

The Gandhi Everyone Loves to Hate

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Gandhi has legions of admirers, but he has also been the target of severe, even virulent, criticism from numerous perspectives. Though Gandhi still commands veneration from many, he is also someone everyone loves to hate. Some critics fault him for particular positions, such as his support of the Khilafat movement, his inexplicable views on the Bihar earthquake, his deployment of Hindu imagery or idioms of speech such as 'Ram Rajya', and so on. Other critics, arguing from specific ideological positions, are inclined to find systemic shortcomings in Gandhi's views.

This paper, focusing in the latter half to a greater extent on modernist and especially feminist readings of Gandhi, suggests that the feminist reading is fraught with more ambivalence than is commonly recognised, and in somewhat unexpected ways. It is argued that though Gandhi may not have been his own best critic, his critics have also not done him the justice of attempting to understand how he negotiated the various critical worldviews that he encountered.

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Uniquely among the major public figures of the modern world, Mohandas Gandhi attracted an extraordinarily wide and diverse following and, perhaps oddly for someone who is customarily thought of in terms of veneration, an equally if not more diverse array of often relentlessly hostile critics.¹ The first part of this story is better known than the latter part of the narrative around which this paper is framed,² though much remains to be understood about the manner in which Gandhi, notwithstanding his rather strident views on modernity, industrial civilisation, materialism, sexual relations, indeed on everything that is ordinarily encompassed under the rubric of social and political life, drew to himself people from very different walks of life.

Among his most intimate disciples, who, it is no exaggeration to say, surrendered their life to the Mahatma, one thinks of the daughter of an English admiral, raised on the music of Beethoven in the lap of luxury and immense privilege; a Tamilian Christian, trained as an accountant and economist, who was among the first Indians to earn a degree in business administration; a Gujarati villager, son of a schoolteacher, who was embraced by Gandhi when they first met in 1917 as something like a long-lost son; and an Anglican clergyman, arriving in India from Britain on what was destined to become a one-way ticket, who came to the realisation that Gandhi was a better Christian than many who call themselves Christians.³

Indeed, the phenomenon – registered as a fact but never quite unravelled – of Gandhi's followers, has been of extraordinarily great interest to his detractors, such as Vidya Naipaul, who are certain that the alleged mediocrity of the master's disciples suggests that the source itself radiated much less light than is commonly imagined. To be sure, one does not have to search far and wide to find ready explanations for Gandhi's ability to draw people to one or more of his causes and passions. There is the supposed fact of Gandhi's "charisma",⁴ which public commentators and political scientists seize upon much as Indologists seized upon caste or the village community when they sought to explain the social structures of Indian life. By the 1920s and 1930s, that is in Gandhi's own lifetime, it had also become something of an article of faith to pronounce that Gandhi's message was resonating with tens of millions around the world who were weary of materialism and violence. This was before most of the atrocities of a violence-filled century, from the Holocaust down to Bosnia and Rwanda, had been perpetrated. Since there is, apparently, no end to our weariness, Gandhi's "charisma" should continue to be drawing people into the ambit of his worldview. If one wished to be more inventive, one could adopt the view of one venerable Indian writer who, regretful that even a once manly race such as the British had succumbed to the myth of the Mahatma, attributed

Gandhi's success in luring countless number of innocents to the fact that humankind is contemptibly fickle and unable to sustain the rigorous demands of a reasoned worldview.⁵

Interesting as is the subject of leaders and followers, I shall leave aside those ruminations and turn instead to Gandhi's critics. The most obvious reason for doing so, I wish to suggest, is that Gandhi appears to be a more, not less, compelling figure in the face of criticism. The media was much less pervasive in Gandhi's lifetime than it is in ours, but it is not often appreciated that every aspect of Gandhi's life was scrutinised in excruciating detail ever since he became burdened with Mahatmahood.

An Open Book

Since Gandhi himself never much abided by the distinction between the private and the public, he also opened himself up to criticism. It is doubtful, for example, that anyone would have known anything of that very small heap of indiscretions which he describes in his autobiography and later writings – the theft of a few gold coins from the family home; the visit to a brothel from where he emerged, predictably, with his virginity intact; the wretched encounter, which commenced and ended in his mind via the belly, with a dead goat; the lust that drove him to Kasturba's bed while his father lay dying; and the immense disappointment he experienced in his 60s when he was painfully brought to the awareness that he had not yet mastered the sexual instinct – had Gandhi not himself rendered his life, in his words, into an open book.

If Mahatmahood can only be tested in slums and the spaces carved out by modern politics, then no extenuating circumstances can be pleaded in an endeavour to create a hermetic space for the notion of a saintly life without blemishes. Writing on March 5, 1925 to the prominent Muslim clergyman Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, who had objected to Gandhi's description of punishment by stoning as something that could not be defended on the mere ground of its purported sanction in the Koran, Gandhi unhesitatingly declared that "even the teachings themselves of the Koran cannot be exempt from criticism. Every true scripture only gains by criticism. After all we have no other guide but our reason to tell us what may be regarded as revealed and what may not be" (*Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (cwmG) 30:336).⁶ If Gandhi was prepared to accept that even scripture gains from criticism, there is every warrant for supposing that he would have taken a similar view of criticism directed at his own life.

We can entertain, as well, a more political reading of the idiom of criticism. One of the most endearing images of Gandhi is of someone who nursed the wounded, nurtured the young, and furnished solace to those who appear to have been defeated by life. The particular conception of rights (and corresponding duties) to which he held in the early stretches of his political life led him to raise an ambulance corps during the Boer War and subsequently the Zulu Rebellion.⁷ He was always present to provide, in the sentimental-laden jargon of the day, "the healing touch" on the various occasions when the streets in one town or another were rocked by communal conflict. "We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him", said Nehru over All-India Radio, hours after Gandhi's life had been extinguished, and yet the light that

had illumined the country would continue to "give solace to innumerable hearts".⁸ His grand-niece has furnished what is perhaps the most touching portrait of Gandhi's tenderness when, in a book called *Bapu, My Mother*, she described how the old man attended to her daily needs and never for a moment let her think about how she had been orphaned. But if we are thus inclined to think of how Gandhi rendered comfort to the afflicted, attentiveness to Gandhian hermeneutics requires that we should pay heed to his political and moral ambition to afflict the comfortable. In saying this, I do not, of course, intend to reduce him to a gadfly or mere irritant, or suggest that he is most productively viewed as a slayer of dragons and mocker of all pretensions.

My contention is that Gandhi furnishes no solace or anchor to those who are accustomed or inclined to view the world in Manichaean categories, and that one of the many reasons why Gandhi creates a profound uneasiness among the many constituencies which had to deal with him – Brahmins and Sudras, Sanatanists and Dalits, Indians and the English, Hindus and Muslims, liberals and Marxists, feminists and patriarchs, communalists and secularists, modernisers and traditionalists, developmentalists and ecologists, even militarists and pacifists – is that he came to embrace the idea of an open-ended conversation even as he stood unequivocally for certain moral, political, and epistemological positions. Many people concur that Gandhi gifted, not as a mere abstraction but as a political practice, the idea of ahimsa (non-violence) to the modern world; others have spoken of Gandhi's gift of the fight.⁹ No more profound gift did Gandhi bestow than the gift of being able to live with ambiguity. It may well be this sensibility that Gandhi inherited from the myth-laden world of the epics and the puranas.

