

Criticising Gandhi

A note on Historiography, Politics and Method*

By Anil Nauriya

When I am contradicted it arouses my attention, not my wrath. I move towards the man who contradicts me: he is instructing me. The cause of truth ought to be common to us both -- Montaigne

The debates on Gandhi's role as a personality and as a symbol of Indian nationalism will go on; the purpose of this article is mainly to draw attention to some points of methodology which, when overlooked, lead to erroneous and even absurd results.

First, analysis confined to comparing the positions of any individuals or organizations at a single arbitrarily chosen point in time is inadequate. Gandhi as well as his critics were continually evolving. The *movement* in their positions is often of more significance than their points of view at any isolated moment.

Secondly, to determine the weight to be attached to any criticism, particularly criticism by other contemporaneous political personalities or groups, it is helpful to evaluate the activities and effectiveness of the critics themselves. Repetition of unexamined or self-justificatory criticism obfuscates more than it illumines. The MPLA and the UNITA were bitter rivals, yet both fought for the freedom of Angola. How much weight should one attach to contemporaneous criticism from, say, the pre-freedom Communist Party of India if that party for all its accumulation of intellectual energy and some flashes of heroism in the components that went into its making, did not as a party conduct a single national-level or even a provincial-level struggle against the British? As lovers of freedom some of its members were perhaps second to none; the trouble was with priorities, praxis, emphases. To say this, it must be clarified, is no criticism of the *present-day* CPI or CPM, just as to appreciate something done by the pre-independence Congress would not amount to appreciation of the Congress (I) or any other present-day political group. Nor does this involve a denial of the anti-imperialist role of say, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, the Jugantar group and, on the whole, of the Anushilan Samiti, some of whose members later drifted into other parties, including the pre-freedom CPI. It is the anti-imperialist record of these groups which is often sought to be appropriated on behalf of the pre-freedom CPI. The irony is that the anti-imperialist ardour of these traditions was in fact *weakened* rather than strengthened within the pre-freedom CPI. The latter largely diverted attention from struggles against the British to a virtually exclusive engagement with trade unionism and some Kisan Sabhas.¹ It was somewhat like what may have happened in China had Mao thought of reversing priorities – concentrating on mobilization for land reforms first and assisting the struggle against the Japanese only later.

Similarly, the criticisms of Gandhi made by Ambedkar in the latter's early phase when he set much store by the British are historically interesting. But historians must examine also why such things as the statutory abolition of untouchability, for example, take place with the retreat of British power and not earlier. The rise of Dalit representation in mainline services, increased educational opportunities and the associated enhancement in their political presence takes place only after independence. Ambedkar's greatest achievements take place when he is in alliance with those who had led the nationalist movement and not when he is at cross purposes with them. Could not Ambedkar have been mistaken then in placing exclusive reliance on the British for protection of Dalit interests particularly if the net gain registered as a sequel to this policy was not substantial? The point is that pre-Ambedkar benefits like non-discrimination in employment and in the system of justice, albeit expensive and slow moving but such as it was, may have provided the *rationale* for the position taken by Ambedkar. But did this position result in any further gains *after* he adopted it? It may be possible to take a contrary view if one assumes that the separate electorates envisaged by the British in 1931-2 outweighed the lack of any significant British initiative on the social, educational and employment needs of Dalits after Ambedkar came into prominence. Our essential point is that in evaluating the strength of Ambedkar's early criticisms, the educational and social fruits, if any, of the pre-freedom Ambedkar-British convergence also need to be scrutinized and cannot simply be *assumed*. The Ambedkar – British convergence may have enhanced Ambedkar's bargaining position in relation to the Congress, but did it significantly promote the Dalit cause qua the British? The significant grassroots support among Dalits for the Congress at this time also needs to be recognized, studied and understood.

Consider the revolutionary movement. Has there been any serious attempt to study why the violent revolutionary movement in India did not succeed? The nationalist mobilization after 1920 could not, merely because it was itself meant to be non-violent, have *prevented* those who believed in armed insurrection from making plans for it and from putting these plans into execution. The Naval ratings revolt, though undoubtedly heroic and not without an impact, takes place in Bombay in February 1946 after a Labour government has come to power in England, a Cabinet Mission to India has been decided upon (by Jan. 24, 1946) and the Congress is on the verge of negotiations with it. But there is no revolt by the armed forces *within the country* during 1942-45 when it would have been critically relevant and useful for Indian independence.² Nor does it take place later (that is after say June-July 1946) either when the British regime and many of its provincial governors show laxity in bringing communal violence under control or when plans are afoot to divide the country. There is an obvious need for interrogation of such 'critical' traditions themselves in the writing of modern Indian history.³ In the 1970s the major prevalent criticisms of Gandhi and the pre-1947 Congress were economic – they did not go far enough in pushing through land reforms, they were too much under the influence of big business and so on. Characteristically, for some British historians Gandhi's regional associates were, from such perspectives, 'subcontractors'.⁴ Many Indian historians, perhaps dazzled by the bright lights of the West, wrote in a similar vein.⁵ Paradoxically, the current wave of criticism of Gandhi and the Congress is centred primarily on the Muslim League – that they were not accommodative

enough to the League demand for ‘safeguards’. This critique which tends to characterize the national movement as Hindu communalist suits Hindutva; it enables, to some extent, appropriation of Indian nationalism by Hindutva. It suits also the Muslim communal tradition; it enables this tradition to define itself. It suits Anglocentricism as well; the entire imperial policy in India is sought to be justified as a result.⁶ Curiously, one may find the same critics repeating the economic critique *and* the League-centred critique. This is more than a little strange. One of the reasons why the alliance between the League and the Congress did not come off in the United Provinces in 1937 was pressure from the Left wing which wished to push ahead with the Congress programme of reform and looked upon the League or a dominant section of it as favouring landlords at least in that Province. The decision against an alliance was influenced not only by socialists and communists but by Muslim groups as well.⁷ That the land reforms then conducted in U.P. were a factor that led to a strong reaction from the League is well recognized.⁸ Oddly enough, once this severe League reaction got going, the CPI sections of the Left lined up with League, that is to say, against the Congress and the nationalist Muslims.

That is why the land reform-centred critique and the League-centred critique are mutually not quite consistent. The notion of ‘safeguards’ is also seldom scrutinized. For example, can the demand that no party other than the League would have the right to nominate a Muslim to the Centre be described as a ‘safeguard’? Or is it a ‘safeguard plus’? Subhas Bose as Congress President in 1938 had found such claims to sole spokespersonship to be “impossible” conditions.⁹ Would those who put such notions forward, taking their cue perhaps from the Cambridge school of history, support similar claims on behalf of communal parties today? What was the opinion on these matters of other nationalist Muslims stoutly opposed to the League? Apart from a few prominent ones, Nationalist Muslims have not really been studied. Writings on Modern Indian history reveal scant acquaintance with, say, Abbas Tyabji, Allah Baksh, Abdus Samad Khan, Prof. Abdul Bari, Mufti Kifayatullah, Yakub Hasan, Ahmed Saeed, Maulana Hifzur Rahman, A Q Ansari, Habibur Rahman Ludhianvi or M. Tayyebulla. Or with the Momin Conference or the Majlis-e-Ahrar. References to the latter party are made, if it all, to present it as a Punjab outfit, without indicating that its activities stretched from Kashmir to Bengal. Several other Muslim organizations which resisted the League to the end (or almost to the end when it became clear that Pakistan was in the offing) are seldom seriously studied. For example, there are no detailed studies of the Anjuman-e-Watan of Abdus Samad Khan, the Baluch Gandhi or of Allah Baksh’s ‘United Party’ in Sind. Even the Jamiatul Ulema-e-Hind is rarely a focus of scholarly interest.

