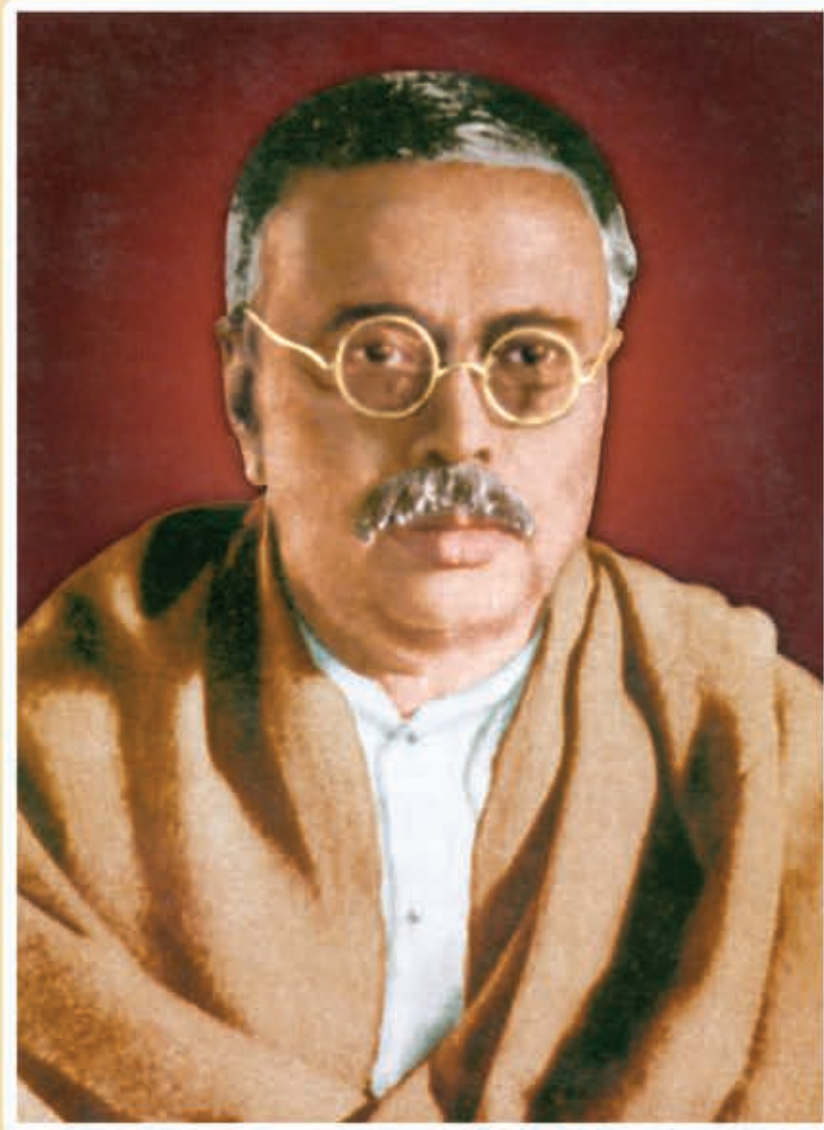


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CONTENTS

Editorial	3
PART I	
The Microcosm of the Unconscious Immediacy on the Uncanny and Primitive Aspects of Oneself <i>by Antonius Stufkens</i>	5
Motherhood: The Dialectic of Love and Hate – A Semantic Paradox <i>by Bharti Jain</i>	17
Anxiety and its Vicissitudes <i>by Adrina Ponzoni</i>	35
PART II	
Gandhi Poster	41
Introduction of all Speakers and Chairpersons	42
Welcome Address by the Secretary: The Man and His Philosophy	45
Gandhi: The Man behind Metaphors <i>By Amita Chatterjee</i>	47
Gandhi, Sexuality and Women <i>by Sudhir Kakar</i>	49
Comments on Dr. Sudhir Kakar's paper "Gandhi, Sexuality and Women" <i>by Pushpa Misra</i>	59
Gandhi's Nationalism or Satyagraha-as-Discipline <i>by Sibaji Pratim Basu</i>	63
Comments on the paper of Sibaji Pratim Basu titled Gandhi's Nationalism or Satyagraha-as-Discipline <i>by Jhuma Chakraborty</i>	69
Ambivalences and Ambiguities: A Personal Journey with Mohandas <i>by Jayanti Basu</i>	73
Gandhi: the Philosophy of Social Reconstruction <i>by Krityapriya Ghosh</i>	81
The Still, Small Voice Within: Learnings from Gandhi's responses to the Violence of Partition <i>by Kaif Mahmood</i>	89
An Excursion Into Gandhi's Cosmopolitanism <i>by Pralayankar Bhattacharyya</i>	113
Gandhi From Within the Cracks in The Mirror <i>by Rajiv Shah</i>	119
Vote of Thanks by the Secretary	127

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E d i t o r i a l

Dear Readers,

We all are aware of the difficult days the whole world is passing through. Along with the pandemic, mental health crisis is also becoming deeper by each day. The uncertainty and the unpredictability of our very existence are seriously affecting our mental stability. Cases of depression and anxiety are increasing at an alarming rate. Our International Association has been very prompt in responding to this critical situation. The Indian Psychoanalytical society is also trying to help people within its limited resources.

However, amid all the chaos people are continuing with their regular activities – a sign that Eros is more powerful than Thanatos. So, we decided to go ahead with the publication of the current issue of *Samīkṣā* which was already overdue. Our apologies for the delay!

This issue of *Samīkṣā* is a special one. It is divided into two parts – the first part contains regular psychoanalytic articles and the second part contains a number of papers on Gandhi. On March 1st and 2nd of 2019, the Indian Psychoanalytical Society organised a two-day multi-disciplinary seminar titled *Gandhi: The Man and his Philosophy*, to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma is probably one of the most revered and the most misunderstood personalities of the world. Attempts to psychoanalytically understand this enigma called Gandhi have been made by a number of psychoanalysts, chief among them is Erik Erikson who wrote a book *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence (1969)*. But the mystery of Gandhi's personality is continuing to attract the attention of psychologists and psychoanalysts even today and attempts to understand the man and his philosophy are still continuing. This seminar is also aiming to have a better understanding of this unique personality.

Eminent psychoanalysts, philosophers, political scientists and sociologists contributed in this seminar. We are publishing their papers in this volume. The papers of Ms. Shifa Haq and Prof. Proyash Sarkar were not available for publication. Kaif Mahmood's paper was not part of the seminar. It is an invited paper.

We hope that you would like this special issue which tries to give you an interdisciplinary flavour on a much misunderstood personality.

Please take care of yourselves. We are confident that like many other previous crises, we shall finally be able to overcome this one too. The experience is a humbling experience and will also help us realise how precious life and its small pleasures are which we often take for granted.

Pushpa Misra,
Editor, Samīkṣā

THE MICROCOSM OF THE UNCONSCIOUS IMMEDIACY ON THE UNCANNY AND PRIMITIVE ASPECTS OF ONESELF

Antonius Stufkens*

The human mind is capable of perceiving a great number of things, and is so in proportion as its body is capable of receiving a great number of impressions.

– Spinoza, *Ethica, Pars II Propositio 14*

Introduction

Everybody knows the children's books and fairy tales in which children run the risk of getting lost in the woods or in which they are told not to enter the deep, dark and dangerous forest where the wild animals live. Recently, I sat with my young grandchildren on the sofa and read a book to them called *Ferocious Wild Beasts* (by Christopher Wormell). The little boy is lost in the forest and is found by a big bear who kindly offers him to show him the way out of the forest. The boy says that his mother had warned him not to enter the forest, because of the dangerous wild animals who live there. The bear initially shows disbelief, but then becomes afraid and asks the little boy whether such a ferocious wild beast could harm him as well. On their way through the dark forest, they meet an elephant, a lion, a crocodile, a wolf and a dangerous snake. All of the animals get very frightened by the boy's account about the ferocious animals whom they might come across and they all stick together and stay close to one another in order to feel safe.

The suspense grows and in the end, they hear a terrible roar and they see a light in the distance. They imagine that it is the eye of a cruel monster. The little boy dares to approach it while the animals flee and he realises that it

is his mother who is searching for him with a torch. She is very angry at him and shouts at him that she had told him not to enter the forest alone. The boy simply answers that he has not encountered any dangerous animal and goes home with her. The image of the woman in black towering over the little boy is the most frightening page in the whole book. In response, my three year old grandson was about to flee from the sofa, but he found comfort on the lap of his aunt and managed to stay with the story.

The forest is a well known symbol for us. In the opening sentences of Dante's *Divine Comedy* he says that he was lost in a dark forest, threatened by three ferocious wild animals: a leopard, a lion and a she-wolf. In iconography, these animals are the symbols of pure sensuality, pride and greed, emblems of the cardinal sins *luxuria*, *superbia* (*hubris* in Greek) and *avaritia*. "The forest...symbolizes the place in which inner darkness is confronted and worked through; where uncertainty is resolved about who one is...Since ancient times the near-impenetrable forest in which we get lost has symbolized the dark, hidden, near-impenetrable world of our unconscious" (Bettelheim 1975 p.93/94). The children's book about the little boy with the mother who wanted to prohibit him from entering the dark world reminded me also of a passage in Sophocles'

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This paper was read as 43rd Girindrasekhar Memorial Lecture at Indian Psychoanalytical Society on 5th February, 2017.

King Oedipus in which Oedipus wants to discover his descent in order to find out who he is. His mother and wife Jocaste is trying to prevent his quest for the truth, saying ‘may you never know who you are’. The sequel is known: he learns having performed, in reality, the worst of crimes.

Among other things, a widening scope has resulted in patients presenting more disturbed and pre-oedipal material. From about the middle of the last century, the countertransference and the unconscious communication in the analytic encounter has received increased attention and elaboration. Recent examples can be found in the Contemporary Conversations in the International Journal of April 2016. The immediate experiences in the analytic contact are described in various concepts and there is much literature about the analyst’s feelings, thoughts, enactments and regressive states, embedded in the intersubjective frame (Stufkens 2014b, 2014c).

I will start with highlighting some aspects of Freud’s essay called The ‘Uncanny’ and proceed with recent views on the analyst’s receptiveness and the transformative consequences of the unconscious encounter. There are several related and perennial psychoanalytic topics about which I will share some thoughts too: madness, the psychotic core, narcissism and omnipotence, splitting and projective identification, sublimation, owning and creativity. I will end this paper with some concluding remarks on the analyst’s stance in the analytic frame.

Uncanniness

Freud’s (1919) ‘Das Unheimliche’, The ‘Uncanny’, was pivotal in the EPF conference in The Hague (2017) and is central to our thinking about ourselves and about culture. In this essay, Freud describes that ‘heimlich’ coincides with its opposite ‘unheimlich’. He

then turns to Hoffmann’s ‘The Sand-man’, which is a complicated story with many episodes centered around a boy called Nathaniel. This boy has been made to feel scared by a nurse about the wicked Sand-man who tears out children’s eyes when naughty boys and girls will not go to bed. He throws sand in their eyes so that these pop out of their eyeballs accompanied by lots of blood. He then collects them in a bag and feeds them to his children. The boy, as a student, suffers several attacks of madness, and in the end, he commits suicide. In Freud’s reading, something uncanny is directly attached to the idea of being robbed of one’s eyes and he connects this with the dread of castration, saying that fears about the eye are derived from the fear of castration. The Sand-man is then the dreaded father at whose hands castration is expected.

There are many other themes in Freud’s essay, for example, an uncanny repetition of strange things, the dread of the evil eye, living dolls, the death and dead bodies and the return of the dead as ghosts. He reduces these to the animistic mode of thinking and the belief in the omnipotence of thought, saying that “...the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (1919 p.220). He concludes that “an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (1919 p.249).

How come this is a somewhat strange piece of work? Royle (2003), a professor of English, demonstrates convincingly in his book *The Uncanny* how important and at the same time unsettling Freud’s ‘Uncanny’ is, looking at the content and the structure of this work. “The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one’s sense of oneself...seems strangely questionable. The

uncanny is a crisis of the proper: it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper (from the Latin *proprius*, 'own')...But the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation. More specifically, it is a peculiar comingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar...it disturbs any straightforward sense of what is inside and what is outside...It may be that the uncanny is a feeling that happens to oneself, within oneself, but it is never one's 'own': its meaning or significance may have to do, most of all, with what is not oneself, with others... It may thus be construed as a foreign body within oneself, even the experience of oneself as a foreign body..." (2003 p.1/2). This scientist connects linguistic, philosophical and historical connotations to this originally Scottish word "uncanny" and argues that reading and rereading Freud's text is in itself unsettling.

Although there are other interesting interpretations of Freud's essay, for example, one based on Lacan's mirror stage (Rahimi, 2013), I will end by saying that it is the extraordinary, mysterious, weird, uncomfortably strange or unfamiliar yet at the same time strangely familiar, that produces uncanniness. The identity issue, uncertainty about who you are and "various degrees of loss of feelings of 'me-ness'" (Kafka 1989 p.48) is a crucial element in 'the uncanny' with which I intend to work in this essay.

Contemporary issues on the immediacy in the analytic encounter:

The discussion in the second number of the International Journal in 2016 addresses the pathology of both patient and analyst and how these interact in the unconscious communication. The emergence of the non-represented leads to a particular situation in which the mental state of the analyst is changed, even to the point of 'becoming' embodied fragments of the patient's history. Some time ago, Bollas (1990) gave an

impressive clinical example of his experiences in this area with his patient Nick.

Last year's conversation on this topic begins with Beatrice Ithier's (2016) paper called 'The arms of the chimeras'. The chimera is a "product of the unconscious of patient and analyst alike, [and] which emerges during a process of depersonalization in the analyst...the chimera [being] a particular intersubjective third whose creation, in a hallucinatory state, makes it possible to gain access to the bodily and emotional basis of the trauma" (2016 p.451). By invading the analyst, the unrepresented can be reached through the analyst's depersonalisation which gives rise to the chimera with its own modes of functioning. She asserts that, in this encounter, the analyst becomes another through this newly created third. She reports experiencing all sorts of sensations, not only mentally, but also physically. With one patient, she describes a sensation of holding a two-year old baby in her arms and feeling its cheek against hers. With another patient, she suddenly found herself transformed into a cow: "I felt I had become a cow" she even says. She links this to traumatic experiences of both of them in the non-represented unconscious, uncannily also discovering some aspect of her own experience in the past which had made it possible for her to identify with the cow of the mother of the patient. She goes on to say that the depersonalisation which she experienced on a bodily level and the loss of ego boundaries, enabled formlessness to gain access to a representation. She concludes by saying that by being in the grip of the chimera, the experiences felt to "belong[ed] to a proto-mental matrix where somatic and psychic are not yet differentiated" (2016 p.475), and that the chimera "...has its birth in the breath of the patient's suffering which permeates the analyst's psychic and bodily reality" (2016 p.476).

In a second contribution, a commentary by Bruce Reis (2016) called ‘Monsters, dreams and madness’, the work of Bollas is rightly introduced. Bollas described already thirty years ago the loss of personal identity in the clinical encounter by being receptive to varying degrees of ‘madness’ in himself and becoming disturbed by the patient: “...it is the analyst who, through his situational illness, is the patient in greatest need” (1987 p.204). Reis cites more recent work in which Bollas defines psychoanalysis as an unconscious object relation, saying that even as an unconscious subject, he is still shaped by the effect of another on him: “my self is given a new form by the *other*” (2016 p.481). Reis sees these developments as new approaches to the issue of identity in which the subject is decentered and always to some degree arises in the context of intersubjectivity. He cites Ogden who holds that “the subject is always *becoming* through a process of the creative negation of itself” (2016 p.483), a notion with an impressive philosophical ancestry. Reis, like Ithier, also uses the word “uncanny” in relation to his own transformational experiences; he was never able to draw a clear distinction between what was a dream, a hallucination, depersonalisation or a creative seizure. He closes his remarks by saying that Ithier, by her extending the phenomena discussed into the realm of traumatic affinities, has started an international conversation on the Freudian intersubjective.

I will briefly summarise the second commentary on Ithier’s contribution by Jan Abram (2016), because it focuses on a misconception of Winnicott’s squiggle game which Ithier in her paper equates with the concept of the chimera. Abram’s main point is about the different definitions of countertransference and the fact that Ithier’s chimera contains the notion of a traumatic link between analyst and patient. She distinguishes between patients with a capacity to think symbolically and traumatised patients with

borderline or psychotic functioning. She suggests that most analysands reach borderline states of mind during certain phases of the analysis which may give rise to extraordinary countertransferences like the chimera-phenomena.

The experience that, in the regression in the analysis, madness and psychosis break out is shared by many. It is self-evident that it is beyond the scope of this paper to even scratch the surface of the vast analytical corpus of knowledge about these and related issues.

Madness and psychosis

What is madness? In all of the dictionaries, we find descriptions like: ‘eccentric, not normal and mentally not quite right and not connected with reality’. Normality and reality are problematic concepts. The everyday psychoanalytic experience teaches us that normality quickly evaporates under our microscope. In Freud’s words: a normal ego is an ideal fiction. “Every normal person, in fact, is only normal on the average. His ego approximates to that of the psychotic in some part or other and to a greater or lesser extent ...” (1937c p.235), and “... there is not only *method* in madness...but also a fragment of *historical truth*...” (1937d p. 267). He endlessly tried to compare and to distinguish neurotic and psychotic functioning of the psyche and their relationship to ‘reality’ (e.g.,1915,1924b,1924e,1927,1940).

I suppose that nobody denies the existence of a neurotic (normal) and psychotic part of the personality (Bion 1957) and that everybody agrees that “Just as the Oedipus complex, the neurotic core, wanes but is never actually and definitively destroyed...so, too, that more archaic, psychotic core tends to wane but remains with us” (Loewald 1979 p.770). In an erudite book with the title *Delusions of Everyday Life*, Shengold (1995) demonstrates that a psychotic core is an active element in

normal psychic life. He makes it clear that “All of us are left with individually varying fragments of the originally...delusional ways of operating” (1995 p.8) as seen in narcissistic delusions, in malignant envy, in paranoid delusions and identifications with delusional parents, and in the delusions involved in perversions and in being in love. These insights are communicated in manifold ways and ‘mad’ and ‘psychotic’ are sometimes considered as different and sometimes loosely presented as synonyms.

Winnicott speaks about madness as a fear of madness (1965 p.119). Borderline for him means that the core of the patient’s disturbance is psychotic, but that there is sufficient neurotic organisation. In the same paper, when he uses the word “psychosis”, he refers to feelings of disintegration, unreality or depersonalisation. Elsewhere, he speaks of it as “a defensive organisation designed to protect the true self” (Winnicott 1954 p.287). The madness which is feared has already been experienced and what is feared is actually the return of the madness. “The patient’s need is to remember the original madness, but in fact the madness belongs to a very early stage...” when there is not yet an organisation in terms of conscious memory. “In other words, madness that has to be remembered can only be remembered in the reliving of it...” (1965 p.125).

This madness has to be experienced in the transference relationship and this process is necessary for reparation to take place. Birksted-Breen (2016) reminds us of André Green’s distinction between mad and psychotic. “[He] links madness to ‘passion’ and Eros, which is not the prerogative of pathology, while psychosis (with its mechanisms of splitting and disavowal) is linked to the destructive instincts. It is the latter which relates to an absence of representation and a decathexis of the object...‘madness’ is to be welcomed in the fight against the absence of cathexis and

representation in these patients who consult us because their life feels meaningless” (2016 p.26).

Narcissism and omnipotence

Freud considered psychosis to be the key to understanding the ego and narcissism. The connection with hubris lies here. Omnipotence with its twin sister omniscience (‘having known it before’ or ‘always knowing better’) is the central phenomenon. He thought that megalomania results from the withdrawal of objects and made this the hallmark of psychosis. He traced this back to a stage before self and object differentiation in which there is, in the child’s mind, “an over-estimation of the power of their wishes and mental acts, the ‘omnipotence of thoughts’, a belief in the traumaturgic force of words” (1914 p.75). So he presupposes an infantile megalomania.

In this world of ‘children and primitive people’ the uncanny turns up. Like many others, I do not believe in an early object-less phase nor in a regressive mental object-less stage, nor that infantile experience can be termed psychotic. “...the fantasy of omnipotence is not a normal infantile state, but a defense woven of strands from each developmental level. These strands become organized in adolescence into a pervasive, implacable resistance to external influences...a defense against the danger of experienced threats of annihilation, abandonment, humiliation, castration, rage, jealousy, and guilt” (Novick & Novick 1996 p.169). Omnipotence and the magic of thoughts and gestures are intimately object-related in the sense that others and the outer world have to be controlled or defeated. In the end, we always find a helpless traumatised child, like the tiny last figure in a Russian doll (ibid. p.135).

In development, we can speak of a faulty environment, a failing container or defective mirror on the one hand, and of innate internal

processes of psychic structure building on the other hand. If there is an infantile psychosis as an inevitable condition, we have to add to it the normal maternal madness, the paradoxical maternal love (Green 1986 p.245). We have to acknowledge the fact that, through the mother's projective identifications, the child's unconscious is, in a way, colonised by the mother's unconscious. In parallel, there are the drives and the way in which the ego forms itself and we assume a primary mental state of undifferentiation with subsequent levels of differentiation and integration permanently threatened by disintegration (e.g., Tähkä 1993). Originally, there is no distinction between ego and external reality (objects) and the ego gradually separates itself from the external world in successive stages of ego-reality integration. They "evolve gradually in conjunction with each other" (Loewald 1951 p.14). This view presupposes a permanent flow between inside and outside and between perception and fantasy. Psychotic regression involves a total or partial loss of the differentiation between self and object. In Kleinian thinking, it is thought that differentiation of self and object is only emerging in the depressive position. Narcissistic object relations are characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position, where internal and external reality are constantly in danger of merging. The fixation point for psychosis is located at this phase of development which precedes the negotiation of the depressive position (Klein 1946) and the more severe forms of projective identification originate in this stage.

Splitting, projective identification and concepts of reality

In a paper 51 years ago, the Dutch analyst Le Coultre (1966) concluded that splitting of the ego, resulting in a hidden madness in the ego, is the central mechanism in neurosis. Reality testing is sufficiently intact, but the

feelings of omnipotence have become a hidden delusion of grandiosity, "notwithstanding its usual concealment behind self-criticism and demonstrations of inferiority" (1993 p.794). We therefore deal with an ego that is split and contains psychotic distortions. "The reason of the ego and the reason of the instinctive demands coexist in the same psychic space" (Green 1986 p.25), it is a horizontal split.

Winnicott's ideas (1971,1964) about the usage of an object are important in the context of projection and projective identification. These imply that the object has to be recognised as part of external reality. Placing the object outside of the subject's omnipotent control is a major step in development. In an analysis, this entails repairing 'the most irksome of all the early failures' and in this process, Winnicott seemed "...to believe that one of the inescapable consequences of...regression in the patient was a corresponding regression in the analyst..." (Grotstein 1990 p.6, see also Ogden 2016).

In parallel to these developments, there has been a major change in our ideas about reality since Freud, and we have come a long way in our thinking about psychic ('subjective') and material ('objective') reality, as if these were distinctive and separate worlds. In a paper titled Psychoanalytic Concepts of Reality and Some Disputed 'New View' Ideas (Stufkens 2002), I have described the history of and theoretical explorations about psychic and external reality by various authors, and part of it is of relevance here. Freud made a clear dichotomy between psychic reality and external reality, and following this many still think of fantasy as opposed to reality. In his Project (1895), he speaks of 'thought-reality' and 'external reality'. In the Interpretation of Dreams (1900) he mentions 'psychic reality', which is contrasted with 'factual reality' in Totem and Taboo (1913). In the 1919 edition of the Interpretation of Dreams, 'external reality' is

named 'material reality'. There has been unease with this dichotomy for a long time already, starting with Ferenczi who advocated that the central opposition was not between internal and external reality, but between the psychic reality of the subject and the psychic reality of the object. In the past, many analysts have formulated their views on this topic. Arlow (1996), for example, doubts the usefulness of the concept of psychic reality. He supposes that there is a mixture of inner and outer worlds, an intertwining of perception of external facts and unconscious fantasy. Perceptions, memories and fantasies are all stored indiscriminately together and survive as actual record of the events. Wallerstein (1985), in a series of articles, like Arlow stressed the mixture of inside and outside and rejected the strict Freudian dichotomy. He accentuated to what extent psychic reality influences the perception of external reality, "...even the world *as science sees it* is also an act of our (human) mental construction and creation" (1985 p.569). His views differ from those of Arlow and Schafer (1970) in that he gives psychic reality the primal place as a basis for a negotiable and validatable understanding of external reality. External reality, in his view, is formed by psychic reality, leaving of course material reality intact. This is partly in line with Loewald's (1951) conviction that the ego gradually separates itself from the external world in successive stages of ego-reality integration. So 'reality' is developing two-sidedly and he formulates it in terms of constructed and projected residue of developing object-relationships. This is a reality concept in terms of interaction and permanent flow between inside and outside and between perception and fantasy. He even asserts that psychoanalysis has taken over the obsessive neurotic's conception of reality as 'the objective reality' (Loewald 1952).

For Wallerstein, there is a continuum of reality in which reality becomes an integral

part of the psyche. In its technical consequences, this view is also far apart from Freud's, who indeed gave the analyst a privileged position vis-a-vis objective reality: "what characterizes neurotics is that they prefer psychical to factual reality and react just as seriously to thoughts as normal people do to realities" (1913 p.159). Meissner (2000) formulated this new concept of psychic reality as subjective awareness, "embracing all conscious knowing, whether of external objects and realities or of internal objects and realities". In this way he defines psychic reality as synonymous with subjective knowing: "actual reality as known is also part of psychic reality since it is knowledge" (2000 p.1134). Etchegoyen (1996) simply said that psychic reality is the theory which the patient has about himself and about others. I also refer to the work of Fonagy and Target (1996) in which the emergence of psychic reality in childhood is documented and in which they argue that internal and external reality are no longer divided, but mutually connected in the capacity to mentalise.

'Owning', sublimation and creativity

We have to conclude that the analyst cannot escape the madness or psychosis of the patient and is inevitably affected by it, even to the extent of temporarily giving up his own identity. He is confronted with his own narcissism, personal history and traumatisation including the split-off or repressed primitive aspects of himself. What resources are available to manage and survive this? Symbolisation, sublimation and owning are key concepts here, and the patient and the analyst have the same task in this respect, although with a different timetable. 'Owning' here means making something one's own. Uncanny thoughts and strong impulses which are suddenly emerging are the 'alien guests' (Freud 1917) and the refusal of owning them results in projection of these

unwanted elements into the outside world.

Delusions (for example in the transference) are effective ways of disowning (Shengold 1995) and we try to help the patient towards internalising the disavowed contents. The process of owning and integrating usually takes place via re-internalisation of the projection in projective identification. The ‘unthought known’ becomes ‘thought’ known and essential in this process is the capacity to symbolise and to tolerate ambiguity and paradox. Psychoanalysis, in this sense, becomes “a process of learning to be less uncomfortable with feelings of estrangement from one’s own self-experience and perception of the world...” (Kafka 1989 p.73). This formulation underlines the experience of the uncanny as a developmental achievement, a condition also necessary for the aesthetic experience.

Sublimation is passion transformed and unites what has become separate (Loewald 1988). We cannot think about creativity and art without sublimation. In my view, in creativity, the difference between madness and psychotic-like mental functioning is not so evident as André Green suggests. There is a mixture of creative and destructive urges and a regression of the artist to an inner world in which me and not-me are not yet separated. This regression is necessary to find the creative material in the deepest layers of the self. “...‘the art’ of art lies in containing the destructive moment” and scientific discoveries, works of art and psychoanalysis all make use of the same thought processes, sometimes named bisociative thinking, or oppositional thinking, or Janusian thinking (Stufkens 1989, 2010). It is a process of synthesising and combining opposites, comparable to Bion’s ‘selected fact’ (1962 p.72; e.g., Foresti 2014). The expression ‘synaptic thinking’ also refers to a combination of two contradictory terms, a gap and a link, in one concept. I believe that Green’s tertiary processes refer to the same

function. He calls them instruments of liaison or connections between primary and secondary processes. It is not so much that the secondary process has to dominate the primary process, but “...rather that the analysand can make the most creative use of their coexistence...” (1986 p.20). It is precisely this linking activity which Loewald (1975) ascribes to the collaboration of patient and analyst.

A work of art can produce uncanny feelings: it invites regressive movements in the reader or spectator and can induce anxiety, because one can get into contact with destructive forces which threaten an existing equilibrium. However, it can also be developmentally constructive in the sense that it invites one to take part in regressive movements parallel to those in the artist and to experience sensations that are unfamiliar. In this way, it can stimulate to integrate split-off parts of the self and have an enriching effect on ‘creative living’ and the ‘co-creation’ of a work of art (in D. Knafo, see Stufkens 2010). One is invited to this co-creation, because the object itself does not communicate a fixed meaning (Kohon 2016). Loewald speaks of the magic of a great work of art and supposes that this magic is connected with the achievement of a reconciliation. He wonders: “Could sublimation be both a mourning of lost original oneness and a celebration of oneness regained?” (1988 p.81)

The psychoanalyst and the setting

The term ‘bi-ocularly’ introduced by Birksted-Breen formulates a dual way of listening “... by having one ‘eye’ on the understanding and interpretation of defense mechanisms, while the other ‘eye’, unfocused, preserves a gap for a ‘something else’ to develop, first in the mind of the psychoanalyst”. This attitude can produce fleeting visual images which “open up a space onto the something new...” (2016 p.26,36). In my personal

experience, these sometimes vivid visual images as manifestations of presentational symbolism (EM & EL Da Rocha Barros 2011) can give a true picture of the non-represented and may prove to be very productive for further work.

In supervision, I have seen many candidates at a loss confronted with their analysand's perverse and psychotic products and manipulations. They found themselves in uncharted waters, and, emotionally petrified, seemed unaware of 'the temptation in the mind common to us all' (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1983), which, among other things, prevented them from seeing and hearing the child in the adult. The risk then is that the patient is pushed prematurely towards sanity or that a collusive avoidance develops. This may be ascribed to inexperience or lack of courage and knowledge; however, things may be more complicated. The analyst's attitude of trusting openness and receptiveness, the reverie or 'Faith in O' make him or her susceptible to a transient decentered sense of self, but also more vulnerable to narcissistic injury and grandiose certainty (Chused 2012). The sense of who one is and where one is can easily be disturbed because of this 'other unfocused eye' without knowledge and desire (never meant literally), resulting in "a strangeness in the mind", a feeling that one is "not for that hour, nor for that place" (Wordsworth 1888).

Maybe it is true that only in a reanalysis the owning of more primitive mental states becomes possible because it is, compared with the mandatory training analysis "...characterized by a greater regression. The transference is more primitive and powerful, evokes levels of anxiety not previously known, involves object representations from earliest development, taps into primitive affective states, and profoundly expresses losses and narcissistic injuries" (Meyer 2007 p.1121). In order to reach the uncanny and most primitive

aspects of ourselves and to enter pre-oedipal and pre-genital states of mind, the setting with the couch and physical presence (see also Lombardi 2009) is, in my view, not only indispensable, but constitutive and has a facilitating and protective function for the analyst as well. At the same time, we have to be aware that this frame harbours the psychotic part of the patient and it must become an object of analysis (Bleger 1966, Stufkens 1979, 2007). In this situation, we sometimes await with goose pimples any further emotional outburst or action of the hysterical, narcissistic or borderline patient. If retaliation can be withheld and enactment restrained, visual images, symbolisation, thinking and a beginning of an internal verbalisation may present themselves. This opens up the way to gain understanding and to co-create 'embodied' meaning. It is a vital and necessary learning process for the analyst too and many analytic writers dedicate a book to their patients in gratitude.

The practicing analyst has his or her daily adventurous walks with the analysand in the forest where the ferocious wild beasts live, the analyst's wild beasts as well. It is clear that we need synaptic thinking, a larger capacity to stand ambiguity and paradoxical states of mind, and to tolerate intense anxieties and fundamental uncertainties. From antiquity to Freud, self-knowledge is explicitly prompted. Sadly, the results on a wider scale are rather disappointing after two thousand years. Most people live with a manichaeian scheme and prefer to pay exclusive attention to the outer world rather than explore their inner space. This causes great problems in relationships and obviously influences society and culture deeply. Pathological narcissism and omnipotence including massive projective identification are everywhere and will continue to show the story of people's childhood experiences. In analysing patients who are more or less like us, we are obligated to integrate the more primitive aspects of ourselves and cannot but obey the 'Know

Thyself’ order. In this, we are helped by the patient who challenges us and confronts us with ‘known-unknown’ non-represented parts in ourselves as well, uncannily awakening the microcosm of our own past familiar yet

unfamiliar early life. I suppose this is nothing new and it is to be hoped that the analyst can resist the temptation to flee if he feels overwhelmed with fear when the ferocious beasts show up. Maybe they will become friends.

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MOTHERHOOD: THE DIALECTIC OF LOVE AND HATE – A SEMANTIC PARADOX

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“Without objective hate, there can be no objective love.”

– Wilson, S. (2002) based on Winnicott's concept in
“Hate in counter-transference” (1949)

Among all the human relations, the most important and intimate dyad is the mother-child dyad. It is the prototype and path-setter for all future relations, as the early subjective and objective experiences of the infant act as templates, and shape the child into a unique personality – leaving strong marks on his capabilities and vulnerabilities, his adaptation and health or any lack thereof.

Mother-child relation is an asymmetrical one and the power equation is tilted in favour of the mother. This position allows her to contain and process the overwhelming anxieties, (both libidinal and aggressive) of the child. However, the negative affects and related anxieties are, often, more difficult to deal with, and if denied and repressed, the unconsciously motivated disguised aggression (and its vicissitudes) can be more damaging. Thus, it is imperative that the mother be aware of the power of this position, own the responsibility and keep the balance. Else, inappropriate love or aggression can interfere with the growth and shaping of the personality of the child. From the perspective of the dyad, the most critical contributing factor of the mother, can be – the awareness and acceptance of hate and anger in one-self – which is the key to health and growth in any dyad and in contrast denial or repression may result in pathology. This has far reaching implications for the analyst-patient dyad too.

As per my analytic understanding, acceptance and integration of aggression and hate (with love) is very much needed in both the maternal matrix and the analytic dyad. It helps cut the ties, facilitate separation and helps in setting of boundaries internally and in the relationship. It subsequently opens up the way to recognise individual issues and process them. The awareness and owning up of the aggression leads to appropriate handling by differentiating its subjective and objective components. By doing so, both the mother and the analyst accept the huge challenge and difficulty of this task and acknowledge the associated power and responsibility of such a role.

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“The emotion of love for instance that of a mother for her infant, is one of the strongest of which the mind is capable...”

– Darwin (1872 p.224)

Being a mother is an attitude. Biological function is an added role. Motherhood is such a state, process, and function, in which a lot of polar opposite as well as conflicting-contradictory elements co-exist. It is this co-existence, which is the core component of motherhood. The capacity to incorporate, balance and integrate them contributes to the resolution of this “developmental crisis”, and reflects in the creation and shaping of a unique entity, the child. (Bibring, 1959)

The child enters this world in an undifferentiated psychic state. Though his physical boundaries are in place, his psychic boundaries are not. A strengthened ego gradually emerges with the help of internal maturation and environmental support. The external support is mainly provided by the mother who ‘enables the infant psyche to begin in the infant body’ (Winnicott 1965), and in the process helps the infant develop the psychobiological capacity to regulate his own emotions. (Schore, 2015).

The mother (as primary caregiver) provides nurturance, protection and care to the infant through physical and emotional holding, and helps in his psychic growth by containing and processing his primitive anxieties and overwhelming affects. These often reflect in the child’s personality – his ‘adaptive capacities as well as vulnerabilities to and resistances against particular forms of future pathologies.’ (Schore, 2015). A person other than the biological mother, can also provide the maternal holding and containing and can act as a substitute mother figure. In analytical treatment, this function is provided by the analyst, through emotional holding and containment.

The success of (the function of) motherhood, largely depends on the mother’s (as primary caregiver) subjective capacities to maintain the balance of love and hate. It is because the nature of the mother-child relation is an asymmetrical one, in which the mother is much more adapted and resourceful than the child. The power equation is tilted in favour of the mother. This asymmetrical hierarchical position gives mother an advantage in handling and soothing the child. Yet this same position also allows the mother to induce painful affect in the infant and the growing child. Whether conscious or unconscious, it can seriously interfere with his growth and shaping of his personality. Incidentally, these capacities of the mother can be hindered or aided by a complex interaction between the different variables of child’s disposition, mother’s subjective and objective issues and a number of environmental difficulties.

Although both the libidinal and aggressive anxieties (of the child) need to be contained, often the negative affects and related anxieties are more difficult to deal with —both by the mother and the analyst. Love and care is an essential feature of the maternal matrix, albeit it is often overvalued and hate or aggression is denied. Evidently the idealisation of love is often a disguise against the fear and unacceptability of the aggression and hate. The aggressive affects are often correlated to pain and vulnerability, and are difficult to handle and process, and thus unwanted in oneself. Hence a common way to deal with them is to deflect them externally. This causes the social and moral judgements to put aggression and hate in the “bad” category, hence connoted as negative, more so in noble roles –such as that of mother and therapist. Hence, despite conscious knowledge and cognitive acceptance that love and hate are two sides of the same coin, emotionally we don’t accept aggression and hate as part of us. This internal conflict

gives rise to the aforementioned semantic paradox.

However, in this context, many issues and queries loom large; such as — Why are we talking about hate in the context of motherhood? Isn't it the mother's love that is needed by the child? How can the hate/aggression be needed – it is so negative and destructive? What happens to the love then? Does a mother really hate her child? Even if she does, how can she ever acknowledge it and worse, accept it? What are the implications if she does or doesn't? What are the implications of the same for the analytic dyad?

The answers to these questions are not easy. It needs exploration from multiple perspectives. We need to know how the mother and child relate to each-other and look at the function of love and hate in the maternal-dyad. Because hate is a vicissitude of aggression, we need to know more about aggression as a whole. As an agent of growth, the mother's subjectivity needs exploration through her narcissism. And most important, how the love and hate of the mother is expressed and how it is known by the child and the impact this has on the dyad.

While this is a vast and confounding topic, I will try to explore some of the relevant issues and their implications in this paper.

Maternal Dyad

"I can give you no idea of the important bearing of this first object upon the choice of every later object, of the profound effects it has, in its transformations and substitutions, in even the remotest regions of our sexual life."

– Freud (*Introductory lectures, Standard Edition, Vol.16, p.314*)

For a mother, love for the child begins with the beginning of her desire for the child and

associated fantasies. Conception makes it a reality. The mother feels merged and at one with the unborn child – a part of herself (body and psyche). Thus the child is cathected with a fusion of narcissistic libido and object libido. All her fantasies, desires and fears are focussed on this unseen, partially-known entity. Pregnancy brings many physical and psychological changes – the beginning of accommodating and adapting to this new entity. Her moods may fluctuate frequently making her excited, enriched and happy at times and upset, angry and depressed at others. She may have self-doubts or regret her lost status and unglamorous changes in herself. Both pleasant and angry feelings and fantasies get projected on the unborn child. She is often preoccupied with herself and the baby. This seemingly pathological state of her preoccupation with the child acts as a preparatory stage, and is normal and healthy for both mother and child.