To enter into Gandhi's world is to come to the awareness that paradoxes leap from every page of his life. If one were to place Gandhi within the framework of analytical philosophy, one might perhaps productively distinguish between several kinds of paradoxes, for example those generated by his own moral and political practices, those imposed upon him by the act of interpretation, and those arising from the disjunction between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Let me dwell upon some of these without discrimination. One cannot think of any biographical note ever penned on Gandhi, for example of the kind routinely encountered in encyclopaedias, that does not somewhere describe him as an Indian nationalist. Supposing that he were, as he is often and not unjustly, described as the chief architect of the Indian independence movement, it is striking that alone among Indian nationalists he had almost nothing invested in the ideology of the nation state. The politics of the nation state is inextricably bound to a zero-sum game, and the vocabulary of "winners" and "losers", which has an absolute stranglehold on modern politics, is one that Gandhi entirely disowned. The 1920s and 1930s, notwithstanding the rifts and dissensions within the Congress party, were the days of the Gandhi Congress. Yet he was not even a due-paying member of the Congress. With the arrival of independence, the Congress was finally in the position of being able to taste the fruits of power. However, in his so-called last will and testament, written a mere few days before his death, Gandhi advocated the dismemberment of the Congress party as a political organisation

– a view not calculated to earn him the goodwill of politicians who, as Gandhi had predicted 40 years earlier in *Hind Swaraj*, were desirous of having English rule without the English.

As many others before me have observed, Nathuram Godse engaged in what may be called a permissive assassination.¹⁰ The aftermath of Gandhi's death was equally drenched in irony. Many people knew Gandhi as a Hindu, a point underscored by his political antagonist, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who at Gandhi's death sent a carefully crafted condolence message to the Indian government expressing his sorrow at the death of "Mr Gandhi", "one of the greatest men", as Jinnah put it, "produced by the Hindu community". The supreme irony of that message is better relished if one recalls that Gandhi's assassin was a Hindu ideologue who strenuously objected to Gandhi's alleged betrayal of the Hindus. But Jinnah was certain that "there can be no controversy in the face of death".¹¹

It is, of course, quite possible to argue that Gandhi's lofty conception of a moral politics was not incompatible with his understanding that power is sometimes never more effectively wielded than when one appears to have disowned it. Much has been written on this subject apropos the Indian past and Hindu prototypes of the Brahmin and the Kshatriya, albeit from a largely Indological standpoint. In India, it is alleged, the renouncer is rather sui generis, exercising a mesmerising hold over his or her flock: he, rather than the warrior, exemplifies the true model of masculine power in the temporal realm. Churchill's (in)famous invocation of Gandhi as a half-naked fakir of a type frequently encountered in Oriental nations, purporting to parley on equal terms with the representative of the king-emperor, which is almost always read as an expression of the sheer contempt that an arrogant Englishman had for an effeminate specimen of a subject race, calls to mind this particular conception of political power that cannot quite be embraced under the various categories through which power generally operates.

Churchill saw in Gandhi's exercise of power a particularly Oriental variety of chicanery; nor could he countenance the thought that a modern democracy does not necessarily have the last word on the legitimate exercise of power. Yet even this much may be more of a concession to Gandhi's critics than is warranted, since Gandhi was both close to, and distant from, power. The revolutionary's dream of capturing power did not interest him; and yet, despite being deeply wedded to democratic sentiments, he wielded control over errant members of the Congress party as well as his own personal entourage like a stern autocrat. We should perhaps multiply the layers of the anomalies that Gandhi's life presents to us, thus viewing him with considerable justification as a warrior who forsook arms, and as an advocate of ahimsa who was desirous of forging the satyagrahis under him into a highly disciplined force that would have been the envy of a general.

It is in the domain of religion, nonetheless, that the paradoxes in Gandhi's life appear in the starkest terms. He described himself as a devotee of Ram, and venerated the *Ramacaritmanas* of Tulsidas, but he unequivocally rejected passages in Tulsidas that he found offensive or degrading to women and the lower castes. Though he viewed himself as much of a Hindu as anyone else, Gandhi seldom visited temples and, it is safe to say, he did not

generally view temple worship as intrinsic to Hinduism: if anything, considering the care with which he tended to the body, he would have agreed with the 11th century Virasaiva saint Basavanna: "My legs are pillars,/the body the shrine, the head a cupola of gold".¹² One can doubtless find passages in his voluminous writings which are contrary to what I am suggesting – and let me underscore "voluminous" here, not merely because his collected writings run to 98 large volumes, but because the whole is comprised largely of pieces that are characterised by their pithiness and brevity. "Some form of common worship, and a common place of worship", Gandhi wrote in the early 1920s, "appear to be a human necessity" (CWMG 28: 432). Much stronger is this passage, from an article he wrote in the early 1930s: "Just as human beings cannot think of the atman without the body, similarly they cannot think of religion without temples. The Hindu religion cannot survive without temples" (CWMG 54: 128). However, in the same article, he wrote in a rather matter-of-fact tone: "I feel no need to go to temples; hence I do not visit them" (CWMG 54: 127).

Lest anyone should think that Gandhi merely viewed visits to temples as necessary for the masses, while quite unnecessary for people of elevated spirituality such as himself, it is necessary to add that he commenced the same article with the observation that "I do not consider it a mark of greatness that I do not visit temples". It is in this context that his sharp differences with the Dalit leader, B R Ambedkar, over the question of temple-entry take on a rather different hue than one customarily finds in the literature, where the conflict is largely presented as one over the politics of representation and as an attempt by a bourgeois Hindu leader to prevent Dalits from embracing more radical positions.

While deploring the immense disabilities under which Dalits laboured, and mindful of the fact that they were prohibited from entering many Hindu temples, Ambedkar nonetheless viewed the entire question of temple-entry as peripheral to their lives. Any gains made by the Dalits were purely symbolic, and even then transitory: as Ambedkar was to write in a trenchant critique in 1945, "after a short spurt of activity in the direction of removing untouchability by throwing open temples and wells the Hindu mind returned to its original state."¹³ On his part, for someone who never experienced any need to go to a temple, Gandhi emerged as a remarkably strong advocate of the right of others to worship at temples. His antagonists within the Dalit community have continued to view Gandhi as the great imposter, as someone who falsely claimed to speak on their behalf and in their language, though it is hard to resist the view that his position on temple-entry betokened his ability to embrace the religious view on the ground.

Object of Hate?

