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Gandhi's West, the West's Gandhi

Vinay Lal

MOHANDAS GANDHI, WHO MADE HIS WAY from the coastal town of Porbandar in western India to London and South Africa before returning to India and in time becoming India's most iconic figure around the world, is commonly believed to have had, at best, an ambivalent relationship with the West. Gandhi was a relentless critic of modern industrial civilization, and on more than one occasion he described Western civilization as "Satanic";¹ on the other hand, there is a strong body of scholarly opinion that holds, on what appears to be unimpeachable evidence, that Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, and John Ruskin exercised something close to a seminal influence upon Gandhi. It is reported that when asked, on his last visit to Britain, what he thought of Western civilization, Gandhi quipped: "I think it would be a very good idea."² Some have thought that Gandhi's remark points to the corrosive influence of nationalism upon him; others view the story as, if not apocryphal, indicative of the fact that the saintly Mahatma was endowed with a generous sense of humor; and yet others think that this light-hearted remark may have masked feelings of profound uncertainty that Gandhi continued to entertain about the West and its unprecedented role in shaping the course of human history over the last five hundred years. It is also remarkable that however critical Gandhi's views of Western civilization, at no point in his adult life did Gandhi lack British, European, and American friends. There are many poignant stories to be told in this regard, none more so than that of his visit to the cloth mills in Lancashire where, despite the adverse consequences of the Gandhi-initiated boycott of mill-manufactured clothing on the livelihoods of English workers, he received a rousing welcome.³

The West has, one might well argue, reciprocated in a great measure Gandhi's ambivalence. There can be little question that the predominant representation of Gandhi, at least among those who are not actively hostile to him, hovers around a saintly figure, lionized as the prophet of peace and as the supreme apostle of nonviolence in our times. His life has been held up as exemplary by many in the West: the Christians who knew him in his own lifetime had no difficulty in abiding by their judgment that Gandhi was a better Christian than most who style themselves Christians,

just as some Western feminists, who have had, for good reasons, an uneasy relationship with Gandhi, have now come around to the view that Gandhi displayed a rather distinct and admirable sensibility in his articulation of care as a moral imperative.⁴ There are those among his admirers in the West who, not entirely unmindful of Gandhi as a practitioner of mass nonviolent resistance, have nonetheless found in him a more potent icon to advocate other interests. Among those constituencies in the West that have championed him, vegetarians, naturopaths, anarchists, luddites, ecologists, teetotalers, walkers, and even nudists come readily to mind.⁵ Quite characteristically, Gandhi himself had cause to remark on this phenomenon: "I have been known as a crank, faddist, mad man. Evidently the reputation is well deserved. For wherever I go, I draw to myself cranks, faddists and mad men."⁶

Not everyone was sold on the idea of nonviolent resistance, and some openly held the idea in deep contempt. Some of Gandhi's critics in the West derided him as a hopelessly naïve idealist incapable of understanding the real evil that people are capable of inflicting upon others. The most commonly encountered argument, particularly in the wake of pronounced anti-Semitism and then the Holocaust, as well as the mass killings orchestrated in Stalin's Russia, is that Gandhi could only have succeeded against the gentlemanly British. He would have had, Gandhi's critics declaim with supreme confidence, no answer to Hitler's bombs and guns, and it is inconceivable that any totalitarian regime would have permitted him to exploit the media as he did, or had the foolhardiness to allow him the privilege of lecturing the judge who had been charged with bringing Gandhi to trial. One rejoinder to this argument points to the history of British atrocities in their colonies,⁷ and even to other willful forms of genocide, such as the various permissive famines that seemed to follow the English in Ireland, India, and elsewhere around the world.⁸ Another strand of this argument has called attention to the South African origins of Gandhian satyagraha,⁹ where neither the British nor the Boers displayed any contrition in slaughtering each other, much less the rebellious Zulus. The supposition that Gandhi had no experience of "real evil" not only overlooks his long years of experience in South Africa, but also betokens a failure to understand that the most acute forms of oppression may not always be expressions of brute physical violence.

Gandhi was also widely held to be a dangerous meddler in politics. The word "dangerous," however, lends itself to more than the common readings here, not all of them wholly or even remotely pejorative. Gandhi's antagonist in South Africa, General Jan Smuts, came to an early appreciation of what mass nonviolent resistance could achieve and negotiated an agreement designed to redress some of the grievances held

by Gandhi and the Indian community. Watching Gandhi in South Africa from afar, the Oxford don and classicist Gilbert Murray had the pulse on Gandhi when he cautioned the world: "Persons in power should be careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes is right. He is a *dangerous* and uncomfortable enemy—because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase upon his soul" (emphasis added).¹⁰ Gandhi's older contemporary, the Maharashtrian Brahmin Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was among the first to give voice to the opinion that politics was a "game of worldly people and not of sadhus [holy men; renouncers],"¹¹ and his misgivings about the entry of Gandhi, who seemed adamant about spiritualizing politics, into the public realm would soon translate into the more fervent and widespread criticism that Gandhi was playing a dangerous game in bringing religion into politics.

The English, an eminently practical people who, if I may put it this way, cared little for philosophy and thought of themselves as the men on the spot,¹² found themselves confronted by a much more tangible sense of the dangerous element in Gandhian praxis. They were well versed in putting down armed uprisings, as their savage suppression of the rebellion of 1857 amply demonstrates, and sedition mongers and recalcitrant rebels could be put away in jail for lengthy periods of time or banished to the Andamans. But just how was one to respond to a man who appeared keener on punishing himself than on chastising the British? If the man insisted on fasting in an effort to bring about a political solution, just how was he to be prevented from executing his plans? Here was a man who, as George Orwell surmised,¹³ had the daring to think that he only had to forgo food and an empire would shake to its roots. Unlike most other eminent revolutionaries of the twentieth century, dedicated to stealth as much as to violence, Gandhi sought to disarm his opponents by advertising his plans. When he had decided upon commencing the Salt Satyagraha in 1930, he took the unusual step of dispatching a letter to the viceroy outlining the precise course of action he proposed to undertake if the British were not willing to enter into negotiations with the Congress (*CW* 48:362–67). Neither Lord Irwin nor Reginald Reynolds, the bearer of the letter, realized at that time just how dangerous Gandhi could be, but Reynolds, at least, came to an awareness of this soon thereafter. "Gandhiji would always offer full details of his plans and movements to the police," wrote Reynolds some years after Gandhi's death, "thereby saving them a great deal of trouble. One police inspector who availed himself of Gandhi's courtesy in this matter is said to have been severely reprimanded by his chief. 'Don't you know,' he told the inspector, 'that everyone who comes into close contact with that man goes over to his side?'"¹⁴

Lord Irwin, the recipient of Gandhi's missive, was a man of Christian belief who subscribed to the school of thought that Christianity could be rightfully harnessed to the project of empire; the messenger, a young English Quaker, represented a much softer strand of Christianity whose adherents would have had no difficulty in understanding Gandhi's injunction to listen to the still small voice within oneself; and the author of the message, who declared himself a believer in *sanatan dharma*, or a certain orthodox conception of Hinduism as an eternal religion, had been hailed by an eminent American clergyman as "the Christ of our age" and had by his own admission learned much about nonviolent resistance from the Sermon on the Mount (*CW*54:308).¹⁵ In this interaction, we might say that Gandhi opened the world to three faces of the Christian West. There had doubtless been many Indians before him who had something of an intellectual and spiritual engagement with Christianity, but Gandhi must be numbered among the first Indians whose interpretations of Christianity, and of the Christian West, would acquire a wide public dimension. He brought to his reading of the Sermon on the Mount a different spirit, and perhaps strove to resuscitate and strengthen traditions in the West that had long been marginalized. It would be a truism, of course, to suggest that Gandhi did not accept the West's own authorized version of itself as the best representation of the West, but did Gandhi seek to authenticate versions of the West that, in his judgment, were calculated to not only serve the cause of colonized subjects but to liberate the West from its own worst tendencies? Should not Gandhi's encounter with the West also be read as a parable of his strongly held view that victors need to be liberated as much as the vanquished, the colonizers as much as the colonized?

The Past is a Familiar Country: Sojourns of a Gujarati in the Other West

Gandhi's staunchest friends and supporters in South Africa were European Jews.¹⁶ For close to five decades, he maintained close friendships with a larger number of Americans, Britons, and other Europeans—many of them eminent in the arts, education, and public life. He drew to himself figures as diverse as Romain Rolland, a hugely successful French novelist and biographer of Beethoven; Madeleine Slade, the daughter of an English admiral who in time came to serve as Gandhi's daughter; Charles Andrews, an English clergyman who reportedly was so close to Gandhi that he alone had the privilege of addressing him as "Mohan"; and Lanza del Vasto, an Italian aristocrat who traveled to India to meet Gandhi in 1936 and returned to France as "Shantidas," Servant of Peace, to found

something akin to a Gandhian Order of Nonviolent Companions. Gandhi still lived in the epistolary age, and his numerous correspondents in the West also shared his enormous appetite for letter writing. Gandhi also entertained thousands of visitors in India from abroad, among them the combative Margaret Sanger, an enthusiastic advocate of birth control as well as eugenics. The extent of his familiarity with Western intellectual traditions is a matter of some debate,¹⁷ and Gandhi himself confessed that he could not “claim much book knowledge;”¹⁸ but there is little question that he had a reasonably firm grasp over the general outlines of Western history. A narrative and interpretive account of Gandhi and the West is thus constrained not by a lack of sources but rather by an embarrassingly huge array of possibilities.

