Introduction

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Since his death in 1948 Gandhi's life has been the subject of more than one thousand books and and Sir Richard Attenborough's Oscar-winning film. Is another book needed? Surprisingly, an important aspect of Gandhi's life that has not been given sustained study is his engagement of other major figures in the Indian Independence movement who were often his critics during the years 1920–1940. This book aims to fill that gap. We will examine the strengths and weaknesses of his contribution to India as evidenced in the letters, speeches, and newspaper articles focused on the dialogue/debate between Gandhi and his major Indian critics. We have included within the term *Indian* not only obvious Indian colleagues who critically engaged Gandhi (e.g., Nehru, Tagore, and Ambedkar) but also two voices of British ancestry, Annie Besant and C. F. Andrews. Both had left England, made India their homeland, and debated with Gandhi the best course to take in achieving independence for India. Indeed it was the Home Rule movement of Besant that Gandhi had to displace in getting his Non-Cooperation, or Swaraj, movement adopted by the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in 1920.[1] Through letters, Andrews gave Gandhi critical counsel as an intimate friend throughout the 1920–1948 period. Included in our study are those who we felt were important leaders or groups within India from the perspective of Gandhi's focus on the achievement of Independence. While his power base was rural village India (and those alienated from their ancestral villages), Gandhi also sought to incorporate minority groups such as the Muslims, Sikhs, and Untouchables within his Non-Cooperation movement. Thus we have featured groups as well as individuals in our analysis. Due to limitations of space and time, however, not everyone who critically engaged Gandhi has been included. Among those deserving of discussion, but whom we were unable to include, are individuals such as Subhas Bose and groups such as the Indian Marxists. They are deserving of separate treatments elsewhere.

To his peers (both supporters and opponents) within the Indian Independence movements, Gandhi was a charismatic and frustratingly unpredictable colleague. He was the bane of orthodox Hindus who were infuriated by his denunciation of caste and untouchability, and by his advocacy of secular politics. The Britisher, Lord Wavell, wrote in his journal in 1946 that Gandhi was an "exceedingly shrewd, obstinate, double-tongued, single-minded politician."[2] He was viewed as an enemy by supporters of both the Hindu and the Muslim cause. Even within the Congress Party Gandhi faced constant discontent. As B. R. Nanda notes,

> During the 1920's and 1930's young radicals like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and Jayaprakesh Narayan were straining at the leash: they fretted at the patient and peaceful methods of the Mahatma. The Indian communists dubbed him a charismatic but calculating leader who knew how to rouse the masses but deliberately contained and diverted their revolutionary ardour so as not to hurt the interests of British imperialists and Indian capitalists.[3]

Gandhi's response to his critics was one of patient engagement through letters and comment in his weekly journals (now published in his ninety volumes of *Collected Works*). These writings, together with the responses of his critics, form the primary source material analyzed by the writers of this volume. Gandhi's attitude to his critics was evidenced in his comment to Nehru, "Resist me always when my suggestion does not appeal to your head or heart. I shall not love you the less for that resistance."[4]

The Indian scene of Gandhi's day, says Eleanor Zelliot, "was marked by a society-wide hierarchical system of social groups justified by religion; by the presence of other vocal minorities especially that of the Muslims; and by the administrative power of still another group, the British government in India."[5] As a religiously based politician, Gandhi was well suited to work within this pluralistic religious context. Perhaps his most unique contribution was to attempt "the purification of political life through the introduction of the *ashrama* or monastic ideal into politics."[6] Based on his experiments in South Africa Gandhi saw himself as a renouncer and ashram dweller, a servant of the people for whom the political fight for freedom was a sacred duty, a religious calling—even to the point of realizing the highest Hindu goal of release or *mokṣa* through political action. For his critics and colleagues, this meant that Gandhi had to be engaged as a religiously motivated politician, whom the masses regarded as a saint, a Mahatma, and who saw himself in a monastic sense as being above the fray. Thus his practice of living simply in an

ashram withdrawn from worldly values, and following the guidance of his "higher inner voice."