Having, I think, furnished a lengthy preamble to this paper, let me advert to its title and commence with the proposition that Gandhi was someone who everyone loved to hate. There is, needless to say, no singular Gandhi that everyone loved to hate, and the advocates of many critical worldviews on Gandhi have all authored their own Gandhi. This is far from being as unreasonable as it sounds, for if environmentalists, pacifists, conscientious objectors, non-violent activists, nudists, naturopaths,

vegetarians, prohibitionists, social reformers, internationalists, moralists, trade union leaders, political dissidents, hunger strikers, anarchists, luddites, celibates, anti-globalisation activists, pluralists, ecumenists, walkers, and many others have at one time or another claimed Gandhi as their patron saint, or at least drawn inspiration from him, then one is also free to choose the Gandhi that one dislikes. It may even come as a surprise to many, who know of Gandhi only as a prophet of non-violence, a beacon light to a beleaguered humanity, and an instigator of change through peaceful means, three among other sentiments which have ceaselessly circulated about him, to discover that Gandhi provoked, and continues to provoke, considerable resentment, and often sharper reactions, among a wide swathe of his and our contemporaries.

The fear that Gandhi's reputation for saintliness would eclipse public memory of his shortcomings and failures has been a tremendous motor driving Gandhi's critics, and equally Gandhi's own proclivity towards detail, attentiveness to which he considered as important as immersion into large political questions, has been effectively turned against him. As the two volumes of Nirad Chaudhuri's autobiography amply demonstrate, his virulent criticism of Gandhi, fully enabled by the author's mastery over the satirical mode, pivots around such things as the hard and unforgiving countenances on the faces of Gandhi's assistants, his costly and quirky attachment to his goats, and the allegedly picnic-like atmosphere that surrounded Gandhi's funeral. All of these enriching details lead Chaudhuri to ask, "Will the hand of truth at any time reduce the vile myth of Gandhi to the putrid mass it deserves to be?"¹⁴ In a simpler vein, and in an idiom more characteristic of the United States, where even supposed star academics write books with titles such as *Telling the Truth about History*, the critic Richard Grenier, something of a lesser Thomas Friedman (if one could imagine such a thing) in his own time, furiously set about trying to demolish the hagiographic portrait of Gandhi that emerged from Attenborough's film with a book entitled, *The Gandhi Nobody Knows*.¹⁵

Gandhi's critics, one might say, divide into two groups. The usual tack among the greater majority of them has been to focus on particular positions that he adopted, or on certain phenomena and issues on which he is alleged to have held views that are construed as inadequate if not outrageous. By way of illustration, the briefest mention of Gandhi's pronouncements on the Bihar earthquake of 1934, his support of the Khilafat movement, and his oft-expressed longing, especially in the twilight of his life, for "Ram Rajya" will suffice.

On Bihar Earthquake

When an earthquake devastated northern Bihar in 1934, Gandhi publicly described it as a form of God's chastisement of Hindus for their oppression of Harijans.¹⁶ It is not only his friend Tagore, gravely puzzled why Bihar had to bear the brunt of God's displeasure,¹⁷ who was scandalised by Gandhi's open invitation to the people to be superstitious enough to believe that a law of compensation prevails at all times.¹⁸ Down to the present day, Gandhi's views on the earthquake are adduced as evidence of his disdain for modern science and his readiness to harness blind faith.

The objections to his resort to religious idioms of expression have been equally strenuous, if different in some respects, and partake of the view that Gandhi erred grievously in dragging religion into the political domain. Gandhi embraced the demand, which first originated with the All India Khilafat Conference, to preserve the Turkish ruler in his position as the Muslim world's Khalifa (or Caliph) as his own as the British set about dismembering the Ottoman empire following the conclusion of the first world war. Even those not wholly indisposed towards Gandhi, such as the writer Mukul Kesavan, have denounced Gandhi's "bad faith" and "opportunism" in acting as an overly enthusiastic proponent of a lost and reactionary cause. Kesavan argues, as many before him have done so, that Gandhi plunged into the Khilafat movement because he "saw it as a quick, cheap way of getting the Muslims on board" and because it permitted him a way to capture the Congress party at a critical stage in the nationalist movement.¹⁹ Gandhi, on this narrative, proved incapable of controlling the passions he had stirred, and he was never wholly able to abandon the temptation to appeal to the religious sensibilities of people whom he knew to be easily excitable. He might have claimed that Ram Rajya was only an expression of a utopian dream about India whose citizens would be self-governing according to the highest principles of moral and political life, but did not his frequent invocations of Ram Rajya signify his anxiety that he should be seen as being beloved of the masses?

To each of these criticisms, a rejoinder is certainly possible. However indefensible appear to be Gandhi's pronouncements on the Bihar earthquake, any criticism which posits a stark opposition of faith and reason, superstition and science, seems hardly any more satisfactory. A geologist might offer a compelling account of how tectonic plates move and under what circumstances they crash into each other, but the craving we have for meaning, for reading acts of nature in the light of human experience and the language of poetry, is not so easily exhausted. In a spirited response that Gandhi offered to Tagore in the pages of *Harijan*, he appears to have worked in the Indian philosophical mode of 'purvapaksha', anticipating the objections to his own argument. "Visitations like droughts, floods, earthquakes and the like", wrote Gandhi, "though they seem to have only physical origins, are, for me, somehow connected with man's morals. Therefore, I instinctively felt that the earthquake was a visitation for the sin of untouchability". Crucially, with an awareness of how his own argument might be turned against him, he adds: "Of course, Sannatanists [that is, adherents of an orthodox conception of Hinduism] have a perfect right to say that it was due to my crime of preaching against untouchability".²⁰ Moreover, though the doctrine of karma rests on the notion of individual responsibility, Indian social theory had never offered any account of collective responsibility. Gandhi's reading of the Bihar earthquake can be seen as an unprecedented effort in that direction.

Similarly, it may be that our conception of the gift is so impoverished, if the gift is always impossible and every political transaction has to be construed as some form of exchange that we cannot but think of Gandhi's politics as also bereft of altruism. It is not at all clear to me that, in supporting the Khilafat movement, Gandhi sought in exchange a promise among Muslims to support

“cow protection”. I do not say that Gandhi did not hope, through his championing of the Khilafat movement, to bring Muslims into the mainstream of national political life, but that is quite different than the conception of him as an opportunist waiting to extract his pound of flesh.

There are many other criticisms of Gandhi along these lines, always riveted on certain events, particular shortcomings, or political and cultural practices with which he was associated. Much critical scrutiny, for example, has been directed lately on the tumultuous relations that he, the Father to a nation but apparently much less so to his own family, had with his own sons, his unabashed description of himself as a believer in both ‘sanatan dharma’ and ‘varnashrama’, and his sexual puritanism. But a second group of critics, whose views are most recently recapitulated and interpreted in a collection called *Indian Critiques of Gandhi*,²¹ have been less fixated on particular issues and have been animated rather by specific world views. Gandhi’s thoughts on trusteeship, to take one example, were viewed as repellent by his Marxist critics, but these same critics were just as likely to note that Gandhi never lacked bourgeois patrons, that while critical of materialism he lacked a critique of the world system of capitalism, that his repugnance for violence made him averse to class warfare, and that Gandhi, enamoured of some ideal conception of the Indian village, was shockingly insensitive to the travails of urban India.

