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Active Awakening: *Swaraj* in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and in Savarkar's *The Indian War
of Independence*

By

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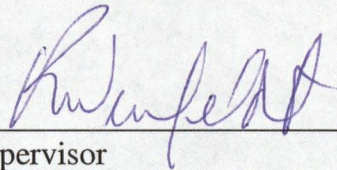
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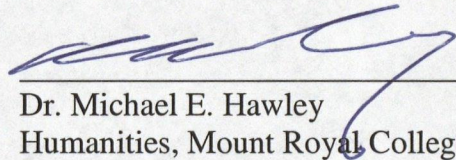
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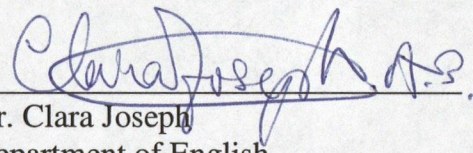
The Undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, a thesis entitled, "Active Awakening: *Swaraj* in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* and in Savarkar's *The Indian War of Independence*", submitted by Erin K. O'Brien in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful grandparents: Brett, Yvonne (Bonnie), Robert (Bob), and Doris.

“The history of our grandparents is remembered not with rose petals but in the laughter and tears of their children and their children’s children. It is into us that the lives of grandparents have gone. It is in us that their history becomes a future.”

ABSTRACT

In the early decades of the 20th century, the Indian intelligentsia was trying to understand the effect of British colonialism on India. Political, social, economic, and religious ideas coming from the west challenged aspects of India's indigenous structures. The response of many Indians was to assert their independence and move toward *swaraj* or self-rule. This involved Indians reacting to the British presence, often by asserting themselves in religious, social, and political forums. Different groups advocated different interpretations of *swaraj* and tried to convert the population to their ideas. In this thesis, I wish to compare the views of Gandhi and Savarkar on *swaraj* (self-rule). Both men saw *swaraj* as essential for India's self-development. While the term *swaraj* is frequently given a purely political meaning (political independence), it is clear that for Gandhi *swaraj* was a religious concept as well as a political one. I will argue that this is also true for Savarkar, Savarkar's later claims notwithstanding.

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INTRODUCTION

I have walked to Savarkar's house. I have gone out of my way to win him over.
But I have failed.¹

-Gandhi

What was the use of a universal faith that instead of smoothening the
ferociousness and brutal egoism of other nations only excited their lust by leaving
India defenseless and unsuspecting?²

-Savarkar

The preoccupation of Indian politicians and intelligentsia in the early decades of the 20th century was the extent to which British colonialism should exist in India. British rule had contributed to religious and political upheaval as 'western' political, social, economic, and religious ideas challenged indigenous systems and ideas. The reaction of Indian elites was to assert their independence in religious, social, and political forums. The goal of their initiative was to achieve self-rule or *swaraj*. Different groups sought to sway the populace in regards to the rightness of their interpretations of *swaraj* which, in some cases, attempted to marry European ideas and Indian traditions. Two examples of such an endeavor can be found in M.K. Gandhi and V.D. Savarkar.

Indians viewed their experience of British colonialism in various ways. At best, the colonial government had provided infrastructure and constitutional values; at worst, it had ruined India and needed to be removed by any means.³ The opinions of Gandhi and Savarkar in regards to the colonial government in the first decade of the 20th century loosely follow the distinction between the moderates and the extremists in the Indian

¹ Gandhi, M.K. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1988), Vol.70, 248. Hereinafter referred to as *CW*.

² Savarkar, V.D. *Hindutva* [Sixth Edition]. (New Delhi: Bharti Sahitya Sadan, 1989), 25.

³ Gandhi, M.K. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*. Anthony Parel Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xviii. Hereinafter referred to as *HS*.

National Congress (INC).⁴ Like Moderates within the INC, Gandhi supported petitioning the British parliament to relinquish some control over Indian governance to increase their rights.⁵ By the time Gandhi had written *Hind Swaraj* he had rejected waiting for the government to grant Indian's independence, but was reluctant to admit that Indians were ready to rule themselves. The goal of his treatise was to guide them so that they would be ready. He believed in the importance of constitutional values for the future of India, but felt that Indians needed more experience before assuming control of their country. He was concerned that Indians would follow the British into folly by imitating their way of life and instead preached a system that had them embracing religion and simple living.⁶ Gandhi insisted that the way to independence was through non-violence or *ahimsa* and advocated returning to simple village life in order to attain independence.

Savarkar believed that Indians were ready for complete independence from Great Britain. Savarkar sympathized with the notion that the INC had become a "safety valve" for anti-British sentiments and that extreme measures had become necessary.⁷

The Extremists stood for swaraj defined as complete sovereignty achieved through constitutional means if possible, but through other means if necessary.⁸

Savarkar was prepared to use violence. He also thought that Hindus should take over all existing infrastructure to strengthen their economic position. He insisted that they had the resources and the intellectual "know-how" to do so.

⁴ Zavos, John. *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 70. The Indian National Congress was an organization run by "prominent professional people, as well as landowning and commercial men". It was conducted like a democracy with debate, discussion and voting.

⁵ Gandhi *HS*, xxx. Moderates wanted "self-government within the empire, achieved through the constitutional means of gradual reform 'granted' by the imperial parliament".

⁶ Gandhi *HS*, xxx.

⁷ Keer, Dhananjay. *Veer Savarkar*. (Bombay: Popular Prakashan Private Ltd., 1988), 1.

⁸ Gandhi *HS*, xxx.

In this thesis, I wish to compare the views of Gandhi and Savarkar on *swaraj* (self-rule). Both men saw *swaraj* as essential for India's self-development. While the term *swaraj* is frequently given a purely political meaning (political independence), it is clear that for Gandhi *swaraj* was a religious concept as well as a political one. I will argue that this is also true for Savarkar, Savarkar's later claims notwithstanding.

In unpacking the views of Gandhi and Savarkar, I will be depending, to a large extent, on a close reading of Savarkar's *The Indian War of Independence, 1857* and Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*. Both texts deal with problems created or made worse by the British presence. The dependency on these two texts is driven by my view that they serve as a counterpoint to each other in some ways, but that they are similar in others. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Gandhi may have had Savarkar in mind when he wrote *Hind Swaraj*.⁹ Both texts were written near the beginning of each writer's professional career and were influenced by other political and religious scholars around them. We can see the foundation of Savarkar's and Gandhi's later work in these texts.

From the perspective of the British government, descriptions of the two pieces resemble each other and both were banned for fear of causing sedition. The critics in Great Britain hated Savarkar's book, calling it "mischievous". One reviewer wrote,

The object of the author is clearly to incite the Indian readers to rebellion by showing how far it succeeded in 1857, and to encourage a repetition of the murders and massacres of the British which were then perpetrated.¹⁰

Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* was not widely known until 1919, but at the time of its publication, it too was considered seditious by the British.¹¹ Gandhi was seen as holding

⁹ Gandhi *HS*, xxvii. "It is difficult to estimate the extent of Savarkar's role in the formulation of the philosophy of *Hind Swaraj*: D. Keer, the biographer of both Gandhi and Savarkar, goes so far as to claim that it was written in response to Savarkar. This is clearly an exaggeration, but there is definitely some truth to it."

¹⁰ "A Loathsome Book" *The Academy*. June 24, 1911.

power over the “always emotional, intensely ignorant” masses that in turn saw him as “no mere political leader but a saint who speaks to them”.¹² For his control over these citizens he was considered dangerous.

Like Savarkar, Gandhi was believed to be inciting hatred of the British through his teachings about western civilization. This “hatred of western civilization” made his ideas “the more formidable school of Indian extremism”.¹³ From Great Britain’s perspective, non-cooperation had the same roots as Savarkar’s justifiable violence.

It [non-cooperation] connotes the fundamental conflict between two civilizations, historically, ethically, and socially remote and antagonistic, which underlay the Mutiny more than half a century ago, and in more recent times the growth of extreme forms of nationalism, partly under cover of a Hindu religious and patriotic revival.¹⁴

In essence, British authorities saw both books as designed to persuade people and to compel them to act against British rule.

In Chapter One, I will provide a brief history of Gandhi’s life preceding the writing of *Hind Swaraj*. This will detail those mentors and experiences that influenced his views on *swaraj*. Chapter two will outline his understanding of *swaraj* at the level of the individual, society and nation. Chapter three will examine the life of Savarkar preceding the writing of *The Indian War of Independence 1857*. This will detail the mentors and experiences that influenced Savarkar in his understanding of *swaraj*. Chapter four will outline his interpretation of *swaraj* at the level of the individual, society

¹¹ Gandhi *HS*, lviii. Parel writes that until 1919, *Hind Swaraj* was relatively unknown.

¹² Chirol, Sir Valentine. “India Old and New. I. Mr. Gandhi’s Teaching: Hatred of Western Civilization” *Times*: Dec. 23, 1920, 11.

¹³ Chirol, Sir Valentine. “India Old and New. I. Mr. Gandhi’s Teaching: Hatred of Western Civilization” *Times*: Dec. 23, 1920, 11.

¹⁴ Chirol, Sir Valentine. “India Old and New. I. Mr. Gandhi’s Teaching: Hatred of Western Civilization” *Times*: Dec. 23, 1920, 11.

and nation. In the concluding chapter (Chapter five), I will analyze and compare in what ways Savarkar and Gandhi's visions of *swaraj* are religious as well as political in nature.

Methodology

This thesis will deal with an analysis of the concept of *swaraj* in both V.D. Savarkar and M.K. Gandhi as revealed in two highly influential texts, *Hind Swaraj* and *The Indian War of Independence 1857*. For this study, I have found the disciplinary context of the History of Religions and specifically the approach of Robert D. Baird a useful one. His approach combines a definition of religion with a definition of history.

The way he defines religion takes into consideration the difficulties in creating an unambiguous, complete definition of the term. He does not seek an essential definition but opts for a "functional" definition; this is "the act of stipulating that a word means a certain thing".¹⁵ It is semi-arbitrary in that he chooses the definition, but from a number of options already in existence in common understandings.¹⁶ The definition is not rated in terms of completeness, but rather is rated for its "applicability and usefulness".¹⁷ The definition is not designed to provide a comprehensive view of religion, nor an essential definition, but to set the boundary of the term for the academic task at hand.

For his use, Baird focuses on religion as "ultimate concern"; it is a thing which is "*more important than anything else in the universe for the person involved*".¹⁸ "We have chosen to limit our study of history to the religious question, that is, what has been and is

¹⁵ Baird, Robert D. *Category Formation and the History of Religions*. (The Netherlands: Mouton & Co. N.V., 1971), 6.

¹⁶ Baird, 7.

¹⁷ Baird, 7.

¹⁸ Baird, 18. His italics.

of ultimate concern to men as individuals and in community.”¹⁹ What one attempts to do in asking the question of ultimate concern is to provide an analysis of religious claims and their function in the lives of individuals and communities.²⁰ Baird’s goal is to “study the ultimate concerns of persons and communities in their historical givenness, ascertaining how subordinate things and penultimate matters relate to that most important concern”.²¹ In other words, he wants to describe and interpret the human past. Baird connects religion to peoples’ circumstances or histories. Religion is not a “primordial attachment” to an unchanging tradition, but rather religions change over time due to different situations.²²

My study is limited to *swaraj* as interpreted by V.D. Savarkar and M.K. Gandhi and to the ideologies supporting their distinct interpretations of this term. I will attempt to demonstrate through their example, that their goal, *swaraj*, meant more than political autonomy alone, that for both *swaraj* was a religious as well as a political goal. Most studies of Gandhi, and the little that has been done on Savarkar with respect to *swaraj*, tend to be one-sided, treating *swaraj* as primarily political. I hope to correct such a one-sided interpretation through my analysis of the vision of both men.

Literature Review

While much has been written about *swaraj*, particularly with respect to Gandhi we do not have an outright comparison of *Hind Swaraj* and *The Indian War of Independence 1857*, nor do we have any sustained studies of Savarkar’s understanding of

¹⁹ Baird, 18.

²⁰ Baird, 19.

²¹ Baird, 35.

²² Van der Veer, Peter. *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), x.

swaraj. While we do not have much scholarship that deals with a comparison of Savarkar and Gandhi, particularly with respect to the two texts at issue, there are a number of sources that are particularly useful for a study such as this.

The primary piece for my study of Gandhi is *Hind Swaraj* (1997). This is a formal piece of writing by a man who tended to write short articles and letters to explain his beliefs. Useful in interpreting *Hind Swaraj* are other works by Gandhi, particularly *Gandhi an Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1993)²³ and *My Religion* (1955), a collection of Gandhi's writings specifically dealing with religious ideas. An indispensable resource for my thesis is the material found within the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (1967). The ninety volumes cover all of his concerns and I will be referring to them to gain insight on his views of Savarkar.

There is a great deal written about Gandhi. What follows is a select few works that I have found useful for my research. One particularly beneficial biography on Gandhi is Judith Brown's *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (1989). This is the most thorough biography on Gandhi to date. David Arnold's book entitled *Gandhi: Profiles in Power* (2001) is a modern critical analysis of Gandhi as he is represented in Indian history. Some of the topics found in his critical analysis will emerge in my thesis.

Some of the articles that have been instrumental for my paper deal specifically with religion and nationalism. The most important of these is Parel's *Gandhi, Freedom and Self-Rule* (2000). His discussion centers on the multi-sided meaning of *swaraj* and the ideas contained in *swaraj*. Gandhi's nationalist goals are set out in clear detail in

²³ It is not a complete autobiography in the sense that he began compiling his experiences in 1925, published them in 1927-1929, and did not die until 1948.

“Ultimacy as Unifier in Gandhi” by Boyd H. Wilson.²⁴ In this article, Wilson provides an interpretation of different terms appropriated by Gandhi such as *satyagraha*, *swadeshi*, *sarvodaya*, and *swaraj*. To understand Gandhi’s views of traditional Indian literature, I refer to a piece by J.I. (Hans) Bakker that focuses on Gandhi’s interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita* called *Gandhi and the Gita* (1993).

The primary piece for my analysis of Savarkar is the text *The Indian War of Independence 1857* (1909). As the introduction to the text states: “His object in writing this history was, subject to historical accuracy, to inspire his people with a burning desire to rise again and wage a second and successful war to liberate their motherland.”²⁵ For a thorough analysis of the text, other writings of Savarkar were beneficial such as his ideological text *Hindutva* (1989), and his descriptive text *The Story of My Transportation for Life* (1950).

Not a great deal has been written on Savarkar. A few studies have been helpful such as Dhananjay Keer’s beneficial biography of his life in *Veer Savarkar* (1988). This places Savarkar in his historical context and provides elaboration on his main ideas. Recently, a number of studies of Hindu nationalism have appeared that are helpful for my project.²⁶ Thomas Blom Hansen’s *The Saffron Wave* (1999) and Christophe Jaffrelot’s *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (1996) illustrate Savarkar’s religious nationalism as compared to other Hindu nationalists in India.

²⁴ Wilson, Boyd H. “Ultimacy as Unifier in Gandhi” in Robert D. Baird, Ed. *Religion in Modern India*. (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1998), 402-421.

²⁵ Savarkar V.D. *The Indian War of Independence* [Tenth Edition] (New Delhi: Rajdhani Granthagar, 1986), xiii. Hereinafter referred to as *IWI*.

²⁶ A few examples of this are Tapan Basu’s text *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags*; Daniel Gold “Organized Hinduisms” *Fundamentalisms Observed*; Walther Andersen and Shridhar Dalme *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Sawyamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*; Sumit Sarkar’s *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism, History*; John Zavos’ *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*.

One of the most useful texts for my research is Van der Veer's *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (1994). Although it does not treat Savarkar and Gandhi in a comparative fashion, it provides extensive discussion of both characters separately and religious nationalism in India in general. Van der Veer provides examples of how language, religion, and sacred places are used to justify the nationalist cause.²⁷ I will be using some of these themes to compare the writings of Gandhi and Savarkar.

²⁷ For a discussion on the religious modes of communication as used in nationalist discourse see page 80. Concepts of time and sacred spaces as used in the nationalist cause can be found on pages 140-146.

CHAPTER 1: MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI

The ideas found in *Hind Swaraj* were informed by Gandhi's life experiences. These can be separated into three distinct periods: his childhood in India, his period of study in England, and his activist period in South Africa. His childhood left him with the conviction that despite religious differences, there was a moral level on which people could communicate. During his time as a student in Great Britain, he explored western and Indian philosophies eventually adopting ideas from each. In South Africa, his position as community leader necessitated that he develop a definition of religion and define his methods of political activism. *Hind Swaraj* can be seen as his attempt to complete that task. Found within the text are the ideas from Rajchandbhai, Tolstoy, Ruskin, as well as many others that Gandhi adapted to address the situation of Indians living under colonial rule.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, the youngest of six children.²⁸ His interests in politics and religion stem from his two parents. His father was interested in policy and government. His mother was a devout Vaishnava who went to the temple daily and fasted for the welfare of her family.²⁹ Gandhi's childhood home was filled with people from different regions and religions.³⁰

[This] was a significant determinant of his ultimate convictions as to the nature of truth, of his personal tolerance and high esteem of all faiths with their particular insights into the mystery of truth, and for his supreme dedication to non-violence.³¹

²⁸ Brown, Judith. *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 15. Hereinafter referred to as *GPH*.

²⁹ Gandhi, M.K. *My Religion*. Bharatan Kumarappa, Ed. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1955), 5. Hereinafter referred to as *MR*. Judith Brown also wrote about Gandhi's caregiver who recited the *Ramayana* to him to ward off nightmares (Brown, 15).

³⁰ Brown *GPH*, 16-18. The family even dined with some of their Jain friends and Gandhi was taught by a Parsi.

³¹ Brown *GPH*, 18.

In his mother's devotion, there was room for Shiva and Rama as well as for Vishnu.³²

His parent's socialization with people from Muslim, Parsi and Jain backgrounds taught Gandhi that Hinduism was not the only acceptable religion, but one expression of truth among many.³³ This expansive notion of religion allowed for a similar expansion later in who could be included as citizens of the nation. Identification with people from different religions provided the empathy needed to see different peoples as citizens of the same nation. In Gandhi's later philosophies this identification with others became manifest as a rejection of those caste practices that could be seen as separating people from each other.³⁴

To seek out financial stability, he left his community to study law in Great Britain.³⁵ As a result of leaving India he was considered an outcaste because other members thought that he would be unable to resist the diet and drinking practices of Europeans.³⁶ The Vegetarian Society in Great Britain provided a support system and moral reasons for Gandhi to continue with the religious vegetarianism followed by his parents.³⁷ Despite the dedication to preserving his diet, Gandhi went through periods where he tried to assimilate to British culture, clothes, mannerisms, etc. Over time he realized that he would remain an Indian despite any outer changes.³⁸

Gandhi was drawn to Indian culture by British citizens who knew more than he did about India's religious philosophies. Theosophists he met in London re-introduced

³² Gandhi *MR*, 7.

³³ Gandhi *MR*, 7.

³⁴ Brown *GPH*, 18.

³⁵ Brown *GPH*, 22.

³⁶ Brown *GPH*, 22.

³⁷ Brown *GPH*, 24, 16. As an adolescent, he tried eating meat, but refrained from continuing because of his feelings of guilt.

³⁸ Brown *GPH*, 24.

him to his own culture and religious texts, such as Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Song Celestial* (a translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*) and *Light of Asia* (a story of the life of the Buddha).³⁹ These texts convinced Gandhi that Hinduism was as moral as any other religion. What Gandhi saw as fundamental Hindu concepts, compassion, self-control, and non-violence, would come to direct his work for attaining *swaraj*.

These concepts were not limited to the Indian context, rather he came to think that they could also be found within the Christian religion. Gandhi became friends with many Christians in England. As they tried to argue for the superiority of their religion, Gandhi had to defend his own religion from their attacks and, as a result, he became increasingly swayed by what he saw as Hinduism's teachings. He compared the two religions to see what "truth" he could find in Christianity and what he saw as "superfluous".⁴⁰ He doubted the necessity of a person to be Christian in order to go to heaven and disagreed with the idea that Jesus was God incarnate.⁴¹ Even though he dismissed such ideas, certain passages of the New Testament, such as the Sermon on the Mount, were complementary to Gandhi's understanding of Hinduism.⁴² He thanked Christians for "awakening" his religious curiosity.

What came out of Gandhi's time in Great Britain? Although "Gandhi as lawyer" is not how most remember him, his interest in policies, procedures, and the search for rights within the law became the tools he used to advocate for Indian rights.⁴³ In 1891, he was called to the bar and returned to India.⁴⁴ His studies, rather than convincing him

³⁹ Brown *GPH*, 25.

⁴⁰ Gandhi *MR*, 10.

⁴¹ Gandhi *MR*, 12-13.

⁴² Gandhi *MR*, 10. The focus of the Sermon on the Mount was in loving each other. "That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly."

⁴³ Early on he honed his skills in the Vegetarian movement.

⁴⁴ Brown *GPH*, 26.

of the superiority of Britain and Christianity, had the reverse effect of interesting him in India, Indian religions, and the Indian people. However, his homecoming would be short-lived as monetary necessity drew him to South Africa.

His initial reason for going to South Africa (mediating a dispute between two Indian businessmen) was overtaken by the need to resolve disputes between the Indian diaspora and the colonial governing body.⁴⁵ Subjected to restricted rights, the Indian “coolies” (as they were called) needed a leader that could bring unity to the diverse Indian community.⁴⁶ His task, as the spokesperson for that community, was to utilize his skills to advocate for rights (such as petitioning and printing newspapers).⁴⁷

As Gandhi tried to bring unity and political rights to the South African Indian community he felt compelled to seek out someone who could provide him with moral guidance. Gandhi began a correspondence with Rajchandbhai.⁴⁸ Rajchandbhai was the closest thing Gandhi had to a religious guru.⁴⁹

His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness, and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always confide to me his innermost thoughts. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore, he was my refuge.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Brown *GPH*, 31.

⁴⁶ Brown *GPH*, 32, 44. The restrictions they encountered were in everything from emmigrating to South Africa, problems with taxation, the inability to access trade, and limits on ways to make money. To unite the Indian community in South Africa he had to convince people of different religions to join together. This was made more difficult because the South African community referred to different cultures by different terms. The majority of the Indians were known as “coolies”, but the Muslims were known as “Arabs” and the Parsis were known as “Persians”. (Arnold, David. *Gandhi*, London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001, 46) In 1906, “The Black Act” demanded that all Indians living within the colony register with the government and provide their fingerprints. (Brown, 45) In 1913, he understood that the colonial government was bargaining in bad faith when they decided that only Christian marriages were valid. (Arnold, 58)

⁴⁷ Arnold, 51. As his petitions failed, he became more reliant on the power of people and the power of perception as found in the press. He launched “Indian Opinion” to try and bring the issues facing the South African Indians to a larger population.

⁴⁸ Arnold, 32. This correspondence began in 1893-1895.

⁴⁹ Arnold, 32.

⁵⁰ Gandhi *MR*, 11-12.

He was a successful Jain businessman but, “these things were not the center round which his life revolved. That center was the passion to see God face to face”.⁵¹ He proved to Gandhi that one could be active in life and remain focused on God. Their discussion of moral and religious issues helped Gandhi develop his idea of religion.⁵² The answers that Rajchandbhai provided drew Gandhi closer to the Indian traditions.

He also looked to the writer Leo Tolstoy for guidance, a move that culminated in a correspondence between the two men in 1909. Author Martin Green wrote that both Gandhi and Tolstoy attacked the “logic of power”.⁵³ By this he meant that for Gandhi and Tolstoy, concepts of dominance and imperialism were rejected for the ascetic virtues of simplicity, religiosity, and non-violence. The virtue of simplicity pitted them against those who supported materialism and industry.⁵⁴ In *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, Tolstoy argued that people should not try to increase and hoard wealth through industry, but should return to manual labour and agriculture for sustenance.⁵⁵ He believed that this form of labour kept one self-sufficient. Economic freedom would bring about political freedom.

Religion also helped ordinary people attain political power. As Green suggests,

[It]...binds people together and motivates the group not at or from the peak of its pyramid but from its base, not for conquest but for resistance, not in pride of greatness, but in solidarity of faith.⁵⁶

Tolstoy and Gandhi understood religion as a foil to empires whose strength came from the “peak of the pyramid”. Tolstoy longed for solidarity with others and for the spiritual

⁵¹ Gandhi *MR*, 11.

