

## Chapter 4

### The Imperative of Critical Transcendence: Reading M K Gandhi

#### 4.1 Engaging with the main concerns of Gandhi's Political Thought

Any account of Gandhi perplexes the researcher as much as the reader, be it his followers, opponents, co-*satyagrahis*, witnesses, and recipients of history bogged down by narratives to which we all contribute one verse at a time.<sup>1</sup> This emotion of *vemödalen*<sup>2</sup> seems to consume one so much that we seek originality in the content of thinkers. Gandhi writes very consciously to perhaps claim how the 'novelty' of his thought is in reality not different from what is already known or has already been told, and these associations made to describe him, may not be relevant to the very thought itself. The novelty perhaps lies in the practice of it, making its participants both culpable and beneficiaries of such thinking. "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills".<sup>3</sup> There are indeed many Gandhis that one could see operate through varying contexts. This and many other instances allow one to engage with the Gandhi that associates thinking with an activity pertinent to the comprehension of oneself and one's surroundings. The current study which purports to engage with, in the least, some of the many Gandhis that time has produced, submits in all humility the inability to comprehend the extent to which Gandhi has been able to steer the Indian imagination.<sup>4</sup>

The inconsistencies with which Gandhi constructed and maneuvered his ideas and values have been used to sometimes blanch him as a significant contributor to the conception of the political. This understanding of the political does not seem to neatly fit into any of these existing categorizations and that makes it adequately difficult for anybody to make sense of the nature of his thought. When one looks at thinkers from the point of view of analyzing their thought, this tendency to get these thinkers historicized and branded within certain discourses feels stronger. The need to escape this does not mean eliminating the possibility of categorization. But it does emphasize so much on the chances and opportunities one gets, in order to theorize and recontextualize to the time and needs of the day. These require inconsistencies to be expected and explored. The inconsistencies are welcome and important as Gandhi was one such person who delved into them. Many scholars have written and commented extensively on these inconsistencies from time to time.<sup>5</sup>

“I must admit my many inconsistencies. But since I am called *Mahatma* I might well endure Emerson's saying that foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of the little minds. There is, I fancy, a method in my inconsistencies”<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi never quite obeyed. He was the disobedient Indian that transformed disobedience into a form of civility. His civility was hinged upon a deep-seated significance given to an individual's self-respect. This was the struggle he began with and weaved within the realization of the civic consciousness of the masses craving not only independence from the colonial rule, but also realising the essential nature of freedom as humans. Disobedience did not stand contra obedience. It stood against the bounds drawn by servility and Gandhi, under the rich religious/cultural influences of various traditions and people he was exposed to, did not believe in servility as an ingredient of obedience. This, undoubtedly, came with conditions and was not the same for all. One could raise enormous criticisms against Gandhi's preaching and his practice of it when the question of women, caste, and gender are brought into the picture.<sup>7</sup> The key to enhancing radical self-determination was to be explored through an engaging and relentless process of questioning. Gandhi invites everyone to adopt his technique of engaging with one's own self and others. There is a certain normative commitment that Gandhi holds on to amidst the growing contextual visibility of ideologically religious and fundamentalist notions of the self that continued to exist as one of the many popular dominant discourses of his time. His contemporary narratives easily found presence in structural and instrumental identifications that were rooted either in the modern state, nationalism, religion, or all of them. Gandhi's discomfort, as well as suspicion lay in this commitment to 'ends' that generally thinkers persisted on.<sup>8</sup> His commitment to the 'means' shuffles the dynamics of activism and thinking that was popularly considered legitimate and fruitful due to its commitment only to the ends.

In the same vein, one could safely say Gandhi fought against many dominant persistent emotions of his time, such as the ones of conformity and complacency. The emotion of the need to be just while being overcome by the pangs of remorse, on many occasions, happens when the event unfolded is over or is sustaining the future course of events along those lines; that did not provide insight for one to engage with it at the risk of questioning it. We seek to establish ourselves in a secure manner within the existing narratives and the ones who are able

to do that tactfully, function as the paragons of Truth. The legitimate authority for such line of thought and action is immensely gathered from the annals of history, to which Gandhi vehemently opposed.<sup>9</sup> Such truths are perfected and systematically defined in the works of thinkers such as VD Savarkar, MS Golwalkar and the like.<sup>10</sup> Such a consolidation of the need to succeed and find this 'Truth', amidst a growing turmoil hinders one's possibilities of processing the 'hurt'.<sup>11</sup> This is the capacity that Gandhi advised individuals to cultivate and process, which would require one to non-conform when needed. This is also evident in the following quote by Gandhi, "We have hitherto said nothing because we have been cowed down, but you need not consider that you have not hurt our feelings by your conduct. We are not expressing our sentiments either through base selfishness or fear, but because it is our duty now to speak out boldly. We consider your schools and law courts to be useless. We want our own ancient schools and courts to be restored."<sup>12</sup> Conformity becomes the deciding order of the day and constantly supplies fodder for legitimacy in people's lives, which also in certain ways mar the chances of people to overcome their hurt. Hence, a social transformation would mean creating space for one to experience the awareness of the 'lack' that exists in conformism.<sup>13</sup>

For conformist politics, the notions of the political and social are clearly fixed and determined. Such a modern distinction that is not only created but legitimized over some time then contributes to our understanding of how a society should be.<sup>14</sup> In fact, all 'political' discussions are then attributed to bolstering this notion of such a pre-definable political, and increasingly fixing the normative commitments it carries viz a viz its relation with the people in the society. For instance, William E. Gladstone's account of the moral state suggests such a syndrome along the above lines, where the state that appears to have broken from the church has in reality engulfed it to effectually transfuse its morality through the new modern instrument known as the modern state.<sup>15</sup>

Gandhi's disobedience marked the possibility of a complete subversion of such a political. This is elaborated through the exploration of some of the following values that are attributed to Gandhi's approaches such as courage, *Ahimsa*, adherence to *Satya*, capacity to perform *Tapas*, and the like.<sup>16</sup> This offered ample space for one to explore Gandhi within many existing conventional narratives and look into how his contributions could be placed or understood

within their interplays, the interplay between Politics and the Political, Public and the Private, Religion and Nation-State, Community and the Individual. The purpose as has been elaborated in the thesis is to figure out how Gandhi looked at the relationship between Religion and Nation-State, from the trope of violence. Some of the major concerns present in Gandhi's thought keeping in mind the aforementioned scope of the current study is elaborated further in the following sections.

#### **4.1.1 The Death of the Political?: The Politics of Morality in Gandhi**

“For had he not once written to the poet Rabindranath Tagore many years ago that a poet should lay down his lyre when the house is in flames and associate himself in work with the famishing millions of his countrymen?”<sup>17</sup> The political struggle for Gandhi required a sense of belongingness that had to be internally created and nurtured into existence as if one's life depended upon it. One had to harbor a spiritual personal connection with that of such a cause for the community. Such moral obligations could be inculcated but had to be inwardly generated in order for a sincere relationship of belongingness to happen for fellow people. This inward generation and nurture of a ‘spiritual’<sup>18</sup> connection laced with the anti-colonial cause was what Gandhi considered as his religion.<sup>19</sup> More significant than the anti-colonial cause was the scathing critique of modernity that he presented as being the larger cause behind most of the troubles, civilization had us endure.

Along these lines, Gandhi goes on to reiterate this fundamental question which was asked once by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, “What makes India a subject nation?”<sup>20</sup> Gandhi says moral failure is the answer, not due to a lack of cultural ingredients in India, but due to the unabashed subsuming of ones' own selves by the Indian populace amidst the glitters of modern western civilization. The gruesome image of these civilizational hierarchies is exposed in the following lines penned by Gandhi in the *Hind Swaraj*. “It is not the physical presence of the English nation that subjects Indians, but it is the civilization which does so. Indeed, as long as Indians continue to harbor illusions about the 'progressive' qualities of modern civilization, they will remain a subject nation. Even if they succeed physically in driving out the English, they would still have 'English rule without the nation: it is a civilization which subjects.’”<sup>21</sup> Such a lamentation in Gandhi's thought makes it immanent for one to investigate into the ways

in which Gandhi entrusts so much responsibility to religion in transforming the 'subject nation' status that India was given by the colonizers, as by many Indians to themselves.<sup>22</sup>

Gandhi's position on this front is his complete non-adherence to the apologetic and regretful picture of the Indian subcontinent that was brought about in the writings of the thinkers such as Rammohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, V.D. Savarkar, and the likes, all for different reasons. He also establishes a scathing critique of the Nehruvian position which laid emphasis on the nation-state that he imagined should be foundationed on the principles of science and not religion, which will provide a new vision to the new India composed of new people.<sup>23</sup> According to Gandhi, India will not succumb to a deterioration of its own composition or 'backwardness'<sup>24</sup> if the movement is towards the past. The movement towards the past, here, indicates the movement towards religion and using religion today to help constitute this 'people' and the fraternal bonds amongst the people. According to Gandhi, such a movement towards the back or the past which dominantly appeared as an indicator of regression amongst many of his contemporaries<sup>25</sup> fails to put to use this framework of a historically legitimate past to a fuller substance in contemporary times.

Within this framework of historical legitimacy that many a thinker drew from in his times, there is a penchant for this modern historically and colonially approved framework of progress and civilization going unquestioned. Such a civilization becomes nothing less than a disease for Gandhi, for the absence of any space that allows for nonconformism within its structure, content, and application. It is indicative of the pathology that has crippled mankind with this blind acceptance and adoration for the ways of living of the colonial master, achieving which, is considered to be the marker of progress.<sup>26</sup> Such a definition of progress, of the perception of culture, and of the meanings of development and welfare, is problematic to the core in the sense that it strips people out of the vestige of a sense of freedom to carve out their lives on their own terms. Nehru uses science in order to achieve this ideal, which Gandhi completely alters and replaces with religion.<sup>27</sup> Therein also lies another important contribution which is merging the political concerns of his times and his pasts in this project of a new reconstruction of the political thereby using religion to merge the otherwise static political with the ever-changing politics and bringing both under each other's scrutiny.

Gandhi's preoccupation with religion offers a deeper perspective that may be associated with Rabindranath Tagore's views that, unlike the West, the East was fundamentally socially oriented.<sup>28</sup> Prathama Banerjee, in her account of the difficulty of social being, does try and read Gandhi and other thinkers in the context of such an emerging state-society relationship. In her analysis, the transformation of the *Samaj* into Society took place not only with the colonial presence and advocacy of the modern state supremacy but due to the anti-state agitation and this also demarcated the spaces of the political and the social gradually. Anti-colonial responses ranged around a heavy critique of the social spaces that marred any possibilities of the modern western liberal notions to be formed in India. This, when coupled with nationalism, did lead the anti-colonial response towards a primacy for the political over the social, which again fitted really well with the nationalist project. Even though Gandhi, as has been extensively studied by Christopher Bayly in *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*,<sup>29</sup> may have contributed to such an anti-politics rhetoric; what one could decipher through his scathing critique of the modern western nation-state formation at a time when the historical legitimacy of the colonial consciousness was dominant, is that Gandhi merges the social into the political and hinges the future of the latter in the hands of the former. However, such a society was not sociable nor had it already achieved its sociability. It was gender-biased, caste-ridden, communal, and witnessed rampant divisiveness through centuries, but it did have the presence of different kinds of vulnerable subjects.<sup>30</sup> These subjects which were internally divided, ossified within hierarchical order of caste and ethnicity, were legitimately backed by their respective religions and cultural practices. Altering the nature of the subjects meant changing the nature of the political and understanding politics in a different light as compared to how it was perceived uni-dimensionally within the ambit of a nationalist struggle against colonial rule.

Gandhi relying upon religion in this sense makes so much meaning in so far as using the very source that legitimized or did not change the divisive practices within the society, and converting into the site that would negotiate with and challenge the basis of such a legitimacy. Gandhi's predilection for hinging upon religion to guide politics completely subverts the then prevalent discourses of his times which sought succor in the imagination of a new state or a new nation bound on certain principles, popularly realized within the narratives of nationalism and/or fraternity.<sup>31</sup> This anxiety of falling back on religion and changing the nature of its political presence in the lives of people with the sole intent of crafting an alternative political

which was centred away from the state and perhaps more around people<sup>32</sup> is captured in the following passage.

“Constitutional demands, as they are understood in liberal political theory, are the essence of non-violent politics; as is well known the great early propounders of liberal democratic thought conceived and still conceive of constitutions and their constraints on human public action as a constraint against tendencies toward violence in the form of coercion of individuals by states and other collectivities, not to mention by other individuals. So why did Gandhi, the prophet of non-violence, think that the Indian people, in their demands for greater self-determination, needed more than constitutional demands?”<sup>33</sup>

Gandhi wants more because he saw the possibility of this getting ossified into a space that may look at every act of questioning the constitution as an activity of questioning its own legitimacy. And that could be easily branded as a means to disrupt the stability which had been temporarily achieved through struggles and the greatness of political institutions that are powerful. This could be targeted and branded as an act of violence, and hence could have been criticized by society. Therefore, dialoguing for constitutional demands makes it more legitimate for the political structures to contribute substantively to society. Such legitimacy, for Gandhi, was rooted in a society that is grounded on religion and committed to the paths of Ahimsa and Satya.

The vulnerabilities and the insecurities of a subject getting transformed into the passive strength of the people through a critical dialogical process indicated the beginning of a departure for India from the western modern structural bondage. Therefore, such an establishment of the civil kind which is essentially hinged on disobedience cannot happen only with the establishment of a liberal order through the constitution, but by sustaining the constitution's commitment to liberty, equality, social justice, dignity, integrity, and fraternity through a process. This 'agonism' is good for society, as it does not preconceive itself to have formed an *apriori* political, whereas it gets reinforced in the everyday routine of politics that people engage in.<sup>34</sup> Gandhi's primary contribution lies in the exposition of the everyday routine as being active participants to the understanding of the political, even in the schemas that he tried to oppose or resist, such as the nationalist discourses. His contributions, therefore, did not hinge

upon the uniqueness of the 'social' spaces that he imagined for India, but in its mundane daily presence that was already present and had to be unlocked in ways that could reimagine the existing societies beyond limitations drawn by a modern liberal state.

Towards this end of reconstituting the political, Gandhi relies upon religion, so much as an entity that is an exposé to the nature of the State wherein the former has never been or can never be devoid of a moral conception of itself which is not religious.<sup>35</sup> Such a nature of the State and its intrinsic connect with religion/culture does entail the need to emphasize and understand religion, in order to make sense of Gandhi's schema. Religion, for Gandhi, marked a special divine communion with the Divine that one could never do away with. He universalizes the application and the imperative of religion in the lives of people, even for that of a steadfast atheist or an agnostic. As Gandhi evidently mentions, 'The rankest agnostic or atheist does acknowledge the need of a moral principle, and associates something good with its observance and something bad with its non-observance.'<sup>36</sup> Atheists and proponents of secularism such as Charles Bradlaugh<sup>37</sup> along with his preoccupation with liberal individualism did not feature as opponents, to Gandhi, at all. For Gandhi, his idea of emphasizing on the presence of religion in the public space did not mean overtly brandishing the opponents of religious order into a certain category that stands opposite to religion. Gandhi, in his critique, tried to uncover the similarities in the essential nature of Bradlaugh's secularism where he claimed to be far away from religion and his own understanding of religion.<sup>38</sup> This is the pattern that one could notice in Gandhi's engagement with his rivals in their conception of religion and in presenting methods to tackle arguable claims made on the vitality and significance of religion in public space. In the light of this argument, his notions of religion did completely stand contra Jawaharlal Nehru's and Rammohan Roy's views on the efficacy of religion in shaping the nature of the public space, and thereby also their contributions to the formation of the political space, without brandishing them as opponents to the very essence of religiosity.

