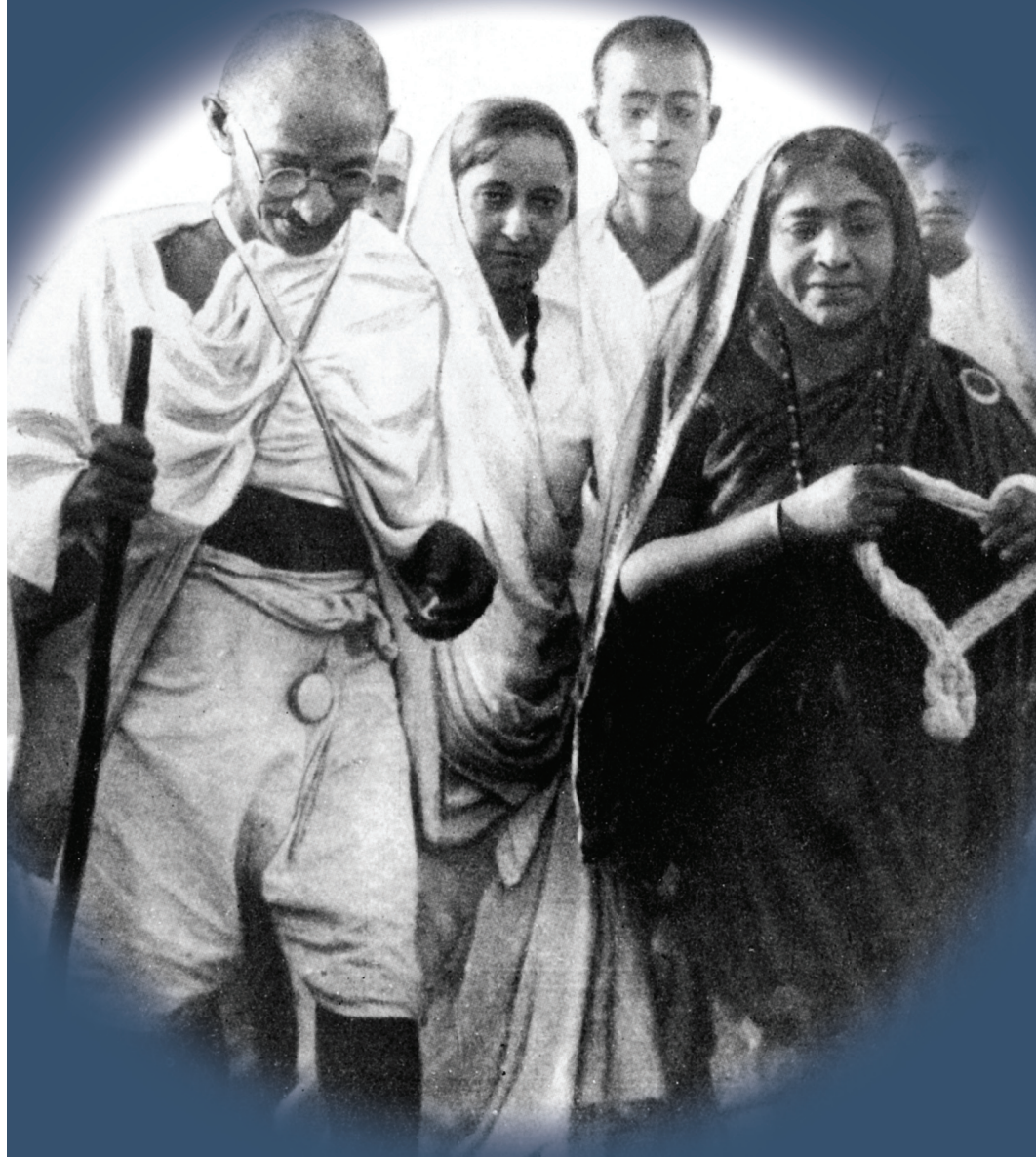


HOPE OR TERROR?

GANDHI AND THE OTHER 9/11

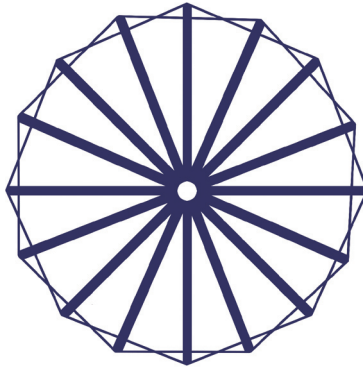


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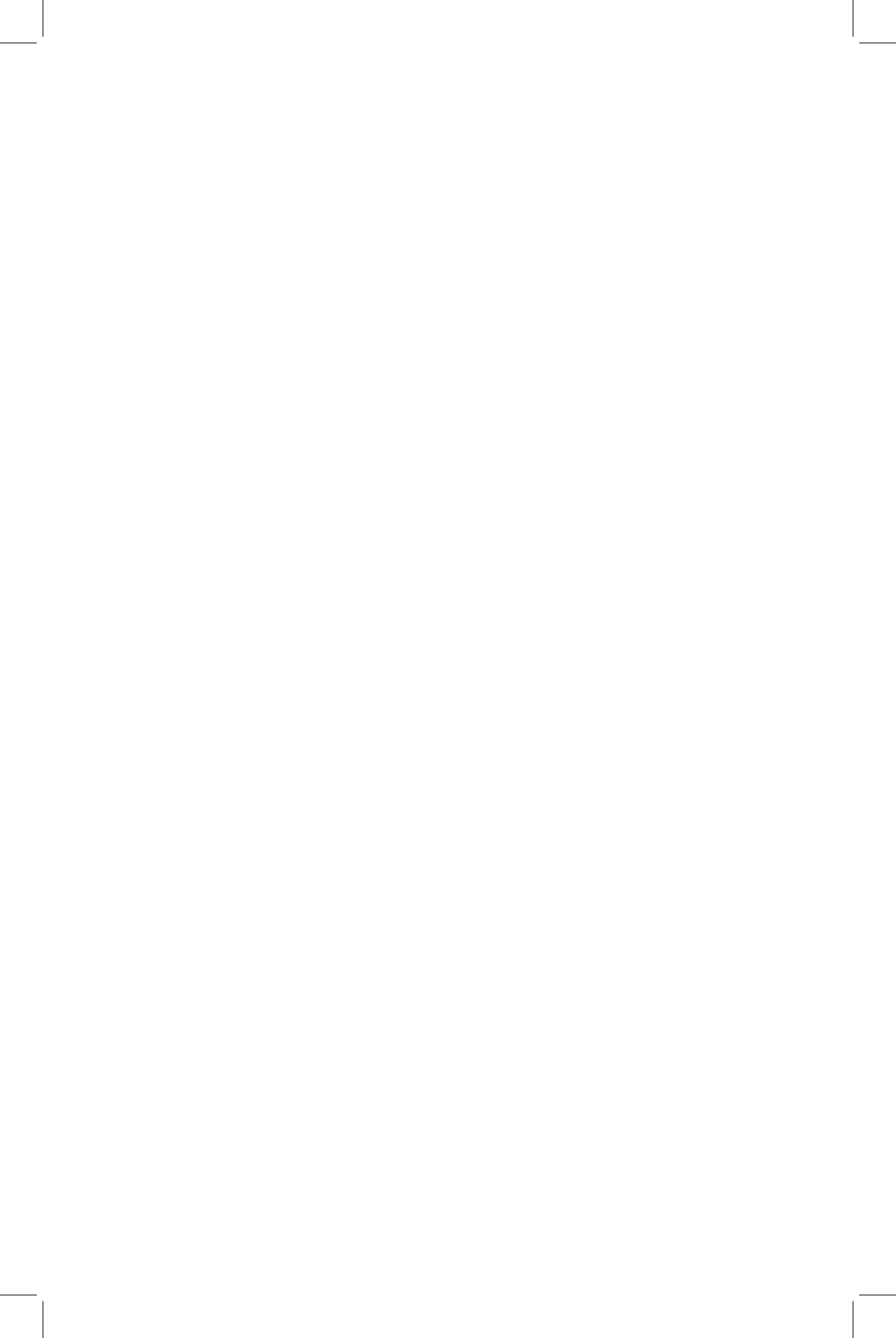
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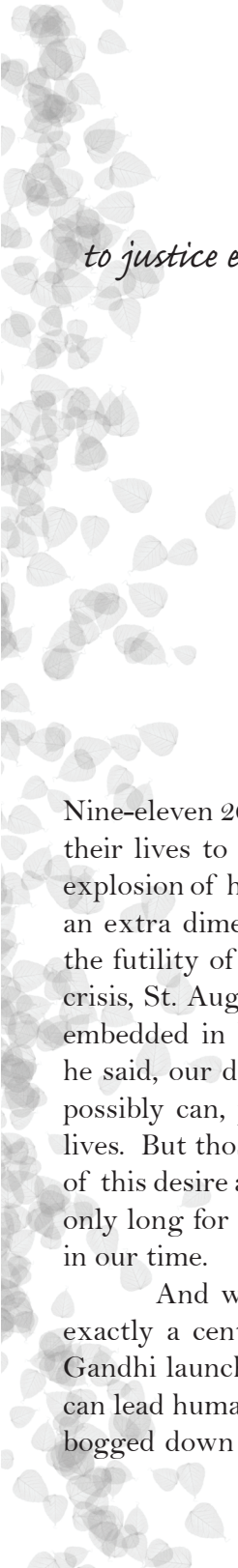


COVER: GANDHI AND POET SAROJINI NAIDU,
ABOUT TO BREAK THE SALT LAW, APRIL 6, 1930.
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Jennifer Kuiper and Jordan Pearlstein of Metta.*





*Injustice anywhere is a threat
to justice everywhere. I will not stand idly by when I
see an unjust war taking place.*

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

INTRODUCTION.

