Dr. Ansari, and General Smuts felt that the decision to fast was wrong. Rabindranath Tagore wondered whether he was mistaken this time. Even the tears of his youngest son, Devadas, could not move him. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote from jail that he did not understand what was happening. Charlie Andrews and Romain Rolland sent messages of support. At 12 noon on May 8, under the mango tree in Yeravda prison, Gandhi began his fast. Fearful that he would die, the government set him free.

Now that he was released from jail, he suspended civil disobedience for a month and asked the government to release all political prisoners and withdraw the repressive
ordinances. He said that he had nothing but praise for the civil resisters, and repeated his call to withdraw the emergency ordinances and release the political prisoners because no settlement was likely as long as Sardar Patel, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and Pandit Nehru were in jail. Congress extended the suspension of civil disobedience for six weeks, a move which failed to nudge the government to change its harsh policies. In Europe, Subhas Bose and Vithalbhai Patel denounced Gandhi, calling the suspension of civil disobedience “a confession of failure.” There were times during his fast when it was feared that he would not survive. After six days he seemed in a trance and was like a skeleton. But he survived, breaking his fast on May 29 with the customary glass of orange juice and prayers.

Too weak to resume his political activities, he attended the marriage of his youngest son, Devadas, to Laxmi, the daughter of his friend and supporter, Rajagopalachari. His health sufficiently restored, Gandhi called a meeting of members of Congress to discuss civil disobedience. There was some support for the motion to call off civil disobedience, but it was defeated, as was the motion in favor of adopting individual civil disobedience. Members supported the motion authorizing Gandhi to seek an unconditional interview with the Viceroy, who declined twice Gandhi’s requests stating that he would continue to refuse to meet him as long as civil disobedience was not completely withdrawn. Unwilling to compromise or negotiate, the government wanted surrender. The decision was taken to suspend mass civil disobedience, but encouragement was given to individual civil disobedience. 100,000 people were imprisoned during the eighteen months the mass movement lasted.
On July 26, 1933, Gandhi announced that he intended to disband Sabarmati ashram, the home for his family, friends, and followers for eighteen years. It was the revolutionary center of the constructive program and the training for civil resistance. The government’s rejection of a policy of compromise meant that it could not continue without ending its ties to the civil disobedience campaign. During the past two years, members had refused to pay taxes which resulted in the seizure of goods which were sold to raise the due taxes. It saddened Gandhi to leave Sabarmati ashram:

[The greatest measure of sacrifice is to be expected of me as the author of the movement. I can, therefore, offer that which is nearest and dearest to me, and for building up of which I and many other members of the ashram have labored with infinite patience and care, all these eighteen years. Every head of the cattle and every tree has its history and sacred association. They are members of a family. What was once a barren plot of land has been turned by human endeavor into a fair-sized model garden colony. It will not be without a tear that we shall break up the family and its many activities.]

The khadi stock and the contents of the workshop were given to the All-India Spinners’ Association; the land and buildings were given to a recently formed Harijan group. Gandhi announced that he and 33 of the inmates, including Kasturbai and Mahadev Desai, planned to become a wandering ashram preaching civil resistance in Gujarat. On August 1 Gandhi, Kasturbai, and the others were arrested and jailed. Gandhi was taken to Yeravda prison, but was released on August 4 on condition that he stayed within the confines of Poona city. When he indicated that he would not observe the restraint order, he was arrested again and sentenced to a year’s imprisonment without privileges on this occasion. Gandhi’s imprisonment set in motion the individual civil disobedience campaign when hundreds of Congress members were jailed. Gandhi commenced another fast to restore the privileges promised in the Yeravda pact, among
which were permission to receive newspapers and periodicals, two visitors a day, and the right to send contributions to the editor of Harijan three times a week. The government reminded him that they had provided ample facilities and that they were prepared to release him if he was willing to abandon civil disobedience.

A week later, his eyes sunken and pale beyond recognition, he was taken from the prison to Sassoon Hospital. When it appeared that he was dying, he was released unconditionally. Realizing that it would take some time to recover his health, he announced that he was abstaining from the civil disobedience movement until the following August. Jawaharlal Nehru was also set free and came to visit him. Two years since they last met, they had long conversations, and both agreed that complete independence was their goal, and that an independent India must adopt the principle of redistribution of resources to improve the condition of the masses. In September, Gandhi’s health had improved enough for him to set up a new ashram at Wardha, a small village in the Central Provinces, which had been founded by Vinoba Bhave.

He decided to devote the remainder of his one-year suspended sentence to work for the untouchables, and traveled some 12,000 miles visiting countless towns and villages, preaching to tens of thousands of avid listeners to end discrimination against untouchables, and raising funds.

THE GREAT BIHAR EARTHQUAKE OF 1934

On January 15, 1934, while Gandhi was touring South India, a devastating earthquake hit Bihar, killing thousands and destroying many towns. Both Hindu and Muslim communities were in the midst of religious festivals at the time. The effects of the earthquake covered some 30,000 square miles. It was said that the thunderous noise
around 2.15 p.m. was followed by almost total darkness as the thick dust covered the sunlight. One million homes were destroyed and 65,000 wells damaged. The people of Bihar thought that the end of the world had come. The government released Rajendra Prasad from jail so that he could assist in disaster relief. The number of deaths was initially placed between ten and twenty thousand people. Gandhi was numbed when Rajendra Prasad cabled him to inform him of the disaster. “What shall I write? What comfort shall I give?” he replied. He described the calamity in Bihar at every meeting he addressed, and asked for funds for the victims. In an article in Harijan, Gandhi suggested the theme of divine chastisement for untouchability as the explanation for the disaster to which the poet Tagore was quick to respond criticizing Gandhi for his unscientific view of natural phenomena.

Gandhi cut short his Harijan tour in South India and reached Patna, the center of relief work in Bihar, on March 11, 1934. The British social worker, Miss Agatha Harrison, left this portrait of what Gandhi’s presence meant to the earthquake victims:

How can I describe these two days to you? With the exception of a few miles of route in the outlying districts we drove between walls of people. As we neared a village or town, these human walls would press in almost to the point of suffocation in an effort to see this much-loved man, Mahatma Gandhi. Sometimes, through sheer fatigue, he would curl up on the seat and sleep and I would talk to Babu Rajendra Prasad. As we neared a village, and the motor slowed down, Babu Rajendra Prasad on one side, and the chauffeur on the other, would lean out and call out softly in Hindustani, ‘He sleeps.’

Wherever he spoke, he emphasized the call to rebuilding as well as reminding them about the need to remove untouchability. The horrible earthquake affected all Indians, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others, including those who saw themselves as high-born and low-born. He hoped that the disaster would teach all Indians to “obliterate all the arbitrary man-made distinctions between man and man.” He admitted that he could
not say with certainty that a calamity was caused by a particular human action. What he wanted to emphasize was that “every visitation of nature does and should mean to us nature’s call to introspection, repentance, and self-purification.” These were his themes as he traversed the earthquake-stricken area, using the pain that the earthquake caused not only to awaken the minds of Indians to the discrimination against Harijans, but also to call them to support his vision of India that would encourage diversity and equality.

When a Muslim worker at a relief center informed him that Hindus were reluctant to accept food from a non-Hindu, Gandhi said:

Is it not shocking to regard the touch of a Mussulman or a Christian as unclean, even though he may be as truthful, god-fearing, pure, self-sacrificing and brave as any? God has created different faiths...How can I even secretly harbor the thought that my neighbor’s faith is inferior to mine? As a true and loyal friend, I can only wish and pray that he may live and grow perfect in his own faith. In God’s house there are many mansions and they are all equally holy. All the great religions of the world inculcate the equality and brotherhood of mankind and the virtue of toleration. Touch-me-not’ism that disfigures the present-day Hinduism is a morbid growth. It betrays a woodenness of the mind and a blind self-conceit. It is abhorrent alike to the spirit of religion and morality.\(^9\)

When he had completed inspecting the devastation in Bihar, he called a meeting of the central committee for relief work and introduced a motion to cooperate with the government in relieving the distress in Bihar. The Bihar earthquake, coming in the midst of the campaign against untouchability, made the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements recede to the background. British imperialists and Indian nationalists were cooperating to ameliorate the Bihar disaster. Gandhi hoped that the crisis would bring them all together, and banish all the differences, both political and racial. As the mind contemplated the fact of 20,000 dead, old enmities were forgotten. They worked not as Congressmen but as humanitarians.\(^10\)
On April 4, Dr. Ansari, Bhulabhai Desai, and Dr. B.C. Roy met Gandhi to discuss with him the resolution taken at a recent conference in Delhi that the Swaraj Party should be revived to participate in the forthcoming elections. Gandhi welcomed this development as he had already made up his mind to suspend civil resistance. It was decided that he would be for the time being the sole representative of civil resistance in action.

The news of Gandhi’s statement calling off civil disobedience sent Jawaharlal Nehru into a rage. The truth was that many Congressmen knew that the mood of the people was not favorable for continuing the campaign of civil resistance. The All-India Congress Committee met in Patna in May 1934 and endorsed Gandhi’s statement calling off civil disobedience. Gandhi resigned from Congress in order to devote himself fully to social reform movements and the revival of village industries and handicrafts. He, nevertheless, remained in close touch with Congress which held several committee meetings at Gandhi’s new Sevagram ashram in Wardha. In his mind, however, he felt that this was the end of his role as leader of the nationalist movement.
CHAPTER 8

NONVIOLENCE AND WAR: WORLD WAR II TO QUIT INDIA

*Ahimsa* [nonviolence] with me is a creed, the breath of my life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before India, or for that matter before anyone except in casual informal talks. I placed it before Congress as a political method, to be employed for the solution of the political questions…Nonviolence has brought us near to *Swaraj* [freedom] as never before. We dare not exchange it even for *Swaraj*.


As he removed himself from the spotlight of national politics in late 1934 to concentrate on his constructive program in the villages, Gandhi was mindful that the political climate in India had changed. Since the enthusiasm generated by civil disobedience and the success of the Salt March of 1930 had waned, Congress members wanted to test the usefulness of the new constitution for India enacted in the Government of India Act of 1935. Indeed, Gandhi encouraged Congress to participate in the elections that were scheduled for 1937. He was not unhappy to be once more on the margins of national politics because he would now have more time to devote to social reforms in Indian villages. The deaths of old friends, most recently the death of his physician Dr. Ansari in 1936, caused him profound grief.¹ As he addressed the new situation, he was able without difficulty to accept a smaller role in Congress politics and give his authority to younger men like Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi’s focus on his constructive program did not mean that he was now retiring from the struggle for independence. A central pillar of his vision for India was always the character of independent India more than simply
independence from Great Britain. Social liberation was as important to him as political liberation. He was fighting now on a different front, to use a military metaphor.

He confronted the crisis of old age with no less activity than when he was young, but did not escape illness. From 1935 he suffered from high blood pressure for long periods, and, often on the verge of collapse, had to spend long periods in bed to recover. As he revealed his deepest feelings in his numerous writings and letters, we see the persistence of his faith in the ultimate goodness of humanity and his struggle to find Truth in the world. He began to speak more frequently and intimately about the presence of the Divine. The struggle against untouchability made him reflect deeply on the ills of Hinduism and how to bring about reforms, but he was more concerned with what religion meant rather than specific religions. He found that the commentary in the Gita on the first stanza of the Isha Upanishad expressed his sentiments best:

At the heart of this phenomenal world,
Within all its changing forms,
Dwells the unchanging Lord.
So, go beyond the changing,
And, enjoying the inner,
Cease to take for your self what to others
Are riches.

But this increasing certainty about God’s presence did not mean that he was not skeptical about his own search for Truth, or that he was unwilling to accept responsibility for his part in plans and actions. He questioned himself often about the ends of his campaigns, and was willing to negotiate and compromise concerning them. At the same time, he insisted on the primacy of means over ends. The imperative of nonviolence
became the central tenet of *Satyagraha*. As was demonstrated eloquently at Chauri Chaura in 1922, he was not afraid to call off civil disobedience when it became violent. Not even the prospect of victory was able to persuade him to change his mind. Gandhi had doubts about his role and achievements in India’s struggle for independence. In making public the smallest details of his private life, his contradictions, and experiments with truth, Gandhi revealed that, although he remained hopeful that truth and love would triumph, he found the ideal of emotional detachment elusive.¹ His last years were full of mental turmoil. The intensity of Hindu-Muslim conflict, the difficulty of abolishing untouchability, and the many obstacles that the British placed on the path to *swaraj* made him at times doubt the effectiveness of his actions, and took their toll on his personal life.²

**VILLAGE UPLIFT**

Gandhi made Sevagram, a poor and isolated village five miles from his ashram at Wardha, his headquarters for the constructive program. Village reconstruction was not new. The *khadi* and *swadeshi* movements were clearly the precedents for the village constructive program, but these campaigns sought to link rural uplift with the social and economic reforms of Indian towns. What was different about the project in the later 1930s was that Gandhi chose to emphasize reforms of Indian villages as self-sufficient entities, and present this idea as the centerpiece of the revival of an independent India. In revitalized village communities, the Indian rural masses would learn the lessons of self-reliance and social responsibility. This was how Gandhi understood the link between his
constructive social program and the struggle for political independence. If the Indian masses were not educated to help themselves nor given the freedom to improve their condition, he maintained that Indian independence would only mean replacing a British autocrat with an Indian autocrat.

Gandhi and his supporters deliberated on the ways to provide work for the villagers, to build their self-esteem, and to introduce schooling that would be related to the conditions of the villagers’ lives. He walked over dusty and, at other times, muddy roads teaching them how to build better latrines or public wells so that their drinking water would be pure, insisting repeatedly that the unclean conditions of their homes and villages were the causes of disease. As he went about his work with patience and diligence, Gandhi understood that any reform movement that was based on the transformation of the individual and community through education would take time.

From discussions with his co-workers on the relation between the constructive program and civil disobedience, Gandhi composed a pamphlet addressed to members of the Indian National Congress on the meaning and place of the constructive program. He made it clear that he did not separate his work for individual and community reform from the campaign for political independence. Compare the creative work they were doing in the villages, he wrote, with the destruction of property in towns and villages that attended the attempt to construct independence by violent means: “Complete independence through truth and nonviolence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, color, or creed. This independence is never exclusive. It is, therefore, wholly compatible with interdependence within or without.”

Acknowledging that reality would fall short of the
ideal, he said that what mattered was the effort to practice truth and nonviolence. He felt that his inclusive vision of India as a nation of diverse peoples, cultures, and religions could be made a reality only by nonviolent means, since independence won by violent means would produce the ascendancy of one party or group which would make it difficult to achieve equality and liberty for all.

Communal unity topped his list of requirements for independence. All Indians were encouraged to reach out to those whose religion was different from their own. Making a distinction between political unity and “unity of the heart,” Gandhi made it clear that communal unity did not mean that all Indians must belong to the same party or association, but stressed that they must respect and trust each other. Whatever their religion, he asked Congress members to consider themselves as the representatives in their own persons of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Parsees, Sikhs, and others, and actively cultivate friendships with Indians who followed a different religion so that they could identify with all Indians. On the question of the abolition of untouchability, he disagreed that those who felt that the matter was more a political necessity than a moral issue, arguing that what was at stake in the campaign to end untouchability was no less than the reform of Hinduism and the recovery of its moral basis. Gandhi urged reformers to approach Orthodox Hindus in a spirit of friendliness so that all Hindus would make common cause with Harijans and remove them from their isolation, “an isolation as perhaps the world has never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnesses in India.” He said that he knew from personal experience how difficult it was to end this practice, but it was a part of the project of constructing freedom: “And the road to Swaraj is steep and narrow. There are many slippery ascents and many steep chasms. They have all to
be negotiated with unaltering step before we can reach the summit and breathe the fresh air of freedom.”

The spinning-wheel and the use of khadi remained important symbols and projects of the constructive program of Satyagraha. He was probably referring to the criticism of his friend, Rabindranath Tagore, and younger nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose when he wrote that some had said that he was taking the country back to the dark ages by making khadi vital to the struggle for independence. Gandhi defended his policy by insisting that the idea behind the cause to popularize khadi was to make economic self-reliance and equality central to the vision of an independent India by changing the colonial mentality of uncritical dependence on Great Britain to “a wholesale swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessaries of life in India and that too through the labor and intellect of the villages. That means the reversal of the existing process. That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities of India and Great Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of 700,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world.”

Aware that the success of the khadi project depended on a revolutionary change of tastes, he felt certain that it was the way to empower the people, redistribute material resources, and decentralize the economy. To establish village economies, he said that they should encourage industries like hand-grinding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-dressing, and the like. This was all part of his “vision of a new India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown.”

Reiterating his theme of equality, he stressed that economic equality was the “master-key to nonviolent independence.” It would end the conflict between capital and
labor, and narrow the wide gulf between the few rich and the millions who went hungry. He said that he still held hopes for his project of trusteeship whereby those who held property would be persuaded to voluntarily give up some of their property to the community and consider themselves as trustees of property, not owners, to be used for the good of the community. Admitting that the result of this project was small and was often the subject of ridicule, he countered that the journey to equality and freedom was slow, adding a note of caution to those who said that social and economic reform would come after independence: “It will not drop from heaven all of a sudden one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort.”

He did not expect that equality would come merely by the conversion of the wealthy classes. Peasants and industrial workers had to be organized to remove injustice nonviolently, and make legitimate demands for a fairer system of distribution. He called on his followers to reflect on the experience of Satyagraha in the peasant struggles of Champaran, Kheda, Bardoli, and Borsad, which were mass-movements and completely nonviolent. Peasants in these districts had a history of violent struggle against landlords, but it was only when they became politically conscious of the usefulness of nonviolence that they were successful. Declaring that peasants did not need sermons on nonviolence, he advised that peasants should be organized and taught how to practice nonviolent methods around a specific campaign to correct an injustice that they suffered, and not utilized for other political grievances.

On the issue of industrial labor, he cited the enduring example of Ahmedabad, recalling the successful mill-workers strike of 1918. Out of that struggle there was established a pattern of resolving conflicts between capital and labor, and building self-
help institutions that were still in operation. He said that the Ahmedabad Labor Union had grown in strength “without fuss and without show. It has its hospital, its school for the children of mill-hands, its classes for adults, its own printing press and *khadi* depot, its own residential quarters. Almost all the hands are voters and decide the fate of elections.” Gandhi felt that the Ahmedabad Labor Union was the model for all labor organizations in India.

Returning to an old theme of village sanitation, he blamed the separation of intellect from manual labor by the Indian privileged social classes for the negligence of village life. He said that villages had become “dung-heaps” where he would like to “shut one’s eyes and stuff one’s nose” if he encountered them, and asked Congressmen to make villages models of cleanliness, and to set in place ways to educate villagers about the importance and benefits of sanitation. He urged them to set the example for the cultivation of body and mind, and respect for both intellectual and manual work. Since the way to make villagers receptive to these reforms was by education, Gandhi proposed that children and their parents should receive an education which should focus not only on overcoming illiteracy, but also on obtaining practical knowledge about how to keep their villages clean. But that was not all. He felt that the village schools should teach “all that is best and lasting in India,” and to develop “both the body and the mind, which keeps the child rooted in the soil with a glorious vision of the future.”

Gandhi included in this discussion the role women should play in the achievement of independence. Although women played a major part in all the *Satyagraha* campaigns, he felt that Congress had not yet realized that women should be equal partners in the struggle for *swaraj*:
Woman must be the true helpmate of man in the mission of service. Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on nonviolence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his. But as every right in a nonviolent society proceeds from the previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fullness in their behavior towards women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and co-workers. It is up to Congressmen to see that they enable them to realize their full status and play their part as equals of men. This revolution is easy, if the mind is made up. Let Congressmen begin with their own homes. Wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence, but should be treated as honored comrades in common service. To this end those who have not received a liberal education should receive such instruction as is possible from their husbands. The same observation applies to mothers and daughters.

He acknowledged that in presenting this picture of women he was giving a one-sided picture, because in the villages of India they were not subservient to men. But the legal and customary status of women was generally discriminatory and needed radical change. In conclusion, Gandhi asserted that without the support of the masses through the constructive program, civil disobedience would be “mere bravado and worse than useless.” For Gandhi, civil disobedience without the constructive program was like “a paralyzed hand attempting to lift a spoon.”

**THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT OF 1935**

Now that civil disobedience was called off, Congress made preparations to enter the mainstream of constitutional politics. The Government of India Act of 1935 embraced two principles: The first was the establishment of an Indian federation comprising eleven responsible provinces of British India, the Princely States, and a small number of chief commissioner’s provinces administered by the central government. This
federation never came into existence because the Indian princes feared that their autocratic power would be subjected to restraint. The demise of the principle of federation at this moment was expected but, later, when the prospect of independence was undermined by calamitous communal conflict, a weak federation was offered as the constitutional solution. The second principle of the 1935 Act was the granting of provincial autonomy, which came after elections on April 1, 1937. The number of those who qualified to vote reached some thirty five million, among whom were 6 million women. Subjected to broad criticism when it was debated in the House of Commons, the Act was attacked by Winston Churchill because it gave Indians too much power and responsibility. Jawaharlal Nehru spoke for the younger and more radical members of Congress when he denounced it in 1936 as a “charter of slavery.” The new Viceroy was Lord Linlithgow who was sent to oversee the development of provincial autonomy. The Congress Party campaigned feverishly for the 1937 elections, drawing large crowds at meetings. Nehru crisscrossed over India, giving speeches and rallying support. Embroiled in his constructive program, Gandhi remained unconvinced that the intent of the 1935 constitution was to prepare India for independence. But he did not oppose Congress taking part in the elections, and even thought that there were benefits for Congress. To demonstrate his interest, Gandhi organized the golden jubilee of Congress in December 1936 in the village of Faizpur in Maharashtra. The over 100,000 delegates were housed in a “bamboo city” designed by the artist, Nandalal Bose, in accordance with Gandhi’s specifications.

Congress won a notable victory in the 1937 elections. They secured the ministries in seven provinces (Bihar, Bombay, Central Provinces, Madras, Northwest Frontier,
Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh). Assam became the eight Congress province after it voted in 1938. Although less than half of the 1,585 electoral seats were open to the general electorate, Congress won all plus another 59 from the separate electorate seats giving it a total of 716 seats. The Muslim League, under the leadership of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, fared badly, winning only 108 seats, a minority of the 482 reserved seats for Muslims. Stung by his defeat, Jinnah saw the election results as a “wake-up call” for his movement which claimed to speak for the whole of Muslim India. The Hindu Mahasabha also fared badly, winning only 7 seats. Not only did the communal parties perform badly, but also the landlord-dominated parties like the Justice Party in Madras and the National Agriculturalist Party. Nehru was so delighted with the results that he wrote to Sir Stafford Cripps, co-founder of the Socialist League, to express his joy saying that they had won despite the support that the British Government had given to opposition parties.

Assured that Congress would be able to form the provincial governments in seven provinces, Nehru was still opposed to taking office because he felt that it was the intent of the British government to have provincial autonomy undermine the national movement for Independence. Stafford Cripps agreed with him, and supported Nehru in his desire to use the electoral victory of Congress to wreck the 1935 constitution, which gave the British Governor the right to intervene in political decisions. At the first meeting of the working committee of Congress after the election, Nehru persuaded the committee to adopt a resolution “not to cooperate with the new Constitution…and to lay stress on the nation’s demand for a Constituent Assembly.” But there emerged differences of opinion among Congressmen in the different provincial governments. It was then that Gandhi supporters like Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachari asked Gandhi to intervene once again to
heal the divisions within Congress. Gandhi moved a resolution at the Congress Working Committee on March 8 authorizing acceptance of office, after proclaiming opposition to the constitution and demanding its withdrawal. The resolution declared that Congress would not accept ministries unless the leader of the Congress Party was satisfied that the governor would not use his special powers of intervention to set aside the advice of ministers. Nehru was terribly upset that Gandhi had undermined his position, and considered resignation. Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, and Rajendra Prasad were appointed as a special Parliamentary Committee to select ministers in the provinces controlled by Congress. The issue dragged on for three months when on June 22, 1937, Lord Linlithgow made it clear that section 93 of the constitution did not mean that governors could intervene at random, but only within the narrowest limits. Gandhi and the Working Committee were satisfied with this response making it possible for Congress to form governments in seven provinces. Congress therefore set out on the path of cooperation with the British Government with the hope that it would lead to dominion status or independence.

Despite the ambivalence of many Congressmen, especially Nehru, the new cooperation seemed to be working. The ministers introduced measures for the advancement of untouchables, started mass literacy and basic education campaigns, and generally organized projects of social reforms. Their enthusiasm was dampened when they found out how difficult it was to solve some problems, especially communal problems. They found the intervention of the Congress national leaders overbearing, and soon the force of local politics came to dominate their interest. The proliferation of charges of nepotism
and corruption meant that provincial power was undermining the moral high ground of the national movement.

As President of the Congress Party in 1937, Nehru was depressed by what was happening. The death of his mother in January 1938 made matters worse. For five months he toured Europe and England where he encountered the beginning of the political madness which would soon engulf Europe. He went to Barcelona at the invitation of the Spanish Republican Government when the civil war between the republican and fascist forces was raging. His intimate experience of the Hitler and Mussolini regimes frightened him when he thought about the brutal forces that were unleashed in the world. He visited Prague, Geneva, and Paris, and wondered why “Paris of the Revolution” did not even protest at what happened to the Czechs. In England he held meetings with important political and cultural figures on the issue of independence for India. When Nehru returned to India, he brought with him the details of what was taking place in Europe.

THE SUBHAS BOSE AFFAIR

Nehru’s return to India coincided with another crisis within Congress. Subhas Bose had decided to run for another term as President of Congress to the dissatisfaction of Gandhi and the more pragmatic Congress leaders. Gandhi had already asked Nehru and then Maulana Azad to run for the office, but both refused. Bose was asked to step aside for Congress historian, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, but he did not do so because he knew that he could count on the support of the students, workers, and peasants in the all-India
Congress Working Committee. Bose won the first contested Congress presidential election, thereby challenging Gandhi’s influence in the party. Desirous of issuing an ultimatum to the British, demanding independence or face civil disobedience in six months, he called those who disagreed with him “rightists” and collaborators. At the Congress meeting in February 1939 at Tripuri in the Central Provinces there was intense wrangling and bitterness. The differences between Bose and Gandhi’s group were too great. Twelve of Gandhi’s supporters on the Congress Working Committee resigned despite the appeals for reconciliation by Nehru. Unable to continue without the support of such an important segment of Congress, Bose resigned, and was replaced as President by Rajendra Prasad. He and his brother, Sarat Chandra Bose, resigned from Congress and formed their own party, the Forward Bloc. It was certainly not the last act for Subhas Bose, who would play a role in the politics of the early 1940s that was beyond anyone’s imagination. But, all that lay in the future. Subhas Bose was an enigmatic figure in the nationalist movement and it is important to understand him if only to explain why Gandhi adopted such an uncompromising stand against him.

A good picture emerges of Bose’s cultural formation in his books, *Indian Struggle* and *Indian Pilgrim*. Initially attracted to the teaching of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna who taught that all the religions of the world were paths to the divine, he entered prestigious Presidency College, Calcutta, in 1915 for his university education after placing second nationally in the matriculation exam. At Presidency College, the major University in northern India, he studied philosophy, especially Kant, Hegel, and Bergson.
Since the nationalist movement was then dominated by the moderate members of Congress, Subhas Bose found the revolutionary call of Aurobindo Ghosh more appealing, who argued that political independence should precede social reforms. Thanks to his family’s political connections, he was able to transfer to Scottish Church College after he and other Indian students had beaten up their British History Professor who had insulted them. Upon graduation in 1921, Subhas Bose left for England where he had hoped to do a degree at Cambridge University and prepare for the prestigious Imperial Civil Service exam. His brother, Sarat Bose, had been called to the bar in London and returned to India in 1914. After receiving his degree from Cambridge University, Subhas Bose sat for the ICS exam, placing fourth among all candidates from the British Empire. But his interest in the civil service as a career had waned. The Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre of 1919 and the swadeshi movement lit his political passion. He returned to Calcutta in 1921 and became the disciple of the Bengali nationalist, C.R. Das, who organized his movement around the issues of Hindu-Muslim unity and the participation of the lower classes in politics.

Like his mentor, C.R. Das, Subhas Bose joined Gandhi’s nonviolent struggle, but only for strategic reasons. When Gandhi called off the civil disobedience movement in 1922 and Indian nationalists returned to constitutional politics, Indian revolutionaries thought that it was time once again to commence revolutionary activity. This time their model was the Irish struggle against the British Black and Tan troops after the 1916 rebellion. Implicated in revolutionary activity, Subhas Bose was arrested and sent into exile in Mandalay prison in Burma where the Bengali poetry and songs of Tagore, Nazrul Khan, and D.I. Roy were his solace during these years. He almost broke down when he
learned that C.R.Das had died on June 16, 1925. After developing tuberculosis, he was sent back to Calcutta in 1927 where he plunged into Bengali politics. He ran for mayor of Calcutta in 1928 but was defeated. On a tour to Bombay he gave his views on nationalism. Knowing full well that Gandhi and Tagore had argued that the principle of social reconstruction must be accepted together with national independence, Bose responded that, although some said that nationalism was narrow and selfish, and was a hindrance to the spirit of internationalism, Indian nationalism was inspired by the highest ideals of humanity. However, reiterating the principles of Aurobindo and Tilak, he asserted that political independence should come before economic and social reforms. A modernist, he proposed secular and scientific education as the cure for religious fanaticism. Asserting that there was more in common between a Hindu peasant and a Muslim peasant than between a Muslim peasant and a Muslim landlord, he called for a democratic society and an end to privilege based on caste and creed. In his book, *The Indian Struggle*, he was critical of Gandhi and the older Indian reformers. He felt that they were obstacles to the radical and progressive forces in India. But he saved his most severe criticism for the British for practicing the policy of ‘divide and rule’ in India, Ireland, and Palestine.

**MOHAMMED ALI JINNAH AND THE MUSLIM LEAGUE**

Although the 1937 elections represented a stunning defeat for Jinnah and the Muslim League, it was not an unexpected result. In the late 1920s the Muslim League was a moribund party without a mass Muslim base, and was always short of funds. It was no wonder that Mohammed Ali Jinnah went into voluntary exile in London where he enjoyed a thriving legal practice and London’s high culture. He returned to the politics of
India in 1934 only because Liaquat Ali Khan persuaded him to return to lead the Muslim League which had been riddled with factions. Not even Mohammed Iqbal’s call for a separate Muslim state in the 1930 Muslim League session in Allahabad created any enthusiasm among Muslims.

Elected permanent president of the League in 1936, Jinnah set out to build an organization to contest the elections of 1937 but with little funds and an inexperienced party machinery. The Muslim League did not have the same preparation in constructing political institutions as Congress did. Granted separate electorates as far back as 1909, a practice underscored by the Ramsay MacDonald Communal Award of 1932, Muslims were guaranteed political representation, and perhaps did not see the need to establish strong political parties. The 1935 British constitution for India simply confirmed that the British intention was to divert the political activity of Indians from the national stage towards local and provincial issues. Muslim political interests were tied to provincial parties rather than the Muslim League.

Only in the North West Frontier Province was Congress successful in winning a Muslim province and that because Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a friend of Gandhi, delivered his seats to Congress and not to the local parties. In the Punjab, Bengal, Sind, and Assam the victorious parties fought on local, predominantly economic, issues. In the Punjab, the Unionist Party, led by Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, was supported by Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. Fazlul Haq’s Krishak Proja party in Bengal represented poor peasants and small landholders and wanted to abolish the existing system of land ownership in Bengal. On the other hand, the Nawab of Dacca’s United Muslim party, sponsored by the Muslim League, was the party of big landlords, lawyers, and businessmen. Jinnah could not
persuade Haq to form an alliance with the Nawab’s party. Feudal landlords controlled the elections in Sind, and local politics also played the biggest role in Assam.

Jinnah’s strategy for the Muslim League in the 1937 elections was to portray himself and the League as nationalists who were also participants in the struggle against British imperialism. While Nehru called the 1935 Constitution “a charter of slavery,” Jinnah termed it “thoroughly rotten.” Winston Churchill, from his perspective as an ardent supporter of imperialism, described the Act as a “monstrous monument of shame built by pygmies.”

During the elections, there were heated exchanges between Jinnah and Nehru. When Nehru charged that there were only two forces in India, Congress and the British Government, Jinnah countered that there was a third force, the Muslims. Nehru answered that the Muslim League represented only the Muslim upper middle-classes and that he came into contact with the Muslim masses more than most members of the League. The extreme bitterness of the campaign left its mark on Jinnah. But what must be made clear was that at this stage Jinnah did not see communal differences to be a major stumbling-block to reaching an agreement with Congress at the national level. What he was looking for were political solutions, not religious ones.

His objective was for the Muslim League to become the sole representative body for Muslims in India, but local political institutions and interests were too powerful in 1937.

The electoral defeat as well as Congress’s policy to undertake a “Muslim mass contact” campaign to attract the Muslim masses to join the Congress Party by addressing their economic interests persuaded Jinnah that he had to make the Muslim League a party for the Muslim masses. Mohammed Iqbal put it best when he wrote to Jinnah that the Muslim League would have to decide whether to remain a body representing the upper
classes of Indian Muslims or begin to include the Muslim masses. He felt that a policy of expanding membership to include the masses would mean that they would have to come up with some project to address the poverty of the Muslim masses. It could be done, Iqbal contended, by seeking recourse in the traditional notion of “the Law of Islam.” As a secular person, Jinnah was naturally reluctant because it would bring the traditional Muslim religious forces into the mainstream of the Muslim League.\(^{11}\) Despite his reservations, it seemed that Jinnah realized that the only way to unify all the Muslim parties under the leadership of the Muslim League and to rally the masses was to play the communal card.

He began to wear a long black Punjabi coat and a black Persian lamb cap. Traveling throughout India, he met local Muslim leaders and gave speeches to large audiences. They called Jinnah “Quaid-I-Azam” or Great Leader. The Muslim masses began to take notice of the new Jinnah. Their passions were inflamed when Jinnah blamed the Congress Party for pursuing exclusively Hindu policies. He called on the Muslim masses to practice discipline for the fight against those who sought to intimidate them and destroy their culture.\(^{12}\) The cry of “Islam in danger” predictably rallied the masses, as the Muslim League brought incessant accusations that in Congress provinces Hindus were practicing discrimination against Muslims. That such previously fervent Indian nationalists and supporters of Hindu-Muslim unity like Jinnah and Shaukat Ali should now turn to blatant communal appeals illustrated well how times had radically changed. The communal appeal to the masses could not by itself do the trick. Jinnah had to have the support of the Muslim parties in the Muslim-majority provinces. He skillfully formed alliances in the Punjab with Sir Sikander Hayat Khan and his Unionist Party and
with Fazlul Haq, Premier of Bengal, by initially accommodating his interests to their local concerns. Jinnah would boast with good reason in early 1938 that he had been able to organize Indian Muslims into the Muslim League in six months more effectively than had been done in over a century and a half.

Realizing that much of the propaganda against Congress stemmed from their project to win Muslim support, Congress terminated this policy. Some members of Congress reached out to Jinnah through Subhas Bose, hoping to reach some mutual agreement. But Jinnah insisted that they should first acknowledge the Muslim League as the authoritative representative body for Indian Muslims. Members of Congress were unwilling to accept this in principle since its central ideal was that it represented all Indians. In August 1938, Jinnah met with the acting Viceroy, Lord Brabourne, and hinted that he would protect British interests if they were to accept the League as the sole spokesman of the Muslims. Here was another twist for a man who had long fought against imperialism. In explaining his political change of heart, Jinnah said that he was willing to ally himself with the devil to advance the League’s interests, and that in politics it was necessary to play one’s game as on a chessboard. In a few short years Jinnah had remade himself. Of all Indian nationalists, Jinnah was perhaps the most enigmatic.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) was the son of a merchant family which moved from Karachi to Bombay where Jinnah spent much of his life. His family was a minority within a minority in that they belonged to the Shia Muslim Khoja community. The Khojas were disciples of the Ismaili Aga Khan who fled persecution in Iran, and made their new home in Western India. Since his family had commercial links with a
British company, Jinnah was encouraged to go to London to work in the London office in 1893, after marrying fourteen-year old Emibai to please his mother. Both Emibai and his mother died before he returned to India. Like so many Indian students who were studying in England in the 1890s, Jinnah was fascinated by the speeches of Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), an experience which inspired him and set in motion his interest in Indian nationalism.

Jinnah decided to pursue a career in law at the prestigious Lincoln’s Inn which had numbered among its graduates several British prime ministers. He was called to the Bar in 1896 and then returned home, enrolling in the Bombay High court. Indian nationalism and British law were his passions, not religion. Attending the 1904 session of the Congress party, he met Gokhale, then the leader of the Indian Home Rule movement, and created a good impression among the moderate Congress leaders. His introduction to the world of Indian national politics coincided with the British partition of Bengal in 1905 which led to the outbreak of a storm of protest. The partition into predominantly Hindu and Muslim provinces contributed to the development of a separate Muslim consciousness, and was followed by the establishment in 1906 of the Muslim League, and the creation of separate electorates for Muslims in 1909. At this important moment in Indian history Jinnah was one with Dadabhai Naoroji and Professor Gokhale in calling for Hindu-Muslim unity. Indeed, in 1906 he was busy helping the ailing Dadabhai Naoroji to draft his speech to be read by Gokhale at the annual Congress meeting in Calcutta. Following the introduction of separate electorates, Jinnah assumed a seat in 1910 in the Bombay legislative council as the Muslim representative, and joined the Muslim League only in 1913. When Gokhale died in 1915, he inherited the mantle of
leadership of the moderate wing of Congress, and was one of those responsible for the Congress-Muslim League pact of 1916.

Jinnah’s pre-eminence in Congress lasted until the Rowlatt Acts Satyagraha which catapulted Gandhi on the stage of Indian national politics. When Jinnah urged the members of Congress at Nagpur in 1920 not to break the British connection, he was booed, which left him feeling humiliated. Elected for a seat reserved for Muslims in Bombay, he concentrated on his legal career and continued to pursue a moderate and constitutional path in politics.

In the late 1920s, the younger generation of Indian nationalists like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose insisted on either dominion status for India or independence. When Gandhi assumed once more the leadership of Congress and moved the motion for complete independence on January 26, 1930, Jinnah was critical of both Gandhi and the younger Congress radicals for departing from constitutional measures and resorting to civil disobedience. He sailed for England in October 1930 to attend the first Round Table Conference, and stayed on in voluntary exile opening a legal practice in London. He enjoyed his life in London with his daughter Dina and sister, Fatima. One wonders how he responded when he heard about the speech of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, an eminent Urdu poet, at the Dec. 29, 1930 session of the Muslim League which articulated the two nation theory for India, demanding a separate state for Muslims within an Indian state. Jinnah was still in England when a Muslim Indian student at Cambridge University, Choudhary Rahmat Ali, in 1933 published a pamphlet entitled, Are We to Live or Perish Forever?, and claimed to be the founder of the Pakistan national movement. Neither Iqbal nor Rahmat Ali was able to establish a movement to advance their ideas. As Jinnah prepared
to return to India in 1934, the Muslim League was a weak organization and there was nothing to indicate that Jinnah would ever occupy as important a political position in India as before 1920.

WORLD WAR II AND INDIA

Despite the difficulties, the factionalism, and corruption of the Congress-dominated provincial assemblies, the cooperation between the British Government and Congress since the elections of 1937 kept open the possibility that Britain would grant Dominion status. All this changed dramatically when Viceroy Lord Linlithgow announced on September 3, 1939, two days after Great Britain declared war against Germany, that India was at war with Germany, without prior consultation with any Indian representative body or official. Indians were quick to notice that the dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa were given the choice to go to war alongside Britain or not to do so, but not India. Angry that they were taken into a war without being consulted, members of Congress resigned from their offices in November, following which Provincial rule was taken over by the Central Government.

The response of Congress to the war developed from the initial policy of individual civil disobedience to civil disobedience in the “Quit India” campaign of 1942, which the government put down with unforgiving repression. The threat to all of Europe posed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy on the one hand, and militarist Japan in Asia, especially after they seized Singapore in 1942, made it difficult for Europeans to view
with sympathy Indian demands for independence. At worse, it seemed that India was using England’s and the world’s peril to advance its interest.