There are, in this narrative, certain iconic moments, and Gandhi's discovery of the Holy Trinity—Thoreau, Tolstoy, and Ruskin—has been etched as a history of successive epiphanies. Ashis Nandy has written of Gandhi that “almost all his gurus were Western intellectuals,” and the two Indian intellectuals to whom he felt closest, Rabindranath Tagore and Gopal Krishna Gokhale, were “conspicuously bicultural.”¹⁹ Nandy wisely eschews the word “influence” since it is none too clear what kind of analytical purchase if any the word carries.²⁰ In an age of political pandits, management gurus, and even sex gurus, the word “guru” has also lost much of its zing. If by guru is meant what traditional usage has long dictated, namely teacher, then there is no doubt that Gandhi viewed himself as having learned something immensely valuable from certain Western intellectuals; if, moreover, the word guru is taken in its widest expanse, to suggest a source of deep inspiration, then also it is unquestionably true that Gandhi saw considerable congruence between his views and those of the figures who are supposed to have had an incalculable presence in his life. Nevertheless, it is also imperative to recognize that Gandhi was an immensely generous man, and he acknowledged many more gurus than one person is likely to have. Indeed, gurus are possessive and do not countenance competition: the supposed proliferation of gurus in Gandhi's life suggests that, ultimately, he was very much his own man. Einstein was, I suspect, much closer to the truth when he gave it as his opinion that “Gandhi would have been Gandhi without Thoreau and Tolstoy.”²¹

Gandhi's journeys in the Other West commenced in the very heart of the West, the metropolitan capital, London. “I thought to myself,” Gandhi would write years after his first visit in 1891, “if I go to England not only shall I become a barrister (of whom I used to think a great deal), but I shall be able to see England, the land of philosophers and poets, the very centre of civilization” (*CW* 1:42). If the ambition to make their name in India was writ large in the lives of proconsuls such

as Curzon,²² Indian men such as the young Gandhi had no doubt that they had to seek their credentials in Britain. We need not be detained by the now familiar account of how Gandhi strove to become an English gentleman, taking lessons in the violin, dancing, and elocution, besides acquiring a chimney-pot hat and having his clothes cut at the Army and Navy Stores (*A pt. I, ch. 25*). In later life, Gandhi would describe himself as having learned much from having consorted with the English: "Punctuality, reticence, public hygiene, independent thinking and exercise of judgment and several other things I owe to my association with them" (*CW 48:375*). Growing up in Gujarat, distinct in India for its delectable vegetarian cuisine, Gandhi and his fellow Gujaratis were reminded by the poet Narmad that the mighty Englishman ruled "the Indian small" since he was a meat-eater (*A pt. I, ch. 6*); and yet it is in London, of all places, that Gandhi embraced vegetarianism, no longer from instinct or habit, but as a choice—and commenced what would become life-long experiments in dietetics, read the *Bhagavad Gita* in Edwin Arnold's translation, and fell in with the Theosophists (*A pt. I, chs. 14, 17, 20*).²³ It is remarkable that where many other Indians had arrived in London, or the other capitals of Europe, to imbibe lessons from the West about how to become modern, imbued with the spirit of rational thinking and the scientific outlook, Gandhi associated with people who were themselves at the margins of British society, ridiculed as cranks and viewed as exponents of ideas that were hopelessly at odds with the dominant temper of the time.

It is in South Africa that Gandhi first encountered the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin.²⁴ Suffice it to say that, with his characteristic generosity and humility, Gandhi described them as having played a significant if not critical role in his intellectual development (*A pt. II, ch. 1*). It is upon reading Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, says Gandhi, that he began "to realize more and more the infinite possibilities of universal love" (*A, Pt. II, Ch. 22*), and elsewhere he described him as "the best and brightest exponent" of the doctrine of "Soul-force."²⁵ Shortly before Tolstoy died in November 1910, Gandhi entered into a correspondence with him and was greatly heartened by Tolstoy's enthusiastic approbation of his deployment of satyagraha in South Africa. Gandhi honored Tolstoy, not only with a fulsome obituary upon his death, but by naming a farm where he had settled down with like-minded companions after the Russian count. But Gandhi had first commenced upon experiments in communal living at a rural settlement called Phoenix outside Durban: the occasion for such a departure from city life was a serendipitous reading aboard a train of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The chapter in his autobiography where Gandhi narrates the mesmerizing hold Ruskin's ideas came to have on him is entitled, "The Magic Spell of a Book," and he credits the book as

having "brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation" in his life (*A pt. IV*, ch. 18).

Ruskin's teachings, we are told by Gandhi, are easily encapsulated in three propositions: first, the good of the individual is contained in the good of all; secondly, all work, howsoever high or low in common estimation, has the same value, and all work should be sufficient to secure a person his or her livelihood; and, thirdly, a life of labor is eminently "the life worth living." The following short sentences describe how these propositions appeared to Gandhi: "The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me" (*A pt. IV*, ch. 18). The admission from a Gujarati *bania* that he had never given any thought to the life of labor is candidly refreshing as much as it is unsurprising.²⁶ But let us follow Gandhi to the end of that paragraph: "I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice." Ruskin's *Unto This Last* gave Gandhi intimations of the principles required for far-reaching social reconstruction, just as Tolstoy's writings strengthened Gandhi in his resolve to seek truth through nonviolent action. Gandhi took these doctrines to their limits, where in the hands of their authors they would have remained untested theories; and though Gandhi was deeply attracted in principle to the nonviolent anarchism by which Tolstoy abided, he also came to understand that it provided an insufficient basis on which to build either resistance to an oppressive state or a nonviolent social order.

We may, by way of illustration of the argument that Gandhi held Thoreau, Ruskin, and Tolstoy in much veneration, consider in greater detail the case of Thoreau. It is through Henry Salt that Gandhi would have become acquainted with Thoreau, from whose works a quote graced the opening of Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism* (1885), which he had chanced upon in a shop window just months into his stay in London (*A pt. I*, ch. 14): "I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other."²⁷ Thoreau has been of particular interest to biographers of Gandhi: deeply steeped, for a little-traveled man from Concord, in numerous Indian philosophical texts,²⁸ his essay on "civil disobedience" is believed to have left a lasting impact on Gandhi. In a memorable passage in *Walden*, ostensibly an account of his life in the woods, Thoreau imagined "the sweltering inhabitants" of Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta drinking at his well. And as for Thoreau himself, he bathed his intellect "in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial." And as he drew the water, Thoreau sensed that "the pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of

the Ganges."²⁹ With Gandhi, the circle is said to have been completed: writing to "American Friends" in 1942, Gandhi said, "You have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essay on the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience' scientific confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa" (*CW* 83:163).

Thoreau's case, as shall be seen, amply suggests what Gandhi gained from a Western thinker, and why prevalent conceptions of the "influence" exercised by Thoreau on Gandhi are inadequate and even intellectually uninteresting. It is in a response to a query from Salt, also Thoreau's biographer, that Gandhi admitted that "Civil Disobedience" had left such a "deep impression" upon him that he had reproduced "copious extracts" from the essay in *Indian Opinion* and even translated portions of it for his readers. Gandhi described Thoreau's essay as "so convincing and truthful" that it had created in him a desire to know more of Thoreau, and this led him to Salt's biography, *Walden*, and other essays, "all of which I read with great pleasure and equal profit."³⁰ The American reporter Webb Miller, whose famous dispatches on the Salt Satyagraha were beamed around the world, reports that Gandhi was more explicit in a conversation with him in 1931. Explaining that he had read *Walden* in Johannesburg in 1906, Gandhi continued: "Why, I actually took the name of my movement from Thoreau's essay, 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience,' written about eighty years ago."³¹ Yet, if it appears from all this that the matter is settled and that a relatively straightforward chronology establishes nearly the precise moment when Gandhi might have found inspiration in Thoreau, then it is also instructive that at various times Gandhi expressed considerable reticence about Thoreau's impact on him. "The persons who have influenced my life as a whole in a general way," he wrote in 1931, "are Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau and Raychandbhai. Perhaps I should drop Thoreau from this list" (*CW* 51:38). Four years later, he insisted to another correspondent that "the statement that I derived my idea of Civil Disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority . . . was well advanced before I got the essay."³²

There are obvious difficulties in imagining a straight line that might take us from Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience to Gandhian satyagraha. The questions of precisely when and in what circumstances Gandhi became acquainted with this text apart, nothing in Thoreau's writings suggests that he envisioned civil disobedience as a mass movement, and his numerous biographers and other scholars are settled upon the consensus view that Thoreau is ultimately best understood as a specimen of Yankee individualism. "The history of the New England tradition," Perry Miller was to write of the American transcendentalists, "is a series of splinterings, of divisions, and subdivisions and the subdivision of

subdivisions, until you are left breathless as you try to keep pace with the accelerating pace of Yankee individualism."³³ There is the critical consideration that Thoreau appeared to have fundamentally withdrawn from society while Gandhi, in spite of his ability to retreat into himself and be attentive to his own inner voice, was throughout a firm adherent of the view that the only place for a man or woman of religion was in the slum of politics.

To assert such is not to entertain the view that Thoreau was apolitical; quite to the contrary, he was deeply troubled by the phenomenon of slavery, and he doubtless also recognized that the same individualism that he cherished could be tethered to the most brutal forms of capitalistic aggrandizement. It is more than probable that reading Thoreau moved Gandhi to a fuller appreciation of the moral imperative that one is bound to follow one's conscience when it comes into conflict with authoritative texts or, for that matter, unjust laws. Seventeenth-century European thinkers, John Locke in particular, adopted the view that to adhere to one's conscience was to retreat into a state of nature; as institutions of civil society matured and the will of the people could be voiced through the legislature, the subjects of the state had to relinquish their private judgment or "conscience." One of the key insights of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thoreau, with which Gandhi was in agreement, was that the priority of the conscience had to be restored. But at some point, Gandhi parted company from Thoreau: not only was a person obligated to cease cooperation with a government that had shed all semblance of moral probity, but the call of the conscience had to be taken much further so that one became the bearer of the suffering of others. As Gandhi insistently claimed, the capacity of the oppressor to inflict suffering had to be matched by the capacity of the oppressed to endure the same and, with this selfless display of forbearance, move the oppressor to repentance and reconciliation.