Nine-eleven 2001 came as a deep shock to those who have dedicated their lives to peace. Whether or not we lost a loved one in that explosion of hatred (as I did), violence challenges our faith and adds an extra dimension of grief for those who feel most poignantly the futility of violence. 1,500 years ago, in response to a similar crisis, St. Augustine declared his faith that the search for peace is embedded in human nature. Whether we're aware of it or not, he said, our deepest desire is "to seek fellowship and as far as we possibly can, peace with every man" and woman — and all that lives. But those of us who work for peace are perhaps more aware of this desire and feel violations of it all the more deeply, for we not only long for but believe in peace — believe that it is possible even in our time.

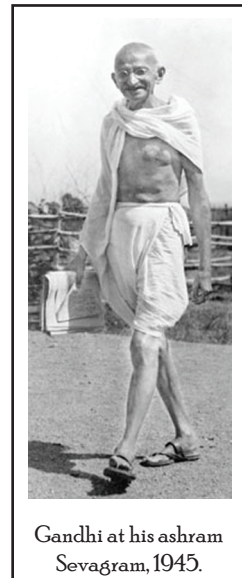
And we have reason to. By a strange coincidence it was exactly a century ago, on September 11th, 1906, that Mahatma Gandhi launched a new way of waging conflict that many believe can lead humanity from the mire of hatred in which we seem to be bogged down out into the clear land of peace. These two 9/11s,

the one freshly smarting and the other much less appreciated or understood (or in most cases, even remembered), seem like signposts for two paths that can be taken by the human race. Our added grief, therefore, does not open into the pit of despair. This booklet tells the story of the older and more helpful 9/11: the story of Satyagraha.

THE WORD ‘SATYAGRAHA’

While the method that Gandhi worked out was not new — he was the first to insist it was ‘as old as the hills’ — it fell to him to develop it systematically and apply it on a broad scale to social problems. As he later wrote, “That non-violence which only an individual can use is not of much use in terms of society. Man is a social being. His accomplishments to be of use must be such as any person with sufficient diligence can attain.”¹ It is a strange comment on human nature — or rather, human culture — that although peace is our deepest longing and using peace to influence others is ‘as old as the hills,’ the idea that returning love for hatred can make one’s adversary change his or her mind, not to mention that this can be done on a vast scale to redress ‘man’s inhumanity to man,’ was so unfamiliar in 1906 that there was not even a word for this kind of power.

So when Gandhi began organizing the disenfranchised Indians of South Africa to resist further encroachments on their rights and dignity by the white colonials, many compared it to the suffrage movements underway in England and applied the phrase from that movement, “passive resistance,” to Gandhi’s experiment; but as he had to point out often, there is nothing passive about his method and it was not confined to resistance! A contest was arranged and eventually a word for the ‘new’ method was coined: *Satyagraha*.



Gandhi at his ashram
Sevagram, 1945.

1. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* online (henceforth CWMG) vol. 98: 6 December, 1947 – 30 January, 1948: item 9.



...clinging
to the truth that
we are all one
under the skin,
that there is no such
thing as a 'win/lose'
confrontation because
all our important
interests are really the
same, that consciously
or not every single
person wants unity
and peace with every
other.

Satyagraha (pronounced sat-YAH-graha) literally means 'clinging to truth,' and that was exactly how Gandhi understood it: clinging to the truth that we are all one under the skin, that there is no such thing as a 'win/lose' confrontation because all our important interests are really the same, that consciously or not every single person wants unity and peace with every other. The principle, or method, he called *Satyagraha* is often gotten into English as 'soul force,' because that unity to which we can appeal is more of the inner person than of the body or outward appearances. Martin Luther King, Jr. would simply, and quite

correctly, call it 'love in action.' Today when we use the word *Satyagraha* we sometimes mean that general principle, the fact that love is stronger than hate (and we can learn to use it to overcome hate), and sometimes we mean more specifically active resistance by a repressed group; sometimes, even more specifically, we apply the term to a given movement, e.g. the 'Salt *Satyagraha*' of 1930 or the 'seed *satyagraha*' in which today's Indian farmers are resisting the appropriation of nature and commoditization of seeds by global corporations. On the first, most general level, it is often the equivalent of nonviolence (usually spelled without the hyphen today) or soul force.² I will use '*Satyagraha*' on all these levels in this booklet.

Satyagraha, whose seemingly endless applications we have only begun to explore, would seem to hold out a great hope for the future of humanity. We human beings will never cease to have differences — fortunately, because our differences are part of what makes us human. We will never cease to have different opinions, and probably never cease to perceive that our own interests are at odds with those of others. But there is no reason that these

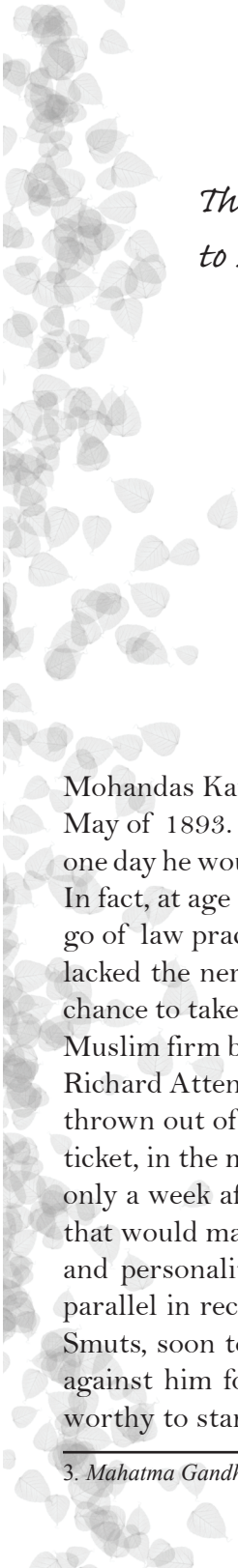
2. For more on these terms see my *The Search for a Nonviolent Future* (Maui, HI: Inner Ocean, 2002), esp. Chapter Two.

differences must deepen into enmities that finally cause explosions of anger as they did that terrible morning five years ago. If we stay on that path, our future is indeed bleak. If we even live to see one.

This is why it is so important that we realize that humanity has a double legacy, which is strangely symbolized in two 9-11s. The century that gave us both Gandhi and Hilter gave us a crucial choice, *if* we become aware of the power that was launched on September 11, 1906. Whatever we remember – the stories we choose to tell ourselves about our past – will have a determining influence on who we become. If we do not remember the ‘other’ 9/11 we will be doomed to relive the violence of 2001. But if we *do* remember it we can put the more recent tragedy in context. In that context the tragedy becomes greater, but in a strange way more endurable, for seeing the alternative to violence shows both the urgency and the possibility of laying it finally to rest. If we remember this, then ‘9/11’ can become for the whole world what it has been for peace scholars and activists, not just a nightmare but a wakeup call.



Salt March 1930



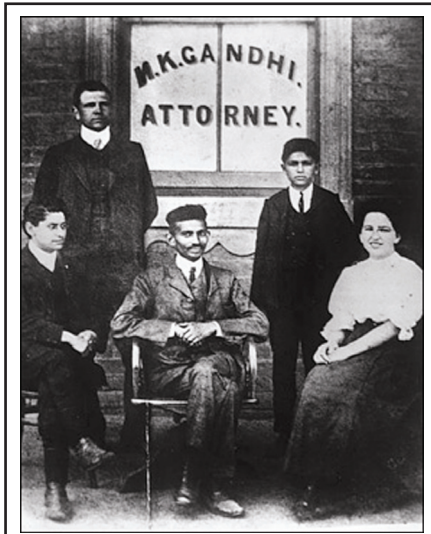
*The test of jihad lies in the willingness
to suffer, not in the practice of warfare.
-- the Qur'an*

THE STORY.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi landed in Durban, South Africa in May of 1893. No one, least of all himself, would have guessed that one day he would be known to the world as Mahatma, or 'great soul.' In fact, at age 24, he was basically a failure. He had failed to make a go of law practice in India – indeed on one painful occasion he had lacked the nerve to open his mouth in court. So he jumped at the chance to take up what was little more than a clerkship with a large Muslim firm based in Durban. Most of the world knows, thanks to Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi*, how he was unceremoniously thrown out of the train for riding first class, even though he had a ticket, in the mountains between Durban and Pretoria. This event, only a week after his arrival in South Africa, precipitated the crisis that would make him a leader who would finally "impress his spirit and personality [on his countrymen] to a degree which has no parallel in recent history." This is the testimony of Jan Christian Smuts, soon to become Gandhi's great rival, who after struggling against him for many years would come to feel that he was "not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man" as Gandhi.³

3. *Mahatma Gandhi: Reflections on his Life and Work* (Bombay: Jaico, 1956-1995), p.226

Many people before and since have been insulted in their basic humanity as Gandhi was on that day, but for some reason it became for him “the most creative night of his life.” As he reports in his autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, he spent the night on the mountain station of Pietermaritzburg shivering with cold and struggling much more intensely with his reaction to the




Gandhi (center) with his secretary, Miss Schlesin, and his colleague Mr. Polak in front of his Law Office, South Africa, 1913

insult. Caught between two impulses, he followed neither. He vowed he would neither run back to India *nor* stay (he was a lawyer, after all) and call the railway company to account for their offense. These two choices define the way most of us respond to such an affront, or any threat; but in Gandhi, the rage and humiliation were forced, as it were, to seek a different, more creative channel when he turned back on both these ‘fight or flight’ responses. It is as though he left himself only one option: to turn his attention — his anger

— to the much larger questions of racial prejudice, injustice and exploitation not only he but all his fellow Indians endured at the hands of European colonists. It is instructive to look back today at that historic struggle because, as the Compassionate Buddha said, “people are often inconsiderate;” countless thousands have gone through the same emotions, in their own way and on their own scale, in the face of the injustices that still disfigure human relationships.

