

## NON-VIOLENCE

When a person claims to be non-violent, he is expected not to be angry with one who has injured him. He will not wish him harm; he will wish him well; he will not swear at him; he will not cause him any physical hurt. He will put up with all the injury to which he is subjected by the wrongdoer. Thus non-violence is complete innocence. Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill will against all that lives. It therefore embraces even sub-human life not excluding noxious insects or beasts. They have not been created to feed our destructive propensities. If we only knew the mind of the Creator, we should find their proper place in His creation. Non-violence is therefore, in its active form, goodwill towards all life. It is pure Love. I read it in the Hindu scriptures, in the Bible, in the Koran.

Non-violence is a perfect state. It is a goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously. Man does not become divine when he personifies innocence in himself. Only then does he become truly man. In our present state, we are partly men and partly beasts and, in our ignorance and even arrogance, say that we truly fulfill the purpose of our species when we deliver blow for blow and develop the measure of anger required for the purpose. We pretend to believe that retaliation is the law of our being, whereas in every scripture we find that retaliation is nowhere obligatory but only permissible. It is restraint that is obligatory. Retaliation is indulgence requiring elaborate regulating. Restraint is the law of our being. For, highest perfection is unattainable without highest restraint. Suffering is thus the badge of the human tribe.

The goal ever recedes from us. The greater the progress, the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory.

Therefore, though I realize more than ever how far I am from that goal, for me the Law of complete Love is the law of my being. Each time I fail, my effort shall be all the more determined for my failure. . . .

A drop of water must yield to the analyst the same results as a lakeful. The nature of my non-violence towards my brother cannot be different from that of my non-violence to the universe, it must still satisfy the same test. . . .

The political non-violence of the non-co-operator [in the civil disobedience campaign of 1920-22] does not stand this test in the vast majority of cases. Hence the prolongation of the struggle. Let no one blame the unbending English nature. The hardest "fibre" must melt in the fire of love.

passionately declares the sage of Yasnaya Polyana. Who can question the truth of what he says?<sup>13</sup>

*Gandhi's originality as a thinker and political leader appears most dramatically in his theory and practice of nonviolence. No one before in history had conceived of nonviolence and applied it to politics like him. Although Gandhi was inspired by the Hindu concept of ahimsa (literally, non-injury), as well as by Christianity and the writings of Tolstoy and Thoreau, none of these influences provided a blueprint for him to follow when he developed his conception of satyagraha. The following articles contain the basic elements in his idea of nonviolence as he formulated it in the first decade after he returned to India from South Africa. Conceptual connections between nonviolence and truth, swaraj and satyagraha, as well as a defense of nonviolent resistance as a courageous method capable of succeeding where violence must fail, appeared first in Hind Swaraj. Here they are sharpened as he applies them to the freedom struggle in India. The ancient idea of ahimsa assumes unprecedented forms.*

## ON AHIMSA

Though my views on ahimsa are a result of most of the faiths of the world, they are now no longer dependent upon the authority of these works. They are a part of my life and if I suddenly discovered that the religious books read by me bore a different interpretation from the one I had learnt to give them, I should still hold the view of ahimsa as I am about to set forth here.

Our shastras seem to teach that a man who really practices ahimsa in its fullness has the world at his feet, he so affects his surroundings that even the snakes and other venomous reptiles do him no harm. This is said to have been the experience of St. Francis of Assisi.

In its negative form, it means not injuring any living being, whether by body or mind. I may not therefore hurt the person of any wrong-doer, or bear any ill will to him and so cause him mental suffering. . . .

In its positive form, ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of ahimsa, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rule to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to me, as I would to my wrong-doing father or son. This active *Ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. . . . A man cannot then practice ahimsa and be a coward at the same time. The practice of ahimsa calls forth the greatest courage.<sup>14</sup>

I cannot be dislodged from the position because I know it. When British or other nature does not respond, the fire is not strong enough, if it is there at all.

Our non-violence need not be of the strong, but it *has* to be of the truthful. We must not intend harm to the English or to our co-operating countrymen if and whilst we claim to be non-violent. But the majority of us *have* intended harm, and we have refrained from doing it because of our weakness or under the ignorant belief that mere refraining from physical hurt amounted to due fulfillment of our pledge. Our pledge of non-violence excludes the possibility of future retaliation. Some of us seem, unfortunately, to have merely postponed the date of revenge.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not say that the policy of non-violence excludes the possibility of revenge when the policy is abandoned. But it does most emphatically exclude the possibility of future revenge after a successful termination of the struggle. Therefore, whilst we are pursuing the policy of non-violence, we are bound to be actively friendly to English administrators and their co-operators. . . .

Swaraj by non-violent means can therefore never mean an interval of chaos and anarchy. Swaraj by non-violence must be a progressively peaceful revolution such that the transference of power from a close corporation to the people's representatives will be as natural as the dropping of a fully ripe fruit from a well-nurtured tree. I say again that such a thing may be quite impossible of attainment. But I know that nothing less is the implication of non-violence. And if the present workers do not believe in the probability of achieving such comparatively non-violent atmosphere, they should drop the non-violent program and frame another which is wholly different in character. If we approach our program with the mental reservation that, after all, we shall wrest the power from the British by force of arms, then we are untrue to our profession of non-violence. If we believe in our program, we are bound to believe that the British people are not unamenable to the force of affection as they are undoubtedly amenable to force of arms. For the unbelievers, the [alternative is] . . . a rapid but bloody revolution probably never witnessed before in the world. I have no desire to take part in such a revolution. I will not be a willing instrument for promoting it.<sup>15</sup>

### MY PATH

I am conscious of the fact that the truth for which I stand has not yet been fully accepted by India. It has not yet been fully vindicated. My work in India is still in the experimental stage.