When we have adequate studies on such questions, or at least an increased awareness of them, we may arrive at a higher stage in the debate on Gandhi and the nationalist movement. These studies are perhaps unlikely to be encouraged in England which still appears to hold many Indian historians and writers in a somewhat hypnotic grip.¹⁰

II

Gandhi often learned from his critics -- changing, improving and modifying his position from time to time. And some of his critics learned from him. Among these, Narendra Deva, Bose and Ambedkar reassessed their position during Gandhi's lifetime. Others, like Jinnah, did so later to some extent. Gandhi's differences with various personalities are generally set out in his writings without assuming the character of personal attacks. The same cannot be said of many of his critics. But some critics maintained a relatively high standard of public discourse.

Consider first the case of Subhas Bose. Bose's relationship with Gandhi was more complex than that of a mere critic. He did not subscribe to the Gandhian notion of non-violence. But even after differences had arisen between him and Gandhi in the late thirties, the two retained a sense of appreciation for one another.

Bose had been close to C.R. Das in Bengal. Gandhi considered his own differences with C.R. Das at the Amritsar Congress in December 1919 to have been primarily on the basis of a different understanding of a common trust, saying in June 1925: ". . . we were warriors, each holding in trust the welfare of the nation according to his ability".¹¹ One of the major differences between Gandhi and C.R. Das arose over the so-called "offer" of constitutional reform by Viceroy Reading in December 1921. We now know, inter alia on account of the papers of the British Cabinet also having become available, that this offer was a mirage.¹² This was not known to C.R. Das and formed the basis of his early differences with Gandhi. Bose, being close to C.R. Das, inherited some of his impressions. However, the Bose-Gandhi differences grew to a head only later -- in 1939.

Gandhi tried to link the political struggle for independence with social emancipation. This was not necessarily so even with such of his critics who are often considered more radical than him. When Gandhi started his anti-untouchability programme on a nation-wide scale in 1933 this was apparently not supported by Subhas Bose and Vithalbhai Patel.¹³

How important is it for a national liberator simultaneously to be an internationalist? The importance of this question should not be underrated; what sometimes appears as bitter criticism of Gandhi and the pre-independence congress is merely a different approach to events, related to whether these are viewed from a purely national or an international perspective. Bose was a patriot in the first instance: internationalist only in the next. While he thought nothing of taking the help of powers like Germany, Jawaharlal Nehru had a different point of view. M.N. Roy went to the extent of offering complete support to Britain in the Second World War, just as Gandhi, with a faith he later outgrew, had sympathized with England during the First World War. Bose sought to judge issues from a purely nationalist frame. After the rise of Hitler, Jawaharlal Nehru, according to Bose, "produced a resolution before the (Congress) Working Committee... seeking to make India an asylum for the Jews". The idea "astounded" Bose. Nehru appears to have backtracked somewhat, saying that his resolution had only been concerned with such refugees as were also technicians.¹⁴

Gandhi's humanism and Indianness were more closely connected. When some Burmese leaders in 1927 opposed the separation of Burma from India, it is Gandhi who told them that the matter should be decided by the Burmese themselves and that in his opinion "India, in cooperation with the British, is exploiting Burma".¹⁵ His position towards Sri Lanka was similar. He saw it as a 'separate entity'. Saying that "I should be content to regard Ceylon as an absolutely independent state", he was inclined to leave the matter to the Sri Lankans themselves.¹⁶

The Gandhi – Bose clash in the late thirties is often invested, as will perhaps emerge from the discussion on Narendra Deva below, with more significance than it may in fact have had.¹⁷ Contrary to the impression sometimes created of Gandhi and Bose being at cross-purposes, in the forties the two came to a greater appreciation of one another. Bose's disappearance from Calcutta in 1941 led to Gandhi making anxious inquiries from his family; the timing of the Quit India Movement a year later was partly inspired by the Japanese advance. In June 1942, Gandhi described Bose "as a patriot of patriots".¹⁸

Bose's broadcasts from South East Asia often invoked Gandhi's name and sought his blessings for the struggle. It was in the forties that Bose addressed Gandhi as the "Father of Nation" in a broadcast from Azad Hind Radio on July 6, 1944.¹⁹ Obviously delighted at the Quit India Movement, Bose said in his broadcast on Gandhi's birthday in 1943 that : "The service which Mahatma Gandhi has rendered to India and to the cause of India's freedom is so unique and unparalleled that his name will be written in letters of gold in our national history for all time".²⁰ Bose's broadcast on the occasion of Kasturba's death in prison is deeply moving.²¹ The INA formations which entered to fight in Myanmar and North East India bore names such as Gandhi, Subhas and Azad. When a Japanese invasion by sea on the Orissa coast was anticipated, Gandhi gave instructions to greet the expected Japanese landing with a programme of non-cooperation with both the British and the Japanese.²² What did this imply? And on what basis did Gandhi come really to expect the Japanese to make a landing on the Orissa coast?²³ Was it simply British propaganda? Had Bose been around after the war, we might have had part of an answer.

Narendra Deva was another critical admirer. He, along with Bose, is among the relatively more authentic contemporary critics of Gandhi. This is because Bose and Narendra Deva are not idle critics from the sidelines but leaders who are themselves in the thick of the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle. Starting out as a 'Tilakite', Narendra Deva became a Marxist by the early twenties and remained so till his death in 1956. This was unlike his Congress Socialist Party colleagues, some of whom had rejected Marxism by 1947-48. Some of them did so as a reaction to Stalin and to the policies of the then Communist Party of India. Similarly motivated, socialists retreated from Marxism by 1952-53. Narendra Deva, though critical of Stalin, did not reject Marxism itself. He had, it is believed, been critical of the non-cooperation movement from a 'Tilakite' perspective. A keen student of the writings and politics of Lenin, he gradually came close to Gandhi. At the same time, Narendra Deva retained the capacity of independent criticism. For instance, in his comment on Gandhi's plans regarding individual satyagraha in the early forties, Narendra Deva ridicules the idea of individual satyagraha and the notion that the enemy

must not be harassed when he is in danger.²⁴ Gandhi nevertheless had come to rely upon Narendra Dev. (“How is it that you have kept hidden such a jewel of a man...?” he had once asked Sri Prakasa.²⁵) Narendra Deva appears to have played a role in stiffening Gandhi’s position in the nineteen forties. Gandhi’s draft resolution for the Congress Working Committee was forwarded by him in April 1942 to Nehru with the remark that “Acharya Narendra Dev has seen the resolution and liked it”.²⁶

Gandhi twice suggested Narendra Deva’s name for President of the Congress. The first time was in 1938-39. In January 1939 Subhas Bose offered to withdraw from the Presidential contest if Narendra Deva were chosen.²⁷ Had this come about, the break between Bose and Gandhi at this time could have been avoided. Gandhi himself was in favour of a socialist President and Narendra Deva was one name he had in mind. It was Nehru who did not approve of the idea. Nehru wrote in February-March 1939: “Indeed, so far as Gandhiji was concerned, he expressed his wish repeatedly in my presence that he would like a socialist as President. Apart from my own name, he mentioned Acharya Narendra Deva’s name. But... I did not like the idea of a socialist president at this stage”.²⁸ (In fairness to Nehru it should be marked that, he indicates that for the same reason he eliminated himself). Evidently, as both Bose and Gandhi were at one on the name of Narendra Deva, the split between them at this time had more to do with the position adopted by Nehru than with Gandhi himself. The second occasion when Gandhi suggested Narendra Deva’s name was in November 1947. This time Nehru was also in favour of Narendra Deva. But others were not.²⁹ Narendra Deva had presided over the foundation conference of the Congress Socialist Party in May 1934. His being made Congress President would have had an obvious significance.