Here is one interesting feature that illustrates the many contrasts in Gandhi’s unique approach: back in India he would never again travel first class, though entire wagons would be put at his disposal. In 1930, at the climax of the freedom struggle, he

brought the British Empire to its knees for making poor Indians pay for their own salt; but he himself was not even using salt at

 More than fifty countries would shake off the yoke of colonialism, at least in large part influenced by the success of his struggle in India.

that time, having renounced it as a spiritual practice and another way of identifying with the ‘poorest of the poor.’ For him it was always the principle of the thing, not what he himself stood to gain or lose.

Another hallmark of Gandhi’s style: Despite his intense determination to fight this manifestation of ‘man’s inhumanity

to man,’ Gandhi did not give up what we would call today his ‘day job,’ the case on which he had been hired, but did what he could to abet the circumstances of individual Indians from that position. To begin he offered to teach three of his fellow Gujaratis English (one soon dropped out). By the time the repercussions of that night’s struggle played themselves out, more than fifty countries would shake off the yoke of colonialism, at least in large part influenced by the success of his struggle in India. In this sense one could say that he ended an entire era; which makes it all the more amazing how small it all began.

Modest as it was, this instinct for turning first to one’s own community for self-uplift would lead, many years later, to Gandhi’s most characteristic method of social struggle: Constructive Programme.

Back to our story: at the year’s end, in the spring of 1894, when he was able to arrange for both parties to settle out of court on terms that would not ruin either of them, Gandhi made ready to return to India. But as it would at other junctures of his life, history played a hand: at the farewell party someone handed him a copy of the *Natal Mercury* with the text of new legislation before the Natal Parliament. Shocked by the racial character of the law (something technically illegal under the British Empire), Gandhi warned the Natal merchants, “this is the first nail in your coffin.” At the instance of the community he agreed to stay ‘for a month more’ to organize some kind of response — a month that would

stretch into twenty years, and an impulse for public service that would steadily unfold as his life's work.

The next few years were a period of systematic discipline and intense personal growth. As far as his profession was concerned, Gandhi came to the realization that the true function of law was "to unite parties riven asunder." He undertook an intense spiritual search, open-mindedly scouring the religions available to him at that time. He attended various Christian churches of South Africa, delved into the Koran, and pondered what he knew of his own Hindu tradition (which was mostly subliminal at that time) for a truth that would satisfy him personally as well as make him a more effective leader. To the end of his life, while Gandhi remained a Hindu through and through, he drew inspiration from all the great religions and encouraged people to undertake a "reverent study" of all of them. And his religion was never something that took place only in one or another place or time: it was his life.

One day in 1904 a journalist friend handed him a copy of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* as he was leaving on a train from Johannesburg, the capital of the Transvaal, to Durban. Gandhi had already been experimenting with simplicity in his material surroundings. He devoured the book and stepped off the train committed to putting his 'new' ideas (he must have been partly aware this was an aspect of ancient spiritual tradition in India) into practice. Whenever Gandhi saw something to be true, he acted on it immediately. What

became clear to him now was that if he was to develop his potential for service he must lead a life of outward simplicity, preferably in an intentional community of like-minded souls. Very soon Phoenix Farm was purchased and settled with some European friends and some of Gandhi's relatives, including his wife Kasturbai, who had come from India to join him. This was the first of four 'ashrams,'



Mohandas K. Gandhi
1913

or spiritual communities, that Gandhi would establish through his career to allow himself and his closest followers to develop their own spiritual capacities – and have a headquarters for Satyagraha.

Then, in the summer of 1906, came the terrible Zulu “rebellion.” As in the Boer war some six years earlier, Gandhi felt that as he was appealing to the Empire for support and protection



From now on his life was not for him to enjoy; it was his sacred opportunity to use every capacity he had for the service of humanity and all life –and his experiment to discover who he was.

he had no right to refuse it service, despite his pacifist convictions. The solution in both cases was to form an ambulance corps. The “rebellion” (it was really a massacre of the Zulus) showed him, if it were not clear already, the horrible face of racism. Were it not for

Gandhi and the Indians he had recruited, the wounded Zulu would have been left to die. In that carnage Gandhi took two strenuous vows. The first was against ownership — from then on everything he used would be looked upon as a tool, not a possession (this would become the important doctrine of trusteeship in his economic



Members of the Tolstoy Farm created by Gandhi in South-Africa, 1910.
Center: Gandhi and Dr. Hermann Kallenbach.

system). And the second was the ancient vow of *brahmacarya*, or sexual continence. From now on his life was not for him to enjoy; it was his sacred opportunity to use every capacity he had for the service of humanity and all life — and his experiment to discover who he was. Strange as it may seem, he later claimed that this struggle gave him a joy and peace in the meaning of nature that he had “no power to describe.”

We are now almost at the eve of the historic September meeting. Drawing on his ongoing spritual disciplines, Gandhi had launched a careful, stepwise campaign to rescue the dignity and the rights of the 100,000 Indians, ‘free’ and indentured laborers, who up to that time had borne the abuses heaped on them with helpless resignation. In due course he:

- § undertook to educate the community. Whenever he wanted, for example, to get a petition signed he would insist that the signer understood exactly what he or she was signing and what it meant. He never let his impatience pressure him to coerce rather than persuade — which meant that he was always building capacity for the long term
- § oversaw the establishment of the Natal Indian Congress, modeled on the much larger Indian National Congress in the homeland
- § organized the first petition ever submitted by Indians to a South African parliament
- § founded *Indian Opinion*, the first of several newspapers that would provide the communication organs of his movements.

These were, briefly told, the steps that lead to the historic meeting at the Empire Theater on Farrier Street, Johannesburg. Another obnoxious law, this time the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance of 1906, had been proposed that would in effect reduce Indians and other “Asiatics” in South Africa to a semi-criminal status. Some six thousand Indians, indentured laborers and ‘free’

merchants and artisans, Hindu and Muslim, had answered Gandhi's call to resist the act should it be passed. What he had in mind was a pledge of non-cooperation: civil disobedience (the term coined by Thoreau that Gandhi would later borrow). Again, history played a hand. A Muslim merchant, Seth Haji Habib, sprang to his feet and declared that "with God as witness" he would never yield to such cowardly submission as to obey the impending law. Taken aback for a moment, Gandhi realized that this was more than he had bargained for. No stranger to vows in his own spiritual development, he realized that invoking God in a political struggle elevated its seriousness to a new level of commitment. What was he to do? As for himself, there was no choice but to take the vow. "There is only one course open to those like me, to die but not to submit to the law. It is quite unlikely, but even if everyone else flinched leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would not violate my pledge."

But would the community follow him? As we have seen, Gandhi never tried to move masses of people to act beyond their own individual

convictions but took the much longer route of educating them, if necessary, one by one. He had explained that this could be a protracted struggle

involving much hardship and sacrifice. Would they follow him now? Twenty years later he recalled the memorable scene:

"The meeting heard me word by word in perfect quiet. Other leaders too spoke. All dwelt upon their own responsibility and the responsibility of the audience... and at last all present, standing with upraised hands, took an oath with God as witness not to submit to the Ordinance if it became law. I can never forget the scene which is present before my mind's eye as I write. The community's enthusiasm knew no bounds."⁴



"There is only one course open to those like me, to die but not to submit to the law. It is quite unlikely, but even if everyone else flinched leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would not violate my pledge."

4 *CWMG* Vol. 34: 11 February, 1926-1 April, 1926, p. 91.

Satyagraha was born.