The birth of the child can bring happy, mixed or negative feelings for the mother depending on her unconscious fantasies and her environmental circumstances. The tiny infant has few rudimentary abilities and almost no control over himself or others. For his survival, he is totally dependent on the mother. It can be a wonderful and powerful feeling, yet, at the same time, so full of doubts and anxiety. Caring for an infant/child tests all the physical and mental capacities of the individual mother and at times stretches beyond conscious intentions and deliberate efforts. (Winnicott 1960, 1965).

Ideally the mother has the physical and psychic capacity to go through the stress, receive the (difficult) affective communication and (yet) affectionately respond to the child. Her active attunement, i.e. sensing the infant's needs and then physically and emotionally providing for them, comes from her narcissistic investment in the child. By matching his needs through regular physical care and satisfactions,

the mother provides a somewhat predictable and familiar environment to the child. Thus she helps the infant's capacity for internal experience to consolidate gradually towards maintaining an adequate internal regulation (homeostasis) for basic growth. Early disruption in this familiarity can disturb the precarious balance of infant's internal regulation and sense of continuity. It can cause early pathology.

Soon, the growing strength of the child's internal homeostasis balance is tested against developmental frustrations, like delay in satisfaction, weaning, discipline and toilet-training etc. It is a test of the mother's capacity too – physical and psychic – to tolerate active aggression. The child challenges her with his newly acquired abilities of walking, running and exploration... The mother has to tolerate the tantrums, stubbornness and the rage of the child, resulting from these frustrations. She needs to constantly adjust herself physically and emotionally to the growing child, so as to complement and accommodate both his limitations and developing capabilities. In due course, the mother needs to renounce the merged-symbiotic relation according to the child's ever changing capabilities through a balance of frustration and assurance. The success of this process depends on her physical and mental endurance, the child's basic constitution and environmental help.

This is tough. What an average mother goes through seems practically impossible. She cannot do what she does without loving her baby with all her heart and soul. This love is powerful enough to allow her to accept her normal frustrations and hate towards the child. Hate is as much a part of normal motherhood as love. She gives up her freedom, status, individuality and routine and allows another entity to take over her time and space – physical and psychic. Nothing seems to be in her control or is predictable —not even her own self. The baby sleeps, cries and feeds at

most inconvenient times. Her eating habits, sleep cycle - everything changes, at times goes haywire. The toilet-training, the tantrums, weaning, the frustrating rage, the initial socialising and schooling – so on and so forth —are all tiring and harassing, to say the least. Each and every stage of this process requires both love and hate to be used to move to the next step. This task of ongoing adaptation to the child can be exhausting. Her unconscious fantasies or conflicts can also shade into her love or hate and may exaggerate them inappropriately.

Aggression – structure & boundaries

“Anybody can become angry – that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.” — Aristotle

Aggression is innate and an expression of the psychic energy (just like libido). Yet, we are afraid to acknowledge and openly talk about it, more so in such noble roles as mother and therapist. It is easy to acknowledge, express and appreciate love and related emotions, but it is very difficult to do the same with aggression and its component affects like hate and sadism. *Why?*

One important logical reason could be that being in the hierarchical powerful position, both mother and therapist, are in a position to help and contrarily to damage. A child is in a very vulnerable position, totally dependent on the mother (primary caregiver) – it means that he cannot survive without her care-providing. However it also means that he is unable to protect himself, if she is to cause him hurt or harm – consciously or unconsciously. Incidentally, such fear and helplessness around a mother's uncontained aggression, can be the cause for caution and the above-mentioned

denial and un-acceptance of hate and aggression in the mother/analyst.

Hence, the child in all of us (by identification) feels scared of the violence by the gigantic powerful adult (our own primitive projection) on whom his survival depends. And we want the powerful mother to only love us (which will comfort us) and not ever hate us (as if it will hurt and kill us).

However, according to my analytical understanding, the denied, un-accepted or unconscious hate or aggression is much more harmful, as it can easily operate in disguise of exaggerated love or justified, non-angry violence – causing harm to the child, the mother and the dyad (relationship). As hate is the vicissitude of aggression, let us explore the aggression and its vicissitudes especially in maternal dyad.

Aggression can range from simple disliking to extreme cruelty. It covers such component affects as sadism, hate, envy, shame, guilt, frustration etc. It is correlated to pain and vulnerability. As an expression of death, mortality, constriction, uncertainty, loss of control and a check on human omnipotence – it is feared and abhorred and often denied. It can be felt as somatically painful and psychically disorienting, and thus fuels our helplessness. Although its purpose is to destroy and eliminate the cause of pain, but inability to do so, may cause it to turn on anything that comes in the way, to seek gratification. It may emerge as a powerful destructive attack on the self, on the object, or on the relationship.

For the infant the pain-anger-frustration starts with birth with his initial attempt at breathing. However, he adapts to it very fast and soon breathing becomes automatic. The child's passing through such painful and frustrating exposures, again and again, is inevitable and essential to facilitate mastery and build ego-strength. So that —“He moves

forward to independence instead of holding back, to walk instead of holding on, to then demand with speech instead of having expectations omnipotently met, to gain bladder and bowel control and sufficient self-care to prevent hurt instead of having to rely on others.” (Bentovim A., 1972) A mother who protects the child from such pain-anger-frustration, possibly out of love, is actually harming and disrupting his growth.

It adds a new dimension to the mother's role. Providing the loving care and physical satisfactions is not enough, she is also required to provide appropriate frustrations to the developing child and tolerate both the exciting anger and frustrating hate of the child. She is required to attune to the child's pain-anger-frustration and survive it without retaliation. This attunement comes from knowing and accepting one's own aggressive anxieties. It means that firstly, she needs to experience her own genuine displeasure, frustration, anger etc. related to the child or the situation. Then, after treating them internally, express it appropriately, to match the child's capacity to tolerate and access aggressive affects in self and others. Thus she helps the child to live through his own hate/anger and also reach the consequent pain and helplessness of developmental frustrations and handle them too. This objective hate and aggression without retaliation on mother's part is as important for the child's healthy growth as her love and care. This helps in the separation-individuation process by development of internal boundaries first and interpersonal boundaries subsequently.

Containing the aggression and hate is a painful and tiring process. One can only process them through subjectively experiencing it in one-self. Incidentally, subjective experiences of anger/hate and such negative affects are developmentally associated with acute pain and discomfort initially and with retaliation and punishment later. This gives rise

to the feeling of annihilation in early infancy and abandonment, rejection, shame and guilt in later periods of childhood. Handling such primitive anxieties by the mother can cause such subjective experiences of her own childhood to re-surface in the her psyche, which may flood her with many negative affects and associated feelings of shame, hate, depression, anger, envy, cruelty, rage, guilt, etc...

However, these affects or their re-surfacing is not the problem. The problem occurs, if the mother is not comfortable with the subjective experience of such difficult emotional states and is incapable to deal with them. In such a situation, the child's pain, anger or hate can trigger her own conflicts around aggression and the affect load can be overwhelming. It can cause her to deny, distort or dissociate (by repression). Dissociation allows them to breed virulently. Later projection can be used to get rid of them from the self. The mother's affects can be projected on the child or the situation and accordingly it will be blamed and hated. This can confuse and overshadow her objective handling of aggression – and result in unconscious retaliation or abuse. It may express itself in disguise of exaggerated love or justified violence – causing harm to the child, the mother and the dyad (relationship).

Unable to tolerate the aggression in herself, the mother may deny and remain unaware of the aggressive anxieties of the child. Such empathic failures by mother (Kohut 2013) may leave the infant/child ill-equipped to tolerate and deal with his pain-anger-frustration, and regulate the self, emotion and behaviour. The infant/child is left with a lot of unprocessed, unneutralised aggression which is not incorporated or integrated in the ego. It means that his ego will not possess the repertoire of emotional exposure, somatic experience or interpersonal skills in the area of dealing with such aggressive affect normally, or in time of

crisis. The quality and quantity will depend on the infant's physical and psychic maturation and capacity of the ego and other environmental factors. It can result in maturational deficiency and hinder the later development of the child.

Case – Jai, aged 11, was suffering from muscular dystrophy. His parents, being doctors, knew the prognosis of his illness and accepted it intellectually. That helped them to handle themselves for the time being and do what is necessary for the child. However, they couldn't process the trauma and mourn their loss. Hence, they couldn't help the child to deal with the anger, shame and frustration of being different. The parents as well as the child maintained a defensive structure to be functional. The child's defence crumbled, when he began at a new regular school. The very first day he returned with severe back pain and got bed-ridden. He hated the new school and the fellow students. This symptom shielded him from further exposure to school and associated humiliation, shame and rejection.

Later in therapy, when he could express his anger towards his peers and teacher, he realised how much he himself hated his condition. He could work through his own and others' projections and also could separate himself from his mother's inductions and projections. He began and continued school for a couple of years, made good friends and later was sad to leave when his father had a transfer.

Evidently, unacknowledged and denied hate or other variables of aggression serve a defensive function. It saves our psyche from venturing into uncharted territory of difficult emotional states of pain and helplessness related to unconscious conflicts. On one hand the aggressive drive gets a chance of easy discharge and gratification – in thought or action, on the other the ego is saved from further dealing with the underlying affects and

vulnerabilities. Hence it indicates the immaturity or inability of the ego to deal with the underlying difficulty – subjective or objective. It is a test of the ego strength of a person, firstly, in acknowledging one's hate/anger/shame etc. and then in dealing with the underlying issue. To work through such a difficult affective state is tough, as one needs to delay the discharge in action and try to tolerate the affect and related anxieties – in one's own soma and psyche.

Hating is natural in times of frustration. It is important to acknowledge and accept it as such. What is harmful is to act it out and the chance of acting out is more when we deny our emotion and find it unacceptable. Hence when one denies hate, and tries to suppress or repress it, it latches on to the love or care, which are allowed and accepted emotions, and returns to the surface and in the behaviour, but not in a clear and honest manner but subtle and hidden behind the love and care which then might be a little more forceful, exaggerated and rigid. The solution is a thorough search in oneself about the so called negative emotions like hate, violence, shame, guilt etc. and allowing them appropriate space in the psyche. One needs to accept the not so acceptable, horrific part of oneself. The more we accept, the more we tolerate our unacceptable self and the more we can contain it, we become capable of tolerating the other. So once we are aware, do we hate then or not? Of course, we do. We hate. We hate clearly and honestly and accept it as such.

It is clear that the objective anger and hate is growth-facilitating in every stage and actively needed for resolution of separation-individuation by maintaining boundaries. Subjective conflictual emotions, whether love or hate, can be damaging. Hence, it is important for a mother to acknowledge her aggression and hate just like her love and be alert of the subjective and objective counterparts - to

minimise damage. The denial and lack of acknowledgement often points towards the internal conflicts around intimacy and aggression, which could be related to the narcissistic vulnerabilities and attachment issues of the mother.

Narcissism and Attachment

*If you truly loved yourself, you could never hurt another – **Buddha***

*A person who never learned to trust confuses intensity with intimacy, obsession with care and control with security – **Patrick Carnes** (2013, p.13)*

A mother's love and hate, is nothing but the expression of her narcissism. She can only so much love or hate her baby, as much as she (unconsciously) loves or hates herself. i.e. as much as she accepts and values herself or as much as she rejects or devalues herself. Narcissism is the core component of our subjective self. A mother's narcissism or her subjectivity, which includes all her subjective conscious and unconscious issues, patterns and conflicts, is a critical feature of her motherhood and affects the child as nothing else can.

Narcissism entails basic self-love – essential for survival; self-care and self-defence. Once our physical survival is ensured, psychic integration ensures healthy narcissism. Healthy narcissism reflects in appropriate differentiation between self and the object. It derives from such intrapsychic structure, which has its infantile grandiosity and omnipotence defused; has integrated both positive and negative aspects of the self and consequently functions autonomously as a whole (Masterson 1993). Such healthy narcissism allows objectivity, which entails emotional investment in a relationship for mutual growth, instead of abusing or being abused. The abuse can only happen when the subjective self is threatened and insecure, which reflects in narcissistic

vulnerabilities or pathological narcissism. Objectivity is based on present circumstances and issues, whereas subjectivity is shaded by past issues – hence allows the unresolved conflicts to resurface.

In pathological conditions, narcissistic health is compromised. Instead of a whole self-representation (containing both the positive and negative aspects), several contradictory and conflictual self-representations and object-representations are separately organised by deploying primitive defences. An intra-psyche split develops to keep the good parts separated from the bad parts. The child-self is often not in continuum within the adult-self. The omnipotence and grandiosity is not renounced, but used to defend the subjective vulnerability and primitive fear. The threatening subjective issues and conflicts can resurface with any associative trigger. An individual with threatened subjectivity finds it hard to provide objective love or hate. (Masterson 1993)

The mother's narcissistic health and security is directly correlated to her own attachment style, i.e. her own relationship with her mother/parents/caregivers during her infancy and later. It is a major building block of her personality or subjectivity. Secure attachment with her mother/parents means that she had been loved and accepted as an individual, and had had the opportunity to work with the full range of her emotions and conflicts i.e. she had been helped to deal with both positive and negative feelings in herself and others. Such secure attachment, by internalisation, results in a reality-oriented stable personality with healthy self-esteem and flexible boundaries. Such a mother will be more tolerant and accepting of her child and allow him to develop an autonomous sense of self.

Contrarily, if the mother is insecurely attached with her mother/parents, which means she had had conflictual relations with them, it is indicative of non-resolution of her

ambivalence and aggression towards her mother/parents and pathology in the process of separation-individuation. Her boundaries can be loose/merged or rigid. There can be discrepancy in her feelings, thoughts and behaviour. She may not experientially feel what she cognitively thinks. She may not be comfortable around certain affects in herself and/or others, especially negative affects, which affects the congruence of her personality and in turn her maternal feelings and behaviour towards the child. Such mothers find it hard to provide appropriate objective hate to the child or process the pain and aggression of the child. For example, some such mothers, in order to prove themselves perfect as individual and as mother, often don't allow crying to the infant and forcefully engage him to be joyful and excited and are intolerant of the anger and distress of the growing child.

Narcissistic vulnerabilities can impact the mother-child dyad in varying degree of inappropriate merging with or distancing from each other. Some mothers are too preoccupied with themselves to allow any connection to the child, whereas some mothers find it difficult to give up their merged-connection with the child, and lose their sense of self, which may result in difficulties for the child to grow its autonomous self (Chodorow 1999). Either neglect or overinvestment (too much love) in a child can hinder a sufficiently individuated and autonomous sense of self.

Attachment issues or conflicts of the mother, in their different shades, reflect in the health or pathology of maternal dyad. Nancy Chodorow (1999, p.212), aptly captures one of the common pathology, "that women turn to children to complete a relational triangle, or to recreate a mother-child unity, means that mothering is invested with a mother's often conflictual, ambivalent, yet powerful need for her own mother. That women turn to children to fulfil emotional and even erotic desires

unmet by men or other women means that a mother expects from infants what only another adult should be expected to give.” A mother’s unconscious conflicts around attachment and intimacy, threaten her subjective self and interfere with her objectivity. Such inherent subjective vulnerabilities mostly work unconsciously, and hence are not easy to overcome. Her own unconscious needs shades her perception of the child’s capacities and needs and she may repeat the pattern – and the cycle continues.

Motherhood is a narcissistic experience and the child is her narcissistic extension. A mother, willingly, risks her own survival – physical and psychical, for the survival of her child. Pregnancy and then child-rearing can evoke many narcissistic and primitive issues and conflicts in the mother, which she needs to process and contain. Each individual mother has her own minor or major narcissistic vulnerabilities, which means, she has unresolved, repressed conflicts and associated uncontained affects, which, if evoked, can threaten her subjective self. The demands and anxieties of motherhood can trigger such conflicts. Failing to contain these anxieties and affects can result in deployment of primitive defences and unconsciously (ab) using the infant/child by projecting her unbearable and unacceptable parts and affects. Such pathology of the mother can be severely detrimental to the child. Depending on the severity of the situation, the reaction of the mother, and the environmental support – the implications can be slight to seriously damaging.

Case – Ms. A, 30, married and a mother of a 5 year old boy, came to therapy after two suicide attempts. Most striking recent fact was two abortions in a gap of 8 months, which she casually mentioned. When her son was 4 yrs., she conceived again. She opted for the termination of her second pregnancy after her gynaecologist suspected the foetus with minor

defects. She mentioned that it is a favour to the child, as such child’s life would be worse than death. She reported being okay after that, took a trip abroad and had a good time. Despite medical caution, within 6 months, she planned another baby. Yet in a couple of months, she was doubting the baby to be defective and wanted to abort it. Despite the medical report suggesting otherwise, she became desperate. Inability to tolerate her impulses and affect, led to abortion against everybody’s caution. However, she had no clue, why she did so.

The narcissistic merging, intolerance and unacceptability of lacuna or defect and fear of herself as an imperfect mother led her to kill her unborn child and then attempting to kill herself to rid of the imperfection. Her acknowledgement of hate towards defect/disability and experiencing associated shame and hate, in the therapy, saved her from further attempts. However, it would be a long process to work through her narcissistic vulnerabilities.

Narcissistic vulnerabilities and conflictual attachment issues limit a mother’s capacities to receive and process the negative aggressive affects in herself and the child. This compromises her ability to fully invest in and attune to her child. From the perspective of the mother, both her expression and perception of emotions – in self and the child, depend on her subjective capabilities. Hence, the nature of her internal affective state powerfully influences her attunement to her child. Secure mothers are more attuned to their babies, hence attuned to a range of infant affect, whereas insecure mothers misattune either randomly or to specific negative affects, that threaten their internalized attachment balance. (Haft & Slade 1989)

Narcissism – both the strength and the vulnerabilities – reflect in a mother’s subjective self. This is the self, which deals with the daily care of the infant and the growing child. And through such day-to-day activities, the mother’s

love and hate is communicated to her child. The infant/child knows himself and the mother not only by what she says but what she does and what she is, which is expressed in her active emotional communication.

Active Emotional Communication

When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not to join their chaos.

– **L.R. Knost**

The role that emotional communication plays in the mother-child relationship is critical to its functioning. The child enters this world with very limited cognitive and linguistic capabilities and only a rudimentary repertoire of socialising. Though he has capacity for experience, his communication abilities are extremely limited and poorly coordinated, yet enough to survive. For example – his helpless cry is enough to induce caring and nurturing emotions in the mother. This non-symbolic, non-linguistic way of communicating one's emotional needs, is the basic emotional communication. It is a complex pattern of somatic and sensory signals and experiences, which includes tone, pitch and rhythm of the voice/words, changes in facial expressions and eye contact, hand and body gestures, and tactile experience of touch etc.

The goal of the emotional communication is to help in survival and growth mainly by regulating the internal balance (homeostasis) and to engage with the external environment to seek help. It is the active process, through which the mother-child interact with each other about their needs, and influence, direct and regulate each-other. Throughout our life, we use it for the same purpose – the survival of physical self is followed by survival and growth of self-esteem.

Success or failure of emotional communication is assessed by change in affect

- in self and/or other. The ultimate goal of this kind of communication is to either increase in positive affect and to reach a state of optimum comfort or decrease in negative affect and removal of state of discomfort/displeasure. For example – a child's cry induces anxiety, or discomfort in the mother and she checks to provide feed or change of nappy or pick him up to comfort. Thereby reducing the infant's discomfort and associated negative affect and increases positive affect or comfort. Once the baby is calmed, it reduces mother's anxiety or negative affect. Seemingly, the whole purpose of the function of emotional communication is to communicate the negative affect for its transformation into positive affect or in less favourable situations, at least transform its intensity and reduce it to bearable level. (Tronick 1989)

The infant as well as the mother uses this communication for the purpose of fulfilment of their needs. The process of communication can be initiated by any of the partner, by means of somatic-sensory signals, which is supposed to induce and evoke appropriate emotions in the other and motivate complementary response or action. This is a subtle, yet very powerful way of influencing the other by one's emotions. For example, the infant's extreme emotional inductions are capable to evoke and provoke powerful emotional experiences in the parents such as 'suicidal or homicidal impulses when the baby is agitated; feelings of profound contentment and peace when the baby is calm' (Geltner 2012).

It is through this that the mother can and does – influence and shape the infant/child, many-a-times without being fully aware of it. The mother's internal emotional state is communicated to the infant, through her physical and sensory actions. Both her conscious and unconscious love and hate gets expressed – her unconscious subjective needs, vulnerabilities, conflicts and anxieties are

communicated to the infant – subtly and continuously – which has the capacity to influence and alter the infant’s emotional state, for example, when her voice and touch is soothing, or in less fortunate moments, when it is irritating or depressing. (Fernald 1992).

A well-coordinated affective interaction between the mother and the infant is reciprocal, synchronous, and/or coherent. It promotes positive affect, sense of comfort and security. Conversely, a mis-coordinated interaction can evoke stress, insecurity and negative affect. In normal course, the interaction in the maternal dyad moves between coordinated and mis-coordinated states and the infant experiences both positive and negative affect accordingly. These frequent moves, are normal, and not a problem. Rather it introduces the infant to both positive and negative affects for brief periods and to the change, i.e. transformations of negative affect into positive. Hence it is healthy and growth-facilitating as it allows the infant to experience the stress and change in his internal emotional state during the engagement with the external environment and gradually regulate it. This makes him an active agent in his goal directed activities of regulating self and engaging others. (Tronick 1989)

What makes an interaction problematic is, if one or both of the mother-child get stuck in affectively negative, mis-coordinated interactive states. It would then result in ‘prolonged periods of interactive failures and negative affect, few interactive repairs, and few transformations of negative to positive affect’. Interaction or communication failures, means that the communicative signals are often ignored, disregarded, or poorly attended to; and did not result in transformation of negative affects. He is left with a load of negative affect. Repair, in this context means resumption of co-ordinated communication and transformation of negative affect.

Communication failures can occur due to the problems in either expression of emotion or accurate perception of it or failure to respond appropriately. (Tronick 1989)

Communication is a two way process. Expression of emotion is as important as the accurate perception and appropriate response. Sensing and understanding such emotional communication is related to the ability to perceive and interpret sensory data – in self and other. An emotional block, blind spot or any such conscious or unconscious motivation can change the understanding of a communication in a particular way. The meaning of an emotional message can change by any minor or major change in expression or perception.

The infant’s abilities are limited, but fast developing. Appropriate exposure to a vast range of positive and negative emotion is essential for an infant and child’s growth, because, although emotions can be described in words, they must be experienced in order to be known (Geltner 2012). This experience is the key to understand and deal with them. Appropriate exposures and experiences help to aid and improve the capacities of the infant/child – not only in communicating one’s emotion but also in interpreting other’s emotional communication – which is the key to empathy.

The mother’s sensory-emotional communication depends on her ability to achieve the merged attunement with the infant by adaptively regressing to his immediate level (Fernald 1992). It has a direct correlation to her comfort or conflicts in areas of intimacy, which is a manifestation of her narcissistic health and attachment style. Any associated vulnerabilities and conflictual issues in these areas might interfere with her capacities to receive and process relevant overwhelming affects in herself and the child. As research in the relevant areas indicated about the incapacities of the insecure mothers’ to attune

to all the affects of their infants. (Haft and Slade, 1989)

This powerfully influences her ability to fully invest in and attune to her child. Thus, if certain affects are dissociated and repressed, then her internal world is organised defensively. This will compromise her objectivity around those affects and their idiosyncratic associations. Her defences can interfere in induction or evocation of such emotions, which can alter her perception and understanding of the child's emotional messages – consequently changing her response to him or leading her to force an unnecessary affect onto the infant/child and cause interactive failure. This can easily become a cycle of misunderstanding or misattunement.

Incidentally, the infant is not totally dependent on the external support to regulate and transform the negative affect into positive. He has the capacity to self-soothe or self-regulate, however limited or rudimentary may it be. Thumb sucking is one such active example. Whenever he is left with negative affect, he stops his engagement with other activities and indulge in self-soothing activities or experiences. Once he is calm and the negative affect transformed – into positive or less in intensity, he again engages with the world – internal (eg. Maturation demands, Cognitive activities) and external (eg. socialising). (Tronick 1989)

However, in case of perpetual and chronic communication failures, the infant is left with a persistent load of negative affect. His immature ego – insecure and threatened – finds it easy to use this normal self-regulatory capacity defensively – the more successful is his self-regulatory capabilities in containing the negative affects and its disruptive effects, the more they are deployed by the ego - eventually it is used automatically, inflexibly, and indiscriminately. Most of the infant's energy gets deployed in it at the cost of other

maturational goal directed activities like socialising or cognitive development. Such affective load impacts the growth of the ego. It may result in rigidity of ego, by causing one to withdraw with a bias, without allowing the self to go through any new experience – internally and externally. This may result in various forms of infant psychopathology – withdrawal, depression, separation anxiety, issues related to autonomy, socialising etc. (Tronick, 1989)

These success and failures of emotional communication may build on or resolve; and can help or hinder the growth in the maternal dyad. This powerfully influences the shaping of the infant/child by organising his immediate internal affective world and further building on that.

Often this continues to reflect in the growing child's personality, his sense of self and his expressions and social interactions, as he increasingly supplants the purely non-symbolic, non-linguistic modes of emotional communication with conscious, deliberate and purposeful cognitive interaction. Eventually, with the establishment of the primacy of verbal, symbolic, and cognitive communication system, the emotional communication and induction recedes towards the pre-conscious or unconscious arena. Though often not obvious, it remains interwoven in our communication and indicates our internal affective state. Cognitive communication is thought-provoking, whereas emotional communication induces feelings. Its integration is a critical feature of our expression, reflecting in congruence of the message.

Expressions of emotion through language is a critical component of analysis. However, the contribution of non-verbal, non-symbolic, emotional communication, which emphasises the congruence is often far beyond its verbal counterpart in analysis. Both the analyst and analysand bring their subjective self, which is

a reflection of their narcissism. Underlying the obvious verbal communication, their unconscious interacts through this emotional communication.

Analytic Dyad

“A new dyad can construct a unique facilitation of, awareness of, and ability to use inner states.”

L.W. Sanders (1985)

The emotional communication is one of the key features that makes maternal-dyad and analytical dyad so similar – and its implications are far-reaching. Its importance in creation of a new dyad can be ascertained by Geltner’s explanation of transference – “Emotional communication linked to past experience is the interpersonal dimension of the repetition compulsion, a powerful force that causes the current people in a person’s life to experience a wide range of feelings that originated in early life.”

Incidentally, the analytic setting evokes regressive intimate connections and because of the transference, the analyst is often perceived as substitute to parents. Both the mother and the analyst are revered and/or feared, as they are invested with strong affects. This tilts the power in favour of the analyst. The responsibility of this role requires one to handle and contain the overwhelming and negative affects, without retaliating, to facilitate growth.

The most critical feature of analytical sessions is the facilitation of subjective experience of affective anxieties, while uncovering unconscious conflicts, layer by layer. Therefore, just like the child, the analysand needs to access full range of his intimate and aggressive fantasies, related to his unconscious conflicts in order to resolve them. As a result, the load of unconscious affects and associated anxieties, which were only available to

emotional communication earlier, can be verbalised, and the congruence between the two achieved.

It entails the experiential knowledge of what contributes to the human psychic structure. Exposure to these components – positive and negative emotions – in their full spectrum – allows one to experience their effect on self and others and builds a repertoire of useful handling strategies. The analyst’s subjectivity is the catalytic tool in this. Ideally the analyst is open to receive, experience and deal with intense emotions in order to explore them subjectively. This helps expanding his objective field of representation. Such narcissistic investment helps sharpen the analyst’s ability to recognise and use appropriate intervention that can penetrate the defensive barrier of the analysand and extends to him the mutative effects of the analytic relationship itself. Judith Chused (2012) further argues that “an analyst’s narcissism can be used to further the development of mature relatedness and capacity for intimacy in our patients.” Nonetheless, she cautions – “If an analyst cannot tolerate the pain of narcissistic injury, he will not fully engage in this most intimate of therapies.”

In this context, Chused very insightfully explains how the personal affective attacks can be handled and objectively used for therapeutic purpose by ‘narcissistic decaethesis of self’ – which is both trusting one’s perceptions while also accommodating the patient’s internal world, which is different. This would help the analyst to maintain objectivity – which is essential to carry on analysis. As Winnicott prescribed decades ago– “A main task of the analyst of any patient is to maintain objectivity in regard to all that the patient brings, and a special case of this is the analyst’s need to be able to hate the patient objectively.”

Why a special case for need to be able to hate? Because in most cases, people come for

analysis/therapy to deal with the leftover load of negative affect from early life (Tronick), which happens to cause them disturbances in the present life, either the functioning of the person or the associated system.

But why hate? Isn't it love that is needed to mitigate hate? The answer can be both - Yes & No.

Yes, because without basic love and positive regard, an analyst cannot bear to receive the patient's emotional communication to genuinely feel the various affects in one's subjective self and feel the anxiety almost like the mother. Thereafter the analyst is required to hold these affects (for the time-being) – waiting for the patient's readiness to receive it back. All this while, these affects trigger his own repressed negative affective load and the associated conflicts and defences. Thereby he needs to continuously contain and process them (treating and neutralizing them by lessening their intensity).

And NO, only love is not enough to heal. Incidentally, the cumulative load of negative affect (self & patient) often trigger discomfort and pain – somatic and psychic – in analyst. Thereby, evoking aggressive and destructive fantasies against the cause of the pain (the analysis or the patient) and triggers hate and associated defence. Although horrifying – inability to accept it, will hinder the experiential processing of affects in the self of the analyst – which will interrupt the process to reach the appropriate intervention. Only by accepting and allowing the hate (towards the patient or analysis) an appropriate space in one's psyche and then, differentiating the subjective and objective hate – the working through could be facilitated by maintaining an appropriate sense of boundaries unique to that patient. Relating with appropriate boundaries is the optimal objective love.

Thus, it is essential for one to objectively

hate as well as to be hated to attain maturity or holistic healing. Maturity entails allowing apt space to both love (libido) and hate (aggression). Yet, it is relatively easy to accept our positive and caring emotions towards the patient, than to accept hate and aggression, which is often difficult, embarrassing and shameful. One of the core reason could be what Epstein (1977) explains – “the patient's hate and destructiveness as they emerge in the analysis, beget the analyst's hate and destructiveness and for most analysts, it is their own hatred more than the patient's that is abhorrent.” Understandably, this is threatening – as counter-transference in such case would be intense and difficult to handle, often leading to projective-identification – which is another specific example of unconscious emotional communication operating beyond the overt cognitive interaction.

For example, The sadomasochistic pattern of abuse, especially child abuse, is so difficult to break. As human beings, we carry the experience of both – a perpetrator and a victim, a bully and a bullied – in all of us. Often one of the role is projected by the patient – to control. The projective identification is established by evoking concordant or complementary countertransference. The patient takes the other role. It may be switched on and off in the dyad. The patient is helpless to stop such repetition-compulsion (Freud 1920). The transference can evoke strong affective counter-transferential hate, sadism or rescue fantasy often difficult to resist.

Somehow, if the projected role and/or the induced affects can be experienced as subjectively operating and thereby analysing that internal experience by differentiating between the objective and subjective components and the associated desires, needs and fantasies in self and in the patient, then it could culminate in a therapeutic breakthrough and growth for both of them. Thereby, if an

analyst could experience and process the unbearable affects of sadism and hate (without abusing) and/or the affects of humiliation and helplessness (without being destroyed), a helpful intervention may be reached and can help the patient to work through his/her own emotions in this context safety in the therapy.

Otherwise, inability to accept or resolve such affects as hate/sadism/humiliation could lead to compromise in the objectivity of the analyst. Non-acknowledgement could result in a range of counter-transferential reactions — from subtle acting out to dis-engagement of the analyst. It could result in such reactive interventions whose partial purpose is to lessen the affective load of the analyst, e.g., to hurry the process; to provide intellectual insights; subtle fault-finding or blaming the patient - leading to impasse or break in analysis. Unconscious collusions might sabotage the therapy. The conflicts remain unresolved, adding more to mistrust and trauma – stagnating growth for all involved by keeping the maladaptive patterns alive.

Contrarily, “Talking about the wish to hurt without recrimination decreases a patient’s fear of his and others’ aggression. It also makes more tolerable the idea of imperfection. If the analyst can talk of pain being inflicted during the session, then there is the possibility that the patient can experience her own pain without a defensive retreat.” (Chused J. 2012) Indeed, it is a very difficult task.

Evidently, the essence of analysis lies in the understanding, experiencing and acknowledging limitations, helplessness, and imperfection as the core elements of being human, and ultimately, to deal with one’s existential anxieties by accepting the elemental facts of us all. Similar to separation-individuation in maternal dyad, mourning is an important process in every analysis. Just like the growing child, the analysand needs to deal with his frustration, anger and pain that come

from diffusing of his glamorous, omnipotent and grandiose ideas about oneself. The facilitation of this processing of unmet needs and desires, and related anger and sadness, requires experiencing pain of loss, regrets and disappointments without blaming – to oneself or others. It means experiencing and tolerating the negative affects without much hope of gratification or even binding logic.

Knowing and tolerating such affective anxiety in oneself allows one to be empathetic and tolerant of the same in others. Hence an analysand is supposed to be allowed (objective) hate, in the safe analytic space, if that’s what he needs. So in Winnicott’s (1949) words – “If the patient seeks objective or justified hate he must be able to reach it, else he cannot feel he can reach objective love.”

Concluding Remarks

The matter of love and hate is not a simple one, but a complex, dynamic and multi-layered issue. However, both love and hate (aggression) are building blocks for healthy functioning of any dyad. Same is true of maternal-dyad and analytical dyad. What is important is to keep it as objective as possible and be alert/aware of the shadow of unconscious subjective issues.

Although growth of the child and subsequent healthy development is not solely determined by the mother’s subjective issues, yet it would be foolish to ignore its significant impact. Same can be said about analyst and the analytical process. In order to facilitate growth, the maternal dyad needs to be child-centric and the analytic dyad is supposed to be analysand/ patient centric. This is because the mother and the analyst are supposed to have more capabilities and range to move to & fro i.e., regressing to the child/patient’s level and coming back to oneself. The child or patient doesn’t possess this capacity. However the internalisation of the mother/analyst helps to

develop such empathy in the child/analysand.

Let's finally ask – In the context of dealing with the hate and violence, what is required of a mother or an analyst?

In such delicate roles, as a mother or analyst, tolerating intimacy is essential, which is to comfortably be as close and merged as one, without losing oneself. And be separate as two different persons with different individual needs and aspirations without disengagement. The objective role of pain and aggression needs to be appreciated to have flexible, permeable boundaries, to protect the self and other.

This requires them to be aware of their subjective and objective needs, and then to take a note of their subjective strengths and limitations. Healthy narcissism, in such roles, entails accepting the reality of one's narcissistic vulnerabilities and its unpredictable unconscious effects which requires one to be open to accept mistakes. The acknowledgement of its behavioural act-outs, aids in learning and growth. Else narcissistic gratification will overshadow the facilitation of objective growth.

In this context, the readiness – physical as well as psychological – in the mother/analyst is an advantage, which entails willingness and

commitment for the unknown journey of knowing oneself in an entirely different way knowing fully well, that there would be no turning back.

Then it could be such a developmental milestone to provide afresh opportunity for resolution of the previously unresolved conflicts related to intimacy and aggression, culminating in integration of self and object with all their paradoxes, which provides growth and maturity for both partners in the endeavour – the mother would grow, as well as the baby. Same could be said of the analyst-patient dyad.

Endnote

1. The word “mother” is used, not only for the biological mother but any primary caregiver or substitute.
2. The use of “his” for the child and analyst is gender neutral. The contextual points are applicable to both the gender.
3. “Love” is used to encompass all vicissitudes of libido.
4. “Hate” is used to encompass different vicissitudes of aggression/sadism – as per the context. It is interchangeably used to mean aggression in general and not only as a specific emotion.

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ANXIETY AND ITS VICISSITUDES

Adriana Ponzoni*

“*I took the step*”, these are the first words of Santiago, a man in his 40s, in our first session and who tells me that he has been putting off calling me for more than 6 months, even though he had my name and telephone number stuck to his refrigerator for all that period of time. “*De el paso o hice el movimiento*” is the better translation (remember the Italian phrase “*traduttore, traditore*”) – which occurs to me and which I will have to continue doing in order to be able to tell you something about this analysis with a foreign patient, who could only communicate in English. His actual words were: “*I made the move*”¹.

First difficulty in this analysis and its transmission was that in addition to the ever present challenge of working with the foreigner – the unconscious of the other from one’s own unconscious – this session also meant having to work in another language, one which I know and am comfortable with, but still it is a foreign tongue.

Once I heard someone say that a person “is” in one language, so that in addition to the permanent restlessness or uneasiness of working with the unconscious, we had to add this new dimension of “being” somebody else in a different language. Dealing with that “foreignness” within a new foreign register...our own new version as psychoanalysts in a second language.

If analysis is an impossible profession, then analysing in another language seemed to double

the difficulty. At the same time I thought... and think: isn’t it always about another language in the psychoanalytical experience?

A number of doubts came into my mind. I asked myself, for example, if I could find the appropriate words when necessary, if could I find those words which were capable of transmitting the subtleties, nuances, twists, equivocal and unequivocal, which we need from them? Even more, I was concerned about those interventions where the patient gets to know, at the same time as the analyst, about what the latter has to say...what would it be like? More than that...could it take place?

I was worried about misunderstandings, which always have a place, but given the circumstances it seemed more unmanageable. When I started working with this patient I think that I was frightened of misunderstandings. Now I trust them greatly and looking back on the process, I find that there were several fruitful ones. I highlight here the value of the “*understumble*” which was recognised by Lacan (1962), a slang term in English which: “*includes that which is understood, and to stumble, which means exactly that – tumble. Comprehension is always a journey doing summersaults into the misunderstanding.*”

My name and telephone number had been given to him by his doctor, for him to consult me, since the doctor felt that he could not do any more to treat the severe palpitations that the patient had suffered for some time and

¹I am referring to this famous expression that also Freud used... “*traduttore traditore*” in Italian, meaning that a translator is a traitor, that is, whenever you translate you are being a traitor because it is very difficult if not impossible to translate!!

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which worried both of them.

We agreed to have some initial meetings to see if we could work together and if I could help him. From the first interview I would highlight that after his first words, previously cited, and his comment about my telephone number and his doctor, he asked me where I wanted him to start, to which I answered: wherever he could.

He thus began to speak about his numerous siblings, his family and his very strict Catholic upbringing, in a very small, catholic and stern town. He mentions that he is gay and has lived with his partner for 5 years. He speaks of making a great and sustained effort to become a professional and that now he is very happy with his work and the organization where he has worked for many years. At times there is an overload of work, which is difficult to manage, but he loves what he does.