III

This brings us to yet another dogma of research fostered in the last few decades. This is the unwarranted and near-exclusive identity that is assumed between Marxism and the pre-1947 CPI. This has its ramifications on the assessments of Gandhi and the nationalist movement.³⁰

The Congress Socialists defined themselves as Marxists.³¹ Vallabhbhai Patel, who had begun drifting away from Gandhi in some ways after 1945-47, disliked the socialists. The socialists’ feelings towards Patel were similarly negative. It was at this juncture that Gandhi emerged as a protector of the socialists. It is no accident that the socialists left the Congress within days of his assassination.

Was Gandhi gradually getting disillusioned with some of the businessmen who had been close to him in the past? One of them, who proved closer to Patel than to Gandhi, had even been corresponding with leading British figures, suggesting that the League demand for partition be accepted. At any rate, Gandhi’s economic ideas had been following a different course. Since 1938-39, he had been drawing closer to the CSP. He even expressed a willingness to join the CSP “*if the difference on violence could be bridged*”.³²

He had said in June 1942 that in the land reform programme of free India, “peasants would take the land” and compensating landlords “would be fiscally impossible”.³³ In January 1947, Gandhi supported the Tebhaga movement demand for the reduction of the landlord’s share from half to one third”.³⁴

While most CSP leaders grasped the evolution of Gandhi’s ideas, it appears that the CPI at this stage did not fully comprehend or even notice it. Unfortunately, the CSP has not been a focus of academic study, partly as a result of the tendency to equate Marxism prior to 1947 with CPI-Marxism.

During the Second Congress of the Communist International at Moscow in 1920 Lenin had expressed himself in favour of communists supporting Gandhi. As M.N. Roy acknowledges, Lenin looked upon Gandhi “as the inspirer and leader of a mass movement” and “a revolutionary”.³⁵ M.N. Roy, young but possessing great intellectual dexterity, attended this Congress as a delegate from Mexico. Roy had differed from Lenin, believing, rather curiously, that the national movement would not necessarily result even in a ‘bourgeois democratic revolution’. The CSP, of which the CPI was only briefly a part, remained truer throughout the struggle for freedom, that is till 1947-48, to the position which Lenin had taken.

In January 1941, Roy was to describe Churchill as “a more revolutionary force than all the Congress leaders Right or left, put together . . .”³⁶ Less than a year earlier, in 1940, Roy had himself stood against Maulana Azad for Congress President and lost.

M.N. Roy’s position in the war was the polar opposite of Bose’s. In early 1944, Roy wrote to Viceroy Wavell asking for what Wavell describes as “a subsidy”, and to be taken into the Executive Council.³⁷

Inconsistencies in positions taken on behalf of sections of the Left at this time are patent; this must necessarily affect the weight to be attached to these positions. For instance, if Gandhi secures resources for the nationalist movement from India’s industrialists, that makes him a representative of the national bourgeoisie; on occasion he is alleged to represent something still more frightful. But if Roy is to obtain funds from Wavell’s administration, whatever the purpose, then this is presumably internationalism. When Gandhi fights imperialism, he remains a representative of the bourgeoisie or whatever other terrible label that may be applied for the moment. But if Churchill fights fascism, Churchill becomes a revolutionary!

However, M.N. Roy did attempt to come to terms with the Gandhi factor. On at least one occasion, when he joined the Congress, he appears to have written to Gandhi inviting advice on what he should do. But Roy’s public comments on Gandhi indicated a trace of contempt for the people. He said in 1938 that Gandhi was great because he could ‘stoop’ to the ‘level’ of the masses.³⁸

Rajani Palme Dutt, a leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain, exercised great influence over the Indian communist movement. He was greatly critical of Gandhi in his book, *India Today*, first published in 1940. Soon after the war, however, in the British general election that followed in 1945, Dutt seems to have felt the need to gain Gandhi's support. At any rate, a request was made by Mohan Kumaramangalam to Gandhi for a message in favour of Dutt in the general elections. Gandhi responded without hesitation, saying "I do wish him success in his campaign".³⁹ Evidently CPI leaders at the time were unsure about the adequacy of their own approach towards Gandhi and the nationalist movement. But they could not then quite understand how to readjust.

There came a phase in the politics of the pre-independence CPI when instead of strengthening the Nationalist Muslims, the party grew closer to the communalist strain among Muslims. The CPI itself (and the CPM after its formation) later made some amends for positions taken in the past. A similar realisation had come over the South African Communist Party in relation to its position towards the African national movement in the twenties.⁴⁰ In India these amends were made in deeds, if not so much in words. K.F. Rustamji recently observed with much truth that Left parties alone in the last few years had stood by the secularism of the India of the earlier years after independence.⁴¹

Mohit Sen, editor of a portion of the documents of the Communist Party of India, acknowledged that the CPI in the pre-independence years had been mistaken in propping up the Muslim League.⁴²

In fact, Humayun Kabir's comment on this had been:

"During the war years and immediately thereafter, Indian communists were found again and again as staunch supporters of the Muslim League. The position came to climax during the general election of 1946 when they openly canvassed for Muslim League candidates. In spite of the communist distaste for religion, they appealed to the religious fanaticism of the Muslim masses in order to bolster the claim of Pakistan. It is in fact extremely doubtful if the Muslim League by itself could have brought about the partition of India unless it had received such unstinted ideological and organizational support from the Indian communists".⁴³

In other words, the CPI stood at this time in relation to the Muslim League in *at least* the same position as the Congress (I) has seemed to stand in recent years in relation to the BJP. The CPI stand was corrected, partly by itself. Can the Congress (I) correct itself?

For various reasons, there has been in academic circles no thorough critique of the Muslim League although it was placed in power in various provinces, especially after the resignation of the Congress ministries in 1939. First, the prominent departments of Modern Indian History in India continued to be dominated by sympathizers of the CPI tradition who (regardless of their present secularism) drew a veil over an uncomfortable past. Secondly, leading British

universities, which still exercise influence over Indian departments of history, have not, dwelt greatly on this aspect. Thus the so-called 'subaltern' studies are carefully selected to gun for the pre-1947 Congress and the nationalist movement. The centre of gravity of such studies is revealed also by a lack of empathy towards struggles against the colonial regime as distinct from other struggles. Such writings ensured that at least half an Indian generation was systematically disoriented in their attitude towards the nationalist movement and its values.⁴⁴ The space thus created was filled by Hindutva. Indeed, it caused no surprise to this writer that at least one scholar associated with the so-called subaltern project soon emerged as a propagandist for Hindutva.