It is my submission, moreover, that a largely mechanistic reading of Gandhi's relationship to Thoreau, revolving around the famous essay on civil disobedience, has obscured the various ways in which Thoreau may have left a lasting imprint on Gandhi. I shall gesture here, fleetingly at best and largely as an illustration, at only one other reading, though many others come to mind—from their common ruminations on the uncommon pleasures of prison life and their wry observations on the supposed merits of such technological marvels as the telegraph to Gandhi's keen appreciation of the fact that Thoreau "taught nothing he was not prepared to practice in himself."³⁴ There is no reason to believe that Gandhi took to walking upon reading Thoreau, but the lives of both resonated deeply with daily walks. In walking, Gandhi paid remembrance to Thoreau: thus, writing to the editor of a Gujarati newspaper in 1916,

Gandhi gave it as his opinion that walking as an exercise was barely worth it unless one was prepared to walk twice a day, six miles at each stretch. Gandhi continues, "Thoreau used to walk for eight hours daily when he wrote his best book. Tolstoy testifies to the fact that while writing his best books he never used to sit at his desk before he had had plenty of exercise" (*CW* 15:216). That this is not a mere stray thought is nowhere made as clear as in his advice to visitors to Wardha twenty years later: "To appreciate all the advantages of walking you must read Thoreau. I have made it a rule that no one, unless he is completely disabled, should be encouraged to come here in a bullock cart—not even Jamnalalji with his heavy body" (*CW* 69:163).

True, Thoreau and Gandhi did not walk in the same fashion, and it is even likely that Thoreau would have found Gandhi's walking purposeful, and thus not walking at all. "I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life," Thoreau wrote in his magisterial essay on walking, "who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks, who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering; which word is beautifully derived 'from idle people who roved about the country, in the middle ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going *à la sainte terre*'—to the holy land"; and, yet, as Thoreau pertinently added, some people "derive the word from *sans terre*, without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere."³⁵ The idea of Gandhi sauntering about does not sit easily on the imagination; but perchance his walking was not always as purposeful as we are wont to imagine, if we consider that Gandhi had, in his own manner, forsaken the conception of home. Saints and religious teachers before Gandhi had walked the length and breadth of the land, but in his articulation of the virtues of walking Gandhi was to strike multiple chords. Some have charged Gandhi with, in effect, walking away from his family and failing miserably in the discharge of his duties towards his sons; many more have alleged that, in an age when most of the world was striving to accelerate the pace of modern life and reap the benefits of numerous technological marvels, Gandhi sought to return Indian to the age of the bullock cart. Gandhi would have said that his critics are too charitably disposed towards him: what to speak of a bullock cart, he would have taken us only as far as his legs could take him. As Gandhi would aver in *Hind Swaraj*, "good travels at snail's pace."³⁶

The Debate Within: The West, Nationalism, and Real Swaraj

Gandhi had read *Unto This Last* on a night train in South Africa, and it is aboard a ship in 1908 that he penned a tract known as *Hind Swaraj*.

Its subtitle, "Indian Home Rule," conveys the impression that Gandhi's manifesto is a plea for some degree of independence (*swaraj*) from British rule in India (*Hind*), but many readers are startled to find, within its pages, what appears to be an ill-conceived and even tasteless diatribe against doctors, lawyers, and the Indian railways. Some commentators in the West, in particular, have expressed themselves as gravely disturbed by what are taken to be its excessive anti-Western sentiments, though it is striking that the "eminent" authorities Gandhi summoned in defense of his views are also predominantly Western. It is reliably reported that when Gandhi shared *Hind Swaraj* with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the venerated politician felt acutely embarrassed and predicted that Gandhi himself would consign *Hind Swaraj* to the dustbin within a year of his return to India. But Gandhi did no such thing: quite to the contrary, in his preface of 1921 he affirmed that he stood by the "severe condemnation of 'modern civilization'" found in the booklet. On the thirtieth anniversary of *Hind Swaraj*'s publication, Gandhi added a new message: while conceding that he would perhaps change the wording here and there, he was also unequivocally of the view that events of "stormy thirty years" had done "nothing" to make him "alter the views expounded in it" (*HS* 13–17).

Hind Swaraj is cast in the form of a dialogue between "The Reader," a nameless interlocutor evidently opposed to Gandhi's views, and "The Editor," none other than Gandhi himself. The 1921 edition carried a brief account of the circumstances under which it had been written: London was then a refuge for various types of advocates of violence and armed revolutionary activity in India, and having encountered them there, Gandhi resolved to answer them. "Their bravery impressed me," wrote Gandhi, "but I felt that their zeal was misguided. I felt that violence was no remedy for India's ills, and that her civilization required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection" (*HS* 15). Though *Hind Swaraj* has had ever since its publication a small but singularly devoted following, there has also been a tendency to dismiss large parts of it as the ramblings of a luddite and obscurantist whose eccentricities have been humored far too long. The colonial government, however, advocated a more stern position: at the behest of the Gujarati Interpreter to the High Court of Madras, *Hind Swaraj* was proscribed. The censor admitted that the work neither advocated open revolt nor the use of physical force against the British government; nevertheless, its author was a proponent of "passive resistance against British supremacy," and if his idea of noncooperation caught the imagination of "young inexperienced men," thus jeopardizing the effective functioning of various branches of the government, it was likely to compromise the safety and integrity of the government. Immediate suppression of the book was necessary, even if, as the censor noted, the writer's ideas "upon other

matters" are "ridiculous and impracticable."³⁷ Yet there is much that is inexplicable in the censor's report: if, for instance, the British much preferred Gandhi, as has often been alleged by many of his critics, to violent revolutionaries, then their fear of "passive resistance" is more than a trifle surprising.

Many ideas run through the twenty short chapters of *Hind Swaraj*, and interested readers will find in it intimations of the great events around which Gandhi's life has been framed by biographers and historians. The Salt March was not undertaken until 1930, but we already find Gandhi declaring that "the salt-tax is not a small injustice" (*HS* 23). Efforts to forge unity between Muslims and Hindus would preoccupy Gandhi in the later years of his life, but *Hind Swaraj* adduces sufficient evidence that this had become a critical concern for him at the onset of his political life (*HS* 44–49). One could go on in this vein, but above all, *Hind Swaraj* is dominated by one central conception. Modern civilization had rendered the condition of England pitiable, and now the canker of this civilization had spread to India. Much had been made of the English parliament, the electoral system, and the supposed freedoms of the press in Britain, but Gandhi described modern civilization as a disease, though not an "incurable" one (*HS* 34). The Editor and the Reader not being in disagreement about the desirability of bringing British rule in India to a close, there remained the question of how India was to attain its independence. The Reader, having in mind Japan's triumph over Russia in 1905, which gave an enormous boost to the confidence of all Asians, proposes the arming of India and hopes for splendid military victories. In what is doubtless the most famous passage in this tract, the Editor replies: "In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan." And this, he emphatically adds, "is not the Swaraj that I want" (*HS* 27).

An India won over for the Indians by violence was not calculated to produce real swaraj (freedom, self-rule, rule over one's self). This argument, an article of Gandhi's faith, would be rehearsed endlessly but is less germane to Gandhi's reading of the West and colonial rule than some of his other insights. First, as has now been indubitably established by a wide body of scholarship, by the mid- to late-nineteenth century it was widely accepted by many Indian nationalists that though the West exercised a resounding superiority over India in the material domain, India remained the lodestar in spiritual matters. The spirit of innovation, the energy of its people, and the drive of capital had come together in England to create a veritable revolution in the material conditions of daily life. Thus England had come to colonize India and,

between them, the European powers had parceled the world amongst themselves. But India seemed destined for a different sort of greatness: in no other place on earth could one witness such keen care of the soul or such ponderous meditations on the meaning of human existence. The nationalists granted that India's cultivation of the spirit had rendered it vulnerable to marauding outsiders, but in India's spiritual hegemony lay the seeds for the renewal of the country and the regeneration of all humankind. Swami Vivekananda, India's emissary to the West, put the contrast in unmistakably oppositional but complementary terms: "When the Oriental wants to learn about machine-making, he should sit at the feet of the Occidental and learn from him. When the Occidental wants to learn about the spirit, about God, about the soul, about the meaning and mystery of this universe, he must sit at the feet of the Orient to learn."³⁸ Whether Gandhi similarly shared in the conceit about India's unique spiritual gifts is debatable, but nowhere does he effect a more palpable departure from nationalist thought than in his emphatic rejection of the idea that the emulation of the West's material gains would profit India. The modern civilization of the West would self-destruct: in England it was eating "into the vitals of the English nation," enslaving people to brutal work regimes, sustaining them through intoxication, and rendering them subservient to debased political institutions such as Parliament (*HS* 33–34).