My path is clear. Any attempt to use me for violent purposes is bound to fail. I have no secret methods. I know no diplomacy save that of truth. I have no weapon but non-violence. I may be unconsciously led astray for a while but not for all time. I have therefore well-defined limitations, within which alone I may be used. . . .

I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short-violent-cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself. But my creed of non-violence not only does not preclude me but compels me even to associate with anarchists and all those who believe in violence. But that association is always with the sole object of weaning them from what appears to me to be their error. For experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence.<sup>16</sup>

### "ON THE VERGE OF IT"

I am your follower and have gone to jail under your leadership and guidance. . . . I now feel very much shaken in my faith in your reasoning and politics. I am not a revolutionary but I am on the verge of being a revolutionary. If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you may save me. . . .

What is more inhuman and terrible, rather what is more violent, to let 33 millions suffer, stagnate and perish, or a few thousand be killed [in a violent revolution]? What would you prefer, to see the slow death of a mass of 33 millions through sheer degeneration, or killing of a few hundred of people? If it is proved that by killing a few hundred, we can put a stop to the degeneration of 33 millions, will you object to violence on principle?

[Gandhi replied:] There is no principle worth the name if it is not wholly good. I swear by non-violence because I know that it alone conduces to the highest good of mankind, not merely in the next world but in this also. I object to violence because, when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent. I do not believe that the killing of even every Englishman can do the slightest good to India. The millions will be just as badly off as they are today, if someone made it possible to kill off every Englishman tomorrow. The responsibility is more ours than that of the English for the present state of things. The English

administrators and their supporters. We must love them and pray to God that they might have wisdom to see what appears to us to be their errors. It must be the prayer of the strong and not of the weak. In our strength must we humble ourselves before our Maker.

In the moment of our trial and our triumph let me declare my faith, I believe in loving my enemies. I believe in non-violence as the only remedy open to the Hindus, Mussulmans [Muslims], Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews of India. I believe in the power of suffering to melt the stoniest heart. The brunt of the battle must fall on the first three. The last named three are afraid of the combination of the first three. We must by our honest conduct demonstrate to them that they are our kinsmen. We must by our conduct demonstrate to every Englishman that he is as safe in the remotest corner of India as he professes to feel behind the machine gun.

Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Judaism—in fact religion is on its trial. Either we believe in God and His righteousness or we do not. My association with the noblest of Mussulmans has taught me to see that Islam has spread not by the power of the sword but by the prayerful love of an unbroken line of its saints and fakirs. . . .

What must we then do? Surely remain non-violent and yet strong enough to offer as many willing victims as the Government may require for imprisonment. Our work must continue with clock-work regularity. Each province must elect its own succession of leaders. . . .

We must hold the Congress at any cost in spite of the arrest of everyone of the leaders unless the Government dissolve it by force. And if we are neither cowed down nor provoked to violence but are able to continue national work, we have certainly attained swaraj. For no power on earth can stop the onward march of a peaceful, determined and godly people.<sup>19</sup>

---

*As Robert McNamara has suggested, the behavior of the civil resister matters: the more civil, the more effective. Gandhi emphasized the qualities of civil conduct in all respects, meaning that the satyagrahi must consistently show restraint, discipline, in the words of the article that follows, "good manners and humility." Intemperate and rude behavior revealed a lack of personal control, anger or "violence of the spirit," just as an absence of humility showed an arrogance of mind, a dogmatic outlook. Gandhi felt that he could not trust such attitudes under fire, and he usually required that those who accompanied him, as on the salt march, affirm that they believed in nonviolence not only as a tactic but also as a creed or way of life. Such people possessed an inner strength and firm self-discipline that would not allow them to strike back, or, in McNamara's apt words, to appear as "an uncontrolled*

*mob . . . frightening but ineffective." When Thoreau coined the term "civil resistance," he did not appear from the tone or substance of his essay to understand all the implications of that crucial term "civil," but Gandhi comprehended its manifold meanings for both the movement and its adversary, turning the concept of civility into a doctrine.*

## CIVILITY

Civility, good manners and humility—these virtues are at such discount these days that they seem to have no place at all in the building of our character. . . .

Civility and humility are expressions of the spirit of non-violence while incivility and insolence indicates the spirit of violence. A non-co-operator, therefore, ought never to be uncivil. However, the most persistent charge leveled against non-co-operators is that they lack manners and are insolent, and the charge has much substance in it. We are apt to believe that in becoming non-co-operators we have done something very great, as if a person who had done no more than pay his debt had thereby become entitled to get an address [i.e., commendation].

This lack of manners delays our victory in the struggle we are carrying on, for, as politeness disarms anger and hatred, incivility increases hostility. Had non-co-operators remained courteous towards those who co-operated with the Government, had they, instead of abusing the latter, shown respect towards them, the existing bitterness between the two would not be there and the unhappy events [riots of November 1921] which were witnessed in Bombay would not have taken place. A student who has left his Government school should not harass or abuse another who may not have left his but should try, instead, to win him over with love. He should continue to render him the same service as he used to do before. A lawyer who has given up practice should not turn up his nose at another who may not have done so, but should maintain with him the same cordial relations as before. A person who has resigned from Government service should not run down another who may not have left it.