Gramsci had written of the subaltern view of history in Italy in contrast to the historiography of the movement for Italian national consolidation. But had Italy been under a foreign colonialism, as India was, a movement against colonialism would itself have had to be designated a subaltern struggle.

Even scholars who claim currently to be unraveling new facts about partition are silent on the subject. Some of them present partition as the outcome of a "triangular game" played by the Congress, the Muslim League and the British. In such critiques, the pre-1947 Congress is equated with the Muslim League in accordance with colonial policy and there is no mention of the role of the CPI. The Hindu Mahasabha is brought in as a factor which from time to time influences the Congress. That the Congress often resisted and even confronted the Mahasabha and was in fact often keen to accommodate the League and other Muslim groups is overlooked. So also is the fact that the Muslim League and other Muslim groups also influenced the Congress. The role of the Mahasabha and the League as ideological twins is not fully considered.

IV

For the same reason such Muslim groups as had been opposed to the League, Muslims of South India who were not terribly enamoured of the League and such Muslim classes as had not even been enfranchised were not seriously studied; this omission also reinforced negative representations of the nationalist movement. If other Muslim groups were studied at all it was largely to show how after 1945 (when it seemed likely that Pakistan was in the offing) some of them were willing to compromise with the League's positions. The omission was not surprising; such studies could have shown up the shallowness of the League position. This deficiency in historiography resulted in the notion – baseless in the absence of universal franchise – that Muslims at large were supportive of the Muslim League. This is precisely what both Anglo-centric scholarship and Hindutva have, by and large, been keen to project.

Some of the real warriors of secularism and Indian unity were Gandhi's Muslim counterparts, the nationalists whose contribution is so often underestimated. They were of the timbre of Allah Baksh and faced the brunt of the Muslim League wrath – Syed Nausher Ali, the Speaker of the Assembly of undivided Bengal, who was injured in a League attack on his house in Calcutta in

August 1946, Saifuddin Kitchlew who was dragged in Multan streets in March 1947 because he would not succumb to the Pakistan demand, and innumerable others who stood their ground in the midst of insanity. Even a former Muslim Leaguer, Shafaat Ahmed Khan, who was named by the Congress as its nominee to the interim government in 1946, was promptly stabbed in Shimla. Whatever else it may be, secularism is a trust which every Indian must hold in obligation to the historical nationalist experience.

Bose, recognizing the Muslim contribution, in a broadcast on August 31, 1942 soon after Gandhi launched the Quit India Movement, had appealed among others to the nationalist forces of the “brave Majlis-i-Ahrar, the Nationalist Muslim Party of India that started the Civil Disobedience Campaign in 1939 against Britain’s war effort before any other party did so” and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, “the old representative organization of the Ulemas or the Muslim divines of India, led by that distinguished patriot and leader, Mufti Khifayat Ullah” (sic).⁴⁵

A critique of the League is essential also because without it, we cannot really confront *Hindutva*, which is the other side of the Muslim League coin. In fact, a few months before the League passed its ‘Pakistan’ resolution, Savarkar in his speech at the session of the Hindu Mahasabha in December 1939, had spoken of Hindus being a separate nation.⁴⁶ This *Hindutva* critic of Gandhi was explicit about the links which his ideology had with Jinnah’s. In 1943, Savarkar said at Nagpur on August 15, 1943:

“I have no quarrel with Mr. Jinnah’s two-nation theory. We Hindus, are a nation by ourselves and it is a historical fact that Hindus and Muslims are two nations”.⁴⁷

Writing from the Hindu communalist position, the Mahasabha leader, N.B. Khare, in his memoirs was to liken Gandhi to Aurangzeb.

The Muslim League, like the Hindu Mahasabha, was sharply critical of Gandhi. Jinnah had made virulent speeches against Gandhi for a number of years; a campaign had been built up against the nationalist Muslims and Gandhi.

At the session of the Muslim League in April 1943 Jinnah approvingly quoted Maulana Mohamed Ali’s reported charge, (made in 1930) that Gandhi had never criticized the Shuddhi programme.⁴⁸ This charge was contrary to the published record of Gandhi’s articles in *Young India*.⁴⁹

Gandhi had been quite critical of Swami Shraddhanand and had said in 1924 that the best Shuddhi would be for each one to practice his own religion better. He had denounced Shraddhanand and other Arya Samajis for having made Hinduism ‘narrow’. He had extended the criticism to Swami Dayanand as well. Many Arya Samaj and Mahasabha functionaries used to claim that it was Gandhi’s criticism of the Arya Samaj, the Shuddhi programme and of Shraddhanand that had led the Swami’s assassin to commit the deed. Gandhi’s assassin had repeated a similar accusation in his statement in the Gandhi murder case.⁵⁰

A great play was made of Gandhi's use of the expression "Ram Rajya". While this was much quoted by the Muslim League and recently by the Hindutva combine for their own special purposes, both these forces suppressed the other part of what Gandhi had repeatedly said – that Ram Rajya and Khudai Sultanat meant the same thing to him, as indeed did Ishwar and Allah.⁵¹

The Mahasabha was equally cynical. A day before his assassination, Gandhi had sent Pyarelal to the Mahasabha leader, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. Gandhi wanted inflammatory speeches from the Mahasabha side "containing incitement to assassination of some Congress leaders" to stop. Mookerjee's reply was "halting and unsatisfactory".⁵²

To what extent did the Muslim League members really believe in their own political positions? There has been no attempt by Indian scholars to study differences within the League. Differences within the Congress are minutely studied and positions taken for or against particular leaders and tendencies. The Shimla conference in July 1945 broke down over Jinnah's claim that all the Muslim members of the proposed Executive Council must be from the League and even an incumbent non-League non-Congress Muslim Premier of a Province could not be represented. Yet members of the League Working Committee were not agreed on such demands. Hossain Imam, the leader of the League in the Council of State, accosted V.P. Menon, who recounts:

"He gave me the impression that the members of the Working Committee of the Muslim League were far from unanimous in rejecting the Viceroy's offer. Hossain Imam suggested that the Viceroy was not aware that a member of his own Executive Council was advising Jinnah to stand firm."⁵³

When Gandhi was assassinated, Jinnah's public comments on him were lukewarm. This reflected an attitude similar to that which Jinnah had taken up after the assassination of Allah Baksh in May 1943.⁵⁴ Allah Baksh, a former Premier of Sind had defied the Muslim League and had opposed the two-nation theory. After the March 1940 League resolution asking for a division of India, Allah Baksh had organized the Independent Muslims Conference which held a large meeting at Delhi and denounced the two-nation theory.

Jinnah's public comments on Gandhi's death had implied that it was a loss only for the Hindus. Although he could not bring himself to say more publicly, his private comments were somewhat different from his public position. The Vice President of Schroeders' Banking Group of New York, Norbert Bogdan, had met Jinnah in Karachi on February 4, 1948, that is, five days after Gandhi's assassination. Campbell-Johnson records the Bogdan—Jinnah conversation as reported to him by Bogdan:

"Jinnah was clearly disturbed about the implications of the Kashmir situation, and spoke of Gandhi in much more generous terms than he saw fit to use in his message, acknowledging to Bogdan how great was the loss for the Moslems".⁵⁵

Interestingly, the Ambedkar – Gandhi differences also culminated in a comparable, though not identical, manner.