#### **4.1.2 Theorizing many Gandhis<sup>39</sup>**

Violence features as not just one of the important concerns for Gandhi. It forms the bedrock of all kinds of anti-colonial anxieties that the subcontinent was facing amidst the many wars the subjects had to fight. The indescribability of the extent to which one had to go to comprehend violence and deal with it, makes it evident that keeping violence central to the reading of Indian



political tradition is imperative for getting a sense of how and why the thinkers and activists behaved and thought the way they did.<sup>40</sup> Keeping in line with this larger paradigm of violence which the current thesis adopts for developing a reading of some of the select canonical thinkers of the Indian political tradition, one could safely conclude that Gandhi's predilections were many in what constituted the struggle toward transformation, for him. The deontological nature of his struggle and experiments exposed one to many Gandhis, holding onto one of the many singular aspects of praxis that is, tarnishing violence. The means he adopted were many and they all catered to this fundamental concern rooted in the problem of managing violence of all kinds. It is this turmoil that Gandhi wanted to deal with by understanding the inner spiritual; and psychological selves and trying to hone his dissenting skills every now and then. Dissent reflects the inner turmoil and the efforts taken at various levels, physical, emotional, and spiritual levels to deal with a crisis. The act of dissenting was somewhat practiced and realized by Gandhi in a way in which perhaps no other thinker could ever have practiced, and this happens in a collaborative effort with the various 'selves' that culminates in the task of knowing the Self, through overcoming oneself.

Theorizing and practicing pose extremely difficult possibilities to the practitioner. While the nonviolence–violence binary gets questioned by the disobedient and active speaking subject, nonviolence, in the absence of otherwise overt manifestations of violence, offers ways to address the hurt. In the given times, when generations after generations of misinformation and retaliation against them are bracketed into ideological weapons under the pretext of rights, identity, and justice; the flip side to that is the absence of flexibility in engaging with the method and the result of questioning. Ahimsa offers a possible fertile space according to Gandhi for exploring options while also simultaneously working out ways of managing this otherwise 'thoughtless' space of the masses.<sup>41</sup> His critical engagement with the external opens up avenues towards realizing a spiritual essence of being which he applied in the understanding of conflict, human nature, society and institutions of power that affected man in various ways. His emphasis on the method of action makes the endeavour a space for the thinking rational mind to engage in a critical –creative reconstructive understanding of the events with morality and politics sustaining each other as inseparable forces. Such is the novelty of Gandhi's conceptualization of alternative possibilities to modernity that it was received with awe. The awe, that breaks and makes conscience in spaces that harbor various kinds of violence.

Violence here does not root itself in institutions and entities that are fixed. His management of violence seeks to de-centre oneself from this whole schema of political experiences while both fixing and opening up avenues for the 'other' and leaving us to figure out which of the two happens to the Other. This is how Gandhi expounds such multiple narratives of varying concerns leaving the reader and the Satyagrahi to uncover for oneself, one's own truth. An intense conversational style in Gandhi, while I presume still goes on, provides to us a glimpse of the 'quest' that Gandhi was relentlessly engaged in and perhaps one needs to engage in today. This wonder that one experiences in the *creational* mode of thinking, is an open space, relatively open, in comparison to the absence of luxury one experiences amidst the dominant space that constantly seeks to undermine the lesser dominant narratives of its times.

The prudence of exploring the relations between Ahimsa, dissent, and creativity lies in the intellectual freedom and openness it provides for one to gather diverse meanings from dialogues. He may be categorized as a modern or post-modern thinker, but the tools he uses such as radical expressions of creativity, dissent, and nonviolent practice are all forever flexible and subjective. Just as there are multiple possible endings/beginnings to a conflict, so were there many Gandhis, and so will many Gandhis continue to exist or non-exist, one of which being the silent political Gandhi, where moral order takes any political shape when thought out as a Satyagrahi. The Satyagrahi is not a mere citizen, nor a subject of requiem within modernity, nor packaged into an ideological formation, nor identified into boundaries of thinking, yet it has the capability to encompass all experiences as the aforementioned entities. This creativity was predicated on the realization of the agent as the one that is in a time-space continuum of suffering and living. In the context of religion, I quote from Bhikhu Parekh's work, *A Very Short Introduction to Gandhi*, "Hindu concepts of *anasakti* (non-attachment) and *nishkam* karma (action without desire). His double conversion, his Christianization of an Indian concept after he had suitably Indianized the Christian concept, yielded the novel idea of active and positive but detached and non-emotive love. Again, he took over the traditional Hindu practice of fasting as a penance, combined it with the Christian concepts of vicarious atonement and suffering love, interpreted each in the light of the other, and developed the novel idea of a 'voluntary crucifixion of the flesh'. It involved fasting undertaken by the acknowledged leader of a community to atone for the evil deeds of his followers, awaken their sense of shame and guilt, and mobilize their moral and spiritual energies for redemptive purposes.

Gandhi's religious eclecticism disturbed many of his Christian and Hindu admirers, who complained that it displayed spiritual shallowness and lack of commitment and did injustice to the traditions involved. His so-called eclecticism or hybridity was really a creative synthesis, a heightened form of authenticity that sprang from his relentless search for Truth, and signified not shallowness but a sincere desire to deepen his own and hopefully other religious traditions. It also built bridges between different religious traditions and fostered the spirit of inter-religious dialogue."<sup>42</sup> This account of Gandhi's conception of the religious within the political allowed for an understanding that one did not have to 'be' to 'become'. This makes for an exercise of a creative synthesis that lacked a telos. This creative act found expression in an inquiry away from the rather conventional ones that have the potential to restrict the idea of the political as something that is distanced or rooted in a fixed understanding of the cultural.

## **4.2 Gandhi's Perspectives on the Theologico- Political**

Unlike Anthony Parel's analysis<sup>43</sup> that Gandhi produced scattered writings of his views on the State as he was not more of a political philosopher makes little sense when one looks at how Gandhi's emphasis on the social-political life of passive nonviolent resistance against the existing forms of legitimacy, is not an inane attempt at distancing himself from the project of the State. These engagements of his, appear more sensible in the light of continuously creating a comprehensive perception regarding the intimidating presence of the State: this State which has been looked upon by many of his contemporaries as the paradigmatic game-changer of India's politics. If one applies Gandhi to studying Gandhi, one might want to place his views in the light of what he *does* when it comes to the question of the legitimacy of the State, more than what he speaks about it. Hence, even though an analysis of the formal political structure of the State remains largely absent in Gandhi's tropes, as Anthony Parel quotes, the State becomes woven into the larger project of defining life and hence features as one of the most significant structures holding legitimate claims getting challenged and theorized by Gandhi.<sup>44</sup>

Even when the State looks irritable to Gandhi, his endeavours invariably suggest a possibility of exploring the scope of its nature as well as that of the political, because of it being one of the most manifested institutions rooted in the history of the political and of knowledge in

general. The State, which Gandhi is suspicious of is intimately connected to history. This is the history, that has explicitly documented only instances of violence. The State's intimate connection with history is testimony to the role the colonial enterprise entrusted in the establishment of a State and its perpetration of a violent and exploitative endeavour. Hence, in Gandhi, one finds a space within the political to tease out multiple opportunities for people to question its legitimacy, as the legitimate roots are not located in history. However, one is left to comprehend the exact locations of these sources, as Gandhi admits the actual site of his operations are these informed experiments he carried out. Within the ambit of history, due to its dubious nature, a State being a paragon of legitimacy does not remain secure about its own legitimacy, as it sought consistent and perfect validation from various sources constantly to sustain itself, especially from the historical past. Such a state and its need for consistency and wait for acceptance and presence, hinges upon nationalist, fraternal, sentimental, and religious-nationalist narratives in the meanwhile, to restore its legitimacy.<sup>45</sup>

Gandhi's adherence to a strong sense of fraternity was not limited to the admiration of his contemporaries for the narratives sustaining nationalism and the state. While, for Gandhi, the state did not primarily fit into the aforementioned fraternal idea, due to the possibilities of it rapidly transforming into the forms such as a nation-state or a hegemonic replacement to the colonial laws, that gained legitimacy from the dominant narrative of the progressive civilization, he did believe that it must constitute in entirety the people with innumerable identities in public space, which constantly be dealt with to make sense of the political.<sup>46</sup> In Gandhi's schema of what might constitute his political, religion played a huge role as it manifested in myriad forms in the everyday lives of people,<sup>47</sup> the presence of which had so much to offer to the realm of the political as well as towards defining its purpose and nature.

Such a conception of the political was rooted in this constitution of the 'social' guided by religion. However, religion had to be used in the sense of equipping people to realize evil in spaces where there was a presence of power. 'The God resides in you'<sup>48</sup> maxim offered an understanding of the role that religion had to play in the formation of the political. This decipherability between the good and the evil, which was again substantive and value-based as is suggested literally by these words, carves out strictly the importance of religion in creating awareness amongst individuals with the techniques to constantly fight and resist any form of

evil that hampers their existence and that of others. Such a thought on religion was largely different from how it was perceived until then.<sup>49</sup>

Even though Gandhi has been criticized by the thinkers of his time of the likes of B.R. Ambedkar<sup>50</sup> for the former's failure to look at the question of caste as a political question and conveniently placing it only in the realm of the social and not the political, I claim to suggest that Gandhi, in this context may be looked at as relying upon religion and the personal spiritual elements it has to offer in comprehending the political nature of religious practices and the crystallized moral order that it creates.<sup>51</sup> Nehru, in one of his letters,<sup>52</sup> had questioned Gandhi's decision of fasting to compensate for and call out the violent practices of caste Hindus in the society, when the country was facing "more significant and larger issues" which would require Gandhi's undivided attention that was getting staggered into trivial issues as caste. For Gandhi, this was the site of the interplay between the moral and the political, as was the merger of the social and the political, and the fact that it was a political issue as much as it was a moral/social issue, is evidenced in the action that Gandhi then undertook to deal with the question of caste. Caste was one such example where the conventional existing perceptions of the social/political binary could not have been adhered to, a claim that Ambedkar relentlessly suggested.<sup>53</sup>

Reading Gandhi in this context, meant working out a strict morally uncorrupt, and a politically active conception of the self that will use *Ahimsa* to claim back as well as create one's space of legitimacy within an oppressive structure: a structure that hinges upon a fixed instrumental notion of legitimate authority in the religious practices as much as in the colonial state. Such a non-instrumentalist conception of religion and state, as well as the need for both of these entities to perceive each other's flaws, maybe the way ahead to tackle the concerns of violence. Hence, religion, for Gandhi becomes a potential political source as well as a site of exploration that could help the society towards his vision of the *Swaraj*.<sup>54</sup>

In an attempt to critique the modern western modes of thinking and living, Gandhi exhibits the imperative of becoming a *Satyagrahi* with a deep sense of the violence of one's times. The *Satyagrahi* becomes the practitioner of *Ahimsa* with the intent and purpose of conversing with and moving beyond the dominant spaces of violence as legitimized through the colonial legacy of the modern west.

Even while Gandhi raises a strong critique against the modern western influences and structural formations his treatment of these entities does not focus on creating a bracketed conception of these entities such as state, religion/ culture, and market, with fixed attributes of being violent. Conversations with violence are ongoing and perhaps should never end, and that entails these institutions to converse and conflict with each other at the behest of respective contexts. Such a confrontation allows one to read religion and nation-state as not closed instruments constantly competing for legitimacy from outside, and filling it within its own institutional apparatus. Gandhi who harbored a suspicious understanding regarding both the religion and nation-state, I claim, was able to explore an element of friendship<sup>55</sup> between the two. The shift from these institutions becoming legitimacy-seekers to entities that may contribute to tackling violence happens both in spirit as well as in practice when such confrontations are encouraged. Conciliation, here, may not be the sole aim of the practice of *Ahimsa* and *Satya*. The combination of the two ensures the reconfiguration of the political without bracketing adherence to peace as the final response in all situations. Along with violence, perhaps there is a taming of peace and conversion of peace into a mode of protest and confrontation that is ongoing and painful.<sup>56</sup> It is a process that constantly defined the political, for Gandhi. This process sought to respond to the dominant perceptions of his times propounded by his contemporaries and predecessors such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sri Aurobindo, and Lala Lajpat Rai, B.C. Pal, all of which had unleashed some of the most visible expressions of religious cultural nationalism as a trope to create and/or realize an idea of India. Gandhi, on the other hand, raised suspicions against the ghastly mutilation of the essence of religion by employing it to only form ‘traditional symbolism’.<sup>57</sup> Instead, he intended for the people to learn from religion a path that would not stand for apathy or a callous disregard and hatred spewed against other entities in society on the grounds of protecting one’s identity. For Gandhi, the visibility of the traditional symbolism had to be balanced with that of the reformist ideas by searching for the presence of nonviolent expressions that could help distinguish his methods from that of the rest, whether or not it allowed him to succeed in his tasks.<sup>58</sup> Such nonviolent expressions required a different political moral configuration to help one distinguish the practices of violence in covert forms of indoctrination and manipulation from critical modes of thinking suggested by Gandhi, and requiring one to place oneself as a politically active subject with a unique language of its own.

Through these conversations, Gandhi aimed at creating a new language of nonviolence emerging out of a profound understanding of the fragmented and widespread presence of violence in society. Gandhi's conversations and experiments with violence offer a glimpse of his modes of thinking and living which leaves open the space for developing creative modes of expression and finding voices in the present, through the language of nonviolence. This language, in no way, necessarily stands contra violence but collapses into it while affirming an identification of its own.<sup>59</sup> The realization of this language for Gandhi is crucial to his imagination of the 'I/i' in the schema of the political.

To elaborate further on this construction of the political space and the Indian imagination at large, the colonial context offers various understandings of subjecthood, which could be studied from within the Indian political tradition, as is carried out throughout the current study. According to Gandhi, colonized subjects are not passively produced by hegemonic projects but are active agents whose choices and discourses are of fundamental importance in the formation of their societies.<sup>60</sup> The Orient, used as a disparaging term many years after, in 1978<sup>61</sup>, became also the space wherein one could explore Gandhi and the possibilities of the application of the principles of nonviolence, a language different from the violent models of the colonial modern west.

Before we get into an analysis of the political in Gandhi, a contextual epithet to the entire project Gandhi dedicated himself to, shall be discussed here. For Gandhi, perhaps, this context was here to stay for a long time and was a space suspended anywhere in the future. This was evident from his remark he made in the year 1939, that given a chance he would not want to change any idea from the *Hind Swaraj* penned in 1909.<sup>62</sup> Keeping in alignment with this argument Gandhi made back in 1939, one could explore the possibilities Gandhi made for the future contexts to come, especially with respect to the gaze of the modern west over non-western societies. This dilemma is presented elaborately in Carol Breckenridge's 'Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia New Cultural Studies', through an exposition of the ways in which knowledge systems worked in order to keep the hierarchical connect between the modern west and the non-west intact and unquestionably legitimate, and as a "convenient mirror to access or admire"<sup>63</sup> the glories of the modern west.

“Suppression of aesthetic authenticity of the utopian needs of the ordinary people was the theme of Nietzsche's and Foucault's critique of western modernity. However, both failed to address the central role played by the fragmentation of value spheres in silencing the spontaneity of those who try to cultivate it in everyday life, even though both were acutely aware of the human urge for authentic and unfiltered experience of joy and suffering. Differentiated value spheres under western modernity have made that urge invisible but not extinct. The material and nonmaterial dimensions of our existence still remain closely intertwined. Pacification and depoliticization of citizens and appropriation, falsification, and exploitation of their authentic "utopian needs" still requires a massive systematic effort.... Most other critical attempts to capture this hidden contradiction of western modernity the denial of mass spontaneity (through theories of "mass culture" and "mass society"), its attempted assimilation (through the theses of pluralism, relativism, and liberal tolerance) or its quarantined celebration as deviance (with countercultural studies and practices) have also failed to see the material anchoring of the disaffections of modern life.”<sup>64</sup>

Such levels of suppression bore testimony to the immanent presence of violence in the formation of these value spheres which captured the essence of the western modernity project to its core. As elaborated by Carol Breckenridge, there is an absolute mistake made in the self-assessment done by the Occident. A logical assessment of the Orient Other/other was rather far-fetched for any possible application of reason in the analysis of their relationship. It was considered totally unimportant for the Occident to require “the cultural sophistication or the will to study the non-western world, in their own terms.”<sup>65</sup> Orientalism, thus, was not only constitutive of the Orient but also of the Occident, and “these images cannot be divorced from the political arenas in which they are produced”<sup>66</sup> Such a subject located and envisioned as part of the Orient has the support of the existing knowledge systems and political frameworks to fixate and define its nature, through the gaze of the hierarchically superior Occident. In Gandhi's schema, the scope of his political begins by rupturing this very assumption which is a politically biased and morally corrupt vision of the society marketed by western modernity.<sup>67</sup> The political that he carves out focuses on the nature of this subject which has been configured thoughtfully to sustain the nature of modern western colonial discourses.