From an Indian perspective, the crisis should not be placed on the shoulders of Indian disloyalty. As early as April 1939 when war seemed imminent, Parliament in Britain introduced new legislation giving the government of India the power to transfer the authority of the provincial councils to executive authority. Fearing that during the war Congress provincial governments might be a stumbling block, the British did not feel that cooperation with Congress was necessary for the conduct of the war. Whatever the Viceroy’s understanding of the situation was, he did not have to take too seriously the consequences of Congress withdrawal from the provincial legislatures; certainly not its demand for complete independence, nor its request for the creation of a constituent assembly to make a constitution for India. Happy to receive Jinnah’s announcement that the Muslim League would not support the Congress resignation from office, the Viceroy promised not to embark on any federal scheme without considering Muslim separate interests.

Gandhi was initially marginal to this crisis, but was invited by the Viceroy along with Jinnah and a representative from the Princely States to discuss the war with him. Gandhi was in favor of giving unconditional support for Britain, saying that he was distressed emotionally by the thought of the destruction of London, but he admitted that he could not speak for Congress and, in any case, his response was going to be nonviolent and against war. It was Nehru who saw the contradiction in Indians being asked to defend the Empire in a war whose rallying-cry was ostensibly to protect democracy. Gandhi eventually supported a draft resolution by Nehru which condemned fascism but
asserted that issues of war and peace had to be determined by the people of India, and that they could not fight for freedom while they were not free. When Lord Linlithgow gave the expected bureaucratic response on October 17, 1939 that the British government was prepared to discuss Dominion status at some unspecified time in the future, Congress felt that it had no alternative but to ask its members to withdraw from the councils.

Gandhi said that he was weighed down by the burden of responsibility of what to do in the situation. He felt that since the Muslim League considered Congress its enemy, it would be impossible to start a nonviolent civil disobedience struggle because it might lead to communal riots. On November 14, Gandhi sent the following message to the British people:

Does Britain intend to recognize India as an independent nation or must India remain Britain’s dependency? This question has not been raised by the Congress to gain an advantage over Great Britain, but to enable the people of India to decide how they should behave during the world crisis. The issue thus becomes purely moral, for, owing to her material and military control of India, Great Britain is able to regulate the Indian and the British garrison and drain India’s wealth at her will. Eight provinces out of eleven have said in most emphatic language that they can’t participate in the war, if it does not mean, among the other things, India’s complete freedom. All other issues are subordinate. The question of the minorities is purely a domestic one for the majority and the minorities to settle themselves.16

Gandhi also supported the Congress demand for a constituent assembly to decide the best means to come up with a constitution indigenous to India, arguing that it might not be ideal, but it would reflect the will of the Indian people. The intersecting themes of independence and communal representation continued to rattle the nationalist struggle. Gandhi might have been too hopeful that Indians could have resolved the issue for themselves, but on the issue of the unity of India he and Congress remained firm. It was a predicament that began to emerge in the late 1920s and was skillfully used by the
British to retain their imperial power. Now, in the context of the war, the idea of the
division of India took on a life of its own. On several occasions, Gandhi referred to it as
the “vivisection” of India and it saddened him. Scoffing at the British argument that they
were ruling India because of the quarrels between the minorities, and that they were
prepared to leave once they were resolved, Gandhi commented that they used that
argument as an excuse to remain permanently as lords over India. He recalled that at an
earlier period the British had said that they were protecting Hindus from the virile races
from the north. Insisting that he did not want to avoid the issue of minority
representation, Gandhi maintained that the protection of the rights of minorities was of
greater concern to Indians than the British.

Still, whatever the causes were, no one could deny that divisiveness between
Hindus and Muslims was becoming serious. On the one hand, the Hindu Mahasabha
demanded the annulment of the communal award and the immediate granting of
Dominion status. On the other hand, Jinnah and the Muslim League continued to
participate in the war effort. To crown it all, Jinnah announced that the Muslim League
would observe December 22, 1939 as “Deliverance Day,” to celebrate the end of
Congress “tyranny” during the past thirty months when he said that they did everything to
destroy Muslim culture. Gandhi pleaded in vain with Jinnah to cancel the protest.
Rajendra Prasad, president of Congress, offered to appoint an independent commission of
inquiry to investigate the charges brought by Jinnah, but Jinnah refused to change his
mind.

There were also divisions within Congress. The younger generation like Subhas
Bose and his Forward Bloc movement, and the socialists, Jayaprakash Narayan and Dr.
Lohia, questioned the importance of spinning and even nonviolence.\textsuperscript{17} Replying that he had no sanction to impose his will on anyone, Gandhi said that his mission was to convert Indians as well as Englishmen, and indeed the world, to the practice of nonviolence in regulating mutual relations, whether they were political, economic, social, or religious. He admitted that it was possibly only a dream, but he felt that he was a seasoned soldier of nonviolence and could therefore speak with some authority about its effectiveness. To Subhas Bose’s criticism that he was too eager to compromise, Gandhi asserted that \textit{Satyagraha} enjoined compromise, and that he had not lost faith in Britain. He acknowledged the difference between Narayan’s socialist party and the \textit{Satyagraha} movement, saying that he knew well that they were not committed to the constructive program, but he warned that their slogan of revolution of the masses needed to be made clearer or else it would lead to violence. Asked by Dr. Lohia to clarify whether the social order of a free India would be based exclusively on the spinning wheel and the constructive program, Gandhi replied:

It will include everything that promotes the well-being of the villagers. I do visualize electricity, shipbuilding, ironworks, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto, the industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the state of the future, it will serve the villages and their crafts. I do not share the socialist belief that the centralization of the necessaries of life will conduce to the common welfare, when the centralized industries are planned and owned by the state.\textsuperscript{18}

Just before the opening session of the Congress meeting in Ramgarh, a village in Bihar, in March 1940, Gandhi received news that Sir Michael O Dwyer was shot dead by a Sikh, Udham Singh, in Caxton Hall, London, an attack that also wounded Lord Zetland, Secretary of State for India.\textsuperscript{19} Aware that the question of a civil disobedience campaign
was on everyone’s mind, he stated that he did not think that the conditions were suitable for launching civil disobedience. The prospect of a war with Britain, which was engaged in a World War against fascism, was fraught with peril. He said that he worried more about the increasing domestic problems. Lamenting that corruption and the lust for power were threatening to undermine Congress as the institution to construct a more just society in an independent India, he urged Indians to fight against sectarianism: “We are all equal before our Maker – Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, worshippers of one God. Why then do we fight among ourselves?” Referring to the abuse that the Muslim League had directed against him, he reminded Muslims that the Koran made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Troubled by the loud cries of sectarianism, he said that he feared to launch a nonviolent civil disobedience campaign.

Addressing the opening session of Congress, Maulana Azad spoke for Hindu-Muslim unity. As a Muslim, he was as proud to be Indian as a Hindu, asserting that Islam was a part of Indian history for more than a thousand years. In the same way, he said that Indian Christians could claim Christianity as a religion of India, and urged Indians of all faiths to look to the future with hope rather than suspicion: “The confusions of the times, the ups and downs that come our way, difficulties that beset our thorny path, cannot change the direction of our steps. It becomes then our bounden duty to march with assured steps to India’s national goal.”

The Muslim League meeting in Lahore at the end of March, 1940 was much more ominous. In his presidential address, Jinnah put forward his two-nation proposal. He said that Hinduism and Islam were not merely different religions but different social orders, and to imagine that they could both be a part of a common nationality was but a
dream, asserting that the unity of India was established by British force of arms. Indian Muslims were, therefore, a separate nation and deserved their own “homelands, their territory and their state.” The members of the League passed the following resolution:

Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or be acceptable to the Mussulmans unless it is designed on the following basic principles, namely, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions, which should be so constituted with such territorial re-adjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute “independent states”, in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.21

Some 60,000 delegates were present to listen to Jinnah articulate the famous Lahore resolution, usually cited as the launching of the request for a separate state of Pakistan, but no mention of partition or Pakistan was made in the resolution. It was the newspapers that spoke about the “Pakistan resolution” in the context of the breaking up of India. The resolution itself was vague, and included features that the League had demanded earlier; separate representation was not enough; a constituent assembly to decide India’s constitution was unacceptable; and in Muslim-majority provinces the minority status was to be replaced by the notion that Muslims were a separate nation.

It was impossible to agree on what kind of partition the Muslim League wanted. Some wanted a loose confederation of states with a weak central government; Fazlul Haq wanted two independent Muslim states, one in his own Bengal; others wanted a single sovereign Muslim state which would include the Punjab and Bengal. It was not clear also what was to be the relation between the separatist Muslim-majority states and Muslim minorities in the rest of India. The Lahore resolution made it possible for the Viceroy to put the constitutional question on the back burner and to deride the Congress assertion
that they spoke for all India. The resolution also cleared the way for Jinnah to become the sole spokesman for Indian Muslims.

Gandhi found the two-nation theory baffling, stating that he could not accept Jinnah’s argument that Islam and Hinduism were two different social orders because most Indian Muslims were converts or descendants of converts to Islam. He said that he could not tell the difference between a Bengali Muslim and a Bengali Hindu, and asked whether those Muslims who hugged Hindus with love and expressed a common bond during the Khilafat campaign were wrong to do so.

THE DEATH OF CHARLIE ANDREWS

On April 5, 1940, Charlie Andrews died. Gandhi said their friendship was not one between an Englishman and an Indian, but between two seekers and servants. As Gandhi held his hand on his hospital bed, Andrews whispered to him: “Mohan, swaraj is coming.” Gandhi called him “one of the greatest and best Englishmen.”

Educated at Cambridge University and ordained an Anglican priest in 1897, Charles Freer Andrews came under the influence of the scholar, Bishop Brooke Foss Westcott, who encouraged Andrews to look to Indian religious thought to understand Christianity better. He left for India in 1904 to become a teacher at St. Stephen’s College, Delhi. The poet Tagore and Susil Rudra, the Indian principal of St. Stephen’s College, influenced him and became his friends, as Andrews became involved in supporting workers in labor strikes and India’s freedom struggle. He took a keen interest in Gandhi’s Satyagraha in South Africa after 1907. When Professor Gokhale asked for
help for Gandhi, Andrews left his position at St. Stephen’s College to go to South Africa, arriving on January 7, 1914, to take part in the final stages of the *Satyagraha* struggle, spending the next six weeks working with Gandhi. Later, Andrews was Gandhi’s publicist to European and American audiences, a role he continued to perform until the 1930s.

Perhaps his greatest achievement for the Indian cause was his part in the struggle to abolish the British indentured labor system whereby, after the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, Indians were sent as indentured laborers to work on the sugar plantations in Mauritius, Fiji, South Africa, Guyana, and Trinidad. Andrews traveled widely to investigate the conditions on the plantations and it was his reports that helped Gandhi to mount a successful attack on the cruelty of the indenture system.  

Active in Gandhi’s struggles on their return to India, he investigated the massacre at Amritsar in 1919, and found it “an unspeakable disgrace, indefensible, unpardonable, and inexcusable…I have seen with my own eyes the very men who have endured the crawling order, the compulsion to grovel on their bellies in the dust, the public flogging which was administered to hundreds of men…” He urged leaders to probe the wounds so that they could draw out all the evil from them, but advised that there was still one more stage, that of healing. Despite the horrors of the massacre and the excesses of the martial law, he asked that they dwell not upon the evil but rather “upon forgiveness, not linger in the dark night of hate but come out into the glorious sunshine of God’s love.”

Gandhi and Andrews cited the different religions of India as sources for their notion that vengeance and retaliation should be overcome by love. Although they both felt that Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount contained the lesson of the law of love, it was to
the life of Gautama Buddha that they both found the beginning of the idea of returning
good for evil. Andrews also discovered that the *Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Scriptures,
resonated with a similar lesson:

Farid, if a man beat thee, strike him not
But stoop and kiss his feet.
Farid, if thy soul hath longing for the Lord,
Become as grass for men to tread on.

Time and again Andrews confessed that Gandhi, Tagore, and Rudra were his
teachers who helped him to broaden his understanding of Christianity. In the 1930s he
traveled widely propagating the ideas of Gandhi’s nonviolence. Between 1929 and 1931
he published three books on Gandhi that were widely read in Europe and America. He
was committed to racial equality and, although he believed that the message of Christ
was the most inspiring given to man, he respected all religions. In spite of the differences
between religions, he urged that man should see what was best in all, for that was the
lesson of love. In his last years Andrews wanted to write a life of Christ and asked
Gandhi whether he should write it in Palestine. Gandhi replied that he should write it in
India because it was in India that he found Christ in Eastern form.

**THE WAR INTENSIFIES AND THE AUGUST OFFER**

In April 1940, Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway and in May his armies
crossed into Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Winston Churchill replaced
Chamberlain as Prime Minister at the head of a national government, and Leo Amery was
made Secretary of State to replace Lord Zetland.24 Churchill rallied the British spirit with
his call to British resolve and sacrifice, but he was in no mood to listen to any cries of
Indian independence. Amery was well aware of Churchill’s antipathy to India and knew that any talk of a constitutional change for India would throw Churchill into a tantrum, spewing rhetoric that it would spell doom to the notion of empire, which was Churchill’s abiding political principle. More importantly for him, Leo Amery knew that the disasters of the war in Europe meant that India was now important as a source of men, munitions and supplies.

Declaring in the House of Commons that the goal of British policy was the attainment of India’s freedom and equal partnership in the Commonwealth, Amery delicately persuaded Viceroy Lord Linlithgow to promise Indians freedom after the war and to assure them that they would decide the form and timing. He encouraged the Viceroy to reconcile with Gandhi and other Congress leaders. Churchill reacted with disgust at the promise of independence. His visceral dislike for Gandhi increased when Gandhi appealed to the British to use a nonviolent approach against the Nazis instead of war. Even Congress members were reluctant to go along with Gandhi, insisting that they were a political organization, which sought independence for India, and not an institution for world peace. Churchill accused Amery of encouraging a revolution in India.

The “August Offer” that Lord Linlithgow actually announced on August 8, 1940 was deliberately vague, and bore the marks of Churchill’s prejudice against India. It did include provisions for an expanded Executive Council and War Advisory Committee. But there was no mention that Indians would decide the form and time of independence for themselves, and no mention of equality for India within the Commonwealth. The purpose of the “August Offer” was to discredit Congress’s proposals for a national government during the war, and to reassert British control over the provinces from the
center using the government’s emergency power. The proposal stated that the British government intended to set up a body after the war to decide India’s future, but they would not allow any system of government to be enforced by any “large and powerful elements in India’s national life.” Congress rejected the offer as proof of the British determination to continue to hold India by the sword. Amery warned Congress that if they refused to play any part in the government they would go ahead and work together with any group that was willing to cooperate with them. Jinnah and the Muslim League accepted the “August Offer” in principle, but requested as the price of cooperation that the League be considered as the sole spokesman for Indian Muslims and that the Muslim League be taken as a full and equal partner with the British in running the country, if Congress withdrew. Jinnah also demanded the right to veto Congress’s entry into the Executive Council before the end of the war. The matter was left for further discussion as the Viceroy could not agree with all of Jinnah’s demands.

At the end of September, Congress invited Gandhi to lead them once more in a new nonviolent campaign. Addressing the Congress meeting at Wardha, Gandhi said that he did not want England to be defeated. His sympathies resided with the British, he declared, and damage done to St. Paul’s Cathedral in London would sadden him as much as if the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Benares was damaged. That was why he did not want to offer mass civil disobedience. But he could not help feeling from the declarations of the Viceroy, the Secretary of State for India, and the actions of the government, that an injustice had been perpetrated against the whole nation. Having rejected mass civil disobedience, he decided on a moderate policy of launching an individual Satyagraha, calling for the freedom to speak out against the war. Asked by a
Gandhi responded that nonviolence was for him a creed and principle. If India’s nonviolent movement could bring an end to the “monstrous armaments” that engulfed the world, then Britain and the rest of the world would benefit from India’s actions.

The individual Satyagraha movement began on October 17, 1940 when Vinoba Bhave, a dedicated supporter of Gandhi, delivered an anti-war speech at a village near Wardha and was arrested and sentenced to three months imprisonment. Jawaharlal Nehru followed and was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment for his speeches advocating nonviolent resistance to war. In mid-November Gandhi commenced the second stage that he called “representative Satyagraha” whereby Satyagrahis were selected from the different Congress associations. The top leaders were arrested, including Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachari. By the end of the year some 400 Congress members of the Provincial and Central legislatures were arrested. On January 5, 1941 the third stage started. Lists of Satyagrahis were prepared by various Congress committees. Persons whose commitment and discipline were certified by Gandhi then walked from village to village giving anti-war speeches. By the end of January more than 2,250 people were convicted. In the fourth and final stage, ordinary rank-and-file members of Congress were enrolled as Satyagrahis. The number of arrested swelled to some 20,000.

Criticized because the campaign did not seem to have any significant impact, Gandhi answered that the purpose of the individual Satyagraha campaign was moral, and symbolic of a people’s yearning for freedom through nonviolent means.²⁵ He dismissed
Jinnah’s claim that the intent of the campaign was to force the British to accept the position of Congress, saying that Jinnah had little interest in a solution to the crisis until he had consolidated the League as the representative for all Indian Muslims. The Secretary of State, Leo Amery, ridiculed the campaign as “regrettable as it is irrational.” When the British asserted that only British rule could bring unity to India, and that they were prepared to leave when the different cultures of India agreed on a formula for unity, Gandhi was quick to stress that “it has been the traditional policy of Great Britain to prevent parties from unity. ‘Divide and Rule’ has been Great Britain’s proud motto. It is the British statesmen who are responsible for the divisions in India’s ranks and the divisions will continue so long as the British sword holds India under tutelage.”

Indians were divided in their loyalty during the war. Gandhi and Nehru were sympathetic to the British and Allied cause in the war; Subhash Bose supported the fascist powers. Having formed his own party, The Forward Bloc, he was delighted that the British had suffered reverses and predicted their ultimate defeat. In his own absurd analysis, Germany, Italy, Japan, and, perhaps, the Soviet Union, would carve up the British Empire. Arrested and jailed on July 2, 1940, Bose, in a dramatic escape from prison, made his way to Afghanistan where he met the German ambassador and persuaded Berlin with his proposal that if a German, Italian, or Japanese army could reach the Indian border, the Indian masses would rise up to topple British domination. Making his way to Moscow by way of Bokhara and Samarkand, he was flown to Berlin where he presented several plans for cooperation between India and the Axis powers. Under the name of Orlando Mazzotta, Bose received a home and an allowance to do propaganda work for the Nazis.
In the summer of 1941, the war crisis became more serious for India. The Germans conquered Yugoslavia and Greece, and had invaded Russia. Their successes in North Africa meant that the war had begun to drift towards India. To secure greater participation by Indians, the Viceroy expanded his Executive Council and created a National Defense Council which included 30 members who were drawn from a wide cross-section of India, including the Princely States. Gandhi was unimpressed by this gesture.

On August 9, 1941, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt met on the cruiser Augusta in Newfoundland to discuss the allocation of American war production. Churchill wanted a pledge of Anglo-American unity but Roosevelt did not give it because America was still officially neutral in the war. What they did draw up, however, was an eight-point plan known as the Atlantic Charter, which pledged both countries commitment to democracy and general disarmament. Article III affirmed that Britain and America would “respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live, and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.” Both Secretary of State Amery and Churchill saw the box in which the charter had placed them, and on September 9 Churchill announced that the provisions of the Charter were meant to apply only to Europe and did not mean any change in British policy towards India and its “responsibilities to its many creeds, races, and interests.” Not unexpectedly, Churchill’s statement caused great disappointment and resentment in Indian circles. Gandhi chose not to make a response saying that his silence spoke eloquently about this issue. To those who advised the beginning of a mass civil disobedience campaign, Gandhi continued to
argue that such a policy would both embarrass the government and lead to communal violence. He feared that without communal unity a mass movement could lead to civil war. He urged, however, that they continue to demonstrate for the right to speak freely against war.

For both British and Indians the war had taken a major turn in December 1941. Germany was already threatening the Near East, and Japan had secured her position in Indo-China. In the crisis, the British Government thought that it was necessary to offer a gesture of conciliation to secure Indian support and, on December 3, they issued a decree offering to release the civil disobedience prisoners. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor thereby bringing America officially into the war. Between December 1941 and the first months of 1942, Japan won victory after victory in the Pacific and South-East Asia. When Malaya fell in three days, some 60,000 Indian soldiers were taken prisoners. In Singapore, the British army suffered a humiliating defeat, and, on March 8, Rangoon, the capital of Burma, was abandoned to the Japanese.

Many members of Congress were concerned about India’s security. Maulana Azad and Rajagopalachari persuaded the Congress Working Committee to offer full cooperation to the British government in return for a national government during the war and the promise of freedom after the war. The moderate Bahadur Sapru asked Churchill for a bold stroke of statesmanship, but Churchill was predictably unmoved. At the Congress Working Committee meeting on December 23, 1941, members confessed that they sympathized with the peoples who suffered from German and Japanese aggression, but insisted that only a free and independent India could defend itself, and that was why they continued to stand by the resolution taken in Bombay on
September 16, 1940. Acknowledging their appreciation for the leadership shown by Gandhi, they declared that Gandhi could not now be their leader because he stood against participation in all wars. In his reply, Gandhi agreed that he had misinterpreted the Bombay resolution to mean a commitment not to participate in the war on the grounds of nonviolence. He realized that he could no longer lead a resistance movement in the situation where “nonviolence was not indispensable.” On January 5, 1942, he explained the implications of the Working Committee’s resolution. He said that it meant that if the government guaranteed that India would get full freedom after the war, Congress would cooperate with the British in the war. His own position on the issue was that “ahimsa was a pearl of great price and that it cannot be given up, and that it can never be the price of swaraj.” In retiring from Congress leadership, Gandhi asserted that this “does not reduce my responsibility but increases it manifold.” He decided to restart Harijan and two other weeklies because he wanted to focus on other issues about the war, such as questions about scarcity of food and clothing, looting, and bread riots. He said that it was important for people to learn how to deal with these problems “without fuss and even without Government effort” because that was the way to responsible freedom: “If we wish to achieve Swaraj through truth and nonviolence, gradual but steady building up from the bottom upwards by constructive effort is the only way.” Gandhi was opposed to participation in the war, but nevertheless accepted the resolution because he believed that the resolution reflected the mind of Congress. Pleading that he was only human, “made of common clay,” he said that sometimes it was better to take a step backward to move forward.

Ahimsa with me is a creed, the breath of my life. But it is never as a creed that I placed it before India, or for that matter before anyone except in casual informal
talks. I placed it before Congress as a political method, to be employed for the solution of the political questions. It may be it is a novel method, but it does not on that account lose its political character...Nonviolence has brought us near to Swaraj as never before. We dare not exchange it even for Swaraj. For Swaraj thus got will be no true Swaraj. 26

THE PASSING OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

On August 7, 1941, Rabindranath Tagore whom Gandhi gave the title Gurudev died in Calcutta. Indians were well aware of the continuing conversation that he had with Gandhi through the long years of struggle, and criticism also. Both Gandhi and Tagore understood nationalism to mean both a critique of British imperialism as well as reform of oppressive traditional institutions and practices. At the memorial or shraddha, given on the tenth day after death, a song was recited that the poet had composed in 1939 which summed up the universal, yet Indian, spirit of the poet:

The ocean of peace lies ahead of me.
Sail the boat, O pilot
You are my companion now.
Take me in your lap.
Along our journey to the infinite
The pole star alone will shine.

Giver of Freedom
Set me free.
May your forgiveness and compassion
Be my eternal resources for the journey-
May the mortal ties fall away,
May the vast universe
Hold me in embrace,
And with an undaunted heart
May I come to know the Great Unknown 27

In February 1940, Gandhi visited Tagore in Shantiniketan. As they walked together around the rustic surroundings of Tagore’s school engaged in warm conversation, Gandhi reminded him that he had visited the school when he returned to India from South Africa in 1915, and reiterated his gratitude to Gurudev for allowing his students to stay at Shantiniketan until he established his own ashram in Ahmedabad. An
international figure, Tagore had placed his hopes for the establishment of a universal culture on his school and university. He had founded a school in 1901 in Shantiniketan, a village about 100 miles North West of Calcutta. Its purpose was to create a school that did not follow the rigidities of existing school systems, but fostered the ideals of truth, beauty, and respect for different cultures. On December 22, 1921, Tagore inaugurated his university in Shantiniketan. It was called Visva-Bharati, a word that was derived from the Sanskrit word for universe and the Hindu goddess of learning. Tagore hoped that it would become a center of studies of Asian and Western cultures, both ancient and modern. Initially, there were three departments: fine arts, music, and Indology, which comprised the study of Buddhist literature, Vedic and Classic Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tibetan, and Chinese. During the turmoil of the world wars and the inter-war years, Tagore looked to his university as the hope for a civilized future. In their conversations, Gandhi expressed his joy at visiting Shantiniketan again, more “a pilgrimage,” than a visit. He said that he saw that the poet “was living for his dearest creation, Visva-Bharati.”28 As Gandhi was leaving, Tagore handed him a letter which said:

Dear Mahatmaji,

You have just had a bird’s-eye view this morning of our Visva-Bharati center of activities. I do not know what estimate you have formed of its merit. You know that though this institution is national in its immediate aspect it is international in its spirit, offering according to the best of its means India’s hospitality of culture to the rest of the world. At one of its critical moments you have saved it from an utter break-down and helped it to its legs. We are ever thankful to you for this act of friendliness. And, now before you take your leave of Shantiniketan I make my fervent appeal to you. Accept this institution under your protection, giving it an assurance of permanence if you consider it to be a national asset. Visva-Bharati is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life’s best treasure, and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation.

With love,
Rabindranath Tagore 29

Gandhi sent this reply:

Dear Gurudev,
The touching note that you put into my hands as we parted has gone straight into my heart. Of course, Visva-Bharati is a national institution. It is undoubtedly also international. You may depend upon my doing all I can in the common endeavor to assure its permanence. I look to you to keep your promise to sleep religiously for about an hour during the day. Though I have always regarded Shantiniketan as my second home, this visit has brought me nearer to it than ever before. With reverence and love,
M.K. Gandhi

In the 1930s, Tagore’s view of modern European civilization moved closer to that of Gandhi. As he passed his seventieth birthday, reflecting on what British imperial civilization contributed to India, he said that they had come to India not simply “as men but as the symbol of the new spirit of Europe, like the Renaissance in Italy.” Representing the spirit of modernity, its light coming from the West illuminated the whole world. He felt that the secret of its power was to be found in the “integrity of its pursuit of truth” guided by reason, which awakened Indians to the call of inquiry of the intellect. The fruit of this inquiry was the notion that all men were created equal. Whether a Brahmin killed a Shudra or a Shudra killed a Brahmin, it was murder all the same. This revolutionary spirit demanded that untouchables be considered the equal in dignity of the highest social classes. The notions of equality and emancipation meant that Indians would judge British ruthlessness by the same moral standards of right and wrong that placed the powerful and the weak on the same moral plane. Their knowledge of English literary classics gave them a new language of fighting tyranny and the “shackles of political slavery.” Declaring that Indians could no longer accept either the British aerial bombing of entire villages or the cry of domestic privilege based on notions of the accident of birth or the fruit of past actions: “Our contact with Europe has awakened us to the universal laws of cause and effect; and it has given us a set of values against which scriptural dispensation and age-old convention declaim in vain.” Attracted by the ideals of free speech and individual liberty, Indians were led to believe that they could demand
an equal partnership in India’s administration on the grounds of human decency. With
great faith in the British character they believed that progress towards self-determination
was possible.

But, writing in 1933, Tagore said that he found this hope illusory because the
British in India believed “only in law and order, rules and regulations.” The measures
that were introduced to improve health and education bore no relation to the needs of the
people. There were few opportunities to increase wealth. Indeed, the future held no
prospects. As it turned out, India was but a dark spot in the “solar dazzle of the new
epoch.” Instead of enlightening the world, European civilization set fires to conquer the
world:

[O]pium supported by cannon balls were directed at the heart of China, an atrocity
the like of which history had not known before, except perhaps in the newly
discovered America when European Powers in their greed for gold used deceit
and violence to destroy the wonderful Maya people…And everyone is aware of
the horrors of European rule in the African province of Congo. Even to this day
the Negroes in the United States have to bear heavy social indigni-

During the Great War it was as if a “drunken maniac was revealed in all his starkness.”
If barbarity in the distant past was like a whirlwind, its modern face was more like an
erupting volcano. Even after the war there did not seem to be any pretence of decency.
How else could one interpret Jallianwalla Bagh, the sending of the cruel Black and Tans
to Ireland, and the rise of fascism. He asked whether one should give up faith in
humanity. There was, nevertheless, hope because in those dark times there were men
who risked their lives in speaking the truth to power.

On his eightieth birthday in 1941, shortly before he died, the poet wrote an essay,
*Crisis in Civilization*. He recalled how much he enjoyed the works of Burke, Macaulay,
Shakespeare, Byron, and the entire tradition of humanistic liberal philosophy. Recalling
how moved he was by the opportunity to listen to the radical John Bright in the House of Commons on his first visit to England, Tagore added that Bright’s “large-hearted radicalism” that transcended all nationalist exclusiveness made a strong impact on him. Such liberal ideas inspired their revolt against rigid social customs in India. But now he was disillusioned with European civilization. As he reflected on the terrible poverty of the Indian masses under British rule, he realized that in no other country than in British India was there such a denial of basic needs like food, clothing, health, and education. Yet, at the same time, the resources of India were being used to make Britain wealthy. He felt that contempt for Indian people was more the emblem of modern British civilization than the values he had imbibed as a student of British literature. Contrasting India’s inertia with Japan’s prosperity and Russia’s progress, he explained, perhaps too optimistically, that neither was ruled by the heavy hand of imperialism.

He said that he had lost faith “in the civilization of the West.” What the British gave to India was law and order and the “instruments of a police state.” Liberty had been replaced by the display of might. In Europe, a new barbarity was in force with “teeth bare and claws unconcealed in an orgy of terror.” This violence was desecrating the spirit of man. “There was a time,” he said, “when I used to believe that the springs of a true civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. Today, as I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt.” Yet, he said that he had not lost faith in Man and looked forward to a “turning in history.”

JAPAN THREATENS AND THE QUIT INDIA SATYAGRAHA
Allied defeats in Europe and Asia created increased tension and insecurity in both Great Britain and India. Japan’s swift victories in China, Southeast Asia, Malaya, and Singapore by the early months of 1942 meant that their conquering march had reached India’s eastern border. The British were forced to abandon Malaya, Singapore, and Burma ignominiously. It was Gandhi who urged Indians not to panic at the reverses that the British were suffering, reminding them that they never allowed defeats to demoralize them but rather used the reverses as stepping-stones for ultimate victory. Gandhi promised that if Japan set foot on Indian territory, he would undertake a campaign of nonviolent resistance against them.

As far as the Allies were concerned, the Japanese threat to India had to be taken seriously because India was an important strategic center of allied defense in the Indian Ocean. It was the main route for supplies coming from Britain and the USA to China, and a major source of soldiers and materials for the wars in the Far East and the Near East. Nudged by Clement Attlee, Secretary of State Amery, and the United States, Churchill set up a special India Committee of his cabinet, which also included John Simon, Sir John Anderson, Sir James Grigg, and Sir Stafford Cripps. The purpose of the committee was to create a constitutional plan for India that would ensure the cooperation of Indians during this critical period.

Churchill’s deep-seated resentment against granting any measure of self-rule to India almost got in the way of an agreement by the committee. His state of mind was revealed later in the year when he declared that he did not become Prime Minister to preside over the break-up of the British Empire. Churchill gave his consent only when he was satisfied that the draft proposal was merely window-dressing, indicating good intent,
to satisfy the questions President Franklin Roosevelt and Americans had raised about
British policy towards India. The committee drafted the proposal on March 7 and
asked Stafford Cripps to take it to India. When Viceroy Linlithgow threatened to resign,
Churchill persuaded him that the Cripps mission was important in order to blunt the
criticism of his administration by Americans, and he assured the Viceroy that the mission
would be abortive. Considered a friend of Nehru, Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in Delhi on
March 23, 1942, and immediately briefed the members of the Executive Council about
his proposals. Following this, he began the process of presenting the draft proposals to
Indian leaders.

Among the provisions of the draft declaration were the following measures:
The British government proposed that steps should be taken to create a new Indian Union
that would have full Dominion status with the power to secede from the Commonwealth.
Immediately following the war, a constituent assembly comprising both British India and
the Princely States would be created. The British government promised to implement the
constitution drawn up by this body on two conditions. Firstly, any province or provinces
that did not accept the new constitution would be entitled to frame a constitution of their
own, giving them the same status as the Indian Union. Any state or states also had the
right to adhere to the new constitution or not. Secondly, a treaty would be negotiated
between the British government and the Indian constituent assembly concerning matters
arising from the complete transfer of responsibility from Great Britain to a free India.
The document insisted that the British Government must keep control of the defense of
India as part of the war effort but the responsibility for organizing the military, moral,
and material resources should remain with the Government of India in cooperation with the people of India.

The draft proposals left Gandhi bitterly disappointed. He advised Cripps to take the next plane back to Britain and predicted that Congress would reject the proposal on the grounds that the Princely States would be included in the constituent assembly, the opt-out provisions, and the defense question. But Cripps wanted it known that the document was open for negotiation. When asked why only Dominion status was promised, he replied that the constituent assembly would have the power to do whatever it wanted. Cripps liked the idea that the new Executive Council would function as a Cabinet. There were mixed signals from practically every group. Nehru said that he felt depressed when he read the proposals and wavered between his support for Gandhi’s nonviolence and his desire to join the fight against fascism; Rajagopalachari and others in Congress were willing to cooperate in the scheme of defense provided they had real power and responsibility; Sardar Patel saw an opportunity to use the war to advance India’s political interests.

Jinnah and the members of the Muslim League realized the threat posed by the proposals that said that provinces, not communities, had the right to opt out of an Indian Union. In the face of their small Muslim majority status in the Punjab and Bengal, Muslim parties forged coalitions with Hindu and Sikh parties in running the Punjab and Bengal. By focusing on a communal rather than provincial identity, Jinnah’s Muslim League was in the process of undermining the traditional politics of the Punjab and Bengal. The draft proposals therefore placed an obstacle in Jinnah’s strategy.
On April 2, the Congress Working Committee formally rejected the proposals, reaffirming its desire for complete independence and gave as its reasons for rejection the inclusion of representatives of the Princely States in the constituent assembly, provisions for non-adherence, and that Indians were not given a central role in the defense of India. In the delicate situation, Cripps continued his negotiation, knowing well that Churchill and Amery in England, and Viceroy Linlithgow and the Commander-in-Chief Lord Wavell, did not want any Indian meddling in matters of defense, and objected vehemently to handing over defense to an Indian minister. On April 3, Colonel Louis Johnson, a former US assistant secretary of war, arrived in Delhi to assist in developing India’s war production and joined Cripps in negotiating with Congress without consulting the Viceroy who immediately complained to Amery. Churchill and Amery reprimanded Cripps severely, claiming that Cripps was told that the proposals were not open to major negotiation and revision. When talks resumed between Cripps and Congress, there was no longer mention of concessions, and the discussion reverted to the original declaration. Congress then formally rejected the proposals giving as its reason the unwillingness of the British government to create a national government. Gandhi did not participate in the final discussions as he had to return to the ashram because Kasturbai was ill. Churchill was delighted that the Cripps mission had failed. President Roosevelt cabled Churchill asking him to keep Cripps in India until a national government could be instituted as the American people were blaming the British for not granting India self-government. Churchill’s response was to treat the message as private correspondence.

The collapse of the Cripps mission left Indians bitterly disappointed. There were some who placed the blame on Gandhi, but Maulana Azad replied to that accusation in an
interview saying that Gandhi had made it clear that members of the Working Committee were free to come to their own decision. Gandhi expressed his regret at the outcome of the mission, especially because Sir Stafford Cripps was a friend of India. But he said that Cripps should have realized that the proposals to allow the possibility of the fragmentation of India into three parts, not giving Indians any real control over defense, and only Dominion status, were unacceptable. Gandhi urged Indians not to brood over British policies, but to try to resolve the communal question. He encouraged those who believed in nonviolence to work to bring Hindus and Muslims together, and to persuade them that interaction was a necessity. If Muslims felt that there was no alternative to partition and Hindus decided to fight against it, the consequences would be horrible and he hoped that he would not live to see this. Writing to Horace Alexander and Agatha Harrison, Gandhi assured them that he approached the Cripps mission with the spirit of the legacy of Charlie Andrews. He did not want to participate because he was “anti-all wars,” but Cripps was anxious to see him and that was why he went. Gandhi mentioned for the first time that the British should leave India.

The idea of the British withdrawal from India was perhaps the consequence of a deep disillusionment over the Cripps mission and one more proof that the British had no intention of giving up their empire. The cry of British withdrawal seemed unrealistic as Japanese ships had already appeared in the Bay of Bengal and their planes had bombed ports between Calcutta and Madras. A not-unrelated development was the growing introduction of foreign troops in India, especially American soldiers. Gandhi said that he saw “no Indian freedom peeping through all this preparation for the so-called defense of India. It is a preparation, pure and simple, for the defense of the British Empire.” As for
the Japanese, the Nazis, and the fascists, he warned them to think twice, if they tried to subjugate India. They would find it more difficult to do so than the British. Gandhi rejected the suggestion that they should use Japanese help to free India from British rule, declaring that he had no doubt that if they freed India, it would be to impose their own tyranny. He said that he believed that nonviolent non-cooperation was the most effective means to fight against British and Japanese rule.

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activity against the Japanese, reworked the resolution and now supported Gandhi’s espousal of nonviolent non-cooperation.

In an article on May 11, “To Every Briton,” Gandhi appealed to the British to withdraw from every Asiatic and African possession and at least from India, restating again that although British statesmen talked enthusiastically about Indian participation in the war, India was never consulted in the declaration of war. Britain held India by “right of conquest and through an army of occupation.” Declaring that India did not profit from her enforced participation in the war, he told the story of how India’s homesteads were being occupied by British troops, Indian and non-Indian, as they prepared for war. The dwellers were forcefully evicted from their homes and expected to look after themselves. He drew their attention to East Bengal, where the people whose lives were utterly dependent on the rivers, were ordered to surrender their canoes. Almost everyone was discontented with what was taking place in India and that was why he chose to speak out openly. When asked whether he was still sympathetic to the British in the war, he replied: “I used to say that my moral support was entirely with Great Britain. I am very sorry to have to confess that today my mind refuses to give that moral support.”

In June 1942, Louis Fischer, an American scholar and journalist, visited Gandhi at his ashram in Sevagram for a week. Fischer interviewed him about his demand that the British withdraw from India in the face of a war that at that very moment was threatening India. Gandhi repeated that the British must go and that he did not want to humiliate the British. He informed Fischer that villagers in Bengal were driven from their homes without compensation to make way for the construction for aerodromes. In presenting his own view of the situation, Fischer responded that the British were not likely to
withdraw. Gandhi’s answer was that Britain and America could use India as a base for military operations because he did not want the Axis powers to be victorious, but India must first be free. It was the kind of conversation he wanted to have with the Viceroy and representatives of the British government. Gandhi was inflexible on the issue of nonviolent means, but on policies and objectives he was prepared to negotiate and compromise. So, when it seemed that his view was too extreme, as on the question of British withdrawal from India, it was his intention that it would serve as his initial position in the process of negotiation. Defending the good faith of British and American democracies, Fischer asked Gandhi why he had praised the patriotism of Subhas Bose, arguing that if such nationalists gained power in an independent India, the consequences would be grave for India. Gandhi reminded him that he had worked to prevent Bose from becoming Congress President twice and he agreed that he was misguided, but he contended that Bose was a patriot. Did not democracies at times act like fascists, Gandhi asked? Turning the conversation to the American President, he questioned Fischer about the meaning of freedom: “Your president talks about the Four Freedoms. Do they include the freedom to be free? We are asked to fight for democracy in Germany, Italy, and Japan. How can we when we have not got it ourselves?” Gandhi gave him permission to present the content of their discussion to the Viceroy and US President. To the question whether an Indian national government would permit the United Nations to use Indian territory as a base for their military operations, Gandhi answered that the first act of a truly national government would be to enter into a treaty with the United Nations for defense against foreign aggression, since India would have nothing to do with any
fascist power. It was with this thought in mind that Gandhi wrote to President Roosevelt on July 1:

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The Congress Working Committee met during the first week of August in Bombay to draft the “Quit India” resolution. It demanded an immediate end to British rule in India, and promised that a free India would throw all its resources in the struggle against Nazism, fascism, and imperialism. The freedom of India would become the symbol of the freedom of all other Asian nations under foreign domination, Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, Dutch East Indies, Iran and Iraq. The resolution was placed before the All India Congress Committee on August 7. After Maulana Azad gave his presidential speech, Gandhi addressed the meeting. Declaring that he was the same Gandhi as in 1920, and that his commitment to nonviolence had become stronger, he said that the draft resolution was based on Ahimsa, and if anyone did not have faith in Ahimsa he should not vote for the resolution. Pledging that their struggle was not for power but for India’s independence, he asserted with pride that there had never been a more democratic struggle for freedom in world history than India’s. Both the French and
Russian revolutions were fought with the weapon of violence. In a democracy that will be established by nonviolence, there will be equal freedom for all. He repeated that their fight was with imperialism, not with British people.