After having talked for a while he makes a pause and asks me if that is what I wanted to hear. This comment surprised me, I thought for a while and said that I was more concerned to know if that is what he wanted or needed to talk about. There was a pause and then he said: *“I carry a guilt”*.

He has been talking about this with his brother who has been visiting for a few weeks and they agreed that all the siblings carry this guilt in their own way. Then he moves on to talk about the problem with his partner. Whilst José, his partner, decided to come to Uruguay with him, he is not comfortable here, whilst Santiago loves it. He tries to help his partner as much as he can. He tries to motivate him as much as possible. José has taken courses, but does not finish them, or, if he does, he does not make use of them, he just leaves them. He thinks that José doesn't know what he wants and this has been an issue since they met. He was not in a fixed job in his home country, nor did he study and here he is just the same. He knows that he enjoys cooking and doing the

domestic chores, but inevitably Santiago feels guilty when he goes to work and leaves José alone. From this point he returns to the subject of his infancy and his family and how difficult it was to deal with his homosexuality as an adolescent. But not dealing with it was also difficult as it meant lying and lying in his family was the worst thing that you could do: it was a sin. In fact everything was a sin and sins had to be paid for, this was the permanent discussion in his house. He comments that his mother was schizophrenic, which became worse over the course of his adolescence and youth. Telling her about his homosexuality was particularly difficult since she was a very strict Catholic and logically, she was the one who reacted worst to the news, locking herself in her room and crying for several days. His father on the other hand, after listening to him, asked him to speak with a psychologist, which he did for a time.

At one point in his telling he stops and says to himself and then to me, how much he needed to talk about all this and the need he feels to talk. However, he feels bad that he is talking behind someone's back. I ask him whose back he is referring to and he smiles and says: *“How crazy, isn't it? To be honest it would be behind my parent's back...but they are already dead!”* He becomes anxious and says to me that in spite of everything he has very good memories of his early childhood, of how much fun it was to have lots of siblings, the summer house and all the games they organized, that his parents had an excellent sense of humour. He has many happy memories of his mother and father. The problem was that at one point his mother's mental health started to deteriorate over time. In addition she suffered from multiple sclerosis, which left her in a wheelchair for the last years of her life. His mother could be very loving, but would suddenly enter into a crisis of tears or rage and would kick out their toys. He remembers one time in which she became

annoyed about the mess in the house and began to throw everybody's clothes out of the window.

He starts to say that he does not understand the reason for these moments of intense tachycardia which he is suffering from. He thinks they are unrelated to the situations during which they occurred and if they were related, then they were totally disproportionate to them.

He did understand that he had difficulties with his partner and that he felt tired, although he also said he loved him a lot. He was tired of his frequent and incomprehensible bad moods, which came on quickly and at times gave rise to concerns such as when his partner started to drink and could not stop and ended up leaving the house and coming back very late at night. The possibility of him being unfaithful did not worry him much, what was worrying was that his partner was progressively losing control and above all, the possibility that something might happen to him, which could put him into danger, or worst the possibility of not seeing him again. These were not regular episodes, but they did repeat themselves. Fortunately they had many other moments when they had a good time together: they shared, enjoyed each other's company and had fun.

We agreed to work in three sessions per week. At the start he was very anxious. He would arrive saying that he felt that he was about to explode as the session approached, that his heart was going to explode at any moment. That he had such a necessity to talk that at times it seemed to him that he would not be able to wait for me to open the door and that he would break it down. These thoughts made him feel very crazy: *"Will I end up like my mother?"* – he often asked. I remember saying to him that in our work we would certainly have to breakdown a few doors and that he was wondering if I was going to be able

to help him or if I would collapse together with the door, crushed by the anxiety which he felt would also crush him.

In this way the sessions were dotted with memories of his infancy and his current difficulties with his partner, jumping from one time-frame to another. Elements began to arise, both in the structure of the telling and in the content of what they spoke about, of a couple with a degree of functioning which was quite indiscriminate (*"we get into each other's space"*, *"we tread on each other's shoes"*).

A loving couple unfolds in the scene where he presents himself as the puppet of the other or a passive accomplice: a cruel and arbitrary master and a puppy dog. Something that was in some ways already announced in his first session when he asked me where to start or what I wanted to hear, which allowed me to connect and work in transference – this particular positioning of his, as an object of the other. And what would I expect of him? What would I want? In a manner that made me evoke something of what Lacan (1962) said when he formulated the following questions: *"What does he want (from) me?"* *"What is he asking for, from me? What does he want as regards this place of the ego?"* He was beginning to see that rather than a victim of José, he was a victim (and not only a victim) of something within him which led him to organize his life in this way, to produce certain scenarios which allowed him to occupy this place and be at the mercy of the other.

A certain degree of heterogeneity started to unfold and different registers appeared: moments in which he was the rudder and others where he was dragged... areas of different functioning, of greater or lesser discrimination. There were moments in which he was not the owner of his thoughts and his thoughts own him.

There were moments of exploration and interrogation and of how it was that by talking

his level of anxiety began to diminish. This starts to form his experience of psychic change, as something which was both good and worrying at the same time. The adrift, derailed affect, was becoming tied down by words, not only with their quota of brevity and trick, but also by a more tolerable silence he was able to face that which is unspeakable or unmentionable.

We talk about a dream which he himself refers to as bizarre: *“It happened in a hotel room, on the ground floor, I was with one of my office assistants, María, there was a double bed, table lamps and there was a patio like this (he indicates an interior patio of the consulting room) in fact it was this same window, exactly the same and over there were a table and chairs. There was a rosary on each of the bedside tables and there was another broken black rosary, I am not sure, either on the bed or in my hand. Then one of the chairs began to move by itself, moving away from the table towards the patio, kind of like flying. María and I were shocked that the chair could move like that on its own, from one side of the room to another. I woke up quite frightened from this dream. The movement of the chair was mysterious, as if there was a spirit or ghost moving it.”*

This was a dream that was so rich in content that we returned to it many times during the years that his treatment went on and were surprised by it every time. I cannot now name all the lines of thinking that unfolded from it, but I will point out some of them and some of the paths that they led us into.

How disquieting it was to be with a woman in a bedroom, the ghosts or spirits that unsettled him, both inside and outside the sessions? My invitation to explore these aspects were strongly resisted: Did I want to make him heterosexual again? The significance of what is broken (within him), crimes, the three

rosaries, the religious education and its prohibitions, above everything else. Everything was sin and black, the lies and the sex, above all.

And this led us to enter more into his sexuality and his sense of guilt. His adolescence and youth were lived as a time of sexual fulfilment. There were innumerable casual and furtive sexual encounters and many passing partners until he matured. There was active participation in gay movements at the start of the decade of the 70’s. Prior to his actual partner he was with somebody else for nearly 10 years. Currently there is almost no sexual activity with his partner. The accusation against his partner of being timid, of being passive, of it always being him who started the relationship and lately, his partner’s outright refusal to have sexual relations; his tiredness and progressive lack of interest in sexuality, apart from masturbation; his surprise to not feel this as a major problem – were also discussed in different sessions.

In one session, at one point in his narrative he was telling about the attacks of rage that affected his mother and how things flew towards him and everywhere. When hearing that, the dream of the flying chair came to my mind and I said to him *“Like the chair in the dream?”*, he smiled as he replied: *“Well, not so threatening”*. At this point he commented that his father never hit them, but his mother did, using a belt and she made them drop their trousers: *“We used to play with matches and I remember that once, in the basement with my younger brother, we burnt one of her suitcases by mistake, only a very little, but she realized and began to say out loud and in front of everybody: “I wonder who burnt my suitcase, I wonder who is or are responsible, I wonder who made that burn mark on my suitcase?” We were terrified, she began to give us her usual talk about lying, about how devilish and black lies*

were. She did this for three days until we could not take the fear any longer and confessed. Even though we confessed she still hit us because lies had to be punished, but at least the terrible anxiety was over". He finishes saying this, then gets anxious and says: "This is powerful, I had never expressed it like that, I do not want to defend her... because I am also angry...the agony that she put us through, but she was really ill..."

I remember having told him something to the effect that certainly those three days must have caused a lot of tachycardia and him associating that tachycardia with another important event: the day he told his older brother that he was gay and that whilst his brother ran out to tell his father, he went to shut himself in the wardrobe until his father came to get him out.

As of this point the associative threads between the dream and this particular memory of his infancy, which we know is a screen-memory- and therefore of great psychic effect – became richer and opened other paths: the burning of the suitcase and the burning as smacking from his mother, the burn on his bottom, which hurts when one sits on a chair. A punishment which burnt and hurt, but was also exciting, in a privileged area of pleasure. It was particularly this word ("*burn mark*") which generated and linked up paths which led us to the cover up of the anxiety and of the desire by the tachycardia. The anxiety faced with the proximity of desire and realizing that "*anxiety is the radical way in which the subject continues to sustain, even in an unsustainable manner, his relationship with desire,*" (Lacan, 14 June 1961).

Possibly for Santiago this knot in the tachycardia constituted a form of maintaining the relationship with his desire in the anxiety: an anxiety which at the same time fed on and created a certain "order" in a number of incoherencies related to the "*hilflosigkeit*",

helplessness, on being subjected to a parental figure who was highly perturbed and disturbing; an anxiety which also inserted itself into a particular group, as Freud (1919h) referred to in "*The Ominous*": "*Amongst the cases which provoke anxiety there will be necessarily a group in which it can be shown that this anxiety is something repressed, which returns. This variety of what provokes anxiety would be exactly that which is ominous, it being indifferent that its origin was something itself something anxious or had some other affect as its bearer*". That is to say what is familiar becomes unfamiliar by means of the repression.

I think that in Santiago's case in addition to his anxiety there was at least another affect in play, which was related to pleasure, excitement and which generated another tributary in this flow which slips from the signifier "*burn*" and which the dream, the (screen)memory and working with them led to a lifting of some of the repression.

And this made me ask if perhaps the search for analysis within him did not imply an intent to sustain that relationship with desire in another form, in a less "*unsustainable*" way or an attempt to be more close to it, or to accompany "its passing" (or "move") in another way, going back to that phrase that he used in our first session.

Over time the language used by Santiago became more neurotic, with primitive anxieties alternating in ever larger intervals, giving rise to a more fluid and more humane discourse: less related to his suffering and his guilt, less trapped in its ghost and accordingly less likely to create warlike scenarios, with its consequential generation of a victim and persecutor or crime and punishment. He was less tied to the Other, a bit freer, as if something of the position of the object, that initial standpoint, always waiting for the word or gesture of the Other, has declined somewhat

and his position predominantly as an object has switched a bit towards that of a subject. Something of the position of object reverting into a subject. Feeling more reconciled with his sexuality or perhaps for the first time accepting his homosexuality, without the weight and guilt that had accompanied him for so many years.

In a new positioning which transmitted to me that some of his neurosis was soothing. In the words of Collette Soler about subjective destruction, as an effect of the end of analysis: *“He reduces his passion for complaint, his reproaches...it is about the neurosis giving in somewhat, relinquishing its religion, and: what is it that this religion implies? It implies a complaint to the Other...it is, let us say, a plugging of the passion for complaining”*.

And even without determining if his neurosis is his “religion” or not, but on the understanding that, *“...in psychoanalysis one hardly sees perverts, what one sees, rather what one hears, is instead their neuroses. One treats their neuroses, not their perversion, because perversion is made in such a way that it does not correlate with the subject supposed to know, namely; it is in their condition as neurotic that one can take in subjects that in turn could abide by perversion.”*

And in this way we foresaw the end of the analysis or the end of this analysis, which was more in line with this distinct positioning and other practical questions (the asymptomatic nature of the cure, always, even if it is a deception) than with what we could call a

“utilitarian result of psychoanalysis” in the words of Luis Campalans(2007).

Utilitarian achievements or norms which on the other hand could only be measured by the person, the values or ideals of the analyst, deeply impregnated or affected by the ideology of the times and what they designate as an achievable or desirable goal relegating the subject and his desires to a second plane. As to his situation with his partner, Santiago felt that whilst it had improved in many aspects, it was something to continue working on and he would see how things worked out. They had started couple therapy sessions almost two years before and in principle would continue with that.

To conclude, I would like to give you a quote from Francois Marty, which seems to me an eloquent way to accompany this material and the subject matter of the end of an analysis:

“A long time after the patient has gone, the therapist continues thinking of their case. Over time different versions come along as if nothing could conclude the matter. If it is true that in his analysis the patient produces multiple versions of his history, the same also happens to the analyst: the versions of his actions can vary and clarify each time in a new form an aspect of the patient’s history and of his therapy. It is in this sense that one can think of analysis as a never ending process”.

Thank you for listening to me today and, accordingly for constructing a further version of the events of this story.

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Gandhi: The Man and His Philosophy

SPEAKERS



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Prof. Jayanti Basu is a Professor in the Department of Applied Psychology, University of Calcutta. She has 12 publications and has authored a book titled, 'Reconstructing the Bengal partition: The psyche under a different violence'. Her research interests include Gender, Ego Function, Psychological Assessment, Relationship, Aggression, Moral Psychology and Psychotherapy Process. She has completed projects on Life History Construction & Mass violence in South East Asia', and Risk factors, prevention and culture compliant intervention for some psychiatric disorders prevalent among women.

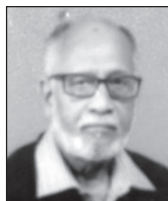


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Prof. (Dr.) Nilanjana Sanyal is a psychoanalyst and former professor of the Department of Psychology, University of Calcutta. She has conducted various trainings for govt. institutes and NGOs, both internationally and nationally. She has over 175 publications including 27 book chapters, and a book titled Positivism, Positive Psychology and Spirituality to her credit till date. She has received the Jubilee Merit Prize and Jawaharlal Nehru Award from Government of India along with the Suhashini Basu Memorial Prize from Indian Psychoanalytical Society for excellence of a research paper. She is the recipient of Bharat Jyoti Award, 2012 for meritorious achievement and life time contribution to social works. Her research areas include Psychoanalysis

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Prof. Prahlad Sarkar is a former Professor of Philosophy at the University of Calcutta and a scholar extraordinaire in Marxist Philosophy. Professor Sarkar is out and out a teacher dedicated to the academic excellence of his students. Besides being a teacher of philosophy, Prof. Sarkar has been running an academic organisation-Darshan O Samaj. As the name indicates, this organisation is dedicated to the study of various aspects of philosophy in the context of their social relevance and possible application in society. Scores of students have academically benefitted from this philosophical enterprise. Darsan O Samaj also publishes books on various philosophical topics in Bengali to encourage study of philosophy in Bengali.



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Prof. (Dr) Pushpa Misra did her Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Rochester, New York, in 1988. Her Ph.D. dissertation was nominated for the prestigious Johnsonian prize in



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Rajiv Shah, is a student of Psychoanalytic Therapy and Research Centre, Mumbai. After spending 30 years in the information technology space, working with people from across the globe, Rajiv chose to ‘return to Freud’, his first love by first completing a Masters in Organizational Psychodynamics and currently pursuing a desire to be a clinician.



Ms Sarala Kapoor is a training and supervising analyst with the Indian Psychoanalytical Society. In addition to her career with the Institute of Post-Graduate Medical Education and Research, Kolkata, she has also worked at the Bangur Institute of Neurosciences and Psychiatry. She has also authored a number of papers (“Freedom from known: A transference-countertransference relationship”, “The Necrophilic society”, “Ardhnariswara: From the perspective of dynamic energy”, etc.) and has organized workshops (e.g. Human sexuality, Ethics of Psychotherapy, Drug abuse).



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Dr. Sudhir Kakar is a psychoanalyst and writer who lives in Goa, India. He studied mechanical engineering, business economics and completed a Doctorate in Economics before training at the Sigmund Freud Institute in Frankfurt. He has authored 20 works of non-fiction and 5 works of fiction including The Inner World, Shamans, Mystics and Doctors, and Culture and Psyche. His many honors include the Distinguished Service Award of Indo-American Psychiatric Association and the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, the country's highest Civilian Award. A leading figure in the fields of cultural psychology and the psychology of religion, as well as a novelist, Dr. Kakar's person and work have been profiled in The New York Times, Le Monde, Frankfurter Allgemeine, Neue Züricher Zeitung, Die Zeit and Le Nouvel Observateur, which listed him as one of the world's 25 major thinkers while the German weekly Die Zeit portrayed Dr. Sudhir Kakar as one of the 21 important thinkers for the 21st century.

Welcome Address

GANDHI: THE MAN AND HIS PHILOSOPHY

Hello, good morning everybody. Indeed it is a very good morning for us to see you all here.

On behalf of Indian Psychoanalytical society, it is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you all here at this heritage premises of ours. This is given to us by Dr, Girindrasekhar Bose, the founder of Psychoanalysis in India. This Institute is about to complete its 100 glorious years in the service of mentally disturbed people. It is a training Institute and provides clinical help at a very low cost for those who cannot afford an expensive treatment.

We work very quietly and dedicatedly so that we may not forget our motto to provide help to those who need it.

Psychoanalysis has come a long way since Sigmund Freud and Dr. Bose. The complicated human mind and society has forced us to think about its different aspects.

On this occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi we are trying to understand him in different ways, Gandhi: The Man and his Philosophy. Friends, we have here with us a galaxy of academicians, educationists, philosophers, Psychoanalysts, historians, Gandhians and of course, common people like you and me.

While constituting the theme of this seminar, I was challenged by the question: Who is

Gandhi? - a political leader, a text-book figure in the history who showed Indians a different way to acquire freedom from the British rulers; an idealist who fought for Indianness - for rich and poor, for freedom and equality, friendship and dignity, for justice and peace or for Individual welfare or social progress or was just a reactionary to British cruelty or he just used non-violence as a weapon in the hands of helpless people of India who were about to lose all their respect, capacity to think or was just a moral person personified in non-violence? He appears to me a 'cult'. Who was he as a person and what was his philosophy? I am amazed to see the different aspects of his personality. The other question was: Is Gandhi relevant today in this nuclear age?

Let us see what these thinkers have in the treasure house of their minds to tell us.

I am thankful indeed to all of you who took the trouble to come here to make this occasion both important and an intellectually stimulating event.

Thank you all once again.

I hand over the mike to Ms Jheelum Podder to proceed further...

Sarala Kapoor*

Secretary

Indian Psychoanalytical Society

*Chief Guest's Speech.

GANDHI: THE MAN BEHIND METAPHORS

Amita Chatterjee*

I am extremely grateful to the Indian Psychoanalytical Society for organizing this seminar on 'Gandhi: the Person and his Philosophy' to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Indian Nation, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. I must confess at the outset that I am neither a Gandhi scholar nor a blind follower of him. I have no distinction whatsoever to inaugurate this seminar. I am standing before you because I could not say 'No' to Pushpadi, the President of this Society. And so, for the last two months I have been reading Gandhi's autobiography and biographies and enjoyed every moment of it.

Undisputed leader of our nation, Gandhi through his precepts and actions have influenced and moulded every facet of Indian life. His is the most familiar of faces, looking at us from our currency notes, postage stamps and from bill boards. Every major township in this country has an arterial road named after him. Every child in this country knows how to draw a cartoon figure of Gandhi just by sketching his spectacles, stick, his bald head and his loincloth. We continue to celebrate his birthday, still mourn his death listening to his favourite 'Ramdhuns' broadcast over AIR and Doordarshan on every 30th January, yet we know very little about the 'true' Gandhi. He has remained an enigma, shrouded by the metaphors he stands for. As has been very aptly put by one of his grandsons, Rajmohan Gandhi, in the biography of his grandfather entitled *Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire*:

'A courageous, selfless, and non-violent foe of oppression anywhere may be dubbed a Gandhi, even in places far from India, while a tormentor of the innocent may be called Gandhi's new assailant, as happened in India during carnages in 1984, 1992 and 2002. But what was Gandhi like as a human being? Despite his fame, or perhaps because of it, Mohandas Gandhi, the individual is not sufficiently

felt, or seen, or understood.' (ix, 2006)

Indian Psychoanalytical Society has invited Gandhi scholars from different parts of our country for this 2-day seminar who has the learning and wherewithal to help us understand Gandhi, the Man.

To understand a man and to evaluate his contributions we need to look at him from a considerable distance just as to enjoy a painting one needs to see it, stepping back a little from the canvas. Too close a view will reduce the painting to mere blotches of colours. After seventy years of his assassination, now the time seems just right to start afresh our attempts to understand the life and works of Gandhi. It would be best if we asked the young people of India what the name Gandhi meant for them because men and women of our generation stand too close to the time of his life and it is impossible for us not to be influenced by the images of this great man painted by our elders who had first hand acquaintance with their leader. But getting feedback from today's youth will be a time consuming process. So let me tell you instead what comes to my mind the moment I think about Gandhi. I can see the image of a frail old man walking alone with a stick in hand, face downcast, as if carrying the burden of the entire world. This is how Gandhiji has been sculpted by the famous sculptor, Deviprasad Roychowdhury, and the statue has been installed at the crossing of Park Street, Kolkata. Right from my childhood, I felt very sad to pass him by, to leave the old man alone. He always appears to me like a benevolent grand-father, a patriarch who wielded a lot of power once upon a time, but now no one listens to him. Yet he is waiting there patiently, loving kindness exuding from his eyes, eager to share his wisdom with his progeny, whoever cares to pay heed to him. He does not scold anyone or try to impose his views on anyone. Following the sayings of the scripture, he has removed himself from the centre-stage of power and

*Chief Guest's Speech.

politics. He, for example, never believed in the Two Nations Theory. We know now that he was 100 percent right. Yet he restrained himself from imposing this view on his friends and foes. Remember the mid-night of 14th August of 1947? The whole country was celebrating Indian Independence and everyone was busy making a tryst with destiny under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru; Gandhiji was not there. He had just declined the request of BBC to give his message to the world on the eve of independence of India after 200 years of the British rule, declaring that he would not yield to any temptation. The world would have to forget that he knew English. Instead, sitting at Beliaghata, far away from lime-light, he was negotiating with the potentially riotous mob to prevent the recurrence of the Great Calcutta Riot of 1946.

He is forlorn and has been forsaken by all who owed him a lot. Yet he still inspires confidence and faith in him. I feel that if I am in trouble and need his advice, he will not fail me. He will understand me and will take me under his protective wings.

Gandhi, as a man was always difficult to be understood. People often noted opposed qualities in him. As Stanley Jones observed, ‘he was of East and West, the city and the village, a Hindu influenced by Christianity, simple and shrewd, candid and courteous, serious and playful, humble and self-assertive. The blend produced a sweet savour. But the preponderating impression he leaves is not sweetness but strength’. He wanted to cultivate motherly qualities like gentleness, yet he often appeared to be an unfeeling husband and a very hard father. Some saw him as an astute politician, others considered him a saint. Some thought that Gandhi put Muslims off by frequently invoking a Hindu vocabulary while others opined that Gandhi was not Hindu enough, he appeased Muslims and deserved to be killed for that. Gandhi, like Lord Krishna in *the Mahabharata* reinterpreted in contemporary terms five virtues, viz, Non-violence (*ahimsa*), Truth (*satya*), Non-stealing (*asteya*) Non-acceptance of any gift (*aparigraha*) and Abstinence from all kinds of

craving – material and sexual (*brahmacharya*), recommended in Indian philosophy in general and Jain philosophy in particular. He tried to practice them meticulously throughout his life. He even did penances and undertook fasts if he ever failed short of these virtues even involuntarily. Yet he allegedly broke his pledge that he would rather die than accept Partition of India, did strange things in the name of chastity. He was accused of emasculating India in the name of non-violence, of patronizing Dalits without empowering them, of not lifting a finger to help the Africans while he was fighting for the rights of the Indians settled in South Africa. Though he is looked upon as the symbol of non-violence, Gandhiji’s distinctive offering was the gift of the fight, said Rammanohar Lohia, thus enabling the individual to resist oppression by himself and without any support from outside. Many even criticized that Gandhi’s non-violence paved the way for violence; disobedience and lawlessness being the other side of his *satyagraha* coin.

So the question that puzzles us all the time is: How do we solve a problem like Gandhi? How do we reconcile these seemingly irreconcilable qualities observed in Babu? Were some of them just exceptions or was he a very complex person, a combination of all these? I think we should start from the premise that Gandhi said to Kartar Singh, ‘Mahatma Gandhi is neither an angel nor a devil. He is a man like you.’ He was not a fake Mahatma, nor was he born a Mahatma, but he became a Mahatma in the hard way through all his struggles, internal and external, in his incessant attempts to exorcize all his demons. It is our great fortune that through all his endeavours and interactions he had been able to develop the greatness that was in him and still remains a beacon to the struggling humanity all over the world.

I look forward, with great expectations, to learn more about Gandhi the Man as we hear out the discourses of the respected scholars and interventions of the interlocutors assembled here. We hope to go back home from this seminar in an enlightened frame of mind. Thanks again to the organizers and thank you all.

GANDHI, SEXUALITY AND WOMEN

Sudhir Kakar*

Gandhi took the vow to observe complete celibacy in 1906 when he was thirty seven years old, on the eve of his first nonviolent political campaign in South Africa. The preceding five years of attempted abstinence, he felt, had only been a preparation for what would amount to a total and irrevocable renunciation of sexuality. The example of Tolstoy further deepened his resolve. Tolstoy's ideas on chastity, not only for the unmarried but also for the married, outlined in the *Kreutzer Sonata* (1889), were combined with the Hindu notions on *brahmacharya* to form Gandhi's own vision of the "right" relationship between men and women. More than a personal code of conduct, these ideas regulated the life of all those who lived with him in his various *ashrams* in South Africa and India. Briefly summarized in his own words, this doctrine on the relationship between a couple holds that –

The very purpose of marriage is restraint and sublimation of the sexual passion. Marriage for the satisfaction of sexual appetite is *vyabhichara*, concupiscence ... if they come together merely to have a fond embrace they are nearest the devil.

The only rule that can be laid down in such instances (if a child is not conceived) is that coitus may be permitted once at the end of the monthly period till conception is established. If

its object is achieved it must be abjured forthwith.¹

Whatever its other consequences, there is little doubt that Gandhi's vow of celibacy distinctly improved his marriage, perhaps because poor Kasturba was no longer perceived as a seductive siren responsible for his lapses from a longed-for ideal of purity.

After 1906, their relationship improved steadily and Gandhi could write with some justification that "I could not steal into my wife's heart until I decided to treat her differently than I used to do, and so I restored to her all her rights by dispossessing myself of any so called rights as her husband."² In their later years, though there were occasional disagreements, generally with respect to the children and Kasturbai's discomfort with the many women in the various *ashrams* who jostled each other to come closer to Gandhi, the marriage was marked by deep intimacy and a quiet love which impressed everyone who witnessed the old couple together.

For Gandhi, celibacy was not only the *sine qua non* for *moksha*, but also the mainspring of his political activities. It is from the repudiation, the ashes of sexual desire, that the weapon of nonviolence which he used so effectively in his political struggle against the racial oppression of the South African white rulers and later against the British empire, was phoenix-like born. As Gandhi puts it:

¹M K Gandhi, *To the Women* (Karachi: Hingorani, 1943), 49-50, 52.

²Gandhi, *To the Women*, 194

*Keynote address in the seminar on Gandhi: The Man and His Philosophy.

Ahimsa (nonviolence) means Universal Love. If a man gives his love to one woman, or a woman to one man, what is there left for the world besides? It simply means, “We two first, and the devil take all the rest of them.” As a faithful wife must be prepared to sacrifice her all for the sake of her husband, and a faithful husband for the sake of his wife, it is clear that such persons cannot rise to the height of Universal Love, or look upon all mankind as kith and kin. For they have created a boundary wall round their love. The larger their family, the farther are they from Universal Love. Hence one who would obey the law of *ahimsa* cannot marry, not to speak of gratification outside the marital bond.³

As for those who are already married

If the married couple can think of each other as brother and sister, they are freed for universal service. The very thought that all women in the world are his sisters, mothers and daughters will at once enable a man to snap his chains.⁴

The truth of Gandhi’s assertion that sexual love limits rather than expands personal concerns and that the narrow role of a husband is antithetical to the larger identity of one who would husband the world is not at issue here. My intention for the moment is to elucidate Gandhi’s conflict around sexuality in the way he viewed it— in this case, the imperatives of desire straining against the higher purpose of unfettered service to community. Yet another of his pansexualist formulations of the conflict has it that the gratification of sexual passion vies with a man’s obligation to enhance

personal vitality and psychic power. “A man who is unchaste loses stamina, becomes emasculated and cowardly,”⁵ is a sentiment often echoed in his writings as is the reiteration that his capacity to work in the political arena was a result of the psychic power gained through celibacy. Still another, later formulation is put in religious and spiritual terms— sexuality compromises his aspiration to become “God’s eunuch.” Reminiscent of Christ’s metaphors of innocent childhood to describe would be entrants to the kingdom of heaven and Prophet Mohammed’s welcoming of “those made eunuchs,” not through an operation but through prayer to God, Gandhi too would see sexual renunciation as a precondition for self-realization.

Like his communes, which are a combination of the *ashrama* of the ancient sages described in the Hindu epics and the Trappist monastery in South Africa which so impressed him on a visit, Gandhi’s views on the importance and merits of celibacy too seem to be derived from a mixture of Hindu and Christian religious traditions. Where Gandhi proceeded to give these views a special twist was in emphasising, above all, the relation of food to the observance of celibacy. The connection between sexuality and food is made quite explicit in Gandhi’s later life when his ruminations about his celibacy would almost invariably be followed by an exhaustive discussion of the types of food that stimulate desire and others that dampen it. Again, we must remember that in the Hindu cultural consciousness, the symbolism of food is more closely or manifestly connected to sexuality than it is in the West. The words for eating and sexual enjoyment, as A K Ramanujan reminds us, have the same root, *bhuj*, in Sanskrit, and sexual intercourse is often spoken

³M K Gandhi, “Yervada Mandir”, in *Selected Works*, vol. 4 (Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1968), 220.

⁴Ibid.

⁵M K Gandhi, “Hind Swaraj”, in *Collected Works*.

about as “the mutual feeding of male and female.”⁶

Experiments with food, to find that elusive right combination which would keep the libido effectively dammed, continued right through to the end of his life. In South Africa, as reported by an admiring yet detached disciple, there were months of cooking without salt or any condiments. Another period witnesses the absence of sugar, dates, and currants being added for sweetening purposes. This was followed by a period of “unified” food served with olive oil. Food values were most earnestly discussed, and their effect upon the human body and its moral qualities solemnly examined. For a time a dish of raw chopped onions, as a blood purifier, regularly formed part of the dinner meal... Ultimately Mr. Gandhi came to the conclusion that onions were bad for the passions, and so onions were cut out. Milk, too, Mr. Gandhi said, affected the ‘passion’ side of human life and thereafter milk was abjured likewise.”⁷ But for Gandhi food was a deathly serious business.

Control of palate is very closely connected with the observance of *brahmacharya* (celibacy). I have found from experience that the observance of celibacy becomes comparatively easy, if one acquires mastery over the palate. This does not figure among the observances of time-honored recognition. Could it be because even great sages found it difficult to achieve. Food has to be taken as we take medicine, without thinking whether it is tasty or otherwise, and only in quantities limited to the needs of the body....

And one who thus gives up a multitude of eatables will acquire self control in the natural course of things.⁸

A radical cure for his epicurean disease is, of course, fasting, and Gandhi was its enthusiastic proponent. “As an external aid to *brahmacharya*, fasting is as necessary as selection and restriction of diet. So overpowering are the senses that they can be kept under control only when they are completely hedged in on all sides, from above and from beneath.”⁹ Remembering Gandhi’s great fasts during his political struggles, we can see how fasting for him would have another, more personal meaning as a protector of his cherished celibacy and thus an assurance against the waning of psychic, and, with it, political power.

Battle, weapons, victory and defeat are a part of Gandhi’s imagery in his account of a life long conflict with Kama, the god of desire, the only opponent he did not engage nonviolently nor could ever completely subdue. The metaphors that pervade the descriptions of this passionate conflict are of “invasions by an insidious enemy” who needs to be implacably “repulsed”, while the perilous struggle is like “walking on a sword’s edge.” The god himself is the “serpent which I know will bite me,” “the scorpion of passion,” whose destruction, annihilation, conflagration, is a supreme aim of his spiritual strivings. In sharp contrast to all his other opponents, whose humanity he was always scrupulous to respect, the god of desire was the only antagonist with whom Gandhi could not compromise and whose humanity (not to speak of his divinity) he always denied.

⁶A. K. Ramanujan, Hanchi: A Kannada Cinderella, in *Cinderella: A Folklore Casebook*, ed. A. Dundes (New York: Garland, 1982), 272

⁷Millie G Polak, *Mr. Gandhi: The Man* (Bombay: Vora & Co.), 63-64

⁸Gandhi, “Yervada Mandir”, 223

⁹Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 210

For Gandhi, defeats in this war were occasions for bitter self-reproach and a public confession of his humiliation, while the victories were a matter of joy, “fresh beauty,” and an increase in vigor and self-confidence that brought him nearer to the *moksha* he so longed for. Whatever may be his values to the contrary, a sympathetic reader, conscious of Gandhi’s greatness and his prophetic insights into many of the dilemmas of modern existence, cannot fail to be moved by the dimensions of Gandhi’s personal struggle—heroic in its proportion, startling in its intensity, interminable in its duration. By the time Gandhi concludes his autobiography with the words;

To conquer the subtle passions seems to me to be far harder than the conquest of the world by the force of arms. Ever since my return to India I have had experiences of the passions hidden within me. They have made me feel ashamed though I have not lost courage. My experiments with truth have given and continue to give, great joy. But I know that I must traverse a perilous path. I must reduce myself to zero.¹⁰

No reader can doubt his passionate sincerity and honesty. His is not the reflexive, indeed passionless moralism of the more ordinary religionist.

How did Gandhi himself experience sexual desire, the temptations and the limits of the flesh? To know this, it is important that we listen closely to Gandhi’s voice describing his conflicts in the language in which he spoke of them—Gujarati, his mother tongue. Given the tendency towards hagiolatry among the followers of a great man, their translations, especially of the Master’s sexual conflicts, are apt to distort the authentic voice of the man behind the saint.

Gandhi uses two words, *vishaya* and *vikara*, for lust and passion respectively. The root of *vishaya* is from poison, and that is how he regards sexuality— as poisonous, for instance, when he talks of it in conjunction with serpents and scorpions. The literal meaning of *vikara*, or passion, is “distortion,” and that is how passions are traditionally seen in the Hindu view, waves of mind that distort the clear waters of the soul. For Gandhi, then lust is not sinful but poisonous, contaminating the elixir of immortality. It is dangerous in and of itself, “destructuralizing” in psychoanalytic language, rather than merely immoral, at odds, that is, with certain social or moral injunctions. To be passionate is not to fall from a state of grace, but to suffer a distortion of truth. In contrast to the English version, which turns his very Hindu conflict into a Christian one, Gandhi’s struggle with sexuality is not essentially a conflict between sin and morality, but rather one between psychic death and immortality, on which the moral quandary is superimposed.

We can, of course, never be quite certain whether Gandhi was a man with a gigantic erotic temperament or merely the possessor of an overweening conscience that magnified each departure from an unattainable ideal of purity as a momentous lapse. Nor is it possible, for that matter, to evaluate the paradoxical impact of his scruples in intensifying the very desires they opposed. Both fueled each other, the lid of self-control compressing and heating up the contents of the cauldron of desire, in Freud’s famous metaphor, their growing intensity requiring ever greater efforts at confinement.

Gandhi himself, speaking at the birth centenary of Tolstoy in 1928, warns us to refrain from judgments. While talking of the import of such struggles in the lives of great

¹⁰ Ibid., 501

homo religiosi, he seems to be asking for empathy rather than facile categorization:

The seeming contradictions in Tolstoy's life are no blot on him or sign of his failure. They signify the failure of the observer.... Only the man himself knows how much he struggles in the depth of his heart or what victories he wins in the war between Rama and Ravana. The spectator certainly cannot know that.¹¹

This is a warning we must take seriously but do not really need. Our intention is not to “analyse” Gandhi's conflict in any reductionist sense but to seek to understand it in all its passion—and obscurity. Gandhi's agony is ours as well, after all, an inevitable by-product of the long human journey from infancy to adulthood. We all wage wars on our wants.

A passionate man who suffered his passions as poisonous of his inner self and a sensualist who felt his sensuality distorted his inner purpose, Gandhi's struggle with the god of desire was not unremitting. There were long periods in his adulthood when his sensuality was integrated with the rest of his being. Old movie clips and reminiscences of those who knew him in person attest to some of this acceptable sensuality. It found expression in the vigorous grace of his locomotion; the twinkle in his eye and the brilliance of his smile; the attention he paid to his dress—even if the dress was a freshly laundered, loincloth; the care he directed to the preparation and eating of his simple food; the delight with which he sang and listened to devotional songs; and the pleasure he took in the daily oil massage of his body. Here, too, from Gandhi's sensuous gaiety, stems his ability to rivet masses of men not by pronouncement in scripture but by his very presence.

In Gandhi's periods of despair, occasioned by real-life disappointments and setbacks in the sociopolitical campaigns to which he had committed his life, the integration of his sensuality would be threatened and again we find him obsessively agonizing over the problem of genital desire. Once more he struggled against the reemergence of an old antagonist whom he sought to defeat by public confessions of his defeats.

One such period spans the years between 1925 and 1928, after his release from jail, when he was often depressed, believing that the Indian religious and political divisions were too deep for the country to respond to his leadership and that Indians were not yet ready for his kind of nonviolent civil disobedience. There was a breakdown with a serious condition of hypertension and doctors had advised him long rest. Interestingly, this is also the period in which he wrote his confessional autobiography where he despondently confides. “Even when I am past fifty six years, I realize how hard a thing it (celibacy) is. Every day I realize more and more that it is like walking on the sword's edge, and I can see every moment the necessity of continued vigilance.”¹² In the copious correspondence of the years 1927 and 1928, the two longest and the most personally involved letters are neither addressed to his close political co-workers and leaders of future free India such as Nehru, Patel or Rajagopalachari, nor do they deal with vital political or social issues. The addressees are two unknown young men, and the subject of the letters is the convolutions of Gandhi's instinctual promptings. One letter, to Harjivan Kotak, deserves to be quoted at some length since it details Gandhi's poignant struggle, his distress at the threatened breakdown of the psycho-sensual synthesis.

¹¹Gandhi, *Collected Works*, vol. 37 (1928), “Speech on the Birth Centenary of Tolstoy” (10 September 1928), 258.