Nothing had distressed Gandhi more than criticism by Ambedkar. This criticism went to the core of the principle on which India sought freedom. Did India have any right to freedom if Dalits were to be condemned to oppression? It was this question which Gandhi himself had been posing to the conscience of society.

Ambedkar had appeared with prominence at the second Round Table Conference in London in 1931 and the country remembered his bitter criticism of Mahatma Gandhi.

Even so, Gandhi was continually to reach out to Ambedkar in subsequent years. Gandhi's campaign against untouchability in the thirties was widened to include a campaign against caste barriers which he had already condemned as an evil.⁵⁶ Towards the end the two brought out the best in each other. Ambedkar in a way drew Gandhi out to his full stature. Ambedkar's own restrictive views on tribal rights improved with time.⁵⁷ To Ambedkar's criticism may be attributed in part, the evolution of Gandhi in a major respect beyond the Gita. By 1945, Gandhi outgrew the Gita concept of the four-fold *varna* order, making a logical inroad upon it from various directions. Gandhi said now, that is in May 1945, that there "prevails only one *varna* today"⁵⁸ and that his earlier formulations on the subject be discarded. And next, attacking the concept from another angle, he spoke of the possibility of repudiating one's *varna*.⁵⁹

He made a third conceptual inroad upon *varna* distinctions on February 20, 1947 by saying that monopoly of occupations would have no place in a casteless society.⁶⁰ The culmination of this evolution was Gandhi's speech on June 14, 1947 in which he indicated that distinctions between *avarna* and *savarna* must go.⁶¹

(Incidentally, some writers seeking to make a critique of modernism, or for other contemporary political reasons, referred in recent controversies to Gandhi's earlier statements on *varna* distinctions without reference to his post-1945 positions).

Gandhi respected Ambedkar's intellect and had a role in his being actively associated with the Government of independent India at the time of the drafting of the Constitution.⁶²

Ambedkar acknowledged Gandhi's contribution. After Gandhi's death, Ambedkar, replying on April 17, 1948 to a letter congratulating him on his marriage, referred to Gandhi as Bapu; and in a speech in the Rajya Sabha some years later, Ambedkar acknowledged that Dalits had been "nearest and dearest" to Gandhi.⁶³ Ambedkar went on to acknowledge further that Gandhi wanted to protect and elevate Dalits. Contrary to current notions, he did not criticize Gandhi for his stand against separate electorates, culminating in the pact at Poona. On the contrary, Ambedkar now urged Nehru to emulate Gandhi:

“The only thing that I would like to say is this that in all this effort which is being made by the Government, by the various social workers and the social agencies, there is one thing which gives me a very sad thought and it is this that our Prime Minister has taken no interest in this matter at all. In fact, he seems to be not only apathetic but anti-untouchable. I happen to have read his biography and I find that he castigated Mr. Gandhi because Mr. Gandhi was prepared to die for the purpose of doing away with separate electorates which was given to the scheduled Castes. He has said in his biography, Why on earth Mr. Gandhi is bothering with this trifling problem? Sir, I was shocked and surprised to hear the Prime Minister – rather Mr. Nehru then in 1934 – uttering these words. I thought that since the responsibility of Government had fallen on his shoulder he may have changed his view and thought that he must now take the responsibility which Mr. Gandhi was prepared to take on his shoulder, but I do not find any kind of a change in his mind”.⁶⁴

One may wonder whether Ambedkar was being fair to Nehru. But he had certainly changed his opinion of Gandhi from what it had been two decades earlier.⁶⁵

There is a phenomenon of what might be called ‘cross criticism’ that should also be mentioned because the analyst needs to be wary of it. Those who see themselves as part of one or the other of the traditions critical of Gandhi occasionally resort to ‘cross-criticism’ by *adopting* some of the criticisms made by *another* critical tradition. This is appropriation with a false ring about it; it is done even though the critical tradition concerned may in fact have been equally opposed to the tradition conveniently appropriated by it. This has the effect of creating an illusion of multiplied criticism. Thus both the Hindutva and the Muslim League traditions sometime seek to counterpose, for example, Bose against Gandhi. Here it is easy to forget that Hindutva organizations like the RSS had instructions to stay out of the national movement. They were in effect as opposed to Bose as they were to Gandhi. The followers of Hedgewar and the Mahasabha sometimes went about assaulting nationalist leaders and tearing up the national flag.⁶⁶

Similarly, Muslim Leaguers physically assaulted Bose in Tipperah district Chittagong division on June 15, 1938.⁶⁷ Ashrafuddin Chaudhury, the secretary of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee and 13 others were also attacked and injured.

V

Considering the continental scale of the anti-colonial movement, which is quite unparalleled, the remarkable feature is not so much the differences that arose within and outside the movement but that the major trends reflected in these differences were not as many as might have been expected or possible, and that a number of such tendencies themselves got reshaped by the hydraulic force of the movement, even as they helped shape the movement itself.

This is particularly so in a situation where, unlike in China, a full scale colonialism (holding India in its grip with its long arms extending into each village) was also potentially able to influence differences and developments. Inevitably, these differences were defined largely in relation to Gandhi. Considering this, the inadequacy of scholarship and the scale of misinformation in relation to Gandhi and the nationalist movement is striking.⁶⁸ Even his writings have yet to be completely published although the project to publish them has formally come to a close in 1994. The translation of Mahadev Desai's diaries is also not yet complete. Further, the letters addressed *to* Gandhi, including by his critics, or on their behalf, need to be compiled and published. This would help more fully to understand the symbiosis between Gandhi and his critics and to determine the weight to be attached to the criticism itself.

Notes and References

* This paper was written twenty years ago at the end of 1995 and published in *Mainstream*, New Delhi on 27 January 1996. As the issues it raises are at least as, if not more, topical than when first published, the paper is reproduced here essentially without change, except for the addition of footnotes 5, 6 and 12.

¹ The Congress Socialist group made significant contribution in the Kisan movement and in trade unionism but without a diminished emphasis on the nationalist struggle.

² Major Jaipal Singh writes in *In the Battle for Liberation*, (National Book Centre, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 16-18) of an organizing committee created in February 1942 with himself as convenor to "educate the Indian officers politically...". On Aug. 25, 1942 "the All-India Body" of this organization met at Delhi. Jaipal Singh says (p.40): "The consensus of opinion was in favour of immediately giving a call to revolt. I opposed it from the outset. Eventually everyone present agreed with me". Major Jaipal Singh, no doubt rendered other useful service in the course of the national struggle. But it was left to others outside the CPI, belonging like Pannalal Dasgupta to the Anushilan and Jugantar circles, to seek, like Dasgupta, who managed to enlist in the army in 1939, to instigate a rebellious spirit within it during the war. (See *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 1, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1972, p.369).