On the communal question and the conflict between Hindus and Muslims, he asked the audience to recall the Khilafat movement of the 1920s, and the spirit of courtesy, dignity, and nobility that inspired them in those days. The “Quit India” resolution was passed on August 8, 1942. Almost immediately the Governor-General-in-Council passed a resolution expressing regret at the Congress resolution. On Sunday August 9, Gandhi got up at 4 in the morning for his prayers and was soon informed that police officers were at the gate with warrants for his arrest as well as Mahadev Desai, and Mirabehn. Given half an hour to get ready, he had breakfast of goat’s milk and fruit juice; his friends sang his favorite hymn, “Vaishnavo Janato,” and some verses of the Koran. A train was waiting for them at Victoria station. The other members of the Working Committee and other Congressmen were already taken in custody and placed in the train. Gandhi and his

On August 7, 1941, Rabindranath Tagore whom Gandhi gave the title Gurudev died in Calcutta. Indians were well aware of the continuing conversation that he had with Gandhi through the long years of struggle, and criticism also. Both Gandhi and Tagore understood nationalism to mean both a critique of British imperialism as well as reform of oppressive traditional institutions and practices. At the memorial or shraddha, given on the tenth day after death, a song was recited that the poet had composed in 1939 which summed up the universal, yet Indian, spirit of the poet:

The ocean of peace lies ahead of me.
Sail the boat, O pilot
You are my companion now.
Take me in your lap.
Along our journey to the infinite
The pole star alone will shine.

Giver of Freedom
Set me free.
May your forgiveness and compassion
Be my eternal resources for the journey-
May the mortal ties fall away,
May the vast universe
Hold me in embrace,
And with an undaunted heart
May I come to know the Great Unknown.

In February 1940, Gandhi visited Tagore in Shantiniketan. As they walked together around the rustic surroundings of Tagore’s school engaged in warm conversation, Gandhi reminded him that he had visited the school when he returned to India from South Africa in 1915, and reiterated his gratitude to Gurudev for allowing his students to stay at Shantiniketan until he established his own ashram in Ahmedabad. An international figure, Tagore had placed his hopes for the establishment of a universal culture on his school and university. He had founded a school in 1901 in Shantiniketan, a village about 100 miles North West of Calcutta. Its purpose was to create a school that did not follow the rigidities of existing school systems, but fostered the ideals of truth, beauty, and respect for different cultures. On December 22, 1921, Tagore inaugurated his university in Shantiniketan. It was called Visva-Bharati, a word that was derived from the Sanskrit word for universe and the Hindu goddess of learning. Tagore hoped that it would become a center of studies of Asian and Western cultures, both ancient and modern. Initially, there were three departments: fine arts, music, and Indology, which comprised the study of Buddhist literature, Vedic and Classic Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tibetan, and Chinese. During the turmoil of the world wars and the inter-war years,
Tagore looked to his university as the hope for a civilized future. In their conversations, Gandhi expressed his joy at visiting Shantiniketan again, more “a pilgrimage,” than a visit. He said that he saw that the poet “was living for his dearest creation, *Visva-Bharati*.28 As Gandhi was leaving, Tagore handed him a letter which said:

> Dear Mahatmaji,
> You have just had a bird’s-eye view this morning of our Visva-Bharati center of activities. I do not know what estimate you have formed of its merit. You know that though this institution is national in its immediate aspect it is international in its spirit, offering according to the best of its means India’s hospitality of culture to the rest of the world. At one of its critical moments you have saved it from an utter break-down and helped it to its legs. We are ever thankful to you for this act of friendliness. And, now before you take your leave of Shantiniketan I make my fervent appeal to you. Accept this institution under your protection, giving it an assurance of permanence if you consider it to be a national asset. *Visva-Bharati* is like a vessel which is carrying the cargo of my life’s best treasure, and I hope it may claim special care from my countrymen for its preservation.
> With love,
> Rabindranath Tagore 29

Gandhi sent this reply:

> Dear Gurudev,
> The touching note that you put into my hands as we parted has gone straight into my heart. Of course, *Visva-Bharati* is a national institution. It is undoubtedly also international. You may depend upon my doing all I can in the common endeavor to assure its permanence. I look to you to keep your promise to sleep religiously for about an hour during the day. Though I have always regarded Shantiniketan as my second home, this visit has brought me nearer to it than ever before.
> With reverence and love,
> M.K. Gandhi 30

In the 1930s, Tagore’s view of modern European civilization moved closer to that of Gandhi. As he passed his seventieth birthday, reflecting on what British imperial civilization contributed to India, he said that they had come to India not simply “as men but as the symbol of the new spirit of Europe, like the Renaissance in Italy.” Representing the spirit of modernity, its light coming from the West illuminated the whole world.31 He felt that the secret of its power was to be found in the “integrity of its pursuit of truth” guided by reason, which awakened Indians to the call of inquiry of the intellect. The fruit of this inquiry was the notion that all men were created equal.
Whether a Brahmin killed a Shudra or a Shudra killed a Brahmin, it was murder all the same. This revolutionary spirit demanded that untouchables be considered the equal in dignity of the highest social classes. The notions of equality and emancipation meant that Indians would judge British ruthlessness by the same moral standards of right and wrong that placed the powerful and the weak on the same moral plane. Their knowledge of English literary classics gave them a new language of fighting tyranny and the “shackles of political slavery.” Declaring that Indians could no longer accept either the British aerial bombing of entire villages or the cry of domestic privilege based on notions of the accident of birth or the fruit of past actions: “Our contact with Europe has awakened us to the universal laws of cause and effect; and it has given us a set of values against which scriptural dispensation and age-old convention declaim in vain.” Attracted by the ideals of free speech and individual liberty, Indians were led to believe that they could demand an equal partnership in India’s administration on the grounds of human decency. With great faith in the British character they believed that progress towards self-determination was possible.

But, writing in 1933, Tagore said that he found this hope illusory because the British in India believed “only in law and order, rules and regulations.” The measures that were introduced to improve health and education bore no relation to the needs of the people. There were few opportunities to increase wealth. Indeed, the future held no prospects. As it turned out, India was but a dark spot in the “solar dazzle of the new epoch.” Instead of enlightening the world, European civilization set fires to conquer the world:

[O]pium supported by cannon balls were directed at the heart of China, an atrocity the like of which history had not known before, except perhaps in the newly
discovered America when European Powers in their greed for gold used deceit and violence to destroy the wonderful Maya people…And everyone is aware of the horrors of European rule in the African province of Congo. Even to this day the Negroes in the United States have to bear heavy social indignities.

During the Great War it was as if a “drunken maniac was revealed in all his starkness.”

If barbarity in the distant past was like a whirlwind, its modern face was more like an erupting volcano. Even after the war there did not seem to be any pretense of decency. How else could one interpret Jallianwalla Bagh, the sending of the cruel Black and Tans to Ireland, and the rise of fascism. He asked whether one should give up faith in humanity. There was, nevertheless, hope because in those dark times there were men who risked their lives in speaking the truth to power.

On his eightieth birthday in 1941, shortly before he died, the poet wrote an essay, Crisis in Civilization. He recalled how much he enjoyed the works of Burke, Macaulay, Shakespeare, Byron, and the entire tradition of humanistic liberal philosophy. Recalling how moved he was by the opportunity to listen to the radical John Bright in the House of Commons on his first visit to England, Tagore added that Bright’s “large-hearted radicalism” that transcended all nationalist exclusiveness made a strong impact on him. Such liberal ideas inspired their revolt against rigid social customs in India. But now he was disillusioned with European civilization. As he reflected on the terrible poverty of the Indian masses under British rule, he realized that in no other country than in British India was there such a denial of basic needs like food, clothing, health, and education. Yet, at the same time, the resources of India were being used to make Britain wealthy. He felt that contempt for Indian people was more the emblem of modern British civilization than the values he had imbibed as a student of British literature. Contrasting
India’s inertia with Japan’s prosperity and Russia’s progress, he explained, perhaps too optimistically, that neither was ruled by the heavy hand of imperialism.

He said that he had lost faith “in the civilization of the West.” What the British gave to India was law and order and the “instruments of a police state.”\textsuperscript{32} Liberty had been replaced by the display of might. In Europe, a new barbarity was in force with “teeth bare and claws unconcealed in an orgy of terror.” This violence was desecrating the spirit of man. “There was a time,” he said, “when I used to believe that the springs of a true civilization would issue out of the heart of Europe. Today, as I am about to quit the world, that faith has gone bankrupt.” Yet, he said that he had not lost faith in Man and looked forward to a “turning in history.”

**JAPAN THREATENS AND THE QUIT INDIA SATYAGRAHA**

Allied defeats in Europe and Asia created increased tension and insecurity in both Great Britain and India. Japan’s swift victories in China, Southeast Asia, Malaya, and Singapore by the early months of 1942 meant that their conquering march had reached India’s eastern border. The British were forced to abandon Malaya, Singapore, and Burma ignominiously. It was Gandhi who urged Indians not to panic at the reverses that the British were suffering, reminding them that they never allowed defeats to demoralize them but rather used the reverses as stepping-stones for ultimate victory. Gandhi promised that if Japan set foot on Indian territory, he would undertake a campaign of nonviolent resistance against them.

As far as the Allies were concerned, the Japanese threat to India had to be taken seriously because India was an important strategic center of allied defense in the Indian
Ocean. It was the main route for supplies coming from Britain and the USA to China, and a major source of soldiers and materials for the wars in the Far East and the Near East. Nudged by Clement Attlee, Secretary of State Amery, and the United States, Churchill set up a special India Committee of his cabinet, which also included John Simon, Sir John Anderson, Sir James Grigg, and Sir Stafford Cripps. The purpose of the committee was to create a constitutional plan for India that would ensure the cooperation of Indians during this critical period.

Churchill’s deep-seated resentment against granting any measure of self-rule to India almost got in the way of an agreement by the committee. His state of mind was revealed later in the year when he declared that he did not become Prime Minister to preside over the break-up of the British Empire. Churchill gave his consent only when he was satisfied that the draft proposal was merely window-dressing, indicating good intent, to satisfy the questions President Franklin Roosevelt and Americans had raised about British policy towards India. The committee drafted the proposal on March 7 and asked Stafford Cripps to take it to India. When Viceroy Linlithgow threatened to resign, Churchill persuaded him that the Cripps mission was important in order to blunt the criticism of his administration by Americans, and he assured the Viceroy that the mission would be abortive. Considered a friend of Nehru, Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in Delhi on March 23, 1942, and immediately briefed the members of the Executive Council about his proposals. Following this, he began the process of presenting the draft proposals to Indian leaders.

Among the provisions of the draft declaration were the following measures:
The British government proposed that steps should be taken to create a new Indian Union that would have full Dominion status with the power to secede from the Commonwealth. Immediately following the war, a constituent assembly comprising both British India and the Princely States would be created. The British government promised to implement the constitution drawn up by this body on two conditions. Firstly, any province or provinces that did not accept the new constitution would be entitled to frame a constitution of their own, giving them the same status as the Indian Union. Any state or states also had the right to adhere to the new constitution or not. Secondly, a treaty would be negotiated between the British government and the Indian constituent assembly concerning matters arising from the complete transfer of responsibility from Great Britain to a free India. The document insisted that the British Government must keep control of the defense of India as part of the war effort but the responsibility for organizing the military, moral, and material resources should remain with the Government of India in cooperation with the people of India.

The draft proposals left Gandhi bitterly disappointed. He advised Cripps to take the next plane back to Britain and predicted that Congress would reject the proposal on the grounds that the Princely States would be included in the constituent assembly, the opt-out provisions, and the defense question. But Cripps wanted it known that the document was open for negotiation. When asked why only Dominion status was promised, he replied that the constituent assembly would have the power to do whatever it wanted. Cripps liked the idea that the new Executive Council would function as a Cabinet. There were mixed signals from practically every group. Nehru said that he felt depressed when he read the proposals and wavered between his support for Gandhi’s
nonviolence and his desire to join the fight against fascism; Rajagopalachari and others in Congress were willing to cooperate in the scheme of defense provided they had real power and responsibility; Sardar Patel saw an opportunity to use the war to advance India’s political interests.

Jinnah and the members of the Muslim League realized the threat posed by the proposals that said that provinces, not communities, had the right to opt out of an Indian Union. In the face of their small Muslim majority status in the Punjab and Bengal, Muslim parties forged coalitions with Hindu and Sikh parties in running the Punjab and Bengal. By focusing on a communal rather than provincial identity, Jinnah’s Muslim League was in the process of undermining the traditional politics of the Punjab and Bengal. The draft proposals therefore placed an obstacle in Jinnah’s strategy.

On April 2, the Congress Working Committee formally rejected the proposals, reaffirming its desire for complete independence and gave as its reasons for rejection the inclusion of representatives of the Princely States in the constituent assembly, provisions for non-adherence, and that Indians were not given a central role in the defense of India. In the delicate situation, Cripps continued his negotiation, knowing well that Churchill and Amery in England, and Viceroy Linlithgow and the Commander-in-Chief Lord Wavell, did not want any Indian meddling in matters of defense, and objected vehemently to handing over defense to an Indian minister. On April 3, Colonel Louis Johnson, a former US assistant secretary of war, arrived in Delhi to assist in developing India’s war production and joined Cripps in negotiating with Congress without consulting the Viceroy who immediately complained to Amery. Churchill and Amery reprimanded Cripps severely, claiming that Cripps was told that the proposals were not open to major
negotiation and revision. When talks resumed between Cripps and Congress, there was no longer mention of concessions, and the discussion reverted to the original declaration. Congress then formally rejected the proposals giving as its reason the unwillingness of the British government to create a national government. Gandhi did not participate in the final discussions as he had to return to the ashram because Kasturbai was ill. Churchill was delighted that the Cripps mission had failed. President Roosevelt cabled Churchill asking him to keep Cripps in India until a national government could be instituted as the American people were blaming the British for not granting India self-government. Churchill’s response was to treat the message as private correspondence.

The collapse of the Cripps mission left Indians bitterly disappointed. There were some who placed the blame on Gandhi, but Maulana Azad replied to that accusation in an interview saying that Gandhi had made it clear that members of the Working Committee were free to come to their own decision. Gandhi expressed his regret at the outcome of the mission, especially because Sir Stafford Cripps was a friend of India. But he said that Cripps should have realized that the proposals to allow the possibility of the fragmentation of India into three parts, not giving Indians any real control over defense, and only Dominion status, were unacceptable. Gandhi urged Indians not to brood over British policies, but to try to resolve the communal question. He encouraged those who believed in nonviolence to work to bring Hindus and Muslims together, and to persuade them that interaction was a necessity. If Muslims felt that there was no alternative to partition and Hindus decided to fight against it, the consequences would be horrible and he hoped that he would not live to see this. Writing to Horace Alexander and Agatha Harrison, Gandhi assured them that he approached the Cripps mission with the spirit of
the legacy of Charlie Andrews. He did not want to participate because he was “anti-all wars,” but Cripps was anxious to see him and that was why he went. Gandhi mentioned for the first time that the British should leave India.

The idea of the British withdrawal from India was perhaps the consequence of a deep disillusionment over the Cripps mission and one more proof that the British had no intention of giving up their empire. The cry of British withdrawal seemed unrealistic as Japanese ships had already appeared in the Bay of Bengal and their planes had bombed ports between Calcutta and Madras. A not-unrelated development was the growing introduction of foreign troops in India, especially American soldiers. Gandhi said that he saw “no Indian freedom peeping through all this preparation for the so-called defense of India. It is a preparation, pure and simple, for the defense of the British Empire.” As for the Japanese, the Nazis, and the fascists, he warned them to think twice, if they tried to subjugate India. They would find it more difficult to do so than the British. Gandhi rejected the suggestion that they should use Japanese help to free India from British rule, declaring that he had no doubt that if they freed India, it would be to impose their own tyranny. He said that he believed that nonviolent non-cooperation was the most effective means to fight against British and Japanese rule.

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The Congress Working Committee met during the first week of August in Bombay to draft the “Quit India” resolution. It demanded an immediate end to British rule in India, and promised that a free India would throw all its resources in the struggle against Nazism, fascism, and imperialism. The freedom of India would become the symbol of the freedom of all other Asian nations under foreign domination, Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, Dutch East Indies, Iran and Iraq. The resolution was placed before the All India Congress Committee on August 7. After Maulana Azad gave his presidential speech, Gandhi addressed the meeting. Declaring that he was the same Gandhi as in 1920, and that his commitment to nonviolence had become stronger, he said that the draft resolution was based on Ahimsa, and if anyone did not have faith in Ahimsa he should not vote for the resolution. Pledging that their struggle was not for power but for India’s independence, he asserted with pride that there had never been a more democratic struggle for freedom in world history than India’s. Both the French and Russian revolutions were fought with the weapon of violence. In a democracy that will be established by nonviolence, there will be equal freedom for all. He repeated that their fight was with imperialism, not with British people.

On the communal question and the conflict between Hindus and Muslims, he asked the audience to recall the Khilafat movement of the 1920s, and the spirit of courtesy, dignity, and nobility that inspired them in those days. The “Quit India” resolution was passed on August 8, 1942. Almost immediately the Governor-General-in-Council passed a resolution expressing regret at the Congress resolution. On Sunday
August 9, Gandhi got up at 4 in the morning for his prayers and was soon informed that police officers were at the gate with warrants for his arrest as well as Mahadev Desai, and Mirabehn. Given half an hour to get ready, he had breakfast of goat’s milk and fruit juice; his friends sang his favorite hymn, “Vaishnavo Janato,” and some verses of the Koran. A train was waiting for them at Victoria station. The other members of the Working Committee and other Congressmen were already taken in custody and placed in the train. Gandhi and his party were taken to the Aga Khan’s Palace in Poona which would serve as their prison.
CHAPTER 9
TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE AND PARTITION

_**Satyagraha** is like a Banyan tree with innumerable branches. Civil disobedience is one such branch, _satya_ (truth) and _ahimsa_ (nonviolence) together make the parent trunk from which all innumerable branches shoot out... We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of _satya_ and _ahimsa_ and then, and not till then, shall we be able to undertake mass _satyagraha._

M.K. Gandhi, _The Hindu_, April 21, 1919.

Once more Gandhi was imprisoned, this time in the old Aga Khan’s palace in Poona, and was accompanied by his secretary for thirty-five years, Mahadev Desai, his physician, Dr. Sushila Nayar, Kasturbai, Mirabehn, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. The palace was ringed with barbed wire and guarded by a large number of police. Throughout India, Congress meetings were banned and its members were rounded up and jailed. The Central government issued severe ordinances, replacing local officers with provincial officials, censoring news, and prohibiting the closing of shops and restaurants.

On August 15, 1942, Mahadev Desai died from a massive heart attack. His passing sent Gandhi and his group into deep mourning. Saddened, Gandhi washed his body, anointed it with sandal, and garlanded it with flowers, whispering, “Mahadev, I thought you would be doing this for me. Now I have to do it for you.” When the jail officials sent a lorry to pick the body up for cremation, Gandhi refused to allow strangers to cremate the body. It was the practice to allow the bodies of even murderers to be handed to their relatives for burial. But the government feared that Desai’s funeral would be another incentive for anti-government activity and so refused to allow Gandhi to cremate his body outside the jail or allow friends to do so. Gandhi decided to have the cremation on the grounds of the prison, saying that Mahadev was more than a son to him and he wanted to perform his last rites.
The news of Mahadev Desai’s death coming on the arrests of Congress members unleashed an outburst of anger at the government. Indians interpreted Desai’s death as the result of cruel treatment meted out to the prisoners. The militarization of India and the establishment of a national security state apparatus following the “Quit India” resolution did not make for a civil solution to the conflict. Protesters marched on police stations and other symbols of the government, attacking more than 150 police stations, 250 railway stations, and 500 post offices. Viceroy Lord Linlithgow viewed the protests as the most serious rebellion since the 1857 rebellion and permitted the brutal repression of the demonstrations.¹ Planes of the Royal Air Force machine-gunned demonstrators on six occasions, and police occupied Benares Hindu University. Having prepared 57 battalions of soldiers for this emergency, government violence continued for some six weeks. Even the hated Whipping Act was restored and used liberally. The Quit India civil disobedience campaign was effectively put down by repressive tactics. In the process, some 28 police were killed. The Indian civilian casualties were put at 900 by the authorities. Unofficial estimates put the total casualties at 2,500. By the end of 1942, 60,000 persons were arrested, of whom there were 28,000 convictions. Churchill gloated that the disturbances were crushed with “the full weight of the government” and reassured the British that “the number of white troops in that country were larger than at any time in the British connection.” He reminded friends and foe that he did not become prime minister to participate in the demise of the British Empire, declaring that “Gandhism and all it stands for will have to be grappled with and finally crushed.” Police seized Navajivan press and all the issues of Harijan, and destroyed the files since 1933. Every attempt by moderate nationalists to engage in discussions with the
government was turned town by British leaders, who stated publicly that Gandhi and Congress were responsible for the violence, not the British. All the while they imposed strict censorship on the publication of different views of what happened.

In letters to the Viceroy in January 1943, Gandhi asked the Viceroy to correct the untruth that was being spread by the government that he was responsible for the violence that erupted: “But you throw in my face the facts of murders by persons reputed to be Congressmen. I see the fact of the murders as clearly, I hope, as you do. My answer is that the government goaded the people to the point of madness.”\(^\text{2}\) Gandhi then informed the Viceroy that he was going to commence a twenty-one day fast to clear the political atmosphere of the clouds of lies that had poisoned the political landscape. The Viceroy replied arrogantly that he had secret evidence that Gandhi and Congress had intended that their campaign would lead to violence, and supported their version of events. He was therefore not backing down from his understanding of what took place. As for Gandhi’s proposed fast, he viewed it as nothing but political blackmail.

The Viceroy’s inflexibility on the issue of negotiation with Gandhi was not unrelated to the allied reversal of fortunes from the beginning of 1943. The tide had begun to turn in favor of the allies in the Atlantic, Russia, North Africa, the Pacific, and South-East Asia. The 14\(^{\text{th}}\) Indian division had already started its advance into Burma. The big three of British foreign policy – Churchill, Amery, and Lord Linlithgow – expressed no concern for Gandhi. The Viceroy felt that Gandhi should be allowed to starve to death. When the Viceroy’s Executive Committee recommended that Gandhi be released and threatened to resign if he was not, secretary of state Leo Amery was angry with them. Churchill expressed his predictable opinion that he really did not care if they resigned:
“We could carry on just as well without them and this our hour of triumph everywhere in the world was not the time to crawl before a miserable little old man who had always been our enemy.” The Viceroy finally heeded the advice of the Executive committee and offered to release Gandhi for the duration of the fast so that he would not be held responsible if Gandhi died. Gandhi chose not to accept the offer.

Gandhi’s friends were worried whether he would survive this fast. He was now 74, and his health was not very good. He became nauseous from the fourth day, and soon his condition grew serious as uremia set in. Representatives of every group urged the Viceroy to release Gandhi immediately, but Churchill and the Viceroy refused to budge. They even denied Mr. William Phillips, President Roosevelt’s envoy in India, permission to visit him. Believing that Gandhi’s death was imminent, the government issued a pamphlet, Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, which castigated Gandhi and Congress for their role in the violent disturbances. Certain that Gandhi would die, they made elaborate preparations to minimize the political impact of his death, among which were decisions not to send Kasturbai any letter of condolence nor to lower flags on government buildings. Gandhi had the last laugh, however. Persuaded by his doctors to mix some sweet lime juice in his drinking water, his condition began to improve to the amazement of friends and foes. The New York Times said that “it was a moral victory for both sides,” and the Manchester Guardian commented that it was a good thing for the ultimate friendship between England and India that Gandhi did not die. What these newspapers were urging was the resumption of discussion and reconciliation, an objective that moved non-Congress leaders to send a deputation to the Viceroy. But the government remained firmly against negotiation. Instead of using the event of the fast as
the opportunity to reach out to Gandhi, they proceeded to ridicule Gandhi’s fast. Unwilling to learn any lesson from the near-tragedy of the fast and the unforeseen consequences that might have taken place, Churchill and Linlithgow preferred to publicize that the fast was really a fraud done with the connivance between Gandhi and his five doctors. Churchill felt certain that one of Gandhi’s Hindu doctors had slipped glucose into his drinking water and was ecstatic when Linlithgow told him that he was suggesting to American correspondents that “it has not been so much a matter of having their heart-strings plucked as of their legs being pulled.” Churchill approved of the Viceroy’s “weapon of ridicule.”

The British government held fast to their policy of immobilizing the Satyagraha movement by detaining Gandhi and Congress leaders from 1942 until almost the end of the war. It was clear from the beginning of the war in 1939 that Britain wanted a free hand in ruling India. First, they welcomed Congress resignation from provincial councils. They found it easy to contain the policy of individual Satyagraha, but the “Quit India” campaign terrified them so greatly that, in making India a national security state, they became an army of occupation. At no time between 1942 and early 1944 were the British willing to engage in discussion about how to reconcile the conflict between the British government and Congress. The British felt that their policy was justified in the context of the war against the Nazis and Japanese. In executing its policy of savage repression, the British also chose to ignore the sympathy that Gandhi and other Indian leaders had for the allied cause which could have been the basis for discussion and negotiation. From the Indian nationalist perspective, the policies of Congress throughout the war were understood as means for negotiation and dialogue. Was Satyagraha then
limited as an instrument of resistance in the particular conditions of British rule in India during World War II? Although Gandhi and his colleagues were imprisoned, Gandhi was able through letters and his fast to engage in a discourse with the Viceroy, which, even though it did not bring an agreement, made Indians aware that a discussion was taking place. Despite the disagreement and anger between both sides, Gandhi at least kept his respect for his British antagonists. So, when the allied victory seemed certain in 1944, many British voices were sympathetic to the cause of Indian independence, and nudged their leaders to re-engage Congress in discussions. It became a principle of Satyagraha that, even in the fiercest of struggles, the lines of discussion and disagreement should be kept open, a mode of resolving conflict that Gandhi often asserted was a key element of the search for the truth of an event.¹

With the members of Congress detained, Jinnah lost no time in pushing his objective of making the Muslim League the representative body for all Muslims. Gandhi read Jinnah’s confident speeches in Dawn, the newspaper that Jinnah founded, and wrote a letter to him asking to meet with him, but the Viceroy did not permit the letter to be sent. Although the Pakistan movement had begun to pick up steam, Jinnah continued to be vague about Pakistan, preferring to harp on alleged Congress discrimination against Muslims and Congress dictatorship, a political line that he calculated would appeal to the Muslim masses. The death of the Muslim leader of the Unionist Party in the Punjab, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, in December 1942 gave Jinnah and the League the opportunity to persuade his inexperienced successor, Khizar Hayat Khan, to follow Jinnah’s leadership. Still, Jinnah had to thread the waters of Punjab politics carefully because the demand for Pakistan would mean the unraveling of the coalition of Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh interests
in the politics of the Punjab. The Muslim majority was so small that if the demand for Pakistan was serious, it must surely threaten the unity of the Punjab and result in partition. In deciding not to define what the demand for Pakistan meant, Jinnah allowed Muslim politicians in the Punjab to follow both the Unionist party and the Muslim League.

In Bengal, the League’s strategy was to undermine Fazlul Haq, who had been premier of Bengal since 1937. Haq had resigned from the Muslim League in 1941, and formed a coalition with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Forward Bloc parties. Jinnah, on the other hand, placed his bet on the support of Nazimuddin and the Nawab of Dacca and Suhrawaddy in Calcutta. When Haq was brought down by a vote of no confidence in March 1943, many Muslim members of Haq’s Party transferred their loyalty to the League. Jinnah urged members to take the message of the League to the masses. The other three provinces claimed for Pakistan- Assam, Sind, and the North-West Province-also came into the League’s camp. In spite of his successes in having the Muslim League replace traditional parties and strategies, Jinnah still refused to be precise about his demand for Pakistan because that would mean initiating a debate about the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. As Jinnah himself put it, such a discussion would “create controversies and differences of opinion.”

By May 1943 there was famine in Bengal, and also sections of Bihar and Orissa. The famine was caused more by the inadequate distribution system than the shortage of food. Although food was scarce in some areas, cereals continued to be exported. In the middle of 1943, food prices were ten times the pre-war level. The burden of famine fell on the poorer sections of society who had to borrow heavily from
money lenders, ultimately causing the transfer of their lands into the hands of moneylenders and landlords. The Japanese counter-attack in March and April created the conditions for the political anxiety which resulted in the famine, since Bengal was on the frontier of the Japanese invasion. Historically dependent on rice from Burma and South East Asia, East Bengal was in dire straits now that it was cut off from its rice supplies. In addition, the government had ordered a scorched-earth policy to deny food to the invaders, and the seizure and destruction of all country boats to prevent them falling into the enemy’s hands, knowing well that they were in some cases the only means of transport of the local population. The railways were requisitioned for military purposes and therefore were not used to transport grain to the stricken areas. The invasion did not materialize, but the consequences were, nevertheless, devastating. From July 1943 to June 1944 between three and five million Bengalis died.6

The Viceroy neither offered his sympathy nor visited the famine areas. Since the tragedy had more to do with human greed and official incompetence, decisive action by the Viceroy might have mitigated the tragedy. But Lord Linlithgow preferred to remain remote from the situation. A favorite of Churchill and Amery, he was persuaded to remain for a few more months, retiring after seven and a half years as Viceroy. His irresponsible conduct during the famine of 1943 was one more burden this Viceroy, known for his heavy-handedness, placed on Indians. In an interview before he left India, Lord Linlithgow declared that India could not hope to achieve self-government for another 50 years, and still needed the hand of Europeans and British officials. Responsibility for the famine fell not only on the British government, but also on the Bengal legislature, now under the control of a Muslim League ministry, which proved more adept at distributing jobs to their supporters than food. As food shortages forced prices to increase, merchants hoarded grain, which should have remained in the villages for food and seed. Little was done to restrain the greedy merchants. Poor people suffered the most because they did not have the money to buy food. Within a week of
assuming the office of Viceroy of India, Lord Wavell flew to Calcutta to observe at first hand the famine. Enraged at the lack of urgency of the acting Governor, Sir Thomas Rutherford, and the director of the Indian Medical Service, Sir J.B. Hance, Lord Wavell immediately dispatched requests to London for famine relief. True to his antipathy towards Indians, Churchill commented that despite the famine Indians would continue to breed like rabbits.

Convinced that Germany would lose the war after the battle of Stalingrad, Subhas Bose made his way to Japan where the situation seemed more hopeful for his plans to liberate India from British rule. On June 10, 1943, he met the Prime Minister, General Tojo, who assured him of Japan’s support for India’s struggle for freedom. Subhas Bose later went to Singapore where he took over command of the Indian National Army which consisted of Indian soldiers of the British army who were captured by the Japanese. It was Pritam Singh, a Sikh priest and member of the Independence League in Bangkok in 1939, and a Japanese intelligence officer, Major Fujiwara, who conceived the idea of approaching captured Indian soldiers, offering freedom if they defected to the Japanese. Soon, some 60,000 captured Indians had joined the INA. In October 1943, Subhas Bose created the Provisional Government of Azad Hind (Free India), and made Rangoon his headquarters. Hoping to raise an army of 300,000 men, Bose also founded a women’s regiment he called the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, named after the heroine of the 1857 rebellion. The Japanese advanced towards Imphal and Kohima in Manipur in January 1944. At least he was able to persuade the Japanese leaders not to bomb Calcutta. By April, the monsoon rains and the tenacity of General Bill Slim and the 5th Indian Division made conditions difficult for the Japanese. Defeated and forced to retreat, some 6,000 troops of the INA were captured by the British, but Bose did not lose hope. He continued to broadcast messages to India, promising to launch other offensives. On August 17,
1945, three days after Japan surrendered, Bose set off from Saigon for Russia. Refueling at Taipeh, his plane caught fire. Badly burnt, he was taken to a Japanese military hospital where he died. After cremation, his ashes were taken to a Buddhist monastery in Tokyo.7

THE PASSING OF KASTURBAI

Gasping for breath, Kasturbai sat upright on her bed and placed her head on Gandhi’s shoulders. On February 22, 1944 in the Aga Khan’s prison, Kasturbai Gandhi, called affectionately Ba or Mother, passed away. The Times of India published the following eulogy on its front page the following day:

Mrs. Gandhi ranks among the great women of India. The keynote of her life was a high steadfast devotion to her husband…unassuming, gentle, shy of public speaking, the role of a leader hardly suited her. But it was Kasturba’s destiny that she should marry one who was to become the most prominent man in Indian public life. For 60 years she was his constant companion, following him through all the vicissitudes of a Mahatma’s wife, courting imprisonment with him in the role of political agitator, picketer, and Satyagrahi…Seldom have the wives of great men earned so much gratitude. She won for herself, perhaps without realizing it, a unique place in the memory of the Indian people. A brave woman with a large and kind heart, she was known to India’s worshipping millions simply as “Ba”-mother.8

Following Gandhi’s arrest, Kasturbai insisted on giving a political speech at a Bombay meeting. She and Dr. Sushila Nayar were arrested and placed in the Arthur Road prison in central Bombay. Leaking sewage pipes, dirty mattresses and sheets, and an attack of diarrhea forced the prison authority to move them to the Aga Khan’s prison where Kasturbai recovered her health.

What gave Gandhi the most pleasure was giving Kasturbai lessons in Gujarati grammar, poetry, history, and geography. She knew a little English and could read
simple Gujarati. They were spending their 61st year of married life in the Aga Khan’s jail. Since Kasturbai loved to sing, Gandhi and Kasturbai would sit on the veranda singing the poems that Gandhi wanted her to learn by heart every evening before prayers. The history of the project of educating his wife was not lost on Gandhi. He had started to do this in the early years of their marriage and gave a variety of reasons why it was discontinued – her stubbornness and his public activity. Her new enthusiasm for studying cooled when, after asking for a notebook to replace her slate, Gandhi, in the manner of a schoolmaster more typical of his youthful years, told her that she would receive one when her writing improved, to which she responded by walking out of the room. She, nevertheless, showed an abiding interest in his work, and kept reminding him that he was now an old man and should worry about his health. Mahadev Desai’s death was still on her mind when Gandhi first raised the possibility of a twenty-one day fast. But she talked with Gandhi privately about her anxiety for an hour, and surprised everyone when she said that she supported his decision to fast as a protest against the Government’s false charges.

No sooner had Gandhi ended his fast on March 3, 1943 than Kasturbai became ill with bronchial pneumonia. The government permitted her sons to visit her. Ramdas and Devadas were happy to make visits to their parents. Manilal was in South Africa, but no one knew the whereabouts of Harilal. At Kasturbai’s urging, Manu Gandhi, their 15 year-old grand-niece, came to be her nurse and companion. She dictated to Manu frequent letters to her children and grandchildren. When the community decided to celebrate Gandhi’s birthday on October 2, 1943 by decorating the dining room, Kasturbai was eager to participate. To show her love for Gandhi, she wore a white cotton sari.
bordered with red that was made from yarn spun by Gandhi which she had kept in the
ashram, with her request that when she died her body would be draped with this dress
before her cremation. The birthday party was a happy occasion for her.

Her health worsened, and, shortly after, she suffered a heart attack,
followed by two more in early January 1944. Gandhi spent long hours sitting next to her,
holding her hand. She kept asking for Harilal, who was on his way to see her after the
police found him in Poona and informed him of the seriousness of her condition. When
he showed up, he was so intoxicated that he was turned away. He came again on
February 17, looking pale and thin. It was a moving visit. Despite his troubled life, she
had always defended him. The visit passed quickly and she was horrified to learn that the
authorities had allowed only one visit. She asked that all her sons be allowed to visit her.
On February 20, Manilal sent a telegram from South Africa saying that he and Sushila
were planning to visit their mother, to which Gandhi replied that he thought it would be
too late. The police found Harilal so woefully drunk that he could not stand up, but
brought him to her. His visit pained her so much that she repeatedly beat her forehead.
Her spirit picked up when Devadas brought Harilal’s daughter to visit her the following
day. She asked Devadas to promise to care for Harilal’s children. On February 22,
Devadas brought a jar of water from the Ganges and, according to Hindu tradition, placed
a drop in his mother’s mouth. Her head resting on his chest, Kasturbai passed away as
Gandhi stroked her hair and her friends sang the hymn “Ramadhun.”

Since the government did not permit a public funeral, Gandhi decided that the
ceremony would be held the next day in the same place as Mahadev Desai’s. Sushila
Nayar and Mirabehn bathed her body and dressed her in the special red-bordered white
cotton sari. Mirabehn placed a garland of flowers around her neck and small wreaths around her wrists intertwined with the five glass bangles that Kasturbai had worn since the day of her marriage, signifying her love and devotion. A procession of about 150 mourners behind the flower-bedecked bier made their way to the cremation site where the body was lifted to the funeral pyre. Gandhi was moved to tears. Then followed a simple service where Gandhi read selections from the Bhagavad Gita, the Quran, and the New Testament. Mirabehn read a Psalm from the Old Testament and Dr. Gilder recited verses from the Zoroastrian sacred scripture. Members of Gandhi’s ashram sang Bhajans. Devadas then lit the funeral pyre.

Gandhi stood near the burning pyre, remarking sadly that “the best part of me is dead” and “what am I going to do now?” He moved his chair to the shade of a tamarind tree and for six hours he gazed at the dying embers of the pyre. A letter to the new Viceroy, Lord Wavell, shed light on what he was thinking:

I feel the loss more than I had thought I should. We were a couple outside the ordinary. It was in 1906 that, by mutual consent and after unconscious trials, we definitely adopted self-restraint as a rule of life. To my great joy this knit us together as never before. We ceased to be two different entities. Without my wishing it, she chose to lose herself in me. The result was that she became truly my better half. She was a woman always of very strong will, which, in our early days, I used to mistake for obstinacy. But that strong will enabled her to become, quite unwittingly, my teacher in the art and practice of nonviolent non-cooperation. The practice began with my family. When I introduced it in 1906 in the political field, it came to be known by the more comprehensive and specially coined name of Satyagraha. When the course of Indian imprisonments commenced in South Africa, Kasturbai was among civil resisters. She went through greater physical trials than I.10

As he sat for long hours observing the flickering dying embers, reflecting on the memories of their old relationship, Gandhi must have remembered that day in 1882 when, at the age of thirteen, riding a white horse at the head of the wedding procession to
Kasturbai’s home, he and Kasturbai were married. After 1906, even Kasturbai used to say that the world became Gandhi’s family. One marvels at how energetically Gandhi struggled to make his ashram, the villages of India, India, and the world a more humane community, even while he was conducting major Satyagraha campaigns. When Gandhi remarked after Kasturbai’s death that she was his better half, he genuinely believed that this was true. He knew that she was the one who held the home and family together. Although many people were drawn to Gandhi and became his true friends, it was the love, devotion, and strength of Kasturbai which provided the foundation for his love for the world. Kasturbai kept the family together, looked after her children’s interests, and made sure that they knew that they were loved. All this while at the same time she was participating in her husband’s campaigns, suffering imprisonment on many occasions, or traveling across the country assisting in the anti-untouchability programs.

It could not have been easy for his children to understand the changes in their material condition following Gandhi’s psychological transformations. Harilal was born in India in 1887; Manilal in India in 1892; Ramdas in 1897 in Durban, South Africa; and Devadas in 1900, also in Durban. Gandhi was studying in England between 1889 and 1891, and was initially engaged in South Africa from 1893 to 1896. It was only from 1896 that the family was together. No one could deny Gandhi’s love for his children. His assistance at the birth of Devadas and his tender care to help 10 year-old Manilal to recover from typhoid speak volumes of his love. Although their home in South Africa was a large, five-bedroom villa, the texture of Gandhi’s life was already changing towards self-reliance and social reform. This transformation would reach a more radical stage when he took the vow of self-restraint or Brahmacharya in 1906 and later moved to
Phoenix settlement. There is no denying the effect this had on his family, especially his children.