¹²Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 209

We are not always conscious of such desires. I had involuntary discharges twice during the last two weeks. I cannot recall any dream. I never practiced masturbation. One cause of these discharges is of course my physical weakness but I also know that there are impure desires deep down in me. I am able to keep out such thoughts during waking hours. But what is present in the body like some hidden poison, always makes its way, even forcibly sometimes. I feel unhappy about this, but am not nervously afraid. I am always vigilant. I can suppress the enemy but have not been able to expel him altogether. If I am truthful, I shall succeed in doing that too.¹³

Another emotionally vulnerable period comprises roughly eighteen months from the middle of 1935 onwards, when Gandhi was almost sixty-six years old. Marked by a “nervous breakdown,” when his blood pressure went dangerously out of control, Gandhi was advised complete rest for some months by his doctors. What is more significant is that in the very first article he was allowed to write by the doctors, Gandhi, meditating on the causes of his ill-health, comes back to the issue of his celibacy. He mentions an encounter with a woman during the period of convalescence in Bombay, which not only disturbed him greatly but made him despise himself. In a letter to Prema Kantak, a disciple and confidante in his Sabarmati *ashram*, he elaborates on this incident further.

The experience which tortured me in Bombay was strange and painful. All my ejaculations have taken place in dreams; they did not trouble me. But Bombay’s experience was in the waking

state. I did not have any inclination to fulfil that desire. My body was under control. But in spite of my trying, the sense organ remained awake. This experience was new and unbecoming. I have narrated its cause. After removing this cause the wakefulness of the sense organ subsided, that is, it subsided in the waking state.

In spite of my shortcoming, one thing has been easily possible for me, namely that thousands of women have remained safe with me. There were many occasions in my life when certain women, in spite of their sexual desire, were saved or rather I was saved by God. I acknowledge it one hundred percent that this was God’s doing. That is why I take no pride in it. I pray daily to God that such a situation should last till the end of my life.¹⁴

Further self-mortification was one of his responses to what he regarded as an unforgivable “lapse.” Even the ascetic regimen of the Sabarmati *ashram* now seemed luxurious. Leaving Kasturba to look after its inmates, he went off to live in a one-room hut in a remote and poverty-stricken, untouchable village. Though he wished to be alone—a wish that for a man in his position was impossible of fulfilment—he soon became the focus of a new community, that became the Wardha *ashram*.

Another dark period covers the last two years of Gandhi’s life. The scene is India on the eve of independence in 1947. The killings have already started in the crowded back-alleys of Calcutta and in the verdant expanses of rural Bengal, where the seventy-eight year old Mahatma is wearily trudging from one village to another, trying to stem the rushing tide of

¹³Gandhi, *Collected Works*, vol. 36 (1927-28), letter to Harjivan Kotak, 378

¹⁴M K Gandhi, *Kumari Premaben Kantak ken am patra {Letters to Premaben Kantak}*, (Ahmedabad: Navjivan, 1960), 260-62 (my translation).

arson, rape, and murder that will soon engulf many other parts of the country. The few close associates who accompany him on this mission of peace are a witness to his despair and helpless listeners to the anguished cries of “*Kya Karun, Kya Karun?*” (What should I do? What should I do?) heard from his room in the middle of the night.¹⁵

For an explanation of his “failures” and sense of despair, Gandhi would characteristically probe for shortcomings in his celibacy, seeking to determine whether the god of desire had perhaps triumphed in some obscure recess of his mind, depriving him of his powers. Thus in the midst of human devastation and political uncertainty, Gandhi wrote a series of five articles on celibacy in his weekly newspaper, puzzling his readers who, as his temporary personal secretary, N. K. Bose, puts it, “did not know why such a series suddenly appeared in the midst of intensely political articles.”¹⁶

But more striking than this public evidence of his preoccupation were his private experiments wherein the aged Mahatma pathetically sought to reassure himself of the strength of his celibacy. These experiments have shocked many and have come to be known as “having naked young women sleep with him when he was old,” although their intent and outcome were far removed from the familiar connotations of that suggestive phrase. In the more or less public sleeping arrangements of his entourage while it rested in a village or the night, Gandhi would ask one or another of his few close women associates (his nineteen year old granddaughter among them) to share his bed and then try to ascertain in the morning whether any trace of sexual feeling had been evoked, either in himself or in

his companion. In spite of criticism by some of his close co-workers, Gandhi defended these experiments, denying the accusation that they could have ill effects on the women involved. Instead, he viewed them as an integral part of the *Yagna* he was performing whose only purpose was a restoration of psychic potency that would help him to regain control over political events and men, a control which seemed to be so fatally slipping away. Again he exploits his desires (and admittedly, women) for the sake of his cause—the prideful vice of an uncompromisingly virtuous man.

How would Freud, who in his mid-life also chose to become celibate, have regarded Gandhi’s celibacy and its intended efficacy? In general, Freud was understandably skeptical about the possibility that sexual abstinence could help to build energetic men of action, original thinkers, or bold reformers. Yet he also saw such attempts at the sublimation of “genital libido” in relative terms:

The relationship between the amount of sublimation possible and the amount of sexual activity necessary naturally varies very much from person to person and even from one calling to another. An abstinent artist is hardly conceivable; but an abstinent young *savant* is certainly no rarity. The latter can, by his self-restraint, liberate forces for his studies; while the former probably finds his artistic achievements powerfully stimulated by his sexual experience.¹⁷

It is quite conceivable that Freud would have conceded the possibility of successful celibacy to a few extraordinary people of genuine originality with a self-abnegating sense of mission or transcendent purpose. The

¹⁵The best eyewitness account of Gandhi’s Bengal period is by N K Bose, Gandhi’s temporary secretary, who was both a respectful follower and a dispassionate observer: see his *My Days with Gandhi* (Calcutta: Nishana, 1953)

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 52

¹⁷S. Freud, *Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness*, (1908), *Standard Edition*, vol.9, 197.

psychoanalytic question is, then, not of sublimation but why Gandhi found phallic desire so offensive that he must, so to speak, tear it out by the very roots.

Gandhi and Women

For the analyst, the story of a man's relationship with women inevitably begins ('and also ends' sceptics would add) with his mother. Yet we know the mother-son dyad to be the most elusive of all human relationships. Located in the life space before the birth of language, the effort to recapture the truth of the dyad through words alone can give but teasing intimations of the hallucinatory intensity of a period when the mother, after giving the son life, also gave him the world. With some exceptions, a mother cannot speak to her son through memory alone. Her truth lies in the conjunction, indeed confabulation of imaginations, symbols and reality through which she was earlier perceived and through which she may be later conjured, the latter being a rare artist's gift. For others, including Gandhi, the truth of the dyad we once built with our mothers is but fragmentarily glimpsed in various maternal proxies—from inanimate objects ('part' or 'transitional' objects in analytic parlance) which a child endows with her vital spirit, to the women who will later attract and hold him. Like all mothers, Putlibai, whose favorite Gandhi was by virtue of his being the youngest child and whose special object of care and concern he remained because of his sickly constitution, is an abiding yet diffuse presence in her son's inner life, an intensely luminous being albeit lacking definition. We will discover her chimerical presence in Gandhi's relationship with various other women in whom she was temporarily reincarnated.

Gandhi's relationships with these women are fascinating in many ways. First, one is

struck by the trouble he took in maintaining a relationship once he had admitted the woman to a degree of intimacy. Irrespective of his public commitments or the course of political events, he was punctilious in writing (and expecting) regular weekly letters to each one of his chosen women followers when they were separated during his frequent visits to other parts of the country or his lengthy spells of imprisonment. Cumulatively, these letters build up a portrait of the Mahatma which reveals his innermost struggles, particularly during the periods of heightened emotional vulnerability, and the role played therein by Woman, as embodied in the collectivity of his chosen female followers.

At their best, the letters are intensely human, full of wisdom about life and purpose. Even at times of stress, they are invariably caring as Gandhi encourages the women's questions, advises them on their intimate problems, and cheerfully dispenses his favorite dietary prescriptions for every kind of ailment. As he writes to one of them: "Your diagnosis is a correct one. The pleasure I get out of solving the *ashram's* problems, and within the *ashram* those of the sisters, is much greater than that of resolving India's dilemmas."¹⁸

Some of Gandhi's uneasiness with phallic desire has to do with his feeling that genital love is an accursed and distasteful prerogative of the father. In his autobiography, in spite of expressing many admirable filial sentiments, Gandhi suspect his father of being "oversexed" since he married for the fourth time when he was over forty and Putlibai, Gandhi's mother, was only eighteen. In his fantasy, we would suggest, Gandhi saw his young mother as the innocent victim of a powerful old male's lust to which the child could only be an anguished and helpless spectator, unable to save the beloved caretaker from the violation of her

¹⁸Gandhi, *Kumari Premaben Kantak ken am patra*, 16.

person and the violence done to her body. In later life, Gandhi would embrace the cause wherein the marriage of old men with young girls was adamantly opposed with great zeal. He wrote articles with such titles as “Marriage of Old and Young or Debauchery?” and exhorted his correspondents who reported such incidents to fight this practice. The older men he respected and took as his model were those who shared his revulsion with genital sexuality. These were men who (like Tolstoy and Raichandra) had sought to transform sexual passion into a more universal religious quest or (like Ruskin) into a moral and aesthetic fervor.

If phallic desire was the violent and tumultuous “way of the fathers,” genital abstinence, its surrender, provided the tranquil, peaceful path back to the mother.

More specifically, the psycho-biographical evidence which I have reviewed elsewhere is compelling that Gandhi’s relationships with women are dominated by the unconscious fantasy of maintaining an idealized relationship with the maternal body. This wished for oneness with the mother is suffused with nurturance and gratitude, mutual adoration and affirmation, without a trace of desire which divides and bifurcates. Replete with wishes for fusion and elimination of differences and limits, Gandhi “perceived” sexual desire as the single biggest obstacle to the preservation of this illusion. Many of his attitudes, beliefs, and actions with regard to women can then be understood as defensive maneuvers against the possibility of this perception rising to surface awareness.

Since the mother is a woman, a first step in the defensive operations is to believe that women are not, or only minimally, sexual beings. “I do not believe that woman is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint.” is an opinion often repeated in his writings.¹⁹ Reflecting on his own experiences

with Kasturba he asserts that “There was never want of restraint on the part of my wife. Very often she would show restraint, but she rarely resisted me, although she showed disinclination very often.”²⁰ Whereas he associates male sexuality with unheeding, lustful violence, female sexuality, where it exists, is a passive, suffering acceptance of the male onslaught. This, we must again remember, is only at the conscious level. Unconsciously, his perception of masculine violence and feminine passivity seem to be reversed, as evident in the imagery of the descriptions of his few erotic encounters with women. In his very first adolescent confrontation, he is struck “dumb and blind,” while the woman is confident and aggressive, in England, he is trembling like a frightened wild animal who has just escaped the (woman) hunter.

The solution to the root problem between the sexes is then, not a removal of the social and legal inequalities suffered by women—though Gandhi was an enthusiastic champion of women’s rights—but a thorough going desexualization of the male-female relationship, in which women must take the lead, “If they will only learn to say ‘no’ to their husbands when they approach them carnally... If a wife says to her husband: ‘No, I do not want it,’ he will make no trouble. But she has not been taught... I want women to learn the primary right of resistance.”²¹

Besides desexing the woman, another step in the denial of female desire is her idealization (especially of the Indian woman) as nearer to a purer divine state and thus an object of worship and adoration.

Primarily seeing the mother in the woman and idealizing mother-hood is yet another way of denying feminine eroticism. Gandhi extolled mother-love as one of the finest aspects of

¹⁹Gandhi, *To the Women*, 81

²⁰Ibid., 60

²¹Ibid., 57

love in human life. His imagery of motherhood is often of infants suckling on breasts with inexhaustible supplies of milk.

Whereas desexualizing, idealizing, and perceiving only the “milky” mother in the woman is one part of his defensive bulwark which helped in preserving the illusion of unity with the maternal body intact, the other part consists of efforts at renouncing the gift of sexual desire, abjuring his own masculinity.

Although Gandhi’s wished-for feminization was defensive in origin, we cannot deny the development of its adaptive aspects. Others, most notably Erik Erikson, have commented upon Gandhi’s more or less conscious explorations of the maternal stance and feminine perspective in his actions.²² In spite of a welter of public demands on his time, we know of the motherly care he could extend to the personal lives of his followers, and the anxious concern he displayed about their health and well being, including solicitous inquiries about the state of their daily bowel movements. We also know of the widening of these maternal-feminine ways—teasing, testing, taking suffering upon oneself, and so on—in the formulation of his political style and as elements of his campaigns of militant nonviolence.

We have seen that for Gandhi, the cherished oneness with the maternal-feminine could not always be maintained and was often threatened by the intrusion of phallic desire. His obsession with food at these times, evident in the letters and writings, not only represented a preparation for erecting physiological barriers against desire, but also the strengthening of his psychological defenses, and thus a

reinforcement of his spiritual armamentarium. In other words, in his preoccupation with food (and elimination), in his persistent investment of edible physical substances with psychological qualities, Gandhi plays out the “basic oral fantasy,” as described by the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott—“when hungry I think of food, when I eat I think of taking food in. I think of what I like to keep inside and I think of what I want to be rid of and I think of getting rid of it.” – whose underlying theme is of union with the mother.²³ His experiments with various kinds of food and a reduction in its intake—in his later years, he abjured milk completely so as not to eroticize his viscera—appear as part of an involuted and intuitive effort to recover and maintain his merger with his mother.

Gandhi’s relationship with women and the passions they aroused are, then, more complex than what he reveals in his own impassioned confession. Or, to use a well known Indian metaphor in which a woman is said to have two breasts, one for her child, another for her husband. Gandhi’s unconscious effort to shift from the one breast to the other—from man to child—was not always successful. He was a man in spite of himself. We know that the sensuality derived from the deeply felt oneness with a maternal world energized Gandhi’s person, impelled his transcendent endeavors, and advanced him on the road to a freedom of spirit from which India, as well as the world, has profited. Yet throughout his life, there were profound periods of emotional turmoil when this original and ultimately illusory connection broke down, emptying him of all inner “goodness” and “power.”

²²Erik H. Erikson, *Gandhi’s Truth* (New York: Norton, 1969), 404

²³D.W. Winnicott, “Appetite and Emotional Disorder,” in *Collected Papers* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1958),

COMMENTS ON DR. SUDHIR KAKAR'S PAPER "GANDHI, SEXUALITY AND WOMEN"

Pushpa Misra

I begin with a quote from Dr. Kakar's paper which goes as follows:

Our intention is not to "analyse" Gandhi's conflict in any reductionist sense but to seek to understand it in all its passion – and obscurity. Gandhi's agony is ours as well, after all, an inevitable by-product of the long human journey from infancy to adulthood. We all wage wars on our wants." (Page 9, typed manuscript of Kakar's paper)

These sentences capture the spirit of our seminar today. Especially important is his use of the expression, "reductionist sense". What kind of reductionism he has in mind? Probably, the reduction of a person into a bundle of fixations, and defences by which we claim that we can explain the behaviour of a person, nay, a whole person. This is a kind of reductionism which overlooks the deep agony, the ecstasy, the torment, the unbound joy and the resultant wisdom which brings about the transformation in us. This kind of reductionist approach ignores the thorny process traversing which a person becomes what he becomes. Understanding this process is an inextricable part of this journey and will lead us, in this particular case, the complex process that transformed a shy, introvert boy into a "Mahatma".

This paper has excellently fulfilled all these conditions. It is bereft of psychoanalytic jargon and yet has given us a deep insight into the psychic process of Gandhi from the point of view of psychoanalysis.

Dr. Kakar has taken up a very important

aspect of Gandhi's life. Gandhi's struggle with his sexuality is not something we are unaware of. He has openly discussed it in his autobiography with an honesty rarely to be encountered. Dr. Kakar's paper has two parts: in the first part he has discussed Gandhi's conflict with his sexuality and his struggle to find a way to control it – largely by controlling the kind of food he eats. In the second part, Kakar has tried to find out the possible sources behind Gandhi's concern related to his sexuality.

As he says,

The psychoanalytic question is, then, not of sublimation but why Gandhi found phallic desire so offensive that he must, so to speak, tear it out by the very roots. (Page, 15, typed manuscript of Kakar's paper)

The second part of his paper is concerned with this question.

Gandhi's desire to control his sexuality had two strong motivations: (i) His desire to participate in the community life. Sexual desire or sexual attachments limit the concerns of a person. He says,

It became my conviction that procreation and the consequent care of children were inconsistent with public service. (My experiment with Truth, p.244)

But more than this social consequence that may have some truth behind it, the deeper motivation, as Kakar points out, is his belief that submission to sexual desire depletes a

man's personal vitality and psychic power. It is not unlikely, however, that both the motivations are interconnected, that Gandhi wanted to have more vitality and cognitive capacities so that he could apply it to the service of community. But his belief that physical and psychic power can be obtained by practicing celibacy is important analytically. The belief, however, is strongly advocated by many Indian spiritual systems.

Gandhi tried various means by which he could control his sexuality or as he prefers to call it, 'lust'. One after the other he experimented to achieve his goal by depriving himself of particular kinds of food - salt, onion, milk, pulses. In some of these cases, he was influenced by the Ayurvedic system of India but in most cases he relied on his own experience. For example, he found that eating pulses or onion increase his sexual desire. The Ayurvedic system also considers that onions are 'Kaamvardhak', but Gandhi relied more on his own experience. He went on experimenting with this almost throughout his life till he settled with goat's milk and a few 'chapatis' which had become his staple food later in life.

But it was not merely the specific quality of food that was important to him. Controlling sexual desire was a question of self-restraint and self-restraint began with controlling the palate. As he says,

Control of the palate is the first essential concern in the observance of the vow. I found that complete control of the palate made the observance very easy, and so I now pursued my dietetic experiments not merely from the vegetarian's but also from the Brahmachari's point of view. As the result of these experiments I saw that the brahmachari's food should be limited, simple, spiceless, and if possible, uncooked. (My experiment with Truth, p.247)

And he finally came to the conclusion that the best food for a brahmachari are fruits and nuts. He says,

Brahmacharya needed no efforts on my part in South Africa when I lived on fruits and nuts alone. It has been a matter of very great effort ever since I began to take milk... It is enough to observe here that I have not the least doubt that milk diet makes brahmcharya vow difficult to observe, (My experiment with Truth, p.247)

Two things strike me in this account (i) Why did self-restraint had to start with restraint of palate? For example, he could have chosen to restraint his dressing or mixing with women because they are the main instruments in stimulating his lust. But he did not. As a young man in England and even in South Africa, Gandhi was a very well-dressed man. Kakar also mentions this in his paper that even when he wore loin-cloth, his dress was always very clean and nicely worn. I was simply wondering whether this choice had any special significance.

(ii) Why did milk become his special target? As Gandhi himself says,

Let no one deduce from this that all bramhacharis must give up milk. The effect on brahmacharya of different kinds of food can be determined only after numerous experiments. I have yet to find a fruit substitute for milk which is an equally good muscle-builder and easily digestible. The doctors, vaidyas, and hakims have alike failed to enlighten me. Therefore, though I know milk to be partly a stimulant, I cannot, for the time being advise anyone to give it up. (My experiment with Truth, p.247)

The reason that I have quoted this lengthy

observation is that it appears to me to be related to what Kakar has tried to establish in the second part of his paper.

Gandhi had taken a vow not to drink cow-milk. This denial, he asserts, is related to the observation that cow's milk is obtained by depriving its legitimate owner, namely, the calf. And he rightly pointed out that milk is not essential for any adult in order to survive. The fact that he had to break his vow by later accepting to drink goat's milk is something he regretfully acknowledges.

In the psychic life of humans, food and sexuality share certain common characteristics. Both are connected instinctual release of tension, sense of belongingness, caring and nurturing. So, somewhere in the human psyche food is related to sexuality. After all, humans became sexual after eating the apple Eve offered to Adam.

Hence, in order to control sexuality, one has to control one's food habits.

In psychoanalytic parlance, food is connected with love, caring, nurturing, belongingness – all that the child derives from his deep association with mother. I was wondering whether Gandhi's exceptional emphasis on giving up milk unsuccessfully has some connection with it.

Now we come to the second part of the paper. In this part, Kakar has tried to understand the source of Gandhi's extreme distaste amounting almost to horror to genital sexual love. He traces it back to Gandhi's relation with his mother – tender, soft, caring. Gandhi thought his father to be oversexed and his mother silently suffering the sexual advances of his father. So, genital sex became the prerogative of the father. It was passionate, tumultuous and violent. So, negating sexual passion is a way of going back to the mother which is calm, tranquil and leads to an unconscious idealized relationship with the mother's body.

Kakar further asserts that in order to maintain this relation, Gandhi also “desexed women, idealized them abjuring his own masculinity.”

I tend to fully agree with Kakar's interpretation here. In the light of autobiographical and other evidence, this appears to be a plausible explanation. It is to be noted that Kakar has not used the typical expression Oedipus complex because Oedipus complex in boys, by definition, is related to sexual attraction and desires towards the mother. It seems to me that Kakar indicates a pre-oedipal desire for merger with the mother in Gandhi's case. This is possible only if sexuality, especially genital sexuality is denied both in the mother as well as in the child. This explains Gandhi's idea of his mother as being a helpless victim of his father's sexual advances, his idealization of women and denying his own masculinity.

Gandhi was very fond of his mother. Under extreme conditions in England, he kept the vows his mother gave him –not to drink, and not to eat meat. Yet when he came back from England and received the news that his mother has died and he was not informed of this, he did not cry. He could take it with equanimity, possibly because his mother was already a part of him, part of his psyche. Also, whatever account of Gandhi's relations with other women are available, it appears that he was very easy with them. There was no rigidity in his behavior towards them. This again, is probably a case in favour of his being able to feel and accept the presence of his mother as part of him.

The question that I raised regarding Gandhi's concern with milk, also can be answered by this contention. Gandhi could not give up milk though he wanted to. Does this symbolize his desire to remain connected with the mother as a child?

However, all our choices and actions are multi-determined. So, I was wondering whether there is more in Gandhi's strong denial of sexuality in his life. I was a little surprised by Kakar's omission of Gandhi's very strong attachment to his father. Gandhi was more shocked and traumatised by the death of his father than by the death of his mother. When his father was ill, he performed all the chores of nursing. I quote:

I had the duties of a nurse, which mainly consisted in dressing the wound giving my father his medicine, and compounding drugs whenever they had to be made up at home. I massaged his legs and retired only when he asked me to do so or after he had fallen asleep. I loved to do this service, I do not remember ever having neglected it. All the time at my disposal...was divided between my school and attending on my father. (My Experiment with Truth: An Autobiography, p.44.)

On the night his father died, he retired in his room giving the charge of nursing his father to his uncle. His wife was asleep, but his amorous advances woke her up. Within 6/7 minutes, however, the servant knocked at the door and informed him of his father's death. Gandhi was shocked and he clearly blamed his carnal desire for his being away from the death-bed of his father. In his own words:

I ran to my father's room. I saw that if animal passion had not blinded me, I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father during his last moment...he should have died

in my arms. (My Experiment with Truth: An Autobiography, p.46.)

Gandhi's grief, shame and guilt is so intense that it is hard to believe that this incident may not have affected his attitude towards sexuality. He himself says:

The shame, to which I have referred..was this of my carnal desire even at the critical hour of father's death, which demanded wakeful service. It is a blot I have never been able to efface or forget..I was weighed and found unpardonably wanting because my mind was at the same moments in the grip of lust. (My Experiment with Truth: An Autobiography, p.46.)

In the next paragraph itself, Gandhi confesses that he tried very hard to break away the shackle of lust. Thus, it seems to me that in addition to Kakar's explanation, this particular incident and Gandhi's deep devotion to his father almost certainly played a role in shaping his future attitude towards sexuality and women.

I do not claim that any psycho-biography can fully explain the personality of any individual – less so of a personality like that of Gandhi. But Kakar's paper is an excellent attempt to understand the complicated dynamics that possibly were working in Gandhi's personality and shaped Gandhi's attitude towards sexuality and women.

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GANDHI'S NATIONALISM OR SATYAGRAHA-AS-DISCIPLINE

Sibaji Pratim Basu*

Scholars and commentators, while assessing Gandhi's success as a *nationalist* politician, generally mention about a kind of 'irony' in his image – a 'paradoxical nature' in his personality. Krishna Kripalani, for example, wrote about 'an unconscious irony in this image of Gandhi as the 'father of the nation' because, according to him, "India torn with violence, bleeding and writhing in horror and hate, could hardly be called the legitimate child of Gandhi."¹ R.C. Majumdar, well-known historian of the 'nationalist school', on the other hand, opined, "Gandhi combined in himself the dual role of a saint and an active politician."² Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya, Gandhi-scholar, also put forward a theory of *two* Gandhis – 'the idealist philosopher and the practical politician – who, paradoxically enough, represented a singularly unified character.'³ This dualism, of being in politics and yet remaining untouched by it, marked the basis of Gandhi's politics, and his nationalism was a part of it.

Compared to his famous contemporaries in Bengal like Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi was definitely more *Hindu*. He was also deeply rooted in the north/western Hindu/Indian culture. The Gandhi-family of Kathiawad followed the *Sanatani Vaisnavism*, founded by Vallabhacharya. Hinduism in this region was also influenced by Jainism, which had a strong hold in Gujrat. But he was more influenced, as time went on, by the

Northern *Vaisnavism* derived from Ramananda. This tradition, owing to its contact with Islam, was more, protestant, ascetic and liberal. The religion, which Gandhi professed, in his later life, was closer perhaps to this tradition.

The spirit of *Vaisnavism* is devotion and self-surrender to the 'Supreme Person' (Vishnu or His incarnations like Ram or Krishna) rather than in a 'Supreme Abstraction' (like the Upanishadic ideal of *Brahma* preached by the Advaitvaists or the modern Brahmos). He acknowledged the deep influence of his devoutly religious mother and his nurse. "They were noble women. They taught me to tell the truth and not to fear."⁴ In his early youth, he came across religious books in Gujrati – Tulsidas's *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavata* and the *Manusmriti*. These books had a lifelong influence on him.

In his schooldays, Gandhi looked at Christianity as something 'foreign'. He developed a dislike for it. 'In those days Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the high school and hold forth, pouring abuse on Hindus and their gods. I could *not endure this*.'⁵ (Emphasis added.) He also referred to a well-known Hindu, whose conversion to Christianity made him to eat beef, drink liquor and dress like a European. 'These things got on my nerves... [A] religion that compelled one to eat beef, drink liquor and change one's own clothes did not

¹Krishna Kripalani, 'Gandhi, the Modern Mahatma', in Sisirkumar Ghose (ed), The Visvabharati Quarterly, (Gandhi Number) Vol. 35, Nos.1-4, Santiniketan, 1969-70, p.107.

²R.C. Majumdar, 'Gandhiji's Place in the History of Freedom Struggle', in Sisirkumar Ghose (ed), Op.Cit. p.118.

³Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya, Evolution of the Political Philosophy of Gandhi, Calcutta Book House, Calcutta, 1969, p.480

⁴Vincent Sheen, Lead, Kindly Light, Random House, New York, 1949, p.187.

⁵Gandhi, An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments With Truth (hereafter, Autobiography), Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1959, p.25.

* Keynote address on 2nd March 2019

deserve the name.”⁶

Yet, he was attracted by the *physical strength* of the British. Thus the doggerel by the Gujrati poet Narmad – ‘Behold the mighty Englishman/ He rules the Indian small,/ Because being a meat-eater/ He is five cubits tall.’ – had its due effect on him. And he, in collusion with a friend, began to take meat for a year, but with a strong sense of guilt (for indulging in such a ‘prohibited’ practice and lying at home). He, in his boyish fantasy, thought that his fellow Indians would be strong enough to *overcome the English*⁷, only if they started eating meat. This was his known first-ever reaction against the British – and in a way this can be taken as the seed of his future nationalism.

However, during his student-days in England, he became more aware of the ‘moral/ethical’ basis of the Western civilization. His childhood impression of Christianity-as-a-religion-that – compelled-‘meat eating and drinking wine’, got a radical change as he came to know a number of liberal theosophists (with two of them Gandhi read the *Gita* for the first time and also read Edwin Arnold’s *The Light (Asia)* and Christian-believers through the Vegetarian Society circle. But during this sojourn, he also evolved as a ‘faithful’ *Indian-subject* of the Empire. And the basis of this subject-hood was his *legal* concept of the rights and duties within the British Empire. But two incidents (mentioned by Gandhi himself) had shaken Gandhi’s feeling of ‘equality’ within the Empire as well as forged an elementary nationalism.

The first occurred in 1892 when he was roughly humiliated by the Political Agent of Rajkot, who previously treated Gandhi in a friendly manner in London. When he approached Pherozezshah Mehta, eminent lawyer and nationalist leader (through a barrister friend for

his advice), Mehta told Gandhi’s friend that “such things are the common experience of many vakils and barristers. *He is still fresh from England* and hot-blooded. He does not know British officers.”⁸ (Emphasis added.) The second one is very dramatic and popular and had been told and retold by popular narratives and romantic films. It was about Gandhi’s supreme humiliation during a train journey in South Africa, when he was thrown out of the first class compartment (despite having a first class ticket) onto the platform at Maritzburg. These two incidents led Gandhi to take on the course of ‘confrontation’ (albeit non-violent) with the colonial/racial regime.

In South Africa, over two decades and a half, Gandhi continued to fight for equal citizenship. ‘He consistently took’, wrote Hardiman, ‘a stance that forced matters to a head: provoking either a crude and violent counter-attack or an embarrassed and shame-faced retreat.’⁹ The method of nonviolent *Satyagraha* evolved in this period. Gandhi would experiment with community living that would help him develop his future *Ashrams* in India. In this period he would gradually grow his all-embracing critique of the modern/western civilisation. His editorial skills also would flourish now, which would establish him as a writer-with-a-difference and provide him with a weapon to preach his ideas as well as combat others’. In short, South Africa made him a new man and provided him with a laboratory for experiments that would change his future course of life.

Gandhi himself, in retrospect, thanked God for his South African experience. “...God laid the foundations of my life in South Africa and *sowed the seed of the fight for national self-respect.*”¹⁰ (Emphasis added.) But, compared to the prevalent streams of nationalism in

⁶Ibid. p.16

⁷David Hardiman, Gandhi: In His Time and Ours, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2003, p.13

⁸Autobiography, p.101.

⁹Hardiman, Op. Cit. p.13.

¹⁰Ibid

contemporary India, Gandhi's nationalism took a different course from the beginning. Far away from the caste-ridden India, which at that time was bubbling with the excitement of the 'Extremist' politics (under Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bepin Behri Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai) that drew its inspiration from the 'Hindu nationalism' to a great extent, his notion of nationalism had been a multi-class-caste-community-movement-of-the-Indians. And if we are to believe him, daily experiences of racial insults and inequality brought him to this realization.¹¹

II

However, in reality, Gandhi's dream of an assimilatory anti-modern Independent Indian nation almost fell apart. The prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity, which he had always considered to be the *core* of this assimilation process, crushed in such a violent way that Partition of India became imminent: independence sans unity – both politically and civil-society-wise – had been the 'fate' of the Indian nation. Another plank, his anti-modernity principle, in terms of decentralization of economy and politics – had been by-passed by the new Indian state. Yet, despite such monumental failures, Gandhi's importance in the Indian national struggle can hardly be overemphasized. And he raised some unique questions about nationalism, in the realm of political thought.

Although Gandhi's concept of Nationalism should be read as an evolutionary concept, it had certain *constant* elements. Many writers – in Gandhi's contemporary times and afterwards – had described/criticized him as an *exclusivist* nationalist. The intensity, pitch and fervour with which he had launched his anti-British campaigns, led, even many of his admirers (like Tagore) take him as a narrow-minded leader indifferent to the world outside. It is true that on most occasions, he focused on his objectives

(especially the question of *Swaraj*) and the *means* to achieve them with such an adamant and single-track way and *imposed* these on his followers that the above image easily gained ground.

Gandhi, it is interesting to note, was aware of this image. And he consistently, almost throughout his career, tried to dispel it. Five years after the launching of the Non-cooperation, he continued with the same spirit: "Let us understand what nationalism is. We want freedom for our country, but not at the expense or exploitation of others... I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England or the disappearance of Englishmen. I want freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country... Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die for the family, the family for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, the province for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world... my idea of nationalism is that *my country may become free, that if need be the whole country may die so that the human races may live...* Let that be our nationalism."¹² (Emphasis added.)

Thus India's freedom was not for its exclusive growing into powerfulness (as Tagore suggested in *Nationalism* or about the Gandhian nationalism during the Non-Cooperation) – rather it was for the spirit of *voluntary sacrifice that could be decided only by a free country*. It also shows that there had been a *hierarchy* in his priority: India's freedom always stood first before the international issues. And the logic was that of a free/voluntary participation of the Indian nation, which could not be achieved without independence. But that does not mean that he was unconcerned about the *world*, for him it was a matter of priority.

¹¹For a detailed daily account of the South African experience, see, Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1959

¹²Young India, 10/09/1925, p. 314

This position had led many scholars like Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya to argue that “For Gandhi, there was no antithesis between nationalism and internationalism.” Indeed, in 1925, Gandhi wrote, “It is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only when nationalism becomes a fact... It is not nationalism that is evil, it is narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of *modern nations* which is evil.”¹³ (Emphasis added.) Here clearly the reference of the ‘evil’ qualities was attached to *modern* nations.

But the Indian nation was a *different* one, as it was not organized on the basis of modern civilization. Rather the distinctive feature of the Indian nation was its principles of non-violent *Satyagraha*, founded on *anti-modern* values. That is why, regarding the question of defence of a nation in case of an outside aggression, Gandhi referred to the defending nation (he had a picture of future India in mind) as the ‘*satyagrahi*’ country. Thus, his nationalism was not a simple nationalism it was a *Satyagrahi* nationalism¹⁴.

Gandhi rarely used the term ‘independence’ or ‘nation’, preferring concepts such as *Swaraj*, *Swadeshi* and ‘Indian Civilization’. This different background of Gandhi’s nationalism had led Bhikhu Parekh to argue, “Since the *civilisation* Gandhi wanted the Indian state to nurture was *sympathetic, tolerant, spiritual and open*, his vision of India had *little common with collectivist, monolithic, aggressive and xenophobic nationalism* of some of the Western and central European countries.”¹⁵

David Hardiman also held a similar view, “Gandhi’s nationalism was thus broad and catholic. He hardly regarded India as a nation in

a narrow sense; rather it was *a civilisation with its particular qualities*.” Thus, Gandhi, according to Hardiman, was not, at least theoretically, a critique of modernity to satisfy his whims or for opportunistic reasons. Yet, Hardiman held, “Gandhi sought to define Indian nationhood in terms of certain cultural markers of an antiquity. This exercise entailed a series of inversion of colonial epistemologies of Knowledge/Power. For example, the colonial depiction of an Orient steeped in religion and superstition was inverted into a statement of the cultural superiority of an ancient civilisation that was based on a soaring spirituality... Gandhi advanced highly essentialist arguments about the culture of each nation.”¹⁶

Nigel Harris had also observed this problem in Gandhi’s notion of assimilatory nationalism. “Gandhi attempted to solve the same [i.e. the communal] problem – the creation of almost a *new* religion, founded in toleration and love – had little real following. *Religion for most people was not a philosophy, but a set of conservative social practices*. Gandhianism was no more than a tolerated sentimentality for much of the Congress leadership...”¹⁷ (Emphasis added.) “Yet”, argued Harris, “it was Gandhi who selected the thoroughly anglicised and secular Nehru to be his heir, and thus predetermined the nature of the leadership of independent India. By implication, Gandhi accepted that his *objectives were utopian, incompatible with the world of competing states*.”¹⁸ (Emphasis added.)

Thus, Gandhi’s nationalism enters the labyrinth of the Third World nationalism: trying to strip off the modern-western cloak yet living under the compulsion of the modern world. In this discourse the peasants, bearer of the anti-modern values, are *mobilized as a nation yet distanced from the national state*. “And so we

¹³Gandhi, Political and national affairs, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1967, p.23

¹⁴Nirmal Kumar Bose, Studies in Gandhism, Calcutta, 1962, p.119-20.

¹⁵Bhikhu Parekh, Gandhi’s Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination, Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1995, p.194.

¹⁶Hardiman, Op.Cit. p.18

¹⁷Nigel Harris, National Liberation, Penguin, London, 1990, p.185.

¹⁸Ibid.

get”, argued Partha Chatterjee, “in the historical effectivity of Gandhism as a whole, the conception of a national framework of politics in which peasants are mobilized but do not take part, of a nation of which they are part but a national state from which they are forever distanced... [I]t will remain a task of modern Indian historiography to explain the historical process, in its specific regional organizational forms, by which these political interventions inherent in Gandhian ideology became the ideological weapon in the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie in its attempt to create a new state structure. The ‘message of the Mahatma’ *meant different things to different people...* It is not surprising, therefore, that in the unresolved class struggles within the social formation of contemporary India, oppositional movements can still claim their moral legitimacy from the message of Mahatma.”¹⁹ (Emphasis added.)

III

We can also approach the importance of non-violent *Satyagraha* in Gandhi’s concept of nationalism from another angle. We know that Gandhi’s *unrealisable* ultimate goal of ‘philosophical anarchism’, could be implemented only through the establishment of a non-violent (as far as practicable) *decentralized* state – both economically and administration wise. It would be a state based on the principles of *Sarvodaya* or *Village Swaraj*, in which the self-sufficient village would be “a *complete republic*, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity...”²⁰ (Emphasis added.)

Thus we see that Gandhi’s nation and nationalism moved on two planes: *social assimilation or integration* (multi class-caste-

community spirit) *as political/national unity* and administrative as well as economic *decentralization as the form of state*. But how to reconcile these two planes – social integration that symbolized national unity, on one hand, and decentralization that symbolized proto-anarchy on the other? Would not the element of decentralization jeopardize the *integrity* of a nation and worse, would not that lead to serious *indiscipline* that Gandhi had always feared of? Hardiman reminded us that “For Gandhi *swaraj* entitled above all what he called a ‘disciplined rule from within’.”²¹ Therefore, Gandhi did not at all opt for a movement by a band of unruly/undisciplined Indians. We know, he bore an abhorrence for violent indiscipline, though throughout his life, he had to risk it in the course of launching mass-scale civil disobedience. Thus the main problem of Gandhi’s theory and practice of nationalism had been how to encourage the masses to organize themselves under decentralized village-swaraj and yet bound them in the thread of national unity; how to call them to disobey law and authority and yet restrict them for committing any act of gross violence?

The means, which would enable Gandhi to do this miracle, to *discipline* the masses and *bound* them as a nation was *satyagraha-as-non-violence*. This had been indeed a unique disciplinary technique invented by Gandhi. In 1931, during the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhi wrote, “It takes a fairly strenuous training to attain to a mental state of non-violence. In daily life it has to be a *course of discipline* though, *one may not like*, for instance, the *life of a soldier*... The perfect state is reached only when mind and body and speech are in proper *coordination*.”²² (Emphases added.)

Thus the success of non-violence rested on disciplining body and mind like that of a soldier.

¹⁹Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial Discourse: A Derivative Discourse?* UK Zed Books, London, p.125

²⁰Harijan, 26/07/1942, p.238.