Gandhi envisioned a thinking subject, the image of which is located in the tenebrous existence of the subject that searches for its agency and is at the edge of time, on the edges of the present, waiting to secure an understanding of life. This fleeting indistinctness of the present is accentuated by the fleeting need for survival.<sup>68</sup> Gandhi conceived of the political as something that needs to be introduced to the moral and vice versa, in this quest for survival. This was one of the first few attempts at questioning the scope of the political in modern times, which conventionally was understood as being distinct from the moral and therefore, ideally believed as entailing a certain degree of disconnection between the moral and the political. This meant that the moral infusion into politics was highlighted as the impossible and the ideal. The formation of such an ideal has had a large contribution in establishing the legitimacy of the modern infusion of the state as an entity that should lead society towards ensuring the well-being of its members. Therefore, nationalist passions which, forever, had remained a dominant value affecting and influencing people's consciousness were state-motivated and interested in projects that state invested in, in the sense that it did ensure the need to reciprocate and legitimize the reciprocation in the masses. This was carried forward through various civilizing missions<sup>69</sup> by not only leading the society essentially towards this good life, I mentioned above, but also by simultaneously defining the meanings of well-being, welfare, happiness, justice, order, freedom and the like, for the collective, which was invariably attributed to the modern state-approved definitions. Not only such a tenebrous self had to cater to the Eurocentric dominant notions of the Self, but even the Eurocentric dominant understandings of the Self was formed and sustained by the project of western modernity.<sup>70</sup>

Such formations of many kinds of selves received credibility through the colonial conquests inducing sociological transitions across colonies and producing varieties of colonial meanings and responses.<sup>71</sup> Amidst such an array of disparaging transitions happening within societies in response to the colonial conquests, one witnessed 'transitional' and 'translational' challenges within the society, where the cultural conscience was put to test amidst the growing rise of servility towards the colonial mindset.<sup>72</sup> Partha Chatterjee's understanding of the 'interstitial zone of the indeterminate'<sup>73</sup> influenced Homi Bhabha's 'vernacular in politics'<sup>74</sup>, and all of these accounts thereby offered us a glimpse of this understanding, where the vernacular loses credence in depicting the changing processes. The growing absence of the vernacular in ones' understanding of the political is testimony to the growing precedence of the colonial modern western paradigms in the formation of ones' cultural, and moral-political systems of living.

Such servility also essentially converted into the narratives of civility, legitimacy and subjecthood that allowed for the conscience of the self to be put to test in the light of the exploitation of the grotesque kinds, structural and cultural. Such cultural reciprocities occurred in the forms of assimilation, and rejection, which Gandhi predicted countless times in his writings in the *Young India*, *Harijan* and through the *Hind Swaraj*. Hence, for Gandhi, if one may put it simply, the intimate enemy<sup>75</sup> of society could have been the State and not religion. This religion in Gandhi, had a huge role to play in the formation of the political which could never be made devoid of moral questions. According to Gandhi, such a collaboration, thereby, had a greater potential to offer space for the individuals, in his political schema. These individuals would be well within the rules and regulations of a democratic order legitimized by themselves with the unnerving support of the faith that religion had the potential to provide. Adherence to religion, according to Gandhi, would require one to negotiate within the bounds, and at times, with it, thereby questioning the legitimacy of these institutional frameworks. This allows for the individual, access to religion and its practices as an escape from the worldly affairs determined and pre-conceived by the political, that is governed and perhaps engulfed by the State. However, this understanding of religion has also been questioned for not only influencing the colonial enterprise in legitimizing the state more than ever before but also restricting the scope of the 'religious'.<sup>76</sup> Religion, which remained largely apolitical or was either utilized to depoliticize public spaces, now becomes a fundamental element of the living.<sup>77</sup>

However, Gandhi was someone who explored the creative critical potential of understanding the colonized subjects as active subjects with rational individual minds/ collective minds, which also extended to his description of the colonial master himself. He trusted human rationality but above that also stressed upon the pre-eminence of moral values for which he prescribed a certain method of practice. This practice includes nonviolence, truth, and commitment to self-criticism as the basis of the proposed method of uncovering his most trusted version of human rationality that will then decide the trajectory of politics. For instance, he appreciated Tagore's question of how it was not enough to lead the country towards a *Swaraj*, if the masses ended up blindly following Gandhi.

This belaboured emphasis on nonviolence as the basis of a narrative that was an alternative to overt forms of violence became a politically legitimate and a distinguishing standpoint for Gandhi to reflect upon and respond to the colonial psyche. There is a paradox of integrity<sup>78</sup> constituting the fundamental binding essence of the concept of nonviolence, simultaneously with the alacrity with which there's disobedience in Gandhian thinking and actions. This paradoxical space allowed Gandhi to generate resistance without losing a sense of a certain vision of the political that is merged and synthesized into the understanding of the moral. This moral, Gandhi claims, and as mentioned above, was extensively drawn from religion. "All training without the culture of the spirit was of no use, and might be even harmful".<sup>79</sup> Gandhi's words in his autobiography reveal an acute sense of belongingness and rootedness in religion in particular and culture at large. This goes on to provide to him the ability to nurture a certain kind of consciousness that allows for understanding religion as infused with culture, unlike the modern forms of religion which are packaged in singular organized entities.

'Critical' processes of thinking and expression do not lend themselves so neatly to orderly treatment, but it encourages flexibility, freedom to be open-minded, and freedom from rigid categories and stereotypes.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, such modes of thinking and expression emphasize on very intense internal feedback before it is used to understand the external world. As mentioned before, this criticality for Gandhi, could never be disconnected from moral concerns. The civil and critical merge in meanings and in intent, however, Gandhi makes it stronger with the introduction of the methods of nonviolence, and the cause for which they are used, the Truth.<sup>81</sup> For instance, new political collectives which have been formed of atomized disembedded individuals who got recreated into communities across times, named as the 'fictive ethnicity'<sup>82</sup> is testimony to such critical endeavours in time. It constitutes the idea of the modern subject or the mass man; signifying the possibility of the whole in one. Gandhi's concept of the *Swaraj* encompasses the possibility of this diversity in the conception of what an individual may be like, in fragmented spaces. This demands solidarity to combine with freedom of consciousness. What then, are the parameters of such a creative expression? Is it one that allows us to either develop new methods of thinking or does it allow restricting oneself to those methods that have been passed on from generation to generation and does it mean applying safe frozen essentializations to redefine and make one's telos stronger and more concrete? How can one *creatically* think, think over the description of descriptions/ knowledge of knowledge and words of words?<sup>83</sup> Does the moral rational exercise of nonviolence make it any better

qualitatively, especially when the purpose behind the whole exercise is perhaps much more than just justifying how the action was performed? Where do those actions, which are followed unethically according to conventions, to dig out truth and for the sake of the larger good, fall? Gandhi permitted the use of violence under certain conditions because one couldn't hurt the other without going through pain. And nonviolence allowed for one to hurt oneself. It, therefore, becomes a tricky situation to draw limits to creative thinking and expression when the conscious 'other' uses nonviolence, which, in its usage may also at some point unify with the violence inflicted upon itself.

Thus, the political self and the other in Gandhi's thought are marked by a significant departure from so many existing conventions of his times. The ways in which the political was conceptualized were largely from the point of view of the supreme authority of the already legitimate state, which claimed its legitimacy from the violent evidence of the past. As was described earlier, this location of the legitimacy in the state was symptomatic also of the inclination for the modern forms of knowledge systems that were rooted in comprehending a legitimate history. The location of legitimacy in history was symptomatic of the nature of the State and the sources and tools it used to create friends and enemies in different contexts. The friend/enemy distinction that characterizes a conventional political space, as was propounded by Carl Schmitt,<sup>84</sup> may, in this light, be understood as just a superficial engagement of the political that does not allow one to move beyond or look through the existing bifurcations of the self and the other.

Gandhi's constitution of the self and the other and therefore the political are rooted in some of the following processes such as delegitimizing history as the site of knowledge, reducing the meanings of the friend and the enemy, and superimposing them to form the self and the other, while in reality there could multiple selves and others being created in a single engagement. The political, thus, usually got constituted by these innate distinctions between the friend and the enemy and by the characteristic attributes that manifested a rather underwhelming account of violence which marginalized its concerns only to the periphery and not the centre of politics.

Gandhi's discomfort with the means of violence emerges in response to these attributions that are made for fixing and defining the nature of the moral and the political. Such epistemic concerns go very well in tandem with the larger concerns of providing ways for society to respond to this entropy of ideas of the political. It is in this light that we require thinkers such as Gandhi to be theorized for gathering a perception of how they conceived and how they produced meanings of the Self/Selves that India is or has been made of, by carrying out the activity of a thematic theorization. We witnessed the need stressed by many scholars above on the need to displace the location of violence in our narratives today to figure out how we have been able to conceptualize so far and how we could incorporate methods to understand violence before mitigating it. As an extension to this activity of understanding violence through an exploration of the politics-political interplay, our significant concern that we may arrive at next would be the religion-nation-state interrelationship. These being the existing 'legitimate; institutional structures, invariably became Gandhi's interest in his reconceptualization of the political.

#### **4.2.1 Gandhi's Old Politics and the New Political: Presenting the 'Other'**

Violence has been used in an inordinate amount in order for the legitimate justification that is usually provided, namely, the preservation of life. Life becomes the ultimate reason and the cause behind all acts of violence being perpetrated in the world, which would invariably put every action as having the potential to be violent in its nature to some entity at a given point in time and space. Now, this life becomes the archetype of living for Gandhi, which is not just rooted in the reality of its being and sustaining. It is present in the realization of its non-being, through the activity of Death. Its *becoming* emerges out of the truth of death.<sup>85</sup> Preservation of life, therefore, by killing and then legitimizing this action through various existing institutions do make it an indomitable a spirit, by which humans are to live.

Meanings of progress, regress, development, rights, duties, citizenship, community identities, and interests are formulated and re-formulated with changing times, where the existing powerful prejudices of the times play a more significant role than other narratives to hijack and form the dominant narratives fulfilling vested interests<sup>86</sup> Such activities of preservation of life focus more on the ability to tweak the conception of 'right' for the sake of the good that allows one to exist, through which ones interpretations might get clouded under the rubric of grand

narratives seeking to enhance ones own credibility amidst grinding opposition. Preservation of life as an activity, therefore requires institutions that humans have created for themselves in order to sustain themselves. However, sustaining oneself might not be neat. It gets laden with the messiness of the enormity of violence in its multiple possible forms, usages, and patterns.

“In fact, Gandhi was clear that justifying war by taking life in order to save it could in no sense be considered rational. What the Mahatma found disturbing, in other words, was not that an inordinate concern with preserving life stood opposed to its casual disposal in battle but rather that one led to the other in a way that makes the love of life itself guilty of the desire for death. Only by giving up the thirst for life that was represented in modern war and medicine alike, he suggested, could the urge to kill be tamed.”<sup>87</sup>

This very definition of life as absolute to every aspect of my living, and as harbouring the inevitability and invincibility becomes a potent reason for major kinds of violence in society. As Etienne Balibar quotes in his latest treatise on violence, ‘From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence,’ “What we need is a new foundation for politics, arising from the consideration of extreme violence. Extreme violence, therefore, is not one question among others for politics; it is the question where the possibility or impossibility of politics is at stake.”<sup>88</sup> The kind of violence that entailed risking one’s life, in other words, was capable of providing an opening for nonviolence, something that preventing war in the name of life’s sanctity never could. And this was why, from those parts of European warfare that still involved such risks, Gandhi wanted to learn the art of throwing one’s life away.<sup>89</sup> The use of violence for the sake of life is done by also allowing for life to be sacrificed or dissected apart in the name of its security and safety, whenever needed.

There are chances of misconstruing Gandhi if one thought he could come across as someone who insisted upon drawing influences from an unimaginable or unrealistic notion of peace. However, the opposite of war was not peace, but a peaceful nonviolent relentless conflict and fight for the self. It was the war that inspired Gandhi to learn the art of ‘throwing one’s life away.’ This European warfare and its implications for the country created a new challenge in Gandhi’s vision of postcoloniality. There was so much to learn from this art of warfare for Gandhi. This learning that he gained from warfare also has another interesting angle to it which

allowed for him to shift the sources of his knowledge from history to myths, heavily sourced in religious and socio-cultural references.<sup>90</sup>

Gandhi's politics is essentially rooted in this deepest knowledge and experience of the potentialities of warfare. He draws innumerable examples from the mythological Indian texts especially the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, wherein he draws lessons on living and dying. His references for the construal of the political, shifted from history to myths, the latter being a better trustworthy source than the former, which could never be a site of knowledge.<sup>91</sup> These references drawn from the myths not only delegitimized history but also extended to questioning the harm liberal institutions such as the modern state did in being the major cause of violence in society.<sup>92</sup>

Gandhi's suspicions for the modern state, which is an extension of the deep-seated violence-centric history, also transfused into the nature of liberal institutions and their ability to suspend conflict by conducting mediation. Such a mediation for Gandhi did not fit in his method of nonviolence as it bore out of one's obligations to the institutions, with little to no participation from the people and society. Nonviolence could not be used to suspend conflicts and allow them to brew in the undercovers of arbitrated and mediated issues. It was better for the conflicts to rise up and be addressed head-on, the responsibility of which was expected to be borne by every individual in a society. This is the site of the moral, that for Gandhi needs to be explored, in order to address and ask imminent political questions. Such a moral space provided for Gandhi to ensure that the one asked very unsettling questions even at the risk of it exposing violence because this and only this could help one get through the tribulations of the situation by allowing everyone involved to address the existing conflicts. Suppression of conflicts in the name of nonviolence was the most cowardly act that Gandhi abhorred. Thus, even if there were causalities in this address of conflicts, for which the dominant institutions and officials responsible took accountability for their actions, then they may continue to happen until the 'good' is realized by the ones responsible for bringing in the 'rightful' decisions. The responsibility for the good may not overcloud the ones concerning the right, and the right in Gandhi was rooted in this conscious engagement with conflict non-violently.

Thus, to summarize this scheme, as an extension to Gandhi's understanding of the source that must guide one's actions, his carving out of the political arena within the plural Indian contexts

developed a stark critical response to liberalism, which interferes with a panorama of events that failed to explain the political for centuries. The infusion of the moral therefore plays this major role in channelizing violence towards oneself in the form of what Gandhi meant by 'self-purification'. Self-purification was an activity that Gandhi fundamentally engaged in to purge the effects of the mistakes committed by himself and his fellow men, as an act of repentance.<sup>93</sup>

There is nothing invisible about violence, and its documentation in history only affirms this. Gandhi's endeavour to make nonviolence visible and source it as our base of knowledge is fundamental to his conceptualization of the political. Here, he merges both subjecthood and agency into each other for the practitioner of nonviolence, through this act of self-purification. He is not an enlightened critic standing outside of society and lamenting, though he assumes the position of a leader and a vanguard of sorts, despite his constant denial of the same in many instances.<sup>94</sup> In self-purification, there is a double sense of subjectivity and agency underlying it. This active conscientious subject that practices nonviolence was essentially already within the realm of the moral in order to willingly and zealously participate in affairs affecting the community. This moral endeavour becomes the paradigm through which one could ask political questions. On the contrary, the very fact that critiques of Gandhi placed his orientation as spiritual or religious on one hand, or political on the other, were in some ways, contributing towards placing Gandhi in terms strictly of this stark distinction between the moral and the political which was generally taken as the norm.

