

## Article 1

### NonViolent Gandhi . . . ?

**“Do actions agree with words? There's your measure of reliability. Never confine yourself to the words.”**

- Frank Herbert, *Chapterhouse: Dune*

Mahatma Gandhi<sup>1</sup> is one of the most recognized, lauded, and idolized personalities worldwide. And *yet* throughout my research (for my novel *Burning for Freedom*) I came across a mountain of documentation that revealed a decidedly unsavory side to the Mahatma, both in his character traits and in his politics. The idol so idealized by the people had feet made of clay and that to a disturbing degree.

My horror of this saga of treachery and power-plays of Gandhi in the Freedom Movement of India was so total, that I have recorded my findings in this series of six articles. The first five deal with his politics beginning from 1907-8 and going on to the partition of India. The last one deals with Gandhi's not-so-saintly characteristics.

The words Gandhi and nonviolence are practically synonymous in the world today. But here are some lesser known, *very* illuminating facts that tell a different tale.

Since 1908-9 Gandhi was vociferous in denouncing the revolutionaries for their 'violence' and much more. But only a short time before, Gandhi's own deeds reveal what was sauce for the goose was, indeed, not sauce for the gander.

Before going any further, I shall first give one of Gandhi's own quotes from his autobiography which highlights his avowed precept of nonviolence.

“I make no distinction, from the point of view of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) between combatants and non-combatants. He who volunteers to serve a band of dacoits, by working as their carrier, or their watchman while they are about their business, or their nurse when they are wounded, is as much guilty of dacoity as the dacoit themselves. In the same way those who confine themselves to attending to the wounded in battle cannot be absolved from the guilt of war.”

This would lead one to believe that nonviolent Gandhi would stay far away indeed from war or any connection to it. One would be wrong!

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<sup>1</sup> Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, October 2, 1869-January 30, 1948.

### **“The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi, by Robert Payne (1969)**

‘In his article in *Indian Opinion* Gandhi called upon the Indians to fight on the side of the British. He pointed out that the Europeans had always distrusted the fighting prowess of the Indians in Natal; at the first sign of danger they would desert their posts and make their way back to India. “We cannot meet this charge with a written rejoinder,” he wrote. “There is but one way to disproving it—the way of action.” He asked the Indians to join the Volunteer Corps. They should not be afraid of war. Wars are relatively harmless.’”<sup>2</sup>

- Note that Gandhi claims wars are harmless . . . !
- Note that despite his above mentioned precept, he wants the Indians to enroll in the British army.
- The British can certainly be considered more ‘dacoits’ than ‘soldiers’ in the manner in which they ruthlessly crushed the Zulu rebellion, victimizing women, children, and the elderly.

In case anyone is willing to give Gandhi latitude for what he means by ‘Volunteer Corps,’ read the excerpts from his article “Indians volunteers” published in his *Indian Opinion*, June 23, 1906.<sup>3</sup>

“The Stretcher-Bearer Corps is to last only a few days. Its work will be only to carry the wounded, and it will be disbanded when such work is no longer necessary. These men are not allowed to bear arms. The move for a Volunteer Corps is quite different and much more important. That Corps will be a permanent body; its members will be issued weapons, and they will receive military training every year at stated times.”

- Gandhi is actively advocating the bearing of weapons and military training over belonging to the Stretcher-Bearer Corps . . . !
- By his above mentioned precept, even belonging to a Stretcher-Bearer Corps ought to be a no-no for his precept of nonviolence.

Unfortunately for Gandhi, the Stretcher-Bears Corps is where he and his troop were finally enrolled despite his seven months of appeals to bear arms.

This isn’t the only instance of Gandhi’s approval—no, actual promotion—of violence. He did it again and yet again!

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<sup>2</sup> *Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity*, by G. B. Singh. Amherst, NY: Prometheus books, 2004; page 63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*; page 100.

## **NonViolent Gandhi and Jihad . . .**

To understand what follows, it is first necessary to understand the background of the Khilafat Movement which sprouted in India in 1919.

An excerpt from my *Burning for Freedom* clarifies the Khilafat (non)cause:

“The Treaty of Versailles was signed in June 1919. Much to the indignation of the Indian Muslims, the Turkish Empire was effectively cut up and distributed between the Allies. Even in his home territory, the Caliph had only nominal powers. The propagandist of the Turkish Caliphate in India decided to force Britain into changing her policy for Turkey. The Khilafat Movement was born.

Gandhi, rather than fight for the much bigger and national issue of Indian freedom or even protest against the horrific behavior of the British military and police against the helpless Indians, at this point decided to make the Turkish cause his own—and willy-nilly dragged the Indian freedom movement behind him!