²¹Hardiman, *Op. Cit.* p.26.

²²Young India, 1/10/1931, p.287.

Gandhi, we know, from his youth had been experimenting with self-imposition of various kinds of discipline in dietetics, sex, love for possession etc. Such a self-discipline or self-restraint would lead to 'renunciation'. Punctuality was another instrument of discipline. Gandhi had, it may be noted, among a few things, praised the Western value of punctuality and as a symbol always kept a pocket watch with him. In this regard he held, "It would be a distinct gain to the national cause if the leaders and workers strictly keep their hours. No man is expected to do more than he can. If at the end of the day there is surplus work left or he cannot get through it without missing a meal or encroaching upon the hours of sleep or recreation, there is *mismanagement* somewhere."²³ (Emphasis added.)

Thus discipline leads to *management* and construction. We have noted that before the commencement of the Salt *Satyagraha* Gandhi was much concerned about the *violent* acts of the national revolutionaries and held, 'Civil disobedience is a sovereign *remedy* of transmuted the *undisciplined life-destroying latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy* whose use ensures absolute success.' So Civil Disobedience based on non-violence was a remedy/means to channel the undisciplined (i.e. violent) forces into a disciplined energy for a positive/constructive ('life-saving') programme.

Therefore, if there was *truth (satya)* in the concept of decentralization and empowerment of the village/individual, then the basis of such a decentralized nation/state should be *non-violence-as-discipline*. It should also act as an instrument of *coordination* and *control* without

which no modern state can be run. In this light the *Satyagraha* becomes a curious word. On one hand it signifies insistence or urge for whatever '*positive*' – freedom from foreign rule, simple and self-reliant life, non-dependence on modern machines, absence of physical coercion and exploitation, democracy from below etc – in short, whatever he associated with the concept of *Swaraj* or Self-Rule. This doctrine, if extended radically, not only stands for decentralized state and economy but also connotes individual liberty to a great extent.

On the other hand, the word 'Self-Rule' literarily means, besides Rule of the Self, Rule *over* the Self and *by* the Self or Self-restraint, which precisely means *discipline*. Thus the apparently *utopian* – extremely decentralized Gandhian state and economy, including Trusteeship, could be a well operative system, if the citizen learns and practises by heart the principles of non-violence. Only this could ensure the *automatic functioning of power* with a least amount of coercion by the state. Or, differently put, the decentralized state would face no difficulty to impose control and ensure coordination, since the people, trained like the soldier, would act responsibly in harmony based on love and resolve the conflicts by *moral persuasion* that would convert the heart of the adversary or would compel him to accept the point of view of others without any application of violence. That would be something nearer to Gandhi's ideal of '*enlightened* anarchy', because enlightenment, in any form, signifies a disciplined order built on cognitive understanding. And the foundation of such a state would be an assimilatory anti-modern *nation* bound by the same principle of non-violence-as-discipline.

²³Harijan, 24/09/1938, p.266.

COMMENTS ON THE PAPER OF SIBAJI PRATIM BASU ENTITLED GANDHI'S NATIONALISM OR SATYAGRAHA-AS-DISCIPLINE

Jhuma Chakraborty

Gandhi is a great personality who has shaken the world with his concept of non-violence and its practical application.

Gandhi was not a conscious theoretician. His entire life symbolizes a relentless search for *Truth* where he was involved in a constant struggle with love, sex and non-violence.

Shibaji Pratim Basu correctly mentions that Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, a Gandhian scholar proposes a theory of two Gandhis, an idealist philosopher and the practical politician. Basu's paper revolves round the concept of *Satyagraha*. He argues that Satyagraha as a discipline is necessary for the realisation of Gandhi's dream of self-sufficient village communities.

Basu's paper has three sections.

Section I is an attempt to trace the roots of the Gandhian theory of Truth and Non-violence. It is a perspective that explains the rebirth of Gandhi who relentlessly fought for the decentralisation of power, a prime requirement of an egalitarian society.

The second section addresses the issue of nationalism and Internationalism. It explores how the notion and dream of India's freedom is completely compatible with internationalism.

In the third section Basu focuses on the central issues of unification of India irrespective of class, caste, religious difference. In other words, how this dream for assimilation can be clubbed together with his dream for

decentralisation, because the two projects appear incompatible.

SECTION - I

It is well known that the entire Gandhian philosophy is based on the principles of *truth and non-violence*. We can also say that it is one principle and not two, for non-violence is Truth for Gandhi. Throughout his entire life he never compromised with this principle. All his socio-economic theories, be it Satyagraha, Swaraj, Swadesi, or Trusteeship, are based on this principle. But it must be noted in this context that the concept of non-violence is a complex concept in Gandhian framework for his concept of non-violence is different from the non-violence preached and practised in Jainism and Buddhism. Non-Violence in Gandhi's theory is not opposed to violence, it is context sensitive. For example, the war of Mahabharata, according to Gandhi, was justified for it was a Dharma Yuddha or it can be regarded as the war of justice. The complexity of Gandhian concept of non-violence can be understood if we treat it as justice ensured in a specified context.

Basu has not focussed on the complexities of Gandhian concept of non-violence. He has discussed the influences that might have had a significant role in shaping his philosophy. Gandhi was influenced by Northern Vaisnavism and Jainism. Vaisnavism worships God as a supreme person endowed with all auspicious qualities. Offering worship, taking sacred vows,

observing fasts are the usual practices in Vaisnavism. His mother and his nurse were devout Vaisnavas and it is very likely that they had a strong influence on Gandhi. But it would be a mistake to think that Gandhi was brought up in a conservative environment for Gandhi's father had Muslim, Zoroastrian, Jain friends and there were friendly exchanges among them in his house regarding religious issues. Initially he had a negative attitude towards Christianity for he saw Christian missionaries abusing Hindu Gods. However, his negativity towards Christianity got erased with his exposure to liberal theosophists. Edwin Arnolds of *The Light of Asia* played a very important role in shaping his conceptual framework.

But Gandhi became a real *Gandhi* after two incidents of his life.

1. Humiliation by a Political agent of Rajkot in 1892 whom Gandhi knew very well.
2. Humiliation during a train journey in South Africa.

Basu has focussed on the major incidents of Gandhi's life. In South Africa Gandhi fought for an egalitarian society for two decades. Not that he never felt the need of counter-violence but he realized that non-violence is far more powerful. It must be noted in this connection that 'Satyagraha' or any other expression of non-violence is context sensitive as has been mentioned earlier. In Gandhi's conceptual framework violence and non-violence are not oppositional categories; it is a hierarchical structure at the bottom of which is cowardice. Violence is a preferable option and non-violence is at the apex of this structure. He started realizing the power of *satyagraha* in this period of his life. Regarding Satyagraha Gandhi maintains,

The concept of Satyagraha implies truth force or love force.. here I contemplate a moral opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to blunt

the edge of the tyrant sword not by putting up against it a sharper edged weapon but by disappointing his expectation that I will be offering physical resistance. (Young India, 8.10.25, Navjivan Publication)

SECTION - II

In this section Basu has beautifully discussed Gandhi's view of nationality which was perfectly compatible with his internationalism.

Since Gandhi's single agenda was the freedom of India he adopted several non-violent means to achieve this goal, e.g. non-cooperation, civil disobedience etc. The intensity of his anti-British campaigns was severely criticised by many freedom fighters including Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore was extremely disappointed with his modes of protests against the British Government and criticised Gandhi's swadesi and satyagraha movements.

But Gandhi was consistent about his insistence on Indian freedom as Basu rightly points out. Gandhi wrote, as Basu has quoted: '*One cannot be internationalist without being nationalist*',. His emphasis on the need of nationalism was not associated with a desire to overpower other nations but a desire to nurture qualities like love, care and non-violence.

Gandhi was dreaming about a '*satyagrahi country*' which will emphasize on qualities like love, care, tolerance, sympathy as Bikhu Parekh argues. This sense of nationalism is essential for internationalism.

SECTION - III

Basu in this section explains satyagraha from another perspective. Gandhi's ultimate goal is complete decentralisation of economic, political, and social power which can be

achieved through self-sufficient village communities.

Basu focuses on a very important issue at this juncture. On the one hand, Gandhi is dreaming of social assimilation of multiclass multicasite community to develop the spirit for national unity, on the other hand he is talking about economically, and politically, self-sufficient village communities which he refers as *village swaraj*. The question is how mass scale social assimilation can go together with *village swaraj*. Would not the element of decentralisation jeopardize the integrity of our nation? Basu has argued that this problem can be solved through *satyagraha* which stands for self-restraint and self-discipline. If *satyagraha* or self-disciplined non-violence is practised by the masses then this miracle can be actualised according to Basu. Thus it no longer remains an utopia.

Basu reiterates that if self-sufficient village community is a truth in Gandhian scheme then this can be achieved only through *swaraj* or self-discipline. According to Basu's interpretation '*satyagraha*' is equivalent to or same as '*swaraj*'.

Swaraj is a loaded concept in Gandhian philosophy which stands not only for freedom from foreign rule and absence of physical coercion but also for simple self-sufficient village life, non-dependence on modern machines. In addition to all these, *swaraj* also stands for self-rule which means rule over the self by the self. *Swaraj* in this sense stands for self-discipline. Only this kind of self-discipline can ensure automatic functioning power with slightest abuse. Thus, Basu gives us a picture of Gandhi's 'enlightened-anarchy' as (has been

referred by some Gandhian scholars) based on *satyagraha* as self-discipline.

I would like to open a dialogue with Basu stating that *Satyagraha* precedes *swaraj*. *Satyagraha* is a political weapon that can be used to free India from British exploitation. A *Satyagrahi* according to Gandhi must have the following characteristics.

1. He should not have any hatred against his opponent.
2. The issue of *satyagraha* must be substantial.
3. A *satyagrahi* must be prepared to suffer till the end of the cause.

I would argue that *satyagraha* is a step towards *swaraj*. *Swaraj* has a deeper significance. *Swaraj* as self-rule is a by-product of economic self-sufficiency, self-regulated administration and an egalitarian society.

Gandhi was aware that self discipline is possible after the satisfaction of some fundamental needs e.g. need for an employment, need for a dignified life. After the satisfaction of all the basic needs (food, clothing and shelter through self earning) one can endeavour to control one's self. This actually means rule of the self by the self. *Swaraj* is the optimum level of self-discipline that starts from the stage of *satyagraha*.

Basu has categorically and explicitly emphasized on the requirement of *satyagraha*, without which Gandhian scheme remains a dream, an utopia. Thus, Basu has endeavoured to address a vital issue and has suggested a way of assimilating nationalism with decentralisation of power.

AMBIVALENCES AND AMBIGUITIES: A PERSONAL JOURNEY WITH MOHANDAS

Jayanti Basu

This article is a product of my own conflict and ambivalences as I attempt to understand the phenomenon called variously Moniya, Mohan, Mr. Gandhi, Gandhiji, Mahatmaji, Babu and even the 'mother'. This should not be read as a psychoanalytical probe into Gandhi's life; but is a psychoanalytically informed representation of some selected sources of ambiguities in his being, in his self-depiction and decisions in various life events. I have tried to look into whatever Gandhi appears to be from his autobiography, in some of his speeches and writings, biographies, memoirs, some recent facts coming up in media and books, and last but not the least from the final statement of his assassin. I feel simultaneous attraction and repulsion toward Gandhi, generated probably from his own ambivalence toward himself. I have tried in my small way to explore this ambivalence, through firstly observing my feelings, and then trying to connect these to available data and comments on Gandhi. Somehow in my subjective space, my ambivalence has merged with his. So this is the Gandhi as I try to touch him through my introspective journey.

Taking the assassin's eye view

I will start from the end - Gandhi's end. Nathuram Vinayak Godse was definitely one with strong ambivalence, as were many others close to Gandhi including Nehru. Trying to understand my source of ambivalence, I consciously tried to see through Godse's lens. Godse's explanation of why he killed Gandhi has been subjected to many scrutinizing eyes of famous scholars like Kakar (1995) and Nandy (1983). So instead of interpreting again, I tried to feel afresh the experiences, existing sentiments of this mild mannered Chitpavan Brahmin, a phenomenological understanding of the emotional - rational complex he let slip and seep into his speech, especially focusing on his ambivalence. As I read and re-read Godse's statement, I feel a kind of helplessness in him. He seems unable to tolerate Gandhi's supreme presence - Gandhi, the one whose influence cannot be resisted. I can almost feel the intolerance, the heat, the unrest till this ambiguous yet authoritarian man is eliminated. Nandy (1980, 1983) has elaborated Godse's own conflict over femininity, referring to his childhood

feminine attire, and especially the 'nath', and his passive reception of religious trances that disappeared after a point. There have been suggestions that Gandhi's persona had a touch of intermingling of femininity and masculinity. Gandhi considered himself a mother to his women companions; despite his controversial experiments with sexuality/brahmacharya with them, Manuben Gandhi wrote a book titled Babu, my mother. May be what Gopi (2014) calls feminized masculinity. I wonder if Gandhi's feminine self was also a reminder to Godse about his repressed femininity; and contributed to his hatred. We also learn that Godse was too keen to kill single-handedly and dreaded the pity that might lessen his punishment. Yet he admitted that he appreciated Gandhi, and he touched Gandhi's feet before shooting. Did he desire unconsciously to settle once for all his ambivalence with the loved and hated national/universal father through the murder of this patriarch? The striving might have been spoilt if others were involved.

Was this ambivalence only Godse's personal agenda? Was this not an ambivalence and dilemma

felt by many at that time? If his ambivalence did not represent a deeper ambivalence of the nation, Godse would not have been relevant till date. So what was it that he and many others could not tolerate? Many scholars and politicians find Godse fanatic and lunatic; immediately after Gandhi's death Nehru stated that Bapu was killed by a madman. Yet this fanatic has many supporters till date, as was the fanatic whom he killed.

In my reading, both Godse and Gandhi are individuals who harboured ambivalence toward both sexuality and aggression, and had unresolved issues with their personal past. This is nothing unusual; many people are like that. But Godse and Gandhi met on a special moment of history, a critical period of intense political engagement. Gandhi had the additional genius of political and social - spiritual leadership where he immensely influenced others to take up his recommended path of non-violence, a path that helped manage his personal conflict. And Godse was also drawn to an exactly opposite path of violence that helped him manage his conflict. They had to annihilate each other, if not physically then ideologically. Gandhi had been consistently killing Godse's cherished approach, ideologically. Godse being of lesser leadership ability and also believing in violence, chose physical termination of his opponent.

Godse referred to his victim respectfully as Gandhiji and also as Mahatma. He says... *'...Gandhiji's influence became supreme. His activities for public awakening were phenomenal in their intensity and reinforced by the slogan of truth and non-violence ... but it is nothing but a mere dream if you imagine that the bulk of mankind is, or can ever become capable of scrupulous adherence to those lofty principles in its normal life...'* (http://indiansaga.com/whoswho/godse_letter.html, 2000).

I was wondering if Gandhi himself was imagining that the bulk of mankind would scrupulously adhere to the lofty principles advocated? Probably he did. In April 1919, in

protest of Rowlett Bill, he was planning a day of Hartal across India, and suggested purification by fast for all. Seems he was utterly taken by surprise when he learnt about the violence in Ahmadabad (R. Gandhi, 2000). He was too engrossed in the imagined positive moral impact of his own sacrifice. He wrote to Esther Faering, a Danish Missionary lady, just before he knew that the mob violence has broken through:

'My imprisonment therefore will show the wrongdoer in his nakedness. And he can do me no harm for my spirit remains calm and unruffled' (Reddy & Terp, 2006).

In his personal fantasy, he generalized his psychological characteristics on others, thinking others will also remain calm upon his instruction. Little did he envisage the violent attack of the protesters, the brutal murder of a British officer off duty, the retaliation of the Government force and subsequent fight resulting in death of at least 50 more people. Gandhi no longer remained unruffled, called his own vision a 'Himalayan miscalculation', and went for a three days fast to atone for the dead British and his own miscalculation (Kripalani, 1968; R. Gandhi, 2008). Was it also for the 50 odd people, most of them Indian, who died afterward? I may have missed it, but I did not find any clear reference. What's wrong then, if Godse says that Gandhi was dreaming?

Whenever Gandhi fasted after any such incident, it was usually atonement for the death of the other than his own people. In Ahmedabad violence, it was probably pre-eminently for the British Officer, later in Chauri Chaura, to the utter surprise and frustration of many, he cancelled all programmes following the killing of 22 policemen. Many Hindus felt for the same reason that he was concerned for the Muslims only. He often advocated that his own people should take the suffering voluntarily and that would give them the power to be purified and strong. This was accepted by many, but many others felt it as victimization of the victims. One example, often quoted by his critics is that he stated that the cause of earthquake in Bihar was the animosity of people

toward the other community. He was quite adamant on such occasions. His mourning for violence, thus, often took the appearance of pressurizing his own people.

In his treatise ‘Totem and Taboo’ Freud (1918/2003) has described the psychology of mourning. Repressed hostility toward enemy may make mourning and atonement necessary for harmonious psychic ambience. The enemy, when killed, represents the powerful father whom one desires to kill, and that impulse being unacceptable, the hostility is projected out. Since the enemy is killed arousing strong guilt, the hostility now attaches to the victim rather than to the dead perpetrator. I wonder if something like this was happening here.

Gandhi has been described by commentators as both wily and shrewd, and foolish and deluded. If so, how much split there would be between the inside and outside of the man, or between two compartments inside, and how much of that split would be consciously available to him? How would his ego be integrated for functioning? When Godse says Gandhi’s non-violence was a dream only, I must say that I do not agree with him.

If Gandhi’s notion of human being’s ability to follow *ahimsa* and Satyagraha were a mere dream, its impact would not have been so strongly spread all over the world for such a long time, adopted in struggles of other spirituo-political leaders including Martin Luther King and Dalai Lama. Nor can I agree with Gandhi that it is the perfect practical answer to violence. It has not generated an answer to violence in India and the world. That leaves me ambivalent and confused. Perhaps there is no clear black and white answer to whether Gandhi’s hopes were unrealistic dreams only. I am awed by Gandhi’s personal impact. Numerous times Gandhi has seen violence erupting during non-violence. Strikingly, these outbursts of brutality rarely happened when he himself was present, when he was personally leading the movement. He could stop some of the violence in 1947 by his sheer presence and announced fasting (R. Gandhi, 2000; 2008). I wonder if it was Gandhi’s personal presence that

was a sine-qua-non for non-violence to occur successfully? He dreamt of non-violence as a weapon for the mass. But did it turn out to be a weapon for a leaderless mass? After all Mohandas, the shy tongue tied boy from Kathiawar always turned out to be the significant factor. And if non-violence failed so quickly, then Godse was right; Gandhi was important and not his policy.

Godse acknowledges that Gandhi did very well in South Africa. But back home,

‘.... he alone was to be the final judge of what was right or wrong. If the country wanted his leadership, it had to accept his infallibility’.

But indeed, the general people always want somebody as a leader precisely because they trust that the leader can do no wrong. They, at least temporarily, depend on his infallibility. I think Godse was irate not because the country thought of Gandhi as infallible, but because Gandhi thought he was infallible, despite his repeated statements to the contrary:

‘The movement might succeed or fail, it might bring untold disaster and political reverses, but that could make no difference to the Mahatma’s infallibility. A Satyagrahi can never fail...’ Godse sarcastically quoted him.

I have a few questions pertaining to my ambivalence. To me Gandhi seems to be a bundle of questions — extremely complex ones, and the tentative answers I get are equivocal and fuzzy. At least two of these questions are: What made Gandhi the irresistible leader? What was in his non-violence and pursuance of truth that made many others feel violated in different ways? In one sense these two are related, because if he was politically replaceable, or made some compromise to his insistent resistance through non-violence and experimenting with what he believed to be truth, he might have lived.

The irresistible leader to be killed

What made Gandhi the irresistible leader? Other strong leaders have come and then side-stepped

or were shoved aside by competitors or oppositional power. Subhas Bose was sidelined, as were Jinnah and Azad at different points of their life. Why did Gandhi's opposition failed to side-line him? What was it that made people wary of him, yet not conceptualizing an organization without him? I will focus only on selected few related to my pursuit of ambivalence.

Gandhi's simplicity is undoubtedly one aspect of his charisma, seduction to be more precise. A number of memoirs refer to his immediate attraction owing to his simplicity and austerity, along with a toothless sweet smile . I would translate a small paragraph from a booklet written by the then Secretary of Bangiyo Pradeshik Chhatra Congress of Kolkata in 1944. He travelled to Sevagram for submitting a memorandum of the activities of the Association to Gandhi.

'The hut of Mahatmaji was probably the worst in the ashram. It was very low, the earthen walls were covered with palm branches and leaves, There was a small and thin blanket on the earthen floor. Mahatmaji was sitting on it with knees folded. As usual he had nothing on his upper body, he was wearing a white khadi dhoti that covered him from waist to knee. A few books were seen on a shelf at one side ... no other furniture in the room. A large OM was written on one wall and a photograph of Christ on another ... Frankly speaking, the moment I saw him, the anxiety that was pestering me so much suddenly disappeared to a large extent. His presence was so calm, easy and humble that even the most ordinary person will not feel uncomfortable in front of him. There was such a pervasive assurance of fulfilment and satisfaction radiating from within the humility and scarcity of things in the environment that one's mind spontaneously becomes filled with bliss. There seemed to be freedom all around Gandhiji' (Basu, 1944).

I wonder what was this feel of freedom that Gandhi conveyed to this young man? Freedom

from what? Perhaps it was the freedom from plentiful of social givens, the pressure for numerous false selves pertaining to social demands. This is not to state that Gandhi was necessarily free from all false selves; one feels that his narcissistic defences were remarkably strong (Modell, 1975; Winnicott, 1960). These were probably most clearly shown in his self presenting apparent calmness attained through obstinacy and inflexibility of some of his beliefs and conduct, a characteristic often explained in context of narcissistic self development (Fonagy, 2002). But Gandhi was also definitely free from quite a few other self-afflictions, including any trace of consumerist temptation and blind allegiance to any authority in the name of modernism, which are also equally extraordinary. Gandhi's presence was felt by many as relaxing. It could do something to change strong hostile sentiments. While the mob cheers and feels expectant with many charismatic political leaders, Gandhi's presence had a different flavour. Rajmohan Gandhi (2017) quotes Nehru's observation:

'That black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulders, it was a psychological change, almost as if some expert in psychoanalytical methods has probed deep into the patient's past, ... and thus rid him of that burden'.

If we believe such accounts, we need to acknowledge that Gandhi's presence touched somewhere deeper than the surface, producing assurance and freedom from fear. This needs a kind of working through with self; a relative freedom from one's own fear of impulses. Indeed Gandhi himself said that he could get rid of his inner violence only when he could be free from his fear. Thus it seems there was something therapeutic in Gandhi. This impact is possible only if one can convey the assurance that you are acceptable; that is, a kind of non-judgmental position is available. Perhaps this impact was what many see as spiritual in him. Yet we know how judgmental Gandhi could be; much of his political tactics was based on evoking guilt in his followers

and enemies. Also, we do feel that he had issues with his sexuality and hostility. This is a riddle that haunts me; is it possible that he was quite emancipated in certain spheres and narcissistically prejudiced in others? Then there is the eternal father - the Bapu. Even in South Africa, Gandhi emerged as the natural leader, probably owing to his sense of extended responsibility and shrewd sense of the politically relevant issue. He learnt about the new rule of Natal legislature in his farewell. The news, whose impact most Indians were unable to understand stirred in him such a deep passion that he cancelled his journey back. What would have anybody else done? With some anxiety and remorse, he would have returned home, as the arrangements were already made. So, may be this assuming responsibility was one that differentiated him from many others. I wonder what this sense of responsibility implies to Gandhi? Did it stem from a desire to be famous — to lead, and to dominate? Gandhi did not think that he might be the best person to handle the problem in South Africa, but there was none else (M.K. Gandhi, 1949). Even if there was an element of narcissistic sense of personal efficacy, the moral sense of authoritarian parenting probably far exceeded that. And when I say parenting, it is parenting; he wanted to be the guardian, protecting, decisive father and the companionate, compassionate yet trainer mother to a nationful of children. Gandhi's certainty about the rightfulness of his way seems fascinating. I suppose here lies a third important clue to his leadership, apart from simplicity and responsibility. He diluted the boundary between the personal and the social-political-national-universal. That way he eschewed the distinction between morality and ethics. Technically we define ethics as universal norms and morality as personal standards of reference. This blurring became a signature of the personhood of Gandhi. His experiments with truth were questions to oneself regarding how far experiential subjectivities can be stretched consciously and what are its impact on self? However, he did not want to end his experimentation with himself, but extended them beyond, wrote them candidly for

everyone. He was so certain about the validity of his own realization that he did not think twice to affirm it to all. Sarala Debi Choudhurani used to call him LG (law giver) – he was indeed.

Violence of non-violence: The eternal contradiction

What follows is not a comment on the efficacy of non-violence as a political strategy. This is more of a comment on Gandhi's self monitoring and working through, and on his specific pathway to reach this end. Of course the perceived certainty and validity of his own law was most striking in his advocating Satyagraha and non-violence (M. K. Gandhi & Fischer, 1983). The view was not new. It was of course 'as old as the hills'; but using it for protest was so typically like a piece of home spun khadi, so feminine, so interior, so close to the homely Indian that it contained an element of surprise. What actually is as old as hills is the concept of fasting before any *puja* — for personal purification of body and mind.

Another Indian concept had been of *prayopobeshan* — fasting unto death for remorse or personal guilt, or to attain individual spiritual excellence. In Indian subcontinent, especially for the Hindus, *prayopobeshan* was an act stemming from personal morality. Gandhi broke down the wall between the personal and the political to use it for mass purification and mass remorse. Personal fasting for mass remorse was a complete innovative technique – something which often resulted in mass fasting following him. The power of fasting over others have always been known to women, Kaikeyi is an example. In traditional India, eating and feeding is a culturally laden issue. In the west and in Christianity, as well as among Indian ascetic community, fasting is a way of controlling one's desire — *Indriya nigraha*. But within the household, especially among women, fasting has complex connotations. Fasting because one is not happy with the situation at hand, and through fasting exploiting and coaxing others, especially those who love, is a colourful part of mundane Indian family drama. Gandhi's

close proximity to his mother who often fasted had already made this strategy available to him. His genius was to use it for the enemy —to persuade the other.

If non-violence is the militant component in the freedom movement, its nature has been beautifully summarized by Erikson. He shows how the tactic, ritual and insight made this weapon truly invincible. Undoubtedly sacrifice in the form of not only food, but also sex was an integral part of it. He also abandoned the desire to harm the enemy – and prayed for the ultimate good of the enemy. Thus winning over *Kama*, *Krodha* and *Lobha* (sexual desire, hostility and greed), one may become immensely potent.

Is it the firm belief in Gandhi's mind that convinced others also to follow his path despite disagreement? I wonder how this unfaltering conviction may be explained psychologically — even in the face of contrary evidence. I submit that Gandhi needed to keep an absolute disjunction between violence and non-violence — this had to be maintained irrespective of other strategies relevant to the situation. Thus ambiguity regarding violence had to be avoided at all cost. One can trace it back to a kind of Kleinian notion (Klein, 1946/1975) during the early paranoid position when fantasy and reality are somewhat merged causing internal disturbance, and so a clear distinction has to be retained between good and bad, in this case violence and non-violence. Why cannot violence be tolerated? Probably because one is terrified that hate would completely annihilate the hated, who is the object of love as well. So hate cannot be contained, and if there is any sign of it, that must be wiped off.

I presume that this deep ambiguity in Gandhi was unconsciously felt by others, and caused some confusion. Yet his other side of simplicity and therapeutic love was also so deep that he could not be ignored. He was a dangerous combination of unconditional love and unconscious struggle with hatred. How did he posit this moral power of *Ahimsa*? In 1909 he summarized and theorized his understanding of non-violence in Hind Swaraj which was translated

by himself in English (M. K. Gandhi, 1910). Gandhi considered that violence of the powerless against a violent power will never yield superiority. Only moral superiority would yield India's freedom. Violence brings danger to the weak, while non-violent protest strengthens them. Thus he shifted the entire struggle elsewhere on a different ground, which truly baffled the British. His another extraordinary logic was that since we are never sure if a certain doctrine is correct, we should not finish off the possibility of reversal by killing.

Did not the other parties including RSS and the Communists had their share of morality? Of course, they did. But they probably lacked a person so deeply convinced at heart like Gandhi. Gandhi seemed to reduce his moral conflicts personally in such a way that he seemed to betray little doubt ever over the supremacy of his policy - Satyagraha and non-violence. This was absolutely insulated, repressing any loose ends, and made cognitively consistent. Also strategically, and perhaps defensively also, Gandhi quickly moved between the personal and the political, resulting in his development of a larger than life size personal image — owing to the seeping in of the nation into his Self. Perhaps this intermingling was not only between the individual and the national, but also between the national and the universal, this expansive ability being one characteristic of his perception. This is where he transcended being the leader of India and became a world leader. But did Gandhi himself attain the ability to love? Louis Fischer (1951) who met Gandhi in 1940 for a few times stated that Gandhi was 'incapable of hatred.' His self transformation was influenced by his selective picking up of certain literary material early in life, eg., the poem by Shamal Bhatt, by Christ, by the Sermon on the Mount, Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, discussion with his Jain friend Rajchandra and of course by his interpretation of the Gita (R. Gandhi, 2000, 2017). He had tossed between violent thoughts and rejection of those thoughts for long, and worked through it by himself. What helped him in this silent working through was probably his empathy and self expansion that

reduced his fear of death to a considerable degree. But love? I wonder why he did not use the positive word 'love' in his doctrine, but always used the negative prefixes of non—a-sohojog, a-himsa.

Love-hate relation with Gandhi: Return to a dialogue

Preparing this article, I have walked many steps with Mohandas. They say seven steps of walking makes a friend. Erikson (1969) wanted to have 'a personal word' with Gandhi. Perhaps me too. I find that after the little I read, I can no longer look at Gandhi dispassionately – he provokes too many emotions in me and at some point become Mohandas to me.

Dear Mohandas

This is to tell you what about you attracts me and what repels me, creating strong ambivalence in me 70 years after your death. First, your extreme audaciousness in affording to be simple and candid, therapeutic, juxtaposed with the deep complexity of thought and perception that lies behind this simplicity, along with your inner and probably never ending conflict over sexuality and violence.

Then comes your deep responsibility and careful parenting, and I both cherish and hate your parenting approach. You mesmerize me with your interpenetrating masculine and feminine qualities, and also sensing the occasional narcissist peep out of it. Then I have your expanded self that allures me to be included, and the same hurts me by being intrusive. The seduction of non-violence is truly too great to ignore, its elegance and moral grounding cannot but overwhelm me. Yet I see the violence and unprocessed aggression in its exposition, and I am left confused. Finally I see you as the mother and father to every Indian, except your own children.

I am awed seeing the uniqueness, the challenge you can throw to yourself, to the Raj and to all of us. At the same time, the layered complexities of the challenge and self contradictions of behaviour and affect seem too much of a labyrinth to traverse. I cannot identify with you, I can perhaps

only follow you — there is no end to this followership. So I don't want to follow. At one point I start hating you, sick of your constant being there as an ambiguous, unattainable yet relentless target. But perhaps I can shed off the anger and ambivalence by empathizing with you on one point. You were so friendless once you came into politics. Few people called you by first name. You sacrificed your love relations for politics and movement. Even if we say that this was narcissistically more satisfying to you, I believe the cry for love and human touch remains. The lack peeps through. You once had Hermann Kallenbach in South Africa, with all the passion expressed in your letters. Later, perhaps you sacrificed for India the only friend you could have had in your political life - Sarala. Maybe only she could extract that vulnerable lover from inside you. I recall Vinay Lal's comments that you had a strange eroticism; Nehru also called it weird. I find some streak of Vaishnava tinge of longing and losing in your eros. And when I empathize with you struggling to pull yourself away from all pleasurable human vulnerabilities, my ambivalence is swayed away with tenderness. You can become Mohan to be cherished and quarreled with, and not the Bapu to be feared, adored and then annihilated.

Perhaps your own ambivalence stemming from a Kleinian paranoid position was relieved and pushed forward to a relatively advanced depressive position when you lost the narcissistic sense of achievement at partition. I want to believe you resolved it and reached the much desired dispassionate yet loving surrender to reality when you withstood numerous attacks on your life, abandoned your wish to stay alive for 125 years, and finally only wanted that you might truly love and forgive your killer.

In his book 'Why Gandhi still matters', your grandson Rajmohan reports that you appear in his dreams. Rajmohan once dreamt of searching for you in different parts of Delhi, until, to his elation, he finds that you were alive, staying in a 'tiny but clean box-like shack The sort of shack that refugees from West Punjab had used in 1947...'. Rajmohan does not provide any

further association except that the ‘dream appeared at least twice, felt utterly real, and was hard to shake off’. While you could very much stay in a tiny shack, I wonder why Rajmohan imagined his grandfather a refugee. While introjecting you during writing your biography,

did he also feel that you were psychologically forlorn, a refugee from your secretly cherished land of love and personal human attachment?

With love and fascination,
Perplexedly yours....

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GANDHI: THE PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

Krityapriya Ghosh

‘Modern Review’ of Ramananda Chattopadhyay published an open letter of Tagore in March 1921. Tagore was then in the United States. The letter was published in the form of an article with a title ‘Constructive work’.

The time of writing this letter should be marked carefully. It was time of Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement. The whole country was awakened and effusive then at the call of Mahatma. But Tagore could not respond positively. Rather he opposed the movement tooth and nail. The poet wrote a series of articles and letters opposing Gandhi’s programmes and pleaded for constructive works and for inter-continental cultural and educational reciprocations. As a matter of fact, since 1920 Tagore was travelling extensively in Europe and America to consolidate his idea of Visva Bharati. Non-cooperation movement was contrary to his ideas.

Gandhi, on the other hand, was fighting for Swaraj, i.e. to attain the dominion status of India. It was also against the ill-motivated Rowlett Act of 1919 and the consequent Punjab massacre. The Khilafat question of the Muslim world was also an issue. Gandhi moved for an all round non-cooperation with the British administration, and the culture and education of the west. He considered the English education as the great obstacle for the development of personality of the Indian students. They should come out from the Government schools and colleges and boycott the universities. Gandhi stood for *National Education* and advocated for reviving

indigenous cottage industries, especially Khadi and charkha. Despite Tagore’s opposition Gandhi tried to persuade him in many ways for his movement, but ultimately he failed. Gandhi earnestly requested the poet to spin for an hour along with his pupils, Tagore replied, “Poems I can spin, of your precious cotton what a mess I would make!”¹

But this is not the whole story of the relationship between these two great minds. Tagore and Gandhi shared many common points and programmes during their life-time. And that was expressed in the open letter I have referred to in my writing at the outset. This letter would help us to understand both the poet and the Mahatma. Let me quote extensively some important parts of this text:

It has given me great consolation to read in your letters (C.F. Andrews: Letters from Abroad) what Mahatmajī is doing in the way of constructive work. Such a positive programme of duties requires no special stress of necessity to justify itself.

‘You are wicked: I shan’t have anything to do with you’, sounds quarrelsome. ‘I shall manage my own affairs, whatever you may think or do’ sounds all right. Non-cooperation appeared to me to be the progeny of the union of rejection from party and dejection as the other party; and therefore though I tried to shed upon it my best smile, I long hesitated to welcome it to my heart.

¹Leonard K Elmhirst: Poet and Plowman, Visva Bharati, 1975, P.22

The most vitally valuable part of self-government is the 'self'. When it comes to us as a gift packed in a tin from the outside, then that very 'self' is smothered to death and its tortured ghost becomes for us an eternal incubus.

The power is there where there is right and where there is the dedication of love. It is a maya to imagine that the gift of self-government is somewhere outside us. It is like a fruit that the tree must produce free through its own normal function, by the help of its inner resources. It is not a Chinese lantern, flimsily gaudy, that can be bought from a foreign second-hand shop to be on the tree to illuminate its fruitlessness.²

This long quote from Tagore substantiates the point that Tagore believes in self help or what Prof. Sumit Sarkar called "Tagore's gospel of 'Atmasakti'"³ We know that since 1904 Tagore stressed on the point of Atmasakti or self-reliance. During the Swadesi movement (1903-1908) the poet talked about the necessity of Swadesi Samaj and propagated his philosophy of social reconstruction. Not only propagation, Tagore formed in 1904 a forum name Swadesi Samaj in Kolkata and framed its constitution. The chief objective of this Samaj was to create an atmosphere of self-help and to serve the country through rural self-reconstruction. Tagore appealed to the then national leaders to join this programme, but most of the leaders took it as a romantic poet's utopia and did not pay their attention to all these. Only a few revolutionary young men, like Bhupendra Nath Datta, Annada Kabiraj came to the poet for discussing about the project. We came to know

that Barin Ghosh sent his comrades to the poet for discussion about the project. But the young revolutionaries soon felt that the programmes framed by Tagore were very dry and dull and did not have much political content. Hence, they ultimately did not join the project. Incidentally, we may remind here that Subhas Chandra Bose during his student days went to Santiniketan along with his friends to meet the poet with the expectation that the poet of Balaka would enthrall them for political patriotic activities. But Tagore talked coolly about village reconstruction and all that. Subhas wrote that they felt very disappointed, but in 1938 Subhas admitted that they did not do justice to the poet as well to their motherland. Self-help and rural reconstruction should have received much more attention.⁴

Tagore opposed fruitless agitational politics and put forward his scheme of rural reconstruction activities in myriad forms. The upliftment of the villages at Silaidaha, Patisar, and the adjoining Tagore estates in North Bengal since 1890s, the founding of Santiniketan school in 1901 and eventually the establishment of Visva Bharati (1918) and the Institute of Rural reconstruction (i.e. Sriniketan, 1922) are the instances where the poet went in his own way. The poet did all these without any outside political patronage. The mainstream nationalistic politics did not help him in any way. 'Swabalamban' or the constructive swadesi was rather the expression of Tagore's alternative model of politics.

Mahatma Gandhi respected this poetic vision although he was essentially a man of mainstream politics. All his activities had political implications. Gandhi believed that political mission would not give birth to any fruitful results if it was not linked up with social reconstruction

²Nityapriya Ghosh (Ed): The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore (Vol. Iv), Sahitya Academi, 2007, p.738-739.

³Sumit Sarkar: The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908, People's Publishing House, 1977, p.47.