Had we, right from the beginning, approached our task in this spirit, it is possible that we would have reached our goal by now and the country would have advanced much further than it has done. The Moderate party would not then have kept away from us.

I trust no one will understand politeness to mean flattery. Nor does it mean hiding our regard for our dharma. To be polite means to show respect towards others while clinging to our own dharma. Because I put a

vermillion mark [of Hindu faith] on my forehead, I may not sneer at another who does not do so. If I face the east when praying, I should not feel contempt for my Muslim brother who says his *namaz* [prayers] with his face towards the west. Ability to pronounce Sanskrit words correctly does not entitle me to speak contemptuously of the sounds in the Arabic language. A lover of khadi,\* while wearing a khadi cap himself, can still be tolerant of a person who wears a sola hat and love him. If a man all clad in khadi starts swearing at a person wearing garments of foreign cloth, he will be acting as the most effective propagandist of such cloth. The incidents in Bombay have not made khadi more popular. On the contrary, it now stinks in the nostrils of some.

If we, khadi-lovers, wish to see the whole of India wearing khadi, we should patiently plead with people who used foreign cloth. However much we speak against such cloth, we should display nothing but love for those who use it. The plague is a dreadful disease but we, too, are likely to catch it if we turn away from any person who has got it. We may desire the disease to be rooted out but not the patient to be killed. If we look upon wearing foreign cloth as a kind of disease, we should attend on a person who suffers from it. May not a person who wears foreign cloth look upon us as the victims of a disease? By all means, let him do so. If, nonetheless, we continue to give our services to each other, sooner or later we shall discover which of us was in error. If we do not act in this way, we shall never discover the difference between what is dharma and what is *adharma*.

Just as it is necessary for us to be courteous to those who co-operate with the Government, so those of us who are imprisoned will also have to behave with civility in the prison. It is difficult to observe jail rules and yet maintain one's self-respect. Some of these rules are naturally humiliating. For instance, we have no choice but to let ourselves be confined in a cell. We must, thus, respect the rules which apply to all prisoners. At the same time, we should firmly oppose any measure which is intended merely to humiliate us. Once we have taught ourselves to behave with courtesy, we shall instinctively know how to act in a particular situation.

Where there is egotism, we shall find incivility and arrogance. Where it is absent, we shall find a sense of self-respect together with civility. The egotist thinks too much of his body. The man of self-respect recognizes the *atman* [self], is ever thinking about it and, in order to realize it, is always ready to sacrifice his body. He who holds his self-respect dear acts towards everyone in a spirit of friendship, for he values others' self-respect

\*Homespun cotton cloth, here signifying commitment to the independence movement.

as much as he values his own. He sees himself in all and everyone else in himself,\* puts himself in line with others. The egotist keeps aloof from others and, believing himself superior to the rest of the world, he takes upon himself to judge everyone and in the result enables the world to have the measure of his smallness.

Hence, the non-violent non-co-operator should regard civility as a distinct virtue and try to cultivate it. The importance attached to it provides the measure of an individual's or a nation's culture. A non-co-operator should realize very clearly that incivility is another name for brutishness and eschew it completely.<sup>20</sup>

### THE NEED FOR HUMILITY

The spirit of non-violence necessarily leads to humility. Non-violence means reliance on God, the Rock of ages. If we would seek His aid, we must approach Him with a humble and a contrite heart. Non-co-operators may not trade upon their amazing success at the Congress [in December 1920]. We must act, even as the mango tree which droops as it bears fruit. Its grandeur lies in its majestic lowliness. But one hears of non-co-operators being insolent and intolerant in their behavior towards those who differ from them. I know that they will lose all their majesty and glory if they betray any inflation. . . .

Non-co-operation is not a movement of brag, bluster, or bluff. It is a test of our sincerity. It requires solid and silent self-sacrifice. It challenges our honesty and our capacity for national work. It is a movement that aims at translating ideas into action. And the more we do, the more we find that much more must be done than we had expected. And this thought of our imperfection must make us humble.

A non-co-operator strives to compel attention and to set an example not by his violence but by his unobtrusive humility. He allows his solid action to speak for his creed. His strength lies in his reliance upon the correctness of his position. And the conviction of it grows most in his opponent when he least interposes his speech between his action and his opponent. Speech, especially when it is haughty, betrays want of confidence and it makes one's opponent skeptical about the reality of the act itself. Humility therefore is the key to quick success. I hope that every non-co-operator will recognize the necessity of being humble and self-restrained.<sup>21</sup>

\*As noted in the Introduction, Gandhi often invokes from *The Bhagavad-Gita* this concept of the universal self.