Was Britain’s treatment of Turkey a greater horror, a greater degradation, to the Indians than her treatment of India?”<sup>4</sup>

At this very time—when Gandhi was fighting in India to maintain the supremacy of the Caliphate—there was a revolution in Turkey itself to get rid of it . . . !

“The Caliph was the ruler and religious head of Turkey which was in the throes of a revolution. A nationalist revolution had captured Young Turks and they wanted to end the Caliphate and his Sultanate, the rotten structure of a dead institution. Their revolutionary leader, Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha, had declared that ‘Islam, this theology of an immortal Arab, is a dead thing’. He wanted to tear out religion from the body politic of Turkey.”<sup>5</sup>

While Gandhi pushed and promoted the Khilafat Movement in India, “Kemal Pasha described the Indian supporters of the Khilafat as foreign busybodies in league with the British Government.”<sup>6</sup>

On November 24, 1919, Gandhi presided over a Khilafat Committee meeting. In his *Young India*, March 20, 1920, he writes of a Khilafat Committee resolution:

“The resolution is a joint transaction between Hindus, Muslims and others to whom this great land is their mother country or adopted home and it also commits

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<sup>4</sup> *Burning for Freedom*, Anurupa Cinar. USA: Trafford Publishing, 2012; page 107

<sup>5</sup> *Mahatma Gandhi, Political Saint and Unarmed Prophet*, Keer. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1973; page 302.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, page 439.

a joint movement to a policy on non-violence in the course of the struggle. But Muslims have **special Koranic obligations in which Hindus may or may not join. They, therefore, reserve to themselves the right, in the failure of non-cooperation in order to enforce justice to resort to all such methods as may be enjoined by Islamic scriptures.**"

Don't be misled by the mildness of the words—this is nothing less than a sanction for Jihad by the Mahatma, the Apostle of Nonviolence . . . ! A Jihad that would be, per force, unleashed upon the hapless Hindus.

In Gandhi's creed, to fight as revolutionaries for the freedom of their motherland, India, was a no-no, but Jihad to maintain the supremacy of the Sultan of Turkey was a 'right' of the Indian Muslims . . . !

### **NonViolent Gandhi: A recruiting agent-in-chief in WWI**

By beating the drum of nonviolence Gandhi had stripped the Hindus of their virility, but even in that he had done a *volte face*! On April 28, 1918, Gandhi gave Viceroy Chelmsford's War Conference resolution his full support.

"DELHI,  
*April 28, 1918*

I consider myself honoured to find my name among the supporters of the resolution. I realize fully its meaning and I tender my support to it with all my heart.

(From a photostat of the original in Gandhiji's hand: G. N. 2225)"

Gandhi further writes in his *An Autobiography*:

"So I attended the Conference. The Viceroy was very keen on my supporting the resolution about recruiting. . . . I had no speech to make. I spoke but one sentence to this effect, 'With a full sense of my responsibility, I beg to support the resolution.'" *Vide An Autobiography*, Part V; Ch. XXVII.

On April 29, 1918, he goes much further and offers to become a recruiting-agent-in-chief himself . . . ! I shall give you a quote from my own novel *Burning for Freedom*, page 100—I have put the whole situation of Gandhi as a recruiting agent for the WWI in a nutshell:

"In early 1918, Gandhi had the people of the Kheda district stage a *satyagraha*<sup>7</sup> protesting the increase in their tax. The Government promptly began to confiscate and sell their property in lieu of the taxes. This made the peasants of Kheda very

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<sup>7</sup> Term coined by Gandhi; he gave it the misnomer "soul-force." Literally the word means "insistence on truth." By implication it has come to mean nonviolent civil disobedience.

restive—the Satyagraha was in danger of coming apart at the seams . . . ! Something needed to be done—and fast. On April 29, Gandhi, in a letter to the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford, suggested a bargain that if the Government were to relieve him of his Kheda trouble, he would “as a recruiting agent-in-chief, rain men on them” in the war. The Viceroy willingly accepted Gandhi’s recruiting services and granted just enough relief to the peasants for Gandhi to make a tall claim of a successful satyagraha and save face . . . ! Then, swiftly discarding his principle of nonviolence, Gandhi began desperately recruiting Indians for the British army.”

Note below the reference to an offer submitted to Viceroy Chelmsford in Gandhi’s letter of April 29, 1919:

“I hope to translate the spoken word into action as early as the Government can see its way to accept my offer, which I am submitting simultaneously herewith in a separate letter.”

The offer is not mentioned in the letter itself, which is intended to be published (as so many of Gandhi’s letters were.) It is mentioned in the cover letter addressed to J. L. Smalley that accompanied the letter to the Viceroy. The actual letter is not available.