³ It would be surprising if unexamined criticism, once made, were not also circulated uncritically. The first volume of the delightful collection *Women Writing in India* Tharu Susie, and Lalita, K., (ed), Vol.1, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1993) is refreshing because it does not suffer overly from the indiscriminate urge to run down the nationalist movement in order to justify the pre-1947 CPI or related orthodoxies. However, this cannot be said of volume 2, which in a lengthy introduction makes its peace with these orthodoxies by uncritically repeating them. The second volume (Tharu, Susie and Lalita, K. (ed), *Women Writing in India* Vol. II, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995) is marred by remarks like the following in a footnote (p.57):

"The naval mutiny of February 1946, for example is estimated at its height to have involved twenty thousand sailors and drew support in Bombay, for instance, from crowds who thronged to cheer them and merchants who threw open their shops, inviting the mutineers to take what they needed, as well as from many trade unions who downed tools in support. But both Gandhi and Vallabhabhai Patel were uncompromisingly hostile. Gandhi chided the mutineers for having set a bad and unbecoming example for

India, while Patel wrote, 'Discipline in the Army cannot be tampered with. . . we will want an Army even in free India'. (Sumit Sarkar, pp.423-425). Gyanendra Pandey quotes a letter in which the Congress High Command reprimanded the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh for having inaugurated an exhibition that contained photographs of police atrocities".

The assurances given to the mutineers by the Congress are not mentioned. But leave that aside. Even otherwise, no questions are asked and no assumptions examined. For how could Pandey and Sarkar have set up misleading signposts? How could the vanguard of history be mistaken? Although the analogy is not exact, one wonders what the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela would have done if the Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military arm of the African National Congress, had launched, on its own, a major rebellion just when talks for transfer of power were to begin with De Klerk's administration in South Africa.

⁴ See Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922*, Cambridge, 1972, p.190.

⁵ The reference to the "bright lights of the West" is in relation to a strategic silencing, muting or de-fanging impact that Western academic publishers and universities may often have on academic writing and publishing in matters of vital interest to their home countries.

⁶ Anglocentricism is used here to depict tendencies and writings representing British colonial or imperial interests and points of view whether contemporaneously or currently and regardless of whether these are represented by British or by other writers.

⁷ An account of these events is available in a letter dated 21 July, 1937 from Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajendra Prasad (see Valmiki Chowdhury, (ed), *Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol.1, 1934-38, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, pp.63-67). According to Nehru, initially in the election campaign both the League and the Congress opposed the Agriculturist Party of the "big Zamindars". But during the election campaign the League took a "reactionary turn". The outstanding and most powerful reactionary elements seemed to gain the upper hand". The President of the UP League Board, the Raja of Salempur, even joined the non-Congress interim ministry that was first formed after the elections. Many Muslims including the Jamiat-ul-ulema-e- Hind disapproved of the League's methods and of the way the League fought the Bundelkhand election in 1937. This seems to have affected negatively their subsequent attitude towards League leaders and the talks that took place between the Congress and Choudhury Khaliqzaman of the League. The Congress raised the stakes, imposing difficult conditions, and settlement possibilities receded. Khaliqzaman, in his *Pathway to Pakistan*, (Longmans, London (Pakistan Branch), 1961) pp.166-167 refers to 'misguided action' of the ulema and to the role of Narendra Deva, Dr. Ashraf, Narbada Prasad Singh and Purushottam Das Tandon at this stage in queering the pitch for an alliance. Mohan Lal Saksena, a former President of the U.P. Congress Committee who was in favour of an alliance, writes in "*Is That To Be The End of Our Lives" Labour?"* (Ballot Publishing House, New Delhi, 1963 p.95) that the Socialists and the Jamiat-ul-Ullema (sic) did not let the Congress have any truck with the League...". According to M. Hashim Kidwai, the proposal fell through because "of the stiff opposition of the Congress Socialists led by Acharya Narendra Deva, Babu Purushottam Das Tandon and Congress communists headed by Dr. Ashraf and Dr. Z.A. Ahmad. Nehru thought that the U.P. Congress having led the first mass agrarian movement in the country was now set for radical land reforms and the inclusion of the moderate-cum-conservative Muslim League elements would moderate the economic and social radicalisms of the Congress..." (See M Hashim Kidwai, *Rafi Ahmad Kidwai*, Publications Division, New Delhi, 1986, p.104).

⁸ Prof. M. Mujeeb writes of the 1937-39 events in U.P:

"Further, while on the one hand the will of the majority seemed to be an argument which swept everything before it, an attempt was made by the Congress, through a programme of mass contact, to drive a wedge between the class and the Muslim masses. The land reforms that formed an essential part of congress policy, though intended in fact to benefit the farmer, though intended in fact to benefit the farmer, threatened to deprive the class of its only means of sustenance. It was inevitable that the class should retaliate as vigorously and as viciously as it could". (See M. Mujeeb, "The Partition of India in Retrospect", in Philips, C.H. and Wainwright, Mary Doreen (eds), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-47*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1970, p.412).

⁹ Subhas Bose to Jinnah, July 25, 1938, Netaji Research Bureau, *Crossroads*, Asia publishing House, Bombay, 1962, p.41.

¹⁰ The need for historical scholarship to develop counter-weights to the prevailing Anglocentricism, a phenomenon understandable upto a point, but unnatural as the dominant influence, seems clear enough to this writer. As a sample of such history writings, consider the following instance, one of many but again from Judith Brown. The British regime's violence in Punjab, including the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 had inflamed all India, and led Maulana Mohamed Ali, for example, to speak of a united Hindu-Muslim national bond having been strengthened and created by the blood jointly shed. Jallianwala Bagh became a reference point for the national struggle and for Hindus, Sikhs Muslims alike. Brown nevertheless presents the "issue of military violence in the Punjab" as one "on which Hindus were particularly sensitive". (Brown, Judith, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990, p.143). To point out the error of this would probably be akin to "nationalist hagiography" to which attention has been drawn at p.3 in Brown's introduction. "Imperial justification" has also been mentioned in the introduction as a bias to be avoided but it is clear that Indian historians must seek out in addition, if they must at all, non-imperial centres of study. Perhaps Dublin? Singapore? Durban? Using British libraries is one thing, submitting theses on modern Indian history to British universities is not unproblematic, nor is submitting to the subliminal messages of Anglo-centric writers, overfree with labels like 'Hindu' or whatever. Such statements, fit snugly with the propensity of Anglo-centric scholars to deny Indian nationalism. Besides, they suit both Hindutva and the Muslim communal tradition. It enables the latter to define itself and the former to seek to appropriate Indian nationalism. In the second round this affects many Indian writers who should know better. In Rajmohan Gandhi's generally painstaking work, *The Good Boatman* (Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi 1995 p. 280), M.K. Gandhi takes to the dress not of an "Indian peasant" or Gujarat peasant" but to that of a "Hindu peasant". But examine the photograph of Allah Ditta of Gujranwala, Punjab "wounded in leg by bomb from aeroplane", reproduced in 1920 in the report of the commissioners appointed by the Congress to inquire into the Punjab wrongs. Is Gandhi's dress strikingly different?

¹¹ *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), Publications Division, New Delhi, Vol. 27, p.268.

¹² See my article, "Viceroy Reading's Offer: Barmecide's Feast", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, November 25, 1995.