As Judith Brown notes, such an approach generated

> misunderstanding and scepticism, hostility as well as love and loyalty. Few men have elicited such vitriolic opposition or such devoted service. Churchill's ignorant jibe at Gandhi as a half-naked, seditious fakir, Muslim distrust of this Hindu holy man who purported to speak for an Indian nation, the fanatical anger of the young Hindu who killed him for "appeasing" Muslims, were paralleled by crowds who flocked to venerate this frail, toothless man in loincloth and steel-rimmed spectacles with a commanding presence and magnetic voice.[7]

People from widely varying backgrounds were attracted to Gandhi and became followers or admirers, even though they would at times doubt his political principles or priorities that were often very opposed to those of today's world.

As a politician Gandhi was deeply engaged with the significant figures and movements within India's struggle for Independence. As Zelliot puts it, "Gandhi sought to weave the divergent interests in India into a unified opposition to the British, at the same time trying to pursue a course of reform without rending the social fabric of Indian society."[8] Many in India saw Gandhi, and Gandhi saw himself, as somehow through his monastic lifestyle standing above the discord around him and yet being able to unify it in the drive for Independence. This unique complexity that characterized Gandhi's life is reflected in the critiques of Gandhi contained in this volume. These chapters are written from the point of view of Gandhi's focus on Independence and his engagement with other important leaders of groups in that process.[9] For the timeline involved, see the chronology in the appendix.

Before Gandhi returned to India the stirrings of the Independence movement had already begun. The Theosophical Society led by the Englishwoman Annie Besant had established its headquarters in Adyar on the outskirts of Madras. In 1885 the Indian National Congress first convened under the direction of A. O. Hume, a former Indian civil servant and Theosophist. In 1891 Gandhi left India to study law in Britain. While studying in London Sir Aurobindo Ghose (see chapter 4) joined the student society Lotus and Dagger Indian for the overthrow of British rule in India. In 1893 Aurobindo returned to India to work in the Baroda civil service. He studied Sanskrit, Indian religion, the Upanisads and began writing a series in the Bombay paper *Indu Prakash* attacking the Congress's leadership. Having completed his studies and having returned to India for a brief period,

Gandhi left for South Africa where he led protests against discrimination toward Indians and developed the experimental Phoenix ashram refining his ideas on nonviolent resistance.

While Gandhi experimented in Africa, revolutionary fervor mounted in India. In 1899 V. D. Savarkar, the founding father of the Hindu Nationalist movement (see chapter 6) established the revolutionary organization Mitra Mela. In 1902 Aurobindo attended the Indian National Congress meeting for the first time. He aligned himself with the Extremists who advocated armed revolution and guerrilla warfare against the British using the Hindu scripture *Bhagavad Gita* to justify violence. Aurobindo moved to Calcutta in 1906 and helped form, with Congress, the group of Indian Nationalists who favor Indian self-reliance and British boycott. That same year Savarkar went to England to train young Indians in the theory of violent revolution. Living in London at India House he initiated the Free India Society. In 1908 Aurobindo was imprisoned for one year and while in jail immersed himself in the study and practice of Yoga. In 1909 Savarkar and Gandhi shared a public platform where they disagreed over interpreting the *Gita* as supporting armed struggle. On release from prison in 1910 Aurobindo withdrew from Indian politics and retired to Pondicherry to pursue Yoga but continued to disagree with Gandhi over the use of violence. Aurobindo refused repeated requests to lead Congress. Also in 1910 Savarkar was arrested in London and imprisoned in Bombay for participating in revolutionary activities. In 1914 World War I began and Besant launched her movement for Hindu reform and Indian self-government under British rule with better British–Indian understanding.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915 after more than twenty years in South Africa, he did not immediately become engaged in Indian politics. In South Africa Gandhi's experiments in applying monastic value and practices to the achievement of political goals had evolved into his satyagraha, or nonviolent noncooperation technique, and his ashram style of life. However he did not see any prospect of launching a satyagraha in India for at least five years. He initially sought out a more obscure life, devoting himself to the problems of the masses of India in their local village settings. To identify with them he dressed in simple Gujarati clothes and spent a year with his wife, Kasturbhai, touring India, traveling third class on the train. Thus he saw India through the eyes of the poor and was shocked by the rough way they were treated by railway officials. But he was equally upset by the rude and dirty habits of the poor people who traveled third class and made the whole experience almost unbearable for Gandhi and Kasturbhai. Judith Brown comments, "The dirt, the numbers and the lack of facilities made third-class