⁴Abhra Ghosh: Subhash Chandrarer Guru Sandhan (Bengali article), Chaturanga patrika (Ed. Abdur Rauf), Magh-chaitra, 1405 (Bangabda), p.10-11.

measures or the reformative initiatives. It is common knowledge that Gandhi always talked about ‘Gram swaraj’ or village autonomy. It was his ultimate objective to attain. This swaraj is not political alone, it is essentially social, economic and cultural. The legendary historian Toynbee said that Gandhi was the prophet of *spiritualized politics*, but we know that this political endeavour will end in fiasco if it is not adequately supported by the socio-economic and cultural transformations. India is a multi-religious, caste stratified, and multi-lingual, multi-racial society. Without balancing and restructuring these in-built refractions of the society, political movements will be of no value. Gandhi was always of the view that the seven hundred thousand villages of India should be awakened first and this enrichment of community-life will pave the way of India’s political enlightenment. The concept of village community and its self-sufficiency is not at all a novel idea. Before Tagore and Gandhi some of the British Indologists, like Charles Metcalf, Travellina or Sir Henry Maine and also Karl Marx in his Essays on India talked about the concept of self-sufficient village autonomy. Charles Metcalf said:

*The village communities are little republics having nearly everything that they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last within themselves where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mogul, Maratha, Sikh, English are all masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same.*⁵

Gandhiji tried to rebuild this village community which was ruined by the British imperialism. It was not a political task at all, the

reconstruct was essentially social and economic as well.

We also know that Gandhi was the prophet of non-violence. His non-violent non-cooperation of 1921 was revoked in early 1922 after the violence of Chauri Chaura. Gandhi, with much grief and sorrow, declared that the nation was not prepared for non-violent movement. According to him, satyagrahis must prepare themselves for self-sacrifice and self-immolation. Non-violence is not the religion of cowards and meek people. Courage, fearlessness and strength of morality would enable then to be the real army of satyagraha. And needless to mention that the concept of Satyagraha is not only political, it is social and cultural as well. It is associated with truth and rightness of the cause. Without justice, fraternity and morality satyagraha will be a misnomer. If the Satyagrahi tries to fulfill his self-interest, greed or any personal ambition, Satyagraha will turn into Duragraha. Therefore, Satyagraha needs constant practice or anusilan of aparigraha (non-possession), discipline and moral exercise. To attain Truth will be the ultimate aim. Gandhi once said: “See, I am growing, you grow with me. I have grown from truth to truth.”⁶

The history of our national struggle also accepted this truth that Gandhi was the first mass leader of the country. The movements upto 1925 led by the INC were not only moderate but also mendicant (as Tagore characterized) in nature. The only exception was the anti-partition movement of Bengal of 1903 -1908. The middle class participation was there to a large extent but the peasantry and the artisan classes were not found much. Hindu-Muslim divide was also a marked feature of the movement. The contemporary researches also said that the lower caste communities were altogether absent in that movement.

⁵Quoted from A. R. Desai: The Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Popular Prakasan, Golden Jubilee Edition, 2004, p.1.

⁶Quoted from Pannalal Dasgupta: Gandhi Gabeshana (Bengali), Nabapatra Prakasana, Kolkata, 1986, p.5.

Since 1915 Gandhi emerged as the recognized leader of the Indian masses irrespective of their class, caste or religion. As a matter of fact Gandhi tried significantly to unite the Hindus and Muslims in the nationalist struggle. The participation of the peasants became prominent in Champaran or kheda movement. The mill-workers of Ahmedabad and some other industrial establishments began to be active in political struggles. This political mobilization of the common people could not be possible without the socio-economic reform activities of the congress leaders led by Gandhi. In *Young India*, Gandhi wrote:

*If we are to analyse the activities of the congress for the last twelve years we would discover that the capacity of the congress to take political power has increased in exact proportion to its ability to achieve success in the constructive efforts – that is to me the substance of political power. Actual taking over of the Government machinery is but a shadow, and emblem. And it would easily be a burden if it comes as a gift from without, the people having no effort to deserve it.*⁷

Here we find the exclusive and unique character of the Gandhian leadership. Gandhi always raised the slogan: ‘Build up your Swaraj’. He never said, smash and grab political power. Actually capturing political power by force is not a difficult task but it is a dangerous and unhealthy weapon. The fruits that come from it do not last for long. Gandhi also believed that real political power can be achieved through constructive works. If we do not attend to peoples’ basic needs, to their daily life, the people shall not accept the leader. Gandhi said that God today can appear before the hungry people only in the form of bread.

A semi-starved nation can have neither religion, nor art, nor organization.

*Whatever can be useful to the starving million is beautiful to my mind. Let us give today first the vital things of life and all other graces and ornaments of life will follow. My ambition is to wipe every tear from every eye.*⁸

This statement shows the practical sense and deep insight of Gandhian leadership. Sometimes Gandhi kept aside his constructive works from the programmes of direct political fold of the INC. The reasons are quiet apt and clear. First, if we politicize the constructive programmes and activities, there shall be the possibilities of government interventions. Second, through these works the people will find in themselves the potentialities of their own Person – the capability of self-reliance. Sheer political slogans will not give it. Third, the anti-imperialist struggle should have a non-political reserve force who sacrifice their lives for *Lok-seva*, i. e. the service to the people. Gandhi believed that *Lok-niti* was no less important than *Rajniti*. *Rajniti* is essentially an art of capturing power which, in other words, is the power of domination and exploitation. If it does not have the base of *Lok-niti* (service to the people) politics will surely be bogged in vulgar power politics. There is the well-known quote: Power begets power, absolute power begets absolute power and authority would be acknowledged by the people if these are backed by the social and ethical components.

Through the constructive social and economic efforts Gandhi could touch all the layers of Indian people – high and low, varna Hindus and the harijans, Hindus and Muslims in general. We know that Gandhi founded innumerable social organisations for economic, social, cultural and educational upliftment of the common people, especially for the benefit of the Harijans. He fought for the good of the Adivasis, labourers, farmers, as well as the white-collar people. He was for women’s emancipation and

⁷Ibid, p.104

⁸Ibid, p.103

even backed the Swadeshi industrialists and enterprises. If we express the character of Gandhian leadership in Marxist terms, we would call him the leader of multi-class people. Thus, it is evident that his politics was never divorced from his constructive social efforts. In the 5th August, 1926, issue of Young India, he proclaimed:

*The fact is that political emancipation means the rise of mass consciousness. It cannot come without affecting all branches of national activity. Every reform means an awakening. Once truly awakened, the nation will not be satisfied with reform only – with one department of life. All movement therefore proceed, everyone proceeding simultaneously.*⁹

But where actually is the meeting point of constructive works and politics? Gandhi had a clear vision about it. He said that many people refused to see any connection between the constructive programme and civil disobedience. But for one who believes in non-violence, it does not need hard thinking to realise connection between the works for Swaraj. Gandhi argued that constructive work is not essential for civil disobedience for specific relief as in the case of Bardoli. Tangible common grievance restricted to a particular locality is enough. But for such an indefinite thing as Swaraj, people must have previous training in doing things of all-India interest. Constructive work must throw together the people and their leaders whom they trust implicitly. Trust begotten in the pursuit of continuous constructive service and work becomes a tremendous asset at the critical moment. Thus, the more the progress of constructive programme, the greater is the chance for civil disobedience.

On March 23, 1940 Gandhi wrote in Harijan

A living continuous mass contact is impossible without some constructive

*programme requiring almost daily contact of the workers with masses.*¹⁰

So, if crores of people do not take living interest in the nation-building work, freedom or swaraj will remain a mere dream, unattainable either by non-violence or violence.

During 1922-1929 immediately after the withdrawal of non-cooperation movement Mahatmaji devoted himself completely to the constructive works. He gave a long list of programmes as the following: (1) Hindu-Muslim unity; (2) Abolition of untouchability and upliftment of this class of people; (3) Adibasi development; (4) Women empowerment; (5) Anti-liquor movement; (6) Khadi and Cottage industries; (7) Buniyadi education; (8) Cow protection sangha; (9) Public health; (10) Development of national language and Hindi; (11) Development of regional languages; (12) Labour organizations; (13) Peasants organization; (14) Adult education; (15) Student organizations etc.

Apparently the above-mentioned programmes and activities are dull and dry. There is no scope of showing bravery or heroism in all these. Romantic excitement is altogether absent here. But Gandhi argued, without these reformist programmes long-standing protracted political struggle needs the strength and patience of constructive works.

Through constructive programs the people make themselves self-sufficient and self-dependent. The concept of 'Atmasakti' becomes no more abstract. If the Indian villages can revive their age-old self-sufficient village autonomy, which had been ruined by the British invasion, attaining Swaraj would become smooth and possible. The idea of this autonomous village republic has some pre-conditions. The most important pre-condition is the concept of decentralization. It is also the base of people's

⁹Ibid, p.106

¹⁰Ibid, p.109.

democracy. Gandhiji characterized the state as an organized violence which crushes individual freedom. Gandhi pleaded for decentralized authority. According to him, this decentralisation would become possible if we empower the village people and their panchayet system at the bottom of society. To him, the villages should have their autonomy and no outside intervention should be tolerated. Similarly, the blocks, the regions, the zillas and the state government and the national government at the top would have their respective fields of activities and autonomous layers of governmental system would maintain a balance and each authority would limit itself in its sphere but it also maintains an organic relation between themselves. Jayprakash Narayan called it a real democratic communitarian state.¹¹ The state will thus be an oceanic circle based on the network of constructive autonomous powers. Each unit will remain independent within its own domain keeping constant relation with others. Secondly, service to the people makes the satyagrahis and the volunteers of Sava Dal modest, disciplined and strong. Without these qualifications and values able organizations cannot grow. And without purposive ethical organizations nation-making process cannot be smooth and fruitful.

Facing the internal squabbles and intra-party rivalries within the INC, Gandhi once remarked:

*We had ambition and we had fought each other for positions of power and responsibility, and stayed away from ahimsa. Let us, therefore, forget politics until our service is needed and people cannot represent the millions until we have reduced ourselves a cipher, effaced the self in us completely.*¹²

In “Young India” (12.1.1921) Gandhi wrote addressing the non-violent Satyagrahi workers that the constructive workers’ grandeur lies in its majestic lowliness.

*But one hears of non-cooperationists being insolent and intolerable in their behavior towards those who differ from them. I know they will lose their majesty and glory if they betray any inflation. ... Non-cooperation is not a movement of brass bluster and bluff. It is a test of sincerity. It requires solid and silent self-sacrifice for national work. It is a movement that aims at translating ideas into action. And the more we do the more we find that much the more must be done than we had expected. And this thought of our imperfection must make us humble.*¹³

Gandhi’s programme of constructive works makes us understand that power should be made from below, it does not flow from the top. If it comes from above, it can never be democratic and benevolent to the ordinary masses. So constructive satyagrahis should not function as a party separate from the masses, wither in constructive works or in civil disobedience. In Gandhi’s words,

*“Their relation to the common people should be like that of sugar in milk which enriches its tastes but has no separate existence.”*¹⁴

Gandhi stood for the development of agriculture and agro-based industries. But since 1920s he admitted the necessity of machineries for the welfare of the general masses, for the development of village communities but not for the massive growth of the cities. In “Harijan” (27. 1. 1940), Gandhi wrote:

¹¹Jayprakash Narayan: Gandhi and the politics of Decentralisation, (Article) in the book Gandhi, India and the World, Ed. Sibnarayan Roy, Nachiketa Publications Ltd, Bombay, 1970, p.226-241.

¹²G. Tendulkar: Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Vol.V), Publications division. Government of India, 1962, P. 300

¹³Quoted from Pannalal Dasgupta: Gandhi Gabeshana, p.115

¹⁴Ibid p.116

*I do visualize electricity, ship-building, iron-works, machine making and the like side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto the industrialisation has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village crafts. In the state of future it will subserve the village and their crafts.*¹⁵

Gandhi was always emphatic on a particular point that the villages are not for the cities' comfort, the cities are rather the levers of development of the villages. Gandhi was not a revivalist, nor did he want to retain the village life as it was hundred years back. Gandhi was for the use of science and technology but opposed its misuse for the luxury of city-dwellers. Gandhi welcomed technology so long as it would be governed by ethics and morality.

Here someone may raise a question – Why, Gandhi put so much emphasis on charkha or spinning wheel. Tagore also criticized Gandhi in this regard. The poet was of the view that charkha might not be regarded as the symbol of progressive economy. Pundit Nehru also in his “Autobiography” characterized this as a ‘fad’. Nehru was always in favour of rapid industrialization which was actually the order of the day. In this context, it should also be referred that Nehru could not always appreciate the apparently non-political issues of constructive programmes. In his ‘Autobiography’ he wrote,:

*To some extent I resented Gandhi's preoccupation with non-political issues and I could never understand the background of his thoughts.*¹⁶

However, coming back to the issue of charkha, Gandhi had his own logic. And Gandhi's close disciple Dr. B. Kumarappa in his

book ‘Capitalism, Socialism or Villagism’ wrote about this logic significantly:

*If spinning is recommended today, it is only because our masses are becoming demoralized for lack of adequate employment. For them to earn even a pice an hour through spinning is better than to lose all hope and faith in themselves. When everyone is otherwise profitably engaged, there will be no need for people to spin and one can conceive of yarn being manufactured at that time by spinning mills run by the state, or cooperatively by the people and being woven into cloth by cottage weavers.*¹⁷

Not only this, Gandhi believed that work is worship in the real sense of the word, a means of identifying oneself, not merely in thought but in deed, with the wider self of community and thus with the universal self of all being. Economic life will thus be raised to a spiritual level. Work or labour will not be degraded into servitude for earning one's bread, it will become divine, a labour of love.

Another important aspect of Gandhi's philosophy of social reconstruction is his idea of Nai Talim – his Wardha programme of basic education in 1936. Gandhi was of the view that our education has got to be revolutionised. The brain must be educated through the hand. In ‘Harijan’ (18. 2; 1939) Gandhi wrote:

*If I were a poet, I could write poetry on the possibilities of five fingers. Why should you think that mind is everything and hands and feet nothing? Those who do not train their hands, who go through the ordinary rut of education, lack ‘music’ in their life. All their faculties are not trained.*¹⁸

¹⁵Ibid p.147

¹⁶Nehru: Autobiography. Penguin, Random House India, 2004, p.203.

¹⁷Quoted from Pannalal Dasgupta: Gandhi Gabeshana, p.178

¹⁸Ibid, p.184

Gandhi said that the old idea was to add a handicraft to the ordinary curriculum of education followed in schools. That is to say, the craft was to be taken in hand wholly, separately from education. To Gandhi, that seems to be a fatal mistake; the teacher must learn the craft and correlate his knowledge to the craft, so that he will impart all the knowledge to his students through the crafts. This is a revolution in the method of teaching. We may recall here the methods of education introduced by Tagore in his Siksha-satra in 1924. This should be regarded as the precursor of Gandhi's Wardha Programme. Education through works and crafts was also found in Marx's writings or in the experiments of Robert Owen. They all believed that there is no antipathy between manual labour and intellectual exercise, they should go hand in hand to have the best results in life.

Gandhi here added one more point which was most revolutionary and also much debatable. Gandhi, in his Nai Talim, introduced a practice that the students must produce wealth by dint of their own labour which would bear the cost of their own education. Tagore here raised a question. In his address of New Education Fellowship (February, 1936), he said:

... Mahatma Gandhi has taken up the cause of mass education in earnest. We may be sure of great results in the near

future. Already great interest has been roused in the country and controversy provoked over the question whether education can be made self-supporting. ... (But) I cannot congratulate a society or a nation that calmly excludes play from the curriculum of the majority of its children's education and gives in its stead a vested interest to the teachers in the market value of pupils, labour.¹⁹

The difference of opinion between Gandhi and Tagore is quite apt and clear here. Even then I want to remind the readers that in 1929, one of the disciples of Gandhi asked Tagore where exactly lies the difference between the poet and the Mahatma. Rabindranath wonderfully replied:

According to the Upanishad the reconciliation of the contradiction between tapasya and ananda is at the root of creation and Mahatmaji is the prophet of tapasya and I am the poet of ananda.²⁰

Needless to mention that the Wardha Programme was based on Tapasya, Tagore's Santiniketan was the product of Ananda. The two noble minds had their commonalities in their programmes of action but the philosophy was different.

¹⁹Sisir Kumar Das: The English Writings of Rabindra Nath Tagore (Volume III), Sahitya Academi, 1996, p.816.

²⁰Quoted from Amlan Dutta: Prabandha Samgraha (Vol.1), Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1993, p.432.

THE STILL, SMALL VOICE WITHIN: LEARNINGS FROM GANDHI'S RESPONSES TO THE VIOLENCE OF PARTITION

Kaif Mahmood

The phrase 'the still, small voice within' is used by Gandhi at different times in his life to convey an inner voice which shows the direction in which one is to go. An early usage of the term is found in an article by Gandhi in *Young India* on 2 March, 1922, in relation to the non-cooperation movement.

From July 1919 to February 1922, for two and a half years, under Gandhi's leadership, the non-cooperation movement has emerged as the first ever nation-wide revolution of the Indian masses. It has shaken up the British Empire, seeing hundreds of thousands of unarmed, poor, often uneducated people bring to question the conscience of the world by refusing to take part in a system that destroys their livelihood and their dignity. The colonial government has filled the jails with the protestors, but they have gone to jail considering it a badge of honour. The leaders of the Congress expect that independence is near.

And then, on the night of 5 February 1922, a mob of protestors in Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces, provoked by police firing, hacks 22 policemen to death, shouting "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*" ("victory to Mahatma Gandhi"). In response, Gandhi calls off the movement, saying that this is not the freedom he wants. He is questioned by most

Congress leaders, who do not wish the movement to stop, and who do not know if such unity of the masses will ever be found again. But the movement does stop. Responding to his critics, on 2 March, 1922, Gandhi writes,

"The only tyrant I accept in this world is the 'still, small voice' within. And even though I have to face the prospect of a minority of one, I humbly believe I have the courage to be in such a hopeless minority. That to me is the only truthful position."¹

In this paper I try to understand the nature of this still, small voice. What was the origin of this voice, and what impact does it have in the psychological and social world that it manifests in? I work with the understanding that this element of Gandhi's life lies at the core of who he was, and manifests most powerfully in his responses to the violence of partition, 25 years after the incidents described above occurred, when he no longer commands the same following as he did in the 1920s and 30s, and truly seems to be in a minority of one.

Gandhi's responses to partition coalesce around three distinct events – his fast in Calcutta in September 1947, his fast in Delhi in January 1948, and his very public death, which can be seen not only as a passive passing away

¹Gandhi is evoking an incident from the Old Testament:

"And He said, go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind the earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still, small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood at the entering of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, 'What does brings thou here, Elijah?'"

(*The Book of Kings, 1.19:11-13*)

from the world, but an event which he was aware would be the likely consequence of his acts, and which had a powerful impact on the atmosphere of the nation. This paper will focus on the first of these events and briefly discuss the other two towards the end, observing the different kinds of psychological change these events precipitated, both shallow and otherwise.

The historical setting

In 1947, two momentous phenomena in the history of India coincide with each other. The first of these is the birth of the nation-state of India – and Pakistan – a new form in which an ancient civilisational ethos of India will manifest itself. This is conveyed for posterity in Nehru’s speech on the midnight of the 14th and 15th August in Delhi, at the Parliament House. We have all heard that speech. I would like to quote a portion of it here.

“Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.

On this day our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the father of our nation, who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us. We have often been unworthy followers of his and have strayed from his message, but not only we but succeeding generations will remember his message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India. We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out, however

high the wind or stormy the tempest.”²

One thousand and five hundred kilometres away, in the city of Calcutta, the man most singularly responsible for India’s freedom – the purported ‘father of our nation’ – spends that day and the following one in quiet prayer, declining to be part of the festivities of independent India. The 77 year old Mohandas Gandhi is in the city to respond to the massive killings of Muslims by Hindus and Hindus by Muslims. Facing a freedom soaked in blood, Gandhi is more concerned about the blood than the supposed freedom. This bloodshed would eventually kill 1 million persons, and displace 20 million, most of them by force, causing, as we all know, the largest mass migration known in human history. This is the second of the two coinciding phenomena we speak of.

The two coinciding phenomena – the independence of India and the violence of partition – ask us two questions, respectively. One, what does it mean to be an Indian? What is that tryst that we made, if we consider Nehru’s words to be more than verbal flourish, words that tell us something about our own selves, about a reality that has existed before our biographical selves were born? The quest to discover the roots of Indian-ness was at the heart of the contemplative lives of several figures of the time, including Gandhi, Nehru, and Tagore, who discovered answers that were broadly in the same field, but also Ambedkar, Iqbal, Jinnah, Savarkar, whose answers were of different kinds, both from the former group and from each other.

The second question these events ask us, a question not unrelated to the first, is, how shall we respond to an ‘other’, an other being one who differs from us, in markers of identity such as religion, class, nationality, or simply, in ideas, as may more often be the case in the academic

²Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1947 [1992]. “Speech on the night of Indian independence, New Delhi, August 15”, in *Penguin Book of Twentieth Century Speeches*, ed. Brian McArthur. London: Penguin, pp.234-237.

circles where this article is most likely to be read.

Through this study of Gandhi's 'still, small voice', as it emerges in the midst of these powerful moments of history, I hope to be able to engage with both these questions.

This article, then, is not a study of biographical aspects of the man Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a tracking of the development of his particular gifts, inner struggles and psychological complexes, as has been attempted by a few psychoanalysts before. Nor is it a study of what are seen to be his philosophical or political ideas. It is a reflection on the phenomenon of Gandhi – by which I mean the vision of Indian-ness he has become the foremost symbol of and, of the values of human relatedness which he sought to embody. The phenomenon of Gandhi is more than an abstract idea, since it is a psychological force that can inspire one to give one's life to it. Yet, as Gandhi would be the first to admit, this psychological force – the still, small voice - is not identical to the person who embodied it, and who has usually been the subject of psychological studies of Gandhi.

How does one study Gandhi?

Before we study Gandhi, however, there are important methodological questions to ask. I find myself unable to proceed without a reflection on these, because, as an academic researcher writing on Gandhi, I am painfully aware that Gandhi was a critic of modern civilisation, including its educational institutions, which he saw as among its foremost purveyors. The British Empire, which he sought to bring down, was administered by viceroys and parliamentarians trained in the best of modern universities. Yet, they had gone on to perpetrate what Gandhi and many others considered a crime against humanity. Gandhi sought to

establish a new form of education, one that addressed the heart and not only the mind.

Hence, is it at all possible, within the conventions of modern academia, to understand Gandhi? Is it possible to write Gandhi while taking seriously his objections to the system within which we study and teach, and write him in such a way that he would recognise himself in it, were he with us today, in flesh and blood? I do not know if we, in the academic world, can justifiably bypass this question.

Nehru, Gandhi's chosen successor and perhaps the man who knew Gandhi most closely, knew this:

"People will write the life of Gandhi and will discuss and criticise him and his theories and activities. But to some of us he will remain something apart from theory – a radiant and beloved figure who ennobled and gave some significance to our petty lives, and whose passing away has left us with a feeling of emptiness and loneliness.

Many pictures rise in my mind of this man, whose eyes were often full of laughter and yet were proofs of infinite sadness. But the picture that is dominant and most significant is, as I saw him marching, staff in hand, to Dandi on the salt march in 1930. Here was the pilgrim on his quest of Truth, quiet, peaceful, determined and fearless, who would continue that quest and pilgrimage, regardless of consequences."³

Gandhi himself has told us what to do with his writings and his speeches when he dies – to burn them: "As a matter of fact, my writings should be cremated with my body. What I have done will endure, not what I have said and written."⁴

The nature of experiments with truth

Gandhi sees his life as a series of experiments with truth. What is the nature of an

³Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1951. Foreword to D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*. Bombay: Vithalbhai Jhaveri and D.G. Tendulkar, pp.xiv-v.

⁴Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 4, p.208.

experiment with truth? What are its elements, what are the processes that these elements go through in the experiment, and what kind of results does such an experiment bring? By trying to answer these very fundamental questions, we may further chisel our response to the question of what it means to study Gandhi – to understand him without his writings, which we were supposed to burn, and without our theories, from which he is quite else.

There is an incident Gandhi tells in the story of his experiments with truth – a title for his autobiography surely not meant to be taken lightly – that we are all aware of. It has been passed down to us in school books, and perhaps from our elders. Let us take a fresh look at it.

It is the year 1893, and 23-year old Gandhi has arrived in South Africa a few days ago. He takes a train from Durban to Pretoria, where he shall represent his client Dada Abdullah in court. Through the post, he books for himself a first-class ticket for the journey. He is seen off by Dada Abdullah at the Durban station, and the train leaves, with Gandhi in the first-class compartment. A few hours later, the train reaches Maritzburg, where a European passenger steps into the compartment. Seeing Gandhi, he walks out and returns with three railway officials.

One of the officials tells Gandhi, “Come along, you must go to the van compartment,” referring to the compartment meant for ‘coloured’ people.

“But I have a first class ticket,” Gandhi replies.

“That doesn’t matter. I tell you, you must go to the van compartment.”

“I tell you, I was permitted to travel in this compartment in Durban, and I insist on going on in it.”

“No you won’t. You must leave the compartment or else I shall have a police constable to push you out.”

“Yes, you may. I refuse to leave voluntarily.”

A police constable is called. He takes Gandhi by the hand and pushes him out of the train. His luggage is also brought out. Gandhi refuses to go to the van compartment and the train steams away. He goes to the waiting room and sits there, leaving his luggage on the platform, making sense of what has just taken place. The railway authorities take the luggage. It is night, and it gets bitterly cold at the Maritzburg station. Gandhi shivers sitting in the waiting room, but does not go to get his overcoat from his luggage, too afraid to face another humiliation from the railway authorities.

Then, he recalls in his autobiography,

“I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights, or go back to India? Or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to return to India without fulfilling my obligation [to work on the court case]. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial - only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. [I decided] I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.”⁵

As Gandhi reaches Pretoria, he is met by members of the Indian community, with whom he shares his experience. These men relate similar experiences of their own, and together, they decide to fight this injustice. A struggle begins for dignity and freedom, which would, over the next 20 years, bring together the 1,50,000 Indian immigrants in the Union of South Africa. The mostly poor and illiterate indentured workers would win this non-violent, and at that time, unique struggle, and restore their rights and dignity, although not without compromises. At

⁵Gandhi, M.K. 1927. *An Autobiography or The Story of my Experiments with Truth*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan, pp.103-4.

the end of these 20 years, Gandhi would no longer be a lawyer dressed in a suit, but a renunciant who has taken to an ancient way of life, a way which has inspired the principles behind the struggle. He would then return to India, and soon emerge as the leader of the Indian freedom movement, a movement whose victory would also see beginning of the end of the age of colonialism.

It is a moment told again and again in books, taught to children, portrayed in the cinema. It has acquired an iconic status, as a moment where the man who would later lead India to freedom first thought of fighting for freedom. I suggest that here, we have, in its early forms, the crumbling of the shell of unconsciousness, and the emergence of a unique self of the individual, coming to terms with his destiny, catalysed by an event that shocks him out of the old self, brings suffering that, even if bearable, is not comprehensible. It is an archetypal moment, one which, in small and large ways, we all go through.

I suggest that we look at this incident as an early form of what Gandhi would later call his experiments with truth. It tells us the following things about the nature of these experiments:

1. The person carrying out the experiment enters the situation with an awareness of a central aspect of his inner life. In this case, it is the awareness of human dignity that is inviolable, whatever the ethnicity of the human being be. We may call this awareness of the truth of the experimenter. This truth is not a belief, or a concept, but a felt, alive, even burning awareness. It is the same, in my understanding, as the 'still, small voice within'.
2. This awareness is then met with a new situation. In this case, the situation is that of being on board the first class compartment of the train, and being asked to leave, and then being made to do so by force. The inner truth and the outer situation then meet, in a

catalysis, which is the centre of the experiment.

3. The catalysis having occurred, both the experimenter and those involved in the experiment experience a change in their truth. We see that Gandhi not only decides to live by what his inner truth is, despite the suffering it has caused him, but also decides to work against the violation of that truth by engaging in public work. The inner truth, then, as a result of the encounter with the new situation, is amplified and manifested in the call to a life of service.

We do not know what is experienced by the persons who threw Gandhi out of the train, for we do not have access to their experience of the situation. All we can say is that the experimenter's insistence upon his truth made these persons more vociferous about theirs, eventually leading to the use of physical force to assert their claims.

4. This amplification of the inner truth must make one face that which is difficult, unknown, and uncertain about the self. We see that Gandhi feels cold in the station at Maritzburg, but finds himself facing a deep anxiety of humiliation, an anxiety strong enough to inhibit him from claiming his luggage. The encounter with personal truth, therefore, is not without its humbling encounter with one's own frailties, which in Gandhi's case, are his own low self-images, which it was otherwise more comfortable to ignore. There is, therefore, no question of the truth experimented with being a mere conceptual entity, since it involves dredging out the deep, dark aspects of the self.
5. Conceptualisation - that is, the faculty of the mind that takes one's experience, which consists of sensations, feelings and thoughts, and translates it into a concept, takes place *after* the experiment, and not *before*. Hence, the situation described above would become the seed for the concept of

satyagraha. Here, the experiment differs from the experiments of modern science (and often, social science), where a body of conceptual knowledge is consciously employed *before* the experiential encounter with the object, as well as after.

6. An experiment, as described here, can only be understood by living through it oneself, if not literally, then vicariously. Its fundamentally experiential nature necessitates an experiential immersion in it to be understood.

Therefore, the reader is invited to look at the events described the pages that follow as an experiment that we are undergoing together - entering the events with a felt awareness of our inner truth, which is a non-conceptual awareness of one's feeling states in the present moment, letting that truth encounter the truth of the subject matter, and then elaborate the changes brought to one's inner truth.

This approach is also present in the work of several psychotherapists, but is perhaps most distinctly outlined by Wilfred Bion's advice to meet the patient "without memory and desire". Without memory, one is without the urge to use concepts through which one translates the world. Without desire, one is without the impulse to change what currently *is*, in one's experience. In this encounter, the therapist not only realises the truth of the patient, but also renews his own relationship with the underlying truth of all psychic experience – the unconscious, unknown, yet always present entity that Bion calls 'O', from which all psychic experience, in the self and the other, arises.⁶

This article then, like the work of Bion, endeavours to use one's *feeling* function to access and express those elements of the psychological field which are not integrated into one's consciousness so far, and explicitly abstains from employing prior knowledge held in memory to meet the events being studied, until the description of the event is over.

This may go against the grain of one's training, but it is hoped that the reader will adopt this approach seriously before moving forward. Our ability to understand the events will directly correspond to our ability to embody Bion's notion that O cannot possibly be known through our mental categories, but only experienced when the impulse to recognise, categorise and analyse – which he terms '-K', is left behind.⁷

The Calcutta Fast⁸

The fast is narrated in much detail, to allow for our feeling capacity receive the atmosphere in which it took place. After this encounter with the event, we shall come back to our conceptual capacities to elaborate on what we have felt and absorbed.

On August 6, 1947 Gandhi leaves Delhi for Noakhali. From November 1946 to March 1947, Gandhi had spent five months in Noakhali, which had been consumed by violence committed by the Muslims against the Hindu minority there. The peace work in Noakhali was left incomplete because Gandhi felt he must go to Bihar to address the communal violence in that province, and then to important meetings in the north of the country, trying to avert its imminent partition. The meetings have failed, and now, as Gandhi

⁶Bion, Wilfred. 1967. "Notes on Memory and Desire". *Psychoanalytic Forum*, 2, pp.271-86.

⁷Bion, Wilfred. 1962. *Learning from Experience*. New York: Basic Books, p.47.

⁸This narrative is based on the following sources. Pyarelal. 1958. *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan; Bose, Nirmal Kumar. 1953. *My Days with Gandhi*. Calcutta: Nishana; Dalton, Dennis. 1995. *Mahatma Gandhi: Non-Violent Power in Action*. New York: Columbia University Press; Gandhi, Manu. 1959. *The Miracle of Calcutta*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan; Gandhi, M.K. 1946. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. 1994. New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India.

returns to Noakhali, it is soon going to be part of East Pakistan.

When he reaches Calcutta on August 8, he is met by Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, head of the interim Muslim League government that is to transfer power to the Congress a week later. One year ago, when violence broke out in Calcutta following the Muslim League's protests on Direct Action Day, 4000 people died. Suhrawardy was the Premier of Bengal and was accused of siding with the Muslim rioters.

Today, Suhrawardy meets Gandhi and begs him to stay in Calcutta, because he feels that only Gandhi's efforts can prevent massive bloodshed in the city. Already, for four months, Calcutta has been in a state of low-grade, chronic violence and a great tragedy threatens to erupt any moment. After a slow stream of migrations to east Bengal, the Muslims are now in a significant minority in Calcutta, and they fear that sooner or later, the Hindus will rise to take revenge for last year's killings.

The government has been unable to control the violence. The police is divided among communal lines, and there are calls in the press for martial law to be employed. Paranoia pervades the city. One day before Gandhi's arrival, a crowd of more than 300 people has stopped a train, selected 12 of its passengers, and slaughtered them in full public view. Sensing the gravity of the situation, Gandhi agrees to stay in Calcutta.

After a few days in Sodepur Ashram to the north of Calcutta, Gandhi decides, as an experiment, to live without police cover in the predominantly Muslim locality of Beliaghata, in east Calcutta, which has been badly affected by the violence. He chooses an abandoned and broken house called Hydari Manzil, whose occupants have left for East Pakistan. He asks

Suhrawardy to live with him there, and to work with him for peace.

When Gandhi and Suhrawardy arrive at Hydari Manzil on the evening of August 13, they are met by a crowd of about 200 Hindu men who hurl stones at the house, smash the doors and windows, and break in. Gandhi meets them. They want to know why he has now come to "rescue the Muslims", while Hindus have been suffering for so long, and how he could associate himself with Suhrawardy, a man seen as responsible for the killings of Hindus on and after Direct Action Day, and named 'the butcher of Bengal'. Gandhi comes out to meet the leaders of the crowd. He says to them, "I am going to put myself under your protection. You are welcome to turn against me and play the opposite role if you so choose. I have nearly reached the end of my life's journey. I have not much farther to go. But let me tell you that if you again go mad, I will not be a living witness to it."⁹ The crowd persists, telling Gandhi that Hindus and Muslims can never be friends, and accusing him of being an enemy of Hindus. Gandhi replies, "How can I, who am a Hindu by birth, a Hindu by creed and a Hindu of Hindus in my way of living be an 'enemy' of Hindus?"¹⁰ In this way, the heated conversation continues for over an hour, after which the crowd eventually disperses.

On the evening of August 14, the crowd returns.

"Where is Suhrawardy?" they shout. There is no answer from inside the house.

They then begin to throw stones at the house and shout slogans. A helpless Suhrawardy cowers on the floor. It is the month of Ramzan, and the sun just having set, Suhrawardy had begun to break his fast when the commotion started.

⁹Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p.443. The conversations are in a mix of Hindi, Bengali and English, Gandhi having learnt a bit of Bengali from his niece Abha who was from that part of the country.

¹⁰Ibid, p.444.

Suddenly, in the dim light of dusk, the crowds see a window shutter on the second floor open, and Gandhi emerges from behind it. The crowd quietens on seeing Gandhi. After a few moments, there is another shout, "Where is Suhrawardy?". Gandhi tells them that Suhrawardy is concluding his Ramzan fast, and would appear before them in a few minutes. Another person from the crowd shouts that Suhrawardy is unworthy of trust. Gandhi replies, "He will not be able to stick to me if he is not sincere. He will drop off before too long." He then turns slightly to his side, and Suhrawardy comes to stand next to him. Gandhi puts his arm around Suhrawardy's shoulders, like a friend. The crowd knows that any attack on Suhrawardy could harm Gandhi too.

Suhrawardy begins to address the crowd in a measured tone: "It is Bengal's good fortune that Gandhiji is amidst us...". But before he completes the sentence, a man in the crowd asks in anger and righteousness, "Are you not responsible for the Great Calcutta Killing?"

For a moment, Suhrawardy is silent. He then says, "Yes, we all are."

"Will you answer my question please?", the man persists. The man speaks for many others in the crowd, whose hearts are brimming with anger over the killings one year ago.

There is silence. Then, Suhrawardy says, "Yes, it was my responsibility."

On this admission of guilt, the atmosphere of the crowd changes. The crowd is taken aback that the man who had arrogantly denied any responsibility for the killings for one year, is now confessing his guilt. The shouts give way to murmurs, the crowd talks among itself, and after a while, disperses. There is silence around Hydari Manzil for the rest of the evening.¹¹

For the next two weeks, Gandhi and Suhrawardy walk the streets together and talk to the people of peace. It seems that the presence of Gandhi, seen as a symbol of the old wisdom of India and as the leader of the struggle that brought India to freedom, inspires the best in common people. They begin to offer each other help and protection, they assure each other of their support if things go wrong.

The Statesman reports that Beliaghata has become "a place of pilgrimage for thousands of Calcutta's citizens. Both Hindus and Muslims came in a constant stream... and placed their grievances before Mr. Gandhi and sought his advice".¹²

The violence settles down. For the first time in a year, for almost a fortnight, there has been no killing or arson in the city. All of India notices this transformation. Nehru and other Congress leaders urge Gandhi to move to the Punjab to help with the mass violence there. On 26 August, Lord Mountbatten sends a telegram to Gandhi:

"My dear Gandhiji,

In the Punjab we have 55 thousand soldiers and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the One-man Boundary Force."¹³

By late August, reports of violence pour in from the Punjab, including vivid accounts of trains from Pakistan arriving, loaded with dead bodies of men and women. Newspapers write graphically of relatives waiting at the stations for long-delayed trains, finding, as the trains arrive, the corpses of their loved ones, the women undressed and violated, and their breasts cut off. There are reports of temples and

¹¹Ibid, pp.446-7.

¹²*The Statesman*, 15 August, 1947, p.1.

¹³Cited in Gandhi, M.K. 1959. *Correspondence with the Government, 1944-47*. New Delhi: Publications Division, p.277.

gurudwaras being desecrated and destroyed, of people betraying their old neighbours and handing them to blood thirsty mobs in the wake of the night.¹⁴ The Punjab is torn apart by a civil war, and it looks like not a single Hindu or Sikh would remain in West Punjab, and not a single Muslim in the east.¹⁵ The impulse to take revenge begins to seethe under the overt peace of Calcutta. The Hindus and Sikhs want to similarly purge this part of the country of the enemy. The violence begins again.

On the night of 31 August, a group of men break into the house. They threaten Gandhi with violence if he does not go away from Calcutta and hand Suhrawardy over to them, with who they have scores to settle. Gandhi tries to placate them but there is no relenting. The protesters continue to shout slogans, telling him to go back.

The temper of the crowd continues to rise, and stones begin to be thrown into the house, one of which hits a police officer. At this moment, perhaps a moment of both courage and loss of self-control, Gandhi walks forward to the crowd and says, "Kill me, I say. Why don't you kill me?"¹⁶ There is no response from the crowd. His associates gently take him back into the house. A lathi is then hurled into the house through the window, which barely misses Gandhi. A brick is hurled which hits one of his co-workers. The police manages to make the crowds disperse. The same night, 51 people are killed in different parts of the city.