Harilal and, to an extent, Manilal, found it more difficult to cope with the seemingly sudden changes in their father’s way of life to one of simplicity and austerity because they grew up when Gandhi preferred a Western lifestyle as a lawyer. Devadas and Ramdas lived at Phoenix ashram and so were used to a simple life where education to build character was preferred to a literary education. All four sons complained but none more than Harilal who wanted to be a lawyer like his father. Married to Gulab, the daughter of Haridas Vora, without apparently consulting his parents, Harilal and Gulab loved each other. Gandhi loved Gulab as a daughter, and when they came to South Africa, they were happy. Harilal was at his father’s side when Satyagraha commenced in 1906, marching, breaking the law, and courting arrest. That others called him Gandhi Junior made Gandhi proud. What broke his heart and made him bitter was Gandhi’s preference first for his nephew Chhaganlal and then, when Chhaganlal fell ill and returned, selected Sohrabji Adjania to receive the award to be educated in England which Gandhi’s friend in England, Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, had offered to support financially.

Still ambitious for a higher education when he left his father to return to India, he sat and failed the matriculation exam three times. Anxious to support his family well, he eventually accepted a job in Calcutta with Seth Narottam Morarji and was able to give his family a normal living. Harilal had many walks and discussions with his father after his parents returned to India. He was devoted to his wife, two daughters, Rami and Manu, and three sons, Kantilal, Rasiklal, and Shanti. But, careless with money, Harilal lost his job, setting in motion other troubles that mounted culminating in the death of his wife Gulab and Shanti in the great influenza epidemic of 1918. Harilal never recovered from these blows of misfortune. At times he tried to restore his sense of family and attitude, but the addiction to alcohol and a dissolute life pulled him in the opposite direction where he seemed to be compelled to criticise his father publicly.\textsuperscript{11}
Manilal was also subjected to his father’s severe moral standards, but with a happier result. In 1909, at the age of 17, Manilal was understandably worried about his future because he did not have any formal education. Gandhi wrote to him from jail offering to help Manilal to overcome his anxiety:

Although I think that you are well able to bear all the burden I have placed on your shoulders and that you are doing it quite cheerfully, I have often felt that you required greater personal guidance than I have been able to give you…I have been reading Emerson, Ruskin, and Mazzini. I have also been reading the Upanishads. All confirm the view that education does not mean a knowledge of letters but it means character building. It means a knowledge of duty. Our own [Gujarati] word means training. If this is the true view, and it is to my mind the only true view, you are receiving the best education-training possible…This does not mean that you should not receive instruction in letters. That you should and you are doing. But it is a thing over which you need not fret yourself.\(^{12}\)

Manilal stayed in South Africa and was given the responsibility of running *Indian Opinion* when the family returned to India in 1915. The two youngest sons, Ramdas and Devadas, also followed their parents in lives of service to the community. This was how Arun Gandhi, the son of Manilal, remembered his grandmother:

Ba was constantly on the move – to Benares with Bapu, where he spoke to a large gathering of Untouchables; to Ahmedabad with her granddaughter Sumitra, Ramdas’ oldest child, who needed eye treatments; to Delhi, where Devadas had settled in a well paying job, to visit his family and rest a bit herself; to Deolali to attend a rural exhibition. Back to Delhi to help care for her baby granddaughter Tara\(^ {13}\)

Kasturbai was also an integral part of the *Satyagraha* campaigns, and a vital member of Sabarmati ashram. She was one of the Satyagrahis who went to Champaran to introduce needed reforms in the villages, and felt proud of her work teaching the community the importance of sanitation. She was there with Gandhi as the community built the ashram on the Sabarmati river, helping shoulder to shoulder in the construction
of cottages, a school, a library, a weaving shed, and a road down to the river. When Gandhi started his movement to revive the ancient craft of spinning, Kasturbai took to her task enthusiastically and became one of the ashram’s most skilful spinners.

She was also a warm and sympathetic advisor to both the residents of the ashram and visitors, an excellent illustration of which was the story of Gandhi’s trusted second secretary, Pyarelal Nayyar. Pyarelal had heard Gandhi speak when he visited Lahore and, on completion of his university studies, asked Gandhi to join his ashram. Pyarelal’s mother wrote to Gandhi asking him to dissuade Pyarelal because she was a widow and was hoping that her son would help support her and her daughter, Sushila, now that he had finished his university training. Invited to come to the ashram to work out the situation, she found a sympathetic figure in Kasturbai who confided to her how difficult she found the way of life of the ashram initially, but explained the nobility of what they were setting out to accomplish. Mrs. Nayar was so charmed by Kasturbai that she allowed Pyarelal to stay for “four or five years.” As they were leaving, Gandhi invited the mother to bring the daughter so that the whole family could live in the ashram. She declined but Sushila spent three years at the Ashram where she was under the guidance of Kasturbai who encouraged her to study medicine. This was Dr. Sushila Nayar who ministered to both Gandhi and Kasturbai in their last years.

Gandhi knew how important Kasturbai was to his life and work. When it seemed that he would not survive his fast against untouchability in Yeravda prison in September 1932, it was the presence of Kasturbai that kept him alive. Like a magician, she used this potentially tragic event as a family reunion. Ramdas was brought to Yeravda prison to complete his prison term; Devadas made frequent visits; even Manilal, Sushila, and their
four-year-old Sita visited them, bringing apples from South Africa and oranges from Zanzibar. Soon after, Kasturbai was off to represent Gandhi at a conference in Madras against Untouchability, and later accompanied other women to plead for the rights of Harijans in the region.

When Ramdas and Devadas went to the site of her cremation to collect her remains in an earthen pot, they were amazed to find that her five glass bangles had not been damaged by the fire. Many interpreted this as a sign that she had fulfilled her dharma, her devotion to life’s duty.

CONSTITUTIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

In April, 1944 Gandhi was stricken with malaria. As his condition worsened, he and his party were surprised when they were told that they would be released from prison unconditionally. After placing flowers and saying prayers at Mahadev Desai’s and Kasturbai’s cremation site, Gandhi and his friends departed for Juhu Beach in Bombay where the sea-air and his vow to observe silence for two weeks did wonders for his health.

On July 11, the Times of India published an interview Gandhi gave to Mr. Stewart Gilder, a British correspondent, on ways to end the political deadlock. He said that he was interested in an interview with the Viceroy because he was searching for a new policy to prevent the recurrence of the events of 1942. Asserting that he did not want to embarrass the British government by resuming civil disobedience, he said that what he had in mind was a national government with control over civil administration. He felt sure that Congress would then join in the war effort. When critics said that they saw little difference between his present position and 1942, Gandhi replied that his understanding
of what happened in 1942 was now more complex, declaring that he considered wrong not only the terrible acts of government repression, but also the acts of sabotage and violence that he learned some of the demonstrators displayed. The second difference was that there was now massive starvation, and an urgent need to find a solution. He said that he was prepared to ask the Congress Working Committee to declare that mass civil disobedience would not be offered, and that Congress would offer to cooperate in the war, if an immediate declaration of independence was made and a national government formed, with the understanding that during the war military affairs would be conducted as at present. The Viceroy replied that he could not accept Gandhi’s proposals, saying that he was anxious for a political settlement with Congress but, arguing the long-held British position, he said that the government had to safeguard the interests of the racial and religious minorities, the depressed classes, and its obligations to the Princely States.

Gandhi interpreted the Viceroy’s position to mean that unless all Indian parties could agree on a constitutional formula, there would be no change in the constitutional status quo.

Gandhi was preparing to have discussions with Jinnah on the basis of the following provisions put forward by Rajagopalachari: (1) The Muslim League was to endorse Indian independence for the transitional period. (2) At the end of the war a commission would demarcate those contiguous areas in Northwest and Northeast India in which the Muslims were in an absolute majority, following which a plebiscite would be taken of all inhabitants to decide whether they wanted to secede from the Indian Union or not. (3) In the event of secession, preparation would be made for defense, commerce,
communication and other essential institutions. (4) The terms would be binding only if Britain transferred full power and responsibility to India.

Jinnah said that he did not find the proposals satisfactory, but would nevertheless place them before the League. He felt that there must be first an agreement to accept Pakistan before a united front could be established to demand independence. In Jinnah’s mind, Gandhi seemed to have accepted the principle of partition of India by agreeing to meet him on the basis of Rajagopalachari’s proposals. This initiative by Gandhi drew much criticism even from some members of the Working Committee of Congress who said that Gandhi had given Jinnah renewed importance. There was great anxiety in the Punjab and Bengal among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs over this conversation about partition. When the Hindu Mahasabha showed their anger by shouting anti-Congress and anti-Pakistan slogans at Gandhi’s prayer meetings, Gandhi answered that the purpose of Rajagopalachari’s formula was meant to initiate a discussion between Congress and the Muslim League so that they could begin to search for a solution to the crisis.

The Gandhi-Jinnah talks finally got under way on September 9 and continued until September 27, but there was little headway. In announcing their failure to reach an agreement, Jinnah said that when Gandhi approached him in his individual capacity, saying that he was prepared to be converted to the Lahore resolution of 1940, he tried to explain the Muslim point of view but was unable to persuade him. Although the talks were held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere, and there were twenty four letters exchanged between them, Gandhi could not accept Jinnah’s premise that India consisted of two nations, Hindus and Muslims. Unable to comprehend clearly what Jinnah meant by Pakistan, Gandhi did not support Jinnah’s two-nation theory, and could not agree that
Hindus and Muslims in India had nothing in common “except enmity.” Jinnah insisted that the division of India was in the best interests of the welfare of India, and remained adamant that agreement on partition must precede independence. When the Lahore resolution was made public in 1940, proclaiming the Muslim League’s desire for a separate homeland, Gandhi found it unacceptable by calling it "untruth," renewing his call for national unity. His willingness to meet with Jinnah showed that he was prepared to modify his stance on the constitutional issue to arrest the separation of heart between Hindu and Muslim Indians. But Jinnah stubbornly rejected negotiating for a common basis for cooperation, faithful to his political ideology after 1940. The sentiment was not lost on some that Jinnah’s star had begun to ascend.

While Gandhi remained an important voice within Congress, he did not play a major role in constitutional negotiations after the breakdown of his talks with Jinnah. As future negotiations were undertaken by leaders like Nehru, Patel, Maulana Azad, and Rajagopalachari, Gandhi chose to devote his time and energy to his constructive program. There were other attempts to reach an agreement between Congress and the Muslim League. In January, 1945, Bhulabhai Desai, Congress leader in the Central Assembly, and Liaquat Ali Khan, the leader of the Muslim League in the Assembly, came up with a formula for an interim government in which Congress and the League would have 40% of the seats, and the other parties would share the remaining 20 %. Lord Wavell was enthusiastic and thought that this was the way out of the deadlock, but Churchill blocked it arguing that the formula was too “sudden a departure” from official policy. Jinnah also rejected the plan, saying that he knew nothing about it. In April, 1945, Sir Tej Bahadur Sastri, the respected Liberal leader, presented the plans of the Conciliation Committee
which had been meeting since November 1944, which recommended that there be no division of India, no provincial separation, and no separate electorates, proposals which were predictably rejected by Jinnah and the Muslim League.

Lord Wavell, who had been trying to nudge the Churchill administration to resolve the political impasse, went to London to make a plea for reopening the dialogue with Indian nationalists, but Churchill did not welcome the initiative. At the opening of the San Francisco Conference to launch the United Nations, British representatives gave the general impression that India was already on the verge of independence, a strategy that Gandhi quickly detected and denounced as untrue. In their attempt to belittle him by suggesting that he should make room for the younger generation like Nehru, Gandhi informed them that Nehru was already the leader. Told about this suggestion, George Bernard Shaw had this to say in defense of Gandhi: “Gandhi’s politics are half a century out of date. His tactics like all tactics are subject to error and readjustment, but his strategy is sound, as it was fifty or five million years ago.” On the matter of Gandhi’s resignation, he said: “Retire from what! His position was natural, not official. The Mahatma cannot hand over anything. Leadership is not a plug of tobacco that can be passed from one man to another.”

The war in Europe came to an end on May 8, 1945, and soon afterwards, Churchill announced that there would be a general election, and gave the go-ahead to Lord Wavell to call a conference to resolve the political situation in India. Declaring that the status of India would be one of their issues in the upcoming elections, Professor Harold Laski, Vice-Chairman of the Labor Party, stated that his party had already made proposals for resolving the deadlock in India and for the immediate release of the
political prisoners in India. In a broadcast on June 14, Lord Wavell announced that he was reconstituting the Central Executive Council and was calling a conference of party leaders and provincial premiers to discuss the future of self-government of India.

At the opening of the conference in Simla on June 25, 1945, Lord Wavell said that he hoped that the delegates would find a way to resolve the complex constitutional problem of India. He told them that their main tasks were to create an interim government, and to forge a long-term solution to the constitutional crisis. Gandhi did not attend the conference, but was invited to Simla for consultation. Azad and Jinnah, respective heads of the Congress and Muslim League Working Committees, could not reach agreement on the composition of the Executive Council. Jinnah refused to accept the Muslim leader of the Unionist Party, Khizar Hayat Khan, being given one of the Muslim seats. He insisted that only the Muslim League could nominate the Muslim representatives on the Council. When Lord Wavell asked each party to present their lists of suitable candidates from which he would select an Executive Council, all but Jinnah agreed, an action that caused Lord Wavell to decide to abandon the conference, in effect giving Jinnah the power of veto on making a constitution for India. It appeared that Wavell was instructed by officials in London not to embarrass Jinnah. Secretary of State Leo Amery was certain that both Churchill and Jinnah were responsible for the breakdown of the negotiations.

**THE CABINET MISSION**

Disappointment over the breakdown of talks at Simla was short-lived as the news arrived that the Labor Party had won the general election. Indians welcomed the change
of government, which meant that the Churchill and Amery team that had refused to engage seriously in negotiation with Indian nationalists was defeated, and raised the hopes of members of Congress that the new administration would be sympathetic to India’s desire for self-government. Clement Attlee replaced Churchill and Gandhi’s vegetarian friend, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, was made Secretary of State. When Japan surrendered in early August after the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Attlee announced that he would move at full speed to bring self-government to India. On September 19, Attlee in London and Wavell in New Delhi announced that, as a preliminary to discussions about independence, elections would be held for the central and provincial legislatures in India, to be followed by the establishment of a constitution-making body.

The major Indian parties were optimistic, perhaps for the first time, when the Labor Party promised self-government. But social and economic forces in 1945 and after were also driving political leaders to reach a solution to the constitutional problem. Poor harvests and a shortage of food, on the one hand, and a decline in military production and the subsequent closure of factories, on the other, led to near famine conditions in many parts of India and also widespread unemployment. In August, 1945, major strikes began which led to armed clashes with the police. However, two other events demonstrated that Indians were not endeared to British rule, despite the Labor party’s sympathetic declarations. In November, the British decided to try by court martial three captured members of Subhas Bose’s Indian National Army, a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Sikh. The trial became a rallying-cry of national unity against British rule. Defended by Nehru and other Congress lawyers, the three defendants received widespread praise, which turned
into a glorious memorial for the heroism of Subhas Bose. This display of affection by Indians for the soldiers of the INA was not ignored by the British. Although the defendants were sentenced to exile for life, their sentences were remitted.

In the elections to the Central Assembly at the beginning of 1946, Congress and the Muslim League triumphed. Congress won 91.3% of the vote in the general constituencies, while the League won 88.6% of the Muslim vote and all the reserved Muslim seats. When the elections for the provincial assemblies took place in April, Congress was able to form ministries in Bihar, UP, Bombay, Madras, the Central Provinces, Orissa, Assam and the North West Frontier Province. No one could deny that the results showed a notable victory for Congress. But, perhaps, the most significant result was the major turn-around of the Muslim League from 1937 in winning 442 out of 509 Muslim seats. Jinnah now had the base to support his contention that the Muslim League should be the sole representative of Muslims in India. But it was still an open question whether this meant that 87% of Muslims wanted a separate nation of Pakistan.

It was, therefore, in an atmosphere of crisis and fear that Prime Minister Clement Attlee decided to send a mission of three cabinet members to resolve the constitutional question. The mission included Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and A.V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty. They arrived on March 24, 1946 and remained in India for three months. They interviewed representatives of the major groups, including Gandhi and Jinnah. Since they were friends, the commissioners showed great respect to Gandhi, who was acutely aware that Jinnah’s demand for Pakistan on the basis of religious differences was a formidable obstacle. To keep the Pakistan proposal alive, newly-elected Muslim
League members of the Central and Provincial Assemblies gathered in Delhi and took a vow to work to achieve their dream of Pakistan. One after the other said that they were willing to fight to bring about Pakistan, and even to lay down their lives. All this was, of course, part of the League’s propaganda to serve its interest by threatening civil war. Jinnah continued to refuse to define what Pakistan meant. Maulana Azad, the leader of the Congress team, argued strenuously against the idea of Pakistan: “Two states, confronting one another, offer no solution of the problem of one another’s minorities, but only lead to retribution and reprisals by introducing a system of mutual hostages. The scheme of Pakistan therefore solves no problem for the Muslims.”

The mission interviewed 472 people as they tried to come up with a formula to transfer British power to a united India, but the deadlock between Congress and the Muslim League remained. The Cabinet Mission then invited both the Congress and the League to send four delegates to a meeting in Simla to discuss a plan they had drawn up. At the second Simla conference on May 1, Congress was represented by Azad, Nehru, Patel, Ghaffar Khan, two Hindus and two Muslims. Gandhi was not a delegate but was persuaded by Stafford Cripps to come to Simla to add to the legitimacy of the meeting, which lasted until May 12 when it was shifted back to Delhi. There was no change in the Muslim League’s position. Its success in the recent elections had given them the basis for holding firm on its demand for Pakistan. On May 16, the Cabinet Mission published its proposal, saying that it was a document that was intended to set in motion the machinery for establishing a constitution “by Indians for Indians.” It put forward the following plan:
The Dominion of India would consist of a union of provinces and Princely States, possessing the widest possible autonomy. The central government would remain responsible for matters of defense, foreign policy, and communications. The provinces of British India would be united in three zones; the first, in which Hindus would predominate, would consist of provinces in the North, Center, and South of the country; the second zone in the West would embrace provinces with a mainly Moslem population – the Punjab, Sind, and the North West Frontier Province; the third or Eastern Zone would consist of the provinces of Bengal and Assam, where Moslems also constituted the majority of the population. In each zone a government would be set up.

The constituent assembly which would consist of deputies elected by the provincial legislatures and those appointed from the Princely States would draw up a constitution for the Union government of India; the constitutions for the three zones would be drawn up within the three sections of the constituent assembly by deputies from the provinces concerned. Elections to the constituent assembly would be held on the basis of three electoral colleges: Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh. Ratification of each article of the draft constitution would require the approval not only of an absolute majority in the plenary session of the constituent assembly, but also by a majority of deputies from the Hindu and Moslem electoral colleges. The mission recommended the creation of an interim government to carry on the administration of British India until a new constitution was formed. It was sympathetic to the anxiety of Muslims, but it rejected the League’s demand for Pakistan, consisting of the provinces of the Punjab, the North-West Frontier, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam, because the non-Muslim minorities in the Punjab and Bengal were large. They said that they considered the possibility of a smaller
Pakistan, comprising only the Muslim-majority districts, but that this was impractical. They also considered partitioning the Punjab and Bengal, but found the idea insupportable because it would be contrary to the wishes and interests of large numbers of people in both provinces. All things considered, they proposed a weak central government that would look after defense, foreign policy, and communications, but one that still preserved the unity of India. They hoped that the provision to allow a province to opt out of zone would allow the Muslim League’s demand for separate Muslim zones in the Northwest and Northeast in a united India. They promised that acceptance of the plan would bring India independence in the shortest possible time.

On May 20, Gandhi wrote an editorial on the proposal expressing his opinion that in the circumstances it was the best document. Jinnah at first criticized the plan, but later persuaded the Muslim League to accept it as he considered it the first step on the way to Pakistan. Some scholars have argued that, in spite of Jinnah’s criticism, he got most of what he wanted. According to them, in the Cabinet mission plan, Muslim majority provinces were not divided, and were awarded self-government in a loose federal union, while Muslim minorities were protected in a united India which gave Jinnah and the Muslim League a share in the Government of India with Congress. But this interpretation did not square with the comments of Jinnah in his speech to the Muslim League on June 5: “Let me tell you that Muslim India will not rest content until we have established full, complete and sovereign Pakistan.”

The Viceroy was already in the process of forming the interim government during the final days of the Cabinet Mission discussions, even though the Muslim League’s demand of parity of representation with Congress and the right to nominate all the
Muslim members was bound to cause contention. Lord Wavell and the Mission did not include a Congress Muslim because they felt sure that Jinnah would be opposed to him. Gandhi was willing to compromise on disputed sections of the Mission proposal, but not to Jinnah’s demand. The Viceroy would have liked him to compromise on this issue for purely tactical reasons, but, in Gandhi’s mind, this was a matter of principle, well aware that from its inception Congress was conceived and developed as a secular organization that represented all Indians. After much wrangling, the Congress voted to accept the long-term proposals of the Cabinet Mission. Despite his reservations, Gandhi supported the resolution when it came up for ratification before the All India Congress Committee. Congress made it known that they could not accept the proposals for the interim government. This created a crisis because it was stated in the Mission proposal that the formation of the interim government would proceed even if one party agreed with the proposal. But Lord Wavell declined to continue with only one party, thereby infuriating Jinnah. Confident that they had established a reasonable framework for the progress of the constitutional question, the Cabinet Mission announced on June 26 that the formation of the interim government had been postponed and three days later they returned to England.

The hope that the Congress and League acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals would quickly lead to a resolution of the constitutional issue was soon dashed. At a time when all parties needed time to reflect on future developments and hold discussions, circumstances drove the political situation to such a crisis that they were all forced to take hasty positions. In Britain, reconstruction following the devastating war understandably became an urgent project but the haste that enveloped the British leaders
and policies over the question of the status of India seemed unwarranted. The issue of minorities was not the only burning question in India. In 1946 and 1947, as the economy continued to get worse, there were some two thousand strikes. Anticipating agrarian reform, peasants in rural districts organized demonstrations in every province, and zamindars retaliated with mass evictions, creating a situation in which the influence of the political Left members of Congress carried great weight. For their part, Jinnah and the Muslim League needed respite from the delicate negotiations to institutionalise their gains from the Cabinet Mission Plan.

In this tense atmosphere, the Mission Plan began to fall apart like a pack of cards at the All India Congress Committee session on July 6 when Maulana Azad, who had been Congress President for six years and who was instrumental in getting Congress to approve the Mission Plan by a large majority, was succeeded by Jawaharlal Nehru. The following day, Nehru told the audience that Congress had not accepted anything, except to attend the constituent assembly. On the critical issues of minority rights and a loose federal central government, he seemed to hedge by saying that they would not accept outside interference in the matter, and that he still envisaged a stronger central government.

Nehru’s defenders have argued that the speech was taken out of context. According to their interpretation, Nehru had no intention of departing from the agreed framework of the Cabinet Mission Plan, and was anxious to arrive at a just solution to the minorities’ issue and Indo-British relations. They argued that his speech was directed at the socialist wing of the Congress Party, which was highly critical of the Plan, and cited his plea to his critics for moderation in the same speech:
We cannot forget that while we have to be revolutionary, we also have to think in terms of statesmanship – not in shouting slogans and escaping responsibility but in terms of facing the big problems. The world looks to you and the Congress for great decisions and it is no use to sit cursing, fuming and fretting.21

At a press conference in Bombay on July 10, Nehru reiterated that he was committed to making the constitutional arrangements succeed. Insisting on the sovereignty of the constituent assembly, he said that it would be subject to considerations, namely, rights for minorities and a treaty between India and Britain, but he pointed out that neither the Muslim League nor Congress considered the Cabinet Mission Plan as the final compromise. From the point of view of Congress, there were reservations about the proposal that the grouping of provinces in the Northeast and Northwest should be made compulsory, and would replace provincial autonomy. Secondly, Nehru expressed concern that the central government would be so weak that that they would not even have the right of taxation, and asked how such a weak central government could prevent the further dismemberment of India.

On his side, Jinnah said that he felt betrayed, and that he no longer had faith in British justice, especially after the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, ordered Viceroy Wavell to form the interim government as soon as possible. Jinnah and members of the League had already felt slighted when Lord Wavell did not ask them to form the interim government when Congress had earlier refused to participate. Nehru’s speech inflamed their anger even more.

On July 27, 1946, the All India Muslim League Council met to discuss what action they should take, and, two days later, they rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan, declaring that they would now be satisfied with no less than a fully sovereign and
separate state of Pakistan. The second resolution declared that the time had come for the Muslim nation to resort to Direct Action to achieve Pakistan. Defining what Direct Action meant, Jinnah said:

Never before in the whole life-history of the Muslim League did we do anything except by constitutional methods and constitutional talks...Today we have said goodbye to constitutions and constitutional methods. Throughout the painful negotiations, the two parties with whom we bargained held a pistol at us, one with power and machine guns behind it, the other with non-cooperation and the threat to launch mass civil disobedience. This situation must be met. We also have a pistol.22

Setting August 16 as “Direct Action Day,” the Muslim League embarked on its first mass civil disobedience campaign. Informed by Jinnah that the League would not participate in the Interim Council, and nudged by the Secretary of State to have a representative government in place, Lord Wavell asked Nehru to form the Interim Government and to try to achieve an agreement with Jinnah. Nehru met with Jinnah at Jinnah’s home, but the talks broke down on the evening of August 15, the day before “Direct Action Day.” To Nehru’s assurances that the Constituent Assembly and Federal Court would decide all disputes, Jinnah stubbornly answered no.

Jinnah could not have foreseen the terrible violence that was unleashed from August 16 to 20. Two days earlier, he had urged that demonstrations should be peaceful and disciplined. For most of his political career he had adopted a constitutional approach to resolving political conflict and it is difficult to imagine that he would have planned and encouraged the orgy of violence that was associated with “Direct Action Day.” A more seasoned veteran of civil disobedience, Gandhi’s experience of some forty years had shown how difficult it was to discipline even a nonviolent mass civil disobedience campaign. In the context of the Muslim League’s political strategy following the
Pakistan resolution of 1940, and especially its communal appeal to the Muslim masses, however, it was not surprising that Jinnah’s call for violence would be interpreted literally and not rhetorically. To give the League’s political slogans teeth, the Muslim League groups in the provinces depended on the religious leaders, *Mullahs* and *Pirs*, who were experts in stirring religious emotions. League meetings were held in and around mosques after Friday prayers, and there were frequent calls for *Jihad*.

The Great Calcutta Killing, as the event came to be known, started when Muslim jute workers began pouring into Calcutta at daybreak. Mr. H.S. Suhrawardy, Chief Minister of Bengal and also a representative of the Muslim League, had announced a three-day public holiday, which gave Calcuttans the opportunity to take part in demonstrations. Accused of incompetence and “black market” dealings during the famine of 1943, Suhrawardy was considered corrupt and opportunistic. British intelligence reports quoted him as telling the demonstrators that the intent of “Direct Action” was to prevent Nehru from governing effectively. Criminal elements or *goondas* ran amok, uncontrolled by any consideration but arson, rape, forced conversions, and killings. It was difficult to understand why troops were confined to the barracks. Again, Suhrawardy was blamed for not giving the order to send in the troops to quell the riots. The situation deteriorated as Hindus formed self-defense groups and began reprisals of their own. By the fourth day, dead bodies were lying in the streets. By August 19, about 45,000 troops were brought in to Calcutta and helped to restore an uneasy calm. The estimate of the casualties was: 5000 were killed, 17,000 injured, and 100,000 homeless. The enormity of the Hindu-Muslim violence in Calcutta was unprecedented. But more was to follow. The riots in Calcutta spread to Muslim-dominated East Bengal in
Noakhali and Tippera districts where *goondas* terrorized the Hindu population. As a chain reaction, the desperate reports and rumors brought by Hindu refugees to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar led to riots and atrocities in those provinces, this time largely by Hindus seeking vengeance against Muslims. From Bihar the madness spread to the Punjab.

On September 2, 1946, Nehru and his colleagues assumed the responsibility of governing India. Its significance was not lost on Gandhi who was staying in the Harijan quarters of Delhi. It was Monday, his day of silence, and when the ministers came to see him, he handed them a note for Nehru which said: “You have been in my thoughts since the prayer. Abolish the salt tax. Remember the Dandi march. Unite Hindus and Muslims. Remove untouchability.” In his speech after evening prayers, Gandhi said that he was aware that it was only one step to independence, but it was still a deeply moving moment for him, and he congratulated the British Government for resolving the age-old conflict of Indian independence by peaceful means.

Nehru expressed his sorrow that India was once again engulfed by suffering, and appealed to members of the Muslim League to enter the assembly “as equals and partners.” In the atmosphere of communal tension, made dark by the violence in Calcutta, the Muslim League entered the Interim Government on October 26, 1946, at Lord Wavell’s persuasion. Jinnah did not offer himself as one of the League’s representatives, which was led by Liaquat Ali Khan, but said that the League decided to join the government to obstruct the working of the interim government and work for the creation of Pakistan. Members of the Muslim League took office as communal riots were beginning in East Bengal and, in particular, the districts of Noakhali and Tippera. Large
groups of *goondas* and the paramilitary group, the Muslim National Guards, cordoned off Hindu villages and proceeded to terrorize them. The atrocities seemed organized and intended to cleanse the districts of Hindus. Towards the end of October, riots began in Bihar. This time the victims were Muslims. Jinnah argued that the outbreak of communal violence justified the League’s two-nation proposal.

Another factor that must have affected the course of events was Lord Wavell’s persistence in making plans for the British withdrawal of their personnel and troops. His competence and honesty were well known. To cite one example, his actions in the late stages of the Bengal famine of 1943 showed greater competence and compassion than his predecessor, Lord Linlithgow. But his fastidiousness in reaching out to the Muslim League, when it seemed clear that they had hardly any interest in the Cabinet Mission Plan and were biding their time to achieve their goal of Pakistan, was perplexing. It was no wonder that Pethick-Lawrence and Cripps found his approach too militaristic and lacking in political maturity in not reaching out more openly to Congress. Referring to an interview with Lord Wavell on September 26, Gandhi wrote to him asking him to confirm that he had said that his leanings were towards the Muslim League, to which Wavell replied that he could not remember. As the communal rioting continued, Wavell made the decision to announce the date for a complete British withdrawal, declaring that the civil administration and the army would not be able to continue governing effectively for more than 18 months, and the government should be ready to complete withdrawal by March 31, 1948. The British government did not accept Wavell’s suggestion that they announce their plan to withdraw, and suggested that he work for a political settlement.
As events seemed to be spinning out of control, Gandhi left for Noakhali with a brief stopover in Calcutta on October 28. He said that his purpose was not to blame any group but to heal the relations between Hindus and Muslims. He stayed in Noakhali for four months, achieving greater success and bringing more hope to the people than the political institutions, which remained mired in mistrust.

At Pethick-Lawrence’s suggestion, Nehru, Jinnah, Liaqat Ali Khan, and Baldev Singh, representing the Sikhs, met in London to see if they could iron out their differences and participate in the proposed meeting of the Constituent Assembly which was scheduled to take place on December 9. The London meeting ended without success. The discussion focused once more on the Mission Plan, and stressed the importance of the grouping of provinces and the freedom to opt out of the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly met on December 9 without the League’s representation, and the meeting was adjourned until January 20, 1947 with little hope that Jinnah and the League would participate.

The gloom at the prospect of partition caused by the continuing Congress-League conflict was made darker by the Viceroy’s obsession with the question of declaring when Britain intended to withdraw from India. In their unhappiness with Wavell, whom they considered to lack the necessary political skills and sensitivity to cope with the situation in India, Clement Attlee and his cabinet decided to make Lord Mountbatten, Supreme Commander of Southeast Asia, the new Viceroy. On January 31, the Muslim League Working Committee called for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and an end to discussion about the Cabinet Mission Plan. Even Congress felt that once the Plan was scrapped, there would be small hope for a rapprochement between Congress and the
League, and Bengal and the Punjab would have to be partitioned. The announcement on February 20, 1947 that the British Government intended to transfer power to India by June 1948, and that Lord Mountbatten would take up office as the new Viceroy in March, made the political situation more volatile.

Nowhere was the situation more tense than in the Punjab, where the Unionist coalition government continued to govern with the support of Congress and the Akali Dal Party of the Sikhs. The communal disturbances had spread to the Punjab. Evan Jenkins, the Governor of the Punjab, managed to quiet the riots, but he warned that an atmosphere of civil war was present. Khizar Hayat Khan, leader of the Unionist Party, banned the demonstrations, but the Muslim League launched another “Direct Action.” Neither restraint nor force was able to calm the rioting. The rioting spread to all districts in the Punjab. Hindu leaders warned that they would defend themselves, and the Sikh leader, Tara Singh, called on the Sikh community to be prepared to fight. When the Unionist Party leader resigned, the Governor dutifully asked the Muslim League to form the government of the Punjab, but Congress and the Sikh party refused to join them. As the riots became more violent, direct rule by the central government was imposed under section 93 of the 1935 Government of India Act.

Both Hindus and Sikhs were beginning to think that partition of the Punjab might be their best security. V.P. Menon, Indian advisor to the Viceroy, persuaded Sardar Patel that Jinnah would not give up his dream of Pakistan, and therefore partition would be better than civil war. In the atmosphere of violence, Nehru and Kripalani, the current Congress President, were beginning to find this option acceptable. The Congress Working Committee met in the first week of March, 1947, and adopted a resolution
supporting the partition of the Punjab into Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas.

Gandhi was not consulted, and declined to accept the invitation to attend the meeting, preferring to continue his work in Bihar to stop the violence between Hindus and Muslims.

Lord Louis Mountbatten was sworn-in as Viceroy of India on March 24, 1947. As Supreme Commander in Southeast Asia, he had the reputation of being a skilled diplomat, a quality that the Attlee Government felt was necessary at this juncture. He had been to India before and knew Indian leaders well, especially Nehru. He asked for and received full powers to make decisions on the spot, as well as the assurance that a speedy deadline for the British withdrawal from India would be announced.

Mountbatten’s instructions were to work for a unitary state of India, comprising British India and the Princely States. If he could not persuade the political parties to agree on a plan, he was to return to England with his own proposal for the transfer of power from Britain, perhaps by June, 1948.

During the first six weeks, he interviewed all the members of cabinet and almost every Indian leader of note, including Gandhi and Jinnah. Gandhi suggested that the Viceroy should dismiss the current cabinet, and ask Jinnah to form the new cabinet with Muslims or anyone he chose, with the understanding that Jinnah would agree to discourage the Muslim paramilitary groups. Gandhi felt that this was a way to preserve the unity of India and enable Muslims to overcome their fear of living in India where the majority were Hindus. Although Mountbatten seemed interested in the idea, the Congress Working Committee soon informed him that Gandhi’s suggestion was unacceptable. The truth was that Nehru and Patel were carrying the torch of Congress in
the constitutional deliberations, not Gandhi. The Congress Party had already made their decision that partition was in their interest. As expected, Mountbatten was unable to budge Jinnah from his refusal to reconsider the Cabinet Mission Plan. Realizing that he had indeed won his “Pakistan,” Jinnah was interested in what form it would take, and the terms of partition such as the division of the army.

When it seemed to the Viceroy that the plan for union was dead, he and his staff began to work on what everyone called “Plan Balkan.” Jinnah’s assessment of the situation that if partition did not take place there would be civil war seemed at the time realistic. By April, 1947, casualties from the violence in the Punjab had reached 3,500. At the end of April, the Congress Working Committee accepted the principle of partition, but Jinnah expressed his unhappiness at the recommendation of “Plan Balkan” that the Punjab and Bengal should be partitioned. Since the enigmatic Jinnah had played his cards close to his chest, it was not clear what Jinnah had in mind. But he should not have been surprised that Congress, once it accepted the principle of partition, would move towards demanding the partition of Bengal and the Punjab. The principle that the Muslim League and Jinnah advocated in asking for Pakistan since 1940 was communal. It was the fact of a Muslim majority, however small, in the Punjab and Bengal that was the basis of the proposal for Pakistan. Unwilling to make any concessions to advance the cause of Indian unity, he surely could not expect to move from an argument based exclusively on communal solidarity and exclusiveness to one based on provincial unity.

Congress also expressed objections to “Plan Balkan,” principally because it implied that power would be transferred to the provinces which would have the choice to join a united India or not to do so. When Nehru received the text of the revised Plan that
was sent from London on May 10, he was seething with anger. The official plan seemed to allow individual provinces the right to choose to become independent sovereign states, and the Princely States, the right to remain independent kingdoms. The situation seemed to be spinning out of control when V.P. Menon, whose illuminating understanding of the political realities of India was indispensable to Mountbatten, offered a plan which called for a quick transfer of power to two central governments, each with Dominion status and its own Constituent Assembly.23

The Mountbatten Plan or, as some called it, the Partition Plan was the final constitutional instrument after all the haggling and negotiation since the end of the war. Nehru wrote to Gandhi on May 23, asking him to come to Delhi because something momentous was about to take place. Gandhi was present at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee when the members agreed to the partition of India, and also the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. Deeply disappointed, he repeated his old lament that he did not want to be a party to “India’s vivisection.” Nehru invited him to return to Delhi again for the Working Committee meeting on June 3 that was going to approve the Mountbatten Plan. Gandhi disapproved of the plan, but he knew that his influence on Congress was for some time declining.

There was some support for the idea that Bengal should remain united. On May 20, a committee comprising of Sarat Bose, Kiran Shankar Roy, H.S. Suhrawardy, and other members of the Muslim League presented their proposals for a united and independent Bengal. Mountbatten was willing to accept Bengal as an independent Dominion, but Nehru’s forthright response was that Congress would permit an united Bengal only if it remained in the Union of India. It was also not clear whether the
proposal for an independent Bengal was more popular than that of a partitioned Bengal. On June 3, following consent to his plan of partition by Nehru and Jinnah, Lord Mountbatten announced the plan on All-India Radio, followed by comments by Nehru, Jinnah, and Baldev Singh.

The Indian leaders praised Viceroy Mountbatten who announced that the date for the transfer of power would be August 15, 1947. At the All-India Congress meeting on June 14 to approve the Working Committee’s decision, the motion passed by 157 votes to 29, with 32 abstentions. The negative votes came largely from nationalist Muslims and Hindus in provinces designated as Pakistan. Although he did not agree with partition, Gandhi, nevertheless, gave his support. He said that he thought about offering Satyagraha against the motion, but the conditions were not favorable. More importantly, he did not want to undermine the prestige of Congress on which he had placed his hopes for Swaraj since the 1920s.

For Congress leaders like Nehru and Patel, the experience of the Interim Government was frustrating, anxious, and indecisive. The increasing lawlessness had given the rulers of the 562 Princely States the hope that, when indirect British rule over their states came to an end in August, they would be free to determine their own destiny. Congress hoped that acceptance of partition meant that a burden was lifted from their shoulders, and a speedy withdrawal of Great Britain would give Congress the authority to build a strong central government to nip in the bud the disintegrating forces in India. The partition of Bengal and the Punjab was decided after elections in which West Bengal and East Punjab voted for partition.
What remained was the actual drawing of boundaries before August 15, a Herculean task because it entailed sometimes cutting across heavily populated areas. Two boundary commissions were set up, each comprising four High Court Judges, two nominated by Congress and two by the Muslim League. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a distinguished British lawyer, was accepted by both parties to chair both commissions. He arrived in India on July 8 and was given five weeks to draw up a new map. The boundary commissions had to draw the boundaries based on contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. This was a daunting task for a diverse country like India. In Bengal, the burning question was who would get Calcutta. Without access to Calcutta for its jute industry, the accepted opinion was that East Pakistan would be a slum. There was also concern about what would happen to the Buddhist hill tribes of Chittagong, and Muslim majority areas of Assam, for example.

The partition of the Punjab was more complicated. The line of demarcation cut across the very area where the Sikhs had their sacred sites and traditional community. In addition, the Sikhs had financed and constructed the canal system that had turned large areas of desert in West Punjab into the breadbasket of India. The British had not forgotten how important the Sikh soldiers were in the first and second World Wars. When the Plan of Partition was announced, the Akali Dal, the main Sikh organization, sent out a letter saying that Pakistan would mean death to the Sikh community, and urged all Sikhs to fight for a Sikh sovereign state with the rivers Chenab and the Jamna as its borders. The governor of the Punjab, Sir Evans Jenkins, warned Mountbatten that the communal situation was getting worse, and that the Sikhs were planning a violent insurrection. He recommended that a Punjab Boundary Force should be established as
soon as possible. A force of 50,000 men, with a large proportion of British officers, was established and put under the command of Major-General Rees, commander of the fourth Indian division. It was the largest military force assembled for maintaining domestic peace. Yet, such a large force was still too little to stem the wave of communal violence. From the Golden Temple at Amritsar, Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikhs, was encouraging his followers to attack Muslims. In Lahore, Muslims retaliated by attacking Sikhs. Tens of thousands of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh families, who lived near the dividing line, began the trek to the country they imagined would bring them safety before Independence day arrived.