The struggle was to last eight years. There were many ups and downs and more than one bitter occasion when only Gandhi's vision kept their resistance going, but in the end the government was forced to withdraw the more obnoxious features of the "Black Act" (as the Indians called it) and other harmful restrictions. But *how* the community succeeded was, for the long term, even more important; for in their struggle they birthed a new relationship between Indians and whites in South Africa — and beyond that, potentially for any groups in conflict. Again the testimony of Gandhi's great opponent, Jan Christian Smuts:

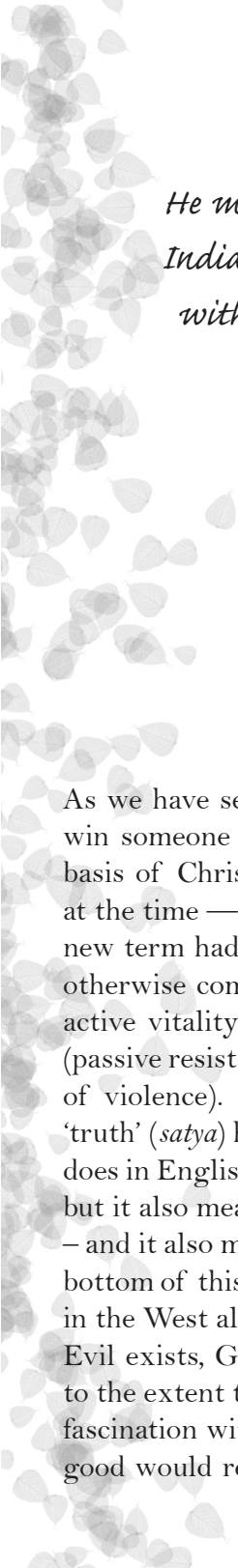
For him it was a successful coup. Nor was the personal touch wanting, for nothing in Gandhi's procedure is without a peculiar personal touch. In gaol he had prepared for me a very useful pair of sandals... which... I have worn for many a summer since then. .. Anyway, it was in that spirit that we fought out our quarrels in South Africa. There was no hatred or personal ill-feeling, the spirit of humanity was never absent, and when the fight was over there was the atmosphere in which a decent peace could be concluded.⁵

A decent peace. How few quarrels end that way! Possibly neither man knew, though Gandhi must surely have suspected, that this new method of struggle would lead to greater results far beyond the stage on which they themselves acted. Nobel laureate Albert St. Gyeorgyi saw what had happened:

Between the two world wars, at the heyday of Colonialism, force reigned supreme. It had a suggestive power, and it was natural for the weaker to lie down before the stronger. Then came Gandhi, chasing out of his country, almost singlehanded, the greatest military power on earth. He taught the world that there are higher things than force, higher even than life itself; he proved that force had lost its suggestive power.⁶

5 *Loc. cit.*

6 *The Crazy Ape* (New York: the Philosophical Library, 1970), p. 44.



*He made it impossible for us to go on ruling
India, but he made it possible for us to leave
without rancour and without dishonour.*

--Arnold Toynbee.

II. WHAT IS SATYAGRAHA?

As we have seen, the willingness to take on suffering in order to win someone over who is acting wrongly — nominally the very basis of Christianity and Western Civilization — was so unusual at the time — and not all that usual even today — that an entirely new term had to be coined for it, especially as the one that would otherwise come to mind, ‘passive resistance,’ failed to convey the active vitality of their method and could lead to fatal confusion (passive resistance did not, in the usage of the time, rule out the use of violence). Satyagraha literally means ‘clinging to truth.’ But ‘truth’ (*satya*) has broader meanings in the Indian languages than it does in English. It means, to be sure, truth as opposed to falsehood; but it also means ‘the real’ as opposed to the unreal or nonexistent — and it also means ‘the good.’ There is a profound optimism at the bottom of this belief, that the world cannot be based on evil (in fact, in the West also this would be rejected as the Manichaeian heresy). Evil exists, Gandhi would explain, but it exists only because and to the extent that we support it — by our belief in its power, by our fascination with violence, by our fear. Withdraw that support and good would reemerge: how could it not? This vision would have

the utmost consequences for the tremendous work he would go on to launch in India:

“The world rests upon the bedrock of satya or truth. Asatya meaning untruth also means non-existent, and satya or truth also means that which is. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being that which is can never be destroyed. This is the doctrine of Satyagraha in a nutshell.”⁷

Obviously, in Gandhi’s conception Satyagraha is a kind of force — indeed the only kind that ultimately exists and works in the world. Its operations change people, for the better. Today in the West, where there is such a gulf between religion and science, there are those who still think that nonviolence or Satyagraha is a kind of abstract, moral concept; a ‘thou shalt not’ arbitrarily constraining the activist rather than a kind of power (a “living power,” Gandhi called it) influencing the opponent. To think in those moralistic terms is to go looking for Satyagraha in the wrong direction. It is possible to say more about the effect it has on people (Gandhi again):


“What Satyagraha does in such cases is not to suppress reason but to free it from inertia and to establish its sovereignty over prejudice, hatred, and other baser passions. In other words, if one may paradoxically put it, it does not enslave, it compels reason to be free.”⁸

No matter how brutal and dehumanized we human beings become as the result of our conditioning, the propaganda we have been exposed to, or what have you, the capacity for what Gandhi calls ‘reason’ in this context (meaning a kind of humane awareness) is always there, hiding though it may be in some pretty deep shadows. At least one friend of mine owes her very existence to this fact. Lily’s parents-to-be were Polish Jews who joined the underground in Warsaw during WWII. One night the Gestapo raided their apartment and found documents that would have spelled their death; but just at that moment their little boy went up to the Gestapo captain and started playing with the shiny buttons on his uniform! His parents were horrified, but when the captain looked down at the child he

⁷ *CWMG, op. cit.* p. 235.

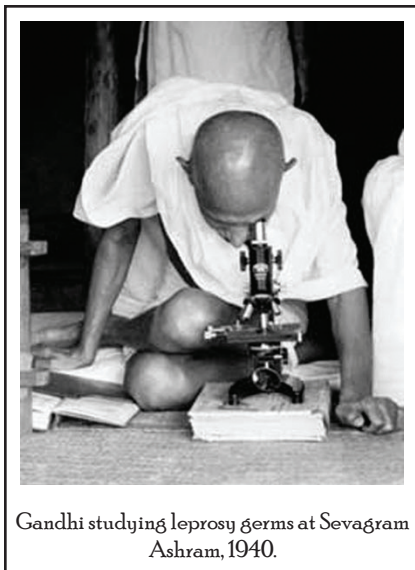
⁸ Pyarelal, *The Epic Fast* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1932), p. 35

stopped talking and, after a long moment that must have seemed like eternity he said, in a totally changed voice, “I have a little boy at home just his age, and I miss him very much.” Then he quietly added, “Your son has saved your life” and ordered his men out of the apartment. Their daughter Lilian, an important peace activist today, was born ten years later. Satyagraha is a way to do consciously what the Kshensky’s little boy did in all his innocence: to reawaken another’s humane awareness. By acting humanly ourselves — remember Smuts’ observation that “the spirit of humanity was never absent” — we reawaken the dormant humanity of the other.



Satyagraha is a way to do consciously what the Kshensky’s little boy did in all his innocence: to reawaken another’s humane awareness.

Interestingly enough, there is now intriguing scientific evidence that this effect is embedded in



our very physiology. Scientists have found that we all possess, in our central nervous system, “mirror neurons” that respond to another’s mental states, a bit like a biological tuning fork that picks up outside vibrations.⁹ If I cry, or exhibit anger — or overcome it — whatever you may or may not feel consciously a part of you is mirroring my response.

All of this does not mean that Satyagraha is easy, or that it always has exactly the effects we want. But it does mean two important things: 1) the more

we use it, the more *some* good will result somewhere, and 2) there is a science to maximizing that good effect. Satyagraha does not depend on luck, or grace — it’s *predictable*.

⁹ Cf. Natalie Angier, “Why We’re so Nice: We’re Wired to Cooperate,” *They New York Times*, July 23, 2002.



BASIC PRINCIPLES.

Satyagraha will look somewhat different in different situations — indeed, many have come to believe that, as Gandhi claimed, there is *no* situation where it cannot be of help. Underneath these differences there are certain basic principles that most scholars and activists agree would characterize Satyagraha:

- § Means determine ends: we can never use destructive means like violence to bring about constructive ends like democracy and peace.
- § In this kind of struggle, we fight the evil, not the person doing it. In Christian terms, we ‘hate the sin, but not the sinner.’ The clearest sign that ‘truth power’ was at work is when your opponent ends up being your ally, even your friend. Indeed, activists often discover that the more they can bring themselves to accept the person opposing them the more effectively they can overcome his or her wrongdoing. It is, as Gandhi said in another context, “mathematically proportionate.” For this reason, except in extreme emergencies, the satyagrahi (the man or woman offering Satyagraha) always operates by *persuasion, not coercion*.
- § We believe that our actions have more consequences than the immediate, visible results we aim at. In fact, as history has shown many times, our efforts may fail to deliver the immediate results we wanted but succeed in doing more than we dreamed of.

In 1953, at the height of the Korean War, there was a famine in China, and a huge surplus of food in the United States. The Fellowship of Reconciliation began a campaign to deluge the White House with miniature grain bags and a quote from Isaiah: “If thine enemy hunger, feed him.” There was no official response from the White

House, but 25 years later, thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, it was revealed that just at that time the Joint Chiefs of Staff were trying to press President Eisenhower to authorize bombing across the Yalu River, i.e. on mainland China — an act of folly which could quite conceivably have precipitated World War III. The President sent an aide to find out how many of the little bags had been received, and when he got the report said to the Joint Chiefs, “Gentlemen, 35,000 Americans think we should be feeding the Chinese. This is hardly the time to start bombing them!” Disaster averted. As Gandhi historian B. R. Nanda explains,

“The fact is that Satyagraha was not designed to seize any particular objective or to crush the opponent, but to set in motion forces which would ultimately lead to a new equation; in such a strategy it [is] perfectly possible to lose all the battles and still win the war.”¹⁰

Violence is inherently destructive, nonviolence is an inherently constructive influence. This means that at some level nonviolence very reliably leads to integration and community, while violence is only going to promote hatred and disunity. This dramatic difference, however, is not always obvious in the short term; and that is why people fail to understand why we find ourselves lurching from crisis to crisis when we try to ‘solve’ problems with violence. Such people will also fail to understand that we could be moving steadily toward a regime of stable peace and creativity by changing those means. Because Satyagraha works predictably but not always visibly — it works on a causal level of thought and action — I find it convenient to say that an action succeeds, or “works” when I refer to its short-term, obvious effects while it works (without quotes) when I refer to the way it affects situations under the surface and thus can produce effects later on, the connection not always being obvious. In these terms, we can formulate an important law:

*Nonviolence sometimes “works” and always works,
while by contrast,
Violence sometimes “works” and never works.*

¹⁰ *India News* October 1, 1994: p.11.