Thoughtless disobedience means disruption of society. The first thing therefore for those who aspire after civil disobedience is to learn the art of willingly obeying laws of voluntary associations such as congresses, conferences and other bodies and similarly obeying the state laws whether they like them or not. Civil disobedience is not a state of lawlessness and license, but presupposes a law-abiding spirit combined with self-restraint.<sup>22</sup>

*The basic distinctions that Gandhi made between satyagraha and passive resistance were suggested in the Introduction. The following articles elaborate on these differences. As we have just seen, a satyagrahi should always possess civility and humility, qualities that indicated self-control and an humble approach to truth. Gandhi's fundamental position on the idea of truth, that one must always be in pursuit of it and not claim possession of it, is clear from his statement opening the next article that "satyagraha . . . excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish."*

*Gandhi characterized civil disobedience as a "branch of satyagraha," and distinguished it from noncooperation, another branch, which he conceived as a mass refusal to obey government authority. Civil disobedience, he says, should be "practiced only as a last resort and [initially] by a select few," because it implies not only a refusal to comply (a mass strike), but an active targeting and deliberate flouting of laws to disobey. These distinctions appear in articles included here on the noncooperation campaign of 1919-22 in contrast to the civil disobedience movement of 1930-31.*

*The chief contrast that Gandhi wants to make here, however, is between satyagraha and passive resistance. The latter avoids physical violence only because circumstances indicate it won't work. Not principle but expediency matters. Because nonviolence is not accepted as a creed, the resister may despise the adversary and easily give way to indiscipline or incivility. Gandhi also called this approach duragraha, action that is nonviolent in form but not in substance because it aims with flawed means at attaining a selfish goal. Hate speech or bias crimes may not be physically violent, but the harm they inflict through verbal assault constitutes duragraha.*

### SATYAGRAHA, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, PASSIVE RESISTANCE, NON-CO-OPERATION

Satyagraha, then, is literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force. It excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the

absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish. The word was coined in South Africa [in 1908] to distinguish the non-violent resistance of the Indians of South Africa from the contemporary "passive resistance" of the suffragettes and others. It is not conceived as a weapon of the weak.

Passive resistance is used in the orthodox English sense and covers the suffragette movement as well as the resistance of the nonconformists. Passive resistance has been conceived and is regarded as a weapon of the weak. Whilst it avoids violence, being not open to the weak, it does not exclude its use if, in the opinion of a passive resister, the occasion demands it. However, it has always been distinguished from armed resistance and its application was at one time confined to Christian martyrs.

Civil disobedience is civil breach of immoral statutory enactments. The expression was, so far as I am aware, coined by Thoreau to signify his own resistance to the laws of a slave state. He has left a masterly treatise on the duty of civil disobedience. But Thoreau was not perhaps an out-and-out champion of non-violence. Probably, also, Thoreau limited his breach of statutory laws to the revenue law, i.e., payment of taxes, whereas the term "civil disobedience" as practiced in 1919 covered a breach of any statutory and immoral law. It signified the resister's outlawry in a civil, i.e., non-violent manner. He invoked the sanctions of the law and cheerfully suffered imprisonment. It is a branch of satyagraha.

Non-co-operation predominantly implies withdrawing of co-operation from the state that in the non-co-operator's view has become corrupt and excludes civil disobedience of the fierce type described above. By its very nature, non-co-operation is even open to children of understanding and can be safely practiced by the masses. Civil disobedience presupposes the habit of willing obedience to laws without fear of their sanctions. It can therefore be practiced only as a last resort and by a select few in the first instance at any rate. Non-co-operation, too, like civil disobedience is a branch of satyagraha which includes all non-violent resistance for the vindication of Truth.<sup>23</sup>

### SATYAGRAHA—NOT PASSIVE RESISTANCE

The force denoted by the term "passive resistance" and translated into Hindi as *mishkriya pratirodha* is not very accurately described either by the original English phrase or by its Hindi rendering. Its correct description is "satyagraha." Satyagraha was born in South Africa in 1908. There was no word in any Indian language denoting the power which our countrymen

moment. *And if this is the correct view of freedom, our chief energy must be concentrated upon achieving reform from within.*<sup>23</sup> *National independence or "outward" freedom is just one part of swaraj, only a "means of measuring the freedom of the self within." The right aim, he says, of those "who wish to attain true freedom" should be "an improvement in the self."*<sup>24</sup> *This relates to Ashis Nandy's point that liberation ultimately demanded a contest of consciousness waged within that "had to begin from the colonized." Gandhi was that rare political leader who demanded of his followers self-examination and "reform from within."*

*This idea of "inward freedom" implies that swaraj requires a personal journey or search for self-knowledge that liberates one from the sort of fear and insecurity that fuels both a desire to dominate or to be dominated. It was the willingness of Indians to cooperate with the British raj out of fear that troubled Gandhi. "Inward freedom" implies personal liberation from such fear. Gandhi recognized that this freedom was not easily gained in any society plagued by gross inequality and exploitation, but he insisted that Indians must be held responsible for collaborating with the government. "The pilgrimage to Swaraj," he said, "is a painful climb."<sup>25</sup> *His own life can be seen as an arduous journey. As such, it can be compared with the lives of others who have suffered from racism and whose response might be viewed as a personal struggle for freedom from fear and domination. The comparison with Malcolm X suggested in the Introduction is worthwhile because their two extraordinary autobiographies portray similar paths to self-realization. Each finds a passage from emulation through separatism to inclusivity that finally transcends racial antagonisms. Gandhi and Malcolm assume almost as an obligation the personal quest that lies at the heart of swaraj.**

*This selection from Gandhi's voluminous writings on swaraj begins with the familiar theme that the goal of swaraj "is infinitely greater than and includes independence" because it means not merely "the change of government" from British to Indian rule but "a real change of heart on the part of the people." Only this can produce necessary social reforms such as abolition of untouchability, the formation of Hindu-Muslim unity, and sexual and economic equality. All these elements of swaraj can be attained solely through satyagraha. "India's freedom," he concludes, "lies only through non-violence and no other method."*

## INDEPENDENCE V. SWARAJ

I submit that swaraj is an all-satisfying goal for all time. . . . It is infinitely greater than and includes independence. It is a vital word. It has been sanctified by the noble sacrifices of thousands of Indians. It is a word

which, if it has not penetrated the remotest corner of India, has at least got the largest currency of any similar word. It is a sacrilege to displace that word by a foreign importation of doubtful value. . . .