On August 7, 1947, Jinnah left Delhi for Karachi where, on August 11, he inaugurated Pakistan’s Constituent Assembly and was elected President. Jinnah had already informed Lord Mountbatten that he intended to be the Governor-General of Pakistan. India and Pakistan celebrated their independence on August 15, 1947. Both Jinnah and Nehru made hopeful speeches before their happy audiences. Jinnah told Pakistanis:

"You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan…You may belong to any religious caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State…in the course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense – as citizens of the nations."

Nehru’s speech in Delhi was moving:

"Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation long suppressed finds utterance. It
is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

Gandhi was in Calcutta putting into practice his experiment of bringing Hindus and Muslims together as friends. Declaring that Independence Day was a day of rejoicing and also sorrow because India was partitioned, he held no special ceremony for the occasion, but he fasted and spun before walking to his prayer meeting in the evening, happy that he was witnessing many instances of fraternization between Hindus and Muslims.

Mountbatten did not announce the boundary awards until August 18. He knew well that they would be contested, and waited until after Independence to make the report public. Some 14 million refugees left their homes to find refuge in what they thought would be a friendly nation, 10 million of whom were from the central Punjab. Muslims moved from East to West, Hindus and Sikhs, from West to East. The columns of refugees stretched for 50 miles. In the Punjab, there were massacres without number. The pictures of trains arriving in Delhi and Lahore with only murdered passengers revealed the horror of the partition. The Punjab Boundary Force was unable to stop the anarchy. Both India and Pakistan accused the military of inaction and taking sides. The official estimate of the casualties was 200,000 to a quarter of a million, which included those who died from diseases and starvation. The greatest part of the migration and massacres took place between August and the middle of November, 1947. The enormity of this wave of inhumanity makes one wonder whether the British, in their haste to withdraw from their rule in India, did not abdicate their responsibility to bring an end to the communal violence.²⁴
CHAPTER 10

INDIAN HOLOCAUST AND THE FINAL SATYAGRAHA

Where were our values and standards then, where was our old culture, our humanism and spirituality and all that India has stood for in the past. Suddenly darkness descended upon this land and madness seized the people.


The partition of India brought disappointment to Gandhi, but the horrible stories of civil war between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs must have made him sick with despair. He must have wondered why love and truth had abandoned India during those dreadful months. Gandhi accepted the fact that he did not exercise great influence in the discussions about constitutional proposals and partition, acknowledging that he was a voice in the wilderness. But, the extent of the violence that followed the call for “Direct Action” by the Muslim League, what became known as the Great Calcutta Killing, the spread of communal violence to East Bengal, and later to Bihar and the Punjab filled him with indescribable pain and anguish. Questioning his assumptions about *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa*, he wondered whether nonviolence was the weapon of the weak or the strong. From August 1946 till his assassination on January 30, 1948, the events seemed to be an unending demonstration of man’s inhumanity to man in Northern India. Political violence and the manipulation of religion by political groups created an atmosphere of tension which, when allied to the mobilization of *goondaism*, exploded into an orgy of killings and revenge.

The “Terror” or “Civil War”, as the period came to be known, shook everyone. As Congress and the League sought to throw the blame on the other, Gandhi placed the blame on all parties. Overcome with anguish because Hindu-Muslim unity was one of
the three pillars of his ideal of freedom for India, Gandhi saw how differently his understanding of India’s past and the future was from the others. In India’s diverse society and cultures, he saw connections between cultures and the interweaving of histories as virtues around which to build a progressive modern society. With the prospect of freedom after World War II, and overwhelmed by political and religious conflicts, too many of India’s leaders followed their imperial masters in conceiving nation-building as establishing boundaries, partitions, and larger military forces. Ordinary people had to suffer the consequences of the partitions and boundaries, uprooting themselves from their ancestral villages in the search for secure homes.

Gandhi had considerable experience in dealing with communal problems. In September 1924, he fasted for Hindu-Muslim unity when communal riots broke out, and, writing in 1927, was prescient when he said that nonviolence would be severely tested in the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. He had learned that in religious conflicts “neighborliness” was necessary to heal the wounds of conflict and that differences of opinion were not a barrier to unity of heart, a Gandhian theme that was repeated on countless occasions. In his mind, that was the key to the restoration of civility. And so, out of despair he found the courage and fearlessness to embark on yet another experiment of applying Satyagraha to stop “the Terror” and to prepare the ground for the different communities to respect each other.

To understand why at the age of 77 he would dare to enter the eye of the hurricane with some devoted friends but with no police protection, one should keep in mind that he had practiced this experiment before and found it to be successful. His understanding that the cycle of violence was caused by the prevalence of fear was on the
mark. The killings, the looting, arson, rape, and forceful conversions created and fed the climate of fear that led to mass migration and revenge. What he hoped to achieve was to help Hindus and Muslims who had suffered in the riots to overcome their fears about the other, and learn again to trust each other. In the context of his struggles for over fifty years, Gandhi’s experiment was not foolish at all, but few imagined that it would have been so successful.

The partition of India and the civil war that followed between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs make us question the achievements of Gandhi’s nonviolent movement, and force us to suggest that there are limitations on its usefulness. But, it must be said that Gandhi never understood *Satyagraha* to be a magical and perfect instrument for resolving conflict. For a person who tried to live his life in accordance with principle, he had a deep understanding of the paradoxes and imperfections of reality. Measured against some abstract criterion and pattern, one could say that the partition and civil war meant that Gandhi had failed in his dream. Examined more closely, however, Gandhi’s activity from late 1946 to his death a little over a year later showed that *Satyagraha* was not only an effective force in fighting against extreme violence, but also a miraculous force. Gandhi’s activity in helping to stop the communal violence during the last year of his life was, perhaps, his greatest achievement, the significance of which was captured poignantly by Jawaharlal Nehru:

Where were our values and standards then, where was our old culture, our humanism and spirituality and all that India has stood for in the past. Suddenly darkness descended upon this land and madness seized the people…How many realize what it has meant to India to have the presence of Mahatma Gandhi during these months? We all know of his magnificent services to India and to freedom during the past half century and more. But no service could have been greater than what he has performed during the past four months when in a dissolving world he has been like a rock of purpose and a lighthouse of truth, and his firm
low voice has risen above the clamors of the multitude, pointing out the path of rightful endeavor.

In October 1946, the news that the riots had spread from Calcutta to Noakhali in East Bengal brought fresh anxiety, especially the stories about the violation and abduction of women, and forcible religious conversions. Ruminating on the relation between religion and society, Gandhi confessed that “if he were a dictator, religion and state would be separate,” declaring that religion was a personal affair, and the state’s mission was to look after secular health, welfare, communications, foreign relations, and the economy, never religion. On October 27, 1946, he announced at a prayer meeting that he was leaving for Calcutta on his way to Noakhali to try and stop the atrocities. Stating that his purpose was not to cast blame on anybody but to make peace between Hindus and Muslims, he felt that nonviolence was on trial, and he wanted to see how the technique would fare in the present crisis. He said that he would not leave Bengal until the disturbances were brought to an end, adding that if he succeeded, it would be the “crowning act of his life.”

Arriving in Calcutta at the end of October, he was persuaded by the Chief Minister to stay for a week until the important Muslim festival of Bakr Id was over. He had heard rumors that retaliation by Hindus against Muslims had already started in Bihar. The report of the troubles in Bihar and a telegram from Nehru confirmed his fears. When Nehru suggested that he would never allow such barbarism to continue, and was prepared to use aerial bombing to stop the atrocities by Hindus, Gandhi not only realized how serious the situation was, but also noticed that Nehru was willing to use a British tactic to stop the atrocities. Gandhi refused to accept that it was the criminal elements alone who were responsible for the violence: “We always put the blame on the goondas.”
But it is we who are responsible for their creation as well as encouragement. It is, therefore, not right to say that all wrong that has been done is the work of the goondas.”

On November 6, Gandhi arrived in Noakhali where he spent four months. He told the representatives of relief organizations that their fear was caused by the sense that they were helpless and had to depend on others, and that he had come to help them to conquer their fear. He urged them not to evacuate their homes, but to follow the example of Leonidas and the brave 500 Greeks at the battle of Thermopylae who were prepared to die than surrender. Addressing a largely Muslim audience on November 10, he told them that he was a servant of both Hindus and Muslims and that he did not come to Noakhali to fight Pakistan. Whether they lived as one people or two, they should live as friends with Hindus.

Gandhi dispersed his party, asking each one, including the women, to go to an affected village and act as a hostage and security for Hindu villagers. He persuaded one Hindu and one Muslim to vow to protect those Hindu refugees who returned to their villages. Gandhi set up camp in one devastated village after another. He used the prayer meeting effectively where selections from the Gita and the Quran were recited, followed by a message by Gandhi. In one address, he remarked how peaceful and beautiful the East Bengal landscape was, but he lamented not seeing the same peace on the faces of the men and women. He said that the emerald green fields of paddy had blessed Bengal with the best crop in twelve years, but nature’s bounty was overcome by man’s cruelty:

But the human scene that met the eye froze one’s blood. There had been murder and arson. The place of worship had been desecrated. The corpses of slaughtered men were piled up in a heap in one corner of the yard and burnt…A school building, a hostel and a hospital were reduced to ashes. ³
He begged the people to purge their hearts of hatred because that was the cause of the fratricide that was sweeping the land. At another village he said that he did not shed tears because he who shed tears could not wipe the tears of others, but his heart wept, however. Since he was in a predominantly Muslim population, he said that he wanted to stay in a Muslim household so that he could begin a new venture in faith. At Kazirkhil village he wrote that the better he got to know Noakhali, the more he realized that the real enemy was “fear which ate into the vitals of the terror-stricken as well as the terrorist.” He gave his assurance that he would not leave East Bengal until he was satisfied that mutual trust had been established between the two communities and normalcy had returned to the villages, affirming that without trust there was neither Pakistan nor Hindustan, only strife and barbarity.

As he left for the village of Shrirampur in late November with his Bengali interpreter, Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose, and his devoted stenographer, Shri Parasuram, he was still painfully aware that mistrust in the villages had become deep-seated, and the oldest friendships had been broken. Shrirampur was a village that was devastated by the religious strife. Gandhi hoped that by living among Muslim villagers he would form friendships with each family. They would come to know his mind and he, theirs. He arranged his books and papers, made his bed, rubbed oil on his body, took a bath with a mug from a bucket of warm water, and cooked his lunch and dinner meal of goat’s milk mixed with vegetable soup.

His first prayer meeting at Shrirampur drew an audience of a thousand people. In his address after the prayers, he explained how and why the prayers were included. The first stanza of the *Upanishads* was selected because it contained the essence of Hindu
thought. It said that God pervaded the universe and so man could not call anything his own. He should, therefore, dedicate his body and mind to the Universal Being. This verse was recited first at Shantiniketan in 1915. The verses from the Bhagavad Gita stressed that true knowledge meant bringing the senses under control. This lesson, he said, was meant not for those “who had forsaken the world but for every householder,” since it was the duty of everyone to practice self-discipline. The passage from the Quran was selected by the daughter of the late Abbas Tyabjee, Raihana Tyabjee, a noted musician. The prayer from the Zoroastrian scripture was included only after it was recited at Kasturbai’s death. He explained that the first mantra, Namyo Horenge Kyo (Salutation to the Enlightened ones) was introduced by a Japanese Buddhist monk who had stayed at the ashram in Sevagram for two or three years. After the prayers, an Indian devotional song or an English hymn was sung, followed by the song Ramadhun.

In his address, Gandhi explained that the shape of the prayers was not meant to reflect any particular religion as far as the sources or objectives were concerned. Its appeal was addressed to all communities, and its message was universal. The dominant theme was the call for tolerance and inclusiveness. When he made readings from the Bible the special feature of the prayer meeting on December 25, Gandhi explained that he believed in the equality of all religions, and that although Jesus was considered special to Christians, the lessons of Jesus were important for the whole world. This form of the prayer meeting was constructed as a significant part of his experiment to restore mutual respect and trust for the diverse religious communities of India. Gandhi added to the message of tolerance the call for discipline.
In seven weeks, Gandhi visited 47 villages. Although his main purpose was to heal the wounds between Hindus and Muslims, he did not desist from encouraging his audience, whether predominantly Muslim or Hindu, to undertake social reforms nor from addressing sensitive issues. He raised the issue of forced conversion to Islam and reminded Muslims that he did not know of a single passage written by Muslim scholars which condoned forced conversions. On the practice of purdah and the seclusion of women, he asked the elders to do away with it in the quickest possible time and liberate half the population to enable them to participate in building a creative society. At a Hindu meeting, he told the people that it was their duty to remove untouchability. When he was asked why he objected to Pakistan, he said that he did not object to the setting up of a separate Muslim State, but he was more interested in the character of such a State. For the time being, he stated, “they should forget politics and devote their sole attention to improve villages, spread education, develop industries and other constructive works.”

In articles in Harijan in December 1946 and January 1947, Kishorelal Mashruwala, later editor from 1948 to 1952, gave a Gandhian perspective to the question of restoring peace in communal strife. When enthusiasts of a religion sought to spread their religion by taking control of the State, he contended that bloodshed and inhumanity followed. Arguing that history showed that every important religious sect suffered persecution from the sect that wielded political power, and in turn inflicted punishment on others when it acquired similar power, he admitted that India was not immune from the excesses of religion and politics, but he reminded readers that the history of crusades and jihads in Europe and West Asia was well-known and there were similar stories in
China and Japan. On the right relation between religion, the state, and freedom,

Mashruwala defended a secular purpose of the state:

> It is only when the State has put itself above all religious sects and declined to take any notice of the religious faith of its subjects in its public affairs and enjoined similar impartiality upon its servants, that people have enjoyed the liberty of believing as they pleased and learnt to live peacefully with the adherents of other faiths.

Mashruwala contended that the Muslim League had presently sought to have the power of the state serve the cause of their religion, and some Hindus had a similar ambition. He felt that power politics in religion produced destructive results, as the violence in Bihar has demonstrated, and recommended that all religions should seek to raise a common human culture instead of trying to separate from or exterminate others.  

Writing about the continuing and spreading communal murders, Mashruwala illuminated what Gandhi was trying to achieve in Bengal and Bihar. He observed that the government’s response to the crisis was to introduce punitive legislation and increase the military and police. What was needed was to understand that “establishing peace is a constructive activity and not merely a preventive, resistive, or retaliatory one.”

> Peace is not ending hostilities by forcing the opponent to surrender and accept whatever terms might be imposed upon him. It is the creation of friendly feelings where bitterness and enmity reigned before...The work of creating peace must, therefore, be undertaken by an independent non-political organization.

Since the mission of peacemakers was to build friendly and peaceful relations between the various communities, he suggested that they should not be active in politics.

Insisting that there was still a role for government in constructing communal peace, he said that financiers and suppliers of weapons to criminal elements must be sought and put on trial. But, it was more important to remove the hardships from the social classes from which the criminals came. Asserting that the causes were both
economic and psychological, he said that it was urgent that ways must be found to provide adequately remunerated employment so that lower classes could obtain the necessary food, clothing, housing, and fuel. He advised the Government not to cry that there was a scarcity of these things because most could see that the rich continued to get more than they reasonably needed. In explaining that resentment and powerlessness made the lower classes abusive against their families and become a fertile ground for the recruitment of goondas for unspeakable crimes, he proposed that providing jobs and adequate incentives would reclaim criminals from their destructive behavior. 6

In January 1947, Gandhi continued his round of visits to other villages. When someone at Narayanpur asked him why, as the modern Buddha, he could not stop the internecine violence, he replied that he was only a simple man, no better than anyone in the audience. Two days later, at Parkot, he read to the audience parts of the speech that Jinnah had given at the opening of a Girls’ High School in which he said that Muslims should develop a high sense of responsibility, justice, and integrity, and urged Hindus and Muslims to follow this advice, adding that if this was going to be the character of Pakistan then everyone would welcome such a State. In his prayer address at Shirandi, Gandhi told the story of a Muslim woman, Antus Salam, who was fasting for twenty-five days to bring unity of heart between Hindus and Muslims, and liked to read both the Quran and the Gita. When members of the Muslim community signed a pledge to work for Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhi advised her to break her fast and himself offered her a glass of orange juice. On another day, on his day of silence, Gandhi wrote down on a slip of paper some sayings of the Prophet:

No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself.
He who neither worketh for himself nor for
others will not receive the reward of God…
Muslims are those who perform their trust and
fail not in their word and keep their pledge.
Whoever is kind to His creatures, God is kind to him.

A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and
hands mankind is safe.
The worst of men is a bad learned man; a good learned man is the best…
The most excellent \textit{jihad} is that for the conquest
of self.
Assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim
or non-Muslim. 

Addressing a large meeting of Hindus and Muslims in February, he was asked by
a Muslim whether there was any appreciable change in the minds of Hindus and Muslims
in Noakhali since he arrived. Gandhi’s answer was a fitting summation of the
achievements of \textit{Satyagraha} in Noakhali as an instrument of stopping civil strife. He
answered that the situation had certainly eased, but it clearly had not brought about the
unity of heart as he had hoped. But, he thought that the Hindu community had overcome
their sense of cowardice and this was a good sign. As for the Muslim community, the
questioner had acknowledged that a peace-loving section had arisen. Gandhi contended
that he was confident that the peace-loving members of both communities were
courageous and strong enough to stand-up nonviolently against the intolerant sections of
their community. On March 2, after a four month stay in Noakhali, Gandhi left for Bihar
to try to end the atrocities.

To the various groups which claimed that the barbarity of one group was more
severe than the other, or that one was in retaliation against a previous attack, Gandhi said
that he did not want to weigh the enormity of crimes in golden scales, and that barbarity
was barbarity. Continuing the practice of holding prayer meetings, he told Biharis that he
was simply overwhelmed with pain and anguish after reading the horrible reports of the
violence in Bihar and visiting the Muslim refugee camps. Reminding them that Bihar
was the land of the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas where even the poorest and uneducated Biharis knew the music of the epic story about sin and merit, he urged them to atone for what they had done and to do what was right. Some thirty thousand people attended his prayer meeting at Masaurhi where Gandhi asked them why so many women, children, and men were murdered, saying that it put Noakhali in the shade. As a way of atonement, he encouraged them to confess and apologize for doing wrong, and also contribute liberally to the relief fund. At another meeting, he asked the audience to sit in silence in sympathy with the innocent men, women, and children who were killed in the village of Gorriakhari. Wherever he went, Gandhi kept asking mournfully why innocent women and children were killed, stating sorrowfully that houses that were full of life a few months ago were now desolate from destruction.

Gandhi continued his work in the villages of Bihar, and was called to Delhi by Nehru whenever there was a significant move on the constitutional issue. In April, a declaration of peace was made public and signed by both Gandhi and Jinnah:

> We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and the greatest misery to innocent people, irrespective of who were the aggressors, and who were the victims.

> We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends, and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid both in speech and writing, any incitement to such acts.\(^8\)

Although the situation was easing in Bihar, rumors in late May about partition filled the air, and kept the situation tense in Bihar and Bengal. In the Punjab, riots were difficult to control. The joint proclamation did little to calm the situation. On the morning of June 1, Gandhi reflected on the unhappy situation in India:

> The purity of my striving will be put to the test now. Today, I find myself all alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the political situation is
wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon. They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule. They wonder, if I have not deteriorated with age. Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true, loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be, regardless of whether my advice is appreciated or not. I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark. I pray that God may not keep me alive to witness it. In order that He may give me the strength and wisdom to remain firm in the midst of universal opposition and to utter the full truth, I need all the strength that purity can give. But in spite of my being all alone in my thoughts, I am experiencing an ineffable inner joy and freshness of mind. I feel as if God himself is lighting my path before me. And that is perhaps the reason why I am able to fight on single-handed. The people ask me to retire to Kashi or to the Himalayas. I laugh and tell them that the Himalayas of my penance are where there is misery to be alleviated, oppression to be relieved. But it may be all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness…I shall, perhaps, not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperiled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India’s vivisection. But everybody is today impatient for independence. Therefore, there is no other help.9

Independence and partition were duly announced by Lord Mountbatten, Nehru, Jinnah, and Baldev Singh on June 3, but it only intensified the violence, particularly in the Punjab, where the flow of refugees fleeing to secure places continued in numbers that boggled the mind. Gandhi went with Nehru to Haridwar where they listened to the tales of woe of the thousands of refugees. On his return to Delhi, he commented at a prayer meeting: “The papers today talk of a grand ceremonial to take place in London over the division of India into two nations…What is there to gloss over in this tragedy?” Three days later, he revealed that several correspondents had written harsh letters to him, accusing him of being partial to Muslims because he had encouraged Indians to treat Muslims honorably in Hindu-majority provinces. Gandhi declared that he did not see why this statement was considered biased because individuals, states, and religions should be judged by the standards of right conduct, not by the wrongs they committed.
Pitched battles were fought in Delhi caused by the tide of refugees fleeing the worsening situation in the Punjab, Sind, and the Northwest Frontier Province. From August 1 to August 4, Gandhi held two prayer meetings in Kashmir that were attended by thousands. He said that he did not want to talk about politics, but knew that the status of Kashmir in an independent India and Pakistan was on everyone’s mind. A Hindu Maharaja governed a Muslim-majority state while the beloved leader of the Kashmiri people, Sheikh Abdullah, was in jail. Gandhi said that he hoped that the status would be determined amicably by the Kashmiri people, the Maharaja, and India and Pakistan.

Visiting a refugee camp in the Punjab, he saw that the prospect of Independence Day, August 15, had filled multitudes with fear and panic. When Sikh leaders told him about the attacks on their holy shrines by Muslim mobs, Gandhi tried his best to reassure them that the worst was over.

CALCUTTA

Gandhi arrived in Calcutta on August 9 and expected to leave immediately for Noakhali, where he hoped to spend Independence Day. But the situation in Calcutta was desperate. Prominent Muslims had pleaded with him to stay in Calcutta longer because they had experienced the previous month the worst communal rioting for the year. Severe rioting broke out a week before Gandhi arrived. In one incident, a mob of three hundred had stopped a train and murdered twelve passengers. The people of North India were aware of Gandhi’s achievements in combating civil strife the past year and considered him as a one-man army.
The prospect of partition at independence had changed the demography of Bengal. Gandhi was told that Calcutta was now only 23% Muslim and that, under a Congress ministry, the Hindu police and officers were partial in the administration of justice. The government had announced that a substantial military force would soon be in place, and that more power would be given to the police to prevent unrest. This was small comfort to people who had witnessed the inadequacy of military force to hold back the storm of sectarian violence.

Always looking for opportunities to persuade Indians to go beyond narrow identities and loyalties, Gandhi asked the audience at a prayer meeting on August 11 what they were doing to help the people in Chittagong who had suffered a terrible flood three days ago. He reminded them that, whatever their religious or future national differences, they were their brothers and sisters and that when calamity struck they should not think about East or West Bengal, Pakistan or Hindustan. On that very day, H.S. Suhrawardy went to see him in Sodepur ashram to ask him to stay in Calcutta until Independence Day. Suhrawardy was not respected by the Hindu and British communities. Hindus blamed him for encouraging the Great Calcutta Killing the previous year, while the British considered him an opportunist who was partly responsible for the ineffectual distribution system during the 1943 Bengal famine. It seemed, however, that the year of violence had softened Suhrawardy. The changed demographic situation of West Bengal saw Dr. P.C. Ghosh of the Congress Party become its Chief Minister, who was to replace Suhrawardy as Chief Minister after independence. The truth was that both the Muslim League and Congress ministries were unable to control the rioting. When Gandhi visited Calcutta three months earlier, he had proposed
that he should become Suhrawardy’s “private secretary”, and that together they would work for Hindu-Muslim unity, a proposal that Suhrawardy dismissed as unrealistic.

The deterioration of the situation in Calcutta forced Suhrawardy to accept Gandhi’s initiative. Explaining the nature of his “experiment,” Gandhi suggested that they should live together, unprotected by the police, in a house owned by a Muslim in a locality that was affected by the riots. Attended by Muslims, they would reason with the people and foster a spirit of peace. When Hindus commented that they did not like this idea at all because they considered Suhrawardy unreliable and held him responsible for the violence against Hindus, Gandhi responded that he was also in the same boat because some Muslims called him an enemy of Islam, but that was precisely why he designed his social experiment in this way. He wanted to prove that despite the climate of civil war Hindus and Muslims could live together with mutual respect.

On August 13, 1947, Gandhi and Suhrawardy occupied the broken-down “Hydari Mansion” in Beliaghata district, one of the most disturbed areas during the civil strife, and home to goondas and bomb-throwers. Hundreds of Hindus arrived, threatening Gandhi by hurling stones at the windows and doors and demanding to know why he had come to the rescue of Muslims. Gandhi pleaded with them to remember that he was a dedicated Hindu who saw his peace mission as his duty. For three weeks all Calcutta was peaceful, a situation that was described as a miracle. All India took notice of this. Ten thousand people attended his prayer meeting on August 14, followed by incredible scenes of fraternisation between Hindus and Muslims.

Beliaghata became a place of pilgrimage for thousands of Hindu and Muslim Bengalis, who told Gandhi their grievances and listened to his advice. The messages of
communal unity at the prayer meetings transformed the climate of violence and hatred to one of goodwill. On August 15, Independence Day, Hindus and Muslims celebrated in the streets of Calcutta from morning to late at night. Crowds of people went to visit Gandhi and Suhrawardy, shouting “Hindus and Muslims, unite.” Gandhi did not observe any special ceremony for Independence. He fasted and spun, dedicating the day in memory of Mahadev Desai. In the evening he walked to the prayer meeting where some thirty thousand attended. To the cries of joy over communal unity, Gandhi said that he hoped that Calcutta would be free of the communal virus forever. At the conclusion of the prayer meeting, Gandhi broke his fast. Hindus were invited to mosques, and Muslims to temples. Congress leaders were already advising him to go to the Punjab where the stories of horrible massacres between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs were already spreading throughout India. In this joyous atmosphere in Calcutta, Gandhi asked himself whether the achievement of peace was a miracle: “We are toys in the hands of God. He makes us dance to His tune…I only ask whether the dream of my youth is to be realized in the evening of my life.” The scenes of brotherhood made him recall with affection the days of the Khilafat movement, comparing those days with present times. The experience of the past year filled him and all India with shame and anguish: “We have drunk the poison of mutual hatred and so this nectar of fraternization tastes all the sweeter, and the sweetness should never wear out.” Fifty thousand people attended the prayer meeting the following day. When Gandhi observed that an old Harijan woman and a young Harijan girl had been invited to hoist the flag of independent India at different functions, his heart was gladdened, and he wondered whether he dared to hope
that there was progress in the struggle against inequality and untouchability, and for unity between Hindus and Muslims. On August 26, Lord Mountbatten wrote to Gandhi:

My Dear Gandhiji,
In the Punjab we have 55 thousand soldiers and large-scale rioting. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One Man Boundary Force, not forgetting his Second in Command, Mr. Suhrawardy.10

The Muslim League had already sent Gandhi their appreciation of his services in restoring Calcutta to peace and goodwill.11 On the evening of August 31, there was a resurgence of violence, just as Gandhi was preparing to leave for Noakhali.

An angry crowd marched to Hydari mansion, carrying a wounded Hindu knifed by a Muslim and demanding that Gandhi call for retaliation. Ignoring his pleas for calm, the crowd attacked his party. Around 10 p.m. they smashed the windows of the house where he was staying, and burst open the windows. Gandhi remembered the courage of an elderly Muslim woman and a young Muslim who stood near his matting to protect him from harm. Riots resumed with all their ferocity, and the following day some fifty people were killed and three hundred were wounded. Gandhi wrote to Sardar Patel that the Calcutta miracle was a nine-days’ wonder. Nehru had asked him to go to the Punjab, but how could he go there or Noakhali now that Calcutta was set to be overcome by madness. Gandhi had already decided to commence a fast unto death in the evening of September 1, saying that the fast unto death was the last and most powerful weapon in waging nonviolent struggle against evil. It was a last resort when all other means of resolving conflict nonviolently had proved futile, but there were two conditions that were necessary. First, it must be constructive in that it should aim to reform the opponent and appeal to his conscience. Secondly, the opponent against whom it was directed must already have some sympathy and respect for the one undertaking the fast.12 Several
groups came to Beliaghata asking what they should do to stop the violence. He told them
that it was time that the leaders should display courage and go to the center of the riots in
order to try to bring peace, even if they died in the process. He exhorted them to
remember that the majority of victims of the holocaust were the “unknown, nameless
rank and file alone.” That night his friend, Rajagopalachari, asked him whether a fast
would be successful against goondas. Gandhi replied: “The conflagration has been
causenot by the goondas, but by those who have become goondas. It is we who make
the goondas. Without our sympathy and passive support, goondas would have no legs to
stand upon. I want to touch the hearts of those who are behind the goondas.”

The riots continued on September 2, the first day of the fast, but by the following
day calm returned to Calcutta. The Calcutta Bar Association pledged their assistance;
Hindu and Muslim students, and Government officials formed peace demonstrations; and
European and Indian members of the police went on a twenty-four hour fast in sympathy
with Gandhi. On September 4, Hindu resistance groups that were formed after the call to
“Direct Action” by the Muslim League the previous year turned in their weapons, as did a
large gang of goondas who were willing to submit to any penalty. There were many
mixed processions of Hindus and Muslims to Hydari mansion to persuade Gandhi to end
his fast, but he told them that he would break his fast only if he could be persuaded that
communal violence would not break out again. He defended his use of his fast in this
way:

The function of my fast is to purify, to release our energies by overcoming our
inertia and mental sluggishness, not to paralyze us or to render us inactive. My fast
isolates the forces of evil. The moment they are isolated they die, for evil by itself has no legs to stand upon.

Towards evening on September 4, an important group of Calcutta officials, including the President and Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, Dr. G. Jilani of the Muslim League, and officials of the Pakistan Seamen’s Union visited Gandhi to ask him to break his fast. Gandhi responded that he fasted for the restoration of communal harmony, and that he required a pledge in writing that the riots would not commence again and, if they did, they would risk their lives to bring it to an end. He said that the fast was meant to persuade the peace-loving and creative members of the community that they had the civic responsibility to be active in preserving communal harmony and working for a more humane community. He encouraged them to work for peace among all communities. Forty signatories, Hindu and Muslim, signed a document pledging “not to allow communal strife in the city and to strive unto death to prevent it.” Gandhi broke his fast on September 4, after seventy-three hours. Great rejoicing followed. At a farewell function that the citizens of Calcutta held to express their gratitude to him, Gandhi thanked his Muslim friends at Hydari mansion in Beliaghata, and praised the martyrs of all communities who gave their lives to protect members of different religions, especially Smritish Bannerjee and Sachin Mitra who lost their lives by stab wounds defending innocent Calcuttans. Reminding his audience of the important part that Suhrawardy played in bringing peace, he praised Suhrawardy’s cooperation and said that he trusted him. Before he departed for Delhi, he organized volunteer groups as peace bridges to patrol the troubled areas of Calcutta, singling out women and student groups for special mention. Rajagopalachari described Gandhi’s accomplishment in this way: “Gandhi
has achieved many things, but there has been nothing, not even independence, which is so truly wonderful as his victory over evil in Calcutta.” In persuading the rival groups that peace was in everyone’s interests, Gandhi demonstrated that Satyagraha was effective in a civil war. His fast unto death gave the citizens of Calcutta the opportunity to think about their destructiveness, and, as they paused to reflect on Gandhi’s willingness to sacrifice his life for their savagery, they felt ashamed. In the process, their understanding of what Gandhi was attempting to do unleashed a torrent of creative energy and spared India bloodshed “on a frightful scale.” When someone asked for a message as Gandhi got ready to leave Calcutta, he wrote: “My life is my message.”

**DELHI**

Gandhi was surprised to learn on his arrival in Delhi that riots had recently broken out. Describing Delhi as “a city of the dead,” he was taken to the palatial Birla house, and not to the Harijan colony where he stayed during the past year because his room was needed for the tens of thousands of refugees from the Punjab violence. As Muslim friends recounted their grievances and the attacks against them, Gandhi feared that there would be massive expulsions of Muslims in India. He resolved to apply his old formula of “Do or Die” to the situation in Delhi. Although he claimed to understand the anger of the refugees, he felt certain that anger and retaliation made the “original disease much worse.”

He made a forty-mile tour of the refugee camps, observing how desperate the situation was. Housing and food supplies were hardly adequate and it pained him to listen to the stories of atrocities that both Hindu and Muslim refugees experienced. He
visited hospitals, the Jumma Masjid mosque where 30,000 Muslim refugees were lodged, the Purana Qila camp with 50,000 people, and the camps at the Ridge and Idgah. In other parts of Delhi were lodged the Hindu and Sikh refugees who had fled from West Punjab, survivors of the convoy of some 800,000 who had fled. As they unburdened their hearts to Gandhi, he urged them “to forget the past, not to dwell on their sufferings but to extend the right hand of fellowship to each other and determine to live at peace with each other.”

As was his custom, he used his prayer meetings to try to restore communal peace, declaring again and again that anger and revenge were responsible for the horrible events in India and Pakistan, and stressed the need for tolerance. As an illustration of communal tolerance, he told them of his friendship with Sushil Rudra, a Christian Indian, who introduced him to Dr. Hakim and Dr. Ansari, Muslims who became his close friends and who helped him to plan his Satyagraha campaigns. It saddened him that Dr. Ansari’s daughter and her husband now had to flee from their home to live in a hotel, through fear of Hindus and Sikhs. On September 15, he gave this message:

> During the night, as I heard what should have been the soothing sound of gentle, life-giving, rain, my mind went out to the thousands of refugees, lying about in the open camps in Delhi. I was sleeping snugly in a verandah protecting me on all sides. But for the cruel hand of man against his brother, these thousands of men and women and children would not be shelter-less and in many cases foodless. In some places, they could not but be in knee-deep water. Was it all inevitable, he asked. The answer from within was an emphatic “no.” “Was this the first fruit of freedom, just a month-old baby? These thoughts have haunted me throughout these last twenty hours. My silence has been a blessing. It has made me inquire within: Have the citizens of Delhi gone mad? Have they no humanity left in them? Have love of the country and its freedom no appeal for them?”

When asked to address Hindu groups like the Hindu Mahasabha or the RSS (Rashtriya Sevak Sangh), he told them that Hinduism had absorbed teachings from all faiths, and that he would continue to “proclaim from the house-tops” that Hinduism
should die, if untouchability survived and Hindus believed that non-Hindus had no place in India. Similarly, if Muslims in Pakistan believed that only Muslims had a rightful place in Pakistan, it would be the death-knell of Islam in India. When some Sikhs objected to the recitation of a selection from the Quran at a prayer meeting at a refugee camp, Gandhi discontinued the prayers, saying that he was a friend of all communities in India. He did not hold public prayer unless the entire audience approved it, but he said that they should not expect him to omit any prayer that he considered worthy and integral to the purpose of the prayer meeting. Critical of those Hindus and Sikhs who were instilling fear into Muslims in Delhi, he referred to the words of the hymn they had just sung which said that God removed all fear from those who had faith in Him to remind those present that those who sought to be free from fear should not bring fear into the hearts of others. Mindful that the refugees were from the Punjab, he wondered how Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs from the Punjab, who lived as brothers and whose blood was mixed in the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919, became enemies. He confessed that he cried daily to God to bring peace or, if peace did not come, to take him away. As his mind turned to the refugees in Delhi and in the Punjab, he said that he heard that the convoys of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh refugees were 57 miles in length, an event that so staggered the imagination that it might have had no parallel in history. He felt that it was not the time to weigh who had done more wrong, but to put a stop to the madness.

At a large prayer meeting on September 28, when two persons objected to the recitation from the Quran, Gandhi discontinued the prayers, but used his post-prayer lecture to make the point that the objectors were not practicing tolerance towards the vast majority who wanted it included. The topic of the lecture was on intolerance, and he
used the example of Winston Churchill’s comments on the riots to make the point that even the powerful were capable of displaying intolerance:

The fearful massacres, which are occurring in India, are no surprise to me. We are, of course, only at the beginning of these horrors and butcheries, perpetrated upon one another with the ferocity of cannibals by the races gifted with the capacities for the highest culture and who had for generations dwelt side by side in general peace under the broad, tolerant and impartial rule of the British Crown and Parliament. I cannot but doubt that the future will witness a vast abridgement of the population throughout, what has for sixty or seventy years been the most peaceful part of the world and that, at the same time, will come a retrogression of civilization throughout these enormous regions, constituting one of the most melancholy tragedies which Asia has ever known.\(^\text{17}\)

Gandhi commented that he thought that Churchill was hasty in his judgment and wished that he had come to India as an impartial observer to study the events. He asked whether Churchill ever stopped to think that the blame for the tragedies should be placed on British imperial rule rather than what he called, condescendingly, the gifted races. Reminding the audience that his voice was already powerless when talks about independence began, he suggested that if he had greater influence, the savagery that Churchill described with such relish would not have taken place.

MRS. SAROJINI NAIDU

A stream of well-wishers visited Gandhi on the occasion of his 78\(^{\text{th}}\) birthday on October 2. There were letters and telegrams of congratulations from people all over India and the world. Nehru addressed a mass meeting, praising Gandhi for easing the communal violence in Delhi, and asked Indians whether they were going to follow Gandhi’s way of truth and love or the way of those who killed and hated. But, the most
moving speech was given by Mrs. Naidu. It was not lost on her how deeply her own life was interwoven with Gandhi nor how much Gandhi had left his mark on India since he returned to India in 1915:

It was on the eve of the last Great World War that we heard the rumor that a strange man was coming to England from South Africa. There was great interest in his coming. It was said that he had enunciated a strange gospel alien to the modern world and alien to the ancient world. His name was Gandhi. I climbed the steps of a house in a very fashionable quarter in London, and I stood on the threshold of an open door, and I found a man seated on a black blanket on the floor with funny little boxes around him, eating dreadful-looking bits out of a wooden bowl with a wooden spoon. He looked up and said, “Oh, is it you?” I said: “Certainly not, it looks dreadful to me.” And so laughing, we began a friendship that has lasted, grown, and developed through all these years. He was Gandhi, as yet a curiosity to the world. They knew he was someone distinguished, that he had won a great moral victory over a small issue, great to him, in South Africa, in a contest with great General Smuts…Who is this Gandhi and why is it today that he represents the supreme moral force in the world? Throughout history, age after age, in every country, there have been very distinguished men and great men - kings, warriors, lawgivers, poets – men whose fame had rang through the corridors of their own periods. Their names have survived and they are fresh today in their radiance, as they were in their own times – Buddha, Jesus Christ and Mahomed, and a few others whose gospel was an exaltation to the spirit of man. Today, there is Gandhi, a tiny man, a fragile man, a man of no worldly importance, of no earthly possessions, and yet a man greater than emperors…But this man, with his crooked bones, his toothless mouth, his square yard of clothing or of cloth rather, that just covers his nakedness, where nakedness must be covered, he passes weekly through the years, he faces embattled forces, he overthrows empires, he conquers death, but what is it in him that has given him this power, this magic, this authority, this prestige, this almost godlike quality of swaying the hearts and minds of men? It is a quality he shares with that small band of great teachers of the world, who inaugurated great religions. He shares with them the quality of bringing hope to the hopeless, of bringing courage to those who are afraid, of uplifting those who have fallen, of soothing down the beastly passions of those who have lost all the sense of sanity and humanity. With Christ he shares the great gospel that love is the fulfilling of the law. With the great Mahomed he shares the gospel of brotherhood of man, equality of man and oneness of man. With Lord Buddha he shares the great evangel that the duty of life is not self-seeking but to seek the truth, no matter at what sacrifice. With the great poets of the world, he shares the ecstasy of the vision that the future of man is great, the future of man can never be destroyed, that all sin will destroy itself, but that love and humanity must endure, grow and reach the stars. Therefore, today, a broken world ruined by wars and hatred, a broken world seeking for a new civilization honors the name of Mahatma Gandhi. In himself, he is nothing. There are men of learning, greater than his, and there are men of wealth and power, and men of fame, but who is there that combines in one frail body the supreme qualities of virtue enshrined in him: courage indomitable, faith invincible, and compassion that embraces the entire world? This transcendental love of humanity that recognizes no limitations of race, no barriers of country but gives to all, like a shining sun, the same abundance of love, understanding and service. Every day – today and yesterday and tomorrow – every day is the same story of the miracle of Gandhi in our own age…He was born like other men, he will die like other men, but unlike them he will live through the beautiful gospel he has enunciated, that hatred cannot be conquered by hatred, the sword cannot be conquered by the sword, that power cannot be exploited over the weak and the fallen, that the gospel of non-violence which is the most dynamic and the most creative gospel of power in the world, is the only true foundation of a new civilization, yet to be built. It is to this man, who is my leader, my friend and my father, I pay this tribute of homage.
Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) was already well known as a poet and nationalist when she met Gandhi in 1914. Educated in Hyderabad, Madras, King’s College, London, and Girton College, Cambridge, and the author of three major collections of poetry, Sarojini Naidu was introduced to the world of Congress politics through her father, Aghorenath Chattopahdyaya, who had helped found a branch of Congress in Hyderabad. It was Gokhale who influenced her to dedicate her life to public service, and he became her mentor. At the Bombay meeting of the Indian National Congress in 1904 she was asked to recite her poem, “Ode to India”, and met some of the early leaders of the Indian nationalist movement. She also met Ramabai Ranade, one of the founders of the women’s movement for emancipation in India, and henceforth the upliftment of Indian women would become a political passion. Until she met Gandhi, her relations with Gokhale blossomed into genuine friendship. It was Gokhale who told her about what Gandhi had achieved in South Africa and made her curious and eager to meet him in London in 1914.