⁵² Arnold, 32.

⁵³ Green, Martin. *Tolstoy and Gandhi: Men of Peace*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 3.

⁵⁴ Arnold, 54.

⁵⁵ Mounce, H.O. *Tolstoy on Aesthetics: What is Art?* (England: Ashgate Publishing Inc, 2001), 76-77.

⁵⁶ Green, 4.

strength that came from appealing to God for help to overcome life's obstacles. This view distinguished him from proponents of rationality and the Enlightenment.

[R]eason is fruitful only amongst those who already stand in the right relation to the world.... It is only those who have the right attitude to God and their neighbour who have reason to believe that life has meaning.⁵⁷

People could take solace in religion, but in turn they had a duty to serve as moral agents of God. As agents, people were to act benevolently in any conflict.

Summing up Tolstoy's beliefs for his Indian audience he [Gandhi] noted his [Tolstoy's] insistence on returning good for evil, and on refraining from fighting or wielding political power; man's primary duty is to his Creator, and therefore he should always concentrate on his duties rather than his rights.⁵⁸

A person's duty to God was to treat others with respect.

John Ruskin's work influenced Gandhi on similar issues. Gandhi understood the meaning of Ruskin's philosophy to be that "the good of the individual is contained in the good of all".⁵⁹ He translated Ruskin's work *Unto This Last* into Gujarati calling it *Sarvodaya* or "the welfare of all".⁶⁰ The "welfare of all" was not simply food, clothing and shelter, but also included things such as art and religion.⁶¹ For Gandhi, providing art was tantamount to supporting religion.

There are two aspects of things- the outward and the inward.... The outward has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward. All true art is thus the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are the expressions of the inner spirit of man.⁶²

⁵⁷ Mounce, 6. As with Gandhi, Tolstoy went through a spiritual crisis that resulted in a subordination of intellectual, aristocratic concerns to a concern for God.

⁵⁸ Mounce, 76-77.

⁵⁹ Arnold, 54.

⁶⁰ Arnold, 54.

⁶¹ Ruskin, *Laws of Fesole*. (New York: Allworth Press, 1996), 37-39. Ruskin concentrated on describing artists and what they gave to their communities. He insisted that good artists were those people who, delighted by the reality around them, were inspired to describe the various parts of the greater whole. "The art of man is the expression of his rational and disciplined delight in the forms and laws of the creation of which he forms a part." "It may only be the praise of a shell or a stone; it may be the praise of a hero; it may be the praise of God."

⁶² Gandhi *CW*, 25:248-249.

Gandhi insisted that art and religion “have to serve the identical aims of moral and spiritual elevation.”⁶³

It was from Ruskin’s work that Gandhi adopted his concept of what a nation ought to be. Ruskin and Gandhi believed that nations had a duty to provide their people with food, shelter, necessities, and luxuries. Luxuries referred, not to material goods, but to things such as art and time for spiritual reflection.⁶⁴ Governments, in their operations, should act “paternally” to make sure that everyone reaped the benefits whether they be social, political or economic.⁶⁵ The purpose of government was to, “direct us in our occupations, protect us against our follies, and visit us in our distresses”.⁶⁶

Gandhi appropriated aspects of both Tolstoy’s and Ruskin’s philosophies into his non-violent *satyagraha* movement. The term *satyagraha* means literally “holding on to Truth” or “Truth-force”.⁶⁷ The movement’s goal was to show unjust people their errors by appealing to their moral sensibilities.⁶⁸ To train his followers in this type of problem-solving and to ready them for prison, Gandhi created self-sufficient settlements. The Phoenix Settlement (1904), like the later Tolstoy farm (1910) encouraged people to develop their inner spirit through communal living and the sharing of labour. Gandhi

⁶³ Gandhi *CW*, 48:149.

⁶⁴ John Ruskin. *A Joy Forever*. (London: Ballantyne Press, 1962), 142. Luxury refers specifically, in Ruskin, to things such as art and time for spiritual self-reflection. Hereinafter referred to as *JF*.

⁶⁵ Ruskin *JF*, 149.

⁶⁶ Ruskin *JF*, 150.

⁶⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 85, 85n. Gandhi describes this term as “love-force” and “soul-force”. Parel goes into considerable detail expressing how Gandhi coined this term by calling for his readers within the *Indian Opinion* to send in their submissions to name his movement. Of these he choose *sadagraha* (firmness in a good cause), but changed it to *satya* (truth).

⁶⁸ Arnold, 57. Gandhi wanted the Indian movement to have an Indian name even if he obtained many of his ideas from the writings of Tolstoy.

wanted to create an inclusive, self-sustaining, working community of like-minded individuals.⁶⁹

Throughout his experiments with communal living, he continued to petition the government for more rights. On one of Gandhi's petitioning trips he produced *Hind Swaraj*. *Hind Swaraj* is the closest thing among his writings to Gandhian political theory. It was written in ten days, from November 13-22, 1909 aboard the Kildonan Castle while Gandhi was traveling back to South Africa from London.⁷⁰ It was first published in *Indian Opinion* (1909) and then as a booklet (1910). In it, Gandhi expressed his frustration with modern civilization and outlined his plan for Indians to recover the ideals of a true civilization.⁷¹ He felt that his time in South Africa gave him a freedom or distance from the kind of restrictions, caste and otherwise, that he might have faced in India.

It was here that he conducted his first experiments in developing a sense of all-India consciousness free from the harmful effects of modern civilisation, undue regionalism, and the worst manifestations of the caste-mentality.⁷²

Hind Swaraj was written to affirm his method of struggle in South Africa and also to show that it could be applied to struggles in India.⁷³ Shortly after its publication in India, it was proscribed. Gandhi responded by creating an English translation, the only one of his works that Gandhi wrote and personally translated into English.⁷⁴

His audience was mixed, from British citizens, to Indian moderates, to revolutionaries.⁷⁵ It was aimed particularly at Extremists, in the hope of persuading them

⁶⁹ Arnold, 55.

⁷⁰ Gandhi *HS*, xiv.

⁷¹ Brown *GPH*, 65.

⁷² Gandhi *HS*, xxiii.

⁷³ Arnold, 64.

⁷⁴ Brown *GPH*, 65, Gandhi *HS*, xiii.

⁷⁵ Brown *GPH*, 65.

that violent action should be rejected.⁷⁶ At one level, the extremists seemed to be after *swaraj* like Gandhi, but on another level the means they proposed to attain it, in his view, supported the system that Gandhi wanted to destroy.⁷⁷ Another aim of the book, in its English translation, was to get British citizens to dismiss any claims that *Hind Swaraj* had made Indians hostile to them.⁷⁸ Gandhi believed that the British would support his movement to address problems created by modern civilization. He chose the dialogue format, between an Editor and a Reader, hoping that this would be persuasive.⁷⁹ By setting out two distinct options to attain *swaraj*, he was sure that people would choose his approach.⁸⁰ I now turn to a discussion of Gandhi's understanding of *swaraj*.

⁷⁶ Gandhi *HS*, xxvii. The Extremists he appealed to were those following Savarkar and Krishnavarma. (See chapter 3).

⁷⁷ Gandhi *HS*, xxviii-xxix. One of the inspirations for *Hind Swaraj* was Tolstoy's "Letter to a Hindu" which was a reply to the revolutionary Taraknath Das.

⁷⁸ Brown *GPH*, 65.

⁷⁹ Brown *GPH*, 66. It is a conversation between an Editor and a Reader with Gandhi's opinions represented by the former.

⁸⁰ Gandhi chose the more radical position of the Extremists to be the "Reader" in *Hind Swaraj* so that he could respond to their arguments.

CHAPTER 2: GANDHI'S *SWARAJ*

*A man, who chooses the path of freedom from restraint, ...will be a bonds slave of passions whilst the man who binds himself to rules and restraints releases himself. All things in the universe, including the sun and the moon and the stars, obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go on for a single moment.*⁸¹

Gandhi acknowledged that both moderates and extremists within the Indian National Congress generally gave the definition of *swaraj* as national independence, or home-rule, but he insisted that their definition was incomplete. A complete definition had to take into account the “state of being” of individuals as well as of nations.⁸² In other words, it should involve the personal and the social as well as the political. Moral preparation in Gandhi’s view of self-rule created the restraint and strength that was needed when it came to political matters. Ruling oneself was foundational for the creation of a nation that was based on proper moral principles. In turn, a moral government would produce moral individuals. For Gandhi, this was central to a civilized society and was exemplified in the *satyagraha* or the “truth-force” movement.⁸³ As the foregoing implies, Gandhi’s idea of *swaraj* was anything but simple. It contained a complexity that is not often acknowledged. A hint of the complexity can be seen by comparing Gandhi’s chapter in *Hind Swaraj* titled “The Condition of England” to the one titled “Civilization”.⁸⁴ Gandhi called the condition in England “pitiable”.⁸⁵ In it, he

⁸¹ Gandhi, M.K. *Conquest of Self*. (Bombay: Thacker and Co. Ltd., 1946), 21. Hereinafter referred to as CS.

⁸² Parel, Anthony, Ed. *Gandhi, Freedom and Self Rule* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 1. Hereinafter referred to as GFS.

⁸³ Gandhi HS, 118.

⁸⁴ Gandhi HS, 30-38.

⁸⁵ Gandhi HS, 30.

criticized government, politics, and the press.⁸⁶ They seemingly had amassed great wealth through modern civilization, but really,

[t]heir condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at the risk of their lives, at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires. Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion, now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy.⁸⁷

Despite the rights that citizens had attained in Great Britain, their lack of self-rule made them slaves to the material world.⁸⁸ They did not acknowledge their *dharma* or responsibilities as citizens. This was not the future that Gandhi desired for India. In this chapter I will discuss *swaraj* with respect to the individual, society, and nation. This is admittedly a somewhat arbitrary distinction given the overlap between the three divisions. Nonetheless, it is a useful division for demonstrating the complexity of Gandhi's *swaraj*.

The Individual and *Swaraj*

In the case of Gandhi, any discussion of *swaraj* must begin with the individual. Gandhi wrote in *Hind Swaraj* that “it is *swaraj* when we learn to rule ourselves”.⁸⁹ This statement clearly puts the onus for freedom on the individual. Gandhi urged people to discover their true nature by stripping away the passions that distract them. Gandhi did not suggest that an individual exhibiting self-control would cause Great Britain to leave India, but if a majority of the population showed self-control, political *swaraj* would be

⁸⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 30-33.

⁸⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 36.

⁸⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 37. “This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people of Europe that those who are in it appear to be half mad. They lack real physical strength or courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication. They can hardly be happy in solitude.”

⁸⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 73. My italics.

inevitable. But, this would have to entail a re-working of the traditional concept of *dharma*.

Dharma

Indians had a misguided view of *dharma*, according to Gandhi. The traditional concept of *dharma* was “tied to a hierarchical system of duties and obligations and to the preservation of status”.⁹⁰ Gandhi re-worked the concept of *dharma* so that it was no longer attached to a system of social hierarchy, and instead suggested a system highlighting the new qualities that he considered to be important. Parel comments:

Gandhi believed that through *Hind Swaraj* he would be able to give Indians a practical philosophy, an updated conception of *dharma*, that would fit them for life in the modern world.... Gandhi felt that the time had come to redefine the scope of *dharma* to include notions of citizenship, equality, liberty, fraternity and mutual assistance.⁹¹

People were to use the caste distinctions only to the extent that they followed this updated version of *dharma*. This meant that the notions of privilege and purity traditionally attached to caste would have to go.

On an individual level, one's *dharma* was a search to understand one's true nature and place in the universe.

Dharma is a quality of the soul and is present, visibly or invisibly, in every human being. Through it we know our duty in human life and our true relations with other souls. It is evident that we cannot do so till we have known the self in us. Hence *dharma* is the means by which we can know ourselves.⁹²

Knowing oneself, according to *Hind Swaraj*, meant becoming attuned to moral principles rather than remaining slaves to desires.⁹³ The trumping of desires by moral principles

⁹⁰ Gandhi *HS*, xvi.

⁹¹ Gandhi *HS*, xvi.

⁹² Parel *GFS*, 9. The quote is from the *CW* (32:11).

⁹³ Gandhi *HS*, 36. “Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion, now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy.”

would naturally result in the performance of *dharma* because rather than meeting their own concerns, individuals would assist fellow citizens as one would assist a member of one's own family. Helping one another was acknowledged by Gandhi as the "religion which underlies all religions".⁹⁴ Therefore, instead of seeking out desires that will never be satisfied, Gandhi suggested that people should focus on religion and follow *dharma* as the way to a meaningful life.⁹⁵

Through this *dharma* humans have access to basic moral insights about what is right and wrong, good and evil. Such access is available to anyone who has true self-knowledge.⁹⁶

Understanding this concept could be achieved by listening to one's heart or conscience.

Gandhi's interpretation of *dharma* as originating in the conscience meant that it could be applied to people who were from uneducated classes and people from non-Hindu traditions. The qualities found in Gandhi's interpretation of *dharma* were not limited to India or Hinduism, but could be found in different philosophies throughout the world.⁹⁷ But, in Gandhi's view, countries were abandoning the teachings of duty and becoming solely concerned with individual rights. India was not immune to this trend. Through *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi hoped to address both the Indian and the British audience with the hopes of a return to a civic humanism where, "real rights are a result of performance of duty".⁹⁸ As Parel points out, in Gandhi's view this was always there, in key Hindu texts, at least in potential.

And in *Hind Swaraj* he presents in simple language his notion of such a redefined dharma, the vision of a new Indian or Gandhian civic humanism, one that the *Gita* and the *Ramayana* had always contained *in potentia*, but something which Indian

⁹⁴ Gandhi *HS*, xlix.

⁹⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 68.

⁹⁶ Parel *GFS*, 9.

⁹⁷ Gandhi *HS*, xlix.

⁹⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 81-82.

civilisation had not actualized fully in practice. In *Hind Swaraj* a conscious attempt is being made to actualize that potential.⁹⁹

Gandhi postulated that the story found in the *Bhagavad Gita* centered on the turmoil experienced in everyone's inner battle with *dharma* rather than on any description of an actual war.¹⁰⁰

It is the description of the eternal duel going on within ourselves, given so vividly as to make us think for the time being that the deeds described therein were actually done by the human beings.¹⁰¹

A true Gandhian representation of the battle in the *Bhagavad Gita* is that it occurs inside each person trying to control the "satanic impulses" and trying to bring forth the "God-ward" impulses.¹⁰² In other words, it shows the battle of the conscience between what one ought to do and what one wants to do. The latter is identified with violent behaviours whereas the former is shown by benevolent behaviours. "God-ward" impulses are those that demand "service of every living creature without thought of reward".¹⁰³

The inner duel found in the *Bhagavad Gita* was also emphasized in *Hind Swaraj*. On the one hand people were depicted as tempted by materialism and desires, and, on the other, were called to simple living and religion.¹⁰⁴ Gandhi wrote that neglecting one's duty to pursue selfish desires was an impulse that would lead to the creation of a "Satanic civilization".¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, simplifying one's life would reduce distractions and

⁹⁹ Gandhi *HS*, xvi.

¹⁰⁰ Arnold, 33.

¹⁰¹ Gandhi *MR*, 138.

¹⁰² Gandhi, M.K. *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. Raghavan Iyer, Ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 1:82. Hereinafter referred to as *MPW*.

¹⁰³ Gandhi *MPW*, 1:84.

¹⁰⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 35-38, 68-69. Chapter VI deals with different manifestations of this battle between materialism and simplicity. In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi insists that the acts that people do can be as simple as working hard (manual labour). Machines and inventions resulted in people "losing" their moral fiber. "They saw that our real happiness and health consisted in proper use of our hands and feet."

¹⁰⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 37.

would extend one's concern for humanity.¹⁰⁶ A simplification of life, a rejection of materialism, and a reduction of distractions did not however, mean withdrawal from life. Rather for Gandhi it meant involvement in life working for the greater good.

The Way of Action: *Karma Yoga*

Gandhi dismissed the traditional idea that one needed to abandon the world in order to attain realization. He argued that imposing self-rule or *swaraj* while acting in the world was the best way to attain realization. Acting in the world according to one's *dharma* was *karma yoga*. The call to action in *Hind Swaraj* can only be understood by reference to this idea. This becomes abundantly clear in Gandhi's call for people to wake up.

Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* in an effort to reawaken the Indian populace and to undermine their unquestioning cooperation with the British. For example, Gandhi spoke about the need to resist the partition of Bengal in a way that was morally right.¹⁰⁷ He listed the partition of Bengal as one of the motivating factors for awakening the population. Gandhi suggested that it would take some time for Indians to awaken from their slumber.

When a man arises from sleep, he twists his limbs and is restless. It takes some time before he is entirely awakened. Similarly, although the Partition has caused an awakening, the comatose state has not yet disappeared. We are still twisting our limbs and still restless, and just as the state between sleep and awakening must be considered to be necessary, so may the present unrest in India be considered a necessary and, therefore, a proper state. The knowledge that there is unrest will, it is highly probable, enable us to outgrow it. Rising from sleep, we do not continue in a comatose state, but, according to our ability, sooner or later, we are completely restored to our senses.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 97. One did not need to become impoverished, but indifferent to material objects. "Those who have money are not expected to throw it away, but they are expected to be indifferent about it."

¹⁰⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 19-21.

¹⁰⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 24.

The unrest resulting from the awakening would cause Indians to react in various ways. Some reactions would be beneficial and some would be detrimental for society.¹⁰⁹ Gandhi was only interested in supporting those actions that would be beneficial for the individual and society.

Acting in ways that supported *dharma* meant committing oneself to moral principles in everyday life. Gandhi believed that any religion, when working properly, should connect all aspects of life together with the ethical side dominating over everything else.¹¹⁰ In speaking of the golden age he had this to say about ancestors:

They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to the sword of ethics, and they, therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the Rishis and the Fakirs.¹¹¹

Gandhi found it impossible to separate being religious from involvement in life.¹¹² The way to enlightenment was through human activity and not through an attempt to bring activity to a standstill. "For him a religion which did not concern itself with every side of life was no religion at all."¹¹³

No man can live without religion. There are some who in the egoism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But it is like a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose."¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 24-25.

¹¹⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 42-43. "Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and all other religions teach that we should remain passive about worldly pursuits and active about godly pursuits, that we should set a limit to our worldly ambition, and that our religious ambition should be illimitable. Our activity should be directed into the latter channel."

¹¹¹ Gandhi *HS*, 69.

¹¹² Gandhi *MR*, 34-36, 117. Although he saw the universe as being in a state of change, Gandhi believed in a "living power" that "creates, dissolves, and recreates". "Not a blade of grass grows or moves without his will." "The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'."

¹¹³ Gandhi *MR*, iii, 12, 155. Just as Gandhi did not differentiate between religion and politics, he also did not differentiate between religion and economics. "I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."

¹¹⁴ Gandhi *MR*, 3. "Whether by reason, or by instinct, or by superstition, man acknowledges some sort of relationship with the divine."

In regards to how a person should act in the world, Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj* had this advice: “We simply want to find out what is right and act accordingly”.¹¹⁵ The problem was distinguishing what constituted right from wrong. Gandhi was concerned that on the basis of the intellect alone any position could be defended.¹¹⁶ He believed that it was through rational thought that unjust laws came into existence and were obeyed.¹¹⁷ Understanding what is right was to be determined by intuition (conscience) and not simply by rationality.¹¹⁸ Sometimes this meant obeying the laws of the divine instead of the laws of people. “A man who has realised his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no one else. Man-made laws are not necessarily binding on him.”¹¹⁹

While one should not give up action, one should give up the reward of action. Gandhi saw this as the central message of the *Gita*. “Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit- be detached and work- have no desire for reward and work.”¹²⁰ In *Hind Swaraj*,

¹¹⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 91.

¹¹⁶ Gandhi *MPW*, 1:84.

Gandhi *MPW*, 1:77.

¹¹⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 92.

¹¹⁸ Gandhi *MR*, 4. Gandhi did not dismiss the importance of reason while acting in the world. He wrote, “I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonably religious sentiment when it is not immoral...As soon as we lose the moral basis, we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man, for instance, cannot be untruthful, cruel, and incontinent and claim to have God on his side.”

¹¹⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 92. Alternatively, a weak religion can be used by proponents of rationality to support what they are doing. “We are sunk so low, that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man’s tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.”

¹²⁰ Desai, Mahadev, Ed. and Trans. *The Gospel of Selfless Action or The Gita According to Gandhi*. (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1991), 131. “While on the one hand it is beyond dispute that all action binds, on the other hand it is equally true that all living beings have some work, whether they will or no. Here all activity, whether mental or physical, is to be included in the term of action. Then how is one to be free from the bondage of action, even though he may be acting? The manner in which the *Gita* has solved the problem is to my knowledge unique. The *Gita* says: ‘Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit- be detached and work – have no desire for reward and work.’” Also see Johnson, W.J., Trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15 (3:8). The Lord told Arjuna, “You should perform enjoined action, for action is better than non-action; even the minimum of bodily subsistence would be impossible without action.”

Gandhi criticized professions that seemed to represent the opposing ideal.¹²¹ He provided a solution whereby members of such professions could act in the world serving fellow citizens instead of remaining distracted by the wealth to be gained through their occupations.¹²² All people had the potential to gain insight into their true nature and become more God-like if they became restrained in their activities. Restraint, however, did not mean to stop acting. Rather, it meant to act in accordance with *dharma*.

Self-Restraint

According to *Hind Swaraj*, to act according to one's *dharma* is to lead a restrained life. Restraint is necessary Gandhi believed, because people become preoccupied with belongings and satisfying their desires rather than focusing on the essence of what it means to be human.

As a rule, the mind, residing in a body that has become weakened by pampering, is also weak, and, where there is no strength of mind, there can be no strength of soul.¹²³

In another instance, Gandhi wrote,

We notice that mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor. The rich are often seen to be unhappy, the poor to be happy.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Gandhi *HS*, 58-65. In regards to lawyers, Gandhi writes, "Men take up that profession, not in order to help others out of their miseries, but to enrich themselves. It is one of the avenues of becoming wealthy, and their interest exists in multiplying disputes." About doctors, Gandhi states, "We become doctors so that we may obtain honours and riches. I have endeavoured to show that there is no real service of humanity in the profession, and that it is injurious to mankind."

¹²² Gandhi *HS*, 116-117.

¹²³ Gandhi *HS*, 96. In other pieces of Gandhi's writing, he makes similar claims. "We are like a rider who cannot keep his horse under control and is quickly brought down. But one who drawing in the reins, keeps the animal under subjection stands a fair chance of reaching his destination." *CS*, 32.

¹²⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 68.

The concept of personal self-rule applied to the individual suggests that there is a level of refinement and self-control that a person can attain in which one's lower, worldly desires can be controlled by a higher, inner voice. "Control over the mind is alone necessary, and, when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest, and his very glance withers the enemy."¹²⁵ The end result is to be a "willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society" which "enriches both the individual and the society of which he is a member."¹²⁶

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi wrote about modes of conduct, through which, people can know themselves and exercise a restraining control.¹²⁷ This becomes clear in his comments on passive resistance.

After a great deal of experience, it seems to me that those who want to become passive resisters for the service of the country have to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth, and cultivate fearlessness.¹²⁸

Chastity and poverty result in diminished desire whereas truth and fearlessness allow one to act for the good of everyone.¹²⁹ As Parel points out, these are traditional virtues re-interpreted by Gandhi to apply to the civic sphere.¹³⁰ This meant that the virtues did not only apply to individual self-realization as was traditionally the case, but also applied to civic life. Gandhi insisted upon chastity "in word, deed and thought" for himself and his followers so that they would retain the stamina needed for their mission. The virtue of poverty meant that once his followers were indifferent to possessions, more remained for those (impoverished people) who needed it. Gandhi saw truth, even towards an enemy,

¹²⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 94.

¹²⁶ Gandhi *MR*, 118.

¹²⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 96-99.

¹²⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 96.

¹²⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 96-98.

¹³⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 96n.

as crucial for supporting instead of undermining their position. Without fearlessness, individuals were more likely to abandon truth. Gandhi explained, "Service is automatically rendered to the country in this process of cultivating morality."¹³¹ Gandhi even suggested that revolutionaries could benefit by learning these four virtues, but his goal in applying the virtues, was the creation of morally-aware individuals.

These observances are not to be abandoned in the belief that they are difficult. Nature has implanted in the human breast ability to cope with any difficulty or suffering that may come to man unprovoked.¹³²

Adhering to these virtues is a trial which proves the determination and self-restraint of individuals.