I long for freedom from the English yoke. I would pay any price for it. I would accept chaos in exchange for it. For the English peace is the peace of the grave. Anything would be better than this living death of a whole people. This Satanic rule has well-nigh ruined this fair land materially, morally and spiritually. I daily see its law-courts denying justice and murdering truth. . . . In order to protect its immoral commerce, this rule regards no means too mean, and in order to keep three hundred millions under the heels of a hundred thousand, it carries a military expenditure which is keeping millions in a state of semi-starvation and polluting thousands of mouths with intoxicating liquor.

But my creed is non-violence under all circumstances. My method is conversion, not coercion; it is self-suffering, not the suffering of the tyrant. I know that method to be infallible. I know that a whole people can adopt it without accepting it as its creed and without understanding its philosophy. People generally do not understand the philosophy of all their acts. My ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation in which England is the greatest partner. If India converts, as it can convert, Englishmen, it can become the predominant partner in a world commonwealth of which England can have the privilege of becoming a partner if she chooses. India has the right, if she only knew, of becoming the predominant partner by reason of her numbers, geographical position and culture inherited for ages. This is big talk, I know. For a fallen India to aspire to move the world and protect weaker races is seemingly an impertinence. But in explaining my strong opposition to this cry for independence, I can no longer hide the light under a bushel. Mine is an ambition worth living for and worth dying for. In no case do I want to reconcile myself to a state lower than the best for fear of consequences. It is, therefore, not out of expedience that I oppose independence as my goal. I want India to come to her own and that state cannot be better defined by any single word than "swaraj." Its content will vary with the action that the nation is able to put forth at a given moment. India's coming to her own will mean every nation doing likewise.<sup>26</sup>

Swaraj does consist in the change of government and its real control by the people, but that would be merely the form. The substance that I am hankering after is a definite acceptance of the means and therefore a real change of heart on the part of the people. I am certain that it does not require ages for Hindus to discard the error of untouchability, for Hindus

and Mussulmans to shed enmity and accept heart-friendship as an eternal factor of national life, for all to adopt the charkha [the spinning wheel as a symbol of identification with India's poor] as the only universal means of attaining India's economic salvation and finally for all to believe that India's freedom lies only through non-violence and no other method. Definite, intelligent and free adoption by the nation of this program I hold as the attainment of the substance. The symbol, the transfer of power, is sure to follow, even as the seed truly laid must develop into a tree.<sup>7</sup>

But after all, self-government depends entirely upon our own internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds. Indeed, self-government which does not require that continuous striving to attain it and to sustain it is not worth the name. I have therefore endeavored to show both in word and in deed that political self-government, that is, self-government for a large number of men and women, is no better than individual self-government, and therefore it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule, and so as you know also, I have striven in India to place this ideal before the people, in season and out of season, very often much to the disgust of those who are merely politically minded.<sup>8</sup>

Swaraj is not going to descend on us from the heavens. It will not be received as a gift from the British Empire either. It can only be the reward of our own efforts. The very word swaraj means effort by the nation. . . . No one will be able to stand in our way when we have developed the strength to win swaraj. Everyone's freedom is within his own grasp.

There are two alternatives before us. The one is that of violence, the other of non-violence; the one of physical strength, the other of soul-force; the one of hatred, the other of love; the one of disorder, the other of peace; the one that is demonic, the other that is godly. . . . We shall reap as we sow.<sup>9</sup>

*Gandhi's conceptualization of freedom in Indian terms of swaraj did not mean that he underrated western liberal ideals of political rights or social liberties. He wrote, "Freedom of speech and civil liberty are the very roots of swaraj. Without these the foundations of swaraj will remain weak."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, his effectiveness against the British came from his argument that they did not practice in India what their own political tradition preached. Gandhi held a law degree from London, practiced British law in South Africa successfully for thirteen years, and studied thoroughly the writings of English prophets of liberty like John Stuart Mill. He could shame the British by demanding respect for their own moral values, much as Martin Luther King, Jr., called on white Americans to fulfill democratic promises of equal opportunity.*

*Gandhi elaborates basic liberties and rights in the following articles in ways that both challenge the British raj and lay the democratic foundations for a free India. His "Resolution on Fundamental Rights and Economic Changes" for the Indian National Congress, and extensive later commentary, represent a remarkable commitment to democratic values. Yet Gandhi did not stress rights at the cost of civic obligations. The last entry of this section contains an important element in this theory that "there is no duty but creates a corresponding right, and those only are true rights which flow from a due performance of one's duties." His idea of citizenship carried a strong element of social responsibility.*

## RESOLUTION ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC CHANGES

This Congress is of opinion that to enable the masses to appreciate what swaraj, as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them. In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions. The Congress, therefore, declare that any constitution which may be agreed to on its behalf should provide, or enable the Swaraj Government to provide for the following:

1. Fundamental rights of the people, including:
  - (a) freedom of association and combination;
  - (b) freedom of speech and of the Press;
  - (c) freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion, subject to public order and morality;
  - (d) protection of the culture, language and scripts of the minorities;
  - (e) equal rights and obligations of all citizens, without any bar on account of sex;
  - (f) no disability to attach to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste or creed or sex in regard to public employment, office of power or honor and in the exercise of any trade or calling;
  - (g) equal rights to all citizens in regard to public roads, wells, schools and other places of public resort;
  - (h) right to keep and bear arms in accordance with regulations and reservations made in that behalf;

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

When men become obstinate, it is a difficult thing. If I pull one way, my Moslem brother will pull another. If I put on superior airs, he will return the compliment. If I bow to him gently, he will do it much more so; and if he does not, I shall not be considered to have done wrong in having bowed. When the Hindus became insistent, the killing of cows increased. In my opinion, cow-protection societies may be considered cow-killing societies. It is a disgrace to us that we should need such societies. When we forgot how to protect cows, I suppose we needed such societies.