carriages little better than cattle trucks."[10] During his travels Gandhi spent some time at Shatiniketan, the new university community begun by Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengali writer and reformer who received the Nobel Prize for literature. While he was there Gandhi urged the teachers and students to do their own cleaning and cooking—something quite foreign to educated Indians—and to improve the hygiene in the kitchen area. Brown observes that "wherever Gandhi went, even when he was most welcome and at home, his critical eye was on people's habits and relationships, and he could not rest content without attempting reform according to his own ideals."[11]

These ideals of a simple ascetic life led Gandhi to oppose many aspects of modernity that had been adopted by some orthodox Hindus and especially by rising young leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi described his monastic-based ideals of simplicity and self-discipline to satyagraha as follows: "[E]ven one truth-seeker by self-sacrifice could begin to cleanse the surrounding atmosphere and start the process of personal and social renewal."[12] Gandhi's unique insight was to apply these Hindu monastic ideals to the process of achieving political change. As a base for this activity he established the Satyagraha ashram on the outskirts of Ahmedabad in 1915 based on the model of his Phoenix ashram in South Africa. Vows of truth, nonviolence, celibacy (even between married couples), physical work, long hours, and simplicity in material possessions were required from all. In addition untouchables were included as full members; however, caste (as determined by birth) was followed as a social discipline but with no high or low status distinctions. Handweaving, work on the land, and helping with the routine household jobs of cleaning, cooking, and carrying water was expected from all. The inclusion of an untouchable couple and their child in the ashram cost Gandhi the loss of much orthodox Hindu support and, for a time, even that of his wife.

During this period Gandhi's concern was focused on the sanitation practices at pilgrimage sites such as Hardwar, acceptance of untouchables into Hindu society as servants *(shudras)* and the fostering of spinning wheels and handweaving as a way for village India to recover its self-sufficiency in the face of British-introduced industrialization. However, in 1915 Gandhi did involve himself in Indian politics to the extent of challenging Besant's agenda for "home rule" when he was on the platform with her at the opening ceremonies of the Banaras Hindu University. In 1916 Nehru first met Gandhi at the Lucknow meetings of Congress. It was at these same meetings that M. A. Jinnah, who later became the founding father of Pakistan, helped to develop the Lucknow Pact, which tentatively integrated the Hindu-dominated

Congress and the Muslim League by agreeing on separate electorates and Muslim representation—a high point in Hindu–Muslim political unity.

Despite his commitment to nonviolence, Gandhi supported the British war effort in World War I, but remained on the periphery of Indian politics. However, he would take a stand for prominent individuals or organizations if he thought that a moral issue was involved. For example, in 1917 Annie Besant was put in prison by the British for her leadership in the Home Rule for India campaign. Gandhi was tempted to engage in some sort of satyagraha campaign in Besant's support but in the end did not. Besant's Home Rule vision of self-rule *(Saraj)* for India did not square with Gandhi's—nor did he like her identification with the Theosophist movement of which she was president. Gandhi rejected the Theosophist notion of esoteric knowledge given by "Mahatmas" or great souls, and kept his distance from the Home Rule movement Besant was leading with Congress approval. Theosophists had for some thirty years been involved in the Indian nationalist movement. But it was Besant's Home Rule League initiative, begun in 1915, and her development of two newspapers *New India* and *Young India* that put her among the leaders of the Independence movement of the day. Because of her ideas and widespread popularity she was imprisoned by the British government in 1917, and while in prison was elected president of the Indian National Congress. As Joy Dixon shows in chapter 3, it was Besant's opposition to Gandhi's concept of satyagraha that led to a major falling out between them.