This norm also went on to create the distinction between the friend and the enemy as was developed into a narrative strongly in the works of Carl Schmitt. The political space then engulfs the moral, spiritual, and religious spaces, by suppressing all 'invisible' and 'partially visible' questions that went beyond the conventional enemy-driven formations of the self and the other. This is what Gandhi vehemently sought to reverse. The onus had to be put on people practicing their religions, to reverse and perhaps also negotiate with the conventional spaces of the political that had been understood as a given for conceiving the public order.<sup>95</sup> The legitimate sources that Gandhi built here, are what I would like to call having the potency to form a potential consensual legitimacy rooted in the people who believe in the moral to guide the political. Such a practice of politics was futuristic and optimistic amidst the tales of compassion, love, sacrifices, and sufferings that were rarely documented in the annals of



history and thus, rarely made visible in what was conceived as of the societies and grassroots in India, as not creating a cosmopolitan environment. This is when nonviolence reaches its pinnacle in fulfilling its purpose of purging politics with the observance of the moral-political as a whole where individuals must function. Gandhi's treatment of the passions and emotions of the people in the subcontinent served multiple purposes within which got 'civilly'<sup>96</sup> questioned, the meanings of nation-state and nationalism.<sup>97</sup>

This idea of the modern self of the western kind or modernization as a process, for India, was considered absolutely a farce according to Gandhi for its hegemonic presence and its potential to create the pretence of indigeneity in the garb of the native that imitated the west. Therefore, Gandhi chose to speak to the Other, the other, and the many others that could possibly form in any political engagement, without bracketing itself into the norms that were set by the modern west, for formations such as that of the nativist kinds. In a way, Gandhi's case for the other also has its implications on the self that he seeks to address.

The constitution of the self, thus, is not in the modern sense located in a certain space or a position, but in the act, which concerns both an enlightened minority that gets there through action in pursuit of *Ahimsa* and *Satya*. This allows one to unpack oneself from the notions attached previously to the Self and the Other. The Other/other is an aware and an informed other who according to Gandhi must not cooperate with the evil present anywhere, both in the self and in the other. Faisal Devji's account of Gandhi's Indian mythological inspiration in the Mahabharata, pointed out an interesting set of arguments regarding the goodness that requires evil to unleash its evil-ness.<sup>98</sup> The *Kauravas*, Gandhi writes, could survive due to the goodness in the forms of friendship, camaraderie, and obligation from the army of men who joined and fought for *Duryodhan*. The conventionally attached meanings of evil-ness in the motive and the actions of the *Kauravas*, also found the presence of friendship and other such good-ness. This, for Gandhi, becomes the site of the political act of resistance. When goodness is removed from the side of the evil, the evil loses. The associations between and the awareness of good and evil, therefore, become a matter of concern. In my understanding, keeping in mind such a site and space that Gandhi chose, in order to make credible the language and the practice of nonviolence is unique. This is new because the superimposition of the self and other into a friend and the enemy, the good and the bad, the right and the wrong, reduces one's vision and senses and also manages to control one's responses in events of injustice and violation.

Thus, figuring out what constitutes this evil and good is as much a political activity as is understanding the purpose behind it. The efforts taken to investigate the purpose make it a moral endeavour that one would do for the sake of fellow others. Neither history, nor the state, nor the liberal political order or dutiful citizenship, and neither a passive neutral mediator state nor nationalism could be the source of this awareness. One could learn so much from religion, the personal spiritual, the slow collective methods of living and dying, and the like.<sup>99</sup> This moral imperative to identify and figure out the evil and the good is to be concerned with and understood in the othered categories in society. That is why most sections of the society that suffered as the 'Other' in the then existing practices of politics, featured in Gandhi's thought as the ones that will provide us with a fertile space to give birth to this suspicion and counter the majority. These acts of exclusion get heinous when it is sought and legitimized by the state. Therefore, theorizing Gandhi under this trope of violence creates a puzzle for one to try and comprehend the source of legitimate claims that Gandhi makes. He sources them in religion and myths and predominantly the *Satyagrahi's* contextual engagements with them. Gandhi states that the public space has always been grounded in and formed around the personal religious experiences of its people, which must continue to guide one's response in a situation of exploitation and misery. In fact, the extent to which one is concerned about these preconceived notions of good and evil and the need to change them radically in generating perception about oneself and the other is part of this moral reasoning that was mentioned above.

The blurry patches in which the meanings of evil and good are construed are no more an extrapolation of the self and the other. There could be the presence of evil and good in the constitution of the self as well as the other. With this basic awareness and understanding, the Other is made a strong one in Gandhi's scheme which practices nonviolence and non-cooperation. The other/Other is characteristic of the space more than the constituents occupying it. Gandhi tried rooting for consensus of some sort not only amongst the constituents forming the 'Other' but perhaps, across the self and other, while also simultaneously redefining the nature of the two entities, time and again. Gandhi's *Swaraj* will be realized if one is able to confront the most dominant forms of consensual legitimacy that are built and nurtured in society.<sup>100</sup>

Nowadays, this is found built using populism. Such a consensus built will slip the society into a mass that might think of itself as informed but is nonetheless following someone. I claim here, that Gandhi's shuffling between both methods of populism and critical thinking, is evident in many conversations he had with his peers on this burden of the mass following he had to handle invariably through the course of the struggle. Also, his usage of religion and pitting it against the modern state as a hopeful space tells us, why these traditional methods may not be so bad, but it is not necessarily located in history, or in the future. It is realized in the present, through a constant deliberation with the plural mythical pasts.<sup>101</sup> Mythological texts on which Gandhi commented, in a way, tell us how perhaps myths could help us understand our present more than anything else, as these offered new meanings in every context, which, deeply ingrained in the psyche of the masses also moulded their minds, towards adapting and changing with the times.

As mentioned before, he hereby lays the ground for the beginning of an inquiry into what constitutes the political for Indians, within the context of both, the global and the native. While processing 'oneself' and 'dialoguing with oneself' is what characterizes and influences most of our dialogues with 'others or the 'West' specifically, in the context of Indian Independence, one must bear in mind the nature of this Self that speaks for millions and yet has to resort to a certain understanding of what constitutes the native or the indigenous.<sup>102</sup> It is at once universal and subjective. This dichotomous nature of the Self underlies every attempt at any understanding of the political and of politics.

Gandhi's treatment of both religion and the nation-state adequately concerns with the flaws of each other, which keeps in line with the aforementioned dichotomous nature of the Self. He looks at religion, not in antagonism with the State but as a thing that could bolster the foundations of society. The dilemma in the existing configurations of the social and the political is witnessed throughout Gandhi. The use of morality which conventionally was understood as being too idealistic for its actual implementation and usage in the public space probably becomes something one cannot strip out of the political. Gandhi reverses the convention in not stripping out of violence wholly, but meandering within it and reconstituting the political. This political needs the moral for its sound survival in a community that is so deep-rooted in

community-oriented living.<sup>103</sup> Politics get sacralized, perhaps more than religion getting politicized, and the emphasis on the activity of politics is bound within the contours of the moral guided by the religious.<sup>104</sup>

Gandhi had a unique sensibility both for the nightmare terrors of the Indian psyche and for its commonplace daytime self-doubts.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps, it is in this space where Gandhi inwardly questioned the self and outwardly sought to attain consensus with others, that he had to handle violence and the concerns related to it. The former which has been largely relegated to the space of the political gets seated within a social-religious space and the latter which concerns with building a Swaraj of *friendship*<sup>106</sup> becomes a more politically charged one. This is how Gandhi perhaps responds to the violence of the kinds that are capable of imposing narratives basing nation-state and political order as the centre, and thereby employing de-politicizing forces capable of transforming the dynamicity of the public space into a weak servile one.<sup>107</sup> Gandhi's insistence on the Dominion Status since 1927 as opposed to Nehru's position of establishing 'complete independence' from the British; bears testimony to this practice of ensuring the minority rights and their representations as being more important than majoritarian popular Indian nationalist imagination of an independent country getting fulfilled. For Gandhi, the latter could not be imagined without the former and both Nehru and he had a turf over this issue. This is one such instance where for Gandhi the social and the political merge into making both stronger than ever in bringing about the changes aspired for by the common man.<sup>108</sup>

#### **4.3 Doing Nonviolence: Gandhi's Desire to be Different**

Amidst democracy becoming 'the major political fetish and the disavowal of basic social antagonisms,' even if not relevant to the future contexts, what makes Gandhi's concerns very viable for both public mass consumption and intellectual labour at the same time, is this unique element of nonviolence as a potent language of the self that is interwoven within the collective psyche of the masses.<sup>109</sup> Such a well-knit and subversive expression of the self poses challenges to the chances of clarifying and defining (or pre-defining) the nature of violence which had to be eliminated in the very first place. The dispensations of all kinds sought to eliminate such an erratic notion of violence from crippling the lives of people, or in the least, claimed to do so.

Gandhi sought to set himself and the people out on this relentless quest to understand violence and try not to lose sight of the larger ways in which it gets manifested. This eventually became a need for Gandhi to develop a sense of the 'self' for India with its myriad possibilities embedded in a new moral-political basis of society.

Gandhi's writings and thoughts stand testimony to these meanings of violence, decocted through his nonviolent methods and processes that he prescribed and practiced as tools to bring about the intended and proposed changes.<sup>110</sup> Such an emphasis on the methods or ways to achieve select goals gets merged into the goal itself. Gandhi's note on Leo Tolstoy's letter to Taraknath Das, titled "Letter to Hindoo" is testimony to this. It is also evidence of Tolstoy influencing Gandhi's ideas and thoughts, especially on the question of nonviolent struggle. It is apparent in the following passage from his introductory note on the Letter.<sup>111</sup>

"When a man like Tolstoy, one of the clearest thinkers in the western world, one of the greatest writers, one who as a soldier has known what violence is and what it can do, condemns Japan for having blindly followed the law of modern science, falsely so-called, and fears for that country 'the greatest calamities', it is for us to pause and consider whether, in our impatience of English rule, we do not want to replace one evil by another and a worse. India, which is the nursery of the great faiths of the world, will cease to be nationalist India, whatever else she may become, when she goes through the process of civilization in the shape of reproduction on that sacred soil of gun factories and the hateful industrialism which has reduced the people of Europe to a state of slavery, and all but stifled among them the best instincts which are the heritage of the human family."

These references and influences that motivated Gandhi such as Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the like<sup>112</sup> indicated this commitment to convincing people of the power of resisting evil. The notion of this evil has been elaborated within Gandhi's political schema above that sufficiently suggests to us his practice of nonviolence as being a constant and consistent action combining a self-aware person amidst contexts of oppression. However, the challenge lies in carrying out such an endeavour of a constant nonviolent dissent amidst the imminent and ongoing violent relationships between institutional and value structures, which almost seem as a perennial and a fundamental basis to the notion

of the political that we understand as a given. There is, but a temptation that is left in the open spaces and crevices of these institutional and processual encounters, which allows for the experimentation of violence in different ways. One such way was channelizing violence to oneself and not getting seeped into the violent mode of practices, habits, and emotions at the expense of others thereby getting ‘tempted and tamed’ into a consistent practice.<sup>113</sup> Such violence of the moral-political self is different from the encounters of a morally subdued self where the idea and conception of morality get passed on as legacies for survival and sustenance of identities within the collective.

Histories of hurt are fed into the creation of a composite nature of our political today which is silently or rather blatantly aimed at a better future, under the pretext of redemption for the violent pasts. The ‘history’s forgotten doubles’ seem to systematically present the hues of popular memories getting subdued, demystified and demythologized into the project of forming a history using certain select paradigms of progress, revival, or evolution<sup>114</sup> Such a history-making process is consistently built on de-historicizing and pushing many out of the boundaries of history, which is then attached to the act of creating a ‘national’ and a progressive scheme to enter the bandwagon of modernity for sake of the country’s self.

At a time when there were dominant notions of India not being modern yet, there were many scholars<sup>115</sup> on Gandhi, who attributed to him the title of a nationalist for having construed an idea of modernity peculiar to India, thereby making him a modern activist-theorist. This is perhaps symptomatic of this process of historicization and moulding of popular memories and experiences to cater to the needs of harnessing “fundamental human values’ and protecting normal human life.”<sup>116</sup> This task of protecting human values was carried out at the behest of history’s need to mould popular memories and oral histories into common threads of progress and/or nationalism, which has always been carried out by eliminating the ambiguous unwritten.<sup>117</sup> This is the reason why many scholars attributed Gandhi with the title of being the nationalist and “creating a mass-based, multireligious Indian nationalism”<sup>118</sup>. However, in essence, Gandhi’s moral understanding of the (s)Self that he envisages, is contra the homogenous product of an indoctrinated nationalist one, wherein, the former provides the utmost path of suffering as the way ahead for a *true* realization akin to the republican notion of sovereignty of the people.<sup>119</sup>

A republican notion of the society puts so much responsibility on the shoulders of the people and it entrusts people with the burden of carrying forward a society that is riddled with different kinds of inequalities and conflicts. An ossification of people into masses is a huge possibility in the narratives of nationalism that might lose sight of the distinct ways in which institutions in authority such as religion and state must perform, think and be. Even though Gandhi stuck with the narrative of nationalism many a time, especially in his commentary on Leo Tolstoy's 'Letter to Hindoo' addressed to Taraknath Das, one could clearly decipher that the meaning of nationalism present in society for Gandhi had differing meanings attached to it. This is evident in the following statements from the commentary. "It is a mere statement of fact to say that every Indian, whether he owns up to it or not, has national aspirations. But there are as many opinions as there are Indian nationalists as to the exact meaning of that aspiration, and more especially as to the methods to be used to attain the end."<sup>120</sup> Such a self that has multiple methods of arriving at these nationalistic aspirations must practice nonviolence. This shall make a truthful *Satyagrahi* with the responsibility of steering the society, which will provide more hopeful a vision of India than any other, that Gandhi reproduces from Tolstoy's deep-seated aversion to the use and sanction of violence by a modern nation-state. However, the imperative behind the burgeoning rise of such a nationalist conception that was legitimized and initiated by the modern nation-state, within people's psyche was symptomatic of the mixed Indian aspirations being suspicious of the conflicting culturally divisive entities, as being a threat to the feeling of belongingness and the bringing together of people, in the face of oppression. Such was also the picture of India in the eyes of the Europeans.<sup>121</sup>

Gandhi's multiple agendas<sup>122</sup> to combat the colonial context de-recognized colonialism as the only dominant context and perhaps, as many scholars theorized, introduced civilization, western modernity, and the nation-state among others, as some of the dominant contexts in response to which his text or the narrative of an Indian imagination emerged.<sup>123</sup> A similar account is elaborated by Kanji Dwarkadas,<sup>124</sup> where one gets a glimpse of this end being different ends that Gandhi wished for. This is indicative of the understanding that one must perhaps take the hint that the 'novel' means of nonviolence did not receive validation from its end but from its practice. The contexts and the ends were countless. The practice was an end in itself as it required one to commit oneself, in spirit, to the activity of rationally being aware of the emotional turmoil and combine the two to the activity of dissent. The means held one in

a distinctly separate space from what one could have been if one had only fixed understandings of success and therefore, of the end. *Ahimsa* thus had multiple ends.

For instance, at times, fasting for Gandhi epitomized the activity of compensating for the moral lapses of those who lived and worked with him, as he felt responsible for the ‘flaws’ in their conduct. Any misdemeanour on their part was evidence of the imperfections and problems in his own character, that he brought down upon himself the responsibility to mend for the ‘inadequacies’ of his fellow beings.<sup>125</sup> Such actions of his did attract a lot of suspicious and confused responses from his counterparts for possibly being the resistance of a dubious kind.<sup>126</sup> The activity of fasting signified purification in a certain sense and that led to an injunction of piety through purgatory processes such as *Tapas*, *Vrat*, *Maun*, *Tyaag*, *Dharmaraksha*, and the like. These practices allowed for the exploration of various methods that denied an overt use of violence upon others, as the way to go ahead in an event of a crisis. Gandhi elaborates this in his seminal work, *Hind Swaraj*, where he presents an enduring critique of the western modern modes of thinking as much as he critiqued colonialism. Towards this end, he talks about nonviolence and love as alternatives to the conventional grind through which we usually make sense of the warring historical pasts of our nations. He paints a poignant image in the following passage from *Hind Swaraj*, of the flawed nature of the constitution of history and in turn the political. While the former roots itself in and is defined by a laborious account of wars and bloodshed, the latter seems to be hinged upon this history that is immaculately defined.

“Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not, and cannot, take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or the soul. Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and re-awakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this. But, if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason, take up arms or go to law, which is another form of an exhibition of brute force, their doings would be immediately noticed in the press, they would be the talk of their neighbours, and would probably go down to history.... History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.”<sup>127</sup>



The nonviolent means is a reckoning of this ‘soul-force’ and ‘body-force’.<sup>128</sup> It also featured as the ends for Gandhi, with many contexts woven into it. The ends and the means found salience in Gandhian thinking as the site of the juxtaposition of the moral and the political. Nonviolence for Gandhi, requires one to be patient<sup>129</sup>, as it allows you movement from deep silence to speech with ample space to think and navigate between the two but without much time to perform. The fact that immediacy of the need for results in the light of communal riots and the extended project of the use of nonviolent means made it convincing for the leaders to justify in all humility, the possibility of resorting to other kinds of violence which might have seemed more legitimate than the one that was practiced and indoctrinated in the name of violence. As Faisal Devji points out in his work, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, “Nonviolence could only prove its claim to moral superiority by being tested against violence, without any reference to a political end being required for this.”<sup>130</sup>

These indoctrinated masses with the characteristic feature of this immediacy suspended all possible means of allowing for the struggle to brew and manifest in the form of an alternative solution that had the potential to suspend decisions such as the partition of the country into India and Pakistan. As any performance awaits results in the form of applause or jeering in the end, the validation of an artist depends heavily on whether or not one was able to pass on the emotion the artist felt, to the onlookers, participants, followers, and the audience. Gandhi’s performances too awaited results. In the case of Gandhi, the infusion of the ethos of the compassionate world that actively resists any form of oppression for each other in the world, becomes the ultimate realization of *Satyagraha*. However, the employment of the language of nonviolence as the means forces one to not settle for the predictable display of emotions and functions against a vigorous exhibition of the violent masculine<sup>131</sup>.

The virile masculine version of the society, which must rise against oppression, for Gandhi makes a failed attempt at performing *Satyagraha*. A silent resistance amidst turmoil not only creates space for that compassionate ethos amongst people but also emasculates power for possessing violent tools.<sup>132</sup> However, the goal for Gandhi is not to display power in a manner that is conventionally concerned with the virile, visible and the concrete, but it lies in working out a display of agency that is not rooted in a consciousness based on abuse of power. In this

seeming exhibit of ‘powerlessness’, Gandhi suggests the presence of immense power that could ‘naturally’ change hearts and move mountains.<sup>133</sup>

On the other hand, some scholars go on to develop this argument by calling these activities as much more than just means. Something in the ontological essence of nonviolence characterized a great deal of presence<sup>134</sup> than just thinking of it as an instrument. In the following quote, this dilemma is captured succinctly: “Yet unlike the last century’s impresarios of mass politics, the Mahatma did not simply tolerate violence as a means towards some end but famously prized the suffering it produced in its own right. And this made Gandhi’s dealings with violence far more radical than those of his revolutionary peers, responsible though they might have been for much more of it than the old man in a breach-clout.”<sup>135</sup> He elaborates on how Gandhi merged contradictory practices into one, the gigantic mobilization that “brought the extremist intellectuals together with the masses in a politics that could only be seen as irrational from the viewpoint of one dedicated only to a country’s independence” as the end goal.<sup>136</sup>

One could even decipher from the criticisms levelled against Gandhi regarding his treatment of nonviolence that would put Indian societies on the track of self-realization and freedom, that the method of nonviolence was assumed as being opposite to violence and that it is crystallized into fixed forms of behaviors. This must have led to the question of whether nonviolence was the end for Gandhi, apart from being the means. This question could provide insight into the critiques that were generated against Gandhi for the longest time by his contemporaries who not only derided the path to be passive but also may have called it absurd and unrealistic for a progressive future.<sup>137</sup>

The ‘moral sincerity’ that came with the practice of *Ahimsa*, was both applauded for as well as questioned regarding its efficacy at the cost of sacrificing countless contexts as the experimental sites in its practice. This also took one beyond the question of the end, the successful end, and the validation of the means through the end. The means became the smaller ends in every contextual real practice of *Ahimsa*, which by virtue of its very practice, made it a success. In content and essence, such nonviolence for Gandhi was also bereft of the passivity that was conventionally considered weak. Not only linguistically but also in essence, his

adherence to an act of courage as being passive denoted an alteration in the meanings of words and its usages within the vocabulary of politics. *Ahimsa*, thus, required immense courage to channel the rage into a productive force that required umpteen amounts of patience.<sup>138</sup> Passivity was, thus, not nonviolence, but altered activism that endured through a patient and an informed mind, which engaged in a relentless quest to decipher the evil out of the uni-dimensionally thinking mind rooted in a false conception of an anthropocentric reason.

Adherence to such reason meant entering into the project of carving out the unforgettable formidable history that is designed to cater to knowledge-production and moulding million sensibilities under the pretext of preserving civic consciousness. This would mean acknowledging life without emphasis or understanding of the myriad ways of living. Gandhi's schema of departing from history and from the project of centrality to human reason within the canvas of civilization, does offer radical alterations to the paths one had forgotten amidst the relics of history. To think of silence (*Maun*), penance (*Tapas*), sacrifice and surrender (*Tyaag*), therefore, as 'passive' was a grotesque misunderstanding of the courage that was required to endure amidst the growing importance attributed to a violent arms race. Gandhi writes the following in *Harijan* to substantiate this point, "The weak of the heart could not claim to represent my non-violence at all. The proper term for what India has been practicing for the past thirty years was passive resistance. It was a preparation for the active resistance of arms".<sup>139</sup>

*Ahimsa*, thus, became a potent tool for conceptualizing and executing the *Satyagraha*, the ultimate space of action and thinking for Gandhi, where nonviolence reached its essence and fulfilled its purpose within the domain of the political.

"*Satyagraha* is not a threat, it is a fact, and even such a mighty Government as the Government of India will have to yield if we are true to our Pledge. For, the Pledge is not a small thing. It means a change of heart. It is an attempt to introduce the religious spirit into politics. We may no longer believe in the doctrine of tit for tat; we may not meet hatred by hatred, violence by violence, evil by evil; but we have to make a continuous and persistent effort to return good for evil. It is of no consequence that I give utterance to these sentiments. Every *Satyagrahi* has to live up to them. It is a difficult task, but with the help of God, nothing is impossible."<sup>140</sup>

The meaning of *Satyagraha* meant discerning the extent to which the self, both individual and the collective had to be disciplined and moulded to exhibit courage<sup>141</sup>. Such an actively engaging subject shall perform collectively for society. Over the course of such a committed resistance, the *Satyagrahi* shall endure the pain of rejection, abandonment, of loathsome behavior from the colonial institutional structures against which they are expected to set a precedent. The trope that Gandhi adhered to and advised in order to perform these relentless struggles for a successful and worthwhile political action, was the emphasis on the method of action. Nonviolence becomes a potent tool<sup>142</sup> and the way of life for Gandhi as he popularly said in the event of the Khilafat agitation. One must practice the weapon of *Ahimsa*, which is the tool of the strongest because the languages of *Yagna* and *Kurbani* which form the basis of justice could only help one get through the turmoil of inter-religious and intra-religious altercations and conflicts.<sup>143</sup>

Thus, a psychological and psychoanalytical study of how violence gets projected, promoted, and justified, suggests to us how disconcerting its end results are due to the repercussions it bears on people.<sup>144</sup> This is the essence captured in Gandhi's thought, the essence of which, in Etienne Balibar's words, signifies how politics and its activity gets ambiguous when confronted with violence.<sup>145</sup> It is, therefore, preposterous to presume that violence could be eliminated from our vocabulary altogether as ideally as one could think of normative visions for the complex society that we are in currently, where eliminating violence assumes the place of an ideal. Such a thought instills one with either dismissing the activity of merely condemning violence or placing it as a normative commitment that a researcher or an activist makes for society. Instead, it was important to conceive of an understanding of violence as much more than just one of the many questions concerning people.<sup>146</sup> Gandhi internalized the means and ways in which violence could be meted out, even though his treatment of violence and methods have been opposed and suspiciously condemned by different sections of society, time and again. This opposition has also been received from scholars of repute, even in the conversations that ensued during the formation of the Constitution of India in the Constituent Assembly Debates.<sup>147</sup> BR Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, V.D. Savarkar, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and the likes have not been in agreement with his methods of countering violence or defining the content and scope of this violence in different contexts. On the questions related to caste, nationalism, the modern state, and the nature of democracy, we could witness extensive debates and deliberations of the critical kind emerging from these

aforementioned thinkers towards Gandhi's practice and conception of nonviolence as the recourse for the future course of events shaping the Indian republic.

The method of nonviolence, by default, now gets pitched as the most prominent method amidst the growing insufficiencies and miseries of our times which shall provide immunity to us. It is in the strength and the courage that a *Satyagrahi* experiences, through the nonviolent method, that this immunity and security lies, and wherein in turn lies the 'bliss' of practicing the *Satyagraha*.<sup>148</sup> The choice of the word immunity qualifies Gandhi's praxis, especially to explain his attitude towards civilization. It was rooted in a firm belief that civilization was a disease, a pathological condition, and colonialism was a prominent symptom of this attraction and adoration for civilization, history, historicization, perpetration and legitimation of violence, establishing political order and assigning centrality to human life above all.<sup>149</sup> Thus, it is in the doing of *Ahimsa* wherein lies the site of the disjuncture for Gandhi, as he urges people to refrain from partaking in the journey of a life that is rooted in the violent manifestations of history, the violence of which is wholly visible through a demystification of the unknown and the diverse. The seeds of a collective that is bound by many sensibilities, especially from the indigenous, the native, the rustic, the slow, the innocent, the mundane, the voluntary poverty and simplicity of the inhabitants and the banal featured in Gandhi as portraying the beauty of a civilization that did succumb to the storms of progress. This is the *ahistorical* that Gandhi relies upon and trusts to carry out the courageous act of living even at the behest of death.

#### 4.3.1 The Requiem of the Political in Satyagrahi's nonviolence

"Being in the beyond, then, is to inhabit an intervening space, as any dictionary will tell you. But to dwell in the beyond is also, as I have shown, to be a part of the revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity, to reinscribe our human, historic commonality, to touch the future on its hither side. In that sense, then, the intervening space beyond, becomes a space of interaction in the here and now."<sup>150</sup>

Gandhi's praxis emerged out of these borders and was made clear to the reader of his thoughts, the idea of his Swaraj, which emerged out of a confusing and a patient engagement with diverse dominant ideas of his time. In order to map this praxis of a Satyagrahi, Gandhi, through his

speeches, writings and actions, did create a regime for a common man to become a part of this Satyagraha that sought to put up a fight against many a thing that was hampering India's freedom. The site of politics in Gandhi's actions, therefore, changed with the changing contexts.

One such idea that he outrightly claimed to not fit his vision of a *Swaraj*, was an imitation of the West. With such a prejudiced and historically legitimized gaze that was adopted by the colonial master, Gandhi's praxis, when read through the paradigm of the location of violence within the religion-state relationship forces one to even question how the moral and political have been understood. His use of nonviolence caters to this exploration of the moral-political on grounds of a novel understanding that needs to be comprehended for it to lead the society towards his *Swaraj*. Such an engagement allows for religion, to make inroads into the understanding of political, in Gandhi, in different ways from his contemporaries.

The formation of the political and its *telos* hinges upon the demarcation that is made, time and again, of the territory of the extrapolitical, the apolitical/ asocial, and the illegal. Such is the space where violence begins in its presence and practice. It has been sufficiently explored on how this analysis really opens up discussions on what constitutes the political.<sup>151</sup> These aforementioned demarcations undergo so many changes, over some time through a series of politically orchestrated events, and as Gandhi would suggest, must undergo transformations, which are rooted in moral questions.

The content that infuses the political with its long-due *politicality* has changed from time to time as it should, rooted in contexts yet suspended in time for its future practitioners and recipients. Such a contextual conception of the political also then opens space for newer forms of conceptualizations to be carried out. However, for Gandhi, the concerns for life and living have humiliated politics.<sup>152</sup> Not only did politics distance itself from emotions and feelings, but it would have been humiliated and debased if it had to concern itself with life.<sup>153</sup> The debasement of life is stated as being crucial to the success and sustenance of the State. Life falls at the behest of politics commanding it whenever convenient to it.

This matter of convenience gets sufficiently threatened with the introduction of Gandhi's schema in the site of politics. His agitation against not the British, but the colonial rule which 'gifted' many colonial moments and continue to do so, is reflective of this deep-seated understanding of the problems inherent in the colonial legacy and its mindset. Despite this mindset being diverse and perverse in its content, there is a certain relationship that forays into every possible colonial encounter, that of the 'split'.<sup>154</sup> This is evident in the following quote by Homi Bhabha from the text, *The Location of Culture*, "The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces. In each case what is being dramatized is a separation- between races, cultures, histories within histories - a separation between before and after that repeats obsessively the mythical moment or disjunction."<sup>155</sup> This exposes the colonial fantasy that never allows for the element of 'split' or the chasm of differences to be understood or covered. The separation is always remembered and the distinctions are sustained on it.<sup>156</sup>

A similar account is elaborated in Peter Van der Veer's *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* where the relationship between the metropole and the colony is that of the agent gazing down upon the subject and making the 'separation' between the two more visible, thereby allowing for the western dominant ways of living and civility to engulf everything subscribing to this schema of difference. Such discourses carve out the nature of not only knowledge systems but also the ways of living thereby "institutionalizing a range of political and cultural ideologies that are prejudicial, discriminatory, vestigial, archaic, mythical and are crucially recognized as being so".<sup>157</sup> The historical was first defined which was followed by the process of redefining the political to produce many more such colonial moments. The former took place through the inclusion of India into the path of historical progress wherein the colonial fantasy locates its seeds of origin. This is implied in the following statement mentioned in *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*: "India stands outside of history, while Britain is the agent of history when it ascribed India as the land of the eternal religion".<sup>158</sup> Such colonial moments take various forms and manifest differently through time, thereby creating and sustaining a colonial psyche. Even though India was dragged into the political and also within the site of politics, India with its religiosity was thrust outside the parameters of what may be understood as 'rational' by the West. Here lies

the site of a violent endeavor that produced the basis of a colonial state which legitimized its colonial enterprise through modern forms of political institutions like the nation-state. Gandhi's discomfort with the state was influenced by this civilizational project that the modern state undertook with a deep-rooted sense of impunity.<sup>159</sup> This carved out the political and the historical which preconceived the practice of politics within the boundaries created by the dominant colonial consciousness and a certain violent history that was not bothered as much by the intersections that sustained this political.

Where does this lead us concerning the questions of dignity, justice, and inclusivity? The emphasis on the carving of the moral-political in Gandhi, tells us with some certainty the need to redefine the notion of the political, which Gandhi undertakes extensively, as mentioned earlier. Where does that leave us with the question of the relationship amongst individuals, individual and the collective, amongst collectives, and between the religion and nation-state, in particular? As has been the case with demarcation and dissemination of violence into spaces and categories, the very process of adhering to these distinctions and then the rules within it that carve out the scope of the political makes it paradoxically violent.

“If violence consists in crossing limits, if the general formula for violence is “the boundaries— or barriers, protections, prohibitions, limits of the ‘self,’ and so on— have been violated,” then we cannot assign violence to a definite sphere with any precision. Yet identity, both individual and collective, depends on the existence of such spheres. Equivocality, again, because we cannot clearly assign individuals and groups, once and for all, to the categories of those who suffer and those who perpetrate violence. To all appearances, it is mainly those who suffer it who are also likely to perpetrate it: here, too, “boundaries”— if only intellectual and moral boundaries—are crossed once we can no longer content ourselves with calling this an “unfortunate consequence,” due to the pressure of circumstances or human frailty.”<sup>160</sup>

Therefore, an “act of drawing a borderline to control or reduce violence seems to have the immediate effect of perpetuating if not exacerbating it.”<sup>161</sup> Such a graphic description of the nature of violence and its treatment within the ambit of the political suggests lacunae of grotesque kinds which completely have the potential to function and carry out politics as a



dramatic irony of sorts, with the knowledge of the inevitable presence of violence and yet the deepest hopes to overcome it.