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

Who protects the cow from destruction by Hindus when they cruelly ill-treat her? Whoever reasons with the Hindus when they mercilessly belabor the progeny of the cow with their sticks? But this has not prevented us from remaining one nation.

Lastly, if it be true that the Hindus believe in the doctrine of non-killing and the Mahomedans do not, what, pray, is the duty of the former? It is not written that a follower of the religion of Ahimsa (non-killing) may kill a fellow-man. For him the way is straight. In order to save one being, he may not kill another. . . .

READER: But will the English ever allow the two bodies to join hands?

EDITOR: This question arises out of your timidity. It betrays our shallowness. If two brothers want to live in peace, is it possible for a third party to separate them? If they were to listen to evil counsels we would consider them to be foolish. Similarly, we Hindus and Mahomedans would have to blame our folly rather than the English, if we allowed them to put us asunder. A clay pot would break through impact, if not with one stone, then with another. The way to save the pot is not to keep it away from the danger point but to bake it so that no stone would break it. Then we shall be steeled against all danger. This can be easily done by the Hindus.<sup>19</sup>

Liberty cannot be secured merely by proclaiming it. An atmosphere of liberty must be created within us. Liberty is one thing, and license another. Many a time we confuse license for liberty and lose the latter. License leads one to selfishness whereas liberty guides one to supreme good. License destroys society, liberty gives it life. In license propriety is sacrificed; in liberty it is fully cherished. Under slavery we practice several virtues out of fear; when liberated we practice them of our own free will. . . .

Therefore, if we have understood true freedom, we will shed communal fear. Hindus and Muslims will cease to fear one another. If both could shed fear at the same time all the better; but a free spirit should not expect the help of others to cast off fear. If the other side violates justice, even then he would not seek the help of a third party. He will depend only on his own strength, and if he loses, he will try to augment his own strength.<sup>20</sup>

### HINDU-MUSLIM TENSION: ITS CAUSE AND CURE

Two years ago, a Mussalman friend said to me in all sincerity, "I do not believe [in] your non-violence. At least, I would not have my Mussalmans to learn it. Violence is the law of life. I would not have swaraj by non-violence as you define the latter. I must hate my enemy." This friend is an honest man. I entertain great regard for him. Much the same has been reported of another very great Mussalman friend of mine. The report may be untrue, but the reporter himself is not an untrue man.

Nor is this repugnance to non-violence confined to Mussalmans. Hindu friends have said the same thing, if possible, with greater vehemence. My claim to Hinduism has been rejected by some, because I believe [in] and advocate non-violence in its extreme form. They say that I am a Christian in disguise. I have been even seriously told that I am distorting the meaning of the Gita when I ascribe to that great poem the teaching of unadulterated non-violence. Some of my Hindu friends tell me that killing is a duty enjoined by the Gita under certain circumstances. . . .

What I see around me today is, therefore, a reaction against the spread of non-violence. I feel the wave of violence coming. The Hindu-Muslim tension is an acute phase of this. . . .

If I am a Hindu, I cannot cease to be one even though I may be disowned by the whole of the Hindu population. I do, however, suggest that non-violence is the end of all religions. . . .

My strength lies in my asking people to do nothing that I have not tried repeatedly in my own life. I am then asking my countrymen today to adopt

non-violence as their final creed, only for the purpose of regulating the relations between the different races, and for the purpose of attaining swaraj. Hindus and Mussalmans, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis must not settle their differences by resort to violence, and the means for the attainment of swaraj must be non-violent. This I venture to place before India, not as a weapon of the weak, but of the strong.<sup>21</sup>

For me the only question for immediate solution before the country is the Hindu-Mussalman question. I agree with Mr. Jinnah [M. A. Jinnah, a prominent Muslim leader] that Hindu-Muslim unity means swaraj. I see no way of achieving anything in this afflicted country without a lasting heart unity between Hindus and Mussalmans of India. I believe in the immediate possibility of achieving it, because it is so natural, so necessary for both, and because I believe in human nature. Mussalmans may have much to answer for. I have come in closest touch with even what may be considered a "bad lot." I cannot recall a single occasion when I had to regret it. The Mussalmans are brave, they are generous and trusting the moment their suspicion is disarmed. Hindu, living as they do in glass houses, have no right to throw stones at their Mussalman neighbors. . . . The history of Islam, if it betrays aberrations from the moral height, has many a brilliant page. In its glorious days it was not intolerant. It commanded the admiration of the world. When the West was sunk in darkness, a bright star rose in the Eastern firmament and gave light and comfort to a groaning world. Islam is not a false religion. Let Hindus study it reverently and they will love it even as I do. If it has become gross and fanatical here, let us admit that we have had no small share in making it so. If Hindus set their house in order, I have not a shadow of doubt that Islam will respond in a manner worthy of its liberal traditions. The key to the situation lies with the Hindu. We must shed timidity or cowardice. We must be brave enough to trust, all will be well.<sup>22</sup>

## HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

Everybody knows that without unity between Hindu and Mussulmans, no certain progress can be made by the nation. There is no doubt that the cement binding the two is yet loose and wet. There is still mutual distrust. The leaders have come to recognize that India can make no advance without both feeling the need of trust and common action. But though there is a vast change among the masses, it is still not a permanent quantity. The Mussulman masses do not still recognize the same necessity for swaraj as

the Hindus do. The Mussulmans do not flock to public meetings in the same numbers of the Hindus. This process cannot be forced. Sufficient time has not passed for the national interest to be awakened among the Mussulmans. Indeed it is a marvel that whereas but a year ago the Mussulmans as a body hardly took any interest in Congress affairs, all over India thousands have registered themselves as members. This in itself is an immense gain.

But much more yet remains to be done. It is essentially the work of the Hindus. Wherever the Mussulmans are still found to be apathetic, they should be invited to come in. One often hears from Hindu quarters the complaint that Mussulmans do not join the Congress organizations or do not pay to the Swaraj Fund. The natural question is, have they been invited? In every district Hindus must make special efforts to draw out their Mussulman neighbors. There will never be real equality so long as one feels inferior or superior to the other. There is no room for patronage among equals. Mussulmans must not feel the lack of education or numbers where they are in a minority. Deficiency in education must be corrected by taking education. To be in a minority is often a blessing. Superiority in numbers has frequently proved a hindrance. It is character that counts in the end. . . .

To my Mussulman friends I would but say one word. They must not be irritated by the acts of irresponsible or ignorant but fanatical Hindus. He who exercises restraint under provocation wins the battle.<sup>23</sup>

As soon as I heard that the Hindus and Mussulmans of Nellore were at sixes and sevens, I thought of coming and remaining in your midst for some time. I wanted to know who those Hindus and who those Mussulmans were who would rather quarrel amongst themselves and retard the attainment of swaraj. . . . I have not come here to judge between my Hindu and Mussulman brethren. But as an expert on Hindu and Muslim unity, I propose in all humility to place, for your consideration and acceptance, certain fundamental principles on which, and on which alone, such a unity can remain everlasting. As a *Sanatana* Dharma Hindu, feeling for my own faith, hoping that if the Faith was on its trial, I would be found in the front rank to give my life for its sake as a *Sanatani* Hindu, I wish first of all to address myself to my Hindu brethren, and would say: "If you would live in amity and friendship with the Mohammedan countrymen, the only way you can do so is never on any account to put a strain upon their religious fervor and always yield to them even though you may consider that their demands are unreasonable and unjust. But there is a condition attached

So far as Harijans are concerned, every Hindu should make common cause with them and befriend them in their awful isolation—such isolation as perhaps the world has never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnesses in India. I know from experience how difficult the task is. But it is part of the task of building the edifice of swaraj. And the road to swaraj is steep and narrow. There are many slippery ascents and many deep chasms. They have all to be negotiated with unflinching step before we can reach the summit and breathe the fresh air of freedom.<sup>37</sup>

*Gandhi consistently featured the "uplift of women" in his program of social reforms. The political advantages of this became painfully obvious to the British government as women participated actively in civil-disobedience campaigns. But the aim of women's emancipation was part of a broader effort that went beyond politics. Gandhi believed that at every level of national development, the country must draw on the energy and ability of its female population. He had begun this cause in South Africa, arguing as early as 1907 for women's education. "Indian men," he declared then, "have deliberately kept their women backward," and "if this state of affairs continues, India will remain in its present abominable condition even if she were to secure all her rights from the British Government."<sup>38</sup> Thirty years later, after mobilizing millions of women as nonviolent resisters in successive satyagrahas, Gandhi spoke before the All-India Women's Conference, declaring that swaraj and "the progress of India in all directions [are] impossible" without the advancement of women: "When woman whom we call abala [weak] becomes sabala [strong], all those who are helpless will become powerful."<sup>39</sup>*

*The first entry that follows, "Untouchability, Women and Swaraj," indicates the connections in Gandhi's thought among essential social reforms and how swaraj depends on the "inward growth" necessary to tackle these problems successfully.*

## UNTOUCHABILITY, WOMEN AND SWARAJ

The question of breaking down the feminine prejudice is most difficult. It is in reality a question of female education. And in this it is a question not merely of education of girls but it is one of the education of married women. I have therefore repeatedly suggested that every patriotic husband should become the wife's own teacher and prepare her for work among her less fortunate sisters. I have also drawn attention to the implications of the suggestion. One of them is for husbands to cease to treat

their wives as objects of their enjoyment but to regard them as co-partners in their work of nation-building. . . .