In the remainder of this paper, then, I shall turn to a very brief consideration of some of the critical perspectives brought to bear upon Gandhi by those who describe themselves as feminists, Marxists, secularists, and developmentalists, or as proponents of some other encompassing world view.

Feminist Reading

Let me turn first to the feminist reading of Gandhi, a reading fraught with considerable ambivalence and shared in part by others who, even if they may not be feminists, consider Gandhi’s views on women as unspeakably retrograde. The publisher and writer S Anand has recently written of Gandhi’s Ram Rajya as a charter for the oppression of women. Anand commences with Rama: “At the drop of a bow, Rama is suspicious of Sita’s honour. He repeatedly tries what we today call ‘honour killing’”, and proceeds to argue that women who are today accused of infidelity and branded as witches or beaten up mercilessly experience an oppression similar to what Sita had to undergo at the hands of Rama, rather mysteriously held up as the paragon of mankind. Such was Ram Rajya, “a reign of social terror” for “women, Shudras and untouchables”. Anand then moves seamlessly to Gandhi: “This is also Gandhi’s Ram, for Gandhi’s attitude towards women was no different”.²² He adduces as evidence an incident from Gandhi’s Tolstoy Farm days, where the harassment of two young girls by a boy then led Gandhi to the conclusion that if the young women were shorn of their fine long hair, it would “give them a sense of security and at the same time sterilise the sinner’s eyes”. Anand concludes provocatively, “Dump Gandhi’s ‘Tolstoy Farm’; give me Osho’s commune any day”.

Not everyone who has written on Gandhi and his relation to women has been similarly unhindered by subtlety of thought or

interpretation; indeed, feminist readers of Gandhi have generally displayed ambivalence, which can be charted in various registers, rather than outright hostility. Some commentators have argued that Gandhi did not merely have difficult relations with his wife, a common enough occurrence in marriages, but also that his relationship with Kasturba was laced with violence and consequently puts a significant damper on his claim that in all his thoughts and actions he only allowed himself to be governed by the principles of satya and ahimsa. Thus Erik Erikson, in his study of “Gandhi’s Truth”, points to the disjunction between the non-violent struggle that Gandhi waged against the British and the psychological violence to which Kasturba and the inmates of Sabarmati Ashram were subjected.²³ Following Erikson’s cue that Gandhi may have sacrificed people to truth, Carol Gilligan, in her acclaimed work *In a Different Voice*, likens Gandhi to the “biblical Abraham”. Against the patriarchs Gandhi and Abraham, both of whom were prepared to sacrifice their sons in the name of some higher truth, Gilligan posits the woman who appeared before Solomon and “verifies her motherhood by relinquishing truth in order to save the life of the child”.²⁴ Nor is it a small matter, so goes the argument, that whatever the ease with which he conducted himself around women, Gandhi may have found it difficult to achieve intimacy with his wife, and that in the last three decades of his life Gandhi may have been closer emotionally to women other than Kasturba.

Many feminists, Indians more so than those in the west, are appreciative of his efforts in bringing women into the struggle for freedom, and they have understood that Gandhi’s recourse to non-violent struggle facilitated their participation in it.²⁵ Their investment in the political life also furnished them with freedom from the stranglehold of marriage, as the autobiographies of many middle class women testify. But if one of feminism’s greatest struggles has been to resist the ascription of qualities and virtues as purely (or even largely) feminine or masculine, then clearly Gandhi’s thinking appears to pose insurmountable problems. Gandhi did not doubt, and he is amply on record in this respect, that women, partly as mothers of the human race and nurturers, were *naturally* more inclined towards non-violence; in a much stronger version of this argument, he wrote that they scarcely required any training in non-violent resistance, as nature had equipped them with all the necessary advantages.

Women could be leaders of a non-violent struggle, Gandhi averred, and variations of this argument, and appeals to men to learn from women, appear everywhere in his writings. But the indubitable fact remains that in handpicking several dozen companions to accompany him to Dandi in defiance of the salt law, Gandhi failed to include a single woman in that august group. The omission was far from being accidental, and is rooted both in Gandhi’s distinction between non-violence of the weak and non-violence of the strong and in a certain notion of what, for lack of a better word, we might call chivalry. The inclusion of women in his group, Gandhi was to state, would have been calculated to deter the British from retaliating; but any advantage so gained was no test of adherence to ahimsa, since the non-violent resister must withstand, even invite, the gravest provocations. To the extent that women are non-violent from instinct, habit, or custom, they

exemplify non-violence of the weak – much as does a nation that, like India, had been forcibly disarmed. Only those who have the capacity to resist, but desist from pursuing that course of action, can claim the mantle of non-violence.

Feminists have also been profoundly troubled, even enraged, by Gandhi's insistence that men and women were to occupy different if "complementary" spheres in life. He thought it unlikely that a woman would want to be the bread winner of the family, and was quite certain that, as he stated in his answer to a query he had received in 1935 about a woman's role in maintaining the family, "the duty of a woman is to look after what in English is called the hearth and home".²⁶ It cannot be said that most other men, whether among elites or the working class, whether in England, India, or elsewhere, would at that time have thought any differently from Gandhi, but it is imperative that Gandhi not be sheltered behind the argument that he was, at least in this respect, very much a creature of his times. If we should accept that Gandhi was well ahead of his times in most matters, from his prescient outlook about perniciousness of ecological devastation to his understanding that violence breeds more vicious cycles of violence, why should we settle for the claim that Gandhi ought to be judged by his times when his views on women are in question?

The various anthologies of Gandhi's writings on women – and anthologies of Gandhi's writings, I might add parenthetically, are something of a cottage industry – are full of his homilies on what ought to be their position in society. But here, as in so many other critical domains, my submission is that Gandhi is much more elusive than is suggested by the critiques directed at him. Let me return to the passage previously cited, where the duty of a woman to home and hearth is delineated. Gandhi continues, "Man has never performed this task. He has been content to build forts and ramparts for protection. Will he come forward to protect the home? And even if he does so, what sort of protection will he offer?" As man looks outward to society, woman looks inward to her family.

But just as there is no reason to suppose that satyagraha directed at the nation state is more difficult or ennobling than satyagraha at the level of the family and the community, so there is no compelling reason at all why we should be seduced into thinking that the builders of forts engage in more constructive or significant work. Indeed, men are so impoverished and trapped by their social conditioning that the militarist metaphors come to occupy an inescapable place in their family lives. "Even in a home", the passage continues, "he will build fortresses and walls. He will make holes within these to fire bullets from and put glass and nails on walls. In the end, the children of the house will meet their death by climbing upon these" (CWMG 67: 125).