¹³ See Baren Ray, "Gandhiji's campaign Against Untouchability 1933-34", *Mainstream*, New Delhi, October 1, 1994, p.21.

¹⁴ See Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1958 p. 324 and pp. 324-343

¹⁵ CWMG, Vol. 34, pages 185-186.

¹⁶ CWMG, Vol. 33 pp. 153-154. Of Burma, Gandhi wrote on March 10, 1927 "I have no doubt in my mind that Burma cannot form part of India under Swaraj".

¹⁷ See, for example, Peter Ward Fay, *India's Forgotten Army*, Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 1994 who in an otherwise meritorious work, emphasizes the difference but not the degree of subsequent convergence, even closeness, between Gandhi and Bose.

¹⁸ CWMG, Vol. 76, p.438.

¹⁹ *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, Publications Division, New Delhi (First published, 1962, Revised edn., 1974 pp. 233-235).

²⁰ *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit, p.209.

²¹ Statement on Feb. 22, 1944; *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op. cit, pp. 228-229.

²² CWMG, Vol. 76 pp. 173-175.

²³ CWMG, Vol. 76 p.37.

²⁴ *Sangharsh*, Lucknow, October 28, 1940.

²⁵ See B.V. Keskar and V.K.N. Menon, (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: A Commemoration Volume*, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1971 p.123.

²⁶ CWMG, Vol. 76, p.66.

²⁷ Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma*, Vol. 5, Publications Division, New Delhi, (First edition, 1952 Reprinted 1969) p.30.

²⁸ Nehru Jawaharlal, *The Unity of India; collected writings 1937-40*, Lindsay Drummond, London, 1948, p.127.

²⁹ Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma*, Vol.8, publications Division New Delhi (Revised Edn. 1963) p.191.

³⁰ Distortions were introduced at various levels. Some were directly contrary to fact; others took the form of too pervading an influence over scholarship relating to the nationalist movement, on account of which this scholarship definitely suffered. As an instance of a direct distortion, consider Sohan Singh Josh's work "*My Meeting with Bhagat Singh and on other Early Revolutionaries*" (Communist Party of India, New Delhi, 1976). About the death sentence on Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Raj Guru, Josh says at p. 28; "Mahatma Gandhi was expected to talk to

Irwin with regard to commuting their death sentences. But he did not utter a word to save them during the Gandhi Irwin negotiations". This is incorrect as evidenced by Gandhi's "final appeal" of March 23, 1931 to Irwin. (CWMG, Vol. 45, pp. 333-34). The letter shows that Gandhi had raised the issue earlier and was now doing so again. In his letter Gandhi wrote, inter alia: 'Seeing that I am able to inform you that the revolutionary party has assured me that, in the event of these lives being spared, that party will stay its hands, suspension of sentence pending cessation of revolutionary murders becomes in my opinion a *peremptory duty*' (emphasis supplied).

In the preface to his book, Josh thanks "Dr. G. Adhikari and Chinmohan Sehanavis for making suggestions to correct certain discrepancies". Presumably, therefore, these persons had seen Josh's manuscript before publication. Volume 45 of Gandhi's *Collected Works* had become available in 1971, that is five years before the publication of Josh's book. I am informed by Dr. Haridev Sharma of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library that he did bring the error to the notice of Dr. Adhikari as soon as Josh's work was published. Dr Adhikari admitted that he had not seen Gandhi's letter of March 23, 1931 and told him that the error would be corrected in a subsequent edition. But the damage was done. An entire generation in Punjab and elsewhere has been brought up on this error. The process took another form at the cultural level. A later generation was in a subtle manner kept from appreciating the full inter-regional and inter-cultural impact of Gandhi and the nationalist movement. Thus if say, Gopal Haldar writes about Kazi Nazrul Islam there is only a tantalizingly brief mention of the Bidrohi Kavi's Song of the Charkha and the verses on Gandhi. There are also occasional notes of apology no doubt unconscious, because Haldar is otherwise quite meticulous. The Charkha, the reader is assured, was to Nazrul "probably never anything but a symbol of national challenge". (Haldar, Gopal, *Kazi Nazrul Islam*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1973, p.36). (Fair enough, but it is arguable that it was hardly different for Gandhi). And while "In spite of his reservations, Nazrul was not unresponsive to Gandhi" the reader is assured that it is really other poems by Nazrul that were "of more touching and spontaneous nature". (Haldar, *op.cit.* pp. 50-51). This may be correct but nevertheless seems a political *ipse dixit* as no literary analysis is offered to support the statement.

It was also contemporaneously 'progressive' to write like this, so that the number of writers striking such attitudes increased, being the prism through which Gandhi and the nationalist movement increasingly began to be presented to a later generation.

³¹ See my "Narendra Deva and Indian Socialism" in Bhasin, Prem; Limaye, Madhu; Sharma, Hari Dev; Singh, Vinod Prasad (eds), *Acharya Narendra Deva: Birth Centenary Volume*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1990 pp.244-283.

³² Bhasin, Prem, "The Heritage of Acharya Narendra Deva", *Janata*, Bombay, February 21, 1971, p.4. Bhasin, who has not mentioned a source, informs me that this was stated in Gandhi's discussions with socialist leaders in 1946-47.

³³ CWMG, Vol.76, p.437.

³⁴ CWMG, Vol. 86, p.413.

³⁵ Roy, M.N., *Memoirs*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi (First published 1964, Reprint 1984) p.379.

³⁶ *Indian Annual Register*, 1941, Vol.1, p.30.

³⁷ Wavell, (A.P), *The Viceroy's Journal*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1973, p.55.

³⁸ Roy, M.N., *Men I Met*, Lalvani Publishing House, Bombay, 1968, p.27.

³⁹ CWMG, Vol. 80 p.283. This was not the first occasion that Gandhi reached out to communists or responded warmly to them. In October 1929, for instance, he had called on the Meerut conspiracy case prisoners. The prosecution of prominent communists and others was founded essentially on ground of belief in communism. Gandhi spent considerable time with the prisoners, who acknowledged: "We frankly did not expect you to visit us". Gandhi response is significant: "Of course you did not. You do not know me. I may have my differences with you. You may even cause me trouble at Congress meetings but my creed teaches me to go out of my way to show regard to my opponents and thus demonstrate to them that I can mean no ill to them. Moreover, in the present case by coming here I wanted in my humble way to show in a practical manner that this prosecution is wrong and that in any event it is atrocious that you should be put under a heavy handicap by being tried in an inconvenient place like Meerut where you cannot get the facilities obtainable in the presidency towns for conducting a proper defence".

(CWMG, Vol.42, p.106). He went on to tell the Meerut prisoners: “If it were in my hands I would withdraw the charge, as in my scheme of things, holding opinions of any kind would be perfectly permissible”. (CWMG, Vol.42, p.58).

⁴⁰ *Sechaba*, London, May 1988, pp.8-9.

⁴¹ *Indian Express*, New Delhi, August 8, 1995.

⁴² *Indian Express*, New Delhi, August 5, 1995.

⁴³ Kabir, Humayun, “Essentials of the Ideology”, in Parikh, Ramlal (ed): *Souvenir, 66th Session, Indian National Congress*, Reception Committee, Bhavnagar, 1961, pp.33-34.