The exercise of violence always has a destructive effect on human relationships even when, as sometimes happens, it accomplishes some short-term goal. The exercise of nonviolence, or Satyagraha, always brings people closer. This explains why Gandhi, after fifty years of experimentation in every walk of life, could declare that he “knew of no single case in which it had failed.” Where it seemed to fail he concluded that he or the other satyagrahis had in some way failed to live up to its steep challenge. Taking the long view, he was able to declare that “There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.”¹¹

Naturally, a Satyagraha struggle leaves opponents closer in understanding and sympathy than when they began. The bitter legacy of the many wars that were ‘won’ only to lead to further cycles of destruction – WWI, Kosovo, no doubt Afghanistan and Iraq today – is not the fate of struggles that are won by nonviolence. As the American Friends Service Committee pointed out in a cogent booklet of 1955 called *Speak Truth to Power*, India and Algiers both gained independence from European colonial powers about



Gandhi leaving 10, Downing Street, London, 1931.

the same time, but the former did so with largely nonviolent and the latter with largely violent means. The results were that enormously greater casualties were suffered on both sides of the Algerian conflict (the Algerians lost nearly 900,000 people while vastly greater India lost only a few thousand) and relations would be strained between Algiers and France almost to the present day, while India and Britain immediately entered an era of cooperation and mutual benefit.

Peace scholar Kenneth Boulding has proposed very useful language for elucidating the difference: Satyagraha struggles are based on *integrative power*; military

¹¹ Gandhi, *Toward Lasting Peace*; Ed. A.T. Hingorani (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966) p. 6.

struggles are based on *threat power*. As Boulding puts it, “Integrative power, then, involves bringing the dissident back into the community. Sanctions alone, threat alone, will not do this. If we think of power merely in terms of threat power, we will get nowhere.”¹²

Satyagraha struggles are enormously less costly than ordinary, military struggles not only to human life, to psychological well-being (combat personnel are often deeply traumatized by what they have done in the line of duty)¹³ — but to material resources as well. The legislation pending to create a Department of Peace in the U.S. Government has been indexed, quite realistically, to two percent of the military appropriation. The current year’s budget for Nonviolent Peaceforce, perhaps the largest operation of the dozen or so organizations doing Third Party Nonviolent Intervention (TPNI — see more below) is \$3.8 million, or *one fifth* the cost of a single F-16 fighter (not counting pro-rated development costs, armament, training, etc).

To be fair, however, Satyagraha is in one way much *more* costly than violence. It takes a lot of courage to face hostility with as much love as we can muster, to face it without weapons. It can take more courage than fighting, as many soldiers today are finding when they realize that recruiters lied to them or they become aware of their own inner rejection of war. While combat soldiers are undeniably brave, theirs is a physical courage, often derived from their armor and weapons. They are not noted for the courage to refuse orders that go against their conscience, or otherwise resist the social pressures of the crowd. As a high-ranking military officer quipped recently about retired generals who were at last speaking out against the war in Iraq, “These are men who are willing to risk their lives, but not their careers.” A satyagrahi must not only be willing to endure physical attacks, if necessary at the risk of life itself, but *also* face the misunderstanding and hatred of a world which has not yet realized what Satyagraha is and what motivates someone to offer it. As Gandhi pointed out, a real satyagrahi must

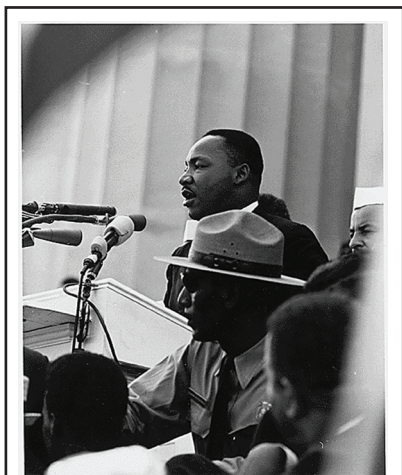
12 Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Three Faces of Power* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage), p. 250.

13 A recognized form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is now Perpetration Induced Traumatic Stress (PITS). See Peter Laufer, *Mission Rejected* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green, 2006) and the documentary *Ground Truth* by Patricia Foulkrod.

often be prepared to go it alone.

WHO CAN OFFER SATYAGRAHA?

Anyone can offer Satyagraha. Being based on soul force, it is not limited to the strong in body. The formula for a nonviolent campaign — to resist injustice firmly without attempting to coerce, humiliate, or injure its perpetrators — can be carried out in myriad creative ways which have been steadily added to since Gandhi's time, as we'll see below, and can involve people from all walks of life. In emergencies, some pretty successful campaigns have been carried out on the spur of the moment — perhaps most famously the Rosenstrasse prison demonstration in which unarmed women rescued their Jewish husbands from the Gestapo in Berlin in 1943.¹⁴ But they are much more successful when the satyagrahis are trained and have a strategy. We do not have to be a Gandhi or a Martin Luther King before we take up the struggle. Gandhi mobilized millions of people during the climactic obstructive phases of his campaign,



Martin Luther King, Jr.
March on Washington
August 28, 1963

probably none of whom had quite the degree of self-mastery and universal compassion that he had achieved. It is wonderful to have the inspiration of a great leader and a strategic vision for protracted struggle, but since the days of Gandhi and King (or Cesar Chavez and others) activists have found ways to organize themselves and stay reasonably nonviolent in the face of harsh repression. In the last thirty or so years masses of people, in many cases without a single, "charismatic" leader, have repeatedly carried

¹⁴ See Nathan Stoltzfuss, *Resistance of the Hear: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York: W.W Norton & Co., 1996).



Satyagraha struggles are enormously less costly than ordinary, military struggles not only to human life, to psychological well-being,

out campaigns that are largely free from violence at least in action and that not only persuade (or if that is not possible, coerce) their governments to change course but simply sweep them aside if they do not.

WHEN CAN WE OFFER SATYAGRAHA?

There are three conditions for a successful nonviolent struggle, or Satyagraha campaign:

- § *The cause must be just.* It is possible to use nonviolent *techniques* in more dubious causes but the laws of success we have been discussing can't be counted on to work. Mistaking the outward techniques, or forms for Satyagraha itself can lead to serious confusion: a journalist, for example, recently referred to "Gandhian" methods of some heavily armed and heavily ideological Israeli settlers. Often the methods without the spirit will lead to bad results, and we should not blame Satyagraha any more than we give up on violence when we lose a battle.

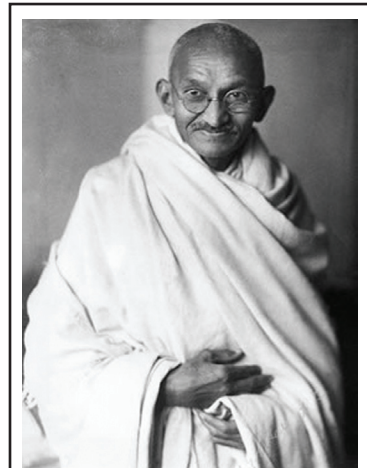
- § *One must have courage.* The basic energy of Satyagraha is precisely the energy of fear converted into an active and creative force. The same can be said of anger. As Martin Luther King explained, in the Civil Rights movement, they neither swallowed their anger nor let it explode; they "controlled anger and released it under discipline for maximum effect." This is one of the best formulations of what Satyagraha actually is: a "way out of no way" that is neither fear-based repression nor anger-based expression, neither fight nor flight.

Satyagraha campaigns can go on for years. They then demand that the satyagrahis' courage be sustained. Patience is therefore an essential key to nonviolent success. One of the terms for nonviolence in Arabic is in fact *sabr*, or sometimes *sumud*,

‘patience, endurance;’ similarly, in Latin America they speak of *firmeza permanente*, ‘endless determination.’ Again to quote King, “We will match your capacity to inflict suffering with our capacity to endure suffering,” and he added, “We will not hate you, but we cannot obey your unjust laws. We will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.” This leads to the third requirement:

§ One *must overcome ill-will* toward the adversary. For most of us this will be a constant struggle in which we will succeed fitfully, and by degrees. The more vividly we remember that our real adversary is not the person but the injustice, the more the power of Satyagraha will inform our actions. We will help our opponents also see themselves not as a tyrant or a torturer but as a human being trapped in a false relationship. In 1922 Gandhi called off a hitherto successful Satyagraha, much to the consternation of some of his closest colleagues, when some demonstrators in a town called Chauri Chaura lost control and murdered policemen who had taunted them. Better do nothing, he reasoned, than do harm under the colors of Satyagraha.