Such an increasingly pre-construed understanding of politics becomes relevant only so far as this lacuna is kept intact, also causing it to constantly root for distinct notions of the friend and the enemy as essential to the growing disconnect between the political and the moral. Politics then gets considered either as concerning the merging of the two or the separation of the two spaces. Any rupture in this conception of the political would then require a critical engagement with the existing institutional mechanisms. This conveniently made the politics-political interplay ideally unquestionable and intact for the longest time. Politics as an activity became all about achieving this ideal.<sup>162</sup> This is brought out and questioned at length in the following statements Gandhi made on ‘Non-Cooperation’ during one of his speeches in Madras.

“I have been told that non-co-operation is unconstitutional. I venture to deny that it is unconstitutional. On the contrary, I hold that non-co-operation is a just and religious doctrine; it is the inherent right of every human being and it is perfectly constitutional..... so long as the doctrine of non-co-operation remains non-violent, so long there is nothing unconstitutional in the doctrine. I ask further, is it unconstitutional for me to say to the British Government I refuse to serve you? Is it unconstitutional for our worthy chairman to return with every respect all the titles that he has ever held from the government? Is it unconstitutional for any parent (o withdraw his children from a government or aided school? Is it unconstitutional for a lawyer to say I shall no longer support the arm of the law so long as that arm of the law is used-not to raise me but to debase me? Is it unconstitutional for a civil servant or for a judge to say I refuse to serve a government which does not wish to respect; the wishes of the whole people?”<sup>163</sup>

These stand to exemplify Gandhi’s fascination and an ‘enduring’ adherence to nonviolence producing a rupture in the very conception of the conventional political.<sup>164</sup> This, coupled with the inclusion of and a fervent engagement with religion, exposes the disjuncture even further. One of the many intersections sufficiently built in Gandhi’s praxis across the boundaries of the political, was by religion.<sup>165</sup> Gandhi focused so much on religion as the site that proffered many possibilities of the political, while continuing to remain as the apolitical many a time,

specifically within India's context. Religion was conveniently relegated to the space of the private or categorized as community identity in the public space. The latter version of religion did transform into a space that could at a macro-level garner mobilization and carry out movements in the society against its own apologetic nature of conduct for the diversities it possessed.<sup>166</sup>

Just as religion formed the basis of his praxis,<sup>167</sup> his emphasis on nonviolent means provided space to explore those boundaries that through time and history had sedimented into people's popular consciousness. To reiterate and place an analysis of this means of nonviolence within the scope of the current study, an emphasis on the means, therefore, suggested a technique, not just for certain activists or participants of the freedom struggle for India who were urged to participate in. It was a means developed for the people. Whether it rendered the people commensurate with the requirements of a radically and respectfully determined self is yet to be understood. It may be understood from the very endurance and patience one garners through nonviolence. The success is rooted in a nonviolent struggle that is committed to not only resisting disrespect and indignity but also not refraining from questioning and engaging with the existing notions of what one thinks of as legitimate bounds. It allows for the interplay to undergo dynamic changes through contingencies in a given context, thereby leaving open the *Satyagrahi* to explore ways of getting things done.

Gandhi's endurance provides emphasis on one of the most important levels of functioning that is located in the practice of these goals. Such a practice is invariably wedded to the disruption of the notion of the political too when he brings in the moral as the site of the politics, that was never before infused into the space of the political as a site which could take into account the people's consciousness. This, I claim is fraternal in spirit due to the primacy this action gave to the notions of endurance combined with self-respect for an individual who out of respect for oneself and others decided to enter into the quest of self-discovery. Such an engagement that Gandhi practiced allowed one to see a glimpse of the elements of togetherness that Gandhi sought for his politics, by not placing them within either of the popular contextual anti-colonial narratives such as nationalism or nation-state.<sup>168</sup> This togetherness indicative of the current constitutional vocabulary of fraternity, I propose, did feature as one of the lasting themes in Gandhi.

#### 4.3.2 Friendship in Gandhi's political

“What do you think? Wherein is courage required in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon, or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior — he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend, or he who controls the death of others?”<sup>169</sup>

Gandhi's nature of the political seated around an ambiguous yet potent notion of such a togetherness that, I claim, meandered around the notion of friendship. The notion of friendship has been studied in a scattered manner within the ambit of politics.<sup>170</sup> An explanatory account of this is brought out in many instances<sup>171</sup> which the latter brings out as a case in point for an instance of friendship getting merged with politics. Friendship, in the above instance, seems to merge with the context, the intent, and the goal of producing a consequence that could possibly respond to an unequal, unjust, and a violent present.

A personal engagement with Gandhi might help one make sense of the nuances of the painful activity of a critical engagement that he embarks on. This explains why the language Gandhi used was termed a 'fad' and sounded too unbelievable and obscurantist.<sup>172</sup> The decision to employ this language in the daily routine politics of action and thought did circumscribe around the necessity to have a feasible and suitable consequence for the masses. This was the burden that every popular method/language/conceptualization had to manage. The burden of affirmative and acceptable consequences for the unconstituted<sup>173</sup> category called people became a major challenge for thinkers who had to design a new vision for an India that was yet to be created. Gandhi's thought produced the language of this vision that had its normative vision based on a lack in the present state of affairs. The lack was a signifier to the growing presence of religion in the agenda that determined now the nature of the public space.

This adoption of a routine language of politics did manage to transcend the fixed notions of the beginning principle of the political by re-rooting its creation in the unfolding events of the daily lives of millions of people. This is brought out elaborately in how the formations of the society in India took place within the narrative of the anti-statist agitation where a '*samaj*', a large abstract formation, got organized and converted into a 'society' which then was pitted against

the colonial state. Such modern influences did meddle with and influence what constituted the 'national selves' by reconstituting it within the narratives of a nation-state.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, despite Gandhi also resorting to such an anti-statist narrative and perhaps contributing to these modern formations, the shift in the language of politics does cater to an attempt to redefine the political.<sup>175</sup> Gandhi and Tagore had fundamentally based their notions on retrieving or say, reminding peoples of these multiple *Samajs* that they have always been a part of while responding to colonial modernity. For them, the social spaces were more significant in understanding and changing politics. This was a space where the relationship between the self and the other was not exclusively understood in terms of conflict.<sup>176</sup> Thus, their endeavours kept reconstituting the essence of what a moral-cultural ethos could carry forward towards creating a possible formation of a cosmopolitan structure that one aspired to create as 'free' peoples.

There was a political restating of renunciation which was rooted in the understanding that the social was not enough for obliterating injustices nor was the political too accepting of the diverse notions of indigenous living that people lived by in the country.<sup>177</sup> This, coupled with religion<sup>178</sup>, made politics an activity that constantly awaited writing the climactic end to figure out ways of generating an anti-colonial response, through the practice of renunciation.<sup>179</sup> Such an activity of politics held on to the binaries of the social and the political that were increasingly getting concrete and definite. However, renunciation being a position enjoyed by the privileged, explains why B.R. Ambedkar's anti-caste struggle from within the society and the primacy he gave to social reforms over political independence from the colonial rule, was not accepted even though he held the 'social' above the 'political' at times. This is because the Dalits were not allowed to renounce their 'duties' as physical laborers in society, which also explained why Ambedkar had to contradict himself by also critiquing some of his contemporaries like Gandhi, for diminishing the value of the political and putting it within the façade of the social and therefore creating a politically sanitized space.<sup>180</sup>

Such accounts only go on to describe what it meant for thinkers and activist-theorists like Gandhi to work out a space of the political which did not stand contra the social. I would like to claim that friendship, in this light, produces a space that is not apolitical but meandering around the political and social. This sociability is rooted fundamentally in self-respect and self-determination that requires essentially distinct tools as that of colonial modernity, to constantly

construe an open space for negotiations, deliberations, and interactions within these social-political/ moral-political spaces. This may have been substantiated by Faisal Devji, in his reading of Gandhi and his methods, as the replacement of the interest-based idea of politics with the emotion-based idea of politics<sup>181</sup>, or an instinct-driven notion of politics with the integrity and commitment to the exploration of the Truth.<sup>182</sup>

Gandhi's methods that emphasized upon nonviolence did not hold onto fixed notions of the civil or the moral but associated these with the practices that required the presence of a radical critical mind as a relentless stakeholder in the agitation of any kind. Only then could we try and understand the space of the political as a potentially fertile space for collaborations and negotiations of all kinds that followed the basic principles of friendliness.<sup>183</sup> Despite there being social in friendship, the politics of friendship gets manifested in the constantly fluid space that criticality creates for the *Satyagrahi*. A true *Satyagrahi*, therefore, becomes the *Satyagraha* itself, wherein this degree of sociability with others and striving for others' sake may guide one through with a deeper sense of the cause of the turmoil. This puts to question the foundations of *politicality* that always existed amongst people, which does not necessarily hinge upon interests, but on passions and emotions. This could explain why Gandhi's response in the Hind Swaraj penned in 1909 was taken as an outright scathing critique of modernity because of its unique treatment of passions and emotions that questioned radically the predominantly channelized notions of the same created by the narratives of nationalism and fraternity.<sup>184</sup>

Violence did not have a place of existence where it did not derive strength from the routine everyday instances and moments of living. The living gets characterized by expressions and manifestations of what one could experience as being violent. The protection of life and survival, in a way, signified securing life from violence even while living through it. Life began to be celebrated as instances where violence gets calibrated and packaged to definite spaces, identities, and the Selves. These quests for securing and protecting lives ensured the need to project the good life as the victory from evil which meant fixing notions of right, good, wrong, and bad. This entailed one to perceive death as something that emerged out of the need to tempt life into getting lived justly. The language that Gandhi adopted here, to produce the critique of this inherently unjust and violent life, was nonviolence. This language emphasized upon Death as necessitating the need to die, in order to secure life.<sup>185</sup> It sees through the imperative to

normalize Death as the ultimate truth that would tempt life into living in manners that would subscribe to the moral-political landscape that Gandhi had framed for the societies seeped in communal rifts. This ideation of life as not continuing to remain as the Self and disintegrating into the idea of death gives morals a life beyond the physical death of the individual and uses death to contribute to the agenda of the fallacies of an unjust life. Religion offers this perspective of viewing the continuity of life in accepting death with courage instead of rage.

This courage is not drawn thoughtlessly from history, but from an understanding of the deep-seated nature of the political to mould towards violence because of its predominant presence in the definition of history. Gandhi seeks to recreate many histories rooted in compassion for which an alternative perception point engenders him to make a stronger case against violence for not just hijacking history and knowledge as the guiding thematic, but also as a method of response to any moments of crisis. The arrival of reason does not require such violence to be dealt with. For Gandhi, he is ready to pander to concerns regarding violence and the violent nature of his methods that are quite baffling<sup>186</sup> that are located in their present practices, rather than sourcing it in a space located in the imagined past or an imaginary future. The key to a critical engagement for Gandhi perhaps lay mostly in the method and only later, in the content of the struggle, and religion, according to him, proffered this space within the political to mould and shape one's methods.

#### **4.4 Some Concluding Remarks**

“Love needs too much help. Hate takes care of itself.”<sup>187</sup>

“India was now free, and the reality was now clearly revealed to him. Now that the burden of subjection had been lifted, all the forces of evil had come to the surface. It was evidently a healthy sign. But what remained to be done was to marshall all the forces of good; so that we could build a great country which forsook the accustomed method of violence to settle human disputes, whether it was between two sections of the same people or between two States.”<sup>188</sup>

Gandhi had a committed engagement with politics and his belief was rooted in the manifold inherent fallacies of Indian societies, exposing the narratives that colluded with the project of forming and sustaining the political, which deprived people of the privileges and the blissful

experiences of the religious moral.<sup>189</sup> Religion's looming absence from the construal of the political pervaded in the formation of the dominant knowledge systems, the disjuncture between politics and political, politics and philosophy and state and society. Its looming absence also notoriously contributed to, within the thematic of violence, a modern age packaged product that was modern in its outlook and practice but essenced on a religious core. Religiosity without meaning to understand or study religion becomes one of the primary features of this modern packaged version of religion which is clubbed with modern entities such as a nation-state. Especially within the context of the usage of the phrase, 'introducing the religious spirit' many a time in his conversations and speeches, he seeks to design the ways in which religion may be perceived as being associated with a new concept of the political which does not excuse it out of politics. Such commitment to the study of religion and its use in the public space slowly and steadily kept changing and affecting the nature of this space.

Going back to the argument raised before, friendship entails one to inverse, reverse, rethink and radically shuffle the conventional domains of the political, if needed. This point is explicated in the following statement by Akeel Bilgrami in his work, "Gandhi the Philosopher". "Non-violence was central in his nationalist mobilization against British rule in India. But the concept is also situated in an essentially religious temperament as well as in a through-going critique of ideas and ideologies of the Enlightenment and of an intellectual paradigm of perhaps a century earlier than the Enlightenment."<sup>190</sup>

Its very content and relations with those that were deemed apolitical or extra-political for the longest time, such as alternate sexualities, ecology, environment, religion and culture, perhaps are not visible always in its practice but are created politically to the extent of questioning the legitimacy of existing spaces. Hence, along with the awareness of political categorizations, for Gandhi, the real change entailed a rigorous process of self-purification. Such a purification, leading to transformation had its roots in the realization and comprehension of the presence of evil and good in all entities.

"You, English, who have come to India are not good specimens of the English nation, nor can we, almost half-Anglicized Indians, be considered good specimens of the real Indian nation. If the English nation were to know all you have done, it would oppose many of your actions. The mass of the Indians have had few dealings with you. If you

will abandon your so-called civilization and search into your own scriptures, you will find that our demands are just. Only on condition of our demands being fully satisfied may you remain in India; and if you remain under those conditions, we shall learn several things from you and you will learn many from us. So doing we shall benefit each other and the world. But that will happen only when the root of our relationship is sunk in a religion's soil.”<sup>191</sup>

The exploration into the formations of knowledge systems in the current millennia seems to explicitly show this anxiety that is evident in the regular practice of religion on one side and the means used for projecting it on the other side. While both strands exist within the fundamentalist thought and narratives, as Nandy points out, what is commonly found in both is the legitimatization of violence in both explicit as well as tacit ways.<sup>192</sup> Nandy accounts for the need to examine the frontiers of such an exploration of the religion-modern nation-state relationship, by exposing how the ardent religious segment within the fundamentalist section, uses religion to whitewash over the use of violence and hatred by other strands within fundamentalism. While this is potentially an exploration for a serious researcher interested in understanding the deeper problems that the use of myriad ways and means of violence has created, it must not come across as surprising to witness how this proliferates and produces new narratives that multiply within the same systemic secular narrative of considering religion as the enemy of the state or of any possibility of a shared legitimate order. The systemic violence lies in this arrangement where religion suffers collaterally or directly in the project endorsed and sanctioned by modernity.

The positioning of religion becomes one of an intimate enemy, something that is too familiar and hence capable of spewing hatefulness. Identity politics require a certain degree of separation and disconnect from the purpose and essence of religion in order to involve with it in ways that suggest the presence of deep camaraderie and connection. This separation between the political and the moral is evident in the anxiety that is shared by Faisal Devji when he explains how Gandhi's politics emerged not as an alternative history of peace and sublimation that belonged to the religious.<sup>193</sup> It was deep-rooted in the turmoil of its times that witnessed some of the worst kinds of events exuding violence, envy, and hatred.<sup>194</sup> Violence provides the epistemological basis of the thematic that controls the dialogical exchanges between the political and moral, which at times merges and disconnects, depending on the context. In this



sense, the third aspect unique to Gandhi which may be emphasized here is his positioning of religion with the state as one that is not institutionalized and concretized by an instrumentalist perspective. Amongst the thinkers analyzed here, who have contributed in their ways to understanding the dialogical process between the two, and also as having formidably made efforts to address the question of violence, Gandhi's contribution becomes too drastic for some to digest yet too subtle for one to completely imbibe and get a sense of.<sup>195</sup> Gandhi's thoughts and ideas were integrated into some of the most abstract epistemological and methodological assurances and obligations that rattled many of his contemporaries.