One would be quite justified in thinking that Gandhi, whose intimate familiarity with prisons did not extend to the high-security prisons of the modern type, and whose acquaintance with cities did not extend to the gated enclaves of exclusive communities in Delhi, Los Angeles, Washington, New York, or Johannesburg, had nonetheless been able to provide an accurate cartography of the security-stricken modern city. However uneasy many are likely to feel at his strict demarcation of the respective duties of men

and women, it is clear that he took a starkly dim view of men filled with their own self-importance. Men who turn their own homes into forts that trap their children have scarcely anything to teach women. If in Gandhi's estimation the work of a bhangi added at least as much to a society's worth as the work of doctors, lawyers, or pandits, the work of women at home was likewise worth not any less than the work of men. Nor did Gandhi, crucially, adopt the position that different duties had some relation to differential rights: thus, in the same piece, he avers that while their duties may be different, "their rights are the same. If a woman sets out in shirt and trousers with a gun in her hand, a man has no right to stop her. In such matters men and women enjoy equal rights." A woman's duty did not demand of her that she take up the political life, but she had every right to do so. Consequently, Gandhi had no difficulty in reconciling the representation of women as guardians of the home and hearth with the political reality, to which women such as Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Sucheta Kripalani, Usha Mehta and Aruna Asaf Ali gave vibrant expression that they may be at the helm of political movements.

Gandhi had, then, a deep aversion to double standards so rampant in every culture, and one can extend this argument to sexual relations, another domain where his views are infused with notoriety. While scornful of Gandhi's puritanism, and his (as Jawaharlal Nehru and many others after him have put it) unnatural repugnance towards the sexual life, feminists may nonetheless perhaps take heed of the fact that, in insisting that men were to forswear sexual relations as much as women, Gandhi did not at least endorse varying standards of sexual conduct for men and women. Nothing in Gandhi's writings or actions even remotely lends itself to the view that he insisted on sexual probity among women but turned his face the other way when it came to the sexual conduct of men.

At least one prominent Indian feminist has argued that Gandhi's pronouncements, even if they do not bring cheer to most women, may be read in a very different light when viewed against the backdrop of the vibrant possibilities that Gandhi's conduct created for women.

Gandhi, unlike people who usually enter politics, was typically much more radical in conduct than in his speech – indeed more radical than even most reformers who claim to treat women on an equal basis.²⁷ Like many feminists and activists, Madhu Kishwar and Ketu Katrak, among others, are also prepared to concede that Gandhi feminised the nationalist struggle.²⁸ While I am persuaded by these arguments, none of them bring us sufficiently close to a very different layer of readings, which I have addressed at length in my writings and will therefore not take up at any length at this juncture,²⁹ that would alert us to Gandhi's own femininity. To take one instance, the women who partook of the sexual experiments that Gandhi conducted late in his life, joining him in bed naked, were unquestionably inclined to view him as womanlike. The supposition that behind the Mahatma there was an old man with dirty thoughts, or that his experiment, considering his exceptional position in Indian life and the, contrariwise, highly impressionable age of young women living in awe of him, constituted naked sexual exploitation is one that his critics have eagerly entertained, even if the women who shared his bed with

him or others who were intimately familiar with his life and thoughts never adopted anything remotely close to that view.

Whatever one's scepticism about Gandhi's varied relationships with women, or his views about the sexual division of labour, it is important to recognise that there are significant feminist thinkers who have been attracted by Gandhi's femininity. Phyllis Mack, following the work of the anthropologist Victor Turner, has argued that Gandhi, much like the Quakers and Franciscans, derived his very model of radical action from "feminine behaviour", from what Turner termed anti-structure: so feminine humility and chastity were to be used in the interest of a spiritualised politics, and "the tasks of daily life", which almost invariably fall upon women, were to be elevated, as indeed they were, "to a holy discipline". Mack rightfully concludes that the example of Gandhi shows that "'feminine' domestic habits of thought and activity may be transposed into the public sphere and transformed into highly effective forms of activism by both women and men".³⁰ The work of other feminist thinkers, though they may not have drawn explicitly on Gandhi, extends Mack's insights further and suggests why a "rehabilitation" of Gandhi in feminist thinking may yet take place. Gandhi's life was wedded to an ethic of care: however flawed his political judgments, and however unattractive some of the ideas by which he stood, it is transparently clear that Gandhi retained an extraordinary ability to nurse the wounded, minister to the sick, nurture the young, and bring into the orbit of everyday life those, such as victims of leprosy, who had been shunned by society.³¹ As some feminist writers have argued, moral issues are to be approached not only through the language of justice, which conceives of the individual as the bearer of rights, but also through the ethic of care, which posits the primacy of a social self and the interdependence of human beings.

Marxists' Critique

Having, I think, sufficiently hinted at some of the principal contours of the feminist engagement with Gandhi, let me turn, in the concluding part of this paper, to a succinct consideration of some of the difficulties that Marxists, developmentalists and modernisers have had with Gandhi. Their criticisms are legion – and, it is necessary to add, utterly predictable. They run the gamut from observations on Gandhi's own lifestyle, the cult-like following that he supposedly attracted, his disempowering and impractical attachment to non-violence, and his failure to recognise class as the pre-eminent category of social, economic and political relations, to his unstinting opposition to industrial civilisation, his inability to carry a mass movement to a successful conclusion, his inadequate comprehension of economic institutions, his defence of obscurantist or oppressive social practices and institutions, and – most of all, as his assassin outlined in his own defence at his trial – the utter disjunction and bulging gap between Gandhi's world view and the nature of modern politics. Though well-intentioned people continue to this day to be animated by the subject of Gandhi's relevance, Nathuram Godse had already declared Gandhi to be a complete irrelevance. Had Godse permitted Gandhi to die a natural death, one suspects that he would have been more effective in fulfilling his ambition of consigning Gandhi to near oblivion. But that is another story. In justifying

his assassination of Gandhi, Godse sought to explain that "Indian politics in the absence of Gandhiji would surely be practical, able to retaliate, and would be powerful with armed forces...[The] nation would be free to follow the course founded on reason which I consider to be necessary for sound nation-building."³²

At the lower end of the left-Marxist spectrum are arguments that converge on the personality of Gandhi. It has been argued that Gandhi was too friendly with the captains of industry and allowed himself to be patronised by rich industrialists who subsidised his ashrams and pet projects. This sentiment is most famously, if inadvertently, captured in the quip attributed to one of his greatest admirers and followers, Sarojini Naidu, "It costs a lot of money to keep Gandhiji in poverty."³³ Saumyendranath Tagore mocked the idea of the "happy family" that was said to emerge from Gandhi's readiness to engage capitalists in conversation, and did not doubt that the bourgeois leaders of Indian industry were thrilled at the ease with which they could exploit "the prophet of the bourgeoisie", and, more importantly, the workers who were susceptible to Gandhi's charm. "Whenever there is unrest among the workers", wrote Saumyendranath in the 1920s, "the millowners of Ahmedabad are in the habit of requisitioning Mahatma Gandhi to use his influence to settle the disputes. With the consent and support of Gandhiji, some of his followers had taken upon themselves the task of organising the workers into unions. The poor workers, unconscious of their class interests, have readily fallen prey to this clever move".³⁴

Nearly every argument in this vein eventually moves towards the expression of the sentiment that Gandhi became the chief agent of false consciousness. In the colourful words of Saumyendranath's more famous compatriot, M N Roy, Gandhi fed a hungry people "spiritual moonshine". As he elaborates, the "cult of non-violence", running rampant through Indian nationalism, "is the clever stratagem of the upper class to head off a revolutionary convulsion, without which nationalism will never come into its own..."³⁵ Thanks to Gandhi, we, the pitiful people of India, never had a Lenin or Mao to lead us to a glorious revolution – nor, I might add, to the resplendent deaths of millions, all in the name of development and modernisation. If only we had had a revolution of the French or Bolshevik type, we might at least have been a fulfilled people; but that dream and aspiration need not be altogether relinquished, as there is still time to emulate Mao's successors. This enlightened view, to which three generations of Marxist historians and commentators have given their generous assent, passes for criticism among Gandhi's detractors. Never mind the millions slaughtered in Stalin's kulaks, or in Mao's 'Great Leap Forward': the god of development must perforce be appeased.