Secondly, even as Gandhi dismissed modern civilization, he recognized its allure for Indians. Nationalists had spun a narrative that variously attributed India's subjugation under colonial rule to British chicanery, the failure of the British to honor promises to Indian rulers, the disunity of India, and the superior organization of European armies. Some writers thought that India's susceptibility to foreign rule was also a consequence of the division of labor under caste and the excessive devotionism of its common people. The precise nature of these arguments did not interest Gandhi; it was sufficient for him that, whatever the motivations of the British in coming to India, their ambitions had found a hospitable home in India: "The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them" (*HS* 35). Gandhi conceded that "the Hindus and the Mahomedans were at daggers drawn," and the British had been aided by the quarrelling that went on among Indians; but none of this could disguise the fact that the commerce of the English pleased Indians. "Hence it is truer to say," remarks the Editor, "that we gave India to the English than that India was lost" (*HS* 36). In the face of the unanimously held opinion that ultimately Britain held India by the sword, Gandhi stood out as the sole dissenter: "The causes that gave them [the English] India enable them to retain it. Some Englishmen state that they took and they hold India

by the sword. Both these statements are wrong. The sword is entirely useless for holding India. We alone keep them" (*HS* 36). As a corollary, it stood to reason that as there were Indians who had sold their services to the English, so there were Englishmen whose sympathies and interests lay with India rather than with their own country. Gandhi's sojourns in the Other West had sensitized him to the presence of Britons who were prepared to be enlisted alongside Indians in the struggle against colonial rule: "I can never subscribe to the statement," wrote Gandhi, "that all Englishmen are bad. Many Englishmen desire Home Rule for India" (*HS* 21). It was hardly necessary to set the expulsion of all the English from India as a goal: "If the English become Indianized, we can accommodate them. If they wish to remain in India along with their civilization, there is no room for them" (*HS* 59).

The attenuated tone of some of Gandhi's observations should not obscure the unremitting conclusion which he had reached: "In our own civilization, there will naturally be progress, retrogression, reforms, and reactions; but one effort is required, and that is to drive out Western civilization. All else will follow" (*HS* 82). A little more than a decade after the publication of *Hind Swaraj*, the apotheosis of Mohandas into the Mahatma had taken place, and Gandhi's swift political ascendancy and take over of the Congress had, at least in the early 1920s, rendered advocates of armed insurrection marginal. But the debate about the place that Western civilization ought to occupy in the imaginary of the Indian nation was far from over, and Gandhi's instigation of the noncooperation movement brought forth a new, formidable if friendly adversary of his views in the figure of Rabindranath Tagore, then easily the most well-known name in Indian literature. Tagore recognized that Gandhi uniquely stood for the application of "moral force" in politics, and the perpetration of atrocities by the British in the Punjab, to which both responded with firmness and dignity, cemented their relationship and enormous respect for each other. Tagore publicly lent his name to Gandhi's efforts to stir the entire nation into nonviolent resistance to colonial oppression, and in his letter of April 12, 1919, released to the press, he proclaimed Gandhi as "a great leader of men" who had come forward to resuscitate the "ideal" of India, "the ideal which is both against the cowardliness of hidden revenge and the cowed submissiveness of the terror-stricken."³⁹

Their friendship would endure many differences, almost none as acute as over Tagore's view that Gandhi's noncooperation movement, launched ironically at a time when Tagore was himself traveling around Europe "preaching cooperation of cultures between East and West," created walls between India and the West that would lead to "ceaseless conflicts." The great call of the day was for cooperation, and India's

genius militated against any advocacy of the “separateness of one’s own people from others”: “India has ever declared that Unity is Truth, and separateness is *maya* [ignorance, though more commonly rendered into English as illusion].”⁴⁰ Tagore pronounced himself a believer “in the true meeting of the East and the West,”⁴¹ and Gandhi was not about to state his opposition to this ideal. He had striven at least as hard as Tagore to adhere to an ecumenical worldview, but Gandhi, in two responses to Tagore published in *Young India* on June 1, 1921, decried both the poet’s dread of the negative and his inability to understand that Western education had created new hierarchies of class and broadened the rift between haves and have-nots. The miasma of Western education “has so eaten into [our] society that,” wrote Gandhi, “in many cases, the only meaning of Education is a knowledge of English.” In a justly famous passage, Gandhi suggested that the encounter between India and the West could only flourish under conditions more conducive to a just exchange: “I hope I am as great a believer in free air as the great Poet. I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”⁴² Back and forth they went, and scholars and critics have differed on who ultimately comes across better. Distant observers, among them Rolland, watched with fascination as the two men, both bound by the highest conception of the truth, stuck to their ground without betraying a gross attachment to their own respective views.⁴³ Yet it is also true that to many in the outside world, the debate was less important than the fact that India’s most famous living poet had heralded the arrival of a “great soul.” The Mahatma, as shall presently be seen, was now poised to cast his shadow over a segment of the West’s own history.

African Americans and the Quest for a Black Gandhi

Gandhi had been in South Africa for only a week when he undertook a train journey to Pretoria that would transform his life. He came to an awareness of racial discrimination when, en route at Pietermaritzburg, he was asked to vacate the first-class cabin seat for which he held a ticket. When Gandhi refused to comply, he was pushed out and his luggage thrown out after him onto the railway platform. Mohandas’s apotheosis into Mahatmahood perforce had to be by way of cooliehood. That journey had more than its share of traumas for Gandhi, but these experiences may have steeled him in his determination to resist iniquity (*A pt. II, ch. 8–9*). A little-noticed detail in Gandhi’s narrative announces an unlikely conclusion to the whole journey: no one was at the train station when

he arrived in Pretoria late on a Sunday evening, nor did Gandhi have a hotel room; despairing about how and where he was to spend the night, he was saved by an “American Negro” who was standing nearby and had overheard the conversation between Gandhi and the ticket collector. This American Negro took him to a hotel owned by another American, who agreed to accommodate Gandhi for the night on the condition that he would agree to take dinner in his own room. Assuring Gandhi that he had “no colour prejudice,” the proprietor stated that he had only European guests, who would likely leave the hotel if they found Gandhi seated in the dining room (*A pt. II, ch. 10*).

Almost seven decades later, another American Negro would journey to India, announcing that while he went to other countries as a tourist, he came to India “as a pilgrim.” Martin Luther King’s name has become indubitably linked to that of Gandhi, but the African American interest in Gandhi much precedes King. W. E. B. Du Bois, who at least in retrospect has been recognized as the most prominent black intellectual of his time, was writing about Gandhi in his journal *Crisis*, subtitled “A Record of Darker Races,” at least as early as 1922. Du Bois wrote admiringly of nonviolent resistance in his article “Gandhi and India,” characterizing Gandhi as “a man who professes to love his enemies and who refuses to take advantage of or embarrass [the] government in a crisis.”⁴⁴ The *Crisis* carried extensive coverage of political events in India over the next decade, and Du Bois’s 1928 novel, *Dark Princess*, one scholar has written, “critically dismissed Garveyism, revolutionary black militancy, and a professed American republicanism, advancing instead the civil disobedience best practiced by Mahatma Gandhi.”⁴⁵ In response to a request, repeated on several occasions, from Du Bois in April 1929 to contribute an article to *Crisis*, Gandhi enclosed what he described as “a little love message” for African Americans: “Let not the 12 million Negroes be ashamed of the fact that they are the grand-children of slaves. There is no dishonour in being slaves. There is dishonour in being slave-owners.” DuBois, in turn, speculated that “real human equality and brotherhood in the United States will come only under the leadership of another Gandhi.”⁴⁶ A year later, Du Bois was describing Gandhi as akin to the Buddha, Muhammad, and Jesus Christ in catapulting India once more to the “great and fateful moral leadership of the world,” and he looked upon Gandhi’s “mighty experiment” and Russia’s endeavors to “organize work and distribute income according to some rule of reason” as “the great events of the modern world.” The “black folk of America” were to look upon “the present birth-pains of the Indian nation with reverence, hope and applause.”⁴⁷

Du Bois was by no means singular in his appreciation of Gandhi. From the 1920s to the late 1940s, other black periodicals—*Chicago De-*

fender, *Atlanta Daily World*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, and Marcus Garvey's *Negro World*—also showed a sustained interest in Gandhi. James Weldon Johnson, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP), speculated in 1922 whether Gandhian satyagraha would be “as effective as the methods of violence used by the Irish”: just why this question was of “absorbing interest” is revealed when he adds, “If noncooperation brings the British to their knees in India, there is no reason why it should not bring the white man to his knees in the South.”⁴⁸ Calls for a black American Gandhi began to appear in the press around this time. Howard Thurman led the first African American delegation to India in 1936, and Benjamin E. Mays of Morehouse College, who criticized clergymen when they were unwilling to advocate Christianity as a Social Gospel, and Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard College, led another delegation to confer with Gandhi in 1947. They were among many prominent African American clergymen, educators, and public figures who succeeded in placing before the black African public a narrative of the freedom struggle in India, and followed Gandhi's satyagraha campaigns, fasts, calls for mass mobilization, and jail terms with unflinching interest. The next generation of African American leaders would build on this legacy: it is from Thurman, then on the faculty at Howard, that James Farmer, one of the principal architects of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), whose members consciously dressed “themselves in the garb of Gandhian philosophy” as they embraced a spiritual nonviolent politics, imbibed the teachings of Gandhi.⁴⁹ Similarly, a sermon on Gandhi by Johnson in 1949, King would recall some years later, inspired him to suspend the skepticism that he hitherto harbored towards pacifism. “His message was so profound and electrifying,” King wrote of Johnson's sermon, “that I left the meeting and bought a half-dozen books on Gandhi's life and works.” King had so far been unable to see how the power of love might be brought to bear upon the realm of social reform, and the ethics of Jesus appeared to have a bearing only on individual conduct. But the introduction he had now gained to Gandhi brought intimations of the greatness of his accomplishment: “Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale.”⁵⁰