In 1919 the All-India Khilafat Committee was formed, with Gandhi's backing, to call for support of the Ottoman caliphate. During World War I, the Muslim Ottoman government of Turkey had aligned itself with Germany and opposed the British. The Khilafat agitation within the Muslim community in India was meant to support the Muslim cause in the old Ottoman Empire post World War I. Gandhi presided over the All-India Khilafat conference in Delhi and called on Hindus to support their fellow Muslims in this cause. His actions here exhibited the pattern he followed for the remainder of his life. If he thought the cause was morally right according to his own "inner voice" he would decide to support it even if he was alone and often without consulting colleagues. Thus, he announced his support of the Indian Muslim Khilafat movement before Congress. When the Indian National Congress formally met in 1920, Gandhi had already seized the initiative and was riding high in public opinion. Thus he was well positioned to introduce his noncooperation program, which Congress accepted making Gandhi the effective leader of both the Congress Nationalist initiative and the Khilafat struggles. He toured India with Muslim leaders, and Muslim–Hindu unity reached a high point. The

Muslim *ulama* endorsed a *fatwa* enjoining Muslim participation in Gandhi's Noncooperation movement as a religious duty. Jinnah, however, privately criticized Gandhi. It was also during this period that Gandhi proposed Hindustani as a national language—a suggestion that as Daud Rahbar shows in chapter 10 became a bone of contention with the Muslims.

In reaction to this Muslim–Hindu agitation, the government's passage of the Rowlatt Acts, which extended wartime restrictions on civil liberties into the post–World War I period, provoked Gandhi to launch a satyagraha campaign against the Rowlatt bills. With this move Gandhi and his nonviolent, noncooperation methods wrested leadership from Besant and her Home Rule idea. Gandhi also became editor of *Young India*, one of the papers started under Besant's initiative. In addition, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 in Amritsar, where General Dyer ordered his troops to fire on an unarmed crowd gathered for a peaceful protest of the Rowlatt Acts, led Gandhi to reconsider his satyagraha strategy against the British. But in 1920 Gandhi launched a full noncooperation campaign. As T. S. Rukmani shows in chapter 5, this led to strong differences of opinion between Gandhi and Tagore. Tagore joined Gandhi in protesting against the Amritsar atrocities by renouncing his knighthood from England, while Gandhi returned his Boer War medals, but they parted company over issues such as the burning of British-made clothing and the withdrawal of students from government schools. Tagore, who saw clothes needed by the poor being burned as a protest against the British, was appalled and spoke out against such forms of Gandhi's noncooperation. Andrews also questioned Gandhi's tactics in the burning of clothes. Yet through all their disagreements these two men remained friends with Gandhi.

Also, soon after World War I commenced, the British government had imprisoned the Muslim brothers Shaukat and Mahomed Ali for their Pan Islamic and pro-Turkish Khalifat sympathies and journalism activities. Gandhi took up their cause both because of the injustice involved and because it offered an opportunity to work at improving Muslim–Hindu cooperation, which he judged essential to the achievement of independence in India. Gandhi's public stand for the Ali brothers was not successful as the government refused to release them on political grounds. However, Brown notes, "The Alis' case was the first all-India issue on which Gandhi showed his political skills and his potential as an all-India political protagonist."[13] It also introduced his strategy of working for Hindu–Muslim unity, which, at this stage, he argued was a precondition for the realization of Independence. In chapter 9, Roland E. Miller shows that this approach of Gandhi's won him significant backing from the

Muslim community but also became the basis for disaffection when Gandhi later seemed to change his priorities and put the noncooperation program and Independence ahead of improving Muslim–Hindu relations. As Miller indicates, the focus on Muslim–Hindu unity in the process of working for Independence was also fundamental to the support of Congress by the Muslims. M. A. Ansari, for example, was a key Muslim leader, twice president of the All-India Muslim League, a participant in Congress assemblies, and a supporter of Gandhi's satyagraha, which he called "a message of hope." During the early 1920s Gandhi and Congress retained Muslim support with the respected Muslim religious scholar Abdul Kalam Azad serving as Congress president in 1923. As Miller points out, although Azad became a lifelong supporter of Gandhi, he did not agree that nonviolent noncooperation was the correct response in all situations. However, he did agree with Gandhi in rejecting any idea that a separate country was needed to safeguard Muslim interests.