⁴⁴ The phenomenon is perhaps not unique to India. One may examine in this connection the work of Japanese scholars from American universities on the Japanese role in the Second World War and the extent to which this unquestioningly reflects American mythologies.

⁴⁵ *Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose*, op.cit., p.145.

⁴⁶ *Indian Annual Register*, 1939, Vol. II, p.317.

⁴⁷ *Indian Annual Register*, 1943, Vol. II, p.10.

⁴⁸ Pirzada, Syed Sharifuddin (ed), *Foundations of Pakistan, All India Muslim League Documents: 1906-1947*, Vol. II, National Publishing House, Karachi, 1970, p.411.

⁴⁹ See, for example, CWMG, Vol. 24, p.145 and pp.148-149, Vol. 32, p.515. Gandhi opposed induced conversion, including Shuddhi and Tabligh, saying “the real shuddhi would consist in each one trying to arrive at perfection in this or her own faith”. Regardless of all this, the inaccuracy is repeated by Bimal Prasad along with other errors in his contribution in Amit Kumar Gupta (ed) *Myth and Reality: The Struggle for Freedom in India 1945-47*, (NMML/Manohar, New Delhi, 1987). My letter to Bimal Prasad regarding the errors did not evoke any response.

⁵⁰ Gauba, K.L., *The Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi*, Jaico, Bombay, 1969, Appendix C, pp.390-392.

⁵¹ CWMG, Vol. 82, p.334 and Vol. 85, p.135. The notion of Khuda-Ishwar occurs in Gandhi’s writings at least as early as in 1909. (See *Hindu-Muslim Riots*, in CWMG, Vol. 9, p.134).

⁵² Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Vol. II, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958, p.768.

⁵³ Menon, V.P. *The Transfer of Power in India*, Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1957, p.214.

⁵⁴ See Jagat Singh Bright, “The Relevance of Allah Bux”, *Janata*, Bombay, August 6, 1995. See also a rudimentary biography by the same writer published within a few weeks of Allah Baksh’s assassination: *India’s Nationalist No.1: Mr. Allah Bux*, Lahore, 1943, pp. 56-57 and pp.61-63.

⁵⁵ Campbell-Johnson, Alan, *Mission with Mountbatten*, Robert Hale, London, 1951, p.283.

⁵⁶ Gandhi’s remarks on caste as an ‘evil’ are made for example, in *Young India*, June 4, 1931. (see CWMG, Vol. 46 p.302). See also my brief survey of some of these writings in “Unfolding of Gandhi’s Thought: The Undermining of Varna”, *Janata*, Bombay, Oct. 8, 1995. Urmila Phadnis when making her remarks on Gandhi and the caste system at a seminar in 1968, (the proceedings of which are reproduced in Biswas, S.C. (ed) *Gandhi: Theory and Practice: Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, K.P. Bagchi & Co., Calcutta 1969, reprinted 1990, p.559) perhaps did not have the advantage of the materials put together in the several volumes of the Collected Works of Gandhi that have since appeared. Till the end of 1968 the Collected Works had reached only up to the year 1926. Scattered uncollected sources were a serious handicap for a later generation of scholars which did not quite know Gandhi but whose vocation seemed to compel them to take positions. Even this partly extenuating factor cannot be invoked on behalf of Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany in Mendelsohn, Oliver and Baxi, Upendra (ed) *The Rights of Subordinated Peoples*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994. See, for example, Mendelsohn’s and Vicziany’s remark on Gandhi and caste at p.108. Incidentally, these two writers, in their otherwise well-written paper, quote at p.75 partially from Gandhi’s speech at the Round Table Conference in 1931 in a manner capable of suggesting that he was denying absolutely the political rights of “untouchables” rather than merely their *separate rights*.

⁵⁷ See Madhu Limaye, *Manu, Gandhi and Ambedkar* (Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 3-10) who compares the record of the Simon Commission’s discussions with Ambedkar with the provisions of the 1950 constitution which the latter helped frame.

⁵⁸ CWMG, Vol. 80, pp.223-4.

⁵⁹ CWMG, Vol. 84, p.247.

⁶⁰ CWMG, Vol. 86, p.484.

⁶¹ CWMG, Vol. 88, p.156.

⁶² See G.N.S. Raghavan's article, "To Each His Ambedkar", *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, July 5, 1994. See also Rajmohan Gandhi, who (in *The Good Boatman*, op.cit., p.261 and p.480 n20) relies on M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology*, Sage, New Delhi 1993, pp.180-1. I have not been able to examine the original Marathi biography of Ambedkar by C.B. Khairmode on which Raghavan and Gore appear to have relied.

⁶³ Rajya Sabha Debates, September 6, 1954.

⁶⁴ *Idem*

⁶⁵ In spite of Ambedkar's own reassessment of his position, (and in spite also of post-1947 developments and Ambedkar's subsequent differences with the Nehru government as expressed, for instance, in the speech delivered by Ambedkar on September 6, 1954), the Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Ravinder Kumar, asserts that while Ambedkar's:

"political protest *against the Mahatma* found expression in the organization of the Republican party, his moral protest *against him* took the shape of entering the fold of Buddhism and recommending to his followers, largely confined to the Dalit elite, that they do likewise". (emphasis supplied) (Ravinder Kumar, "Resurgence in the Ganga Valley-1", *The Hindu*, New Delhi, July 11, 1995). There is admittedly no indication from this article that Kumar was aware of Ambedkar's speech of September 6, 1954.

But Kumar must surely have known that the Republican party was formed after both Gandhi and Ambedkar were dead though the latter had started planning for it after parting ways with the Nehru Government, Ambedkar in fact converted to Buddhism eight years after Gandhi's death.

⁶⁶ See the account by the eminent socialist N.G. Goray, "Red Sunday in Poona", *Congress Socialist*, May 14, 1938. (Reprinted, *Janata*, Bombay, May Day, 1994). Goray wrote:

"Who attacked the May Day procession? Who assaulted men like Senapati Bapat and Sjt Kankar? Who tore up the national flag? The Hindu Mahasabhaites and the Hedgewar boys did all this. There, are they also acting as benchmen of the foreign imperialism? The answer to this question can only be unqualified affirmative... By the intensive use of intensely communal and completely cloistered propaganda, the leadership has succeeded in creating troops of yesmen to whom democratic and open-minded discussion seems to be a senseless waste of time. They have been taught to hate the Muslims in general as public enemy No. 1, to hate the Congress and its flag which is pro-Muslim, to hate socialists and communists who are anti-Hinduism. (Care, of course, is taken to evade any attempt at defining Hinduism)".

⁶⁷ *Indian Annual Register*, 1938, Vol. I, pp.269-270.

⁶⁸ 'Gandhian institutions' such as they are, must also share responsibility for this; they call for separate treatment. Many such institutions have a chronologically limited view of Gandhi, not going far beyond *Hind Swaraj* (1909) and his *Autobiography* which brings the story upto 1920-21. This limitation has perpetuated some misconceptions about Gandhi's economic ideas, most people being familiar only with his earlier formulations. The notions introduced and fostered by many Gandhian institutions are not much fairer to Gandhi than those sometimes introduced by his critics.

Even apart from this, many of these institutions are now quite sick. This should be obvious, for one thing, from a lack of a significant educational initiative on their part against the diverse communalist tendencies which have proliferated.