Ten thousand miles apart, African Americans and Indians had, one is inclined to believe, made common cause. The one historian who has delved deeply into the African American “encounter with Gandhi” reaches much stronger conclusions, arguing that the receptivity to Gandhi among early black leaders germinated in the following generation's heady embrace of Gandhian strategies of nonviolent resistance.⁵¹ Yet Sudarshan Kapur is much more reticent about the precise ways in which an interest

in Gandhi might have been translated into Gandhian-style acts of mass resistance among American blacks, just as he leaves unexplored other substantive questions. Two oppressed groups had wrought into being a sustained communication with each other, but it is not clear that they did so through the mediation of a dominant culture. True, Gandhi had been educated in Britain, and early African American leaders would not have been ignorant of Thoreau's legacy, but nevertheless the lengthy engagement of at least a certain class of black Americans with Gandhi and the Indian independence movement compels renewed consideration of how ideas traveled across borders, the nature of political solidarity among subordinated groups, the heterogeneous legacies of anticolonial and antiracist movements, and theories of cosmopolitanism that have not deviated much from the supposition that the fount of ecumenism remains the liberal humanist tradition of the West. What makes the history of the long conversation between black American intellectuals and Gandhi all the more interesting is that the frequently voiced criticism that Gandhi was inattentive to the sufferings of black South Africans, choosing to wage a struggle only on behalf of the oppressed Indian population during his two decades long stay in South Africa, appears not to have influenced African American estimations of Gandhi. It is also conceivable that black Americans may have known of Gandhi's assiduous efforts to bring a halt to the system of indentured labor, which one prominent historian not uncontroversially described as another form of slavery.⁵²

In the activities of A. Philip Randolph, James Farmer, and Bayard Rustin, we arrive at a closer approximation of how Gandhi's ideas would be diffused among black Americans to create an activist ethics before King's full-bodied embrace of satyagraha in the decade from the mid-1950s until his assassination appeared to vindicate Gandhi's prescient observation in 1936 that "it may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of nonviolence will be delivered to the world."⁵³ One historian has suggested that the significance of Randolph, America's most prominent black labor leader, is best gauged by understanding that he "made a link between the depression-era readiness of blacks to engage in more militant and confrontational forms of protest and the diffuse but persistent African-American fascination with Gandhi and Gandhism."⁵⁴ Randolph introduced the idea of mass nonviolent resistance in the United States with his call for a march to Washington in 1941 in an attempt to ensure that blacks would have equal access to jobs in the burgeoning defense industries. Like Gandhi, Randolph had no hesitation in accepting the assistance of liberal whites; but just as Gandhi was unequivocally firm in his resolve that ultimately Indians had to fight their own battle, so Randolph justified his March on Washington Movement as an endeavor to develop "a sense of self-reliance with Negroes depending on Negroes

in vital matters. It helps break down the slave psychology and inferiority complex in Negroes which comes with Negroes relying on white people for direction and support." What Negroes required was "mass organization with an action program, aggressive, bold and challenging in spirit," and the example of "the people of India with mass civil disobedience and non-cooperation and the marches to the sea to make salt" was before them.⁵⁵

The historian George Frederickson has offered a number of pregnant observations that sound an alert about viewing Randolph as some kind of African American Gandhi. It is not merely that Randolph was an atheist and an economic determinist; more critically, he "achieved his victories simply by threatening mass demonstrations," and he never actually embarked on mass nonviolent action.⁵⁶ Randolph's younger contemporary, James Farmer, and the cofounders of CORE had by far the greater experience with nonviolent political activism; having introduced the sit-in and the freedom ride to the repertoire of resistance in the U. S., Farmer was perhaps the first practitioner and theorist of black resistance to the pernicious system of segregation that then prevailed in the U. S. who was fully committed to putting Gandhi's teachings to effect in the American context. As he outlined in a memo to the leading American pacifist, A. J. Muste, in 1942:

Segregation will go on as long as we permit it to. Words are not enough; there must be action. We must withhold our support and participation from the institution of segregation in every area of American life—not an individual witness to purity of conscience, as Thoreau used it, but a coordinated movement of mass noncooperation as with Gandhi. And civil disobedience when laws are involved. And jail where necessary. More than the elegant cadre of generals we now have, we also must have an army of ground troops. Like Gandhi's army, it must be nonviolent. Guns would be suicidal for us. Yes, Gandhi has the key for me to unlock the door to the American dream.⁵⁷

If we place Farmer's lionization of Gandhi in apposition with the recent pronouncement by Fred Thompson, former American senator and presidential candidate, that "Gandhi's way isn't the American way,"⁵⁸ the profoundly radical implications of Farmer's proposed introduction of mass nonviolent resistance become all too clear. Farmer may still have been holding on to some form of American exceptionalism in invoking "the American dream," but that he should have thought of Gandhi as paving the way for emancipating the American dream from the burden of its oppressive history is a remarkable testament to his vision.

It would take the immense gifts of Rustin and King to make mass nonviolent resistance a reality in the U. S. Though Farmer was an inspired activist, he was not a master strategist; moreover, CORE was

neither a predominantly black organization nor had its members given much thought to how a collective ethos of resistance was to be forged from the embers of a dissenting conscience. Rustin was, we might say, a wholly unlikely man to assume the mantle of a Gandhian strategist to help King lead African Americans to the mountaintop, but there is little question that no American then had a richer understanding of mass nonviolent resistance and the mind of a strategist to give effect to Gandhian ideas than Rustin. In today's clichéd language, Rustin was an oppressed man many times over: besides being an African American, he was gay, a conscientious objector and draft dodger, and firmly committed to communism. If, to quote King's adversary H. Rap Brown, "violence is as American as cherry pie,"⁵⁹ then let it be recalled that Rustin was also an avowed pacifist and Quaker. None of these attributes was designed to endear Rustin to his fellow Americans.

A contemporary of Muste and Randolph, Rustin made a detailed study of Gandhi's life, writings, and political campaigns and offered a candid appraisal in 1942 that "no situation in America has created so much interest among negroes as the Gandhian proposals for India's freedom."⁶⁰ A few years later, Rustin was among those undertaking the "Journey of Reconciliation" who sought to test the Supreme Court's ruling declaring segregation of interstate transportation facilities unconstitutional. The Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–56, with which the advent of mass nonviolent resistance in the American South was announced to the world, brought King into the limelight; it also brought Rustin and the white Methodist minister Glenn E. Smiley to Montgomery at a critical juncture, when King's resolve to persist amidst adversity and intimidating retaliatory violence was beginning to dwindle. "Rustin became teacher to a pupil," writes one scholar, "whose fame would soon outstrip his mentor's."⁶¹ Some years later, Rustin recalled that though King then had a fleeting knowledge of Gandhian nonviolence, and "knew very little about the man [Gandhi],"⁶² he displayed a heady capacity to absorb the teachings that were placed before him. It is through the struggle, Rustin told an interviewer, that King "came to a profoundly deep understanding of nonviolence," and he described as a hoax the idea that somehow "college professors who had read Gandhi had prepared him in advance."⁶³ But Rustin's supreme Gandhian moment was still to come: the much-promised March to Washington had been lingering in the air since the time of Randolph, and Rustin, King, and African American leaders had decided in 1963 that the time to redeem the promise of America, for descendants of slaves as much as the descendants of slave owners, had arrived. Gandhi's walk to the sea had rendered the march the iconic gesture of mass nonviolent resistance, and since at least the 1930s American demonstrators had sought to render it a "successful

American technique for direct action."⁶⁴ Rustin, the chief architect of the March to Washington, where King would deliver his most famous sermon, would have agreed with the prospective assessment that it was "the most significant civil rights demonstration since Gandhi led the Indians to freedom."⁶⁵

Believing that "God has called Martin Luther King to lead a great movement," Smiley, after one meeting with him, would put the epitaph to the quest that had commenced in the 1920s: "King can be a Negro Gandhi."⁶⁶ King had grafted Gandhi on to both African American Christianity and the personalist philosophy under the shadow of which he had been educated:⁶⁷ in King's dramatically sparse language, "I went to Gandhi through Jesus,"⁶⁸ though had he substituted Rustin for Jesus, he would not have been committing any historical blunder. King would often link Gandhi and Jesus together: at a sermon in Montgomery in 1959, he remarked that both had died on a Friday, and elsewhere he characterized the relationship in these terms: "Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method."⁶⁹ King deployed nearly the entire Gandhian arsenal—from picketing, boycotts, and strikes to marches, flooding the jails, bearing witness, and the skillful mobilization of all forms of the media—as he transformed the African American civil rights movement into the apex struggle of its times. The entire Gandhian apparatus was centered in the idea of self-suffering, and King remained true to the ideal. He often cited Gandhi, "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood."⁷⁰ *Stride Towards Freedom* (1958) and *Where Do We Go From Here?* (1968) boldly set out his conviction that in Gandhi's life and struggle were to be found the cues that African Americans could follow with success. In his last sermon at Bishop Charles J. Mason Temple in Memphis, a day before his assassination, King adverted to unfinished dreams and Gandhi's unrelenting sorrow at the partition of India—perhaps in intuitive acknowledgment of the possibility that his own days were numbered.⁷¹

Inspiring as this story may be of solidarity of the oppressed across borders, some difficult questions remain. Reflecting perhaps his implicit grounding in Indian philosophical traditions, Gandhi spoke only infrequently of sin; indeed, the centrality of *satya* (truth) to his praxis and philosophical outlook alike allowed for the marginalization of the idea of sin. Always prepared to obey the call of truth, Gandhi saw no reason why many others might not share in that journey. King, on the other hand, was committed to a much stronger notion of sin—though perhaps one might want to resist viewing this only, or even predominantly, as his Christian inheritance. A glutton for food, tobacco, and sex, King arguably had more reason to think of sin. But the matter cannot rest there, not even with the contrary example of Gandhi, whose indifference to

a theological conception of sin may perhaps be partly derived from the fact that his own life was so singularly devoid of “sin” as this is commonly understood. For close to five decades, Gandhi held fast to the idea that the practitioner of satyagraha has to make every endeavor to lead a life of purity, and he even came to believe that political violence or the breakdown of satyagraha is but the reflection of the satyagrahi’s failure to exercise swaraj, here understood as control over one’s baser instincts.⁷² There is little to suggest that King or the African American masses were willing to follow Gandhi on this matter—or, more crucially, in accepting his strictures against modern industrial civilization. King has written that, having been born on the verge of the Great Depression and recalling the breadlines that would soon form throughout the country, he had always harbored “anticapitalistic feelings,” and in 1967–68 he moved to a much stronger expression of his sentiment that the agitation for civil liberties had to be more closely intertwined with struggles to effect a radical distribution of economic and social entitlements.⁷³ Nevertheless, it appears to be indisputably true that African American leaders, King not excepted, did not entertain far-reaching critiques of modernity, opting at most for socialist conceptions of social justice. Gandhi may have been closer to otherworldly Christian traditions of renunciation than most of his Christian admirers. Eschewing the otherworldliness of Gandhi, represented at one end in his extraordinary discipline and, at the other end, in his relentless critique of the spectacular misrule of modernity, African Americans were tethered to the pragmatism of a Gandhian grammar of dissent in its everyday operations against regimes of foreign and native oppression.