There is, of course, much more to be said about why Marxists and the fond advocates of modern civilisation have been so dismissive of Gandhi, but much of that would be an elaboration of the cues that I have already offered. Some critiques of Gandhi will not go away, and in closing let me summon two points I have only made in passing. It has been an article of faith for those who view Gandhi as having had a deleterious effect on civil society to argue that, in failing to keep religion and politics apart, and in frequently resorting to Hindu idioms in his public speeches,

Gandhi forever contaminated, communalised, and fragmented the public sphere. The Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Mayawati, doubtless a paragon of the idea of unity, recently charged Gandhi with dividing society along caste lines.³⁶ Another critic harps on Gandhi's Hinduness with these words: "Whereas Gandhi statues always depict him with the Gita, Ambedkar statues always have him holding the Constitution, a modern text that espouses equality. Ram Rajya is a dystopian relic. Bahujan Samaj should be our utopian ethic."³⁷ Gandhi died on January 30, 1948, and the Constitution of India did not then exist: so much for the fidelity to facts among the scientific-minded modernisers of our times! Had statues of Gandhi shown him with the Constitution, we can be certain that his detractors would have complained bitterly of the abuse of history and the Hindu's tendency to trade in myths. However, it is also true that having over the course of the last two decades witnessed the remarkably swift ascendancy of the Hindu right, and come to the realisation that Gandhi's Hinduism may be best calculated to steer the faith's more militant advocates away from the fulfilment of their political ambitions, at least a few Marxist and secularist critics are suddenly discovering in Gandhi a figure of ecumenism, sanity, and religious harmony. Since the proponents of a highly masculinised Hinduism have openly derided Gandhi as, in their own language, an eunuch who preferred castrated Muslims to wholesome Hindus,³⁸ his critics infer that Gandhi's soft Hinduism is about as close as one can get to no Hinduism at all in a man who clearly held himself to be a Hindu.

Modernisers' Critique

A similarly complete disavowal of Gandhi has become difficult to sustain on the part of those who are unrepentantly committed to modernisation and industrial civilisation. Once wholly contemptuous of Gandhi's critique of industrial society, and prone to rubbish him as a relic of a bygone period of human evolution, some modernisers are now viewing Gandhi as someone who was unusually sensitive to what E P Thompson characterised as the "moral economy of the peasant". Now that the dam of development has broken, figuratively and otherwise, Gandhi is being brought back through such ideas as "sustainable development", "development with a human face", and "alternative technologies". The time may not be very far when even Gandhi's idea of "trusteeship", which all but the obdurate and true-blooded Gandhians have completely obscured, is resuscitated – not, I might add, as some kind of formula for keeping the peace between the owners and tillers of land, or between capitalists and workers, but as a way of enhancing our ecological awareness that we are morally obligated to act as the trustees of the multiple inheritances bequeathed to us by previous generations. I wonder if Gandhi's oft-stated desire to reduce his life to zero, or his full-bodied embrace of near nakedness, also did not arise in part from his desire to himself act as a trustee of nature: "The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed". Though it has become a commonplace among those who style themselves as public commentators and even scholars of Gandhi to diminish him with the observation that he was more a man of action than a thinker, one doubts that very many of them would

have been capable of the nuanced notion of trusteeship that Gandhi brought into the dialectic by keeping dissenting strands of western thought for which the west itself then had little appetite in safe custody for use by future generations of Europeans more receptive to divergent histories of their past. Even as India's colonisers were documenting, recording, interpreting, and most significantly inventing an Indian past, Mohandas Gandhi was acting as an archivist and trustee of European intellectual traditions that Europe had all but trashed.

And so to the coda. It is neither necessary nor desirable to aver that Gandhi was his own best critic as it would endow him with a self-sufficiency that he would have disowned. But it is nonetheless palpably true that his conception of the truth remained hermeneutic, dialectical and dialogical. This is just as much as the case with his vegetarianism and his advocacy of prohibition as it is with the political choices that he exercised. His vegetarianism, for example, has been inspirational for many, and it is his reverence for all living beings that has made him important to Indian environmentalists and the members of the German Green party alike. However, unlike many vegans in postindustrial nations, Gandhi readily served meat to his meat-eating guests, even to those who knew him as an extraordinarily devout vegetarian. The critics often rest their case on a static Gandhi, but it is very likely that, had he been alive today, he would, keeping in mind the immense toll that obesity has taken of modern lives and the levels of saturation achieved by the popular media, have been more opposed to Coca Cola, sugared drinks, super-sized meals, and the culture of fast food than to alcohol.³⁹ "The philosophy of Coca Cola", Ashis Nandy has written, "is the archetypal social philosophy of our times"; Coca Cola "is the ultimate symbol of the market", "a way of thinking rather than a thought".⁴⁰ In opposing Coca Cola, Gandhi would not merely have been making a futile gesture against the market; he would have signalling his alarm at the totalising nature of modern knowledge systems.

Many Possibilities

Gandhi's life opens up many possibilities that we should be prepared to entertain and to which the Gandhians, whose own readings of Gandhi have rendered him into a museum piece even while they shout themselves hoarse over his "increasing relevance", should perhaps be more attentive. Had Gandhi allowed the British to frame his choices for him, he would not merely have been consigned to deploying those modes of "resistance", whether that be constituted as the recourse to arms or the adoption of parliamentary and polite procedures of redress, which the British considered to be legitimate expressions of dissent; rather, his entire moral and cognitive framework would have been captive to a colonial epistemology which had firm notions about the "self", the "other", and social relations in an unequal world. The gift of the Gandhian mode of play is that in it there are no winners and losers, not even, let me hasten to add, what are today described by management gurus, cheerleaders, policymakers, and "people-friendly" consultants as "win-win situations". The task of the next generation of scholars and thinkers will surely be to devise an epistemological critique more commensurate with the world view that Gandhi came to inhabit.