Above all, to exercise restraint meant to live according to *ahimsa*. Gandhi believed that the notion of *ahimsa* or non-violence, governed all principles of self-restraint. In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi suggested that the four virtues discussed above are essential for the practice of *ahimsa*. Gandhi wrote,

... at least in the majority of cases, if not, indeed, in all, the force of love and pity is infinitely greater than the force of arms. There is harm in the exercise of brute force, never in that of pity.¹³³

Driven by compassion and love, people are likely to sacrifice their own happiness so that another can avoid suffering.¹³⁴ The virtue of the exercise of *ahimsa*, according to Gandhi, is that it does not cause suffering to others.

Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Gandhi *HS*, 96n.

¹³² Gandhi *HS*, 98.

¹³³ Gandhi *HS*, 84.

¹³⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 91 and Parel, Anthony "Gandhi as a Man of Prayer" *Revision* (Vol. 24, Summer 2001), 42. Parel mentions the need to do this "action for the sake of the action and not for any benefits that may accrue."

¹³⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 91.

Gandhi described *ahimsa* using the metaphor of a woman. A woman carries an infant and goes through pain and suffering in order to bring it forth, but she soon forgets her pain in “the joy of creation”.¹³⁶

Ahimsa was a means to self-purification as well as a political tool. To move from violence and retaliation to restraint and renunciation altered a person from a state of corruption to a state of purity.

Non-violence is an active force of the highest order. It is soul-force or the power of the godhead within us. We become Godlike to the extent we realize non-violence.¹³⁷

Gandhi’s vision of *ahimsa* meant that it was not disconnected from worldly action, but that it was to be active in responses like compassion and love.¹³⁸ In times of conflict, as existed with the British, Gandhi advocated using measures true to *ahimsa*, such as restraint and renunciation, rather than retaliation.¹³⁹ He argued that *ahimsa* is a technique that comes from the soul whereas *himsa*, or violence, uses only the body.¹⁴⁰ Gandhi considered the use of the soul as superior to the use of the body. He saw the discomfort that this approach might cause in that it placed the responsibility for actions on individuals, but argued that it could bring peace to a distressed community. On Hindu-Muslim conflicts over the killing of cows he had this to say:

¹³⁶ Gandhi *MR*, 49.

¹³⁷ Gandhi *MR*, 48.

¹³⁸ Zavos, 131. “Gandhi’s project was to reverse this practical association between *ahimsa* and withdrawal from the world. He infused the concept with worldly emotions, relating it particularly with compassion and love.”

¹³⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 58, 89. Also see Gandhi *MR*, 129, 59. Non-violence could also be seen in the renouncing of things. Automatically, one would not try to gain another’s possessions. “We pretend to believe that retaliation is the law of our being, whereas in every scripture we find that retaliation is nowhere obligatory but only permissible. It is restraint that is obligatory.

¹⁴⁰ Gandhi *HS*, lvi.

It is not written that a follower of the religion of Ahinsa (non-killing) may kill a fellow-man. For him the way is straight. In order to save one being, he may not kill another. He can only plead- therein lies his sole duty.¹⁴¹

Gandhi's ideas about *ahimsa* were based on a reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* that disputed interpretations of the *Bhagavad Gita* that justified war and violence to bring about justice. "Violence is simply not possible unless one is driven by anger, by ignorant love and by hatred".¹⁴² Gandhi disagreed that violence was a sentiment that the heart could understand.¹⁴³ In Gandhi's chapter on "Brute Force", he explained that brute force is *himsa* rather than *ahimsa*.

I am not likely to obtain the result flowing from the worship of God by laying myself prostrate before Satan. If, therefore, anyone were to say: 'I want to worship God, it does not matter that I do so by means of Satan' it would be set down as ignorant folly.¹⁴⁴

The kingdom of Satan is, for Gandhi, a kingdom of violence. Although atrocities had, in the past, been committed in the name of God, violent behaviour was simply not Truth. "Hence the more he [an individual] took to violence, the more he receded from Truth. For in fighting the imagined enemy without, he neglected the enemy within."¹⁴⁵ In Gandhi's view, it was only through the practice of *ahimsa* that one can realize what ought to be everyone's goal, to come face to face with Truth.

Ahimsa is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so Ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Gandhi *HS*, 55.

¹⁴² Gandhi *MPW*, 1:81.

¹⁴³ Gandhi *MPW*, 1:81-85. Gandhi argued that if one were to take a look at the *Mahabharata* as a whole, one would find that Vyasa is writing about the futility of war, not the defense of war. Yet, he is writing about a warrior and must make his arguments on those terms.

"We can only guess what reply Krishna would have given if Arjuna had protested and said that he did not wish to kill at all, whether his opponents were kinsmen or others. It is my humble view, however, that the Gita was not composed to give a direct answer to that question."

¹⁴⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 81.

¹⁴⁵ Gandhi *MR*, 102.

¹⁴⁶ Gandhi *MR*, 103.

Gandhi believed that people needed to restrain their physical nature in order to attain an understanding of Truth. A good person can not separate him/herself from Truth and a morally ambiguous person can not align him/herself with Truth. Self-restraint enhances people's energy, cleanses them of sin, and brings them closer to Truth.¹⁴⁷ For Gandhi, to come face to face with Truth meant to come face to face with God.

This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found him, but I am seeking after him.¹⁴⁸

The *Gita*, insisted Gandhi, tells people that they will not discover peace until they encounter God.¹⁴⁹ If individuals were to attain a state of non-violence and therefore truthfulness, they would bring themselves closer to God and would achieve freedom from the world in their attitude.¹⁵⁰ If they focused on violence and behaviours that disregarded the virtues, their subordination to both inside negative forces and questionable outside forces would continue.

To examine the necessity of self-restraint in *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi used the example of living under the British to show how unrestrained behaviour had led to the demise of self rule on both individual and corporate levels. The loss of independence was linked to the commercial wealth offered by Great Britain.¹⁵¹ As Indians became less restrained in regards to money, the British presence became more established. To rule

¹⁴⁷ www.hinduism.co.za/self-res.htm (February 19, 2005) *The Mahabharata* Santi Parva, Section CLX. Translated by Sri Kisari Mohan Ganguli.

¹⁴⁸ Gandhi, M.K. *Gandhi An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), xxvii-xxviii.

¹⁴⁹ Desai, 129. "Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like unto God."

¹⁵⁰ Wilson, 412.

¹⁵¹ Gandhi *HS*, 41. "We like their commerce, they please us by their subtle methods, and get what they want from us. To blame them for this is to perpetuate their power."

themselves, Gandhi wrote that people should reduce their reliance on others to fix their own problems. For instance, if people were restrained, there would be little need for lawyers and doctors whose professions fed off a weakness of restraint.¹⁵²

The application of self-restraint, argued Gandhi, should not apply only to the elite, but to all people.¹⁵³ The sick, the young, and the old can each live a restrained life. In this sense, Gandhi's theory of personal *swaraj* gave power to those who were powerless. Likewise, by associating *satya* with God, Gandhi chose a term that was accessible to and powerful for a broad group of people.¹⁵⁴ Gandhi believed that the attainment of political freedom was directly proportional to the attainment of religious freedom. But, throwing off enslavement and becoming free had to begin with the individual. "When we are slaves, we think that the whole universe is enslaved...But if we bear in mind the above fact, we can see that, if we become free, India is free."¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, as Gandhi's emphasis on the exercise of restraint in the lives of individuals indicates, the freedom of the individual includes what he would term religious freedom, the exercise of restraint to come face to face with Truth, as well as political freedom.

The Model for *Karma Yoga*: The *Satyagrahi*

Hind Swaraj was written in order to persuade people to live by moral laws. Gandhi's aim was to mold each person into a *satyagrahi*.¹⁵⁶ The *satyagrahi* is one who

¹⁵² Gandhi *HS*, 58, 63. "Their business is really to rid the body of diseases that may affect it. How do these diseases arise? Surely by our negligence or indulgence...The doctor intervened and helped me to indulge myself. My body thereby certainly felt more at ease, but my mind became weakened. A continuance of a course of a medicine must, therefore, result in loss of control over the mind."

¹⁵³ Gandhi *HS*, 118. Likewise in *MR*, 70 Gandhi suggests that *ahimsa* is not only for holy men, but that all could live according to its precepts.

¹⁵⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 10. This term allowed Gandhi to gain followers across religious and political lines. "He hereby sought to make God acceptable not only to Jains and Buddhists but also to Marxists."

¹⁵⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 72-73.

¹⁵⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 85. The term *satyagrahi* comes out of the term *satyagraha* which means firmness in the truth. Therefore, a *satyagrahi* is one who firmly holds on to the truth.

embodies Gandhi's call for action and restraint in action. This is someone who, in theory, has followed Gandhi's prescription for personal liberation through taking hold of truth.¹⁵⁷ He/she "held firmly the truth" of his/herself as a moral agent.¹⁵⁸ Operating in the world the *satyagrahi*,

is jealous of none, who is a fount of mercy, who is without egotism, who is selfless, who treats cold and heat, happiness and misery, who is ever forgiving, who is always contented, whose resolutions are firm, who has dedicated mind and soul to God, who causes no dread, who is not afraid of others, who is free from exultation, sorrow and fear, who is pure, who is versed in action and yet remains unaffected by it, who renounces all fruit, good or bad, who treats friend and foe alike, who is untouched by respect or disrespect, who is not puffed up by praise, who does not go under when people speak ill of him, who loves silence and solitude, who has a disciplined reason.¹⁵⁹

Such people were to comprise Gandhi's spiritual army.¹⁶⁰

The morality advocated by Gandhi was derived from his reading of the *Bhagavad Gita*. To Gandhi, the *satyagrahi* was a *sannyasin*, that is, a renunciate, who nonetheless, continues activity in society.¹⁶¹ "The *sannyasa* of the *Gita* will not tolerate complete cessation of all activity. The *sannyasa* of the *Gita* is all work and yet no work."¹⁶² This is clearly a re-interpretation of the *sannyasin*, who traditionally was conceived of as abandoning the material world for the spiritual world. For Gandhi, the *Gita* guides conduct, including the aspects that outline non-possession and equability.¹⁶³ "He must fight and do so not for personal gain, but in a spirit of non-attachment and truth-

¹⁵⁷ The *satyagrahi* is presumably someone who has attained personal *swaraj*.

¹⁵⁸ Sonnleitner, Michael W. "Gandhian Satyagraha and Swaraj: A Hierarchical Perspective" in *Peace and Change* (Conference on Peace Research in History and Consortium on Peace Research, Education and Development, 1989)

¹⁵⁹ Desai, 130.

¹⁶⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 181-182.

¹⁶¹ Gandhi *MR*, 15. For those who wanted to become a *satyagrahi*, Gandhi advocated reading and meditating on the *Gita*, particularly Chapter 2.

¹⁶² Desai, 132-133. "The devotee of the *Gita* is neither happy nor unhappy. And when that state [of equanimity] is reached, there is no pain, no pleasure, no defeat, no deprivation, no possession."

¹⁶³ Gandhi *MR*, 16.

seeking.”¹⁶⁴ The *satyagrahi* achieves realization by acting in the world.¹⁶⁵ Gandhi was certain that no one could escape acting in some way, and that people should detach themselves from the rewards or “fruit” of the action taken.¹⁶⁶ Like the *Gita*, *Hind Swaraj* advocated a life that renounces attachment to the material and acts on the basis of a moral framework. Gandhi commented that people can pursue *kama* and *artha*, but only within the framework of *dharma*.¹⁶⁷

The *satyagrahi* is not focused on accumulating more possessions, but is interested in critical self-analysis.¹⁶⁸ Each person uses his/her conscience to distinguish right from wrong.¹⁶⁹ “Outer transformation ought to begin with the inner transformation of the moral agent.”¹⁷⁰ The *satyagrahis* become the leaders of change in society and are the ideal for others to emulate.

The method for change described in *Hind Swaraj*, is for the *satyagrahi* to take a stance and to try to communicate with an opponent through petitions.¹⁷¹ In communicating, the *satyagrahi* has to be open to different points of view.¹⁷² If no compromise can be made, one can “civilly disobey a law, for sufficient reason, without violating a moral law”.¹⁷³

When we do not like certain laws, we do not break the heads of law-givers, but we suffer and do not submit to the laws. That we should obey laws whether good or bad is a new-fangled notion. There was no such thing in former days. The people disregarded those laws they did not like, and suffered the penalties for

¹⁶⁴ Arnold, 33.

¹⁶⁵ Desai, 131.

¹⁶⁶ Desai, 131.

¹⁶⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 73n.

¹⁶⁸ Gandhi *HS*, xxxv. Parel discusses looking at Socrates as a type of *satyagrahi*.

¹⁶⁹ Gandhi *HS*, xlvj, 182. “He ‘examines himself constantly and listens to the dictates of the inner self’.”

¹⁷⁰ Gandhi *HS*, lxi.

¹⁷¹ Gandhi *HS*, 21.

¹⁷² Gandhi *HS*, li.

¹⁷³ Gandhi *MPW*, 3:59.

their breach. It is contrary to our manhood, if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to religion.¹⁷⁴

The British reaction to the disobedience of their laws was to arrest participants. However, even under this duress, the *satyagrahi* was expected to be “courteous”, “calm”, and “dignified”.¹⁷⁵ In short, the *satyagrahi* was to be the epitome of the restrained individual. Describing the *satyagrahi*, Arnold wrote,

The *satyagrahi*’s love, dignity, self-suffering, and endurance were intended to weaken the opponent’s anger and appeal to his higher nature. The *satyagrahi*’s uncomplaining suffering denied the opponent the pleasure of victory and mobilised neutral public opinion in his support.¹⁷⁶

Each *satyagrahi* was to use his/her soul rather than his/her body to face challenges in the world.¹⁷⁷ When communication with an opponent did not work, the *satyagrahi* was expected to suffer for *swaraj* while agitating for rights.¹⁷⁸ For Gandhi, the one taking this route fearlessly is braver than any warrior on the battlefield. “Who is the true warrior- he who keeps death as a bosom friend or he who controls the violent death of others?”¹⁷⁹

Gandhi insisted that people should “desire for the welfare of others”.¹⁸⁰ The *satyagrahi* suffers rather than letting another suffer. This was, for Gandhi, central to what he called soul-force or love-force. “Of religion, pity or love is the root, as egoism of the body. Therefore, we should not abandon pity so long as we are alive.”¹⁸¹ For a

¹⁷⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 91.

¹⁷⁵ Arnold, 57.

¹⁷⁶ Arnold, 57.

¹⁷⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 85n, lii.. The *satyagrahi* has realised the “futility of violent revolution and the need to use ethically sound means to gain independence.”

¹⁷⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 21 and Arnold, 57. Petitioning served the purpose of educating people about problems, but Gandhi did not feel that it solved many of the problems. The *satyagrahi* was not afraid of pain. Fighting injustice sometimes meant facing jail or even death.

¹⁷⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 93.

¹⁸⁰ Gandhi *HS*, xvii.

¹⁸¹ Gandhi *HS*, 88.

person who doubts his/her intentions or who feels too self-involved, Gandhi suggested the following procedure:

Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to *him*. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self-rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen?¹⁸²

To operate in the world consequently meant that the *satyagrahi* would serve others. The *satyagrahi* would assist people to create peaceful ways to deal with conflict and help them towards self-realization. Underlying the *satyagrahi's* actions is his/her embodiment of the virtues that Gandhi saw as central to *dharma*. By virtue of the exercise of chastity, poverty, truth, and fearlessness the *satyagrahi* exemplified Gandhi's reformulated concept of *dharma*.

Society and *Swaraj*

Gandhi believed that the irreligion of the British and India's thirst for a modern civilization had made her weak. In response, Gandhi illustrated a number of ways in which Indians could regain their autonomy. Indians needed to become self-reliant socially, economically, politically, and religiously. What this ultimately meant was to reject British systems in favor of domestic ones. Indians needed to reject the educational and military options that the colonial régime provided and accept that self-sufficient village-life contained the essential elements of an ideal society. Under the conditions provided by the village, Gandhi believed that people would have an easier time disciplining themselves. Following his plan meant renouncing rather than embracing aspects of modern civilization.

¹⁸² Gandhi *MR*, 51.

Organization

Gandhi tried to create communal living arrangements that would imitate the beneficial parts of village life. He saw the benefits of such arrangements as allowing people to identify with one another in the performance of similar tasks, and creating an environment that could be self-sustaining. Village life, according to Gandhi, could be a utopia, an ideal micro-civilization. Tied to his ideal of village life was a rejection of city life. Gandhi saw cities as detrimental because they tempted people to abandon the orthodoxy of their religions and exacerbated social problems. For example, the factory workers found in European cities were described by him in desperate language.

But there is no end to the victims destroyed in the fire of civilisation. Its deadly effect is that people come under its scorching flames believing it to be all good. They become utterly irreligious and, in reality, derive little advantage from the world.¹⁸³

Gandhi's ideal society was anti-establishment in practice, bringing the power back to smaller groups. Instead of focusing on industry and large-scale government, Gandhi wanted a return to self-sustaining productivity and government by village units.¹⁸⁴ Gandhi aligned himself with the ideas found in a number of alternative "societies", particularly the New Crusade Society. This group proposed alternative values like "country life, agriculture, handicrafts, homespun clothes, and opposing the 'increasing dependence on machinery' and 'competitive mechanical production'".¹⁸⁵ The values found in these societies meshed with the values espoused in the writings of Tolstoy.

¹⁸³ Gandhi *HS*, 43.

¹⁸⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 34, 34n.

¹⁸⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 34n.

His own experiments with alternative communities resulted in the Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy Farm. Everyone in the settlements would labour for the same wage and nothing would be individually owned.¹⁸⁶ In this way the settlements would foster the idea of brotherhood and mutual assistance, in short, non-violent societies. Gandhi claimed that, “You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages.”¹⁸⁷ His choices were a reflection of his interpretation of village life. People from different religions and social strata were all represented on the farm, but Gandhi differentiated the farm from traditional Indian communities by insisting that work was not to be assigned according to one’s caste status. The resulting communal life was to provide the people in the community with a sense of identity and unity despite their differences in religion and caste.

Religion

Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is alone true and perfect Religion, but it becomes many, as it passes through the human medium.¹⁸⁸

Gandhi was all too aware that there were powerful elements in society that threatened to undermine the societal unity he was trying to create. Religious identity was recognized in *Hind Swaraj* as one such disruptive force. When the reader in *Hind Swaraj* asserted that religion was a divisive factor in society, Gandhi wrote,

Everybody understands that the cruelties you have named are not part of religion, although they have been practiced in its name; therefore, there is no aftermath to these cruelties. They will always happen so long as there are to be found ignorant and credulous people.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Green, 125.

¹⁸⁷ Gandhi *HS*, xvi. Quoted from the CW 70:242.

¹⁸⁸ Gandhi *MR*, 19-20, 28. “In God’s house there are many mansions and they are equally holy.”

¹⁸⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 43.

In contrast, his Hinduism was a personalized form that easily mixed with other traditions.¹⁹⁰ He wanted people to follow “that religion which underlies all religions” and emphasized the many-sidedness of reality which manifested itself in different ways, even within the Hindu tradition.¹⁹¹

Should we not remember that many Hindus and Mahomedans own the same ancestors, and the same blood runs through their veins? Do people become enemies because they change their religion? Is the God of the Mahomedan different from the God of the Hindu? Religions are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal?¹⁹²

Gandhi used metaphor to describe his understanding of the diversity of religions. He described religion as a tree with different branches or blind men trying to depict an elephant.¹⁹³ In the latter story, seven blind men tried to describe to the others ‘what the elephant was’ by holding and touching distinct parts. In the end, none of their descriptions were complete and all were different. Like the blind men, Gandhi was trying to describe his concept of religion to others. Gandhi insisted that there was no complete view and that all were in some way touching the divine ‘elephant’. The parts of the ‘elephant’ were the moral laws that were inherent to each tradition.

Every “cultured” person had a duty to join Gandhi in reading scriptures and doing his or her best to understand the perspectives taken in the scriptures of the world.¹⁹⁴ “The more we advance in true knowledge, the better we shall understand that we need not

¹⁹⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 48-49. “They learned one another’s languages, and there was no aloofness between them.”

¹⁹¹ Gandhi *MR*, 3, iv. and Sarkar, iv.

¹⁹² Gandhi *HS*, 53.

¹⁹³ Gandhi *MR*, 20.

¹⁹⁴ Gandhi *MR*, 21, 18. Cultured people were expected to read various scriptures, not for a literal interpretation, but to uncover the truths that could be found in each text. “I do not share the belief that there can or will be on earth one religion. I am striving, therefore, to find a common factor and induce mutual tolerance.”

be at war with those whose religion we may not follow.”¹⁹⁵ Gandhi claimed that seeing the larger picture of religious perspectives would bring one closer to God. Finding the common factors among religions would create an atmosphere of respect and result in a harmonious society.¹⁹⁶

Those who do not wish to misunderstand things may read up the Koran, and will find therein hundreds of passages acceptable to the Hindus; and the Bhagavad-Gita contains passages to which not a Mahomedan can take exception. Am I to dislike a Mahomedan because there are passages in the Koran I do not understand or like? It takes two to make a quarrel. If I do not want to quarrel with a Mahomedan, the latter would be powerless to foist a quarrel on me, and, similarly, I should be powerless if a Mahomedan refuses his assistance to quarrel with me. An arm striking the air will become disjointed. If everyone will try and understand the core of his own religion and adhere to it, and will not allow false teachers to dictate to him, there will be no room left for quarreling.¹⁹⁷

If the two brothers, Hindu and Muslim, decided on peace, Gandhi argued that the British would be unable to separate them.

Gandhi saw Hinduism’s strength as being inherently inclusive in nature. This meant that Hinduism could exist peacefully with other religions. He wrote,

Hinduism is not an exclusive religion. In it there is room for the worship of all the prophets of the world. It is not a missionary religion in the ordinary sense of the term. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes into its fold, but this absorption has been of an evolutionary, imperceptible character. Hinduism tells everyone to worship God according to his own faith or *dharma*, and so it lives at peace with all other religions.¹⁹⁸

True Hinduism “abhor[ed] stagnation” and thrived on change and new knowledge.¹⁹⁹

Gandhi insisted that God laid out the proper interaction between people. This meant to approach others with discipline, humility, and love rather than in terms of religious

¹⁹⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 54.

¹⁹⁶ Gandhi *MR*, 22.

¹⁹⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 56.

¹⁹⁸ Gandhi *MR*, 153.

¹⁹⁹ Gandhi *MR*, 154.

identity.²⁰⁰ When approaching others in this way, people would realize that religious identity did not have to be exclusive.

Rights and Duties

Parel makes the point that ancient Indian governments lacked the “republic” system that western culture had in common with ancient Rome.²⁰¹

Classical Indian political philosophy, being a theory of monarchy, lacked a tradition of political freedom and a notion that people are the repository of power and authority.²⁰²

There was no sense of freedom, but rather only an interest in where one belonged within the hierarchical system. The western concept of rights was adopted by the Indian National Congress and, inasmuch as he bought into this, so too was Gandhi’s notion of rights very western in origin. He believed that taking ideas from western cultures was “both legitimate and necessary” and hoped that the British, in turn, would take spiritual cues from Indian culture.²⁰³ Just as he had argued that individual rights had to be governed by duty, so too he argued that rights for society had to be governed by duty.

The beginning of the notion of rights for Indians as British subjects is found in the 1858 proclamation by Queen Victoria.²⁰⁴ This proclamation was considered the “Magna Carta” of Indians in that it outlined that they were entitled to the same treatment as all other British subjects.²⁰⁵ This included basic rights such as “freedom of association, conscience, religion, speech and a free press”.²⁰⁶ In regards to rights Parel states:

²⁰⁰ Gandhi *MR*, 41, 48. “Where love is, there is God also”.

²⁰¹ Parel *GFS*, 2.

²⁰² Parel *GFS*, 2.

²⁰³ Parel, Anothony. “Gandhi on the Dynamics of Civilization” *Human Rights Review*. (Jan.-Mar. 2003), 15-16.

²⁰⁴ Gandhi *HS*, xviii.

²⁰⁵ Gandhi *HS*, xviii.

²⁰⁶ Parel *GFS*, 8.