Gandhi feels deep sorrow at the rage in the crowd, which his words had no impact on. The next morning, he writes to Sardar Patel, "What was regarded as the 'Calcutta Miracle' has proved to be a nine days' wonder. I am pondering what my duty is in the

circumstances."¹⁷

Since only a few Muslims are left in Beliaghata, Gandhi's colleagues request him to ask them to shift to a more secure location in the city. Gandhi does so. On the afternoon of 1 September, as a truck carrying Muslim labourers is taking them from Beliaghata to a new residence, a hand grenade is thrown at it, only a few metres from Hydari Manzil.

Gandhi immediately goes out to see what has happened. He sees the dead bodies of two men, labourers, clad only in dhotis, lying in pools of blood. Their eyes are glazed and flies buzz over their bodies. Next to one's body lies a coin of 4 annas, perhaps his earnings for the week. The rest have fled the spot. Struck by the brutality of the incident, he silently walks back to the house.

That evening, Gandhi tells Pyarelal that he is undertaking a fast unto death. His colleagues are worried, for in his earlier fasts, Gandhi was younger and the world looked up to him. Today, he is 77 years old, and the world seems to be marching past him without heed.

C. Rajagopalachari, governor of West Bengal comes to meet Gandhi. Rajaji, as he is called, had termed the peace of the last fortnight, effected by Gandhi's efforts, 'the Calcutta miracle'. He tries to persuade Gandhi to not fast. Gandhi responds that words have failed, that the world of language is no more effective in conveying the truth he lives for, and a fast is only truthful response he has to the violence.

The same evening, he says in a public statement, "To put in an appearance before a yelling crowd does not always work. It certainly did not last night. What my word in person cannot do, my fast may. It may touch the hearts

¹⁴*The Statesman*, 29 August, pp.1, 5-6; 1 September, p.5.

¹⁵This would eventually be true of the Punjab, but not of Bengal. The events we are discussing have an important role to play in that difference.

¹⁶Gandhi, Manu, *The Calcutta Miracle*, p.54.

¹⁷Gandhi, M.K. 1957. *Letters to Sardar Patel*. Ahmedabad: Navjivan, pp.225-6.

of all the warring elements in the Punjab, if it does in Calcutta. I, therefore, begin fasting from 8:15 tonight to end only *if* and when sanity returns to Calcutta.”¹⁸ The fast begins.

On September 2, Gandhi spends the first day of the fast lying on a cot on the roof of Hydari Manzil, and continues his work of editing the journal *Harijan*, sipping water and nothing else. As the day passes, fatigue comes to his body but he goes on. There is mild rain, and with the rain, the violence in the city also goes on. A hotel is burnt down in Sealdah, in central Calcutta. Nearby, at Zakaria Street, there is shooting and plundering of shops. There is no food for Gandhi’s associates in Hydari Manzil, since the car bringing provisions has had to stop half-way and go back, as there was gun-fire on the roads.

News of Gandhi fasting unto death if the violence does not stop spreads. Around noon, a group of 27 citizens come to promise that they would do whatever they can to ensure peace. A group of lawyers soon follows with a similar assurance.

Shyama Prasad Mookerjee of the Hindu Mahasabha, one of the organisations accused of inciting the violence, arrives to inform Gandhi that its workers would walk the streets along with the workers of the Muslim League, and speak for peace. Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Subhash Chandra Bose and leader of the Forward Bloc, is also present. The Forward Bloc and the Hindu Mahasabha have accused each other of inciting the violence, and in subtle ways, repeat the accusations in Gandhi’s presence. Gandhi tells them, “I am not here to judge. My fast is an appeal to everybody to judge his own heart.”¹⁹

On September 3, the second day of the fast, Congress officers from different parts of the

city arrive to assure Gandhi that the people of Calcutta are working for an end to the violence. University students ask their professors to allow them to not attend classes so they can gather weapons from violence-affected areas and take them to Hydari Manzil. Men reach home from office in the evenings and discover that the womenfolk are fasting, not feeling it is right to eat until Gandhi does. Restaurants and amusement centres do little business. Some of them are voluntarily closed by their owners.

Peace demonstrations of students, political workers, and government officials walk through the city, converging in the evening at Hydari Manzil. This broken down house in the locality inhabited by the poorest and most despised of persons, seems to be becoming the moral centre of the city. So far it was political leaders who made speeches for peace. Now ordinary people have stepped out of their confines, to work for the man silently fasting to death here.

Amiya Chakravarty, an associate of Gandhi and then professor at Calcutta University, writes of those days:

“His face and eyes, made luminous by suffering, would show little trace of the agony that his will had mastered, but the nature of his ordeal was unmistakable to the millions. Even while repudiating his method and its efficacy, the one question in peoples’ minds would be, ‘How is Gandhiji?’ People would begin to feel uncomfortable. The grocer’s boy, the rickshaw-puller, the office clerk, the school and college students would scan the news columns early in the morning and listen to the radio throughout the day and feel more and more personally involved in the situation.”²⁰

At half past six in the evening, a procession of Hindus and Muslims comes to see Gandhi.

¹⁸Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p.496. Italics added.

¹⁹Gandhi, M.K. CW 89:147.

²⁰Chakravarty, Amiya. 1950. “A Saint at Work: A View of Gandhi’s Work and Message”, William Penn Lecture. Philadelphia: Religious Society of Friends.

They are requested to send only two Hindu and two Muslim representatives from among them to meet Gandhi, so as to not stress his weakening body. One of these representatives, a prominent Muslim League politician, speaks with tears in his eyes:

“I worked with you during the Khilafat movement. I undertake that no Muslim in this area will again disturb the peace. Your mere presence in our midst is an asset to us. It is the guarantee of our safety. Do not deprive us of it.”²¹

The Hindu representatives repeat the same assurance. A physically exhausted Gandhi, tired from the day’s activities, speaks in a feeble voice that can only be heard by bending close to him. He tells the representatives that he will break his fast when the feelings they express are also present in the minds of those who are carrying out the violence.

At quarter past seven in the evening, Rajaji visits Gandhi and informs him that in contrast with the previous days, the city is remarkably peaceful. From the roof of Hydari Manzil, there seems to be calm all around. Members of both communities are being protected by volunteers of the other community. Congress leaders Acharya Kriplani, Ram Manohar Lohia and Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghosh arrive a little later and request him to end his fast now. Gandhi says that he does not yet sense that there is a spontaneous unity in the hearts of the people. He continues, “Death alone is our true friend. Why should we be afraid of it?”²²

The third day, September 4, begins with Gandhi waking up still weaker. His secretary Pyarelal writes, “The voice had sunk to a mere whisper, the pulse was small and rapid.”²³ A naturopathic doctor is continually by his side. Gandhi’s companions are worried that this 77-year old body, chiselled over decades of experiments with body and mind, may not survive this experiment. Meanwhile, in the city, mixed processions of Hindus and Muslims walk

the streets, appealing for peace, reminding people that the leader of the freedom movement is dying from their violence, and in his death, calling us all to repentance.

Pyarelal writes,

“Then the miracle happened. As the leaden hours crept by and slowly life ebbed out of the frail little man on the fasting bed, it caused a deep heart churning in all concerned, bringing the hidden lie to the surface. People came and confessed to him what they would have confided to no mortal ear.”²⁴

Groups of Hindu men who had been anonymous members of mobs that had murdered, raped and put homes on fire, now appear before the frail old man, silently lying on a cot on the roof of Hydari Manzil. They confess that it was they who had organised and executed the killings. They ask Gandhi to give up the fast and to not slip into death. Gandhi silently listens to them. They say, “We shall submit to whatever penalty you want to impose, only that now you should end your fast.” Gandhi replies, “My penalty for you is that you should go immediately among the Muslims and assure them full protection.”²⁵

At two in the afternoon, an influential man from the Calcutta underworld, a man who had organised the violence in the Burrabazar area, comes to meet Gandhi. He confesses to having organised the killings. He says that by the evening, all the weapons that his men possess would be surrendered at Hydari Manzil, and two of his men would protect each Muslim shop in Burrabazar.

An hour later, a small group of rioters arrive. One of them comes forward and confesses that four days ago, he threw the lathi into Hydari

²¹ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p.507.

²² *Ibid*, p.508.

²³ *Ibid*.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p.509.

²⁵ *Ibid*.

Manzil, which barely missed Gandhi. He asks for forgiveness. Gandhi listens silently, and asks them to leave, saying, “God be with you.”

As evening falls, a group of representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League come to meet him. Along with them are the Governor Rajaji, the Chief Minister P.C. Ghosh, and Acharya Kriplani. Suhrawardy is part of this group, even though he has been in Hydari Manzil with Gandhi in the past three weeks. The group presses upon Gandhi that the city is entirely peaceful now, the rioters have surrendered, and there could not possibly be clearer signs that his penance has transformed the city.

Gandhi asks them two questions –

“One, can you in all sincerity assure me that there never will be repetition of trouble in Calcutta? Can you say that there is a genuine change of heart among the citizens so that they will no longer tolerate, much less foster, communal frenzy?”

And two, if trouble breaks out.. would you give me your word of honour that you would not live to report failure, but lay down your life in the attempt to protect those whose safety you are pledging? You should remember, too, that if you break your pledge after giving it to me, you will have to face an *unconditional* fast unto death on my part.

If you deceive me, if you say one thing and mean another in your heart, my death will be upon your head. I want a clear and straight answer. Your assurance must be in writing.”²⁶

The group goes into the adjoining room to discuss the matter. In the meantime, an appeal signed by 40 representatives of the Hindu and Muslim residents of four different areas of the city – Narkeldanga, Sitalatala, Maniktola and Kankurgachi – are brought in. The signatories have pledged that they would not allow any violence to occur in their localities, which were the worst affected by the killings.

In a while, the politicians emerge from the next room with a signed document. The document says, “We the undersigned promise to Gandhiji that now that peace and quiet have been restored in Calcutta once again, we shall never allow communal strife in the city and shall strive unto death to prevent it.”²⁷

Gandhi responds, “The leaven is at work”, referring to the parable of Jesus which offers the symbol of the leaven - the yeast in dough which makes it rise and transforms it into nourishing bread – to connote the invisible work of the spirit in transforming hearts.²⁸

Three full days after it commenced, he decides to break the fast. Suhrawardy, once a staunch adversary of Gandhi, brings him a glass of orange juice. There is a short prayer sung by all present, followed by Ramdhun.

As the darkness of night approaches, a truck full of weapons – swords, daggers, guns, grenades – arrives as promised. Close to midnight, another group of men arrive and surrender their pistols. The next day, the surrender of guns, swords and daggers continues. Men who are wanted by the police for weeks, but have escaped it, now appear with their weapons and lay them down.

Calcutta is in peace. Not only does the critical period of partition pass without violence in Calcutta, but communal violence does not return to the city for many years. Even though violence would continue in other parts of the country, the fast has demonstrated that in the worst of times, non-violence can win over violence. It has shown that one man steeped in non-violence can effect a powerful change in a city of two and a half million people.

Shortly before leaving the city, on 5 September, Gandhi is asked by a young man who

²⁶Ibid, p.510.

²⁷Ibid, p.511.

²⁸Ibid.

has joined the peace processions to leave behind a message for the city that he has impacted in silence. In the Bengali script he has recently learnt, Gandhi leaves these words - "My life is my message".²⁹

Having been through the event of the fast, we may now employ our analytical capacities to elaborate our understanding of it.

The dismantling of the self-other divide

Through his life, Gandhi broadly offers two reasons for fasting. One, that fasting purifies the self, and the self, thus purified, can convey the truth of its perceptions to the other more effectively.³⁰ Second, that to suffer voluntarily is to evoke compassion in the other, to melt a heart that has hardened.³¹

In psychological terms, we may say, of the first of these reasons, that fasting is a withdrawal of attention from the psyche's habitual objects. What in psychoanalytic terms is called cathexis is a fixing of attention on particular inner objects. The fasting person, in withdrawing from food, is also withdrawing his attention from these inner objects which otherwise work towards furthering the preservation of the psyche and the body. This attention being withdrawn, the inner objects lose their potency, and psychic energy is freed to express itself in new forms that emerge from the unconscious. What these new forms are, we will come to shortly. The self has thus changed its structure. This is the

psychological dynamic of what is perhaps, at the same time, the most ancient and the most universal, of all spiritual practises.

When the self has changed, the other is bound to change too, since self and other exist in relation to each other. The self is what the other is not, and the other is what the self is not.

What does this mean in practical terms?

When he fasts unto death, Gandhi is no longer the Congress leader speaking for Hindu-Muslim unity, walking the streets of Calcutta to counsel for peace, and being seen as an adversary by the rioters, who may go and throw stones at him. Rather, he is now another entity in the minds of the rioters. He is no longer the opponent, threatening to vanquish them through his particular means. Rather, he seems to have withdrawn from the fight, or at least from the form that the fight had taken so far, so that it no longer seems a fight at all. The opposition between the one speaking for unity and the rioters is broken. The flavour of the relationship between the two is different now.

The rioter's self exists in opposition to the self of the one who wishes to maintain peace. The psychic object of violence in the mind of the rioter is held up in opposition to the psychic object of peace in the mind of Gandhi. When Gandhi withdraws from working for any outer goals, but slowly, silently fasts into non-being, the potency of the psychic object of violence in the mind of the rioter is also lost. Psychic energy is freed in the rioter to express itself in new

²⁹ Gandhi, M.K. CW 89:156.

³⁰ "I must undergo personal cleansing. I must become a fitter instrument able to register the slightest variation in the moral atmosphere about me." Gandhi, M.K. 1922. "The Crime of Chauri Chaura", *Young India* 16-2-1922, CW 22: 419.

"I launched non-cooperation. Today I find that people are non-cooperating against one another, without any regard for non-violence. What is the reason? Only this, that I myself am not completely non-violent. If I were practising non-violence to perfection, I should not have seen the violence I see around me today. My fast is therefore a penance. I blame no one. I blame only myself. I have lost the power wherewithal to appeal to people. Defeated and helpless I must submit my petition in His Court. Only He will listen, no one else...". *Young India* 23-10-1924, CW 29: 185. Also see, CW 25: 200.

³¹ "The effect of such action on the life of the people is that when the person fasting is at all known to them, their sleeping consciousness is awakened." Gandhi, M.K, 1947. "Question Box", *Harijan* 21-12-1947. CW 90: 202.

forms. Other aspects of the rioter's self, so far lying unconscious, emerge. These are parts of him that are not so violent, and can possibly even be the opposite of violence – empathy.

This process can be termed the dismantling of the self-other divide.

The psychotherapist also facilitates a similar process by not being like the inner objects to which the patient is habituated. This can be relieving, such as cases in which the patient realises that something about him that felt shameful and worthy of punishment is actually met with a different response in the therapy room. It can also be anxiety provoking, as the patient is left with an uncertainty when he realises that the usual responses that he receives from people in his relational network are not forthcoming. This uncertainty in the situation, if responded to sensitively by the therapist, allows for the discovery of new aspects of the self.

The mere withdrawal from the current self-other constellation is not all there is to this process, however. In subtle ways, in his silent withdrawal from eating, talking and living an active life, Gandhi is sending out a message - that all human beings are, fundamentally, one.

The psychotherapist, on the other hand, does not have a moral message to make in any explicit way. However, there is a subtle message, that all that the patient does is acknowledged and seen, rather than rejected. The first corollary of this is that all that emerges in the self is of value. The second corollary of this is that one element of the psyche is not of more value than another. The therapist is a companion on the journey, who, first of all, who watches the waves of consciousness rise and fall, not preferring one over the other, but only allowing for the habitual preferences of the patient to give way to a more spontaneous flow of the waves, or in Gandhi's terms, a more direct emergence of truth.³²

Here we reach what I propose lies at the essence of all healing – the dismantling of the current form of the psyche, in other words, the dismantling of the particular mechanisms through which the ego is formed, and allowing for psychic energy to take a new way of being.

What is this new way of being? As we become witness to the fast, we see a man who silently goes into the cave of death, and in his growing absence from this world of food, action, speech, becomes increasingly present to our own consciousness. Our own consciousness, entangled as it is in thoughts of self and other, of friend and foe, of our own grievances and the unfair privileges of the other, somehow begins to dissolve at the edges, and is permeated by the presence of the silent man fasting, dying. This dissolution of our boundaries allows in us a space where the values of the fasting man can take root and grow. So, we close our offices and hotels. We too, at times, are unable to find in us the will to eat. We forego our hatred for the other. We begin to join the peace processions.

Gandhi's presence in our collective consciousness

What are the values that thus, through a powerful psychological process, find their roots in our own consciousness?

Before and after Gandhi, other persons have endeavoured to fast unto death publicly. Yet, their fasts have not evoked the same change in our hearts. I suggest that in our collective consciousness, Gandhi is not only the biographical individual that he was, but embodies an aspect of our collective consciousness, which we may call a *presence*.

I use the word 'presence' to connote a reality which has been connoted by the words 'archetype' and 'myth' by other researchers of

³² Hence, we may bring together Freud's 'free floating attention', Bion's attention 'without memory and desire', and Rogers' 'unconditional positive regard' here, as accentuating different perspectives on the same quality of attention with which the therapist meets the patient.

human consciousness in the past. Either of these two words have been used by Jungian psychologists, anthropologists, and scholars of comparative religion, to illustrate a phenomenon in our consciousness which is, respectively – outside the biographical self of the individual; which allows the individual to understand the human condition in a way that takes it from randomness to meaning; and which brings into human life a sense of the sacred.³³ I use the word presence, rather than archetype because of the esoteric and abstract connotations it has acquired, even if it describes something quite everyday and ordinary, something human beings down the ages have known. I avoid using the word myth for similar reasons, but also for the reason that despite scholarship pointing to a different way, the word is indelibly linked with the notion of a narrative.

The term presence, then, connotes here an entity that emerges in consciousness. It is larger than the ego, and the ego receives it, surrenders to it, and embodies it. The presence moves the ego forward in certain directions, and in doing so, brings relief from the contradictions of the ego. It offers a different way of being.³⁴ Here, we may remember the lines by Nehru quoted in the beginning of this paper – “But to some of us he will remain something apart from theory – a radiant and beloved figure who ennobled and gave some significance to our petty lives, and whose passing away has left us with a feeling of emptiness.”

A presence is different from an ego ideal. The ego ideal is chosen by the ego. The presence

is discovered, arising from the unconscious. The ego ideal has its roots in the phallic stage of life, where the child’s capacity to direct psychic energy allows him to find an object towards which he may strive. The presence has its roots in a non-life historical aspect of consciousness. While a presence can be turned into an ego ideal, it is not actually an ego ideal.

A presence opens up for an individual two aspects of human existence that have been often caged away in modern experience. First, it opens up our awareness of collective consciousness, breaking the shackles of individuality, and enables us to experience a communion with the collective, indicating that a part of our consciousness is not only our own, but also shared with that of the people of our culture, or cultures.³⁵ Second, and most importantly, it opens up our awareness to a sense of the sacred, whatever forms that sense may take.

The two dimensions are not always clearly delineated in experience, and exist in a paradoxical relationship to each other. Gandhi’s own life is an illustration of the paradox. Gandhi steps away from his identity as a westernised lawyer, and discovers his roots, eventually embodying them in every step of his life – his lifestyle, his food, his clothing, his speech and his faith. In discovering his roots, he also transcends them, and becomes a symbol of the simple dignity of the human being, however poor and oppressed, across the world. The paradox, then, is this - in discovering one’s cultural roots, one also loses oneself and discovers a communion with all human beings, and possibly

³³See Jung, Carl Gustav. 1961. *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. New York: Random House, pp.173-178; Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1978. *Myth and Meaning*. London: Routledge, pp.1-4; Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., pp.162-215.

³⁴‘A way of being’ is the term also used by Rogers to summarise what, in essence, psychotherapy offers a suffering person. Rogers, Carl. 1980. *A Way of Being*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, p.x.

³⁵Like Jung’s other terms, ‘myth’ and ‘archetype’, I hesitate to use his term ‘collective unconscious’, since it has also come to acquire, similarly, a sense of the esoteric. In the early 20th century, within the scientific establishment which Jung addressed, these terms were probably useful to bring some degree of acceptance and understanding of the nebulous processes that we are concerned with here. Today, I believe, they have acquired a different meaning in our vocabulary.

with all life.³⁶ The same may be said of the mystics of various religious traditions of the world – they are uniquely and powerfully embodiments of their traditions, and yet, there is something in them that goes beyond their historical context.

Two vignettes

I will offer two vignettes, among many that can be found when studying Gandhi's life, that point to the fact that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi emerged in our consciousness as more than Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – as a presence, as described above.

The historian Sudhir Chandra begins his book, *Gandhi: Ek Asambhav Sambhavana* (*Gandhi: An Impossible Possibility*), with the following vignette from his own early life.

“Like most of those who belong to the generation that was in its childhood at the time of the country's independence, my relationship to Gandhi is older than my memory itself. My first memory of this relationship, which is a little hazy, is from an evening in my large house in Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh. Somebody came in and said that Gandhi is no more. On hearing this, I began to cry. That night no food was made in the house. Everyone went to sleep without food, although not hungry, whenever they could fall asleep. It was extreme winter. I lay down and stretched my blanket to cover my head, and cried for a long time under it.”³⁷

What is it about Gandhi that makes a small boy, perhaps less than 10 years of age, and several others who had never met the man, go into the night weeping at his death? What about Gandhi makes children, teenagers, poor and

uneducated persons who have never met him, be touched by him?

The other vignette I wish to mention here is narrated by Amiya Chakravarty. Once again, for lack of space, we will need to take this as representative of hundreds of such vignettes that we can find in the historical register.

It is the mid-1940s, and Gandhi is travelling in a train in Bengal. The train stops at a tiny station near Bolpur, and Gandhi sits in his third class coach, waiting for the journey to resume. A sea of faces come to the train compartment to get a glimpse of the one they call mahatma. Through that immense crowd, an aged, visibly poor woman makes her way to the window, and puts into Gandhi's palm a coin of 4 *paisas*. With moist eyes, she then speaks in Bengali, which is translated for Gandhi, that she had come to the nearby market from a distant village, and in the market, had heard that a train carrying Gandhi is stopping at the railway station. She decided to come and see Gandhi, and give him all the money she was carrying – 4 *paisas*. She wanted to help him in his work. But could he return half the money, 2 *paisas*, so that she could buy something for her home before she goes back to her village? Gandhi thanks her and returns 2 *paisas* to her. The woman walks back through the crowd, going back to her village, two hours away. Moved by the simplicity and sincerity on the woman's face, Gandhi sits silently, too moved for words. He then says to his associate, “One more thread added to the million threads with which India's strength will be woven.”³⁸

If Gandhi is not only an individual but a presence, what is he a presence of? Gandhi's presence brings alive a particular vision of India.

³⁶This, I suggest, would be the deeper psychological meaning of Gandhi's notion of *swadeshi*. In this sense, *swadeshi*, like *swaraj*, is not a merely external doctrine concerning political and economic action, but rather, an orientation of the heart that involves an inner change, rooting one's consciousness in the shared cultural consciousness of one's people.

³⁷Chandra, Sudhir. 2011. *Gandhi: Ek Asambhav Sambhavana*. Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, pp.18-19. Translation mine.

³⁸Chakravarty, “A Saint at Work”, pp.11-12.

It is a vision of India as a mixture of cultures, people, traditions. It connotes a collective consciousness where its different parts contain the other – the Hindu is also a little Muslim, the Muslim a little Hindu, the privileged also has a little of the underprivileged in him, and the underprivileged a bit of the privileged. Co-existence comes to mean not merely tolerating the other at one's side, but discovering the other within the self. Essentially, this vision of India is the vision of a self-other relationship that is porous. Perhaps, had Mohandas Gandhi not existed, India would have found another person to embody this unified flux of traditions. The nature of India as a unified flux is prior to Gandhi, who only embodies it, as did others much earlier. The *mahatma*, as embodied by Mohandas Gandhi, is a continuation, in the collective consciousness, of the figure that symbolises a oneness underlying diversities of the human and non-human world. It is a space that has earlier been occupied by other figures in the story of India – Kabir, Nanak, Tukaram, and others. The mahatma, as a presence, is not a mere idea. He is a living, felt reality up to this day, one that can inspire people to dedicate their lives to it.

One may carefully and tentatively propose, in fact, that the juxtaposition of a force that celebrates the oneness of all that exists, and a force that employs power to separate and control, is a prism through which all of Indian history could possibly be viewed. The former force finds embodiment in the nature mysticism of the Vedic hymns, in the renunciant mysticism of the Buddha and the Upanishads, and later, in the devotional poets and teachers mentioned above. The latter force finds embodiment in a strictly hierarchical social order, in stringent temple ritual, in patriarchy, in religious divides, and perhaps most powerfully in contemporary

India, in the stark divisions between rich and poor.³⁹

The fact that simple, unlettered persons would be touched by Gandhi, and would immediately, almost magically, be moved by his message, putting their trust in him, can only be explained by the fact that they were attuning themselves not to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, but to the *mahatma*, a symbol of a certain Indian-ness. It was a symbol not only of a certain Indian-ness, which is only one aspect of the phenomenon that we have called presence, but it was also a symbol that brought alive a sense of the sacred, which touches our hearts and moves them with compassion. Hence, despite this strong emphasis on the cultural rootedness in Gandhi's life, he is also a universal figure, who inspires people across cultures.

To summarise, it is through dismantling the self-other divide, then embodying a powerful presence from our collective consciousness, and allowing it to manifest in each of us, that Gandhi's fast in Calcutta makes its impact.

Having made my central argument, I would now like to make two additional points before concluding this paper.

The Delhi fast and the death

Gandhi undertakes another, longer and more life-threatening fast un-to-death in Delhi from January 13 to 18, 1948. This fast brings to embodiment the same psychological processes as spoken of here, although on a larger scale. In Calcutta, the fast is addressed primarily to the rioters –armed goons employed by political parties and other organisations to carry out the work of ethnic cleansing. It is the confession

³⁹Perhaps this split is universal, and the examples here only illuminate the way in which it has been embodied in the Indian civilisation. We have had similar splits in other civilisations, such as the Sufi and the *ulema* in Islam, the monastic and the cleric in Christianity, and in some senses, the madman the scientist in modernity.

and surrender of arms by these rioters that is decisive in the path to peace in that city. In Delhi, when the fast takes place, partition has occurred four months ago. Every fourth person in the capital city of one and a half million people is a refugee, and the fast is addressed to a far larger degree to the common people, who, brutalised by the wounds of partition, have killed, raped and set houses and shops on fire. The impact of the fast is, thus, more powerful.

Like the Calcutta fast, the Delhi fast brings peace to the city. Then, 12 days later, on the evening of 30 January, 1948, Gandhi is assassinated. An estimated 1.5 million people assemble along the path of his funeral procession from Birla House in central Delhi to Rajghat, on the banks of the Yamuna river, to the north-east of the city.⁴⁰ For seven hours, the procession continues, until it reaches the river bank, where the body is cremated. Much of these seven hours pass in overwhelming quietness, broken by occasional cries of “Mahatma Gandhi ki jai”. There is sorrow in the air, and the death is seen as possibly the most mourned death in history.

Gandhi’s public death and the mourning that follows allows for the suppressed suffering of partition – the suppression of which was maintained by overt acts of violence and hatred – to be felt and released to a significant extent. After 30 January, 1948, the violence of partition slowly grinds to a halt. There are other factors that contribute to this ending of violence – the government machineries have found their bearings, a large proportion of the migrations have already taken place. But on the level of collective consciousness, it is the death of Gandhi that allows for the concentration of sorrow and angst in one public event, which is then experienced and cathartically purged from the

hearts of millions. Nehru, characteristically, finds words to express what many in this newly independent nation feel at the moment:

“The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. Our beloved leader, Babu, as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will continue to illumine this country for many more years. For that light represented something more than the immediate past, it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.”⁴¹

The wounds of partition are partly purged, partly put behind, and the ethic of nation-building prevails. For four decades thereafter, communalism remains a peripheral phenomenon in Indian public life – present, yet never at centre-stage for long, until the late 1980s when it rises to the centre once again, the unprocessed trauma of partition rising to the fore.

The dismantling of the self-other division, the mythical presence, and finally, the catharsis facilitated by Gandhi’s vicarious, public suffering, are the three steps through which he responds to the violence of partition and plays a singularly significant role in bringing to an end a civil war that has torn the nation apart. All three steps are present in the three events discussed here, even though they progressively become stronger in the second and third of them.

Shallow non-violence

Other than the three psychological steps mentioned above, there is another process that takes place, which we shall call ‘shallow non-

⁴⁰The estimate of 1.5 million was given to Louis Fischer by General Roy Bucher, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. Cited in Guha, Ramachandra. 2019. *Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World, 1914-1948*. New Delhi: Penguin.

⁴¹ From Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1980. *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology*. Ed. Sarvepalli Gopal. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp.106-7.

violence'. By elaborating on this process, this final section addresses two concerns. First, it asks why Gandhi's fasts and his death did not root out communal hatred altogether. Second, it seeks to engage with the polarity that is often found in discourse about Gandhi – a worshipping tendency that sees him as a miracle worker, and perhaps in reaction, a visceral dislike for him, dismissing his work as that of a cunning, blackmailing politician. Disentangling ourselves from this polarity may perhaps allow us to recognise that appreciation, however deep, need not become worship, and criticism, however incisive, need not become demonisation.

I will narrate two incidents that help us engage with these concerns.

One day in September 1947, in Delhi, there is news that the homeless refugees from Pakistan are going to attack the hospital opposite their temporary home in the tents of Kingsway Camp. The hospital's patients are mostly Muslims, since Muslims are the primary victims of the killings in Delhi at that time. Gandhi sends Sushila Nayar to the site, asking her to take help from Nehru and Patel, and ensure that no violence takes place. Sushila informs Nehru's office about this, and proceeds to the hospital. When she reaches the hospital, Sushila sees that the patients have been moved to the Jama Masjid, but the refugees are looting the hospital. A lone policeman stands watching. When she asks him why he does not stop the looters, he nonchalantly says that it is not in his powers, betraying both indifference and helplessness.

Briefly thereafter, Nehru arrives in his official car and Sushila narrates to him what has taken place. Nehru, visibly angry, asks the driver to take him and Sushila to the refugee camp. They reach the camp and Nehru steps out of his car. An angry crowd gathers around him. He reproaches the crowd, "I thought we were helping our suffering brethren. I did not know we were sheltering thieves and dacoits!" The crowd scowls at Nehru. A fiery young man

comes to him and says, "You lecture to us. Do you know what we have suffered?" The atmosphere grows very tense and violence can erupt any time.

Nehru is unable to contain himself any longer. He shakes the young man by his collar. Sushila is worried that the crowd will attack their Prime Minister. As Nehru regains his calm, he releases the young man, but the latter mutters, "Yes, Panditji, go on. What better luck can I expect than to die at your hands?"

Nehru's anger melts. His voice is sad and full of emotion. He says, "This is not the time for me to tell you how much I feel for you all, and how my heart aches at your suffering. But what I say to you is: Have these Muslims done you any harm? If not, then you must not injure them. We must be just. If justice requires it and it is necessary, we can go to war with Pakistan and you can enlist. But this kind of thing is degrading and cowardly."

The mood of the crowd changes. They are no longer shouting against Nehru. Rather, they say, "Long live Jawaharlal Nehru."⁴²

The volatility of the moral compass of the mob is evident in this vignette. One moment, the mob has just looted a hospital and is now about to attack the man reproaching them. The other moment, it acclaims the same man as its leader.

We know from the study of groups that in periods of great social disturbance, the ego feels threatened and unstable. The instincts push to break out of the control of the ego and there is great internal struggle between self-control and an expression of the aggression within. At this time, the individual longs to be part of a group, so that, merging into it, his sense of right and wrong can be transferred to the group leader or leaders, and thus, he is relieved of the burden of having to control the instincts and face the

⁴² Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, p.527.

anxiety that may follow the failure to do so.⁴³

The victims of partition, in the above vignette, are one such group. Their selves cracked into bits by trauma, they are easily swayed by calls to violence, but they are also swayed by calls to non-violence. As there were people like Nehru and Gandhi who tried to take the psychological forces of these refugees in the direction of non-violence, there were other organisations who found fertile ground in the refugee camps to perpetrate their ideology of violence. Therefore, we can justifiably ask - is the change affected by Nehru in this vignette truly an inner transformation? More likely, it is a change from one ego ideal to another, made by a terrified ego seeking stability, security and self-definition.

On another day in September 1947, Gandhi visits the Old Fort in Delhi, where Muslims who have been forced to leave their homes in the city and its surrounding areas wait until the train taking them to Karachi arrives. As Gandhi's car slows down, a crowd gathers around him and begins shouting angry slogans because they see him as a leader of the Hindus. Gandhi's companions worry for his safety and suggest that they drive to a distance. But Gandhi insists that the car stops, and he steps out of the car. He faces the crowd, and addresses them as his brothers and sisters. He tells them that he is in Delhi to 'do or die', to help the Muslims be secure, or to give up his life in this endeavour. The crowd is moved by Gandhi's address and recognises him to be one of their own, rather than a hostile Hindu leader from among those who have thrown them out of their houses. Individuals from the crowd come forward to tell him of their experiences of being attacked, and their houses and shops being burnt by neighbours and refugees. Gandhi listens in silence, and promises them that together, they will work towards bringing peace to the nation, or die in

the process. The next day, referring to his experience at the Old Fort, Gandhi tells his prayer gathering of how non-violence can convert angry men and women to love.⁴⁴

This volatility of the moral compass of the crowd in both instances suggests that the radical process of the re-constellation self was not the only process that took place among the people. There was another process – that of the replacement of one ego ideal with another.

In the Bionian model of psychic work, we see that the unconscious can never be known when approached through a pre-existing framework of knowledge. 'O', the unconscious, can only be experienced, embodied in action, and put into words, rather than controlled through a prior reference point, which an ego ideal would be. Therefore, a radical re-constellation of the self, by facing the unconscious, would involve the foregoing of the very need to demand an ego ideal to attach oneself to, and the ability to withstand the uncertainties that come with living a life that is in intimate and perennial contact with the unconscious, or to put it more philosophically, an inner life that comes into being, while remaining in touch with non-being.

On the other hand, a self that has strongly attached itself to an ego ideal is not open to the always radical, always new quality of the unconscious. To the extent that the ego ideal prevents an encounter with the unconscious, it also prevents a re-constellation of the self so that old defences may fall away and new possibilities of thought and action may arise.

The crowd of Muslim refugees at the Old Fort who shouted at Gandhi, 'Go back!', and in a few minutes, hailed him as their friend, is unlikely to have experienced a sustained inner transformation, for this transformation, in a

⁴³ Freud, Sigmund. 1921. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (trans. James Strachey). London: Hogarth Press, p.9, 60.

⁴⁴ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp.538-539.

sustained form, usually requires a certain powerful and prolonged exposure to the processes described earlier in this paper, which are rarely evoked by one speech. The transformation may be evoked temporarily by such a speech, but the person may then lapse back to the old psychic structure, retaining the stimulus of the transformation as an ego ideal.

This would be similar to a person experiencing freedom and a radical openness in a psychotherapy session, or in spiritual practice, but lapsing back into the old structure once the experience is over. However, when the person is exposed to the same experience of freedom repeatedly over time, the transformation may be relatively stable, although, as therapists and those on the spiritual path know, complete transformation is the work of a lifetime. Hence, the story of the experiments with truth was a story of lifetime rather than of one moment.

What one says about the Muslim refugees at Old Fort, one could also say of the crowd that Nehru faced bravely at Kingsway Camp. One could, indeed, ask similar questions about the few hundred thousand persons who marched the streets of Calcutta and Delhi to restore overt peace and to sustain Gandhi's life. Further, one could ask this question, specifically, about the right-wing activists who signed the peace pledges that led to the breaking of both fasts, and one of whose bretheren murdered Gandhi 12 days after the fast in Delhi. We do not have access to the inner lives of these persons, and therefore, we cannot say with exactitude which of the two processes, in what precise proportion, transpired in the hearts of particular persons. That would be a question that is not only unanswerable, but also, perhaps meaningless. We must rest with estimations. Those are the terms of any research into collective consciousness.

Yet, what we do know is that there *was* transformation in Delhi and Calcutta. The transformation was, by and large, one that lasted.

Communal riots did not return to these cities for several years. The civil war that the partition was halted to a stop, and remained there for four decades. A mere change of ego ideals would only suppress the unimaginable degree of violence that erupted in partition, which would burst out soon after.

Eye-witness testimonies, partly reproduced and referred to here, as well as the broader historical record of the impact of the three events, suggest that the churnings in the hearts of the people when Gandhi fasted, and the tears in their eyes when he was killed and went on his final journey, were often deep and real. Yet, what was also real was that this process of healing was not complete, and co-existed with the other process described here by the term 'shallow non-violence'. Reality here, as often, is complex and not simple.

It would be simplistic, also, to assume that Gandhi was unaware of the shallowness of non-violence among many who claimed to practice it. From the early 1920s, he had emphasised that beyond a small group of satyagrahis, India was not ready for non-violence. Hence, he cited 'the still, small voice within' and called off the non-cooperation movement in 1922. Since then, he had withdrawn from political life for stretches of several years, focusing the majority of his lifetime on ethical action in personal life and in collective life through his work of economic and social reform, largely in the villages of India. Yet, time and again, the Congress would approach Gandhi to come back to active politics, because there was a need to address the deep structural violence in the colonial administration and in the possible reactions to it, which could be even more violent.

Looking at these facts, we find that Gandhi did have an awareness that those who employed his methods had not yet undergone the transformation that is required to embody them even in the face of the worst of adversities. But we also find in him an understanding that the

alternative to those methods would spell disaster for the nation, given the underlying violence which was palpably brimming, against the coloniser, and against other communities. Thus, even if the fast at Calcutta meant that a proportion of those who took to peace did not undergo deep transformation, without the fast Calcutta was likely to have plunged into civil war as had the Punjab. The non-violent intervention, then, was primarily meant to stem the rise of violence, rather than one that gullibly assumed that people would be transformed deeply and permanently. The degree to which Gandhi himself was able to discern between a deep transformation and shallow non-violence is a question that requires further reflection, and is outside the space that can be taken by this paper.⁴⁵

Conclusion

Gandhi's fast in Calcutta, his fast in Delhi, and his public death are meant to have an impact on the world, which Gandhi expresses in traditional, religious language, and effects through his own being. This paper tries to translate that language into contemporary, psychological language and elaborate on its dynamics, noting three related processes – the dismantling of the self-other divide, the evoking of a particular presence in our collective

consciousness, and a collective catharsis. The paper also attempts to briefly throw light on the failures of this process.

In doing so, it is hoped, the two questions asked at the beginning of the article have been engaged with – what it means to be an Indian, and what the nature of the relationship between the self and the other is.

Lastly, I shall note that at a time when it is often asked, 'What would Gandhi do, if he were alive today?'. Our most sincere answer can be that he would ask himself and each of us, in the spirit of *swaraj*, if the work of non-violence has found a home in our own hearts, before we expect it to manifest as an overt political programme. If understood in their essence, the three processes studied here – non-cooperation with all self-other divides, finding our roots beyond our individual selves, and experiencing the pain of others, even the pain of those most far and opposed to us – are possible in our own lives, every day, even if in situations that seem to us unimportant in the face of big political battles. Also, as discussed earlier, this process of inner transformation is always a work in progress, never over, never not applicable. If non-violence thus finds a home in our hearts, outward changes *will* proceed. If we listen to Gandhi with all our being, that is the only path we can take.