NOTES

- 1 B R Nanda has attempted to capture both constituencies in his work: 'The Master and the Disciples', *Gandhi Marg* 15, 2, July-September 1993, pp 154-73, and *Gandhi and His Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985.
 - 2 I would like to allude, if only briefly, to the two sets of disjunctions which in part, and only in part, led to this paper. In the staunchly middle class circles of west Delhi in which I grew up and from which my family drew the greater bulk of its acquaintances, the respect for Gandhi was commingled with deep suspicion, foreboding, and even hatred of the "Father of the Nation". Many of the people who lived through the Partition held Gandhi responsible for their own misfortunes, and among the family elders and some of our guests the sentiment that Gandhi had often blundered in politics ran deep. Owing to my sustained interest in Gandhi over nearly three decades, his name came up in conversations often, and there was frequent mention of his appeasement of Muslims and his inability to understand the modern world. If he was nonetheless referred to as Gandhiji, it was not only out of habit, but also from the recognition that Gandhi had been a patriot, if a misguided one, and from an acknowledgment that the state-sanctioned version of Gandhi could not be entirely rubbished. As young teenagers, my friends and I wondered why a national holiday had been set aside in the memory of a rather backward-looking old man who wandered about scantily dressed, but the received textbook versions spoke of him in such unambiguously hagiographic language that the instinct to laugh at the old man was somewhat contained. In recent years, it appears to me, the reaction against him has hardened, and one cousin who is a doctor casually referred to Gandhi as a scoundrel (*Gandhi to kamina tha*). I suspect that the disjunction between the authorised version of Gandhi and that encountered in middle class homes is one which is familiar to many.
- As a graduate student in the United States in the 1980s, I became aware of another kind of disjunction. In those heady days of post-colonial theory and cultural studies, when anti-racism, anti-imperialism, and nationalism spawned immense number of studies and it was argued that finally "the empire was writing back", there was barely a mention of Gandhi among internationally known thinkers except in the writings of a few Indian scholars, notably Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, and Shahid Amin. None of the post-colonial critics or cultural studies advocates had any use for Gandhi, not even Henry Louis Gates, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, or, most significantly, Edward Said. In the voluminous writings of Said, Gandhi appears as a rare footnote; on the other hand, a cultish attachment to Fanon is everywhere evident. One would have thought that Bhabha, over whom the shadow of Lacan looms large, might have sensed something of an affinity between psychoanalysis and satyagraha, or that the post-colonial critics with their stated intention of defying master narratives and signifying their solidarity with the downtrodden might have found Gandhi an intellectually and ethically engaging figure. The silence which surrounded Gandhi at a time when colonialism was the principal subject of a supposedly dissenting body of work might itself be construed as a critique of Gandhi, one that did not even do him the service of taking him seriously.
- At the conclusion of my talk at Emory in 2005, Gyanendra Pandey made two interesting arguments to suggest why Gandhi has drawn, so to speak, a near blank among major figures in the academies in the US and the United Kingdom, though I remain unconvinced by either argument. Pandey suggested that the insularity of the Indian intellectual tradition, while not recognised by Indians, is deeply experienced among scholars

of India in the US, Japan, and elsewhere. For insularity of intellectual traditions, I would think that one could turn more profitably to the US itself, where most debates appear to be conducted without any reference to anyone except god-blessed Americans. As someone with a fair share of experience of the American academy, stretching back to my first undergraduate days at a US university in 1978, I find it all but implausible that the US academy should be viewed as an example of intellectual ecumenism or cosmopolitanism. Moreover, in the case of Gandhi, his alleged indigenism or nativism, his repudiation of the modernist aesthetic, the unsexiness of non-violence, the moralist tone of much of his work, among other phenomena, appear to me to furnish better grounds for understanding why he has been marginalised by the progressive or radical elements of the academy.

Secondly, Pandey argued that Africa and the Atlantic world, far more so than India, have registered an intellectual and political presence in American life. There is no gainsaying this fact, and the story stretches from the early presence of the slave trade through the Civil War to the traditions of jazz, blues, rap, and hip-hop. Indian studies, in comparison to studies of the Atlantic world or African-American Studies, occupy a minuscule if rapidly growing place in the American academy. However, by an irony of history, in no community did Gandhi have a more magisterial role than among African-Americans. Everyone is aware of Martin Luther King's full-throated embrace of Gandhian ideas of non-violent resistance, but many other important if not supreme figures of African-American history, such as Bayard Rustin, James Farmer, A Philip Randolph and James A Lawson, had a deep engagement with Gandhi's ideas. Sudarshan Kapur's study, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1992, amply documents Gandhi's presence in the African American political imagination, as does John D'Emilio's superb biography, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, The Free Press, New York, 2003.

This paper also provides, I believe, some cues that might help us to understand the relatively marginal note Gandhi has played even in supposedly progressive, liberal, radical, or dissenting elements of the academy in the US, Britain, and elsewhere where recent theoretical trajectories have informed much of the work on nationalism, colonialism, racism, and the like. Gandhi has a considerable presence in peace studies or conflict resolution programmes, though a "theorist" of non-violent resistance such as Gene Sharp takes precedence in most such programmes; moreover, the institutionalisation of Gandhi has robbed his thinking of its most radical and potentially emancipatory elements. See also Vinay Lal, 'Gandhi, the Civilisational Crucible, and the Future of Dissent', *Futures* 31 (1999), pp 205-19, and idem, 'Gandhi and the Social Scientists: Some Thoughts on the Categories of Dissent and Possible Futures' in Arif Dirlik (ed), *Pedagogies of the Global: Knowledge in the Human Interest*, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder and London, 2006, pp 275-97.

- 3 The literature on Gandhi's followers is reasonably voluminous, if extremely uneven and on the whole not especially insightful. The profiles in Jayant Pandya, *Gandhiji and his Disciples*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1994, are useful; much more complex, if still handicapped by a notion of "influence", is Thomas Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004. Mark Lindley, *J C Kumarappa: Mahatma Gandhi's Economist*, Popular Prakashan, New Delhi, 2007, introduces new material into the discussion.
- 4 Susanne Hoebner Rudolph and Lloyd I Rudolph, *Gandhi: The Traditional Roots of Charisma*, Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1983, originally published as Part 2 of *The Modernity of Tradition: Political*