The British constitution remained the standard by which to measure the quality of colonial administration: policies in conformity with it were thought to be good, and those contrary to it, evil.²⁰⁷

Gandhi's harsh treatment in South Africa illustrated to him how important the concept of rights was; the absence of rights meant a person could be treated as a lesser being.²⁰⁸

However, Parel indicates a radical difference between rights as discussed by Gandhi and rights as discussed by European philosophers. In the 'western' concept, individual rights of people were understood as the means, "by which they can protect their individual interests from the interference of others".²⁰⁹ Gandhi believed that the nature of people was not to be individualistic, but to be social beings. People were "body-soul composites" and even though the body sought to satisfy its individual needs, the soul aspect of the person tended to social interaction and responded to duty.²¹⁰

The Gandhian concept of rights had nothing to do with personal gain or individuality, but centered on making the community better for all people. In this sense, his concept of rights was the mirror image of duty.²¹¹ "[M]an is born to do his duty to his creator; he should therefore pay more attention to his duties than to his rights."²¹² He did not feel that there could be one without the other.

Freedom, both individual and religious, has always had and will always have many limits. Religion does not hanker after rights, it hungers for restraints and restrictions. Anyone who knows religion and practices it does not think in terms of his rights.²¹³

²⁰⁷ Gandhi *HS*, xviii.

²⁰⁸ Parel *GFS*, 8.

²⁰⁹ Parel *GFS*, 8-9.

²¹⁰ Parel *GFS*, 9.

²¹¹ Gandhi *MPW*, 1:108.

²¹² Gandhi *MPW*, 1:108. The concept of duty as part of rights was adapted by Gandhi from Tolstoy.

²¹³ Gandhi *MPW*, 3:230.

His was an understanding that rights function within limits and that it is religion that sets these limitations. The duty that people have to God should be mirrored in relations with others.

Gandhi taught his followers that the search for equality and rights must be balanced by “moral insight, economic development and spiritual progress”.²¹⁴ Gandhi criticized the British for not understanding this.

But real rights are a result of performance of duty; these rights they have not obtained. We therefore, have before us in England the farce of everybody wanting and insisting on his rights, nobody thinking of his duty. And, where everybody wants rights, who shall give them to whom?²¹⁵

Parel remarks, “Real rights flow from duty. This contrasts with the modern theory of rights which asserts the priority of rights over duties.”²¹⁶ Gandhi insisted on a civic humanism and concern for the welfare of others.²¹⁷ To Gandhi, all rights had to be considered in the context of obligations. Concerning Gandhi’s attitude to modern civilization and the British constitution, Parel states:

Thus he welcomes a number of its contributions- civil liberty, equality, rights, prospects for improving the economic conditions of life, liberation of women from tradition, and religious toleration. At the same time, the welcome is conditional in that liberty had to harmonise with swaraj, rights with duties, empirical knowledge with moral insight, economic development with spiritual progress, religious toleration with religious belief, and women’s liberation with the demands of a broader conception of humanity.²¹⁸

Gandhi’s civic humanism is one informed by moral insight. Concepts such as economic development, liberation of women, religious toleration and rights can have no meaning

²¹⁴ Gandhi *HS*, xvii.

²¹⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 81-82.

²¹⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 82n.

²¹⁷ Gandhi *HS*, xvi.

²¹⁸ Gandhi *HS*, xvii-xviii.

unless society follows the virtues of truth, fearlessness, chastity, poverty and *ahimsa*. Applying restraint to their lives would help people create the society that they desire.

Satyagraha as a Movement

Gandhi's experimental communities provided the context where potential *satyagrahis* could practice his teachings. In this experimentation with community living, the idea of individual restraint for the benefit of the community was applied on a larger scale to self-restraint on the part of society as a whole. The development of techniques to deal with opponents and the application of the techniques were central to *satyagraha* as a movement on the societal level.²¹⁹ The *satyagraha* movement began with education and dialogue.

The first stage of the *satyagraha* movement dealt with enhancing communication between the leaders of the movement and their opposition.²²⁰ Communication with the opposing side always remained the best method for resolving conflict.²²¹ Gandhi claimed to have obtained this side of *satyagraha* from the natural problem-solving methods of villages.²²² If one villager had a problem, the best way to deal with it was for that person to enter into dialogue with the one causing the problem. Nonetheless, important aspects of the *satyagraha* movement were non-cooperation and civil disobedience.

The use of civil disobedience on the part of society was only to be undertaken when dialogue was impossible and there was widespread "moral distress", such as when

²¹⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 85n.

²²⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 21. "For redress of grievances, we must approach the Throne, and if we get no redress, we must sit still, except that we may still petition."

²²¹ Gandhi *HS*, 85. By using petitions to educate people, "they give the latter the idea of their condition, and warn the rulers".

²²² Gandhi *HS*, 95. Gandhi recounts an episode when unhappy villagers abandoned their village and the prince returned and apologized to them.

the government repealed the right to free speech and free assembly.²²³ When appeals to the government did not result in justice, the people were forced to move from petitions to non-cooperation. In his comments about petitioning the government Gandhi said:

If you do not concede our demand, we will no longer be your petitioners. You can govern us only so long as we remain the governed; we shall no longer have any dealings with you.²²⁴

Gandhi's response to government intransigence was self-restraint through fasting and civil disobedience on a societal level. The *satyagrahis* have the "inherent" right to do this in order to achieve greater good.

This basic right of the citizen is co-extensive with the duty of an individual to resist complicity in injustice and untruth, however sanctioned by public institutions.... Civil disobedience was for Gandhi not an exhilarating or emotive response to injustice, but a solemn undertaking only to be attempted with calm deliberation and a clear resolve to benefit others.²²⁵

Indians, as a group, would follow the leaders of the *satyagraha* movement and conduct themselves in similar ways. "What the leaders do, the populace will gladly follow."²²⁶

Gandhi's method relied on the development of a relationship between the satyagrahi and his/her opponent. The satyagrahi did not coerce his/her opponent, but rather, "the opponents may voluntarily change their wills in a way consistent with the universal love of God".²²⁷ *Hind Swaraj* was written as a rational argument against groups that would use violence to banish the British from India or to retaliate against them.

²²³ Gandhi *MPW*, 3:6.

²²⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 85.

²²⁵ Gandhi *MPW*, 3:6.

²²⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 110. Also see, Zavos, 133. "The volunteers, then, had a critical role in the mediation of the idea of *satyagraha* in its full religious sense, because it was principally through their demeanour that this meaning of *satyagraha* would be transmitted to the people. In addition, *satyagraha* would be taught in the direct pedagogic sense noted above, and it was the volunteers who were also the source of this teaching."

²²⁷ Sonnleitner, 7.

Hind Swaraj tells a story about a robber that shows the problem with retaliation. Gandhi wrote that using force against someone who has robbed you only serves to increase violence within the community because he/she begins targeting other people.

Thus the result of wanting to take revenge upon the robber is that you have disturbed your own peace; you are in perpetual fear of being robbed and assaulted; your courage has given place to cowardice.²²⁸

If a person did the opposite and took pity on the robber, the situation would change for both the individual and the community.²²⁹ Instead of the robber acting with violence, Gandhi believed that he/she would act with guilt and remorse. “He inquires about you in the village, he comes to learn about your broad and loving heart, he repents, begs your pardon, returns your things, and leaves off the stealing habit.”²³⁰ In the same way, the English would repent, feel guilty and return India to the Indians.²³¹ Thus,

Passive resistance is an all-sided sword; it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood, it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen.²³²

In order to facilitate the *satyagraha* movement, Gandhi actively promoted a “reliance on our own strength” encompassing “our body, our mind and our soul”, otherwise known as *swadeshi*.²³³ Some of Gandhi’s suggestions for *swadeshi* included abstaining from luxury, surrendering titles, avoiding government functions, withdrawing students from schools, boycotting the courts, refusing military work, dismissing elections,

²²⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 83.

²²⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 84.

²³⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 84.

²³¹ Gandhi *HS*, 86-87. “In using brute force against the English, you consult entirely your own, that is, the national interest. There is no question here either of pity or of love. If you say that the actions of the English, being evil, represent fire, and that they proceed to their actions through ignorance, and that, therefore, they occupy the position of a child, and that you want to protect such a child, then you will have to overtake every such evil action by whomsoever committed, and, in the case of the child, you will have to sacrifice yourself.”

²³² Gandhi *HS*, 94.

²³³ Gandhi *HS*, 21n.

and rejecting foreign goods.²³⁴ *Swadeshi* became an important part of Gandhi's *satyagraha* movement. In Gandhi's view, supporting indigenous resources would create an atmosphere where villages and the poorest would be able to thrive.²³⁵ To this end, Gandhi rejected cities as a place of advancement.²³⁶ He supported the *khadi* (hand-woven cloth) movement for its exemplification of *swadeshi* using, "local materials, local labour, and the local market".²³⁷ Exhibitions of *khadi* cloth were done to, "showcase the values of the nation and demonstrate the processes through which *swaraj* could be attained."²³⁸

The goal for nationalists in India, for Gandhi, was to show citizens of Great Britain the harm created by colonialism and the immorality of their country's actions.²³⁹ This applied to the economic sphere, just as it applied to other spheres of life. Civil disobedience could be seen as the means to attain not only civil rights, but also economic freedom. *Swadeshi* was a fundamental aspect of obtaining economic freedom through its emphasis on using local resources whether this be at the village, or regional, or national level. For Gandhi and his followers, this was also a religious matter. He agreed that economics was not equivalent to prosperity, but that prosperity depended on the moral quality of the community and the ability of that community to be self-sustaining. Gandhi

²³⁴ Gandhi, M.K. *Swaraj In One Year* (Madras: Ganesh and Co., 1921). Hereinafter referred to as *SOY*, 11-12.

²³⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 109. Chapter XIX on Machinery talks about ending the building of mills to make cloth and instead using domestic hand-made goods. The mill owners, "can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred hand-loom, and they can buy out the cloth that may be thus woven."

²³⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 69n.

²³⁷ Wilson, 409.

²³⁸ Trivedi, Lisa N. "Visually Mapping the "Nation": Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India, 1920-1930". *The Journal of Asian Studies*. (Association for Asian Studies Inc., Feb. 2003), 11.

²³⁹ Brown *GPH*, 55-56.

commented that Indian traditions were resistant to materialism and that this was the reason for their longevity.²⁴⁰

Gandhi hoped that those participating in the *satyagraha* movement would be driven by their need to create societal change. Just as Gandhi taught that real rights would emerge only when individuals had performed their duties, he thought that the participants of the *satyagraha* movement would gain rights by aiding others. The success of the *satyagraha* movement would mean a society based on civic humanism where “fraternity” and “mutual assistance” would dominate over individual well-being.²⁴¹

The Nation and *Swaraj*

Hind Swaraj laid out the way that *satyagraha* could bring peace to communities and nations. Gandhi’s national aim was to re-establish a true civilization that would protect and enhance the religion and the rights of the people therein. He looked to that civilization for its moral teachings. Gandhi’s idea of national *swaraj* focused on reclaiming the ideals of a true Indian civilization over the modern civilization of the British. The nation was to be one based on morals and ethics rather than wealth and technology.

Civilization

If Indians managed to create a nation according to his principles, Gandhi expected to see the return of a golden-age or the true civilization of India. “What is the meaning of

²⁴⁰ Gandhi *MR*, 149. Gandhi looked at Indian civilization and compared it to other civilizations (such as the Babylonian, Syrian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilizations). He interpreted their downfall as a result of being dependent on material things.

²⁴¹ Gandhi *HS*, xvi.

Hind Swaraj? It means the rule of *dharma* or *Ramarajya*.”²⁴² Gandhi’s notion of a proper civilization entailed a place where rights and a true knowledge of *dharma*, would be realized. In defining the true civilization for the Reader, Gandhi said:

Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves.²⁴³

Swaraj, for Gandhi, was equivalent to achieving true civilization.

Gandhi believed that the *continuous* legacy of Indian civilization could not be equaled anywhere else in the world.²⁴⁴ The end result of rediscovering morality would be the reclamation of the true civilization or golden-age of India, an ethical civilization. This civilization, guided by moral, religious principles, would be a “kingdom of heaven”.²⁴⁵ The adoption of *ahimsa* by the majority, would result in a “purification of the nation’s soul” or *atmashuddhi*.²⁴⁶ According to Gandhi, there was no room for violence in the attempt to develop a true civilization because *ahimsa* is the mark of a true civilization. Violence and untruth would produce a nation that was unjust and therefore uncivilized.

Part of the usefulness of a nonviolent approach, in Gandhi’s view, was that the people who used such an approach would garner the respect of people from other countries. In commenting on Gandhi’s South African experience, Brown says:

²⁴² Gandhi *HS*, xvii. Also see Gandhi *MPW* (Volume 1), 370. Gandhi described the particular ideal government suitable for Indians. “I have described it as *Ramarajya* i.e., sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. The Congress constitutions of Nagpur and Bombay for which I am mainly responsible are an attempt to achieve this type of *swaraj*.”

²⁴³ Gandhi *HS*, 67.

²⁴⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 66.

²⁴⁵ Although a Christian reference, the idea of a “kingdom of heaven” was expressed by a number of Hindu reformers.

²⁴⁶ Zavos, 133.

By engaging in a political style that was peaceful, constitutional and acceptable in Western politics, Indians would also reinforce their claim to be the civilized, rational equals of the white citizens of the empire.²⁴⁷

Gandhi believed that democracy can never come through violence, for that would inevitably mean the removal of all opposition through violence.²⁴⁸ For Gandhi, true democracy could only come through the application of values such as *ahimsa*. In the face of this, opposition would vanish. In his own preface to *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi commented,

...if they [Indian people] would revert to their own glorious civilization, either the English would adopt the latter and become Indianized or find their occupation in India gone.²⁴⁹

The nationalist call for Indians to fight the British was replaced by the call for the religious fighting against irreligion, albeit in non-violent fashion.

This was presented as a process of self-assertion which would lead to independence not only from colonial control but from all the oppressive, immoral, *adharmic* aspects of society.²⁵⁰

The end result was a broadening of who could be included in the nation and who not.²⁵¹

Gandhi did not advocate retaliation against British rule. Rather, he wanted to improve the ways in which they ruled.

[T]he non-violence of my conception is a more active and a real fight against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness.²⁵²

The goal, for India, was to create a rule by which the people would achieve self-realization. If India reclaimed its golden age, it would become a model for governments everywhere.

²⁴⁷ Brown *GPH*, 50.

²⁴⁸ Gandhi *MR*, 124-5.

²⁴⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 7.

²⁵⁰ Zavos, 133.

²⁵¹ Van der Veer, xv.

²⁵² Gandhi *MR*, 62.

Gandhi referred to *dharma* (duty), *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and love as the embodiments of true civilization. Gandhi believed that in a true civilization the different goals of life would be balanced: wealth and power (*artha*), ethical conduct (*dharma*), pleasure (*kama*), and the ultimate meaning of existence (*moksa*) would each have their place in people's lives.²⁵³ Gandhi felt that common elements of "modern" civilization, factory life, cities, and economic prosperity, were incompatible with the recovery of "true" civilization because they only focused on *artha* and *kama*.²⁵⁴ Gandhi argued that without the focus on religion or ethics, there was no satisfactory end goal for modern civilization.

The means for the recovery of Indian civilization was to be the practice of *satyagraha* on the individual, societal and national levels. The recognition of the ancient Indian civilization helped to prepare citizens to govern by reminding them of the core values, such as self-restraint and non-violence, that were to inform all facets of life. Non-violent action should move from individuals to society and from society to the rest of the world.²⁵⁵ In a true civilization, the *satyagraha* movement was more than a collection of *satyagrahis* following their own principles outside of society; it was the understanding that all problems, even worldly ones, could be solved through *satyagraha*.

Nation and Civilization

Gandhi did not see the idea of a nation as an "alien import" from western culture, but rather as an extension of India's religious history.²⁵⁶ The domestic origins of

²⁵³ Parel "Gandhi on the Dynamics of Civilization", 12. None should be sacrificed for any of the others.

²⁵⁴ Gandhi *HS*, xxii and Parel "Gandhi on the Dynamics of Civilization", 14.

²⁵⁵ Gandhi *MR*, 61.

²⁵⁶ Copley, Antony. "Is There a Gandhian Definition of Liberty?" in Anthony Parel, Ed. *Gandhi, Freedom, and Self-Rule*. (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2000), 31. "The Hindu saints had established its frontiers and 'fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world. Any two Indians are one as no two Englishman are'."

nationalism meant that it was not necessary to fix India's problems through purely western approaches. His criticisms of the British administration were criticisms of western civilization, and any government or nation, that tried to imitate that form.²⁵⁷ Modern civilization was a "disease" assailing India, a disease that Indians seemed too willing to embrace in the attempt to create a nation.²⁵⁸ In addressing the business of political *swaraj*, Gandhi said:

You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English, and when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the Swaraj that I want.²⁵⁹

Gandhi's drive to create a nation was a response to the modern civilization of the British. In a modern civilization, the concern about modernity and accumulation of power and wealth, cause people to forget about their proper place in the universe.²⁶⁰ When asked about the origins of these problems, Gandhi said,

It is not due to any particular fault of the English people, but the condition is due to modern civilization. It is a civilization only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day.²⁶¹

He felt his views on modern civilization were needed because, in his opinion, the people were deceived by a dream-like system, promising much but delivering little. In responding to the definition of civilization, Gandhi wrote:

A man, whilst he is dreaming, believes in his dream; he is undeceived only when he is awakened from his sleep. A man labouring under the bane of civilization is like a dreaming man. What we usually read are the works of defenders of modern civilization, which undoubtedly claims among its votaries very brilliant and even

²⁵⁷ Sarkar, Sumit. *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindu Fundamentalism, History*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 248-9.

²⁵⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 38. Gandhi insisted that the problems of modern civilization were also hurting people in Great Britain. It is interesting that the sources for Gandhi's criticism of civilization were western (Tolstoy, Ruskin, etc.).

²⁵⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 28.

²⁶⁰ Copley, 49.

²⁶¹ Gandhi *HS*, 33.

some very good men. Their writings hypnotize us. And so, one by one, we are drawn into the vortex.²⁶²

Gandhi used the term “cultural anarchy” to describe modern civilization.²⁶³ “This civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion.”²⁶⁴ People living under these conditions focused on their wants in addition to their needs. They were constantly in search of something to fill the void left by their rejection of religion. “This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people of Europe that those who are in it appear to be half mad.”²⁶⁵ A true civilization on the other hand, was to be based on religious sentiments that Gandhi regarded as true.

Gandhi’s concept of *swaraj* led him to reject any view which presumed that overthrowing the British government would cure India’s ills. Morally speaking, the rule of the British and the rule of Indians could result in the same thing unless the rule was informed by Gandhian values.²⁶⁶ The problem was that both Indians and British citizens had been deceived and were dedicated to the irreligious values in modern civilizations.²⁶⁷ On the concept of patriotism, Gandhi said: “My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes, if only the English would retire.”²⁶⁸ Gandhi was concerned with how individuals in a true civilization were to respond to the madness, irreligion and materialism exemplified by the British value system and method of governing. Gandhi argued that true patriots would resist tyranny

²⁶² Gandhi *HS*, 35.

²⁶³ Gandhi *HS*, 35n.

²⁶⁴ Gandhi *HS*, 37.

²⁶⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 37.

²⁶⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 26.

²⁶⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 37. Gandhi insisted that his argument was not with the British people, but with the methods they used to retain their colonies.

²⁶⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 76-77.

and seek the welfare of all. Without a radical change in thinking, Indians would not be able to recover their moral, civilization.²⁶⁹

In dealing with the conflict between Indians aspiring for independence, and the colonial government, *satyagraha* provided the best option for real change. Gandhi believed that *satyagraha* techniques would lead to autonomy socially, politically, nationally, and religiously. The *satyagrahis* would discipline and restrain themselves in regards to needs and desires creating self-awareness and empathy for others.²⁷⁰ Social injustice would become visible to them and individually, they would be compelled not to leave the world, but to act within it.²⁷¹ Different communities made up of different individuals had to live up to these expectations before this new Indian civilization, this new nation, would emerge. If created by appropriate means, that is through *satyagraha*, the nation created would be a truly civilized one. True self-rule was to be produced, not by eliminating the British, but through India becoming an ideal moral nation.²⁷²

Conclusion

Gandhi's approach to creating self-rule was informed by his religious beliefs. For Gandhi, God was truth, the truth of morality and ethics. The means to be more god-like was to be disciplined in moral behaviours. Gandhi encouraged *ahimsa* as opposed to violent conflict to achieve his goal of *swaraj*. Gandhi recognized the need for development as being true not only for the individual, but also for the nation.

Satyagraha would force Indians not only to deal with the external causes of subjugation, but would also get them to deal with internal causes. In this way, he placed

²⁶⁹ Gandhi *HS*, 118.

²⁷⁰ Parel *GFS*, 7, 16. Gandhi wanted to avoid the "do as you like" mentality that nationalist movements seemed to take on.

²⁷¹ Parel *GFS*, 16.

²⁷² Gandhi *HS*, 118.

some of the responsibility on the Indian people for the state in which they found themselves. In commenting on Gandhi's linkage between independence and self-rule, Parel writes:

According to Gandhi, independence without a capacity for self-rule would mean nothing more than the rule of the strong- the economically and politically strong- over the economically and politically weak. It would not mean the rule of equals by equals.²⁷³

Rule by Indians under these circumstances would be identical to British rule. True nationalism meant uncovering the truth hidden by colonialism. This truth hidden by colonialism was that the people, not the state, were the repositories of power. To think otherwise was, for Gandhi, *maya*.²⁷⁴ On Gandhi's use of the term *maya*, Zavos writes:

If colonial power was *maya*, nationalism became politics directed towards the unveiling of *satya*. It had profound spiritual significance in the quest for truth, becoming almost a religious obligation. This means that the fulfilling of this obligation was *satyagraha*.²⁷⁵

Gandhi wanted to create a nation in which communities recognized the shared goal of one "ordered moral government of the universe".²⁷⁶ The created nation would focus on the concept of rights, duties and equality for the Indian people. These ideas, which seem to be western in origin, were to be infused with values taken from Indian traditions. Likewise, questionable elements of Indian government such as unjust laws were to be replaced by the ideals of civic humanism. On the ideal of civic humanism for Gandhi, Parel says:

[Gandhi] grafted what he thought were the saving elements of modern civilization- its civic humanism, consisting of the ideas of human rights, civil

²⁷³ Parel *GFS*, 5.

²⁷⁴ Zavos, 130.

²⁷⁵ Zavos, 130.

²⁷⁶ Gandhi *MR*, 3.

liberty, economic justice, gender equality, the religious neutrality of the state, the rule of law, constitutionalism, and a civic mode of nationalism.²⁷⁷

Just as individuals had to balance rights with duties, the government would also have to balance individual rights with national needs. In commenting on Gandhi's understanding on self-governing, Terchek writes,

As Gandhi understands matters, to be self-governing does not mean that one is free to do whatever one wants; rather autonomy requires a determination by an agent to live according to moral standards that the person has freely chosen.²⁷⁸

Therefore, to develop a truly free nation required more than just replacing British rule with Indian rule. It was to be a "genuine" *swaraj* in which individuals and government would be preoccupied with justice, duty, and truth as much as they were preoccupied with accumulating rights.

Outside the cities, Indian villages retained living values and those values, according to Gandhi, needed to re-emerge on the national level.²⁷⁹ Gandhi suggested that the best way to rule India was by giving smaller communities more power to make decisions. Through such a move, benefits of these villages would become apparent and emerge on a larger scale. In essence this meant that civilization had less to do with technology, science, or rationality, and more with people's "mode of conduct" particularly with respect for each other. In this context, nation-building was laden with notions of duty, truth and ethics. The ideas of non-operation, morality, non-violence and other attributes were both religious and political ideas. In a civilized society, the state would, "have a moral obligation to help the poor and underprivileged and provide

²⁷⁷ Parel "Gandhi on the Dynamics of Civilization", 11.

²⁷⁸ Terchek, Ronald J. "Gandhian Autonomy in the Late Modern World" in Anthony Parel, Ed. *Gandhi, Freedom, and Self-Rule*, (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books. 2000), 49.

²⁷⁹ Parel "Gandhi on the Dynamics of Civilization", 11.

opportunities to those who for centuries had been despised and deprived”.²⁸⁰ Religion, politics, and *swaraj* were the same for Gandhi. As Gandhi clamored for an independent India, for a nation, he did so with these notions in mind.