Gandhi's defense of the Ali brothers and his leadership in opposing the Rowlatt Act and responding to the Amritsar massacre enabled him to be seen as a linchpin by both Muslims and Hindus, and to become the leader of the Indian National Congress. At its meeting in September 1920 Gandhi moved a noncooperation resolution as the basis for India to obtain self-rule in one year. In his speech he outlined the various forms noncooperation needed to take including surrender of titles and honorary offices, refusal to attend government functions, withdrawal of students from government-controlled schools and colleges, boycott of British courts, refusal by the military to offer their services in the Khilafat disputes in Turkey, refusal to participate in elections to councils, and the boycott of all foreign goods.[14] Gandhi went on a speaking tour throughout the country and used his paper, *Young India*, to educate all sections of the public on how to participate in noncooperation. As Nanda states, "This program electrified the country, broke the spell of fear of foreign rule, and led to the arrests of thousands of *satyagrahis*, who defied laws and cheerfully lined up for prison."[15] In February 1922 the movement was sweeping the country when violence broke out in Chauri Chaura, a village in eastern India, causing Gandhi to call off mass noncooperation demonstrations. Muslim backers of the day were dismayed by Gandhi's lack of consultation in making this decision. Gandhi was arrested shortly after on charges of sedition and sentenced to six years in prison. Released two years later he found that much had changed. Tagore wrote the novel *Muktadara* indirectly criticizing Gandhi. The Congress Party had split in two and unity between the Hindu and Muslim communities, which had been a hallmark of the 1920–1922 satyagrahas, had disintegrated. Gandhi worked at drawing

the two communities back together and in 1924 undertook a three-week fast to bring Hindus and Muslims back to a nonviolent approach.

In 1923 Besant started organizing a convention of moderates to develop the Commonwealth of India Bill, advocating self-rule, a village system of government, and a restricted franchise. The Hindu Nationalist movement in the form of the Hindu Mahasabha was revived and its intellectual leader, Savarkar published his key work *Hindutva* (see chapter 6). Also in 1923 Mohammed Ali delivered his presidential address to Congress stating his own belief that violence in self-defense is valid despite his agreement to abide by Gandhi's policy of nonviolence.

In the mid-1920s Gandhi took little interest in active politics. During this period Gandhi's friend the Christian minister C. F. Andrews was urging Gandhi to join forces with Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, the leader of the Untouchable community, to battle the evil of untouchability. Although he expressed deep feelings for the Untouchables, Gandhi could not let go of his focus on Independence and Muslim–Hindu unity. But he did attack untouchability in ways that were radical for a caste Hindu of his day. He had accepted an Untouchable family into his Ahmedabad ashram, and in 1924 he supported the use of satyagraha by the Untouchables against caste Hindus at the town of Vaikam. Gandhi went to Vaikam and debated with the Orthodox Brahmins against their interpretation of Hindu scripture that supported untouchability. Although winning a partial success for the Untouchables, Gandhi admitted that he was not able to change the minds of the Orthodox Hindus. During the debate Gandhi accepted the revealed status of Hindu scriptures and the laws of karma and rebirth. Through his newspaper *Young India*, he also supported Ambedkar when the latter led a satyagraha at Mahad to establish the right for Untouchables to drink water from the Chawdr tank located in a Brahmin locality. Gandhi commended the Untouchables for their self-restraint and Ambedkar for his leadership in refusing to do battle with a stick-wielding mob of caste Hindus. However as I show in chapter 2, a major difference between Gandhi and Ambedkar was that Gandhi wanted to solve the problem by reinterpreting Hindu scriptures and redefining Untouchables as shudras within the Hindu caste system, while Ambedkar said that the Hindu scriptures that justified untouchability should be burned and the caste system scrapped.

In 1925 Tagore wrote an article in the *Modern Review* criticizing Gandhi's emphasis on the home spinning of cotton. Gandhi responded to this criticism with an article in *Young India* entitled "The Poet and the Charkhā." Tagore, in 1927, also criticized Gandhi's defense of *varnasrama dharma* (the four caste structure of orthodox Hindu society) in an article

"The Shudra Habit" published in *Modern Review.* At the same time Besant published her book *India—Bond or Free?* in Britain to gain support for the Commonwealth of India Bill in parliament. In her book Besant explicitly criticized Gandhi's noncooperation movement. Gandhi appeared to be a spent force in Indian politics.