An important aspect of his thought, however, is the usage and realization of nonviolence only if we were able to forgo the criticisms we raised on account of a fixed notion of morality. 'The fear of public humiliation or losing his moral authority did not bother him in the least, for it was 'more honourable' to admit mistakes than to sacrifice one's principles'.<sup>196</sup> However rooted this vision looked, with the rootedness came the discrepancies of the times and contextual challenges which requires Gandhi to be applied differently. Gandhi turns into the method himself. The method requires meticulous thought and must be committed to certain ideals down the path to Satya. In my reading, Gandhi seems to function beyond temporal spaces in the future as much as in the present. One of the many reasons behind the criticisms against and praises for Gandhi lies in the ability of Gandhi to create a mass following that dominated a course of political action in the nationalist struggle against colonial rule, while simultaneously aiming to create the Swaraj, based on radical self-determination.

This critique of Gandhi is rooted in this possibility of merging his charismatic influence along with substantial modes of 'acting' and 'being' in the presence of the colonial which Gandhi acknowledges as the perils of mass mobilization in his conversations with Rabindranath Tagore. But, this very mass mobilization creates grounds for another one that may oppose the fundamental basis of this one, which to Gandhi would be the beginning of another expression of the right to self-determination, if it does not lose the essence of the 'how' of the expression and the 'who' of the expression. What is being hinted at here, is that the means of expression were more important a source of legitimate action for Gandhi than anything else. It was the *Ahimsa* that made an action legitimate as if that formed enough grounds for political legitimization, especially with respect to his project of critiquing modernity. As Gandhi spoke in

one of his addresses, "The true sovereign act lies in dying without killing the other." This allows for disruption from the routine violence that places the other in a vulnerable position of no escape from the perils of all external hierarchical associations that are exploitative. This exploitation may have a different unpredictable end if coaxed with that sovereign creative space of non-action and action, all at once. This was evident in the explosive use of silence and fasting unto death in Gandhi, especially when it was employed violently against B.R. Ambedkar agreeing for the Poona Pact of 1932.

There is an imperative in Gandhian thought that is sufficiently radical and rather forceful with the question of life. Specifically, the human life and its living is spoken about by Gandhi in a manner that has never been spoken about in the discourses of modern Indian tradition that evolved within, predominantly, the nationalist historiography. The myriad meanings of life and living for Gandhi flourished out of the necessity to understand and internalize the process of decay and death. This amorous connect of the human life with the reality of death makes one grapple with Gandhi in a different light. In the "Gandhi Memorial Number" of *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, Huxley wrote:

"Gandhi's social and economic ideas are based upon a realistic appraisal of man's nature and the nature of his position in the universe.... He knew, on the one hand, that the cumulative triumphs of advancing organization and progressive technology cannot alter the basic fact that man is an animal of no great size and in most cases, of very modest abilities.... Men, he said, should do their actual living and working in communities of a size commensurate with their bodily and moral stature, communities small enough to permit genuine self-government and assumption of personal responsibilities, federated into large units in such a way that the temptation to abuse great power should not arise."

This anarchical element of thought in Gandhi may be supplemented with a fundamental question on the reasons why a person needs to cater to community interests apart from the 'right' to radical self-determination that engages with the meaning and action of the individual's position in society. Understanding such transitions only made it more important to the activity of theorization and conceptualization of thinkers within the political tradition. Gandhi's comprehensive set of agendas and his approaches did strive to focus on how one must perceive religion for the times to come, in the context of developing and conceiving a religion-state relationship, that was hinged on friendship.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> John Koenig, *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, p. 7. This book is a compendium of new words for different emotions representing sorrows. This covers the word 'Vemodalen' meaning, the fear/ sorrow that originality is no longer possible. As the poet says, "The powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse." What else is there to say? When you get your cue, you say your line."

<sup>3</sup> See M.K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

<sup>4</sup> See Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi, The Philosopher". He writes in his note that writing about Gandhi felt like taking a detour from climbing the Western Ghats and heading to Mount Everest. "It's generally foolhardy to write about Gandhi, not only because you are never certain you've got him right, but because you are almost sure to have him wrong."

<sup>5</sup> Dipankar Gupta, "The Importance of Being Inconsistent" p. 5

<sup>6</sup> M.K. Gandhi, "His Life, Writings and Speeches", *CWMG*, p. 52

<sup>7</sup> See Madhu Kishwar, *Gandhi and Women*, and B.R. Ambedkar's "Annihilation of Caste" are seminal pieces heavily critical of Gandhi's failure to comprehend the questions surrounding gender and caste. These works offer us a chance to see through the ideal of Swaraj and question its commitment to the concerns of gender and caste.

<sup>8</sup> See Anthony Parel (ed.), *'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings*

<sup>9</sup> Ritu Birla and Faisal Devji, "Itineraries of Self-Rule" p. 266

<sup>10</sup> See V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindoo?* and M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*

<sup>11</sup> The hurt requires to be processed with patience, more so, when it does not apparently appear as hurt. One must be able to see through this for Gandhi. This is why we must not legitimize civilization, as it is a disease that could hurt without allowing us to process it and imposing itself on us as if that would lead us to progress.

<sup>12</sup> M.K. Gandhi, "Conclusion", *Hind Swaraj*, p. 85

<sup>13</sup> See Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Gandhi*, and Anthony Parel (ed.), *'Hind Swaraj' and Other Writings*

<sup>14</sup> See Prathama Banerjee, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*

<sup>15</sup> Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, p.

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<sup>16</sup> See Ajay Skaria, “The Religion of Gandhi: A Conversation About Satyagraha with Ajay Skaria”, *The Wire*. Also see Ajay Skaria, *Unconditional Equality: Gandhi’s Religion of Resistance*

<sup>17</sup> This was said in the context of Gandhi supporting Abdul Ghaffar Khan’s son’s interest to pursue art instead of forcing him to join politics and fighting the war amidst the political freedom struggle looming large in the country. See Nirmal Kumar Bose, *My Days with Gandhi*, p.12

<sup>18</sup> The meaning of religion for Gandhi to a large extent meant, I represent myself, and not any Hindu. It was spiritual in the sense that it was an individual’s connection that the individual built with the divine. This relationship with the divine will then help one conceptualize what should constitute common Good/good for the society. Hilal Ahmed explained this point in his four-fold classification of religion which may be unpacked into different forms depending upon the context and form in which it is played out. This idea was presented in a national workshop on ‘Doing Religion in Social Sciences’, organized by TISS, 2022.

<sup>19</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi’s religion and its relation to his Politics” in Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, p. 93

<sup>20</sup> Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya asks this question wherein he explains why and how Indian/ Bengali societies got colonized and how traditional Bengali societies ensured that religion was used for otherworldliness and not to commit oneself to the cause of freedom. Freedom, according to Bankim was not part of the Bengali Hindu consciousness and neither did religion serve the purpose of creating solidarity amongst the masses. He also paints an apologetic picture of the growing fatalistic attitude towards life that Hindus have developed because of their religious practices. A similar lamentation is found in Gandhi too. However, he turns it around and makes religion even more important in guiding the society towards *Swaraj*.

<sup>21</sup> Anthony Parel, “Gandhi and the State”, Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, p. 171. He takes this excerpt from Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* and studies it extensively, and uses this as an argument that was reiterated by Gandhi in the hope that the nation-builders won’t create an aggressive state.

<sup>22</sup> The last British Commander-in-chief of the Indian Army, General Claude Auchinleck is referred to in Ramachandra Guha’s speech titled, “Makers of Modern India”. It can be accessed here, <https://youtu.be/vd6a22ZxXVw>.

<sup>23</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, “Nehru and the national Philosophy of India”. Also see Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

<sup>24</sup> See C.A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*

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<sup>25</sup> See Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*

<sup>26</sup> M.K. Gandhi, "Letter to Narasimharao", 'Notes: On the Wrong Track', *CWMG-KS-Vol. XIX*, pp. 80, 178

<sup>27</sup> M.K. Gandhi, "What is Swaraj", *Hind Swaraj*, p. 26. Hind Swaraj is testimony to this understanding of a new civilization that is grounded not on the paradigm of modern activities of conquests and plunder.

<sup>28</sup> Prathama Banerjee, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, p. 24

<sup>29</sup> See C.A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire*

<sup>30</sup> "The Self in the political development narrative is already unstable and is shorn of self-possession, coherence, even identity" in the words of Prathama Banerjee suggest this nature of the subject. Prathama Banerjee, "Renunciation and Anti-Social Being", *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, p. 23

<sup>31</sup> Partha Chatterjee, in his work *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, used the trope of nationalism to study Indian thinkers. Many other published works in India did not thematize the study. A comprehensive chronological study was done by scholars like Thomas Pantham and V.R. Mehta.

<sup>32</sup> This argument of exploring the traces of republicanism present in Gandhi shall be explored much later in the thesis.

<sup>33</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi, The Philosopher", p. 4

<sup>34</sup> See Rohit De, *A People's Constitution: The Everyday Life of Law in the Indian Republic*

<sup>35</sup> Peter Van der Veer in his book, *Imperial Encounters*, mentions about the levels of indoctrination that took place in claiming this task of colonizing as a moral task and not just a political one. This act was associated loosely with Christianity and therefore, with the job of performing social service in the name of religion, for the betterment of mankind and making people experience this civilization. Other thinkers who subscribed extensively to this view were T.N. Madan and Ashis Nandy

<sup>36</sup> See *Young India*, 23-1-'30, p. 25

<sup>37</sup> He founded the National Secular Society in 1866 and was a staunch critic of the institutional sovereignty of religious organizations in the determination of public order.

<sup>38</sup> Gandhi goes on to say in the following words, his notion of what religion means and serves to do in society. "No man can live without religion. There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But it is like a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose. Whether by reason, or by instinct, or by superstition, man

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acknowledges some sort of relationship with the divine.... Bradlaugh, whose atheism is well-known, always insisted on proclaiming his innermost conviction. He had to suffer a lot for thus speaking the truth, but he delighted in it and said that truth is its own reward. Not that he was quite insensible to the joy resulting from the observance of truth. This joy however is not at all worldly but springs out of communion with the divine. That is why I have said that even a man who disowns religion cannot and does not live without religion” See, *Young India*, 23-1-'30.

<sup>39</sup> Aparna Vijayan, “Conversing with Violence: The Creative Radical Expression of Gandhi”, pp. 36-37

<sup>40</sup> A detailed psychoanalytical and historical study of various thinkers in the canon of Indian political tradition has been carried out by scholars such as Ashis Nandy, Akeel Bilgrami, Sudhir Chandra, Faisal Devji, Ajay Skaria, and the like

<sup>41</sup> See Ajay Skaria, “Democracy, the limits of Rage, and the meaning of Courage: Reflecting with Gandhi”, *Religion and Ethics*

<sup>42</sup> See Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Gandhi: A Very Short Introduction*

<sup>43</sup> Not being a political philosopher in the formal sense, Gandhi did not write a treatise on the subject of the state. However, ideas relating to the state are found scattered in his writings. See Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*, p. 154

<sup>44</sup> See Anthony Parel (ed.), *‘Hind Swaraj’ and Other Writings*

<sup>45</sup> Ashis Nandy, “Culture, State and the Rediscovery of Indian Politics”, *The Romance of the State: And the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, pp. 15 – 33

<sup>46</sup> M K Gandhi, “What is Swaraj”, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 26

<sup>47</sup> This phrase is inspired by the title of the book by Rohit De. See Rohit De, *A People’s Constitution: The Everyday Life of Law in the Indian Republic*

<sup>48</sup> This maxim is attributed to Leo Tolstoy for his views on the sovereignty of God and its impact on the lives of people, the essence of which is present in the following quote, “The sole meaning of life is to serve humanity by contributing to the establishment of the kingdom of God. This can only be done by the recognition and profession of the truth by every man”. See Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*

<sup>49</sup> Anthony Parel (ed.), *‘Hind Swaraj’ and Other Writings*, pp. 32-39

<sup>50</sup> See B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste and What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, in Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*. See <http://drarnbedkarwritings.gov.in/content/>

<sup>51</sup> While theorizing Gandhi using the paradigm of violence, on one hand, he problematically attributed the term *Harijan* to the Dalits without addressing the cause of such a violent caste

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Hindu consciousness, and on the other hand, also called for a fast against caste oppression, which according to many of his contemporaries was not politically a relevant question. One would find sufficient evidence of the transformations in Gandhi himself regarding the question of caste.

<sup>52</sup> See Sunil Khilnani, “Nehru’s Faith”, p. 4796, and Ramachandra Guha, *Makers of Modern India*, pp. 325 – 350

<sup>53</sup> This, I claim, in the context of Gandhi’s fast, was also upheld by Gandhi and not as much by Nehru.

<sup>54</sup> In *Hind Swaraj*, chapters titled, “Civilization”, “What is Swaraj” and “The Condition of India” provides an elaborate account of how Gandhi perceived religion as.

<sup>55</sup> This is elaborated in section 4.3.2 of the current chapter of the thesis.

<sup>56</sup> Taming violence, is an idea elaborated by Faisal Devji and taming peace is borrowed and inspired from him. Faisal Devji, “Introduction”, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, p. 7

<sup>57</sup> Sussanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, “Self-Control and Political Potency”, pp. 207-208

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 208

<sup>59</sup> See Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*

<sup>60</sup> Anthony Parel (ed.), ‘*Hind Swaraj*’ and Other Writings

<sup>61</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*

<sup>62</sup> Cited in Aditya Nigam, “The Angel of History: Reading *Hind Swaraj* Today”, p. 42

<sup>63</sup> Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds., *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, pp. 48-49

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-48

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 48

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>67</sup> See M.K. Gandhi, “Civilization”, “What is True Civilization”, *Hind Swaraj*, pp. 32 – 34, 54 – 56

<sup>68</sup> Homi Bhabha on the borderlines of the present in his work titled *Location of Culture*, in the following statement, “It is precisely in reading between these borderlines of the ‘nation-space’ that we can see how the concept of the ‘people’ emerges within a range of discourses as a double narrative movement. The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference: their claim to be

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representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address.” Homi Bhabha, “Dissemination”, *Location of Culture*, p. 144

<sup>69</sup> Peter Van der Veer, “The Moral State: Religion, Nation and Empire”, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 30 – 53

<sup>70</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “Civilization”, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 32. Referred from [www.mkgandhi.org](http://www.mkgandhi.org)

<sup>71</sup> This has been the project, in which many historians like Dipesh Chakraborty have been engaging. He elaborates in his work, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, the intent to rethink how societies have under the influence of the dominant European order, continued to create their own native/ indigenous understandings of how to form politically organized societies. This thesis seeks to offer a chance to read into the dominant canonical Indian thought and look at how it has offered to solve such questions concerning violence, keeping in mind the contemporary times.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, pp. 19, 30 – 46. A detailed reading of this text offers one an understanding of how prominent the processes and patterns in the colonial project were in defining the cultural consciousness within societies, and that historicism may be critiqued for posing both transitional as well as translational challenges.