No cause was greater for her than Hindu-Muslim unity. She grew up in Hyderabad where the mix of Hindu and Muslim cultures was harmonious. At the National Congress meeting in Bombay in 1915 she recited her poem, “Awake”, in which she said that India could awake from her sleep only by the united efforts of all her communities:

*Hindus*: Mother! The flowers of our worship
    Have crowned thee!
*Parsees*: Mother! The flame of our hope
    Shall surround thee!
*Mussulmans*: Mother! The Sword of our love
    Shall defend thee!
*Christians*: Mother! The song of our faith
    Shall attend thee!
*All Creeds*: Shall not our dauntless devotion avail thee?
    Hearken! O Queen and O Goddess,
We hail thee!

The poem was dedicated to Mohammed Ali Jinnah, then a disciple also of Gokhale and a promising nationalist leader. She was hopeful that under Jinnah’s leadership Hindu-Muslim unity would have a strong foundation. In her many speeches, she did not lose an opportunity to describe what Hindus and Muslims shared in common. They shared, she said, the commitment to truth, purity, and service, and the worship of the same transcendent spirit, “no matter whether we call it Allah or Parameshwara.”

With the death of Gokhale in 1915, Gandhi became her mentor. She met him at the Lucknow Congress the following year and was one of Gandhi’s lieutenants in the Champaran Satyagraha of 1916, and in most of his campaigns. When Gandhi called for a Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Acts in 1919, she was among the first to join and gave speeches encouraging Indians to resist the repressive laws. She was a member of a deputation of the Home Rule League that was sent to London to present their view of what was happening in India, and was shocked by the general ignorance about the British repression in India and the massacre by General Dyer. In a letter to Gandhi of July 15, 1920, she said:

[It] is in vain to expect justice from a race so blind and drunk with the arrogance of power, the bitter prejudice of race and creed and color, and betraying such an abysmal ignorance of Indian conditions, opinions, sentiments, and aspirations…The debate on the Punjab in the House of Commons last week shattered the last remnants of my hope and faith in British justice and goodwill towards the new vision of India… I enclose a copy of my correspondence with him [Lord Montagu] on the subject of the outrages embodied in the Congress Sub-committee’s report and evidence. I naturally assume that no single statement contained in the evidence has been accepted without the most rigorous and persistent scrutiny but the general attempt to discredit the Congress Sub-committee’s findings and to shift responsibility of an outrage which cannot be denied to Indian shoulders – The Skin Game with a vengeance. Speaking at a mass meeting the other day, I said that what we Indians demanded was reparation and not revenge; that we had the spiritual force and vision that enabled us to transcend hate and transmute bitterness into something that might mean redemption both for ourselves and the British race: but that freedom was the only reparation for the agony and shame of the Punjab.
On her return to India, Mrs. Naidu was active in Gandhi’s non-cooperation campaign in 1920, urging crowds of young Indians and women to support the campaign. She insisted that Gandhi was the quintessential moral rebel. As the British government cracked down on the campaign, causing hundreds of casualties, she was present in the midst of the protests, urging nonviolence in the face of provocation, and helping to carry the injured to hospitals. She supported Gandhi’s decision to call off the campaign after the killings at Chauri Chaura in early 1922. Commenting on his trial for sedition, she said that the significance of Gandhi was that he was the first Indian leader who spoke for the common man and who “approached the poor with the mind of the poor,” a theme she would state over and over in her speeches.

In December 1925, she was elected President of the Indian National Congress for the following year, the first Indian woman to occupy that office, and announced that she would continue to emphasize Gandhi’s constructive program as the way to overcome India’s poverty. She also proposed the establishment of a women’s section of Congress to look after the special needs of Indian women. It was her prodigious intelligence, humane sensibility, and indomitable will that enabled her to balance her activity on behalf of Indian women and the nationalist movement, in spite of recurring bouts of ill-health and looking after her family. Her friendship with Margaret Cousins, one of the founders of the women’s movement in India, brought the women’s movement in India to the center of nationalist politics. Mrs. Naidu also worked to establish links between the women’s movement in India and international women’s movements. But her major contribution to the progress of Indian women was her attempts to persuade Congress to view women’s emancipation as part of the national struggle for freedom, and encouraged
women leaders to take the cause of women’s emancipation to the masses. Although she admired the achievements of the women of Europe, she advised Indian women to use their own heritage as inspiration in their struggle.

She was especially pained that in the latter 1920s the fabric of Hindu-Muslim unity began to unravel, and that her friend Jinnah broke with Congress. Gandhi and Congress asked her to mediate discussions to heal the developing breach between Congress and the Muslim League. From October 1928 to July 1929, she visited America and Canada, giving lectures, reciting her poetry, and taking the opportunity to explain the character of India’s struggle against British imperialism and, above all, to interpret the significance of Gandhi. She was very popular with American artists, statesmen, journalists, and educators, and was the subject of favorable articles in many newspapers. Her admiration for American vitality and energy was sincere and she showed special interest in the condition of African-Americans and American Indians. She found African-Americans cultured and gifted and sensed their suffering. She took pleasure in attending traditional American Indian performances, and found a striking similarity between the beauty of their traditions and the folk traditions of the tribal people of India.

Mrs. Naidu played an active role in the Salt March Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930. She participated in the planning of the campaign and joined Gandhi at the end of the march in Dandi. When Gandhi was arrested, she led the march on the Dharsana Salt Works. She was arrested but not before the Satyagrahis had demonstrated to the world the courage, self-discipline, and self-suffering of their movement and, what turned out to be the defining event of the struggle, the moral worth of their struggle against
British imperialism. As representative of the Indian women’s movement, Mrs. Naidu accompanied Gandhi to the second Round-Table Conference in London in 1931.

When they returned, they found that India was once more under the heavy hand of repression. She was again arrested and put in jail until ill-health forced the authorities to release her. Her friendship with Gandhi and Kasturbai became even closer, and she shared the experiences of Gandhi’s fast against untouchability in 1932, and his frequent tours to promote the campaign against untouchability. She not only advised and helped him politically, but also looked after his health and nursed him. She was arrested and imprisoned along with Gandhi, Kasturbai, and thousands of other Indians following the Quit India resolution of August, 1942. It was a particularly painful experience for her because she became depressed after the deaths of Mahadev Desai and Kasturbai.

The divisive nature of the discussions for the independence of India, the sectarian politics of Jinnah, and the prospect of partition left her unhappy, and even more when civil strife broke out between Hindus and Muslims. She was reluctant to accept when Nehru offered her the post of Governor of Uttar Pradesh in independent India, but Gandhi persuaded her that India needed her long experience in working for Hindu-Muslim unity as Governor of a state where Hindu and Muslim traditions had mixed for seven centuries. Her praise of Gandhi on the occasion of his birthday on October 2, 1947 was, therefore, not from an impartial observer. She was a participant in almost all of the significant events of Gandhi’s life. By no means an ascetic, she brought a sense of humor and intimacy to the large family of Gandhi’s friends. She chided his vegetarianism as nothing but “grass and goat’s milk” and called him “our Mickey Mouse.” The savagery of the civil war between Hindus and Muslims between 1946 and 1947 must have filled
her with anguish. Nevertheless, Gandhi’s successes in calming the storms of civil strife in Bengal, Bihar, and now in Delhi would have done much to restore hope in Mrs. Naidu and others that the moral way of resolving serious political conflicts was the right and effective way.

Mrs. Naidu was the most splendid illustration of Gandhi’s inspiration in persuading large numbers of women to join the national freedom movement. Aware early that the oppression of women in India was great, he saw women’s traditional capacity for self-sacrifice and self-suffering as confirmation for his own notion of nonviolence as displaying courage. What is more, he saw their plight not as an “object of reform” that needed the benevolent initiative of progressive men but, rather, as an historical project where women could change their condition as agents of their own advancement. Where women’s inequality was sanctioned by religion, Gandhi felt that “it is irreligion, not religion, to give religious sanction to a brutal custom.” Although he did not develop specific plans for the economic and political empowerment of women, preferring to incorporate their activity in the national movement with the hope that a new independent India would bring equal rights for women, his unequivocal assertion of women’s right to equal dignity and freedom won him the hearts and minds of Indian women, as Madhu Kishwar argued. Adamant in his opposition to traditional customs like child-marriage, the dowry, and fears over the remarriage of widows, he not only encouraged an increasing number of Indian women to participate in politics and public service, and so widened the base of support for his Satyagraha movement, but by championing the cause of women’s equality on the front burner, so to speak, he made it possible for Indians to accept women who chose to make their careers in public service.
THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEES

The plight of the refugees streaming into Delhi from the Punjab was of major concern to Gandhi and the Congress authorities. The resentment of the Hindu and Sikh refugees was fueling the attacks against Muslims in Delhi. Although the violence had abated, the situation was still explosive. The exodus lasted from late August to November, and the government was able to contain the expulsion of people only by October, largely through the influence of Gandhi.22

What was disturbing was that some of the most cruel massacres took place in the Central Punjab, where there was an even distribution of population between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs in the towns and the rural villages, and where there was widespread mixing of the population. Minorities who survived the killing made their way to towns where members of their own community were in the majority. In many instances, minorities were placed in camps so that they could be better protected. That was why Gandhi made frequent appeals in his prayer meetings for warm blankets, quilts, and thick cotton sheets because he knew about the hardships of the refugee camps. The shortages of food, clothing and the basic necessities did not help the refugees to develop the spirit of tolerance that Gandhi was constantly encouraging. A resurgence of anxiety followed the invasion of Kashmir on October 21 by Pathan tribesmen from the Northwest Frontier Province who declared a *jihad* to support their fellow Muslims. Of the Princely States that were directed to accede to either India or Pakistan by August 15, 1947, three-Hyderabad, Junagadh, and Kashmir- had not decided by Independence. Hyderabad and
Junagadh had Muslim rulers but their population was largely Hindu; Kashmir had a Hindu ruler, Maharajah Hari Singh, but three quarters of its population were Muslim. In September, the Indian army took control of Hyderabad, and India gained Junagadh by supporting a Junagadh liberation group. In Kashmir, a Rajput dynasty ruled the large, beautiful, and strategic state with the assistance of Brahmin civil servants known as Kashmiri Pandits. In the 1930s, a Muslim mystic, Sheikh Abdullah, led a nationalist struggle demanding a larger share in the administration of the state for the Kashmiri people. He founded the All-Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference which he changed to All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference when Hindus and Sikhs joined his party, but was promptly jailed by the Maharajah. Convinced that the Pathan invasion was a Pakistani plot to seize Kashmir, the Maharajah turned to Delhi for support, and released Sheikh Abdullah, making him prime minister of an interim government. On October 26, Maharajah Hari Singh formally acceded to the Indian Union, and requested Indian troops to liberate Kashmir from the Pathan tribesmen. Lord Mountbatten agreed on condition that a plebiscite to determine the will of the people would be held after the raiders were driven from Kashmir. When a Sikh battalion was flown to Srinigar thereby saving the capital, Jinnah was prepared to send in the Pakistan regular army, but was informed by Field Marshall Auchinleck that if he insisted on sending in the regular army, every British officer in the Pakistan army would have to withdraw. The fighting continued until the United Nations arranged a cease-fire on January 1, 1949. One quarter of the Western portion of the state, excluding the vale, formed Azad Kashmir (Free Kashmir), which subsequently acceded to Pakistan. No plebiscite was ever held and the status of Kashmir has remained a major cause of hostility between India and Pakistan.
Gandhi felt that what was happening in Kashmir would raise the temperature of the communal conflict, but he added that he recently saw friends from Karachi and Lahore who informed him that things were getting better. He heard the story of a Muslim family who had given shelter to a Sikh friend and set apart a room for keeping his *Grantha Sahib* out of respect. In November, Gandhi told the prayer meeting that there were many instances of Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus sheltering each other during the disturbances. He expressed his sympathy for the government because it was virtually impossible to bring order to such a large number of people who were uprooted from their homes.

There were enough records of the savagery to get a good idea of what took place. But the answer to the question of why it happened remains elusive. In late November, Gandhi published in *Harijan* a letter from an American friend, Richard B. Gregg, who offered to give a psychological explanation of the outburst of madness. Gregg argued that the outburst of violence was not so much the result of inter-communal suspicion and hatred, as an explosion of pent-up resentment of the masses against the oppression they suffered not only from foreign imperial rule but also from the imposition of foreign modern social and economic ways that undermined the traditions of the masses, especially the established rhythm of village life. Among the ways listed as foreign and modern were the English landholding system, money-lending at excessive interest, and heavy taxation payable in money. He cited psychological studies which showed that children who suffered great frustrations at the hands of an individual and suppressed their resentment sometimes expressed this repressed anger at an innocent person long after the original frustration took place. He said that in all countries, all through history, major
political changes created the conditions for stability and discipline to unravel, bringing more or less violence and disorder, and the masses have always suffered more than elites. Arguing that communal hatred was not deep, he was hopeful that if the masses could have the opportunity to restore some of their more creative traditional institutions and customs such as the village *panchayats, khadi*, extended family systems, and religious practices, the energy of the people will be turned away from violence towards more creative channels. He hoped that this explanation would give a glimmer of encouragement in the gloomy climate of civil strife.

Gandhi found Gregg’s analysis difficult, but insisted that he was hopeful for the future because of his underlying faith in nonviolence. He wondered whether it was the case that when the British left, the pent-up fury could not be restrained any longer. Gandhi, nevertheless, reaffirmed his faith in nonviolence.

Gandhi continued to cite examples of how communities changed from being tolerant to intolerant. He described the scenes at the ever-crowded Chandni Chowk where Sikhs and Hindus were intimidating Muslims to abandon their shops and homes, and recalled that, in times past, Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims respected each other in the crowded spaces of Chandni Chowk, and Muslims did not sell meat products out of respect for Hindus. Now Sikhs and other refugees were selling meat products. He asked refugees to try to learn and respect the traditions of their new city, criticizing the damage done to 137 mosques in Delhi, which were converted into Hindu temples, and the persecution of Christians in the village of Kanhai, 25 miles from Delhi. Gandhi said that it was part of the same virus that was infecting India, which made them forget that
Hinduism was a tolerant religion, and that Christians, Jews, and Parsis found shelter from persecution in India.

On November 28, Gandhi attended the celebrations in memory of the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion. There were more than 100,000 men and women in the audience, many of whom were driven out from West Pakistan. Addressing the Sikhs, he told them that he brought Sheikh Abdullah, the Lion of Kashmir, with him for a purpose. While Muslims in Jammu were being killed by Hindus and Sikhs, Sheikh Abdullah won the hearts of Hindus and Sikhs by inviting those who carried out the violence to forget the past and repent the evil they had done. Gandhi asked that the practice of driving out Muslims from Delhi should stop immediately.

In discussions about nonviolence, he clarified what he meant by passive resistance. It was the weapon of the weak for those who used it as a temporary expedient, to be discarded when the opportunity to use violence came. He admitted that nonviolence as the weapon of the strong was still a dream, and had no future as a harbinger of world peace unless it could successfully guide power politics. Yet, he knew that in many instances, when nonviolence was linked to power, it became tainted with corruption. He felt that it was important that they find an answer to this puzzle of how to influence power politics without succumbing to corruption.

In early January, 1948, Harijan carried a thoughtful article on the Sikh religion, arguing that the religions of India had not lived up to their ideals of tolerance, but were now dominated by fanatics and bigots who cared more for rituals and dogma. The author quoted the sixteenth-century poet, Kabir:

The Hindus say they love Rama,  
The Mussulmans say they worship Rahman;  
Both fight with each other over words,
None sees the common spirit. Although the Sikh religion placed greater emphasis on justice, goodness, forgiveness, generosity, and moral qualities than on mere outward forms of worship, he felt that they had not “lagged behind the Hindus and Muslims in committing the darkest crimes which have disgraced and humiliated us.” Confessing that Sikhs, like Hindus and Muslims, have killed and thrown out helpless victims from running trains, the author called on the leaders of the Sikh community to condemn these crimes, and to stop the butchery of women, children, old, and helpless people, and to become the arbiters of establishing real and abiding unity between the Hindus and Muslims.

Following the resurgence of communal riots on a small scale in Delhi, Gandhi told a prayer meeting that refugees were trying to occupy Muslim homes and demanded that Muslims should be banished from India. Gandhi said that he understood the plight of the refugees who had to endure the bitterly cold winter, and heavy rains in inadequate tents, but he felt that it was wrong to intimidate Muslims, and then occupy their homes. On January 10, refugees from Bahawalpur in the Punjab staged an angry demonstration asking for help for Hindus and Sikhs left behind. Gandhi felt that the peace movement was losing ground and he had to resort to the ultimate nonviolent instrument, another fast to bring about reconciliation between the religious communities: “I never like to feel resourceless, a satyagrahi never should. Fasting is his last resort in the place of the sword.” He told Indians to use his fast as an opportunity to turn the searchlight inwards because it was a testing time for all. Its purpose aimed not only at calming the communal storm, but of transforming the conscience of individuals towards recovering the unity of heart with other communities, and the moral purpose of their lives.
Gandhi began his fast at noon on January 13, 1948, urging Hindus and Sikhs to protect the lives of Muslims regardless of what was happening in Pakistan, and asked them to listen to the words of Gurudev Tagore’s song: “If they heed not thy call, walk alone, walk alone.” To those who said that Gandhi showed impatience in undertaking this fast since the situation was relatively stable and he had already saved hundreds of thousands of lives, Gandhi replied: “It was only when, in terms of human effort, I had exhausted all resources and realized my utter helplessness, that I put my head on God’s lap. That is the inner meaning and the significance of my fast.” On January 14, news arrived that there were more atrocities against Sikhs in Karachi, and that innocent men, women, and children were killed. Another report said that there was an attack on a train carrying non-Muslim refugees from the Northwest Frontier Province. Gandhi cried in anguish: “How long can I bank upon the patience of the Hindus and the Sikhs, in spite of my fast?” He felt that Pakistan, too, must allow Hindus and Sikhs to live securely in Pakistan. Gandhi had hoped that his fast would bring reasonableness to all who lived in India and Pakistan. The cabinet decided to pay Pakistan 550 million rupees immediately as its share of the assets of united India. Outside Birla House, Sikh and Hindu refugees demonstrated with cries of “Blood for blood. Death to Gandhi.”

The following day, his condition began to worsen as his kidneys weakened. But Nehru and Rajendra Prasad organized peace committees, and Hindu and Sikh representatives assured him that the communal situation was improving. Telegrams came from all over India and the world, expressing their concern for him. But the most uplifting news came on January 16, when a cablegram arrived from Karachi from Muslim refugees who had been driven out from Delhi, inquiring whether they could return and re-
occupy their houses. To those who had been asking what it would take for him to end his fast, Gandhi now replied: “That is the test.” His secretary, Pyarelal, then took the cablegram to the Hindu and Sikh refugee camps in Delhi and by nightfall had got 1,000 refugees to sign a declaration that they would welcome the return of Muslims to their homes in Delhi, even if it meant that they would have to return to the inhospitable conditions of the camps.

Gandhi spoke briefly, repeating the theme that a spiritual fast was about cleansing the heart and that it should not be considered a political move, but a call of conscience and duty. In the evening, nausea set in and the doctors feared for the worse. Maulana Azad spoke at a large peace rally in Delhi and informed them of the conditions that Gandhi had set for ending the fast. Assurances had to be signed by responsible people who could guarantee their fulfillment. A Central Peace Committee was formed, consisting of 130 members drawn from all communities and, under the chairmanship of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, adopted the seven-point resolution requested by Gandhi. Among the signatories were representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha and the militant R.S.S. The general tenor of the resolution was contained in the first declaration which said: “We wish to announce that it is our heart-felt desire that the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and members of other communities should once again live in Delhi like brothers and in perfect amity, and we take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property, and faith of Muslims and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again.”

As more than a hundred members of the peace committee, including Mr. Zahid Hussain, the High Commissioner of Pakistan, went to Birla House to ask Gandhi to break his fast, many spoke about the warm relationship between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs that was
taking place, how Muslims were cheered and treated with fruit and sweets by Hindus. His voice weak, Gandhi told them that he was moved. They had, indeed, given him all that he had asked for, but he reminded them that they had agreed to work for peace not only in Delhi, but wherever it was needed. Overcome with emotion, he broke down in tears. At 12.45 p.m. on January 18, Maulana Azad gave Gandhi a glass of orange juice. After fruit was distributed to all present, Gandhi broke his fast. He said that he was heartened by their pledge of friendship. Jawaharlal Nehru confessed that he, too, had commenced to fast when Gandhi did. With typical humor, Gandhi sent him a little note telling him to end his fast and continue to be Jawahar (a jewel). To build a unity of heart among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, he encouraged Hindu and Sikh women to establish friendship with Muslim sisters, and suggested that Muslim girls and boys should go to common schools, not communal schools. In encouraging Muslims to resume their previous occupations, he said that Delhi was the poorer, if it lost the exquisite workmanship of Muslims: “In this great country of ours, there is room for all.”

A bomb explosion 25 yards from where he was sitting at a prayer meeting at Birla House on January 20 was evidence enough that not all Indians had cleansed their hearts of violence. The attempted assassin was Madan Lal, a Hindu refugee youth from West Punjab, who considered Gandhi as an enemy of Hinduism. Gandhi simply urged those who encouraged Madan Lal to desist from such activity. No one expected that mistrust between the religious communities would suddenly come to an end, certainly not Gandhi, who asked that the prayers should continue despite bombs and bullets. Nevertheless, no one could deny that, thanks to Gandhi’s success in restoring an atmosphere of relative
trust, the national and local governments were able to take control over the situation without excessive dependence on the military and police.

There were groups whose understanding of independence was different from Gandhi. The tolerance that Gandhi wanted was interpreted as appeasement by Hindu militant groups who blamed him for the partition of India. There were others, Hindu and Sikh refugees, who blamed their plight on Gandhi’s alleged pro-Muslim policy. For some Indians, then, Gandhi became the scapegoat for the partition of India, and the violence that followed. It was a strange interpretation of events because the truth was that Gandhi did more than anyone to advise against partition, and to stop the civil strife. The method of *Satyagraha* to clarify misunderstanding was to invite opponents to a dialogue, so different from the method of a conspiracy, which secretly hatched plots to remove an enemy.

The conspiracy to assassinate Gandhi arose at independence in August, 1947, and was planned after he commenced his fast on January 13. What boggles the mind was its connection to another violent movement in 1909. Among the group of conspirators in 1948 were Nathuram Godse, Narayan Apte, Madanlal Pahwa, and V.D. Savarkar. Savarkar (1883-1966) was the mastermind behind the conspirators, who had come under his influence in the Hindu Mahasabha organization of which Savarkar was a former president. A zealot of revolutionary nationalism in London, Savarkar had influenced Madan Lal Dholgra to assassinate Sir William Curzon-Wylie, British assistant to the Secretary of State, in 1909, an action that motivated Gandhi to write his treatise against violent nationalism, *Hind Swaraj*. Later, Savarkar worked to establish a Hindu India, and was dismissive of Gandhi’s commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity. His Hindu ideology
was not based on an assertion of Hindu traditions, but was developed within a modern framework. Denouncing caste and untouchability, as well as religious rituals, he wanted an Indian state that was Hindu and powerful. Nathuram Godse, an orthodox Brahmin, joined the Hindu Mahasabha around 1930 and came under the influence of Savarkar. He read widely on Indian history and culture and came to share Savarkar’s association of Indian civilization with Hindus. Narayan Apte was also a Brahmin who belonged to militant Hindu associations. Godse and Apte founded a newspaper, Hindu Rashtra, to propagate their militant Hindu ideology. Dedicated to free thinking, and opposed to caste and untouchability, the assassin Godse said that he read seriously the writings of Savarkar and Gandhi because he felt that both had great influence on the minds of modern India. Describing how Gandhi’s influence became paramount after 1920 “with the slogan of truth and nonviolence,” he went on to deride these lofty principles as a mere dream for the bulk of mankind. Arguing that honor, love, and duty to one’s own “kith or kin” were more persuasive reasons to use force than any abstract commitment to the idea of nonviolence, he disagreed that armed resistance to aggression was unjust. Citing the examples of Rama, Krishna, and Arjuna, who slew evil enemies, he ridiculed Gandhi’s ignorance of the motivations of human action, saying that Gandhi had established for thirty-two years a dictatorship over India’s nationalist movement whereby Congress had to play “second fiddle to his eccentricity, whimsicality, metaphysics and primitive vision.” He blamed Gandhi for the massacres of Hindus from Bengal to Karachi, and said that his anger reached its boiling point when the leaders of Congress, with the consent of Gandhi, “divided and tore the country – which we consider a deity of worship.” He thought that if he killed Gandhi, the nation would then be free to follow the
course of reason, and its politics would be practical, committed to building a powerful army, and willing to retaliate.

The violence of Savarkar and Godse was of a different order from the madness that engulfed India for more than a year. The civil strife and riots were emotional outbursts by people who at other times might have been tolerant and respectful of other communities. The word “madness” that was used to describe the horrible acts of aggression and retaliation is illustrative of how they happened. Passion came to dominate rationality. Gandhi’s experiments made Indians pause to consider what they were doing, and they were, therefore, ready to listen to the persuasive words, stories, and symbols that Gandhi used to restore reasonableness and humanity.

The violence of the assassins, however, was ideological. Calculating and, in their minds, rational, they convinced themselves that their laudable objective of making India great and powerful justified the violent means they took. Godse and Savarkar, while proclaiming their loyalty to the idea of a Hindu nation, utilized the language of a modernist discourse to link reason, the modern nation-state, and the notion of social equality to power with an exclusive religious identity. As a critical traditionalist, Gandhi’s understanding of Indian nationality started with the civilizational reality of India’s diversity of cultures, religions, and languages, and established a bridge from this reality to acceptable notions of modernity like social reform and equality, religious pluralism, democracy, secularism, and science. While Gandhi located the practice and principle of nonviolence in the world’s pre-modern traditions, he, nevertheless, advocated *ahimsa* as the modern method to understand the great transformations that were taking place in the world, and prevent destructiveness. Gandhi had observed the virus that
Savarkar was spreading in 1909, and offered an alternative remedy for gaining freedom and social reform in *Hind Swaraj*. Since 1915, Gandhi presented his discourse to India and the world in his writings and actions. At the same time, Savarkar’s discourse was rejected utterly by Indians, and his influence restricted to a small minority who proposed a militant and exclusive way to resolve India’s political and social development. Their way was secrecy and conspiracy.

On Friday, January 30, Gandhi got up as usual at 3.30 for morning prayers, after which he worked and then took a nap. At eight, he was ready for his massage and he handed Pyarelal a copy of his proposed constitution for the National Congress Party that he had worked on the day before. At 9.30, he had breakfast and had his daily exercise in writing Bengali. His meal consisted of goat’s milk, cooked and raw vegetables, oranges, and a concoction of ginger and sour lemons. He then examined the additions Pyarelal had made to his proposed constitution, after which he had his midday rest. When he got up, he met groups of visitors. At 4 p.m., Sardar Patel went to see him for an hour, following which, at 5.10, he made his way to the prayer meeting with his grandnieces, Manu and Abha, at his side. As Gandhi lifted his hands from their shoulders to acknowledge greetings from well-wishers, Nathuram Godse pushed forward, bent down in reverence with his hands folded, and fired three shots at Gandhi. The last words Gandhi uttered were “Rama, Rama.” That evening, January 30, 1948, Nehru gave this message on all-India radio:

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere and I do not quite know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him and that is a terrible blow not to me only but to millions and millions in this country. And it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any advice that I or anyone else can give you. The light has gone out, I said and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine
this country for many more years and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this
country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light
represented the living truth and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth reminding us of
the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom. All this has
happened. There is so much more to do. There was so much more for him to do. We could never
think that he was unnecessary or that he has done his task. But now, particularly, when we are
faced with so many difficulties, his not being with us is a blow most terrible to bear.27
CHAPTER 11

EPILOGUE

BROTHERS IN SATYAGRAHA

The quest for truth cannot be prosecuted in a cave. Silence makes no sense where it is necessary to speak. One may live in a cave in certain circumstances, but the common man can be tested only in society. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, July 18, 1948.

ABDUL GHAFFAR KHAN:

There have been many who were influenced by Gandhi’s Satyagraha movements, most of whom were ordinary men and women who found in the life and actions of Gandhi the inspiration and courage to fight against injustice. Among the most significant were Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Dalai Lama. We cannot ignore from this exemplary group the figure of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Gandhi’s close friend.

How are we to understand the ups and downs of fortune of Gandhi’s friend and exemplary Satyagrahi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan? The important part he and his movement played in India’s successful *Satyagraha* struggle to achieve independence from British rule is well-known, as was his close friendship with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. A deeply religious person, Abdul Ghaffar Khan committed his long life to serving his Pathan people, to reform cruel customs, and to construct the foundation of modern life for his people on their more humane traditions of honesty and simplicity. Inspired by the teachings of Islam and Gandhi’s *Satyagraha*, Khan created an original institution, the Khudai Khidmatgar or Servants of God, that grew to some 100,000 members, dedicated to establishing constructive programs throughout the villages of the North West Frontier Province, educating the people, especially women, and generally trying to improve the material condition of all. Khan joined Gandhi’s movement and
hoped that its success would bring not only independence for India but also the fruit of freedom and responsible autonomy for his people who had suffered greatly at the hands of British imperialism from the creation of the North West Frontier in the 1890s.

Damning Pathans as irretrievably violent and quick to seek vengeance, the British were unwilling to grant reforms to the NWFP that they gave to the rest of British India. When the NWFP joined Gandhi in the Satyagraha movement from the Rowlatt Acts to partition, they suffered terrible repression. Ghaffar Khan spent some 15 years in British jails, at times under harsh conditions. His nonviolent Servants of God army experienced the most extreme torture and indignities from British rule. Yet, Ghaffar Khan kept insisting that his fight was against British rule, not British people. He was affectionately called the “Frontier Gandhi,” and it was a measure of the highest respect for their work that their achievement was called that of the “two Gandhis.”2 This description of their friendship was neither inappropriate nor belittling of Ghaffar Khan. Released from jail in 1934 but banned from returning to his home, Ghaffar Khan, his brother Dr. Khan Saheb, and later his daughter and sons lived at Gandhi’s ashram in Wardha. Their friendship and love were splendidly illustrated in the daily prayers at the ashram where, asked to read from the Koran but sometimes forgetting to bring his glasses, he would read with Gandhi’s glasses;3 Or their walks together every morning and evening after which Ghaffar Khan would assist in washing Gandhi’s tired feet. Gandhi called the friendship of the Khans “a gift of God.”

Visiting Visva Bharati University in Shantiniketan in September 1934 where his son Ghani was studying, Ghaffar was moved with joy when the poet Rabindranath Tagore described him as a votary of truth and love, values that the students at the
university would always cherish, and one of the truly great people “whose hearts are for all who belong to all the lands of the world.”

Exiled for 6 years, Ghaffar Khan returned home in 1937. Grateful for his warm stay at Wardha, he pleaded with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to visit his home to see the beauty of the North West Frontier, and the affection that Pathans had for Gandhi, Nehru, and the Congress leaders. Nehru visited the province in October 1937 and was overcome by the generosity and hospitality of the people, marveling at the development of the nonviolent army of the Khudai Khidmatgar. He noted with great interest that this province did not then show the communal spirit and bigotry that were beginning to shake the rest of India, and he felt sure that this was because of the efforts of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his movement. As his hosts took him to places of interest like the Khyber Pass, Nehru’s sense of history filled him with awe at the places that memorialized India’s ancient civilizations from the ancient Aryans to invasions of Alexander the Great and the Greeks, the Scythians, Turks, and Huns who conquered and settled in India, not to mention the great Buddhist Empire of Ashoka and Kanishka whose influence in the Frontier Province was considerable. The peoples of the Frontier inherited the legacy of some of the great civilizations of India, a perspective that was so different from their depiction as savages portrayed by the British imperial administration.

Gandhi made two visits to the Frontier Province, the first in February and the second in September 1938. As old and young village men and women came to greet him bringing gifts of fruit, goats, sugar-cane, and even home-made bread, Gandhi was moved to tears of joy. He held discussions, gave lectures on nonviolence, and observed carefully the Khudai Khidmatgar, concluding that it was a miracle that a people who were known
for violence and revenge could so radically transform their lives in such large numbers. For years Gandhi had seen for himself the quality and dignity of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Now he marveled at witnessing in the flesh the discipline and commitment of thousands of Pathans to nonviolence. This experience demonstrated the truth of his deeply-held beliefs like nonviolence, Hindu-Muslim unity, and that the constructive program was the key to transforming a society. In his discussions, Gandhi reminded his audiences that they should be proud that the nonviolence of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar was built on the legacy of the great Buddhist civilizations of ancient India that preached *Ahimsa*. Taken on a tour of Taxila, Gandhi was reminded that a great Buddhist university flourished there for a thousand years and, as his eyes focused on a pair of silver anklets in the museum, he recalled that his own mother used to wear silver anklets. In the figure of his friend Ghaffar Khan, Gandhi found that *Ahimsa* was also an essential part of Islam, and that the brotherhood of man really meant the brotherhood of all mankind. His parting advice was that if self-discipline and self-realization were at times elusive they should remember to cultivate infinite patience, “even the patience of emptying the ocean with a blade of grass.”

Despite his experience of long years in and out of British jails in the 1920s and 1930s, Ghaffar Khan found comfort in that his causes showed signs of progress. The Salt March *Satyagraha* had made freedom for India seem possible. In addition, his constructive program to educate and improve the material condition of the people in the North West Province was yielding promising results thanks to the creation of the Khudai Khidmatgar. Ghaffar Khan held firm to the principles of nonviolence, freedom from British imperial rule, the social progress of the poor masses of India, and Hindu-Muslim
unity. Aware that some criticized these ideals as impossible to achieve, he likened his faith in the transforming power of love and truth to a seed that must remain in the ground for a time before it ripens and multiplies. There was a feeling of hope when Nehru and Gandhi visited the North West Province in 1938, especially after the Congress had won a great victory in the elections of 1937.

The 1940s brought bitter pills to swallow as World War II opened a new Pandora’s box of trials and tribulations for India’s independence movement. Britain’s desperate situation in Europe saw the rise of leaders like Winston Churchill who were opposed to negotiating with Congress leaders who were willing to support Britain provided they gave clear signals that they would grant independence to India. Repressive policies, especially following the threat posed by Japan, meant that India’s Congress leaders spent the later years of the war incarcerated. Worse followed. From 1940 Mohammed Ali Jinnah energized the Muslim League, and his expanding movement demanded a separate homeland for Indian Muslims and recognition for the Muslim League as the sole representative of Muslims. Supporting the British in the war, Jinnah clung stubbornly to his idea of Pakistan.

With the end of the war and the victory of the Labor Party the plans for independence moved inexorably towards partition, a solution that saddened Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan, and sent them into deep despair. Gandhi found the idea of the “vivisection” of India unbearable; the depression was worse for Ghaffar Khan. He had committed the fate of the North West Province, a 95% Muslim province, to Congress and a united India. He had also refused to support Jinnah and the Muslim League, describing them as advocates of the Muslim elites who did little for the masses.
On the political road to partition, the fragile project of Hindu-Muslim unity burst into fragments. From 1946 to early 1948, from Noakhali and Calcutta to Bihar and then to the Punjab and the North West Frontier, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh Indians terrorized each other; some 500,000 people were killed, and 15 million left their homes hoping to find security among their co-religionists. Ghaffar Khan commented to Gandhi that India had become “an inferno and my heart weeps to see our homes set on fire by ourselves.”

Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan, and supporters went from village to village to bring hope and courage, preaching tolerance and nonviolence. In Bihar especially, the picture of the lean, tall figure of Ghaffar Khan next to Gandhi accompanied by friends captured the courage of the Satyagrahis, and showed the usefulness in the depth of human destructiveness of what Gandhi called Truth-force and Ghaffar Khan termed Service to God in restoring relative calm to social passions that have gone beyond the control of reason. To those from all religions who cried for vengeance, Ghaffar Khan condemned them as ignorant of the meaning of religion whose hearts were empty of love.

Proclaiming his admiration for all religions, he enunciated his own understanding of his religion, “My religion is truth, love, and service to God and humanity.”

It is not difficult to imagine Ghaffar Khan’s predicament. Having supported Congress and rejected Jinnah and the Muslim League, he saw clearly that though the North West Frontier Province had voted in favor of a united India and Congress as the representative of all Indians in the 1937 and 1946 elections, the acceptance of partition on the basis of religion meant that Jinnah would claim the North West Frontier Province for Pakistan. In one of their final conversations Ghaffar Khan lamented to Gandhi that his people would now be under the domination of Pakistan to which Gandhi replied that he
was filled with inner agony. Nehru and the Congress leaders who voted for partition could be moderately satisfied that they achieved independence; not so Ghaffar Khan for whom partition meant defeat not merely for his vision of the future of the North West Frontier Province but the likelihood of social and political regression. The imperial government’s demand that the NWFP hold a referendum to determine its status made it clear that the British government had thrown its support behind Jinnah and the Muslim League, and effectively put an end to Ghaffar Khan’s proposal of an independent Pathanistan until the ratification of the constitution of India and Pakistan when they would choose to become a part of either India or Pakistan. Jinnah remained unbending and there followed a campaign of vilification of Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar. Contrary to the advice of Congress leaders, the Khudai Khidmatgar boycotted the elections of 1947. In addition, supporters of the Muslim League terrorized the voters and even brought in Punjabi Muslims to vote for them. And so the North West Frontier Province became part of Pakistan which was inaugurated on August 14, 1947. What little hope remained for Ghaffar Khan seemed ruined when news reached him of Gandhi’s assassination on January 30, 1948.

Often ridiculed as a “Hindu,” Ghaffar Khan attended the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in February 1948 to pledge his loyalty and the loyalty of Pathans to Pakistan, and to make his case for an autonomous Pathanistan within Pakistan claiming that the name North West Frontier was given by the British. Repeating that he had no desire to establish a sovereign Pathan state and to fragment Pakistan, he all the same explained why he could not support the Muslim League which he felt was more interested in political power and in preserving the dominance of the business, landed, and military
elites than in serving the masses of people who were poor. He also explained why he had supported a united India and Congress, and why he was an advocate of nonviolence. Ghaffar Khan spoke the truth to the powerful as he understood it at all times, whether British, Indian, or Pakistani. There were principled positions that he would not compromise. He was neither afraid of Jinnah nor the military ruler Ayub Khan. When Jinnah advised him to join the Muslim League as the way to place the politics of his people along a more hopeful road, Ghaffar Khan was adamant that he could not support in principle the Muslim League but was committed to his Khudai Khidmatgar as the way to lead his people and Pakistan to a dignified future. Speaking before the Pakistan Parliament, he insisted that the Khudai Khidmatgar was a social and not a political movement, declaring that far from wanting to destroy Pakistan he saw advantage only in constructive action willing to serve Pakistan and its people. But he warned the assembly that looking at Pakistan from the perspective of the poor he saw no difference between the policies of the British and Pakistan governments.

Fearful that disgruntled opponents would rally around Ghaffar Khan, the Pakistan government arrested him and sentenced him to three years in prison, and unleashed a campaign of terror against the Khudai Khidmatgar. In August 1948 troops opened fire and massacred countless innocent supporters of the Khudai Khidmatgar which was later banned. In 1950 in an action reminiscent of the British, the Pakistan Air Force bombed some Pathan villages. It was not without irony that the Indian National Congress passed a resolution deploring the injustice meted out to Ghaffar Khan who was a victim of the very independence of India which he helped to bring about.
He was released in 1954 and was greeted enthusiastically when he returned home in 1955. Declaring that he continued to have faith in nonviolence which he understood as the force of love, he hoped that Pakistan would become a peace-loving country and play a role in peacemaking in international affairs. But, asserting that to speak the truth before a despotic king was the “highest form of jihad,” he criticized the government that the rich were getting richer and the poor, poorer, and there was no civil liberty in the country, especially in East Pakistan where the masses were ruthlessly oppressed. Ghaffar Khan was arrested again and jailed for incitement to violence.