The new British parliament did not pass the Commonwealth of India Bill but formed the Simons Commission, with no Indian representative, to investigate constitutional reform in India. The *Nehru Report* (named for Motilal, father of Jawaharlal) responded to the Simons Commission by calling for dominion status and joint electorates without provision for minorities. Muslims opposed the report, as did young members of Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose who would settle for nothing less than complete independence. At the Calcutta meeting of Congress, a split between the old guard and younger members was avoided by a compromise formula framed by Gandhi. As Nanda puts it, "The Congress passed a resolution accepting the *Nehru Report* on the condition that, if by December 31, 1929 [i.e., in one year] it was not accepted by the Government, the Congress would demand complete independence and fight for it, if necessary, by resorting to non-violent, non-cooperation."[16] Gandhi was back at the helm of the Congress Party. Responding to the *Nehru Report*, Jinnah unsuccessfully called for protection of the Muslim minority and Azad and Ansari founded the All-India Nationalist Muslim Conference to rally Indian Muslims.

About this time C. F. Andrews published his book *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, which included a public critique of Gandhi's early support for recruiting Indians to fight in World War I, and of Gandhi's views on celibacy. As the "year of grace" for the British to grant India dominion status in response to the Calcutta Congress ran out, preparations were underway for the next Congress meeting in Lahore. Gandhi was urged to accept the presidency of Congress but declined and put up Jawalharlal Nehru for the position; and although (as Robert D. Baird points out in chapter 1) they continued to have major differences of viewpoint and style, there was a strong bond of loyalty and affection between the two men. Nehru was elected and a split between the old and young sections of Congress was avoided. Although Nehru was President of Congress, Gandhi was its effective leader. Gandhi decided the country was ready for a satyagraha to force some action from the British. So in March 1930 he launched a noncooperation campaign against the government tax on salt, which most affected the poorest part of the community. Perhaps the most successful of Gandhi's nonviolent campaigns against the British, the salt march resulted in the imprisonment of more than sixty thousand persons.

The British government responded by arresting Gandhi and by calling a Round Table Conference in London to discuss India's future constitution. At the 1930 conference, the Untouchables, led by Ambedkar, joined forces with Muslim and Sikh representatives to ensure that the proposed constitution would include separate electorates for minority communities. In India, after talks with Lord Irwin, Gandhi and other imprisoned Congress leaders reached a truce in which they called off their civil disobedience campaign and agreed that Gandhi, as sole representative of Congress, would attend the second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. This was a serious disappointment to the Indian Nationalists who saw it as a shift of focus from Independence to minority group issues. As I recount in chapter 2, it was at this meeting that Ambedkar and Gandhi clashed over who really represented the Untouchables, and the question of separate electorates for the Untouchables. Gandhi also claimed that as Congress represented not only Hindus but also all minority communities, and as he was the sole Congress representative at the conference, it was therefore he who ultimately spoke for the Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and Untouchables—all of whom had leading representatives at the meeting. Gandhi attempted unsuccessfully to get the agreement of the British to separate electorates for minorities (achieved at the first conference) reversed in the case of the Untouchables. This further upset Ambedkar and other minority leaders who perceived Gandhi as having shifted his priorities and was now placing Independence in front of Muslim–Hindu–Sikh harmony. The Muslim leader Ansari wrote to Gandhi stressing the importance of Hindu–Muslim-Sikh harmony over independence, and Mohammed Ali reversed his pro-Gandhi stance and publicly criticized Gandhi for trying to make Indian Muslims subservient to the Hindu Mahasabha. Upon his return from London, Gandhi was arrested and the Congress Party outlawed. Gandhi considered his London efforts a failure.