That freedom which is associated with the term swaraj in the popular mind is no doubt unattainable without not only the removal of untouchability and the promotion of heart unity between the different sections but also without removing many other social evils that can be easily named. That inward growth which must never stop we have come to understand by the comprehensive term swaraj. And that swaraj cannot be had so long as walls of prejudice, passion and superstition continue to stifle the growth of that stately oak.<sup>40</sup>

## SPEECH AT BHAGINI SAMAJ, BOMBAY

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Bhagini Samaj,

I am thankful to you for asking me to preside over this annual function of the Samaj [Women's Association]. Your president, I really feel, should be a woman, though you may seek men's help or advice in your work. The Samaj is dedicated to the noble aim of women's regeneration and, in the same way that another's *tapascharya* [self-sacrifice] does not help one to ascend to heaven, man cannot bring about the regeneration of women. I don't mean to suggest that men do not desire it, or that women would not want to have it through men's help, I merely wish to place before you the principle that it is only through self-help that an individual or race can rise. This is not a new principle, but we often forget to act upon it.

The Samaj is at present kept going by the enthusiasm of Bhat Karsandas Chitalia. I am looking forward to a time when one of you will take his place and release him from this Samaj for other work. Having dedicated his life wholly to the service of women, he will find out some work in the same field. The Samaj will come into its own when it elects its office-bearers from among its women members and gives a better account of itself than it does today. I have close associations, as you know, with both men and women, but I find that I can do nothing in the way of service to women without help from women workers. That is why I take every occasion to protest in no uncertain terms that, so long as women in India remain ever so little suppressed or do not have the same rights [as men], India will not make real progress. Hence it will be all to India's honor if this Samaj succeeds completely in its aims.

It is necessary to understand what we mean when we talk of the regeneration of women. It presupposes degeneration and, if that is so, we should further consider what led to it and how. It is our primary duty to

of the idea of predominance and subordination. The spirit of democracy is not a mechanical thing to be adjusted by abolition of forms. It requires change of the heart. If caste is a bar to the spread of that spirit, the existence of five religions in India—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism—is equally a bar. The spirit of democracy requires the inculcation of the spirit of brotherhood, and I can find no difficulty in considering a Christian or a Mohammedan to be my brother in absolutely the same sense as a blood brother, and Hinduism that is responsible for the doctrine of caste is also responsible for the inculcation of the essential brotherhood, not merely of man but even of all that lives.<sup>67</sup>

## DEMOCRACY AND NON-VIOLENCE

Q. Why do you say, "Democracy can only be saved through non-violence?"

A. Because democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the weak. My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence. No country in the world today shows any but patronizing regard for the weak. The weakest, you say, go to the wall. Take your own case [the questioner was an American]. Your land is owned by a few capitalist owners. The same is true of South Africa. These large holdings cannot be sustained except by violence, veiled if not open. Western democracy, as it functions today, is diluted Nazism or Fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the Fascist tendencies of imperialism. Why is there the war today, if it is not for the satisfaction of the desire to share the spoils? It was not through democratic methods that Britain bagged India. What is the meaning of South African democracy? Its very constitution has been drawn to protect the white man against the colored man, the natural occupant. Your own history is perhaps blacker still, in spite of what the Northern States did for the abolition of slavery. The way you have treated the Negro presents a discreditable record. And it is to save such democracies that the war is being fought! There is something very hypocritical about it. I am thinking just now in terms of non-violence and trying to expose violence in its nakedness.

India is trying to evolve true democracy, i.e., without violence. Our weapons are those of satyagraha expressed through the charkha, the village industries, primary education through handicrafts, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, prohibition, and non-violent organization of labor as in Ahmedabad. These mean mass effort and mass educa-

tion. We have big agencies for conducting these activities. They are purely voluntary, and their only sanction is service of the lowliest.

This is the permanent part of the non-violent effort. From this effort is created the capacity to offer non-violent resistance called non-co-operation and civil disobedience which may culminate in mass refusal to pay rent and taxes. As you know, we have tried non-co-operation and civil disobedience on a fairly large scale and fairly successfully. The experiment has in it promise of a brilliant future. As yet our resistance has been that of the weak. The aim is to develop the resistance of the strong. Your wars will never ensure safety for democracy. India's experiment can and will, if the people come up to the mark or, to put it another way, if God gives me the necessary wisdom and strength to bring the experiment to fruition.<sup>68</sup>

One thing is certain. If the mad race for armaments continues, it is bound to result in a slaughter such as has never occurred in history. If there is a victor left the very victory will be a living death for the nation that emerges victorious. There is no escape from the impending doom save through a bold and unconditional acceptance of the non-violent method with all its glorious implications. Democracy and violence can ill go together. The States that are today nominally democratic have either to become frankly totalitarian or, if they are to become truly democratic, they must become courageously non-violent. It is a blasphemy to say that non-violence can only be practiced by individuals and never by nations which are composed of individuals.<sup>69</sup>

Q. Would you kindly give a broad but comprehensive picture of the Independent India of your own conception?

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbors or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labor.

This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living Force which inheres every other force

known to the world and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labor and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labor has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place.<sup>70</sup>

---

*The metaphor of the "oceanic circle" where, beginning with the individual, each entity sacrifices itself for the good of the larger unit, should not disguise the importance of the person in Gandhi's thought. For all of its attention to forms of social organization, Hinduism is profoundly individualistic in the sense of recognizing, above all, the sanctity of self-realization. Gandhi followed this emphasis in his thought. In a reply to a letter from a nephew, he discussed in detail personal questions concerning "the cause of our bondage as well as of our freedom," and then concluded with this wisdom: "I hope I have*

---

*replied to all your questions. Please do not carry unnecessarily on your head the burden of emancipating India. Emancipate your own self. Even that burden is very great. Apply everything to yourself. Nobility of soul consists in realizing that you are yourself India. In your emancipation is the emancipation of India."<sup>71</sup>*