²⁸⁰ Brown, Judith. “Gandhi and Nehru: Frustrated Visionaries” *History Today*. (Vol. 47, Sept. 1997), 22.

CHAPTER 3: VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR

The ideas found in *The Indian War of Independence* were informed by the life experiences of Savarkar. These can be separated into two distinct periods: his childhood activism in India and a maturation of his activism while he was studying in England. His family taught him to be proud of his identity as a Marathi. He understood that the riots and plagues in his childhood were caused by both the colonialism of the British and the weakness of the Hindus. He followed other Indian nationalists to London and obtained a ‘western’ education in law. Even more importantly, he obtained a nationalist education courtesy of expatriate Indians such as Pandit Shyamji Krishnavarma. His study of history and nationalist revolutionaries, such as Mazzini, convinced Savarkar that educating Hindus in their true history and organizing people into secret societies was the only way to create leaders that would lead the nation into existence. The goal of his *The Indian War of Independence* was to enlighten Hindus about their history, to awaken them to their martial spirit, and to ignite their desire to attain independence.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born on May 28, 1883 to a family of Chitpavan Brahmins in the Maharashtra region of India.²⁸¹ Savarkar’s parents focused on education for him and his two brothers.²⁸² His biographer, Dhananjay Keer, suggests that Savarkar’s prolific reading and writing habits were the result of Savarkar’s parents engaging him in the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and *Bakhars*. Each of these texts

²⁸¹Keer, 2. The lack of biographical material has led to a reliance on Dhananjay Keer’s biography *Veer Savarkar*. Some scholars have commented that the text borders on hagiography. (Noorani, A.G. *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection* (New Delhi: LeftWord Books, 2002), 11. Noorani has written that a “fair and definitive biography of Savarkar is yet to appear”. Nonetheless, the text still contains a wealth of information for a scholar to use and interpret.

²⁸²Keer, 3.

contained stories about warriors, such as Arjuna, Rama, and Shivaji, and the possible creation of a Hindu Raj.²⁸³

Savarkar was a very bright child who had a turbulent childhood. His mother died of cholera when he was only ten.²⁸⁴ His early adolescent years were marked by riots between Hindus and Muslims.²⁸⁵ The greatest trauma for Savarkar (and the whole of Maharashtra) was brought about by devastating plagues. His father and uncle were killed by one of the plagues and two of his brothers became ill, but later recovered.²⁸⁶ It was generally believed that the British government had mishandled the plagues and, in response, the Chapekar brothers assassinated the British plague commissioner.²⁸⁷ Savarkar idolized the brothers and wrote tales about their sacrifice.²⁸⁸ A sense of loss and frustration in regards to what happened in his own family remained with him throughout his life as did his impatience with the British regime.

His activist tendencies manifested themselves early in life and were inspired by other activists such as Indian National Congress extremist Bal Gangadhar Tilak.²⁸⁹ In Tilak, Savarkar found approval for many of his own projects. Savarkar adopted Tilak's methods for organizing protests and organizing his societies. While still in school Savarkar created the Mitra Mela to increase nationalism through festivals, a re-creation of

²⁸³ Keer, 3.

²⁸⁴ Keer, 5.

²⁸⁵ Keer, 4. The 1893 riots in the United Provinces between Hindus and Muslims resulted in a vow that Savarkar would avenge the Hindus that died. As a young child, he got his revenge by throwing stones at mosques. To him, all of the riots had been incited by the Muslims.

²⁸⁶ Keer, 7.

²⁸⁷ Keer, 5. The British used the segregation of people and burning of their properties as the means to deal with the plagues

²⁸⁸ Keer, 7-8. Their sacrifice entailed their deaths after they were captured.

²⁸⁹ Gandhi *HS*, xxx. Savarkar, like Tilak, believed that the Indian National Congress had failed as a viable voice against British colonialism.

Indian history, and a celebration of its heroes.²⁹⁰ Savarkar and Tilak shared in the popularization of Hindu festivals of nationalist deities such as Ganesh and Rama.²⁹¹

At Fergusson College in Pune, Savarkar enlarged his group, changing the name to Abhinava Bharat, and introduced a radical paper called "Aryan Weekly".²⁹² In it, he encouraged various forms of *swadeshi* as protest. *Swadeshi* or "of one's own country-made goods" refers to the use of indigenous products and the rejection of foreign products.²⁹³ As a protest against the presence of Great Britain on the Indian subcontinent, Tilak also supported the *swadeshi* movement.²⁹⁴ In his nationalist work, Savarkar made an impression on Tilak who then suggested Savarkar's name to Pandit Shyamji Krishnavarma for a Herbert Spencer Indian Fellowship.²⁹⁵ Savarkar's marriage into the family of Bhaurao Chiplunkar provided the necessary financial arrangements so that Savarkar could take advantage of the scholarship to study overseas.²⁹⁶

Krishnavarma was an expatriate nationalist who wanted to "bring bright Indian youths to Europe and America for training in the theory and practice of violent

²⁹⁰ Keer, 32. Figures for emulation were brave fighters such as Shivaji, Guru Nanak, and Guru Gobind Singh.

²⁹¹ Benai, Veronique, "Reappropriating Colonial Documents in Kolhapur (Maharashtra): Variations on a Nationalist theme," *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 33, No. 4. (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 938. "Tilak, amongst others, made famous and generous use of Maharashtrian cultural, historical, and religious traditions as shown by the Ganapati festival and the Shivaji celebrations he sponsored." He encouraged these festivals for both "religious revival and political independence". (See also Courtright, Paul. "The Ganesh Festival in Maharashtra: Some Observations" in Eleanor Zelliot and Maxine Bernstein Eds., *The Experience of Hinduism: Essays on Religion in Maharashtra*, (New York: The State University of New York, 1988), 77, 84-85.

²⁹² Keer, 16.

²⁹³ Keer, 16, 18. This evolved from not using foreign products to leading boycotts where quantities of foreign clothes were burned.

²⁹⁴ Keer, 18-19.

²⁹⁵ Keer, 17, 20. About Savarkar, Tilak said, "...among the applicants there is one Mr. Savarkar from Bombay, who graduated last year and whom I know to be a spirited young man very enthusiastic in the swadeshi cause so much that he had to incur the displeasure of the Fergusson College authorities. He has no mind to take up Government service at any time and his moral character is very good."

²⁹⁶ Keer, 12-14.

revolution”.²⁹⁷ Krishnavarma was a “revolutionary journalist, writer, [and] cultivator of freedom fighters”.²⁹⁸ An outspoken critic of colonial rule, he left India for Europe to avoid imprisonment.²⁹⁹ There he obtained properties, such as India House, where young Indian students felt free to express revolutionary ideas. Pandit Shyamji Krishnavarma left Savarkar in charge of India House when he moved to Paris.

Savarkar chose law as a discipline, not to practice, but to use as a tool to liberate India from colonial Britain. He chose law because it showed the “vital points” of the colonial government and indicated where one could gain the upper hand.³⁰⁰ He attended Gray’s Inn for his studies, but the focal point of his revolutionary work revolved around India House.³⁰¹ There he initiated the Free India Society which became a recruitment branch of the Abhinava Bharat Society in India.³⁰²

During his first year in Great Britain, Savarkar translated a biography of the Italian revolutionary Joseph Mazzini into Marathi.³⁰³ Italian unification was a poignant example of nationalism for Indians because both Italy and India were comprised of different regions with their own rulers, languages, and customs.³⁰⁴ Savarkar was drawn to Mazzini because of the parallels in their lives. Mazzini took his law exams but then abandoned his studies for the conspiracy movement.³⁰⁵ In a similar way, Savarkar’s revolutionary work resulted in him not being called to the bar. Both Savarkar and

²⁹⁷ Gandhi *HS*, xxvi.

²⁹⁸ Padhya, Hemant. “*Pandit Shyamaji Krishnavarma*” www.hvk.org/articles/0803/193.html. Pandit Shivaji Krishnavarma was influenced by Dayananda Saraswati and became one of his disciples. His time in Europe resulted in discussions with people like Max Mueller and Herbert Spencer.

²⁹⁹ Padhya, Hemant. “*Pandit Shyamaji Krishnavarma*” www.hvk.org/articles/0803/193.html

³⁰⁰ Keer, 26.

³⁰¹ Keer, 29.

³⁰² Keer, 24.

³⁰³ Kerr, 24, 34. It was printed in 1907 and sold out in a matter of months. It was the first victim of the India Press Act.

³⁰⁴ Sarti, Ronald. *Mazzini: A Life for the Religion of Politics* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 2.

³⁰⁵ Barr, Strongfellow. *Mazzini: Portrait of an Exile* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 22-23.

Mazzini had to deal with powerful foreign interests: India with colonial Britain, and Italy with Austria.³⁰⁶ Their preoccupation with nationalist history and revolutionary ideas incited them to commit acts that were considered criminal by governing powers.

Mazzini's campaigns promoted Italian unity through the circulation of forbidden nationalist texts.³⁰⁷ His various journals and writings were an expression of the type of society he longed to create.³⁰⁸ Mazzini believed that the "function of literature was to change society, and that the great writer was a reformer in disguise".³⁰⁹ The works of Mazzini outlined the concept that a nation must be informed by a national history. "Italians could look back on no national tradition" and therefore one had to be created for them.³¹⁰ Mazzini's writings showed how different cultures, peoples, languages and politics could be united by conflict directed at an outside source.³¹¹ The unity created in conflict could result in a national tradition. In support of Mazzini's unification theory, Savarkar indicated that other countries (Italy, Germany, and England) have, "united their peoples into strong and powerful nations to-day, because they had been melted in the furnace of internal strife and the fire of foreign despotism".³¹²

Mazzini participated in fostering national identity through his participation in, and creation of, secret societies.³¹³ Mazzini's creation, Young Italy, was "part modern political party; part traditional secret society" in that it sought political action and was a place for like-minded individuals to come together.³¹⁴ It was in these societies where the

³⁰⁶ Barr, 16.

³⁰⁷ Barr, 23-25.

³⁰⁸ For descriptions of the various journals, see Barr, 52 and Sarti, 35, 54.

³⁰⁹ Sarti, 33.

³¹⁰ Barr, 17.

³¹¹ Barr, 17.

³¹² Savarkar *IWI*, 144.

³¹³ Sarti, 35.

³¹⁴ Sarti, 54.

idea of 'nation' was connected to the idea of 'culture'.³¹⁵ Savarkar recognized the strength of secret societies for outlining the duties and responsibilities of its members. By joining a secret society, a person obtained freedom, not for himself, but for the whole group.³¹⁶ Secret societies bridged the gap between the individual and the nation.

Sometimes revolutions could be won through peaceful administrative methods. On other occasions violence was required to instigate change. "Young Italy waged its fight peacefully and publicly where it could, or violently where it was forced underground."³¹⁷ Italian secret societies required their members to be armed with daggers, rifles and cartridges.³¹⁸ Mazzini made and distributed arms and proclaimed, "Multitudes and weapons! There is the secret of future revolutions".³¹⁹ Mazzini was Savarkar's example of an intellectual leader who was able to inspire ordinary people to overcome their fear and become great nationalists.³²⁰ Savarkar similarly adored the heroes of revolution in *The Indian War of Independence*.

The Indian War of Independence, otherwise referred to as the "textbook of revolutionaries" or "the Bible of the revolutionaries" was Savarkar's version of the 1857 uprising written in 1908, fifty years after the mutiny.³²¹ "Directly and indirectly the book has influenced, animated and guided at least two generations in India and their struggles

³¹⁵ Hansen, Thomas Blom. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 77.

³¹⁶ Sarti, 58. The use of "himself" is because the members of these groups would have been male.

³¹⁷ Sarti, 54.

³¹⁸ Barr, 39-40.

³¹⁹ Sarti, 25.

³²⁰ Jaffrelot, Christophe. *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. (New Delhi: C. Hurst & Co., 1993), 26. Savarkar likened Mazzini to the poet-saint Ramdas and Garibaldi to Shivaji. Through this comparison, Savarkar hoped to show that Hindus had all of the virtues and characteristics required to be nationalist leaders.

³²¹ Savarkar *IWI*, xxi, xv.

to free the Motherland.”³²² Controversy surrounding the book’s intentions resulted in numerous police raids forcing the manuscript to Europe where it went from France to Britain and to Germany before finally being published in Holland.³²³ The English government proscribed the book before its publication, a move that was criticized by the domestic press.³²⁴ It was smuggled to India where even possession of the book suggested that one was implicated in revolutionary activities.³²⁵

The book was an Indian revolutionary version of the 1857 Indian uprising. The uprising was called a ‘mutiny’ by the British, but Savarkar wanted to show it as the first attempt at a revolutionary movement. He questioned the idea that Britain was sympathetic to “nations struggling for constitutional freedom and political accommodation”.³²⁶ While some of the Indian National Congress leaders, such as Gokhale wanted gradual change, others (notably Bal Gangadhar Tilak) “mistrusted the benevolence of the British and advocated a militant strategy of armed destabilization of the British colonial administration”.³²⁷ In other words, the text supported the opinion of extremists in the Indian National Congress who believed that waiting for the British to hand over power through gradual reform and constitutional means was not a prudent policy. Instead, many of these nationalists advocated the use of violence to attain *swaraj*.³²⁸

³²² Savarkar *IWI*, xxii.

³²³ Savarkar *IWI*, xvi.

³²⁴ Savarkar *IWI*, xvii.

³²⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, xvii, xix.

³²⁶ Chaudhuri, S.B. *English Historical Writings on the Indian Mutiny*. (Calcutta: The World Press Private Ltd., 1979), 170.

³²⁷ Hansen, 74-75.

³²⁸ Savarkar V.D. “The Indian War of Independence” in Ainslie T. Embree, Ed. *1857 in India: Mutiny or War of Independence*. (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1963), 39. Many of these nationalists resided around Maharashtra and Bengal.

Savarkar wanted to reach an audience that was educated, but unaware of the “true” history of India. The book was written using powerful, emotional language. He hoped to persuade the Hindu elite into believing that overthrowing the British government was quite possible and necessary.³²⁹ His arguments were as much against Indian weakness as they were against British dominance. Much more than the need of destroying foreign systems, Savarkar wanted to fill Indians with a desire to rise up against the British.³³⁰ Savarkar read into the past a possibility for a brighter future. “We read what Savarkar said not as the sentence of a judge but as a theme worthy of itself, a revelation, a yearning that was wishful.”³³¹ Like Gandhi, Savarkar’s goal for India was *swaraj*. The purpose of the following chapter is to present Savarkar’s understanding of *swaraj*.

³²⁹ Chaudhuri, 171. “A book, dynamic and truly national, it rang with a noble indignation against the alien rulers.”

³³⁰ Savarkar “The Indian War of Independence”, 39.

³³¹ Chaudhuri, 171.

CHAPTER 4: SAVARKAR'S *SWARAJ*

Of all the gifts of God, the most gracious is that of Swaraj."³³²

The Indian War of Independence followed the general definition of *swaraj* as national independence or home-rule. Savarkar's *swaraj* was, "the ideal of absolute political independence" through "an *armed national revolt* against foreign domination".³³³ The immediate goal for Savarkar was the expulsion of the foreign British presence so that India could usher in the new Hindu Raj. Savarkar proclaimed in a speech,

No, by Hindusthan, no; the historical continuity of the Indian nation is not cut off. The war began on the 10th of May 1857 is not over on the 10th of May 1908, nor shall it ever cease till a 10th of May-to-come sees the destiny accomplished, sees the beautiful Ind crowned.³³⁴

Savarkar described *swaraj* as an "all-moving principle" for which people would give up their possessions and fight.

It is always due to some all-moving principle for which hundreds and thousands of men fight, before which thrones totter, crowns are destroyed and created, existing ideals are shattered and new ideals break forth, and for the sake of which vast masses of people think lightly of shedding sacred human blood.³³⁵

Savarkar insisted on teaching Hindus about their potential to make this occur.

Savarkar believed that the golden-age of Indian rule had been lost because of the weakness of her people. India was a "fallen" state controlled by foreign powers. Domination was especially difficult considering that the Hindu people were depicted as being more advanced than those ruling them.

³³² Savarkar *IWI*, 8.

³³³ Savarkar *IWI*, xiii. His organization, the Adi Nava Bharat adopted these principles as fundamental to their organization.

³³⁴ Savarkar *IWI*, 547. From his speech "O Martyrs".

³³⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, 3.

The Indians saw that the cherished ideals of their race-their thrones and their families and the very Gods they worshipped- were trampled under foot, the holy land of their love devastated and sacked by hordes of barbarians, so inferior to them in language, religion, philosophy, mercy and all the soft and human attributes of man and God - but superior to them in strength alone - strength that summed up its creed in two words - Fire and Sword.³³⁶

One Hindu *dharma* of nurturing and religious tolerance had led the people to forget another Hindu *dharma* of power and protection.³³⁷

Savarkar's *swaraj* was a masculine sort that embraced modernization and militarization.³³⁸ Savarkar did not juxtapose Indian values against British values, but he wanted Hindus to embrace those things that had enabled the British to build an empire.³³⁹ Like other nationalists, Savarkar encouraged Indians to take advantage of any education, administration, or military experience that the colonial regime might provide. It was necessary for people to realize that the state of India was being manipulated by foreign rule. It was necessary that they become the heroes that they read about in *The Indian War of Independence*. A superficial reading of Savarkar seems to suggest that his *swaraj* was only about political independence. Indeed, this is the way his rhetoric is often interpreted. I suggest that a careful reading of Savarkar in terms of *The Indian War of Independence* will show that his *swaraj* is as religious as it is political.

The Individual and *Swaraj*

It is interesting to note that Savarkar equated any loss of *swaraj* with a loss of *swadharma*, that is, one's own *dharma*. "Swaraj without swadharma is despicable and

³³⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 21.

³³⁷ Marty, Martin. *Fundamentalisms Observed*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 547.

³³⁸ Hansen, 79.

³³⁹ Hansen, 79.

swadharma without Swaraj is powerless.”³⁴⁰ This would seem to indicate that any discussion of *swaraj* must begin with the individual and his or her *dharma*. Freedom, for Savarkar, demanded action on the part of individuals.

He who does not attempt to acquire Swaraj, he who sits silently in slavery, he is an atheist and hater of Religion. Therefore, rise for Swadharma and acquire Swaraj.³⁴¹

This statement suggested that people had to do their duty or *swadharma*. *Dharma*, according to Savarkar had to do with taking on the role of the *ksatriya*. Savarkar argued that if people followed his prescription for independence by becoming educated in military tactics and military history, they would take action to protect their country from intruders. Such action would require a fighter to restrain his/her passions, prepare him/herself for violent battle, and for the possibility of impending death.

Swadharma

Hindus did not have a proper understanding of *dharma* or duty, according to Savarkar. He believed that as it had been in the days of Shivaji, it was also now one's duty to protect and preserve Hindu religion from “aggressors, usurpers, and oppressors”.³⁴² Savarkar wrote that, “it is the duty of every man to fight for the rights given to man by God”.³⁴³ This concept is intrinsic to Savarkar's *Indian War of Independence* in that Savarkar was trying to awaken the people to what he considered their divinely-inspired duty. Following one's *dharma*, to Savarkar, meant using and

³⁴⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, 10.

³⁴¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 10-11.

³⁴² See Laine, James. *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6, 42-43. Savarkar believed that he mirrored Shivaji's approach to opposition and the mythology around Shivaji helped to support his view. The enemies of Shivaji were not seen as having a different *dharma*, but instead were depicted as being devoid of *dharma*. The stories suggest the opponent (Muslims) were the “antithesis” of what it meant to be Hindu, a view that disregards the diversity of Islam. Islamic beliefs were not well-known at the time of Shivaji and were being interpreted through the eyes of Hindus. In the literature, Muslims were shown as cruel, intoxicated, cow killers and iconoclastic.

³⁴³ Savarkar “The Indian War of Independence”, 42.

developing one's power to protect Hindus from domination, their religion from slavery, and their country from subjugation.³⁴⁴

While Savarkar appealed to *dharma* and its recovery, his view of *dharma* involved a refocusing of traditional notions of *dharma* particularly with respect to the *caste* system. For Savarkar this refocusing meant to privilege the duties and characteristics that applied to the *ksatriya* class, particularly the idea of *ksatriya* as warrior. Taking on the role of a holy warrior or *ksatriya* was the only means by which India could break the cycle of subjugation, according to Savarkar.³⁴⁵ Furthermore, such a refocusing challenged traditional caste distinctions, at least with respect to involvement in the battle for independence.

In this our army, the differences of small and great shall be forgotten, and equality shall be the rule; for all who draw the sword in this holy war for the defense of religion are equally glorious. They are brethren, there is no rank among them.³⁴⁶

The reasoning behind Savarkar's redefinition of caste was that he thought that the values associated with the *ksatriya* had been underrepresented in Indian politics and religion. Savarkar insisted that Hindus had lost their divinely-given land, wealth, and power through embracing non-violent virtues instead of military virtues.³⁴⁷ The peacefulness of the Hindu people made them an easy target for enemies to conquer. When domination and exploitation are understood in this light it is clear that the British were not seen as the cause of oppression, but rather, the non-violent aspects of Hindu religion were at fault. Non-violent virtues had weakened the Hindu way of life.

³⁴⁴ Marty, 547.

³⁴⁵ Savarkar *Hindutva*, 21.

³⁴⁶ Savarkar "Indian War of Independence", 42.

³⁴⁷ Savarkar *Hindutva*, 21.

To counteract the weakening of the Hindu way of life, Savarkar believed that he had to emphasize his definition of *dharma*. Hindus had to focus on the protection of Hindu society, Hindu religion, and attainment of Hindu rule. For Savarkar, the means to attain *swaraj* was through using the enemies' weapons in a way that was justifiably violent. This meant the exercise of might. "Right does not unfailingly win through its inherent justifiability (sic) or righteousness unless it is upheld by proportional Might."³⁴⁸ By taking on the role of *ksatriya*, each person would realize his/her *swadharma* and would cast off the British, and any other oppressive rule.

Savarkar's definition of *dharma* was constructed on the basis of his concept of Hindu gods. In *The Indian War of Independence*, the Gods were champions of order and balance. The deities used battles to create justice in the world. Savarkar wrote of a "terrible" deity "dancing on the blazing flames" while,

...insolence tyranny and injustice are ground and burnt to ashes by the mighty hammer in whose hands the shackles of slavery get knocked down to pieces and Nations are set free and whose hundred and one red hot tongues are lolling out from hundred and one mouths athirst to lick up battlefuls of blood when loaded war clouds burst out on Nations fighting for life, for death- that aspect of thee, O spirit of War, O Har- the terrible! We contemplate, we worship! Be propitious! Wilt thou, O Lord, sharpen the edge of our sword and bless it with victory?³⁴⁹

Just as Gods dispense justice through destruction, so too could individuals use divinely-sanctioned violence to create a just world. His description of God in terrible form is clearly reminiscent of the image of Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

As many river currents converge on the sea, so those heroes of the human world flow into your blazing mouths. As flying insects propel themselves to death in the brilliant flame, so the worlds impetuously hurl themselves to destruction between your jaws. Vishnu, you lap up all the worlds with your flaming mouths,

³⁴⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 68.

³⁴⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 69-70.

ubiquitously devouring; your fierce rays engulf the entire universe in brilliance, roasting it.³⁵⁰

As we know from Savarkar's arguments with Gandhi, the *Gita* was an important document for him in supporting the warrior ethos and tying this to *swadharma*.

Significant to Savarkar's re-interpretation of *swadharma* was his argument that being ruled by a foreign nation would cause religion to die and to be replaced by the religion of the ruling nation.³⁵¹ Tyranny under another's rule results in the absence of one's own religion. Savarkar believed that the motherland of India was a repository for religious ideas that Hindus should choose from and that these had to be protected.³⁵² However, the only way to "safeguard" the diverse Hindu traditions was for Hindus to dominate in conflict.

It is then inevitable that we must resist sword in hand and wage a relentless struggle to win back our political independence and to safeguard the honour of the ashes of our fathers and the temple of our gods.³⁵³

A foreign power with a foreign religion challenging the religious laws of a conquered people was tyranny.³⁵⁴ If they were allowed to change the rules of the religion, what else were they able to change?