Gandhi in World History

The ascendancy of Barack Obama to the presidency of the United States furnishes the latest iteration of the globalizing tendencies of the Gandhian narrative. Unlike his predecessor, whose disdain for the practice of reading generated a mill of rumors, Obama is said to have a passion for books; and Gandhi’s autobiography has been described as occupying a prominent place in the reading that has shaped the country’s first African American president.⁷⁴ Obama gravitated from “Change We Can Believe In” to “Change We Need,” but, in either case, the slogan is reminiscent of the saying with which Gandhi’s name is firmly, indeed irrevocably, attached: “We Must Become the Change We Want To See In the World.” This quote graces Gandhi T-shirts, it adorns banners flown at political demonstrations, and it even appears as an inscription on a statue of Gandhi unveiled in the town of Skokie, Illinois, a few years ago.

As I have elsewhere argued,⁷⁵ even overseas Indians who are inclined to disown Gandhi as something of a relic from an earlier age have understood that the name of Gandhi carries immense cultural capital. Obama and many others have drawn upon the huge reservoir of goodwill generated by Gandhi to underscore their commitment to change, win political friends, and gain electoral votes. Delivering a message on the anniversary of Gandhi's birth last year, Obama wrote of the Mahatma: "His portrait hangs in my office to remind me that real change will not come from Washington—it will come when the people, united, bring it to Washington." Obama concluded his message with the exhortation that we must "all rededicate ourselves, every day from now until November 4th, and beyond, to living Gandhi's call to be the change we wish to see in the world."⁷⁶

The West's Gandhi is evidently one who is supremely a world-historical figure, but this Gandhi is not easily reconciled with the Gandhi who was an emphatic critic of nearly all the critical categories of modern political and humanist thought. Most political thinking in the West over the course of the last century has been riveted on the question of "rights," and it is no accident that recent political movements in the West have, in addition to the rights of the individual, a question which has been at the heart of Western political theory, vigorously asserted the rights of groups, whether defined with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or some other marker of identity. Gandhi, at least in the received view, might reasonably be seen as falling entirely within this framework. How could one possibly dispute the fact that he asserted the rights of Indians, first as subjects of the Empire, and later, after he had been transformed from a believer in the fairness of the British to an ardent noncooperator, as arbiters of their own destiny? The same Gandhi, even if he deplored attempts by the colonial state to drive a wedge between Hindus and religious minorities, was nonetheless quite certain that a democracy is to be judged by how it treats its minorities. More broadly, one can describe Gandhi as someone who initiated the modern campaigns against colonialism, racism, and xenophobia, and in this respect he can be viewed as an advocate of the right of people to live an unfettered life of dignity.

And yet, if one should thus be tempted to assimilate Gandhi into a pantheon of the champions of human rights, one would doubtless be obscuring his profound skepticism toward the discourse of rights. Rights are ordinarily claimed against the state, and those desirous of staking claims look up to the state to safeguard their rights. Yet, apart from the consideration that the state is often the most egregious violator of rights, Gandhi had little, if any, enthusiasm for the modern nation-state. This argument does not coincide with the commonly held view of him as an

Indian nationalist, but just how anomalous a figure Gandhi was even on the Indian political scene is something that has seldom been understood in the West. Indeed, Gandhi is distinct among modern political figures in decisively rejecting the narrow association that the idea of citizenship has come to have with the demand for rights and in reinstating the concept of duty. It is in South Africa, where the rights of Indians were trampled upon at every turn, where every Indian was but a coolie, that Gandhi had something of an epiphany: if he wished to claim his rights as a member of the human race, and—with perhaps more legal force—as a subject of the British monarch, he perforce had to live and act in full awareness of his duties. Much more than four decades after he had been tossed out of a train for daring to enter a first-class train cabin as a brown-skinned man, Gandhi, now immersed in a struggle with the ruler of his native Rajkot, averred that “In swaraj based on ahimsa [nonviolence], people need not know their rights, but it is necessary for them to know their duties. There is no duty but creates a corresponding right, and those are true rights which flow from a due performance of one’s duties.”⁷⁷ Attentiveness to our duties is the only true condition of our liberation—not only from oppression without, but from the more insidious and intractable servitude demanded by the ego.

We can see how far Gandhi had traveled from classical and contemporary political thinking, and it is certain that his stress on “duties” would place him at great odds with activists and observers for whom the notion of duties is not even remotely part of their political vocabulary.⁷⁸ Gandhi’s unflinching skepticism towards history furnishes an even more dramatic example of his repudiation of the liberal traditions of learning of the modern West and of the categories of thought marshaled by modern knowledge systems. “The dominant discipline in the human sciences,” the French feminist thinker Luce Irigaray remarks, “is now history.”⁷⁹ History had, however, become ascendant much earlier, certainly by the early part of the nineteenth century. When James Mill and Thomas Macaulay sought to demonstrate that Indians were not much given to rational thinking, they adduced as evidence the lack of interest in history among Indians and the sheer inability of Indians to deliver simple chronologies. If any Indian was disinclined to believe this, all that was required was to flaunt Edward Gibbon, David Hume, Macaulay, and later Leopold von Ranke before the skeptic and ask if any Indian text could even remotely meet the standards of historical reasoning that had become commonplace in Europe.

Indian nationalists wilted under this charge and set themselves to counter it with a vengeance.⁸⁰ Nationalist thought was heavily invested in the idea of history, and the commitment to history took many forms. Some began with the simple but perhaps still indisputably true proposi-

tion that history, or what survives as history, is almost always the record of the victors rather than of the vanquished; others, in what might be described as a more complex variation of this theme, attacked European writings on India as (in today's language) Orientalist. "We read books written in English by English historians," Gandhi told a gathering of some twenty-five thousand people at the Inter-Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in 1947, "but we do not write in our own mother tongue or in the national language—Hindustani. We study our history through English books rather than through the originals. That is the cultural conquest which India has undergone" (*CW* 94:221–22). For writers such as Bankimchandra Chatterjee, the task of historical reconstruction could even be attempted by the deployment of the historical novel, and similarly Indians had to be weaned away from their foolish and enervating attachment to myths. Bankim found no fault with Hindus for worshipping Krishna, but he could not contain his anxiety that the predominant Krishna of the Hindus was an ahistorical deity about whom nothing verifiable could be said with certainty. Whatever the ideological differences between armed revolutionaries, liberals, constitutionalists, Indian Tories, and Hindu supremacists, they were all agreed that an Indian history, for and by Indians, was the supreme requirement of the day. No nation could be considered free until it had authorized its own version of history; but for its narrative productions to count as history, the approbation of the West was indispensable.

Though one can speak of Gandhi's departure from the main strands of nationalist thought in numerous domains, it is in Gandhi's absolute indifference to the language and claims of history that one can witness what a lonely path he struck and how far he had distanced himself from the sensibility of the West as much as the aspirations of Indian nationalists. It would be trivial to suggest that Gandhi did not lack an awareness of the past; but had he lacked such awareness, it is far from certain that he would have viewed his ignorance as a deficiency. Gandhi's indisposition towards viewing the Mahabharata, Ramayana, or the *puranic* material as a historical record is pronounced. He wrote of the Mahabharata, in a lengthy piece dated to 1924, that it "is hopeless as a history. But it deals with eternal verities in an allegorical fashion." Describing himself as unwilling to enter into speculations about "the value of history considered as an aid to the evolution of our race," Gandhi declared: "I believe in the saying that a nation is happy that has no history. It is my pet theory that our Hindu ancestors solved the question for us by ignoring history as it is understood today and by building on slight events their philosophical structure. Such is the Mahabharata." Viewed in this light, Gibbon was clearly "an inferior edition" of the Mahabharata.⁸¹ A year later, in a short article on Sikhism, Gandhi once again affirmed:

“My Krishna has nothing to do with any historical person.”⁸² Let alone Krishna or Rama, Gandhi evidently did not even care an iota whether the historical Jesus had ever existed. All the labors of German higher criticism or the debates on the synoptic Gospels might as well have been for naught: “I have never been interested in a historical Jesus,” Gandhi explained to his fellow passengers aboard the *S. S. Pilsna* on Christmas Day 1931, and “I should not care if it was proved by someone that the man called Jesus never lived, and that what was narrated in the Gospels was a figment of the writer’s imagination. For the Sermon on the Mount would still be true for me” (*CW* 54:308).