In 1932 British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald announced the results of the London Round Table meetings as a Communal Award stating that separate electorates for all minority communities (including the Untouchables) were to be incorporated into India's new constitution. Although in prison, Gandhi launched an effective protest by announcing a "fast until death" unless the provisions of the Communal Award were changed so that the separate electorates for the Untouchables were revoked. Gandhi correctly saw that this provision could result in the loss of 50 million votes from a Hindu community of 250 million, a significant weakening of which Hindu nationalists would never accept. Ambedkar and other minority leaders visited Gandhi during his fast in the Yeravada prison and after days of negotiation produced the Poona

Pact granting more assembly seats to the Untouchables but eliminating separate electorates—an agreement which the British accepted. Gandhi saw this event as a "wakeup call" from God that he and all Hindus should make amends for their unjust treatment of Untouchables over the centuries.

Gandhi's fast and his moral soul-searching shook the country. Upon release from prison Gandhi launched a two-year all-India campaign to change the attitude of caste Hindus in their discrimination against Untouchables, but with the retention of *varna* (hereditary occupational groupings). He established a weekly paper dedicated to this cause, the *Harijan* (Gandhi's name for Untouchables). He also created the Harijan Sevak Sang and the Harijan Fund to assist in the "uplift" of the Untouchables. Despite invitations from Gandhi, Ambedkar rejected involvement in these organizations, which he saw as patronizing actions by caste Hindus. In spite of Gandhi's efforts, however, Hindu caste attitudes did not significantly change, and when an earthquake struck Bihir in 1934, Gandhi took it as a divine sign that he should end his untouchability campaign and put his efforts into aiding earthquake victims. In addition Gandhi resigned as both leader and a member of the Congress Party because he was not convinced that Congress's leading members were sufficiently committed to nonviolent noncooperation. Instead, Gandhi shifted his attention from politics to the education and uplift of grassroots rural India. Tagore, Nehru, and others were distressed by Gandhi's sudden shift of direction. In 1936 Ambedkar published *The Annihilation of Caste*, a devastating critique of the Hindu caste system, prompting Gandhi to reply in the *Harijan*. Ambedkar replied to Gandhi and in so doing announced that he was leaving the Hindu religion, prompting large numbers of Untouchables to join him in eventually becoming Buddhists.

With the outbreak of World War II, the struggle for Independence entered its final phase. Gandhi was very critical of both fascism and war. In the journal *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote an article criticizing Zionism, Judaism, and the Jews in Germany, who were then suffering from the evils of Nazism. Martin Buber replied criticizing Gandhi's essay but Gandhi did not respond.[17] Unlike Gandhi, the Indian National Congress was not committed to complete nonviolence and was ready to support the British war effort if Indian self-government was promised. The Government of India Act, based on the round table discussions, was passed approving the goal of Indian independence and guaranteeing Muslim representation. During the 1937–1939 period Nehru, Tagore, and Andrews all found themselves in disagreements with Gandhi. Congress swept the Indian elections with the Muslim League winning only 109 of 482 reserved seats, prompting Jinnah to begin mobilizing

the Muslim grass roots. In so doing Jinnah accused Gandhi of compromising the principles of Congress and establishing a Hindu Raj. In 1940 Jinnah refused Azad's offer to reconcile the Muslims with Congress because, in Jinnah's view, Congress was a Hindu body. The Muslim League passed its Pakistan Resolution based on the concept that Indian Muslims were a distinct people in need of a homeland.

In 1940 Gandhi once more became politically active, launching a civil disobedience campaign demanding self-rule for India in exchange for support of Britain's war effort. In 1942 the British sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India to propose an interim government during World War II to be followed by full independence. However, British equivocation over the transfer of power and the encouragement given by British officials to conservative and communal forces causing Hindu–Muslim discord led Gandhi to demand a complete British withdrawal from India. The British responded to this "Quit India" movement by imprisoning Congress leaders and outlawing the Indian National Congress. This led to violent outbreaks that were sternly suppressed until the rupture between India and Britain became wider than ever. In 1944 Gandhi was released from jail. Jinnah met Gandhi at talks in Bombay and scorned Gandhi's refusal to accept Muslim self-rule. In Jinnah's view Gandhi had turned the Congress Party into a Hindu body. In 1945 Ambedkar published his most vigorous critique of Gandhi in his book *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables.* Gandhi admitted that he had been unable to change the attitude of caste Hindus on untouchability and finally agreed with Ambedkar that Untouchables should become active in Indian politics. In the elections of 1945 the Muslim League swept the reserved Muslim seats in the elections for India's provincial and central assemblies.