“Further I desire relief regarding the Kaira<sup>8</sup> trouble. Relief will entirely disengage me from that preoccupation which I may not entirely set aside. It will also enable me to fall back for war purposes upon my co-workers in Kaira and it may enable me to get recruits from the district.”

What the offer is about is in Gandhi’s letter to J. L. Smaffey re his April 29 letter to the Viceroy:

“The other enclosure 3 contains my offer. You will do with it what you like. I would like to do something which Lord Chelmsford would consider to be real war work. **I have an idea that, if I became your recruiting agent-in-chief, I might rain men on you.** Pardon me for the impertinence.”

This offer was kept secret and hidden from the Indians. When questioned about his two letters to the Viceroy, he said:

“I do not admit that, as a representative of the people, I am in duty bound to place before the public all the letters that I write to the Viceroy.

All through my life, there have been a good many, and to my mind important, actions of mine in my representative capacity which have remained, and will ever remain, unknown. My first letter to His Excellency the Viceroy was meant for him alone. I cannot give publicity to the views which I expressed to him as to a

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<sup>8</sup> Another name for Kheda

gentleman and a friend. . . . I have given publicity to such part of my conversation with him as would bear being made public.”

[From Gujarati] *Mahadevbhaini Diary*, Vol. IV

- Gandhi is mistaken when he writes “and will ever remain, unknown.” It is now all revealed!

Gandhi’s relevant letters on this topic are to be found on pages 1-54 on the link:

<http://www.gandhiserve.org/cwmg/VOL017.PDF>

## **The Kheda Debacle**

Gandhi reconfirmed his offer to be a recruiter in a follow up letter (written before he announced any of the concessions given by the British Government, as will be seen below.)

“*LETTER TO J. L. MAFFEY*

ON THE TRAIN,

*May 18, 1918*

In full confidence that the request contained in my letter of the 29th will be accepted, I am busy making recruiting preparations. But I shall not commence work before I have your reply.

(From the manuscript of Mahadev Desai’s Diary. Courtesy: Narayan Desai)”

The follow-up letter of Gandhi’s given below is written after he announced the Government concessions.

“*SABARMATI,*

*May 30, 1918*

DEAR MR. CRERAR,

I have just received Mr. Maffey’s letter in which he refers me to His Excellency the Governor regarding the offer of my services which I made immediately after the Conference at Delhi. . . . Will you kindly let me know His Excellency’s wishes regarding my offer and the suggestions made in my letter to Mr. Maffey in so far as they refer to Kaira?

*Yours sincerely,*

M. K. GANDHI”

(India Office Judicial and Public Records: 3412/18)

**What was the Government answer to Gandhi’s oh-so-generous offer to be a “recruiting-agent-in-chief” and persistence in getting a reply?**

- James Crerar, Secretary to the Governor of Bombay, has this to say in his June 1 letter in acknowledgment of Gandhi's letter:

“His Excellency will cordially welcome your co-operation, which he hopes will be directed more particularly to the encouragement of recruiting in the Northern Division . . . . As suggested in your letter of April 30th to Mr. Maffey, he will be glad, when the organizations which will, it is hoped, result from the Conference have been set on foot, to indicate in more detail the directions in which your services can be most profitably utilized.

As regards the revenue situation in Kaira, His Excellency considers that this, like all other questions of internal administration, must be dealt with separately on its merits, and that there should be no confusion of issues in regard to the great and urgent purposes of the Conference, but a whole-hearted and united effort without distinction of race, class or creed. He feels sure that you will concur in this view and by your example and influence support his endeavour to secure the most complete unanimity and co-operation which the present grave crisis requires.”

**So the Government happily accepted Gandhi's recruiting services, while declining to make any concessions for his Kheda satyagraha . . . !**

This might have left Gandhi in a fix, but fortunately for him, he was able to resurrect the meager concessions the Government had granted on April 20, 1918—just days before his proposed bargain with the Viceroy.

That Gandhi was unaware of these concessions until many days later is clear from his speech below. This is what he says, on June 6, 1918, addressing the people of Kheda (after getting the Government response to his “recruitment” offer and their stand on Kheda):

“Orders were issued to all Mamlatdars on the 25th April that no pressure should be put on those unable to pay. Their attention was again drawn to these orders in a proper circular issued by me on the 22nd of May and to ensure that proper effect was given to them, the Mamlatdars were advised to divide the defaulters in each village into two classes, those who could pay and those who were unable to pay on account of poverty. **If this was so, why were these orders not published to the people? Had they known them on the 25th April what sufferings would they not have been saved from!**”

There is a distinct note of aggrievement in these words! How pathetic these concessions were is obvious in the “catch” therein. Who was to decide which defaulters were to be classified as “poor”—the Government. Also,

“The Mamlatdar’s order, to the effect that the rich agriculturists of the village should pay up their dues and **the poor *khatedars* would be given a suspension of the assessment till the next year**, was read out by the *talati*.”