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⁴⁵Gandhi's thoughts on this matter can be found in his defence of himself at the 'great trial' of Ahmedabad, 1922 (CW 22: 110-120). We also find insights into this matter in his response to Tagore's criticism of the non-cooperation movement as an act of playing with fire by provoking the masses to rise against a purported adversary (Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi [ed.] 1997. *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, pp.65-96). In both cases, and particularly in the latter, Gandhi suggests that despite this lurking threat of violence, a non-violent mass movement was justified, because the alternative could be mass violence.

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AN EXCURSION INTO GANDHI'S COSMOPOLITANISM

Pralayankar Bhattacharyya*

M. K. Gandhi, a prophet of non-violence, is not a system builder, he is an experimenter. The journey of Gandhian philosophy, from the standpoint of ethics and political philosophy, is a journey from subjectivity to universality, from "village swarâj" to global democracy. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore this philosophical journey of Gandhi through his cosmopolitan ideology.

Gandhian Vision

In his version of Plato's *The Apology* (in connection with *The Defence and Death of Socrates*), Gandhi pays tribute to Socrates: 'We must learn to live and die like Socrates'. For Gandhi, Socrates was a great *satyagrahi*, he offered *satyagraha* against his own people, so the Greek nation became great. If out of cowardice or fear of death, we fail to examine our own faults and pretend ignorance about them, we won't be able to do good to India in spite of adopting many "external remedies". Self-suffering, as Gandhi believes, has a moral dimension, it is directed towards the moral persuasion of the opponent. Gandhi had read Plato's *Apology* in South Africa, in 1908, and rendered *The Apology* into Gujrati. Both Socrates and Gandhi believed in civil disobedience, and sacrificed their life for the sake of truth that they realized. For Gandhi, who like Socrates believes that ethics is not a matter of outward conformity but of inward fulfilment, doing good to India is not to be alienated from the global perspective. Throughout his political career, Gandhi never thought of India's freedom from colonial rule in isolation from world events. Imperialism, he believed, needed to be challenged globally not nationally. Gandhian version of cosmopolitanism is definitely one of the key elements of global democracy.

Gandhian view of cosmopolitanism leading to

global democracy is actually based on his vision of spirituality. Gandhi writes: 'I do not believe ... that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in *advaita* (non-duality), I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent.' It is interesting to note that these lines of Gandhi have been cited by the environmental activist and the chief exponent of the philosophy of "deep ecology" Arne Naess, the Norwayjjan philosopher, in his article 'Gandhi and Group Conflict', in *An Exploration of Satyagraha: Theoretical Background*, (Naess, p.43). In his elaboration of the philosophy of "deep ecology" Naess categorically says that in the formulation of the principles of "deep ecology" he was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. "Deep ecology", unlike "shallow ecology", sees that natural diversity has its own intrinsic value, and, in this context, Naess notes that 'equating value with value for humans reveals a racial prejudice'.

Our understanding of Gandhian cosmopolitanism can be initiated as a movement having a bearing primarily upon social-environmental domain of the whole world. And, here, Naess seems to present Gandhi's philosophy

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in a novel way. Naess explains that ‘Gandhi made manifest the internal relation between self-realization, non-violence and what sometimes has been called biospherical egalitarianism’ resulting into the ecological balance leading to the rejection of ‘the Western World’s material abundance and waste’, (Naess, p.10). The present ecological and social movements, all over the world, accept this progressive Gandhian ideal.

Gandhian spirituality is based upon the positive meaning of *ahimsā* (or sometimes *satyagraha*), i.e., love, compassion and an adherence to justice, discussed with much emphasis in *Hind Swaraj* and *Satyagraha in South Africa*. Love to all prepares the ground for justice, i.e., freedom for all, since *ahimsā* or love is the way to “Truth” – the impersonal all pervading reality or God. Hence, for Gandhi, as Naess also draws our attention, self-realization presupposes a search for Truth. Search for the impersonal all pervading reality paves the way for self-realization leading to the recognition of the freedom for all; thus, search for the impersonal leads to the recognition of impartiality. We hardly remember the following lines of Gandhi, ‘I do believe that all God’s creatures have the right to live as much as we have’, (M. K. Gandhi, 1937), and, ‘We should feel a more living bond between ourselves and the rest of the animate world’, (M. K. Gandhi, 1929).

Gandhi’s vision of spirituality based on *ahimsā* or the positive virtue called love, from the socio-political and cultural perspective, is to be understood as “universal reciprocity”. Of late, John Rawls, one of the twentieth century liberal thinkers, has introduced the idea of reciprocity in his epoch making work *Political Liberalism*, in connection with the distinction between cooperation and coordination. Unlike coordination which is based on the activity coordinated by orders issued by some central authority, cooperation ‘is guided by publicly recognized rules and procedures that those cooperating accept and regard as properly regulating their conduct’, (Rawls, 1993, p.16). A fair system of

cooperation which is invariably a political cooperation is thus based on the idea of reciprocity; cooperation is possible among those members who can act on terms all can accept, and each member has to be equally free to participate in this cooperation, not to be determined by any external authority. For Rawls, the idea of reciprocity lies between the idea of altruism and the idea of mutual advantage. The basic idea is: ‘everyone benefits along with the other’. But, in the political philosophy of Rawls, the idea of reciprocity is primarily discussed in connection with his initial focus on social cooperation and the basic structure of society. Besides, thinkers like Samuel Freeman have shown that although Rawls’s *The Law of Peoples* is not free from cosmopolitan dimension (like duty of assistance to burdened people, human rights are higher than the autonomy of governments) but Rawls seems to reject cosmopolitanism as an ideology, (Freeman, p.419). His state-centric view of global justice is not wholly compatible with the cosmopolitan’s blatant disregard of national boundaries and social affiliations as primary. The Gandhian perspective of universal reciprocity, on the other hand, leads to the realization of the essential unity of man and for that matter all that lives, and thus, seems to ensure “*sarvodaya*” or freedom and development of all.

Meaning of Cosmopolitanism

A cosmopolitan is a citizen of the world. Cosmopolitanism is the ideology that all human beings belong to a single community, based on a shared morality. But, is it possible for the people of the world to belong to a single community? Various interpretations have been invoked by different political thinkers and philosophers ranging from the Stoic philosophers of the ancient Greece to the modern thinkers like Charles Beitz, David Held and Thomas Pogge, through the philosophers of modernity like Immanuel Kant, Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx. Seneca in ancient Greece advocated world citizenship in his essay ‘On Leisure’. For Seneca, there are two “commonwealths”, the one is the *polis* ‘to which

we have been assigned by the accident of birth’, and the other is a ‘vast and truly common state’, (Seneca, pp.187-189). During the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century cosmopolitan ideas flourished through the political writings (like ‘Perpetual Peace’, 1795) of Immanuel Kant. It was Kant who categorically said that the problems of internal order within states and the problems of the external order amongst the states are inextricably linked. Thus, Kant considered the supposed division between domestic and international politics as artificial. If our goal is sustainable progress and peace against the backdrop of global poverty, pollution and international violence, we have to ensure universal hospitality through the affirmation of a principle of “Cosmopolitan Right”. But, for Kant, we cannot think of such universal hospitality at the cost of the independence of the existing states, (first definitive article of the plan for ‘Perpetual Peace, ‘the Civil Constitution of every state shall be republican’). Knowing that an international state is ‘an unrealizable idea’, Kant advocates the gradual coming together of independent nations into one international organization without sovereign powers. Kant’s vision of the “universal cosmopolitan existence” as the ‘highest purpose of nature’ depends upon a legal order in which there are established ‘lawful external relations among states’ and a ‘universal civic society’.

Kant definitely abandons the idea of international state at the empirical level, but suggests that the idea of international organization possesses reality from the standpoint of morality and justice as the guiding ideal underlying the law of nations. The obvious reaction seems to be like this: ‘it is morally real but empirically unattainable’. Bentham supports an international legal framework. Marx and Mill, on the other hand, use the concept of cosmopolitanism as an empirical concept. For Mill, capital and human interactions more generally transcend national boundaries. Marx, in his *Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*, holds that ‘money develops into international money’; hence, ‘the

commodity-owner becomes a cosmopolitan’. Commodities, for Marx, are indifferent to all religious, political, national, and linguistic barriers, their ‘universal language is price and their common bond is money’, (Marx, p.152). Thus, market capitalism is inherently expansive, breaking the bounds of the nation-state system. At the same time, it is to be noted, Marx and Engels also hold that the proletariat in every country shares essential features, and has common interests, and the Communist movement aims to convince proletarians everywhere of these common interests. Human suffering is the common bond, revolution is the universal language. This combined with the deal of classless society and the expected withering away of the state after the revolution, implies a form of cosmopolitanism of its own.

Of late, Thomas Pogge, in *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms*, has explained three key components of cosmopolitanism: (i) individualism – ‘the ultimate units of concern are persons’, (ii) universality– ‘the status of ultimate unit of concern attaches to every living human being equally’, and (iii) generality – ‘persons are ultimate units of concern for everyone’, (Pogge, p.175). After all, the ideology of cosmopolitanism does not necessarily contemplate a world-state as a possibility. The term “cosmopolitanism” has been derived from the Greek word “cosmopolis” presenting a political-moral philosophy that posits people as citizens of the world. Modern cosmopolitanism looks beyond liberalism, and is rooted in the belief that relations between people are not always and everywhere subsumed by interstate conflict. Cosmopolitans argue in favour of vesting full sovereignty in people rather than in states, the societies of states will eventually evolve into the societies of people. It is a process of denationalization of politics and law.

Gandhi as a Cosmopolitan

Contemporary challenges brought about by violent transnational phenomena such as

terrorism, rising economic disparities, massive displacement of people and immigration, and global warming require global and coordinated efforts for peaceful development and change. It is Gandhi who had conceived a global field of negotiated practices based on the principle of non-violence. Before Gandhi, it was Kant who understood the practical difficulties related to the global and coordinated efforts for peaceful development. Like Kant, or even with more emphasis than Kant had put, Gandhi made it a point that the ideal of cosmopolitanism cannot be ensured by political and legal means alone; any plan for peaceful development depends on the moral progress of man.

As it has been mentioned earlier, Gandhi was not a system builder; he was an experimenter who continuously kept on modifying, elaborating and enriching his ideas. Hence, we hardly find any finality or well-structured system in Gandhian approach. Perhaps, because of this perspective, Gandhi could see citizenship through cosmopolitan lens; he could talk about universal reciprocity leading towards global democracy. His idea of cosmopolitanism is an inclusivist vision. His cosmopolitanism is a journey from egoic centrality to a shared humanity, from self-recognition to the recognition of the unity of humanity. His inclusivist vision has the element of individualism, since it is based on the process of critical self-examination; it has also the element of universality as the critical self-examination leads to the recognition of shared humanity. Communicative approach is another element of his cosmopolitanism. We talk about Gandhi, but we hardly try to cultivate this Gandhian approach. Gandhi was in search for a new link between all men, a profound universal solidarity, not at the cost of individual identity, but free from personal and national construct whose essence is sustained upon the rejection of everything outside its boundaries. Violence and any form of extremism is nothing but the rejection of the other – the untouchable other, it is based on blind adherence and lack of free will, and it is sustained by dogma

and poverty of thought and understanding. The fusion between individualism and universality can be realized only on the moral and spiritual plane.

Gandhian cosmopolitanism, within the inclusivist paradigm, gives rise to a self-respecting community marked by mutual tolerance. The idea of self-respect initially involves the acceptance of one's own imperfections, it is a call to oneself to become fearless as well as humble. Acceptance of one's own imperfections, in turn, helps to foster the culture of pluralism. This takes us away from dogmatism and cultural conformity. His idea of *satyagraha* is neither purely Eastern nor purely Western, it came from a process of living in between cultures. Mutual tolerance has a dialogical nature; all cultures are the equal partners in dialogue. Hence Gandhian cosmopolitanism is a paradigm of inter-cultural dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue as the tolerant interplay of concepts and values, in Gandhian philosophy, gives a new meaning to pluralism – “the empathetic pluralism”. It is not only enough to recognize that there are others, it is also required to respect the otherness. Thus, the respect for otherness flows from the idea of self-respect. Gandhi is a cosmopolitan since he seems to cultivate this empathetic pluralism throughout his life. Practice of empathetic pluralism can ensure the moral progress of a community, even of the global community, and thus, peace is also ensured.

Thus, it is needless to say that the plan of sustainable development, as a holistic project, includes international peace as well as ecological balance. There is no doubt that the problems that are challenging the humanity today, like terrorism, violence, global warming, economic disparities, religious intolerance, poverty and immigration, are all man-made problems. Therefore, sustainable development ultimately depends on the all round development of individual and society in harmony with nature. Gandhi is relevant in this context; he draws our attention to the harmony between the inner and outer, between the East and the West. Gandhi himself said, ‘If inward change is achieved, outward change takes care of itself’.

(Gandhi, Collected Works, p. 506). Our primary enemies are greed and fear, our strength is constituted by love or non-violence and fearlessness, and our moral courage leads to harmony. His philosophy is ontological, it is rooted in praxis, and his praxis is a call for us to overcome the binaries and boundaries made for division leading to exclusion and hatred. It is a philosophy of becoming of the being.

Gandhian cosmopolitanism is, therefore, the philosophy of inclusion and harmony, it is the approach of (economic) decentralization, it is also an ethical vision towards humanity. This is the idealistic aspect of Gandhian philosophy. The realistic aspect of it is education as enlightenment. Education for truth, peace and human rights constitutes the relationship of trust and mutual exchange. Peace, for Gandhi, is not mere absence of violence, it is a matter of cultivation and an activity; it stands for total elimination of war and large scale violence, it means the acceptance of the other, the inclusion of the other. It means examining oneself, educating oneself, and empowering oneself. Gandhi's objective is not the greatest good for the greatest number of people, as the utilitarians think; his objective is the full mental and moral growth of the individual and the greatest good of all. He began with "village swarāj" and ended up in proposing Rāmrajya – an enlightened community, through the instrumentality of non-violence. For Gandhi, state or nation-state is not an end in itself although it is one of 'the means enabling the people to better their condition in every department of life'. In this context, Gandhi's position is strikingly different from Tagore's position that rejected any form of political nationalism. For Tagore, the social is higher than the political; he has consistently argued that we should fight against the education which teaches us that 'a country is greater than the ideals of humanity', (Tagore, p. 106). Tagore was totally opposed to the Gandhian call of *swadeshi* movement; he has always believed that *swarāj* is actually in the mind of people, the moral culture of brotherhood should not be limited

by geographical boundaries. In fact, economic aspects were taken into consideration by Tagore; his novel *Ghare Baire* represents him as a social scientist in his consideration of *swadeshi* as an improper form of protest. But, Gandhi, on this issue, was more emotional. For Gandhi, in burning one's foreign clothes one burns his/her shame, we should give work to those people who do not need those clothes. But it is true that Gandhi put emphasis on village *swarāj*, or democracy at the base. However, ultimately, state, a "soulless machine" for Gandhi, is ideally undesirable, since it represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. Gandhi believes that decentralization is nothing but shared sovereignty, and this cannot be ensured on the basis of narrow citizenship. This is possible within the cosmopolitan framework of caring for the other through the bonds of love, empathy and concern.

Gandhi had become a pre-eminent voice for civil society and against the modern state on the Indian and world stage. After the First World War Gandhi's advocacy and practice of non-violence attracted the world wide attention and support, and after the Cold War his ideas about civil society as an arena for self-help and social change gained prominence. Two of his most important creations *satyagraha* and *sarvodaya* occurred within 'the mental and physical space' of civil society. He differentiated civil society from state which is implicit in his doctrine of disobedience. In 1939 Gandhi wrote: 'I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being'. Joan Bondurant, in this regard, draws our attention to an important observation in his book *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*. For Bondurant, Gandhi 'sets himself in agreement with the new liberalism of T. H. Green rather than with the metaphysical theory of Hegel', (Bondurant, p. 161). Hegel, in his *Philosophy of Right*, considered civil society as the system of needs, as the sphere of individuality and conflict finally leading to the spectacle of war. Gandhi was a critic of the western form of civil society; for him, people of modern civil society

are the people of social exclusion, he wanted to transform them into the people of social inclusion through the cultivation of humanism based on self-examination, nonviolence and *satyagraha*.

For Gandhi, 'Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle', (M. K. Gandhi, 1939). On the other hand, individual freedom is the condition for one's preparation for being able to 'voluntarily surrender himself to the service of society'; thus, unless freedom is acknowledged, the question of surrender does not arise at all.

Hence, our goal is to bring the idea of the universal within the fold our subjectivity thereby broadening its horizon and making it more assimilative and tolerant. In the twenty-first century we must not fail to understand the importance and relevance of the Gandhian concept of self-transformation. This is the

ontological perspective of Gandhian philosophy. It is a matter of practice and becoming that self-transformation, in the form of decreased egoic attachment, self-criticism, and the realization of "the Unity of Being", ultimately decreases fear and greed. Fear which is born of duality leads to the rejection of the other and drives violence. Social inclusion can be ensured, for Gandhi, with the increase of the capacity for empathy, compassion, acceptance and dialogue. Internal transformation of consciousness keeps one away from any form of rigidity and imposition, and constitutes the heart of the education that earnestly advocates cosmopolitan ethic. Gandhi's view of cosmopolitanism is, thus, a revised form of the Upanishadik (Maha Upanishad) philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* inculcating an understanding that the world is one family.

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GANDHI FROM WITHIN THE CRACKS IN THE MIRROR

Rajiv Shah

Gandhiji is at the street corners on bird-shit covered pedestals, in the names of train stations that have, as of yet, remained unchanged, of roads well-travelled, of parks that fight hopelessly against the trash he sought to clear, of universities that teach how to spin a different yarn, on government office walls-bearing with a toothy grin-all that goes on below, and even on the currency note in memoriam to his anal character – his stubbornness, orderliness and of course his preoccupation with faeces. He is everywhere - omnipresent in impotence. Even on days dedicated to talking about him. Over the years I have heard stories of him, seen him in biopics, heard his tremulous voice firmed with conviction but strangely have no memory of reading him. My consciousness is suffused with his ideas of Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Swarajya. His political actions: Dandi March, protests, jail terms, fasts, the train ride across the length and breadth of India and his death. His character traits: a tenaciousness, shrewdness, and his wicked sense of humour. And despite not practicing anything of what he stood for, the guilt inducing idealisation exists.

So how do I separate the man from the great man? Separate Mohandas Gandhi from Mahatma Gandhiji. Hive him off me so I can look at him objectively, study him, understand him, maybe. Without the troubling feeling of arrogance that comes with objectification, of the subject-object relationship. Or maybe I don't need to do that. Maybe I can absolve myself of this anxiety inducing burden through some magical identification process? What if I gave him his own voice? A voice informed by a psychoanalytic framework through which to

speaking with us. After all, much like the prolific Freud, he too was “in search of what he called Truth...constantly trying to explain it all to himself and others”(Gandhi, 2002, p.x), through his writings and conversations that fill a hundred volumes. Freud found his Truth, however manipulated, through his dreams - one that eventually led to the discipline of psychoanalysis. I believe Gandhi first glimpsed his Truth through the terror he experienced at the hands of the colonials in South Africa – a Truth that drove him in his fight for India's freedom. But would this identification be an exercise in my narcissism, or would it connect me to “the seeker after truth...so humble himself that even the dust could crush him?” (Gandhi, 2018, p.15) So far all I seem to have for my introjections is only a weak stomach and none of the discipline, courage or faith. Nevertheless, let me soldier on. The Mahatma would have wanted nothing less.

Gandhi's Self-Introduction

In a psychoanalytic conference I don't think there could be a better format than a narrative, that picks a moment in time, for raising questions that have been dogging me for a while now. Given the shortened session time a biography is, thankfully, out of the question. Besides, there are far too many out there already. And they seem to be attracting dust and not eyeballs. I must admit I have leafed through a few of these. To remember who I was. To understand how I was remembered. I will not comment on those written by others. But my own, I must admit reluctantly, dry, pedantic stuff. Earnest though. Honest, I think, although may be a bit too eager to be truthful.

Not real literature of course. But remember those were different times. And my purpose was different – an attempt to connect with my people, a catharsis, to look at myself from the outside. And jail terms do take the fanciful prose, poetry and rhythm out of one. Replacing them with staccato days that turn into nights filled with omnipotent hope and wild despair. Hopefully, some of you, who have read my autobiography, have already noticed the difference in writing style here. Another experiment! To keep up with the times! An attempt at keeping sentences short. Apparently, attention spans even among those trained to listen are severely limited. Though, I do want to rid myself of the Macaulay English or ideally be rid of English entirely. But alas! Even after 70 years of freedom, we seem to dwell in the alienating Imaginary. An Image of our selves divorced from our reality. Language, even our “mother’s tongue” is the Other, for all of us are born into a “linguistic universe” (Fink, 1995, pp.5-7). The early cries of the child are interpreted and given meaning by parents “who attempt to name the pain... (e.g. “she must be hungry”)” (Fink, 1995, p.6). Language speaking the subject, casting in stone the experience of the body. An act that moulds the very desire of the infant making it that of the Other – an alienation from the completeness of our basic nature. If our mother-tongue is thus a foreign body thrust upon us, what is the level of alienation an insidious English can perpetuate? And yet we persist even today. Is this a phylogenetic disposition towards self-castration? Or is it a mature ego driven recognition of current reality? I am eager to listen to your perspectives.

Rajaji says, I was “starved for good conversation” (Mehta, 2013). He probably means that people idealised me. Never a great context for Truth seeking! So, maybe, this conversation is an opportunity for yet another experiment with Truth. After all isn’t the

purpose of psychoanalysis an evolution towards it (Truth). One, I believe, I left incomplete because of “the evil passions within that keep me so far from HIM” (Gandhi, 2018, p.16). Although, I must be candid, I do have some misgivings about your abilities to be open to it. Why? Indian psychoanalysis traces its origins to the pioneering spirit of a Girindrasekhar Bose – a person to be admired for his rejection of defining one’s worth through a western education. But it also includes the hostility of Berkeley-Hill and Daly who “saw psychoanalysis as a state-of-the-art therapeutic device and hoped to introduce it with minor modifications into India as a partial cure for the worst affliction Indians suffered from – Indianness” (Nandy, 2000, pp.95-99). Then there is the idealisation I sense - an Echo, for the progenitor of the discipline. For his ideas, theories and no doubt for his prejudices too. Especially regarding his rather derisive view of the “oceanic feeling” (Freud, 1989, p.723) as a regressive state of limitless narcissism. A view I find ill-considered for a discipline that purports to study the mind in all its states. Especially of one such as this which many consider as the pinnacle of human development and “a biological imperative that drives us from the moment we are born” (Andrew Newberg, 2017, p.15). I find the reason for this mystifying. Could it be that Freud the scientist, the rationalist was unwilling to move beyond science’s narrow prisms which are “not yet equal to the task of accommodating psychoanalysis” (Fink, 1995, p. 140)? Could it be his need to always consider a material foundation, despite his formulation of the Unconscious, the seat of motivation, as the container within which psychic reality takes precedence over external reality? Could it be his distaste for religion that he considered a neurosis and the residue of a primitive stage in man’s history? But no matter, I will not let his views beat me into silence. Instead, I will take support both, from the fact that Tagore, a man

I admired much despite our differences, was appreciative of psychoanalytic thought, and from the generosity of your carving out an entire two days to remember me. Further, I have long believed in language as therapeutic. My daily outpourings are a testimony to that. And while there is no turning away from Freud, such is the breadth and genius of his ideas, I will take my place within a more radical Lacanian framework, with its concepts of the Real, Imaginary, symbolic and 'Jouissance' - one within which my Indian mind senses faint echoes of the sublimeness of the Gita.

Gandhi's Story

Trauma! That is the trigger event for psychoanalysts. Life emerges from the trauma of birth and sets the prototype for every other possibility. For Lacan trauma is one of the faces of the Real. The Real is what comes "before the letter, before words" (Fink, 1995, p.24) and before language obfuscates it hides it from view. It cannot be symbolised. It is the undifferentiated fabric of non-existence from which existence emerges, is carved out. Woven in such a way as to be "full everywhere, there being no space between the threads that are its stuff." (Fink, 1995, p.24). It is the infant before its body "comes under the sway of the Symbolic order" (Fink, 1995, p.24); all that conditions it, claiming it, bringing it into existence, placing it within a socially constructed reality- aided by the infant's desire for coherence, unity as a defence against the feelings of disintegration. The Real is before the "mirror stage" (Lacan, 2006, p.93) in which the infant takes as himself the Image in the mirror, real or metaphorical-the eyes of the mother- a whole being, a specious integrity an unholy lie which is useful, no doubt, delivering hope where there is fragmentation. But in reality, it is a splitting giving rise to the incompleteness of a divided self, to an experience of non-being and lack, paradoxical

boundaries that contain, even as they limit, that castrate even as they protect, that give life even as they obscure Truth.

Imagine a 24-year-old England returned lawyer on his way to another country - an escape from the disappointment of several professional failures, born of both inability and an adherence to scruples. But one who believes his English degree entitles him to a first-class berth. Imagine this 24-year-old becoming the talk of the town in a few days of his arrival in South Africa. For fighting the might of the empire and winning to keep his turban on, and then earning, through patience and a shrewd understanding of his suspicious and doubtful patron, the trust to represent him at a court in another city. What you have is one whose faith in himself, in his specialness, though temporarily beaten, never left him. On the contrary it was now further strengthened. Now imagine his bodily removal for occupying what he was entitled to, followed by a merciless pummelling. Yes, there was humiliation felt within the context of the Image. But the abject helplessness went deeper provoking an unnameable terror that rendered me immobile even as it seemed to fuel the large looming man into a greater frenzy. It was the terror of total annihilation in the depths of my being and reflected in the face of the aggressor. I felt myself disintegrate – a return to the terrifying moment of birth, fragmented into a thousand little pieces like a mirror smashed in rage. Held together only by the violence of the Other as each fist pushed me further into the dark, bottomless and strangely liberating abyss. But in that moment when I felt the veil descend, drape itself like a shroud, I sensed the warmth of gossamer threads, like the web of a spider, envelop me – each thread a memory that clung to me, embracing me, holding me to its bosom. There was my mother that gentle sacrificing woman whose reparative love was embedded in my DNA together with the thorny guilt, I

carried, of not nursing my father in his dying moments. My father – a redeeming love dripping from his eyes on reading my confession of theft! The love of my brother that sent me to England even as he struggled to make ends meet! The power and strength of my guru’s Lakshman Rekhas that held me together through my stay in that foreign land! And intertwined with these regenerative warps of a conscience formed “in the first year of life through identification with the nurturer” (Carveth, 2013, p.20) came others. Inextricable wefts of the harsh Superego that represents the “ethical standards of mankind” (Freud, 1989, p.37) and manifests as a soul numbing self-reproach – of being denied support from the state for my education, of being excommunicated by my sanctimonious narrow-minded community for travelling abroad, of being bodily thrown out by an acquaintance from England who sat unforgivingly in his position of power, of wanting to commit suicide to escape social constraints, of my cowardice and terror in the face of an overwhelming force.

Floodgates opened releasing this spirit regenerating glue that with infinite patience and compassion pieced together the fragments of my shattered self making me almost whole again, enabling me to muster enough strength to hold on to the bar and look at the aggressor with a defiance laced with curiosity – a defiance that refused to avoid reality, to blind itself to the hatred, aggression and violence that was directed at me, and lived in me. To enable a movement through which “the subject comes into being as a form of attraction toward and defence against a primordial overwhelming experience of what the French call *Jouissance*: “(Fink, 1995, p.xii). An intensity of exquisite sensation – not bound by pleasure and therefore without limits. A temporary transgression of the laws that bind the socially constructed human beyond sin and virtue,

beyond desire and loathing, beyond pleasure and pain but encompassing both in the same way as a birthing mother does. A moment beyond the castration by language shattering the neurotic confines of man’s inflicted morality, beyond the desire shaped by the Other anon to the path to subjectivization. In which the Other’s desire becomes one’s own, through which one becomes the master of one’s own destiny. From a victim of fate to “I saw, I heard, I acted” (Fink, 1995, p.xiii). But this ‘I’ is not the individual that capitalism has so neatly carved out for domination. Nor a conscious thought. Nor the distortion we call the ego, the Image created in the mirror-stage through the desire of the Other, and the location of our narcissistic fixation. On the contrary the I, the subject, is only assumed – a signifier from the outside by the observer to make understanding possible. More appropriately described using the French word “*ne*”, literally ‘not’” (Fink, 1995, p.39) – the subject as ‘Not I’, a fleeting eruption of the Unconscious. From within which emerges a knowledge, an awareness of the cracks in the mirror bringing with it an understanding of repression. To prevent me from knowing the Truth that I had vowed to follow, like Harischandra my ideal, through every ordeal. It was a moment of liberation. I was not the Image, neither the one the British sought to create, nor the one pieced together by my own people. It was not as a revelation from some force above, but was a recognition, a remembrance, a deconstruction of the ego, of the Image. And with that for the first time I glimpsed the inexpressible Truth – a moment of oneness, beyond the Symbolic, beyond the narcissism of the Image – not as some psychotic breakdown of boundaries to some regressive state as Freud believed, and some analysts still do despite the evidence that neuroscientists have researched extensively. With it came the knowledge that the search for Truth was a subjective endeavour that mandated non-violence because violence splits,

divides, fragments. It emanates from sadistic death wish, from the false idea that we are the Image. A million myriad reflections in the mirror deluding us into a cohesive whole! A cover up! A shunning of the Truth that disassociates us from the experience in and of the body, of an engagement without intrinsic reality! It divorces us from the Real manufacturing an alienation and a narcissism making this Truth a space from within which to re-imagine the myth of Narcissus. Not as an individual obsessed with his Image but as one eager to escape the Echo that is constantly defining him. Eagerly looking for the cracks in the mirror through which to slip away towards a collaborative, creative, happier and more satisfied sense of being as discovered in conversations with over two thousand people and through their “brain scans” (Andrew Newberg, 2017, p.4). All of which tell a story, not of a narcissistic regression but one in aid of the development of subjectivity, “of connectedness and purpose that gives life meaning and fulfilment” (Andrew Newberg, 2017, p.69) expressed in improved relationships to people and work. An experience that finds an echo in the “significant changes we see in the thalamus” (Andrew Newberg, 2017, p.62), and a decreased activity in the parietal lobe, the seat of spatial orientation and language processing.

It was a moment of penetrating clarity which brought with it the realisation the aggressor was not a man, not an individual. It was the Other, the Symbolic Order embodied in an empire that used psychoanalysis to understand and control its subjects better. Collecting dreams from across the colonies in a vain attempt to prove the superiority of the civilised colonial mind and the savagery of a primitive colonised one! A racist initiative that despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, was clung to by the colonists and ignored by psychoanalysts for disproving their many pet theories: The Oedipus complex, not

as a father-son conflict but as one against the stifling, repressive and unjust empire; Sexual development that neither experienced a latency period nor a fascination with excretory functions; projections of “status anxieties, sexual hang-ups, and feelings of insecurity” (Linstrum, 2017) backed by so violent and oppressive a regime that their effects exist even after so many years of independence. An empire built on and drawing its strength from selfishness and materialism! Keen to define me and my fellow Indians through the raw demonstration of power, knees bent at the “mercy of language, at the mercy of the symbolic order” (Fink, 1995, p.11), that constructed our very bodies as Coolies, bearers of a physical, emotional and a psychic burden; weak, dirty, uncivilised needing to be saved from ourselves. Filling us with fear and self-disgust! Aggression turned inward casting us in a perpetual violent “Lack” (Lacan, 2006, p.524) of non-being. Bodies without passion - neither love nor hate, numb with desires misaligned with self-interest. A restrictive set of patterns that were all meant to serve the empire! Us the subjects in constant homage to them the rulers! Making the Image a site of pain and un-wholeness with the fantasy of redemption possible only through identification with the oppressor! Their clothes, mannerisms, education, religion, roles in life and a cognition of them as manly bearers of the white man’s burden. An arrogant race eager to become the God in Michelangelo’s Creation of Adam. There flashed in my mind’s eye my, thankfully, unsuccessful attempts at becoming British during my stay in England. Just as, in the not-so-distant future, I would be witness to the less successful of my people; the royalty that was forced to parade in a finery they despised, unsmiling clowns in a grotesque pantomime, in a macabre dance of death!

As the curtain came down on this direct experience of Truth, I grasped desperately to hold on to something of its ephemeral vision.

It was futile but not hopeless for I had been marked. I had bitten from the apple! There were residues seared across my psyche – imprints from which I could draw succour even in my darkest moments. But work would need to be done to keep the memory alive. A Himalayan effort that would require the support of the Symbolic to unshackle the chains of reality of another Symbolic order! An effort to deconstruct an introjected foreign body to bring me closer to the skin I was born with. Closer to the Real! To my Truth! For it to be able to speak to power it was necessary to discard, throw off, the mantle of slavery the Indian mind had been suffocated by. Words and actions would need to emerge from within the collective Indian Unconscious based on its cultural motifs, contexts, and reference points. Narcissus would need to be replaced by a fearful and confused Duryodhana, mercilessly mocked, in the palace built by Maya. Michelangelo’s God, arrogantly created in man’s image, would need to be subsumed within the infinite possibilities emerging from the darkness of Krishna. The scorching fury of guilt and the inevitable Christian hell would need to be exchanged for the dispassion of the Gita’s Self. The punitive Superego would need to be transformed into a more benign and co-created Swarajya. The voracious greed for consumption, dominion would have to be counteracted through fasting and non-cooperation. Clothes that attempted to dress us up like mannequins in a dollar shop would need to be replaced by Swadeshi, the simplicity of khadi spun at home, gently freeing the Indian body from the grip of a rapacious and nihilistic British Capitalism. Law as a controlling force, demanding obedience and subservience, would need to be replaced by an individually sought-after spirituality, practiced through Satyagraha, “love in action”. The rage of a traumatised people would no longer be repressed by a suffered, despondent passivity turned inwards but acted out in the

filling up of jails. A symbolic show of incarceration that would shock and awaken the conscience of the global community. Wilful acts of rebellion that would refuse to feed the Lack and violence, experienced within. A resounding, unequivocal ‘No’ not to the actual father but to the British Empire that constantly gave life to this Lack! But at the heart there would be non-violence. Ahimsa, unconditional love! Not as a tactic but as an art, not realised in some remote mountain monastery but in the thick of life of conflict, of hatred. In the service of the Other and Self! Practiced with a contradictory ruthlessness on the Image! On the illusion! To demolish it, break it to a will that belongs, is beholden, to a Truth that demands much. No subterfuge, no secrets, no repression but complete and honest revelation. No idealisation. I tried to enable people to understand this. By coaxing, nay forcing, them, to work with, as I willingly did, the rawness of each other’s bodies.

And yet, despite my single mindedness, I failed! I failed to attain Moksha, enlightenment, personal liberation. Why? It is a question that plagues me night and day. Why after that one glimpse, that breach in the discourse of the Unconscious from which the Real emerged as the subject, did I never feel the oneness again? Did I desire it too much? Did desire make me impervious to everything else? Was it a mirage I had dreamed up as a defence against the utter annihilation and terror I had felt? Or did my desire mirror the “surplus value” (Fink, 1995, p.96) created through the British exploitation of India and siphoned off to make rich their own country while ostensibly seeking to bring civilization to the natives? Was then my desire nothing but “surplus enjoyment” (Fink, 1995, p.96) the entity that always remains hidden beneath the surface; the product or a profit that can’t be seen? Was it concealed in the seduction of the many to become my secretaries, my followers, the keepers of my

memoirs? Was it in a desire for power, for revenge, for adulation? Was it in the nationalism Tagore referred to as “pugnacious” and stemming from the “business instincts of patriotism” (Gandhi, 2018)? Did I revel in becoming the Oedipal father I was intent on getting rid of? Did I get wedded, begin to enjoy the idea of being a Mahatma? Did I become part of, an unwitting contributor to the prevalent discourse, as recent conversations around my racism suggest? Was I too focused on freedom in and not off the world? Were my passions merely repressed rather than controlled? Was it the natural desire for homosexuality, suppressed by a vapid Victorian morality, despite the belief in revealing all? Or was it the desire for youth that I surrounded myself with? Did my ruthlessness lead to a mere displacement of instincts rather than a liberating

sublimation? Did it become a conceited high ground that invited idealisation? Did I constantly attempt to construct from memory a desire for another spirit destroying and uplifting trauma through the violence my political actions invited? Was my obsession with non-violence an escape into fantasy, an avoidance of psychic reality? Or had I reached the essence of my being and all that was needed was an identification with it, an acceptance of it? Did I instead, foolishly, try to bring Jouissance down to the level of language and worse still in acting it out?

Where, in the Mirror, did I leave residues I could not free myself from? Where in the cracks was the Image kept safe? Where was the Lack hidden?

Maybe you can shed some light?

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VOTE OF THANKS

Good evening friends and guests,

I hope you have enjoyed your stay here in Kolkata despite very meager facilities that we could provide you with; but we hope we have offered you sufficient intellectual richness to compensate the paucity of physical comforts that you might have experienced. A seminar like this requires the cooperation of many known and unknown persons and their direct or indirect contribution to make it possible.

I am indeed thankful to everyone who worked to make it happen. Our guests never let us feel that they are not one of us.

We appreciate the gracious presence of Prof (Dr.) Amita chatterjee, ex Vice-Chancellor of Presidency University, who gave us her precious time from her busy schedule. We are equally thankful to Dr. Sudhir Kakkar, internationally acclaimed Psychoanalyst who travelled all the way from Goa; to Prof. (Dr.) Kritpriya Ghosh, to Prof. (Dr.) Shefali Moitra, to Prof (Dr.) Soumitra Basu, to Dr. Proyash Sarkar, to Prof. (Dr.) Prayalankar Bhattacharyya and to Prof. (Dr.) Shibaji Pratim Basu, of Vidyasagar University whom I had heard at Maxmüller Bhavan in a series of lectures on Great German scholars. Since then I was taming a wish to hear him again. Thank you, sir, for enlightening us once again. We are thankful to Prof. (Dr.) Jhuma Chakravorty, Prof. (Dr.) Nilanjana Sanyal, Prof. (Dr.) Jayanti Basu, and to Prof. (Dr.) Prahlad Sarkar for their valuable contributions in the seminar. We are also thankful to Dr. Rajiv Shah of Mumbai, Prof. (Dr.) Shifa Haq of Ambedkar university, Delhi, who took all the trouble to be present here.

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very presence is inspiring for us.

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Please, forgive me if I have forgotten to mention any names here. This is not because their work was any less important but because they are so much a part of our IPS family that they do not need any special thanks. They are always there.

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Sarala Kapoor

Secretary

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