The election of the Labour Party in Britain in 1945 signaled a new phase in Indo–British relations. During the next two years prolonged negotiations took place between the Congress leaders, the Muslim League led by Jinnah, and the British. During this period, as Baird shows in chapter 1, there were increasing tensions and differences of view between Nehru and Gandhi. Ambedkar organized massive satyagraha demonstrations of Untouchables before the state legislatures at Pune, Nagpur, Lucknow, and Kanpur but, despite this activity, the Congress Party took all of the scheduled caste seats in the election. Jinnah urged "direct action" to secure Muslim independence, resulting in general Hindu–Muslim unrest and many deaths in Calcutta. Gandhi directed his final efforts to the defusing of this Hindu–Muslim rioting. As a result of all of this activity the Mountbatten Plan of 1947, which included the partition of India into Pakistan and modern India, was accepted.

The British parliament approved the Indian Independence Act and India's first cabinet was formed with Nehru as prime minister and Ambedkar as law minister (on Gandhi's recommendation).

With the formation in mid-August 1947 of the two new dominions of India and Pakistan, there were massive movements of Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus from one part of the country to the other, with much bloodshed. As Nanda points out, one of Gandhi's greatest disappointments was that Indian Independence was achieved without Indian unity, and with much violence. "When the partition of the subcontinent was accepted—against his [Gandhi's] advice—he threw himself heart and soul into the task of healing the scars of communal conflict, toured the riot-torn areas of Bengal and Bihar, admonished the bigots, consoled the victims and tried to rehabilitate the refugees."[18] Partisans in all communities blamed Gandhi for what they perceived as their losses. Gandhi's two final triumphs were the stopping of rioting in Calcutta in September 1947 through fasting, and the shaming of the city of Delhi into a communal truce in January 1948. A few days later, while on his way to evening prayers, Gandhi was assassinated by a young fanatic member of the Hindu Mahasabha. Shortly after his death, untouchability was made illegal in India.

In this brief outline of Gandhi's engagement in the Indian Independence movement, we see that his activities and ideas brought him into dialogue and conflict with many major figures in India. The following chapters recount many of these interactions in detail. In part I, Gandhi's relationships with Nehru, Ambedkar, Besant, Aurobindo, and Tagore are given detailed study through the analysis of Gandhi's *Collected Works* and the letters, speeches, and writings of these other leaders, who often found themselves critical of Gandhi's ideas or actions. In part II the critique of Gandhi is examined from the perspective of various Indian movements including the Hindu Right, the Christian Community, the Sikhs, and the Muslims. Finally, Gandhi's response to the issue of language—the Hindi-Urdu question—is critically analyzed.

NOTES

1. Mahatma Gandhi, *Swaraj in One Year* (Madras: Ganesh, 1921).
2. B. R. Nanda, *Gandhi and his Critics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), vii.
3. Ibid., viii.

4. Ibid.

5. Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement* (Delhi: Manohar, 1998), 151.

6. Raghavan Iyer, "Gandhi on Civilization and Religion" in *Gandhi's Significance for Today*, ed. John Hick and Lamont Hempel (London: Macmillan, 1989), 123.

7. Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press), 1989, 1.

8. Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit*, 153.

9. For more general introductions to Gandhi see B. R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958); Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); and J. F. T. Jordens, *Gandhi's Religion: A Homespun Shawl* (London: Macmillan, 1998). See also M. K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru, *Mahatma Gandhi* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1949). For earlier treatments of Gandhi and his critics see P. C. Roy Chaudhury, *Gandhi and His Contemporaries* (Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1972) and Nanda, *Gandhi and his Critics.*

10. Brown, *Gandhi*, 97.

11. Ibid., 98.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 124

14. Mahatma Gandhi, *Swaraj in One Year* (Madras: Ganesh, 1921), 11, 12.

15. B. R. Nanda, "Gandhi," *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1989), 652.

16. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi*, 277.

17. Haim Gordon, "A Rejection of Spiritual Imperialism: Reflections of Buber's Letter to Gandhi," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36 (1999): 471–479.

18. Nanda, "Gandhi," 653.