Incarceration caused his health to deteriorate but did not dampen his spirit. Released in 1957, he was busy attacking the centralizing policies of West Pakistan because they undermined the movement for greater autonomy for Pathans. Ghaffar Khan did not fare any better under the martial law regime of President Ayub Khan who continued to spread mischief that Ghaffar Khan wanted a separate province where he would be king or, at other times, that he wanted the North West Frontier Province to be a part of Afghanistan. In making Ghaffar Khan its “prisoner of the year” in 1962, Amnesty International wanted to spotlight the fact that he had been incarcerated almost continuously since 1948 for his campaign for the rights of Pathans. His health had deteriorated so badly that he was released in 1964. It is of some interest that Ghaffar Khan spent 15 years in British jails and 16 years in Pakistan jails. Reflecting on the injustice meted out to him, he said that both British and Pakistan governments had used force to govern Pathans, and he wondered whether Pakistan would suffer the same fate as the British in India.
When he learned in May 1964 that his friend Jawaharlal Nehru had died, he sent a moving note to his daughter Indira Gandhi praising her father as his friend who tried to put in practice Gandhi’s ideals of love and peace on earth. After receiving medical treatment in London where he met Indira Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan accepted the offer of exile in Afghanistan and residence in Jalalabad. He was welcomed enthusiastically by the Prime Minister and thousands of Afghans where he was free to correspond and meet with close friends from his freedom struggle days like Pyarelal and Vinoba Bhave who expressed their sorrow over his suffering and the cruel treatment he received. They still assured him that he remained a beacon of hope for the Gandhian movement in the world. Ghaffar Khan replied to their earnest and warm letters by repeating old themes that he sometimes felt let down by his Congress comrades who could have done more to support his movement, and he believed that Gandhi would have helped them if he were alive. Pyarelal visited him in July 1965 and left a beautiful description of a man who was now 75 years old who suffered unjustly countless years of imprisonment, many of them in solitary confinement: “The countenance bore marks of intense suffering but the eyes beamed deep compassion, and an air of kindliness surrounded him.”10 But it was not the story of suffering that caught Pyarelal’s attention. It was the courage and unconquerable spirit of this man of God. When asked what his future plans were, he replied that he was going to re-start the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and organize his people divided for centuries by Mughal, British and Pakistan governments. Pained that they were considered as an uncivilized people, and aware of how imperialist forces have ravaged their lands and cared little to uplift the people, he wanted to change this situation, to build
schools and hospitals, and construct institutions of freedom so that they could stand on
their feet before the world with pride.

At Pyarelal’s invitation, Ghaffar Khan visited India in 1969 to commemorate the
anniversary of Gandhi’s birth at a time when Hindu-Muslim riots broke out. Crowds
listened to him when he protested the communal riots and made a plea for harmony. He
received the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding and a gift of 8
million rupees which he hoped to use for the revival of his newspaper and the welfare of
the people.\textsuperscript{11}

When the situation worsened in East Pakistan following general elections in 1971,
Ghaffar Khan advised against the use of force to quell the riots, offering to go to East
Pakistan to negotiate a solution. But the offer was declined by Pakistan leaders who
feared that their own influence would be undermined by the aging Ghaffar Khan. They
must have recalled that he had raised his voice against oppressive policies towards
Bengali Muslims in the early months of the birth of Pakistan. Yet, in the face of
secession of East Pakistan and the formation of Bangla Desh, Ghaffar Khan did not
encourage any armed revolt for freedom while criticizing the government for infringing
the rights of nationalities.

Ghaffar Khan returned to Pakistan from exile in 1972. He was ailing for many
years, visiting hospitals in Delhi and the Soviet Union. India honored him with its
highest award in 1987, the Bharat Ratna. Ghaffar Khan died in Peshawar on January 20,
1988, at the age of 98, and was buried in Jalalabad.

It is tempting to view the life and work of Ghaffar Khan as one more example of
the failure of nonviolent struggles. Further, as we observe the fate of Pathan people in
Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the crises in the world today, we are justified in asking what if Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar had succeeded, what if India was not partitioned, what if Pakistan had welcomed Ghaffar Khan and his movement. Such questions, of course, do not take into account the unpredictability of history. In one sense Gandhi had a finely honed sense of the long view of history when he told the Khudai Khidmatgar to cultivate the patience of one seeking to empty the ocean with a blade of grass. Echoing Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan forged his vision from his belief in love, truth, and service to God and humanity. A devout Muslim, he held that all religions should be respected equally, and that he himself had learned from other religions. Brotherhood for Ghaffar Khan meant love for all mankind. He never departed from these values and principles in a long life involved in some of the most perilous conflicts of the 20th century, and suffering 30 years of imprisonment. Shortly before his death, Ghaffar Khan uttered a warning that resonates in every part of the world: “The world needs Gandhi’s message of love and peace more today than it ever did before, if it does not want to wipe out civilization and humanity itself.”

The history of national and international conflicts since Gandhi’s death does not reveal any significant development towards the victory of nonviolence. No sooner did colonial wars come to an end than the doctrines of the Cold War, nationalism, fundamentalism, and the national security state arose to justify violent means to protect what advocates call defensible ends or just wars. Developed as well as developing nations do not preclude policies of using the military to solve domestic and international conflict. This is not to say that nonviolent movements have not been successful.
The success of the civil rights movement of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s was, perhaps, the most splendid illustration of the usefulness of the method of nonviolence outside of India. What, then, is the value of this discourse that examines Gandhi’s life and nonviolent movement? The first impression that comes to mind in researching Gandhi’s life and voluminous writings is the wide range of his interests, ideas, and the richness of his insights. It is impossible to comprehend and to tell the complete story. Although the twentieth century has made us skeptical of the value of nonviolent movements, we must again draw on the essential hope that underlines Gandhi’s Satyagraha as we consider how to resolve the horrifying conflicts that have already beset the new century.

Joan V. Bondurant’s magisterial work, Conquest of Violence, analyzed Gandhi’s movement as a technique for social and political action and, in conceptualizing its meaning, methods and objectives, concluded that Satyagraha was universally applicable. Categorizing Gandhian philosophy into objectives, principles, and policies, she put forward that Gandhi’s objectives were independence (Swaraj) and uplift for all (Sarvodaya), while his means were nonviolence and adherence to truth. Aware that he had created Satyagraha as a way to resist unjust laws and, later, to transform and change the social system in India, Professor Bondurant argued that a Satyagraha movement sought to rectify an unjust situation by persuading opponents through reason of the justice of one’s cause which, if it failed, would be followed by self-suffering as the next step of dramatizing the injustice. Finally, if both methods failed to bring about a rational discussion and solution, then nonviolent civil disobedience would be considered.
As Gandhi sought to define his nonviolent movement as Truth-force, he mined the rich potential of the traditional notion of *Ahimsa* or the refusal to injure other creatures in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religions. In addition, his Muslim, Christian, and Jewish friends and his own reading persuaded him that certain core values of Semitic religions supported nonviolence. Nor were Gandhi’s sources only religious. In translating Plato’s *Apology for Socrates* into Gujarati and distributing it to his supporters in South Africa and India, he made the figure of Socrates a quintessential Satyagrahi.¹⁴ *Satyagraha* meant, then, the force of truth, love, and nonviolence. The Indian traditional imperative not to injure others was expanded to mean love, even love for the evil-doer.

Gandhi’s insistence on the relative character of the human search for the truth played a significant part in his definition of *Satyagraha*. Unconvinced that any religious tradition was superior to others and persuaded that all traditions contained the truth partially, he brought this spiritual insight to the world of politics. He had learned early in South Africa of the Jain conception of relative truth. Since it was impossible to know the absolute truth, it was wrong to cause injury to an opponent who should be persuaded rationally and nonviolently to correct the injustice. Nevertheless, in spite of his view of the imperfect understanding of truth by human beings and institutions, he never stopped searching for the Truth, which he called God and Love. It was precisely its elusive character that conditioned his understanding of truth as more of an awareness than a dogma. Gandhi created many “experiments” to test his spiritual development, some of which brought accusations of obscurantism. Moreover, he used the social and political needs of human beings as the criteria of truth. Love and nonviolence were the means to realize both freedom and uplift for all. As practiced by Gandhi, *Satyagraha* was rooted

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in a principled notion of truth. His belief that an understanding of truth was relative certainly contributed to his openness and willingness to change his mind on occasions. To affirm that nonviolence was the fruit of courage and not the weapon of the weak, he said that violent resistance against injustice was preferable to cowardice. His critics chided him with recruiting for the British in the Great War. Yet, as he grew older, he seemed to have become firmer in his conviction about the necessity of nonviolent means as he became more flexible on the objectives of his struggles.

Did *Satyagraha* depend upon a philosophical or spiritual understanding of truth or could it be used only as a strategic political method of fighting injustice. To repeat, Gandhi’s nonviolence embraced both principle and practice. For him, nonviolent action for the community was indispensable for his own spiritual development. But Gandhi himself confessed that he had proposed *Satyagraha* to Indians as an alternative method to an armed struggle for a mass movement, aware, indeed, that few were prepared to accept the philosophical premises of the method. The almost military discipline, planning and organization of nonviolent movements, from Gandhi’s struggles in South Africa and India, the Danish resistance to the Nazis, the US civil rights movement, the Polish Solidarity movement, and the Chilean peoples’ struggle against dictatorial rule, among others, showed that nonviolent strategies of resistance against oppression could be successful where armed struggle had failed. An examination of these successful resistance movements reveals a deep understanding of both the historical and political reality of these struggles and the mental preparation for the courage to suffer punishment. But is success the only measure of the value of nonviolent movements as a political instrument? Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* as a political and social movement had as its
overarching purpose the creation of an Indian community and solidarity as the way to
heal the fragmentation caused by its history and imperialism; a community that practiced
respect for the diversity of religions and cultures of India, where there was no
untouchability or social inequality of caste and gender and where all received the
opportunities to work for their living. Indeed, it often seemed that Gandhi considered his
constructive Program to be as important as the movement for independence. He
acknowledged that it would take time to realize this vision and could only be achieved in
a democratic system of decentralized government.

It was vital to persuade opponents of the value of such a community, not win
victories over them, because they were also to be included in the new community.
Looked at from a realistic position, such a view seems utopian. But the holocausts and
genocides, not to mention the countless little wars of the recent past, are evidence enough
of the necessity of constructing communities where democracy and diversity are
respected in the hope that such cruelties and destructiveness are not repeated.

THE DALAI LAMA

The sad experience of the people of Tibet, occupied for more than forty years by
the Peoples Republic of China and facing cultural and racial destruction, is well known.
In an address in England presenting his proposal for a Satyagraha movement for freedom
for Tibet, Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, chairman of the Assembly of Tibetan Peoples’
Deputies, gave an illuminating analysis of his conception of Satyagraha and its relevance
to the Tibetan freedom movement. Affirming that he was inspired greatly by Gandhi, he
stressed that for him Satyagraha was a movement that arose from a spiritual motivation
and, as he understood it, was not about nonviolent strategies. He admitted that there were
some differences between Gandhi’s conception and his. Gandhi’s spirituality as a Hindu was centered on God while, as a Buddhist, he did not believe in a Supreme Creator but still acknowledged two categories of truth, absolute truth and relative truth. He declared that absolute truth was the ultimate reality of all existence and the source of all creativity, but it could not be the basis of Satyagraha because it could not be fully comprehended. Insisting that its basis was, therefore, relative, Professor Rinpoche argued that a Satyagraha movement must, nevertheless, follow values such as freedom, justice, equality, and human dignity, verified by others through experience and logic as eternal values of truth. There were overtones of Gandhi when he said that a Satyagrahi was not afraid of trusting an opponent and had the reputation of being a law-abiding person. He cited Buddhist scriptures, the Hindu Puranas, Socrates, Jesus, and Thoreau as offering examples and lessons of Satyagraha. Although he urged Tibetans to love the Chinese people and their leaders while condemning Chinese atrocities against Tibetans, he said that he did not think that Satyagraha could be a mass movement but would have to be carried out by a dedicated group of activists. In his final appeal, he showed his distaste for the modern idea of politics by reminding supporters that they should not consider Satyagraha as a political movement to gain benefits or a campaign to hurt the Chinese. They should believe that they were “engaged in a spiritually motivated mission to restore freedom to Tibet for the highest purpose in human life: the well-being of all sentient beings.”

The advocates of nonviolence who emphasize its strategic usefulness in a just cause claim to be aware of the reality of evil in the world. Notions like loving one’s enemy or hating an evil system but not the person who practices evil are problematic for
a mass movement in its struggle against injustice, except in a situation of personal
spiritual development. It bears repeating that Gandhi’s Satyagraha was both a personal
and political struggle. As a consequence, it drew its inspiration from a view of truth that
gave primacy to the social perspective and vision. As Gandhi understood them, social
and political ideals arising from a sense of community were no less valid than religious
ideals in the journey towards truth. Indeed, notions of truth and love can derive from a
secular foundation of community. There exists also the difficult question of what weight
one should give to the argument about the reality of evil and how those who suffer
injustice can be reconciled to those who practice injustice. Gandhi did not minimize the
difficulty. Indian experience of British imperialism was harsh and oppressive throughout
Gandhi’s long struggle. After the massacre at Amritsar in 1919, Gandhi no longer
believed that British political ideals of freedom and justice would be granted to Indians
and concluded that British imperialism was evil. But he distinguished between the
system of imperialism and British people for whom he had the highest respect. In
campaigning against imperialism, he refused to demonize the British as a people and
civilization. He integrated into his understanding of Satyagraha the notion that the
British rulers or, earlier, the South African government under Jan Smuts, could be
persuaded to see the injustice of the evil system of imperialism and racism, and rectify it.
Similarly, he considered the system of untouchability as evil and utilized the full force of
Satyagraha to abolish it. At no time did Gandhi consider these objectives simple. The
narrative of his campaigns reveals enormous difficulties, countless defeats, and deep
suffering. There were many periods when he had doubts about the efficacy of his
movement. What enabled him to sustain for so long the courage to persist in the
nonviolent struggle against injustice? Gandhi’s spirituality cannot be questioned but his voluminous writings allow us to understand that his inspiration and moral strength came no less from his actual experience with all the people he met and, in particular, his awareness of the humanity of downtrodden communities which suffered injustice.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The successful campaigns of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. offer rich insights into Satyagraha. Reflecting on his own “pilgrimage to nonviolence,” Dr. King commented that he began to examine Gandhi’s thought and nonviolent movement when he entered Crozer Seminary in 1946 after hearing a sermon in Philadelphia on Gandhi’s life and teachings by Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard university. He felt that Gandhi was the first to use love as enunciated by Jesus beyond the interaction between individuals as a force to bring about the social transformation of the masses, and admitted that Gandhi’s emphasis on love and nonviolence provided the key to the discovery of the method of social reform that he was seeking. The study of Gandhi had helped him to overcome the influence of the teaching of the influential theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, who argued that the reality and power of individual and collective evil could make nonviolent resistance irresponsible.

On completion of his formal training in 1954, Dr. King took up a position as a young pastor in Montgomery, Alabama, and the following year played a leading role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. His main contribution was “to infuse the movement with a Christian ethos of nonviolence and explicitly Gandhian precepts of nonviolent
As he reflected on the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott campaign, Dr. King drew lessons which are worth recalling for the light they shed on the universal application of the method of nonviolence. Echoing Gandhi that nonviolence was not cowardice, he stated that it was not the weapon of the weak nor was it passive. It was “the active spiritual resistance to evil.” Although nonviolent non-cooperation was the central theme of the Montgomery Boycott, its purpose, he said, was not to “defeat or humiliate” but to “win the friendship and understanding” of the opposition. Dr. King declared that the outcome of nonviolence was the “creation of a beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.” He said that his struggle was against the forces of evil, not persons who practiced evil, making clear that his campaign was not against white people. He wanted victory for all people, not only African Americans. On the significance of suffering in nonviolent struggle, he quoted Gandhi that “suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears which are otherwise shut to the voice of reason.” Dr. King counseled his followers not only not to injure their opponents but also not to hate them. He then expanded his notion of love as it applied to his nonviolent movement. Using the Greek word for love, Agape, he defined it as love in action which sought to preserve and create community, “[Agape] is a willingness to sacrifice in the interest of mutuality. Agape is a willingness to go to any length to restore community.” In his final lesson to nonviolent resisters, he asked them to consider his conviction that there was a creative force in the universe, called by some “an unconscious process, an impersonal Brahman, or a Personal Being” that operated to bring justice, and that they should have faith in the future.
Perhaps the most popular portrait of Gandhi was the painting by the outstanding Indian artist, Nandalal Bose, which became the inspiration for many sculptured statues of Gandhi throughout the world. In portraying him as an old man, dressed in his humble dhoti, stick in hand, striding forward defiantly on his march to Dandi, Nandalal Bose captured the quintessential spirit of Gandhi. *Satyagraha* was active resistance, not passive resistance. Gandhi’s sympathy for the poor and the discriminated was central to the conception and practice of *Satyagraha*.

We must not forget that Gandhi was a successful lawyer in South Africa. Dressed elegantly in European garb and living in comfortable conditions suited to his profession, Gandhi gave up his material comforts as he gradually came to understand the racial injustice meted out to the poorest Indians, indentured Indian laborers. One cannot ignore the racial incidents he suffered as causes of his activism. Thrown from the train at Maritzburg for traveling first-class, kicked off the pavement reserved for whites only, and a near lynching attempt at the hands of South African whites must have made him more resolved than ever to fight against racism. However, a close reading of his autobiography shows that it was the courage, idealism, and humanity of the indentured laborers that had inspired him. Years after he left South Africa he kept singing the praises of the courage of the young indentured woman, Valiamna, and the old man, Harbatsingh, who joined the Great March of 1913, suffered imprisonment, and died. The themes of the uplift and advancement of the poor, the untouchables, women, and working people were repeated constantly in his many campaigns. His sympathy for the lowly social classes was not an abstract notion. He interacted with them easily and he enjoyed their company. The warmth and genuineness with which he described his experience at Kingsley Hall in the
working class section of London during the second Round Table Conference is a good illustration of how deeply Gandhi recognized and appreciated the humanity of the more needy. Recalling Gandhi’s visit with him in France, the writer Romain Rolland remarked that Gandhi seemed to enjoy more a visit with a French working woman than the meeting with some French intellectuals that Rolland had organized. Yet, when he asked Rolland to play Beethoven, and, later in Italy, when he described his awe and excitement at visiting the Vatican art gallery, Gandhi reminded us that he was also a man of culture and learning.

Nelson Mandela remarked that Gandhi’s Satyagraha was first a struggle against oppressive colonialism and racism and acknowledged that it inspired anti-colonial struggles in Africa. This was no small praise from one of the outstanding leaders of the 20th century who was also well known for his successful struggle against racism and imperialism.

Viewed from the perspective of Gandhi’s campaigns, British imperialism in India was built on force, not consent. From the rebellion of 1857 to the granting of independence in 1947, political stability was preserved by policies that were a mix of repression against nationalists and concessions to the small group of Indian elites who supported British rule to defend their social and economic interests. The massacre at Amritsar in 1919 was not an isolated instance of aberrant imperial behavior. Every Satyagraha campaign brought the heavy hand of state repression as the British tried to crush the spirit of Indians. The Congress committee report on the massacre at Amritsar, composed for the most part by Gandhi, provides powerful evidence of the horrors of imperial rule. In this tense political climate, Gandhi’s method of nonviolent resistance
was unique and remarkable in that he was able to make a distinction between the cruelty of the system of imperialism and the essential humanity of the British. *Satyagraha* rejected demonizing the British and offered the possibility of reconciliation between the British and Indians as the solution. Arguably, it was Gandhi’s presence in the Indian anti-colonial struggle that softened the image of British rule, making it appear different in character from, say, French imperialism in Algeria.

Gandhi observed that repression was not the only consequence of an imperial system that exploited Indian resources for the benefit of Great Britain. Millions of Indians were thrown into poverty by the British industrial transformation of India. Gandhi’s movement was directed, therefore, not only at resisting imperial oppression but, at the same time, towards laying the foundation of reconstructing an alternative Indian community by stressing the necessity of work to overcome poverty. To heal the psychological wounds of poverty and a sense of inferiority, he gave Indians pride in many of their traditions and history and their “indigenous intellect, spirit, and industry.”

*Satyagraha* gave Indians everywhere the courage to reject the British imperial claim that they were bringing progress and civilization to a backward society.

Gandhi was quick to see that imperialism was not the cause of all the ills that beset India. The campaign to eradicate untouchability became one of the foundation stones of *Satyagraha*. Gandhi said that he questioned the discrimination against untouchables as a boy and he made the inclusion of untouchables central to his vision of a free India. In the 1930s the issue was placed at the center of the nationalist movement. Although initially supporting the ideal of caste as a hereditary division of occupation based on equality, he later came to see that inequality characterized its practice. The
creation of an alternative Indian nation to replace the British imperial state meant that practices and attitudes like discrimination against untouchables and lower castes had to be abolished. The struggle to change these traditions was as difficult as that against imperialism. In these domestic issues, too, he preferred to attack the system and not the Orthodox Hindus who practiced the discrimination. Declaring that untouchability was not sanctioned in the Hindu Shastras, he advised against attacking the Orthodox and proposed reform movements to persuade and educate all Indians that all people were equal, and that there should be no prohibition or discrimination against untouchables entering temples, sharing village wells, and entering schools. Character, Gandhi asserted, was the only determining factor of the quality of a person, not birth or ritual forms. Gandhi was not the only leading voice in the struggle against untouchability. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was considered by many as the chief spokesman for untouchables and was often at odds with Gandhi over programs to eradicate untouchability. Yet, both men were instrumental in bringing the issue of untouchability to the center of India’s national politics.

Gandhi’s ideal of a new Indian collectivity was rooted in the notion of respect and tolerance for the diversity of its peoples and cultures. The universal doctrine of the brotherhood of man became his guiding principle not only in the struggle for equality for untouchables, but for the inclusion of Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Christians, and Jews. Hindu-Muslim unity was another central objective of the Satyagraha campaign. Although he did not ignore conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in India’s history, he was firm in his conviction that both communities were vital to India’s future. Unable to accept the idea of a separate polity for Indian Muslims and Hindus, he kept insisting that
the cause of Muslim separatism was the policy of “divide and rule” encouraged by imperial Britain. He said that his ideal was not only the brotherhood of Hindus but the brotherhood of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, and Jews, and asserted that if the scriptures of the different faiths were read from the perspective of the followers of each religion, they would see that all faiths were really one, and there were “no distinctions of superiority and inferiority among the children of one and the same God.”

The partition of India and the genocide following the riots between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs sullied the dream of religious unity, but not entirely. The impressive success of his Satyagraha fasts and activity to put an end to the riots in the midst of the fury of communal madness is a powerful statement of the force of Satyagraha to stop violence and to begin the process of healing hearts wounded by hatred and extreme violence. For Gandhi, Satyagraha was the means to make the notion of the brotherhood of man practical and living. In addition, in arguing against the missionary practice of seeking to convert others to their faith, and proposing, instead, the project of encouraging every religion to be committed to equality and love, he had in mind a version of equality that was based on accepting and respecting differences among peoples. As he was accustomed to say, he was seeking a community that was based on a unity of heart, not uniformity.

This ideal of a community as a unity of heart where respect for diversity, openness, and a willingness to listen, tolerate, and criticize different opinions shaped Gandhi’s commitment to democracy. This democratic spirit shone brightly in his debate on the 1920 non-cooperation campaign with his friend, Rabindranath Tagore. Nor was Gandhi afraid of embarrassment when Tagore criticized him for saying that the catastrophic Bihar earthquake in 1934 was punishment by God for the practice of
untouchability. Following his visit to India in 1959, a visit that he said made him more aware of the value of Gandhi and his movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. confessed that he was moved most of all by the awareness that it was Gandhi himself who acknowledged and revealed his own weaknesses, failures, and defects. For Gandhi, the democratic virtues of criticism and self-criticism were important practices not only in the personal search for truth but also in social and political movements.

On the question of governments, Gandhi preferred a decentralized state where citizens would be active and responsible citizens of their own small communities. His fear of the expansion of the power of the state in the lives of people remains resonant. He had the Soviet Union in mind when he said that defensible social ideals of equality could be corrupted by powerful states. Rejecting the notion of class struggle, armed struggle, and coercion to bring an end to injustice, Gandhi asserted that only nonviolent socialism would bring justice, insisting that “we may persuade, but not compel.” Cautioning that social reform could not be rushed, he advised that nonviolent transformation could come only by education of the “haves” and “have-nots.” He lamented that the nation’s wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy families and asserted that economic equality was the “master key” to nonviolent independence and that the juxtaposition of a few palaces and miserable hovels would inevitably lead to bloody revolutions. He confessed that such a sight of extreme inequality caused him great pain and he understood that both the British as well as wealthy Indians were exploiting the poor who “produce the food and go hungry.” A society based on nonviolence, he declared, must be based on the ideal of just distribution, not the concentration of capital in a few hands. Claiming that he had tried to live like the “poorest of the poor,” he was quick to add that
he was aware that he made use “of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich.”

But how could the chasm between rich and poor be bridged? In proposing his idea of trusteeship, he remained true to his belief that social and political conflicts could be resolved by nonviolent persuasion and affirmed his hope that the rich could be converted to the notion that they held their wealth as trustees for the less fortunate in the society.

Gandhi was arguing, of course, from the premise of nonviolence or *Ahimsa*, and asserted that it was his life’s mission to show that nonviolence was a social “weapon” and that economics must be tied to ethics: “True economics…stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for a decent life.” Gandhi was hopeful that what seemed Utopian and merely a dream could be achieved in time. Truth-force, he said, was “an effort to abandon the violence that is inevitable in life.”

CHAPTER 11

EPILOGUE

BROTHERS IN SATYAGRAHA

The quest for truth cannot be prosecuted in a cave. Silence makes no sense where it is necessary to speak. One may live in a cave in certain circumstances, but the common man can be tested only in society. M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, July 18, 1948.

ABDUL GHAFFAR KHAN:

There have been many who were influenced by Gandhi’s Satyagraha movements, most of whom were ordinary men and women who found in the life and actions of Gandhi the inspiration and courage to fight against injustice. Among the most significant were Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Dalai Lama. We cannot ignore from this exemplary group the figure of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Gandhi’s close friend.
How are we to understand the ups and downs of fortune of Gandhi’s friend and exemplary Satyagrahi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan? The important part he and his movement played in India’s successful Satyagraha struggle to achieve independence from British rule is well-known, as was his close friendship with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. A deeply religious person, Abdul Ghaffar Khan committed his long life to serving his Pathan people, to reform cruel customs, and to construct the foundation of modern life for his people on their more humane traditions of honesty and simplicity. Inspired by the teachings of Islam and Gandhi’s Satyagraha, Khan created an original institution, the Khudai Khidmatgar or Servants of God, that grew to some 100,000 members, dedicated to establishing constructive programs throughout the villages of the North West Frontier Province, educating the people, especially women, and generally trying to improve the material condition of all. Khan joined Gandhi’s movement and hoped that its success would bring not only independence for India but also the fruit of freedom and responsible autonomy for his people who had suffered greatly at the hands of British imperialism from the creation of the North West Frontier in the 1890s.

Damning Pathans as irretrievably violent and quick to seek vengeance, the British were unwilling to grant reforms to the NWFP that they gave to the rest of British India. When the NWFP joined Gandhi in the Satyagraha movement from the Rowlatt Acts to partition, they suffered terrible repression. Ghaffar Khan spent some 15 years in British jails, at times under harsh conditions. His nonviolent Servants of God army experienced the most extreme torture and indignities from British rule. Yet, Ghaffar Khan kept insisting that his fight was against British rule, not British people. He was affectionately called the “Frontier Gandhi,” and it was a measure of the highest respect for their work
that their achievement was called that of the “two Gandhis.” This description of their friendship was neither inappropriate nor belittling of Ghaffar Khan. Released from jail in 1934 but banned from returning to his home, Ghaffar Khan, his brother Dr. Khan Saheb, and later his daughter and sons lived at Gandhi’s ashram in Wardha. Their friendship and love were splendidly illustrated in the daily prayers at the ashram where, asked to read from the Koran but sometimes forgetting to bring his glasses, he would read with Gandhi’s glasses; or their walks together every morning and evening after which Ghaffar Khan would assist in washing Gandhi’s tired feet. Gandhi called the friendship of the Khans “a gift of God.”

Visiting Visva Bharati University in Shantiniketan in September 1934 where his son Ghani was studying, Ghaffar was moved with joy when the poet Rabindranath Tagore described him as a votary of truth and love, values that the students at the university would always cherish, and one of the truly great people “whose hearts are for all who belong to all the lands of the world.”

Exiled for 6 years, Ghaffar Khan returned home in 1937. Grateful for his warm stay at Wardha, he pleaded with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to visit his home to see the beauty of the North West Frontier, and the affection that Pathans had for Gandhi, Nehru, and the Congress leaders. Nehru visited the province in October 1937 and was overcome by the generosity and hospitality of the people, marvelling at the development of the nonviolent army of the Khudai Khidmatgar. He noted with great interest that this province did not then show the communal spirit and bigotry that were beginning to shake the rest of India, and he felt sure that this was because of the efforts of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his movement. As his hosts took him to places of interest like the Khyber Pass,
Nehru’s sense of history filled him with awe at the places that memorialized India’s ancient civilizations from the ancient Aryans to invasions of Alexander the Great and the Greeks, the Scythians, Turks, and Huns who conquered and settled in India, not to mention the great Buddhist Empire of Ashoka and Kanishka whose influence in the Frontier Province was considerable. The peoples of the Frontier inherited the legacy of some of the great civilizations of India, a perspective that was so different from their depiction as savages portrayed by the British imperial administration.

Gandhi made two visits to the Frontier Province, the first in February and the second in September 1938. As old and young village men and women came to greet him bringing gifts of fruit, goats, sugar-cane, and even home-made bread, Gandhi was moved to tears of joy. He held discussions, gave lectures on nonviolence, and observed carefully the Khudai Khidmatgar, concluding that it was a miracle that a people who were known for violence and revenge could so radically transform their lives in such large numbers. For years Gandhi had seen for himself the quality and dignity of Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Now he marveled at witnessing in the flesh the discipline and commitment of thousands of Pathans to nonviolence. This experience demonstrated the truth of his deeply-held beliefs like nonviolence, Hindu-Muslim unity, and that the constructive program was the key to transforming a society. In his discussions, Gandhi reminded his audiences that they should be proud that the nonviolence of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar was built on the legacy of the great Buddhist civilizations of ancient India that preached *Ahimsa*. Taken on a tour of Taxila, Gandhi was reminded that a great Buddhist university flourished there for a thousand years and, as his eyes focused on a pair of silver anklets in the museum, he recalled that his own mother used to wear silver
anklets. In the figure of his friend Ghaffar Khan, Gandhi found that Ahimsa was also an essential part of Islam, and that the brotherhood of man really meant the brotherhood of all mankind. His parting advice was that if self-discipline and self-realization were at times elusive they should remember to cultivate infinite patience, “even the patience of emptying the ocean with a blade of grass.”

Despite his experience of long years in and out of British jails in the 1920s and 1930s, Ghaffar Khan found comfort in that his causes showed signs of progress. The Salt March Satyagraha had made freedom for India seem possible. In addition, his constructive program to educate and improve the material condition of the people in the North West Province was yielding promising results thanks to the creation of the Khudai Khidmatgar. Ghaffar Khan held firm to the principles of nonviolence, freedom from British imperial rule, the social progress of the poor masses of India, and Hindu-Muslim unity. Aware that some criticized these ideals as impossible to achieve, he likened his faith in the transforming power of love and truth to a seed that must remain in the ground for a time before it ripens and multiplies. There was a feeling of hope when Nehru and Gandhi visited the North West Province in 1938, especially after the Congress had won a great victory in the elections of 1937.

The 1940s brought bitter pills to swallow as World War II opened a new Pandora’s box of trials and tribulations for India’s independence movement. Britain’s desperate situation in Europe saw the rise of leaders like Winston Churchill who were opposed to negotiating with Congress leaders who were willing to support Britain provided they gave clear signals that they would grant independence to India. Repressive policies, especially following the threat posed by Japan, meant that India’s Congress
leaders spent the later years of the war incarcerated. Worse followed. From 1940 Mohammed Ali Jinnah energized the Muslim League, and his expanding movement demanded a separate homeland for Indian Muslims and recognition for the Muslim League as the sole representative of Muslims. Supporting the British in the war, Jinnah clung stubbornly to his idea of Pakistan.

With the end of the war and the victory of the Labor Party the plans for independence moved inexorably towards partition, a solution that saddened Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan, and sent them into deep despair. Gandhi found the idea of the “vivisection” of India unbearable; the depression was worse for Ghaffar Khan. He had committed the fate of the North West Province, a 95% Muslim province, to Congress and a united India. He had also refused to support Jinnah and the Muslim League, describing them as advocates of the Muslim elites who did little for the masses.

On the political road to partition, the fragile project of Hindu-Muslim unity burst into fragments. From 1946 to early 1948, from Noakhali and Calcutta to Bihar and then to the Punjab and the North West Frontier, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh Indians terrorized each other; some 500,000 people were killed, and 15 million left their homes hoping to find security among their co-religionists. Ghaffar Khan commented to Gandhi that India had become “an inferno and my heart weeps to see our homes set on fire by ourselves.” Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan, and supporters went from village to village to bring hope and courage, preaching tolerance and nonviolence. In Bihar especially, the picture of the lean, tall figure of Ghaffar Khan next to Gandhi accompanied by friends captured the courage of the Satyagrahis, and showed the usefulness in the depth of human destructiveness of what Gandhi called Truth-force and Ghaffar Khan termed Service to
God in restoring relative calm to social passions that have gone beyond the control of reason. To those from all religions who cried for vengeance, Ghaffar Khan condemned them as ignorant of the meaning of religion whose hearts were empty of love.

Proclaiming his admiration for all religions, he enunciated his own understanding of his religion, “My religion is truth, love, and service to God and humanity.”

It is not difficult to imagine Ghaffar Khan’s predicament. Having supported Congress and rejected Jinnah and the Muslim League, he saw clearly that though the North West Frontier Province had voted in favor of a united India and Congress as the representative of all Indians in the 1937 and 1946 elections, the acceptance of partition on the basis of religion meant that Jinnah would claim the North West Frontier Province for Pakistan. In one of their final conversations Ghaffar Khan lamented to Gandhi that his people would now be under the domination of Pakistan to which Gandhi replied that he was filled with inner agony. Nehru and the Congress leaders who voted for partition could be moderately satisfied that they achieved independence; not so Ghaffar Khan for whom partition meant defeat not merely for his vision of the future of the North West Frontier Province but the likelihood of social and political regression. The imperial government’s demand that the NWFP hold a referendum to determine its status made it clear that the British government had thrown its support behind Jinnah and the Muslim League, and effectively put an end to Ghaffar Khan’s proposal of an independent Pathanistan until the ratification of the constitution of India and Pakistan when they would choose to become a part of either India or Pakistan. Jinnah remained unbending and there followed a campaign of vilification of Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar. Contrary to the advice of Congress leaders, the Khudai Khidmatgar
boycotted the elections of 1947. In addition, supporters of the Muslim League terrorized the voters and even brought in Punjabi Muslims to vote for them. And so the North West Frontier Province became part of Pakistan which was inaugurated on August 14, 1947. What little hope remained for Ghaffar Khan seemed ruined when news reached him of Gandhi’s assassination on January 30, 1948.

Often ridiculed as a “Hindu,” Ghaffar Khan attended the Pakistan Constituent Assembly in February 1948 to pledge his loyalty and the loyalty of Pathans to Pakistan, and to make his case for an autonomous Pathanistan within Pakistan claiming that the name North West Frontier was given by the British. Repeating that he had no desire to establish a sovereign Pathan state and to fragment Pakistan, he all the same explained why he could not support the Muslim League which he felt was more interested in political power and in preserving the dominance of the business, landed, and military elites than in serving the masses of people who were poor. He also explained why he had supported a united India and Congress, and why he was an advocate of nonviolence. Ghaffar Khan spoke the truth to the powerful as he understood it at all times, whether British, Indian, or Pakistani. There were principled positions that he would not compromise. He was neither afraid of Jinnah nor the military ruler Ayub Khan. When Jinnah advised him to join the Muslim League as the way to place the politics of his people along a more hopeful road, Ghaffar Khan was adamant that he could not support in principle the Muslim League but was committed to his Khudai Khidmatgar as the way to lead his people and Pakistan to a dignified future. Speaking before the Pakistan Parliament, he insisted that the Khudai Khidmatgar was a social and not a political movement, declaring that far from wanting to destroy Pakistan he saw advantage only in
constructive action willing to serve Pakistan and its people. But he warned the assembly that looking at Pakistan from the perspective of the poor he saw no difference between the policies of the British and Pakistan governments.

Fearful that disgruntled opponents would rally around Ghaffar Khan, the Pakistan government arrested him and sentenced him to three years in prison, and unleashed a campaign of terror against the Khudai Khidmatgar. In August 1948 troops opened fire and massacred countless innocent supporters of the Khudai Khidmatgar which was later banned. In 1950 in an action reminiscent of the British, the Pakistan Air Force bombed some Pathan villages. It was not without irony that the Indian National Congress passed a resolution deploring the injustice meted out to Ghaffar Khan who was a victim of the very independence of India which he helped to bring about.

He was released in 1954 and was greeted enthusiastically when he returned home in 1955. Declaring that he continued to have faith in nonviolence which he understood as the force of love, he hoped that Pakistan would become a peace-loving country and play a role in peacemaking in international affairs. But, asserting that to speak the truth before a despotic king was the “highest form of jihad,” he criticized the government that the rich were getting richer and the poor, poorer, and there was no civil liberty in the country, especially in East Pakistan where the masses were ruthlessly oppressed. Ghaffar Khan was arrested again and jailed for incitement to violence.

Incarceration caused his health to deteriorate but did not dampen his spirit. Released in 1957, he was busy attacking the centralizing policies of West Pakistan because they undermined the movement for greater autonomy for Pathans. Ghaffar Khan did not fare any better under the martial law regime of President Ayub Khan who
continued to spread mischief that Ghaffar Khan wanted a separate province where he would be king or, at other times, that he wanted the North West Frontier Province to be a part of Afghanistan. In making Ghaffar Khan its “prisoner of the year” in 1962, Amnesty International wanted to spotlight the fact that he had been incarcerated almost continuously since 1948 for his campaign for the rights of Pathans. His health had deteriorated so badly that he was released in 1964. It is of some interest that Ghaffar Khan spent 15 years in British jails and 16 years in Pakistan jails. Reflecting on the injustice meted out to him, he said that both British and Pakistan governments had used force to govern Pathans, and he wondered whether Pakistan would suffer the same fate as the British in India.9

When he learned in May 1964 that his friend Jawaharlal Nehru had died, he sent a moving note to his daughter Indira Gandhi praising her father as his friend who tried to put in practice Gandhi’s ideals of love and peace on earth. After receiving medical treatment in London where he met Indira Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan accepted the offer of exile in Afghanistan and residence in Jalalabad. He was welcomed enthusiastically by the Prime Minister and thousands of Afghans where he was free to correspond and meet with close friends from his freedom struggle days like Pyarelal and Vinoba Bhave who expressed their sorrow over his suffering and the cruel treatment he received. They still assured him that he remained a beacon of hope for the Gandhian movement in the world. Ghaffar Khan replied to their earnest and warm letters by repeating old themes that he sometimes felt let down by his Congress comrades who could have done more to support his movement, and he believed that Gandhi would have helped them if he were alive. Pyarelal visited him in July 1965 and left a beautiful description of a man who was now
75 years old who suffered unjustly countless years of imprisonment, many of them in solitary confinement: “The countenance bore marks of intense suffering but the eyes beamed deep compassion, and an air of kindliness surrounded him.” But it was not the story of suffering that caught Pyarelal’s attention. It was the courage and unconquerable spirit of this man of God. When asked what his future plans were, he replied that he was going to re-start the Khudai Khidmatgar movement and organize his people divided for centuries by Mughal, British and Pakistan governments. Pained that they were considered as an uncivilized people, and aware of how imperialist forces have ravaged their lands and cared little to uplift the people, he wanted to change this situation, to build schools and hospitals, and construct institutions of freedom so that they could stand on their feet before the world with pride.