Savarkar viewed his version of *dharma* as teaching "true" history. Savarkar insisted that inattention to the militant aspect of Hindu history had contributed to Hindu subjugation and he believed that the revolt of 1857 was a piece of that history that the

³⁵⁰ Johnson, 51. (11:28-30)

³⁵¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 54-57, 60. Some of his fears he felt were realized with the work of missionaries. Their presence affected British policies in India, such as the Macaulay reforms on education. Through their insistence, the British questioned practices like suttee and widow remarriage. There was a general belief that those who converted to Christianity had more opportunities for promotion than others had. Savarkar argued that it was not a question of if these practices were good or bad, right or wrong, but a question of if an outside force should be allowed to interfere with the customs of people.

³⁵² Savarkar *IWI*, 55-56. "...it is infinitely more easy to rule a nation whose individuality is dead than to rule one which has a clearly marked individuality."

³⁵³ Savarkar *IWI*, 67.

³⁵⁴ Savarkar *IWI*, 58.

people could revisit for inspiration. His history would show them that India had a history of heroism and toughness, not just of renunciation and non-violence. Hindus had to accept his version of events if they were going to free themselves from colonial domination. But, they would first have to de-colonize themselves as individuals before the nation could be de-colonized.

Savarkar renamed the 1857 mutiny as a war; it was not a revolutionary war, but the first war of Indian independence.³⁵⁵ He believed that if more Indians understood their history, they would be eager to fight for independence.

The nation that has no consciousness of its past has no future. Equally true it is that a nation must develop its capacity not only of claiming a past but also of knowing how to use it for the furtherance of its future. The nation ought to be the master and not the slave of its own history.³⁵⁶

Savarkar's history provided people with a narrative and a lesson to keep the idea of *dharma* and *swaraj* fresh in their minds. Once immersed in their own history, Hindus would have to confront their failings and their successes. Unless people recognized their true *dharma*, insisted Savarkar, oppressive regimes would continue to occupy India.

The Way of Action: *Karma Yoga*

It should be clear from the discussion of *swadharma* that Savarkar promoted a way of action or *karma yoga*. People needed to act in the world to ensure that their traditions, beliefs, society, and nation would be protected. Savarkar asked the question, if realizing God meant perfecting the self, how could that be accomplished in slavery?³⁵⁷

God is the essence of justice, and slavery is the absence of justice. God is the essence of freedom; slavery is the absence of freedom. Hence, when there is a

³⁵⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, xiv. He wrote the book in response to the 50th anniversary of Great Britain's success over the revolutionaries.

³⁵⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, ix.

³⁵⁷ Savarkar *IWI*, 53.

God there cannot be slavery, and where there is slavery, there cannot be God or Godliness. When there is no place for God [there] can be no religion.³⁵⁸

God was, for Savarkar, a champion of those who sought for and fought for justice. When people aligned themselves with the creation of justice, they aligned themselves with God.

Stories such as the *Bhagavad Gita* were important for Savarkar in that he believed that they described a historical context in which violence was used to attain justice. Taking his cue from the *Bhagavad Gita*, Savarkar wrote *The Indian War of Independence* to compel people to act in the world. Warriors were merely instruments of God and should act like warriors. As Krishna in the *Gita* states:

I am time run on, destroyer of the universe, risen here to annihilate worlds. Regardless of you, all these warriors, stationed in opposing ranks, shall cease to exist. Therefore go to it, grasp fame! And having conquered your enemies, enjoy a thriving kingship. They have already been hewed down by me; Savyasachin, simply be the instrument.³⁵⁹

Savarkar rejected the idea that violence would lead one away from the divine, but argued rather that, “revolution which destroys injustice and oppression is holy.”³⁶⁰

Savarkar argued that one cannot separate the duty of individuals from their religion.

The reason why, in the East all revolutions take a religious form, nay more, the reason why Eastern history knows of no revolutions unconnected with religion, lies in the all-embracing meaning that the word ‘Dharma’ has.³⁶¹

It is only through *dharma* and devotion to God that one can achieve liberation. It is as though Savarkar took his cue from the last verses of chapter 11 of the *Gita*.

Neither through the Vedas, nor through asceticism, neither by alms-giving, nor by way of sacrifice is it possible to see me in the way you have seen me. But by exclusive devotion, Arjuna, I can be known and seen thus, as I really am, and

³⁵⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 54.

³⁵⁹ Johnson, 51. (11:32-33)

³⁶⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, 347-348.

³⁶¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 10.

entered into, Incinerator of the Foe. He who acts for me, who makes me the highest goal, who is devoted to me, who has abandoned attachment, who is without hatred for any being, comes to me, Pandava.³⁶²

It is evident in the writings of Savarkar that he was influenced by the same ideas that provoked Bal Gangadhar Tilak to write a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, known as the *Gita Rahasya*.³⁶³ Tilak believed that the *dharma* of educated people was to protect Hindu interests.³⁶⁴ Tilak offered an interpretation that reconciled the duty to act with religiosity.³⁶⁵ The *Rahasya* emphasized political activism in two ways: 1) The *Gita* advocates action rather than renunciation; and 2) The *Gita* states “that social or political action is the duty of all citizens when the nation is threatened by internal decay or external opposition”.³⁶⁶ Tilak interpreted this text to support “the way of action” or “karma-yoga”. Savarkar’s heroes in *The Indian War of Independence* followed the way of action.

Self-Restraint

If people were to act according to their *dharma*, they had to impose on themselves a form of self-restraint. The achievement of *swaraj* suggested that one’s lower, personal desires had to be sacrificed to one’s greater duty to create a just society. Realizing the greater goal would link one to the divine. Individuals, left to their own devices, would likely accept the status quo and be concerned only with their own needs. Self-control was necessary so that injustice could be corrected in the world. In *The Indian War of*

³⁶² Johnson, 53. (11:53-55)

³⁶³ Brown, D. Mackenzie. “The Philosophy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak: Karma vs. Jnana in the Gita Rahasya,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. 17, No. 2 (Association for Asian Studies, 1958), 197-206. Also see www.here-now4u.de/eng/some_reflections_on_the_influe.htm. “Tilak’s Gita-Rahasya, written in the time between November and April 1910/11 in the Mandalay prison is according to Aurobindo the strongest and most comprehensive work of Indian spirituality in which the importance of human action for the sake of humanity is justified.”

³⁶⁴ Keer, 165.

³⁶⁵ Brown, D. M., 197.

³⁶⁶ Brown, D.M., 199.

Independence, Savarkar wrote about the modes of conduct that individuals needed to follow in order to accomplish the goal of creating a nation. In order to be successful in achieving this goal, individuals had to be willing to give up their notions of peaceful bliss, to be obedient to leaders of the struggle, and to be willing to give up their lives for the greater goal.

Hindus had to reject their subservience to foreign powers. Savarkar taught them that they could not relinquish a concern for justice and called them out to fight.

Will you turn away from this part of duty? Rather stay on and fight, fight at bay if you must...And so if you must die then Die Fighting. Kill one enemy of the country and then expire. Why die like a coward?³⁶⁷

Individuals were encouraged to become knowledgeable in Hindu history and to cast aside any cowardly feelings that kept them from participating in the fight for justice.

People had to restrain themselves in order to be good fighters. Successful armies were created, not by following the desires of individuals, but by putting aside the thought of the individual for the thought of the collective. A good fighter was one who was self-disciplined, obedient, and committed to the collective.

And even mistaken orders of a weak general carried out by the obedient and unanimous bravery of the troops under him, become successful- are bound to become successful. On the other hand, even well-planned orders of a capable general lead to disaster and defeat, through the self-willed behaviour of the troops and the lack of oneness in command and proper subordination.³⁶⁸

“Honouring the officers and obeying their word of order is the very essence of discipline.”³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Savarkar, V.D. *The Story of My Transportation for Life*. (Bombay: Sadbhakti Publications, 1950), 147. Hereinafter known as *MTFL*.

³⁶⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 478.

³⁶⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 337.

Governing the idea of self-restraint was the notion that violence was just under certain conditions.

Revolt, bloodshed and revenge have often been instruments created by nature to root out injustice and to introduce an era of justice. And when justice uses these terrible means for her salvation, the blame of it does not lie on Justice, but on the preceding cruel Injustice, the power and insolence of which called forth the means.³⁷⁰

Savarkar understood that peace remained a distant hope; therefore he thought that it would be naive to act peacefully when others would act in a violent manner.³⁷¹ Savarkar claimed that the goal of the warrior was to use whatever justifiable means that would work, whether this be cooperation, peaceful non-cooperation, or violent non-cooperation.

We revolutionaries ought always to remember one thing and guide ourselves by one principle. That politics worth the name is neither cooperation nor non-cooperation. It is responsive cooperation, and morally it can be no other. If we win a step by cooperation, then let us cooperate with the opposition. If we feel certain that cooperation is useless, then let us resort to non-cooperation. Sometimes non-cooperation has to be non-violent. At another time, it cannot help being violent... Non-cooperation cannot be a principle, it is only a remedy for the time being.³⁷²

Cooperation was the best way to deal with others, but if no other means to defend oneself, one's traditions, and one's country were available to Hindus, Savarkar advocated violence to achieve the goal.

The idea of violent non-cooperation could lead to realization on the part of the warriors if it did not cater to their materialistic self-interest. In regards to another nationalist group, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Jaffrelot states, "[A]ction,

³⁷⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, 273-274.

³⁷¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 273-274. "But so long as that divine age has not arrived, so long as the highly auspicious end remains only in the lines of saintly poets and in the prophecies of the divinely inspired, and so long as, even to make that state of universal justice possible, the human mind has to be busy eradicating the sinful and aggressive tendencies, so long, rebellion, bloodshed and revenge cannot be purely sinful. As long as the word "rule" is used for "authority" both just and unjust, so long its antonym "rebellion" can, also, be just as well as unjust."

³⁷² Savarkar *MTFL*, 523.

even when it is violent, can constitute a means of renunciation when it is undertaken without regard to personal advantage and in the service of Dharma.”³⁷³ Similarly, Savarkar argued throughout *The Indian War of Independence* that his warriors had to give up careers, land, wealth, families, and even their lives in order to achieve *swaraj*.

The struggle for justice sometimes meant dying for the ideal of independence. Warriors had to cultivate fearlessness in the face of their opponents and their own possible failings. They had to be brave in the face of death. Those who fought and died to attain their goal were considered religious martyrs by Savarkar. The martyrs were certainly not renunciates in the traditional sense; but they were renunciates in the sense that they were willing to give up much in a cause greater than themselves.

To die while fighting was not something restricted to a particular caste, but was something individuals from any caste could accomplish. Savarkar wrote to identify and venerate martyrs and used their stories to depict ideal behaviour for Indians. One of the martyrs, Peer Ali, who was a bookseller by trade commented,

You might hang me, you might hang other men like me; but you cannot hang our ideal. If I die, thousands of heroes will rise out of my blood and will destroy your kingdom.³⁷⁴

Mangal Panday also exemplified the characteristics of a martyr. He took up the duties of the *ksatriya* and killed British officers. He was caught and condemned to be hung.³⁷⁵

Savarkar used the examples of such martyrs to note their bravery in the face of death.³⁷⁶

People, in his view, needed to be unafraid to perform acts of violence and to be on the

³⁷³ Jaffrelot, 40.

³⁷⁴ Savarkar *IWI*, 320.

³⁷⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, 103-104. “The crown of martyrdom shines only on the head of those, who, regardless of success or failure, bathe their cherished ideals with their hot blood.”

³⁷⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 310-311. The sacrifice of the martyrs, “made sacred the gallows on which they were hanged”. “And without the least agitation, he mounted the scaffold even as a Yogi enters Samadhi! Fortified by the assurances of his creed, death to him was but a transition from the hated association of the infidel Feringhis to the blissful enjoyment of paradise.”

receiving end of violence. Savarkar saw the renunciation of these martyrs as encouraging others, increasing the number of participants and the likelihood that the movement would be a success.

Model for *Karma Yoga*: The Warrior

Savarkar promoted a particular interpretation of *karma yoga*, in *The Indian War of Independence*, in which the model for *karma yoga* was the heroic warrior. Savarkar made it understood that Hindus needed to exemplify the military qualities of the warriors in order to enable a new generation of heroes to arise. *The Indian War of Independence* was a documentation of people who were fulfilling their *dharma* as warriors.

The heroes of *The Indian War of Independence*, such as Nana Sahib,³⁷⁷ Lakshmi Bai³⁷⁸, and Azimullah Khan³⁷⁹ displayed virtues such as bravery, intelligence, devotion to fellow Hindus, and religiosity. Nana Sahib, for example, was a practical, well-educated politician. Although relentless on the battlefield, off of the battlefield he treated his opponents with kindness and respect.³⁸⁰ Savarkar described Nana Sahib and Lashmi Bai as, “two witnesses, sword in hand, to prove that the blood of Hindusthan that gave birth to Shivaji is not yet dead.”³⁸¹ Through outwitting and outmaneuvering their opponents, the heroes of *The Indian War of Independence* were able to temporarily overpower the

³⁷⁷ Savarkar *IWI*, 29-31. Nana Sahib, although just one of many characters, exemplifies the characteristics that Savarkar felt necessary in an ideal leader. He was adopted by Bajirao and made heir to the throne of the Peshwas. As part of the treaty with the British, Nana Sahib was entitled to a pension and he reacted rebelliously when the British did not acknowledge his adoption. Fearful of losing his proprietary rights, Nana Sahib rose up against the British. These circumstances give a flavor of the type of leader that Savarkar wanted Indians to emulate.

³⁷⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 29.

³⁷⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 30.

³⁸⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, 37. “The elevated and heroic ideal of generously treating those very enemies with social courtesy and obligation, whom, on the battlefield you would remorselessly destroy, has again and again been celebrated in the epics and histories of Hinduthan.”

³⁸¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 25.

British.³⁸² Despite the disparity in strength and lack of experience, the Indian revolutionaries acted with courage and were able to strike when necessary.

The characters in *The Indian War of Independence* were described by Savarkar in ways that were reminiscent of the mythology surrounding Shivaji. Savarkar was, no doubt, influenced by the Maharashtrian legends about Shivaji. In regards to the Shivaji's mythology, Laine writes that he was, "praised not only as a warrior, but also as an administrator, social reformer, nationalist, and even mystic".³⁸³ Shivaji was seen not simply as a political warrior, but also as one who fought on behalf of the divine. He was an active *karma yogin*, a warrior whose power was connected to the goddess Bhavani. This action-oriented goddess assured Shivaji of victory in each of his exploits in exchange for his devotion and blood sacrifice.³⁸⁴ This intervention was necessary because Shivaji was depicted as an underdog in the mythology.³⁸⁵ Afzul Khan, his opponent, was seen as strong and demonic compared to the young, short Shivaji, just as the British were seen as more powerful than Indian forces in Savarkar's day.³⁸⁶

The mythology of Shivaji was so important to Savarkar, that he connected his warriors to the great hero. While standing in his hall, Savarkar's hero Nana Sahib saw a portrait of Shivaji. Savarkar wrote, "The stories of the noble deeds of the great Shivaji, whose memory he fondly cherished, must, without doubt, have set ablaze in his heart the

³⁸² Savarkar *IWI*, 213-214.

³⁸³ Laine, 5.

³⁸⁴ Laine, 22-23. Berntsen, Maxine. "One Face of God" in Eleanor Zelliot and Maxine Berntsen, Eds. *The Experience of Hinduism: Essays on Religion in Maharashtra*. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 19. He was seen as a modern Bhim or Arjuna (characters from the Mahabharata).

³⁸⁵ Laine, 21.

³⁸⁶ Kincaid, David. *Shivaji: The Founder of the Maratha Empire*. (Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 1986), 116 and Laine, 87, 24. Laine quotes the following description of Afzul Khan. *This is the Muslim/ Whose profoundly evil conduct/ Has strengthened the greatness/ Of the Kali Yuga... Who always wishes to kill/ Any Brahmin that he sees./ He is like a mountain of sin,/ Completely a man of passion,/ Determined to obstruct/ The path of caste-dharmas,/ He is the opponent of all dharmas,/ And supporter of all adharmas-/ He has advanced on me,/ And it is up to me to kill him... But alas! This dark soul/ Kills cows every day,/ And desires to overturn/ The holy law completely!* (Laine, 24)

flames of anger and vengeance.”³⁸⁷ The English were said to have based their program to destroy the religion of the Hindus on the historical success of Aurangzeb, Shivaji’s opponent.³⁸⁸ Accordingly, they were to be resisted just as Shivaji had resisted the Moguls. “When the English had begun to take up the role of Aurangzeb, there was no other remedy than that India must produce a Shivaji or a Guru Govind.”³⁸⁹ In his admiration for, and use of Shivaji, Savarkar was following the lead of his mentor Tilak who also used Shivaji to promote Hindu nationalism.³⁹⁰

Many of Savarkar’s followers also saw Savarkar as embodying the characteristics of the ideal warrior. He was disciplined in his religious and political beliefs³⁹¹ and his transportation for life to the jail in the Andaman Islands was seen by them as a form of death or martyrdom.³⁹² Savarkar himself saw his trials as a religious test.

Those who are unfortunate to be born in time, country or circumstance as adverse as ours, and who yet aspire to rise above them, beating, fighting and conquering them on their way to realize their ideal and to usher in the dawn of a new age, must needs digest the poison administered to their lips by cruel fate.³⁹³

He understood that God had sentenced him so that he could overcome his pride and reach a type of liberation.³⁹⁴ Admirers viewed him as a teacher and hero who,

³⁸⁷ Savarkar *IWI*, 36.

³⁸⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 56.

³⁸⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 58.

³⁹⁰ Jasper, Daniel. “Commemorating the ‘Golden Age’ of Shivaji in Maharashtra, India and the Development of Maharashtrian Public Politics,” *The Journal of Political and Military Sociology*. www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3719/is_200301/ai_n9197835_pg_10. Tilak had raised funds to preserve historical sites related to Shivaji and created a festival in his honour. Savarkar participated in similar projects.

³⁹¹ Savarkar *MTFL*, 4, 30. He meditated on the Yoga Sutras which he found helpful because, “a man must be as much prepared, while in prison, to pass through agonies of the mind as he had to suffer tortures of the body”.

³⁹² Savarkar *MTFL*, 3. He was sentenced to a transportation for life.

³⁹³ Savarkar *MTFL*, 6.

³⁹⁴ Savarkar *MTFL*, 55. “May be, God desires by putting you here that you should overcome your pride, your self-conceit, your separateness from the rest, your sense of superiority. The best of sages, saints, seers and yogis refrain from the ‘sadhana’ which has come in your way to conquer and burn into dust the pride of

[I]n spite of untold sufferings and sacrifices, trials, tribulations and transportations, has been spared by Providence to witness the triumphant march of the Revolutionary principles and programmes which he as a SEER preached and as a WARRIOR fought to carry out.³⁹⁵

The presence of restrained, yet militant, individuals was not enough to ensure *swaraj*. Individuals, while important, had to create and participate in a society that reflected values important to Savarkar. Creation of organizations by such individuals would help by teaching others the necessity of restraint and militancy. The organization would teach people to reject their subordinate state, to emphasize collective rather than individual gain, and to use violence when, and if, necessary. The drive to *swaraj* would naturally occur if people, as a group, stuck to the values that Savarkar saw as important.

Society and *Swaraj*

Savarkar recognized that India was once a great nation that had fallen into a state of disrepair. The cause of this “fall” was the culture of non-violence which had led to military weakness. Savarkar was certain that power could be regained if Indians became more assertive economically, politically and religiously. This ultimately meant rejecting British power for domestic power. Savarkar, like other nationalists, encouraged Indians to take advantage of any education, administration, or military experience that the colonial regime might provide. This required that individuals, “train yourself, discipline yourself, and acquire learning”.³⁹⁶ As in the case of individuals, he looked for a society that was disciplined and organized in ways that contributed to the realization of his revolutionary goals.

caste, gotra, race, class and character and merge themselves into the universe and be one with its Creator. Why not use it to the full then?”

³⁹⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, xxii.

³⁹⁶ Savarkar *MTFL*, 440.

Organization

Savarkar wanted to create social structures that would enable Hindus to execute revolutionary plans and ensure the security of the Hindu people. With this in mind, he created and supported secret organizations like those used in the 1857 rebellion with the insistence that some form of military discipline and strong leadership was necessary. Such organizations would be places for like-minded individuals to advocate for change and would provide people with a sense of identity and purpose. Savarkar took the idea of secret organizations not only from the revolutionaries in India's history, but also from figures like Mazzini.

The failure of the 1857 revolution, in his view, was the result of the disorganization of troops and the inability of participants to follow orders. In short, there was a lack of organization and communal/organizational discipline. In addition, the lack of strong military leadership had resulted in mistimed attacks that helped the English by warning them of dissent.³⁹⁷ The losses incurred because of weakness in the movement numbered in the thousands.³⁹⁸ Savarkar wrote of this problem in *IWI*,

You died as you should die, but the auspicious moment was gone! Time and opportunity were gone. In a Revolution, what is lost by a minute, sometimes, cannot be regained in an epoch.³⁹⁹

The plans for a revolution, brought on simultaneously by several secret organizations, were ruined by such premature attack. Following the first attack, other groups that had waited were indecisive and confused, and the British took advantage of this.⁴⁰⁰ Simply

³⁹⁷ Savarkar *IWI*, 116.

³⁹⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 345.

³⁹⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 373-374.

⁴⁰⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, 128-129.

establishing secret societies was not enough; the organizations needed strong internal order and discipline with strong leaders in order to be successful.

Discipline was hard to maintain without experienced warriors to lead and train the others.⁴⁰¹ Indian troops involved in the revolution had faltered after original victories. Savarkar admired how strong the leaders on the side of the British were. They influenced and inspired their troops but kept them organized and disciplined. In Delhi, the British troops got reinforcements whereas Indian troops were disorganized, disobedient to commanders, and in some cases, in a state of anarchy.⁴⁰² The lack of experienced leadership was pin-pointed as the primary cause of the failure of revolutionaries to hold Delhi and caused despair in Indian ranks.⁴⁰³ Gaining enough leaders for *swaraj* was one of the necessities for successful revolution. Savarkar took note of the failure and supported compulsory military training for Indians.⁴⁰⁴ He felt that this would give Indians the structure and experience they needed to launch a successful push for *swaraj*. Those unable to join were expected to support the troops with money, food and supplies.⁴⁰⁵

Savarkar was not adverse to using organizational structures that had been put in place by the British. Savarkar seemed to think that it was necessary that certain groups be part of the revolution, such as the military and the police, in order to maintain order.

⁴⁰¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 132-133, 139-140, 158, 325. On these pages the exploits of the Sikhs are discussed. The Sikhs helped the British, according to Savarkar, because after their land had been annexed by the British they lost the virtues of freedom and the martial spirit. The martial Sikhs that remained were integrated into the British army and all others became peasants. To Savarkar, they became a warning as to what might happen if Indians did not fight against the British. "When a people become mere peasants, they lose their martial qualities; they become hungry for 'peace' and do not easily give their consent to revolutionary projects which might interfere with their agriculture." (140) Ultimately, Savarkar saw the British betray the Sikhs by using them on the front lines as fodder to protect British soldiers. In one incident, they came to aid the British and the British began firing on them too. They had no choice but to join the revolutionaries.

⁴⁰² Savarkar *IWI*, 337.

⁴⁰³ Savarkar *IWI*, 343. The British ended up looting Delhi and massacring 5-6 thousand people.

⁴⁰⁴ Keer, 251. The military training of Indians happened during WW1 and WW2.

⁴⁰⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, 360, 356.

Savarkar called for Indians to dominate these structures so that when the time came, they would have control over these institutions. In *The Indian War of Independence*, Savarkar recounted that the revolutionaries in Delhi immediately formed a militia and took over other vital positions so that, "...there was no break in any department or its work on account of the revolution, except that, instead of Englishmen, the chief officers were Indians."⁴⁰⁶ By continuing with the work of different departments, the revolutionaries in Delhi were providing an example of order and discipline to revolutionaries in other areas. Taking over systems put in place by the British became an important piece of Savarkar's understanding of *swadeshi*.

Keer has written about Savarkar initiating *swadeshi* protests to protest the partition of Bengal in 1905. This included boycotting all foreign goods and organizing bonfires to destroy foreign cloth.⁴⁰⁷ However, Savarkar's tactics, with respect to *swadeshi*, changed over time. Savarkar eventually came to believe that the re-emergence of domestic industries would not be enough for *swaraj*. Therefore, Savarkar called for a take-over of foreign industry through a process of indigenization. In this sense, Savarkar's interpretation of self-reliance was different than Gandhi's version of *swadeshi*. Whereas Gandhi believed that people had to discipline and assert themselves to use only what was regionally available, Savarkar believed that people had to assert themselves to take over what was available whether this was of indigenous or foreign origin. Savarkar wanted to nationalize industries so that Indians could meet their needs and be independent from Britain. Upon taking over industry, the factories and plants

⁴⁰⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 177.