Gandhi’s profound misgivings about history arose from a number of considerations. The nation-state appeared to him as perhaps the most pernicious form of organizing collectivities, and he saw the enterprise of history as firmly tethered to the project of the nation-state. The state produces authorized versions of the nation-in-the-making and the fulfillment of the destiny of a people in something called the nation-state is viewed as the end of history. Minorities increasingly contest the officially sanctioned narratives, each keen on ensuring that it receives honorable mention and more, and the sanctimonious pieties in which nationalist narratives are wrapped are punctured with great gusto. The nation-state can then advertize its ecumenism and commitment to multiculturalism to the rest of the world, though the nation-state is no more permissive of real dissenters than is the discourse of history. But Gandhi’s acute skepticism towards history was also a consequence of his awareness that nineteenth-century ideas about history and the inevitability of human progress were but forms of social evolutionism. Civilizations were to be assessed along an evaluative scale, and history became the template by which people were judged as more or less socially evolved. In the India of the nineteenth century, Europeans saw the remains of their own sixteenth- or seventeenth-century civilizations that could no longer be witnessed at first hand in Europe itself. Europe’s past was India’s present; India’s future was Europe’s present. History was thus not only a totalizing mode of interpreting the past that was wholly inhospitable to competing visions of the past, it was, even more ominously, a way of hijacking the future of colonized peoples. The only history that India could live out was someone else’s history.

Gandhi’s own pronounced indifference to history has been largely reciprocated by those in the West who are charged with the production, dissemination, and interpretation of knowledge. This will appear as a surprising, indeed inexplicable, statement to those who look around them and rightly perceive that Gandhi has an inescapable presence in the public imagination, popular art, the speeches of policy makers, and even, in certain ways, in the knowledge industry. It therefore becomes

imperative to ask precisely what kind of Gandhi is recalled in histories and the manner in which the shapers of opinions and the framers of knowledge have neutralized him. The idea of "world history" has found many supporters in the ranks of progressive historians, and Gandhi's place in world histories seems assured. But a perusal of such histories reveals something significant. The world histories accord a place to Gandhi as an Indian nationalist who articulated some unusual ideas of nonviolent resistance, forged a mass anticolonial struggle against the British, fought valiantly to bring peace to communities torn apart by violence, and agitated for various social reforms. World histories, in other words, have room for a sanitized Gandhi, the apostle of peace and the principal architect of a nonviolent movement to liberate India from the shackles of colonial rule, but such histories are deafeningly silent on Gandhi's withering critique of modernity, his condemnation of urban industrial civilization, his strictures against Western systems of education, or his frequently expressed concern that the encroaching materialism of the West was poised to destroy the fabric of human societies. Only a few public intellectuals of the first rank have dared to embrace Gandhi as more than just a practitioner of nonviolent resistance, and it is the rare thinker in the West who, recognizing that a narrowly political conception of satyagraha cannot describe the worldview that animated Gandhi, has seriously sought to understand Gandhi's resounding critique of the entire edifice of modern social systems.⁸³

There is, in fact, an unremitting hostility to Gandhi in India as much as in the West—among feminists, Marxists, and modernizers, to name just a few constituencies.⁸⁴ It is not necessary, at this juncture, to enter into the various reasons why Gandhi has had detractors, but representations of him as a resolute antimodernist who had quaint if not repulsive ideas about sex, loathed modern medicine, and hearkened back in countless ways to some highly idealized view of India as a cluster of autarchic village republics have not been uncommon in the West. Gandhi, in turn, remained visibly unimpressed by the high culture of the West, and, as I have argued, his sympathies lay with dissenting, marginalized, and peripheral philosophies, movements, and figures. His singularity in that respect, within the flowering of Indian political culture that took place from the time of Rammohun Roy until nearly the advent of independence, is also vitally significant. Alone among his contemporaries who engaged seriously with the modern West, Gandhi was left entirely unfazed by its accomplishments. An exchange that transpired in 1928 gives some insights into his thinking: when asked how he would reply to a claim made in the *Times of India* that over the last one hundred years "every one of the Indians who have achieved anything worth mentioning in any direction was or is the fruit, directly or indirectly, of Western education,"

Gandhi averred that he regarded “the influence of Western culture” as having had an adverse effect insofar as it “interfered with the full effect that the best in Eastern culture might have produced” on notable Indians. As “an Anglicized, denationalized being,” having little knowledge of, and “even despising,” the “habits, thoughts and aspirations” of the masses, Gandhi suspected that he would have been worthless to them, and he feared that a considerable portion of the nation’s energy had been consumed in staving off the encroachments of a foreign culture which, whatever its merits, was unsuited for Indians “whilst they had not imbibed and become rooted in their own.” While ready to acknowledge his own debt to Western culture, Gandhi nonetheless wished to impress upon the reader that, in his own words, “whatever service I have been able to render to the nation has been due *entirely* to the retention by me of Eastern culture to the extent it has been possible” (*CW* 42:207).

Though the authorized version of the nation-state’s history sees Gandhi as the culmination of the Indian renaissance that commenced with Roy, the liberal politician and Gandhi’s adversary, C. Sankaran Nair, was much closer to the truth when he observed that “there is scarcely any item in Gandhi’s programme which is not a complete violation of everything preached by the foremost sons of India till 1919.”⁸⁵ Outside India, Gandhi’s sin was seen in an even graver light: alone, or perhaps nearly so, of all the major figures formed by Western education, he refused his allegiance to the knowledge systems of the modern West. Even the segment of the Western academy, which over the last two decades has been most heavily invested in critiques of colonialism, xenophobia, political repression in the nation-state, and social injustice, has had little time for Gandhi, and the leading figures of postcolonial criticism in the West, other than some Indian academics, have barely been able to spare more than a footnote or two for Gandhi. It may be that in the years to come, the West will find yet more sophisticated ways to render Gandhi an object of study, but there is almost no sign yet that Gandhi’s insights are being brought to bear upon the study of the very precepts and epistemological foundations of economics, anthropology, sociology, or the other disciplines. There is even, to take one instance, a mini-industry of sorts on Gandhian economics, but perish the thought that any professional economist would ever deploy Gandhi to critique Paul Samuelson, Kenneth Arrow, or Lawrence Summers. The most enduring aspect of Gandhi’s critique of the West, then, is surely his understanding that oppression will increasingly be exercised through the categories of modern knowledge. “Do or Die,” he urged Indians as he pushed forth his 1942 “Quit India” movement; and to this mantra we might add another Gandhian insight: think locally, act globally. In this last thought is encapsulated the gist of Gandhi’s engagement with the West: he embraced it, as he embraced

any part of the world, as the arena of action for any person endowed with a moral conscience, but he was justly suspicious of the view that all our universalisms are to be derived from the West.

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NOTES

1 "According to the teaching of Mahomed," Gandhi was to write of the civilization of modern Europe in 1909, "this would be considered a Satanic Civilization," *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958), 10:261. He affirmed again in 1920, "It is my firm opinion that Europe today represents not the spirit of God or Christianity but the spirit of Satan. . . . The last War however has shown, as nothing else has, the Satanic nature of the civilization that dominates Europe today. Every canon of public morality has been broken by the victors in the name of virtue" (*ibid.*, 21:241). (Hereafter, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* will be cited as *CW* followed by volume and page number; the entire set is available online in PDF format at <http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/cwmg.html>).

2 E. F. Schumacher has described, in his book *Good Work* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1979), seeing a film with documentary footage of Gandhi in Britain where the question was posed to him—except that Gandhi was asked, "What do you think of modern civilization?" Schumacher suggests that the correction to the received version makes for a more forceful argument, but I am not certain that I am inclined to agree with him. Gandhi's views on "modern civilization" are well known and leave little room for ambiguity; but he had, as my paper seeks to establish, a much more ambivalent relationship with the West. My view, moreover, is neatly summed up in the punch line in John Ford's classic Western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend." Leela Gandhi, while accepting the version proposed by Schumacher, refers to the story as "journalistic legend." See Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 1999), 22.

3 Robert Payne, *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi* (1969; New York: Smithmark, 1995), 416. Gandhi and the workers in Lancashire may have had altogether different expectations: if Gandhi attempted to elicit their sympathies for the struggle for freedom from British rule, they may have labored under the impression that a meeting with Gandhi would help in restoring the trade. The euphoria of that visit, one might well argue, did not last long; as the *Darwen News* editorialized on October 3, 1931, "Mr. Gandhi has seen Lancashire, and Lancashire has seen Mr. Gandhi, and there is the end of it" (p. 4). The matter is still more complex, and Gandhi recognized what many in the mills failed to acknowledge: the machinery in use in England's mills was shockingly outdated and the textile mills of western India were, by comparison, models of good management.

4 Joseph Kupfer, "Gandhi and the Virtue of Care," *Hypatia* 22, no. 3 (2007): 1–21.

5 When, for example, Gandhi visited the writer Romain Rolland in Switzerland in 1931, nudists, peasants, crazies, and vegetarians were among those who brought milk to the "King of India." See David James Fisher, *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2003), 133.

6 Mahatma Gandhi, "Food Faddists," *Young India*, June 13, 1929, in *CWMG* 46:105.

7 John Newsinger, *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire* (London: Bookmarks, 2006).

8 Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2002).