At Pyarelal’s invitation, Ghaffar Khan visited India in 1969 to commemorate the anniversary of Gandhi’s birth at a time when Hindu-Muslim riots broke out. Crowds listened to him when he protested the communal riots and made a plea for harmony. He received the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding and a gift of 8 million rupees which he hoped to use for the revival of his newspaper and the welfare of the people.

When the situation worsened in East Pakistan following general elections in 1971, Ghaffar Khan advised against the use of force to quell the riots, offering to go to East Pakistan to negotiate a solution. But the offer was declined by Pakistan leaders who feared that their own influence would be undermined by the aging Ghaffar Khan. They must have recalled that he had raised his voice against oppressive policies towards Bengali Muslims in the early months of the birth of Pakistan. Yet, in the face of
secession of East Pakistan and the formation of Bangla Desh, Ghaffar Khan did not encourage any armed revolt for freedom while criticizing the government for infringing the rights of nationalities.

Ghaffar Khan returned to Pakistan from exile in 1972. He was ailing for many years, visiting hospitals in Delhi and the Soviet Union. India honored him with its highest award in 1987, the Bharat Ratna. Ghaffar Khan died in Peshawar on January 20, 1988, at the age of 98, and was buried in Jalalabad.

It is tempting to view the life and work of Ghaffar Khan as one more example of the failure of nonviolent struggles. Further, as we observe the fate of Pathan people in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the crises in the world today, we are justified in asking what if Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgar had succeeded, what if India was not partitioned, what if Pakistan had welcomed Ghaffar Khan and his movement. Such questions, of course, do not take into account the unpredictability of history. In one sense Gandhi had a finely honed sense of the long view of history when he told the Khudai Khidmatgar to cultivate the patience of one seeking to empty the ocean with a blade of grass. Echoing Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan forged his vision from his belief in love, truth, and service to God and humanity. A devout Muslim, he held that all religions should be respected equally, and that he himself had learned from other religions. Brotherhood for Ghaffar Khan meant love for all mankind. He never departed from these values and principles in a long life involved in some of the most perilous conflicts of the 20th century, and suffering 30 years of imprisonment. Shortly before his death, Ghaffar Khan uttered a warning that resonates in every part of the world: “The world needs Gandhi’s
message of love and peace more today than it ever did before, if it does not want to wipe out civilization and humanity itself.\footnote{12}

The history of national and international conflicts since Gandhi’s death does not reveal any significant development towards the victory of nonviolence. No sooner did colonial wars come to an end than the doctrines of the Cold War, nationalism, fundamentalism, and the national security state arose to justify violent means to protect what advocates call defensible ends or just wars. Developed as well as developing nations do not preclude policies of using the military to solve domestic and international conflict. This is not to say that nonviolent movements have not been successful.

The success of the civil rights movement of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s was, perhaps, the most splendid illustration of the usefulness of the method of nonviolence outside of India. What, then, is the value of this discourse that examines Gandhi’s life and nonviolent movement? The first impression that comes to mind in researching Gandhi’s life and voluminous writings is the wide range of his interests, ideas, and the richness of his insights. It is impossible to comprehend and to tell the complete story. Although the twentieth century has made us skeptical of the value of nonviolent movements, we must again draw on the essential hope that underlines Gandhi’s Satyagraha as we consider how to resolve the horrifying conflicts that have already beset the new century.

Joan V. Bondurant’s magisterial work, \textit{Conquest of Violence}, analyzed Gandhi’s movement as a technique for social and political action and, in conceptualizing its meaning, methods and objectives, concluded that \textit{Satyagraha} was universally applicable.\footnote{13} Categorizing Gandhian philosophy into objectives, principles, and policies,
she put forward that Gandhi’s objectives were independence (Swaraj) and uplift for all (Sarvodaya), while his means were nonviolence and adherence to truth. Aware that he had created Satyagraha as a way to resist unjust laws and, later, to transform and change the social system in India, Professor Bondurant argued that a Satyagraha movement sought to rectify an unjust situation by persuading opponents through reason of the justice of one’s cause which, if it failed, would be followed by self-suffering as the next step of dramatizing the injustice. Finally, if both methods failed to bring about a rational discussion and solution, then nonviolent civil disobedience would be considered.

As Gandhi sought to define his nonviolent movement as Truth-force, he mined the rich potential of the traditional notion of Ahimsa or the refusal to injure other creatures in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religions. In addition, his Muslim, Christian, and Jewish friends and his own reading persuaded him that certain core values of Semitic religions supported nonviolence. Nor were Gandhi’s sources only religious. In translating Plato’s Apology for Socrates into Gujarati and distributing it to his supporters in South Africa and India, he made the figure of Socrates a quintessential Satyagrahi. Satyagraha meant, then, the force of truth, love, and nonviolence. The Indian traditional imperative not to injure others was expanded to mean love, even love for the evil-doer.

Gandhi’s insistence on the relative character of the human search for the truth played a significant part in his definition of Satyagraha. Unconvinced that any religious tradition was superior to others and persuaded that all traditions contained the truth partially, he brought this spiritual insight to the world of politics. He had learned early in South Africa of the Jain conception of relative truth. Since it was impossible to know the absolute truth, it was wrong to cause injury to an opponent who should be persuaded
rationally and nonviolently to correct the injustice. Nevertheless, in spite of his view of the imperfect understanding of truth by human beings and institutions, he never stopped searching for the Truth, which he called God and Love. It was precisely its elusive character that conditioned his understanding of truth as more of an awareness than a dogma. Gandhi created many “experiments” to test his spiritual development, some of which brought accusations of obscurantism. Moreover, he used the social and political needs of human beings as the criteria of truth. Love and nonviolence were the means to realize both freedom and uplift for all. As practiced by Gandhi, Satyagraha was rooted in a principled notion of truth. His belief that an understanding of truth was relative certainly contributed to his openness and willingness to change his mind on occasions.

To affirm that nonviolence was the fruit of courage and not the weapon of the weak, he said that violent resistance against injustice was preferable to cowardice. His critics chided him with recruiting for the British in the Great War. Yet, as he grew older, he seemed to have become firmer in his conviction about the necessity of nonviolent means as he became more flexible on the objectives of his struggles.

Did Satyagraha depend upon a philosophical or spiritual understanding of truth or could it be used only as a strategic political method of fighting injustice. To repeat, Gandhi’s nonviolence embraced both principle and practice. For him, nonviolent action for the community was indispensable for his own spiritual development. But Gandhi himself confessed that he had proposed Satyagraha to Indians as an alternative method to an armed struggle for a mass movement, aware, indeed, that few were prepared to accept the philosophical premises of the method. The almost military discipline, planning and organization of nonviolent movements, from Gandhi’s struggles in South Africa and
India, the Danish resistance to the Nazis, the US civil rights movement, the Polish Solidarity movement, and the Chilean peoples’ struggle against dictatorial rule, among others, showed that nonviolent strategies of resistance against oppression could be successful where armed struggle had failed.\textsuperscript{15} An examination of these successful resistance movements reveals a deep understanding of both the historical and political reality of these struggles and the mental preparation for the courage to suffer punishment. But is success the only measure of the value of nonviolent movements as a political instrument? Gandhi’s \textit{Satyagraha} as a political and social movement had as its overarching purpose the creation of an Indian community and solidarity as the way to heal the fragmentation caused by its history and imperialism; a community that practiced respect for the diversity of religions and cultures of India, where there was no untouchability or social inequality of caste and gender and where all received the opportunities to work for their living. Indeed, it often seemed that Gandhi considered his constructive Program to be as important as the movement for independence. He acknowledged that it would take time to realize this vision and could only be achieved in a democratic system of decentralized government.

It was vital to persuade opponents of the value of such a community, not win victories over them, because they were also to be included in the new community. Looked at from a realistic position, such a view seems utopian. But the holocausts and genocides, not to mention the countless little wars of the recent past, are evidence enough of the necessity of constructing communities where democracy and diversity are respected in the hope that such cruelties and destructiveness are not repeated.
THE DALAI LAMA

The sad experience of the people of Tibet, occupied for more than forty years by the Peoples Republic of China and facing cultural and racial destruction, is well known. In an address in England presenting his proposal for a Satyagraha movement for freedom for Tibet, Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, chairman of the Assembly of Tibetan Peoples’ Deputies, gave an illuminating analysis of his conception of Satyagraha and its relevance to the Tibetan freedom movement. Affirming that he was inspired greatly by Gandhi, he stressed that for him Satyagraha was a movement that arose from a spiritual motivation and, as he understood it, was not about nonviolent strategies. He admitted that there were some differences between Gandhi’s conception and his. Gandhi’s spirituality as a Hindu was centered on God while, as a Buddhist, he did not believe in a Supreme Creator but still acknowledged two categories of truth, absolute truth and relative truth. He declared that absolute truth was the ultimate reality of all existence and the source of all creativity, but it could not be the basis of Satyagraha because it could not be fully comprehended. Insisting that its basis was, therefore, relative, Professor Rinpoche argued that a Satyagraha movement must, nevertheless, follow values such as freedom, justice, equality, and human dignity, verified by others through experience and logic as eternal values of truth. There were overtones of Gandhi when he said that a Satyagrahi was not afraid of trusting an opponent and had the reputation of being a law-abiding person. He cited Buddhist scriptures, the Hindu Puranas, Socrates, Jesus, and Thoreau as offering examples and lessons of Satyagraha. Although he urged Tibetans to love the Chinese people and their leaders while condemning Chinese atrocities against Tibetans, he said that he did not think that Satyagraha could be a mass movement but would have to be
carried out by a dedicated group of activists. In his final appeal, he showed his distaste for the modern idea of politics by reminding supporters that they should not consider *Satyagraha* as a political movement to gain benefits or a campaign to hurt the Chinese. They should believe that they were “engaged in a spiritually motivated mission to restore freedom to Tibet for the highest purpose in human life: the well-being of all sentient beings.”

The advocates of nonviolence who emphasize its strategic usefulness in a just cause claim to be aware of the reality of evil in the world. Notions like loving one’s enemy or hating an evil system but not the person who practices evil are problematic for a mass movement in its struggle against injustice, except in a situation of personal spiritual development. It bears repeating that Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* was both a personal and political struggle. As a consequence, it drew its inspiration from a view of truth that gave primacy to the social perspective and vision. As Gandhi understood them, social and political ideals arising from a sense of community were no less valid than religious ideals in the journey towards truth. Indeed, notions of truth and love can derive from a secular foundation of community. There exists also the difficult question of what weight one should give to the argument about the reality of evil and how those who suffer injustice can be reconciled to those who practice injustice. Gandhi did not minimize the difficulty. Indian experience of British imperialism was harsh and oppressive throughout Gandhi’s long struggle. After the massacre at Amritsar in 1919, Gandhi no longer believed that British political ideals of freedom and justice would be granted to Indians and concluded that British imperialism was evil. But he distinguished between the system of imperialism and British people for whom he had the highest respect. In
campaigning against imperialism, he refused to demonize the British as a people and civilization. He integrated into his understanding of Satyagraha the notion that the British rulers or, earlier, the South African government under Jan Smuts, could be persuaded to see the injustice of the evil system of imperialism and racism, and rectify it. Similarly, he considered the system of untouchability as evil and utilized the full force of Satyagraha to abolish it. At no time did Gandhi consider these objectives simple. The narrative of his campaigns reveals enormous difficulties, countless defeats, and deep suffering. There were many periods when he had doubts about the efficacy of his movement. What enabled him to sustain for so long the courage to persist in the nonviolent struggle against injustice? Gandhi’s spirituality cannot be questioned but his voluminous writings allow us to understand that his inspiration and moral strength came no less from his actual experience with all the people he met and, in particular, his awareness of the humanity of downtrodden communities which suffered injustice.

**DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

The successful campaigns of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. offer rich insights into Satyagraha. Reflecting on his own “pilgrimage to nonviolence,” Dr. King commented that he began to examine Gandhi’s thought and nonviolent movement when he entered Crozer Seminary in 1946 after hearing a sermon in Philadelphia on Gandhi’s life and teachings by Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard university. He felt that Gandhi was the first to use love as enunciated by Jesus beyond the interaction between individuals as a force to bring about the social transformation of the masses, and admitted
that Gandhi’s emphasis on love and nonviolence provided the key to the discovery of the method of social reform that he was seeking. The study of Gandhi had helped him to overcome the influence of the teaching of the influential theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, who argued that the reality and power of individual and collective evil could make nonviolent resistance irresponsible.

On completion of his formal training in 1954, Dr. King took up a position as a young pastor in Montgomery, Alabama, and the following year played a leading role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. His main contribution was “to infuse the movement with a Christian ethos of nonviolence and explicitly Gandhian precepts of nonviolent action.” As he reflected on the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott campaign, Dr. King drew lessons which are worth recalling for the light they shed on the universal application of the method of nonviolence. Echoing Gandhi that nonviolence was not cowardice, he stated that it was not the weapon of the weak nor was it passive. It was “the active spiritual resistance to evil.” Although nonviolent non-cooperation was the central theme of the Montgomery Boycott, its purpose, he said, was not to “defeat or humiliate” but to “win the friendship and understanding” of the opposition. Dr. King declared that the outcome of nonviolence was the “creation of a beloved community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.” He said that his struggle was against the forces of evil, not persons who practiced evil, making clear that his campaign was not against white people. He wanted victory for all people, not only African Americans. On the significance of suffering in nonviolent struggle, he quoted Gandhi that “suffering is infinitely more powerful than the law of the jungle for converting the opponent and opening his ears which are otherwise shut to the voice of reason.” Dr. King counseled his
followers not only not to injure their opponents but also not to hate them. He then expanded his notion of love as it applied to his nonviolent movement. Using the Greek word for love, Agape, he defined it as love in action which sought to preserve and create community, “[Agape] is a willingness to sacrifice in the interest of mutuality. Agape is a willingness to go to any length to restore community.” In his final lesson to nonviolent resisters, he asked them to consider his conviction that there was a creative force in the universe, called by some “an unconscious process, an impersonal Brahman, or a Personal Being” that operated to bring justice, and that they should have faith in the future.

Perhaps the most popular portrait of Gandhi was the painting by the outstanding Indian artist, Nandalal Bose, which became the inspiration for many sculptured statues of Gandhi throughout the world. In portraying him as an old man, dressed in his humble dhoti, stick in hand, striding forward defiantly on his march to Dandi, Nandalal Bose captured the quintessential spirit of Gandhi. Satyagraha was active resistance, not passive resistance. Gandhi’s sympathy for the poor and the discriminated was central to the conception and practice of Satyagraha.

We must not forget that Gandhi was a successful lawyer in South Africa. Dressed elegantly in European garb and living in comfortable conditions suited to his profession, Gandhi gave up his material comforts as he gradually came to understand the racial injustice meted out to the poorest Indians, indentured Indian laborers. One cannot ignore the racial incidents he suffered as causes of his activism. Thrown from the train at Maritzburg for traveling first-class, kicked off the pavement reserved for whites only, and a near lynching attempt at the hands of South African whites must have made him more resolved than ever to fight against racism. However, a close reading of his autobiography
shows that it was the courage, idealism, and humanity of the indentured laborers that had inspired him. Years after he left South Africa he kept singing the praises of the courage of the young indentured woman, Valiamna, and the old man, Harbatsingh, who joined the Great March of 1913, suffered imprisonment, and died. The themes of the uplift and advancement of the poor, the untouchables, women, and working people were repeated constantly in his many campaigns. His sympathy for the lowly social classes was not an abstract notion. He interacted with them easily and he enjoyed their company. The warmth and genuineness with which he described his experience at Kingsley Hall in the working class section of London during the second Round Table Conference is a good illustration of how deeply Gandhi recognized and appreciated the humanity of the more needy. Recalling Gandhi’s visit with him in France, the writer Romain Rolland remarked that Gandhi seemed to enjoy more a visit with a French working woman than the meeting with some French intellectuals that Rolland had organized. Yet, when he asked Rolland to play Beethoven, and, later in Italy, when he described his awe and excitement at visiting the Vatican art gallery, Gandhi reminded us that he was also a man of culture and learning.

Nelson Mandela remarked that Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* was first a struggle against oppressive colonialism and racism and acknowledged that it inspired anti-colonial struggles in Africa. This was no small praise from one of the outstanding leaders of the 20th century who was also well known for his successful struggle against racism and imperialism.

Viewed from the perspective of Gandhi’s campaigns, British imperialism in India was built on force, not consent. From the rebellion of 1857 to the granting of
independence in 1947, political stability was preserved by policies that were a mix of repression against nationalists and concessions to the small group of Indian elites who supported British rule to defend their social and economic interests. The massacre at Amritsar in 1919 was not an isolated instance of aberrant imperial behavior. Every Satyagraha campaign brought the heavy hand of state repression as the British tried to crush the spirit of Indians. The Congress committee report on the massacre at Amritsar, composed for the most part by Gandhi, provides powerful evidence of the horrors of imperial rule. In this tense political climate, Gandhi’s method of nonviolent resistance was unique and remarkable in that he was able to make a distinction between the cruelty of the system of imperialism and the essential humanity of the British. Satyagraha rejected demonizing the British and offered the possibility of reconciliation between the British and Indians as the solution. Arguably, it was Gandhi’s presence in the Indian anti-colonial struggle that softened the image of British rule, making it appear different in character from, say, French imperialism in Algeria.

Gandhi observed that repression was not the only consequence of an imperial system that exploited Indian resources for the benefit of Great Britain. Millions of Indians were thrown into poverty by the British industrial transformation of India. Gandhi’s movement was directed, therefore, not only at resisting imperial oppression but, at the same time, towards laying the foundation of reconstructing an alternative Indian community by stressing the necessity of work to overcome poverty. To heal the psychological wounds of poverty and a sense of inferiority, he gave Indians pride in many of their traditions and history and their “indigenous intellect, spirit, and industry.”19
Satyagraha gave Indians everywhere the courage to reject the British imperial claim that they were bringing progress and civilization to a backward society.

Gandhi was quick to see that imperialism was not the cause of all the ills that beset India. The campaign to eradicate untouchability became one of the foundation stones of Satyagraha. Gandhi said that he questioned the discrimination against untouchables as a boy and he made the inclusion of untouchables central to his vision of a free India. In the 1930s the issue was placed at the center of the nationalist movement. Although initially supporting the ideal of caste as a hereditary division of occupation based on equality, he later came to see that inequality characterized its practice. The creation of an alternative Indian nation to replace the British imperial state meant that practices and attitudes like discrimination against untouchables and lower castes had to be abolished. The struggle to change these traditions was as difficult as that against imperialism. In these domestic issues, too, he preferred to attack the system and not the Orthodox Hindus who practiced the discrimination. Declaring that untouchability was not sanctioned in the Hindu Shastras, he advised against attacking the Orthodox and proposed reform movements to persuade and educate all Indians that all people were equal, and that there should be no prohibition or discrimination against untouchables entering temples, sharing village wells, and entering schools. Character, Gandhi asserted, was the only determining factor of the quality of a person, not birth or ritual forms. Gandhi was not the only leading voice in the struggle against untouchability. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was considered by many as the chief spokesman for untouchables and was often at odds with Gandhi over programs to eradicate untouchability. Yet, both men
were instrumental in bringing the issue of untouchability to the center of India’s national politics.

Gandhi’s ideal of a new Indian collectivity was rooted in the notion of respect and tolerance for the diversity of its peoples and cultures. The universal doctrine of the brotherhood of man became his guiding principle not only in the struggle for equality for untouchables, but for the inclusion of Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Christians, and Jews. Hindu-Muslim unity was another central objective of the Satyagraha campaign. Although he did not ignore conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in India’s history, he was firm in his conviction that both communities were vital to India’s future. Unable to accept the idea of a separate polity for Indian Muslims and Hindus, he kept insisting that the cause of Muslim separatism was the policy of “divide and rule” encouraged by imperial Britain. He said that his ideal was not only the brotherhood of Hindus but the brotherhood of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees, and Jews, and asserted that if the scriptures of the different faiths were read from the perspective of the followers of each religion, they would see that all faiths were really one, and there were “no distinctions of superiority and inferiority among the children of one and the same God.”22 The partition of India and the genocide following the riots between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs sullied the dream of religious unity, but not entirely. The impressive success of his Satyagraha fasts and activity to put an end to the riots in the midst of the fury of communal madness is a powerful statement of the force of Satyagraha to stop violence and to begin the process of healing hearts wounded by hatred and extreme violence. For Gandhi, Satyagraha was the means to make the notion of the brotherhood of man practical and living. In addition, in arguing against the missionary practice of seeking to convert others
to their faith, and proposing, instead, the project of encouraging every religion to be committed to equality and love, he had in mind a version of equality that was based on accepting and respecting differences among peoples. As he was accustomed to say, he was seeking a community that was based on a unity of heart, not uniformity.

This ideal of a community as a unity of heart where respect for diversity, openness, and a willingness to listen, tolerate, and criticize different opinions shaped Gandhi’s commitment to democracy. This democratic spirit shone brightly in his debate on the 1920 non-cooperation campaign with his friend, Rabindranath Tagore. Nor was Gandhi afraid of embarrassment when Tagore criticized him for saying that the catastrophic Bihar earthquake in 1934 was punishment by God for the practice of untouchability. Following his visit to India in 1959, a visit that he said made him more aware of the value of Gandhi and his movement, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. confessed that he was moved most of all by the awareness that it was Gandhi himself who acknowledged and revealed his own weaknesses, failures, and defects. For Gandhi, the democratic virtues of criticism and self-criticism were important practices not only in the personal search for truth but also in social and political movements.

On the question of governments, Gandhi preferred a decentralized state where citizens would be active and responsible citizens of their own small communities. His fear of the expansion of the power of the state in the lives of people remains resonant. He had the Soviet Union in mind when he said that defensible social ideals of equality could be corrupted by powerful states. Rejecting the notion of class struggle, armed struggle, and coercion to bring an end to injustice, Gandhi asserted that only nonviolent socialism would bring justice, insisting that “we may persuade, but not compel.” Cautioning that
social reform could not be rushed, he advised that nonviolent transformation could come only by education of the “haves” and “have-nots.” He lamented that the nation’s wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy families and asserted that economic equality was the “master key” to nonviolent independence and that the juxtaposition of a few palaces and miserable hovels would inevitably lead to bloody revolutions. He confessed that such a sight of extreme inequality caused him great pain and he understood that both the British as well as wealthy Indians were exploiting the poor who “produce the food and go hungry.” A society based on nonviolence, he declared, must be based on the ideal of just distribution, not the concentration of capital in a few hands. Claiming that he had tried to live like the “poorest of the poor,” he was quick to add that he was aware that he made use “of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich.”

But how could the chasm between rich and poor be bridged? In proposing his idea of trusteeship, he remained true to his belief that social and political conflicts could be resolved by nonviolent persuasion and affirmed his hope that the rich could be converted to the notion that they held their wealth as trustees for the less fortunate in the society. Gandhi was arguing, of course, from the premise of nonviolence or *Ahimsa,* and asserted that it was his life’s mission to show that nonviolence was a social “weapon” and that economics must be tied to ethics: “True economics…stands for social justice; it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for a decent life.” Gandhi was hopeful that what seemed Utopian and merely a dream could be achieved in time. Truth-force, he said, was “an effort to abandon the violence that is inevitable in life.”
GLOSSARY

Ahimsa: Nonviolence or refusal to inflict injury; one of the principal virtues of Buddhism, Jain, and varieties of Hinduism.

Allah O Akbar: “God is Great.” An invocation of Islam.

Artha: Material wealth or power. In Hinduism, Artha, Kama (pleasure) are permitted if they are moderated by Dharma (moral duty) and Moksha (spiritual liberation).

Ashram: Spiritual community. Gandhi established his ashrams in Sabarmati, Ahmedabad and in Sevagram, Maharashtra.

Avidya: Ignorance

Bande Mataram: “Hail to the Mother.” The poet Tagore composed a song Bande Mataram from the Bengali novelist, Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-94). The song became the rallying cry of Bengali nationalists.

Bania: Subcaste of the Vaishya social order. The traditional social order of India was divided into four Varnas or groups: Brahmins, who possessed authority of priests and teachers; Kshatriyas, who held temporal power; Vaishyas, who were merchants; and Sudras, who did menial work and served others. Gandhi belonged to the Bania subcaste.

BhagavadGita: A sacred text of Hinduism which influenced Gandhi. It is sometimes shortened to Gita.

Bhajan: A devotional song.

Bhakti: The pursuit of the Divine by devotion and love, particularly popular among the Hindu masses.

Brahmin: Belonging to the priestly caste.

Brahmacharya: Vow of celibacy. This vow was taken by Gandhi in 1906 as he dedicated himself to devotion to God and service of the people.

Charkha: Spinning wheel. It was used by Gandhi to promote the use of local materials for making clothes or Khadi.

Communalism: Political conflict between religious communities.

Darshan: A blessing that comes from the sight of holiness.

Dharma: Duty, Hindu code of morality.

Dhoti: loincloth.

Ganapati: Festival in honor of Lord Ganesha.

Goondas: Street criminals who terrorized Hindus and Muslims during partition.

Granth Sahib: The Sacred Book of Sikhs.

Gurkhas: Soldiers from Nepal who served in the British army.

Harijan: “Child of God,” the name given by Gandhi to members of the untouchable community. In 1933 he established a journal by that name.

Hartal: A strike by labor and the closing of shops as part of the Satyagraha campaign.

Hijrat: voluntary exile; mass migration.


Hindutva: The ideology that claims that India is a Hindu nation.

Hindu Rashtra: Hindu rule.

Kama: Pleasure. See Artha.

Karma: The doctrine of the moral law. Every act has a natural consequence
in future character. The law of *Karma* holds that man is the master of his fate by creating in the present what will produce the desired effect.

*Karmayoga:* Yoga or discipline of action. Gandhi used the concept as the doctrine of political and social action based on selfless action.

*Khadi or Khaddar:* Homespun cotton cloth used by Gandhi as the symbol of the nationalist movement and identification with the masses.

*Khilafat:* The movement by Muslims and Hindus to support the Caliphate after the defeat of Turkey in the first World War.

*Mahatma:* Great Soul, the title given to Gandhi by poet and friend Rabindranath Tagore.

*Madrassah:* An Islamic school.

*Moksha:* Spiritual liberation.

*Panchayat:* Village council; advocated by Gandhi as the basic democratic institution of an independent India.

*Parsees:* Members of the Zoroastrian religion in India descended from Persian refugees who fled from persecution in the seventh and eight centuries.

*Purdah:* Veil; institution of seclusion of women.

*Quran:* The Sacred Scripture of Islam.

*Raj:* Government.

*Ram Raj:* “The Rule of Lord Ram.” It was used by Gandhi to denote the ideal society of harmony and justice for all religious communities.

*Sarvodaya:* “Welfare of all.” It was one of the major objectives of Gandhi’s movement.

*Satya:* Truth.

*Satyagraha:* Truth-force; also called soul-force.

*Sudra:* The *Varna* of laborers. See *Bania*.

*Swadeshi:* “One’s country.” It embraces the principle of supporting the use of goods and materials in India rather than foreign products; it also led to the boycott of foreign goods.

*Swaraj:* Freedom. Gandhi’s freedom movement included both political independence from Great Britain as well as personal freedom and social liberation from inequality. Satyagraha was the means to achieve this freedom.

*Tapasya:* Self-sacrifice. This traditional Indian virtue helps to explain how Indians accepted and respected Gandhi’s fasts, especially during the riots in Calcutta.

*Upanishads:* Philosophical writings of ancient India regarded as the source of Indian metaphysical philosophy.

*Vaishya:* The *Varna* of commercial activity. See *Bania*.

*Varna:* Social order. There were four *Varnas*; each had its social function. *Varna* is sometimes translated as “caste.”

*Vedas:* The ancient sacred scriptures of Hindus.

*Zamindar:* Landholder.
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Gandhi, Pan-Islamism, Imperialism, and Nationalism in India.


Footnotes

Chapter 1


7 See Nelson Mandela’s illuminating essay on Gandhi in *Time* magazine, December 1999, commemorating outstanding individuals of the 20th century.


11 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p. 4. *Chaturmas* was a vow of fasting or semi-fasting for the four months of the rainy season.

12 Ibid., pp. 7-12.

13 Ibid., pp. 12-16.

14 Ibid., pp. 17-21.


18 Ibid., pp. 65.

19 Ibid., p. 68.

Chapter 2


3 Ibid., p. 313

4 Ibid., p.324


7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 400.

9 Ibid., p.401.

10 Ibid.,p.410.

11 Ibid.


Ibid., p.328.

Ibid., pp.327-328.


*CWMG*, 13, pp. 385-390.


The Factory Act passed in Delhi stipulated that no child under 9 years could work in a factory. Those between 9 and 12 could work half a day. Those over 12 were considered adults. See Erikson, *op.cit.*, p.302.

Born in 1889 in Bombay, Shankerlal was involved in the unrest over the partition of Bengal in 1905. An admirer of Tilak, he was a member of the organization, The Depressed Classes Mission, which was devoted to the “uplift” of the backward classes and untouchables. He was a supporter of Mrs. Annie Besant’s...
Home Rule League. When she was arrested in 1917, he went to meet Gandhi and asked him to speak at a protest meeting asking for Mrs. Besant’s release. When Gandhiji appeared lukewarm, he recalled how she had humiliated Gandhiji at Benares Hindu University and asked him to forgive her. Gandhi replied that he was not thinking about that but rather that a better way was to start a Satyagrah campaign for her release. This was the beginning of Shankerlal’s commitment to Gandhi.

Gandhiji’s indispensable and trusted friend died in August 1943, a prisoner with Gandhi in the Aga Khan’s palace. He was cremated on the grounds and mourned as a son. Months later, Kasturbai died in the Aga Khan’s palace and she too was cremated on the same grounds.

Chapter 4


2 See Van Dungen, *op.cit.* pp. 43-63.


5 Colonel R.J. Baker treated them as a regular military unit. Gandhiji started a *Satyagraha* against him and was permitted to resign thereby allowing him to return to India.


8 *CWMG*, 15, pp. 101-103.


11 *CWMG*, 15, pp. 183-188.

12 *CWMG*, 15, pp. 188-189.


16 *CWMG*, 15, pp. 188-189, 202, 203.


18 Dyer was third generation Anglo-Indian. Born in India in 1865, Dyer was educated in India and Ireland. He enrolled in the Royal College of Surgeons but could not stand the dissection of bodies. He switched to Sandhurst. He made a name for himself in 1916 when he led a company of 150 men into the Baluchistan-Persian border region to suppress the tribesmen who were colluding with the Germans to invade India from Afghanistan. It is said that he inherited from his parents the British arrogance towards Indians. See Anthony Read and David Fisher, *op.cit.*, pp. 169-170.


Charles Andrews had returned to Shantiniketan in late May after speaking to Gandhi, British officials, and other friends in Delhi. The enormity of the repression forced Tagore to act. He traveled to Calcutta and tried to organize a public meeting to register their protest but to no avail. His letter to the Viceroy, written on May 31, was published in the Indian press on June 2. See Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, eds., Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore, p. 223.

Alfred Draper, op.cit., pp. 112-114.

Ibid., p. 118.

Ibid., p. 125.

Ibid., p. 135.

Tendulkar, op.cit., p. 264.


The Committee with Lord Hunter as President included Mr. Justice G.C. Rankin, judge of the Calcutta High Court, Mr. F.W. Rice, Additional Secretary to the Government of India, Home Office, Mr. Thomas Smith, member of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces, Major-General Sir George Barrow, Commander of the Peshawar Division, Pandit Jagat Narayan, member of the Legislative Council in U.P., Sir Chinmanlal Harila Setalvad, Advocate of the High Court of Bombay, and Sardar Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Khan, Member of Appeals in Gwalior. Draper, op.cit., p.167.

The members of the Congress Sub-Committee were Pandit Madan Malaviya, Gandhiji, C.R. Das. M. R. Jayakar, K. Santanam, and Abbas Tayabji, retired judge of the Supreme Court of Baroda.

For the Congress Report, see CWMG, 17, pp. 114-292. The authorship of the Congress Report has been credited to Gandhi with assistance from M.R. Jayarkar. C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, and Abbas S. Tayabji could not continue work on the committee in early 1920 and so the responsibility for conducting the inquiry and drafting the report fell to Gandhi.

Ibid., p.128.

Ibid., p. 137.

The Punjabis were not allowed to land by the Canadian government. They returned by the s.s. Komagata Maru and were imprisoned on their landing in Calcutta and then taken to the Punjab and interned. They revolted and influenced some in the Punjab.

Ibid., pp.141-144.

Prahlad was a devotee of God who was punished by his unbelieving father.

Mirabai was the medieval saint-poetess of Rajasthan and Queen of Mewar.

Ibid., p.153.

Kukris were dagger-like weapons.


Ibid., p.178.

Ibid., p. 182.

Ibid., p. 191.

Ibid., p. 241.

Ibid., p.257.


Chapter 5


3 The father of the Ali brothers died when Muhammad, the youngest of six children, was 2 years. They were brought up by their remarkable mother, Abadi Banu Begam, affectionately called Bi Amman, and relatives. Bi Amman pawned her jewels to give Muhammad and Shaukat a Western education. Shaukat received a B.A. from Aligarh College. Muhammad went to England to sit for the Civil Service exam. He
received a B.A. from Oxford University. Both Shaukat and Muhammad were excellent orators. See Gail Minault, *op. cit.*, pp.16-17.

Abul Kalam Azad was born in Mecca in 1888, the son of Shaikh Muhammad Khaireddin Dehlavi and his Arab wife. Shaikh Muhammad was a Sufi who had migrated to the Hijaz. On his return to India, he settled in Calcutta in the mid-1890s. Abul Kalam was educated by his father. *Ibid.*, pp.38-39.


When Annie Besant was released, the Muslim League, demanded the release of the Ali brothers and elected Muhammad Ali as President. In his absence, a photograph of him was placed on the empty presidential chair and his mother, Bi Amman, gave a speech in his absence behind the veil of her burqa. *ibid.*, p. 58.

He returned the Kaiser-I-Hind medal for humanitarian work, the Boer War medal, and the Zulu War medal.

Chapter 6


2 Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p.147.

3 *CWMG*, 26, pp. 269-272.


7 Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 249.

8 *CWMG*, 37, p. 147.

9 Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 315-316.


12 *CWMG*, 42, pp. 341-344.
Chapter 7


7 *Harijan*, 1, pp. 1, 15.

8 *CWMG*, vol. 57, pp. 326-327, 351.


Chapter 8


3 In 1906 Gandhi had taken the vow of Brahmacharya or sexual abstinence believing that, according to Hindu spiritual tradition, that was the way to inner purity and spirituality. In his mind his strength to practice nonviolence was linked to Brahmacharya. See *CWMG*, vol. 79; Nirmal Bose, *My Days with Gandhi*, Bombay: Longmans, pp. 163-177; Yogesh Chadha, *op. cit.*, pp.337-339.

4 *CWMG*, 75, pp. 163-166.

5 In his thoughtful essay on Gandhi for Time Magazine’s section on People of the Century, December 31, 1999, Nelson Mandela wrote: “He [Gandhi] exposes the fallacy of the claim that everyone can be rich and successful provided they work hard. He points to the millions who work themselves to the bone and still remain hungry. He preaches the gospel of leveling down, of emulating the kisan (peasant), not the zamindar (landlord), for “all can be kisans, but only a few zamindars …Gandhi remains today the only complete critique of advanced industrial society. Others have criticized its totalitarianism but not its productive apparatus. He is not against science and technology, but he places priority on the right to work and opposes mechanization to the extent that it usurps this right…Above all, he seeks to liberate the individual from his alienation to the machine and restore morality to the productive process.”

6 Lord Linlithgow was the son of the first Governor General of Australia and a former deputy chairman of the Conservative Party. He had the reputation of being cold and ill at ease with Indians. See Anthony Read and David Fisher, *The Proudest Day*, NY: W.W. Norton, 1998, p. 261.


8 Prof. Oaten had declared in class that as the ancient Greeks had Hellenised the Barbarians, so the British had to bring civilization to Indians. When he grabbed one of the students by the neck, the students called a strike to protest the professor’s behavior.

Chapter 9


13 Arun and Sunanda Gandhi, *op. cit.*, p. 266.


17 A Fabian socialist and graduate of Eton, Lord Pethick-Lawrence had first visited India in 1926-27 where he became a close friend of Gandhi and other Congress leaders. He was respected by Indian nationalists as one sympathetic to their cause. Sir Stafford Cripps was an old friend of Nehru. A.V. Alexander was an expert in military affairs and was sent to look after the defense aspects of Indian independence. *Read and Fisher, op. cit.*, pp. 360-373.


22 Quoted in *Read and Fisher, op. cit.*, p. 393.

23 V.P. Menon was born in Malabar of a Jain family in 1889. Lord Wavell and Mountbatten found him knowledgeable and respected his opinions. See *Read and Fisher, op. cit.*, p. 444.

24 Penderel Moon saw a great parallel with the 1857 rebellion: “The parties to the conflict at that time were different, Hindus and Muslims being ranged on one side, and Christians of all kinds – European, Eurasian, and Indian - on the other; but the passions aroused were much the same and caused the adherents of all three religions alike to sink to the crudest savagery. The mutineers set the standard by shooting their British officers and then murdering their wives and children. This roused in the British such a burning spirit of revenge that British troops, when they got the opportunity, slaughtered “niggers” indiscriminately without regard to guilt or innocence, age or sex…” Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961, p. 267.

Chapter 10


Born in 1879, Sarojini Naidu was educated in Hyderabad and Madras. A precocious student, she began writing poetry at the age of 14. The following year, she met Dr. Goivindrajulu Naidu, who had recently completed his medical studies and they fell in love. Her parents thought that she was too young to be married, and sent her to England where she was admitted to King’s College, London and Girton College, Cambridge University. Edmund Gosse and Arthur Symons encouraged her to continuing writing poetry. When she returned to India in 1898, she married Dr. Naidu with her parents’ blessing. Her first major book of poetry, The Golden Threshold, was published in 1905; The Bird of Time was published in 1912; in 1917, her final major collection of poems, The Broken Wing, was published. She had four children and was always devoted to her family. For the remainder of her life she was at the center of politics of India as a nationalist and activist for the Women’s movement of India. Mrs. Naidu died in 1949. See V.S. Naravane, "Sarojini Naidu: Her Life, Work, and Poetry," London: Longmans, 1980, reprinted in 1996, pp. 13-27.

Margaret Cousins and her husband, James, came to India in 1915 and fell in love with it. They joined the Theosophical Society headed by Annie Besant and together they organized the women’s movement. For a discussion on Gandhi and women, see Madhu Kishwar, “Gandhi on Women,” Economic and Political Weekly, vol. XX, no. 40, 1985, pp. 1691-1702; vol. XX, no. 41, 1985, 1753-1758.


See B.R. Nanda, Gandhi and Religion, New Delhi, 1990


See the long excerpt from Godse’s 93 page manuscript of his defense in his trial for the assassination of Gandhi in Yogesh Chadha, Gandhi: A Life, pp. 497-501.

Chapter 11


4 Ibid., p. 181.
5 Ibid., p. 236.
6 Ibid., p. 403.
7 See Abdul Ghaffar Khan, My Life and Struggle, p. 195.
9 He said that he could not hide his feelings about Pakistan because its treatment of Pakhtoons was more cruel and unjust than the British. See Abdul Ghaffar Khan, My Life and Struggle, p. 208.
10 See D.G. Tendulkar, op. cit., p. 524, 527.
14 CWMG, 8, p. 174.
21 See Eleanor Leacock, “Gandhi and Ambedkar – A Study in Leadership,” in Michael Mahan, The Untouchable in Contemporary India, Tucson, Arizona, University of Arizona Press, 1972, pp. 69-93. Dr. Ambedkar was a London-trained barrister from West India and belonged to the Mahar caste of untouchables.
24 Harijan, March 31, 1946.
4 Ibid., p. 181.
5 Ibid., p. 236.
6 Ibid., p. 403.
7 See Abdul Ghaffar Khan, My Life and Struggle, p. 195.
9 He said that he could not hide his feelings about Pakistan because its treatment of Pakhtoons was more cruel and unjust than the British. See Abdul Ghaffar Khan, My Life and Struggle, p. 208.

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See D.G. Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, p. 524, 527.


14 CWMG, 8, p. 174.


18 See *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, vol. 3, Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1992, p. 16. Dr. King expanded his knowledge of Gandhi’s method from Bayard Rustin and Glenn Smiley when they came to Montgomery in 1956.


24 *Harijan*, March 31, 1946.