⁴⁰⁷ Keer, 18.

would produce “Indian-made goods”.⁴⁰⁸ In essence, Savarkar called for the nationalization and indigenization of structures that had been introduced by the British.

Savarkar taught that the strength of the British was based on institutions such as government and industry. Savarkar argued that people had a duty to learn from the British and to take over the institutions controlled by the British. He believed that taking over businesses and markets traditionally confined to the British would make India self-reliant. Savarkar wrote about this type of domestic control over institutions, specifically political institutions, in *The Indian War of Independence*.

The civil departments were also organized and almost all the previous holders of offices were confirmed in their posts. And the chief posts, occupied previously by Europeans, were now given to Indians. The government land-tax was assessed in the name of the Emperor of Delhi. Courts of justice were opened as before and the former officers were retained. In short, there was no break in any department of its work on account of the Revolution, except that, instead of Englishmen, the chief officers were Indians.⁴⁰⁹

Clearly, Savarkar wished to dispel the illusion that the British were needed for sustaining business, industrial and governmental systems. Savarkar believed that the process of taking over industry, governmental and judicial systems was an important aspect of self-assertion and self-reliance. But, this was a process that all citizens needed to participate in.

Religion

In *IWI*, Savarkar’s vision for a revolution was based upon the idea of an active citizenry. People who dedicated themselves to Mother India became equals, despite their caste and religious identities. Savarkar was, in effect, re-interpreting tradition and attempting to create new orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The new orthodoxy had to do with

⁴⁰⁸ Keer, 18.

⁴⁰⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 177.

dedicating oneself to the nation and fellow citizens (as both were seen as objects of religious devotion) and the new orthopraxy was determined by participation in the revolutionary cause. This meant ignoring British attempts to turn the lower castes against the upper castes in the interests of creating solidarity among the people.⁴¹⁰ In order to accomplish this, Savarkar had to redefine caste practices to eliminate the animosity that existed between the castes. Savarkar also knew that getting the British out of India depended on Muslims and Hindus fighting together. This meant ignoring British attempts to divide Muslims and Hindus. Savarkar took pains to list the different castes, occupations and religions of those who participated in the 1857 revolution, stating:

...all the servants of the civil departments; peasants, merchants, and students; in short, all whether Hindu or Mahomedan, rose like one man for freeing their country. Private enmity, differences of religion and caste and rank were all forgotten.⁴¹¹

Caste distinctions were challenged by Savarkar in that he wanted everyone to take on the role of the *ksatriya* in the interests of the revolution. The *ksatriya* were traditionally the group in society concerned with security, protection, and the ruling of India's lands. Instead of one caste being responsible for the security of all, Savarkar insisted that it was everyone's and society's duty to take on this role. People were encouraged to join revolutionary secret societies and all were expected to discipline themselves and the group as a whole was expected to discipline itself in the interests of *swaraj*. If people were solely concerned with their livelihood, without the hunger for an independence sustained by "martial qualities" and willing to let others rule them, they

⁴¹⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, 312.

⁴¹¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 256-257.

would become “mere peasants” and be therefore unlikely to gain independence.⁴¹² But if society was infused by a martial rather than a peasant spirit, success would be guaranteed.

Ultimately, caste differences had to be put aside. Savarkar argued that *shudras* and untouchables, were required along with *brahmins* in order to carry out plans for a revolution. Savarkar remained critical of any divisions remaining in India because he felt that divisions only served to strengthen the hold of Great Britain on India. In *The Indian War of Independence*, Savarkar referred to a pan-Hindu desire for liberation, “men and women, rich and poor...- all attacked the foreign slavery with their swords drawn under the banner of their country”.⁴¹³ This was not to be a revolution for a small, select group, but a revolution for all people and one in which all people were involved regardless of traditional caste identity.⁴¹⁴

Both Hindus and Muslims were encouraged to participate in secret organizations. Since Hindus and Muslims both felt that their religions were being attacked, there could be cooperation between the two groups in an “anti-colonial coalition”.⁴¹⁵ In *The Indian War of Independence*, Savarkar wrote about the need for the two religious systems to deal with each other with a measure of restraint.

...they [the British] will try to incite the Hindus to rise against the Mussalmans, and the Mahomedans to rise against the Hindus. But Hindu Brethren! Do not fall into their nets... They are adepts in the art of treachery and deceitful imposture. They have all along been trying to root out all other religions on earth but their own!... Mussulmans, if you revere the Koran, and Hindus, if you revere the cow-mother, forget now your minor differences and unite together in this sacred war!⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² Savarkar *IWI*, 140. “...within ten years of the destruction of the Sikh Empire in the Punjab, the majority of Sikhs began to take to the plough and left their swords altogether..”

⁴¹³ Savarkar *IWI*, 125-6.

⁴¹⁴ Savarkar *IWI*, 107.

⁴¹⁵ Hansen, 76. According to Hansen, Tilak was “instrumental” in the passing of the Lucknow Pact between the Congress and the Muslim League.

⁴¹⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 177-8. This view seems to be quite distinct from Savarkar’s view in his later writings.

Muslims, at the time of the writing of *IWI*, fit Savarkar's notion of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Many Muslims were willing to dedicate their lives to the removal of the British and the creation of India. They had participated alongside the Hindus in *The Indian War of Independence* and were therefore, in a sense, religious brethren.

Savarkar was clearly looking for a change in Hindu/Muslim relationships, a working together for the greater good in a battle that was seen as sacred. One clear example of this was his attitude toward the Emperor of Delhi. Although he was a Muslim, he was accepted by Savarkar as a national citizen.⁴¹⁷ This distinguished the Muslim leaders involved in the 1857 rebellion from those who had conquered India centuries earlier.⁴¹⁸ He suggested that the Emperor of Delhi was a representative of a new time. Placing a Mogul leader on the throne of Delhi,

...was the declaration that the longstanding war between the Hindus and the Mahomedan had ended, that tyranny had ceased, and that the people of the soil were once more free to choose their own monarch.⁴¹⁹

Hindus and Muslims chose to unite and fight under his rule. In this early work, Savarkar spoke of a pan-Indian identity that included the Muslims. In some instances, the secret organizations kept identities of members unknown by allowing them to cover their heads.⁴²⁰ This enabled a Muslim to work alongside a Hindu in order to gain *swaraj*. This is quite different from his position in his later works, such as *Hindutva*, and his speeches while he was president of the Hindu Mahasabha.

⁴¹⁷ Savarkar *IWI*, 79.

⁴¹⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 283-284.

⁴¹⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 285. Bahadur Shah was chosen by the people and therefore did not represent the re-emergence of the Mogul Empire, for, "that throne had already been smashed to pieces by the hammer of the Maharattas."

⁴²⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, 90-91. "When they used to come to the secret societies, they used to conceal their identity by covering their faces completely, leaving only their eyes uncovered, and then speak about the thousand and one oppressions committed in the country by the English."

Without the help of groups such as the Sikhs and the Nepalese, Savarkar felt the British could never have won the 1857 uprising. Referring to India as a “Mother”, he stated: “That the enemy would try to massacre her, she knew, but she did not know that her friends, her brothers, too, would raise the axe of destruction against her.”⁴²¹ He called these groups traitors, but suggested that if “India” had had a clear goal to follow, they would have become patriots.⁴²² Savarkar was even more critical of those who stayed out of the battle altogether. “The fault of failure lies with the idle, effeminate, selfish and treacherous men who ruined it.”⁴²³ Some leaders preferred to wait and be on the side of the victors, whoever they might be.⁴²⁴ Savarkar saw the fence-sitters as another reason for the failure of the revolution. “They played a double-game- the result of mean selfishness... they played, indirectly, the part of traitors.”⁴²⁵ The term “traitor” had an obvious religious meaning for Savarkar. Individuals who refused to participate in *swaraj* were seen by him “atheist[s] and a hater[s] of religion.”⁴²⁶ The only way to protect religion was to rise up in times of political turmoil and protect one’s rights.

The people who fought were the promoters of justice. Savarkar found that the,

stirring acts of former heroes in history, poetry and romance, or discourses on the immortality of the soul from the Upanisads and the Bhagwatgita would prove a tonic to the shattered hearts of our political prisoners. That would imbue them with the spirit of defiance.⁴²⁷

As in the case of the *Gita*, God would be on the side of the righteous, but it was the people, as a group, who were responsible for bringing about justice. Savarkar found the teachings in the *Bhagavad Gita*, not unlike the descriptions found in the Old Testament,

⁴²¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 397.

⁴²² Savarkar *IWI*, 543.

⁴²³ Savarkar *IWI*, 544.

⁴²⁴ Savarkar *IWI*, 266-267.

⁴²⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, 267.

⁴²⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 10-11.

⁴²⁷ Savarkar *MTFL*, 157.

to attest to a “bitter struggle of the nation and its heroes for emancipation from the thralldom into which it has passed”.⁴²⁸

Rights and Duties

To bring about justice in society, political awareness needed to exist. It was the duty of leaders in society to prepare and educate others in true *swaraj*. The goals of society could only be promoted in so much as citizens fulfilled their responsibilities. Practicing restraint, organizing, and giving people tools such as writing letters, petitioning officials, and striking against injustice would help the ideas of revolution to spread to other people and places. Savarkar wrote:

Within a month, regiment after regiment, Prince after Prince, city after city, sepoys, police, Zemindars, Pandits, Moulvis, the multiple-headed Revolution sounded its tocsin and temples and mosques resounded with the cry ‘Maro Feringhee Ko’.⁴²⁹

The Indian War of Independence was part of what Savarkar saw as his duty to educate society. He saw himself as one of its leaders, someone who could inform fellow Indians about the country and its people. Savarkar version of the 1857 mutiny was instructive. He called the mutiny “that instructive and magnificent spectacle”.⁴³⁰ In *My Transportation for Life*, he wrote:

By our teaching we are not only making them learn to spell their rudiments; but we are opening the windows of their soul upon the world, and making them understand their best interests in life. In contact with us, they come to know of their country, of their nation, and of their people. They imbibe right notions about them from us. When we tell them stories of great men from our history of the past, light shines in their eyes... To educate the fallen into seeing right and feeling right, to give them as much of literary, intellectual, moral and national education as it is in our power to give them is a duty we must do as long as we are in this prison.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Savarkar *MTFL*, 19.

⁴²⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 548.

⁴³⁰ Savarkar *IWI*, IX.

⁴³¹ Savarkar *MTFL*, 263-264.

His version of Indian history promoted the virtues that he believed were important, in particular, the willingness to subordinate the self to the collective. He also believed that it was necessary to understand where one came from in order to understand where one was going. The reason for the disorganization of the 1857 revolutionary troops and the continued failure to expel the British was the lack of knowledge in these areas.⁴³²

Morally speaking, Savarkar understood the process of education as transforming irresponsible people into responsible members and leaders of society. The irresponsible members included pacifists as well as prisoners, both of whom Savarkar believed could be taught a militant approach. Through a combination of philosophy, history, and religion, Savarkar hoped to have his recruits well versed in his *dharma*. One of the results of this educational process he said was that,

...they had gradually begun to realize the meaning and significance of words like 'country', 'religion', 'service' in relation to themselves and to the larger community of which they were also social units.⁴³³

Savarkar knew a form of education was necessary to give the masses knowledge of "upper-caste notions of selfless duty and purity [that] were inscribed into the construction of the ideal national citizen".⁴³⁴ In the interests of education in citizenship, Savarkar supported inter-caste dinners where people would discuss the Bhagavad Gita and recite works of the Arya Samaj.⁴³⁵

⁴³² Savarkar *MTFL*, 275. In *My Transportation for Life*, Savarkar taught his students to read and write as well as teach them Indian history, world history, political awareness, and Indian religious philosophy.

⁴³³ Savarkar *MTFL*, 259.

⁴³⁴ Hansen, 7.

⁴³⁵ Savarkar *MTFL*, 503.

The Nation and *Swaraj*

The Indian War of Independence signaled people in different regions to accept their duty in the struggle against the British. Regional success was to bring about national success. According to Savarkar, all Hindus were needed for the battle, otherwise it would fail. Savarkar's national aim for India was to usher in a new civilization that would protect the religion and the rights of the majority therein. He looked to India's past for inspiration to begin a new battle. Through appeals to fighting for justice, Savarkar's goal was to create a new civilization known as *Ram Rajya* or *Hindu Rashtra*.

Nation

Savarkar believed that real justice could arise only with the establishment of an independent nation. A nation was needed by Indians not only to protect their interests, but also their religions. *Swaraj* on the national level had been lost, but could be reclaimed. To reject participation in national *swaraj* was to lose control of the nation, of the religious traditions, and Savarkar believed India's people would subsequently find solace in the religion of their conquerors. He came to this conclusion by inspecting the history of the 1857 rebellion.

Indeed, the *IWI* was a recollection of a failed attempt at disposing of foreign rule. The failure in leadership and organization ensured that the British were able to assert themselves on India in terms of politics, culture and religion. Any success in nation-building in his day, as compared to the 1857 uprising, was for Savarkar "essentially a question of subjective feelings, loyalty, individual patriotism, and a 'will to nationhood'".⁴³⁶ Hansen sees this as Mazzini's influence on Savarkar. He writes:

⁴³⁶ Hansen, 78.

Savarkar found an ideological framework and a political philosophy that combined cultural pride and national self-assertion with a modernist outlook and a vision of a strong, culturally homogenous nation embodied by a unitary state.⁴³⁷

The best way that regions could be protected from foreign powers was to create a nation in which individuals could personally invest. Being loyal, patriotic and devoted to the nation would result also in providing individuals with self-respect.

The nation was to be built on the backs of reformed individuals and societies. If every person realized his/her own *dharma* (*swadharma*), *swaraj* would result. That is, if people adopted their duties as proposed by Savarkar, they would join secret societies. The secret societies in turn would collaborate with each other and the larger community structures in order to succeed in their drive to nationhood. Political *swaraj* was to be the culmination of personal *swaraj* in that the education and devotion of people could create an atmosphere that would empower societies, communities, and finally, the nation.

Creating a nation had to do with establishing and protecting territory. For Savarkar's brand of nationalism, territory was important, because it was a holy land or 'sacred space' for the people within it.⁴³⁸ The territory of India was the place where epic battles for justice had played out and where Gods had come to counsel men. Despite the diversity of religions in India, pilgrimage to these shared sacred spaces connected a person from one area to a person from another area.⁴³⁹ In his later writings, Savarkar would define such people for whom this was important as Hindu.

A HINDU means a person who regards this land of BHARATVARSHA, from the Indus to the Seas as his Father-Land as well as his Holy-Land that is the cradle land of his religion.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁷ Hansen, 77.

⁴³⁸ Hansen, 78

⁴³⁹ Hansen, 78. The term "Hindu" evolved from the region around the seven rivers 'sindu' in northern India.

⁴⁴⁰ Savarkar *Hindutva*, inside front cover.

At this earlier stage, however, Savarkar saw a true citizen as anyone who would fight and sacrifice the self for the nation. The revolutionaries of Savarkar's day were seen as renewing the commitment to justice achieved by past Hindu heroes.

While Savarkar advocated the use of violence in achieving independence, he saw pitfalls to such a use. One of the main pitfalls was uncontrollable violence. Savarkar argued that violence, when left uncontrolled, would be intoxicating for those who wield it. Even after the enemy was vanquished, people would be tempted to use violence against their own people.⁴⁴¹

In all Revolutions this common blunder is committed, and this sows the seeds of destruction of the Revolution in the very beginning. Every Revolution is started by cutting down the laws of existing authority by the sword. But when once the habit is formed of mowing down by the sword the unjust laws of unconstitutional authority, then in the heat of the moment, the vicious habit develops of setting at nought all laws at will. The sword used for destroying wicked and crude laws tends to destroy all law. The heroes, who start out for overthrowing foreign rule, soon get into the habit of overthrowing all rule. In the excitement of breaking the bonds of foreign rule, they begin to dislike all bonds, even those of just and normal rule. And in this way, Revolution ends in Anarchy, virtue in vice, and what ought to be a great benefit ends in loss. The destruction of individuals, of society, and of kingdoms is caused as much by anarchy as by foreign rule, as much by the absence of any bond as by the presence of cruel bonds. If any Revolution forgets this sociological truth, it generally kills itself in the end.⁴⁴²

To resolve the problem of uncontrollable violence, Savarkar advocated for discipline in two forms. The first form of discipline had to do with the actions of individuals, and the second form of discipline had to do with the actions of the government. Savarkar wanted a government that would keep order and freedom in the nation and he wanted to teach people that they had a vested interest in the new nation. The new government, once established, was expected to adopt a middle ground between modern values selected from

⁴⁴¹ Savarkar *IWI*, 347-348. Savarkar compared this problem to the man who uses wine to solve a health problem, who then will not abandon wine after his problem is gone.

⁴⁴² Savarkar *IWI*, 347-48.

the British and traditions handed down to them through history. The nation was to be a democracy.⁴⁴³ Savarkar argued that a free, liberal form of government would allow freedom of speech and dissent without destroying the nation. As soon as liberation was achieved, people would need a constitution to rule properly. Savarkar called for, “Revolution outside and Constitution within, chaos outside and cosmos within, sword outside and law within”.⁴⁴⁴

The moment foreign power is destroyed, in order to guard the country from the ills of anarchy, a constitution liked by the majority of the people should be at once established and that constitution should be obeyed with reverence by all.⁴⁴⁵

This disciplined approach to government was Savarkar’s version of *dharma* operating on the national level.

The ideal of nationhood was held out as a promise by Savarkar to ensure that the revolution would not spiral into indiscriminate violence.

The mind must be trained from the beginning to honour one’s own rule as much as to hate foreign rule. In wiping out foreign misrule, care must be taken to discourage, by all possible means, internal disorder. In smiting down foreign rule and foreign authority, one’s own rule and authority should be worshipped as sacred.⁴⁴⁶

Individuality had to be subordinated to the good of all.⁴⁴⁷ To create this love of the nation the new government had the duty to bring national awareness into every aspect of a Hindu’s life.⁴⁴⁸ Education, culture, and religion were to be infused with national elements to make differences between groups less noticeable. To do this, Savarkar wrote

⁴⁴³ Hansen, 4. While Savarkar used the term democracy for this type of government, others called Savarkar’s system majoritarian. “This majoritarian call for Hindutva combines well-established paternalist and xenophobic discourses with democratic and universalist discourses on rights and entitlements, and has successfully articulated desires, anxieties, and fractured subjectivities in both urban and rural India.”

⁴⁴⁴ Savarkar *IWI*, 349.

⁴⁴⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, 349.

⁴⁴⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 349.

⁴⁴⁷ Savarkar *IWI*, 349.

⁴⁴⁸ Hansen, 30.

about putting aside Hindu, Muslim, and other religious sensibilities to create a national identity with independence as the theme.

The Indian War of Independence is Savarkar's celebration of Indian strength, but he tried many other ways to communicate his nationalism to people. National songs were sung, dances were created, and stories were written.⁴⁴⁹ Like Tilak, Savarkar promoted parades and telling stories that had the effect of making historical people into heroes of mythical proportions.⁴⁵⁰ Savarkar taught people to read using nationalist and religious texts.⁴⁵¹ He specifically taught Hindi to his students with the hope that it would replace Urdu as the common language in northern India.⁴⁵² He did not choose his own language Marathi, because he believed "what is national must be preferred over what is local and provincial".⁴⁵³

Civilization

In *The Indian War of Independence* Savarkar claimed that eventually India would be in a position to reclaim the title of 'civilization'. The means of getting to this end goal was laid out by Savarkar in three steps. First, the Hindu people had to realize their present predicament and realize that foreign powers had taken over India due to their own passivity. Once they had realized this, they could look to their own history and past stories to develop the virtues that were essential for the achievement of freedom. Only then, Savarkar argued, would it be possible to re-create that civilization that India had once been.

⁴⁴⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 84-86.

⁴⁵⁰ Hansen, 75. At the same time, other nationalists, such as Lala Lajpat Rai were re-creating Indian history of figures like Shivaji.

⁴⁵¹ Savarkar *MTFL*, 485. Teaching in Hindi allowed him to teach the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Ramayana in a language closer to the original Sanskrit.

⁴⁵² Savarkar *MTFL*, 77. He also encouraged the Arya Samaj to come in and change the English names on the Andaman Islands back to Hindu names.

⁴⁵³ Savarkar *MTFL*, 481.

Savarkar's mentor Tilak believed that Hindu society would be able to reform itself by looking back to Vedic civilization.⁴⁵⁴

Tilak rejected the right of foreigners to criticize and judge the qualities of the Hindu civilization. The antiquity of Hindu civilization, its resilience, its profound philosophy, and scientific character were proof of its viability and coherence. Echoing orientalist romanticism, Tilak claimed the Vedic civilization to be the oldest in the world, the most refined, and the mother of all civilizations.⁴⁵⁵

Savarkar also looked to the Vedas for guidance, but saw them as “historical books” rather than “omniscient and unchangeable”.⁴⁵⁶ Keer described Savarkar as testing the knowledge in these books.

He, therefore, asks the Hindus to test the knowledge in the ancient holy works, their laws and learnings on the touchstone of science and to follow fearlessly what contributes to the good of the nation.⁴⁵⁷

Instead of writing about the Vedic period, Savarkar focused on those periods of time when Hindus dominated in battle and held power. The period of rule by Shivaji and the stories of the 1857 revolutionaries showed the virtues of self-assertion and self-reliance that Savarkar was trying to convey. The ability of a nation to exert power and control had a direct effect on its ability to protect itself. Savarkar believed that a fighting citizenry, as well as an independent, indigenized rule laid the foundation upon which a civilization could emerge.

In the long run, Savarkar wanted the re-establishment of a *Brahmanical* age, but insisted that the means to achieve this was through following the duties of the *ksatriya*. On this note, Savarkar recognized the possibility of civilizations emerging in western nations. Savarkar admired what he saw as a masculine strength of western countries,

⁴⁵⁴ Hansen, 75.

⁴⁵⁵ Hansen, 75-76.

⁴⁵⁶ Keer, 206.

⁴⁵⁷ Keer, 206.

such as Great Britain, and believed that they stood on the cusp of civilization if they fulfilled the moral requirements of a civilization. As Savarkar wrote from prison,

The Americans need Vedanta philosophy and so does England, for they have developed their life to that fullness, richness and manliness- to Kshatriyahood and so stand on the threshold of that Brahminhood, wherein alone the capacity to read and realize such philosophy can co-exist. But India is not. We are at present all Shudras and can't claim access to the Vedas and Vedanta... We, as a nation, are unfit for these sublime thoughts... Let us study history, political science, science, economy; live worthily in this world, fulfil (sic) the householders' duties and then the philosophic dawn might come.⁴⁵⁸

Instead of reviving the Vedic civilization, Savarkar wanted to join the best of the past with modern values. What he looked for ultimately was a divine age, a civilization characterized by peace. But, to get there, India needed to be unafraid to use violence.

Savarkar wanted to create a nation where martial qualities were paramount. By fostering those qualities, citizens of a country took their first steps to building a civilization. This civilization would combine the ancient philosophical teachings of the Vedas with western ideas of science and technology. From this vantage point, Indian civilization would be reinvented in a modern form and would be the model for other countries to follow. It is essential to note that Savarkar saw this development as happening in the distant future. Savarkar believed that he and other Indians could succumb to the pleasure that came with a peaceful civilization only when India had reached a state of peace and prosperity under a strong Hindu rule. His focus, therefore, was on regaining power in the present. "To walk in the path leading towards Heaven, the shackles of slavery must be broken."⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ Keer, 137.

⁴⁵⁹ Savarkar *IWI*, 54.