There was a time limit to the relief granted to the “poor”! Nevertheless, Gandhi grabbed eagerly at the concessions and declared a successful satyagraha. As Keer says in his biography:

“On April 20 the Collector had given orders granting total remission to those who were poor. But it was left to the Government officers to determine who were poor, and the terms were repeated on May 22 to Mamlatdars in the district. Gandhi avidly clung to the offer and agreed to it.”<sup>9</sup>

### **What was the actual result of this “successful” satyagraha?**

“Only 8 percent of the land revenue was in arrears and most of it was subsequently recovered. Yet Gandhi thought he had won a victory! . . . Which satyagraha by Gandhi fulfilled the essentials of a complete triumph? His much-trumpeted victory did not bring any material remission of land revenue.”<sup>10</sup>

The Government did not give Gandhi much in the way of concessions, but Gandhi was obliged—to uphold his oft-declared loyalty to the British Empire—to indeed begin the job of recruiting Indians for the WWI!

### **First, I shall give a sample of Gandhi’s many declarations of loyalty:**

“If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions, and not whisper ‘Home Rule’ or ‘Responsible Government’ during the pendency of the war. I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment . . .

**I write this, because I love the English Nation, and I wish to evoke in every Indian the loyalty of the Englishman.**

*I remain,  
Your Excellency’s faithful servant,  
M. K. GANDHI*”<sup>11</sup>

“Another matter that he wished to speak to them about was the idea that self-government meant the dismissal of the British from India—this was impossible. All they wanted was to become a great partner in the British Empire.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Mahatma Gandhi, Political Saint and Unarmed Prophet*, Keer; page 270.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*; page 270

<sup>11</sup> Viceroy’s April 29, 1918, letter.

<sup>12</sup> Speech at Patna, May 25, 1918.



**Here are some of Gandhi's "recruitment" speeches:**

“The time had arrived for Indians to make their choice. . . . India had been called on for another army; already some seven or eight lakhs were serving outside India and another five lakhs were to be recruited this year. . . . The self-government that the people were clamouring for was not the self-government that he had in mind. **They must have a self-government army, and for this it was incumbent on them to supply the five lakhs that Government wanted without waiting for Government to recruit them.**’ . . .

Two essentials are necessary in self-government—power over the army and power over the purse, and that is why he repeatedly said that India’s ambition to obtain self-government would be blasted if they missed this opportunity of obtaining military training and assisting the Empire, and thereby obtaining self-government. This opportunity would never come again.

*Bombay Secret Abstracts, 1918”*

“Recruits whom we would raise would be Home Rulers. They would go to fight for the Empire; but they would so fight because they aspire to become partners in it.’

*The Bombay Chronicle, 17-6-1918”*

“67. APPEAL FOR ENLISTMENT

NADIAD,

June 22, 1918

LEAFLET NO. 11

SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF KHEDA DISTRICT:

You have just emerged successful from a glorious satyagraha campaign. You have, in the course of this struggle, given such evidence of fearlessness, tact and other virtues that I venture to advise and urge you to undertake a still greater campaign. . . .

**One meaning of Home Rule is that we should become *partners in the Empire*. . . .** It behooves us, therefore, to learn the use of arms and to acquire the ability to defend ourselves. *If we want to learn the use of arms with the greatest possible despatch, it is our duty to enlist ourselves in the army. . . .*

Partnership in the Empire is our definite goal. We should suffer to the utmost of our ability and even lay down our lives to defend the Empire. If the Empire perishes, with it perish our cherished aspirations. ***Hence the easiest and the straightest way to win swaraj is to participate in the defence of the Empire.***”

**There are several more where these came from! Keer sums it up like this:**

“On August 1 Gandhi declared that ‘Indians were not entitled to Swaraj till they came forward to enlist in the Army!’

Gandhi made strenuous efforts to supply the Government with military recruits and spent his energy, time and goodwill in the propagation of army recruitment.”<sup>13</sup>

**To those who questioned his about-face, Gandhi had this answer:**

“My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statement but to be consistent with the truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment.”<sup>14</sup>

Such were the “staunch” principles of the Apostle of Nonviolence.

Anurupa Cinar

Author of *Burning for Freedom*

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<sup>13</sup> *Mahatma Gandhi, Political Saint and Unarmed Prophet*, by Dhananjay Keer; page 277

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, page 275