- 9 Satyagraha, a term coined by Gandhi, is derived from *satya* (truth) and *agraha* (force). It is most commonly rendered in English as truth-force, or soul-force, neither of which are perhaps the most felicitous expressions. Gandhi sought to distinguish the nonviolent resistance that he came to embrace from passive resistance. He elaborates upon the distinction in "Satyagraha v. Passive Resistance," chapter 13 of *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1928; Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1972), 103–7.
- 10 See Gilbert Murray, "The Soul as It Is, and How to Deal with It" *Hibbert Journal* 16, no. 2 (Jan. 1918): 201, cited by Raghavan N. Iyer, *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), 126.
- 11 Cited by Stanley Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1961), 291–92.
- 12 "The man on the spot" is a widespread but little explored trope of imperialist governance: it was the rejoinder issued by colonial officials to their armchair superiors in London when they were reprimanded for harsh or injudicious conduct towards the natives.
- 13 George Orwell, "Reflections on Gandhi" (1949), in *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 4, *In Front of Your Nose 1945–1950* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1970), 523–31.
- 14 Reginald Reynolds, *A Quest for Gandhi* (New York: Doubleday, 1952), 88 n.1.
- 15 John Haynes Holmes, "The World Significance of Mahatma Gandhi" (1922), in John Haynes Holmes and Donald S. Harrington, *The Enduring Greatness of Gandhi: An American Estimate* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1982), 48.
- 16 The correspondence between Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach, a German architect who became one of Gandhi's financial patrons, is uniquely captured in *Gandhi Letters: From Upper House to Lower House, 1906–1914*, ed. Gillian Berning (Durban: Local History Museum, 1994). Some of these letters are not to be found in the CWMG.
- 17 See, for example, George Woodcock, *Gandhi* (London: Fontana, 1972), 26.
- 18 Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (1927; Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1983), 41–44 (Part IV, Chap. 18). There are numerous editions of the *Autobiography*, with different pagination; though included in the CWMG (Vol. 39), invariably it is cited as a stand-alone text. For ease of reference, I cite it as A, followed by part and chapter number.
- 19 Ashis Nandy, "From Outside the Imperium: Gandhi's Cultural Critique of the West," in *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 128.
- 20 One scholar's valiant attempt to narrate Gandhi's life and afterlife through the trope of "influence" is far from satisfactory, even if the lives Gandhi influenced and was influenced by are not without considerable interest. See Thomas Weber, *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004).
- 21 Cited by H. H. Anniah Gowda, "Non-Violent Resistance in Thoreau and Gandhi," in *Gandhi and the West*, ed. C. D. Narasimhaiah (Mysore: Univ. of Mysore, 1969), 101.
- 22 These reversed journeys have seldom been viewed in tandem: see chapter 1, "The Great Game Gone Mad," in Jeffrey Paine, *Father India: How Encounters with an Ancient Culture Transformed the Modern West* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 28–60.
- 23 Stephen Hay, "The Making of a Late-Victorian Hindu: M. K. Gandhi in London, 1888–1891," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 1 (1989): 87–91.
- 24 The lengthiest treatments of this subject are by Elizabeth T. McLaughlin, *Ruskin and Gandhi* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1973) and Kalidasa Nag, *Tolstoy and Gandhi* (Patna: Pustak Bhandar, 1950).
- 25 Cited by Naresh Guha, "Gandhi and Tolstoy: Brother Experiment in Soul-Force," in *Gandhi and the West*, ed. C. D. Narasimhaiah, 189–90.
- 26 The word "*bania*" is most often used in a pejorative way and is here used to suggest a similar kind of condescension to that implied in the observation, attributed to Napoleon, that the "English are a nation of shopkeepers."

- 27 The quotation is from Henry David Thoreau, *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1938), 249.
- 28 See, for example, Arthur Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932), which is rather dated and even hackneyed, and David H. Albert, "Thoreau's India: The Impact of Reading in a Crisis," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 125, no. 2 (1981): 104–9. More satisfactory is Alan Hodder, "Ex Oriente Lux: Thoreau's Ecstasies and the Hindu Texts," *Harvard Theological Review* 86, no. 4 (1993): 403–38.
- 29 Thoreau, *Walden*, 249. Nowhere did Thoreau engage with Indian texts in such depth as in the Tuesday chapter of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, a text with which Gandhi decidedly had no acquaintance whatsoever and that also remains unknown to most of the Indian scholars who have sought to unravel the nineteenth-century origins of American interest in India.
- 30 Henry S. Salt, *Company I have Kept* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1930), 100–1, cited by George Hendrick, "The Influence of Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience' on Gandhi's Satyagraha," *New England Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1956): 464.
- 31 Webb Miller, *I Found No Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1938), 238–39, cited by Hendrick, "The Influence of Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience,'" 463.
- 32 Qtd. in Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), 87.
- 33 Qtd. in David M. Robinson, *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2004), 86.
- 34 Gandhi, "Passive Resisters," *Indian Opinion* (26 October 1907), *CW* 7:279.
- 35 Thoreau, "Walking" (1862), paragraph 2, online at <http://www.transcendentalists.com/walking.htm>.
- 36 Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1939), 42 (hereafter cited as *HS*).
- 37 "The 1910 Banning of Hind Swaraj," *Gandhi Marg* 15, no. 2 (1993): 254.
- 38 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati Memorial Edition in 8 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1976), 4:156.
- 39 Tagore to Gandhi, April 12, 1919, in *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore, 1915–1941*, ed. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1997), 49.
- 40 Tagore in the *Modern Review* (May 1921), in Bhattacharya, *Mahatma and the Poet*, 60–61.
- 41 Bhattacharya, *Mahatma and the Poet*, 59.
- 42 Bhattacharya, *Mahatma and the Poet*, 64–68.
- 43 Romain Rolland, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Man Who Became One With the Universal Being*, trans. Catherine D. Groth (1924; New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1968), 71–92.
- 44 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Gandhi and India," *Crisis* (March 1922): 207, cited by Bill V. Mullen, "Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, and the Afro-Asian International," *Positions* 11, no. 1 (2003): 221.
- 45 Nicole A. Waligora-Davis, "W. E. B. DuBois and the Fourth Dimension," *New Centennial Review* 6, no. 3 (Winter 2007): 86.
- 46 *The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois: Selections 1887–1934*, ed. Herbert Apthekar (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1973), 1:403; also published in *Crisis* 36 (1929): 225.
- 47 Cited by Mullen, "Du Bois, *Dark Princess*, and the Afro-Asian International," 217.
- 48 Quoted in George M. Frederickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 232.
- 49 John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 54.

- 50 *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Warner, 1998), 22–24.
- 51 Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).
- 52 Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974).
- 53 ‘Interview to American Negro Delegation’ [21 February 1936], CWMG 68:238.
- 54 Frederickson, *Black Liberation*, 232.
- 55 A. Philip Randolph, “Keynote Address to the Policy Conference of the March on Washington Movement,” September 26, 1942, on the Internet at <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/aasp/chateauvert/mowmcall.htm>.
- 56 Frederickson, *Black Liberation*, 233–35.
- 57 James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: New American Library, 1985), 74.
- 58 Fred Thompson, “Gandhi’s Way Isn’t the American Way,” *National Review*, March 15, 2007.
- 59 See Timothy Foote, “The Morality of Violence,” *Time*, November 23, 1970.
- 60 Qtd. in D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 52.
- 61 D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 230.
- 62 Cited by Peter J. Ling, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* (London: Routledge, 2002), 48.
- 63 D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 230–31.
- 64 Lucy G. Barber, *Marching on Washington: The Forging of an American Political Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 2002), 106, 145.
- 65 John Sisson, head of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, as cited by D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 350.
- 66 Cited by Harvard Sitkoff, *King: Pilgrimage to the Mountaintop* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 44.
- 67 Warren E. Steinkraus, “Martin Luther King’s Personalism and Non-Violence,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar., 1973), 97–111.
- 68 Qtd. in Sitkoff, *King*, 45.
- 69 King, *Autobiography*, 132, and Sitkoff, *King*, 47.
- 70 Qtd. in Stephen B. Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: New American Library/Mentor Books, 1982), 75.
- 71 King, *Autobiography*, 356.
- 72 *Swaraj* is derived from the Sanskrit prefix “*swa*,” meaning one’s own, and “*raj*,” rule: *swaraj* is thus rendered as freedom, or self-determination. However, as Gandhi’s tract *Hind Swaraj* makes amply clear, rule over one’s self implies not only political self-determination, but also bringing the senses under the jurisdiction of the mind and exercising self-restraint.
- 73 King, *Autobiography*, 1 and 346; Sitkoff, *King*, 207–234.
- 74 Michiko Kakutani, “From Books, New President Found Voice,” *New York Times*, January 19, 2009, A1, 16.
- 75 Vinay Lal, *The Other Indians: A Political and Cultural History of South Asians in America* (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center Press, 2008), 124; see also frontispiece.
- 76 See Obama’s letter commemorating Gandhi’s day of birth, <http://www.gandhitopia.org/forum/topics/obama-on-gandhi>.
- 77 CW75:178 (13 March 1939); cf. CW97:199 (17 October 1947).
- 78 For a lengthier elaboration of this theme, see Lal, *Gandhi, Citizenship, and the Idea of a Good Civil Society*, Mohan Singh Mehta Memorial Lecture (Udaipur: Seva Mandir, 2008).
- 79 Luce Irigaray, *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community*, trans. Stephen Pluhacek (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2002), vii.

80 See Lal, *The History of History: Politics and Scholarship in Modern India*, 2nd rev. ed. (New Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005).

81 "My Jail Experiences—XI", *Young India*, September 11, 1924, reprinted in Raghavan Iyer, ed., *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 1, *Civilization, Religion, and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 187. Cf. *HS* 58.

82 "Sikhism," *Young India*, reprinted in Iyer, ed., *Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, 1: 484–85.

83 Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 103–42.

84 Lal, "The Gandhi Everyone Loves to Hate," *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 4, 2008.

85 Cited by Nandy, "From Outside the Imperium", 158. Gandhi had created a furor when, in a chance remark, he observed that Rammohun had been, in relation to the unknown authors of the Upanishads, Kabir, Guru Nanak, and the sants of India, "a pigmy" (*CW* 33:200–1).