- Development in India*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967.
- 5 Nirad Chaudhuri, *Autobiography of an Unknown India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1973 [1951].
 - 6 M K Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Publications Division, New Delhi, 1961, hereafter cited in the body of the paper as CWMG. The 100-volume set is now available online at www.gandhiserve.org in PDF format.
 - 7 Vinay Lal, *Gandhi, Citizenship, and the Idea of a Good Civil Society*, Mohan Singh Mehta Memorial Lecture 2008, Seva Mandir, Udaipur, 2008.
 - 8 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Nehru on Gandhi*, John Day, New York, 1948, pp 127-28.
 - 9 Jehangir P Patel and Marjorie Sykes, *Gandhi: His Gift of the Fight*, Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia, Madhya Pradesh, 1987.
 - 10 This argument was advanced by Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi*, Dutton, New York, 1968, and finds reaffirmation in J L Kapur, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Conspiracy to Murder Mahatma Gandhi*, 6 vols in 2, Government of India, New Delhi, 1970.
 - 11 Message of January 30, 1948, online at: <http://pakistanspace.tripod.com/48.htm>
 - 12 A K Ramanujan (ed) and trans, *Speaking of Siva*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1973, p 88 [Vacana no 820].
 - 13 B R Ambedkar, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, Thacker and Co, Bombay, 1945, p 114.
 - 14 Nirad C Chaudhuri, *Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India 1921-1952*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1987; Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, New York, 1988, p 885. The other "episodes" can be referenced at pp 436, 439, and 874.
 - 15 Richard Grenier, *The Gandhi Nobody Knows*, Thomas Nelson, New York, 1983, was first published as a lengthy film review in *Commentary*. From political and cinematic standpoints, there is much to criticise in Attenborough's film, though the hostility it provoked, particularly in Britain, arises from very different grounds that can adequately be gauged by the reception given to the film in the tabloid and conservative press. The much acclaimed Paul Johnson, advising the readers of the *Daily Telegraph*, April 16, 1983, that "Gandhi Isn't Good For You", described Gandhi as a "consummate sorcerer's apprentice"; and likewise John Vincent, a historian at Bristol University, nonchalantly held Gandhi responsible for the "shedding of innocent blood during the massacres" that followed in the wake of Partition ('We Must Not Feel Guilty Over Gandhi', *Sun* [London], April 21, 1983).
 - 16 "Speech at Public Meeting, Tinnevely", January 24, 1934 and "Speech at Public Meeting, Tuticorin", January 24, 1934, both in CWMG 63:34, 40.
 - 17 Gandhi's piece on "Bihar and Untouchability" in *Harijan* on February 2, 1934 adverts to this matter: "I am not affected by posers such as 'why punishment for an age-old sin' or 'why punishment to Bihar and not to the South' or 'why an earthquake and not some other form of punishment'. My answer is: I am not God. Therefore I have but a limited knowledge of His purpose". See CWMG 63:82.
 - 18 See Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, compiler and ed, *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore 1915-1941*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1997, p 156.
 - 19 Mukul Kesavan, 'Gandhi's Bad Faith: The Opportunism of the Khilafat Movement Alienated Muslims', *Telegraph*, June 26, 2005, online at: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050626/asp/opinion/story_4915438.asp (accessed on September 15, 2008).
 - 20 Bhattacharya, *The Mahatma and the Poet*, p 160; also CWMG 63:164-66.
 - 21 Harold Coward (ed), *Indian Critiques of Gandhi*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2003.

- 22 S Anand, 'To Thee Thy Kingdom', *Tehelka*, October 27, 2007, also online at: http://www.tehelka.com/story_main34.asp?filename=hub271007>Tothee.asp
- 23 Erik H Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Non-violence*, W W Norton, New York, 1969, pp 230-31.
- 24 Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Harvard UP, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1982, pp 104-05.
- 25 See, for example, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, *Inner Recesses, Outer Spaces*, Navrang, New Delhi, 1986, who is forthright in her assessment that "to those of my generation the real political history of India begins with the Gandhi era" (p 147).
- 26 CWMG 67:125; also in Puspha Joshi (ed), *Gandhi on Women*, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1988, p 294.
- 27 Madhu Kishwar, 'Gandhi and Women', *Economic & Political Weekly* 20, Nos 40 (October 5, 1985) and 41 (October 12, 1985), pp 1691-1702 and 1753-58, respectively; reprinted as *Gandhi and Women*, Manushi Prakashan, Delhi, 1986.
- 28 Ketu Katrak, 'Indian Nationalism, Gandhian 'Satyagraha', and Representations of Female Sexuality' in Andrew Parker, May Russo, Doris Sommer and Patricia Yaeger (eds), *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, Routledge, New York, 1992, pp 395-406.
- 29 Vinay Lal, 'Nakedness, Non-violence, and Brahmacharya: Gandhi's Experiments in Celibate Sexuality' in idem, *Of Cricket, Guinness and Gandhi: Essays on Indian History and Culture*, Seagull, Calcutta, 2003; Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2005, pp 114-53.
- 30 Phyllis Mack, 'Feminine Behaviour and Radical Action: Franciscans, Quakers, and the Followers of Gandhi', *Signs* 11, No 3 (Spring 1986), pp 457-77 esp p 477.
- 31 Joseph Kupfer, 'Gandhi and the Virtue of Care', *Hypatia* 22, no 3 (Summer 2007), pp 1-21. The focus in this article is on Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982), but the author's questionable embrace of the film need not detract from the argument in general. One wonders if the day of Gandhi's assassination is also celebrated as anti-leprosy day from sheer sentiment, or whether critics such as S Anand, who resolutely adhere to the position that Gandhi's life remains singularly unattractive in every respect, have any idea of the vast array of activities in which Gandhi's life was enmeshed, many of them not calculated to earn Gandhi profit in the material world, political power, or even an army of followers. Cynicism, however, is infinitely inventive: somewhere someone will pronounce that, in working with leprosy patients, Gandhi sought to derive cultural capital.
- 32 Nathuram Godse, *May It Please Your Honor*, Surya Prakashan, Delhi, 1987, pp 154-55.
- 33 Sarojini Naidu's quip is encountered in numerous variations: the most likely story has it that while waiting for a third-class railway coach to be brought from a considerable distance to Gandhi so that he could travel alongside the poor, she remarked: "If Gandhi only knew how much it costs us to keep him in poverty!" In other variants, the story even goes beyond Naidu. The American poet Gary Snyder, recalling his commitment to non-violence and a simple way of life, says that he remembered "reading that Gandhi's great supporter, the Indian industrialist Tata, once said, 'It costs me a fortune to keep Gandhi simple.'" See Catherine Ingram, *In the Footsteps of Gandhi: Conversations with Spiritual Social Activists*, Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 1997, p 247.
- 34 Saumyendranath Tagore, 'Gandhism and the Labour-Peasant Problem' in idem, Sudarshan Chattopadhyay (ed), *Against the Stream*, 2 vols, Saumyendranath Memorial Committee, Calcutta, 1:19-21.
- 35 M N Roy, 'The Cult of Non-Violence: Its Socio-Economical Background' in idem, *Selected Writings*, 3 vols, Oxford UP, Delhi, 1989, 2:153, 156.
- 36 Sarabjit Pandher, 'Charge against Mahatma', *Hindu*, October 28, 2007.
- 37 S Anand, 'To Thee Thy Kingdom', *Tehelka*, October 27, 2007.
- 38 This viewpoint is frequently encountered in the public speeches of prominent ideologues of Hindutva, such as Praveen Togadia, Uma Bharati, and Sadhvi Ritambhara. See also Sudhir Kakar, *The Colours of Violence*, Viking Penguin, New Delhi, 1995.
- 39 On sugar as history's mass killer, see Ashis Nandy, 'Sugar in History: An Obituary of the Humble Jaggery', *Times of India*, June 16, 1994; for the wider canvas, see Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, Penguin, 1986.
- 40 Ashis Nandy, 'The Philosophy of Coca Cola' in Vinay Lal (ed), *Dissenting Knowledges, Open Futures: The Multiple Selves and Strange Destinations of Ashis Nandy*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, pp 201-04.

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