<sup>73</sup> See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*

<sup>74</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism”, *Test and Nation: Cross Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*

<sup>75</sup> I am applying Ashis Nandy’s *Intimate Enemy* thesis in the understanding of the relationship between religion and state. See Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*

<sup>76</sup> Peter Van der Veer, “The Moral State: Religion, Nation and Empire”, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, pp. 41 – 54

<sup>77</sup> Religion as an ideology by Ashis Nandy is testimony to the depoliticization that took place with the creation of mass followings which could be very evidently found and perhaps more concretized in the modern societies, in modern forms. See Ashis Nandy, “The Twilight of Certitudes: Secularism, Nationalism and Other Masks of Deculturation”, Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, Lloyd I. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*

<sup>78</sup> See Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi: The Philosopher”

<sup>79</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “Part IV-Training of the Spirit”, *Autobiography of Gandhi: The Story of my Experiments with Truth*, pp. 179 – 180

<sup>80</sup><sup>80</sup> Aparna Vijayan, “Conversing with Violence: The Creative Radical Expression of Gandhi”, pp. 35 - 36



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<sup>81</sup> Although Gandhi does use the word criticism in a sense different from that of what I intend from the word critical. Criticisms, for Gandhi, could make the opponent defensive and let one stray away from the real issues. In the page here, by being critical what I intend to state is, that criticality in Gandhi's politics had a moral authoritarian force that forced the practitioner to restrain oneself and resist resorting to the relatively easier methods of a violent confrontation. See Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi, The Philosopher", pp. 11-12

<sup>82</sup> Etienne Balibar coins this term to explain the new formations that take place in society when the existing set of institutions and the narratives supported by their powerful presence in the lives of people fail to legitimize their role. For more details on this, see Aditya Nigam, *The Insurrection of Little Selves: The Crisis of Secular-Nationalism in India*

<sup>83</sup> See Kenneth Johnson, *Thinking Creatically*

<sup>84</sup> See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

<sup>85</sup> This interpretation of Gandhi's ability to trivialize life may be credited to Faisal Devji. Faisal Devji, "Introduction", *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, pp. 1-8

<sup>86</sup> See Neeladri Bhattacharya, *Predicaments of Secular Histories*

<sup>87</sup> Faisal Devji, "Conclusion", *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, p. 186

<sup>88</sup> Etienne Balibar, "From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence", p. 384

<sup>89</sup> Faisal Devji elaborated on this point in detail in a talk on "Gandhi as a Critic of Liberalism" under the Lecture Series organized by the Department of Political Science, The M.S. University of Baroda under the auspices of Prof. A.H. Somjee and Dr. Geeta Somjee Colloquium on Political Science, on July 30, 2020

<sup>90</sup> Faisal Devji, "Speaking of Violence," p. 9

<sup>91</sup> Faisal Devji, "Speaking of Violence", pp. 18 – 20

<sup>92</sup> See Faisal Devji, "Speaking of Violence", Ashis Nandy, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity – Volume I*, pp. 3 – 15

<sup>93</sup> Aditya Nigam, "The Angel of History: Reading *Hind Swaraj* Today", pp. 42 – 43

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 42

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 44. Also see M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

<sup>96</sup> Gandhi's notion of civil disobedience is referred to, here. Akeel Bilgrami, "Gandhi: The Philosopher", pp. 11-12

<sup>97</sup> See Anthony Parel, "Gandhi and the State" in Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*

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<sup>98</sup> Faisal Devji, “Speaking of Violence”, pp. 18-20

<sup>99</sup> Aditya Nigam, “The Angel of History: Reading *Hind Swaraj* Today”, p. 45

<sup>100</sup> The dominant forms of consensual legitimacy that Gandhi was responding to while penning *Hind Swaraj*, could be that of V.D. Savarkar’s. This is why, he does not replace this form of legitimacy with something else as an alternative, instead guides the society towards creating non-violent peoples using the means that stand completely in contrast with the consensual legitimacy that Savarkar creates.

<sup>101</sup> Faisal Devji, “Speaking of Violence”, pp. 18 – 20

<sup>102</sup> See Ashis Nandy, “South Asian Politics: Modernity and the Landscape of Clandestine and Incommunicable Selves”

<sup>103</sup> Faisal Devji had elaborated on this point in detail in a talk on “Gandhi as a Critic of Liberalism” under the Lecture Series organized by the Department of Political Science, The M.S. University of Baroda under the auspices of Prof. A.H. Somjee and Dr. Geeta Somjee Colloquium on Political Science, on July 30, 2020. During the course of the talk, there were questions raised on the presence of Gandhi’s politics within the ethical framework, where Gandhi uses the moral to build upon the political. He sacralizes politics in Bhikhu Parekh’s words. See T.N. Madan, “The Crisis of Indian Secularism”, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 233 – 265

<sup>104</sup> T.N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, pp. 235 – 238

<sup>105</sup> Sussanne Hoeber Rudolph and Llyod I. Rudolph, “The Fear of Cowardice”, *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the World and at Home*, pp. 177 – 198

<sup>106</sup> This idea shall be explored in the last segment of the current chapter

<sup>107</sup> Sussanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, “The Fear of Cowardice”, *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the World and at Home*, pp. 177 – 198

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, pp. 67 - 72

<sup>109</sup> Faisal Devji, “Introduction”, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, pp. 1-8

<sup>110</sup> See Faisal Devji, “Speaking of Violence”, “Communities of Violence”

<sup>111</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “Introduction”, Leo Tolstoy, *A Letter to a Hindu: The Subjection of India - Its Cause and Cure*, p. 1

<sup>112</sup> Gandhi recommended people to read books by Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, Ruskin Bond, Plato, Henry Maine, Edward Carpenter, R.C. Dutt, Giuseppe Mazzini, and the like which provided him with legitimate reasons to convince people of the efficacy of the message that

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*Hind Swaraj* could provide for today and for the times to come. This was reflective of his understanding of many significant lacks in society if not all. A detailed account of this is explicated in Sussanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *Postmodern Gandhi and Other Essays: Gandhi in the World and at Home*

<sup>113</sup> Faisal Devji, "Conclusion", *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, pp. 185 - 190

<sup>114</sup> Ashis Nandy, "History's Forgotten Doubles", *Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, p. 87

<sup>115</sup> Thomas Pantham, Dhirubhai L. Sheth, Ramachandra Guha and the like have contributed to this picturization of Gandhi.

<sup>116</sup> Ashis Nandy, "History's Forgotten Doubles", in *Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, pp. 87 – 88

<sup>117</sup> See Donald N Levine, "The Flight from Ambiguity: Essays in Social and Cultural Theory", cited in Ashis Nandy, "History's Forgotten Doubles", *Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics*, p. 88. It talks about the fear of ambiguity that history seeks to laboriously eliminate and thereby counter forgetfulness.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas Pantham, "Religious Diversity and National Unity: The Gandhian and Hindutva Visions"

<sup>119</sup> An elaborate account of the shortcomings and the internal paradoxes in the meaning of nationalism may be found in Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Self*

<sup>120</sup> M.K. Gandhi, "Introduction" in Leo Tolstoy, *A Letter to a Hindu: The Subjection of India - Its Cause and Cure*, p. 1

<sup>121</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *Makers of Modern India*, p. 144. Also see, Ashis Nandy, *Illegitimacy of Nationalism*

<sup>122</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *Makers of Modern India*, p. 148

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, pp. 148; 281

<sup>124</sup> Faisal Devji, "Introduction", *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, pp. 1-8

<sup>125</sup> This is brought out in the following statements present in the article written by Suneera Kapoor and Shrawan Singh titled, "Gandhi and Nehru on Religion", pp. 506-507. "Any misbehavior on their part was proof of some imperfection in him. As he became purer his surroundings would, he thought, adequately respond to the change."

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p. 507

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<sup>127</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “Passive Resistance”, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 69. Accessed from [www.mkgandhi.org](http://www.mkgandhi.org)

<sup>128</sup> See Anthony Parel, “Gandhi and the State” in Judith M. Brown and Anthony Parel, (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gandhi*

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 143. The idea of patience here is associated with the immediacy of results that is expected out of the morally corrupt self. Gandhi suggests one to forgo off this expectation.

<sup>130</sup> Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, p. 5

<sup>131</sup> See V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindoo?* and M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. The brand that Savarkar, Golwalkar and the likes promoted for the definition of the nationalist agenda for India were of this kind.

<sup>132</sup> Hannah Arendt’s concept of power and violence as functioning as opposites may be recalled at this juncture, the validity of which is sought in Gandhi’s practice of the ‘new’ political method, *Ahimsa*.

<sup>133</sup> See M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

<sup>134</sup> See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning cannot Convey*. The idea of presence used here is inspired from its elaboration carried out by Gumbrecht in this text.

<sup>135</sup> Faisal Devji, “Introduction”, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, p.5

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, pp. 6-7; Faisal Devji begins with Kanji Dwarkadas’ account of Gandhi’s practice of nonviolence in detail and works out the idea of nonviolence as violence that is tempted and seeded into its own narratives with the intention of creating the idea of a new individual that has decided to break free from cooperating with the unjust order and therefore accept suffering and death as fundamental to experiencing sovereignty.

<sup>137</sup> See V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindoo?* and M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Also see [www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi-and-churchill.html](http://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi-and-churchill.html).

<sup>138</sup> Ajay Skaria, “Of Rage, Courage and Democracy”, *Outlook*, <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/india-news-of-rage-courage-and-democracy/304126>; Nirmal Kumar Bose, “Building up a Free India”, *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 270

<sup>139</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan* (13-07-1947), p. 236; Cited in Nirmal Kumar Bose, “Building up a Free India”, *My Days with Gandhi* by Nirmal Kumar Bose, p. 270

<sup>140</sup> M.K. Gandhi “His Life, Writings and Speeches”, *CWMG, Vol. XV*, pp. 135-36

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- <sup>141</sup> Ajay Skaria, “Of Rage, Courage and Democracy”, *Outlook*, <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/india-news-of-rage-courage-and-democracy/304126>
- <sup>142</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “The Conditions of Swaraj”, *CWMG-KS-Vol. XIX*, p. 383
- <sup>143</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings of M.K. Gandhi*, p. 530
- <sup>144</sup> See Ashis Nandy, *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*
- <sup>145</sup> Etienne Balibar, “From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence”, p. 384
- <sup>146</sup> Ibid, pp. 384, 385
- <sup>147</sup> See Shefali Jha, “Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946 – 1950”
- <sup>148</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi: The Philosopher”, pp. 12, 14, 18
- <sup>149</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “What is Swaraj?”, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 26
- <sup>150</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.7
- <sup>151</sup> See Etienne Balibar, *Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Philosophy* and “From Violence as Anti-Politics to Politics as Anti-Violence”
- <sup>152</sup> Faisal Devji’s theorization of Gandhi, in association with the questions related to life and death may be connected to these views by Arendt on life in the Human Condition. Devji theorized Gandhi within this paradigm of concerns related to the life and death where, he claims, Gandhi emphasized on death more than life in the practice of Satyagraha. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas facing Modern Man*
- <sup>153</sup> See Wendy Brown, *Manhood and Politics: A Feminist Reading in Political Theory*
- <sup>154</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 82
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid, pp. 82 – 83
- <sup>156</sup> See Peter Van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* for a detailed reading of the relationships that are built between the Metropole and the colony
- <sup>157</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 83
- <sup>158</sup> Macaulay’s Minutes on Indian Education was an act of pushing India into the political by pushing India into history. Peter Van der Veer, “The Moral State: Religion, Nation and Empire”, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, p. 41
- <sup>159</sup> See M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*
- <sup>160</sup> Etienne Balibar, “Violence and Civility: On the Limits of Political Philosophy”, p. 3
- <sup>161</sup> Ibid, pp. 3 – 4
- <sup>162</sup> Prathama Banerjee, “Introduction”, *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, pp. 1 – 22
- <sup>163</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Speeches and Writings of M.K. Gandhi*, p. 531

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<sup>164</sup> The term ‘Enduring’ for Gandhi comes from the lecture delivered by Lajwanti Chatani, Professor of Political Theory, Department of Political Science, The M.S. University of Baroda, titled “Enduring Gandhi: The Deathlessness of an Idea”, organized by Gandhi Study Circle, Aryabhata College, University of Delhi on January 30, 2022.

<sup>165</sup> Gandhi’s seminal text on his vision for India, *Hind Swaraj* in 1910, successfully managed to raise narratives that were unconventional to his times, such as looking at western modernity with suspicion and questioning the idea of civilization as a disease that had the potential to destroy the ethos of the society. Hence, the binary between the social and the political that caste threatens, which was rightly exposed by Ambedkar, seems to have affected Gandhi’s response to the problem of the hegemonic colonial mentality. Gandhi brought in religion completely into understanding the political or rather, vice versa. The political was used to serve the purpose of the moral that was rooted in a deep spiritually religious consciousness.

<sup>166</sup> See Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*

<sup>167</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, pp. 86 – 87

<sup>168</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 87. The Editor asks, ‘Who is the Nation?’ seeking clarification on what it meant to the reader, as its meanings were both ascribed as well as construed on certain ideals which were bound to change from people to people, and from time to time.

<sup>169</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 72

<sup>170</sup> For a detailed account of the same, one may refer to Judith Nisse Shklar, “Politics and Friendship”

<sup>171</sup> Khilafat Movement was one such instance where Gandhi’s participation in the attempt to get the Islamic population into the nationalist struggle, was criticized for being non-secular, on the grounds of his favoring a certain religion over others. The demarcation of the majority and minority did, however, play in the mind of Gandhi, when he said the majoritarian self had to practice self-purification and resistance of the highest sort in the ‘fraternal/friendly’ relations that could be nurtured between Hindus and Muslims.

<sup>172</sup> Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, Cited in Suneera Kapoor and Shrawan Singh, “Gandhi and Nehru on Religion”, p. 507

<sup>173</sup> See Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*

<sup>174</sup> One may refer to Prathama Banerjee’s chapter titled, ‘Renunciation and Anti-Social Being’ from *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, p. 24

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, pp. 23 – 24

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<sup>176</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “Civilization”, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 32. He works out an understanding of the self and the other in Gandhi, which is neither rooted in the Indians nor in the British, as both are victims and othered by the colonial consciousness.

<sup>177</sup> Prathama Banerjee, ‘Renunciation and Anti-Social Being’ from *Elementary Aspects of the Political: Histories from the Global South*, pp. 23 – 24. Her account of this creates a semblance of the political as being rooted in its ‘lack’ that defines its own nature.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 30. This point is associated with the religious notions of Kaliyuga as providing and influencing in forming a legitimate basis for the concept of renunciation that became quite a political tool exposing the lack in the social spheres.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, pp. 23 – 24

<sup>180</sup> B.R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste and What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, in *Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches*. <http://drambedkarwritings.gov.in/content/>

<sup>181</sup> Faisal Devji, “The Childhood of Politics”. This is an idea associated with Faisal Devji, which was developed in the talk on “The Childhood of Politics”, which was later published into an article with Public Culture. He talks about the inclusion of children into the idea of the political. The child disrupts the temporality of the past, present and future and merges these distances. The inclusion of a child disrupts also the primacy given to reason which was replaced with emotions and instincts, akin to Gandhi’s method of operation.

<sup>182</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi: The Philosopher”, pp. 1- 2

<sup>183</sup> Judith Nisse Shklar, “Politics and Friendship”. She provides a historical account of how friendship has been studied and understood in the Western political tradition and offers some insight on how it may either be perceived as beyond the political space, or it may very well be a substitute or a replacement of politics, indicating at friendship as providing respite from the activity of politics.

<sup>184</sup> One might want to remember Akeel Bilgrami’s conception of secularism which according to him came to prominence due to its functioning as an antidote to the rising nationalism in the country. Secularism was brought in not with the primary intention to separate religion from state as in the west, but to counter the hegemonic spread of nationalist narratives which subsumed our understandings of our pasts, histories, memories, our present, and future. Today, nationalist narratives are also dedicated to creating meanings of civility, morality, legitimacy, and politics. This idea was delivered in a talk on July 5, 2022 titled, “The Past and the Present of Indian Secularism” organized by St. Berchmans College. In this talk, he develops the idea

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of how secularism was brought in to not necessarily oppose or contain religion as its major agenda but to contain the damages brought in by the modern nationalist discourses.

<sup>185</sup> Faisal Devji, “Bastard History”, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, p. 19

<sup>186</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi, The Philosopher”, pp. 1- 4

<sup>187</sup> This is a famous quote of Charles Bukowski, a renowned American poet (1920 – 1994).

<sup>188</sup> Nirmal Kumar Bose, “Building up Free India”, *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 271

<sup>189</sup> See M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*. A detailed exchange between the Editor and the Reader in the *Hind Swaraj* on the condition of England and the nature of the future ruler for India, exposed the blind adherence of popular narratives of India against the British without questioning or uprooting the hold of the colonial western mentality and its supremacy from our minds. The deep sentiments of nationalistic fervour which were sustained on those fixed grounds only kept the colonial mentality alive.

<sup>190</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi, The Philosopher”, p. 3

<sup>191</sup> M K Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, p. 86

<sup>192</sup> See Ashis Nandy, “South Asian Politics: Modernity and the Landscape of Clandestine and Incommunicable Selves”

<sup>193</sup> Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*, p. 11

<sup>194</sup> See Faisal Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence*

<sup>195</sup> Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi, The Philosopher”, p. 1

<sup>196</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi*, pp. 9 –10