These are the basic enabling conditions for a Satyagraha struggle. But in themselves they do not guarantee success. As we have seen, immediate and long term success (“work” and work) will be “mathematically proportionate” to the preparation of the activists, and in addition strategy and timing are critical, especially in protracted struggles. In Satyagraha, as in much else, we must be cunning as serpents *and* innocent as doves. Once the above enabling conditions are met, what else should a satyagrahi watch out for?



A studio photograph of Gandhi taken in London at the request of Lord Irwin, 1931.

INGREDIENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL STRUGGLE.

In the years since the historic meeting of 1906 — and the Independence of India forty-two years later — scholars and activists alike have learned much about the science of Satyagraha as applied to large-scale, political struggles — more than we could hope to cover in this little booklet. I will only mention five considerations that might serve to give a sense of the kind of thing that can make a difference between success and failure (and why it is so wrong to conclude that “nonviolence doesn’t work” just because a group that refrained from using outright violence did not achieve its goals).

TRAINING. In a sense, one’s whole life should be a training for nonviolence; that is why Gandhi had his closest coworkers live with him in his ashrams. Just as military training systematically dehumanizes prospective soldiers (this is one of the most grievous



Giving massage, 15 min. daily, to a leper patient, the Sanskrit scholar Parchure Shastri, at Sevaġram Ashram, 1940.

costs of the war system), so training for Satyagraha involves enhancing our courage and humanity. At present we are slowly developing ways of doing that training. Most organizations who carry out nonviolent intervention (see Section III, below) now offer brief trainings for their

field workers, and more than one organization exists for such training (e.g. Training for Change, in Philadelphia).

STRATEGY. A nonviolent struggle is like a conversation with one’s opponents, a conversation that has to take place in the realm of action because they are no longer willing to listen to our words. Sometimes we can create a situation in which they have

to either let us enter an illegal zone, for example, or use so much violence to stop us that the public will swing their support to us. Another strategy is to maneuver the opponent into a confrontation where his violence and our nonviolence cleanly square off — and the latter prevails. We call this today a “nonviolent moment.” A good example is the climactic Satyagraha of 1930 that made it only a matter of time before India collected her independence. One very important part of strategy is:

TIMING. As in any ‘conversation,’ we sometimes can make our point by speaking, sometimes we have to gesture, sometimes do



“We will not hate you, but we cannot obey your unjust laws. We will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process.” – MLK, Jr.

something concrete. Much depends on the mood or willingness to listen of the other party — and part of Satyagraha is to gradually make him or her willing to hear us. We are always ready to assume that our opponent is open to moving towards us, often more than she or he can let on. By assuming the best we tend to evoke the best. Gandhi kept trusting Smuts even after the latter shamelessly betrayed him. In

the end, as we know, he was vindicated both by political success and Smuts’ personal admiration.

On the other hand, we must match our opponent’s determination. There is an important line between a petitioning phase and the need for Satyagraha, in the sense of nonviolent resistance: the point at which the opponent is no longer willing to listen and we need a way to open his or her heart. As Gandhi described this,

“Things of fundamental importance to the people are not secured by reason alone but have to be purchased with their suffering. . . If you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also.”¹⁵

When this does become necessary it is good to be aware that there is a qualitative difference between the passive, unwilling suffering of a victim and the willing suffering of a victor, who by virtue of this suffering rises above circumstances and has a potent

¹⁵ Published in *Young India*, cf. *CWMG* vol. 54 (November 5, 1931), p. 48.

effect on his or her onlooker. As Martin Luther King would say, “Unearned suffering is redemptive.”

We crossed this line in February, 2003, when President George W. Bush declared that he did not need to take seriously the millions of people who had demonstrated world-wide against the planned invasion of Iraq: they were just “a focus group.” At that moment protest was no longer appropriate (what is the point of telling people how you feel when they’ve just told you they don’t care?). The next



Anti war protestors in Cape Town, South Africa.
February 2003

step was civil disobedience. And here it is good to remember that the more constructive program we have underway and the earlier we begin the ‘conversation’ with our

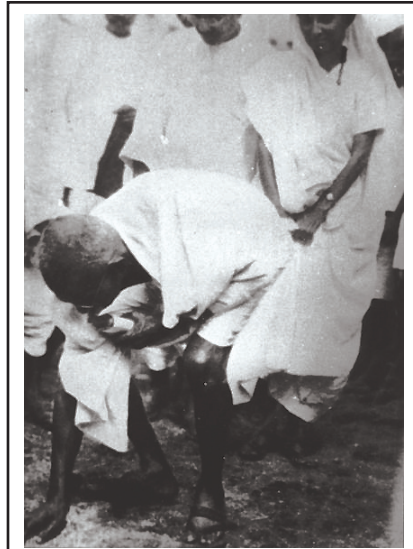
opponent the less the ‘law of suffering’ will be required.

CONCRETENESS. There is a natural affinity between “clinging to truth,” or reality, and concrete action. In general, peace groups today overuse symbols. Marching (when it does not take us into places that are prohibited or is otherwise obstructive), rallies, holding up signs at street corners, wearing ribbons — all of these have a very limited usefulness in Satyagraha. They can get a message across — provided our audience is in a mood to hear it — and they can create a temporary sense of community and mutual support, but a deeper and more durable sense of community is the kind that comes from working together toward a concrete goal. At best, then, symbols can rally our spirits and sometimes send the right message to others; at worst, a protest or a statement can make us “feel good” without creating real change. (It can even signal that we have no way to make real change, which is very wrong in Satyagraha). The point is not to blow off steam but to harness it —

to “release it under discipline for maximum effect.”

Cindy Sheehan has been called a “symbol” of the resistance to the war in Iraq, but she is a very real person (I have met her) with a very real grievance against the President. Gandhi’s march to the sea in 1930 was a dramatic symbol, but don’t forget that he reached the real sea and picked up real salt — illegally. *The best symbol is the concrete act itself.*

NUMBERS AND PUBLICITY. An early term for Satyagraha was “people power,” the power of a large number of people to resist organized repression. It was coined during the successful Philippine “people power” insurrection of 1986; but that very insurrection also involved what I like to call “person power:” the almost limitless power of truth that resides untapped in the individual. Satyagraha is “soul force,”



Gandhi at Dandi, South Gujarat, picking salt on the beach at the end of the Salt March April 1930



A million people have their own effect, but so does a single person who is a million times more committed.

after all, and it’s good to remember that only an individual has a soul. Organizations, crowds, and corporate entities do not. There are certainly times when numbers are a great help, but in Satyagraha there are also times when a single person is the key. In 1942, when Gandhi did not want to distract the British from their other

‘conversation’ with the Axis powers but nonetheless felt that India’s petitions had to be heeded, he directed one person, his great disciple Vinoba Bhave, to carry out a ‘Satyagraha of one.’ A million people have their own effect, but so does a single person

who is a million times more committed.

WHEN SHOULD WE NOT OFFER SATYAGRAHA?

In Germany some months ago a deranged teenager fell upon an unsuspecting crowd of people and stabbed nineteen of them before he was subdued. Now, if Satyagraha meant that we can never use violence, we would be unable to use it in such a situation. But Satyagraha, remember, is not primarily a prohibition of anything, it is love in action, and a challenge to us to bring love-in-action to bear on a situation. Gandhi himself was very clear on this point (have 9/11 in mind as you read this):

“Taking life may be a duty.... Suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about, sword in hand, and killing anyone that comes in his way, and no one dares capture him alive. Anyone who dispatches this lunatic will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded as a benevolent man.”¹⁶

A true satyagrahi would not hesitate to stop such a person, and if there is no other way, to stop him with lethal force. However, there are three things we will *not* do, and they point up the inner difference in approach between the satyagrahi and the person who is still relying on violence. We will not:

§ as far as in us lies, hate the unfortunate person causing the danger;

§ *prepare* for such emergencies ahead of time, because if we have time to prepare we can use it to prepare nonviolence;

§ conclude that our use of force solved the situation. The situation includes the culture that leads to so many episodes of this kind today; our responsibility leads us to do something to change that. For us, physical force is a sign of failure, not success.

It is convenient here to point out that both Gandhi and King often used the word ‘moral’ to describe Satyagraha, but that

16 *Young India*, April 11, 1926, p. 395; cf. *All Men Are Brothers*, p. 119.


was because no very good language was available — or still is — to describe non-physical forces. A satyagrahi will inevitably tend to hold certain beliefs that may differ sharply from those of the majority. He or she will believe that there is a way to resolve every conflict so that all parties benefit, and that no matter how depraved people may be there is a core of goodness buried within them. He or she will *not* believe, as the majority still does, that destructive force can solve problems permanently and lead to constructive ends. Nonetheless, Satyagraha is not properly speaking a religion or dogma. If one is a real satyagrahi he or she will not hold any of these beliefs uncritically, and will certainly not use them to reject or stigmatize others. He or she will be always searching for higher truth, holding all his or her beliefs as hypotheses to be constantly tested in the laboratory of experience. This enables us to ‘cling to truth’ without being divisive toward others: we recognize that *our* truth is privileged only in the sense that it is the truth that we must live out and keep on testing: everyone has *some* truth and to be human means to work out the refinement of our truths together.

“CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME” (CP).

As we have already seen, Satyagraha had two strings to its nonviolent bow from the very outset in 1894. It involved both non-cooperation with evil — the refusal to obey pass laws, travel restrictions, and other unjust measures (sometimes the word Satyagraha means only this part) — *and* it involved cooperation with good in the form of political and other education in the Indian community, experiments in community living, farming, and simplicity. The cooperative side would eventually be formalized as ‘Constructive Programme’ in the Indian struggle. Even within the peace movement it is often under-appreciated, even ignored today behind the flash of nonviolent resistance. Yet in a way it is if anything more important. With a good constructive program, confrontation and obstruction may almost become unnecessary; without it even the most effective nonviolent uprisings have seen their labors go for next to nothing. In the Philippines, in South Africa, in Serbia and the wave of ‘color revolutions’ that followed

it in Eastern Europe, courageous students and others unseated despotic regimes, and did so with far less cost and usually far less time than would have been the case in a violent overthrow, only to see their societies slide back into the structural violence that caused all the trouble in the first place. (Viktor Yanukovych, unseated by Ukraine's famous Orange Revolution, is now back in power).

In India, CP was developed as eighteen projects ranging from the elimination of untouchability to the boycott of foreign cloth and uplift of women. All were grouped around a principle



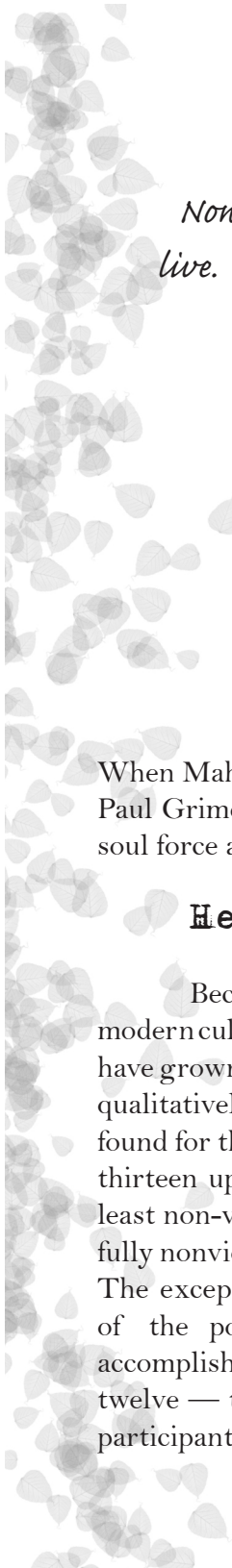
With a good constructive program, confrontation and obstruction may almost become unnecessary; without it even the most effective nonviolent uprisings have seen their labors go for next to nothing.

of *svadeshi* or localism, and the pièce de résistance that symbolized and held the whole together was *charkha*, the spinning wheel. Today there are countless projects that will eventually be the matrix of a new civilization free from violence. Many are rebuilding communities that are oppressed and exploited,

usually by multinational corporations and conniving governments, and doing so in a way that the stranglehold of those institutions will be significantly loosened, often without their knowing it — or being able to do anything about it if they do.¹⁷ All that they lack to unlock their revolutionary potential is the *awareness* that they are in fact a widely dispersed constructive program that can be coordinated and balanced with obstructive methods when necessary. Nonetheless, these projects are going on, all over the world;¹⁸ and here and there groups like the Positive Futures Network in the U.S. are trying to work out and publicize the grand vision that would create this rise in consciousness.

17 One effective type is creating parallel institutions, e.g. in the First Intifada in Palestine.

18 These projects are regularly reported in *Ye!* and *Ode* Magazines; others are discussed in Frances Moore Lappé and Anna Lappé, *Hope's Edge* (New York : Jeremy P. Tarcher/ Putnam, 2003), www.greatturningtimes.org and other resources.



*Nonviolence has come among men and it will
live. It is the harbinger of the peace of the world.*

-- M.K. Gandhi

III. SATYAGRAHA TODAY.

When Mahatma Gandhi fell to an assassin's bullets, correspondent Paul Grimes went on the air to say, "Mahatma Gandhi is dead . . . soul force and non-violence are dead, too."

He was so wrong.

Because nonviolence and peace are by and large ignored in modern culture, many of us are unaware how remarkably these forces have grown in the years since January, 1948, both quantitatively and qualitatively – both in extent and in the variety of uses people have found for this 'new' force. In one year alone, 1989-1990, there were thirteen uprisings against despotic rule, of which twelve were at least non-violent (not marred by much use of abusive force) if not fully nonviolent (driven by active desire for the opponent's welfare). The exception, Rumania, was by far the most violent revolution of the post-Communist transitions — and characteristically accomplished the least change. All but one of the remaining twelve — the disastrous Tienanmen uprising in China — led their participants to freedom. And as the Dalai Lama says, "If you lose,

don't lose the lesson." We can learn a lesson from the Tienanmen tragedy: the students and others focused too much for too long on



Gandhi with textile workers at Darwen, Lancashire, England, September 26, 1931.

the square itself – in other words the *symbol* of China. Had they left the square to the regime and fanned out across the country, educating a n d organizing in schools, f a r m s , factories, it's

possible that they would not only be alive today but in a position to mount a more successful drive toward freedom.

What we have just done — taking a lesson from the strengths and weaknesses of a nonviolent campaign — illustrates one of the most hopeful features of Satyagraha in the last hundred years, and one which adds a new element to human history: the deliberate learning from nonviolent events to build better ones, ultimately to build a nonviolent culture. Why should only military scientists study their past and incorporate its lessons? Just as Hitler 'benefited' from the world's indifference to the Armenian genocide; just as the Chinese were apparently emboldened by the world's indifference to the brutal suppression of Burmese student rebels in

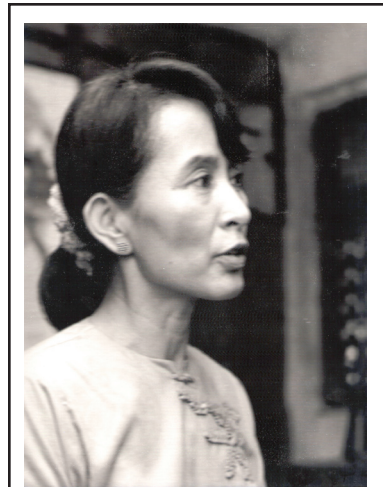


All that they lack to unlock their revolutionary potential is the *awareness* that they are in fact a widely dispersed constructive program that can be coordinated and balanced with obstructive methods when necessary.

1988, so have we been learning, slowly but surely, what Satyagraha can do and how to use it. As we now know, dozens of satyagrahis from India's freedom struggle came to the United States to aid the Civil Rights movement; and many American leaders made the learning-tour/pilgrimage to India, including Martin Luther King himself.¹⁹ After the 2000 Otpor revolution that toppled President Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, though the media and the general public learned next to nothing about or from this remarkable event, the International Center for Nonviolent Conflict set up a group called the Center for the Advancement of Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS) so that veterans of the Serbian struggle could share their experiences with others, particularly the wave of 'color revolutions' that have brought about similar transitions to democracy now in Georgia, the Ukraine, Lebanon, and Kyrgyztan (see resource list for further details). Otpor itself received critical support from U.S. Government-affiliated organizations — at a ridiculously low cost compared to military support — and Serbian translations of the seminal works of nonviolencescholar Gene Sharp. Scholars and activists are steadily developing the vocabulary of this new science, and introducing this fresh air into the winds of political change that sweep our world.

The other uprisings mentioned above, in Latvia, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Hungary, Indonesia, and Chile among other places, embrace a population of 1.7 billion people, or 1/3 of the planet. If we step back and look at the whole past century, getting

India also into the net, an astounding 3.3 billion people, or more than half the human population of the earth, now enjoys freedoms that were formerly denied to them (and in most cases could never



Aung San Suu Kyi, opposition leader in
Burma

¹⁹ Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: the African-American Encounter with Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

have been secured by force) thanks to Satyagraha.²⁰

Considering the sheer scope of these struggles – and remember, we are still only talking about one type, namely insurrections – it is a shock and a sorrow that the world in general still knows so little, reports so little, and teaches so very little about the “matchless weapon” of Satyagraha. Yet looked at in another way, what a potential for change! This is perhaps the greatest and most urgent challenge facing people of good will today: to open the eyes of the world to the many uses of this power.

As one small contribution, let me conclude this brief survey of movements of this type going on today with the observation that many of them are CP without OP (‘obstructive program’) or OP without CP. Few have enjoyed the balance, and coordination of both wings of nonviolence that proved so effective in Gandhi’s struggles and, to an extent, those of Martin Luther King in the

United States. One of the largest social movements the world has ever seen is going on today in Brazil: the Landless Worker Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, or MST), with over a million and a half members.



Goiânia, Brasil
Landless Workers' Movement marching to Brasília.

The MST is almost entirely based on what Gandhi would have called Constructive Programme. Putting into practice an article of the Brazilian constitution which grants unused lands to those who make it productive, hundreds of thousands of near-destitute Brazilians have occupied unworked farmlands (in the late 1900s 3% of the population of Brazil owned 2/3 of the arable land) and formed cooperatives with schools, clinics, cottage industry — in a word, nearly complete parallel societies — and applied to their

20 Cf. Richard Deats, “The Global Spread of Active Nonviolence,” in Walter Wink, Ed. *Peace is the Way* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000) pp. 283-295.

government, often with success, for title to that land. Yet on the whole the MST has not made any provision for the necessary Satyagraha, in the sense of active resistance. When confronted with the brutality of the police and paramilitaries sent to break up their occupations they have either fled or fought back with whatever “weapons” they had to hand, and in these melees over a thousand farmers have been killed.