Conclusion

Savarkar's approach to self-rule was informed by his belief that the protection of the nation, its people, and its religion could best be accomplished by morally-guided warriors. The warriors were expected to be fearless, and strong when facing an enemy. Savarkar saw this protection as "selfless, active devotion" and akin to the religious battles fought in the Epics by leaders such as Krishna and Rama.⁴⁶⁰

The Indian battleline of three hundred million soldiers of liberty led by the charioteer Shri Krishna, and by the warrior Rama, - heroes of Hindu, and her invincible ideal - shall not fall back because we are not in it. It will hem in the enemy; it will beat and conquer; it will hold fast the flag of victory and freedom; and it will plant firm - 'Hind's Oriflamme', - on the snowy summits of the eternal Himalayas - the abode of our holy trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar. Glory to them; glory to Hind; and victory to the battleline of three hundred million soldiers of freedom, the soldiers of Hindu. That is my faith and my solace.⁴⁶¹

People were encouraged to take on a warrior ethos. Savarkar taught them to imitate the warriors in the 1857 uprising who had sacrificed their own desires in order to achieve larger goals.

Savarkar's urgings were characterized by a belief in a God who encouraged action. God, as seen by Savarkar, was sympathetic to warriors and others who would fight to attain justice. The means to be more god-like was through personal development and participation in the warrior ethos. Part of being a warrior meant participating in literal battles, but Savarkar also recognized that some battles were concerned with politics and economics. To this end, Savarkar taught his followers to use *swadeshi*, as he interpreted it. Savarkar's ultimate goal was the creation of a sublime civilization, but he believed that the first step was to create a strong, self-sufficient nation.

⁴⁶⁰ Marty, 548.

⁴⁶¹ Savarkar *MTFL*, 140-141.

CHAPTER 5: COMPARISON AND CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this thesis, I claimed that both Gandhi and Savarkar saw *swaraj* as essential for India's self-development and that for both men, it was a religious concept as well as a political one. The purpose of this chapter is to compare their views of *swaraj* and show that even though they both used this term in religious and political ways, their individual conceptualizations of this term were quite different. One aspect that Gandhi and Savarkar shared was the belief that traditional Hinduism was, in part, responsible for the situation they found themselves in. To that end, both Gandhi and Savarkar attempted to reform Hinduism to make it work for the circumstances of their day.⁴⁶² For them, the term *swaraj* was fundamental for their understanding of Hinduism, an understanding which was to correct moral inadequacies and the subordination of India to a foreign power with a foreign religion.

The goal of both *Hind Swaraj* and *The Indian War of Independence* was to persuade people to take their ideals to heart and to inspire them to initiate change. In both cases, *swaraj* had to begin with the individual because individuals were the building blocks of a nation. To ignore the individual was to guarantee the failure of the push for *swaraj*, even if *swaraj* was to be confined to the idea of political independence. For both, *swaraj* meant the creation of a society using the newly constructed idea of *dharma*.

Gandhi reformulated the concept of *dharma* in an attempt to deal with modern problems. *Dharma* centered on the concept of citizenship where, "equality, liberty,

⁴⁶² Van der Veer, x. Van der Veer described the history of religion as rejecting the idea that religions were "unchanging traditions", but rather "specific products of changing forms of religious organization and communication".

fraternity, and mutual assistance” were paramount.⁴⁶³ Gandhi believed that *dharma* contained the knowledge of “right and wrong” and could help people realize their place in the universe.⁴⁶⁴ Understanding how *dharma* worked meant that one could begin to understand truth, which Gandhi equated to the divine. Gandhi wanted his followers to experience an inner change but he felt that this would occur only if individuals related to others properly through the cultivation of moral principles and virtues found within *karma yoga*.

Savarkar insisted that *dharma* needed to be reformulated. He too was interested in promoting citizenship, mutual assistance, equality, etc., and believed that the best way to create these things was through the protection of the Hindu people. Following *dharma*, for Savarkar, meant encouraging his followers to realize the concept of justice and the correct use of power so that people could take on roles to protect and preserve India and her traditions. To him, the concept of *dharma*, protecting religion and fellow citizens from outsiders and fighting for “rights given to man by God”, was realized in fulfilling the duties of the *ksatriya*.⁴⁶⁵ Savarkar saw the role of *ksatriya* as an underrepresented ideal and wanted to address this imbalance. For Savarkar, performing *dharma* meant recovering power and aligning oneself with a God who was a champion of order and justice. Savarkar insisted upon cultivating certain virtues through his interpretation of *karma yoga*.

For Gandhi, *karma yoga* was the means to attain *swaraj* in that it encouraged individuals to act in a way that was aligned with moral principles. *Karma yoga* taught that real rights flowed from duty and adherence to moral principles. Therefore, in order

⁴⁶³ Gandhi *HS*, xvi.

⁴⁶⁴ Parel *GFS*, 9-10.

⁴⁶⁵ Savarkar “The Indian War of Independence”, 42.

to build a nation, individuals had to be willing to focus on duties rather than rights, and become moral agents. This way of living entailed all aspects of life with the ethical side dominating. This meant attuning oneself to moral principles such as *dharma* and figuring out what is right or wrong, good or evil. To Gandhi, *karma yoga* meant acting in a way that was true or aligned with divine principles. On a mundane level it meant nurturing virtues and encouraging people to have restraint. Gandhi believed that people became weaker when they focused on material possessions and were stronger when they behaved in a way that was more restrained.

The ideal practitioner of *karma yoga*, for Gandhi, was the *satyagrahi*. The *satyagrahi* was interested in critical self-examination through exploring decisions of the conscience. The *satyagrahi* possessed certain virtues and employed restraint to help him/her act in the world. Gandhi advocated restraints such as chastity, poverty, fearlessness and *ahimsa* so that people could focus, without distractions, on the goal of *swaraj*. Chastity and poverty allowed one's energies to be collected.⁴⁶⁶ Fearlessness was required because it was essential for any difficult action. Fearlessness led to truth because, "when a man abandons truth, he does so owing to fear in some shape or form".⁴⁶⁷ All of those virtues demanded a certain amount of simplification of life that would, in turn, reduce distractions and extend one's concern for humanity.

The virtues were essential for the cultivation of *ahimsa*. Non-violence did not mean inactivity towards others, but meant acting on their behalf with good intentions. Therefore, people should act, not according to their desires, but according to their

⁴⁶⁶ Gandhi *HS*, 98.

⁴⁶⁷ Gandhi *HS*, 98.

responsibilities as a stewards or trustees of the world.⁴⁶⁸ Focusing on “citizenship, equality, fraternity, and mutual assistance” reinforced the idea of participation in human activities.⁴⁶⁹ In this sense, brute force could not be permitted. He wrote:

To use brute force, to use gunpowder is contrary to passive resistance, for it means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not. And, if such a use of force is justifiable, surely he is entitled to do likewise by us. And so we should never come to an agreement. We may simply fancy, like the blind horse moving in a circle around a mill, that we are making progress.⁴⁷⁰

In contemplating proper action, a true *satyagrahi* would look to the poorest and most helpless of fellow citizens and ask if the call to action would lead to *swaraj* for them.⁴⁷¹

The ideals of the *satyagrahi* were played out in civic society through the *satyagraha* movement. This movement is representative of Gandhi’s call to action. Rather than individuals advocating for change, the *satyagraha* movement had many people launching larger campaigns for social change without thought of rewards. This meant applying the ideas of *dharma* beyond the individual to society and social action. If a society was conducted itself according to the laws of *dharma*, that is, if it was comprised of *satyagrahis*, Gandhi postulated that a true civilization would be able to re-emerge with *ahimsa* as the ethical foundation.

For Gandhi, there was an unbreakable link between means (how one conducts oneself) and ends (what one’s ultimate goal is). This is important in regards to *swaraj* because it implies that if one uses non-violent means then the result will be a product of that decision and vice-versa. Gandhi believed that it was unrestrained behaviour, i.e. the

⁴⁶⁸ Gandhi *MR*, 16.

⁴⁶⁹ Gandhi *HS*, xvi.

⁴⁷⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 92-93.

⁴⁷¹ Gandhi *MR*, 50-51.

lack of *ahimsa* in modern civilization, that had allowed the subjugation of India by Great Britain. If the ideal of *ahimsa* was followed, all else would fall into place.

They say ‘means are after all means’. I would say ‘means are after all everything’. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the Creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end.⁴⁷²

Like Gandhi, Savarkar equated a loss of *dharma* with a loss of *swaraj* and believed that individuals had to act in order to protect their interests. He believed that the goal of *swaraj* was greater than individuals and therefore emphasized the importance of individual duties as well as rights. But, to Savarkar, *karma yoga* meant acting in a way that encouraged the assertion of rights. He believed it was the duty of people to fight for rights bestowed by the divine.⁴⁷³

The ideal citizen for Savarkar was the *ksatriya*. To Savarkar, the *ksatriya* was an example of a person who had mastered self-restraint in necessary areas and self-assertion in others. Self-restraint was necessary for those times when the lower desires tried to overrule the higher desires and Savarkar prescribed following a number of virtues to help keep lower desires in check. Like Gandhi, Savarkar saw virtues such as bravery and the willingness to act as essential means to achieving the goals of *swaraj*. Alongside these virtues, Savarkar advocated obedience to leaders and teachers who were exemplars of virtue. He called for his warriors to be committed to the cause of *swaraj*, even if it meant rejecting any differences between of religions and castes.⁴⁷⁴ Savarkar also encouraged his warriors to be unattached to land, people, possessions, and notions of peace until their security could be attained. The giving up of one’s life can be seen in Savarkar’s stories

⁴⁷² Gandhi *MR*, 58.

⁴⁷³ Savarkar “The Indian War of Independence”, 42.

⁴⁷⁴ Savarkar believed that attachment to these constructs gave the British something to exploit.

about martyrs. In the sense that Savarkar asked his followers to give up personal interests, what Savarkar proposed was a sort of renunciation. Savarkar emphasized that knowledge of these concepts was paramount for the creation of order and justice.

Savarkar saw self assertion, rather than *ahimsa*, as the highest virtue. Sometimes this concept of self-assertion had no other outlet than a violent one. Savarkar believed that violence was a natural and, sometimes, necessary thing. Savarkar believed that it was necessary that a warrior be able to exercise might in order to safeguard Hindu interests and that, often, it was only through this means that Hindus would be taken seriously. He also insisted that by encouraging self-assertion, an inner change in the participants would come about. His stories in *The Indian War of Independence* were written in order to illustrate times when Hindus had asserted themselves and to arouse in them the fearlessness to commit justified violence against the British. For Savarkar, people had to restrain themselves from being weak and non-violent and take their place among the people who were willing to fight for India.

Savarkar believed that that justice would only come about through assertion of the Hindu people as a whole. This meant that leaders had to organize on the societal level so that they were able to communicate these ideas to the rest of society. They did so through secret societies where discipline and strong leadership were prized alongside education. These societies also encouraged the strengthening of the Hindu presence in the military and in other economic and political forums. The nationalization of industry, proposed by Savarkar was indicative of his emphasis on self-assertion and self-reliance. Savarkar also encouraged the teaching of a national culture that promoted the importance of collective values. Savarkar believed that only a nation could adequately protect the

interests of its people and it was important to invest energy in creating this entity. Just as on the individual level to reject restraint meant losing control of the self, so too a loss of restraint on the national level meant a loss of *swaraj*.

Savarkar argued that the ends justify the means, that is, in the battle for independence and self-rule the removal of the British through violence becomes justified. That said, Savarkar did not believe that all violence was a good thing. He insisted that the use of violence could not be used to cater to individual self interest. To show that the ends he advocated were, in fact, moral, Savarkar turned to the *Bhagavad Gita*. In it, warriors who acted on the side of creating justice were representing the will of God. Similarly, the justice created by Savarkar's warriors would lead to freedom and self-respect. Political *swaraj* would be a culmination of personal *swaraj* in that discipline would result in pride in the nation and a constitutional democracy that would have the rule of *dharma* as paramount. On this level, justice could be seen as sacred.

Like Gandhi, Savarkar believed that it was possible for a true civilization to develop if followers followed his prescriptions. However, rather than moving away from "modern civilization", as Gandhi suggested, Savarkar called for followers to take the best of modern civilization and what he thought of as the best of the past in re-interpreted texts in order to create a sustainable civilization. He even went so far as to acknowledge that "western" countries were closer to civilization than India because they had established foundations of strength that could be built on.

In essence, the two men criticized the Indian people for their inaction. Both believed the mentality of people living in India had to change. Each set forth his model of behaviour for the people to follow. While both called for discipline and the cultivation

of virtues, such as truthfulness, fearlessness and self-reliance, the cultivation of the warrior ethos was quite different from that of the *satyagrahi*. While the *satyagrahi* emphasized *ahimsa* as the paramount virtue, Savarkar's *ksatriya* warrior saw this type of action as contributing to the problem of the Indian people. Instead, Savarkar believed that the warrior's ability to assert the rights of fellow citizens was a more reasonable reaction to the subordination of Hindu religion and the Hindu people. Savarkar believed that in doing so, he could build a moral nation on the precepts of order and justice.

Swaraj as Religious

For many Indian intellectuals *swaraj* was a political goal equated simply with the achievement of independence. The end goal, in a political sense, was the creation of a democratic, Indian government. Gandhi argued in *Hind Swaraj* that many Indians equated *swaraj* with becoming modern and westernized. He criticized this "modern civilization" in terms of the problems it had created in Great Britain.⁴⁷⁵ Nonetheless, Gandhi believed in constitutionally based values and rights and insisted that the Indian people had to direct their own government. To attain this end, Gandhi called for action in both the political context and in the economic context (the *swadeshi* movement). To Gandhi, the end result of what Indians had the potential to create was superior to what Great Britain was able to provide.

Savarkar, in *The Indian War of Independence* also criticized the British presence in India. Savarkar believed that Hindus were ready for complete independence from Great Britain and for self-rule. He encouraged his followers to join the military and other organizations of power so that they would be prepared to take them over in the event of a

⁴⁷⁵ Gandhi *HS*, 7.

revolution. Like Gandhi, he wanted a constitutional government run by Indians and for Indians.

However, as the discussion in chapters two and four indicates, to confine the discussion of *swaraj* simply to political goals is to ignore the primary motivations of Gandhi and Savarkar. *Swaraj* for both men, apart from political independence, also meant the realization of particular religious goals.⁴⁷⁶ *Swaraj* was, in effect, a religious path for both Gandhi and Savarkar. However, they understood this path in radically different ways. Gandhi understood *swaraj* as a path leading to self-realization, whereas Savarkar saw *swaraj* as a path leading to the protection of India's religious traditions. Despite their differences, it is evident that both texts show how *swaraj* can be understood as a religious concept.

Both Gandhi and Savarkar appealed to a reinterpretation of *dharma* as a fundamental aspect of *swaraj*. For both *dharma* was as much a religious concept as it was cultural. *Dharma*, for Gandhi, meant acting in a way that provided service for others. It was through the notion of service that the process of self-realization began. Understanding one's own soul and the souls of others was necessary for the realization of the divine. Gandhi insisted that "true" rights and any proper type of government were born out of this religious performance of duty.⁴⁷⁷ Like Gandhi, Savarkar wrote of the importance of *dharma* and connected it to *swaraj*.⁴⁷⁸ *Dharma*, for Savarkar, meant

⁴⁷⁶ Van der Veer, 56. Like other nationalists, the instigation to reform their religion came from the conflict with modernization and western forces.

⁴⁷⁷ Gandhi *HS*, xvii-xviii. The emphasis on this can be seen in the passage where Gandhi writes, "At the same time, the welcome is conditional in that liberty had to harmonize with *swaraj*, rights with duties, empirical knowledge with moral insight, economic development with spiritual progress, religious toleration with religious belief, and women's liberation with the demands of a broader conception of humanity".

⁴⁷⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 10.

recovering the *ksatriya* mentality, too long abandoned by the general population.⁴⁷⁹ The *ksatriya* mentality had religious significance for Savarkar because without the intervention of the warrior, the foreign presence would cause indigenous religion “to die” and be replaced by a foreign religion.

The reinterpretation of *dharma* was one example of how Gandhi and Savarkar used religious language to express their sentiments to a larger audience. For instance, critical of modern civilization, Gandhi called this civilization “irreligious” and believed that it had “taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in it appear to be half mad”.⁴⁸⁰ Gandhi argued that religion, by its nature, had to be involved with *swaraj* because “a religion which did not concern itself with every side of life was no religion at all”.⁴⁸¹ Despite finding religion in all facets of life, Gandhi insisted that *moksa*, or liberation, should take precedence over all other traditional goals, but defined the path to *moksa* to be service to others.

Savarkar, in *The Indian War of Independence*, showed that he thought, or at least wrote, of *swaraj* in religious terms. The drive to nationhood, for Savarkar, came from seeing Gods “trampled underfoot”.⁴⁸² An individual who did not act against this type of subjugation was considered “an atheist and hater of Religion”.⁴⁸³ Savarkar wrote, “[I]t is the duty of every man to fight for the rights given to man by God”.⁴⁸⁴

When there is God there cannot be slavery, and where there is slavery, there cannot be God or Godliness. Where there is no place for God [there] can be no religion.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁷⁹ In the same sense, one could not blame the British, but rather Savarkar insisted that the blame rested on Hindus.

⁴⁸⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 37.

⁴⁸¹ Gandhi *MR*, 12, 155.

⁴⁸² Gandhi *HS*, 21.

⁴⁸³ Gandhi *HS*, 10-11.

⁴⁸⁴ Savarkar “The Indian War of Independence”, 42.

⁴⁸⁵ Savarkar *IWI*, 54.

Savarkar's notion of justice was written in God language. Savarkar saw God as bloodthirsty for justice, "whose hundred and one red hot tongues are lolling out from hundred and one mouths athirst to lick up battlefulls of blood".⁴⁸⁶ Savarkar encouraged his warriors to be like the martyrs in *IWI* who mounted "the scaffold even as a Yogi enters Samadhi!"⁴⁸⁷

In his reformulation of *dharma*, Gandhi appealed to virtues that had traditionally been seen as part of the path to liberation. He believed that "where there is no strength of mind, there can be no strength of soul".⁴⁸⁸ Poverty and chastity were the virtues that could be closely associated with the idea of religious renunciates, but Gandhi also called for one to be truthful and fearless. The most pertinent of the virtues was *ahimsa*. Gandhi understood *ahimsa* as a tool of purification for Hindus. To Gandhi, violence stemmed from the desire for power and wealth, not from any religious sentiments. As God is peace-loving, so too can humans be like God through this means.⁴⁸⁹ Development of these virtues would lead one to personal liberation.

Gandhi's religious ideas concerning *dharma* and the development of virtues depended on his interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Gandhi metaphorically interpreted passages in the *Gita* as focusing on non-violence and tolerance.⁴⁹⁰ He saw it as describing the inner conflict between the inner voice that states what ought to be done versus what one wants to do.⁴⁹¹ By listening to the inner voice found in the conscience, one remained in a religious frame of mind and had the opportunity for self-realization.

⁴⁸⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 69-70.

⁴⁸⁷ Savarkar *IWI*, 310-311.

⁴⁸⁸ Gandhi *HS*, 96.

⁴⁸⁹ Gandhi *MR*, 48.

⁴⁹⁰ Gandhi *HS*, 37. Gandhi counseled on the dangers of interpreting the *Gita* literally, because he believed that the violence portrayed within was not a sentiment that the conscience would accept.

⁴⁹¹ Gandhi *MPW*, 1:82.

Gandhi believed that true religious and political freedom would only come about when Indians were able to tap into that inner voice.

The model for Gandhi's religious vision was the *satyagrahi*. The *satyagrahi* was one who followed *dharma* and exemplified the virtues that Gandhi promoted. The *satyagrahi* acted in the world, to bring about change because of his/her concern for the souls of others. This concern for others rather than oneself made him/her a type of *sannyasin* or renunciate. Undistracted by selfish desires, the *satyagrahi* was better equipped to hear the truths as understood by his/her conscience. Gandhi believed that these subjective truths would lead one to the absolute Truth, which Gandhi equated with God.

Following the *satyagrahi's* example, the self-realization of India's people would enable India to gain true independence. Such a nation would be based on compassion, self-control, non-violence and simplicity. Moral and religious imperatives acted out on the individual level would feed into the nation and vice versa. The nation would be the outward expression of *swaraj* and would continue to foster self-realization among its citizens who had not yet achieved this inner change.⁴⁹²

In his reformulation of *dharma*, Savarkar appealed to virtues that he thought would strengthen the Indian community and its religion against its enemies. Self-assertion was the fundamental virtue for Savarkar because it was through this means that his followers could attain justice. Another virtue that Savarkar promoted was an awareness of justice and injustice, particularly in regards to the situation in India. Savarkar's followers had to be fearless when reacting to injustice, fearless in regards to

⁴⁹² Gandhi *CW*, 25: 248-249. Gandhi discussed this concept with regards to art stating, "The outward forms have value only in so far as they are expressions of the inner spirit of man".

shedding “sacred human blood”, and fearless in giving up their own lives for a higher principle.⁴⁹³ This made Savarkar’s warriors, performing their duties without concern for their self-interest, examples of renunciates.⁴⁹⁴ The virtues in and of themselves would not necessarily lead to personal liberation but would rather lead to protection of their religion and the protection of India.

Texts such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Bakhars* supported his concept of *dharma* and how it related to *swaraj*. Savarkar’s literal interpretation of *Bhagavad Gita* was that the *Gita* supported violence in the cause of justice. It supported the virtues of assertiveness, justice and fearlessness. Savarkar used the text to integrate his concept of *swaraj* with previous depictions of success, or as Van der Veer called it, “[relating] the present to a glorified past”.⁴⁹⁵ He depicted the 1859 revolt as a re-emergence of past strengths; its heroes could be identified with the heroes of the Epics. Savarkar used these texts to show that Hinduism could exist simultaneously with war, that being religious did not equate to being non-violent.

Savarkar’s descriptions in the *Indian War of Independence* depicted Gods that were champions of order who “ground and burnt” insolence and knocked slavery “to pieces”.⁴⁹⁶ India was described as a holy, sacred land where epic battles had taken place and where religious experiences had manifested themselves and now needed protection.

⁴⁹³ Savarkar *IWI*, 3, 273-274. Savarkar saw “revolt, bloodshed and revenge” as part of God’s natural law, occurring also in nature, “to root out injustice and to introduce an era of justice.” He believed that it was the most natural thing to seek this out.

⁴⁹⁴ Jaffrelot, 40.

⁴⁹⁵ Van der Veer, 143-144. Identification with this past connected one to the nation and vice versa. Van der Veer writes, “In every case of Hindu nationalism, it identifies the nation with the community of believers, sacred space with national territory, and sacred history with national history.”

⁴⁹⁶ Savarkar *IWI*, 69-70.

God was on the side of the righteous, and warriors were the instruments of God.⁴⁹⁷ Those who accepted their duties to take on the role of the *ksatriya* were participants of a holy war, the “true” citizens of the nation.⁴⁹⁸ Through the self-realization of the nation, that is, through *swaraj*, India’s indigenous religious heritage would be protected because India would be strong.

In the introduction, I suggested that it is helpful to use the approach of Robert D. Baird for understanding *swaraj* with respect to both Gandhi and Savarkar. Baird takes the position that it is useful to ask the question of ultimate concern to determine which matters ultimately for both individuals and communities.⁴⁹⁹ Gandhi’s ultimate concern was in obtaining, for himself and others, self-realization and a connection to the divine. *Swaraj*, for Gandhi, was the path to this liberating knowledge. For Gandhi, the term *swaraj* did not stop at independence, but encompassed the idea of personal liberation. *Swaraj*, in the political context was only important in so far as it helped people, and the nation, achieve this higher goal.

Whereas Gandhi’s ultimate concern pertaining to *swaraj* was otherworldly, Savarkar’s ultimate concern was this worldly. The ultimate concern of Savarkar was the freeing of a holy land and the creation of *Ramrajya*, where people would be free to cultivate their traditions. Savarkar did not explicitly discuss the spiritual awakening of individuals, but was focused on the idea that people needed freedom and security in order to pursue their indigenous traditions. The only way to attain such freedom and security, Savarkar argued, was to fight in a holy battle to attain *swaraj*. He found support for such

⁴⁹⁷ Johnson, 51. (11:32-33) As God told Arjuna in the *Gita*, “And having conquered your enemies, enjoy a thriving kingship. They have already been hewed down by me; Savyasachin, simply be the instrument.”

⁴⁹⁸ Savarkar *IWI*, 397. Muslims were accepted as children of India if they participated in its liberation.

⁴⁹⁹ Baird, 18.

an argument by looking to texts, traditions, and beliefs commonly regarded as religious. He used their language in the *The Indian War of Independence* with the ultimate goal of inspiring citizens to participate in the holy battle for India's independence.

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