More typically we have seen obstructive without constructive action, and watched societies fall back into much the same difficulties they began with (as in the Philippines, South Africa, and Serbia). But all over the world, people are learning that their collective will does not need the backing of violence, as state-sponsored oppression does. They are learning that they have a legacy of Satyagraha that they can make their own through study, personal preparation, and practice.

One Gandhian experiment stands out for its sheer promise. Since 1981, when an organization called Peace Brigades International was formed at a historic meeting on Grindstone Island in Canada, a dozen or so organizations have come into existence to carry forward a dream that was left unfulfilled when the Mahatma left his mortal frame: the dream that unarmed people, or rather people armed



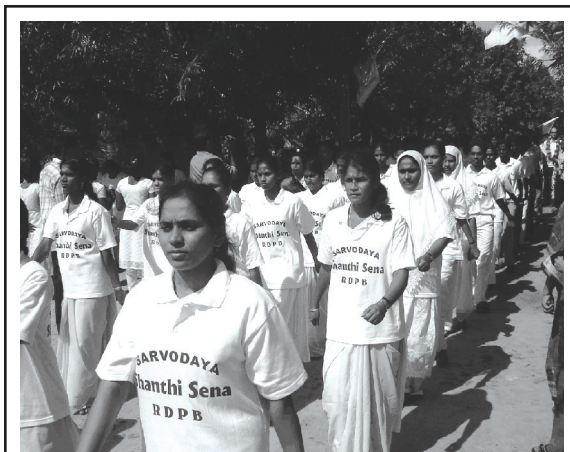
But all over the world, people are learning that their collective will does not need the backing of violence, as state-sponsored oppression does.

mentally with the matchless weapon of Satyagraha, could lend their presence, their good offices, and in the extreme case their lives to the cause of peace in open conflicts even at a large scale. The history of what is now called Third Party Nonviolent Intervention (TPNI) has by now been relatively well documented, and its impressive track record is available to the world.²¹ The dream,

which had begun much earlier as Gandhi’s ‘Peace Army’ (Shanti Sena), took a decisive step forward in 1999, when San Francisco-based civil rights and peace activist David Hartsough and veteran St. Paul community organizer Mel Duncan discovered each other at the Hague Peace Conference. In three years the organization

21 See the Nonviolent Peaceforce Feasibility Study at www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org.

they pledged to create had offices in St. Paul and San Francisco, had garnered endorsements from seven Nobel Peace laureates, established bases in Europe and Asia, and begun skillfully to build up a network of participants and potential volunteers from around the world to create a nonviolent interventionary force that could rescue the world from the embarrassment of either standing idly by or meddling destructively with military coercion when hatreds flare out of control. At time of this writing the Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) has carried out a successful pilot project in Sri Lanka, now numbering close to 30 field team members (FTM's) and



Shanti Sena (Peace Army) volunteers supported by Nonviolent Peaceforce, Sri Lanka, 2006

their supporters. These courageous men and women from many parts of the world (NP has 94 member organizations on five continents) have enabled anguished mothers to rescue their children who had been abducted for military uses, saved the lives of individuals

under direct attack, and repatriated 1,600 villagers who had fled their homes under threat of military reprisals in one of the most dangerous parts of the Island. While prospects are far from bright in Sri Lanka at the time of this writing, NP's modest operation has contributed substantially to a semblance of normal life and stability in the four key areas where they work. NP now has an exploratory team in Mindanao and is moving toward similar operations in Northern Uganda and Colombia. With the start of cooperative agreements with several UN agencies, NP has positioned itself for the support from enlightened governments that would advance them to the next and much larger stage of global peacekeeping.

Along with the other developments now taking place in the ‘other superpower’ — civil society — NP has a conspicuous potential to give humanity its “ocular demonstration” that we can live without war. And even, on some blessed day, without hatred.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Community supported agriculture, Grameen banks, off-the-grid energy systems and currency or barter systems, green cities, peace studies programs, the World Social Forum — a thousand flowers of Constructive Program are blooming in this world. As are ‘people



Gandhi in Rome, where he met with Mussolini on his way home from London's Conference, December 12, 1931.

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mass
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world
is
being
engulfed
in
violence

and that there is nothing we can do about it (since it is, after all, human nature to destroy and be destroyed!) — the impression that newscaster Paul Grimes gave voice to when Gandhi died — is tragically misguided.

Without spending too much of our energy bemoaning these shortcomings of the press, the educational system, and the culture in general, we can move forward by addressing some of the remaining areas where we who seek wide and deep nonviolent change still need to grow. Let us build a world where every child learns about

Satyagraha, a science to which few of us in the modern world have been exposed. We have already made the first steps. Building on the work of Gene Sharp at Harvard's Center for the Study of Nonviolent Sanctions, whose three-volume *Politics of Nonviolent Action* outlined nearly two hundred specific tactics, (though not all of these would seem to fit the criteria of Gandhian Satyagraha), the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict has produced a nonviolent strategy DVD game, *A Force More Powerful*.

Recently, the American futurist Joanna Macy has outlined three areas or three dimensions in which the change toward a nonviolent future has begun taking shape: there are political reforms like the anti-death penalty campaign of the United States, anti-militarist efforts like counter-recruitment of the ban on landmines, and of course the courageous work of TPNI. These have the goal of limiting or reversing the damage of the domination system under which we have been living — in other words, they are part of obstructive program. Then there are the many experiments in so many areas that will give us the pieces of a new, sustainable world — constructive program (though again not many of the bright people carrying them out are aware of it). Together these are Satyagraha in the broadest sense. And, she adds, there is the crucial work of consciousness-raising, both cognitive and spiritual — crucial because the change to a new system is far too urgent to be left to the usual modes of cultural evolution. We must create this paradigm shift more consciously than the previous shifts that have punctuated human evolution, while at the same time tapping into what Augustine reminds us is our deepest unconscious wish, for peace with all that lives.

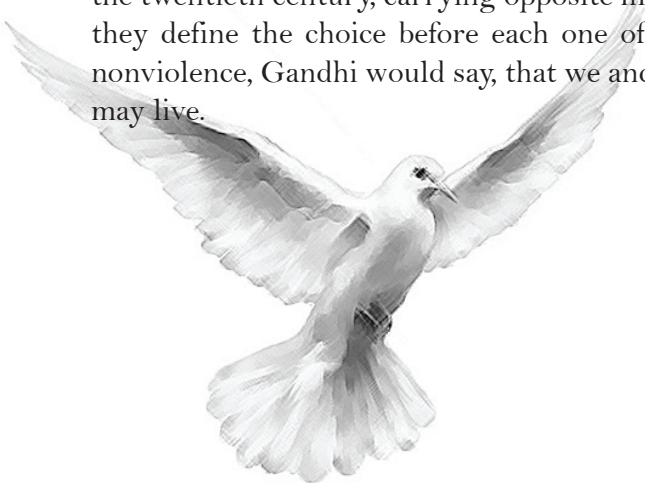
CONCLUSION.

On December 7, 1961, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote an op-ed for the *New York Post*, saying “What happened at Pearl Harbor 20 years ago points up the fact that we should always be alerted for the worst, even though the worst seems highly improbable.” The four years that followed the attack on Pearl Harbor cost the lives of tens of millions of human beings. It is time to realize that while there

may be some value in preparing for the worst, unless we are also aware of the best, and working for it, the worst will surely come to us. Every time we remember 9/11, as we should, we should remember both. If we do, then, even as we feel the anguish of the recent 9/11 all the more deeply, we will not be tripped into despair. We will not cry for the desperate measures that have backfired so badly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It is a very safe bet that Mrs. Roosevelt had no idea that barely a year before her statement Vinoba Bhave, considered Gandhi's foremost disciple because of his spiritual orientation, was passing through the Chambal Valley in Madhya Pradesh on one of his padayatra's or 'walking pilgrimages.' He was told the area was "infested" with dacoits, or hereditary bandits, but Bhave, wisely eschewing the dehumanizing imagery, said no, it was not "infested with dacoits" but "inhabited by virtuous people." Drawing on his nonviolent authority, he sent word to the men that if they come forward and turned themselves in to him he would see that they were dealt with fairly by the law. They would be penalized, but no further punishment would be visited on themselves or their families. Surprisingly (to some), they came and laid their arms at his feet, forestalling a bloody confrontation with the authorities. Could Satyagraha even be the answer to terrorism? Could it point the way out of war?

The universe has set before us two 9/11's, one at each end of the twentieth century, carrying opposite messages. Between them, they define the choice before each one of us. Therefore choose nonviolence, Gandhi would say, that we and our children's children may live.



FOR FURTHER STUDY

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Websites:

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- www.mettacenter.org
- www.gandhiserve.com (includes CWMG)
- www.nonviolence.org (a hub for nonviolence sites)
- www.calpeacepower.org (a student nonviolence journal from Berkeley)
- www.cnvc.org (the Center for Nonviolent Communication)
- www.rainonline.org

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